

District Councils

Oxfordshire has five District Councils: Cherwell, Oxford City, the Vale of the White Horse, West Oxfordshire & South Oxfordshire. They were created in 1974 as part of a national reorganisation of local government which included the extension of Oxfordshire into parts of Berkshire (now the Vale District) and creation of a new [County Council](#). The five districts have their own elected councils and professional staff and their responsibilities include planning and building regulations, housing, public health & sanitation and provision of leisure facilities.

The current districts replaced a much more complex pattern of local government. From 1894, this had included Boroughs, Rural District Councils (RDCs) and Urban District Councils (UDCs), which varied enormously in size. Some of the smallest districts consisted of single parishes and were created because they had originally been part of larger poor law unions & sanitary districts outside Oxfordshire. Administratively, [Oxford City](#) was not in Oxfordshire at all but was an entirely separate entity known as a County Borough.

District Councils are responsible for services such as

- Housing
- Planning & building regulations
- Public health and sanitation
- Rating
- Wartime civil defence and evacuation

List of pre-1974 Rural and Urban District Councils in Oxfordshire (with their catalogue reference code):

- RDC1 Banbury RDC (1894-1974)
- RDC2 Bicester RDC (1894-1932)
- RDC3 Bullingdon RDC (1932-1974)

- RDC4 Crowmarsh RDC (1894-1932)
- RDC5 Culham RDC (1894-1932)
- RDC6 Goring RDC (1894-1932)
- RDC7 Headington RDC (1894-1932)
- RDC8 Henley RDC (1894-1974)
- RDC9 Chipping Norton RDC (1894-1974)
- RDC10 Ploughley RDC (1932-1974)
- RDC11 Thame RDC (1894-1932)
- RDC12 Witney RDC (1894-1974)
- RDC13 Woodstock RDC (1894-1932)
- UDC1 Bicester UDC (1894-1974)
- UDC2 Thame UDC (1894-1974)
- UDC3 Wheatley UDC (1894-1932)
- UDC4 Witney UDC (1894-1974)

The RDC & UDC collections also include records of predecessor or associated authorities e.g. Sanitary Authorities and Joint Planning Schemes

Interesting Examples

By 1932 all district councils were required by statute to develop planning controls and Oxfordshire as a whole was covered by a network of 6 joint town-planning schemes. For example, the Banbury & District Scheme has 11 maps and 2 draft schemes from 1936-9. The maps are large-scale OS maps showing the area in great detail and with planning zones coloured in. Some of them are very large (more than 3m x 2m in some cases) and show different areas in the scheme. These maps are a fascinating record for anyone who is interested in the local history of their area and the ideas of early planners.

Where are these records?

Records of pre-1974 District and Borough Councils are held at OHC. Records of former Berkshire Districts now in Oxfordshire are held at the Berkshire Record Office. These include:

- Abingdon RDC
- Faringdon RDC
- Wallingford RDC
- Wantage RDC
- Wantage UDC

Where is the catalogue?

RDC and UDC catalogues are searchable online via [Heritage Search](#), with the exception of Bicester UDC, which is only available in hard-copy form in the searchroom.

[Visiting the Oxfordshire History Centre](#)