



AN ASSESSMENT OF
THE OXFORD VIEW
CONES:
CONSULTATION ON
DRAFT
OCTOBER 2014

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Introduction

An assessment of the Oxford View Cones was carried out by Oxford City Council working in collaboration with the Oxford Preservation Trust and English Heritage. This document was made available for public consultation between the 13th June and the 25th July 2014.

The purpose of this assessment is to provide an evidence base that examines the significance of each of the 10 Oxford View Cones as part of Oxford's heritage, using a robust methodology in order to better understand how they can be most effectively managed in the future.

Public Consultation

Comments on the findings of the draft appraisal report were invited from interested stakeholders and members of the public. These were welcomed in the format of an online questionnaire or by writing to the City Council.

Consultees were asked to comment on three key issues:

- 1. On whether the **methodology** used for the assessment of Oxford’s views and defining their significance is sound. If any elements have been missed; and any comments or suggestions.
- 2. Whether there is agreement that the **10 View Analysis Summaries** define each view and properly articulate what makes it special.
- 3. And finally, consultees were invited to provide any **further comments** about the Study.

The findings from the online survey have been summarised here.

Q.1a Methodology

1. a)

Do you think that the methodology for assessment of Oxford’s views and defining their significance, as set out in section 5 of the study, is sound?

Option	Results
Yes	<div><div></div></div> 74% (32)
No	<div><div></div></div> 16% (7)
Don't Know	<div><div></div></div> 9% (4)

• [View the responses to this question](#)

There was strong support for the methodology used for the assessment of Oxford’s views and defining their significance with 74% of the total of 43 consultees considering it to be sound. 16% of the respondents considered it was unsound; and a further 9% didn’t know.

Q.1b Are there any key elements missing

1. b)

Do you think there are any elements that contribute to the significance of views that have been missed from the lists set out in the method section (5)?

Option	Results
Yes	<div><div></div></div> 23% (9)
No	<div><div></div></div> 63% (25)
Don't Know	<div><div></div></div> 15% (6)

• [View the responses to this question](#)

A significant number of the respondents some 63% did not consider that any key elements had been missed from the assessment. 23% of the respondents however did feel that there were some elements missing and a further 15% didn’t know.

Q1 c) Comments or suggestions on methodology

Table 1 Summary of comments on methodology

This table provides a summary of the main comments received on the **methodology** used for the Assessment of the Oxford View Cones. It includes the City Council's response to the comment together with the Action that will be taken.

Question:1c Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the methodology	OCC Response	OCC Action
It needs to reflect and contribute to the reality of most people's lives.	The project is designed to help people's understanding and thus their enjoyment of the views of and the landscape setting of Oxford	No further action required
Concerned about the way the consultation has been undertaken which needs to be well in advance of the closing date.	Consultation on this project has complied with the Council's consultation policies. Indeed it has been subject to scrutiny by a number of stakeholder groups, as well as this on line consultation to ensure the results are accurate and the evidence robust.	Include this consultation response table as part of any published material
<p>The statutory context of the View Cones study and its contribution and relationship to the wider, statutorily enacted concept of setting, character or appearance needs to be articulated better.</p> <p>Presentation of individual studies is generally good but needs to be improved. Needs to cover how views appear to human eye; vulnerabilities in planning site allocations; spatial mapping; and context with other LPA's</p> <p>The important but subsidiary nature of the view cones to the issue of setting should now be recognised.</p>	<p>This study seeks to understand the nature and significance of the 10 identified views in the Oxford Local Plan and Core Strategy views. The study seeks to go beyond what the eye sees also to include analysis of what that means.</p> <p>Further study is proposed to place this work within a planning policy and development management context.</p>	No further action
<p>There is an over emphasis on heritage and preservation though meritable the underplaying of new opportunities that could add much to or enhance the scene is problem in the current methodology.</p> <p>1960's report never ruled out changes to the skyline by tall structures just that they shouldn't be bland. But in practice used by planning officers and objectors to reject</p>	<p>This is an evidence base that seeks to improve our understanding of the historic environment within the 10 view cones. It does not set out policy for what should or shouldn't be permitted.</p> <p>Further work is proposed that will form the basis of advice for</p>	<p>Development of policy framework in place.</p> <p>No further action required.</p>

<p>schemes.</p> <p>It has resulted in bland roofline; height limit hasn't been a good solution; merit should be given to texture and colour of potential new features such as hanging foliage and roof gardens.</p>	<p>future development management</p>	
<p>Need to deal more directly with the damage done by the buildings in Roger Dudman way to what you spend so much time saying is a lovely view. It is no longer so lovely and yes your viewing point decreases the impact of this, but perhaps some conversation about why you need to do this at all --- because you allowed the hideous things --- would be appropriate.</p>	<p>This study seeks to understand the nature and significance of the 10 identified views in the Oxford Local Plan and Core Strategy views. The study seeks to go beyond what the eye sees also to include analysis of what that means.</p> <p>Further study is proposed to place this work within a planning policy and development management context.</p> <p>It is not and was never intended to be a critique of decisions made</p>	<p>No further action required as further work on developing the policy framework is in progress</p>
<p>It is unclear whether a developer would be required to undertake an assessment for each view as per the methodology or whether the assessment provided has been developed from the methodology and that the detailed description of the view would be used as a tool to assess a development.</p> <p>If the former we believe that this would result in a document which is neither accessible nor proportionate.</p> <p>If the latter we believe the analysis provides very good resource which will promote an understanding of the city and its views which can be used as a tool to describe and assess developer.</p>	<p>The assessment has been developed from the methodology and is intended to be use by applicants, their professional advisers and the local community to ensure understanding and to inform debate and decision making.</p> <p>This evidence base will be supported by planning and technical advice, which will be produced as a second stage in the project</p>	<p>No further action required as further work on developing the policy framework is in progress</p>
<p>The spires and domes of Oxford provide its most recognisable characteristic and are a major draw for visitors. They should not be obscured or dominated by new development. The view from the Hinksey Hill interchanges shows how bad it can get, in this case with the dominance of the pylons.</p>	<p>Support noted</p>	<p>No further action required</p>
<p>It is excellent</p>	<p>Support noted</p>	<p>No further action required</p>
<p>The 10 views should be expanded and are considered to be of high importance as well as the views from outside the city looking in.</p>	<p>The methodology is one that can be applied to other sites to identify the significance of other views and settings.</p>	<p>Possible action for a second stage project to gather information about other views that are</p>

	The 10 views are considered to be representative of the many views that are possible into, out of and across the city	valued locally and as part of the work already in progress to develop policy framework.
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Q 2 a View Analysis Summary

Some 85% of all respondents agreed that the 10 View Analysis Summaries had defined the characteristics of each view and properly articulated what makes these views special. 10% of respondents disagreed and a further 5% didn't know.

Q 2b Additions and or corrections proposed

Table 1.2 Summary of responses with suggested amendments to View cones

This table, in response to Q 2b, provides a summary of the detailed comments on some suggested **amendments** or **additions** to the **Oxford View Cones**. It includes the City Council's response to the comment together with the Action that will be taken.

Response ID	Question 2b Do you have any information to add or corrections to make to the descriptions of the 10 views	OCC Response	OCC Action
328503	General Comment: The approach is limited and formulaic	The methodology has been supported by English Heritage as appropriate and proportionate. The Oxford Design Review Panel commended the methodology and approach	No further action required
337538	General comment and Boars Hill and South Park: Trees are sometimes mentioned as a viewing problem but in fact they add to the magic because when leaves fall in the winter, unexpected views can literally stop you in your tracks so I'd not want to see trees taken down to make way for views. The two exceptions to this are, I think, Matthew Arnold's view from Boars Hill from just above the old farm and South Parks.	Agree. From Rose Hill allotments the trees have grown to obscure the view. The identifies the need for effective landscape management as well as development management, working with other organisations who have a role to play in this.	As a part of future management of the views consider how to engage effectively with landowners and land/estate managers and public authorities

328431	<p>Boar's Hill: The 'Tower of the Winds' is NOT part of the Radcliffe Camera, as described in notes on the Boar's Hill view!</p> <p>It is interesting that the tall domes and minarets of the unfinished Islamic Centre and the Central Mosque are so unobtrusive.</p> <p>Barton: The proposed extensions of Barton could perhaps impact detrimentally on the precious Elsfeld view.</p> <p>Science Area: Redevelopments of buildings in/around the Science Area need to be very sensitively considered for impact on views.</p>	<p>Agreed</p> <p>This assessment of the views is designed to assist those in developing Barton Park to ensure that the significance of the view is properly considered</p> <p>Similarly with the ROQ site</p>	<p>Correct text</p> <p>No further action required</p>
337594	<p>South Park: The feature most important to me is the view from the top of South Park from a vantage point that shows more of the south of the town with the north and east of the town more obscured by trees to my right and that is the Electrical distribution tower holding a set of cable appearing to round the hill it stands on the side of.</p> <p>The view is poetically reminiscent to a friendly giant just coming in from yonder valley to bring its load of pleasant goods/power to be put at the east of the city. The proportions to the hill and setting suns make it seem not to gargantiously overpowering to the bigger landscape around it, while making appear to be frozen in a pause looking back toward the setting sun..</p> <p>The view of the other Electrical towers when I clear the trees to see the north of the city are generally over powered by the comparative baulk of the still spindly building towers that the study seems to appreciate more, that lay in the foreground in the middle of the city.</p>	<p>The history of the view has had oxford spires and domes as the focus and is the basis of this study.</p> <p>Some would consider the electricity pylons that form part of the view differently from this respondent.</p>	<p>No further action</p>
337589	<p>Port Meadow: In the Port Meadow section I think that Wolvercote Green should be replaced by Wolvercote Common which lies adjacent to Port Meadow whereas Wolvercote Green is separated from \Port Meadow by the railway and canal</p>	<p>accepted</p>	<p>Correct text</p>
329099	<p>Port Meadow: The nature of Port Meadow is very different from other view cones having a viewing point level with the city across a large publically accessible area. Inevitably the assessment moves from an assessment of the view cone to an assessment of the significance of the</p>	<p>The study seeks to capture the significance of each view. The foreground of this view is extensively the meadow and so forms part of the significance of the view</p>	<p>No further action required</p>

	Meadow as a whole.		
329408	Port Meadow: The pale buildings of the Roger Dudman Way detract from the view from Port Meadow. A planting of trees in front of them would reduce the damage. Even rendering them in darker cement would be an improvement.	The is an assessment of the 10 view cones, and is not intended as a commentary on recent developments in the city	No further action required
337517	Port Meadow: The importance of the St Barnabas Tower to the historic visual effect of the view from Port Meadow and beyond is understated. Sight of the tower, which had previously been of great attraction and importance from ON Port Meadow as well as beyond, has now been almost totally lost by the monumental impact of the Roger Dudman Way, University Accommodation Blocks.	See above	No further action
330378	Port Meadow: The impact of the Robert Dudman Way buildings in Port Meadow has been massively understated. They are not listed as detractors to the view, although it is clear from later parts of the document that they are. No suggestion for reducing this harm to the beautiful serene view has been made.	See above	No further action
328454	Port Meadow: The earlier views of Port Meadow show the variation in tree line and other large unidentified buildings which have come and gone. This clarifies the changing role of trees and in particular crack willow. It necessitates some thought about how this will be managed so that amenities which have been in existence for much longer, and answer other environmental demands, like allotments, can continue to thrive and develop alongside other developments.	Agreed. As a part of future management of the views it is important to consider how to engage effectively with landowners and land/estate managers and public authorities	Review as part of work on policy framework
337246	Port Meadow: It appears the Survey plays down the major controversy raised by the Roger Dudman buildings. You have not emphasised sufficiently the glare from this white render row of buildings on bright days. They are hideous.	See above	No further action
337147	Rose Hill: Analysis focuses on view from Rose Hill but should be considered from other parts of Iffley: Cordrey Green, Tree Lane, Abberbury Rd, 3 & 4 Wootten Drive, Krebs Gardens, Beechwood Hse and Woodhouse Way. City visible from	The study is limited to consider the existing 10 view cones although the methodology can be applied to other parts of the city where there is a view	Consider as a part of the on-going work to develop policy framework

	<p>local businesses: The Tree Hotel, Hawkwell Hse Hotel, Nursing Home in Anne Greenwood Close. The extent of these views are influenced by vegetation and seasons, but available to range of residents and visitors.</p> <p>The views of the City and Wytham Hill are greatly valued and wish to preserve it from buildings protruding into the skyline.</p>		
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Question 3 Other comments on the study

Table 1.3 Summary of responses commenting on the study

This table provides a summary of **any other comments on the study**. It includes the City Council's response to these comments together with the Action that will be taken.

Question 3 Do you have any other comments to make about the study	OCC Response	OCC Action
I am delighted that the view cones are being reviewed because they continue to have a significant impact on the enjoyment of the public use of these open spaces.	Support noted	No action required
Only to say that it's all very well to recognise and analyse the importance of the view cones, but another thing to manage the views and prevent development that negatively impact them. Why was the Roger Dudman Way development not flagged up as inappropriate and stopped before it was too late, for instance? Studies like these are great, but do they have any teeth?	The purpose of the project is to develop a robust methodology and evidence base for understanding the views and to use this to inform the development of planning policy.	Work on policy framework in progress
This is a very good study and those involved are to be congratulated. It is to be hoped that, in time, additional cones will be added, but this is an excellent start.	Support noted	No action required
South Oxfordshire District Council support policies to maintain the important historic buildings of Oxford including their setting and support the maintenance of important views to the iconic skyline of the city; but need to balance these with pressures in the city for both economic and housing growth. Some view cones protect wide areas where views are restricted or have other unsightly features (eg. electricity pylons). Considered well designed taller new buildings could add interest to the skyline and complement the views of the existing buildings. A more refined and selective approach is therefore required and important	The purpose of the project is to develop a robust methodology and evidence base for understanding the views and to use this to inform the development of planning policy and decision making.	

<p>views should continue to be protected, however these may only really be visible over a smaller area than the view cones protect. Views that have already been compromised should not continue to be protected.</p> <p>The assessment needs to acknowledge the pressure for growth in and around the city and acknowledge that difficult judgements may need to be made about the relative merits of some of the views of the city's skyline compared with the importance of retaining a green setting for the city and preventing urban sprawl around the periphery of Oxford which will also detract from its attractiveness. It would be beneficial to include in the study some assessment of the relative merits of the different views.</p>	<p>It would be dangerous to 'grade' the value of the view, a methodology that runs counter to current policy and practice. This is because some views, which although may be of less significance than others, could be more vulnerable to change. Assessment should focus on significance rather than relative value.</p>	<p>Current work on policy framework to consider this issue further</p>
<p>Comprehensive and detailed. A good piece of work.</p>	<p>Support noted</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>Consider consultation process and questions, such as methodology to be overly complicated. Needs Plain English approach.</p>	<p>It has sought to be clear, with plain English Approach, but inevitably because of the nature of the policy guidance relating to landscape and setting, must include some technical terminology</p>	<p>Check glossary to ensure it properly explains technical terms used</p>
<p>I live close to a view cone and our view of the city centre has been compromised over the last 35 years by inappropriate building in formerly green spaces. I would like to see the City's obsession with growth reigned in.</p>	<p>Sustaining the significance of a historic city yet sustaining its relevance in the 21st century serving the needs of its business and residential community is challenging. The purpose of this study is to help understanding of our historic environment as a part of a suite of heritage research publications to help decision makers.</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>A very worthwhile study. The city's view cones are an important part of its heritage and should continue to be protected.</p>	<p>Support noted</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>It is good to reassess what the intent of policy is really trying to achieve and whether it actually is being applied to enhance or unthinkingly detract from the city's architecture and skyline.</p> <p>The most recent version of a pure height ban is further confused when the ground is lower than at Carfax Tower which means what is bellow at one end of a flat topped roof is above to some and bellow to others. A point that misses the original intention to make the cityscape visually interesting and stimulating for its inhabitants and "view-users".</p> <p>Opportunities to make structures that may appear to</p>	<p>The existing policy makes distinction between height above Ordnance Datum and the height of proposed buildings.</p> <p>When considering proposed development against the existing policy framework on height and views assessment will include consideration about how to add to the view</p>	<p>Current work on policy framework will assist. No further action required.</p>

<p>have most bulk higher than the towers keenly promoted in this draft document such that add a new form above the current skyline with a gap to give a visual interlude between the old and the new. I think such could pass the original 1960's test if it got the gaps and positioning in the right spot to complement or not obscure the other parts of the skyline deemed important to appear behind and beneath it.</p> <p>Size is not critical it is more important from a visual perspective where the juxtapositions lay between the different elements and the optical texture and lighting that breakup a form or alternatively offer to make it more dominating.</p> <p>Promoting roof gardening with trees can give a more rural aspect to a view and often be more pleasant to live on too.</p> <p>Should consider a plan to artificially elevate the important historic towers by using modern methods that can carefully lift entire large buildings intact and in one piece and if desired transport them away to some new spot. People could add new things beneath the raised buildings or the apparent ground could be raised allowing the roads to be covered over in parts, and green walks run above them...</p> <p>In short I think the study has shown a way to evaluate a scene in a way that can be interpreted into a settings stage architectural design which is good start but it fails to capture every ones view for what is personal taste.</p>	<p>(possibly with another tall element), but such decisions need to be based on a understanding of the significance of the views, hence this study.</p> <p>This is an interesting, though unrealistic idea, but would undermine the historic and architectural significance of the group of listed buildings.</p>	
<p>There should be some acknowledgement of the positive contribution made by twentieth century architecture to the city. Oxford has a significant number of important 20th century buildings and a history as a centre of innovative research, we believe this should be acknowledged within the study.</p>	<p>This is a study of the views rather than of C20th architecture, the significance of which is already recognised through the statutory protection regime</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>I think this is really important to sustain the unique selling point of Oxford</p>	<p>Support noted</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>After the Castle Mill intrusion it is essential that nothing more is allowed to spoil the views of Oxford. A conscientious application of the assessment methodology is vital.</p>	<p>The study is intended to help inform decisions, not stop all development</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>I applaud the Council's wish to preserve the remaining views, and only hope they can resist the attempts by Mammon and the University to destroy them. If only the damage done in the last year or so could be undone.</p>	<p>Support noted</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>It is incredibly important to protect views of our city, one of which has already been desecrated by council bumbling.</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>No action required</p>
<p>I have greatly enjoyed reading the historical and art background of the famous views, and I find it astonishing that the Roger Dudman eyesores should have been allowed to happen, considering that so much information is known about the value of the views as a world</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>No action required</p>

treasure.		
Government and business pressure on the City to build is a temporary feature of our time which will one day be as despised as the road building passion of the 1950s. Whoever controls Oxford's planning has a responsibility for all time. Enough damage has already been done. If its unique, celestial appearance is not visible from as many places as possible as a group of towers, spires and domes, Oxford will no longer be Oxford. No existing view should be sacrificed for money. Anyone who did so would be rightly remembered as a Philistine and a vandal.	Noted	No action required
An excellent and useful document	Support noted	No action required
The University's desire appears to be to have all its key buildings in the centre of Oxford. The consequences of this approach are felt in Headington where the Old Road development is inappropriate for the area. Recent controversial developments in Worcester Place, Jericho, and other schemes are all Oxford University projects. The current policy approach has served us well for fifty years – so why change? This consultation appears to be driven by the University's pressure to develop its sites. If your approach provides a bastion against vested interests, then all well and good. If not we will see the gradual disappearance of the views which have been preserved for generations.	The study is driven by a need to develop understanding of the views of Oxford and to inform decisions about how to manage them	No action required
Overall the skyline should be preserved. To lose it would destroy the history of Oxford, but as we all know if things a little way out of the 'preserved area' are not allowed to be developed there is the risk that organisations would not expand their businesses here, and as a city everything would become dependent on money coming from visitors, which would not be enough to keep everyone who lives here in full time work. The skyline view area therefore might have to change so the core area we want to preserve, is preserved, and the main areas that the visitors actually see stay the same.	Noted. The challenge of sustaining the relevance of a historic city for the 21 st century is a big one and this study and the work of the city council to build up understanding of our historic environment is designed to help deliver on this challenge	No action required

Nick Worlledge, Oxford City Council

7th November 2014