

# Oxford City Manifesto

## *A Green Oxford*

### The Green Party Local Election Manifesto 2012

Since the first Greens were elected to the City Council more than a decade ago, Green Councillors have been taking a leadership role on issues ranging from protecting public services and green spaces to affordable housing, transport, recycling, climate change, economic development and crime prevention. Support for the Greens is continuing to grow. At the European elections in 2009 more people voted Green in the City than for any other party. Now the Greens are setting the new agenda for 2012 and beyond

Green policy priorities for the City Council include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Protecting Public Services</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Creating a Sustainable Oxford</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Better Housing &amp; Protecting Green Spaces</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Action on Climate Change</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Better Public Transport</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Safer Streets</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Power to the People</b></li></ul>



## **Protecting Public Services**

The Greens have always seen good quality publicly run public services as essential in building a caring society.

### **Locally and nationally public services have been under attack.**

In Oxford we have seen closures, privatisation and cuts in services like never before. Massive cuts have been introduced by the Conservative controlled County Council and the Labour City Council plus deep cuts in the local Health Service and many other public bodies. Whilst Labour Lib Dem and Conservatives have been voting for cuts Green councillors have been there voting against reductions in services and fighting for libraries, youth centres and to protect the elderly and vulnerable from the impact of savage reductions.

It has been clear that the Labour controlled Oxford City Council have retained massive bloated reserves three times larger than they need but has been implementing a savage cuts agenda not because they have to but because they want to.

### **Only the Greens have consistently defended the right to access high quality affordable public services.**

#### ***Green successes:***

- Campaigning to reopen the Oxford Community Hospital.
- Resisting proposals for 'Labour's Academies' for our schools to be run by private concerns.
- Stopped the closure of municipal toilets around Oxford.
- Opposed the privatisation of Leisure Services.
- Supported campaigns locally to keep our NHS public and stop privatisation.
- Worked with Trade Unions to oppose the cuts.
- Worked with campaigning groups such as the Anti Cuts Alliance, Save Our Services and Keep Our Public Services Public.

#### ***The Greens will:***

- Continue to oppose the cuts in our public services and press for the reestablishment of lost services to our elderly and young citizens.
- Fight against privatisation of Oxford's Health and Education services.
- Demand the refurbishing Temple Cowley swimming pools and oppose its closure.
- Stop further Council house sell-offs and protect our Community Centres.
- Resisting Government pressure to privatise ever more public services.

*Only the Greens seem to recognise the value of public services and have a clear objective that they should be publicly owned and managed, be of high quality and publicly accountable. The Greens are not financially backed by companies that will benefit from the privatisation of public services and have a long history of solid support for public services at every level.*

## **Creating a Sustainable Oxford**

The Greens have been at the forefront of improving our environment and making our City sustainable. Without them improvement would never have taken place.

The Greens have obviously always been the major force behind moves to create a sustainable Oxford and virtually all initiatives can be traced back to their budget amendments, questions or motions to Council. The period 2004 to 2008 when the Greens held the balance of power saw them insisting on creating a sustainability programme and demanding recycling. The amount of waste generated by our over-consuming society is scandalous and an ineffective use of resources. The present Labour administration record is meagre and there is still a great deal to do if we are to make Oxford into a truly sustainable city.

### ***Green successes:***

- Pressed for improvements in sustainability saving Council energy bills by better insulation schemes and reducing Council waste.
- The Greens were behind virtually every sustainable policy initiative such as waste food waste collection, green energy suppliers for the Council, supporting local Framer's Markets, promoting allotments, the Local Car Club and many, many more Green initiatives. (*See Our Website: What have Green Councillors Ever Done for You?*)
- Provided extra money in the budget to allow extra cycles of waste collection when needed.
- Convinced the City to appeal to the County not to go ahead with the waste incinerator.
- Pushed for the Council to adopt a Fair Trade Policy from its suppliers.

### ***The Greens will:***

- Fight for Redbridge waste centre to be retained for domestic users.
- Demand a dramatic increase in the recycling rates to at least 80% over the next two years and set the date for zero land fill deposit of 2015.
- Push for more and varied types of recycle centres focusing on different products and a quicker response time to clear grot spots.
- Push for real improvements in waste disposal with more staff committed to litter collection, green space blitzing and deep clean programmes.
- Extend the food waste scheme and composting systems establishing deals with local allotments and farms for cheap fertilizer.
- Make the food waste scheme free once more... to stop the gradual commercialisation.
- Push for growth in home grown food by developing community gardens local food production and enhancing allotments as we are aware that food will become increasingly costly in family budgets.

*The Greens were behind the moves to a more sustainable Oxford and only they will have the drive and determination to introduce the policies that our City so desperately needs.*

## **Better Housing and Protecting Green Spaces**

There is a difficult balance to be struck in the City between the demands for more housing our local economy and the need to retain our green spaces. The Greens know where to draw that line and are prepared to make a stand against mindless development for its own sake.

We need to protect the overall level of jobs rather than simply seek expansion. The focus should be in generating new development in high quality well paid employment to replace job losses. Growth for the sake of growth runs counter to the heritage of Oxford which has always placed a premium on quality rather than mere volume.

The Greens believe that we must protect the Green Belt and need to focus on our inner City brown-field sites to meet the housing need .An example where this principle may be applied is the site reserved for the expansion of the Westgate Shopping Centre which should be used partly for affordable housing.

While fighting to preserve our green spaces from development is important that we do not forget the management and preservation of our existing open spaces, conservation areas and Town Meadows. Protection of the Green belt is a real priority.

The Greens are also determined to get a better deal for tenants protecting them from unscrupulous landlords with new tougher licensing policies for Houses of Multiple Occupation.

### ***Green successes:***

- Took the lead in a 10 year campaign to introduce a Licensing scheme for HMOs
- Ensuring the provision of affordable housing on urban sites and demanding more Council Housing.
- First suggested the rule that all new housing developments should be 50% affordable housing.
- Opening up open spaces, such as Aston's Eyot, helping local groups improve and develop schemes.
- Retaining public access to parks such as Angel & Greyhound Meadow and back Town Green status for sites such as Warneford Meadow.
- Greens took the lead in seeking to amend the Core Strategy for the City's development. They were the only Party to consistently seek to preserve Oxford's unique character by opposing the Northern Gateway, Summertown Housing Plan, South Oxfordshire Strategic Development Area and require more assurances about infrastructure and community facilities and open Space in the West Barton Development.

### ***The Greens will:***

- The greens will continue to press for more limited and sustainable development in emerging area plans such as the West Baron Housing Scheme.
- The Greens propose to meet housing need as far as this need can be balanced against the necessity to protect our open spaces and the heritage of Oxford.
- Release land currently reserved for business use for affordable, green homes.
- Seek Balanced Communities with no high concentrations of HMOs in small areas.
- Get tough with bad landlords with the aim of improving the quality of the private rented sector and demanding a new more comprehensive policy on Houses of Multiple Occupation.
- Oppose the mindless expansion of Oxford and destruction of the Green Belt.
- Press for reconsideration of the Westgate Development with a more eco friendly rebuild on smaller scale to include some affordable housing.
- Establish a new deal for people who live on boats at residential moorings.
- Local residents to devise their own Community Nature Plan for open spaces. Press for Town Green Status for accepted Green spaces.
- Demand more and eco friendly Council Housing which protects tenants security of tenure and gives credit to not only meeting social need but holding communities and families together.
- We will do all in our power to help local independent traders keep the individual character of shopping in Oxford resisting the rise of clone town British chain stores.
- The Greens will view Oxford in its natural context. Keeping its bio diversity protecting natural resources like watercourses whilst taking action to prevent flooding. Extensive tree planting will form an important component to this approach.

*The Greens know how to meet the housing crisis and balance this against the need to protect our open spaces and the heritage of Oxford.*

## **Action on Climate Change**

Thanks to efforts by Green Councillors who over the years have been the foremost advocate of moves to tackle Climate Change the City is now recognised as a leading authority in tackling climate change.

Virtually all of the improvements can be traced back to Green budget initiatives and motions in Council. The City Council has reduced its own carbon footprint by more than 20 %, but much of this has been because the authority is selling off buildings .It will take real commitment to make the real cuts which are very necessary. Recent years have shown the local impact of climate change with issues such as flooding and local economic development.

In recent budget-setting process, Labour admitted that the environment ‘was not a priority for them and voted down several new Green initiatives.

Only the Greens are committed to reducing the carbon footprint of ALL of Oxford and setting an example on other environmental matters.

### ***Green successes:***

- Establishing a Climate Change officer team to improve the City Council performance at cutting its climate emissions and providing the expertise to win awards.
- Introduced a large array of Green initiatives in East Oxford including support for introducing the Car Club, solar panels on Manzil Way, the Farmer’s Market and many other low carbon projects.
- Worked to establish low carbon community groups throughout Oxford to stimulate community involvement in local initiatives.

### ***The Greens will:***

- Re-instating cuts to the City’s environmental budget
- Introducing a Citywide scheme offering free wall and loft insulation
- Build new affordable ‘green homes’ on vacant industrial sites and above car parks - not on sensitive ‘green field’ sites or flood plains.
- Improve enforcement of building regulations to raise environmental standards, deliver fuel savings by insulation schemes and other energy saving measures such as boiler replacement.
- Insist on the implementation of Environmental Impact Reviews on all new building.
- Ensure a new range of policies to tackle the risk of flooding in Oxford not only within the City but also in the northern tributaries to the Thames.
- Investing in renewable energy systems on Council buildings and on Council-owned land.

*Fighting Climate change has a long way to go and local actions play a vital role. Only the Greens have the drive to push ahead with changes that are so obviously needed.*

## **Better Public Transport**

The Greens have been the major group demanding improved public transport better cycle ways and tackling air pollution but the problems persists and a new approach is needed.

The Greens have a long history of fighting for improvements for cyclists and demanding lower emission Public transport with more frequent public services.

Further predestrianisation and better road planning are called for. A range of new developments will be required to ensure that the acute transit problems Oxford faces are tackled.

A major focus should be on developing cycling and helping pedestrians. Cycling is the most energy-efficient form of transport and is not polluting. However cycle routes are poorly thought out.

**Others may recognize the problems but only the Greens have effective solutions.**

### ***Green successes:***

- Demanded and achieved expanded bus services and more frequent timing.
- Demanded changes to bus carbon monoxide emissions.
- Highlighting the health problems of air pollution.
- Established the East Oxford Car Clubs which has taken 300 cars off the road.
- Fought for and achieved cross ticketing between bus companies.
- Implemented a real increase in the number of cycle racks and improved cycle lanes.

### ***The Greens will:***

- Keep up the pressure for a European style separation of cycle ways from main roads to improve safety standards and reduce accident levels.
- Support improved facilities for cyclists such as a covered cycle hub in the City Centre plus immediate filling of potholes and the completion of a cycle network around the City.
- To improve cycle safety cyclists should be given priority over motorised traffic at junctions.
- Increase on-street parking for cycles in and around shopping areas, and in urban terraced streets, where parked cycles might otherwise block the pavement.
- Place cycle routes on the major roads in urban areas with a planned network of interconnecting cycle ways.
- Fight for more affordable public transport with lower emission buses, hybrids and electrics
- Research the potential of reinstating light rapid transport systems such as trams.
- Investigate the potential for an inner city congestion charge.
- Push for new railway branch lines to reopen and new Oxford stations to be established.
- Improved park and ride facilities for car users.
- Increase cheap tick schemes for vulnerable groups.
- Push for a full 20mph scheme for all of Oxford.

*Transport is important. It must be pollution free with an emphasis on public mass transit as the best eco solution. Cyclist and pedestrians deserve a better deal.*

## **Safer Streets**

Road safety and policing remains pressing issues in Oxford and the Greens have never been afraid to those who would threaten our best community interest.

Crime is too high and the accident rate on our roads is still a problem. By working with the police in the Neighbourhood Action Groups Green councillors have brought a more focused approach by the police on trouble spots. With new lighting and designing in security to new building projects and focusing police resources in known trouble spots a great deal as been achieved.

### ***Green successes:***

- The main advocates of new pedestrian crossings such as Donnington Bridge Road.
- The Green led Cowley Road new road system which has led to a 35% decline in accidents

- The Greens openly advocated the introduction of the 20mph rule for Oxford roads, saving lives especially children.
- Pushed for Iffley Road complete resurfacing and the elimination of pot holes.
- Greens pushed for the introduction of the bicycle Bobbies and Community support officers.
- Green councillors have been totally committed to the new Neighbourhood Action Groups guiding the police to local trouble spots.

### ***The Greens will:***

- Fight for new pedestrian crossing such as Percy Street and Weirs Lane
- Press for road upgrades such as Iffley Road and ALL the streets off the main road.
- Push for 20mph speed limit on all inner Oxford City Roads.
- Expand neighbourhood policing.
- New lighting systems on side streets.
- The Greens will support the Rape Crisis Centres and speak out against sexual exploitation of women and activities such as trafficking and prostitution.
- The Greens will focus on eradicating Anti Social Behaviour and alcohol related crime.

The Greens believe in a fear free environment with streets that are safe and welcoming.

## **Power to the People**

Democracy is important – yet the current Labour-run Council has progressively taken powers and funding away from the people and focused it in very few hands.

Local Area Committees have been abolished and their planning powers and devolved decision-making curtailed. A supreme leader was established with many extra powers to stifle political opposition and centralise decision-making.

**The Greens believe that transparent decisions making close to the people is a good think.**

### ***Green Successes:***

- Moved the original motion to set up Area Committees and to give them influence and an allocation of money to spend locally.
- Actively involving residents' groups in decision-making and planning decisions.
- Hosted a vast range of consultative events from Controlled Parking zones to policing on the Cowley Road.
- Launched a vast range of initiatives and responses to local community demands such as support for the Cowley Road Carnival, solar lighting on Manzil Way helping the Farmers Market and hundreds more over 10 years of real democracy. (*See Our Website: Oxfordshire Green Party : What have Green Councillors Ever Done for You?*)

### ***The Greens will:***

- Re-establish the Area Committees with full powers over planning and with adequate financial resources.
- Improve the Council's appalling record on consultation.
- Introduce a Charter of Citizen's Rights to give people more of a say in decision making.
- Increase funding to Area Committees and protect their existing powers to give support to events such as the Cowley Road Carnival and promoter new local festivals and celebrations.

- Engage more local groups via part funding to contribute to the Community.
- Introduce residents discount cards that will encourage local communities to be more stable and financially viable.
- We will introduce a local Health Monitoring Board to report on changes introduced recently to the regional NHS and to report on issues and problems.

*The Greens believe that transparent decisions making close to the people is a good thing and will restore local democracy. To do this structures are needed to foster social engagement and give a sense of community control and influence.*

**Voting Green is no longer an alternative - it is an imperative**