

#VOTEGREEN2024

LISTENING TO YOU: A GREEN NEW DEAL FOR OXFORD

#STANDINGUPFOR DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

#AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOWER RENTS

#ZERO CARBON PROTECTING NATURE

#REDUCED TRAFFIC SAFER STREETS

#ACTION ON THE COST OF LIVING



**Green
Party**

#AFFORDABLEHOUSINGLOWERRENTS

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Oxford has the least affordable housing in the UK. We believe that access to affordable, secure and decent housing is a human right, not a privilege. Nobody should be left homeless or have insecure accommodation.

ELECTED GREEN COUNCILLORS HAVE:

- ✓ Campaigned for the utilisation of brownfield sites; e.g. old industrial sites, above car parks, to build affordable, zero carbon housing
- ✓ Supported the purchase of long-term vacant properties, for social housing, backed by compulsory purchase orders if needed
- ✓ Argued for the use of low-cost Council borrowing to build 100% social and zero carbon housing on Council-owned sites
- ✓ Worked to improve residential moorings based on the Collaborative Housing 'Community Led Moorings' report
- ✓ Opposed evictions which result from cuts or delays in benefits or Universal Credit
- ✓ Argued for the establishment of a new Council-backed letting agency offering fairer rents and more secure contracts
- ✓ Budgeted for more support to organisations that offer 'safety net' services such as the Oxford Homelessness Project
- ✓ Backed the introduction of a 'housing first' model to support rough sleepers into accommodation
- ✓ Argued for the renovation of more older properties; delivering affordable, zero carbon homes with reduced energy bills
- ✓ Campaigned for the introduction of an improved landlord registration scheme where costs are not passed on to tenants
- ✓ Proposed the introduction of an Oxford Living Rent – promoting affordability in the private rented sector
- ✓ Got City Council to lobby central government to introduce powers for local Councils to introduce private sector rent controls

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#REDUCEDTRAFFICSAFERSTREETS

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While transport is primarily the responsibility of the County, the City Council is a consultee and should be playing a key role in delivering planning solutions that reduce the need to travel. Public consultation needs to be improved.

ELECTED GREEN COUNCILLORS HAVE:

- ✓ Supported 'Vision Zero' – the eradication of deaths and serious injuries on our roads; making Oxford a safer, healthier place
- ✓ Encouraged the bus companies to improve services, develop fairer pricing & become one of UK's first all-electric bus cities
- ✓ Argued for electric shuttles to deliver goods in the City – avoiding HGVs in the City - and expanding freight delivery by bike
- ✓ Backed cycle and pedestrian-friendly transport improvements and work to improve/deliver 'Connecting Oxford'
- ✓ Backed calls for improved cycling infrastructure; creating joined-up cycleways, improving cycling priority and safety
- ✓ Argued for a real Zero Emission Zone to improve air quality, not the small congestion charge zone introduced by the Council
- ✓ Supported current Low Traffic Neighbourhoods but with improved local consultation to identify accessibility improvements
- ✓ Supported a ban on pavement parking with exceptions for marked parking bays
- ✓ Supported the expansion of School Streets – safe zones around schools
- ✓ Supported the introduction of car-sharing schemes, peer-to-peer lending schemes; and installation of more electric chargers
- ✓ Backed the proposed workplace parking levy to fund transport improvements and calls to examine road pricing options
- ✓ Promoted online and home working, and improved internet access and connectivity to reduce the need to travel
- ✓ Supported calls for buses to be re-regulated allowing for public control over fares and routes
- ✓ Backed the introduction of bus gates to make public transport more efficient and a reliable alternative to private cars

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#ACTIONONTHECOSTOFLIVING

Massive increases in energy prices, food costs and rents has left many unable to make ends meet. Whilst the causes of the cost-of-living crisis are many and varied, the Council could be doing more to support those in need.

ELECTED GREEN COUNCILLORS HAVE:

- ✓ Supported efforts to 'level up' quality of life across City by tackling root causes: poverty, poor education, housing & pollution
- ✓ Budgeted for the introduction of a Hardship Fund to help out those most impacted by the cost of living crisis
- ✓ Campaigned for the Oxford Living Wage to be higher; at the same rate as London
- ✓ Secured a budget amendment to retain the Council Tax Relief scheme protecting the most vulnerable in the City
- ✓ Worked with health partners & the County to increase access to affordable health & social care, improving support for carers
- ✓ Worked with the voluntary sector, develop a Food Strategy to address the issues of food inequality, sustainability & health
- ✓ Encouraged local production of healthy food through, for example, allotments & community orchards to promote good nutrition
- ✓ Campaigned for rent controls to guard against above inflation rental increases and protect tenants from bad landlords
- ✓ Backed organisations such as Oxford Mutual Aid in providing week-round support to those in food poverty
- ✓ Opposed Council's plans to privatise services leading to higher costs for users
- ✓ Opposed Council's plans to raise services charges – and remove previous discounts - for those on low incomes
- ✓ Argued for Council policy to be focused more on supporting small, local businesses, cooperatives and the public sector
- ✓ Delivered a Council-run scheme of free period products in Oxford's community centres

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#STANDINGUPFORDIVERSECOMMUNITIES

Oxford is a wonderfully diverse City with about a third of residents born outside of the UK, with almost half of adults identifying as non 'white British', a well-established LGBT community and active faith groups.

ELECTED GREEN COUNCILLORS HAVE:

- ✓ Ensured that the Council formally recognises to contribution of refugees – such as the West Papuans – to our City
- ✓ Supported the establishment of Oxford as a City of Sanctuary
- ✓ Worked to ensure Council policies do not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity or sexual preferences
- ✓ Passed a pioneering policy on trans inclusion at the City Council
- ✓ Successfully campaigned to get the City Council to monitor and address its LGBT pay gap, as it already does for gender, ethnicity and disability
- ✓ Supported key events for Oxford's faith communities, including the Broad Street Menorah Lighting
- ✓ Worked with other parties to get the Council to support a ceasefire in Gaza and take a stand against Islamophobia and Antisemitism
- ✓ Campaigned to get more protection for independent businesses in areas like the Covered Market, Cowley & Magdalen Roads

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#ZEROCARBONPROTECTINGNATURE

There is a climate and ecological emergency. Under pressure from the Greens, the Council has committed to go 'net zero' by 2030 and is working with others to make the whole City 'net zero' by 2040. But progress is slow.

ELECTED GREEN COUNCILLORS HAVE:

- ✓ Argued for the Council's carbon claims to be independently verified to improve transparency, credibility & avoid 'greenwash'
- ✓ Called out Labour on its U-turn on climate change spending plans which would have plugged Oxford's funding gap
- ✓ Campaigned for the £m's being spent on speculative commercial property to be redirected to invest in renewable energy
- ✓ Supported the Oxford Energy Super Hub and investment in expanding the high voltage vehicle charging network
- ✓ Supported new community- and cooperatively-owned energy schemes such as those developed by Low Carbon Hub
- ✓ Proposed amendments to the Local Plan to require all new residential and commercial properties to be 'net zero' carbon
- ✓ Argued for more to be done to align the City's waste strategy with carbon targets by adopting a circular economy approach
- ✓ Continued to lead the way in relation to City's policies on natural environment; protecting & enhancing a range of habitats
- ✓ Campaigned to end building on valued greenfield sites & flood plains whilst enhancing 'green corridors' for wildlife
- ✓ Argued for better access to nature - vital for improving wellbeing – as well as more green roofs and public planting
- ✓ Argued for a better Flood Alleviation Scheme for Oxford plus more natural prevention measures upstream
- ✓ Backed the bird and insect-friendly planting of verges and community orchards, benefiting both people and wildlife
- ✓ Supported the creation of a new national nature reserve to the northeast of Oxford taking in Otmoor and Bernwood Forest
- ✓ Secured greater protections for biodiversity in Oxford's local plan

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#CYCLESAFETY

“We hear a lot of talk about the ‘road transport hierarchy’ but time after time the needs of cyclists and pedestrians are given a low priority.”



The Greens have long campaigned for improvements to cycle infrastructure within the City but much, much more needs to be done before Oxford can claim to be a safe, cycle-friendly city.

Too many cyclists have been injured and lives lost.

Green successes have included better signposting of cycle routes and improvements to cycle lanes on major roads and improved cycle parking. We have also backed calls for safer routes to school, speed restrictions on residential roads and improvements to The Plain working alongside local cycling organisations such as Cyclox.

Whilst the County and City Councils are planning many cycle improvements, the Greens are calling for more ‘joined up’ thinking following the recent tragic deaths of cyclists.

The Green Party is calling upon the County and City Councils to push ahead with the adoption of ‘Vision Zero’, a goal of zero pedestrian, cyclist and driver road fatalities within Oxford. We need to limit heavy vehicles entering the City, create safer junctions and roundabouts, enforce speed limits and provide segregated spaces for cycling.



#ACITYOFREFUGE

Green MP Caroline Lucas has proposed a number of Parliamentary motions calling on the Government to end the promotion and export of military equipment to authoritarian regimes.



Oxford is an international city, its residents hailing from across the world. With so many personal, family, business and organisational links to the wider world, we are in a unique position to build solidarity, share solutions and ideas, and work to end global conflict and environmental degradation.

Our past as an imperial state has shaped how many see the world, often in ways that are negative and destructive. The foreign policy of both Conservative and Labour governments has been counterproductive, hypocritical and make the world more dangerous.

Greens stand for a safer world and international solidarity. We have taken a clear and consistent stand for peace, justice and equality. If the whole world is not safe, none of us are safe. We oppose the immoral trading of UK armaments for oil that keeps regimes like the Saudi monarchy in power. We oppose the dangerous transit of nuclear arms through Oxfordshire.

Greens were behind the declaration of Oxford as a City of Sanctuary, and we will continue to welcome refugees and asylum seekers. More can be done through our city twinning programme to influence the actions of others.

We oppose the detention of refugees and asylum seekers and support the campaign to Keep Campsfield Closed. We oppose the Rwanda Bill.



#LOCALDEMOCRACY

“Democracy is not a spectator sport, it's a participatory event. If we don't participate in it, it ceases to be a democracy.”



Our democracy is in bad shape. The country is deeply divided with many feeling unrepresented and out-of-touch with the political process creating a vacuum which risks being filled by right-wing populists.

The first-past-the-post voting system stifles new thinking. At the last European elections in 2019, held under a Proportional Representation voting system, the Green Party received the second highest vote in Oxford, more than Labour and Conservatives.

Oxford City Council, elected via first-past-the-post, fails to fairly represent the views of electors. Despite receiving less than half the votes in the last three local elections, Labour won 70% of the seats.

The Green Party has consistently opposed infringements on democratic participation and civil liberties. We want to see the right to protest protected and would scrap anti-trade union laws. Democratic reform has to start locally with the empowerment of communities. We will continue to press for:

- ✓ More opportunities for members of the public to engage in local decision-making. For example, citizens' assemblies, enhanced speaking rights at Council meetings, with participatory budgeting
- ✓ Replacing the first-past-the-post system with a fair and proportional voting system so that every vote counts
- ✓ The right to vote for 16- and 17-year olds
- ✓ Unnecessary and unfair voter ID laws to be scrapped.



#CLIMATEEMERGENCY

“No more broken promises. The City Council has said a lot about climate change but achieved very little real change.”



We are facing a climate and ecological emergency. This is the decisive decade during which we must act to avert the worst impacts of climate change, habitat loss and ecological collapse. In Oxfordshire we are especially aware of threats of worse flooding. Elsewhere in the world the impacts are already devastating in some countries, for both people and their environment.

In January 2019, the Greens successfully proposed a motion to Council declaring a climate and ecological emergency in the City. More than three years later there has been a lot of talk but little action. This is not the first time the Council have procrastinated on environmental issues.

In response to on-going pressure from the Greens, Council plans have now committed to a 'net zero' Council by 2030 and a wider 'Zero Carbon Oxford' partnership have signed a charter that aspires to make the whole City zero carbon by 2040. Though welcome, these plans are vague and unfunded. They ignore many significant sources of emissions.

Only the Greens are in a position to hold the Council to account and make sure they deliver on these aspirations.



Climate protests, Oxford (2019)

#AUNIVERSITYCITY

*“Humans are constantly learning and the world is an experiment.
Our task is to light the way” Ernst Bloch*



Life in Oxford is intricately wrapped up with the city's two universities. However, with their special relationship comes responsibilities. The expansion of the universities has been a contributing factor in the housing crisis in the city, and as many colleges are major landowners, they have a direct interest in development around the city.

Students are a vital part of our communities - sustaining the local economy, contributing to local culture and often staying here to work themselves. But many who work during their studies do so in low paid and harsh working environments, and many have poor quality accommodation.

Greens will strongly scrutinise planning applications from the universities and colleges and insist on full transparency.

We will require students to be supported on equal terms by Council services, ensure that housing policies reflect the needs of students, and work with unions and employers to promote fair pay and conditions for all workers, including students.

The Greens have supported university staff in their campaigns for fair pay, pensions and conditions - including through showing solidarity with striking UCU members.

