

GREEN PARTY, OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

MANIFESTO 2018

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Introduction

Oxford is a great city, and Greens are proud to represent our diverse, vibrant and caring communities. But we still live in the shadow of the banking crisis, and a government of millionaires is determined to make people pay the price for the failures of politicians – failing to control the corporations and banks, failing to provide enough homes, failing to provide jobs for all.

Now it's our hospitals and council homes that are up for sale, our schools that are being dismantled, our care workers who have to work longer hours for less pay, and our young people are being burdened with debt if they want an education. Greens understand the value of public services to our city, and will continue to campaign to bring them back into public hands. Privatisation is not the solution to our problems fully funding services is.

Oxford is facing a housing crisis and as the number of people who can't afford a home goes up, the council must step up to meet the challenge. People waiting for social housing are being let down and the list continues to grow. Tenants are getting a raw deal as repairs are delayed while rents creep ever higher. Greens are pushing the council to step in to fix the crisis.

Increasingly, national politicians are passing the buck for their failures and blaming migrants. Politicians from the major parties are backing disastrous BREXIT strategies instead of offering leadership, visionless politicians from the major parties are bending over backwards to appease extreme Brexiteers. The government is splitting up families, making life harder for businesses, and driving young people into debt. Greens welcome migrants to our communities – they are our friends, neighbours, co-workers, and partners.

We need an economy that works for our communities. Businesses owned in the community have a stake in the community doing well – not in sucking profits out to tax havens. Greens would take action to defend diversity in our shopping streets, to roll out the living wage to more of our city's jobs, and to oppose cuts to two of Oxford's largest public-sector employers – education and health.

We are glad we live in a city that doesn't accept the Tories plan for our economy – selling off our public services, BREXIT and re-inflating the housing bubble – We believe the council could be showing another way.

So, if you want to see our communities put first, vote Green. If you want to see public services in public hands, vote Green. If you want to see housing of a decent standard and at affordable cost, vote Green. If you want to oppose BREXIT, vote Green.

Protecting Public Services

Our public services are key to how we care for each other as a society. Our schools and hospitals, teachers and care workers should be able to put us first and provide a quality service. “The fragmentation caused by privatisation of public services, though highly profitable for top executives, is extremely inefficient, bureaucratic and wasteful. Time and again, the tax payer has to pick up the bill for failed privatised companies like Carillion. Greens have always seen good quality publicly run public services as essential to building a caring society.

Locally and nationally public services are being run down and sold off. In Oxford we have seen closures, privatisation and cuts in services like never before. Large cutbacks have been introduced by the Conservative controlled County Council plus deep cuts in the local Health Service and many other public sector bodies. Whilst Labour, Lib Dem and Conservatives have been voting for cuts, Green councillors have been there voting against reductions in services. We’ve defended our libraries, children’s centres, youth centres. We’ve called for protecting the elderly and vulnerable from the impact of an uncaring government’s spending cuts that are falling most heavily on the services they use. We’ve shown that small increases in council tax (of around 40p a week) could keep services open for the most vulnerable, and called for people to decide whether they wanted to chip in for the sake of their neighbours. But Labour, Lib Dem and Tory politicians who weren’t prepared to put their careers on the line to stand behind the Green proposal to save local services.

Meanwhile the Labour-run Oxford City Council have held money back and cut back on staff and services when they could have been investing in our City. It was Labour who privatised Leisure Services and have been cutting millions each year from the budget. The present Conservative government want to run down our services even more, it’s more important than ever for councils to put their communities first by supporting the organisations helping people to leave homelessness behind, the food banks, providing meals to people in deprived areas, and the advice centres helping people with their finances and disabilities.

Council-provided services support all of us in different ways in Oxford and are crucial to the wellbeing of our communities. While other political parties won’t promise to reverse the damage done by government cuts, Greens will campaign to see public funding restored to councils and other public services.

The response from Oxford City Council, the authority with a statutory responsibility for housing and homelessness, has been poor.

Greens recognise the value of public services and want to see them kept in public hands. We value and encourage working with trade unions to deliver effective services.

Green successes:

- Repeatedly proposing legal alternative budgets which would have protected frontline services in the face of relentless central government grant cuts. Exposing the myth that there is no alternative.
- Fought consistently to maintain the principle of free education and an end to Labour and Tory tuition fees and charges.
- Successfully convinced the Council to retain control of council housing and repeatedly challenged the government's "viability tests" that prevent the building of more.
- Campaigned to reopen the Oxford Community Hospital.
- Stopped the closure of all municipal toilets around Oxford. - ?
- Opposed the privatisation of leisure services.
- Supported campaigns locally to keep our NHS public and stop privatisation.
- Worked with campaigning groups and trade unions to oppose the cuts.
- Were there at every demonstration against the cuts.

The Green Party will:

- Continue to oppose the cuts in our public services and press for the reestablishment of lost services to our sick, the elderly and young citizens. We will continue to move budgets to protect the most vulnerable and to save our services.
- Fight against privatisation of Oxford's health and education services and resist government pressure to privatise ever more public services.
- Stop further council house sell-offs and protect our community centres.
- Work to return public transport to public ownership.

Better Housing for all

Oxford has a housing crisis. Housing is the least affordable in the country, with renters paying higher prices than anywhere else outside London

Too often people are paying high rent yet get poor service – basic rights aren't respected by rogue landlords, and repairs aren't getting done. Faced with little alternative people put up with paying through the teeth to be ignored. Greens want to take action to drive up standards in rented housing and to tackle the burden of rent.

There are more than 4,000 households on the local housing register waiting for social and council homes. Successive Tory and Labour governments have both failed to provide houses for those who need them,. The shortage of housing in Oxford has got worse, while across the country hundreds of thousands of homes sit empty. And then the bedroom tax and other benefit cuts are forcing people to look for smaller (and more crowded) houses - houses which aren't available in their communities. The introduction of Universal Credit, with its long payment delays, has created a threefold increase in rough sleeping.

Greens will tackle the issues of availability, affordability and homelessness. We will support increasing the number of council and social homes available to those who need them. Greens recognise that access to decent housing is a human right – the council must do much more to meet the housing needs of all. Only the Greens have a comprehensive range of housing policies that will be implemented. Rhetoric is not enough.

With the massive cut in Oxfordshire County Council funding for homelessness (voted through in 2016 by the Tories and supported by Labour and the Lib Dems) there has been a rising numbers of homeless people on the streets of Oxford. The City Council by closing night shelters such as Lucy Faithful house and openly and directly harassing the homeless has played a disgraceful role in making life hell for the unfortunate who find themselves without a roof over their head. The situation has reached crisis levels.

Homelessness is undoubtedly a complex issue too but, after spending time supporting the Oxford 'Open House' movement and talking to individuals and organisations involved in homelessness support, the Greens have put together an achievable Ten Point Action Plan to help tackle homelessness.

Green successes:

- Took the lead in a 10 year campaign to introduce a Licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Ensured the provision of affordable housing on urban sites and demanded more Council House building.
- First suggested the rule that all new housing developments should include 50% affordable housing.
- Pressing for more housing on urban sites such as the Westgate Development.
- Supported directly and personally the homeless people who have been abandoned by the Labour Council
- Succeed in getting Oxford City Council to work on an Empty Spaces Protocol based on the successful Iffley Open House.
- Green Councillors donate some of their ward member spend (a grant given to Councillors each year to spend on good causes) to the Oxford Homeless Project.
- Green motion to Oxford City Council (24th April) to re-open Lucy Faithful House and provide adequate accommodation.(voted down by Labour Councillors).

The Green Party will:

- Oppose the bedroom tax. But more than that -we would oppose eviction for non-payment of rent that has resulted directly from loss of housing benefit under the new government 'bedroom tax' rules, and protect the security of tenure for tenants in council homes.
- Oppose evictions which result from cuts or delays in benefits or Universal Credit.
- Continue to press for sustainable development in area plans such as the West Barton Housing Scheme with no concessions to demands from developers that social housing ratios be dropped or reduced.
- Continue to press for an end to Right to Buy.50 of ex Council house stock is now in the hands of private landlords.
- Investigate the feasibility of a social housing rent freeze (or at least rent increases no greater than inflation) to help our poorest households and controlling private rents to make lower rents possible.
- Meet housing need and balance this against the necessity to protect our open spaces and the heritage of Oxford.
- Encourage the Council to buy more existing homes for use as social housing.
- Launch a programme that social housing, rented accommodation, and privately owned homes all have excellent levels of insulation to keep energy bills down and prevent fuel poverty.
- Reverse County funding cuts & increase the City's homelessness grants
- Re-furbish Lucy Faithful Faithfull House or a City centre site as a new homeless hostel
- Change 'local connection' rules so more rough sleepers are helped
- Revoke the City Centre PSPO; which fines and criminalises the homeless
- Introduce an Empty Spaces Protocol to make vacant properties temporarily available for the homeless

- Change 'severe weather' rules to offer earlier shelter to homeless not just Christmas
- Introduce new Council-backed letting agency offering fairer rents and more secure contracts
- Make homes built on Council land 100% social housing - work with nearby Councils to build more affordable homes
- Offer more support to organisations that offer 'safety net' services such as the [Oxford Homeless Project](#)
- Use compulsory purchase powers to buy-up long-term vacant sites
- Push for setting up a Council-run letting agency – free from unfair letting agency fees for tenants and pushing up standards in rented housing.
- Bring back into use larger long-term empty commercial properties suitable for conversion to housing, including flats.
- Get tough with bad landlords but seek to redraft the confusing bureaucratic application process, with the aim of improving the quality of the private rented sector with more registrations.
- Establish a new improved deal for people who live on boats at residential moorings.
- Demand more 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.

Building the Local Economy

Greens want to help build a stronger local economy to work in the interests of our communities, not those of big corporations. Oxford should be known for good quality well rewarded work in both the manufacturing and service sectors. We need a thriving mix of shops, offices and cafes - not a bland copy of all the national chain stores.

Greens will encourage social enterprises and cooperatives as a larger part of the employment mix, because we recognise that when they are not protected we lose local shops and businesses.

Businesses owned in the community keep the profits flowing in the community and are more likely to understand the concerns of their neighbours. Chain stores suck profits out of the area and are distant and unaccountable to the communities they want to sell to. Greens will seek to level the playing field to promote the local economy – for example by introducing a national chain supermarket rate levy.

For the economy to work for our communities, it must support decent jobs that pay more than a Living Wage. Greens will work to support key employers in our city – such as opposing the cuts in education and health – Green will encourage more employers to guarantee a Living Wage.

Tourism in Oxford can be a substantial benefit to the local economy and local residents but the approximately 9.6 million visitors per year tend to be day trippers. We need to encourage longer stay tourism and cycle and walking rural tourism to enhance the benefits to our local economy.

Oxford Green Party recognises that our city is influenced by globalising processes. Publishing is a major source of private sector employment in Oxford. The international growth of electronic publishing and the pressure to have free access to academic journal content could have implications for the currently substantial employment in publishing in our city. Related to this, internet sales of books may exert downward pressure upon Oxford's bookshops – just as internet sales may continue to impact upon some of our other retailers. Whilst we welcome innovation including internet shopping that brings a wider range of choice to Oxford's consumers, we recognise that many types of goods need to be seen by the consumer in order for an effective judgement to be made upon their value.

Currently we have both Labour and Conservative Parties pushing for BREXIT from the European Union. The Greens are clear : Withdrawal from EU is bad for both domestic and international investment in Oxford and will hamper the recruitment of staff in vital local services such as Health. The Government's proposals to take back from Europe powers over the environment and social justice are extremely disturbing given their appalling record compared to the policies of the EU over the last 40 years. These actions would help neither the people nor the environment in Oxford. Greens recognise that there is a need for a new referendum that focuses on the negotiated proposals to leave the EU and also offers the prospect of remaining. (the EU has problems in many areas so we want reform, including changes to the Common Agricultural Policy, but we also want to continue to be a member of the EU. Leaving is folly.

Green successes:

- Greens successfully mobilised local opposition to a planning application for change of use to a hotel-chain restaurant, thus saving Professional Music Technology Shop, one of our iconic Cowley Road shops and helping them to move to new larger premises.
- Blackwells changed their planning application for student accommodation to several small local retail units when Greens pointed out that it would breach the Cowley Road planning restrictions on balanced retail business.
- Our popular Green Party Winter Green Fairs have 36 years of success, involving many small local enterprises.
- With Green support, a local landlord twice refused to rent to large chains, preferring to rent his premises to small local retailers.
- Got the council to pursue a 'National Supermarket Levy' within the rates, recognising the impact they have on the local economy and to raise funds to invest in local communities.
- Greens helped attract the Ethical Property Company to East Oxford where they now manage the Old Music Hall on Cowley Road, which provides office space for small local charities and organisations.
- The Greens initiated the campaign for a large employers parking levy that would encourage them to support their employees to use other means than cars to come to work.
- The Greens managed to get the Council to agree to a temporary car parking arrangement which has reduced the financial impact on local businesses.
- Greens surveyed the local traders near St Clements's car park correctly identifying that the loss of the car park would reduce trade.

The Green Party will:

- Continue to work with local residents to get a better planning regime to protect local traders on the Cowley Road, Iffley Road and St Clements.
- Oppose the current traffic proposals for the Westgate shopping centre. Its larger units will attract current retailers from the High Street, leaving hard-to-fill empty spaces with high rents in the High Street. Now that we have the Westgate Centre it is vital that other shops in the City continue to thrive and the Council must turn to ensuring that they are supported.
- Continue our work with traders and the City Council to re-build trust between the parties and ensure a successful future for the Covered Market as a home for a wide variety of independent businesses.
- Continue to run Green Fairs each year, giving participating local businesses the opportunity to attract new customers.
- Support the Oxford Breakfast scheme to encourage overnight tourists to shop at local retailers.
- Support the Oxford Green Card to encourage tourists to use sustainable businesses.
- Support the Oxford Pound to support the local economy, to be launched in the future.

- Try to use the local Council's discretion to vary business rates to support social enterprises and co-operatives.
- Promote Oxford as a tourist destination for UK and short-distance tourism from the continent. making local authorities fully responsible for introducing or extending cycling and walking networks within their own boundaries and in conjunction with other authorities. This is the priority area for tourism development as it has the smallest ecological impact. It will also be useful to residents: All new developments aimed at attracting tourists should also have local benefits.
- Empower the City Council to give grant aid to small and medium-sized tourism sector enterprises, such as bed and breakfast establishments and hotels, which wish to improve their facilities for cyclists.
- Link coach parking charges to inflation, as part of a strategy to reduce this unsustainable form of tourist travel in favour of less damaging modes like cycling, walking, and the use of trains.
- Campaign to upgrade pay and conditions of work in tourism, which are amongst the worst of any industry in Britain. The Green Party would seek full compliance with minimum wage legislation in the short term, until a compulsory Living Wage is adopted; we would require that employees and sole traders are trained thoroughly in skills appropriate to their enterprise; and we would encourage the creation of longer-term employment in this sector by promoting dual use of tourism facilities on a year-round basis. New development proposals should be assessed for their capacity to attract year-round use.
- Act to improve accommodation that enables people to bring their pets on holiday; this is limited. Local authorities would conduct a survey of such accommodation locally and if necessary give grant aid to ensure that enough is available to meet the estimated demand.

Migrants Rights

Oxford has a strong history of welcoming migrants. Greens are proud to live in such a city that is a living example of the energy immigration brings to communities. A vote for the Green Party is a vote to stand up to the scapegoating political elite.

The Green Party firmly believes immigration enhances our culture and diversity, benefits the economy, and improves our relationships with peoples around the world. We also believe the UK has a moral duty to offer refuge to all people seeking asylum.

The Green Party condemns other political parties that are blaming and scapegoating migrants for economic and social problems – problems caused by the government's failure to run the economy for ordinary people. We will stand up to UKIP, Tory, Labour and Lib Dem policies that would shut the door to migrants,

Green successes:

- Supported all the demonstrations held in Oxford for asylum seekers and migrants.
- Oppose measures forcing landlords to check immigration status of tenants.
- long standing supporters of Oxford City of Sanctuary.
- Provided £2,500 to Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action to fund 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' (ESOL) places, to train volunteers, and to bring together organisations working with people who need help.
- Provided £2,500 to Asylum Welcome to fund individual tuition and to establish a continuing fund to receive contributions for that purpose.
- Ensured £5000 to provide 5 days training for 25 people (Service Users, Carers and Voluntary Sector staff and volunteers) to understand Community Care rights law .
- Moved the motions at City & County to support unaccompanied minors .

The Green Party will:

- Ensure that all council services and advice are able to meet the needs of migrants – including helping with accessing housing and benefits.
- Fund advice services to help new migrants to settle in, ranging from registering with the NHS to getting the paperwork needed to work.
- Campaign against the removal of legal aid from migrants, and support initiatives to continue providing legal assistance.
- Campaign to end the detention of asylum seekers.
- Campaign for asylum seekers to have the right to work – rather than being stuck with no wages and no benefits.
- Oppose the government's Immigration Act that is set to force landlords to make residency checks and charge migrants to use the NHS.
- Support Oxford's status as a City of Sanctuary.
- Continue to support language classes for migrants and the children of migrants.

A Sustainable Oxford

The Greens have been at the forefront of improving our environment and making our city sustainable, pushing the council to make change happen.

The Greens have clearly been the major force behind moves to create a sustainable Oxford and countless initiatives can be traced back to Green budget amendments, questions or motions to the City Council.

When Greens held the balance of power on the City Council 2004-2008, we succeeded in creating a sustainability programme and increased recycling. The amount of waste generated by our society is scandalous and an ineffective use of resources. The present administration's record on waste management is poor. The recycle rate has been effectively static for years and there is still a great deal to do if we are to make Oxford into a truly sustainable city.

Over the years, Green Councillors have been the foremost advocates of moves to tackle climate change. The City is now recognised as a reasonable authority in tackling climate change, primarily because of the constant efforts of Green councillors to focus the work of the Council on achieving energy efficiency and reducing emissions.

Recent years have shown the local impact of climate change fully with issues such as flooding and local storm damage from freak weather occurring year on year. Only the Greens are committed to reducing the carbon footprint across the board from all of Oxford's sources of emissions and taking the lead on other environmental matters.

Greens highlight the scientific consensus on climate change. It is happening to us now in Oxford and we must face up to the likelihood of all sorts of threats from weather changes, one of the most pressing at this time being flooding. We recognise however that it is going to be vital for us to adapt to a whole range of challenges by ensuring we have access to a good supply of locally produced food and that there is adequate clean water should there be drought and the air we breathe does not damage our health.

Green successes:

- Pressed for improvements in sustainability saving Council energy bills by better insulation schemes and reducing Council waste.
- Were behind virtually every sustainable policy initiative such as food waste collection, green energy suppliers for the Council, local Farmers' Markets, promoting allotments, the Local Car Club and many, many more Green initiatives.
- Pushed for the Council to adopt a Fairtrade policy for its suppliers.
- Established a Climate Change officer team to improve the City Council performance at cutting its climate emissions and providing the expertise to do the job.
- Ensured Redbridge Waste Centre was retained for domestic users.
- Ensured food waste collection returned to free of charge.

The Green Party will: -

- Work with other authorities to create a municipal energy provider using renewable systems such as solar farms and hydro schemes to generate local energy at cheaper rates.
- Build into our alternative budgets real systems of insulation in all Council housing and municipal buildings.
- Create Low Emission Zones across the City that have real regulations that will deliver genuine reductions in pollution rather than purely a wish list.
- Demand a dramatic increase in present stagnant recycling rates. figures such as 80% can be achieved .Set the date for zero land fill as 2020.
- Push for a greater number of more varied types of recycling centres focusing on different products and a quicker response time to clear grot spots, and oppose incineration.
- Push for real improvements in waste disposal with more staff committed to litter collection, Green space litter blitzing, and deep clean programmes.
- Promote a Zero Waste approach in which all types of waste are assessed for re-use and recycling, creating new, useful employment as a result. Oppose incineration ...creating more CO2 is not a solution.
- Push for growth in home grown food by developing community gardens, sale and production of local food, and enhancing allotments, as we are aware that food will become increasingly costly in family budgets.
- Ensure support against flooding by protecting local communities, but also pursuing a whole river basin approach that recognises that environmentally sensitive measures are required that will lessen the volumes of water coming down from the upper Thames and its tributaries.
- Support water conservation measures by all users. Development agreements must include a commitment from developers to install water butts on new houses, provide means of using greywater for toilet flushing and low water use appliances as standard fixtures in new and refurbished homes.
- Introduce a water poverty standard similar to the fuel poverty standard in its original form ,rather than as redefined by the Coalition Government to reduce numbers in fuel poverty. Oxfordshire Green Party urges the Government to give consideration to setting 3% of net income figure as the level above which it is unreasonable to expect a household to meet water charges, acknowledge a higher expenditure to imply water poverty, and develop policies to reduce the numbers of households affected.

A City for Students

Education and training is for the benefit of society as a whole, not just the individual.

The Green Party remains absolutely opposed to Tuition Fees, and also to the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which used to support students in Further Education.

Tuition fees add to the massive private debt of our society, and undermine people's ability to save for the future. The Green Party believes access to Higher and Further Education should be as open as possible, permitting us to address UK skills shortages and to re-build the public sector after devastating and avoidable cuts.

Students in Oxford are a vital part of our communities – contributing to the local economy by providing employment and staying here to work, and contributing to local culture by participating in society and bringing new people to the city. Education is also one of the largest employment sectors.

However, they are often neglected by local councils who consider them a transitory population. Greens will fight for students to be supported on equal terms by council services and welcomed as members of their local communities.

Green successes:

- Getting the City Council to be tougher with bad landlords with the result of gradually improving the quality of the private rented sector.
- Obtaining a new more comprehensive policy on Houses of Multiple Occupation from the City Council.
- Attending regular consultation meeting with the Universities to improve student welfare and liaison with local communities.
- Provided money for extra waste collection rounds at student accommodation.
- Continually fighting for the redesign of notorious accident black spots for cyclists in the City.
- Supporting the student volunteer hubs in their schemes to support local communities.
- Supporting applications for more campus based accommodation such as Hollow Way and Iffley Road at the Former VW garage development.
- Providing grants for the arts and festivals such as the Cowley Road Carnival that make this City a great place to be.

The Green Party will:

- Continue to campaign against tuition fees, and to demand the return of the EMA, and for equal opportunities as the only way to maintain social justice.
- Campaign to ensure that City Council housing policies reflect the needs and aspirations of students to live in decent accommodation throughout their studies.
- Seek to expand all bike hire schemes.

Planning for a Sustainable Future

While fighting to preserve our green spaces from development, it is important that we do not forget the management and preservation of our existing open spaces, conservation areas and Town Meadows and we acknowledge the work of 'Friends' groups for existing parks in helping to make this a reality.

Protection of green space around Oxford is a real priority, especially given both Conservative and Labour **government** failure to protect greenfield sites from urban sprawl and council proposals to allow Oxford to expand outwards into neighbouring districts.

The council has pushed forward plans that have been strongly opposed as **disastrous** by local communities: from redeveloping St. Clements car park to the Port Meadow fiasco, they've shown a cavalier disregard for local opinion.

We need to protect the overall level of jobs for existing residents through planning policies rather than relying solely on City expansion. The focus should be on high quality new developments which offer well-paid employment opportunities. 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.

Green successes:

- Making open spaces - such as Aston's Eyot - more accessible and helping local groups improve and develop schemes.
- Retaining public access to parks such as Angel & Greyhound Meadow and backing Town Greens status for for sites such as Warneford Meadow.
- Forcing the Council to review its failure to provide an Environmental Impact Statement of the Port Meadow development, with the community campaign.
- 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. Only Greens required more assurances about infrastructure, community facilities, traffic minimisation, and open green space in the West Barton Development.
- Helping the Professional Music Technology shop fend off the threat of closure by spreading news of the petition against re-development – which very rapidly gained over 2000 signatures, forcing the City Council's Planning Committee into a unanimous vote against proposed re-development.

The Greens will:

- Oppose the mindless expansion of Oxford and destruction of the Green Belt.
- Create new allotments where there is demand on the periphery of urban areas to increase local food production.
- Support local residents devising their own Community Nature Plans for open spaces.
- Press for Town Green status for accepted green spaces.
- 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, especially through our engagement with the Covered Market renovation proposals.
- View Oxford in its natural context. This includes planning to keep its biodiversity and protecting natural resources like watercourses whilst taking action to prevent flooding. Extensive tree planting will form an important part of this approach.
- Resist the development of hydraulic fracking anywhere in Oxfordshire, in cooperation with our Green Party MEPs.

Action on Climate Change:

Only the Green Party is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of all of Oxford and setting an example on other environmental matters.

Countless City council actions concerning tackling climate change can be traced back to calls from Greens. The city council has reduced its own carbon footprint by more than 20 %, but most of this has been because the authority is selling off buildings and calling that a saving.

Unfortunately, globally greenhouse gas emissions are now rising once again. It will take real commitment to make the actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions which are necessary. Recent years have shown the local impact of climate change with, for example, more frequent flooding.

The council must take a lead in persuading the private sector and local public sector bodies to improve energy conservation and use of microgeneration – reducing their costs in the process. The council has a responsibility to tackle climate change and local actions play a vital role. Only the Greens have the drive to push ahead with changes that are needed.

Green successes:

- Established a Climate Change officer team to improve City Council performance in cutting its greenhouse gas emissions and provided the expertise to win awards.
- Introduced and supported a large array of Green initiatives in East Oxford including the Car Club, solar panels on Manzil Way, the Farmers' Market and many other low carbon projects.
- Worked to establish low carbon community groups throughout Oxford to stimulate community involvement in local initiatives.

The Green Party will: -

- Reverse cuts to the city's environmental budget.
- Introduce a city-wide scheme offering free wall and loft insulation for all tenants.
- Build new affordable 'green homes' on vacant industrial sites and above car parks - not on sensitive 'green field' sites or flood plains. It is possible to retain desired car parking at ground level whilst providing apartments above such parking, maximising the utility of the space.
- 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 Assessment and traffic impact assessment on all new building.
- Propose policies to tackle the risk of flooding in Oxford not only within the City but also around the northern tributaries to the Thames.
- Invest in renewable energy systems on Council buildings and on Council owned land (see appendix).

Better Public Transport

The Greens have a long history of fighting for improvements for cyclists and demanding lower emission public transport with more frequent public services. Others may recognize the problems but only the Greens have effective solutions. The local Green Party transport policy for Oxford City published 23 years ago in 1995 has either already been implemented or is currently being actively considered.

Further pedestrianisation and better road planning are needed. A range of new developments will be required to tackle the acute transit problems Oxford faces, focusing on helping cyclists and pedestrians.

The Greens recognise the contributions of the Oxford Pedestrians' Association, and local cycling groups and businesses in supporting a sustainable transport future for our city. The City Council's Cycling Forum was created at Green councillors' request, to enable the many different cycling lobby groups to communicate and speak with one voice. Cycling is the most energy efficient form of transport and is not polluting. However cycle routes are poorly thought out: we need a complete network for cycling routes, not disconnected cycle lanes.

To highlight the outrageous well above inflation increases in rail fares the Green have stage protests outside Oxford Railway station. They will continue to campaign for the nationalization of our railways and for fare levels that reflect European prices.

Re-nationalisation of the railways has always been Green Party policy, for which we have continually pressed. The ideologically-driven privatisation of the railways has been a huge failure leading to inefficiency, lack of planning, highly complex and continually rising fares, and poor and unreliable services.

Greens have pressed for improvements in transport under the City Council's planning and other powers but despite recognition that there is a real problem, the Labour-run City Council has advanced only limited measures to address the issues resulting in the continuation of the congestion and air pollution. The County, which has major transport powers, also fails and is only now beginning to address these issues, and Greens are very active responding to proposals (such as the Zero Emission Zone, congestion charging, a workplace parking levy, access restrictions) and coming up with visionary new ideas.

Then recent congestion created by the opening of the Westgate Shopping Centre must be addressed with measures such as extra cycle racks better bus routing and promoting the Park and Ride system.

Transport is important. It must be pollution-free with an emphasis on cycling, walking, and public transport as the best solutions for solving congestion. Cyclists and pedestrians deserve a better deal.

Green successes:

- Staged protests at Oxford Railway station at every outrageous fare increase.
- Demanded and achieved expanded bus services and more frequent timing.
- Demanded monitoring bus carbon monoxide emissions.
- Highlighting the health problems of air pollution with numerous Town Hall presentations by our Green European Member of Parliament Keith Taylor.
- Demanded changes to bus carbon monoxide emissions.
- Established the East Oxford Car Club which has taken 400 cars off the road.
- Fought for over 15 years and achieved cross ticketing between bus companies.
- Implemented a real increase in the number of cycle racks and improved cycle lanes throughout the City.
- Continued to work with communities to introduce Controlled Parking Zones - where the community concerned supports them.
- Fought a successful campaign to introduce a CPZ in Iffley Fields.
- Continually pressing for speedy and more effective pot hole repairs on all our roads.
- Planted the concept of a large employers parking levy charge within Council budgets to generate income to fix potholes.
- Responded in detail to several proposed schemes like the Zero Emission Zone.

The Green Party will:

- Keep up the pressure for a Europeanstyle separation of cycle-ways from main roads to improve safety standards and reduce accident levels. This is the so called 'Benelux three division system' recognised as the principal reason that cycle accidents are 60% less in Europe as compared to the UK).
- Campaign to increase the frequency of the renewing of cycle markings, which are currently being neglected throughout the City by the County Council.
- Support improved facilities for cyclists such as a covered cycle hub in the City Centre plus prompt filling of potholes and the completion of a cycle network around the City.
- Campaign to improve cycle safety by giving cyclists 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 especially East to West routes.
- Ensure there are enough cycle racks at the new Westgate Centre.
- Fight for more affordable public transport with lower emission buses, hybrids and electrics. Set new standards to be introduced by 2020 for all buses - 20% lower than present Low Emission Zone ratios.
- Seek to expand the existing pedestrianisation in the City Centre.
- Research the potential of reinstating light rapid transport systems e.g. trams.
- Investigate the potential for an inner city congestion charge for Oxford.

- Push for railway branch lines to reopen and a new Oxford four platform station to be established.
- Improve park and ride facilities for car users, with an extra charge to cover improvements.
- Introduce new cycle hire systems. similar to the London system.
- Introduce cheap ticket schemes for low income groups.
- Continue to support car-free housing alongside improved public transport, using Section 106 agreements and successor legislation, in new developments.
- Push for a full 20mph scheme for all residential roads in Oxford within the ring road.
- Investigate the feasibility of a freight distribution centre outside Oxford as a means of reducing Heavy Goods Vehicle entry to the city, sited on an existing industrial estate.
- Investigate the contribution cable cars (a tried and tested technology capable of delivering 3,000 passengers per hour at a third the cost of trams and in a fifth of the time) could make to Oxford's transport network, including access to the JR Hospital.
- Encourage traffic calming to reduce urban traffic.
- Extend the network of speed cameras as soon as financially possible to reduce excessive traffic speeds on our roads.
- Support City Council promotion of teleworking and other forms of working at home, live-work units and improved broadband internet access to decrease the need to travel, especially in rush hours.
- Consider workplace car park charging and road tolls as part of strategies to reduce urban traffic and congestion on trunk roads.
- Fight any expansion of the London Oxford Airport in Kidlington and oppose completely the establishment of a new airport on other sites in Oxfordshire.(now a proposal)
- Establish the City authority as a statutory objector to the proposed high speed rail link running through Oxfordshire and use the billions proposed in local rail service improvements.
- Work with the City Cycling Forum, CyclOx and the Pedestrians Association to improve safety and eliminate danger spots.
- Support the reopening of the so called Varsity Line rail link between Oxford and Cambridge.

Safer Communities

It's important for people to be safe and secure in the places they live and work. Greens want to see road safety taken seriously, and the root causes of social conflict and crime addressed.

The accident rate on our roads is still a problem. Greens work with the police through Neighbourhood Action Groups, where the whole community can be represented in tackling any problems that arise.

We oppose reduction in police force strength and want more bike bobbies on the streets.

The underlying causes of crime are complex, and Greens support solutions that recognise this. The huge inequality in our city and society in general can drive social conflict and crime.– we support making society more equal, including expanding the Living Wage.

Green successes:

- We were the main advocates of new pedestrian crossings such as at Donnington Bridge Road and Iffley Road. Safety must be built into the design.
- The Greens openly advocated the introduction of the 20mph rule for Oxford roads, saving lives - especially children.
- They supported the Cowley Road new road system - which has led to a 35% decline in accidents.
- Pushed for Iffley Road and The Slade to have complete resurfacing and the elimination of pot holes.
- Greens pushed for the introduction of the Bicycle Bobbies and Community Response Officers.
- Green councillors have been totally committed to the Neighbourhood Action Groups guiding the police to local trouble spots.
- Our Green local councillors have worked directly with the local police in the arrest of local drug dealers but equally have been active in seeking medical support for victims of drug addiction.

The Green Party will: -

- Call for the abolition of the Police Commissioners and the restoration of democratic control of policing via an elected police authority.
- Push for 20mph speed limits on all residential roads in Oxford.
- Expand neighbourhood policing.
- Advocate new solar lighting systems on side streets and other designs in safety features which improve security.
- Support the Rape Crisis Centres, trying to stop the cuts to them, and speak out against sexual exploitation of women and activities such as trafficking and prostitution.
- Focus on eradicating anti-social behaviour and alcohol-related crime.

Power to people

In a democracy, people should have power to shape their own lives - simply voting for politicians every few years is not enough. Greens want to see people have a real say in their communities, not a council thinking that it alone can make decisions that affect us all.

The current council administration has taken powers and funding away from people, giving the most important decisions about the future of our city to just a handful of councilors in a Cabinet chosen only from the majority party.

Area-based decision making has been abolished and local councillors have been given less say over decisions affecting the communities they represent, as the council leadership take less interest in the views of the public outside of elections.

The Greens will push for people to have more say in decisions that affect their communities – including shaping plans and sharing out money – to make those decisions more transparent and better represent people’s interests.

The Labour Council in Oxford also tried to introduce a draconian Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) to fine people they did not like .The original list included pavement artists, people living on boats, beggars, buskers and the homeless. The Green Party campaigned to reduce the effects of this which aimed to criminalise and fine people who were least able to pay. Our actions shamed the Labour Councillors to stop using the worst aspects of these locally developed ‘laws’ and into respecting what few belongings people who were having to sleep on the streets may have and to ease the harshness of those PSPO orders. The attack on the homeless by Labour was particularly vicious.

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 involved residents’ groups in decision-making and planning decisions.
- Hosted a vast range of consultative events on issues such as Controlled Parking Zones and 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 East Oxford Farmers’ Market - and hundreds more over ten years of real democracy.

The Green Party will:

- Re-establish the Area Committees with full powers over planning, local devolved decision-making and with adequate financial resources.
- Improve the Council's very poor record on consultation.
- Reintroduce the Committee System of decision making so that all councillors have a say and stop the concentration of power in a few individuals.
- Introduce a Charter of Citizens' Rights to give people more of a say in decision making.
- Help more local groups with grants, to contribute to the community.
- Introduce residents' discount cards, and support the Oxford Pound initiative, that will encourage local communities to be more stable and financially viable.
- Do all we can to promote Credit Unions amongst local communities to combat the influence of loan sharks.
- Support Healthwatch, trade unions in the NHS, and related campaigning groups reporting and campaigning on changes introduced recently to the regional NHS and to report on issues and problems.
- Revoke the City Centre PSPO; which fines and criminalises the homeless.

Healthy in our City

Health and wellbeing are essential features of a good life, at all ages. The City Council has a role to play in maintaining good health, and fostering better lifestyles that encourage healthy living. The current picture of health in our city should not encourage complacency especially when you consider the unacceptable amount of air pollution in the centre of the city.

Unfortunately, Labour when in government encouraged Public-Private Partnerships in the NHS which have increased the costs of healthcare and this has been continued by the Present Government.

Also, this governments pressure on the NHS to cut £20 billion in England and Wales ignores the advice of health service organisations including trade unions that an ageing population means higher not lower health spending. WE must be outspoken critics of the Government so called 'Transformation and Sustainability Plans' which will see the NHS locally £22 milliun worse off.

The Green Party believes in an NHS provided from public funds, delivered by the NHS ,free at the point of use and available to all.

We will not like Labour and the Conservatives retain the Commissioning bodies because this the central mechanism for privatization.

Oxfordshire Green Party supports Healthwatch, trade unions and community campaigning to defend and enhance our health services.

Green Party Successes:

- The Green Party has never wavered from a publicly funded publicly operated health service even though both major parties are promoting the concept of privatisation via contractualisation for Health provision.
- It was the Greens who fought against Labour introduction of Private Finance Innovative NHS funding contracts with untrustworthy firms such as Carillion.

The Green Party will: -

- Resist attempts to reduce by constant cuts the health services in Oxford.
- Continue to support the use of public open spaces for recreation, dog walking, children's play, and sporting activities – and help in protecting these sites against encroachment by unwanted development.
- Work to increase cycling in the city and to reduce traffic, increasing health and reducing noise, air pollution, and stress.
- Support and maintain community centres in providing locations for physical activity and events for all ages.
- Insist that air pollution in the City centre is reduced and eliminated.

Animal Welfare

Oxfordshire Green Party recognises that the City Council has a vital role in the protection and advancement of animal rights in Oxford.

Green Successes:

- It was Green Party councilors who moved that visiting circuses must not involve wild animals.
- Green have been the movers of various motions to improve bio diversity policies in our green spaces
- The Green councilors moved the motion at the County council seeking a new positive approach to try to stop the decline in wildlife
- Greens moved the motion. (mocked by Labour councillors) that the City must play its part in trying to stop bee colony collapse. Simply because our survival depends on bees pollination power.

The Green Party will:

- Support the City Council in opposing any circus using animals in the Oxford area.
- Ensure periodic checking of pet shops to prevent the sale of endangered species.
- Resource the dog warden service adequately, to help reduce animal cruelty and the risks that untrained or uncontrolled animals may present to the public or to other animals.
- Consider grant assistance to animal welfare groups providing animal refuges.
- Appoint an Animal Rights Officer to lead an animal welfare team for the city.

APPENDIX - ENERGY COOPERATIVES FOR OXFORD

Oxford's councils must consider energy cooperatives as a means of cutting their energy bills.

Southampton and Woking councils both have their own energy generation helping to reduce their energy bills. Both councils have plans to extend their schemes to cover more local housing.[1]

Oxfordshire Green Party wants both the City and County councils to give higher priority to local energy options.

Pioneering efforts by Southampton and Woking councils have helped these local authorities keep their own energy bills under control. They now intend to extend the benefits of their efforts to their local communities, including supplying more households with their energy.

Oxford City Council and our County Council can investigate the cost advantages of investing in renewable systems of energy generation to cut their own costs, and those of local residents in the longer term.

“It is also possible for the Councils to support the formation of energy cooperatives. Brighton has an active energy cooperative expanding renewable electricity supplies in Brighton and neighbouring areas.[3]

“Plans already exist for more renewable energy in Didcot and further expansion of the efforts of the Westmill Solar team, which has a solar park near Watchfield.[4] Cooperatives UK has issued a major report on this growing energy sector [5] with case studies of working examples of energy cooperatives around the country. It would clearly be better to use council reserves to support energy conservation and clean energy than allow more Oxfordshire households to join the estimated 4.5 million UK households in fuel poverty.

References:

1. Both locality schemes are explained in more detail in: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/04/councils-generate-ownpower-big-six-energy-fuel-poverty>
2. <http://www.brightonenergy.org.uk/> They say: “We connect investors to solar projects in Brighton and on the South Coast. As the projects produce clean electricity they generate revenue by selling power to our solar landlords and to the national grid. As we earn revenue, investors are paid back with interest.” SEE also: http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/10795783.Brighton_Energy_Co_op_is_powering_to_solar_bill_saver/
3. SEE: <https://www.energysaving.coop/a-peoplespower-station-in-oxfordshire/> AND <http://www.westmillsolar.coop/aimsandbackground.asp>
4. http://www.uk.coop/sites/storage/public/downloads/renewableenergy_0_0.pdf
5. Citizens Advice: http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/pressoffice/press_index/press_20130516.htm Recently, the Government has changed the official definition of fuel poverty to cut the numbers of households.