

Oxford is not an island

By Ian Green, Chairman

With several major consultations running in parallel over the summer, we have continued to make the case for a coordinated approach to planning.

Recently the OCS Planning, Housing, Transport and Oxfordshire Futures Groups reviewed the preferred options of the emerging new **Local Plan** for the City (2016 - 2036). The Oxfordshire Futures Group submitted comments on the draft **Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy** (2017- 2040) while the Transport Group submitted comments on the draft **Station Master Plan**. We have welcomed the opportunity to comment on these important draft plans. Our comments have been made in the spirit of constructive collaboration and we look forward to continuing to collaborate on further drafts and associated plans.

Before making our Local Plan comments we took the opportunity to present our more strategic concerns about the Oxford Local Plan 2036 in its city-region context. There is no disputing that the various functions of the city extend well beyond the city boundaries. Although it is understood that the Local Plan 2036 can only include policies for areas within the city boundary we urged that it is also necessary to ensure that development planning and management in the city region is effective, efficient and sustainable.

A great deal of joint development planning work is being done by the City, District and County Councils. Some of this is through the duty-to-cooperate with the help of the Oxfordshire Growth Board and some simply through the Oxfordshire Growth Board, the effectiveness of which is growing steadily. We recommend that through this coordination, the Local Plan clearly explains how the city region is functioning and is being planned and how transport and other services are being provided within and beyond the city boundary. We hope that the District Local Plans will also explain their relationship to the city although at present this aspect of the these plans is not always sufficient.

In particular, we would like the plans to enable an assessment to be made of the adequacy of the provision and location of housing and employment in the city region and the



Getting ready for Spotless Oxford at the Old Bank Hotel - see the back page
Photo courtesy of Steve Holmes (Mogford Ltd)

adequacy of transport (especially public transport) and other links between the city and the city region.

By the time of the next stage of the draft Oxford Local Plan consultation in 2018, most neighbouring local authorities will have completed their updated Local Plans. The recommended assessment will be facilitated and adjustments could be made as necessary to the Oxford Local Plan at least.

If the **Oxfordshire Joint Spatial Plan** (JSP) is prepared in the period 2017- 2019 as currently proposed, the assessment of links between the city and the city region and beyond could be deepened. It is possible that revisions may be needed to the newly approved Local Plans in Oxfordshire in 2019/ 2020 if the JSP is thorough and is based on an adequate infrastructure capacity assessment (which the current Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy does not appear to be, or to be based on).

In addition by the time of the next Local Plan consultation, more may be known of the proposed **East-West economic corridor**, the concept of which is being developed by the National Infrastructure Commission in association with local authorities along its route, including the local authorities of Oxfordshire.

Planning comes before programming?

We very much welcomed the joined-up thinking that the **Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)** initiative demonstrates. We encourage the continued strengthening of inter-authority and multi-sector planning and especially the strengthened relationship between inter-authority development planning and infrastructure planning. However we believe that the output of OxIS is seriously flawed in that it presents a list of possible investments rather than a strategy for infrastructure investment.

What is presented is an attempt to meet the demands of the development proposals of the finalised (or about to be finalised) Local Plans of the Districts and City. However each of these has been prepared independently without the benefit of an overall spatial plan and without an assessment of current and prospective strategic infrastructure capacity. Hence an infrastructure strategy is being retro-fitted to five Local Plans but without an analysis of the economic efficiency and sustainability of their development proposals using infrastructure capacity as a basis for the analysis.

We are disappointed to note that the assumption is made that existing employment and housing growth projections are the principal development drivers. Little attention is given to intended social and environmental characteristics of future growth, including reduced carbon emissions, preservation and enhancement of biodiversity and improved public health. All of these require a clear analysis of existing and prospective future infrastructure capacity and, based on this, the identification of an optimal economic, social and environmental allocation of employment and housing growth.

We had also expected a report on the capacity of Oxfordshire's infrastructure to be the basis of the proposed Oxford-

shire Joint Spatial Plan (JSP). But there is no mention of this. Instead, at least at this stage of its preparation, the infrastructure 'strategy' offers a series of short-term fixes with no consideration of demand (or scope for its management) over 30 years or more. The general tenor of OxIS at this stage is that infrastructure should serve the needs of planned development on a 'predict and provide' basis.

This leads to inadequate attention to innovative infrastructure investments especially in the transport and energy sectors. The prioritisation process is also inadequate, with a very narrow perspective which appears to imply that there is no economic gain to be derived from schemes which benefit existing businesses and transport users. It would potentially disqualify many transport schemes whose benefits cannot be linked directly with any particular development sites. This applies especially to schemes in and around Oxford – the city region.

We recommended that as work on OxIS continues, linked with the JSP, a different approach is introduced: one in which **development is directed to where it contributes to the most efficient use and enhancement of infrastructure especially, but not only, transport networks and which consolidates a systematic approach to a sustainable future.**

Ideally this consideration would have fed into the *current* draft Local Plan site allocations. We hope that there will be scope for refining the content of OxIS over time as work is undertaken to develop the JSP. This would encourage a role for OxIS and JSP as a bridge between current and future Local Plans and will prevent them from becoming entirely 'backward looking', serving past decisions rather than influencing future ones.

You can read our submissions in full on our website. Your comments will be very welcome and we'll be pleased to include them in the next edition of *Visions*.

Ian Green, Chairman



CONTENTS

- 1-2 Chairman's commentary
- 3 Making a success of the Westgate Centre
- 4 The transport of the future
- 5 Better by design
- 6 Tackling our housing shortage
- 7 Enjoying our waterways
- 8 Why are green issues last on the list?
- 9 Ashmolean event / A meeting of minds
- 10-11 Programme
- 12 OxClean / Exec matters

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

18 - 19 November: One World Festival at the Ashmolean Museum – read more on page 9

2 - 4 March 2018: OxClean Spring Clean

21 March 2018: AGM – please see the back page for details of elections to the committee and other ways to support us

Making a success of the Westgate Centre

Ian Green

The Westgate Centre opened on 24 October and we will have had a first impression of how well the £500 million investment operates.

The new Westgate Centre represents the biggest change to central Oxford for over a generation. OCS has consistently argued that the access arrangements of the redevelopment have not been adequately designed. We have also been concerned that the redevelopment of Westgate could have a negative effect on the old city centre shopping streets and the covered market. We hope that we're proved wrong.



Shown here on the opening day, the Westgate Centre could attract up to 15 million visitors a year. They will need to use buses, not cars, if the redevelopment is to be successful and city centre transport manageable

Photo courtesy of Reabow Rotors

But there is an opportunity to ensure that at least the Westgate access arrangements can be considered, and if necessary adapted, as part of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 preparation process. It is important for the success of the proposals in the Local Plan that linked city-wide and city-centre transport strategies are in place that will successfully and sustainably accommodate and manage transport needs. Effective transport strategies need to support current development and guide the location of proposed new development in or close to the city centre.

Two welcome studies

For this reason we very much welcome two studies which are now being undertaken: a study of the management of traffic within the city (critical to enabling greater priority to be given

to non-car modes) and a second study on a 'City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy' – this is something we have been requesting for a long time!

We recommend that when the essential 'city centre movement and public realm strategy' is complete a city centre development strategy is explicitly presented in the Local Plan 2036 (it is not included, currently). We also recommend that this strategy includes the West End area development sites including Osney Mead Industrial Estate, Oxpens, the 'Island site', Frideswide Square, the station redevelopment and the Westgate linked to the Castle site.

Our hope is that if the integrated city centre strategy is based on a feasible transport strategy we will all benefit from an efficient and sustainable city centre.

Don't lose your Visions!

We recently had to change our bank and want to thank all those members who took out a new standing order. If you have not yet done so, please read on ...

Subscriptions for 2018 are due on 1st January and we'll be grateful if you would change your standing order so that your payment goes to our new bank account:

Bank: Lloyds Bank plc

Sort Code: 30 12 51

Account: Oxford Civic Society

Account Number: 34795660

Single membership costs £9, Joint membership (living at the same address) £12.

Please remember to cancel your old standing order to HSBC.

If you have already amended your order then please let Liz Grosvenor, the Membership Secretary, know by email to membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk or phone 07505 756 692.

For members who pay by cheque

Please send your payment to:

Membership Secretary, 15 Lime Walk, Oxford OX3 7AB

Single membership costs £10, joint membership £14.

This will save us the expense of sending out reminder letters. Thank you.

The transport of the future

Andrew Pritchard, Transport Group

The Transport Group has recently responded to a number of major public consultations.

Will they - won't they run buses along Queen Street?

Following opposition by the bus companies to the pedestrianisation of Queen Street, the issue was referred to the Department of Transport. They decided that, once Queen Street is re-opened after final construction works, some 29 buses per hour should use it, rather than the 55 per hour before construction started. This will be reviewed in due course and the City Scrutiny Committee will be looking at the wider effects of the Westgate on transport issues in the New Year.

We don't yet know which routes will use Queen Street. We also await decisions about where the various routes will turn, and at which of the new stops along Castle Street/Norfolk Street they will pick up passengers when the Westgate Centre opens on 24 October.

Transport issues in the Local Plan

We feel that the decision on Queen Street buses should be part of this Plan, on which the Transport Group has commented, together with others of the Society's Groups. We felt that the draft of section 7: Movement lacked any strategy. The Plan relies heavily on walking, cycling and public transport as the three main means of travel, but has little to say about the last of these, or about how to resolve possible conflicts between them.



Energy-efficient, driverless pod cars have been in use at Heathrow Terminal 5 since 2011 and are being considered in other congested cities. Why is there no consideration of such technologies in our local plans?

We welcomed the concern about long-distance and tourist coaches in the city and noted that Stagecoach had recently produced a useful report *Design Guide for Buses in New Developments*.

We had doubts about the value for money of Chiltern Railways' proposals for running a few passenger trains on the Cowley branch line, compared to possible light rail. We also felt that the Plan should consider more novel types of transport, including cable cars.

The City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy

This stakeholders' workshop was managed by the City's consultants, Phil Jones Associates. We welcomed their willingness to include Central Oxford West, including Osney Mead and the Oxpens, as part of the city centre. We were also glad to see strong representations on behalf of cyclists to ensure that proper provision was made in the city centre.

The proposals for road closures made both in the County's Local Transport Plan 4, and in the critical report by Alan Baxter for the City Council, were presented, as was a brief presentation for the Government made by the LEP. Very little reference was made to the number of commuters coming into Oxford every day from outside the ring road or how their needs might be accommodated.

However, the need to manage tourists and their buses was highlighted. Some of us expect that the Westgate Centre may accommodate quite a lot of tourists, possibly assuaging their need for retail therapy without going on further to Bicester Village.

Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS)

We are pleased that this is now proposing to look at all the development corridors suggested by District Councils together, rather than separately. However, there does not yet appear to be any assessment of the infrastructure capacity available to support such developments, or of infrastructure that links one or more of them.

Station Masterplan (4th draft)

In our comments we repeated our concerns that the many requirements made by the City and County for the redevelopment of the station are unlikely to be realised on the present site, for which little developer interest is forthcoming.

The West End Area Action Plan policies need to be revised to take account of the wider developments in Oxford Central West. Do the inadequacies of the current railway station site suggest that alternative sites need to be sought for the station and transport hub?

Better by design

Clive Booth, Planning Group

After three years in operation, how well is the Oxford Design Review Panel doing?

In November 2011, the University of Oxford submitted plans for a huge student housing development on Roger Dudman Way. Few realised the impact on Port Meadow until the buildings were almost finished. As a result of the uproar that greeted the granting of planning consent, an independent review recommended, among other things, the creation of an external professional panel, funded by developers, to scrutinise plans in detail before submission as formal planning applications. This body, the Oxford Design Review Panel (ODRP), was created in 2014.

Three years on, the Society has contributed evidence to the City Council on the performance of the ODRP to date. We strongly agree that design review in Oxford is relevant, but we question whether the current ODRP implementation arrangements enable the ODRP to be fully effective. The Panel has tended to focus on the design of the project itself and not enough on its impact on the character of its surroundings and its functioning within the community where it is set. The large student accommodation block on the corner of London Road and Latimer Road in Headington is a good example of an arguable failure to consider the wider context adequately.

Behind closed doors

It does not help that ODRP meetings are closed to the public. We think that some way should be devised of involving representatives of the community, such as ward councillors or residents' or Neighbourhood Plan groups, at least in the initial site visits. Developers should also be encouraged to

include the public as observers at the ODRP meetings. At the Barton Park meeting observed by the Society, nothing was discussed which seemed to be commercially sensitive. As a matter of course, the public should also be able to read the ODRP's comments on the application website immediately after their transmission to the applicant.

Of continuity and clout

Another problem has been that the membership of panels has varied between successive reviews of an application, so that some panel members are unfamiliar with the way thinking has developed. Some panels have also lacked members with conservation and heritage expertise.

We are concerned too that the ODRP might have "most favoured commentator status" which could mean that any public discussion at the time of the planning application would have diminished impact. Unless it is absolutely clear that the Panel is a contributor to the design process, ranking alongside other contributors, it could lead to a loss confidence in the public participation process.

In its short life, the ODRP has dealt mainly with larger schemes, although it is not limited to them. As these projects are only just being built, it is too early to assess whether the ODRP has contributed beneficially to the built environment. Readers will have their own views about the Thames Street frontage of the Westgate Centre. On balance, however, the ODRP does seem to have had a broadly positive effect on the quality of design, but lessons could be learned if a formal case study exercise were to be undertaken before the annual review in 2018.



The Westgate Centre seen from Thames Street – eyesore or excellence?

Photo courtesy of The Oxford Times

Tackling our housing shortage

Peter Thompson, Housing Policy Group

Our new Housing Group has plunged in at the deep end by commenting on the Government's housing White Paper and the housing options in the draft Local Plan.

It is perhaps strange that the Housing Policy Group should be the most recently-formed special-interest group of the Society, since housing has undoubtedly been one of the defining topics of discussion in recent times. In part this relates to the sheer complexity of the subject. It is relatively easy to debate the pros and cons of building homes in specific locations, or of architectural style, but it is impossible to do this without consideration of the broader political and economic issues.

These issues include:

- high house prices in relation to incomes in cities such as Oxford
- reliance on 'the market' to supply the homes we need
- local authorities' lack of power to build new homes themselves
- so-called 'affordable housing' that is beyond the means of many who need a home
- high levels of 'buying to let' that distort the market in some places
- the high cost of land designated for development, with knock-on effects on house prices
- 'land value uplift' that benefits the landowner with minimal return for the local authority to provide the necessary infrastructure.

These are some of the issues which lie behind the national housing situation and some were addressed in the housing White Paper on which the Government consulted in April. Interestingly, the White Paper made the repeated assertion that 'the market is broken' and it focused on how the market might be better regulated, not questioning whether it represents the best way of supplying affordable housing. The first substantive output from our group was our response to this paper (which may be viewed on our website). It remains to be seen how the proposals translate into effective measures to address the real issues.

How should Oxford respond?

At the local level, planning for the development of more homes took up a substantial section of the draft Local Plan, to run to 2031. The Housing Group responded to the options entitled "Creating a Pleasant Place to Live, Delivering Housing with a Mixed and Balanced Community".

While this is a laudable headline aspiration, given the limited authority of local government and the particular characteristics of Oxford, achievement is going to be a tall order. Yet it is the need for affordable housing which drives the total housing requirement for the city. This has been assessed in

conjunction with all the other local authorities in Oxfordshire and suggests that somewhere between 1,200 and 1,600 homes should be built each year until 2031 – around 30,000 homes in total. (This figure may be re-assessed but that will alleviate the difficulties, not remove them.)

The latest studies of Oxford's capacity for new homes suggest that there are sites for only 7,500 homes within the city boundaries. This is why we have suggested **building at much higher density** – 50 dwellings per hectare (dph), and up to 150dph in particular locations. We were critical of City Council proposals to regulate the proportion of different sizes of homes in new developments, since evidence of the need for such regulation seemed sparse, and because it could militate against more dense development.

Accommodation for students in Oxford is a contentious issue; we support the encouragement of purpose-built housing for the two universities. But we believe that better control is required of speculative development of undesignated student housing, and better intelligence is required on the profusion of non-university institutions and their student populations.

We are also supportive of more **community-led housing**; this refers to initiatives by groups of individuals and cooperative organisations to deliver homes. Though no proposals have yet come to fruition here, this niche in housing delivery is steadily gaining ground and national legislation requires that local authorities facilitate such initiatives in local planning.

Despite 'affordability' being a predominant driver it has to be recognised that formal **definitions of 'affordability'** do not align with prices which many of our key workers can genuinely afford. This calls into question the whole process of actually accommodating 'mixed and balanced communities'.

The side-effects of unaffordable housing include instability of communities and difficulty recruiting teachers, nurses and other key contributors. This affects not only the local economy but the lives and welfare of all of us. Coming up with smart solutions will be the focus of the Housing Group for the foreseeable future.



High density housing in Freiburg, Germany

Enjoying our waterways

Tony Joyce, Vice President

Oxford is enmeshed in waterways but we haven't always cherished them as assets. That perception is changing.

In the lifetime of the new Local Plan, the city will see an intensification of development both within and around it. How can we retain, perhaps even enhance, those special qualities that still make the city enjoyable to live or work in? One aspect, which has happily been given more consideration recently, involves the network of ponds, streams, rivers and the canal.

Historic Oxford has always, as its name implies, been dependent on water and surrounded by it. Its location, defence, transport and commerce have depended on it. Its scope for expansion has been limited by flood plains which have preserved a refreshing rural presence remarkably close to the centre. A heron fishing below St George's tower, the flash of a kingfisher on the canal, lift the spirits on the dulllest of days.

As the city has grown and its commercial prosperity has shifted, the waterways have come to be used largely for recreation and exercise. What has been happening recently?

On the canal, the **Oxford City Canal Partnership** brings together representatives of the adjacent sites, residents and boaters, city and county councillors and officers, the Environment Agency and the Canal and River Trust (C&RT) to enhance the amenities of the canal itself and its surroundings.

One main concern is the quality of the **canal towpath**, not only its maintenance which is the responsibility of the cash-strapped C&RT, but the pleasure of walking or cycling along it into the heart of the city. Added to the listening points on its heritage trail*, recent murals have been warmly welcomed, as have plans for permanent maintenance and graffiti-proof



treatment of some of the historic canal bridges. As the city introduces electric charging points for cars, so it is hoped to do the same at moorings to reduce the pollution from boats running their diesel engines to recharge batteries.

At the **Jericho Wharf** site, the planning permission to open up the surroundings of St Barnabas Church awaits further action by the developer. This site will provide a much-needed boatyard, community centre and affordable housing, partly financed by an attractive canalside terrace of private housing.

Nuffield College's acquisition of the large island site between **Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street** raised hopes that their redevelopment of that whole area, including the Worcester Street car park, might include an extension of the canal back into part of the original basin area in front of the College. This would add a very attractive and appropriate



Wolvercote Lakes were sympathetically restored and opened to the public by Oxford Preservation Trust. They are now a nature reserve for all to enjoy

gateway to the city for those approaching the centre from the station. However, this seems unlikely unless a scheme of greater value to the College than a conventional development could be devised. At Hythe Bridge itself, however, steps are already in hand to improve the setting of the present canal end to give visitors a more favourable impression.

The **rivers** have always offered scope for recreation and attractive waterside development, though in part this has been restricted to boathouses and some well-known inns and restaurants. **St Hilda's College** however is planning further riverside development. **Christ Church** too has been extending access to the meadows with additional visitor amenities.

The **County Council** has recently consulted on plans to improve the **river towpaths** as practical ways to **access** the centre, though here, as in all shared space, the joint use by cyclists and pedestrians will need careful management. But what of the rivers as their own means of accessing the centre? Could we hope in future to see the daily commute to work being by boat, water taxi or canoe, as our Dutch neighbours have shown? It has been encouraging to see the provision of good changing facilities in recent large employment developments, to promote alternative and healthier ways of getting to work.

* Read about the trail at www.oxfordcanalheritage.org

Why are green issues last on the list?

Chris Church

The planners are ignoring vital environmental issues in their key plans.

Members will be aware that the City, District and County Councils have a lot of 'plans': the Local and District Plans, Transport Plans and an upcoming 'Joint Spatial Plan'. On top of that we have the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) for which there has been a process of 'Stakeholder and Public Engagement' (you won't be alone if you missed that – it ran from July to September).

Clearly we need to manage development and we need adequate infrastructure in our county. But for a strategy that is meant to work for the next 20 or more years, the OxIS is utterly inadequate on some key issues. One of the reasons so many of us like living here is the quality of life yet improving that quality and our wellbeing is something that is almost entirely ignored in the consultation document.

The threats to our wellbeing

It is widely acknowledged that we have serious health and environment issues. *The Oxfordshire Air Quality Group Annual Report – Health Improvement Board*, delivered last October 2016, recognises the serious health effects of air pollution, adding: "it is now recognised by the government as the country's second-biggest health threat after smoking". In fact air quality is so poor nationally that the European Commission has launched legal proceedings against the UK for its failure to reduce levels of nitrogen dioxide.

Air quality is assessed as poor in the whole of Oxford and in most other towns in the county, from Banbury to Henley and Chipping Norton. Emissions from vehicles are the major source of pollutants throughout the county.

We also face the growing threat of climate change. Oxfordshire local councils have committed (in the *Oxfordshire 2030* report) to cut greenhouse gas emission by 50% by the year 2030 (compared to 2008). But the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership *Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis* (2016) reminds us that: **"Meeting the Oxfordshire 2030 target will be further challenged by the county's plans and aspirations to grow its economy and population"**.

A lack of commitment?

With these issues staring us in the face, it is astonishing how environmental issues are marginalised in the OxIS report. It suggests that new projects will be scored against 11 key criteria. Coming in at number 11, right at the bottom, are 'environmental benefits'. Even this is inadequate, talking about "impacts upon natural and/or urban environment and local air quality and noise" – there is nothing about cutting carbon emissions, actually improving our green spaces, or creating better places to live.

This failure to demonstrate any degree of leadership on these issues is depressing and must make us wonder how serious our politicians are about their environmental targets. We need to tackle these failures – and work has started.

In June Oxfordshire Friends of the Earth invited the Society, the 'Need Not Greed' Coalition and other groups to a seminar at Oxford Brookes University on 'Planning as if the climate mattered'. This asked "How can our planning system be more effective at dealing with issues such as climate, air quality and biodiversity loss?". There were some excellent presentations including a fine overview by Ian Green of the Civic Society. A report with links to all the presentations is available online at: www.foe.co.uk/groups/oxford/news/Planning-as-if-the-climate-mattered

Sushila Dhall of Oxford Pedestrians Association and Peter Thompson recently protested about air quality in the city

Photo courtesy of The Oxford Mail



Any rational analysis would suggest that we need to tackle these issues urgently. If our planners and council managers really know more about why it's alright to ignore climate change than all the scientists in Oxford and across the world, then perhaps they could share this knowledge with the rest of us. If not then perhaps they could take their heads out of the sand and produce a strategy that is fit for the century we live in.

Chris Church chairs the Oxfordshire Climate Action Network:

www.facebook.com/groups/oxfordshireclimateaction

One World Festival

An invitation to all our members

We are delighted to announce that we are sponsoring the One World Festival, a weekend of festivities at the Ashmolean Museum on 18 -19 November that will connect communities and faiths from across Oxford.

October sees the Ashmolean Museum open another major exhibition, **Imagining the Divine – Art and the Rise of World Religions**. It is the first exhibition to explore the art of the five world religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism, as they spread across continents in the first millennium AD.

On display will be remarkable objects created when the iconography of each religion was still being developed. These will include the first known depiction of Christ and some of the first surviving Qurans.

Inspired by and in support of this exhibition, faith communities from across Oxford are coming together at the Ashmolean Museum to hold a big weekend celebration **One World Festival**, exploring how light, music and food connect communities and faiths.

The weekend will see a dazzling range of activities, talks and crafts, for all ages. Visitors will find out more about how Oxford's religious communities celebrate the festival of light, listen to local choirs and live music, make a lantern, join a

tour, have a go at chanting or meditation, or sample some delicious food from Oxford's community stalls.

Our President, Sir Clive Booth says: "We will be running a stand and welcome this unique opportunity to reach out to communities who may be unaware of what we do. We hope that visitors will be inspired to join the Society and that some will want to play an active role. We want to reflect a wide range of views on Oxford's future."

Do visit the event at the Ashmolean Museum, which is free, and visit our stand.



A meeting of minds

Gillian Argyle writes from the Executive Committee about how the Society responds to public consultations.

If you're reading this, you'll already be only too well aware of OCS's standing in the media and local government. We are frequently consulted and quoted by all and sundry and our ideas are sometimes influential. Whose are the minds which produce our considered views?

Each of our four technical working groups – Planning, Transport, Housing and Oxfordshire Futures (which covers strategic planning in Oxford and Oxfordshire) has around a dozen members contributing to meetings. Additional members participate online and specialist skills are called in if they are needed.



The backgrounds of the Group members are varied and we think that this helps to enrich the discussions. Our recent response to the Oxford Local Plan consultation was prepared by members with experience in education, the civil service, EU infrastructure

planning, city planning, architecture, medicine, civil engineering, administration, bus and rail operations and local politics. The meetings are usually held in members' homes and are always convivial occasions.

Our effectiveness in shaping the future of Oxford depends on these groups. **There is an open invitation to all OCS members to join the groups, either online or as participants in the meetings** or a mix of both. We also have a group that organises our programme of walks, talks and visits and a Communications Group that disseminates our views.

If you are interested to take part, please contact us (see the back page for emails and the phone number).

We are immensely fortunate that people of such wide backgrounds give up their time to support our working groups. **But rest assured that we value all our members and need more of them – our strength lies partly in our numbers and in the enthusiasm you show for what we do. So please, come to our events, encourage others to join the Society, follow our tweets and send your views to our newsletter editor. We'd like to know what's on your minds.**

Booking form

January – April 2018 ticketed events

Closing date for applications: **Monday 18 December**. Please enclose:

- 1 cheque/s payable to Oxford Civic Society, one for each event
- 2 one stamped, addressed envelope for all tickets

Member's name.....

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

2nd member's name (if applicable).....

Address.....

.....

.....

Postcode Telephone

Email

Event	No. of tickets	Amount enclosed
St Cross College – a visit Thursday 22 February at 10.30am @£8	
Historic Bicester – a walk Thursday 8 March at 10am@£5	
Willowbrook Farm, Kidlington – a visit Saturday 21 April at 10am Please indicate whether you: Need a lift / Can offer a lift (please circle) Lunch (farm-produced burger) must be ordered in advance (please attach a separate cheque for lunches, payable to OCS)@£8 ... @£7.50	
<i>Please note that tickets will be posted out in the New Year</i>		

Note: Tickets are allocated soon after the closing date but if you miss it, it's always worth asking if there are places left. Cheques are banked three weeks after ticket issue; after that no refunds can be given.

Send this completed form to:

Alan Hobbs
66 Southfield Road
Oxford OX4 1PA

OCS Calendar

'Cut out and keep'

November 2017 - April 2018

**ticketed events*

Sat 18 and Sun 19 November

One World Festival, a weekend of activities and talks at the Ashmolean Museum, sponsored by the Society

Weds 24 January 7.30 for 8pm
Recent architecture in Oxford, a talk by **Geoffrey Tyack** at Magdalen College Auditorium

Thursday 8 February 7.30 for 8pm
East Oxford: a Victorian and Edwardian 'new town', a talk by Liz Woolley at Magdalen College Auditorium

Thursday 22 February* 10.30am
St Cross College, a visit

Thursday 8 March* 10am
Historic Bicester, a walk led by **Bob Hessian**

Wednesday 21 March 6.30 for 7pm
Making Oxfordshire a better place, a talk by Jayne Woodley at Magdalen College Auditorium

This is followed by the AGM at 8pm

Tuesday 10 April 7.30 for 8pm
From conflict to cohesion? Planning in Oxfordshire, a talk by **David Valler** at Magdalen College Auditorium

Saturday 21 April* 10am
Willowbrook Farm, Kidlington, a visit

***Contact for booking/tickets only:**

Alan Hobbs
66 Southfield Road, Oxford OX4 1PA
Tel: 01865 248 105

If you have booked but can't attend, please contact Alan Hobbs.
We always have a waiting list



Programme

January – April 2018

Open talks – all welcome

No pre-booking, free of charge – help us to recruit new members by bringing a guest

Recent architecture in Oxford

Wednesday 24 January at 8pm (tea from 7.30pm)
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Geoffrey Tyack explains the interesting and often innovative new buildings that have gone up in Oxford over the past 20 years, including the Blavatnik School of Government and the new Middle Eastern Centre at St Antony's College. Geoffrey Tyack is an emeritus Fellow of Kellogg College and author of *Oxford: an Architectural Guide* (1998).

East Oxford: a Victorian and Edwardian 'new town'

Thursday 8 February at 8pm (tea from 7.30pm)
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Local historian **Liz Woolley** tells the fascinating story of how Enclosure in 1853 led to the rapid development of farmland south east of Magdalen Bridge. Within 50 years, 2,500 homes had been built, attracting college servants, skilled artisans, labourers and "the ignorant and rambling poor". These events laid the foundations of today's thriving East Oxford.

Making Oxfordshire a better place

Wednesday 21 March

Tea/coffee from 6.30pm, talk at 7pm followed by AGM
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Jayne Woodley is the Chief Executive of the Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF). She talks about how OCF is developing its understanding of Oxfordshire's needs and resources to inspire more philanthropy and to build partnerships and community-based solutions to our social problems.

From conflict to cohesion? Planning in Oxfordshire

Tuesday 10 April at 8pm (tea from 7.30pm)
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

David Valler, Reader in Planning at Oxford Brookes University, talks about the politics of the city's growth. Unresolved dilemmas and political conflict over the expansion of the city have defined the nature of development politics for a generation. But are we now experiencing the beginning of a new era of joint planning and policy cohesion?

Members-only visits and walks

Tickets are needed for these events: bookings by 18 December

St Cross College

Thursday 22 February 10.30am



St Cross is a graduate-only college which shares buildings owned by Pusey House in St Giles which date from 1884. They include Pusey House chapel (1914) designed by Temple Moore

and the new West Wing bordering Pusey Street designed by Niall McLaughlin architects, opened in 2016, which completed the West Quad. The tour will cover these and more.

Historic Bicester: a walk

Thursday 8 March 10am

Bob Hessian, Chairman of Bicester Local History Society, will lead a walk around the historic parts of the town centre, explaining some of the details of the long and fascinating history of this vibrant market town.

Willowbrook Farm Kidlington: a visit

Saturday 21 April 10am

The **Radwan family** farm motto is 'naturally reared, ethically farmed'. Since 2002 the family have transformed their land into an organic and free-range farm enterprise. The family will explain their philosophy as we are shown around. We then have the option of the farm's own barbecue burger lunch and to stay for demonstrations and hands-on activities afterwards. Allow 2 hours for the visit and wear stout shoes. Note, the ground is uneven throughout the farm.

Visit the website www.willowbrookfarm.co.uk to read more about this remarkable family and their vision of sustainable farming and living.



OxClean news

Rosanne Bostock

A new OxClean campaign is rolling out across the city.

OxClean is trialling a new campaign, in liaison with hotel-owner Jeremy Mogford, called **Spotless Oxford**. The idea is that we take ownership for keeping the pavements and gutters in front of our premises, whether private, commercial or educational, litter free.

We are particularly pleased that, among others, Marks & Spencer in the city centre and Summertown, three Costa Coffee outlets and Cherwell School have signed up. This is a particular challenge for the school as it straddles the Marston Ferry Road.

There is now a Spotless link on the OxClean website for commercial and educational establishments to sign up www.oxclean.org.uk/spotless-oxford. The Campaign is backed by Oxford Preservation Trust, the High Street Association and ROX in addition to the Society.



If winter comes ...

After our very successful Spring Clean this year, we're pleased to announce **Spring Clean 2018 is Friday 2 to Sunday 4 March**. We always need volunteers to join the OCS groups. Next year OxClean teams will be back on Grenoble Road and in Blackbird Leys – do join us. Are there any groups willing to tackle litter in the Churchill Hospital car park? You can, of course, join up with other groups as they come up on the OxClean website. Contact information is given in the next column.

Work goes on all year round. OxClean has an ongoing anti-litter campaign in Cowley with residents and student wardens from Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. We are in touch with primary and secondary schools and run a schools anti-litter campaign. **If you'd like to help behind the scenes, do get in touch.**



Exec matters ...

Vernon Porter, Hon Secretary



The Executive Committee pictured in 2016

Join us and help to shape Oxford's future!

In 2017 we gained a new President and Chairman plus three new trustees. We always need more help as the opportunities always exceed our capacity to seize them. If you'd like to join either our Trustees (Executive Committee) or one of our working groups, please contact me for an informal chat. Our current working groups cover planning, transport, Oxford Futures, housing policy, OxClean, the programme of walks, talks and visits, and communications.

Nominations for the Executive and notice of any items to go on the AGM agenda should reach me by 6 March at the address shown below.



We're pleased to welcome **Gillian Coates** to the Executive Committee. An art historian and former senior manager at the University of Oxford, Gillian has also joined the Planning Group and will help support OxClean next year. "I'm passionate about Oxford and wanted to make a practical contribution," she says.

OCS is a society for people who care about Oxford, want to enjoy it more fully and help shape its future. Membership costs £10 (£9 by standing order) or £14 for two people at the same address (£12 by standing order). See the website for how to join, or contact Liz Grosvenor membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk or join at one of our talks.

Oxford Civic Society

67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ

Tel: 075 05 756 692 info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

Photos and letters to the Editor can be sent to Hilary Bradley
newsletter@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

oxcivicsoc.org.uk | oxclean.org.uk

www.oxfordfutures.org.uk | www.oxfordwalks.org.uk



Visions is published in March, July and November ISSN 051-137X