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Creating consensus on growth

By Ian Green, Chairman

The city and county continue to grow: the issue is how to manage growth so that it benefits us all. So, how should local people be involved in major decisions about where growth should be accommodated in our city-region?

Later this year the public will be asked for their views on the final version of the **Oxford Local Plan** and in early 2019 on the **Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP)**. The two are inextricably linked as the future shaping of Oxford in the Local Plan depends very much on the future shaping of the city-region and the County as a whole (and its links with the Oxford – Cambridge Economic Corridor) in the JSSP. (It would be more logical of course, if the strategic plan preparation preceded the local plan, but we hope that this sequence will be achieved in subsequent revisions).

In the case of the JSSP, the task of ensuring that Oxford and the city-region continue to contribute sustainably to the nation's future economic growth will not be easy. **It will be much easier if concerns about the scale and pace of growth are acknowledged and the Oxfordshire Growth Board (OGB) includes thorough public discussion of the implications of growth when preparing the JSSP.**

Opportunities for consensus building have been missed in recent years as there has been a conspicuous lack of public consultation on strategic growth and its implications. Other than in district and city local plan consultations (which have not had the benefit of an inter-authority perspective) and to a limited extent in the revision of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), there has been no major consultation on the economic, financial, environmental and social implications of growth.

Concerns and critics

The projections of the SEP and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) have been criticised, most notably by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) but also by amenity groups from predominantly rural parts of Oxfordshire, at SEP consultation meetings, other public meetings and in the local press. Concern about pressure on local communities and the countryside is understandable: Oxfordshire includes parts of three different **Areas of Outstanding**



Why is affordable housing so difficult to provide? See page 8
Cartoon courtesy of Rob Cowan

Natural Beauty. Blenheim Palace and its estate is a **World Heritage Site**. The area surrounding Oxford is **Green Belt** – a planning designation which was established to control unplanned urban extensions, and, in the case of historic cities like Oxford, to preserve its setting and special character.

Fears about the distribution of growth are widespread. Although the SEP did not include a spatial interpretation of the economic plan, the main growth locations were expected to be within the **Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine** stretching from Bicester in the north through Oxford to Science Vale in the south. It was intended that this would be reflected in local plans and in the scale and location of investment in the infrastructure for research, enterprise and connectivity. The



Oxford North is likely to be the next large development in the city
Photo courtesy of Fletcher Priest Architects

many firms and economic assets elsewhere in the county in the market towns and rural areas will also need support.

Better management, smarter thinking

Although comprehensive information is not available, developers probably have land in reserve, not all of which is in locations likely to be favoured for growth or which lacks infrastructure, particularly transport. The finalisation of local plans should ensure that:

- site allocations correspond with the allocation of employment growth and with infrastructure capacity (utilising the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy - OXIS);
- speculative land holdings which are not in appropriate locations are refused planning permission.

It must be the aim that the imminent finalisation of local plans and the JSSP will enable more effective development management than has been possible hitherto.

It is hoped that the JSSP preparation will ensure meaningful public discussion of these, and other, concerns. It is recommended for example that the JSSP ensures that the benefits as well as the risks of growth are discussed: increased economic activity in growth areas could ensure a stronger

revenue base for local authorities, enabling much-needed service provision in remote rural areas for example.

In its 2014 *Oxford Futures* * report, the Society recommended setting up a **Futures Commission** to stimulate a more strategic approach to development planning in Oxfordshire. As part of the continuing evolution of the OGB, perhaps such a Futures Commission (described now as a Forum) would be helpful if it comprised national and international experts in regional development planning and associated skills as well as local stakeholders. The purpose of the Futures Forum would be to advise the OGB and JSSP team on a variety of issues, including the scale and pace of growth and to inject innovative ideas into the JSSP process. A think-tank in other words. It could help the OGB to establish and maintain a clear set of principles of the 'big picture' of sustainable and equitable growth.

A voice for the public – Development Forums

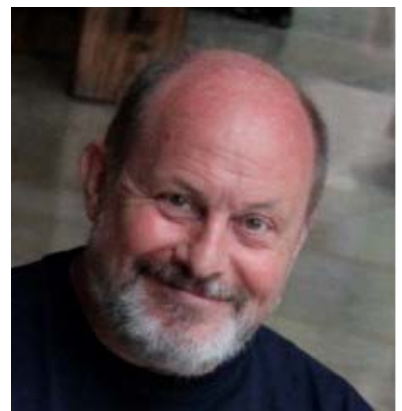
The 2014 report also recommended **Development Forums** to tap into the energy and interests of those who will form and fund the communities of the future. A first step would be to ask local people what kind of rural area, town or city they would want to see in 2050 in the light of feasible options. Such ideas would feed into a Development Forum which would include the house-builders who will be building the communities of the future, including housing associations and the professionals advising them. **The idea of Development Forums is still valid and could be one of the instruments of JSSP implementation.**

The Development Forums could also be the catalyst for the agreement of a '**Development Charter**' between stakeholders. The Charter would identify principles for guiding growth, for example: develop in the right place and reduce car use; create balanced and healthier communities; build distinctive places; and minimise environmental impact. Similar principles have been applied to the growth of other mid-sized university cities including Cambridge, Grenoble and Freiburg. Principles of this kind could well win popular support if they were applied in a Charter for shaping the spatial growth of Oxfordshire.

A Futures Forum, Development Forums and a Charter could all help realise the Growth Board's intention to give the public a clear overview of the county growth / development picture. This should support better understanding of the growth trajectory for the county and increase the ability to engage in collective decision making.

Ian Green
Chairman

**Oxford Futures* is available on our Oxfordshire Futures website. See



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New activists, an award

New recruits to our work



We warmly welcome two new members to the Executive Committee, both elected at the AGM in March. **Thelma Martin**, shown left, is a former criminal lawyer who has recently had much experience of chairing and supporting community groups in Iffley and East Oxford.

Anne Gwinnett,

shown right, was formerly Head of Corporate Affairs at Oxford Brookes University and Chair of the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Together our new members bring a wealth of experience to our discussions.

We also welcome **Caroline Thompson** who has joined the **OxClean** team to visit schools and report on the cleanliness of their grounds. We award certificates to the best.



New volunteers will be most welcome – see our website for current vacancies:

www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/membership/volunteers/

An award for Sheila Glazebrook

The national charity Contact the Elderly has given its highest award to Sheila who has clocked up 53 years of service as a volunteer and supporter. The charity aims to alleviate loneliness and social isolation among older people by running monthly tea parties in the volunteers' homes.

Sheila will be familiar to members as the former head of the Programme Group, usually there to welcome us at talks and visits. We offer her our warmest congratulations.



Photo courtesy of the Oxford Mail

OxClean goes to Westminster

Despite the disruption to the annual Spring Clean OxClean has recently had other things to celebrate.

For the first time in 11 years, the annual Spring Clean did not take place as planned when snow in early March prevented most groups from going out to litter-pick. A few stalwarts re-scheduled their support and went out litter-picking once the snow had melted – many thanks to them for their support.

So it was cheering to be invited to the House of Commons in April by **Keep Britain Tidy** in recognition of our pioneering work. The Society has been associated with Keep Britain Tidy for many years. The national movement was started by Lady Elisabeth Brunner, the mother of our Past-President Sir

OxClean at Westminster – from left-right: Vernon Porter, Paul and Tracy Brackett (regular volunteers from Blackbird Leys), Rosanne Bostock, Tony Turton and Chris Church



Hugo Brunner. Since OxClean started in 2007 Sir Hugo has been a keen and active supporter. OxClean's chief organiser, Rosanne Bostock, has been drawn into the national scene, advising Keep Britain Tidy on many aspects of Spring Clean.

Rosanne and five other OxClean volunteers travelled up to Westminster to join other groups from around the country for a buffet lunch on the House of Commons Terrace. They met celebrity anti-litter campaigner Julia Bradbury and local MPs Anneliese Dodds, Victoria Prentis and Robert Courts (MPs for Oxford East, Banbury and Witney respectively). Mr Courts was very interested in starting something similar to OxClean in his own constituency.

Since then we've been delighted to support a new initiative in Abingdon, spearheaded by Helen Flynn. AbiClean will be using OxClean's materials and approach to organise community litter-picking across the town. We wish Helen and her team of volunteers every success.

We are also pleased to note that the Marine Conservation Society is again organising a national **beach clean** (14-17 September). Is the tide at last turning against litter?

What we really think about cable cars

The Editor reports

After some mis-reporting in spring, we'd like to set the record straight on our views on cable cars.

Juliet Blackburn, who heads our Transport Group, was on holiday abroad in March when she learned she was quoted in *The Times* (of London) as saying that the Society 'supports' the introduction of cable cars to combat congestion in the city centre. 'At no time had I spoken to anyone at *The Times*,' says Juliet.

The story began when the *Oxford Mail* accurately reported our view that cable cars deserve 'serious consideration' as a means of mass transport into the city centre or some of the hospitals. We presume *The Times* then picked up the tale. Mark Barrington-Ward raised the issue at the AGM and has kindly sent us his views for our letters column.

For the record, the Society does not support cable cars (gondola lifts) but we do believe that they and other innovative forms of transport are worth investigation.

By sheer coincidence Act4Oxford, a new community group interested in cable cars, ran a seminar at Trinity College in spring and our Chairman, Ian Green attended.

'It's clear from the experts that gondola lifts have the capacity to move thousands of people swiftly and efficiently and they can fit into urban spaces as well as ski slopes,' says Ian. 'Many cities across the world are installing cable cars as part of their transport infrastructure. But as one speaker pointed out, transport authorities need to be ready to receive that information and most are dealing with more pressing matters, Oxfordshire County Council among them.'

'Even so, groups such as ours should keep these innovations in the public eye because opportunities do sometimes come along to think further ahead. Our local authorities will shortly be preparing a Joint Spatial Plan, a golden opportunity to think about the transport of the future.'

Your letters

Mark Barrington-Ward kindly made his AGM comments available to us.

I was Editor of the *Oxford Mail* when the Society was founded in 1969. In the early 60s when the electricity board was building new power lines, a battle was fought to stop them putting pylons right across the famous view of the city's skyline from Boars Hill and Hinksey Hill and to put some of the power lines underground. The Society's first Chairman, James Stevens Curl, was very critical of what he called 'wirescape'.

Before the Society gives any encouragement to a proposal for what amounts to more pylons, it must say where the cable cars will run and demonstrate that they will not have an adverse impact on the city's setting. Putting cable cars near homes in the Botley Road would seem likely to intrude into their privacy and cable stations would be at rooftop level. Cable cars are also likely to intrude into the views of the historic skyline, a precious national heritage.

The present need is to improve air quality and reduce congestion. This seems likely to come about from advances in electric vehicle engineering and reducing the demand for road space by some form of charging. Conditions on the Botley Road would also be improved if at least some of the traffic-generating retail sheds along it were to be replaced by housing. The large expansion of the city's retail offer at Westgate and the change in shopping habits demonstrated by the collapse of Toys R Us may help to bring this about and the Society should encourage it. The Society is most influential when it makes practical, down to earth proposals.



Cities around the world are building cable cars to tackle congestion on the road network or to cross difficult terrain. 'Trams in the sky' can be a cheaper option than conventional trams or metro systems. This is London's cable car which provides a new Thames crossing

Photo courtesy of EMPICS Entertainment

Ann Spokes Symonds writes:

I could not agree more with Mark Barrington-Ward's criticism of cable cars for Oxford. They would be totally unsuitable in a place where wires would need to come across the spires and towers which are Oxford's essential charm. I hope they will never come about.

What are your views (on this and other subjects)? Please write or email us. See the back page for the Editor's contact details.

The WOW factory!

Clive Booth, Rosanne Bostock and Ingrid Lunt

By coincidence our three authors visited the BMW factory recently and were moved to write about the experience.

'HG Wells would have loved it. The aliens are building motor cars in Cowley! For once, "awesome" is an appropriate word.' Those were the thoughts that struck Clive as he surveyed the 1,200 robots working energetically in the vast BMW plant. Rosanne and Ingrid were likewise 'bowled over, discombobulated, amazed' by the sheer scale of the plant (visitors get round it in a minibus) and its extensive use of robots. They were each guided round the plant by former assembly line workers, now retired, who were mines of interesting information, tinged with humour.

Teams of robots deftly bring together steel parts to form the basic shell of the Mini. 'They seem to be performing an elaborate ballet' says Clive, 'but their movements, though precise, are distinctly jerky. It is strangely hypnotising to watch a group of them twisting, ducking and weaving, never clashing, as they bring the parts together.

'The 1,200 robots are tended by 50 or so human beings who feed them with components and minister to them when they are under the weather. Even robots, apparently, can have a bad day!' Rosanne and Ingrid noted that the robots 'are designed in Switzerland, built in Sweden, in a factory owned by the Chinese, but belong to BMW!' The international aspect of the factory struck everyone, with 400 lorries per day delivering parts from the UK, several different European countries (60% of the lorries) and even China.

Every Mini is unique

The assembly plant appears more traditional-looking with cars being carried along on moving belts while workers do the intricate work that robots (for now) find too challenging. But the remarkable feature of the Mini assembly line is that no two cars being assembled are identical. Each car is made to the specific order of a known purchaser, so the possible combinations of colour, engine, transmission, seating, number of doors, and a legion of other features, are vast.



Riveting robots build the shell of the Mini Photos courtesy of BMW

Our authors agree that this is production engineering at its most sophisticated. Clive observes: 'Recognition systems positioned at every point along the assembly line ensure that Ms Jones' sky-blue three-door Mini is fitted with a petrol engine and automatic transmission, while the car immediately following, ordered by Mr Bloggs, is an estate version in bright yellow with sun roof, diesel engine and fancy alloy wheels. This individuality applied to mass production seemed to me quite as remarkable as the army of robots in the other building.'

Caring for the workforce

Rosanne and Ingrid were impressed by the workforce, over 5,000 people, who look trim (a choice of seven canteens offers healthy eating options) and who enjoy rotating shifts and duties to reduce the monotony. They are encouraged to solve problems and to take pride in their work. Ingrid noted that BMW runs an apprentice scheme and would like more people to apply. 'This can be linked to training at Oxford Brookes University and apparently the skills learnt at BMW, not least with the robots, make employees desirable all over the world,' she says.

At the end of the hour and a half tour, our authors all felt admiration for what has been achieved at the BMW plant and urge people to see it for themselves. 'It's no surprise that the visit is highly rated on TripAdvisor!' says Clive.

Your chance to visit too!

You can visit the factory at any time and it's easy to book online (www.visit-mini.com). Next year however you can enjoy an OCS tour of the factory as part of our special Golden Jubilee programme of walks, talks and visits. More details next time.

Our future at stake

Ian Green, Oxfordshire Futures Group

The Group's current focus is the Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan which will have a major impact on all our futures.

The Futures Group is busy scrutinising the **Housing and Growth Infrastructure Programme** agreement. Central government has set the pace having agreed to provide £215 million of additional government funding for Oxfordshire, to deliver the key infrastructure required to bring forward proposed housing development, together with additional funds to increase the supply of affordable housing.

One of the key components of the Programme is the preparation of an Oxfordshire **Joint Statutory Spatial Plan**. The JSSP is intended to provide a countywide strategic vision for sustainable growth, to give the public a clear overview of the growth picture and greater opportunities to engage in collective decision-making and to avoid incremental, speculative, and unplanned development. Building on the existing and emerging District Councils and City Council Local Plans, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and Oxfordshire Transport Strategy, the JSSP will set the strategic direction for planning across all Oxfordshire local authorities to 2050. The agreement with government also provides up to £2.5 million to support the development of the JSSP.

Although the Society has an interest in all the Programme initiatives we have been putting most effort into the JSSP as it has profound implications for shaping the city-region and the city itself. The Oxfordshire Growth Board has agreed that we (and other civic groups) will be involved in the preparation of the 'Statement of Community Involvement' and as shown in the leader article we are not short of comments on the importance of this and ideas for it.

We have also prepared an update of the 2014 *Oxford Futures* report which provides recommendations for principles for the JSSP to follow. The report is being finalised and will be on the OCS website shortly.

Within the city, the development of the **West End** continues to be of great interest to the Futures Group. Current discussion with city leaders is aimed at encouraging the incorporation of the development of the West End (the station, Osney Mead, Oxpens, Frideswide Square and the area bounded by Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street) into the main city centre for planning and management purposes.

You can keep up to date with the Group's thinking on its own website www.oxfordfutures.org.uk where the original *Oxford Futures* report can be downloaded.

Celebrations at the Museum

The Museum of Oxford (MOO) has had a big boost to enable it to progress its current expansion plans, as Tony Joyce explains.

A grant of £1.6 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund plus generous support from the City Council will now enable the Museum to make progress on expanding the existing small 'taster' museum.

With a fundraising target of £4.5 million there is still some way to go but the news has certainly cheered staff, volunteers and supporters alike.

The money will be used to reconfigure some of the Town Hall spaces, provide better access for visitors, display more of its collections and continue its educational work with local schools. The museum aims to tell Oxford's story through its people, businesses and communities.

This is an exciting time for the museum which will relaunch in 2020 (it is closed for building work at the moment but some limited exhibitions are open).

Jan Wyck's painting of Oxford in the Civil War is one of the museum's treasures
Photo courtesy of Dartmouth Heirloom Trust and MOO



Transport is key to successful development

Andrew Pritchard, Transport Group

The City and District Councils must plan housing and transport networks together to provide sustainable development and viable public transport.

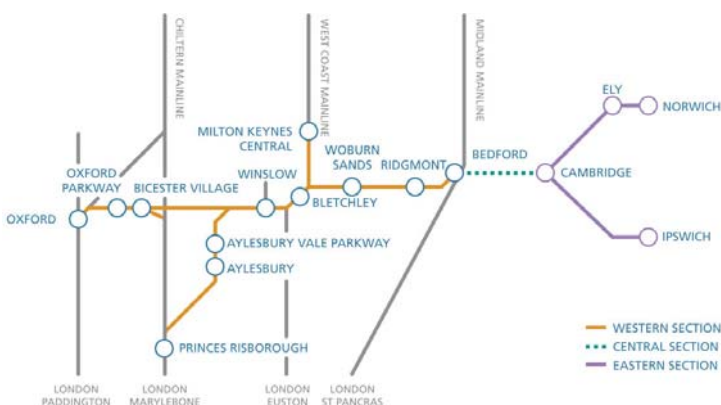
As noted by our Chairman, a **Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP)** plan is being prepared jointly by the District Councils and is designed to show where development will take place. A key issue is how these developments will relate to existing transport corridors.

The Society is therefore producing an update to the very successful *Oxford Futures* report which looks at how housing and employment can be linked by sustainable transport in existing corridors. This is intended to help the scoping of the JSSP and will be relevant to a number of transport-related studies that are now under way, such as the Oxfordshire Rail Connectivity study, funded by £300k government money and matching local funding. **Failure to plan development and transport jointly is not sustainable; it simply adds traffic to our congested roads and creates misery for people forced to travel miles to work.**

We discussed with the University the possibility of a new **rail station** to serve its large planned development at **Begbroke**. However there are problems with access to the site, with narrow lanes and level crossings that would need substantial investment.

In the absence of any details of the route for the proposed **Oxford-Cambridge expressway** we feel currently unable to express a view. We are surprised that the planning of the expressway is going ahead so fast when East West Rail is expected to open to Milton Keynes and Bedford by 2023, at a fraction of the cost of an expressway.

An expanded **Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4)** is also needed to provide an Oxfordshire-wide transport strategy. The Transport Group has been looking in more detail at possible routes for the Rapid Transit system, a key part of LTP4, and considering the relative advantages of buses, trams and gondolas, taking account of capacities and environmental impacts as well as economics. We noted that Cambridge has already produced the sort of plan that Oxfordshire needs.



Tourist coaches dominate the street scene in St Giles – and they are getting larger
Photo courtesy of the Oxford Mail and Mary Clarkson

In the city ... of plans, tourist coaches and the rail station

Within the City we are still awaiting the final version of the *City Centre Transport and Public Realm* report, which will be important for our comments on the **City Local Plan**. We await firm proposals on demand management by **congestion charging or workplace parking levies**. There does not appear to be a city-wide vision of how such developments will affect others such as the proposed Zero Emission Zone.

We are becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of an effective policy to manage tourism in the city, and the ever larger **tourist buses**. We therefore welcomed a suggestion from Phil Southall of the Oxford Bus Company that they would be interested in providing parking and refreshment facilities for tourist buses and their drivers at their Garsington Road premises during the day, when most of their buses are out in regular service.

It was also interesting to learn that tourists provide a substantial income for **Christ Church College** and that they will shortly open a visitor centre to manage the numbers who wish to visit it. They were not, however, sympathetic to our suggestion that a **cycle path** could be instituted through the meadow to Rose Lane, to provide a safer and more agreeable route from west to east for cyclists.

Developments around the **rail station** and the **Oxpens** are slowing as the owners try to find a solution to the transport problems. We feel that the West End Area Action Plan needs to expand its boundaries to take account of the reality that it is now becoming part of the city centre (the Society is represented on the West End Area Action Group).

We are also concerned with reports that Network Rail is seeking to reduce even further the proposed footprint of the

The route of the railway line from Oxford to Cambridge. The western section will be completed by 2023. Map courtesy of East West Rail

Are we becoming Bananas now?

Peter Thompson, Housing Group

Building the affordable homes we need can't be left to the market alone – and we need more examples of good schemes to counter the opposition to new development.

Many different commentators, as well as politicians of all shades, have expounded on the causes of the housing situation now confronting us. But none seem to catalogue all the factors which contribute and it seems obvious that measures such as the currently-proposed amendments to the framework of the planning system (the NPPF) are likely to do little to address the problem on the scale required.

Of course, a fundamental reason for high housing prices in Oxford is the intrinsic attractiveness of the city – but no-one would suggest deliberately making it less attractive. It would be better to make other places more so, by improving employment opportunities and creating beautiful social, built and natural environments.

The fact is that, in recent decades, we have relied on the market to deliver housing, hence prices are set by successful transactions – purchases which actually happen. So if prices are high, not to say astronomical, it is because there are buyers sufficiently wealthy to pay. If 'ordinary' folk are priced out, it reflects the wealth inequality of the population. In a society with the inequality of ours, is it really appropriate that the market should be relied upon to deliver something as critical as a family's home?

The attractiveness of housing as an investment commodity also boosts prices. Good returns from rental streams, capital appreciation and security of the asset are irresistible to many of the already-rich. So families seeking no more than a decent roof over their heads are competing with pure investors. And recent developments, such as Airbnb and other means of booking short-term accommodation have enabled many to make successful businesses out of investment in properties which formerly housed families.

*Attractive new housing on Cumnor Hill – but these properties sell for over £1 million and do little to meet local housing need
Image courtesy of HAB Housing*



Government policies seem to have had several unintended consequences. The 'right to buy' for Council tenants gave millions the opportunity to create the 'property-owning democracy' proclaimed decades ago. But now we learn that very many of the properties bought are privately rented, at market rents, and home ownership is falling. 'Help to buy' makes more funds available to some, but is likely to raise prices and excludes those ineligible. Lack of investment in transport infrastructure has condemned many to excessive, unproductive journeys between home and work.

How the planning system needs to change

The planning system does have a lot to answer for in the creation of current problems, including abject failure to:

- produce consistent and coordinated plans across the functional region
- properly integrate transport planning
- deliver genuinely good design and the variety in housing which our society needs
- set appropriate levels of density for new developments, and
- ensure the proper protection and enhancement of natural environmental assets.

These are all essentially technical issues, but one of the consequences of the failures in planning is the near-universal popular objection to any development – the graduation of the Nimbys to BANANAs – **Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anyone**. And it is hard to be unsympathetic as it is very difficult to point to good examples of modern development, genuinely fit for the future. But such attitudes, in a democratic society, make political support at a local level difficult to achieve, which further exacerbates the situation.

Solving the housing crisis is going to be difficult; it will necessitate change to all these factors and more. We seem to be making progress on some, but it will be decades before solutions are achieved.

A victory for Neighbourhood Plans

We are pleased to report a small victory in Headington where plans for new housing on the site of the old Quarry Gate pub were rejected on the grounds that the design 'fails to relate to the strong sense of character' of the local area. The Headington Forum, which drew up Oxford's first completed Neighbourhood Plan, had spent some time defining 'local character' and the planning authority now has to take account of it. We welcome the new housing but hope to see more sympathetic designs here and throughout the city.

See also the next article.

How to preserve local character

Margaret Maden, Vice President

Congratulations to the St Margaret's Area Society for producing guidance for its householders on how to preserve the character of the North Oxford Conservation Area. We hope it might inspire other groups to follow suit.

The front gardens of the North Oxford Victorian suburb provides invaluable information about design features which need to be preserved in this Conservation Area, which includes some 600 properties. As the leaflet says, 'The North Oxford Victorian suburb is ... a garden city and it is in all our interests to keep it that way'.

This short leaflet offers comprehensible advice about what is and isn't allowed in terms of frontages, windows, solar panels, roof lights, stonework, bins and bicycle sheds, car parking and so on. 'Do I need planning permission?' is an especially useful panel which explains where to find advice and guidance.

As well as building characteristics, the leaflet also advises on planting. This section covers some 35 plants – from large garden trees to shrubs and wall cover – which are known to suit the soil and historic conditions of the area.

The leaflet is remarkably effective as a conduit between the Planning Department at the City Council and householders who may be a bit thrown when trying to comprehend and navigate the Council's own planning website. It is interesting – and not entirely surprising – to learn that this leaflet has taken over three years to finalise. The City Planners have clearly been careful in ensuring that nothing written is incorrect or misleading. However, they also appreciate the final product as they can see that it is succinct, readable and accurate. It is in everyone's interests that these attributes apply.

The current status

Conservation Area status was secured in four tranches from 1968 to 1976. The recent North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area Appraisal, by appointed outside consultants, was passed by the City Council in November 2017. It recognises the importance of heritage and ensures that planning regulations are up to date in relation to actual conditions on the ground. The appraisal suggests that the next steps should include a consideration of the size of the Conservation Area, allocating Grade II listed status to more properties and introducing an Article 4 direction, as in Jericho and Osney.

Tree Preservation Orders are occasionally deployed, subject to the City Council's approval. The existence of a wide variety of trees in Oxford suburbs generally is something many of us value hugely. This provision can apply outside Conservation Areas and is well worth pursuing in other areas.

The value of local input

It is clear that the St Margaret's Area Society has garnered a good deal of knowledge and expertise from 1971 to the



Typical Victorian houses in North Oxford with planting to soften the impact of bike and bin storage Photo courtesy of Tim King

present day. As usual, the efforts and insight of local volunteers, as well as City Council staff, make all the difference. When it is clearly in the interests of householders to maintain the quality of their environment, then the oversight and regular monitoring by their voluntary representatives in the Area Society is welcomed. Occasional accusations of being 'busy-bodies' are inevitable but there is an overall appreciation of the Society's efforts to maintain and improve shared space.

Indeed, there are lessons to be learnt from the St Margaret's Area leaflet and all it represents in identifying helpful measures aimed at maintaining and improving where we live in Oxford. Our many residents associations could well adapt the St Margaret's Society approach and produce their own bespoke leaflet to help everyone living in the relevant neighbourhood; it's a 'win-win' situation isn't it?

Knowing the ground rules of planning regulations alongside learning how to contribute to the quality of where we live is good for the individual property owner or renter as well as for the neighbourhood. There is also academic research which demonstrates how residential property prices rise following such communal, voluntary efforts.

The Society is grateful to the St Margaret's Area Society and its Chair, Dr Tim King, for providing such an excellent exemplar for the rest of us to follow. For further information see <https://stmargaretsareasociety.wordpress.com>

Booking form

Autumn 2018 ticketed events

Closing date for applications: **Friday 31 August**. 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	Rank ☺
For events at more than one time, please cross out any dates you cannot do or indicate your preference			
The Botanic Garden – a visit Thursday 4 October at 1.30pm Saturday 20 October at 11am @£8		
Exploring the city walls – a walk Saturday 6 October at 10.30am@£5		
Lincoln College – a visit Monday 29 October at 2.30pm@£8		
Rhodes house – a visit Monday 5 November at 2.30pm@£8		
☺ Events are sometimes oversubscribed. If you rank your choices in order of preference we'll try to ensure you get a place on your favourites.			

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'

September – November 2018

**ticketed events*

Tuesday 18 September* 2.30pm

Sydlings Copse, a walk through the nature reserve with **Nicole Clough**

This event is sold out but please enquire about the waiting list

Thursday 27 September 8pm

Homelessness in Oxford, a talk by **Simon Bennett** at Magdalen College Auditorium

Thursday 4 October* 1.30pm

Saturday 20 October* 11am

The Botanic Garden, a walk through history, led by **Mark Davies**

Saturday 6 October* 10.30am

Exploring the city walls, a walk led by **Julian Munby**

Thursday 11 October 8pm

Coats of arms and colourful folk: the Bodleian, a talk by **John Ashdown** at Magdalen College Auditorium

Monday 29 October* 2.30pm

Lincoln College, a visit

Monday 5 November* 2.30pm

Rhodes House, a visit with **Isabelle Barber**

Wednesday 14 November 8pm

Citizens in crisis, a talk by **Al Bell** at Magdalen College Auditorium

Date / venue to be confirmed

The Oxford Local Plan, a discussion

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

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

If you have booked but can't attend,
please contact Alan Hobbs.

We always have a waiting list



Programme

Autumn 2018

Open talks – all welcome

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

Homelessness in Oxford

Thursday 27 September, 8pm
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Homelessness and in particular rough sleeping appears to be on the increase in Oxford but is a complex issue to address. **Simon Bennett**, Partnerships Officer at the City Council, will talk about the issues and how the Council, working jointly with other agencies, is attempting to tackle them.

Coats of arms and colourful folk: the Bodleian

Thursday 11 October, 8pm
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

In the second of his two talks on Oxford libraries, **John Ashdown**, former Conservation Officer for the City, talks about the most famous library of them all, the Bodleian. He will reveal some of the stories you may not know about this revered institution.

Citizens in crisis

Wednesday 14 November, 8pm
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Al Bell, Director of Oxford Citizens Advice, talks about the charity's role in helping Oxford people and influencing decision makers on a range of contemporary social and economic issues including debt, housing, Universal Credit and Brexit.

The Oxford Local Plan: a discussion

November: date and venue TBC

This autumn the City Council will be consulting further on the Local Plan that will guide Oxford's development for the next 20 years. This discussion will be an opportunity for members to discuss the issues and give their views. We will announce the details of this event by email, on our website and on Twitter when we know the City's timetable.

Members-only walks and visits

Tickets are needed for these events: bookings by 31 August

The Botanic Garden – a walk through history

Thursday 4 October 1.30pm
Saturday 20 October 11am

Local historian **Mark Davies** will lead this 75-minute tour, highlighting some of the more unusual individuals and events associated with Oxford's 400 year-old 'physick garden'. These include the garden's first superintendent, Jacob Bobart, the German Prince of Plants; some of Britain's earliest hot air balloon launches and the garden's associations with Lewis Carroll and other celebrated writers.

Exploring the city walls – a walk

Saturday 6 October 10.30am

The medieval walls and gates of Oxford are often well hidden and much of the evidence has disappeared. Archaeologist **Julian Munby** will lead a walk along the line of the city wall from the Castle to the South Gate (but not including the well-preserved section in New College gardens) and for those who wish to continue, on to the West Gate and back to the Castle.

Lincoln College – a visit

Monday 29 October 2.30pm

An opportunity to see some of the oldest and newest parts of this ancient college, located in the heart of the city since the 15th century.

Rhodes House – a visit

Monday 5 November 2.30pm

Rhodes House is a hidden delight in the heart of Oxford. Designed by Sir Herbert Baker, it reflects a number of influences: Cape Dutch farmhouse, English country mansion, and the arts and craft movement of the 1900s. **Isabelle Barber** of Rhodes House will show us where Rhodes Scholars and their distinguished guests have studied and entertained for nearly 100 years.



Your data

Vernon Porter

Read how we are complying with the new General Data Protection Regulations.

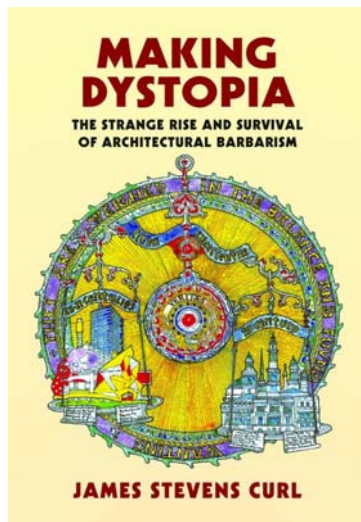
There has been much focus recently on the new regulations. You may well have been contacted by various organisations inviting you to 'opt-in' to receive communications from them.

To enable us to send you *Visions* and other communications and to administer the programme of walks and visits, we have to hold basic contact details for you, our members. The law recognises that if you are a member of a group such as ours, we need to tell you what we are doing. We don't need your explicit consent to do so, but we do have to be careful how we use the data we hold. So we recently conducted a data audit and updated our [Privacy Policy](#). This can be found on our websites but is also available in printed form.

Much of our policy is not new. We've never given out email addresses to third parties. Encrypting data we send internally and to our mailing house / printers is a more recently adopted measure.

If you would like any further information do get in touch.

Bookshelf



Making dystopia is a new book by the Society's first Chairman, Professor James Stevens Curl.

'A cultural and environmental catastrophe; massive destruction, a waste of resources, alien urban landscapes, and the elimination of all decoration and choice': these are just some of the terms used by the author to describe the triumph of architectural Modernism.

Professor Stevens Curl traces the effects of Modernist architecture from 1918 to the present, arguing that, with each passing year, so-called 'iconic' architecture has become more bizarre, unsettling and expensive, ignoring established contexts and proving to be remote from the aspirations and needs of humanity.

A 'passionate and controversial' book, *Making dystopia* will be published at the end of August by Oxford University Press, price £45. Available at all good bookshops.

Students onside!

Tony Turton

We are always looking for ways to be in contact with people and groups in the wider community, not least Oxford's large population of students.

We pleased to announce that, working with Oxford Brookes University over the past few months, we have appointed six **Student Ambassadors**. They will spend the next academic year working with the Society to learn about and take part in our activities. The scheme is open to students on any course of study.

The students will spread the word about the Civic Society among their contacts. In return they will get the chance to meet local politicians and other influential people and see at first-hand how policies are developed and decisions made.

They will also be encouraged to work on specific projects as part of their required course work.

We will report in more detail once the scheme is up and running in the autumn.

OCS is a society for people who care about Oxford, want to enjoy it more fully and help shape its future.

Membership costs £10 a year (£9 by standing order) or £14 for two people at the same address (£12 by standing order). Students and local groups may join for £5; corporate members' rates on application.

See the website for how to join, or contact [Liz Grosvenor membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk) or join at our talks.

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Letters to the Editor and photos can be sent to Hilary Bradley
newsletter@oxcivicsoc.org.uk
or by post to the above address.

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