

Oxfordshire County Council

Conservative Independent Alliance Proposed Budget Amendments 2025/26

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment

Context and Purpose

Oxfordshire County Council's vision is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county. This includes working to ensure that our policies and services support equality and inclusion.

This assessment sets out the equalities impact of the Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed budget amendments for 2025-26.

We can look to legislation to support our understanding of the council's equalities impacts. The Equality Act (2010) states that all public bodies need to take extra steps to stop discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations: this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Act defines discrimination as the less favourable treatment of a person because of a protected characteristic, as compared to others who do not share that characteristic. The legislation also applies where there is a belief that the person who is disadvantaged has a particular protected characteristic, even if it is not the case.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Including Everyone – an inclusive Oxfordshire

The council has set out its approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, including how we meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, in the [Including Everyone framework](#), which was refreshed in October 2024.

Including Everyone sets out how the council goes further than the protected characteristics in the Equality Act by also considering the impact our decisions might have on:

- People living with social deprivation
- Rural communities
- Those leaving care
- Carers
- Those in our armed forces community

This overarching Equality Impact Assessment shows how the Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed budget amendments might impact the nine protected characteristics and the five additional areas above, and what we are doing to reduce or remove any potential negative impacts.

Equality Impact Assessments

All council decisions are reviewed for equality impact at the appropriate level of detailed analysis, depending on the potential service impact of the proposed change. This allows for the review of the potential impacts of new and updated policies and service delivery decisions on those with protected and/or additional characteristics. Where there is potential for material service impact, a formal Equality Impact Assessment is completed.

This overarching Equality Impact Assessment is made in support of the council's overall budget for 2025/26. It provides summary information on the equalities impacts which the Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed budget amendments might have if they are approved and implemented. It also gives an indication of how we might mitigate any potential negative impacts.

Assessing equality impacts does not guarantee that a change will never have a negative impact. Rather it is intended to ensure that our policies are designed and implemented to meet the diverse needs of individuals, groups and communities in Oxfordshire. Equality Impact Assessments also help to ensure that the outcomes of a proposal are carefully considered, with the potential benefits maximised and possible challenges mitigated, within the overall funding available.

Overarching Equality Impact Assessment – approach

The following pages show how we have approached the assessment of impacts on equalities and diversity, setting out at a summary level what impacts our budget proposals might have on the protected characteristics listed above.

If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed to aid understanding and outline mitigations.

Capital budget – proposed amendments

The Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed amendments are not expected to have significant negative impacts on equalities. Consequently, no detailed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) have been published at this time.

Some impacts have been identified for capital proposals, which are outlined in the summaries below:

- Remove Active Travel in Rural Areas
 - This amendment (2026CIA7) is proposing to remove funding (CORP113) which supports the delivery of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), which focus on smaller-scale, high-impact "quick wins" in rural areas and market towns to rapidly enhance connectivity and accessibility. Removing this fund will result in the anticipated benefits of this proposal not being realised. Active travel has a positive impact on all communities and improves health, connection and community. The removal of this funding will negatively impact those in rural communities.
- Remove funding for St Giles' Public Realm improvements
 - This amendment proposes to reduce Prudential borrowing (2026CIA9) to fund the administration's proposal to improve St Giles' public realm (included in CORP103). This amendment removes funding to improve the space for socialising and greening in St Giles and improve access for pedestrians and cyclists. The removal of funding will have a negative impact for all protected characteristics as it reduces social inclusion and access to green space.
- Remove funding for Thame to Haddenham active travel link
 - This amendment proposes to defund the administration's proposal to improve cycling infrastructure in rural communities. Defunding this proposal would result in failing to deliver the potential benefits of a proposed cycleway connecting Thame to Haddenham, which would facilitate safe cycling travel to Haddenham and Thame Parkway station. Not funding this proposal would have a negative impact on rural communities and would reduce access to healthier alternative travel options for communities.

Public Consultation

Public consultation on specific proposals is one of the tools which Oxfordshire County Council can use to help understand and mitigate the potential impacts of proposed savings on equalities (the nine protected characteristics) or wider community areas (rural communities, areas of deprivation, carers, care leavers, armed forces community, social value).

Section 1: Summary details

Service Area	All Service Areas
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	This assessment sets out the overall impact that the Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed budget amendments for 2025/26 have on a range of equality and diversity characteristics, including the nine protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010. The assessment also summarises any mitigations that have been planned or put in place to reduce or remove any potentially negative impacts.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	This impact assessment provides an overview of the Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed budget amendments for 2025/26 and so comments on existing programmes as well as new proposals.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>This assessment covers the Conservative Independent Alliance Group's proposed budget amendments for 2025-26. It is an opportunity to highlight key evidence and intelligence that the council has used to assess the impact of its budget proposals on the nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>In line with our equalities, diversity and inclusion (EDI) framework, the council has also assessed the impact on those living in rural areas, those living with social deprivation, armed forces communities, carers and those leaving care, and social value.</p> <p>This assessment has identified a number of potential negative impacts on those with protected characteristics. These are set out in section 3 below. If the amendments are approved, mitigations would need to be identified to reduce impact.</p> <p>A summary of the impacts of the budget proposals on climate change outcomes have been set out in a separate overarching Climate Impact Assessment.</p>
Completed By	Jamie Kavanagh
Authorised By	Susannah Wintersgill
Date of Assessment	February 2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p><u>Oxfordshire County Council's vision</u> is to lead positive change by working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.</p> <p>We want to make sure that everyone in Oxfordshire can take advantage of what the county has to offer. Our strategic plan explains our cross-cutting priorities and commitments to achieve our vision and sets out our areas of focus.</p> <p>In recent years Oxfordshire County Council has delivered significant savings both in response to reductions in government funding and to release funds to reinvest in meeting rising demand. This budget planning round has been affected by increased pressure from estimated inflationary increase to the cost of social care, and government change to employers' national insurance, as well as contract inflation.</p> <p>The council also continues to experience demand-led pressures and the effects of the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs.</p> <p>The last Census confirms Oxfordshire has a growing and ageing population, which will continue to increase demand on services.</p>
<p>Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>This impact assessment covers proposed budget amendments across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment and Highways • Economy and Place • Resources and Law and Governance • Transformation, Digital & Customer Experience • HR and Culture Change • Public Affairs, Policy and Partnerships • Highways and Maintenance

	Details of proposals are set out in the main budget papers.
Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact	<p>In considering the impact of budget proposals before they are formally agreed, the council undertakes a detailed process of democratic and community engagement. For equalities this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA 2023) of health and wellbeing needs, and the associated Equalities Briefing, to consider the impact of proposals as they are drawn up and in the development of this overarching assessment. The council's JSNA can be found here. • Census 2021 data analysis and insight, which is used to understand the demography of Oxfordshire and benchmarked statistics in relation to national and county level data, which can be found here. • Using data and intelligence gathered through developing our refreshed Including Everyone Framework on equalities, diversity and inclusion, which can be found here. • Services follow the council's approach to undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA). This can include considering at an early stage what impacts each proposal might have on the nine protected characteristics or on wider inequalities, and subsequently setting out greater detail, including any actions identified to mitigate negative impacts. If potential impacts are assessed as significant, individual Equalities Impact Assessments are completed and published to aid understanding and outline mitigations. • A democratic process including agreement of proposals by Cabinet, analysis and comment on those proposals by the Performance Scrutiny Committee, and adoption of a budget by Full Council.

	Each of these stages provides an opportunity to invite comment and engagement from the public and representatives of particular organisations or population groups.
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Section 3: Impact Assessment

<p>Assessing the evidence and impact on those with the protected and additional characteristics</p>	<p>The 2021 Census records that Oxfordshire has a population of 725,290. Demographic data below has been taken from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2023 and through analysis of Census 2021 data.</p> <p>The summaries below outline where a proposal has a positive or negative impact on those with protected and additional characteristics.</p> <p>Some of the proposed amendments have potential negative impacts across the majority of protected characteristics. These will be referenced at the end of this section, under the title 'Wide-ranging impacts'.</p> <p>Age: The median age of Oxfordshire increased slightly from 38 years as of 2011 census to 39 years at 2021 census. In 2021 census, the median age was lowest in Oxford City (31 years) and highest in West Oxfordshire (44 years). At a small area level, wide areas of rural Oxfordshire had a median age above 47. Over the past 20 years (between 2001 and 2021), there was an increase in the population of Oxfordshire from 605,400 to 725,200, a growth of 119,800 (+20%). The younger age group, aged 0-15, increased by 10%. The older age group, aged 65 and over, increased by 48%. Rural districts have a much higher proportion of older people than Oxford City. In 2021, older people aged 65+ made up 20% of the estimated population of Oxfordshire's four rural districts, compared with 12% of the population of Oxford City. Oxford City had a much higher proportion of people in younger age groups (including students) and a higher number of people aged 20-24 than living in Oxfordshire's four rural districts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the administration's one-off investment to leverage investment in rail (2026CIA4): Removing the one-off investment in rail could reduce accessibility for older adults and young people who rely on public transportation. • Remove one-off revenue funding for discretionary active travel measures (2026CIA7): Removing funding for discretionary active travel measures might limit opportunities for physical activity among older adults and young people.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove Active Travel and St Giles' Public Realm Improvements (2026CIA9): Adjusting borrowing for the removal of capital pipeline projects could delay improvements that benefit older adults and young people. • Remove one-off revenue funding for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (2026CIA7): This could limit opportunities for physical activity among older adults and reduce connectivity and accessibility in rural and market towns, which may disproportionately affect older adults who rely on these improvements. <p>Disability: 14.5% of people in Oxfordshire consider themselves disabled as defined in the Equality Act 2010, compared to 17.5% of people nationally. Of those 14.5%, approximately 35% feel limited 'a lot' by their disability in day-to-day activities, with 65% limited 'a little'. Since 2011, the proportion of disabled people in Oxfordshire has increased by 0.7%. The most common types of disability for older people are mobility, breathing/stamina issues and hearing. The main type of disability experienced by working age adults relates to mental health, with children experiencing the most social/behavioural and learning disabilities. As of March 2021, there are 20,000 blue badge holders in Oxfordshire, 2.9% of Oxfordshire residents (source: Department for Transport), compared with 4.2% of England's population. In November 2022 there were 52,169 disability-related benefits claimed in Oxfordshire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the administration's one-off investment to leverage investment in rail (2026CIA4): Reduced investment in rail could impact accessibility for individuals with disabilities. • Remove one-off revenue funding for discretionary active travel measures (2026CIA7): Removing funding for active travel measures might limit accessible travel options for individuals with disabilities. • Remove Active Travel and St Giles' Public Realm Improvements(2026CIA9): Delayed improvements in public realm projects could affect accessibility for individuals with disabilities. • Remove one-off revenue funding for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (2026CIA7): Removing funding for LCWIPs might limit accessible travel options for individuals with disabilities
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and reduce connectivity and accessibility in rural areas and market towns, impacting their mobility and independence.

Gender Reassignment: 0.6% of Oxfordshire residents over the age of 16 identify with a gender which differs from their sex registered at birth, compared with 0.5% of over 16s in England. Of this population, 16% identify as a trans woman, 17% as a trans man and, 17% identified as non-binary and 49% as other gender identities. Oxford City has the largest trans and non-binary population outside of London.

- Please see wide-ranging impacts below.

Pregnancy and maternity: There were 7,380 live births in Oxfordshire in 2021. The general fertility rate (GFR) for Oxfordshire (51.2) is lower than in England (54.3), and the birth rate among mothers aged 30-39 is higher than the England average. The biggest increases in birth rates from 2020-2021 are in South Oxfordshire (11% increase) and Cherwell (9%), with a 2% decrease in live births in Oxford. 4.2% of Oxfordshire maternities took place at home, higher than the UK average of 2.4%.

- Remove the administration's one-off investment to leverage investment in rail (2026CIA4): Reduced investment in rail could impact accessibility for pregnant women and those with young children.
- Remove one-off revenue funding for discretionary active travel measures (2026CIA7): Removing funding for active travel measures might limit safe travel options for pregnant women and those with young children.
- Remove Active Travel and St Giles' Public Realm Improvements (2026CIA9): Delayed improvements in public realm projects could affect accessibility for pregnant women and those with young children.
- Remove one-off revenue funding for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (2026CIA7): Removing funding for LCWIPs might limit safe travel options for pregnant women and those with young children, and reduce connectivity and accessibility in rural area and market towns, affecting their ability to move around safely and conveniently.

Marriage and civil partnership: At the time of the 2021 Census there were 132,060 households of married couples or couples in a civil partnership (47% of the Oxfordshire population, 3% higher than national average). 0.8% of Oxfordshire married couples or those in a civil partnership are same-sex couples.

- No specific issues relating to marriage and civil partnership have been identified as a result of these proposals.

Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality: JSNA records that the largest ethnic group in Oxfordshire is White “English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British” at 83.63% of the population. Aside from that group the largest ethnic groups in Oxfordshire are “Other White” (6.16%), “Indian” (1.25%), “Pakistani” (1.20%) and “African” (1.08%). Oxford City is proportionately more ethnically diverse than England and Wales, whereas all other Oxfordshire districts are less ethnically diverse than England and Wales. West Oxfordshire is the least ethnically diverse Oxfordshire district.

56% of school pupils in Oxford are of an ethnic minority, double the rate of Oxfordshire as a whole, and 33% have a first language which is not English. 18.7% of Oxfordshire residents were born outside of the UK, of which those born in Poland are the largest group, followed by India and Romania. As of 2021 there were 652 ‘White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ residents and 1,229 ‘White: Roma’ residents in Oxfordshire. The majority of Roma residents reside in Oxford and Cherwell, with the highest proportion of Gypsy and Irish Traveller population residing in West Oxfordshire. Nearly a quarter of Oxfordshire residents are of an ethnic group other than White British (and almost half the population in Oxford). Oxfordshire has a higher proportion of residents that are of a mixed-race or of multiple ethnicities than the England and Wales average (3.1% compared to 2.9%)

- Please see wide-ranging impacts below.

Religion or Belief: JSNA data on religion and belief is based on the 2021 Census where this question was voluntary. 65% of Oxfordshire residents chose to disclose a religion. Of those stating a religion, 47% of Oxfordshire residents are Christian, 3% (23,500) are Muslim, 1% (6,332) are Hindu, 1% (3,257) are Buddhist, 1% (2,716) Other Religion, and less than 1% of residents are Jewish (1,893) or Sikh (1,192).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see wide-ranging impacts below. <p>Sex: As of mid-2020 there were 347,569 (49.9%) males and 349,311 (50.1%) females living in Oxfordshire. Females in Oxfordshire have a higher life expectancy (84.9) than males (81.5).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see wide-ranging impacts below. <p>Sexual Orientation: The 2021 Census shows that 3.4% of Oxfordshire residents (21,428) describe their sexual orientation as something other than Straight or Heterosexual. Of this group, 47% are bisexual, 41% are gay or lesbian, 7% are pansexual, 2.5% are asexual, 1.3% are queer and 0.7% other sexual orientation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please see wide-ranging impacts below. <p>Rural Communities: Oxfordshire is a rural county, with 2.8 people per hectare, and is the most rural county in the South East. Rural areas have a higher proportion of elderly (aged 85+) residents than urban areas: higher rates of over 65s live in one of four rural districts (20%) compared to 12% in Oxford City. 40% of Oxfordshire residents live in small towns and villages. 85 out of 407 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Oxfordshire are ranked within the most deprived 10% nationally on the geographical access to services (defined as road distance to a post office, primary school, GP and supermarket).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the administration's one-off investment to leverage investment in rail (2026CIA4): Removing investment in rail could disproportionately affect rural communities with limited transportation options. • Remove one-off revenue funding for discretionary active travel measures (2026CIA7): Removing funding for active travel measures might limit travel options in rural areas. • Remove one-off revenue funding for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (2026CIA7): Removing funding for LCWIPs could disproportionately affect rural communities by limiting travel
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	<p>options and reducing connectivity and accessibility, which are crucial for enhancing mobility and access to services in these areas.</p> <p>Armed Forces: In April 2022 there were 9,350 regular armed forces personnel stationed in Oxfordshire and there are a number military bases in Oxfordshire including Vauxhall Barracks, Dalton Barracks, RAF Brize Norton, RAF Benson and Bicester Garrison. There are 23,541 armed forces veterans in Oxfordshire and as of March 2022 there were 6,718 recipients of pensions/compensation under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme in the county. There are an estimated 3,500 military families in the county, of which there are 3,043 school-aged children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific issues relating to the armed forces have been identified as a result of these proposals. <p>Care leavers: As of March 2021, Oxfordshire has 129 care leavers aged 17-18 and 301 care leavers aged 19-21. Care leavers face many challenges as they move into adulthood, such as those relating to careers, education and training, accommodation, finances and personal change. Our Care Leavers Local Offer explains the services which can be accessed by those who have been in OCC's care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific issues relating to care leavers have been identified as a result of these proposals. <p>Areas of Social Deprivation: Oxfordshire is one of the 10 least deprived counties in England, However, four of Oxfordshire's wards are in the most 10% deprived nationally. Oxfordshire's ten most deprived areas have higher rates of children (under 16s) in poverty than across England (24.6%), while increasing numbers of households experience fuel poverty, with more households in Oxford experiencing fuel poverty than the rest of Oxfordshire. Nearly 20,000 children and 12,000 older people in Oxfordshire live in poverty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the administration's one-off investment to leverage investment in rail (2026CIA4): Reduced investment in rail could impact accessibility for individuals in deprived areas who rely on public transportation. • Remove one-off revenue funding for discretionary active travel measures (2026CIA7): Removing funding for active travel measures might limit travel options for individuals in deprived areas.
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- Remove one-off revenue funding for Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (2026CIA7): Removing funding for LCWIPs might limit travel options for individuals in deprived areas and reduce connectivity and accessibility, which are essential for improving access to opportunities and services for these communities.

Wide-ranging impacts

Cancel some discretionary memberships (2026CIA15): Oxfordshire County Council is a member of a number of organisations which support our development of inclusive policies, delivery of training and planning and delivery of inclusive service delivery. Memberships we hold currently range from those which focus on individual protected characteristics to those which seek to improve outcomes for all communities of lived experiences (inclusive of the nine protected characteristics). Cancelling some of these memberships could negatively impact our inclusion efforts and the council's work to fulfil its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Redesign the Communications, Marketing, Engagement & Consultation team and Policy Teams (2026CIA14): This proposal could reduce the effectiveness of outreach and engagement efforts targeted at vulnerable and protected communities and those with protected characteristics. These teams lead inclusion efforts within the organisation, steering the delivery of inclusive policies and strategy implementation. They also reach out to communities to understand their needs and incorporate this feedback into policy decisions, in line with our Public Sector Equality Duty. Significantly reducing the resource in this area could negatively impact our inclusion efforts and the council's work to fulfil its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty.