# CONTENTS

## Section 1 INTRODUCTION
1.1 The AAP ..................................... 3
1.2 How to use this document ................. 4
1.3 The vision ..................................... 5
1.4 Achieving the vision ......................... 7

## Section 2 AN ATTRACTIVE NETWORK OF STREETS AND SPACES
2.1 Public realm enhancements .............. 9
2.2 New links ..................................... 10
2.3 Designing streets to reduce the impact of traffic .............. 10
2.4 Urban public spaces ......................... 12
2.5 Green spaces and water .................... 13

## Section 3 A HIGH QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT
3.1 Historic environment ..................... 17
3.2 Design and construction ................. 17
3.3 Resource efficiency ....................... 19
3.4 Flooding ................................. 20

## Section 4 A STRONG AND BALANCED COMMUNITY
4.1 Housing mix ............................... 23
4.2 Affordable housing ......................... 24
4.3 Affordable housing from commercial development ....... 26
4.4 Hidden parts of the community .......... 26
4.5 Student accommodation ................. 26
4.6 Amenities to support new housing ........ 27

## Section 5 A VIBRANT AND SUCCESSFUL WEST END
5.1 Creating activity and a mix of uses ....... 29
5.2 Office development ....................... 29
5.3 Public sector offices ....................... 30
5.4 Retail ........................................ 30
5.5 Cultural activity ............................ 31
5.6 Visitor coaches ............................. 32
5.7 Hotel accommodation ..................... 33
5.8 Conference facility ......................... 33
5.9 Leisure ................................. 34
5.10 Education ................................. 34

## Section 6 DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION
6.1 Infrastructure requirements .............. 37
6.2 Streamlined contributions ............... 37
6.3 Funding mechanisms ....................... 38
6.4 Other sources of funding ................. 39
6.5 Responsibilities ............................ 39
6.6 Pre-application advice ..................... 40
6.7 Planning delivery agreements .......... 40
6.8 Supporting information for planning applications ........ 40
6.9 Other considerations ...................... 41
6.10 Compulsory purchase powers .......... 41
6.11 Monitoring ................................. 41
FOREWORD

Contemporary Oxford is an economic hub with a world-class knowledge economy, which underpins the prosperity of the county and the local region. The city's West End currently offers an undistinguished gateway to the historic centre and makes a limited contribution to the vitality of its economic, cultural and community life. The transformation of the West End and the renaissance of this important part of the city centre is the goal that has inspired the production of this Area Action Plan. The AAP sets out our vision and the ways that this vision can be achieved.

The AAP was adopted by the City Council on 30th June 2008 and will be the basis for the determination of all planning applications in the West End. It is also a guide to stimulate the renaissance of the area. The street layouts, buildings and open spaces that result will shape the lives of the people of Oxford for many generations to come.

The AAP represents the start of a period of development that will extend over several years and is the product of a partnership between the City Council, the County Council and the South East of England Development Agency. It rests on the outcomes of extensive consultation with a wide range of individuals, interest groups and organisations. Gathering the views of stakeholders and the public has been a key feature of the production of the AAP, and helped to produce a Plan that was approved by the Planning Inspector in the examination.

The City Council and its partners in the West End Steering Group will be working hard over the next few years to realise the opportunities offered by the Action Plan. They are a key element in building a world-class city for everyone.

Councillor Bob Price
Leader of Oxford City Council
Oxford City Council has prepared this Area Action Plan (AAP) to guide future development and change in the West End, the southwest corner of the City centre.

Currently, the West End of Oxford is under-utilised and does not match Oxford’s international reputation or live up to its potential as a City centre area of the highest quality. As it is part of the centre of our historic city, its renaissance is important to the long-term success of the whole City.

A high quality and mixed-use development as befits its location and role, will be created. This is not a simple housing-led or office-led redevelopment project. The West End renaissance is not just about buildings and their uses, but about creating a community that can mature. It is about creating an exciting piece of City centre for the people who will live, work, study or spend leisure time there. It is about creating a vibrant, successful and sustainable community.

The West End renaissance is an exciting project with great potential.
1.1 The AAP

This document has been produced by the City Council in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), landowners and developers, amenity groups and local people. This partnership approach does not end with this document’s publication but continues through to the implementation and delivery of the West End renaissance.

The AAP is a Development Plan Document (DPD) that forms part of Oxford’s Local Development Framework. Appendix 1 explains this status in more detail and how the AAP relates to the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016. Background information to the AAP and the Proposals Map can be found on the City Council’s website at: www.oxford.gov.uk/ldf.

The AAP uses a wide range of tools to influence the type of place that the West End will become; it does not rely simply on land-use policies to deliver the change proposed for the West End. Many of the plans and proposals for the West End could not be delivered solely through the planning process, but require the continued involvement of the various partners.

The AAP is both a policy and a delivery tool. It goes beyond traditional land use policy documents by considering issues of funding, timing and delivery. The AAP identifies many key infrastructure projects that will contribute to the West End renaissance, for example investment in the public realm and spaces.
By guiding the types of development to take place in the West End, and setting out in broad terms when and what development will take place, the AAP will become the document through which the vision and objectives for the West End can be achieved.

Instead of considering a series of individual sites that happen to be located near to each other, the AAP addresses the issues and needs of the West End as a whole. The relationships between the development sites and those areas of the West End where change is not expected are very important in achieving the project’s aims. No one site will be able to deliver on its own the kind of change that is sought; instead it is the sum of the parts that will deliver the renaissance.

The West End renaissance will be an extended process, not a short-term event. Some of the plans and proposals will take longer than others to come to fruition. The AAP will continue to be a living document. It will be monitored and updated if necessary, to ensure it continues to be relevant and effective until the renaissance is complete.

1.2 How to use this document

The AAP in its entirety (text, policy boxes and appendices) comprises the City Council’s policies and vision for the West End. For ease of reference some helpful sections of the policy have been highlighted in the policy boxes. However all text should be seen as part of the policy approach. Appendices are published as a separate volume.

Developers will be required to contribute towards various infrastructure projects that will enable the renaissance to take place and the West End to function smoothly; where a policy or project will involve developer funding this is indicated by the use of the symbol in the policy box.

The AAP has been written to address the West End as a whole instead of considering a series of individual sites. However, a simple quick-reference guide to the identified development sites and their appropriate uses has been included at Appendix 2. These identified development sites are shown on the map on the opposite page.

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Key to Identified development sites map (opposite page)

1. Oxford Railway Station  
2. Fire Station, Rewley Road  
3. Beaver House, Hythe Bridge Street  
4. Island site (Park End Str/Hythe Bridge Str)  
5. Worcester Street Car Park  
6. Odeon Cinema, George Street  
7. New Theatre, George Street  
8. Becket Street Car Park  
9. Ocean and Collins, Hythe Bridge Street  
10. Macclesfield House, New Road  
11. Cooper Callas Site, Paradise Street  
12. County Hall, New Road  
13. St Aldate’s/Queen Street  
14. Town Hall, St Aldate’s  
15. Nursery, Osney Lane  
16. Osney Warehouse, Osney Lane  
17. Oxpens  
18. Oxford and Cherwell Valley College remainder  
19. Oxford and Cherwell Valley College  
20. Westgate Shopping Centre  
21. Albion Place and Magistrates’ Courts  
22. Speedwell House, Speedwell Street  
23. Telephone Exchange, Speedwell Street  
24. Police Station, St Aldate’s
1.3 The vision

The West End project aims to transform this key part of the City centre, raising it to the standard that Oxford's reputation deserves. The renaissance of the West End will look to the future; developments will be economically and socially sustainable and have environmental sustainability at their heart.

It is vital that new development in the centre of Oxford enhances its appeal, reinforces its economic stability and creates a strong community. Successful City centre areas contain a wide mix of uses that create activity at different times of day. Within the West End there is significant potential to re-establish high-quality urban-living, providing much-needed new housing. It is also important that the West End is attractive to visitors, employees and businesses. The West End will be able to provide new leisure, retail, community and tourist attractions as well as some office space.

To meet the opportunities that exist for improvement, it is necessary to create an attractive environment, with good public spaces and high-quality design. The spatial vision diagram helps to show where major improvements are needed, and gives an overall idea of how the West End should be developed. The diagram shows key streets in which
public realm improvements will increase the attractiveness of the area for all those using it. Attractive streets will be created, with room to wander. Interspersed along the streets will be a variety of spaces, where people can pause and relax or gather. The diagram shows public squares and open spaces in the West End that will be created or enhanced.

An attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists will reward those who get out of their cars and changes to bus provision and to the train station will help people travel to the area. New routes will be created to make the area easy to move around. These are shown on the spatial vision diagram. The West End renaissance will be delivered with care, with a view to solving some existing environmental and access problems, and preventing new problems in the future.

In the West End many existing attractive features provide an excellent basis for the renaissance. Waterways, hidden for decades, will be opened up for everyone to enjoy, and the edge of Castle Mill Stream will form a green route through the West End. With careful design the many historic features in the West End will become well integrated into new developments and the rich heritage of the area will be brought to life.

The sites shown in the Spatial Vision diagram below are the key sites that will have the biggest effect on the West End renaissance and the improvement of the City centre.

**Spatial vision diagram**

**Key**

- Public spaces
- Water
- Pedestrianisation
- Bus priority
- Green corridor
- Station improvements
- Station improvements
- Station improvements
1.4 Achieving the vision

The West End Partnership will go on working hard towards achieving this vision. This AAP is one tool it will use to do this; and it has been structured around 4 key aims. The West End renaissance will create:

• an attractive network of streets and spaces
• a high quality built environment
• a strong and balanced community
• a vibrant and successful West End

The final but very important aspect of the West End renaissance to be addressed in this document is delivery and implementation. It is essential that the policies and plans set out in the AAP are delivered on the ground; a set of well-meaning policies alone will not achieve the change envisaged for the West End.

Key values of the West End renaissance:

Demand excellence
In the West End, only the best will do. To improve quality of life in Oxford, the highest quality in every aspect of planning and execution will be expected.

Think future
Whenever new ground is broken, we must build something our grandchildren will be proud of. We'll be forward-thinking, and socially responsible and will strive to create something memorable and lasting for future generations.

Collaborate
To bring the shared vision of Oxford’s future to life, we will engage with stakeholders and future users, asking for and responding to their views.

Seek balance
We will strive to find the common ground as we develop the new quarter – balancing old with new, public realm with private space.

Be open
The new quarter will be open, welcoming and accessible to all. Open space and open access will be integral to the development. We'll also be open-minded and encourage open and honest dialogue.

Imagine!
The new quarter will delight and surprise. It will release Oxford’s energy, diversity and creativity. We’ll be innovative in our thinking and pioneering in our delivery. In the new quarter, we won’t be afraid to do things differently!
Streets are vital for allowing people to access and move around the area easily. Walking, cycling and use of public transport can be encouraged by the good design of streets, and motor traffic can be carefully managed to minimise its impact.

The creation of attractive streets and spaces is crucial to making the West End a successful and exciting place. Well-designed streets can also be places to meet and to interact. The West End will provide public spaces for people to linger and to gather for events and festivals, as well as quiet and tranquil green spaces.

Streets and the spaces between buildings are often referred to as the public realm. Most people’s perception of an area is affected by their experience of the street environment and public realm. At the moment, the public realm is poor in many areas of the West End. Residents, workers and visitors deserve a public realm and public spaces of the highest quality. Improving the quality of the public realm is a key objective of the West End renaissance.
2.1 Public realm enhancements

The public realm will be improved to make spaces more pleasant for pedestrians and cyclists, who will be given priority whenever possible. Elements such as lighting, public art, signs, street furniture, trees, plants and surfacing materials contribute to the attractiveness and functioning of the public realm. Certain principles should guide the design of these elements:

- minimise clutter on the streets and in parks;
- always consider safety;
- find innovative technical and design solutions;
- choose materials that are sustainable and, where practicable, from a local source;
- ensure a high quality, durable finish with a contemporary design; and
- elements should be part of a design 'family' and relate well to each other.

The West End Design Code is an essential element of the AAP, crucial in creating the type of place the West End will become. The Design Code is attached as Appendix 3. It provides a framework for the design of streets and buildings.

As part of the West End renaissance project the City Council plans to review the City centre Public Realm Strategy. The new document entitled “Improving the Street Environment” will be used to inform the design of the public realm in the West End. This will ensure a consistent approach, setting out a ‘palette’ of materials and principles that will help create a high-quality public realm in the City centre, including the West End. Particularly in the most highly trafficked streets, too little attention has been given to pedestrians. For several streets in the West End improvements to the public realm are essential.

Oxpens Road (including Thames Street and Hollybush Row) is the only through-road available to connect the main northern and western routes into the City to the main southern route. In pedestrian, cycle and public realm terms, many people see Oxpens Road as a problem. The street was engineered for a higher volume of traffic than it carries, resulting in a wide street with no sense of human scale, where traffic is intimidating. The road bisects the heart of the West End, acting as a barrier to pedestrian movement. The feel and ambience of Oxpens Road needs to be transformed as part of the West End renaissance.

Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street form the two main approach roads to the heart of the City centre from the railway station and the west. They lead out from Frideswide Square towards the main shopping and leisure areas. These roads form boundaries to the Island Site (the site bounded by Park End Street and Hythe Bridge Street) and Worcester Street car park, which are key sites for development. These busy and important routes are not attractive spaces for pedestrians, as they have narrow footways and a poor public realm. Traffic modelling has shown that in conjunction with other public realm works including the remodelling of Frideswide Square, it is possible to narrow traffic to one lane in each direction in Hythe Bridge Street, which would enable the pavement to be significantly widened.

**Policy WE1:**

**Public realm**

The public realm will be enhanced across the West End, and in particular in the key streets shown on the map at the end of this section. Streets and public spaces should be designed in accordance with the framework set out in the Design Code (Appendix 3).
2.2 New links
Ease of movement for pedestrians depends on good urban design. It is important to design the street network so that routes are where people wish to go and are easy to identify.

The existing street pattern and connectivity (the way streets are linked) have been analysed as a movement and accessibility study by Space Syntax to inform the Design Code. Routes have been identified that would increase accessibility around the area. The map at the end of this section identifies the routes for new streets through the area.

A new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the Thames to join Oxpens Field to the Thames towpath is proposed. This would link the West End to Osney Mead and the West Oxford Cycle Route. Improvements will also be made to the route running east from the pedestrian bridge over the railway, along Osney Lane and onto Castle Mill Stream. New links will be needed through the development sites at Oxpens, the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, and the Westgate Centre. The planning permission for the Westgate centre redevelopment incorporates a new bridge over Castle Mill Stream and new links through the site.

Policy WE2:
New links
New links as shown at the end of this section will be provided. The new pedestrian and cycle links identified should be created to improve access and movement. Where appropriate development of sites on or having an impact upon those identified for new links will be expected to help deliver them and proposals must not prejudice their delivery. New routes should be built to Highway Authority adoption standards.

2.3 Designing streets to reduce the impact of traffic
Street-design measures such as traffic calming to reduce speeds, shared space, pedestrianisation, signal changes and redesigning junctions all help to minimise the impact of traffic on the public realm. Changes to street design and how it affects traffic and motorists’ behaviour will be essential to ensure an attractive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

An important part of the renaissance of the West End is to facilitate the pedestrianisation of Queen Street, one of the key retail streets in the City centre. Queen Street currently plays a key role in the bus network acting as part of a loop for turning buses and as a convenient location for bus stops. Pedestrianisation of this street will improve the quality of the retail experience and remove the conflict between buses and pedestrians. The Highway Authority has investigated new bus routing options and identified some technically feasible solutions to allow the pedestrianisation of Queen Street. One solution is to use a new bus priority route along Oxpens Road and Hollybush Row. This, combined with improvements at Frideswide Square, should provide better bus penetration into the West End and in an easy route for buses needing to turn.

The redevelopment of the Westgate Shopping Centre will create new bus stopping areas in Castle Street and Norfolk Street, which will allow the bus stops to be removed from Queen Street. However, some bus services terminating in the City centre will need to loop elsewhere when Queen Street is pedestrianised. The redevelopment of other sites in the West End creates an opportunity to extend the current bus priority route.
The City Council wants to reduce the negative impact of scheduled coaches on the City centre. Scheduled coaches include the airport coaches and the frequent coach service to London. The Highway Authority will investigate a range of solutions to remove coaches from Gloucester Green and re-route services so that they no longer use High Street and St Aldate’s. However, this is part of wider transport considerations beyond the scope of the West End renaissance project. Possibilities will be investigated as part of a separate project and the review of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (2006-2011).

An extended bus priority route along Oxpens Road and Hollybush Row would enable scheduled coaches to avoid Castle Street and Norfolk Street. It would also allow buses to loop without using Queen Street. This work will be taken forward to the detailed design stage, when air quality and other impacts that depend on detailed design features will be tested.

To facilitate a bus priority route along Hollybush Row, cars will be redirected to use Becket Street as well as Hollybush Row. Becket Street will be made two-way. Improvements at the junction with Frideswide Square and Hollybush Row will allow buses to flow freely and reduce congestion in Frideswide Square. A new junction will also be created on Oxpens Road with a new road that will pass through the Oxpens site. Junction changes may be implemented at other points along Oxpens Road to give buses priority.

The Highway Authority is investigating a comprehensive traffic management system to improve bus journey times, air quality and the street environment in the City centre and the inner parts of the main roads leading into the West End (Abingdon, Botley, Woodstock and Banbury Roads). This system would co-ordinate traffic signals outside the City centre with traffic flows around Frideswide Square and other junctions, to ensure traffic does not clog up the City centre. This system would also simplify Frideswide Square without causing additional delays to buses or inconveniencing pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy WE3: Redesign of streets and junctions in the West End

Developer contributions will be sought towards the redesign of streets and spaces as set out in the AAP. Planning permission will not be granted for the development of sites on or having an impact upon those streets or junctions identified for improvements as set out in section 2.3 of the AAP, if it would prejudice the delivery of those improvements.

As the West End is highly accessible by walking, cycling and public transport it is appropriate to restrict the amount of parking provision. Managing parking, public, private or residential, will discourage unnecessary car trips to the West End and enable land to be used efficiently. However, the City Council recognises the value of public parking facilities to the economic viability of the City centre and wishes to maintain the current level of provision. Levels of private residential and non-residential parking, will be minimal in the West End and car-free developments will be encouraged (see Appendix 4 for parking standards).

Transport Assessments should assess the impact of a proposed development on the highway network and give details of measures to mitigate that impact around the site and in the wider context. (See the Parking Standards, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans Supplementary Planning Document (2007) for more details.)
2.4 Urban public spaces

At present, the principal urban public spaces in the West End are Bonn Square, Frideswide Square, Gloucester Green, Carfax and the new space at the Castle (which is widely seen as a good example of opening up spaces and the use of high quality materials). There are also the important ‘arrival spaces’ of Gloucester Green bus station and the railway station. These spaces vary greatly in size, quality and function. The intention in the West End is to create a series of linked spaces, each with its own feel and function, which will encourage cultural/street activities. It is proposed to enhance and in some cases redesign the existing public spaces and to create new ones.

Frideswide Square needs to be greatly improved. Hamilton-Baillie Associates undertook an appraisal of the space at Frideswide Square and produced some initial designs based on shared space principles and intended to build on pedestrian ‘desire lines’ (routes people want to take), clarify the route from the City centre to the railway station, promote steady continuous vehicular flow and improve safety. With changes planned to the railway station and the reconfiguration of the forecourt, this area should be transformed into a more attractive and welcoming space with improved circulation.

The railway station performs a vital role in bringing visitors to the City centre. Increasing capacity combined with a station that is welcoming and easy to use, is key to ensuring that people will want to use the railway, which is a highly sustainable means of travel. One option to increase capacity at the railway station would be to create a new south-facing bay platform on part of Becket Street Car Park. The use of Becket Street Car Park is currently restricted to rail passengers. Parking provision should be maintained on Becket Street Car Park, and this could be achieved by decking part of the site. It will be important to ensure that the decking does not adversely affect the setting of St Thomas’ Church.

Gloucester Green is a modern square surrounded by shops and restaurants and is home to regular farmers, food and craft markets. Redevelopment of the cinema (while maintaining the existing use) would present an opportunity to create more ‘active’ frontage and a more obvious access to the square, helping to integrate Gloucester Green and George Street.

Bonn Square will be redesigned becoming an uncluttered area that can be used flexibly for day-to-day and programmed activities, while respecting the history of the site. The City Council is the lead authority in building the winning scheme of an international design competition, with the County Council and SEEDA as its partners.

Carfax (the space in front of Carfax Tower) is located at the junction of four key streets and currently functions as a central meeting point. The removal of buses from Queen Street will allow improvements to the quality and attractiveness of the space.
Oxpens Square will be a new civic square on the Oxpens site, which could host festivals and other events. The space will be surrounded by new buildings with an urban and civic quality, which are likely to include the new joint City and County Council offices and a hotel with a conference centre (as set out later). The new square will be positioned to catch the sun and to be well connected, so that it will be well used. It should incorporate high quality materials and street furniture. The square will cover an area of approximately 2500m².

Worcester Street Car Park is currently used as a surface level car park. New development should enhance the setting of Nuffield College and the Castle Site. The development of this site should accommodate a public space as part of any development; this could be linked to opening up the Castle Mill Stream frontage. Another preferable option could be to open up a further stretch of the Oxford Canal that once passed through the site. Applications to implement this preferred option will be encouraged unless it is shown to be not practicable or economically viable.

Oxford Preservation Trust, Nuffield College and the County Council have commissioned a Conservation Appraisal of the wider area around the car park site to inform future development decisions.

Thames Square forms part of the plans for the redeveloped Westgate Shopping Centre. Part of the design accommodates an area for buses to turn, stop and layover.

Policy WE5:
Public spaces
The City Council will seek the delivery of a series of public spaces in the West End in line with the principles outlined above. Development of sites on or near those identified for public spaces will be expected to help create the spaces, and proposals must not prejudice their delivery.

The incorporation of other public/semi-public spaces of a more intimate scale within schemes will be encouraged as long as buildings do not front onto these spaces at the expense of creating good street frontages.

Policy WE6:
Frideswide Square and the railway station forecourt
Frideswide Square and the railway station forecourt will be improved to become more attractive, welcoming and better functioning spaces.

Planning permission will be granted for development that improves the capacity of the railway station as long as it is well designed, welcoming, easy to use and well connected to the existing station. It is essential that any development of the railway station improves it for passengers and creates a strong sense of arrival to Oxford.

2.5 Green spaces and water
At present, there is relatively little publicly accessible green open space in the West End. The main existing spaces include a narrow strip of land alongside Castle Mill Stream, Oxpens Field and several treed areas, such as Paradise Square and the area around St Thomas’ Church. The West End also has the benefit of several waterways: the Thames, Castle Mill Stream, Wareham Stream and Oxford Canal that terminates just outside the area. A network...
of green spaces will be provided in the West End that includes pocket parks, and tree-lined streets. This will involve enhancing features that are already there and supplementing them where appropriate. Trees will be planted at key points and in particular along Oxpens Road.

Oxpens Field is the largest area of green space in the West End. The field is used for informal recreational activities such as walking, although people currently make relatively little use of the space as it has little to attract them. As part of the West End renaissance Oxpens Field will be configured to create a park offering a range of facilities that is attractive and accessible for existing and new users of the area. Oxpens Field should be designed as a linking space between Grandpont Nature Park and the City centre.

Castle Mill Stream offers significant opportunities in terms of amenity, recreational and biodiversity value, but it is largely hidden at present. The West End renaissance provides the opportunity to transform Castle Mill Stream into an attractive streamside park that offers informal recreation, a route through the West End, and a wildlife corridor. Castle Mill Stream already enables some wildlife, such as fish and aquatic invertebrates, to move between the north and south of the City centre; it should be enhanced by creating more natural banks where possible and planting native aquatic and emergent vegetation, thereby enabling new species of plants and animals, such as water voles, to colonise the area. It is important that new development should face the stream, but it should be noted that some adjoining land is in Flood Zone 3 (see Appendix 5), which will affect the design of such schemes.

The Thames, which forms the southern boundary of the West End, represents one of Oxford’s most important natural assets. It is of value both for recreation and in contributing to Oxford’s landscape. This section of the Thames is tree lined and relatively attractive. It is, however, largely hidden and public accessibility is not obvious. Development on part of the Oxpens site will provide an opportunity to improve access to the Thames. An attractive frontage onto the river will be created that maintains much of the green, tree-lined frontage and a new bridge between Oxpens Field and Osney Mead will be provided as outlined earlier.

**Policy WE7:**

*Castle Mill Stream*

A streamside park will be created along Castle Mill Stream to create a route through the West End. New developments along side the stream should face the stream. Developers of sites adjacent to the stream will be required to submit and implement a comprehensive landscape, management and maintenance plan for the streamside park. The guidelines in Appendix 6 for the design of streamside park should be followed.

**Policy WE8:**

*Oxpens Field*

Oxpens Field will be enhanced to create a high quality open space with areas for formal and informal play, planted gardens and a wetland nature area on the south of the park, along the Thames and Castle Mill Stream. Biodiversity will be enhanced. Flood compensation measures will be implemented on the field. Development should face onto the field.

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**West End AAP Adopted June 2008**

- The City Council will work with the owners of land adjoining Castle Mill Stream to implement an attractive, publicly accessible streamside park.
- The City Council will manage Oxpens Field as a key area of open space for recreation.
Policy WE9: The Thames

Development on the Oxpens site must carefully consider its relationship to the Thames and allow for pedestrian and cycle access along the river frontage and improved access to the river frontage.

Waterside development proposals should protect or create wildlife habitats along the watercourse.

Key streets and spaces map

- The City Council and River Thames Alliance will pursue the possibility of a waterways partnership to improve recreation management along the Thames.

Key

- New links
- Pedestrianisation
- Bus priority route
- Other key streets
- Key junction improvements
- Urban public spaces
- Green spaces
- Water
Section 3

A HIGH QUALITY BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Achieving a high quality public realm is only one aspect of creating a high quality environment. The standard of design and architecture is also fundamental to the West End's renaissance. Good design of the public realm and buildings can attract people, investment and activity to a place. This is a 21st century renaissance, and the building style should be contemporary. However, new design should build on the existing character of the area, using the historic buildings and street patterns as a basis. Developers should be conscious that we are adding a new layer of history.
3.1 Historic environment

There is a great deal of historic interest contained within the West End. Often, this has not been dealt with sensitively. It is important to understand the historic qualities of the West End as it is redeveloped. The key is to ensure the positive combination of new 21st-century development with older, historic features. Many historic buildings and street patterns remain in the area and suggest what should be developed. The visual impact of new development could add a contemporary element to views of Oxford’s historic skyline and existing historic buildings, without destroying their nature. The area’s historic interest should not be seen as a negative constraint on development; rather it should be seen as a positive and valuable opportunity to root new development in the historic groundwork of a long-established part of Oxford. The origins of the area, and its proximity to Oxford’s historic centre, must be remembered as new development takes place. The City Council’s Conservation Team has produced a study which sets out details of the historic qualities of the West End (see background paper). The whole of the West End lies within the City Centre Archaeological Area; an archaeological assessment will be required alongside a planning application for any scheme that would involve significant breaking of the ground in the West End.

**Policy WE10:**

**Historic environment**

New development must respect the character and historic skyline of Oxford and the setting of listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and buildings of local interest. It should enhance existing local interest. Applicants should demonstrate in their Design and Access Statement (see Appendix 7) that new development has been designed with an understanding of the area’s heritage, street patterns, views, skyline and important buildings.

3.2 Design and construction

Much of the 20th century development in the West End is of low quality. Good design in all new developments is key to the renaissance of the area. It is important to design all buildings carefully to relate to their setting and to the public spaces they frame.

To promote a high standard of design, a Design Code has been produced as a framework for designing, developing and building in the West End. The Design Code presents the aspirations and requirements for the new buildings and spaces; it is a tool for describing the kind of place the West End should become. The Design Code sets limits that do not impose style but provide a framework within which to reflect the essential qualities of good urban places. The guidelines are intended to stimulate innovation and quality. The Design Code is an important part of the AAP and is set out at Appendix 3.

**Policy WE11:**

**Design Code**

Planning permission will only be granted for new developments that follow the framework set out in the Design Code.
There is a variety of styles in the West End, and it is an ideal location for innovative, distinctive and high quality architecture. Appendix 7 includes a template for the Design and Access Statements that must be submitted with planning applications. Applicants should use the template to set out the design approach and reasoning, stating how they have taken local context into account, why they have specified particular materials, and how they have complied with the Design Code. A Design Review Panel has been set up to advise on proposals for larger and more sensitive sites or where specialist advice is required. Their advice should be sought at the pre-application stage.

The quality of the architecture and buildings developed in the West End is not just about style and statement; it also depends on the standards of construction employed. Buildings should be adaptable to the changing needs of the occupants. This can mean, for example, designing multi-use buildings with different uses on different floors of the building. This type of building will be particularly appropriate in the West End. Active uses should be on the ground floor next to the public space, and less active uses such as residential accommodation or offices should be on the floors above (and to the rear). Even if the first occupier does not require it, building the ground floor with higher ceilings (approximately 3.5 metres) than the upper floors will allow the ground floor to be used for a greater variety of uses, and will therefore ensure the building remains useful. This is particularly relevant in the main streets where there is a need for active uses and where there is most likely to be change in uses over time.

Houses designed so that they can be easily adapted (for example through house extensions or conversion to compatible uses such as live-work units) have a longer lifespan. This type of adaptable house design will be encouraged.

Buildings and public spaces must meet the needs of everyone, including those with pushchairs, people with disabilities and the elderly. The City Council will continue to require at least 15% of all new market houses to be built to “Lifetime Homes” standard, or its equivalent, as set out in the Local Plan policy. The Lifetime Homes standard has been produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and sets out criteria for designing residential units to be easily and cheaply adaptable should the occupants develop disabilities through accident, illness or old age.

One way to promote quality and sustainability is to use Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) (which includes off-site manufacturing). This can improve quality, minimise waste and reduce the number of accidents during the build. It allows the site to be prepared while the building is done elsewhere in a factory. Developers in the West End should actively consider the use of MMC, which would reduce their costs and enable quick, clean construction, minimising any disruption caused in this busy area of the City centre.

Buildings and public spaces also have the potential to provide habitats for wildlife. Ways of achieving this, through appropriate design, include planting trees and shrubs; providing green roofs; creating flight lines and foraging opportunities for bats and erecting bat and bird boxes.
Policy WE12: Design and construction
High quality architecture will be expected in all new development. It should be demonstrated in planning applications that buildings are designed to be flexible and long lasting.

A Design and Access Statement is required to be submitted with all planning applications (except householder applications outside of a conservation area). A template to follow is attached as Appendix 7.

On each site comprising residential development, 15% of all new market houses must be built to “Lifetime Homes” standard, or its equivalent.

3.3 Resource efficiency
The City Council requires new developments to use energy, water and materials efficiently and all large developments to incorporate renewable energy technologies as one way of addressing climate change on a local level. The re-use and responsible use of construction materials, energy-efficient systems and technologies can improve living and working conditions and reduce building running costs. There are several specific requirements for new developments (of 10 or more dwellings or non-residential developments of 2,000m² or above), including the generation of at least 20% of energy used from on-site renewable sources. The Local Plan and Natural Resource Impact Analysis Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provide more detail on these requirements. The City Council has also signed up to the manifesto produced by EcoSE (a partnership for better buildings in the South East), which includes a commitment to the EcoHomes “excellent” standard (this may become level 4 in the Code for Sustainable Homes).

A project has identified many potential benefits to a community scheme for sustainable energy for the West End. The scheme will link developments to an area-wide combined heating, cooling and electricity network. The generation and distribution of heat and cooling on a district basis offers important efficiency savings in terms of carbon dioxide emissions and also in terms of floorspace and plant requirements for each building. A further phase of the project will design the scheme and is likely to involve setting up an Energy Services Company (ESCo).

Policy WE13: Resource efficiency
Planning permission will only be granted for new development that complies with the requirements of the NRIA.

A community energy scheme will be delivered in the West End. Developments will be required to connect to the scheme where practicable. Development in the West End that connects to the community energy scheme will be able to count this contribution towards its on-site renewable energy requirements.

In cases where it is evident that a planned development will be able to connect to a forthcoming but not completed community energy scheme, this will be counted towards its on-site renewable energy requirements if the developer undertakes to commit to connection to the scheme.

• The City Council will continue to facilitate meetings of the West End Design Review Panel when appropriate.

• The City Council will work with an energy services company (ESCo) to develop and run a community energy scheme.

• The City and County Councils are committed to ensuring the new joint City and County offices are connected to a community energy scheme.
3.4 Flooding

The Thames and other local waterways add diversity and interest to the West End. They enhance the open space and the outlook of buildings. However, in Oxford flood risk must always be dealt with carefully.

Climate change means that flood risk in the West End will be greater for future generations. Developers in the West End will need to bear this natural risk in mind and respond with imagination. Flood risk must not be made worse – now or in the future – by new development in the West End.

A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the West End has been undertaken (see Appendix 5), which makes a starting point for working out options that balance the management of flood risk with development proposals. As part of this work, an initial investigation was also undertaken to see whether it might be possible to move the current flood storage area on the Oxpens site to create a more regularly shaped or larger area suitable for development. Four potential ways of compensating for this flood storage area were identified, and a feasibility study will be carried out to identify the best option as part of the master planning of the site.

Flood-Risk Assessments (FRAs) will be required for all developments in flood-risk zones 3 and 2, and for any developments of 1 hectare or over in flood-risk zone 1. Taking climate change into account, the FRA should identify and assess the risks of all forms of flooding to and from the development, and show how these flood risks will be managed.

Certain types of developments are less vulnerable to flood risk and may be more suitable in areas at risk of flooding. Where flood risk varies across a site, more vulnerable uses should be kept for lower-risk parts of the site. The lower floors of buildings in areas at medium and high risk of flooding should be reserved for less vulnerable uses. More vulnerable uses may be appropriate on the upper floors as long as there can be safe access. Where there is a low risk of shallow water in specific places, using flood-resilient buildings may be acceptable, as flooding would have less serious consequences there.

Most developments involve the creation of impermeable surfaces that can increase the rate of surface water run-off and flood risk. Developments in the West End are expected to incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) where practicable to limit the rate of run-off or preferably reduce the existing rate. Some measures designed to reduce water demand, such as rainwater harvesting, may also help to reduce flood risk.
The City Council will support the Environment Agency in continuing to seek ways to alleviate flooding.

**Policy WE14:**

**Flooding**

Planning permission will not be granted for any development except water compatible uses and essential infrastructure in the areas of highest flood risk (Flood Zone 3B).

Development on sites in any area of flood risk must include a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and to implement the necessary mitigation measures. All other developments of over 1 hectare must carry out an FRA.

Developments in the West End should use sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs), where practicable. The Proposals Map shows areas of flood risk.
The West End is a very sustainable location for residential development. Being located in the heart of Oxford, it offers the opportunity for City centre living, where people can walk or cycle to work, shop, socialise and catch public transport. The provision of new housing will form a vital part of the West End renaissance. It is expected that the West End will eventually accommodate about 600-800 new dwellings, but it will not be allowed to become a dormitory area.

As a mixed-use City centre area, the West End already contains much housing and a variety of housing types. Some new housing at the Castle and Brewery sites has proved very popular. New housing should help to strengthen the existing community and help support more facilities that bring benefits to the community as a whole.

Creating a strong and balanced community will be key to the success of the West End. The West End should be a desirable place to live with a happy, settled and mixed community.
4.1 Housing mix
In recent years, new residential developments in Oxford, especially the City centre, have often comprised mainly 1 and 2 bed flats. While City centre sites often suit to higher-density accommodation, it is appropriate to ensure a balanced and mixed community by requiring some larger dwellings in the West End. This will help to attract families, who are likely to stay longer in the area and to create a more stable community. The residential density should be high enough to make efficient use of land in this City centre location, while not stopping houses being built or neglecting the need for appropriate levels of amenity space.

The City Council will refuse planning permission for residential development that does not help achieve an appropriate mix of dwelling types as set out in the policy below. This mix will equally apply to the affordable housing element of a residential development. The need for a mix of sizes of affordable housing units mirrors the overall pattern. It will be unacceptable for a scheme to meet the mix requirement but then allocate only smaller units as the affordable element.

There should be a reasonable mix of dwelling sizes in each new development. However, it is clear that some sites will lend themselves more easily to the development of houses than others (for example it will be difficult to provide houses where the residential element of a mixed-use development is on the upper floors of a building). The policy below indicates those sites, which, if they come forward with housing development as part of their scheme, must include a high proportion of housing. These sites should not come forward solely for flats, as this would limit the opportunities for houses as part of the West End renaissance.

Residential development in the West End is an opportunity for providing car-free developments, as so many amenities and facilities will be located in the area. It will be appropriate for smaller units to be car-free whilst larger dwellings will be able to have one parking space (see Appendix 4 on parking standards). Car clubs are a way of allowing people to have access to a car even if they do not own it themselves.

Policy WE15:
Housing mix
Across the West End, the overall balance of the different sized homes (new build) to be achieved should be:
• Not more than 65% flats (at least half of the flats should have 2 bedrooms); and
• Not less than 35% houses of 3, 4, and 5 bedrooms.

This mix applies equally to the market and affordable elements of residential development and must be applied as far as appropriate on all sites. However, where multiple development sites are in the same land ownership, the City Council will enter into negotiations with developers to secure the required balance across that group of development sites.

If the following sites come forward for housing, at least 50% of the units provided should be houses: Oxpens site, the remainder of the Oxford and Cherwell Valley College site and Becket Street Car Park.

• The City Council will work with car club providers to try and ensure a car club is set up in Oxford, by liaising with the Highway Authority to identify possible locations for on street spaces.
4.2 Affordable housing

Affordable housing is an important element in creating a mixed and balanced community. Oxford’s Housing Requirement Study (Fordham Research, 2004) identified a “huge need” for affordable housing in Oxford. The redevelopment of the West End offers an important opportunity to help meet some of this need in a highly sustainable location.

The Oxford Local Plan requires generally a minimum of 50% of proposed new dwellings to be affordable. This requirement will continue in the West End although the threshold for the affordable housing policy in the Local Plan will not apply. This is because of the cumulative effect of many development sites in one locality. Instead, all proposals that include residential development will be expected to provide affordable housing.

The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Affordable Housing gives more detail on how the Local Plan and AAP policies will be implemented. The tenure mix that best meets local need, as set out in the SPD, is 80% social rented and 20% shared ownership.

The West End is identified as a strategic site in the Regional Housing Strategy (South East Regional Housing Board). This indicates that it is a key area in the region for delivery of affordable housing so Housing Corporation investment (Social Housing Grant) is expected to be available.

**Policy WE16:** Affordable housing

The City Council will seek the provision of generally a minimum of 50% affordable housing from any development that includes residential development on a site within the West End having the capacity for at least ten dwellings. This should be in the ratio of 80% social rented and 20% shared ownership.

If it can be demonstrated by open-book evidence that this makes a site unviable, developers and the City Council will work through the cascade approach in the following order until a scheme is made viable:

1. Reducing the percentage of affordable housing provided (to a minimum of 40%) by reducing the shared ownership element only.
2. At 40% affordable housing, reintroduce an element of shared ownership incrementally up to 20% of affordable units.
3. Make affordable housing provision on another site (at the 50% level).

Some residential areas of the West End currently contain mainly affordable housing. Some of this stock has become dated and may not well serve the needs of the occupiers; it should be improved and modernised where possible. In some cases redevelopment may be the only option. Where there is a proposal to redevelop existing affordable housing, the City Council will expect it to result in at least the same number of affordable housing units as before the scheme.
4.3 Affordable housing from commercial development

Commercial development should not worsen the existing housing situation by encouraging workers in housing need to move to Oxford; such development should contribute towards meeting the need for affordable housing in Oxford. The Adopted Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD explains how affordable housing from commercial development should be provided. This should mean building homes on site or making a financial contribution that reflects the cost of providing the number, types and sizes of dwellings required. They could be provided outside the West End if it is difficult to identify suitable sites for family housing. This policy does not apply to retail developments or non-profit-making public-sector projects.

If it proves, in the light of open-book assessment, not to be viable to meet the target of affordable housing considered to be equivalent to 1-5% of staff employed, it may be necessary to reduce this contribution from commercial developments so that they can meet the other objectives of the West End project instead.

Policy WE17:
Affordable housing from commercial development
Planning permission will only be granted for commercial development where the scheme provides the number of affordable homes to meet the additional demand created.

4.4 Hidden parts of the community

Another important element of the community in the West End is evident from the number of facilities and services provided by the various health and social service providers. These include the several hostels and drop in centres already located in the West End catering for groups of people who are sometimes hidden. There may be future proposals for similar or linked facilities in the West End (for example a wet garden for the use of street drinkers). It is important that these vital services are located in the right places in terms of allowing users access to the services and in terms of their relationship to neighbouring uses.

4.5 Student accommodation

The West End is suitable for some additional student accommodation as it is near many of the University of Oxford colleges. Purpose-built student accommodation would enable more students to live in halls of residences, which would reduce the pressure for private rented housing, making more family homes available.

However, as the West End is identified as a sustainable location for housing and there is a desire to create a mixed and balanced community, it is vital that the amount of student accommodation should not jeopardise these objectives.

To ensure a balanced community, speculative student accommodation development will be subject to occupancy restrictions to ensure that the accommodation is only available to those in full-time education at the University of Oxford or Oxford Brookes University.

Non-self-contained student accommodation is not required to provide affordable housing. However if student accommodation is self-contained (i.e. it has its own kitchen area and bathroom) the affordable housing policy will apply.
The City Council will continue to work with the University of Oxford to minimise the impact of students on the family housing market.

Policy WE18:
Student accommodation
Planning permission will be granted for the development of purpose-built student accommodation on Speedwell House and the St Aldate's/Queen Street sites. On other sites, for speculative student accommodation, occupancy restrictions will be secured to ensure that the accommodation is only available to those in full-time education at the University of Oxford or Oxford Brookes University.

4.6 Amenities to support new housing
New housing in the West End will be close to a whole range of City centre amenities. It is important that plans for large increases in housing take into account the need for local, supporting amenities. Amenities such as increased school capacity, local open space and play facilities are vital.

The Primary Care Trust are looking to provide new City centre health care facilities in the West End. Should such proposals come forward, they would be encouraged at the appropriate scale and location. It is important that these facilities be located adjacent to a major bus route to facilitate easy access. Appropriate sites would include Oxpens, the remainder of the College site and Worcester Street Car Park sites.

The Police are looking to relocate their main facilities to another location outside the City centre. If this does become the case, it would be important to maintain some form of police presence in the City centre. The West End would provide an opportunity to do this, and this could be linked to the new City and County offices on Oxpens.

Other amenities that would help support the local community would include, for example, small, local convenience stores, children’s nurseries and schools; these facilities will be encouraged in the appropriate locations.

Where proposals come forward which include the loss of supporting facilities, the City Council will need to be satisfied that there will be no loss of amenity to the West End community.

Policy WE19:
Amenities to support new housing
Planning permission will be granted for amenities of the appropriate size and scale to support the local community of the West End.

Planning permission will be granted for a new Primary Care Trust City centre healthcare facility within the West End at the appropriate scale and location.
The West End renaissance must not be dominated by any single land use. New housing is important. But the opportunity must be taken to provide additional space for business growth, to greatly enhance the shopping opportunities and to provide new leisure, community and tourist facilities.

The West End needs to attract visitors, employees and businesses. Development in the West End will support the knowledge economy that is so vital to Oxford’s reputation and future prosperity. New attractions and community facilities will ensure the area enhances Oxford’s attractiveness to residents and visitors. The area already contains most of the City centre bars, cafés and restaurants. It is not proposed to create many new ones, but their environment will become more attractive. The main focus of new retailing in the area will be the Westgate Shopping Centre and the St Aldate’s/Queen Street site. This will strengthen Oxford’s position as a sub-regional retail destination, and reinforce other attractions in the City centre.
5.1 Creating activity and a mix of uses

It is important to encourage activity at street level to help achieve the vibrancy that is desired in the West End. Street level activity can be encouraged through the design of the buildings for example by introducing windows and particularly doors at street level. Further detail on this aspect is included in the Design Code.

The uses that are located in a building also have an effect on the level of activity created. A development or building that contains a variety of uses is much more likely to create street level activity throughout the day and evening than one which is single-use only. There are also particular uses that inherently bring with them more activity; cultural uses and attractions are very useful to add vibrancy and activity to a mixed-use scheme.

Policy WE20:
Mixed uses
On sites of 0.2 hectares or greater, planning permission will only be granted for developments that incorporate more than one use.

The mix of uses must be appropriate and take advantage of the opportunities that the site presents to achieve the diversity and range of objectives that are an essential part of the vision for the West End, such as cultural attractions.

5.2 Commercial office accommodation

The City centre is an excellent location for new offices, being accessible for staff and visitors by walking, cycling and public transport. Employment uses such as offices will help to create a mixed-use area, and bring important day-time activity.

In Oxford, good-quality modern office space is in demand (Oxford Employment Land Study, March 2006). Apart from the Oxford Business Park, there are relatively few modern office developments in Oxford. While the City centre has a reasonable amount of office accommodation, it is mainly older, second-hand space in only a fair condition. The West End offers a rare opportunity to provide some new office accommodation, in modern and flexible spaces. New office accommodation would be most appropriate on the frontages of main routes (especially on the upper floors), in particular along Oxpens Road, Hythe Bridge Street and Park End Street. It is not intended that office development should dominate these streets, simply that offices are one of several uses that would be suitable here. The Employment Land Study investigated the demand for new B1 uses across the City, including the West End. The Study suggested a need for about 15,000-20,000m² of new B1 floorspace in the West End until 2021. This demand is likely to be mainly for smaller office units, providing good-quality, modern space, with few units over 900m².

Commercial offices are likely to constitute the highest proportion of new B1 uses in the City centre. However, it is important that there is not an unlimited supply of offices in the West End. This would result in the balance between uses in the West End being lost and the overall vision being compromised, with other less valuable uses losing out.

Because of the need to balance uses, the fact that offices are only one type of B1 use, the need to avoid oversupply and the fact that the Area Action plan period is until 2016 rather than 2021, the lower estimate of likely demand in the range shown in the Employment Land Study was chosen as a suitable limit for new office space.
Policy WE21: Office accommodation
Planning permission will be granted for up to 15,000m² of additional office floorspace in the West End.

5.3 Research and development and start-up units
Significant demand also exists for research and development floorspace. Oxford’s two universities are the driving forces behind the research and development industries. The Employment Land Study suggests that maintaining a high level of research and development is essential to the future economic success of Oxford and also identifies a strong need for start-up units across Oxford. These are small units with shared services, on-site support and short flexible leases, and often specialist space including laboratories. This type of employment use exploits Oxford’s strengths, and creates jobs that can be filled from the existing population. Locating some of these units in the West End has some advantages as it is close to many colleges and will also help to create a viable mix of uses.

5.4 Public sector offices
The City Council and County Council operate from various offices across the City centre. There is an opportunity for the City and County Councils to join offices, which could help to ensure efficient use of land and working practices. These are currently estimated to need floorspace of about 20,000m². Several of the existing sites could then be released for other development.

The Oxpens site has been identified for the new joint offices. Location of well-designed offices on the Oxpens site would act as a catalyst for other new development of high quality. It would show confidence in the area and would start to draw people and activity to the Oxpens site. It would also help to support the new bus loop along Oxpens Road.

Other public-sector offices and headquarters could also locate in the West End.

Policy WE22: Public sector offices
Planning permission will be granted for new joint City and County Council offices on the Oxpens site. A limited amount of floorspace for other public sector offices will be supported within the West End.

5.5 Retail
The West End area includes several of Oxford’s key shopping streets. Policies in the adopted Local Plan identify areas of primary and secondary retail frontage, in which percentages of retail are maintained at certain levels. These are still relevant to the West End and may be extended to include the new shopping areas in the Westgate Centre and St Aldate’s/Queen Street. The Proposals Map identifies a Primary Shopping Area, and new City centre retail should focus on this area.

The Retail Needs Study identified a need for Oxford to expand its retail facilities. Planning permission has been granted for the redevelopment of the Westgate Shopping Centre, which will provide 34,000m² of additional retail floorspace comprising 60 additional units. This will enhance Oxford’s shopping scene and provide much employment.
The St Aldate's/Queen Street site will create a further opportunity for additional retail floorspace with mixed-use development on the upper floors. This development should be complementary to the Westgate Shopping Centre. Development will take place behind the existing properties on the street frontages, and be accessed from several points to enable pedestrian movement through the site.

The development of the Westgate Shopping Centre, with enhanced retail provision on the St Aldate's/Queen Street site, will meet most of the City wide comparison retail need as identified in the period to 2016. However, there is a limited amount of additional need. Much of this will be accommodated outside the West End. However, the West End may offer opportunity for some new comparison shopping floorspace. The choice of site is important: it should enhance the Primary Shopping Area without detracting from the vitality and viability of existing retail frontages or allocated sites, especially the High Street, Broad Street and the Covered Market. It is therefore considered appropriate for some retail development to take place on the County Hall site.

There is only a limited need for additional convenience (food) shopping, which is likely to be met by expanding existing stores or opening small new stores in the established City or District centres.

Outside these areas, replacement of existing retail units will be acceptable, such as the retail uses along Park End Street, Hythe Bridge Street and New Road. However, there is little opportunity for additional retail floorspace. Some exceptions will have to be made, as set out in the policy, as it is expected and desirable that new cultural attractions such as galleries and interactive museums will have ancillary retail space, and new local stores will be wanted to support housing.

**Policy WE23:**

**Retail**

Planning permission will be granted for the redevelopment of the St Aldate's/Queen Street site for retail development on the ground floor with mixed use development on the upper floors.

Planning permission will be granted for new retail floorspace within the Primary Shopping Area including an element of new retail floorspace on the County Hall site. Outside the Primary Shopping Area, planning permission will not be granted for additional retail floorspace except for small-scale local shops, facilities ancillary to cultural attractions such as galleries and new interactive museums, or facilities that enhance the cultural offer in their own right.

Planning permission will only be granted for a small amount of new convenience (food) retail use in the West End if it does not exceed Oxford’s total additional need, and only if it is in the Primary Shopping Area.

**5.6 Cultural activity**

Increasing the variety of stimulating attractions for visitors and local residents is a key objective of the renaissance project. Facilities that add diversity to the cultural scene, including cultural attractions, and cultural employment uses such as artists’ studios and exhibition areas, will be encouraged in the appropriate locations. New cultural attractions, street performances and activities in accessible and visible locations will
There are many arts and performance schools in Oxford, teaching and training in the arts. However, Oxford has few facilities for those wishing to work in these professions. At present, once students have qualified they have to move out of Oxford to find adequate workspace. Studios, workspaces and galleries would assist people in creative professions to stay in Oxford. These kinds of uses at ground level encourage day and evening activity, which enlivens the street scene.

The cinema on George Street is an important use in an appropriate location that adds to the cultural offer of the West End. However, redevelopment of the site (to include a cinema) would offer several benefits: an opportunity to improve the facilities; to create more street level activity along the George Street and Gloucester Green frontages; and to improve the entrance to the square. The redevelopment of the cinema on its existing site is encouraged.

There is some private-sector backing for 2 new attractions: a hands-on cultural centre for science (Science Oxford) and a Story Museum (for children’s literature). Both projects are seeking to locate in the West End. Science Oxford would offer flexible exhibition space, performance space and a hands-on zone. The Story Museum would draw on the rich heritage of children’s storytelling in Oxford, featuring exhibitions, audio-visual presentations and unique archives. The development of these projects in the West End is encouraged.

Developers will be expected to consider the potential of all sites to make provision for cultural attractions, which are an essential part of the vision for the West End. Such uses will help to attract people to a site, to create activity at street level and to meet the requirements of the mixed uses policy (WE20).

**Policy WE24:**

Cultural activity

Planning permission will be granted for the creation of new facilities that will add diversity to the cultural scene, such as cultural attractions, artists’ studios, galleries and museums.

5.7 Visitor coaches

Oxford is a world-renowned tourist destination; it is the sixth most visited city in the UK by international visitors. It is estimated that 32% of Oxford’s visitors travel by coach. Arrangements for coach arrivals are not welcoming or convenient for the visitor or for residents and other users of the City centre. The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK and the Oxford and District Coach Operators Associations have suggested that drop-off and standing arrangements are unsatisfactory.

Currently, coaches park on the Oxpens site. The Oxpens site is a key catalyst in the renaissance of the West End; the relocation of coach parking from the site is essential to the masterplanning of the site.

Coaches do not need to park in the City centre. However, they will need facilities to drop-off and pick-up passengers safely in places from where they can easily get into the historic core. A drop-off and pick-up point will be provided which will welcome tourists to the City centre and offer visitor information. Coaches would park at a park-and-ride
site; Redbridge would be most suitable if the drop off is south of the City centre. In the north the alternatives may be at Pear Tree and the Northern Gateway.

**Policy WE25:**

**Visitor coaches**

Planning permission will be granted for development of the part of the Oxpens site currently used for visitor coach parking. Visitor coach parking will be provided at a Park and Ride site. Suitable provision should be made for visitor coaches to drop-off and pick-up.

5.8 Hotel accommodation

While the quantity and quality of hotel accommodation in Oxford has recently increased, some of it is in out-of-centre locations and there is not much accommodation in the City centre. In particular the lack of quality branded hotels has been highlighted, and the popularity of the new hotel at the Castle suggests a strong demand. There is also a shortage of mid-range hotel accommodation in the City centre. There should be increased provision of hotel accommodation in the West End.

The Oxpens site is a good location for a large hotel. The size of the site lends itself to large development, and a 4 or 5 star hotel (with about 150 bedrooms) would also act as a catalyst to revive this corner of the West End. A possible new multi-functional conference space, providing accommodation for business tourists, as well as other visitors may be incorporated alongside the hotel.

The Royal Oxford Hotel could be replaced as part of the redevelopment of the Island site (Park End Street, Hythe Bridge Street), which is one of the key redevelopment sites of the West End.

**Policy WE26:**

**Hotel accommodation**

Planning permission will be granted for the development of new hotel accommodation in the West End which strengthens or diversifies the range on offer.

Planning permission will be granted for a new 4 or 5 star hotel on the Oxpens site.

5.9 Conference facility

The demand for conference facilities in Oxford exceeds supply by 40%. A market feasibility study (September 2005) found that existing local facilities are limited to the 100-200 and 200-500 delegate segments of the market, and that there is demand for a larger purpose-built conference centre for 500-800 delegates (which would equate to around 5,300m²). The West End offers an opportunity for the development of a top-of-the-range conference centre. The most suitable site for development is Oxpens, as the building would need to be large, and the centre would help attract people to this part of the West End.

Studies have investigated the potential for a concert hall. A lack of venues of around 400-600 capacity has been identified. A large music/performance arts venue would probably be commercially viable only if it were part of a mixed-use development with
more commercial conference activities. The conference centre should be designed as a flexible space that could be used for a range of other activities, including concerts.

**Policy WE27:**
*Conference facility*
Planning permission will be granted for a flexible conference centre facility on the Oxpens site to meet some of the need for conference space, concerts and other events.

### 5.10 Leisure

The main leisure facility in the West End is the ice rink, which is run by the City Council. Both the building and the plant are "life-expired" and the rink would require almost complete re-development to bring it up to the standard of a modern facility. Oxford City Council is unable to generate extra income from the ice rink, as it is in poor structural condition and is too small to stage entertainment or top-level ice hockey successfully (source: Indoor Facilities Study, Oxford City Council; January 2006). As well as being a regional facility, the ice rink is a local facility that is especially popular with teenagers.

A study is examining options for the future for the ice rink and the ice rink site. One option would be to provide a better facility on another site, possibly near the ring road. Locating an ice rink alongside a swimming pool would bring benefits in terms of energy efficiency and economies of scale.

It is important that a leisure opportunity should still be available in the Oxpens area. Commercial leisure facilities would be acceptable in this location. It is important to design leisure facilities with flexibility to meet changing tastes. One way to achieve this would be to design flexible leisure space that could incorporate a range of leisure opportunities; the enhancement of Oxpens Field could be an important factor in this.

**Policy WE28:**
*Leisure*
Opportunities for leisure should continue to be provided in the Oxpens area.

### 5.11 Education

Significant housing development in the West End will inevitably lead to more demand on the local education facilities. Work is continuing with the County Council as local education authority to establish the level of need for additional facilities in the West End and the wider area. The streamlined contributions (as set for residential development) incorporate an element of funding towards meeting the additional need created.

The Oxford and Cherwell Valley College is located in the heart of the West End and intends to remain on the site. The college hopes to redevelop their campus providing modern facilities to meet modern needs. This will involve wholesale redevelopment but on a smaller site than at present. The rest of the site will become available for other uses.

The University of Oxford has a significant interest in the West End with several colleges and teaching facilities located in the area. There may be opportunities to extend these uses within the West End.

*The City Council will continue to work with the County Council as local education authority to ensure the provision of educational facilities for new residents of the West End.*
Section 6

DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

It is essential that the policies and plans set out in the AAP are implemented on the ground. Policies alone will not bring about the change envisaged for the renaissance of the West End: infrastructure, funding and delivery are key factors.

To make a place successful and sustainable, new development must be supported by the necessary social and environmental infrastructure. To mitigate any undesired effects of development, to achieve the planned improvements to the public realm and public space in the West End and to create an attractive and functional place, it will be necessary to invest in new infrastructure.

New infrastructure on the scale required in the West End renaissance comes at a cost and funding will be pursued from a variety of sources including developer contributions towards this. The approach and mechanisms that will be employed are outlined below.

It is important that the delivery of projects on the ground is achieved in a smooth and timely manner. The City Council and the West End Partnership will try and ease the delivery process to ensure that unnecessary delays are avoided and disruption to the area is minimised.
6.1 Infrastructure requirements
The renaissance of the West End will entail investment in some significant infrastructure projects for the benefit of all who live, work, visit and have an interest in the area. Without these infrastructure projects, new developments will not be able to operate efficiently and an opportunity will have been lost to maximise improvements to the area and secure the vision for the West End. The infrastructure needs of the West End fall into 3 broad categories:

- Strategic infrastructure, which is needed to enable the West End and its wider environment to function; particularly transport and utilities.
- Service infrastructure, which is needed to meet the day-to-day needs of the population - schools, affordable housing, community facilities, open space, sewerage etc.
- Transformational infrastructure, which will transform the whole area and make it a different and better place; improving the public realm for instance.

6.2 Streamlined contributions
To simplify and speed up the way it sets developer contributions, the City Council has adopted a streamlined process for assessing contributions from development in the West End. This will apply a global sum to pay for the various infrastructure requirements of the West End. Having regard to the need created, the global sum is assessed on the size of the development (calculating the contribution per 100m² of non-residential development or per 1/2/3/4 bedroom dwelling or per unit of student accommodation).

The sum will be calculated:

- For new build, on gross development;
- For change of use schemes, on any increased impact of the development unless it can be shown that the impact of the development is unchanged; and:
- For development which retains the existing buildings and same uses, on any net increase in floorspace;

Developments that do not easily fall into any of these categories will be considered by the City Council on a case-by-case basis.

The sum is based on the city-wide Planning Obligations SPD adopted in April 2007. However, this has been adapted to meet the specific area requirements of the West End. For the West End development, the negotiated elements have been calculated in advance and the thresholds removed, because of the cumulative effect of many development sites coming forward in the West End.
The global sum will be reviewed and updated in Supplementary Planning Documents. This will reflect any changes in the scale/mix of development which is taking place and any updates to the infrastructure requirements of the West End renaissance.

**Policy WE29: Streamlined contributions**

The City Council will seek developer contributions in a streamlined way as a global sum.

The amount in later years will be set out in Supplementary Planning Document. Until that time the global sum will be calculated on a site-by-site basis.

The sum must be paid upon commencement of the development. However, for large-scale developments, phased payments may be agreed by negotiation, although this will incur an additional administration charge. The sum will be increased to reflect inflation at the time of determining the application.

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the combined effect of the policies on affordable housing and streamlined contributions does not result in development sites becoming unviable, there will always be a possibility that site-specific circumstances lead to the borderline or non-viability of a potential scheme. If a scheme in all other respects complies with the policies and contributes to the achievement of the vision of the AAP, the following mechanism will be used to improve the viability of the scheme.

If it can be demonstrated by open-book evidence that a site is unviable when applying the combined policies of the AAP, the following steps will be taken in order:

i) The affordable housing cascade (found in Policy WE16) will be worked through in order.

ii) The payment of streamlined contributions will be phased in line with the approach set out in Policy WE29 and the Planning Obligations SPD.

iii) The City Council will enter into negotiations with the developer over the scale of the streamlined contribution.

6.3 Funding mechanisms

It is expected that the West End will be developed over time through a series of different-sized developments. It will not be practical for any one development to provide all of the infrastructure needed. There must be overall control of development to ensure quality and consistency. Therefore, the streamlined contributions will be pooled. The contributions will be collected and held by the City Council on behalf of the City and County Councils who are the delivering authorities. There will be a formal mechanism agreed by the two authorities that will determine how and when the money will be allocated and spent. This mechanism will involve the West End Partnership in deciding the funding allocations. The apportioning of the pooled contributions will be based on the relative proportions set out in the Planning Obligations SPD and other infrastructure needs identified for the West End, which are listed in appendix 8.
The West End Partnership will investigate ways to forward fund important projects and will collect contributions that will cover these costs.

Policy WE30:
Pooled contributions and forward funding
Contributions will be pooled so that larger infrastructure can be put in place once adequate contributions are received.

Some projects are so important to the success of the West End that they should be funded before adequate contributions have been received. Where possible, these will be forward funded on the basis that funding will be reimbursed.

6.4 Other sources of funding
To ensure all possibilities for improvements in the West End are explored, and that the highest quality of public realm, attractions and infrastructure is provided, the City Council and the West End Partnership are pursuing sources of funding other than developer contributions. These monies will be used in addition to developer contributions to fund West End projects that could not otherwise be delivered.

- Oxford has been designated as a New Growth Point (focused on the West End) and has been allocated £1.2 million for the first year (2007/8) and £5 million capital and £0.5 million revenue for the 3-year period 2008/9 to 2010/11.
- For transport improvements, funding through the current and future Local Transport Plans may be possible. Some funding (£6 million) is already allocated from the Access to Oxford package secured by the Highway Authority for improvements to the railway station and forecourt.
- The Housing Corporation (to become the Homes and Communities Agency) should be able to supply Social Housing Grant towards affordable housing. The West End is identified as a strategic site in the Regional Housing Strategy.
- Money for improvements to Carfax and Speedwell Street may come from the Business Improvement District funding.
- Consultants have been appointed by the West End Partnership to investigate other possible sources of funding and develop a fund raising strategy for the West End.
- The West End Partners (SEEDA, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council) have committed to investing their own funds, both in terms of capital and revenue expenditure, to furthering the vision of the West End AAP.

6.5 Responsibilities
The West End Partnership is firmly established and has been pivotal in driving forward the West End's renaissance thus far. The West End Executive, with its Steering Group members, will continue to work towards fulfilling the vision set out in this document.

The City and County Councils will play important roles in the West End's renaissance. Both authorities own much land in the area and are committed to using their land holdings for the wider benefit of the area. The Councils will work with leaseholders and development partners to bring forward sites, and where appropriate will dispose of parcels for development by the private sector. When the new civic offices are developed on the Oxpens site, several of the existing sites will be released for other development. They also play other roles in fulfilling the vision, including that of the County Council as the Highway Authority and Local Education Authority, and the City Council as Local
Planning Authority. Other functions of both the City and County Councils will also be important in the implementation of projects paid for by pooled contributions. The procedures set out below ensure that the planning process, in particular, operates in as smooth and timely manner as possible.

Other public bodies (including those identified in the AAP) also have important roles. Many of these bodies are already part of the West End Steering Group and the Partnership has contacted others who will be able to help deliver the vision for the West End.

The private sector will help to bring about new development on the various sites in the West End. The AAP will frame proposals for individual sites to ensure they work together as a whole for the benefit of the wider area.

Stakeholder involvement has been crucial in developing the AAP, and the Partnership will continue to build on this by further involving and consulting on future aspects of the West End project. It is important that the community (including existing and new residents and users of the area) continues to have a say in the plans for the future of their area.

6.6 Pre-application advice

The City Council (as the local planning authority) will expect applicants to take part in pre-application discussions to ensure that when planning applications are submitted, they stand the best chance of being approved. A project management protocol has been produced for the West End for major developments, following consultation with the development industry. This seeks to ensure that the City Council, County Council and developer can agree on the project management and resourcing of these applications at the outset.

6.7 Planning Delivery Agreements

On large schemes developers will be encouraged to draw up and enter into a Planning Delivery Agreement (PDA) in partnership with the City Council. A PDA sets out a framework for negotiations to consider development proposals in a timely, well-managed and transparent manner. It is expected that most negotiations, including heads of terms for legal agreements, will take place before a planning application is submitted.

6.8 Supporting information for planning applications

To demonstrate the suitability of individual proposals, applicants must submit sufficient supporting information to enable the City Council to fully consider the impact of the proposals. They must submit the following supporting information alongside planning applications, where appropriate:

1. Details of the type and quantity of proposed uses.
2. Details of how the biodiversity of the area will be enhanced.
3. Which residential units will be built as adaptable dwellings.
5. A Flood Risk Assessment.
6. A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, including details of access/restriction arrangements for vehicles and non-car modes, and the parking strategy (see the Parking Standards, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans SPD).
7. Where retail uses are proposed outside the Primary Shopping Area but within the Area Action Plan boundary (and not allocated in this Plan), an assessment of need and a sequential test of the proposed location.

8. A Design and Access Statement to show how urban design principles have been addressed and how development has responded to a detailed analysis of the local context and the Design Code. The template provided at Appendix 7 is to be used.

9. Details of the number, tenure type, mix of housing types and sizes for the market and affordable housing.

10. Draft heads of terms for the legal agreement using the standard agreements set out in the Affordable Housing and Planning Obligations SPD.

11. Details of how proposals conserve and enhance the City's heritage including any impacts on the conservation area, listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.


This list may be superseded by the implementation of the standard planning application form, which will list the specific requirements for each type of planning application.

6.9 Other considerations

Applicants may need listed building consent to undertake any alteration or development of a listed building. They may need conservation area consent to undertake any kind of development or demolition in or affecting a conservation area. They may also have to apply for other forms of approvals or licence, such as premises licenses for the sale of alcohol or the provision of entertainment. The City Council will be able to help and advise in such circumstances.

6.10 Compulsory purchase powers

The strength of the West End Partnership will help to ensure that all interested parties sign up to the vision and aims of the West End renaissance. The City Council does not envisage a need to rely on compulsory purchases to deliver the vision. However, it will use its compulsory purchase powers if necessary.

**Policy WE31: Compulsory purchase powers**

The City Council will use its compulsory purchase powers, where applicable, to bring forward the renaissance of the West End as set out in this Area Action Plan.

6.11 Monitoring

The City Council will monitor the implementation of the Area Action Plan, and performance against the plan's objectives. Appendix 9 sets out a series of indicators and where possible targets, against which the progress will be monitored. These are then linked (where possible) to the core, local and contextual indicators of the City Council’s Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) where the monitoring will be reported.
If you would like a copy of this leaflet in a different language or in large print or would like further information, please contact the Planning Policy Team.

Translations available

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