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Oxfordshire Quarterly Economic Briefing – January 2009

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Key Messages

- Levels of GVA per capita and GVA per job generated in the Oxfordshire economy continue to be above regional and national averages. However, recent rates of economic and productivity growth in Oxfordshire have been below the South East average, and significantly slower than in some of the county's immediate neighbours, particularly Buckinghamshire.
- Updated estimates for 2008 suggest that average earnings for employees in Oxfordshire are about 6% below the South East average and 3% below the national average. The relatively low earnings levels in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire depress the overall average for the county.
- The rate of new business formation in Oxfordshire was below the South East average in 2007, although more new businesses were started in the county than in 2006. Oxfordshire's performance on new business formation has deteriorated relative to the regional and national averages since 2005. However, survival rates for new businesses appear to be marginally higher than in the South East or nationally.
- Based on data for the year to June 2008, Oxfordshire's employment rate amongst working age residents is similar to the South East average and above the national average. However, slightly higher employment rates are evident amongst the county's geographic and statistical neighbours. The low employment rate in Oxford City continues to depress Oxfordshire's overall performance on this indicator.
- Claimant unemployment levels in the county increased sharply between October and November 2008, with an increase of over 500 claimants or 11% in this single month. The number of unemployed claimants increased by over 1,700 or 51% in the 12 months to November 2008.
- Despite the recent increases, claimant unemployment rates in Oxfordshire are still relatively low. Unemployed claimants represent only 1.3% of the county's working age residents, compared with 1.9% across the South East region and 2.8% nationally. Unemployment rates range from only 0.9% in West Oxfordshire to 1.6% in Oxford City.
- All of Oxfordshire's main towns have experienced an increase in claimant unemployment during the last quarter, although the increase has been relatively small in some towns, particularly Banbury, Kidlington and Thame.
- The summer 2008 exam results confirm that Oxfordshire continues to lag behind the regional average on levels of GCSE attainment. The county's

performance is also below the average for its closest statistical neighbours. However, there has been a narrowing of these performance differentials compared with the position in 2007. This reflects a marked improvement in Oxfordshire's results in 2008, particularly in Cherwell and Oxford City.

- Property prices in Oxfordshire continue on a downward trend. The latest figures show that the average house price in the county declined by about £21,000 or 8% in the 12 months to November 2008. However, this is a smaller reduction than has been experienced at regional (14%) and national levels (12%).
- Comparisons of Oxfordshire with its geographic and statistical neighbours show that the county has an above average performance in relation to levels of GVA per capita, GVA per job (productivity), and levels of claimant unemployment and worklessness.
- However, the county is currently under-performing relative to its neighbours in relation to recent productivity growth, average earnings levels, new business formation rates and GCSE exam attainment levels.

1. Introduction

This briefing paper is the latest in a series of regular updates looking at recent changes in the Oxfordshire economy. It has been prepared by the Oxfordshire Economic Observatory (OEO). The report is based on official statistics that have been released in the last three months, since the completion of the last briefing paper at the end of October 2008.

The paper includes the following new or updated statistics for Oxfordshire:

- Sub-regional and local gross value added (GVA) – updated estimates of economic activity, as measured by GVA, for 2006 (released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 12 December 2008);
- Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – updated estimates of average earnings for April 2008 (released by ONS, 14 November 2008);
- VAT registrations and de-registrations (business start ups and closures) – updated figures for the 2007 calendar year (released by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, 28 November 2008);
- Business demography: enterprise births, deaths and survival rates – this is a new data series recording business births, deaths and survival during 2007; also time series data from 2000 to 2007 (released by ONS, 28 November 2008);
- Annual Population Survey, estimates of employment rates – updated estimates based on survey data for the 12 months to June 2008 (released by ONS, 18 December 2008);
- Claimant count, Job Seekers Allowance claimants – updated figures for November 2008 (released by ONS, 17 December 2008);
- Department for Work and Pensions, working age clients benefits data – updated counts of working age “out of work” benefit claimants for May 2008 (released by the Department for Work and Pensions, 12 November 2008);
- GCSE exam results – for summer 2008 (released by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, 16 October 2008);
- Average house prices – for November 2008 and preceding months (released by the Land Registry, December 2008).

The latest Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) data, which provides estimates of employee jobs for December 2007 (released by ONS on 17 December 2008), is

not included in this briefing paper. It is hoped to include these figures with the next quarterly update.

In order to benchmark the performance of the Oxfordshire economy, the paper includes comparisons with regional and national averages. Where possible, comparisons are also made with the county's geographic and statistical neighbours. The county's geographic neighbours are defined as the six counties or former counties immediately adjacent to Oxfordshire, i.e. Berkshire, Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes), Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Wiltshire (including Swindon). Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours are as defined in the DCSF's Statistical Neighbour benchmarking tool. These are the ten local education authorities (LEA's) which are most similar to Oxfordshire in their socio-economic characteristics, and comprise Bath & North East Somerset, Bedfordshire, Bracknell Forest, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, West Berkshire and Wiltshire.

Also included in this report for the first time is a selection of National Indicators relevant to monitoring of local economic performance (as defined in Department for Communities and Local Government, *National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions*. Revised edition, May 2008). These include:

- NI75 – Percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE's at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics;
- NI79 – Percentage of young people with a Level 2 qualification by age 19;
- NI80 – Percentage of young people with a Level 3 qualification by age 19;
- NI151 – Employment rate for working age residents;
- NI152 – Percentage of working age residents on out of work benefits;
- NI163 – Percentage of residents aged 19-59/64 with Level 2+ qualifications;
- NI164 – Percentage of residents aged 19-59/64 with Level 3+ qualifications;
- NI165 – Percentage of residents aged 19-59/64 with Level 4+ qualifications;
- NI166 – Median earnings of employees in the area;
- NI171 – New business registration rate.

Performance on these indicators has been benchmarked against the regional and national averages (see Table 23), and where possible is also compared with the average performance of Oxfordshire's geographic and statistical neighbours, as defined above (see Table 24).

2. Economic Activity, Growth and Productivity

Background

- The latest estimates of gross value added for Oxfordshire were released by the Office for National Statistics in December 2008. Gross value added (GVA) measures the total monetary value of an economy's output, and when expressed in per capita terms it is one of the most useful indicators of an area's overall economic performance. GVA can also be expressed in relation to the number of jobs in the economy (GVA per job), which provides a crude measure of productivity.
- The latest release provides new estimates of GVA for 2006 and revised figures for earlier years. The relevant data for Oxfordshire and comparative areas is summarised in Tables 1 and 2.

Key Findings

- Gross value added (GVA) in Oxfordshire was £23,600 per head in 2006. This is 17% above the South East average (£20,200) and 22% above the English average (£19,400).
- However, GVA per head in Oxfordshire is 18% below the level in neighbouring Berkshire (£28,900), and is also slightly below the figure for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (£24,200). Levels of GVA per head are significantly lower in Oxfordshire's other geographic neighbours (Table 1).
- Economic growth in Oxfordshire, as measured by growth in GVA per head between 2001 and 2006, has been slower than the regional and national averages. Oxfordshire experienced a 23% increase in GVA per head over this period, compared with growth of 24% in the South East and 26% in England. Amongst Oxfordshire's immediate neighbours, growth in GVA per head has been strongest in Berkshire (24%), Warwickshire (25%) and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (28%).
- Table 2 shows levels of GVA per job, which provides a crude measure of productivity levels in the economy. The latest figures are again for 2006, and change between 2001 and 2006 is also shown. GVA per job in Oxfordshire was £39,300 in 2006. This is 6% above the South East average (£37,000) and 11% above the English average (£35,300 per job). Again, levels of GVA per job are higher in Berkshire (£42,200) and Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (£41,900), but lower in Oxfordshire's other geographic neighbours.

Table 1: Gross Value Added (GVA) per Head of Population

Area	2001 (£)	2006 (£)	% Growth, 2001-2006
England	15,409	19,413	26.0
South East	16,254	20,152	24.0
Oxfordshire	19,247	23,608	22.7
Berkshire	23,336	28,853	23.6
Bucks & Milton Keynes	18,940	24,212	27.8
Gloucestershire	15,768	19,172	21.6
Northamptonshire	15,467	18,941	22.5
Warwickshire	14,716	18,379	24.9
Wiltshire & Swindon	16,664	19,942	19.7

Source: Office for National Statistics, estimates of sub-regional and local GVA, released 12 December 2008. The table shows estimates of workplace-based GVA, which allocate income to the area in which commuters work. Figures are at current prices, i.e. they are not adjusted for inflation.

Table 2: Gross Value Added (GVA) per Job

Area	2001 (£)	2006 (£)	% Growth, 2001-2006
England	29,963	35,337	17.9
South East	30,335	36,972	21.9
Oxfordshire	33,299	39,263	17.9
Berkshire	36,048	42,188	17.0
Bucks & Milton Keynes	32,595	41,854	28.4
Gloucestershire	30,200	36,857	22.0
Northamptonshire	29,663	37,056	24.9
Warwickshire	28,872	33,443	15.8
Wiltshire & Swindon	29,298	34,805	18.8

Source: Office for National Statistics, estimates of sub-regional and local GVA, released 12 December 2008; ONS, annual estimates of total jobs and jobs density. The table shows estimates of workplace-based GVA, which allocate income to the area in which commuters work. Figures are at current prices, i.e. they are not adjusted for inflation.

- The level of GVA per job in Oxfordshire increased by 18% between 2001 and 2006. This is similar to the national average (18%), but below the growth rate for the South East region (22%). Oxfordshire's productivity growth over this period, as measured by the growth in GVA per job, was outstripped by several of its immediate neighbours, including Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (28%), Gloucestershire (22%), Northamptonshire (25%) and Wiltshire and Swindon (19%).

3. Average Earnings

Background

- Results from the 2008 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) were released by ONS in November 2008. The results provide estimates of average earnings levels for Oxfordshire and its districts, as at April 2008. Tables 3 and 4 summarise the relevant data, showing average gross weekly earnings for full-time workers.
- Two sets of figures are shown in these tables, one relating to the earnings of those people working in Oxfordshire (workplace-based, Table 3) and the other relating to the earnings of Oxfordshire residents (residence-based, Table 4). The assessment of Oxfordshire's relative performance differs depending on which of these measures is used. Both measures are of interest, but we focus here mainly on the workplace-based measure. This indicates the earnings levels of those actually working in the county and is therefore a better measure of the strength of the county's economy, since the figure is not distorted by the high earnings of those commuting to workplaces outside Oxfordshire.
- Tables 3 and 4 show both mean and median earnings; we focus here mainly on mean earnings, but again the relative performance of the county varies somewhat depending on which of these measures is used.

Key Findings

- Mean workplace-based earnings for full-time workers in Oxfordshire are estimated at £566 per week in April 2008. This is approximately 6% below the South East average (£601 per week) and about 3% below the English average (£585 per week) (Table 3).
- These differentials are reduced if we look at median rather than mean earnings. Median earnings in Oxfordshire are estimated at £495 per week. This is only 1% below the South East average (£500), and is 3% above the national average (£483).
- Average earnings levels are below the regional and national averages for employees in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire; the opposite applies in Oxford City and Vale of White Horse districts.
- Residence-based earnings in Oxfordshire are also slightly below the South East average, but are above the national average. Mean earnings for Oxfordshire residents are estimated at £628 per week in April 2008; this is about 3% below the average for residents of the South East region (£647), but 7% above the national average (£586) (Table 4).

Table 3: Average Workplace-Based Earnings, April 2008

Area	Median Earnings	Mean Earnings
	£/week	£/week
Cherwell	459.1	524.2
Oxford City	517.5	586.7
South Oxfordshire	468.7	510.3
Vale of White Horse	543.0	632.6
West Oxfordshire	456.3	532.7
Oxfordshire	495.4	565.6
South East	499.8	600.7
England	483.1	585.2

Source: Office for National Statistics, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.
Note: Figures shown are gross weekly earnings for full-time workers.

Table 4: Average Residence-Based Earnings, April 2008

Area	Median Earnings	Mean Earnings
	£/week	£/week
Cherwell	487.3	569.3
Oxford City	498.0	562.0
South Oxfordshire	558.3	772.4
Vale of White Horse	573.9	659.0
West Oxfordshire	508.9	594.9
Oxfordshire	522.2	627.6
South East	523.2	647.2
England	484.0	586.4

Source: Office for National Statistics, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.
Note: Figures shown are gross weekly earnings for full-time workers.

4. Business Births and Survival

Background

- Statistics on VAT registrations and de-registrations for the 2007 calendar year were released in November 2008 by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (previously the DTI). Numbers of VAT registrations are a useful proxy measure of the rate of new business start-ups in the economy. Data for Oxfordshire and its districts is summarised in Tables 5, 6 and 7.
- Also released at the same time was a new ONS dataset on enterprise births, deaths and survival (“business demography”). In future years, this new dataset will replace the statistics on VAT-registered businesses, which will no longer be updated. The new dataset includes both VAT-registered and PAYE-registered businesses. It therefore includes businesses with employees below the VAT threshold (unlike the VAT registration statistics), providing a more comprehensive picture of business activity and business start-ups. Relevant data for Oxfordshire and its districts from this new data series is summarised in Tables 8-11.

Key Findings

- There were almost 26,400 VAT registered businesses in Oxfordshire at the start of 2008. The number of VAT registered businesses in the county increased by about 1,100 or 4.4% between January 2006 and January 2008. This rate of increase is slightly below the average for the South East (4.7%) and nationally (5.1%). Amongst Oxfordshire’s districts, Cherwell and Oxford City have experienced the largest percentage growth in numbers of VAT registered businesses since January 2006 (Table 5).
- The annual number of new VAT registrations, which is often used as a proxy measure of business start-ups, has seen a steady increase in Oxfordshire in recent years. There were 2,400 new VAT registrations in the county during 2007, compared with 2,230 in 2006 and only 2,150 in 2005 (Table 6).
- The rate of new VAT registrations in Oxfordshire (46 per 10,000 resident adults in 2007) is slightly below the South East average (48), but above the English average (43) (Table 7). Although this rate increased in Oxfordshire between 2006 and 2007, from 44 to 46, there were larger increases at both regional and national level.

Table 5: Start of Year Stock of VAT Registered Enterprises, 2006-2008

Area	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Cherwell	5,490	5,615	5,800	5.6
Oxford City	3,385	3,450	3,545	4.7
South Oxfordshire	6,730	6,845	7,005	4.1
Vale of White Horse	4,755	4,825	4,945	4.0
West Oxfordshire	4,870	4,975	5,060	3.9
Oxfordshire	25,235	25,710	26,355	4.4
South East	305,405	311,060	319,860	4.7
England	1,651,435	1,684,590	1,735,690	5.1

Source: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

Table 6: Annual Number of VAT Registrations, 2005-2007

Area	2005	2006	2007
Cherwell	475	490	545
Oxford City	305	305	325
South Oxfordshire	585	605	655
Vale of White Horse	395	410	450
West Oxfordshire	390	420	420
Oxfordshire	2,150	2,230	2,395
South East	28,675	28,665	31,970
England	159,555	159,335	179,905

Source: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

Table 7: Annual VAT Registrations per 10,000 Resident Adults

Area	2005	2006	2007
Cherwell	45	44	50
Oxford City	24	24	26
South Oxfordshire	57	59	64
Vale of White Horse	42	44	48
West Oxfordshire	50	52	51
Oxfordshire	42	44	46
South East	44	43	48
England	39	39	43

Source: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

- The new business demography statistics, which in future years will replace the VAT statistics as the main source of data on business births and deaths, paints a rather less favourable picture of business formation in Oxfordshire (see Tables 8-11).
- The annual number of enterprise births in Oxfordshire is estimated at 3,065 during 2007 (Table 8). This compares with the 2,400 new VAT registrations recorded in the county during the year.
- The annual number of births in Oxfordshire in 2007 (c.3,065) was higher than in 2006 (c.2,845), but was lower than the total for 2005 (c.3,270). There was also a dip in the number of births in 2006 at regional and national levels, although both saw a stronger recovery in 2007, to above the 2005 figure (unlike Oxfordshire) (Table 9).
- The rate of enterprise births in Oxfordshire during 2007 was below the South East and national average. There were 59 births per 10,000 adult residents in Oxfordshire in 2007, compared with 67 in the South East and an English average of 64 (Table 10). Oxfordshire's relative performance on this measure has deteriorated since 2005, suggesting a relatively sluggish rate of new business formation.
- However, the new business demography statistics suggest that business survival rates in Oxfordshire are slightly above the regional and national averages. For example, over 68% of businesses started in Oxfordshire in 2004 were still trading after three years, compared with 67% in the South East and 65% nationally (Table 11).

Table 8: Enterprise Births, Deaths and Stock in 2007

Area	Births In 2007	Deaths In 2007	Active Stock of Enterprises
Cherwell	680	500	6,010
Oxford City	455	390	4,295
South Oxfordshire	810	660	7,620
Vale of White Horse	580	490	5,385
West Oxfordshire	540	455	5,405
Oxfordshire	3,065	2,495	28,715

Source: Office for National Statistics, Enterprise Births, Deaths and Survivals (business demography data series).

Table 9: Annual Number of Enterprise Births, 2005-2007

Area	2005	2006	2007
Cherwell	660	600	680
Oxford City	475	430	455
South Oxfordshire	770	805	810
Vale of White Horse	550	510	580
West Oxfordshire	815	500	540
Oxfordshire	3,270	2,845	3,065
South East	42,555	39,195	44,860
England	241,410	225,120	266,165

Source: Office for National Statistics, Enterprise Births, Deaths and Survivals (business demography data series).

Table 10: Annual Enterprise Births per 10,000 Resident Adults

Area	2005	2006	2007
Cherwell	61	55	62
Oxford City	38	34	35
South Oxfordshire	75	79	79
Vale of White Horse	59	55	62
West Oxfordshire	103	62	66
Oxfordshire	64	56	59
South East	64	59	67
England	59	55	64

Source: Office for National Statistics, Enterprise Births, Deaths and Survivals (business demography data series).

Table 11: Three Year Business Survival Rates

Area	2002 Births	2003 Births	2004 Births
	%	%	%
Cherwell	69.3	66.7	67.3
Oxford City	66.3	64.9	63.9
South Oxfordshire	68.5	68.9	69.9
Vale of White Horse	66.1	70.3	66.7
West Oxfordshire	67.0	73.0	72.2
Oxfordshire	67.6	68.8	68.3
South East	66.1	66.3	66.9
England	62.7	63.5	65.2

Source: Office for National Statistics, Enterprise Births, Deaths and Survivals (business demography data series).

Note: Figures show the percentage of businesses that were still active three years after their birth.

5. Labour Market Participation

Background

- Local labour market indicators derived from the Annual Population Survey (APS) are updated on a quarterly basis. The most recent update was released by ONS in December 2008, and provides estimates based on survey data for the 12 months to June 2008.
- The APS provides several labour market indicators, but we focus here on the key employment rate measure (National Indicator 151). The employment rate shows the proportion of working age residents who are in employment, including the self employed.

Key Findings

- The latest estimates, for the 12 months to June 2008, indicate that Oxfordshire's employment rate (c.79%) is similar to the South East average (c.79%) and above the national average (c.75%) (Table 12). However, there appear to be slightly higher employment rates amongst Oxfordshire's geographic and statistical neighbours (an average of c.80-81%).
- Within Oxfordshire, the employment rate is highest in Vale of White Horse (c.86%) and lowest in Oxford City (c.71%).
- The APS estimates are not sufficiently precise to discern trends in the employment rate in Oxfordshire or in the individual districts. For example, the 95% confidence interval for the estimates shown in Table 12 is around 2% for Oxfordshire and is between 4% and 6% for the individual districts. The quarterly changes in employment rate estimates shown in the table should therefore be treated with caution, particularly for the district-level estimates.

Table 12: Employment Rate for Working Age Residents

Area	Jan 2007 to Dec 2007	April 2007 to March 2008	July 2007 to June 2008
	%	%	%
Cherwell	82	79	81
Oxford City	66	69	71
South Oxfordshire	80	80	80
Vale of White Horse	87	87	86
West Oxfordshire	83	82	83
Oxfordshire	78.3	78.5	79.3
South East	78.4	78.5	78.6
England	74.4	74.5	74.5

Source: Office for National Statistics, Annual Population Survey.

Note: Figures shown are survey-based estimates and are subject to sampling error. The 95% confidence intervals for Oxfordshire's districts are between 4 and 6 percentage points; the 95% confidence interval for Oxfordshire as a whole is around 2 percentage points. Quarterly changes in employment rate estimates should therefore be treated with caution, especially with the district-level figures.

6. Claimant Unemployment and Worklessness

Background

- The latest monthly claimant unemployment statistics are for November 2008. They provide a count of the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Oxfordshire. The relevant data for Oxfordshire, its districts and other constituent areas is summarised in Tables 13-17.
- A wider measure of levels of worklessness is provided by DWP benefits data. The measure adopted here uses the definition of out of work benefits in National Indicator 152. This shows the number of working age residents claiming one of the main “out of work” benefits, including Job Seekers Allowance and incapacity benefits. The measure also includes lone parents and others on income related benefits, but excludes the carer, disabled and bereaved client groups. Unfortunately, the DWP benefits data is not as up to date as the monthly claimant unemployment count; the latest figures are currently for May 2008, and so pre-date the large increase in Job Seekers Allowance claimants experienced during the second half of 2008. Results for Oxfordshire are summarised in Tables 18 and 19.

Key Points

- The latest monthly claimant unemployment data for November 2008 shows another large increase in unemployment in Oxfordshire during the last quarter. The number of claimants increased by over 500 or 11% between October and November 2008 alone, and there has been an overall increase in claimant unemployment of over 1,700 or 51% since November 2007 (Table 13).
- There were just under 5,100 Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Oxfordshire in November 2008. This compares with 4,400 claimants in the previous quarter (August 2008) and less than 3,400 in November 2007.
- Despite the recent large increases, claimant unemployment rates in Oxfordshire are still at relatively low levels. Job Seekers Allowance claimants currently represent only 1.3% of working age residents in the county. This is significantly below the South East (1.9%) and English averages (2.8%). Claimant unemployment rates in Oxfordshire’s districts range from only 0.9% in West Oxfordshire to 1.6% in Oxford City (Table 14). Rates are below the South East regional average in all of the five districts.
- All of Oxfordshire’s districts have experienced large increases in claimant unemployment during the last quarter. In absolute terms, the largest increases have been in Oxford City and South Oxfordshire (an increase of

c.155 in each), with smaller increases in the remaining districts (c.125 in each). In percentage terms, the increase in claimant unemployment since August 2008 ranges from only 9-11% in Cherwell and Oxford City to 22-23% in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, and an increase of 29% in West Oxfordshire. It should be emphasised that the large percentage increases in these districts were from a very low base level.

Table 13: Trends in Claimant Unemployment in Oxfordshire in Last 12 Months

Month	Claimant Count	Month	Claimant Count
Nov 2007	3,366	Jun 2008	3,893
Dec 2007	3,430	Jul 2008	4,007
Jan 2008	3,546	Aug 2008	4,401
Feb 2008	3,697	Sep 2008	4,423
Mar 2008	3,762	Oct 2008	4,563
Apr 2008	3,820	Nov 2008	5,086
May 2008	3,813		

Source: Office for National Statistics, monthly claimant count data.

Table 14: Claimant Unemployment (Job Seekers Allowance Claimants)

Area	August 2008		November 2008	
	No.	%	No.	%
Cherwell	1,086	1.3	1,209	1.4
Oxford City	1,643	1.5	1,796	1.6
South Oxfordshire	676	0.9	833	1.1
Vale of White Horse	557	0.8	682	1.0
West Oxfordshire	439	0.7	566	0.9
Oxfordshire	4,401	1.1	5,086	1.3
South East	78,309	1.5	94,802	1.9
England	766,178	2.4	878,047	2.8

Source: Office for National Statistics, monthly claimant count data. Percentages show the number of claimant unemployed as a proportion of the mid-2007 resident working age population.

Table 15: Claimant Unemployment in Selected Oxfordshire Towns

Town	August 2008		November 2008	
	No.	%	No.	%
Abingdon	179	0.9	212	1.1
Banbury	642	2.3	661	2.4
Bicester	169	0.9	207	1.1
Carterton	62	0.7	90	1.0
Didcot	173	1.1	224	1.5
Henley	54	0.9	92	1.6
Kidlington	101	1.2	113	1.4
Oxford	1,643	1.5	1,796	1.6
Thame	47	0.7	52	0.8
Wantage	52	0.8	71	1.1
Witney	145	0.9	198	1.3

Source: Office for National Statistics, monthly claimant count data for 2003 CAS wards.
 Note: Percentages show the number of claimant unemployed as a proportion of the mid-2007 resident working age population (derived from ONS, mid-2007 small area population estimates, published on 19 November 2008).

- All of Oxfordshire's main towns have seen an increase in claimant unemployment during the last quarter, although the increase has been relatively small in some towns, including Banbury, Kidlington and Thame (Table 15). Amongst Oxfordshire's towns, only Banbury currently has a rate of claimant unemployment above the South East average (2.4%).
- The average claimant unemployment rate in Oxfordshire's worst 10% of neighbourhoods (lower layer super output areas) was 3.4% in November 2008. This compares with the overall Oxfordshire average of only 1.3%. Rates in these worst performing neighbourhoods range from 2.4% to 6.6%. Table 16 shows the latest unemployment rates for the worst 5% of super output areas in the county; these areas are concentrated in parts of Banbury and Oxford, although part of Didcot (in Didcot All Saints ward) also features amongst the worst neighbourhoods.
- The number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants out of work for over 12 months has remained relatively static during the last quarter. In November 2008, there were c.350 claimants who had been out of work for over 12 months, representing 6.9% of all claimants. This is below both the South East (7.5%) and national average (9.7%) (Table 17).

Table 16: Claimant Unemployment Rates in the Worst 5% of Oxfordshire's Neighbourhoods, November 2008

Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA)	2003 CAS Ward	Claimant Unemployed as % of Working Age
Cherwell 005A	Banbury Ruscote	6.6
Oxford 018A	Blackbird Leys	5.6
Cherwell 004A	Banbury Grimsbury & Castle	5.4
Cherwell 005B	Banbury Ruscote	4.9
Oxford 017B	Blackbird Leys	4.7
Oxford 016F	Rose Hill & Iffley	4.3
South Oxfordshire 010A	Didcot All Saints	4.1
Cherwell 003D	Banbury Neithrop	4.0
Cherwell 004F	Banbury Grimsbury & Castle	3.9
Cherwell 007B	Banbury Calthorpe	3.8
Oxford 018C	Northfield Brook	3.8
Cherwell 004B	Banbury Grimsbury & Castle	3.8
Oxford 017C	Blackbird Leys	3.8
Cherwell 005D	Banbury Ruscote	3.6
Oxford 005A	Barton & Sandhills	3.6
Oxford 018B	Northfield Brook	3.6
Oxford 017D	Northfield Brook	3.5
Oxford 005B	Barton & Sandhills	3.5
Cherwell 003A	Banbury Neithrop	3.3
Oxford 016A	Littlemore	3.2

Source: Office for National Statistics, monthly claimant count data for LSOA's.

Note: Table shows the 20 Oxfordshire LSOA's with the highest claimant unemployment rates (claimants as a percentage of working age residents) in November 2008. There are 404 LSOA's in Oxfordshire, so the worst 20 LSOA's represent the worst performing 5% of neighbourhoods in the county. The mid-2007 working age population is used to calculate rates (derived from ONS, mid-2007 small area population estimates, published on 19 November 2008).

Table 17: Claimants Out of Work for Over 12 Months (Long-Term Unemployed)

Area	August 2008		November 2008	
	No.	%	No.	%
Cherwell	75	6.8	70	6.0
Oxford City	160	9.7	160	9.0
South Oxfordshire	55	8.1	50	6.2
Vale of White Horse	30	5.4	40	6.2
West Oxfordshire	25	6.2	25	4.1
Oxfordshire	345	7.8	350	6.9
South East	6,765	8.7	7,055	7.5
England	83,980	11.0	84,655	9.7

Source: Office for National Statistics, monthly claimant count data.

Note: Percentages show the number of long-term unemployed as a proportion of all Job Seekers Allowance claimants. Counts are rounded to the nearest five persons.

- A wider measure of worklessness is provided by the number of working age people claiming the main “out of work” benefits from DWP (National Indicator 152). This includes those of working age claiming Job Seekers Allowance, incapacity benefits, as well as lone parents and those on other income-related benefits. The latest available data is for May 2008 (summarised in Table 18).
- There was a very small increase in the number of out of work claimants in Oxfordshire between February and May 2008, from 22,920 to 22,980. Only 5.7% of Oxfordshire’s working age residents were claiming out of work benefits in May 2008; this is significantly below the South East (7.7%) and English averages (11.2%).
- Amongst Oxfordshire’s districts, out of work claimant rates vary from only 4.4% of working age residents in West Oxfordshire to 7.3% in Oxford City. Rates are below the South East average in all of Oxfordshire’s districts.
- There were slight increases in the number of out of work claimants in the quarter to May 2008 in Cherwell and Oxford City; the remaining districts experienced no change or a slight decline in claimant numbers in this period. The more recent large increase in Job Seekers Allowance claimants noted earlier are not picked up by this indicator, as no figures are yet available for the second half of 2008.

Table 18: Working Age Residents Claiming Main Out of Work Benefits

Area	February 2008		May 2008	
	No.	%	No.	%
Cherwell	5,280	6.1	5,330	6.2
Oxford City	7,920	7.3	7,950	7.3
South Oxfordshire	3,630	4.7	3,610	4.7
Vale of White Horse	3,390	4.8	3,390	4.8
West Oxfordshire	2,700	4.4	2,700	4.4
Oxfordshire	22,920	5.7	22,980	5.7
South East	397,360	7.8	394,700	7.7
England	3,597,340	11.3	3,568,230	11.2

Source: Department for Work & Pensions, working age client group benefits data.

Note: Percentages show the proportion of working age residents in the following client groups: job seekers, incapacity benefits, lone parents, and others on income related benefits. The figures exclude those in the carers, bereaved and disabled client groups. Mid-2007 population denominators are used to calculate the percentage claim rates.

- There is a wide variation in out of work claimant rates amongst Oxfordshire's main towns (Table 19). Worklessness rates vary from only 3.4% of working age residents in Thame to 9.8% in Banbury. As with the narrower claimant count measure, Banbury is the only town in Oxfordshire with a proportion of out of work claimants above the South East average.
- There are a small number of neighbourhoods in Oxfordshire, mainly in Banbury and Oxford, with relatively high levels of worklessness. In the worst 10% of neighbourhoods (lower layer super output areas) in the county, the average out of work claim rate was 14.9% in May 2008; this compares with the overall Oxfordshire average of only 5.7% and a national average of 11.2%. Worklessness rates in these worst performing neighbourhoods range from 11.2% to 20.2%.

Table 19: Working Age Residents Claiming Main Out of Work Benefits in Selected Oxfordshire Towns

Town	February 2008		May 2008	
	No.	%	No.	%
Abingdon	1,200	6.1	1,230	6.3
Banbury	2,665	9.7	2,685	9.8
Bicester	1,025	5.2	1,045	5.3
Carterton	340	3.7	345	3.8
Didcot	950	6.2	930	6.1
Henley	300	5.1	310	5.3
Kidlington	475	5.7	495	6.0
Oxford	7,920	7.3	7,950	7.3
Thame	215	3.2	225	3.4
Wantage	310	5.0	315	5.1
Witney	910	5.8	900	5.8

Source: Department for Work & Pensions, working age client group benefits data for 2003 CAS wards.

Note: Percentages show the proportion of working age residents in the following client groups: job seekers, incapacity benefits, lone parents, and others on income related benefits. The figures exclude those in the carers, bereaved and disabled client groups. Mid-2007 population denominators are used to calculate the percentage claim rates.

7. Educational Attainment

Background

- Aggregate GCSE results for summer 2008 for Oxfordshire and its districts were published in October 2008. Results for individual schools are due to be published in mid-January 2009, and these will be included in the next quarterly briefing. Tables 20 and 21 summarise the relevant data for the county and comparative areas.

Key Points

- The GCSE results for summer 2008 confirm that Oxfordshire continues to lag behind the South East average on levels of GCSE attainment. The county's performance is also below the average for its closest statistical neighbours.
- The 2008 results show that 62.7% of pupils in Oxfordshire obtained at least five GCSE's at grades A*-C. This compares with an average of 65.5% in the South East region and 63.7% in England as a whole. The average for Oxfordshire's ten closest statistical neighbours was even higher, at 66.4% (Table 20).
- There was a narrowing of Oxfordshire's performance deficit on this measure between 2007 and 2008. The percentage point deficit on the South East average was reduced from 4.6% in 2007 to 2.8% in 2008, and the deficit compared to the national average fell from 2.7% to only 1.0%. There was also a reduction in the performance deficit compared with Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours, from 5.8% in 2007 to 3.7% in 2008.
- Table 21 shows results based on the alternative measure of 5+ GCSE's at A*-C, including English and mathematics (National Indicator 75). Oxfordshire also lags behind the South East average and its statistical neighbours on this measure, although its performance is above the national average. The 2008 results show that 50.4% of pupils in Oxfordshire obtained at least 5 GCSE's at A*-C, including English and mathematics. This is only slightly below the regional average (51.4%), and above the national average (47.8%). However, there is a large performance deficit on this measure compared with Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours (54.7%).
- There was a marginal improvement on this measure in Oxfordshire between 2007 and 2008, relative to the regional and national averages. However, there was a slight widening of the differential between Oxfordshire and its statistical neighbours.

- Analysis of the 2008 GCSE results at local authority district level shows a significant improvement in attainment levels in schools in Cherwell and Oxford City, although these two districts continue to lag behind the rest of Oxfordshire. However, the performance differential relative to the rest of the county has narrowed compared with 2007, especially in Cherwell's schools.

Table 20: Percentage of Pupils Gaining 5+ GCSE's at Grades A*-C

Area	2006	2007	2008
Cherwell	49.4	52.5	62.9
Oxford City	43.8	43.9	50.8
South Oxfordshire	65.6	61.8	66.2
Vale of White Horse	55.4	59.5	66.0
West Oxfordshire	63.5	65.2	66.0
Oxfordshire	56.6	57.4	62.7
South East	59.7	62.0	65.5
England	57.5	60.1	63.7
Average for Oxfordshire's Statistical Neighbours	62.5	63.2	66.4

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families, Statistical First Release: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2007/08 (Provisional), released 16 October 2008 (and similar releases for previous years).

Note: Figures are for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. Figures for 2008 are provisional. Figures for England are for schools in the maintained sector. Figures for Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours are calculated as an unweighted average for the ten LEA's most similar in socio-economic characteristics to Oxfordshire (as defined in the DCSF's Statistical Neighbour benchmarking tool).

Table 21: Percentage of Pupils Gaining 5+ GCSE's at Grades A*-C, including English & Maths

Area	2006	2007	2008
Cherwell	38.5	38.6	46.8
Oxford City	37.7	34.4	39.3
South Oxfordshire	56.3	54.8	56.5
Vale of White Horse	46.0	50.0	52.1
West Oxfordshire	54.3	57.4	57.7
Oxfordshire	47.5	48.1	50.4
South East	47.9	49.4	51.4
England	44.1	45.9	47.8
Average for Oxfordshire's Statistical Neighbours	51.0	52.1	54.7

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families, Statistical First Release: GCSE and Equivalent Results in England, 2007/08 (Provisional), released 16 October 2008 (and similar releases for previous years).

Note: Figures are for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4. Figures for 2008 are provisional. Figures for England are for schools in the maintained sector. Figures for Oxfordshire's statistical neighbours are calculated as an unweighted average for the ten LEA's most similar in socio-economic characteristics to Oxfordshire (as defined in the DCSF's Statistical Neighbour benchmarking tool).

8. Housing Market Indicators

Background and Key Points

- Table 22 shows trends in average house prices in Oxfordshire during the 12 months to November 2008. The figures shown are mean standardised seasonally adjusted prices, published by the Land Registry as part of its monthly House Price Index data series.
- The latest figures show that the average price for properties sold in Oxfordshire during November 2008 was £232,500. This is 18% above the South East average (£197,800) and 44% above the average for England and Wales (£161,900).
- Average property prices in Oxfordshire fell by about 8% in the 12 months to November 2008. This is a smaller percentage reduction than in the South East as a whole (where average prices fell by c.14%), and is also below the reduction in prices at national level (c.12%).

Table 22: Mean House Prices in Oxfordshire, Last 12 Months

Month	Oxfordshire	South East	England & Wales
	£	£	£
Nov 2007	253,700	229,100	184,500
Dec 2007	253,400	228,500	183,700
Jan 2008	253,400	230,700	184,800
Feb 2008	253,400	229,300	184,400
Mar 2008	252,800	227,700	182,700
Apr 2008	251,000	226,400	182,800
May 2008	248,300	225,200	181,700
Jun 2008	245,600	221,600	178,300
Jul 2008	244,600	220,400	177,000
Aug 2008	243,100	214,400	172,600
Sep 2008	240,400	209,100	168,100
Oct 2008	237,000	204,400	165,000
Nov 2008	232,500	197,800	161,900
% Change, Nov 2007-Nov 2007	- 8.4%	- 13.7%	- 12.2%

Source: Land Registry, monthly house price index.

Note: Figures shown are mean standardised seasonally adjusted prices. All values are rounded to the nearest hundred pounds.

9. Oxfordshire's Comparative Performance

Background

- In order to benchmark the performance of the Oxfordshire economy, comparisons have been made with regional and national averages, and where possible with the county's geographic and statistical neighbours (as defined in Section 1 above).
- Benchmarking against a selection of National Indicators which are particularly relevant to monitoring of economic performance is provided in Table 23 (against regional and national averages) and Table 24 (against the average performance of Oxfordshire's geographic and statistical neighbours). These indicators include measures of school exam attainment (NI 75), qualifications (NI 79-80 & 163-5), labour market performance (NI 151 & 152), average earnings (NI 166) and new business formation (NI 171).
- Table 25 provides comparisons for a range of additional economic indicators discussed earlier in the briefing paper. These include measures of economic activity, growth and productivity, business survival rates, claimant unemployment levels, and alternative measures of earnings and new business formation.

Key Points

Compared with its geographic and statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire currently has an above average performance on the following indicators:

- Gross value added (GVA) per head (value of economic output in relation to population size);
- Productivity (as measured by gross value added (GVA) per job);
- Proportion of working age residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance (claimant unemployment rate);
- Proportion of working age residents claiming main out of work benefits (worklessness rate).

Compared with its geographic and statistical neighbours, Oxfordshire has a below average performance on the following indicators:

- Productivity growth (as measured by the recent growth rate of GVA per job);
- Average workplace-based earnings;
- New business formation rates, in relation to resident adult population;
- GCSE exam attainment levels.

Table 23: Selected National Indicators for Oxfordshire – Comparisons with Regional and National Performance

National Indicator	Oxfordshire	South East	England
NI 75 - % of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE's at A*-C, including English & maths (2007/08)	50.4	51.4	47.8
NI 79 - % of 19 year olds with Level 2 qualifications (2006/07)	73	78	74
NI 80 - % of 19 year olds with Level 3 qualifications (2006/07)	52	55	48
NI 151 - % employment rate for working age residents (July 2007 to June 2008)	79.3	78.6	74.5
NI 152 - % of working age residents on main out of work benefits (May 2008)	5.7	7.7	11.2
NI 163 - % of 19-59/64 age group with at least Level 2 qualifications (2007)	73.6	72.6	68.9
NI 164 - % of 19-59/64 age group with at least Level 3 qualifications (2007)	56.4	52.7	49.0
NI 165 - % of 19-59/64 age group with at least Level 4 qualifications (2007)	35.0	32.9	30.2
NI 166 - Median earnings of employees in area, £ per week (April 2008)	495.4	499.8	483.1
NI 171 - New business registration rate, per 10,000 resident adults (2007)	59	67	64

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families (NI 75, 79 & 80); Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (NI 163, 164 & 165); Department for Work and Pensions (NI 152); Office for National Statistics (NI 151, 166 & 171).

Table 24: Selected National Indicators for Oxfordshire – Comparisons with Average Performance of Geographic and Statistical Neighbours

National Indicator	Oxfordshire	Geographic Neighbours	Statistical Neighbours
NI 75 - % of pupils achieving 5+ GCSE's at A*-C, including English & maths (2007/08)	50.4	52.3	54.7
NI 79 - % of 19 year olds with Level 2 qualifications (2006/07)	73	73	75
NI 80 - % of 19 year olds with Level 3 qualifications (2006/07)	52	51	54
NI 151 - % employment rate for working age residents (July 2007 to June 2008)	79.3	80.1	80.9
NI 152 - % of working age residents on main out of work benefits (May 2008)	5.7	7.7	6.6
NI 163 - % of 19-59/64 age group with at least Level 2 qualifications (2007)	73.6	72.5	74.1
NI 164 - % of 19-59/64 age group with at least Level 3 qualifications (2007)	56.4	52.0	54.2
NI 165 - % of 19-59/64 age group with at least Level 4 qualifications (2007)	35.0	33.0	34.7
NI 166 - Median earnings of employees in area, £ per week (April 2008)	495.4	--	509.2
NI 171 - New business registration rate, per 10,000 resident adults (2007)	59.4	68.8	69.1

Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families (NI 75, 79 & 80); Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (NI 163, 164 & 165); Department for Work and Pensions (NI 152); Office for National Statistics (NI 151, 166 & 171).

Note: Figures for geographic and statistical neighbours are unweighted averages. Blank cells indicate that figures for the area cannot be derived.

Table 25: Other Economic Indicators for Oxfordshire – Comparisons with Average Performance of Geographic and Statistical Neighbours

Indicator	Oxfordshire	Geographic Neighbours	Statistical Neighbours
Gross value added (GVA) per head of population, £ (2006)	23,608	21,583	--
Gross value added (GVA) per job, £ (2006)	39,263	37,701	--
% growth in GVA per head, 2001-2006	22.7	23.3	--
% growth in GVA per job, 2001-2006	17.9	21.2	--
Mean workplace-based earnings, full-time workers, £ per week (April 2008)	565.6	589.1	612.5
Mean residence-based earnings, full-time workers, £ per week (April 2008)	627.6	613.1	661.9
Annual VAT registrations per 10,000 resident adults (2007)	46.4	51.2	50.0
3 year % survival rate for businesses started in 2004	68.3	67.3	67.4
Claimant count unemployed, as % of working age residents (November 2008)	1.3	2.0	1.6
% increase in claimant unemployment (12 months to November 2008)	51.1	51.8	55.1
% of claimant unemployed out of work for over 12 months (November 2008)	6.9	7.8	6.3

Source: Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (VAT registrations data); Department for Communities and Local Government (house prices data); Office for National Statistics (all other indicators).

Note: Figures for geographic and statistical neighbours are unweighted averages. Blank cells indicate that figures for the area cannot be derived.