

GREEN PARTY, OXFORD CITY COUNCIL MANIFESTO
2020 draft version 2A
For the Common Good

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Vote Green for the Common Good – Vote Green, get Green

Our Policies at a Glance

Our policies, outlined below, are the culmination of years of scientific research, trial and error, and sheer common sense. We have worked with other parties to implement these, and we believe that by working together we can tackle the issues raised above. Each one of our policy areas starts with the situation as it currently is, followed by what we have done to help address the issue, and then what we plan to continue to do if we are elected. However, our generalised policies are to:

- Fight the Climate emergency with all means possible, saving both the planet and your finances in the process.
- Protect public services; greater investment in public services leads to dramatically less crime, anti-social behaviour, and illness, whilst also leading to dramatically more social cohesiveness, social mobility, financial stability and sustainable development.
- Provide more and better quality housing across Oxford, to help decrease long, expensive commuting, remove the housing crisis, and to build the resilience of Oxford's local economy.
- Building the Green Economy, establishing an economy that works for us, not soulless corporations but local businesses which are the bedrock of Oxford's successes.
- Protecting Migrant's rights, both refugee and economic. Migrants provide more in taxes and services, and take less out, than any other demographic – so whether you are a Syrian refugee escaping or Dutch national working, you are welcome in our City.
- Planning long term for a sustainable future for the next 100 years and beyond, not 10.
- Providing the space for Students and Young People to thrive;
- Improving transport infrastructure so more people can confidently and safely travel around Oxford without the need for cars to clog our streets and lungs.
- Evolving safer, stronger communities, tackling antisocial behaviour with constructive, not vilifying, policies, whilst allowing them to grow and promote society.
- Promoting Health in our city, supporting the work of *Healthwatch*, local unions, and local campaigns across the board, whilst increasing funding so that more social workers can give you the attention you deserve and they want to give.
- Animal welfare promotion; protecting our pets and wildlife whilst tackling trafficking.
- Bringing democratic power back to the people.

Introduction

Oxford is a great city, and Greens are proud to represent our diverse, vibrant and caring communities. In the European Elections of May 2019 Oxford gave Green candidates 10,239 votes (23%) and Labour just 6,444 (10%). Whilst the Liberal Democrats topped the poll in the City, the Conservatives recorded just 1755 votes.¹

We believe that the greatest threats to our City include:

The Climate Emergency: The Green Party believes that a carbon neutral UK must be achieved by 2030 if we are to avoid a Climate catastrophe. Since we first began to be aware of the heating of the Planet by human action in the late 1980s, greenhouse gas emissions have risen by over 60% and global temperatures have gone up by 1 degree C.

This has had dramatic effects upon the Climate, with more extreme weather afflicting larger areas of the world. We must take exemplary action in our City for our children and the children still to come, and for the countless species damaged by global warming and human action, that we are losing at the rate of about 200 species around the world each day. Estimates for the global average temperature rise by 2100 vary between 3-5 degrees C, threatening to exacerbate all of the known effects of human induced Climate Change to date.²

Oxford Green Councillors would: Insist upon a carbon neutral City by 2030, ensuring the City Council works with all major employers to improve policies and actions to achieve this (see section on Climate below)

The Cambridge-Oxford Expressway: This would be a motorway to allow more traffic to pour into the Oxford City region to add to the serious air pollution, noise and traffic congestion we already have. Since this road project is accompanied by corridor development of warehousing, housing in the countryside on greenfield sites, new facilities for new communities and as many as 13 new road junctions, this ranks as one of the most environmentally-damaging projects of recent decades in the UK. We oppose this development. We are not repairing the roads we have: our City is riddled with potholes due to the cuts to County Council spending in particular. It will probably take about 14 years to clear the backlog of road repairs, so new trunk roads are not an option.

¹ Full results for Oxford:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20046/elections_and_voting/1324/european_parliamentary_election_result_-_may_2019

² See: John Foster, ed., *Facing up to Climate Reality: honesty, disaster and hope*, Green House, 2019, especially pp4-8.

We do support the Government programme for the East West Rail line, to restore direct Cambridge-Oxford rail services. The Green Party supports re-opening disused rail lines.

Green City councillors would: Call a halt to increases in road capacity and increase space for walking and cycling, including more pedestrianised areas, within Oxford.

We still live under the shadow of austerity which has meant cuts in all of the vital services our City needs. Our hospitals are under-funded and struggle to keep all wards and services running.

Council homes can still be sold under Right to Buy, unlike in Scotland and Wales, and our Labour City Council has an appalling record of not providing enough social housing. It has preferred to allocate land to employment purposes rather than housing. This, along with other national policies, has created a surge in homelessness and food bank usage. We need very low-cost housing of all types to meet needs as high priced market housing and market rents drive people like nurses and teachers to move elsewhere, damaging our City in the process.

Our schools are being damaged as teachers leave for cheaper towns, and class sizes are growing as a result of under-funding too. Our care workers are never sufficient to fill vacancies as the costs of living in Oxfordshire are too great for this low paid sector.³ Our young people are penalised with debt if they want a good education to develop their skills and opportunities, as a result of the Tuition fees the Green Party would abolish.

Green City Councillors would join in the country-wide effort of the Green Party, working with other groups, to end austerity and rebuild the tax base to serve all our future needs.

Green City Councillors will ensure the best possible use of the existing homes and built environment to meet real housing demand in Oxford.

The City Council must buy more properties for social and keyworker housing, and work with City-based groups to provide more housing in these categories. See Housing section below for more details.

The Brexit process has undermined our economy already, and is deterring people from coming to the UK, or remaining in the UK - in sufficient numbers to fill our many skills shortages. These skills shortages are the result of people voting for parties which have been in Governments of the UK for the last few decades, who have failed to invest in skills development in education at all levels. Years of investment will be needed to

³ Vacancies for care workers in Oxfordshire generally stand at about 700-800. The national level of care work vacancies is about 100,000. This illustrates the very low paid nature of this socially valuable, but not valued, work.

change the results of our education system, and we will need migrants for a wide range of jobs far into the future.

We need an economy that works for our communities. Businesses owned in the community have a stake in the community doing well – not in sending profits out to tax havens.

Green City Councillors 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.

Vote Green, if you want to see our Climate and our communities put first, vote Green in Oxford. 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. And above all, don't imagine that the green claims of other parties are more than the mirage they have always been: **Vote Green, get Green.**

1. Action on the Climate Emergency

On 28th January 2019, the Oxford City Council passed a Green Party motion to declare a Climate Emergency. Councillors present voted for this motion unanimously. On the 13th February 2019, the Labour councillors on the City Council voted down a Green Party motion which would have transferred funds from other areas of its proposed Budget to dealing with Climate Change. Emergency what Emergency?

Oxford has experienced a 1.5 degree C increase in temperature since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Seven of the City's hottest 10 years since records began have been since 2000.⁴ Like cities in southern and central Europe, we need more street trees and more fountains and water features occupying part of existing roads in Oxford to help keep summer temperatures down.

Greens have no doubt that the existing council, under Labour, will try to improve upon its track record concerning Climate Change.⁵ The problem is that its promises do not: change the planning system or the Oxford City Plan to put Climate Change and the associated ecological crisis as primary considerations in all planning decisions; shift resources away from areas like Park and Ride investment which creates areas of

⁴ Harrison Jones – *Oxford feels heat as climate change hits*, Oxford Mail, 4th May 2019

⁵ A summary of what the City Council believes it is doing, and what it envisages doing through partnerships, is offered by this document: *Presentation by Cllr Tom Hayes, Oxford City Council's Cabinet Member for a Zero Carbon Oxford at Low Carbon West Oxford Climate café, May 2019.*

congestion and air pollution towards sectors likely to bring greenhouse gas emissions down fast; challenge the dominance of private transport in our City; address the City-wide problem of radically reducing air pollution fast. These complacent failings correspond to gaps identified in national Labour policy in a paper by Tony Firkins:

on transport including aviation, on emissions from industry, on reducing emissions from land use, on stopping aviation expansion and reducing shipping emissions. So, our local problem, a Labour City Council, is part of the national problem of Labour thinking – like the Conservatives – that achieving zero carbon by 2050 is OK for the UK, when the UN is signalling that zero carbon sector by sector would be far safer for people, planet and all species by 2030.

The Oxford decision on Climate Emergency was one of many others in the UK, and in other countries, responding to the UN report on the implications of failing to make a 1.5 degree C ceiling in temperature increase a planet wide goal. For Oxford, research done by Green councillors Craig Simmons and Dick Woolf for the successful declaration of Climate Emergency by the City Council in January 2019 shows that by sticking to the present reduction in emissions figures Oxford will not reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, when the Government is now claiming a target of 100% for the whole of the UK. Unfortunately, attempts to gain support for a 2030 deadline for a carbon neutral City – as some British communities are actually working towards⁶ – have yet to find majority support in Oxford City Council.

It is clear that electing Green councillors is the most effective way to ensure our City has a wider range of effective policies to resist Climate change. Why on Earth would Labour councillors want to retain spending on expanding the Seacourt Park and Ride, adding to traffic and pollution in the surrounding area – on a site prone to flooding – rather than dealing with the serious Climate Emergency challenges our City faces? Green Councillors' plans to tackle climate emergency will result in lower costs paid over time by you – the most cost effective way to deal with the issue as it stands. Recent years have shown the local impact of climate change with, for example, more frequent flooding, means that higher premiums for home insurance are paid by those living along the Thames flood basin, whilst recurrent drought means higher water costs for all of us.

⁶ See as examples: <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/nottingham-city-council-resolve-to-go-carbon-neutral-by-2028/> & https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/500002/council_policies_and_strategies/3833/climate_change/3 & Glasgow: <https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/17891846.no-one-small-make-difference-climate-crisis/>

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!

The Council must take a lead in persuading the private sector and local public sector bodies to improve energy conservation and make more use of microgeneration – reducing their costs in the process. Every building can have solar panels.

But we must ask whether the public are ready for the vigorous pursuit of unprecedented reductions in carbon emissions? First, we now know that 71% of people think dealing with Climate Change is more important than the issue of Brexit (in the long-term).⁷ Secondly, we know that public opinion has shifted towards more support for acting on environmental problems including the Climate Emergency, in a series of polls - with a shift now showing 85% of people are concerned about Climate Change.⁸ And ways of persuading people about taking bigger and faster steps are more readily available.⁹ But major emissions sources like fossil fuel industries need shutting down, which will only happen quickly if more Greens are elected.

Oxford City 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:

- Persuading the City Council to declare a Climate Emergency, meaning that the council has to start taking climate change into consideration in all their actions.
- 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 Oxford including the Car Club, solar panels on Manzil Way, the East Oxford Farmers' Market and many other low carbon community groups stimulate community involvement.

⁷ See for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jul/26/climate-more-pressing-than-brexit-say-71-of-britons-poll>

⁸ See: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/climate-change-fears-gripping-britain-poll-reveals-85-are-worried-about-warming-the-highest-figure-a4218251.html>

⁹ Climate Outreach – *Are the public ready for net zero? Recommendations for building a positive public discourse*, May 2019.

The Green Party will continue to fight Climate Change by:

- Insisting upon revising the Oxford City Plan to reflect the City Council Climate Emergency policy, and the goal of a carbon neutral City by 2030.
- Seek to ensure Oxford City Council works with other local authorities, employers both private and public, and with the general public to achieve a carbon neutral City.
- Ensure that suggestions from the Citizens Assembly become part of the Oxford City Council overall policy on the Climate Emergency.
- Reverse cuts to the city's environmental budget.
- Try to achieve both protection and enhancement of species diversity within Oxford, including habitat protection.
- Ensure sensitive sustainable retrofitting of buildings and the creation of cooler areas where reflected heat is worst; for example, by adding fountains, green spaces, green walls, and more trees particularly.
- Ensure more tree preservation orders and additional trees throughout the City, on air pollution and Climate grounds particularly.
- Offer more free wall and loft insulation for all council tenants, saving hundreds of £s from their heating bills annually.
- Build new affordable 'green homes' on vacant industrial sites and above and around the edges of car parks ("brownfield sites") - 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. It is also possible to create multi-storey car parking in some locations and build housing over car parks in other places.
- Improve enforcement of building conditions made in the local planning process to raise environmental standards for refurbished and new buildings, deliver fuel savings by insulation schemes and other energy saving measures such as boiler replacement, heat pumps and moving from gas central heating to all-electric systems.
- Build a voluntary scheme supporting private landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, in their interest, and in the interests of their tenants.
- Insist on the implementation of Environmental Impact and Traffic Impact assessments on all new buildings or projects likely to add to traffic to our overcrowded streets.
- Propose policies to tackle the risk of flooding in Oxfordshire not only within the City but also around the northern tributaries to the Thames.

- Work with relevant groups to increase local food production in Oxfordshire, and the sale of food in more farmers' and local markets within Oxford, to cut food imports and the carbon emissions of long-distance food transport, translating into cheaper, more sustainable food for local residents.
- Invest in renewable energy systems on Council buildings and on Council owned land (see appendix on energy cooperatives).
- Encourage people to consume less and make the maximum possible use of means of re-use (e.g. charity shops/scrap stores) and recycling, all to help cut our City's greenhouse gas emissions.

NB. Other policies about the Climate Emergency appear in other sections of this manifesto, reflecting the many sectors where changes must take place.

2. Protecting Public Services

Our public services are key to how we care for each other as a society. Our schools and hospitals, nurses, teachers and care workers should be able to put us first and provide a quality service. 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. Minor increases in public spending by the Boris Johnson Conservative Government do not compensate for these cuts. Green councillors have voted against reductions in services. We've defended our libraries, children's centres and 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 as little as 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 even modest increases in council tax have failed to get support from other parties on councils, despite the actual policies of their parties at times.

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. 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.

Focussing on food banks, it is clear that use of food banks is increasing in Oxford. Very high rents and home prices put households with workers in them, and those on benefits and low pensions, in difficulties. Major cuts in benefits instigated by the Coalition during 2010-2015 have combined with the introduction of Universal Credit to ensure less money for the poorest, and great difficulty in obtaining support.¹⁰

Council-provided services support all of us in different ways in Oxford and are crucial to the wellbeing of our communities. 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 costed and 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.
- Successfully convinced the Council to retain control of council housing and repeatedly challenged the government's "viability tests" that prevent the building of more social housing.
- Supported campaigns locally to keep our NHS public and stop privatisation.

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 to protect our community centres.

¹⁰ See for example: <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17651489.human-rights-watch-report-on-food-banks-in-oxford/>
Original report is Human Rights Watch – *Nothing Left in the Cupboards: austerity, welfare cuts and the right to food in the UK*, May 2019

- Work to return public transport to public ownership.

3. Better Housing for all

Oxford has a housing crisis. Housing in Oxford is consistently amongst the least affordable in the country, with home buyers and private renters paying higher prices than anywhere else outside London.¹¹

Too often people are paying high rent yet get poor service – basic rights aren't respected by rogue landlords, and repairs aren't done. Faced with little alternative people put up with paying through the teeth, or they leave Oxford with their much-needed skills. Greens will take action to drive up standards in private rented housing and tackle the burden of rent. In short, our City needs more very low-cost housing because the costs of buying and of private renting are far too high.

There are more than 3,000 households on the local housing register waiting for social and council homes. Many people will not apply since it is known that low cost housing only comes available in small quantities each year, partly because of a general failure of the City Council to use its power and resources to buy homes on sale for social housing.

Successive Tory and Labour governments have both failed to provide houses for those who need them. The shortage of actually affordable housing in Oxford has got worse, while across the country hundreds of thousands of homes sit empty, and some of these are in Oxford. And the bedroom tax and other benefit cuts are forcing people to look for smaller (and more crowded) houses. The introduction of Universal Credit, with its long payment delays, has added to homelessness.¹²

Greens will tackle the issues of availability, affordability and homelessness. We will support increasing the number of council 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.

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 street

¹¹ *Oxford named least affordable for home buyers*, no author, Oxford Mail, 5th February 2019

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/oct/27/universal-credit-fuels-homeless-crisis>

homeless, has played a disgraceful role in making life hell for the unfortunate who find themselves without a roof over their head.

But the quality of housing needs to reflect the Climate Emergency. Energy and water efficient housing should be the normal result of having a home refurbished, but this rarely happens and the City Council is complicit in letting refurbishment of all types of housing lead to continuing energy inefficiency. The Committee on Climate Change has provided detailed advice on what may be done instead.¹³

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 achievable policies to help tackle homelessness and housing that costs far too much to buy or rent.

Green successes:

- Took the lead in a 10-year campaign to successfully introduce a Licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- First suggested the rule that all new housing developments should include 50% affordable housing.
- Supported directly and personally the homeless people who have been abandoned by the Labour Council
- Succeeded in getting Oxford City Council to work on an Empty Spaces Protocol based on the successful Iffley Open House.
- Green Councillors donated some of their ward member spend (a grant given to Councillors each year to spend on good causes) to the Oxford Homeless Project.

The Green Party will:

- Support and encourage the legal subdivision of large owner-occupied homes into two or more units, to increase the supply of homes.
- Insist that the City Council consider subdividing its council homes when they become vacant to try to increase the number of such homes available.
- 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.

¹³ The Committee on Climate Change -*UK housing: fit for the future?* February 2019.

- Continue to press for sustainable housing 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.
- Investigate the feasibility of a social housing rent freeze (or at least rent increases no greater than inflation) to help our poorest households and of 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. Each of these types of home should have microgeneration in form of solar PV panels, heat pumps and solar thermal units.
- Institute a general programme to improve the water efficiency of existing and new homes.
- Reverse County funding cuts & increase the City's homelessness grants
- Find 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 when temperatures are very low.
- 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 on brownfield sites
- 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, and empty homes
- 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 HMO registrations.

- Establish a new improved deal for people who live on boats at residential moorings, including by adding significantly to the number of secure moorings that are available.
- 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.

4. Building the Local Economy, Arts and Culture

Greens want to help build a stronger and more diverse local economy to work in the interests of our communities. Oxford should be known for good quality well rewarded work in both the manufacturing and service sectors. We need a thriving mix of cooperative businesses, sole trader shops, community cafes, community growing schemes, offices where actually needed and more farmers' markets - not a bland copy of all the national chain stores. But this is not enough. A thriving arts and culture sector is important – both commercial and as a result of voluntary initiatives. This is of enormous value to visitors and residents alike. 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. Green Party efforts, including by Caroline Lucas, initiated the original Green New Deal idea, long before this was taken up by US Democrats and Labour in the UK.¹⁴

Oxford Green Party believes in sustainable development, not conventional economic growth which adds to greenhouse gas emissions – including from the traffic attempting to enter Oxford each working day. In consequence, bearing in mind the dubious housing figures mentioned elsewhere in this manifesto, we do not accept the Oxfordshire Growth Deal which is dependent on building expensive, energy inefficient homes on greenfield sites – often far away from needed facilities. We note how the public, in a consultation, has resolutely rejected the proposed *Oxfordshire Plan*.¹⁵

The Westgate Shopping Centre upgrade has: increased car parking for shopping in the City; added a lot of additional low-paid jobs in a City with high housing costs; prompted moves by many existing shops from other parts of the City into the Westgate, increasing vacant shops; catered for a massive increase in fashion shops in the City which increase unsustainable consumption and do not necessarily provide workers creating new clothes with the sort of wages they deserve, around the world. We needed more social housing: we got more chain stores: another failure of our Labour City Council.

¹⁴ See: <https://neweconomics.org/2008/07/green-new-deal>

¹⁵ Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – Introducing the Oxfordshire Plan, consultation report, June 2019.

Businesses owned in the community keep the profits flowing into the community through the spending of wages, 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 the economy to work for our communities, it must support decent jobs that pay at least a Living Wage and preferably 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. We judge that costs in Oxford are so great that any Living Wage set for the UK should be paid at its London rate in Oxfordshire as a whole. There is already evidence that the payment of a Real Living Wage helps people working in Oxford.¹⁶

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 tourism to enhance the benefits to our local economy.

Related to this:

For decades our Green Councillors have proposed a variety of projects and gained funding for arts, crafts and cultural activities within the city. Arts & crafts are widely recognised as essential to promotion of wellbeing whilst also contributing to the economy, the health of our citizens and lifting our focus from the everyday to development of new exciting opportunities for the future.

The arts and crafts are not the only aspects of our lives which contribute to a more holistic, healthy and satisfying as well as creative lifestyle which the Greens wish to encourage in our City. We will continue working with the wide variety of nature and conservation groups in this City. Play, sports and all outdoor activities are recognised as essential to developing a stronger more active and environmentally aware citizenship in all age groups. There are also a good number of community based groups who have struggled to provide access to sports and other facilities for younger people in the city, the Greens are committed to continuing Council support to those groups.

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

¹⁶ Laura Green, for Good Food Oxford: *Assessing the impact of the Real Living Wage on employee wellbeing*. March 2019.

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 significant number of 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 and prices 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 the EU is bad for both domestic and international investment in Oxford and will hamper the recruitment of staff in vital local services such as social care, education and 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 45 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 decades 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.
- 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.
- Greens campaigned successfully to keep the Jericho Boatyard as a boatyard, of importance to locals and tourists, although it remains a contested site of potential development.

The Green Party will:

- Continue to work with local traders to get a better planning regime to protect them against pressure from chains/rents etc.
- Now that we have the Westgate Centre it is vital that other shops in the City continue to thrive and the Council must ensure that they are supported.
- Continue our work with traders and the City Council to re-build trust between the parties and ensure a successful long-term 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.
- 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 eco-tourism from the continent.
- Make 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.

- The Green Party is committed to continuing support for the various local community festivals, arts events, e.g. The Christmas Light Festival & Cowley Road Carnival. All are important linking with the schools and community groups so that different parts of our communities can express themselves. It is also an encouragement to provide jobs in a variety of arts, music, performance and singing whilst celebrating and enjoying life in Oxford as a vibrant and multicultural city.
- Greens are committed to encouraging jobs in the arts and entertainment sector within the city. Continued support for Arts Weeks throughout the County is an important encouraging everyone to be involved in, to purchase and to see the range and quality of arts and crafts exhibited in such a variety of community venues throughout the county. Local artists and craftspeople need as much support and recognition of the value they give to any community as the range of other local producers.
- It was the Greens who recommended that a 'post' of Oxford City Poet be created about 10 years ago, highlighting the amount of talent and interest there is in the city in literature and the arts. We would continue to select a Peoples Poet for Oxford City and involve the recipient in the cultural celebrations within the city.
- We would continue to make use of the Town Hall Gallery space to be used for 'peoples' exhibitions': to highlight and share the range of community arts projects within the town and to give opportunities to new and local artists and crafts people to show their work. We would consult on the potential for an annual Peoples Art Exhibition where those who are not usually employed/ involved in the visual arts could submit work for exhibition at the gallery.
- Different styles of music, performance /theatre and song are also supported by a variety of different bodies in the City however the Green Party would prioritise support and seek partnerships for funding multicultural festivals/s of dance & music. There is potential for an excellent mix of all our ethnic groups and cultures to be showcased and enriching the life in the City and making stronger cultural links with our twin town partners.
- Green Party Councillors will seek to extend the scope and support the City Council and its partners give of Green Week. Apart from recognition of architectural and environmental successes and inventions in the City we would like to strengthen support for the variety of local environmental and wildlife action groups in and around the city particularly those campaigning on addressing Climate Change most urgently. e.g Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Extinction Rebellion.
- Greens will seek to support maintenance and improvement of allotments, and projects such as the City Farm, Hogacre, Lye Valley Nature Reserve and its two Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and other nature reserves and green spaces where we can all enjoy a more natural health giving environment. We will encourage groups in communities to take an active partnership role in developing

the council verges and green spaces, parks etc. to encourage bee friendly planting, growing of wholesome foods and to ensure that Oxford continues to develop a clean and wild life friendly environment.

- Younger people and teenagers need space to develop their own independence to play and take part in all sports to contribute positively to their health and wellbeing rather than pursuing those other sedentary alternatives on offer to very young people today. The Greens will continue to seek partnership funding to support local sports and other groups such as football, rowing and gymnastics, and provide Council owned facilities to ensure these will be available to those groups in the future.
- We will continue to update and extend Playgrounds, play equipment and other outdoor recreational facilities for our young and teenage citizens. However we will also seek partnerships funding and advice to develop facilities relevant to maintaining active life styles for the elderly age range of citizens in the city e.g maintaining footpaths, walkways and provision of seating all of which can aid access.
- Greens are committed to maintaining access for all to the waterways and rivers which run through our city. We want to maintain affordable facilities for those who choose to live on the river and canal working with the Environment Agency and others to make best use of the waterways as a recreational as well as working facility.

5. 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. 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 and fund services for ordinary people. We will stand up to political parties with 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.

6. Planning for a Sustainable Oxford

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 recycling 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. However, as we note throughout this Manifesto, it needs to do far more.

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.

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. We welcome the fact that the Inspectors of the draft Oxford City Plan were so unimpressed by the Labour City Council's claims of housing needs that they referred the draft Plan back to the City Council for clarifications in summer 2019.¹⁷ However, the Oxford City Plan needs to be revised to reflect the City Council declaration of a Climate Emergency on 28th January 2019 as well. Since shrinking Oxford's overspill housing projections is clearly desirable in environmental terms, it means the local plans of neighbouring districts need adjustments when Oxford's housing figures are based on what the City of Oxford can actually provide – far, far more than the limited imagination of the Labour City Council up to this point.

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. The Westgate development was

¹⁷ See for example: <http://www.cpreoxon.org.uk/news/current-news/item/2762-oxford-lp-put-horse-before-cart>

questionable in principle and should have incorporated social housing, but our Labour City Council decided it would have only luxury flats.

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:

- 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.
- Making open spaces - such as Aston's Eyot and Lye Valley - more accessible and helping local groups improve and develop schemes.
- Retaining public access to parks such as Angel & Greyhound Meadow and backing Town Green status for sites such as Warneford Meadow.

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 efficient insulation in all Council housing and municipal buildings.
- Create a Zero Emission Zone across the City that has 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 soon as possible, supporting the expansion of refill schemes and encouraging the City Council publicise them; adapting re-use and recycling policies to achieve the goal of reducing waste.
- 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 clean up, 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.
- 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 has and 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. To this end, to support smaller-scale water catchment schemes such as the proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Lye Valley.
- 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.
- Support and extend the work of the Low Carbon Hub.
- Introduce a water poverty standard similar to the fuel poverty standard in its original form, rather than as redefined by the Coalition Government 2010-2015, 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.
- Oppose the mindless expansion of Oxford and destruction of the Green Belt and greenfield sites.
- Create new allotments where there is demand on the periphery of urban areas to increase local food production, maintaining allotments in the City rather than allocating them to other uses as the Oxford City Plan up to 2036 does in some cases. Support allotments with more City Council resources, including to help additions to biodiversity on such sites.
- Support local residents devising their own Community Nature Plans for open spaces. Press for Town Green status for accepted green spaces.

- 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 and is essential to reducing reflected heat in the urban centre, along with fountains.
- Resist the development of hydraulic fracking anywhere in Oxfordshire, in cooperation with our Green Party MEPs.

7. A City for Students and Young People

The Youth Climate Strikes have sent a shock through our political system. Young people, incensed by the continuation of University tuition fees, infuriated by being denied a vote in the Euro Referendum in 2016, have come out on the streets in unprecedented numbers in defence of our Planet. Combined with good Green election successes in the local and European Elections of 2019, the Climate complacent political parties – the ones which believe a zero carbon UK by 2050 is good enough – are being confronted by young people who, like the activists of Extinction Rebellion, do not believe they are doing enough.

The Green Party has long believed young people deserve the vote at 16, that education about our political system in schools is inadequate and that we are destroying our country and our Planet as if our young people and future generations who might live here simply do not matter. So what steps should we take?

Education and training are 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. It, and other measures to support studying in FE, must be re-introduced. Similarly, we believe that the dramatic drop in applications for nursing which has occurred since bursaries were replaced by loans means bursaries must be restored. We also note that apprenticeships do not attract the number of students they might, due to derisory levels of financial support to each student.

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. We also recognise that the many students who work during their studies often do so in low paid and harsh working environments where little attention is paid to their needs. 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.
- Provided money for extra waste collection rounds at student accommodation.

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 which they can actually afford throughout their studies.
- Seek to expand all bike hire schemes, including docked rather than dockless bikes.

8. Better Transport for All

The Greens have a long history of fighting for improvements for pedestrians and 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 back in 1995 has either already been implemented or is currently being actively considered. But there is a new challenge: The transport sector is experiencing growth in greenhouse gas emissions which will cause breaches in the Government's rather limited and long-term emissions targets. The 2016 figures for transport showed 2% growth in emissions.¹⁸ In 2017, Transport was responsible for 37% of the total UK greenhouse gas emissions, by end user. But transport is the only sector to show emissions growth in the UK since 1990, demonstrating a general failure in this sector. The Committee on

¹⁸ <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/air-pollution-uk-transport-most-polluting-sector-greenhouse-gas-emissions-drop-carbon-dioxide-a8196866.html>

Climate Change, advising Government on greenhouse gas emissions, has identified transport as a key area creating difficulties in meeting greenhouse gas emissions targets for the UK.¹⁹

Further pedestrianisation and better road planning are needed. A range of new developments will be required to tackle the acute problems Oxford faces, focusing on helping cyclists and pedestrians and increasing numbers of journeys made on foot and by bike. A key problem about transport is that the way use of transport changes for each of us during our lifespan¹⁹ is not being effectively recognised in a car-orientated transport system. Walking and cycling needs are under-funded, undermining health benefits; accidents are too frequent; rail passenger growth is not creating the increases in carriages needed at the speed necessary; the whole transport system is not gearing up to become carbon free by 2030. In addition, online ordering is creating growth in traffic movements made by delivery vehicles. This highlights the importance of bicycle deliveries within the City.

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 inadequate and disconnected cycle lanes.

To highlight the outrageous well above inflation increases in rail fares the Green have staged 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. For example, the recent congestion

¹⁹ See particularly: Phil Goodwin – *A New Social Contract for Transport*, May 2019.

created by the opening of the Westgate Shopping Centre have not been addressed. Measures such as extra cycle racks on Queen Street, better bus routing and promoting the Park and Ride system are viable alternatives to the current arrangements. 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).

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.
- Fought for over 15 years and achieved cross ticketing between bus companies.
- 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.
- Planted the concept of a large employers parking levy charge within Council budgets to generate income to fix potholes.

The Green Party will:

- Campaign for Electronic Road Pricing for the Oxford City Region, following the model adopted in Singapore in 1998. See report *Electronic Road Pricing for Oxford*, to see how this might work: <https://bit.ly/2VdV3Ez>
- Seek the abandonment of the proposed Cambridge-Oxford Expressway by the earliest possible date.
- Support the *Running out of Road* proposals for a step up in spending on cycling in Oxford.²⁰
- Keep up the pressure for a European style separation of cycle-ways from main roads to improve safety standards and reduce accident levels. This is the so called

²⁰ National Infrastructure Commission – *Running out of road: investing in cycling in Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford*.

‘Benelux three division system’ recognised as the principal reason that cycle accidents are 60% less in Europe as compared to the UK. Such a scheme in Walthamstow in London is referred to as a low traffic neighbourhood or ‘Mini-Holland’ and the Greens will support the development of such schemes within Oxford, recognising that an attempt is being made to do this in Florence Park already.

- Support the principle of a Zero Emission Zone for the City of Oxford by 2030, not 2037 as the City Council plans,²¹ recognising the latest World Health Organisation figures show 64,000 premature deaths each year from air pollution in the UK²² – a big increase on earlier estimates of 40,000, making this action a public health priority.
- 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 an enlarged, covered cycle hub in the City Centre to replace the existing one, plus prompt filling of potholes and the completion of a cycle network throughout 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. Insert locked cycle hangers for residents to improve security for bike owners throughout the City, as in Walthamstow.
- Place cycle routes alongside 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, in the main areas where they were located before the construction of the new Westgate – for example on a pedestrianised Queen Street.
- Fight for more affordable public transport with lower emission buses, hybrids and electrics. Set new standards to be introduced by 2025 for all buses – ultra low emissions as standard.
- Seek to expand the existing pedestrianisation in the City Centre, beginning with Broad Street, Queen Street and a substantial area of St.Giles.
- Research the potential of reinstating light rapid transport systems e.g. trams.

²¹ The City Council proposes a very small Zero Emissions Zone covering a limited area of central Oxford which is already either pedestrianised, has pedestrian priority, or where vehicle movements other than buses or taxis are already restricted. In short, this is unlikely to deal with the City’s general problem of air pollution or increases in traffic on some routes into the City. See, for example: Harrison Jones – *ZEZ plans relaxed as vehicle ban for next year is dropped* – Oxford Mail, 19th January 2019.

²² See for example: <https://inews.co.uk/news/health/air-pollution-kills-64000-people-in-the-uk-every-year/> The WHO is now estimating global deaths from air pollution each year at about 8.8 million people.

- Push for railway branch lines to reopen throughout the County and a new Oxford four platform railway station to be established. Priorities would include the Cowley branch rail line, connecting it to existing lines east of Oxford and to Oxford rail station; the Witney-Carterton route, to reduce pressure on the A40 and neighbouring roads.
- Improve park and ride facilities for car users, but without increases in capacity, with an extra charge to cover improvements.
- Support the introduction of new cycle hire systems to increase use by visitors.
- Introduce cheap ticket schemes for all 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 on a brownfield outside Oxford as a means of reducing Heavy Goods Vehicle entry to the city, sited on an existing industrial estate. This would involve expanding existing cycle freight deliveries and transfer of goods to electric vehicles where too large for cargo bikes.
- 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 assessing average speeds of vehicles 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 Electronic Road Pricing as part of strategies to reduce urban traffic and congestion on trunk roads.
- Reduce overall car parking in Oxford to cut traffic movements into the City, to reduce air and noise pollution, and traffic congestion. Some car parks could be allocated to social and keyworker housing; some car parks could be made multi-storey to help reduce the number of car park congestion problems especially in rush hours, including suitable Park and Ride sites.
- Access and disability issues: better access for people with disabilities, good provision for people with pushchairs – in continuous walking networks. Importance of better pavements meaning more frequent repairs, and tackling inconsiderate pavement parking to the limits of City Council and Police powers.

- Fight any expansion of the London Oxford Airport in Kidlington and oppose completely the establishment of a new airport on other sites in Oxfordshire.
- 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, Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, the Oxford Pedestrians Association and other bodies to improve safety and eliminate danger spots.
- Support the reopening of the so called 'Varsity Line' rail link between Oxford and Cambridge, now referred to as 'East-West Rail.'²³

9. 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. We have a very different approach, believing causes and not just offenders must be addressed. Some crime is committed by people affected by addictions, and we need to re-establish vital support services that have been cut to ensure this declines.

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.

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

²³ The Green Party recognises there is considerable potential to re-open lines and increase rail services outside Oxfordshire. See for example: Hugh Jaegar – *East West Rail and why it is better than a road* See this paper at www.noexpresswayalliance.org under RESOURCES.

few belongings people who were having to sleep on the streets may have and to ease the harshness of those PSPO orders.

Green successes:

- We were the main advocates of new pedestrian crossings such as at Donnington Bridge Road and Iffley Road.
- The Greens advocated the introduction of the 20mph rule for Oxford roads, saving lives - especially children.
- Pushed successfully 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.
- 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. This will involve support for prevention of addictions, support for users and rebuilding support services such as Youth Centres and Childrens' Centres to help people who are in difficulties or in danger of falling into behaviours that may damage themselves or others.

10. 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. Clearly, the long years of austerity have not helped: taxes have been cut for the highest income groups and the wealthy, and for corporations whilst essential services have been cut. Greens would like to see a larger proportion of public spending under the control of local government. Our support for Land Value Taxation rather than the Council Tax would help with this.²⁴

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 councillors in a Cabinet chosen only from the majority party. And Labour continues to be opposed to democracy, and will not support proportional representation for elections even when this is used for the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, the London Assembly and European Parliament elections.

Area-based decision making of Oxford's past was abolished by Labour 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.

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 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 others over ten years of real democracy using Area Committees.

The Green Party will:

- Re-establish the Area Committees with full powers over planning, local devolved decision-making and with adequate financial resources.

²⁴ <https://policy.greenparty.org.uk/ld.html>

- 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.
- Remove any threat of another City Centre PSPO; which fines and criminalises the homeless. The scheme which is currently in abeyance, was branded abusive of the homeless and a failure.²⁵

11. 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. But this is not assisted by 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 subsequent Governments. This was a continuation of the Private Finance Initiative started by the Conservatives. 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, unlike Labour and the Conservatives, retain the Commissioning bodies because this is

²⁵

<https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17462094.oxford-pspo-to-prosecute-homeless-beggars-branded-a-failure/>

the central mechanism for creeping privatization, meaning less service per pound we put into the system – and the more you will have to pay in the future for the same service!

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 Initiative 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 health and 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.

12. 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 councillors who moved that visiting circuses must not involve wild animals.
- The Green councillors 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, because our survival depends on bee's 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.

13. 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] Here in Oxfordshire, we have hydro electric schemes at Osney and Sandford, as well as a Solar Farm at Charlbury.

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.*