LOCALIS

AT THE RIGHT LEVEL

A strategic case for city-led growth, innovation and renewal

By Zayn Qureshi

About Localis

Who we are

We are a leading, independent think tank that was established in 2001. Our work promotes neo-localist ideas through research, events and commentary, covering a range of local and national domestic policy issues.

Neo-localism

Our research and policy programme is guided by the concept of neo-localism. Neo-localism is about giving places and people more control over the effects of globalisation. It is positive about promoting economic prosperity, but also enhancing other aspects of people's lives such as family and culture. It is not anti-globalisation, but wants to bend the mainstream of social and economic policy so that place is put at the centre of political thinking.

In particular our work is focused on four areas:

- **Decentralising political economy.** Developing and differentiating regional economies and an accompanying devolution of democratic leadership.

- **Empowering local leadership.** Elevating the role and responsibilities of local leaders in shaping and directing their place.

- **Extending local civil capacity.** The mission of the strategic authority as a convener of civil society; from private to charity sector, household to community.

- **Reforming public services.** Ideas to help save the public services and institutions upon which many in society depend.

What we do

We publish research throughout the year, from extensive reports to shorter pamphlets, on a diverse range of policy areas. We run a broad events programme, including roundtable discussions, panel events and an extensive party conference programme. We also run a membership network of local authorities and corporate fellows.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Research roundtables

The research for this project was initiated with five research roundtables, held by Localis and Oxford City Council and attended by local, regional and national stakeholders in September and October 2020. The purpose of the roundtables was to identify possible paths to regional economic recovery in Oxford and broader national recovery, and to understand, in a more general sense, what would be required of national and local government for place-based recovery. These roundtables were invaluable in identifying the parameters and focus of the research, and a debt of gratitude is owed to all the participants, listed below.

Session 1: Business and Inclusive Growth

- Mr Tom Bridgman, Executive Director — Development; Oxford City Council

- Mr Steve Burgess, Chief Executive Officer; The Oxford Trust

- Mr David Hartley, Commercial and Knowledge Exchange Director; Oxford Brookes University

- Mr Jeremy Long, Chair; OxLEP

- Mr Frank Nigriello, Director of Corporate Affairs; Unipart

- Mr Peter Nolan, Chair of Oxford Economic Growth Board and OxLEP NED; OcQuila Therapeutics

- Mr Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager; Oxford City Council

- Ms Penny Rinta–Sukhi, Partner; Blake Morgan LLP

- Mr David Valler, Reader in Planning – School of Built Environment; Oxford Brookes University

- Mr Stuart Wilkinson, Head of Knowledge Exchange and Impact; University of Oxford

Session 2: Levelling Up and Research & Development

- Ms Sarah Haywood, Managing Director; Advance Oxford

- Mr Will Hutton, Principle, Hertford College; University of Oxford

- Mr Kris Krasnowski, Deputy Director; MHCLG

- Prof Simonetta Manfredi, Deputy Director of Diversity Policy Research and Practice; Oxford Brookes University

- Mr Matt Peachey, Economic Development Manager; Oxford City Council

- Mr Adrian Sell, Chief Executive Officer; Oxfordshire Community Foundation

- Mr Chris White, Visiting Professor of Industrial Strategy; Loughborough University

- Mr Patrick White, Director; Metro-Dynamics

- Mr Stuart Wilkinson, Head of Knowledge Exchange and Impact; University of Oxford

Session 3: Clean Local Growth and Climate Change

- Mr Jacob Ainscough, Senior Researcher on Sustainability Policy; Policy Connect

- Ms Roz Bulleid, Deputy Policy Director; Green Alliance

- Prof Nick Eyre, Professor of Energy and Climate Policy, Environmental Change Institute; University Of Oxford

- Ms Alyssa Gilbert, Director of Policy and Translation, Grantham Institute of Climate Change; Imperial College London

- Mr Aaron Gould, Head of Local Government Strategy; MHCLG

- Mr Lewis Knight, Programme Director; Bioregional

- Prof Malcolm McCulloch, Associate Professor In Engineering Science; Oxford Martin School

- Mr Tim Sadler, Executive Director Sustainable City; Oxford City Council

- Ms Bindu Varkey, Managing Director; The Mobox Foundation

- Ms Harriet Waters, Head of Environmental Sustainability; University of Oxford

Session 4: Role of Local Government and Economic Development

- Mr Tom Bridgman, Executive Director – Development; Oxford City Council

- Professor Colin Copus, Visiting Fellow; Localis

- Mr David Godfrey, Director of Strategy; Kent county council

- Mr Bernard Genville-Jones, Group Executive Director; Activate Learning

- Ms Caroline Green, Chief Executive Officer; Oxford City Council

- Mr Brendan Hattam, General Manager of Westgate and Castle Quarter; Landsec, Westgate

- Mr David Jackson, Head Of Planning – London; Savills

- Mr Sebastian Johnson, Head of Innovation and Inward Investment; OxLEP

- Dr David Prout, Pro VC Planning & Resources; University Of Oxford

- Mrs Carolyn Puddicombe, Director of Planning and Housing; Christchurch, University of Oxford

- Mr Richard Rosser, Managing Director; B4

- Mr Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive Officer; OxLEP

Session 5: The Future of the Health and Care Economy

- Prof John Ashton, Former Regional Director (North West); ADPH
- Sir Andrew Dilnot, Warden; Nuffield College Oxford
- Prof Gary Ford, Chief Executive Officer; Oxford Academic Health Science Network
- Ms Caroline Green, Chief Executive Officer; Oxford City Council
- Ms Hannah Iqbal, Director of Strategy and Partnerships; Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Dr Mimi Malhotra, National Medical Director's Clinical Fellow; Health Foundation
- Dr Claire Shingler, Business Manager; Oxford BioEscalator
- Dr Elodie Sinley, Marketing and Events Manager; BioEscalator
- Mr Michael Wood, Head of Health Economic Partnerships; NHS Confederation

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven the resilience and strength of England's local government in keeping our communities safe. Equally, the ongoing socio-economic consequences demonstrate the need for strong place-based leadership and governance at the right level to help our recovery. This is especially true for Oxford, one of our country's leading cities that has a global impact with demonstrated leadership in areas such as medical science and biotech. Oxford is also a key part of the Arc, and one of the few parts of UK that makes a net contribution to the Exchequer and will be a focal point for post-pandemic and post-Brexit growth. Faced with the need for robust social and economic strategies for recovery, there is an imperative to make a clear case for strong urban leadership driving renewal from the pandemic. With this in mind, 'At the Right Level' is seeking to highlight Oxford's case for city governance as a compact global city.

Background

National context

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching implications for the UK and its economy. In mid-August, it became clear that the UK suffered more than any other major European nation during the period of lockdown and is now in a deeper recession than any other reported by a European or North American country[1]. The 20.4 percent fall in output in the second quarter of 2020 has been noted to be the largest quarterly reduction ever and the largest of any major developed economy[2]. According to the Institute of Employment Studies, redundancy notifications are more than double the levels seen in the Great Recession[3], with the number of people notified in HR1 forms as being at risk of redundancy in June and July 2020 rising to 300,000. In light of this and the sharp increase of market volatility during the initial phase of the pandemic, the Centre for Economic Performance emphasised maintaining liquidity as a key priority for monetary policy[4]. This points to the need to support the economic potential and assets that can help the UK recover.

The levelling up agenda, aimed at reducing the UK's wide regional inequalities, was set as a flagship manifesto commitment before the pandemic struck. After gaining his 80-seat majority in December 2019, the prime minister acknowledged outside of 10 Downing Street the overwhelming mandate given

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1   The New York Times (2020) – Britain's New Record: A recession worse than in Europe and North America
2   Financial Times (2020) – Coronavirus Business Update: UK economy shrinks by a fifth
3   Institute for Employment Studies (2020) – On Notice: Estimating the Impact on redundancies of the COVID-19 crisis
4   Centre for Economic Performance (2020) – Strategy, investment and policy for a stronger and sustainable recovery: An action plan

by the people to unite and level up the United Kingdom[5]. The challenge of how to manage economic recovery whilst also levelling up has now come into sharp focus. Since the announcement of the devolution and local recovery white paper in July 2020, which has been devised for 'levelling up' economic and democratic opportunities[6], many questions have been asked as to what this means for local government. If the broader purpose of the agenda is to bridge the gap of socio-economic inequality across the country, then how this is done in line with the economic offer and potential of different places, and what this means for their wider region, needs to be taken into consideration.

The pandemic continues to highlight stark inequalities within our society. A study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that school closures over the first lockdown period created substantial inequality between pupils from differing socio-economic backgrounds, particularly around time spent learning. Children have had wildly differing experiences of home learning[7], exposing pre-existing disparities in home environments. This has demonstrated the need for levelling up not only in terms of the physical and economic infrastructure, but the opportunities available to our youth across the country. The urgency to deliver on the levelling up agenda is not only evident in light of the economic impact of the pandemic, but also owing to how it has brought to the surface pre-existing and multifaceted dimensions of our societal inequality.

Oxford Context

Oxford is a coherent economic entity, with an independent and unique strategic national offer. The city is a vital economic node of national significance, with the local economy contributing £6.75bn in GVA to the national economy per year, not accounting for its knock-on effects and supply chains, and a set of industrial assets which are undeniably attractive to people and investment. Illustrating this, Oxford has been ranked 8th in the UK's top 10 cities for the highest net private sector jobs growth. Between 2017-18, there was a 3.3 percent increase in private sector jobs[8]. A large part of Oxford's unique economic strength is based on the universities, science and business parks and related local assets that drive innovation on a national and international level. Oxford's institutions, including Oxford Brookes, the University of Oxford, its associated research facilities, and collaborations with neighbouring facilities such as Culham and Harwell, are essential to the UK's place as a world-leader in innovation. This was demonstrated during the pandemic and the global search for a vaccine – with a leading global contender led by the University of Oxford and its spin-out company, Vaccitech in partnership with pharma giant AstraZeneca. Due to its distinctive and nationally-significant anchor institutions, Oxford also powers the 'Knowledge Spine', connecting research centres across different housing and employment markets in the wider county. Adding to all of this, Oxford's strategic position in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and the Thames Valley, requires city governance for reasons of both pragmatism and principle.

Oxford understands the need to be as strong as possible in the recovery from COVID-19 and in ameliorating the economic consequences of lockdown. It has

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5   BBC (2019) – General Election: Boris Johnson – 'We are going to unite and level up'
6   Centre for Cities (2020) – Where next for English Devolution?
7   IFS (2020) – Primary school closures created substantial inequality in time spent learning between pupils from poorer and better off families – and re-opening schools may be the only remedy
8   Centre for Cities (2020) – Cities Outlook 2020

grasped the nature of the specific challenges and opportunities that require a city level focus. While Oxford has a strong economy, the benefits are not equally felt by all residents, leading it to be the 2nd most unequal city in the UK[9]. This disparity is likely to be exacerbated by the pandemic. To this end, the city council has developed a draft economic strategy underpinned by inclusive growth and ecological sustainability. By valuing Oxford as a key strategic city, with a proud 1,000-year tradition of democratic and economic self-governance, these plans will enjoy greater longevity and impact. Additionally, maintaining a democratic voice for communities will be increasingly difficult if we move to further one-size fits all unitarisation, especially as England already has the largest local government units in Europe. As the country reforms for levelling up and recovery, strong city-based governance will prove critical as the most effective conduit between the residents and communities of Oxford and beyond this to sub-regional, regional and national governance. Relatedly, the economic success of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc will rest upon the dynamism and distinctiveness of its three main cities – Cambridge, Milton Keynes, and Oxford. These are considerations that the city council recognises and has been preparing for through the forthcoming economic strategy.

Economic Strategy

The overarching ambition of the city council is for Oxford to have 'a productive, inclusive and environmentally responsible economy', which can be achieved through harnessing the benefits of being a compact global city. The economic strategy has been developed on the back of, and is aligned with, multiple different strategies. This includes Oxford's Local Plan, the council's Corporate Plan, the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy, and the Oxford 2050 vision. It goes hand in hand with the COVID-19 recovery strategy and serves as its long-term delivery vehicle. The economic strategy builds on existing strengths and successes of the city council and is underpinned by three priorities that include developing a more inclusive economy, becoming a stronger global city, and building an environmentally responsible economy.

Regarding the latter, the city council has embraced innovation in clean growth, and Oxford's anchor institutions have further advanced the road to decarbonisation. The strategy displays a council commitment to using its convening power to marshal local communities and businesses around a coherent pathway to a cleaner economy. Guided by this, in February 2021 the city council coordinated 21 local stakeholders including the universities, institutions and largest economic anchors to sign a Zero Carbon Oxford Charter. Stakeholders committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions in the city by 2040. This marked the creation of a Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership for the city.[10] Relatedly, the council has appointed an independent scientific advisor to consult on decisions around climate change[11]. And most significantly, Oxford was the first city in the country to hold a citizens' assembly on climate change.[12] Here, a sense of place, scale and identity counts. The gains that can be made through well-coordinated action at city level, such as through the Zero Carbon Partnership, would be diluted significantly if attempted across a much wider,

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9   Centre for Cities (2018) – Cities Outlook 2018
10   Oxford City Council (2021) – Leaders across Oxford support 2040 net zero carbon emissions pledge
11   Oxford University (2020) – Professor Nick Eyre Appointed Oxford City Council Scientific Advisor
12   Oxford City Council (2019) – Oxford Citizens' Assembly On Climate Change Report Published

more dispersed and diverse geography.

While Oxford is already a strong global city, there is a recognition that a lot more could be done to strengthen the city's contribution to the national and international economy. Tied to this are a number of issues that hold Oxford back from realising the extent of its potential as a compact global city. These are factors that might arise at a local level, but which affect the region as well as potential productivity impacts on a wider, more national scale. For example, graduate retention appears to be lower than average.

In addition, traffic congestion and infrastructure concerns relating to this make the city itself difficult to get around, something which impedes integrated innovation potential. In addressing this, one of the ten ambitions set in the economic strategy for the next ten years includes "expedit[ing] infrastructure developments that unlock economic opportunities". Getting infrastructure delivered at pace, particularly important now that levelling up has been tied to national recovery, requires nimble and locally intelligent and driven delivery vehicles. Through this, the city council can work with strategic partners, including neighbouring districts and the county council, toward solving issues around housing affordability and connectivity that affect not only Oxford but the wider region. Key here is recognising the city's role in convening with other stakeholders and driving the agenda forward.

Oxford – Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework

The Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and the innovative potential found within it, has been recognised by government as the key to the nation's economic recovery and renewal. However, it has also been noted as being 'an area constrained by inadequate infrastructure, a stressed and fragmented natural environment, [and] escalating housing costs'. These are all issues that hold it back from reaching its full economic and environmental potential. In identifying the Arc as 'a national economic priority area' in February 2021 the government published their Spatial Framework plans for the region[13]. In developing the framework, the government is taking a 'strategic approach to planning for growth and infrastructure to realise [the] transformational opportunity' held within the Arc.

Overall, the Spatial Framework will support 'better spatial planning, provide a blueprint for better targeted public investment, give investors greater long-term certainty over growth plans, and allow communities to shape the future of places across the region'. It is based on 10 core principles including being inclusive, sustainable, evidence based and digital first to name a few. Its intention is to identify different opportunity areas for growth including environment, housing, and infrastructure development.

Running parallel to this, an Arc-wide economic strategy will also be developed that will analyse forecast of future growth, identify specific infrastructure requirements, and the investments needed to deliver full economic potential. Both will complement one another, with the framework helping deliver on the priorities of the strategy. Other key areas of focus for Spatial Framework include the Arc's environment, transport and infrastructure requirements, and housing and planning.

There are three phases to the development of the Spatial Framework. The first

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13   MHCLG (2021) – Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework

includes developing a vision for the future of the Arc with public engagement commencing in the summer of 2021. The second phase will develop options to turn the vision into policy, with these options being published for consultation in Spring 2022. Finally, a draft Spatial Framework will be published in autumn 2022 after responses to the consultation are considered. Shortly after this a final framework should be ready for use.

Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative

Oxford's unique innovation assets, its world-renowned anchor institutions, and thriving R&D business sector makes the city's local economy one of the strongest in England. The success of its economy manifests in Oxford contributing over £6.5bn to the national economy per year. At the same time, Oxford is the second most unequal city in the UK, with multiple long-term issues contributing to this disparity. Amongst these can be included earnings, housing, educational attainment, health outcomes, and food poverty[14]. In 2019, the housing affordability ratio for Oxford was 17.23, making it the least affordable city in the UK[15]. When it comes to life expectancy, inequality at birth has widened from 8.5 years in 2010/12 to 9.5 years in 2017/18. These statistics indicate some of the stark differences in socio-economic and health outcomes between high and low-income individuals and families in the city. While the pandemic has laid bare how prevalent these disparities are across communities within our country, the extent of inequality within Oxford and the wider region was something already recognised by local stakeholders.

Oxford City Council, along with the Oxford Strategic Partnership, and Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership, initiated a series of Inclusive Economy Seminars[16] across the city in late 2019 and early 2020 that were designed to bring core strategic partners together and facilitate dialogue on what the future ambitions of an inclusive economy should be. These helped identify what the main interventions would be required in achieving an inclusive economy, and what each stakeholder in the local state needs to do to deliver on this shared ambition. Each seminar focused on different aspects of the inclusive economy including defining the challenges and potential interventions, place-based strategies, economic opportunities for all, and advancing an inclusive economy initiative for Oxfordshire. This has resulted in the publication of a draft summary report findings on the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative in late 2020, with a final report scheduled for publication in 2021[17].

One of the thoughts that has underpinned the ambitions of Oxford City Council and that of its key partners for an inclusive economy is that economic growth in and of itself will not reduce inequalities. There is a need to seize the initiative in searching for and implementing the correct interventions to help guide the process towards imbedding inclusivity

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14   Oxford Strategic Partnership & OxLEP – Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative: Summary Report Findings [A final report is scheduled for publication in 2021]

15   Centre for Cities – Cities Data Tool

16   Oxford Strategic Partnership – Inclusive Growth Seminar Series

17   Oxford Strategic Partnership & OxLEP – Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative: Summary Report Findings [A final report is scheduled for publication in 2021]

within the local economy. Related to this, the city council has already spearheaded initiatives aimed towards inclusivity, including the employer recognition scheme associated with the Oxford Living Wage[18]. Overall, building an inclusive economy has now been adopted as a core objective by the Oxfordshire Growth Board and the Local Industrial Strategy, and is now being advanced within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

At the Right Level: where do we go from here?

The pandemic has given the national levelling up agenda new impetus, in light of the need for localities to recover from the pandemic and ensure that their local economies are resilient and adaptable in light of what may be yet to come. Looking at Oxford's context, particularly in the drive to embed inclusivity within the local economy, it is evident that if we are to recover successfully as a nation, levelling up needs to occur on a local basis as well. Further putting this into context of what the devolution and local recovery white paper might bring, it is extremely important to understand that levelling up and recovering from the pandemic needs to be carried out at the right level for our communities to feel any benefit. Whether it be decarbonisation, local and inclusive growth, strategic approaches to homelessness, COVID-19 recovery response and transport connectivity, the city's political leadership has consistently risen to complex place policy challenges with muscular and creative thinking to optimise Oxford's future. It is vital not to lose sight of this.

Ultimately, there are three aspects to what needs to be happen going forward. There is an evident need for **Levelling Up and Recovery from the Pandemic.** The guiding question here needs to grasp '***How does Oxford recover and grow?'***.

The second element of this is in how to do this through **Good Growth.** In line with existing ambition for an inclusive and sustainable local economy, we need to understand '***How do we make sure recovery and growth happen fairly without people being left behind?***'.

Tying these two elements together is the **Local State** of Oxford, taking this to be wider than local government, including key education and health anchor institutions, as well as community and business stakeholders. Understanding the roles and responsibilities that each have in Oxford's journey of levelling up and recovering from the pandemic, defining '***Who oversees the delivery of recovery and growth?***' will ensure a streamlined and directed recovery.

Levelling Up and Recovery

With strong city-led governance, Oxford is able to use its unique assets and particular strengths to recover stronger than before. Focusing these assets in the right direction will streamline the city's local levelling up efforts. In looking at recovery, each locality will need to gain an understanding of assets and strengths that can be utilised in the process, as well as priority areas that need to be addressed.

Oxford's globally significant research and development assets will present an opportunity for the city's own levelling up and recovery journey. How to retain and grow this asset base, and the countless innovation opportunities deriving from it,

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18   Oxford City Council – The Oxford Living Wage

will heavily influence the way recovery manifests on a local and regional level, and the impact that these assets can have on the national effort. Through targeted investment in this base, and the companies attached to it, there will be a knock-on effect on wider employment opportunities that would benefit local communities. Something particularly beneficial given the scarring consequences that the current recession will continue to have on local people who lose their jobs.

In making the case for Oxford's role in driving forward regional levelling up and recovery efforts, attention needs to be given to both existing strengths and barriers to growth. An area that needs to be looked at is the certainty and longevity of investment funding. Without there being certainty that funding will be available from government on a long-term, sustainable basis, the delivery on shared strategies of growth becomes more challenging. This will be further compounded when faced with changing national priorities as the government deals with the pandemic, and how these changing priorities will affect funding flows on a local level. Managing this will entail developing a holistic and collaborative approach to growth funding, with Oxford City Council using its convening power to work with local state stakeholders in finding a way to alleviate current budgetary pressures. Relatedly, in attracting further investment in growth and economic development, the city council can take a leadership role in supporting initiatives that showcase the city and region's rich innovation ecosystem. Especially in areas proven by the pandemic to be of particular importance for the future – including health-tech and clean growth.

Attracting further investment will also have to factor in the impact of lifestyle changes pertaining to work culture on the levelling up agenda. The increase in working from home brought on by the pandemic is one of many changes to work patterns likely to continue. Oxford's road to levelling up and recovery will require an evaluation of physical infrastructure strategies including those relating to transport. The importance of connectivity underpins this. Currently, the most convenient way to travel to and between the rich variety of clusters and campuses around Oxford and the region is by car. Going forward, a central aspect of strengthening and growing these unique assets needs to consider a more sustainable transport model to connect them together. The pandemic has changed how we get to and where we work. Related to this is the consideration that needs to be given to emerging spin outs and the type of lab spaces that will be needed for innovative industries. While there will be an increase of working from home, it still remains that face-to-face interaction will help drive innovation forward. And accommodating these companies within the Oxfordshire region and broader Arc area will be key in regional levelling up and recovery efforts. Addressing this is an area of focus where the city council needs to continue its engagement with key local, regional and national stakeholders. Already, there are a number of projects that bring together influential stakeholders, such as Oxfordshire County Council, Network Rail, and the University of Oxford to focus on key related investments such as the Oxford West End Innovation District and fulfilling the Oxford Station Master Plan.

Station Redevelopment

Oxfordshire's rail system acts as a 'bottleneck' to future network expansion. The Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study identified the need for a 70 percent increase in rail services by 2028, with growth concentrated on Oxford Station. The re-development of the station is key to growth and the sustainability of the wider regional economy.

Figure 1: Indicative Service Patterns
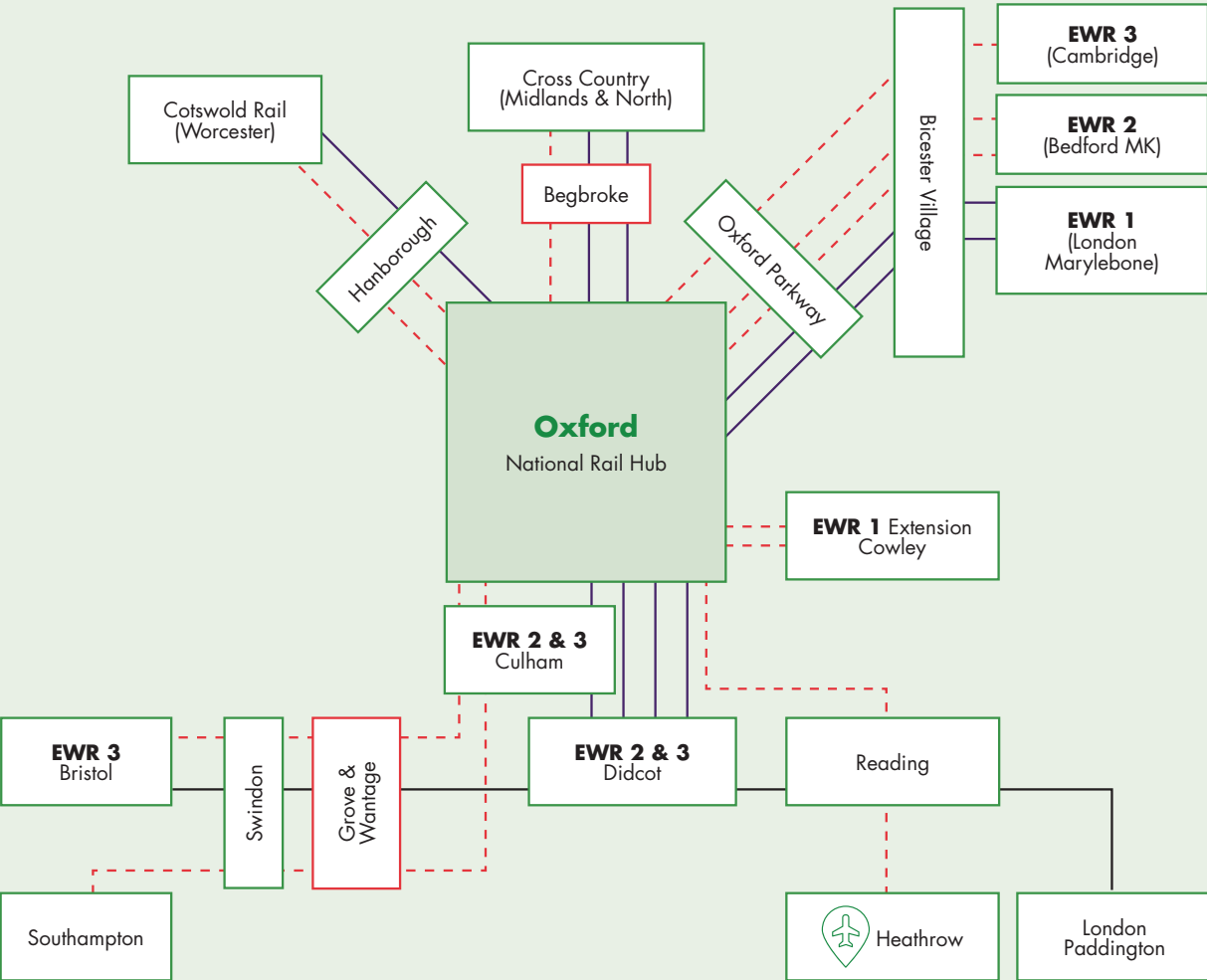
Legend

— Current Rail Network

- - - Future Additional Rail Development

□ Existing Interchange Hubs

□ Proposed New Transit Interchange Hubs

Potential indicative passenger routes of regional connectivity via Oxford rail transport hub

Cross Country	**Cotswold Line**	**East West Rail 1 extension**	**East West Rail 2**	**East West Rail 2**
Midlands & North	Cotswold	London Marylebone	Bedford MK	Cambridge
⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕
Oxford	Oxford	Bicester	Oxford	Oxford
⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕	⇕
Swindon	Didcot	Oxford	Didcot	Bristol
⇕	⇕	⇕		
Southampton	London Paddington	Cowley		

Considering it will serve as a hub for the East-West railway, the station has a key role in expanding Oxford's reach across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Recognising this, Network Rail have applied for £160m funding to improve rail infrastructure along the Oxford Rail Corridor.

The redevelopment of Oxford station sits within the wider regeneration of the city's West End. Key schemes cover Osney Mead, Oxpens, and other adjacent sites that are coming together to form the Oxford West End Innovation District (OxWID). Adding to this are other key sites in charitable ownership. OxWID will create a new nationally significant R&D space in the heart of the city, alongside facilities for spin-out companies and residential housing. The first scheme entails plans to convert the Osney Mead Industrial Estate into an innovation quarter. The second is aimed at developing a mixed-use site in the city centre to deliver new homes, office space, and flood mitigation measures. The Innovation District will be a gateway development into Oxford's innovation ecosystem, with the station at its heart. The success of these schemes will entail continued engagement and partnership working with stakeholders central to their success, both within the city and more widely across the region.

Our increasing reliance on digital technologies during the pandemic will continue post-recovery, further emphasising the importance of developing a robust digital infrastructure. Many companies are increasing capacity for online working to engage global markets. Adapting to the convergence of digital technologies, facilitated by the city council, will increase inward investment into Oxford and the region. At the same time, the necessary shift to digital schooling following the national lockdown highlighted the prevalence of a digital divide disadvantaging children from low socio-economic backgrounds[19]. This shows the importance of developing the soft skills to engage with digital infrastructure and represents another area of consideration for the city council in leading regional levelling up efforts.

More broadly, the skills agenda is a vital part of the inclusive economy framework. It is also a key route through which to facilitate social mobility in Oxford's local community and ensure that levelling up and recovery is directed by good growth. Understanding how the skills agenda links to Oxford and Oxfordshire's local economy needs is increasingly important within the context of recession and projected job losses.

Good Growth

Levelling up and recovering from the pandemic must be underpinned by the ambition of creating an inclusive local economy whose benefits are felt and shared by every community in Oxford. In order to successfully achieve this, the imperative to level up and recover needs to be guided by principles of good growth. This should be viewed as an all-encompassing, holistic, approach combining multiple policy agendas aimed at levelling up Oxford's communities and embedding inclusivity within the local economy. Key elements include clean local growth, community input through neighbourhood participative democracy and co-design, and robust social infrastructure amongst many others. Good growth is where the need for deeper collaborative working and meaningful engagement between the key stakeholders of the local state, including business, government, and local community, is paramount. Equally, defining how this engagement works, and what it means for each stakeholder will ensure that recovery occurs through good growth.

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19   The Telegraph (2020) – Children Left Behind As Schools Go Digital

Important factors for good growth include:

- **The role of planning** in embedding good growth within the recovery will be essential, both in planning policy, and aligning shared objectives of delivering an inclusive local economy. This highlights the importance of partnership working and is demonstrated through collaborative work occurring on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 by the five district planning authorities of Oxfordshire with engagement from county council. Relatedly, looking at planning strategy through a business lens will give businesses confidence that Oxford and the wider region is an area that they can continue to invest in.

- **Local business** has a unique role in driving forward levelling up and recovery through good growth. The relationship between business and community will increasingly become significant in developing resilience to the socio-economic effects of the pandemic. Recovery through good growth will bring focus on the broader social responsibilities that businesses have toward their community. Understanding community as also encompassing the business community demonstrating that they have a stake in local issues.

- **Community co-design and neighbourhood democracy**, through giving the local community a voice, are an integral part of good growth. Oxford has set a precedent in this by being the first city in the UK to organise a citizen's assembly on climate change. This form of co-design involves convening of the local community with parts of the local state, including local government. For good growth, it is vital that engagement happening effectively with parts of the community it is aimed to benefit the most.

- **Physical infrastructure** is crucial to social mobility and equality of access, particularly in an area with Oxford's housing demands and target. Providing clean and sustainable infrastructure to all communities is a central challenge of modern governance. Equally, infrastructure needs in an urban context, such as Oxford, are different from a rural context as they are cumulatively triggered from growth within and beyond the city limits. The opportunities for modal shift and health improvements through physical infrastructure are very real in a compact city like Oxford. The need to get first/last mile investment in Oxford is critical to the wider economy.

- **Social infrastructure** is fundamental to good growth's success. For Oxford's local communities to benefit from the growth potential that recovery will bring, and for the city to address socio-economic and health disparities, structural challenges need to be addressed. Social value in procurement, education, and corporate social responsibility come into play with strong collaboration between local stakeholders required. The need for this has increased during the course of the pandemic with the need for fast, flexible, targeted and aligned responses, which has led to the city council moving to an increasingly localised model of delivery. Investment in education will enable local industries, including those based in the Arc region, to be more accessible to local people. Developing social infrastructure to enables community empowerment.

- **Clean growth** is a vital part of good growth, and they need to be taken together to be successful. Economic and environmental aspects of growth cannot be addressed effectively unless there is an integrated approach to

place. There is an imperative to align strategies, given clean growth links closely to health and wellbeing and physical infrastructure in place. For its part, the city council recognise this and alignment is occurring through the establishment of a Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership involving all of the city's major businesses and institutions. A good growth strategy for Oxford based on place dynamics should encompass frameworks for climate change strategy, health and wellbeing strategy, local plans, the forthcoming economic strategy, and the approach to post-COVID recovery strategy around skills.

- **Social mobility**, and opportunities to facilitate this, open up by linking the city's local community to the vast offer and potential of Oxford's knowledge intensive economy. It is important, now more than ever, to ensure our local economies are robust enough to stimulate growth using the existing potential found locally. Working through the framework of the skills agenda, Oxford's anchor institutions and businesses should ensure good jobs and training opportunities are accessible to local people. The city council is well-placed to facilitate these possibilities.

The Local State

Oxford's local state includes the research and development clusters, anchor institutions, and government that all drive the city forward in being globally significant. It is this local state that has a particular role in tying the first two elements together: in delivering levelling up and recovery through good growth. Discussing the local state in this context covers the roles and responsibilities of Oxford's local economic anchors and clusters, the universities, the health eco-system, as well as key local government partners, including Oxfordshire's district and county councils, that all drive the city forward in being globally significant. It is also these institutions that will have a large responsibility in helping achieve the goals of meeting the objectives of the inclusivity agenda, and other key strategies including, but not limited to, the Oxford 2050 vision and the new Council Strategy 2020-2024.

The convening power of the local state and importance for key stakeholders to engage in partnership working to achieve shared objectives is already apparent in many parts of Oxford City Council's work and will be critical in its journey of levelling up and recovery. This is evident through the work that Oxfordshire's councils have done through the Oxfordshire Growth Board with regard to the Housing and Growth Deal.

In order to maintain and develop effective partnership working, there needs to be a substantial alignment of strategies and plans so they make sense when set against one another. There is a clear requirement for strategies on different areas including economic, climate change, transport, education, and housing. However, these individual strategies also need to be curated in a way that makes sense holistically, reflecting the realities of place, and are realistically deliverable. In developing strategies on different policy areas, the elements that contribute to bringing them forward have to be understood and communicated in a way that is relevant to local stakeholders.

Doing so will make it easier to consider the right level of intervention for the convening power of the local state in delivering outcomes. Partnership working extends beyond local government, and, therefore, it is critically important that the city council and OxLEP, as a key partner, continue to work together to deliver the right kind of local response to the national programmes found within the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy in Oxford.

As a core element of the local state, local government is at the centre of driving forward the road to levelling up and recovery through good growth. It has a set of direct responsibilities and actions that it can undertake to facilitate Oxford's sustainable good growth. The scope of action to enable this is large, and encompasses tackling health and socio-economic inequalities, mitigating the consequences of climate change, building an inclusive economy, and providing business support for local SME's to name a few. These are all areas where the city council is already making considerable headway, and its continued leadership in facing these issues will be the foundation of a good growth recovery. Equally, making a robust recovery from the pandemic and ensuring the benefits of Oxford as a compact global city are felt as widely as possible throughout the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and beyond will only be achieved through strong city leadership alongside cross boundary cooperation with neighbouring districts and the county council.

Central-local government relations are a key part of decision making on the right level. Therefore, a clear conversation is required on how to deliver on shared objectives of the city council and central government in a joined-up manner that indicates a realistic way for delivery on things like local infrastructure needs.

Local anchors

The other core element of the local state are the universities, the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes. As key contributors to the city's economy, with global reputations, they have a significant role in driving Oxford forward and delivering on good growth. The global recognition of the University of Oxford plays a big role in attracting business and inward investment into the area, while Oxford Brookes has worked to unlock the skills potential of Oxfordshire's youth through the Brookes Engage programme[20]. It is vital that the working relationship between the city council and both universities continues to strengthen and be built upon in different areas of communal interest. Additionally, continuing efforts to understand and engage with different local agendas to tackle prevalent shared issues will help develop an understanding of the universities' role in supporting Oxford's local community.

In gaining a fuller picture of what the post-pandemic economic landscape will be, and the required actions needed for recovery through good growth, the other necessary area of collaboration is with the region's private sector Local Economic Anchors. As a global facing city rooted in place, Oxford has a strong presence of anchors, and with this the social capital needed to help direct recovery through good growth. Core anchors include the BMW Mini Plant in Cowley, Oxfam GB, Oxford Biomedica, Activate Learning, Unipart, the Westgate Shopping Centre, the Oxford Bus Company, and the Science and Business Parks to name a few. Areas that would benefit from sustained partnership working are in education and the skills agenda particularly in defining the role that these economic anchors can play in developing a resilient and skilled local workforce in the face of COVID-19-inspired large-scale unemployment. For their part, the city council have engaged in sustained dialogue with these anchors on recovering from the pandemic over the late summer and autumn months of 2020.

The city council recognises the intrinsic connection between health and the

20   Oxford Brookes – Brookes Engage

economy, and the importance of a successful economy as a determinant of health and wellbeing. This is why healthcare institutions, including the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, their constituent hospitals, and primary care services, are the vital third element of the local state. They have a unique role and responsibility in working with the other stakeholders of the local state to tackle the socio-economic and health deprivation within pockets of Oxford's communities. It has been noted that given the level of scale at which the parts of the health system works at, in terms of its internationally significant work, there isn't equal focus given to tackling the local inequalities as effectively as could be. Finding a way to navigate these two realities while understanding how the health system can work across the local state to use this innovation to tackle these local issues will be a critical part of levelling up and recovery through good growth.

Delivering at the right level

The pandemic has shone a light on the centralised nature of our political system. Countless examples throughout the year, from data sharing on R rates with local authorities, to the command of track and trace, demonstrate the extent and consequences of the drift towards centralisation. Equally, it has demonstrated the power of, and need for, local government's ability to work across organisational and geographic boundaries as a system that can be strategic and responsive to communities. The services needed to support local communities throughout the pandemic, whether health, police, transport, or other social services all sit within varying geographies and demonstrate the need for collaborative working.

Oxford City Council have proven that they are a committed leader in collaborating with strategic partners to serve local communities, especially during the pandemic. However, in order to truly deliver a good growth recovery, the central issue of budgetary uncertainty needs to be addressed. For this reason, Localis is calling for a £1bn Endowment Deal for Oxford, taking the form of a single long-term investment strategy for city-led growth. This deal would give Oxford City Council power to: target investment in key physical and transport infrastructure requirements, build the capacity needed to develop a skills supply chain, give strategic planning powers relating to Oxford's decarbonisation targets, and allow for city led investment strategies on social, digital, and smart energy infrastructure.

It would allow the city council to direct growth at the right level for Oxford to become an inclusive and sustainable compact global city and in so doing broaden its offer to the different economic areas within which it sits. Considering its functional role within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the Thames Valley, and the FEMA's that centre on the city, a long-term investment strategy would allow Oxford to play a stronger and more effective part in all of these configurations. Oxford being able to invest in its own good growth will allow for wider benefit to be seen across the Arc, and crucially, make the city a better engine for growth within it. This will accelerate the transformation of the Arc 'into a world leading economic area'[21]. Relatedly, the success of Oxford goes hand in hand with the success of Oxfordshire as a whole. The city having the power to drive growth will equally require continued and strengthened collaboration with its neighbouring districts and county partners to ensure that Oxford's successful growth continues to benefit its wider region.

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21   MHCLG (2019) – The Oxford-Cambridge Arc

Governance at the Right Level

This recommendation is designed to situate Oxford as a compact global city within the aegis of governance frameworks not just vested in Oxford City Council but also extending sub-regionally to those of Oxfordshire County Council and OXLEP and regionally to the nationally vital Oxford-Cambridge Arc – so as to provide sufficient power and resource at the right level to allow the city to deliver for its residents and to further accelerate the growth potential of the arc and the county.

Oxford's ability to grow at the city level

- The power to raise levies to fund placemaking efforts:

  - On businesses, in a manner similar to the provisions laid out in the Business Rates Supplement Act.

  - On residents, in a progressive manner using council tax bands as a guide.

- A long-term endowment fund for supporting good growth within the city.

Oxford's relationship with the County and the Arc

- Co-decision powers with Oxfordshire County Council on local transport infrastructure decisions.

- Some strategic planning powers for the city council, specifically on the ability to go further within the city than national and regional targets dictate for planning standards and design codes relating to good growth targets.

- Key cities for the Arc's future growth, including Oxford, Cambridge, and Milton Keynes need to have a clear voice on its governance i.e through representation on the proposed Arc growth body.

Oxford City Council's relationship with its residents

- Statutory convening role in the development, alongside County and Arc partners, of a skills supply chain for the City of Oxford which focuses on maximising the human potential of the city's resident population.

- The city should put forward a transparent community asset and social infrastructure investment strategy as part of a revised social contract with residents.

Barriers and Obstacles to be addressed

- A lack of certainty on the availability of long-term funding makes the delivery of growth strategies more difficult, leading to detrimental consequences for investment in place. An holistic approach to growth funding is required in providing certainty. One where different elements of the local state come together to alleviate budgeting pressures and pool resources over a wider geographic area.

- The current funding system is set up in a way that leads to a competition for central pot funds. This system is not sustainable in the long term as localities look to recover and address place-based infrastructure challenges. There needs to be a long-term approach for funding to meet these needs that doesn't have to appeal to the national rhetoric at the expense of community issues not being addressed.

- The national standardised housing requirements present in the Future Homes Standard 2025 highlights an issue around the best way to ensure robust national policy translates to deal with local needs and requirements.

- The proposals set out in the planning white paper pose a challenge to local authorities in the significant changes intended to the current framework. The ability to formulate a strategic vision, and the importance of strategic partnerships, is lacking. The work that Oxfordshire's authorities are doing together in meeting regional housing needs through the Growth Board should have been held as an exemplar scheme in the planning white paper.

Challenges to be addressed

- On climate change, the city council needs to continue to show leadership in communicating the understanding reached in the citizens' assembly to the rest of the people of Oxford. And ensuring that the debate is inclusive, allowing every part of the city's community to engage with it.

- To tackle the socio-economic and health disparities in Oxford's local communities, there needs to be clarity on the best way to harness and leverage the relationships and assets across the city's public sector, including in healthcare and education, to take constructive steps to address the issue.

- In addressing local health policy challenges, the city council needs to engage more with the cutting-edge research coming from the innovation ecosystem in identifying and tackling specific problems. As an example, Oxfordshire is faced with the challenges that arise with successful ageing. Dealing with this population will require efficient communication support, remote monitoring devices, and the best use of data to improve health outcomes. Oxfordshire's health and social care needs serve as a basis for innovation in the health tech area. Here, local government, including the city council, are well positioned to collaborate with the health tech, healthcare and academic networks involved to say what it needs to support the local population.

- The city council can help empower communities by making more local services agile and adaptable to community need. Finding a way to deliver a city-wide service while catering to the specific needs of different communities on the hyperlocal level will require bold innovation.

1. Levelling up and Recovery from the Pandemic – How does Oxford Recover and Grow?

In moving towards recovery, places need an understanding of assets and strengths that can be utilised, as well as priority areas that need to be addressed. With strong city-led governance, Oxford has the potential to use its unique assets and particular strengths to recover as a more robust and inclusive economy. With a holistic strategy, these assets can streamline the city's local levelling up efforts.

1.1 Contextualising the wider impact of Oxford's recovery

To appreciate the importance of Oxford's levelling up and recovery being led at the right level, it is essential to consider the crucial role played by the city in wider geographic configurations. Oxford is a core element of bodies such as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the Thames Valley, as well as the functional economic areas (FEMAs) which centre around the city.

FEMAs define local economies spatially, along various lines of economic market activity. These areas will differ in size and shape, based on the sphere of economic activity in question. Two commonly used FEMAs are Housing Market Areas[22] (HMAs) and Travel to Work Areas[23] (TTWAs). Another recently developed FEMA definition was put forward by Colin Jones of Heriot-Watt University[24], focusing on commercial centres of office rents and retail activities. In his paper, Jones comments:

> "Unfortunately, very often administrative regions and local authority areas are used as proxies for functional areas, but they have serious shortcomings for spatial economic analysis and the implementation of local policies"

In Oxford, there are several competing FEMA considerations. There is the local housing market within Oxford and its planning jurisdiction, but also the wider Strategic Housing Market Area[25] of Oxfordshire. There is also the broader Oxford TTWA which includes most of Oxfordshire. This overlaps with other TTWAs – the northern part of Oxfordshire is part of TTWAs extending into the Midlands, and the southern part is absorbed by the Reading TTWA. London is also a consideration; it was the area outside of the TTWA with the highest number of commuters into Oxford in 2011.

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22   GOV.UK (2010) – Housing Market Areas
23   ONS (2016) – Travel To Work Area Analysis In Great Britain
24   Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science (2016) – Spatial Economy And The Geography Of Functional Economic Areas
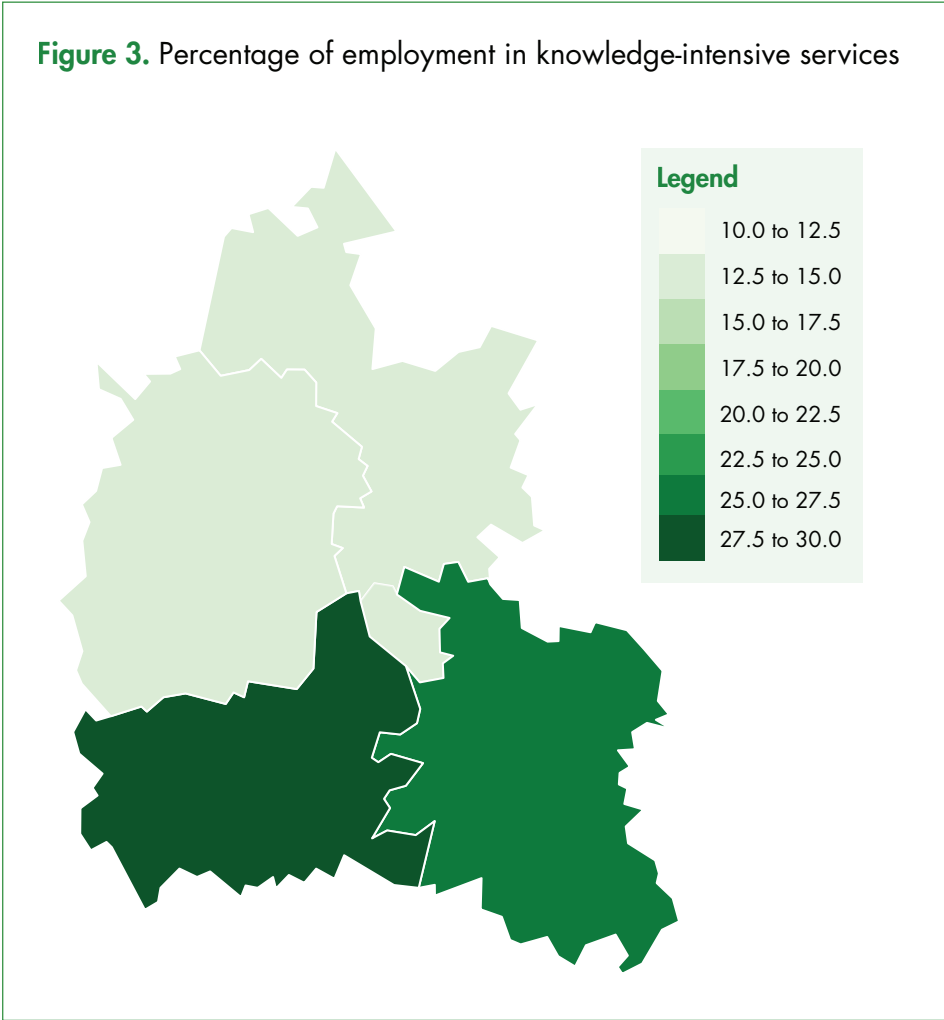25   Oxford City Council (2014) – SHMA Key Findings Summary

Figure 2: Oxfordshire 'Knowledge Spine'
Christian Brand, Oxford University

Across the wider Oxfordshire area, there are several distinct economies, relating to but not always coterminous with the overlap in TTWAs. At the city level, there is clearly a coherent core commercial market, as well as a recognisable periphery. Centre for Cities[26] identifies Oxford as a 'Primary Urban Area' with coherent markets for commercial and retail space. Jones includes the city as a 'tier-4 retail centre', defined as an area with £260-450m retail sales, along with Hull, Plymouth, Milton Keynes, Derby, Bath, Exeter, York and Northampton. Also worthy of consideration is the tourism sector in Oxford and its interaction with other markets such as the Cotswold tourism in the west of Oxfordshire. Oxford also has unique characteristics, harder to generalise into economic typographies, due to its distinctive and nationally-significant anchor institutions – Oxford powers the 'Knowledge Spine', connecting research centres across different housing and employment markets in the county. The value to local job prospects of the 'Spine' can be seen in the high percentage of employment concentrated in high-GVA, knowledge-intensive services seen at its base, in the 'Science Vale', illustrated in the map below.

Figure 3. Percentage of employment in knowledge-intensive services

Legend
- 10.0 to 12.5
- 12.5 to 15.0
- 15.0 to 17.5
- 17.5 to 20.0
- 20.0 to 22.5
- 22.5 to 25.0
- 25.0 to 27.5
- 27.5 to 30.0

Source: BRES

Beyond this, there is the broader, sub-regional focus of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc[27]. The Arc is a stretch of land covering 50 miles, which runs between

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26   Centre For Cities – City Definition
27   GOV.UK (2019) – The Oxford-Cambridge Arc

Oxford and also extends into Cambridge via Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. It is home to unrivalled assets of global significance, and contains 31 local authorities, 4 local enterprise partnerships, and 10 universities including the University of Oxford and University of Cambridge. It has shown global leadership in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the regional strengths in core innovation industries including life sciences being at the forefront in developing vaccines. These sectors will play a significant role in the post-COVID economic recovery of the UK.

The other overlapping sub-region Oxford is a part of is the Thames Valley, which is the fastest growing region in the UK outside of London. It encompasses companies from all across the world from a range of sectors and is considered to be the UK's true 'turbo-economy'. The area has a presence of £330bn turnover across all sectors, £14bn turnover for the tech sector and is predicted to contribute 1.9 percent of GVA growth in 2021[28]. It is predicted that all areas within the Thames Valley are forecast to outperform the UK average in terms of GVA growth between 2019 – 2025[29].

Figure 4. GVA per head in the OxCam Arc
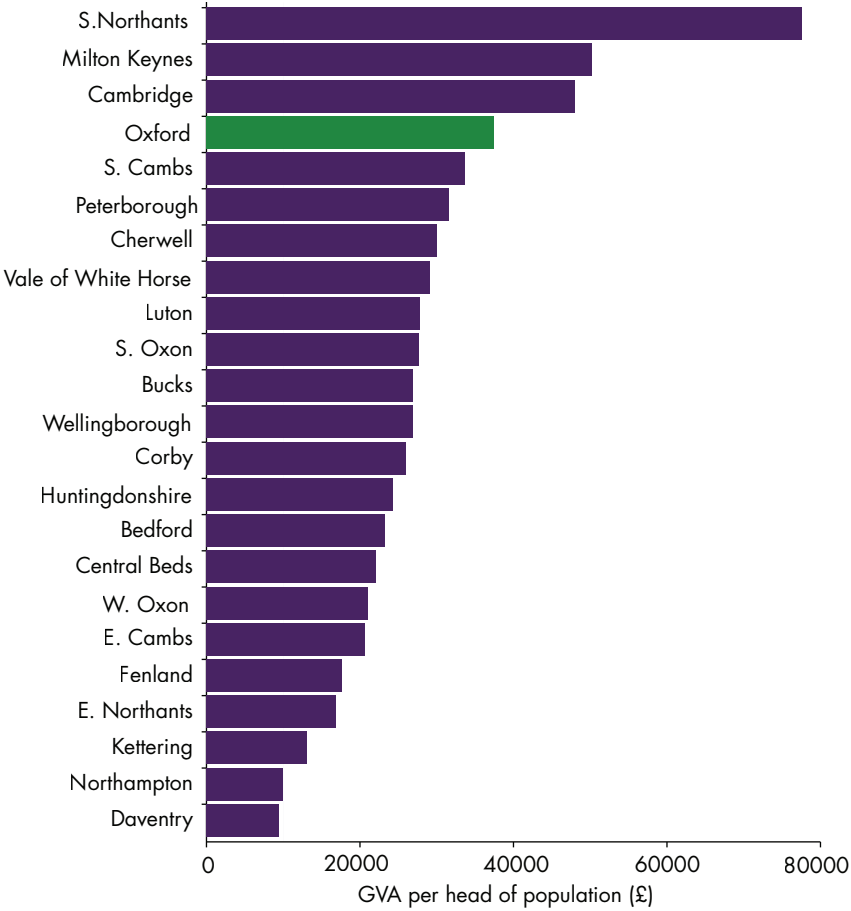
28   BDO (2019) – Focus on the Thames Valley Region – BDO

29   EY (2020) – Assessing the impact of COVID-19 on the Thames Valley

1.2 Innovation Opportunities

Innovation will be key to the productivity increases that will drive economic recovery. Oxford and its neighbours are well-positioned with innovation opportunities to drive recovery locally and nationally. Identifying how best to seize the potential of these innovation opportunities is most effective at the local level, through a collaborative effort between private and public actors, convened by a local state that is aware and appreciative of the socio-economic profile of the place. The local leadership demonstrated through this process is informed by, and in service to, Oxford's community. Working in this manner will build on the relevance of Oxford's economic offer in the broader national context of building back better in a bottom-up and inclusive manner.

Research and development

Oxford's globally significant research and development assets present an opportunity for the city's own levelling up and recovery journey. The question of how to retain and grow this asset base, and the countless innovation opportunities deriving from this, will influence the way recovery manifests on a local and regional level, and the impact that these assets can have on the national effort. Retaining R&D companies in the region and investing in their growth will bring direct and indirect opportunities, including in employment, for the local community. Furthermore, the area's strong research and development offer inevitably impacts Oxford's social infrastructure – the places and spaces that people used to interact, network and participate in the local community. Recognising this and pursuing ways of maximising the sectors positive impacts on society would illuminate how innovation opportunities can go a long way in bringing about social good.

 The global prestige associated with the pioneering work done by the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes attracts talent and investment into the city and neighbouring districts. The spread of locations of the universities, and their affiliated institutions, in neighbouring districts has created a network of innovation across the region. This network is cemented further by Oxford University Innovation (OUI)[30] and Oxford Science Innovation (OSI)[31]. OUI gives innovative ideas the support they need to launch successfully, invests in the latest enterprises, and guides budding entrepreneurs. It gives the local research community commercial advice, whilst providing funding for patent applications and legal costs. OUI forms between 15-25 companies a year, making 1002 deals in 2019, and manages between 4,000-5,000 patents and patent applications a year. In 2018, Oxford ranked 3rd in the top 10 UK cities for published patent applications, at 64.5 per 100,000 residents[32]. During Q2 of 2020, five companies have been launched – amongst them, Oxsed[33], a social enterprise developing a fast test for COVID-19. OSI is the largest university-partnered venture firm in the world, building and investing in the success of science and technology businesses. From artificial intelligence to nuclear fusion to developing treatments for infectious diseases, the firm has raised over £600m to build a first-rate science and technology ecosystem.

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30   Oxford University Innovation – Homepage
31   Oxford Science Innovation – Homepage
32   Centre for Cities (2020) – Cities Outlook 2020
33   Oxsed – Homepage

Adding to this are the array of science, innovation, technology and business parks hosting some of Oxford's biggest anchors. This knowledge-led economic activity is sustained by a world-class community of researchers. Overall, the sector drives the creation of pioneering businesses that are geared toward solving the biggest global challenges, whether that be in healthcare, energy or climate change. Much of this activity, and the sites within which they occur, are bolstered by the globally significant name of Oxford and the prestige that it holds. Many of these parks lie along the 'Knowledge Spine' that is powered by the city.

The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus[34] is an example of the pioneering work carried out at these parks. It is a cluster comprising of over 200 world leading research and technology companies (specialising in various health sciences, space applications and energy) and employs approximately 6000 people. It is home to a designated UK Space Agency gateway, as well as Diamond Light Synchrotron, Medical Research Council, and the Public Health England science hub. With a proposed addition of 1000 new homes as part of a Harwell Innovation Village, and its own innovation centre, Harwell is typical of the rich innovation opportunities waiting to be nurtured and emboldened in the context of recovery and renewal. The Culham Science Centre[35] specialising in fusion energy and robotics, has over 2000 scientists and researchers, and is home to the Centre for Fusion Energy and Supply Chain Cluster. Culham finds itself at the heart of the UK's robotics and autonomous systems activity sector – with the RACE centre spearheading the county's successes in the sector. Overall, the robotics capabilities at Culham have managed to attract over £200m worth of major contracts, contributing to Oxford, Oxfordshire, and the UK's competitiveness on the world stage.

Oxford's innovation opportunities are enriched further by its energy sector and the role that it is playing in the clean energy revolution and achievement of net zero. Culham is home to the Centre for Fusion Energy – the UK's national nuclear fusion laboratory. The centre works in developing the enormous potential that fusion energy has in generating low-carbon electricity. There is also the Local Energy Oxfordshire (LEO) project; an ambitious, innovative set of 'smart grid' trials that adopts a holistic approach to improving the country's understanding of how best to transition to a cleaner and flexible electricity system. The goal is to test the potential for greener electricity systems to better understand how they may function on a national scale. Energy Superhub Oxford is the other clean energy project based in the area. ESO aims to eliminate 10,000 tonnes of CO_2 emissions a year by 2021 and seeks to demonstrate the benefits of transitioning towards smart localised energy systems. This is done by uniting technological innovations in transport, heat and power with a planning model for cities across the world to follow when cutting carbon emissions and improving air quality.

Innovation ecosystem

The network of innovation centered around Oxford is a nexus which connects various R&D assets together, facilitating coordination between them. An example being the Oxford University DNA sequencing spin out Nanopore opening a base within the Harwell Campus[36]. This is in addition to their head quarter offices

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34   Harwell Campus – Homepage
35   Culham Science Centre – Homepage
36   Oxford University Innovation (2018) – Oxford Nanopore Secures £100m for Harwell Base

based at the Oxford Science Park. Understanding the importance of this network, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and the neighbouring districts should continue partnering with these R&D anchors to maintain the overall growth of the innovation ecosystem. Oxford's innovation ecosystem is of national and global significance. By being guided through strong city governance, Oxford can grow this, and begin to seize upon the significant potential for the city's recovery and renewal to be driven by a diversified and innovative R&D sector. A sector strengthened in such a way, through adopting a holistic view of Oxford's global brand and forging stronger links between institutions, would make the city and neighbouring district's economic offer to the broader national agenda of levelling up coordinated and streamlined.

The global successes coming out of this vast innovation ecosystem throughout the pandemic, most notably in racing to find a vaccine to COVID-19[37], clearly demonstrate its importance on a regional, national, and international level. It is equally indicative of the potential the ecosystem holds for Oxford's own levelling up and recovery efforts. Especially if done with a clear focus and directed at addressing the most pressing concerns to ensure recovery occurs through good growth.

Figure 5. Business survival rates by number of years

Source: ONS business demography data

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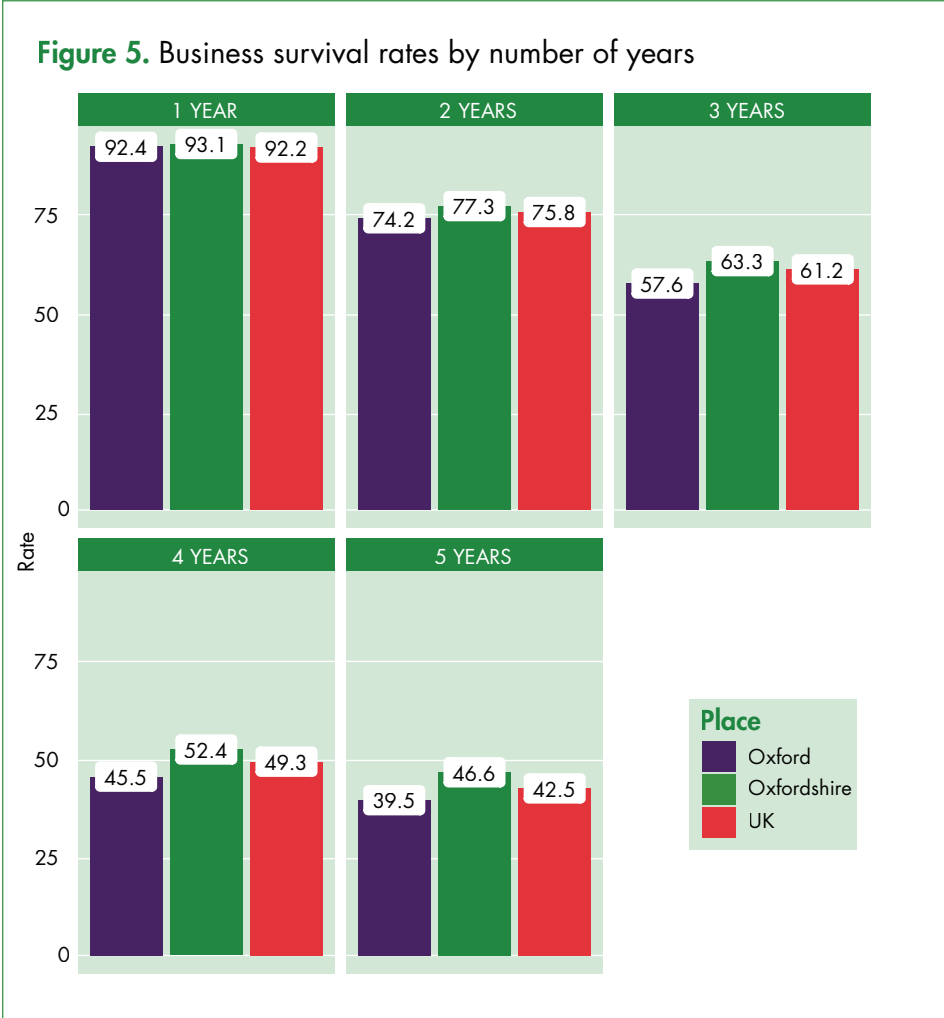
37   University of Oxford (2020) – Oxford University Breakthrough On Global COVID-19 Vaccine

Breakthrough businesses

The high concentration and consistent production of breakthrough businesses across Oxford and its neighbouring districts are a key benefit of the innovation ecosystem. Oxford ranks in the top ten cities in the country for the number of patent applications per resident[38]. These companies are global leaders in tackling the biggest challenges facing the planet, ranging from finding a vaccine to COVID-19 to designing technology to predict Alzheimer's Disease, and having them based in and around Oxford is a unique strength. Their continued success is a success for the city. While there is significant potential in using this success for local levelling up and recovery efforts, there is also a role to be played by a collaborative local state in developing and maintaining the conditions to allow these companies to thrive.

In their *2017 Science and Innovation Audit*[39] the Oxfordshire Transformative Technologies Alliance focused on the growth of four main 'transformative technology' areas including autonomous vehicles, digital health, space-led data applications, and technologies underpinning quantum computing. The audit states that Oxfordshire has a role in supporting the growth of businesses that develop these technologies, predicting that this will result in 69,000 jobs for the region by 2030.

There is already the robust infrastructure in place to support breakthrough businesses including spinouts coming out of the universities. OUI has been responsible for creating and supporting these companies for over 30 years[40]. Since 2010, over £2.5bn in external investment has been raised by its spinouts, as well as channelling millions back into research at the University, benefitting local economic development and significant local job creation[41]. Nearly half of all the spinouts in Oxford's history have launched in the past five years[42] since OSI's launch. Even in the face of the pandemic, these companies have continued to see external investment grow – in the second quarter of 2020, across 21 deals, £366m was raised and five companies were launched[43]. Oxford Brookes have also pledged continued support to the emerging innovation coming out of the university. It has a robust enterprise support network[44], one aspect of which involves the 'Start-Up Visa' for international students who want to develop their innovative ideas in the UK. Already, there is a 150 strong community of spinouts, and in its University Strategy 2035, Oxford Brookes promises to 'increase the number of spin-outs and start-ups by 50 percent'[45]. Both universities have also joined together in the Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership aimed at supporting local social enterprises. As a result of OSEP's successful bidding in 2014, Oxfordshire was announced as the first county in the UK to be a 'social enterprise place' by Social Enterprise UK[46].

Alongside this, there is an extensive ecosystem of business support and funding – including a wealth of networks, trusts, prizes and clusters. One that stands out with regard to innovation opportunities looking forward is Oxford BioEscalator,

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38 Centre for Cities (2018) – Cities Outlook 2018

39 OxLEP (2017) – Oxfordshire Transformative Technologies Alliance

40 Oxford Mail (2018) – Oxford University spin-outs are attracting more cash than ever

41 British Business Bank (2018) – Small Business Finance Markets 2018/19

42 Financial Times (2020) – Why UK university spinouts are courting overseas investors

43 Business & Innovation (2020) – COVID-19 doesn't dampen investor appetite for Oxford University spin outs

44 Oxford Brookes – Enterprise Support

45 Oxford Brookes – Our New University Strategy

46 Oxford Brookes (2014) – Oxfordshire designated a 'Social Enterprise Place'

a new research and innovation centre, within the broader Oxford City Science Area, established specifically for medical science companies. It functions to ensure that the research undertaken at the University of Oxford reaches medical facilities and pharmacies worldwide by offering an environment for them to collaborate and grow. It provides physical lab space, and a protective bubble of support and investment opportunity.

Nevertheless, the Oxfordshire LIS[47] identified how 'many firms continue to struggle to grow to scale and do not translate ideas into business growth'. In addition to this, 'many firms are simply unaware of the support available, or unable to access it'. Therefore, in order to maximise innovative potential, OxLEP's Growth Hub is actively engaged in streamlining business support. One of the programmes is 'eScalate'[48], which is designed to support SME scale-ups that are socially minded, while the 'Innovative Support for Business'[49] programme is designed to commercialise innovative business ideas of SME's.

It is within this framework that the city council can continue to build on the work local state partners are carrying out supporting breakthrough businesses to reach their full potential. This includes making full use of its convening power to signpost budding enterprises to the support, funding and expertise available to them. In doing so, an opportunity presents itself in collaborating with local state partners and these enterprises to explore widening the scope of providing apprenticeships in more basic roles and for providing local opportunities in driving social inclusivity. Ultimately, the potential for world-leading research, creative thinking, and fast growth for Oxford's breakthrough businesses demonstrates how invaluable they are to the economic viability of the city and the wider area. Identifying where they slot in locally, how their growth can be supported, and the roles and responsibilities they hold for Oxford's local community will be critical in the city's renewal, but also long-term success.

1.3 Investment in Growth

With recovery through good growth being the priority, attention must be given to how an investment in growth ought to align with Oxford's ambition of embedding social inclusion through a sustainable and inclusive local economy. Local recovery ought to build back better in a way that allows all members of society to unlock their potential and tap into the wider opportunities present within their local economy. To do so requires long-term investment, particularly from the public sector which is extremely difficult at the local level due to a highly unstable and short-term funding environment.

A lack of certainty over finance proves a major obstacle to investment in growth. In order to recover stronger than before, it is critical to come together on the local level and produce strategies for investment in growth for Oxford. Yet, without being certain that funding will be available on a long-term, sustainable basis, the delivery of these strategies becomes much more difficult – allowing for vital investment to go amiss and a prodigious amount of time, effort and expertise to go to waste. This comes down to how centralised the base of funding is in the country, with local authorities having to constantly adjust their budgets according to what is immediately necessary. With local authority budgets straining from the pandemic, an expensive social care crisis and long-term spending commitments,

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47   Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (2019) – A Partner In The Oxford-Cambridge Arc
48   OxLEP – eScalate
49   OxLEP – Innovation

funding can see itself withdrawn at any stage if budgets become too tightly squeezed. This results in the delivery of crucial strategies and projects being stopped. Invariably, they will have to turn to funding regimes that themselves are highly centralised and shrouded in time-consuming inaccessibility – resulting in a level of competitiveness that is detrimental to local cohesion and collaboration.

Managing this will entail developing a holistic and collaborative approach to growth funding, with Oxford City Council using its convening power to work with local state stakeholders in finding a way to alleviate current budgetary pressures and pool resources from a variety of sources. Doing this will give stakeholders long-term buy-in, where it is in their best interest to see strategies and projects come to fruition and delivered, leaving little to no reason for investment to be cut short – resulting in a more sustainable, long-term stream of investment that puts hearts and minds at ease.

Overshadowing

Some concerns are being raised locally that lesser appreciated industries, such as data science and various creative industries, are being overshadowed by Oxford's rich and globally competitive life sciences sector – this overshadowing is being reflected in the amount time, effort and investment from the local state they are afforded. Despite not quite achieving the global status of the life science and transformative technology sectors, these industries are still emerging, and have great potential to contribute towards local economic growth. However, this potential will only manifest into results if these overshadowed industries are brought into the fold of consideration more often and investment is reflective of the role they can play in the Oxford's recovery and renewal.

Teacher Retention and Growth

While it may not seem an obvious barrier to growth, Oxford's low teacher retention rate is a challenge closely linked to growth. This results in teachers and pupils not having a strong understanding of opportunities present within the local economy and marketplace. A number of interconnected issues lead to low retention, namely a lack of appropriate salary-weighting, poor transport infrastructure around the city and region, and lack of affordable housing. The issue is particularly prevalent at the primary and secondary school level, which is the critical skills development process. This is a structural challenge, with the city council already working with key partners in addressing the underlying cause of low retention including affordable housing and sustainable transport infrastructure. Addressing these wider issues on the local level will enable teachers to be embedded within the local economy and see the opportunities present for their pupils.

In working with the existing strengths of Oxford in attracting inward investment, the city council should take a leadership role in supporting initiatives that showcase the city and region's rich innovation ecosystem. This is particularly important for attracting organisations that would not typically invest in the R&D sector. Working with key partners, including leading innovation institutions, and neighbouring districts, the city council could broaden outreach to demonstrate

the value of investing in the ecosystem, especially in those areas proven by the pandemic to be of particular importance for the future, including life sciences, health-tech, and clean growth. Collaborating to attract further inward investment in these areas would accelerate the progress of these institutions and stimulate the local economy. In so doing, the ability to embed inclusivity into the local economy could open up through linking the local community with new opportunities arising from increased inward investment.

Capital investment in positioning for the future

Oxford is currently home to a great deal of ongoing development projects and opportunities:

- *Oxpens* is a prime example; a mixed-use site in the city centre, between the station, Westgate centre and the river, that seeks to deliver over 300 new homes, 10,400 square metres of office and research space, variety of open spaces and crucial flood mitigation measures. It is a joint venture led by Oxford City Council and Nuffield College through Oxford West End Development (OxWed) and is one part of the wider regeneration of Oxford's West End.

- The regeneration of the *Osney Mead* Industrial Estate is being led by the University of Oxford and includes regenerating the site to become an innovation quarter. Plans include increased opportunity for employment, better housing, and transport infrastructure that connects the site to the city centre through sustainable means. In delivering on this, the University of Oxford is engaging closely with local partners including Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, OxWed, and National Rail.

- The *Blackbird Leys and Knights Road* regeneration project is being undertaken by Oxford City Council and their development partner Catalyst. It will include close to 275 new homes, including social housing, improved community facilities, new shopping facilities, and improved open green spaces. In delivering on the new homes, the council is making sure that 40 percent new development will be earmarked for social rent.

1.4 Physical Infrastructure

The national levelling up agenda will see those areas needing more generalised, large-scale investments prioritised. This requires Oxford to be particularly clear on where infrastructure funding and capital investment is needed, and the benefits and opportunities that will arise if they are met. Developing a consensus on the purpose of investment in infrastructure, in line with the ambition of Oxford as a compact global city, will identify gaps where physical infrastructure is noticeably lacking and impeding progress, which will strengthen the case for inward investment in the city. Doing this will have to factor in the impact of lifestyle changes pertaining to work culture on the levelling up agenda. Relatedly, Oxford's central role as an engine of growth within the Arc means that investment in the city will help progress the national levelling up agenda. This is recognised by the government through recognising the Arc as a 'national economic priority

area' and the work they are doing in developing the Spatial Framework to guide sustainable economic growth. In order for this to be successful, and the innovative potential of the area to be felt nationally, investment at the right level in the core hubs of the Arc is needed.

Oxford's road to levelling up and recovery will require an evaluation of physical infrastructure strategies including those relating to transport and office space. A shift towards working from home, a boost in walking and cycling, and a cementing of public transport staff as 'key workers' all have significant implications for building infrastructure that is sustainable and future-proof. Looking ahead, this will be particularly important for growth areas on the edge of Oxford and connecting them to the city centre through better walking and cycling infrastructure. The lifestyle changes seen with regard to transport over the pandemic period provide a perfect opportunity to embed sustainability into local public transport systems and lessen the reliance on cars.

Improved connectivity can push productivity gains, but sustainability is paramount. The industrial landscape of Oxfordshire is constituted by a wealth of clusters, campuses and parks dispersed from one another, while being connected to each other and anchors in Oxford through the innovation ecosystem. Unfortunately, at the moment the easiest and quickest way to visit many of these sites is by car. As the network of Oxford's industries grow and considerations of physical infrastructure continue to develop accordingly, matters of connectivity between them must favour more green and sustainable modes of transport. Relatedly, the fact that many of these assets have the city as a nucleus for their activity shows the need for an Oxford focused transport plan that better connects the neighbouring districts with the city centre.

Oxford-Cambridge Arc

The Arc is a stretch of land about 50 miles – running between Oxford and Cambridge via other places within Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. It is home to some of the brightest, most cutting-edge industries in the UK. Oxford will play a leading role in the development of the Arc – with opportunities having been identified that include the delivery of one million new homes and jobs across the corridor by 2050. There are also plans for an East-West railway link, as well as the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, both of which propose a direct link between Oxford and Cambridge through the other core centres within the Arc. Developing the transport connections and physical infrastructure of the corridor could potentially increase the economic output of the area per annum by £163bn.

Transport Strategy

The long-term sustainability of transport systems across the country has been brought into sharp focus during the pandemic. Regarding Oxfordshire, this relates to the need for a modal shift towards greener transport across the county. Beyond Oxfordshire, it is also about the need to better connect the city of Oxford with other areas of key growth. Oxford is a strategic city that constitutes one of the functional urban regions based on the three urban centres of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Along with Cambridge and Milton Keynes, it will be a focus of growth across the Arc. This reinforces the need for a clear voice for these cities

in the future governance of the Arc. The transport infrastructure that connects these three places, especially the East-West railway[50], holds rapid transformation potential for these cities.

Rail infrastructure has a central role in supporting the development of Oxfordshire, including meeting its housing need and employment growth. In supporting economic growth, there is an imperative to enhance connectivity to ensure that the region's main employment hubs are better linked. However, it has been identified that the county's rail system currently does not meet this requirement, and acts as a 'bottleneck' to future network expansion. Furthermore, the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Study (ORCS) identified the need for a 70 percent increase in rail services by 2028, with growth being concentrated on seven key hubs, including Oxford Station[51].

Therefore, the re-development of the station is key to the growth and sustainability of the wider regional economy. Additionally, considering it will serve as a hub for the East-West railway, re-development of the station has a key role in expanding Oxford's reach across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Recognising this, Network Rail have applied for £160m funding to improve rail infrastructure along the Oxford Rail Corridor. In 2017, the city council adopted a Master Plan aimed at 'promot[ing] a maximised connectivity network with the station at its core' and to 'act as an effective gateway into Oxford'[52]. In light of the ORCS study, a new Master Plan is currently being developed[53], which will reflect the need for additional rail capacity required for future plans including its role in the East-West railway.

The improvement of railway infrastructure and redevelopment of Oxford station sits alongside the flagship Westend Innovation District[54], which is a core element in the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy. This will be a gateway development into Oxford's innovation ecosystem, and the station sits within it. The district will provide the scope for business growth and innovation within the city through its state-of-the-art office space and R&D HQ facilities. The district will be fully integrated, connected, and encompass Osney Mead, Oxford Station, Oxpens, and other key sites whose development is being led by stakeholders including the city council, the county council, and the University of Oxford to name only a few. In this context, delivering on the re-development of the station will unlock the extensive mixed-use development of the innovation district and further the reach of Oxford's innovation ecosystem regionally, within the Arc, and nationally as well.

On a regional level, the need to consider environmental sustainability within the transport infrastructure that connects Oxford, and its wealth of innovation assets, will be a key part of responding to the climate emergency, meeting the city's target of net-zero by 2040, and building a lower carbon economy. This is especially true considering the challenges the city faces on traffic congestion and air pollution. Recognising the urgent need for sustainable transport, the city council has partnered with the county council to produce 'Connecting Oxford'[55]. The plan sets out a vision to make Oxford's transport system largely net-zero within the next 20 years through an increased reliance on walking,

50   East West Rail – The Project
51   Oxfordshire Growth Board (2020) – Investment In Improved Rail Connectivity For Oxfordshire
52   Oxford City Council – Station Masterplan
53   Oxford Mail (2020) – New Plans To Overhaul Oxford Train Station Will Be Drawn Up
54   OxLEP (2020) – The Investment Plan: Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy
55   Oxford City Council & Oxfordshire County Council – Connecting Oxford

cycling, and public transport. The need to invest in this type of infrastructure to accommodate for the city's growth has been recognised by the National Infrastructure Commission report 'Running out of Road'[56]. The report called for a £200m investment as a sustainable, low-cost solution to traffic congestion and air pollution challenges. Particularly, it called for the creation of 'first/last mile' cycling routes that connect key areas and centres of innovation in the 'Science Vale' to local public transport, and within Oxford itself link, park and ride sites and Oxford Station to office spaces.

It is evident that the future growth of Oxford and the integration of the city in these areas of growth requires a new approach to considerations on transportation infrastructure. In addition to the extensive work already being carried out in developing sustainable transport with stakeholders, Oxford City Council should be given co-decision power alongside Oxfordshire County Council on all transportation matters affecting the administrative areas of the city where growth is concentrated. This would help tackle key environmental and sustainability issues facing Oxford's current transportation infrastructure that have knock-on consequences for the wider geographic area. Moreover, it would help secure closer alignment on areas including the city's growth, climate change, and regional levelling up efforts, while addressing the city's transportation and connectivity challenges at the right level. Giving the city council co-decision power in this manner can be implemented through a short statutory instrument to amend the Transport Act 2000.

The use of office space is fundamental for innovation to occur within key parts of the R&D sector. Having said this, the shift toward working from home during the pandemic has implications for how Oxford approaches its strategy behind space utilisation going forward. It calls into question what type of space, and investment, is necessary for recovery and beyond. While it is still too early to tell, monitoring how this change to work culture will continue to play out on the local level in the long-term, and understanding how it can be utilised to an advantage at city level can inform infrastructure investment decisions.

While the uptake of working from home promises to continue in certain sectors, it is important for entrepreneurs working in technology, R&D, medical sciences, and related sectors to have the space to come together for peer mentoring, innovating, and experimenting amongst many other things. These industries require more specific considerations on the provision of space. Oxford is reaching a point where its available office and laboratory space is nearing full capacity. Accommodating these emerging companies in Oxford and the broader Arc, as well as connecting existing spaces to one another, becomes a matter of particular importance in the context of recovery and renewal on the local and regional level. This is why the delivery of infrastructure projects, particularly the station re-development and the Global Innovation District, is so crucial for Oxford. Therefore, a careful balance is required which considers the potential consequences of working from home, while also understanding the continued need of space, and how to meet this, for the innovation ecosystem.

Overall, it must be emphasised how budgetary certainty plays a huge part in the commitments that can be made for physical infrastructure investment. It is difficult to draw clear lessons on local infrastructure investment and economic growth after a decade characterised by strict budget cuts for local government.

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56   National Infrastructure Commission (2018) – Running Out Of Road: Investing In Cycling In Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford

While the city council have faced this challenge with robust budget management, it remains that the delivery of large infrastructure is dependent on local actors having the peace of mind provided by budgetary certainty.

1.5 Digital Infrastructure

Our increasing reliance on digital technologies during the pandemic is likely to continue post-recovery, further emphasising the importance of developing a robust digital infrastructure as part of levelling up and recovery efforts. The increase of working from home and the shift to digital schooling during periods of national lockdown highlight the importance of investing in this infrastructure.

Globally, companies are increasing capacity for online working to engage global markets[57]. Therefore, adapting to the convergence of digital technologies on the local level, facilitated by the city council, will increase inward investment into Oxfordshire. This is something the council are aware of. Working in partnership with neighbouring districts and the county council, the city is part of the Digital Infrastructure Programme[58]. The overarching programme consists of six projects, including Better Broadband for Oxfordshire[59]. This project is now complete and has boosted business efficiency by bringing fibre enabled broadband to 80,000 residents and businesses. Another focus area of the consortium has been to improve 3G and 4G coverage, as well as the roll out of 5G across Oxfordshire.

This is something the city council have taken an active role in and have begun to embed 5G infrastructure in Oxford already. In late 2020, the city approved Cornerstone's plan to build a 5G mast on the corner of Old Road and Windmill Road[60]. This is in addition to other masts built across east Oxford and is part of a drive by telecommunication companies such as O2, EE, and Cornerstone to establish themselves within the region as the providers of the next generation of mobile data.

The other crucial step is in the accessibility of these new initiatives for hard-to-reach communities. The necessary shift to digital schooling following the national lockdown has highlighted the prevalence of a digital divide disadvantaging children from low socio-economic backgrounds[61]. Across Oxfordshire there are close to ten thousand children who do not have the devices, the Wi-Fi connectivity or the skills to get online and access learning opportunities[62]. Addressing this is a necessary part of developing the digital infrastructure.

When it comes to skills in relation to digital exclusion, the proportion of people who do not have the adequate skills to get online and access learning or educational opportunities only increases further up the age groups. Working age adults are struggling to make benefit and job applications[63]. Digital infrastructure is critical, but soft skills, and how to engage in developing this, need to be considered here as well.

57   Schroders (2020) – Why Digital Infrastructure Could Emerge Stronger From COVID-19
58   Digital Infrastructure Programme – Better Connectivity For Oxfordshire
59   Oxford City Council – Better Broadband For Oxfordshire
60   Cherwell (2020) – 5G Mast To Be Built In Oxford
61   The Telegraph (2020) – The Children Left Behind As Schools Go Digital
62   Oxford Community Foundation (2020) – Fostering Digital Inclusion
63   Citizens Online – Digital Inclusion

> ### Get Oxfordshire Online
>
> Oxfordshire Community Foundation recognise the challenges associated with digital exclusion and have been working on how to get people online across Oxfordshire. This includes working with partner organisations to provide support for target groups suffering exclusion such as those experiencing homelessness and the elderly. Other areas include data and connectivity and skills. Part of their work looks at how second-hand devices can be refurbished to be more internet capable. There has been initial philanthropic investment, and future plans involve exploring data gifting in addition to community Wi-Fi and data gaps being an area of focus.

1.6 Skills

As Oxford's economy recovers and grows, there will be a need to match up to the skills requirements of companies seeking resilience to the evolving challenges that the 21st century will bring. Understanding how the local skills agenda fits within the national context helps to embed this resilience on the local level. The agenda is a vital part of the inclusive economy framework. It is a key route through which to facilitate social mobility in Oxford's local community and ensure that its levelling up and recovery is directed by good growth. Looking at Oxford's labour market and qualification percentage, the city performs with 57.9 percent of residents having at least a NVQ4 qualification compared with the British average of 40.3 percent for the period January to December 2019[64]. This provides a solid foundation to build on in creating a resilient local workforce that can meet the current and future skills demands of Oxford's local economy.

There is an opportunity here to tap into the latent potential found within Oxford's local community in developing these skills required, and in so doing further join them up with the benefits coming out of the city's world leading companies. The inequality experienced by the most deprived in Oxford, and the subsequent barriers to the labour market caused by this, leads to an unfortunate underutilisation of human potential, which could be benefitted from through an inclusive economy. In *Prosperous Communities, Productive Places*[65], Localis called for businesses to build local skills supply chains and take an active role in producing the skills they need for now and in the future. This would entail a commitment to grow local talent and awareness of local opportunities.

For Oxford, this would entail supporting its businesses to build closer links with local educational establishments so that both can work in collaboration to develop the skills supply chain. Early engagement with young people in the community in raising ambition, and developing bespoke training opportunities backed with qualification, such as degree apprenticeships, would develop a qualified, skilled, and resilient workforce within the city itself. Doing this could prove a vital role in raising prosperity of the least well-off in the community. The worst effects of the pandemic recession on people's employment could start to be reduced, through the coordinated efforts of the local state to earmark employment schemes, with the possibility for upward social mobility, for those currently experiencing unemployment or close to being made redundant.

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64   NOMIS (2019) – Labour Market Profile – Oxford
65   Localis (2018) – Prosperous Communities, Productive Places

Two objectives are met by coordinating with key business stakeholders to embed a skills supply chain into the local economy, both of which will be vital for Oxford's levelling up and recovery to be successful. Firstly, it will help actively link young school leavers with opportunities within the local economy. Secondly, it will allow for practical skills development and training in later life, which will be particularly important in the context of a rising rate of redundancy resulting from the pandemic recession. Overall, the key benefit of addressing the skills agenda through the development of a local supply chain will be that skills provisions are linked more directly to the needs of the local economy.

For their part, Oxford City Council have already taken active steps in this direction. As a part of their COVID-19 response, the council have partnered with the social enterprise Aspire in funding the Community Employment Support Project (CESP)[66]. The aim of this is to link individuals facing difficulty in accessing education, training, and employment with the suitable support and initiatives. Additionally, the city council have been working with gateway organisations including Aspire in rolling out the new Kickstart Programme locally, to connect unemployed young people in receipt of Universal Credit with 6-month work placements in local businesses[67]. More generally, in developing their new Corporate Strategy 2020-24, the council have highlighted the community wealth building agenda as an opportunity to increase social value through council procurement in creating a vibrant sustainable community[68]. This follows on from a motion passed in 2019 to work with Oxford's leading employers to address how the councils procurement spend can be used to promote social goals, including developing an inclusive economy[69].

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66   Aspire – Community Employment Support Project
67   Aspire – Kickstart Scheme
68   Oxford City Council – Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 Workshop Information
69   Oxford Mail (2019) – Oxford City Council aims to 'spread the wealth'

2. Good Growth – How do we make sure recovery and growth happen fairly without people being left behind?

Levelling up and recovering from the pandemic must be underpinned by an ambition of creating an inclusive local economy whose benefits are felt and shared by every community in Oxford. In order to successfully achieve this, the imperative to level up and recover needs to be guided by principles of good growth. This should be viewed as an all-encompassing, holistic approach combining multiple policy agendas aimed at levelling up Oxford's communities and embedding inclusivity within the local economy. Key elements include clean local growth, community input through neighbourhood democracy and co-design, and robust social infrastructure amongst many others. Good growth is where the need for deeper collaborative working and meaningful engagement between the different key stakeholders of the local state, including business, government, and local community, is paramount. Equally, defining how this engagement works, and what it means for each stakeholder will ensure that recovery occurs through good growth.

2.1 Role of Planning

Planning plays a key role in ensuring good growth is embedded within Oxford's journey to recovery, and the wider benefit this can bring. This is in terms of both planning policy and aligning shared objectives of the local state in delivering an inclusive local economy. Particularly in the context of Oxford, the role of strategic planning and continued collaborative working with partners in tackling the city's challenges will be one of the central elements of its successful renewal.

A key challenge facing Oxford is the cost and supply of housing within the city. It has the greatest housing affordability issue of any city in the UK. Based on the 2019 Housing Affordability Ratio, Oxford is the least affordable city in the UK, with house prices more than 17 times average wages[70]. This is closely linked to the supply and availability of housing in the city. In 2013, the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment was commissioned by all Oxfordshire district councils, supported by the county council, to help the region's local planning authorities better understand their housing needs between 2011-2031[71]. It showed that Oxford will need between 24,000 to 32,000 homes to meet its housing need during this period. In meeting this challenge, the city council created Oxford City Housing Limited, which is a wholly council-owned housing company to build affordable homes[72]. Additionally, recognising that the housing need cannot be met within the city boundaries alone, it has worked with the Oxfordshire Growth Board and agreed a county-wide approach in working together to meet Oxford's housing shortage[73]. This will largely be met through a

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70   Centre for Cities – Cities Data Tool
71   Oxford City Council (2014) – Strategic Housing Market Assessment
72   Companies Home – Oxford City Housing Ltd
73   Cherwell and South Northamptonshire Councils (2016) – A Countywide Approach To Meeting The Unmet Housing Need of Oxford

series of urban extensions to the north, east and south of the city in neighbouring districts agreed through their Local Plans. Within this context, in 2017, the Growth Board secured £215m of government investment as part of the Housing and Growth Deal, which aims to support building 100,000 homes across the county between the 2011 -2031 period[74].

Looking at how this challenge is being met through cooperation across boundary lines is just one example of how important sustained and meaningful engagement with neighbouring districts is going to be for Oxford in meeting its future needs. Putting this into context of good growth, as Oxford continues to develop both economically and through urban expansion, there will be an increasing need for strategic planning led by the city council to guide this development in such a way that its benefits are felt across all communities, in an inclusive manner.

This also highlights how important considerations regarding the spatial future of Oxfordshire as a whole, and Oxford's central role as a functional urban area and economic driver, are for continued regional economic success. Here, the Oxfordshire Plan 2050[75], as a tool for convening the city, county, and district councils on strategic planning for the region's future, is vital. The production of this joint statutory spatial plan is one of the commitments that Oxfordshire's local authorities made as part of the Housing and Growth Deal. Through the involvement of the city, county, and neighbouring district councils, the plan can collectively consider the needs of the county and align strategies so that areas including housing, transport, and physical infrastructure, all of which require cross boundary cooperation, are coordinated. This collaborative approach strikes a vital balance in enabling a strategic vision whilst also allowing for local knowledge and focus on area specific issues and opportunities to be maintained. In addition to this, through strategic planning on a broader level, there can be a consistent approach across the board on agendas such as clean local growth. Currently, it has been delayed owing to the pandemic 'exacerbat[ing] some of the challenges that jeopardise the delivery of the Deal'[76]. However, in looking toward recovery from the pandemic and beyond, Oxford has a key part to play in driving the plan forward. This is especially true when considering its leading role at the centre of economic growth and innovation, as well as in combating climate change[77].

While the pandemic has resulted in the plan being delayed, there is a renewed urgency for it to proceed so that there can be a consistent approach on the key agendas that will ensure a recovery through good growth, the effects of which would be embedded long term. At the same time, because of the role business plays as a key enabler of good growth and an inclusive economy, there will be a need for Oxford and neighbouring districts to consider their shorter-term timeline and immediate priorities regarding planning strategy. Considering it through a business lens will give businesses the confidence and inspiration needed to realise their potential for growth in the city and broader spatial area. Placing this within the context of wider growth across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, this business lens will be critical to the successful creation and implementation of the planned Spatial Framework[78].

74   Oxford City Council (2017) – Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

75   Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – About Us

76   Oxfordshire Plan 2050 – Growth Board Agrees Housing And Growth Deal Extensions With Government

77   Oxford City Council – Oxford Citizens' Assembly On Climate Change

78   MHCLG (2021) – Planning for sustainable growth in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc: an introduction to the spatial framework

Digital Agenda and Planning

Recognising the role that planning can have in good growth for all, it is important to open up consultation and engage as many people as possible in the system so that they can have their say over the future of their place, including the services and social infrastructure available to them. Exploring the potential for a digital planning system is one area where the digital agenda can combine with the planning agenda to gain reach. This goes hand in hand with the need for increased civic engagement for good growth to be successful. The potential for this idea has already started to be explored, with MHCLG launching a Digital Land Policy Team in 2018 to create a 'digitally enabled future planning and housing system'. Additionally, there has been extensive online engagement with stakeholders, including property developers and the general public, during the consultation stages in preparing the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

Planning for Clean Growth

Oxford City Council has taken a leadership role in the clean growth and climate change agenda. Recognising its vulnerability to the changing effects of the climate, and how economic growth contributes to this, the council has set the objective of building an environmentally responsible economy as a priority within its forthcoming economic strategy. This is on top of taking proactive steps following the recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly, including becoming net-zero as a council in 2020[79], 30 years earlier than the target set by national government. Additionally, in February 2021, the city council convened key institutions in the Oxford for a Zero Carbon Partnership Summit, resulting in 21 local organisations signing a Zero Carbon Oxford Charter. Stakeholders committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions in the city by 2040. This marked the creation of a Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership for the city[80].

According to the council's Climate Emergency Strategy Support 2019 report, 'emissions from energy and fuel use in residential buildings is the greatest single contributor to Oxford's carbon footprint – 29 percent in total', while institutional buildings are the second biggest contributors at over 25 percent, and industrial buildings are the third biggest responsible for 17 percent[81]. In response to the concerns this raised amongst citizen assembly members, the city council has pledged to move toward a zero-carbon building system across eight areas – 'council buildings, council housing, new homes, community buildings, commercial buildings, private rented sector, planning standards, and building standards'[82].

Putting this into context of the Future Homes Standard 2025, the fact that the proposed changes are set as a national minimum energy requirement restricts what action can be done on the local level in achieving net-zero. The Standard proposes to change Parts L (conservation of fuel and power), parts F (ventilation) and Part 6 (energy efficiency) of the Building Regulations. In the consultation document, it states 'we appreciate [the] uplift options increase the costs for home builders and so we propose to remove the ability of local planning authorities to set higher

79   Oxford City Council – Oxford Citizens' Assembly On Climate Change

80   Oxford City Council (2021) – Leaders across Oxford support 2040 net zero carbon emissions pledge

81   Oxford City Council (2019) – Climate Emergency Strategy Support report September 2019

82   Oxford City Council (2019) – city council responds to Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and outlines £19m climate emergency budget

energy efficiency standards than those in the Building Regulations'[83]. This presents a challenge for local authorities owing to the fact that each locality is dealing with different circumstances. In Oxford's case, with its own ambition to reach net-zero city-wide by 2040, setting this standard as a national minimum impedes its ability to act at pace. Given this, it is crucial that it is set as a local minimum. The need for this is reinforced by the fact that the housing industry is itself moving at pace ahead of the national 2050 commitment. In June, Barratt Development, the UK's largest housebuilder, announced its intentions to become net-zero by 2030[84]. National government must recognise this shift and allow for the local level to move quicker.

Tying this into the Planning for the Future white paper, concern has been raised regarding how proposed changes might give property developers an upper hand in the planning process[85]. However, Oxford City Council, being a main landlord in the city, can assuage these concerns and set an example by opting for more climate friendly models of design. The council are already doing this with their new build homes, stating that through 'Oxford City Housing Limited … the council will demonstrate net-zero or Passivhaus homes to generate local interest'[86]. Adaptation plays a huge part in tackling climate change, and the intersect between planning and clean local growth extends beyond the need for zero carbon homes. Planning provides a unique opportunity to build integrated places using green spaces and sponge city concepts, which are designed to prevent flooding. Within the planning system, there is further opportunity to consider how building material and the physical shapes of buildings can be utilised to create cooler spaces.

There is also a clear link between planning and transport. Evidence from the Climate Change Committee shows that 20 percent of emissions reductions can be achieved through behavioural change[87]. Enabling people to make the choices to reduce their emissions is where the planning system can have a real impact, which reinforces the need for considerations of cycling and walking infrastructure. To this end, proposals are being developed for Oxford to run an all-electric bus service in the city. If the proposal is approved, Oxford could be awarded £50m by the government to convert its entire bus fleet to electric, as well as build the necessary infrastructure to support this[88].

Transport, and the changing behaviours regarding its use, is central to developing healthier and cleaner places. However, its lack of discussion in the planning white paper is worrying[89]. Adding to this, the proposed reforms to the function of Local Plans to focus on identifying three areas for development including growth, renewal, and protected areas would not give them the capacity to set enough stipulations in terms of transport and other required infrastructure. Compounding this issue further, central government's strong emphasis to 'Build, Build, Build'[90] could lead to increased development on greenfield sites, something that could exacerbate transport connectivity issues in and around the edges of the Oxford.

Oxford has many strengths in its favour that can allow it to continue leading the acceleration to net zero by 2040 at the local level. However, in maximising

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83 GOV.UK (2019) – The Future Homes Standard

84 Barratt Developments PLC (2020) – UK's Largest Housebuilder Announces Major New Targets To Reduce Carbon Emissions

85 Haringey Defend Council Housing (2020) – Stop This Developer's Charter: Scrap The Planning White Paper

86 Oxford City Council (2019) – city council responds to Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and outlines £19m climate emergency budget

87 Committee On Climate Change (2020) – Reducing UK Emissions 2019 Progress Report To Parliament

88 Oxford Mail (2021) – Oxford and Coventry set to become first all-electric bus cities

89 The Planner (2020) – Transport Is Integral But The White Paper Has Almost Nothing To Say About It

90 GOV.UK (2020) – PM: Build, Build, Build

efficiency to achieve this, national government need to show flexibility and allow the local stakeholders to achieve the goal at pace.

2.2 Role of Business

Oxford has 4,730 businesses that employ 118,000 people. With a population of 154,600, local businesses employ up to 77 percent of the city's population[91]. This highlights how local business has a unique role in driving forward levelling up and recovery through good growth. A successful inclusive economy will be underpinned by a thriving business sector that understands its role within the community. The relationship between business and community will increasingly become significant when developing resilience to the socio-economic effects of the pandemic. Recovery through good growth will bring focus on the social responsibilities that businesses have toward their community.

Understanding local business as being an integral part of Oxford's community highlights its stake in the continued growth and success of the community at large. With regard to building an inclusive economy, Oxford's businesses can take an active role in driving place prosperity through investing in developing a local skills supply chain[92]. Developing local talent in this way will be mutually beneficial for business and the wider community. Another closely related area is in paying decent wages. Oxford City Council launched Oxford Living Wage[93], designed to encourage local businesses to pay employees in accordance with the cost of living in the city. For 2020-21 the rate is £10.21 an hour. Currently 42 local employers are signed up to the scheme. Recognising how pay inequality is a major factor in social disparity within Oxford, the Living Wage could be a vital part of advancing an inclusive economy if more businesses take part in it.

Ultimately, there will be an increased demand for growth as we enter into the recovery phase of the pandemic. Oxford City Council is in a prime position to understand how its local businesses can meet this demand. In order to drive this forward, a powerful global-facing economy – equipped with an understanding of local need and nuance – should be built on in a way that is as sustainable and inclusive as possible.

2.3 Co-design and Neighbourhood Democracy

As the overall objective of an inclusive economy is to ensure that nobody is left behind, neighbourhood democracy and community co-design forms an integral part of good growth. If the shared objective is to have an inclusive economy in Oxford, it is crucial to involve those people purported to benefit from it in determining how to do so. Already, Oxford has set a national example by being the first city in the UK to declare a climate emergency and organising a citizens' assembly on climate change to see how the citizens themselves would like the city to address the issue.

Climate Emergency and Citizens' Assembly

In January 2019, Oxford City Council unanimously declared a climate emergency, set their own ambitions to become a zero carbon council by 2030, and held the UK's first Citizens' Assembly on climate change in September. This involved an

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91   Oxford City Council – Oxford City Business Guide
92   Localis (2018) – Prosperous Communities, Productive Places
93   Oxford City Council – The Oxford Living Wage

independently selected representative sample of 50 Oxonians coming together to learn more about the issue, how it affects Oxford, and how they would like to see the council tackle the problem. A key question raised during the assembly was how the city can reduce emissions in future building and transport plans. For buildings, attendees identified the need for 'a balanced approach to decreasing emissions from buildings while simultaneously working to resolve the current affordable housing and homelessness crisis in Oxford'[94]. For transport, the need to facilitate a behavioural shift from private to public transport through infrastructural and technological changes was highlighted as central. Additionally, attendees recognised the need for a unified approach to strategic transport planning on a broader scale between the city council, county council and wider transport providers.

The city should build on work done on climate change through the Citizens' Assembly by using the existing skills, experience and activity already there across the city and wider area to drive the conversation forward. Doing so will allow for awareness to be reached amongst a wider population across the region but also the country. Given its role in holding the first assembly, the city is in a prime position to lead the way on this. One of the challenges coming out of the Citizens' Assembly is in broadening the reach of the debate so that it resonates with every community within the city. The LEO Project[95] is an initiative that has inclusivity at the heart of its work. The project is one of the most wide-ranging smart grid trials conducted in the UK. It seeks to create conditions to replicate the energy system of the future and grow an evidence base to inform how Oxfordshire can transition to a smart electricity system. In doing so it aims to create investment models for community engagement and support the development of a skilled community that can take advantage of the shift to renewable electricity. As the Citizens' Assembly demonstrates, local solutions to climate change are best driven from the bottom up, therefore engagement on the issue needs to be continued on this level.

Citizens assemblies are a relatively new concept, with the first taking place in Canada in 2004[96]. Apart from Oxford, there has been only one other local authority to hold one on climate change specifically. Given this, it is particularly important to ensure that those who were involved have positive experiences coming out of it and feel that their voice is heard in the long term. This will instill a feeling of empowerment, which is crucial to the success of neighbourhood democracy and citizen co-design. To this end, the city council has responded to the findings of the assembly by setting up a climate emergency budget worth £19m[97].

Sharing Oxford's positive experience with the assembly through engaged citizen diplomacy would spread the understanding of the agenda within Oxford's community. There are three groups best placed to do this, including the residents selected, the elected councillors, and council officials. As a representative population of the city, residents are best placed to be spokespeople to engage with their own community. City council members passing the resolution for a climate emergency shows the political will to do something about the crisis. Through vocalising their support for the agenda within their constituencies, further awareness can be raised locally. The last group are the council officials. They are the mechanism through which what has been decided in the assembly can be delivered. Each group should

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94   Oxford City Council (2019) – Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change report published
95   Low Energy Oxfordshire – The LEO Project
96   Citizens' Assembly UK – About Citizens' Assemblies
97   Oxford City Council (2019) – city council responds to Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and outlines £19m climate emergency budget

act on what the assembly has suggested and deliver on climate action in the city, and in doing so continue to raise awareness of the issue.

The Who and How of Co-design

Co-design 'is a distinct set of principles and practices for understanding problems and generating solutions … In the public sector, co-design is often invoked as a more effective, democratic, or innovative alternative to conventional approaches to community engagement, public participation, service design, and policy development'[98]. Achieving good inclusive growth will require input of the community in co-designing the trajectory of their future, which will entail making the resources and anchors available in our communities matter to all.

Co-design entails working with local communities. Through the process of co-design, communities are empowered to influence their local area. This results in people becoming increasingly invested in seeing their area succeed. They increasingly see themselves as part of the collective story and start to bring forward their most pressing concern. The Citizens' Assembly is an example of co-designing on the need to tackle climate change. One of its recommendations on buildings was the need for a balanced approach to cut carbon emissions while working to resolve the affordable housing challenge of the city[99].

The need to tackle affordable housing is recognised as a priority in Oxford City Council's Local Plan 2036, which has set a standard for a 50 percent affordable housing provision for all qualifying development sites[100]. This standard has also been applied by the city's neighbouring districts who are meeting Oxford's unmet housing need. Through co-designing and hearing the concerns of citizens on the issue and taking steps in city policy to meet the challenge, these two factors have combined to influence how new development around the city occurs. The new urban district of Oxford North[101] is an example of effective community engagement around the built environment that strives towards 'unlocking previously inaccessible land to residents, visitors and people passing through, transforming the area with tree-lined streets and a mix of workplaces, homes, leisure, arts and culture, and open green spaces'[102]. The initial public response of the planning application for the development drew large concern regarding the availability of social and affordable housing[103]. Initially they had to deliver a minimum of 35 percent of affordable housing, resulting in 168 homes. However, agreement has been reached with the city council to review how Oxford North can match the 50 percent affordable housing provision[104]. As the city expands to accommodate its growth, it will be increasingly important to work with existing communities to ensure they directly feel the benefit of this growth.

2.4 Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure is fundamental to good growth. For Oxford's local communities to benefit from the growth potential that recovery will bring, and for the city to

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98   Blomkamp (2018) – The Promise Of Co-Design For Public Policy

99   Oxford City Council (2019) – city council responds to Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and outlines £19m climate emergency budget

100 Oxford City Council – Adopted Local Plan

101 Oxford North – About Us

102 Ibid.

103 Oxford City Council – Oxford North Planning Application Documents

104 Oxford North (2019) – TWO agrees to review mechanism for Oxford North that could see up to 50 percent affordable housing

address socio-economic and health disparities, structural challenges need to be addressed. Social value in procurement, education, and corporate social responsibility come into play with strong collaboration between local stakeholders required. Investment in education will enable local industries, including in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc region, to be accessible to local people.

Social infrastructure can also empower communities to be active participants in finding solutions to communal challenges. The community larders set up by SOFEA, an Oxfordshire based food poverty charity, during the peak of the pandemic to provide food to vulnerable families are a societal exercise in levelling up local communities from the bottom up. Investing in social enterprises engaged in supporting communities will drive a stronger recovery through good growth. To this end, Oxfordshire Community Foundation invested £25,000 in SOFEA, and have continued to support their work throughout the pandemic[105].

Procurement and Social Value

Procurement from local SME's is a central way to strengthen the relationship between business and place. Investing in a local supply chain can drive the economic growth needed for swift recovery, and doing this through a framework of social responsibility, which addresses the key causes of socio-economic deprivation facing Oxford, will contribute to the development of an inclusive economy.

Localis has previously called for the widespread adoption of Community Value Charters by councils across the country to define goals and priorities for the local community when it comes to public procurement on the local level. This would involve all relevant stakeholders in the process including the local authority, major providers at all levels, and community groups. The Community Value Charter model is an approach to standardised social value based on three principles: a framework for setting local outcomes, a standard model for evaluating the social value of bids, and an accepted language for social value. Incorporating social value into the procurement process for services is increasingly being seen as a key way for embedding an inclusive economy and allowing for inclusive growth on a local level. This realisation has been a guiding thought in Oxford and has been seen as a way to grow community enterprises in the most deprived parts of the city. The eScalate business support programme, developed by OxLEP, can help support the development of and strengthen social enterprises working on supply chains. The idea being that larger companies looking to change their procurement practices to incorporate more social value considerations will have increased scope to do so.

One of the agreements reached in the Inclusive Economy Seminar Series was for a task force to be set up to initiate working amongst anchor institutions to enhance the social contributions and benefits through procurement and increase the share of spend that is captured locally[106]. The University of Oxford is a member, and its sustainable procurement strategy highlights 'the need to increase the number of local businesses within [their] supply chain'[107]. In addition to this, the strategy highlights work the university are doing to ensure ethical considerations including making sure that fair trade and the living wage are a part of procurement decisions.

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105 Oxfordshire Community Foundation – SOFEA

106 Oxford Strategic Partnership & OxLEP – Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative: Summary Report Findings [A final report is scheduled for publication in 2021]

107 University of Oxford (2018) – Sustainable Procurement Strategy 2018-2022

Community Power and Agency

Youth Empowerment – the SOFEA case

In addition to the food distribution operation carried out by SOFEA, the charity provides traineeships for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Through working as a food warehouse apprentice, they provide the opportunity to gain practical skills training and employability skills. This is in addition to a personalised programme of study, which includes GCSEs in English and Maths and a diploma in team leading.

Strong social infrastructure can form the basis of community empowerment and be a source that galvanises community spirit. Community assets help engage communities in change and empower them to do so. As demonstrated by SOFEA's work on providing food for vulnerable families during the pandemic, when it comes to crisis response, it is the local level that rises to meet the challenge first. Oxford City Council can strengthen these assets to empower communities by having more local services that are agile and adaptable to their needs. The council has already started working to a greater level in and within localities through the implementation of community impact zones[108]. The first zone has been established within the East Oxford, Cowley, and Blackbird Leys area. With one of the main goals being to adapt service delivery by statutory agencies and participating voluntary sector organisations in localities to maximise collaborative impact.

Health, Social Infrastructure, and Oxford

Figure 6. Active travel: people walking or cycling
Percentage of population by frequency of exercise
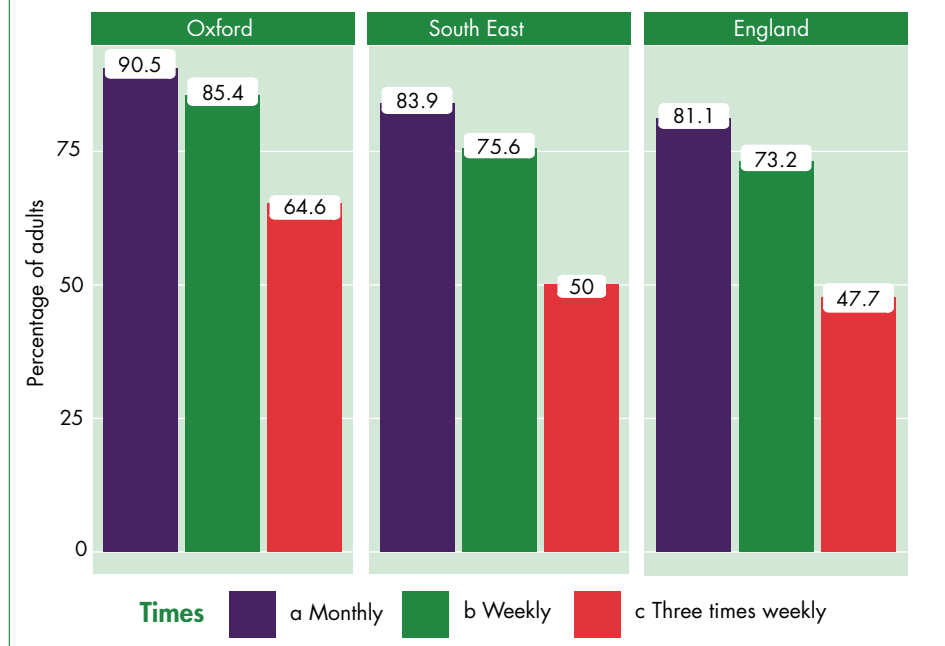
108 Oxford City Community Impact Zone – About Us

Many of the causes leading to socio-economic deprivation in Oxford are directly linked to the social infrastructure related to education, skills development, and health and wellbeing. The economic consequences of the pandemic threaten to compound these issues, increase inequality, and stunt the potential for overall economic growth – unless there is coordinated action on the local level to address them. Regarding health inequality, there is an imperative for breakthrough businesses and anchors within Oxford's health innovation ecosystem to direct their efforts towards addressing this issue.

The numerous health innovation spin outs are world-renowned for delivering cutting edge solutions to the world's most significant health challenges. A prominent example is Vaccitech, which had been working at breakneck speed to find a vaccine for COVID-19[109]. In order to ensure recovery through good growth, the potential to use the considerable skillset within the sector should be focused on solving the health inequality challenges facing the city itself. There is a need to be more robust in focusing on local health concerns as a priority in the next phase of recovery.

The global significance of the work done within the health innovation sector does not detract from the fact that they are local businesses, and as such have a central role to play in making sure levelling up and recovery happen through good growth. Moreover, the population of Oxford and its neighbouring districts serve as a great basis for innovation and design. For example, a challenge affecting Oxford is that of ageing well[110]. A key issue here is social isolation, which becomes an important factor in older people's mental health. Here, there is significant potential for organisations like Oxford VR[111], which specialises in affordable ways to understand and treat mental health using VR, to address this challenge. Relatedly, as mobility issues increase with age, there is a need for communication support and remote learning devices to improve health outcomes. Oxford City Council needs to play an active role in working with the health innovation and academic sectors in directing the work they do to help address local population needs.

Companies working in the health innovation and life science sector in Oxford and its neighbouring districts are key assets that attracts inward investment into the region. However, it is important to convey this significance to Oxford's local communities. Especially those experiencing the worst effects of socio-economic and health inequality and are disengaged from these sectors that make Oxford a global driver. When discussing the inward investment and growth potential these innovation sectors bring for Oxford, there is a need to think about their social infrastructure impact too. Particularly at this moment of recovery, not doing so risks creating a further divide and leaving communities behind.

2.5 Clean Growth

Clean growth is a vital part of good growth, and they need to be taken together to be successful. Economic and environmental aspects of growth cannot be addressed effectively unless there is an integrated approach to place. There is an imperative to align strategies, given clean growth links closely to health and wellbeing and infrastructure in place. A good growth strategy for Oxford should encompass frameworks that align climate change strategy, health and wellbeing

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109 Vaccitech (2020) – Oxford University Breakthrough On Global COVID-19 Vaccine

110 Oxfordshire Health Inequalities Commission (2016) – Recommendations For Action On Health Inequalities In Oxfordshire

111 Oxford VR – About Us

strategy, local plans, and the approach to post-COVID recovery strategy around skills. Providing a place-based approach to clean growth is important and could be done by identifying strategic opportunity areas for the biggest return for green jobs and sustainable housing. Doing so will enable long term resilience and adaptability to deal with the immediate need for recovery from the pandemic, as well as future proofing Oxford in the longer term.

Taking an integrated approach such as this would allow for the local economy as a whole to be seen through the lens of clean growth and identify key areas where work can continue to be done to transition to low carbon. As has been noted, Oxford City Council has taken a leadership role in clean growth and the climate change agenda. They recognise that economic growth can be a factor in the city's contribution to climate change, and accordingly have set the ambition to build a more environmentally responsible economy in their forthcoming economic strategy[112]. Specifically, they have committed to 'building a stronger clean low carbon economy' noting the role that the local economy can play in achieving the goal for Oxford to be net-zero by 2040.

In shifting to a clean, low carbon economy and embedding the clean growth agenda within Oxford, there will be a need to engage with key local stakeholders. Working with SME's provides an opportunity to enact change in business practices. To this end, the city council has pledged to 'provide mentoring and support to entrepreneurs interested in creating environmentally and socially responsible businesses that balance profit with purpose' in working toward a low carbon economy. Related to this, it is important to showcase the work that local businesses are doing to advance the clean growth agenda locally in order to inspire other companies to follow suit. An example of an organisation doing this is the Oxfordshire GreenTech business network, who support the growth of the low carbon sector in the city and across the county.

In order to expand the reach of the clean growth agenda, and have it resonate with different demographics, there is an imperative for the benefits of clean growth, as a vital part of a good growth recovery, to be as inclusive as possible. An example of where this is happening is The One Planet Oxfordshire inclusion pilot project[113]. The project is being run by two Oxford based social enterprises – Bioregional and Aspire – and will involve funding Community Champions. They will be trained to work with a range of groups including ethnic minority associations and housing associations to give them a voice on green issues.

Bioregional framework for Climate Emergency on the local level

The need for a response to tackle the climate crisis on the local level is increasingly understood by local authorities across the country. To this end, 74 percent of councils have declared a Climate Emergency as of October 2020. To guide councils through the next step, Bioregional have launched a 'One Planet Action' service, which aims to help create effective action plans. The service works with local authorities through a six step ACTION process. To Assess gaps and opportunities, Create a vision, Train staff, Involve others in the learning process, build Ownership, and Nail impact.

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112 Oxford City Council et al – Oxford Economic Strategy Purpose, Themes and Actions Slides (still in draft format – due to be released in 2021)

113 Bioregional (2020) – Help us burst the 'green bubble' in Oxfordshire and beyond

2.6 Social Mobility

In the midst of the economic fallout resulting from the pandemic, it is important, now more than ever, to ensure our local economies are robust enough to stimulate growth using the existing potential found within the local community. Placing this within the context of Oxford's ambition for an Inclusive Economy, by linking the city's local population to the vast offer and potential of Oxford's knowledge intensive economy, endless opportunities for social mobility open up. Here, Oxford's business anchors and educational establishment have a part to play in ensuring good jobs and training opportunities are accessible to more of the local population. Through investing in building a local skills supply chain, the city's economic resilience will be strengthened in the face of the pandemic recession. It also has the potential to link those experiencing social deprivation and exclusion in Oxford to the world leading businesses and institutions linked with the city.

In September 2020, the government announced plans to 'transform the training and skills system …and helping the country build back better from coronavirus'[114] through the Lifetime Skills Guarantee. The purpose of which is to allow adults to take free college courses 'valued by employers'. However, research by the UPP Foundation[115] suggests that 80 percent of people at risk of losing their job from coronavirus will not be covered by the guarantee because they are not eligible, or they want higher level training. The damage of this on the ability of local economies to grow and recover could be profound. For Oxford, this could threaten its work in developing an inclusive economy. Which is why it is especially important that the local state comes together in developing a local skills supply chain and tap into the potential of Oxford's talent.

The city council, along with key educational and business stakeholders, are best placed to direct this supply chain in adequately meeting the evolving needs of its local economy. Oxford's universities will have to play a part in developing a local, skilled workforce. Oxford Brookes is already heavily engaged with the skills agenda in the context of driving upward social mobility. Brookes Engage[116], is a programme which provides free activities to help local young people from marginalised backgrounds learn more about university and prepare for their future careers.

Regarding the breakthrough businesses and spinouts working within Oxford's innovation ecosystem, it is understandable that they search nationally and internationally for the best talent. However, there is an opportunity within the framework of building a local skills supply chain for these businesses to work with local FE colleges and schools to bring in school leavers. Doing this through apprenticeships for entry level jobs would not only develop local talent but also forge a deeper link between the two through demonstrating the local community's contribution. In conveying this sense of contribution, OxLEP organised a 'transformative technologies tour' for children doing their GCSE and A-Levels in Oxfordshire's secondary schools[117]. The tour included visits to institutions at the Oxford Science Park, Harwell Campus, and Culham Science Centre. This was

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114 GOV.UK (2020) – Major expansion of post-18 education and training to level up and prepare workers for post-COVID economy

115 UPP Foundation (2020) – New research: Government's "lifetime skills guarantee" will not benefit up to 80 percent of non-graduates at risk of losing their jobs

116 Oxford Brookes – Brookes Engage

117 OxLEP (2020) – Oxfordshire's Innovators of Today inspire 'Innovators of Tomorrow' on Transformative Technologies Tour

done to help give an understanding of what opportunities these places present for local young people.

Understanding these opportunities will be especially important considering how the recession will be hardest felt by the youngest in our country. By July, under 25s made up a third of new Universal Credit claims, while apprenticeships halved between March and June[118]. In this context of rising youth unemployment, and consequences this can have on future economic growth for Oxford and its regional partners, it is vital that Oxford's local state work together to make the local economy resilient and stimulate growth using the existing potential within the local community.

Education

Figure 7. Oxford skills overview

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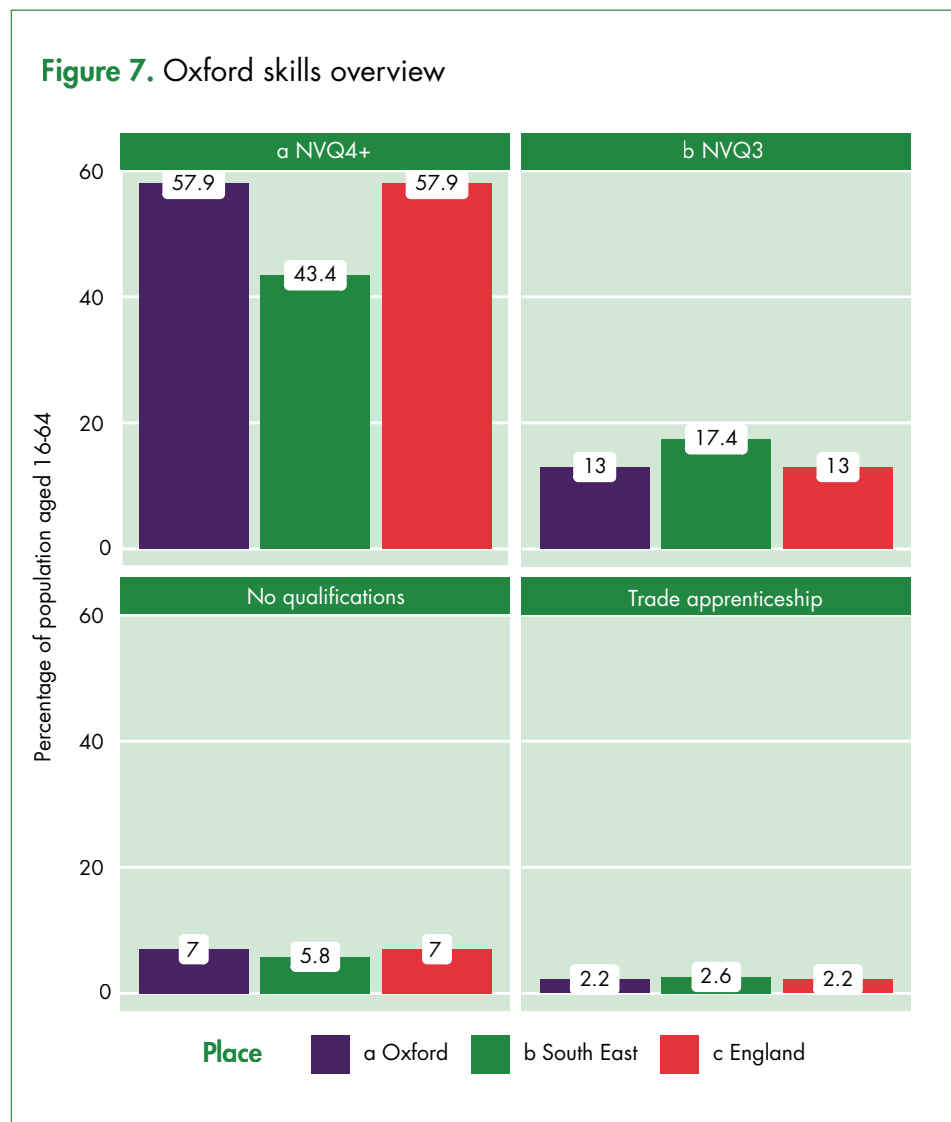
118 BBC News (2020) – Seven Ways The Young Have Been Hit By COVID

Regarding educational attainment, 22 percent of Oxford's population aged 16 or over either don't have qualifications or have fewer than 5 GCSE's[119], which excludes a significant proportion of community members who will not be able to share in the prosperity of Oxford. This is compounded by the fact that these disparities in education are disproportionately seen in the most deprived parts of Oxford. At the same time, growth in high-wage, high-skill jobs is more likely to be seen in sectors including university related education, bioscience, and healthcare to name a few[120]. This educational disparity is a challenge for the Oxford's recovery and levelling up.

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119 Oxford Strategic Partnership & OxLEP – Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative: Summary Report Findings [A final report is scheduled for publication in 2021]
120 Oxford City Council – Education, Skills, and Employability Training

3. The Local State – Who oversees the delivery of recovery and growth?

Oxford's local state includes the research and development clusters, anchor institutions, as well as key local government partners, including Oxfordshire's district and county councils, that all drive the city forward in being globally significant. It is this local state that has a particular role in tying the first two elements together: in delivering levelling up and recovery through good growth. Discussing the local state in this context encompasses the roles and responsibilities of Oxford's local economic anchors and clusters, the universities, the health eco-system, as well as local government. It is these institutions that will have a large responsibility in helping achieve the goals of meeting the objectives of the inclusivity agenda, and other key strategies including, but not limited to, the Oxford 2050 vision and Oxford's new Council Strategy 2020-2024.

3.1 Partnerships and Delivery Vehicles

The ambition for Oxford to become a compact global city underpinned by an inclusive and sustainable economy can only be achieved through the convening of the local state in order to align strategies and deliver on shared objectives. This understanding is one that already exists in many areas including in tackling housing, transport and inclusivity challenges. Work that has been carried out through the Oxford Strategic Partnership[121] on inclusive growth, and through the Oxfordshire Growth Board on the Housing and Growth Deal demonstrates this. Going forward, the successful recovery of Oxford from the pandemic, and the broader benefits of its economic growth on a regional and national level, will depend closely on the close collaboration between stakeholders of the local state. The need for partnership working is critical to ensuring that the economic growth resulting from Oxford's recovery has a broader reach. Regeneration projects around Oxford, such as the Oxpens redevelopment[122], Oxford Station Master Plan[123], and Blackbird Leys District Centre Regeneration[124] are leading examples of how partnership working, led by the city council is looking beyond recovery to repositioning for the longer-term growth. Delivering on the ambition of Oxford's growth as a compact global city, and the projects needed to achieve this, will require partnership working on varying scales. Partnership working with Oxfordshire County Council and its district councils will be increasingly important in this context. Overall, convening is about the need to find the right level to achieve goals in a constructive and encompassing way. Delivering on specific projects within the city itself, such as the Global Innovation District, will require the city council leading convening efforts.

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121 Oxford Strategic Partnership – About Us
122 Oxford City Council – Oxpens Development
123 Oxford City Council – Oxford Station Masterplan
124 Oxford City Council – Blackbird Leys District Centre and Knights Road

The role of partnerships in planning for good growth

The strength of the city's economy makes it a driver in enabling Oxfordshire to be one of the most successful regions in the UK. Strong city led governance, working in partnership with district and county partners, will enable the benefits of a good growth recovery to be felt across the region. At the same time, the collaborative working demonstrated between Oxfordshire's districts and with the county council will be necessary in facing the challenges to the future growth of the city and region exacerbated by the pandemic.

This is something the Oxfordshire Growth Board have been so effective in responding to; in coordinating Oxford and neighbouring districts and the efforts they are making to meet housing and transport needs through their constituent local plans. Specifically looking at how this will be met through urban expansion, and the economic development accompanying it, the identity of the city will continue to change. The Duty to Cooperate with neighbouring districts will be especially important when effectively incorporating new areas into Oxford's prosperity. One example where this is particularly important is the South Oxford Science Village[125]. The development promises to bring 3,000 new homes 50 percent of which will be affordable housing. The new neighbourhood will bring together international research and innovation with local businesses. Core selling points have been cited as improvements to sustainable transport networks and connecting homes to local employment opportunities.

The Growth Board is a leading example of how district councils are committed collaborators in place making. It demonstrates the strength of collaborating for stronger economies across functional economic geographies to deliver investment and infrastructure results for local communities. On a wider level, it reflects the thought that 'districts are particularly well placed to instigate and lead collaborative projects, because they are close to the communities they serve by virtue of their size and the nature of their services'[126].

The need to broaden the reach of Oxford's prosperity as it continues to grow

125 South Oxford Science Village – Welcome
126 University of Birmingham & inlogov (2016) – Building Better Collaboration

is an important aspect of creating an inclusive economy both within the city and across Oxfordshire. In delivering on inclusive growth across the region, the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy has committed 'to work through the Growth Board to convene local leaders, academic experts, businesses and community organisations to form an Inclusive Growth Commission'[127] to ensure the benefits of the city's innovation ecosystem can be felt broadly across all communities.

Convening on net zero

Clean local growth, and achieving net zero carbon emissions, will require convening across geographic boundaries to gain maximum reach. This will be particularly important for Oxford and its neighbouring districts given that they have all declared climate emergencies[128], and that the Growth Board has agreed a strategic vision for Oxfordshire that prioritises climate change[129].

For Oxford and its neighbouring districts, one area that has been recognised as needing urgent action is in ensuring that new homes are built to zero carbon and retro fitting existing homes. This is because across Oxfordshire, 'domestic emissions account for 24 percent of carbon emissions [and] approximately 80 percent of the housing that will exist in Oxfordshire in 2031 has already been built'[130]. Therefore, looking at the scale of what is needed to decarbonise and obtain fit for purpose housing stock is a challenge that has to be met in partnership. In addition to local government led action, this challenge will require working with social enterprises to catalyse action. One such organisation is the low carbon hub, who are an Oxfordshire based enterprise whose goal is for the whole county to be 'powered by an interconnected series of smart micro-grids centred on community controlled renewable energy schemes'[131]. One of the projects that they are partners of is Cosy Homes Oxfordshire who provide a service to people across the county to retrofit their houses[132].

Identifying the local, regional, and national levels upon which action can be taken will help develop an understanding of how to drive the clean growth and decarbonisation agenda forward. On a city level, identifying businesses who are willing to take action to decarbonise is essential. Through the Low Carbon Oxford partnership, which was coordinated by the city council, local businesses signed up as pathfinders and committed to reducing their carbon emissions by 3 percent year on year. The pathfinders ranged from SMEs to global organisations and include local economic anchors such as the BMW Mini plant in Cowley and Oxford University Press, as well as the universities. In February 2021, the city council convened a Zero Carbon Summit with many of the same organisations and a collective commitment was reached to form a Zero Carbon Oxford partnership while seeking to cut emissions to zero across the city as a whole by 2040. On the wider Oxfordshire level, areas of focus will include housing, physical and transport infrastructure and the sustainability associated with them. These are all areas where the Growth Board are coordinating and leading on. Finally, there is an imperative to try to influence change on the national level through policy. To reiterate, a key area for Oxford and its partners would be in

127 OxLEP (2019) – Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy
128 Oxfordshire Growth Board (2020) – Zero Carbon Homes
129 Oxfordshire Growth Board (2020) – Strategic Vision For Oxfordshire
130 Oxfordshire Growth Board (2020) – Zero Carbon Homes
131 Low Carbon Hub – About Us
132 Retrofit Works – Cosy Homes Oxfordshire – Access The Service

setting the Homes Standard as a local minimum.

Looking at the levels of influence from an economic strategy perspective, there are different sizes at which influence can occur. Chief among these include the Oxford Travel To Work Area, as well as the Knowledge Spine stretching from Bicester to Science Vale and Harwell. Ultimately, a high skill and innovative Oxford economy working with and robustly linked with its neighbouring districts, will be the hub of catalysing change.

Partnership building in health care

In tackling the socio-economic and health disparities that are prevalent across communities in Oxford, it is of utmost importance to gain clarity on the best way to harness and leverage the relationships, assets, and shared desire across the city's public sector and wider organisations to tackle the issue. A key area, which the pandemic has shown the importance of, is population health management through digital technology and data innovation. Here, Oxford's local state is in a strong position to collaborate to understand how to use the innovation and research coming out of COVID-19 within the innovation ecosystem to better target local health determinants of poor health in the community.

Lab10x is an OUI affiliated health-tech spin out who work to 'accelerate data-driven healthcare solutions powered by AI'[133] using data from local NHS patients, which then goes on to push the innovation they do. This is simply one example of initiatives that are using local patient data to drive innovation and produce better healthcare outcomes. Looking at Oxford's recovery, it is crucial that these initiatives continue to bring local benefit to public health. Network building will be key to this. For their part, the Bioescalator works to connect medical start-ups with opportunities to expand their work. One way they do this is through working with the Oxford Academic Health Science Network, who work to get 'innovation into clinical practice to improve patient outcomes … through collaboration with the NHS, industry and universities'[134].

This shows the willingness of local healthcare partners to use innovation to improve local health outcomes, and how it is already happening to a large extent. The city council will have a large role in coordinating these efforts to better target the public health challenges Oxford faces, and in ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are involved. This will become especially important on the city's journey to level up and recover through good growth.

3.2 Local Anchor Institutions

Universities

In Oxford's context, the other core element of the local state are the universities, the University of Oxford, and Oxford Brookes. These are significant anchor institutions that have been built into a global brand, acting as a magnet for talent and investment into the city and across Oxfordshire. As key contributors to the city's economy, with a global reputation they have a significant role in driving the city forward and delivering on good growth. Therefore, it is vital that the working relationship between the city council and the universities continues to strengthen and be built upon in the different areas of communal interest including tackling

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133 Lab10x – About Us
134 Oxford Academic Health Science Network – About Us

climate change and increasing inward investment into the region. Moreover, continuing efforts to engage with different local agendas to tackle prevalent communal issues will help develop an understanding of both of the universities roles in supporting local community issues.

The universities were key stakeholders invited to participate in the Inclusive Economy Seminars[135] that took place in 2019 and early 2020. In defining the challenges and interventions needed for an inclusive economy, a leading question was 'how can the universities be more engaged in inclusive growth within Oxford?'. It has also been pointed out that 'there are multiple opportunities for inclusive economy funding from … [the] university sector'. In their University Strategy 2035, Oxford Brookes have recognised as an immediate priority the role they have in contributing to the prosperity of local communities, especially in helping them recover from the pandemic[136].

The climate change agenda is another area that will require sustained engagement between the city council and its university anchors. The University of Oxford has been developing a set of environmental sustainability targets, a key part of which is developing buildings using the Passivhaus methodology, which will help them in their target of a 50 percent carbon reduction by 2030[137]. And the city council is working with the University to further embed carbon reduction in their future projects[138] with a new commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2035. There is an opportunity here for the city council, the university and other stakeholders to work together in enabling a good supply chain for the new building technologies required for Passivhaus construction, especially as the council itself has started to explore building Passivhaus homes through the Oxford City Housing Ltd.

Understanding the vital part that Oxford's universities play in the local economy, the city council collaborates closely with both in order to support economic growth. Building on this, the University of Oxford's Strategic Plan 2018-23 has a key theme of Engagement and Partnership. One of their commitments is to 'build a stronger and more constructive relationship with [their] local and regional community'[139], through exhibiting the research of the university a variety of ways including exhibitions and outreach programmes. Partnering with the city council on this provides an opportunity to further showcase the innovation and wider R&D impact of the University and can help attract further inward investment.

Initiatives like this will also further Oxford and Oxfordshire's journey to become a global innovation eco-system by 2040. The Oxfordshire LIS Investment Plan recognises the need to nurture the natural talent across the region and connect them to the opportunities within the innovation ecosystem. A part of this is the Oxford Brookes led High-Flyers programme, a central aspect of which will be improving accessibility and support for women and BAME innovators who are underrepresented in the enterprise community. This will ensure inclusivity and that innovation reflects the diversity of the region.

Businesses

In gaining a fuller picture of what the post-pandemic economic landscape will

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135 Oxford Strategic Partnership (2020) – Inclusive Growth Seminar Series
136 Oxford Brookes – Our New University Strategy
137 University of Oxford – Sustainability: Carbon and Energy
138 Oxfordshire Growth Board (2020) – Zero Carbon Homes
139 University of Oxford – Strategic Plan 2018-2023

be, and the required actions needed for recovery through good growth, the other necessary area of collaboration is with the region's private sector Local Economic Anchors. As a global facing city rooted in place Oxford has a strong presence of anchors, and with this the social capital needed to help direct recovery through good growth. Core anchors include the BMW Mini Plant in Cowley, Oxfam GB, Oxford Biomedica, Activate Learning, Unipart, the Westgate Shopping Centre, the Oxford Bus Company, and the Science and Business Parks to name only a few. Areas that would benefit from sustained partnership working are in education and the skills agenda and in defining the role that these economic anchors can play in developing a resilient and skilled local workforce in the face of COVID-inspired large-scale unemployment. For their part, the city council have engaged in sustained dialogue with these anchors on recovering from the pandemic over the late summer and autumn months of 2020.

When considering the necessary steps to build an inclusive economy and recover through good growth, work experience and the link between local businesses and schools is critical. OxLEP offer an extensive skills work experience programme[140], which has been impacted by the pandemic. Additionally, in their current Corporate Plan, the city council have set a priority to work through the Oxfordshire Skills Board to 'support educational attainment, traineeships, apprenticeships and better targeting of funds for skills'[141]. This commitment is one that was equally reflected in the Inclusive Economy Seminars and will be increasingly important on the road to recovery, where there will be a need for better bridges between schools and businesses in Oxford and across the wider region. There is an imperative to continue to build on this in the coming years and engage stakeholders of the local state in doing so.

Given that each business will be unique in their circumstance and requirements, the central question is in how to effectively engage with the business lobby to address the challenges facing the city. Tackling congestion is fundamental to Oxford's sustainable growth. This is why the city council, working alongside county partners, proposed to introduce two bus gates to stop cars from travelling through parts of the city. However, out of the 7,000 responses received from the public consultation on the measures, only 4 percent came from business representatives[142]. While there might be concerns from businesses on measures like these, it is important to find a way to address them and have collaborative conversations with businesses where they own communal challenges. For this reason, the city council has been working toward getting a unified business voice to facilitate this collaborative conversation. One step in the direction would be in having a forum that is representative across the board on a sector-by-sector basis.

NHS

The city council recognises the intrinsic connection between health and the economy, and the importance of an inclusive and sustainable economy as a determinant of health and wellbeing. This is why healthcare institutions, including the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, their constituent hospitals, and primary care services, are the vital third element of the local state. They have a unique role and responsibility in working with the other stakeholders of the local state to tackle the socio-economic

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140 OxLEP – Work Experience
141 Oxford City Council – Corporate Plan Annual Statement 2018-19
142 Oxfordshire County Council (2020) – Councils Thank Residents For Huge Response To Oxford Bus Gate Survey

and health deprivation within pockets of Oxford's communities.

Owing to the innovation eco-system within which it is based, the healthcare system in Oxford is deeply embedded in a lot of the cutting edge and globally significant research. Yet it remains equally true that this is taking place within the context of the UK's 2nd most unequal city. It has been noted that given the level of scale at which parts of the system work at, in terms of its internationally significant work, there isn't equal focus given to tackling the local inequalities as effectively as could be. Finding a way to navigate these two realities while understanding how the health system can work across the local state to use this innovation to tackle these local issues will be a critical part of levelling up and recovery through good growth.

The community impact zone[143] set up in East Oxford is a leading example of how the city council is actively engaging with the local communities and social enterprises on local public health issues to 'tackle intergenerational poverty and disadvantage' through addressing the health determinants that effect people's lives. In addition to this, the city council have also engaged with local health partners including the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group on a number of public health projects to tackle health inequalities in Oxford.

An example is the Oxford City Health Inequalities Project[144] to which both the council and the OCCG committed £100,000. The project was focused on the Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys area, and the three overriding objectives were to 'provide health promotion information in community settings, 'target patients with specific health conditions', and to work with 'city council tenants – identifying groups of people with mental health issues'. This demonstrates how involved the city council is in tackling local inequalities and collaborating with key partners in doing so. There is an opportunity here to scale up such programmes through harnessing the innovation coming out of Oxford's rich health-tech sector to gain an understanding of where this can help in the delivery of public health and social care duties within the remit of the council.

The workforce within Oxford's healthcare sector is unique given that it is a hub for innovation that attracts the best medical practitioners and researchers from across the world. The local healthcare sector has a key part to play in the skills agenda and developing a local skills supply chain. This has been recognised by both Trusts, who offer a range of clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships to local young people[145][146]. Expanding these initiatives will be increasingly important in the context of Oxford's recovery.

3.3 Direct Council Action

Oxford City Council is at the centre of driving forward the road to levelling up and recovery through good growth. It has a set of direct responsibilities and actions that it can undertake to facilitate Oxford's sustainable good growth. The scope of action to enable this is large, and encompasses tackling health and socio-economic inequalities, mitigating the consequences of climate change, building an inclusive economy, and providing business support for local SME's to name a few. These are all areas where the city council is already making headway, and its continued leadership in facing these issues will be the

143 Oxford City Community Impact Zone – About Us
144 Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (2018) – Oxford City Health Inequalities Project
145 Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust – Apprenticeships
146 Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust – Apprenticeships

foundation of an inclusive recovery within the city. Equally, making a robust recovery from the pandemic, powered by the unique assets in and around the city, will only be achieved through cross boundary cooperation with the city's neighbouring districts and the county council.

Current strategies and targets

In tackling the challenges impeding the city's growth potential, Oxford City Council have a number of existing, and soon to be adopted, strategies and visions for the future of the city. Over the last few years, a key one has been the Corporate Plan 2016-2020[147]. It has been a guiding force setting out a vision for Oxford to become a world class city for all. On 1st April 2020, a new Council Strategy[148] covering the period 2020-2024 was adopted. Building on the ambitions and targets of its predecessor, the new strategy has set out four strategic aims including: fostering an inclusive economy, delivering more affordable housing, supporting healthy communities, and pursue a zero-carbon Oxford. In achieving these aims, there is a commitment to partnership working between the city council and core elements of the local state, prioritising tackling inequality, and using council owned commercial assets to benefit residents and the local community.

The new Council Strategy will serve as a tool to deliver on the Oxford 2050 Vision[149], which was developed and adopted mid-way through the Corporate Plan in 2018. There are five themes of the Vision, each underpinned by targets, that aim to guide what Oxford will become by the year 2050.

The themes include:

- work and learning – Oxford will become a global centre for the knowledge-based economy.

- people and communities – deprivation and inequality will be significantly reduced in Oxford.

- the built and natural environment – Oxford will be an accessible and affordable place to live.

- transport and connectivity – Oxford will be better connected regionally and nationally.

- culture and leisure – Oxford's culture offer will reflect the city's diverse communities.

The Vision was developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders of Oxford's local state including community groups, charities, businesses, the education sector, and other prominent public institutions. Going forward, it will inform the policies carried out by the city council to achieve its goals. Alongside the new Council Strategy 2020-2024, the Oxford 2050 Vision has influenced the forthcoming economic strategy, and what Oxford as a compact global city will mean for its community.

Tackling Health and socio-economic Inequalities

Beyond the immediate health considerations of the pandemic, Oxford City

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147 Oxford City Council – Corporate Plan 2016-2020
148 Oxford City Council – Oxford City Council Strategy 2020/2024 and Budget 2020/2021
149 Oxford 2050 – Our Vision for Oxford in 2050

Council is aware of the importance of a successful economy as a determinant of health and wellbeing. Oxford's economy is already extremely successful. However, growth is slowing owing to the socio-economic and health disparities within communities. Compounding this, the new economic risks arising from the pandemic threaten to worsen existing levels of inequality.

Within the developing Strong and Active Communities' element of the Corporate Plan 2016–20, the city council states how they would work with the Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership as well as the Health and Wellbeing Board to reduce inequalities, integrate services and improve the health and wellbeing for local residents. On top of this, high quality community facilities will continue to be provided in order to increase physical activity and improve the health of community members. Recognising the importance of physical and mental health in leading happy lives, the peoples and communities' theme within the Oxford 2050 Vision sets out how these two components will be built into the fabric of new and existing communities – taking particular inspiration from the Barton Healthy New Town[150], which is one of the sites of NHS England's Healthy New Town programmes.

Reducing health and socio-economic inequalities across Oxford is an agenda which involves all parts of the local state. Given this, stakeholders, including the city council, need to continue the work being done on tackling it. Here there is an opportunity to explore how local public policy challenges, including public health, can be better tackled by tapping into the academic research carried out within the city.

Inclusive Economy

The need to develop a more inclusive and sustainable local economy as a means to reduce socio-economic inequality within Oxford and the wider region has been recognised for a while by stakeholders in Oxford's local state. The more recent manifestations of this has been the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Initiative and Seminars that have galvanised action to address the agenda.

The Corporate Plan 2016-2020 acknowledged a number of challenges facing building a vibrant economy including the lack of land for commercial and residential purposes, housing shortages and associated transport issues, labour and skills shortages, and infrastructure capacity problems. The council pledged to work with local state partners and the Oxfordshire councils to address these challenges and develop an economy that works for all.

Given that fostering an inclusive economy is a key pillar of the Corporate Strategy 2020-24, the council have laid out a number of headline actions to enable this. Core to this will be the implementation of the economic strategy to empower disadvantaged communities to benefit from the city's economy. Additionally, the council have pledged to use their purchasing power to reinvest money into the local economy through an emphasis on social value, while promoting the Oxford Living Wage with the goal to increase its uptake by local employers. This is in line with the thought coming out of the inclusive economy seminars for anchors and other large institutions to enhance the benefits of procurement locally.

One of the ambitions set out in the Oxford 2050 Vision is for all Oxonians to benefit from the local economy. In facilitating this, Oxford's schools will play

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150 Oxford City Council – Background to Barton Healthy New Town

a large part in preparing school leavers and the young for apprenticeships, work experience, higher education opportunities, and professional training. The skills agenda plays a central part in the inclusivity agenda. Given this, ensuring that local communities, especially the youth within them, are adequately trained to meet the future needs of Oxford's economy will be one of the driving forces behind creating an inclusive economy. This is an area where sustained partnership working between the city council, the county council, OxLEP, and local businesses will be necessary.

Business Support

Understandably, most SME businesses will have the more immediate concern regarding their survival during the pandemic. Therefore, Oxford City Council's role in supporting local businesses on the path to recovery will be critical in determining the long-term resilience of the local economy. More broadly, the city council, as a public sector body, have a role in facilitating the development of small independent businesses and social enterprises, while linking them to the wider community wealth building agenda which brings wider benefit to place. The councils convening role as a leader is of great significance in this.

The city council have been proactive in terms of their communication with businesses and their approach to support grants[151], effectively and clearly relaying the help available during the pandemic and periods of lockdown. Throughout this period of uncertainty, the council handed out £26.6m to 1,795 businesses in Oxford[152]. This is in addition to discretionary support for businesses not covered by the grants. In providing this help, a publicity campaign was launched to inform businesses of the support available to them. Outside of funding support, the city council worked to pedestranise streets across Oxford to provide outdoor dining space while respecting the need for social distancing. More recently, during November 2020, the city council partnered with Independent Oxford, Experience Oxfordshire and The Oxford Times to promote local businesses through digital and print editorial advertising[153].

Relatedly, understanding how the pandemic will continue to impact the local economy through increased unemployment, and taking active steps to mitigate this, will be equally important to creating resilience for both business and community. This is why the work the city council are doing in partnership with Aspire on the Community Employment Support Programme and rolling out the Kickstart Programme is so vital. It will be increasingly important, not only in the context of the immediate recovery from the pandemic, but also delivering on the inclusivity agenda in the longer term.

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151 Oxford City Council – Coronavirus: guidance and support for business

152 Oxford City Council – Oxford businesses able to apply for lockdown support grants

153 Oxford City Council – Oxford City Council, Independent Oxford, Experience Oxfordshire and The Oxford Times team up to support the city's businesses through lockdown

Looking forward

The Need for Delivery at the Right Level

The pandemic has shone a light on the centralised nature of our political system. Countless examples throughout the year, from data sharing on R rates with local authorities, to the command of track and trace, demonstrate the extent and consequences of the drift towards centralisation. Equally, it has demonstrated the power of, and need for, local government's ability to work across organisational and geographic boundaries as a system that can be strategic and responsive to communities. The services needed to support local communities throughout the pandemic, whether health, police, transport, or other social services all sit within varying geographies and demonstrate the need for collaborative working.

Oxford City Council have proven that they are a committed leader in collaborating with strategic partners to serve and local communities, especially during the pandemic. This proves the transformational potential that Oxford's recovery through good growth also has for them and the wider geographic configuration the city sits within. However, in order to truly deliver a good growth recovery, the central issue of budgetary uncertainty needs to be addressed. Whilst the council have managed the £29m financial shortfall caused by the pandemic robustly, long-term financial certainty will be the anchor that allows the city council to drive levelling up and recovery through good growth forward.

For this reason, Localis is calling for a £1bn Endowment Deal for Oxford, taking the form of a single long-term investment strategy for city-led growth. This deal would give Oxford City Council power to: target investment in key physical and transport infrastructure requirements, build the capacity needed to develop a skills supply chain, give strategic planning powers relating to Oxford's decarbonisation targets, and allow for city led investment strategies on social, digital, and smart energy infrastructure. Aside from the clear goal of driving good growth, this deal would enable the city to continue to play its part in supporting the regions world leading innovation ecosystem, closing the digital gap, delivering on net zero targets, and take a leading role in attracting inward investment.

It would allow the city council to direct growth at the right level for Oxford to become an inclusive and sustainable compact global city and in so doing broaden its offer to the different economic areas within which it sits. Considering its functional role within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the Thames Valley, and the FEMA's that centre on the city, a long-term investment strategy would allow Oxford to play a stronger and more effective part in all of these configurations. Oxford being able to invest in its own good growth will allow for wider benefit to be seen across the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and crucially, make the city a better

engine for growth within it. This will accelerate the transformation of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc 'into a world leading economic area'[154]. Relatedly, the success of Oxford goes hand in hand with the success of Oxfordshire as a whole. The city having the power to drive growth will equally require continued and strengthened collaboration with its neighbouring districts and county partners to ensure that Oxford's successful growth continues to benefit its wider region.

Governance at the Right Level

This recommendation is designed to situate Oxford as a compact global city within the aegis of governance frameworks not just vested in Oxford City Council but also extending sub-regionally to those of Oxfordshire County Council and OXLEP and regionally to the nationally vital Oxford-Cambridge Arc – so as to provide sufficient power and resource at the right level to allow the city to deliver for its residents and to further accelerate the growth potential of the Arc and the county.

Oxford's ability to grow at the city level

- The power to raise levies to fund placemaking efforts:
  - On businesses, in a manner similar to the provisions laid out in the Business Rates Supplement Act.
  - On residents, in a progressive manner using council tax bands as a guide.
- A long-term endowment fund for supporting good growth within the city.

Oxford's relationship with the County and the Arc

- Co-decision powers with Oxfordshire County Council on local transport infrastructure decisions.
- Some strategic planning powers for the city council, specifically on the ability to go further within the city than national and regional targets dictate for planning standards and design codes relating to good growth targets.
- Key cities for the Arc's future growth, including Oxford, Cambridge, and Milton Keynes need to have a clear voice on its governance i.e through representation on the proposed Arc growth body.

Oxford City Council's relationship with its residents

- Statutory convening role in the development, alongside County and Arc partners, of a skills supply chain for the City of Oxford which focuses on maximising the human potential of the city's resident population.
- The city should put forward a transparent community asset and social infrastructure investment strategy as part of a revised social contract with residents.

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154 MHCLG (2019) – The Oxford-Cambridge Arc

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