

# FOR RICHER, FOR POORER



**POVERTY AND LIVELIHOODS  
IN THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD**

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EDITED BY **ALISON WEBSTER**



“ We welcome this excellent report ‘For Richer For Poorer’ as it builds significantly on our own ‘Vital Signs’ and ‘Uncovered’ publications which set out our aspirations for pooling our resources, focusing our collective efforts and working in partnership to strengthen our communities. We would be delighted to explore how we might build on the many great local projects that are happening within parishes across the Diocese. We believe there are increasing opportunities for us all to combine our efforts and work more closely together. ”

**Jayne Woodley, Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Community Foundation, on behalf of Community Foundations across the Thames Valley.**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

On taking up his post in 2016, Bishop Steven Croft named 'poverty and marginalisation' as one of his three key personal priorities for the Diocese of Oxford.

Inspired by this Alison Webster, Social Responsibility Adviser for the Diocese of Oxford, commissioned Jane Perry, an independent social researcher with a background in poverty and welfare research, to compile a report on the profile of poverty across the Diocese (coterminous with the Thames Valley Region).

“ *‘For Richer For Poorer’ represents a clear, high-level insight into how poverty and marginalisation are experienced across the diocese of Oxford.* ”

The aim was to produce a foundational and up-to-date survey of the meanings and manifestations of poverty in the Diocese; to gain an overview of both the resources available to us, and the challenges being experienced in our communities.

*‘For Richer For Poorer’* represents a clear, high-level insight into how poverty and marginalisation are experienced across the Diocese of Oxford. Developed through conversations with key people with an ‘ear to the ground’, and supported by the latest statistical evidence, it explores key issues facing our communities and asks how we might most effectively respond. Quotes throughout this report are from ten key people interviewed at the beginning of this research because of their experience and particular insights. This group included Area Deans, local parish clergy (including those with a pre-ordination background in relevant forms of service delivery, e.g. housing) and representatives of community groups, church and non-church.

This report provides the starting point for further explorations. Within our church at all levels, and in conversation with our partners (other denominations and faiths, community organisations, policy workers and politicians), we plan an unfolding listening process. We aim to better understand how the statistical evidence in *‘For Richer For Poorer’* is reflected in the complex life of our neighbourhoods: to explore further what is obvious, and to uncover and discover what is hidden. This report is a tool for enhancing our churches’ activities of social action and community engagement.

## KEY FINDINGS

### *Understanding Oxford Diocese*

During our research and conversations, four key points have emerged:

- **Diversity of experience** – the area covered by Oxford Diocese contains a staggering variety of different settings: rural areas, both remote and well-connected; villages and small towns; suburbs and larger conurbations; new towns and older cities. Geographical, historical and economic context combine to shape very different life experiences for individuals and communities. Whilst these differences may be most apparent on a large scale, very different socio-economic issues can be faced by different parishes, even in the same Deanery
- **Increasingly apparent inequality** – several commentators felt the distinction between those who are thriving and those who are struggling was increasing. Where this diversity relates to income, resources or access to services it can lead to inequality, the impact of which can be emphasised by relative proximity of people with very different life experiences
- **Hidden struggles** – paradoxically, diversity of experience and increasing inequality also contribute to poverty and marginalisation becoming hidden. Statistically, local neighbourhoods which are particularly struggling can become subsumed into wider averages. On a more human scale, social pressures to participate in the consumer society can lead to pressure to ‘keep up appearances’ which belies deeper struggles and pressures. Similarly, marginalisation can occur in different ways, not always directly related to income or wealth
- **Impacts on self-perception** – appreciation of ‘difference,’ and perceptions of inequality, in turn shape the self-perception of individuals and communities. Our stories, aspirations and relationships with others are all shaped by who we think we are, and how we relate to the wider world.

### *Understanding Poverty and Marginalisation*

These social forces are, of course, not new or unknown to those living and working in our communities. However, the birds-eye view offered here does help to throw the issues into sharper relief. The analysis presented underlines why a focus on poverty and marginalisation is not only still relevant but increasingly relevant. Poverty and inequality are intrinsically linked to social integration, within and between communities.



“...it is more important than ever to be careful of the language we use and to avoid talking about ‘the poor’ or ‘deprived communities’, as though they are somehow ‘other’. This report takes a deliberately different view, adopting what is known as a ‘livelihoods approach’. This gives an alternative focus, not solely on getting people over a specific income line, but rather considering what is required for them to have a secure, sustainable livelihood.”

Highlighting diversity of experience also demonstrates the dangers of taking a ‘deficit’ approach to poverty, focusing solely on what some people lack. The data presented in this report demonstrate how poverty affects us all, whether we or our communities are perceived as rich or poor. This means it is more important than ever to be careful of the language we use. Talking about ‘the poor’ or ‘deprived communities’, as though they are somehow ‘other’ risks both reinforcing judgemental attitudes and further disempowering the most vulnerable.

This report takes a deliberately different view, adopting what is known as a ‘livelihoods approach’. This gives an alternative focus, not solely on getting people over a specific income line, but rather considering what is required for them to have a secure, sustainable livelihood. A livelihoods approach brings a multi-faceted understanding, looking across a range of areas of life rather than just finances, towards a more holistic sense of what makes a ‘good’ life. In doing so it seeks to be more empowering and asset-based, emphasising the resources people and communities already have as well as where they struggle.

### ***Structure of this report:***

- **Part I – Introducing the Diocese of Oxford** sets out the key geographical and demographic features of the Thames Valley area.
- **Part II – Understanding Poverty** explores the essential concepts which underpin what can be said about poverty and marginalisation, as well as exploring key poverty indicators across the Diocese.
- **Part III – Dimensions of Deprivation** takes each of 7 dimensions of the official National Statistics Index of Multiple Deprivation and explores how they are differentially experienced across the Diocese.

### **Note on use of data:**

Analysis of parish size (see Section 2) reveals considerable variation in the number of households/residents in each parish. This variation means it is difficult to make valid statistical comparisons between parishes. In addition, aggregation of published National Statistics (which are produced for smaller local units) to produce parish level statistics involves a degree of approximation and modelling.

For these reasons, most of the analysis presented in this report concentrates on smaller administrative units taken from the 2011 Census. Known as 'super-output areas' these are a consistent size (approximately 1,500 inhabitants), living in the same area or cluster of streets, referred to in this report as a 'neighbourhood'. These provide the clearest and most robust estimates of poverty and marginalisation across the Diocese.

“ *The analysis presented [in this report] underlines why a focus on poverty and marginalisation is not only still relevant but increasingly relevant. Poverty and inequality are intrinsically linked to social integration, within and between communities.* ”

## **2. INTRODUCING THE DIOCESE OF OXFORD**

The Diocese of Oxford is the administrative area of the Church of England that, broadly speaking, covers the three historic counties of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire – now divided into metropolitan districts of Bracknell Forest, Slough, Reading, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead (Map 1).

It covers 2,200 square miles – and much the same area as Thames Valley Police – between the Cotswolds in the west and London to the east. It spans tiny rural communities to the large cities of Oxford and Milton Keynes. All Local Authority Districts are shown in Map 2.

### ***A region of change***

The area covered by the diocese has seen, and will continue to see, considerable population change. For example, the urban area of Milton Keynes grew by 23% between 2001-2014.

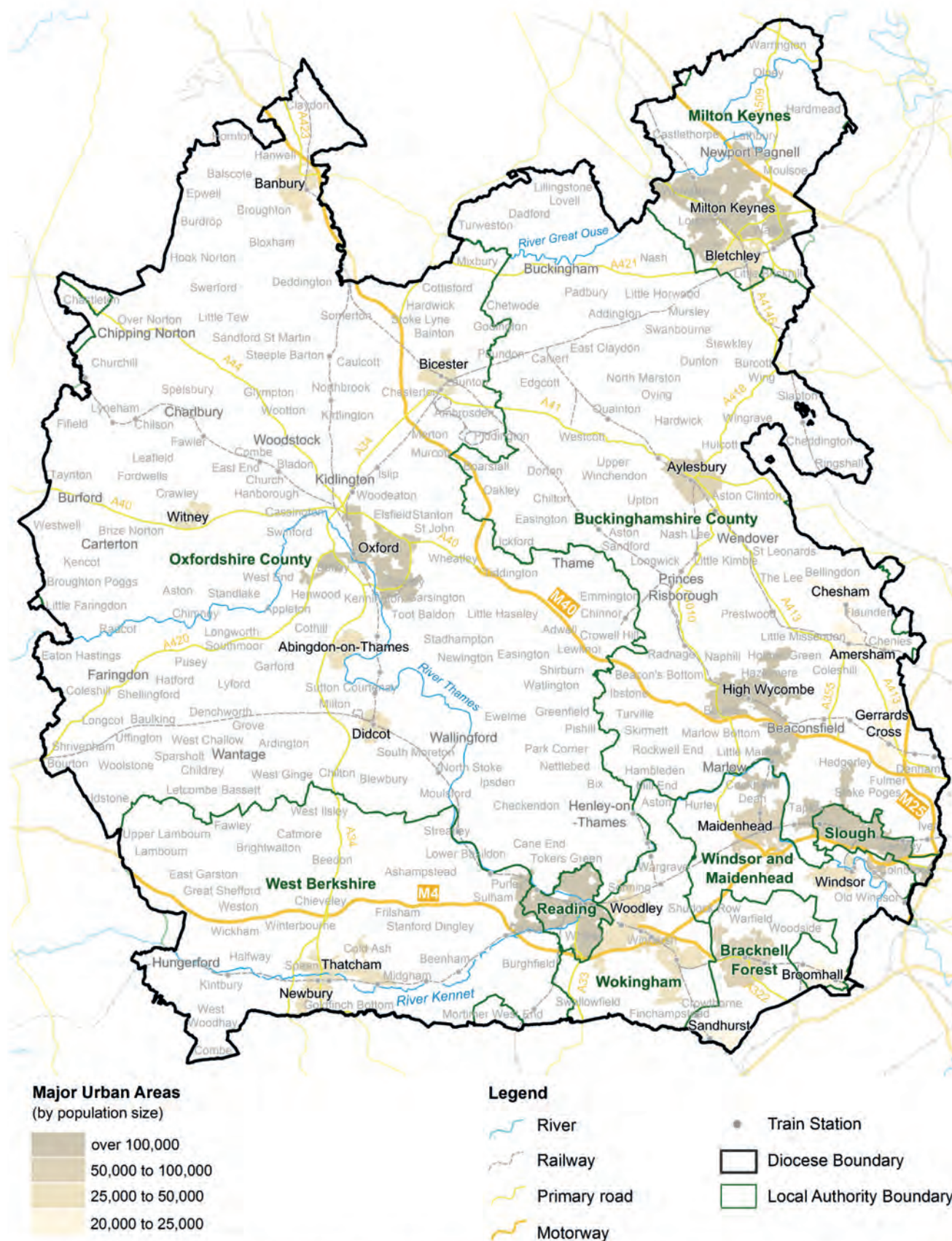
New housing developments are currently affecting all parts of the Diocese, both urban and rural. This presents challenges of community cohesion and inclusion, mediation of conflict regarding planning and resource allocation, changes to people's sense of belonging and identity, and practical issues of infrastructure and services.

In our initial conversations, various points were raised about these new developments:

- 'Bicester's population will double – but the new housing is aimed at people with reasonable incomes – £50K plus.'
- 'In Milton Keynes there are six to seven new estates on the way, each with 1,800-3,600 houses. There is concern about lack of community facilities. Historically, Milton Keynes had better provision but this has become less and less and is changing. There are transport issues – public transport has always been an issue – it's good here for cars and bikes, but buses need to work differently.'
- 'In Reading, Crossrail will effectively make us a suburb of London; so, new development won't help existing chronic under-provision of housing. There will also be all the social impacts of families moving in from elsewhere. There's concern about drugs and other things that will get imported with the improved proximity to London.'
- 'Even newer housing developments will see the phenomenon of "bringing problems with you", as experienced in earlier waves of development in Milton Keynes. There will be a reason why you moved – personal or family backstory, and the "disconnect" that happens when individuals and families move. There is a loss of social networks; a need to travel to maintain them, and the difficulties in building new, local ones.'



**Map 1. Diocese of Oxford – Main Settlements and Features**



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## Map 2. Local Authority Districts



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## ***Church of England – Parishes, Deaneries and Episcopal Areas***

From Chipping Norton to Slough, from West Berkshire to Newport Pagnell, the Diocese covers villages and market towns, suburbs and urban areas, organized into around 620 parishes<sup>1</sup>.

There are 815 churches in our diocese – more than any other diocese in the Church of England. So, in many ways the best description of the Diocese of Oxford is that it is a family of the 55,000 or so regular worshippers in these churches.

Parishes are organised into 29 Deaneries, within 4 Episcopal Areas (Map 3). The Diocese contains several ‘ex-parochial areas’, shown in grey on the map, which lie outside of the parish system<sup>2</sup>. These include Windsor Castle, Shotover and Blenheim Place, as well as Christchurch College, Oxford.

### ***Parish Size***

In terms of the size of the populations living within their boundaries, parishes vary considerably:

- The largest 10% of parishes have over 10,418 inhabitants – with the very largest 49,370 (Watling Valley, Milton Keynes) and 43,640 (Stantonbury and Willen, Milton Keynes) respectively. The next largest is Walton, Milton Keynes; Woughton, and Langley Marish – all with around 29,000 people
- 50% of all parishes in the Diocese have 1,050 inhabitants or less, with 30% having 520 or fewer
- 10% of all parishes have less than 170 inhabitants.

Variation in parish size means it is difficult to make valid statistical comparisons between parishes.

---

1. The Diocesan website currently reports this figure as 626. The Diocesan Pastoral and Committee Secretary reports that the number is not static (changing by single figures each year). As of Nov 21st 2016 her database showed 623 parishes – there are a number of anomalies which mean this database does not exactly correspond with the central Church of England database. This analysis will use the database created by Miso (Dotted Eyes) in collaboration with the Diocesan Finance Department.

2. Ex-parochial areas:

- |                                                 |                                |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • WINDSOR CASTLE ex. par.                       | • CHRISTCHURCH COLLEGE ex. par |
| • MERTON FIELD ex. par.                         | • WALLINGFORD CASTLE ex. par   |
| • SHOTOVER ex. par.                             | • SEACOURT ex. par             |
| • LANDS COMMON TO COTTISFORD AND HETHE ex. par. | • BLENHEIM PALACE ex. par.     |
| • CLATTERCOTE ex. par.                          | • CORNBURY PARK ex. par.       |
| • HOGSHAW (missing data)                        |                                |



# Less than 170 inhabitants

*The population of the  
smallest 10% of all  
parishes.*

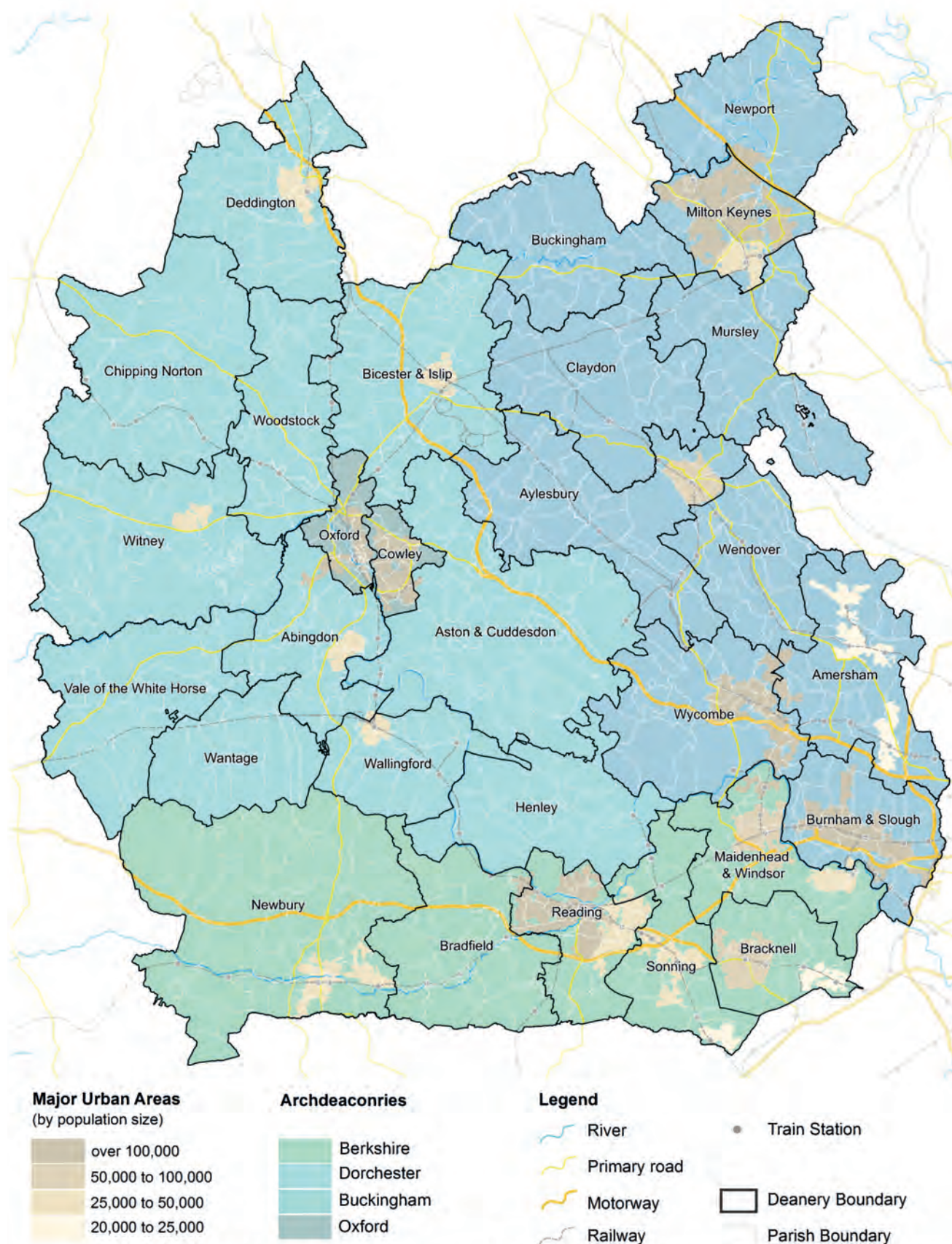
# 49,370 inhabitants

*The population of the  
largest parish in the  
diocese: Watling Valley,  
in Milton Keynes.*

# Less than 1,050 inhabitants

*The population of  
50% of all parishes.*

### Map 3. Deaneries and Archdeaconries



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## ***Town and Country***

The Diocese includes densely populated urban areas through suburbs, to small towns, villages and relatively isolated rural areas.

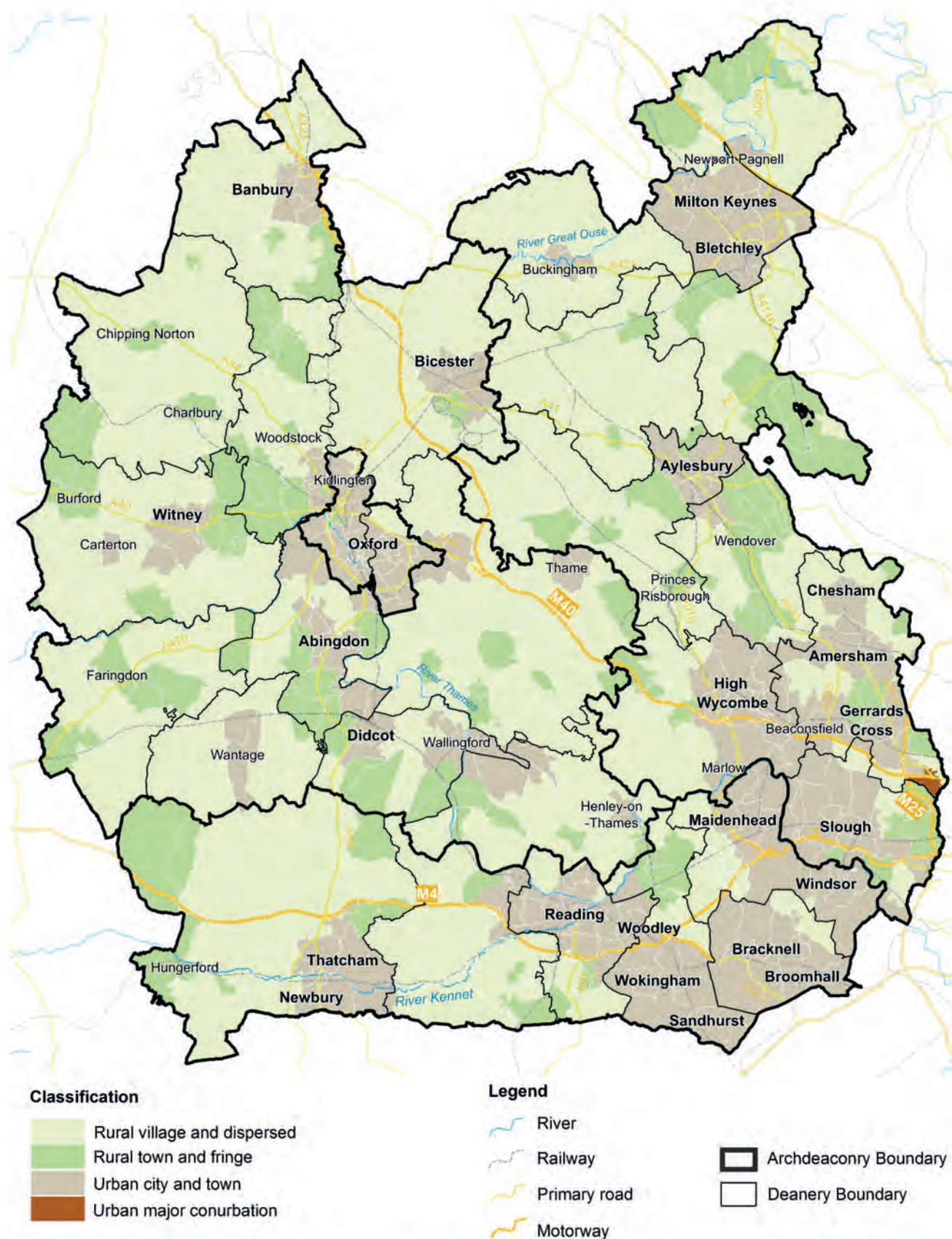
Where people live, and in what sort of area, can make a big difference to the opportunities available to them and to their access to public services. Local conversations suggest these gaps may be growing:

- **City centres** – for example, Oxford, contain complex needs in tight spaces; cities can be huge income generators and yet not all local people may see benefits; at a cursory glance their appearance may look glossy, but many people working there come in from outside, meaning wealth is not necessarily kept or shared in the city.
- **Suburbs** – these range from desirable to those struggling with poor housing, immigrant populations, low income and disability, and needs that are hidden from view (for example by main roads by-passing poorer communities).
- **Rural Towns/Villages** – may appear to be cohesive communities, but can struggle with issues around housing affordability and access to work.
- **Hamlets and Isolated houses** – with issues around isolation and difficulty accessing health and other public services; and price of fuel for transport and heating.

These area differences make a considerable difference to individuals' and communities' experiences and self-perceptions. These dramatically differing experiences run as a theme throughout the following analysis.



**Map 4. Rural-Urban (National Statistics, Census 2011)**



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## 2.1 TYPES OF HOUSEHOLDS

Mosaic Household type, provided by Experian, allows households to be classified by their main social and economic characteristics.

**Figure 1 Mosaic Public Sector Household Types**

A	Country Living	Well-off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life
B	Prestige Positions	Established families in large detached homes living upmarket lifestyles
C	City Prosperity	High status city dwellers living in central locations and pursuing careers with high rewards
D	Domestic Success	Thriving families who are busy bringing up children and following careers
E	Suburban Stability	Mature suburban owners living settled lives in mid-range housing
F	Senior Security	Elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement
G	Rural Reality	Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities
H	Aspiring Homemakers	Younger households settling down in housing priced within their means
I	Urban Cohesion	Residents of settled urban communities with a strong sense of identity
J	Rental Hubs	Educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods
K	Modest Traditions	Mature homeowners of value homes enjoying stable lifestyles
L	Transient Renters	Single people privately renting low cost homes for the short term
M	Family Basics	Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet
N	Vintage Value	Elderly people reliant on support to meet financial or practical needs
O	Municipal Challenge	Urban renters of social housing facing an array of challenges

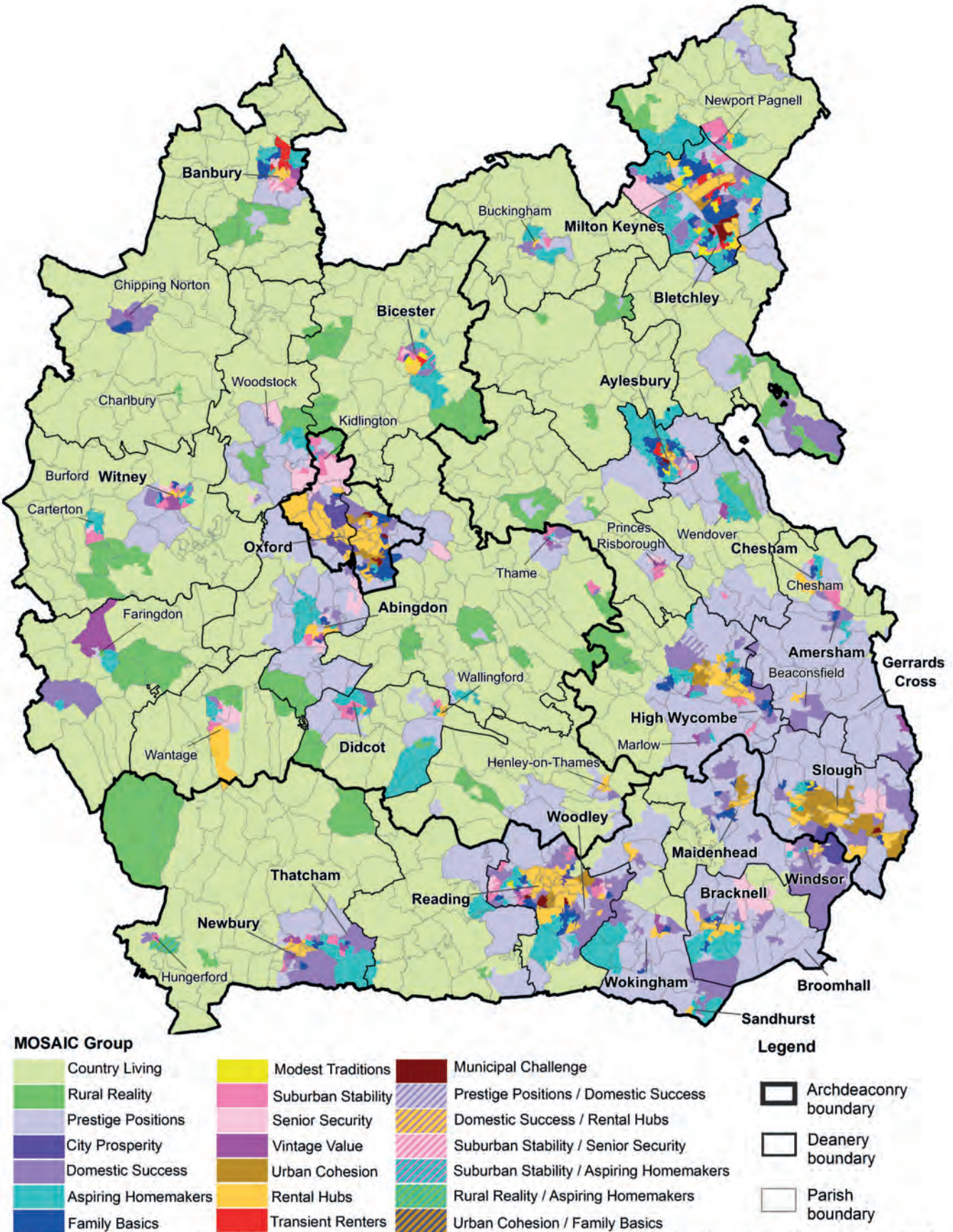
Map 5 shows the predominant group in each parish across the Diocese.

This highlights:

- The predominance of renting in the urban centres of Oxford, Reading, High Wycombe, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Banbury, Abingdon and Newbury
- A slant towards 'Prestige Positions' in areas closest to London, with good rail links and along the A34 corridor around Oxford
- Areas predominantly of 'Rural Reality' tend to be furthest from urban centres.



### Map 5. Predominant MOSAIC Household Type (Experian: MOSAIC, 2016)



## 2.2 ETHNIC DIVERSITY

Initial conversations undertaken for this research identified a growing gap in experience between parishes which had remained predominantly White and those with high and/or growing levels of ethnic diversity. Some of these demographic patterns are longstanding and well known, for example, relatively high ethnic diversity in Slough. Other changes are recent with a very localised impact, and so are not necessarily identified in local statistics. For example, in Newbury, it was identified that the school population was changing rapidly with local clergy being aware of a significant increase in the Muslim population.

Other commentators noted that changing population was not a new thing. For example, Milton Keynes being established and now developed by subsequent waves of new arrivals: originally from London and Liverpool, now Somalia, East Asia, Poland.

This points to the potentially significant observation that there are two angles to increasing ethnic diversity: issues of social integration, but also more general issues of adjustment to change. The commentator reflecting on Milton Keynes observed that each new 'immigrant' community (White or Non-White) had brought its own challenges with it, plus a sense of disconnection from its roots and a conscious sense of belonging somewhere else:

“...there are two angles to increasing ethnic diversity: issues of social integration, but also more general issues of adjustment to change.”

*‘While the first generation can bring a huge buzz – motivated, looking to contribute and potentially bringing huge strengths – it is sometimes not until the second generation that some of problems start to work through, with families worn down by experiences of establishing themselves somewhere new, not necessarily feeling welcomed.’*

It was felt that where population is changing very rapidly, this can create a particularly challenging environment for churches – called as they are to provide institutional stability, especially if the demographic change is very transient.

In terms of social integration, another commentator observed that marginalisation (of ethnic minority or White Communities) was most difficult and dangerous when economic marginalisation (inequality) is compounded by ethnic-minority (cultural) marginalisation.

Readily available National Statistics relate only to ethnic diversity at a specific point in time (the 2011 census). The following analysis therefore concentrates on that distributional pattern, but is not able to provide a description of demographic change.



## ***Neighbourhood Analysis***

Around a third (30%) of neighbourhoods across Oxford Diocese had 90% or greater identifying as White British, with 62% of neighbourhoods having 80% or more identifying as White British (Figure 2). Areas with high proportions of White British were predominantly found across rural areas (Map 6).

At the other end of the spectrum, 12% of neighbourhoods (170 in total) had 40% or more residents identifying as being of an ethnic group other than 'White British' (henceforth referred to as 'Other Ethnic Groups').

Three neighbourhoods, all in Slough, had more than 90% of residents from Other Ethnic Groups – one mostly falling in the parish of St Paul, Slough (with a proportion in Langley Marish and Upton Cum Chalvey); one in the parish of St John the Baptist, Manor Park with St Michael, Whitby Road and one mostly falling in Manor Park/Whitby Road and St Paul, Slough.

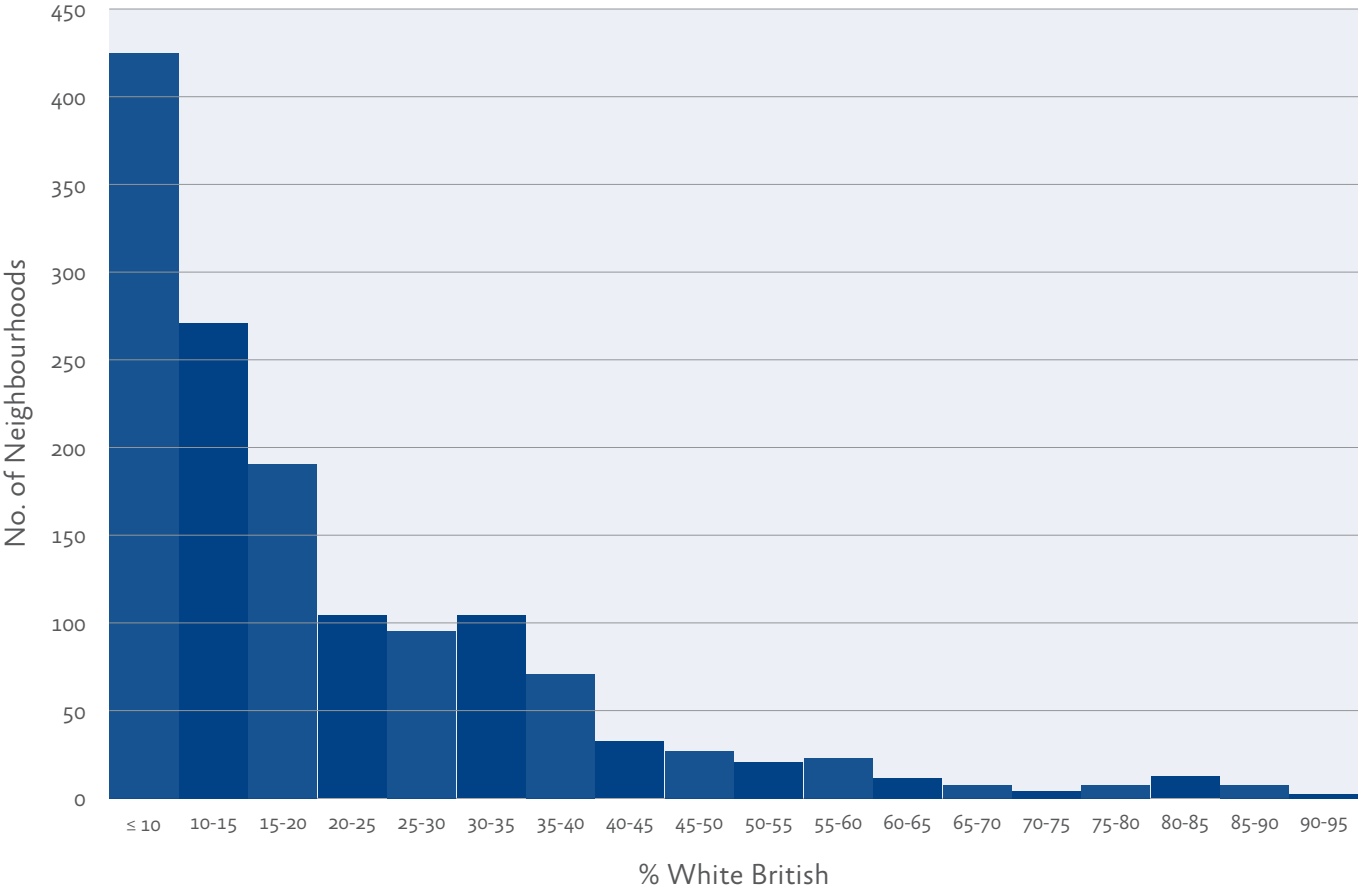
Map 6 shows the areas with very high-high<sup>3</sup> ethnic diversity:

- Slough (29 very high neighbourhoods; 20 high neighbourhoods)
- Wycombe (2 very high; 7 high)
- Reading (1 very high; 9 high)
- Milton Keynes (3 high)
- Aylesbury Vale, Oxford, Windsor, and Maidenhead/Wokingham (1 high neighbourhood each).

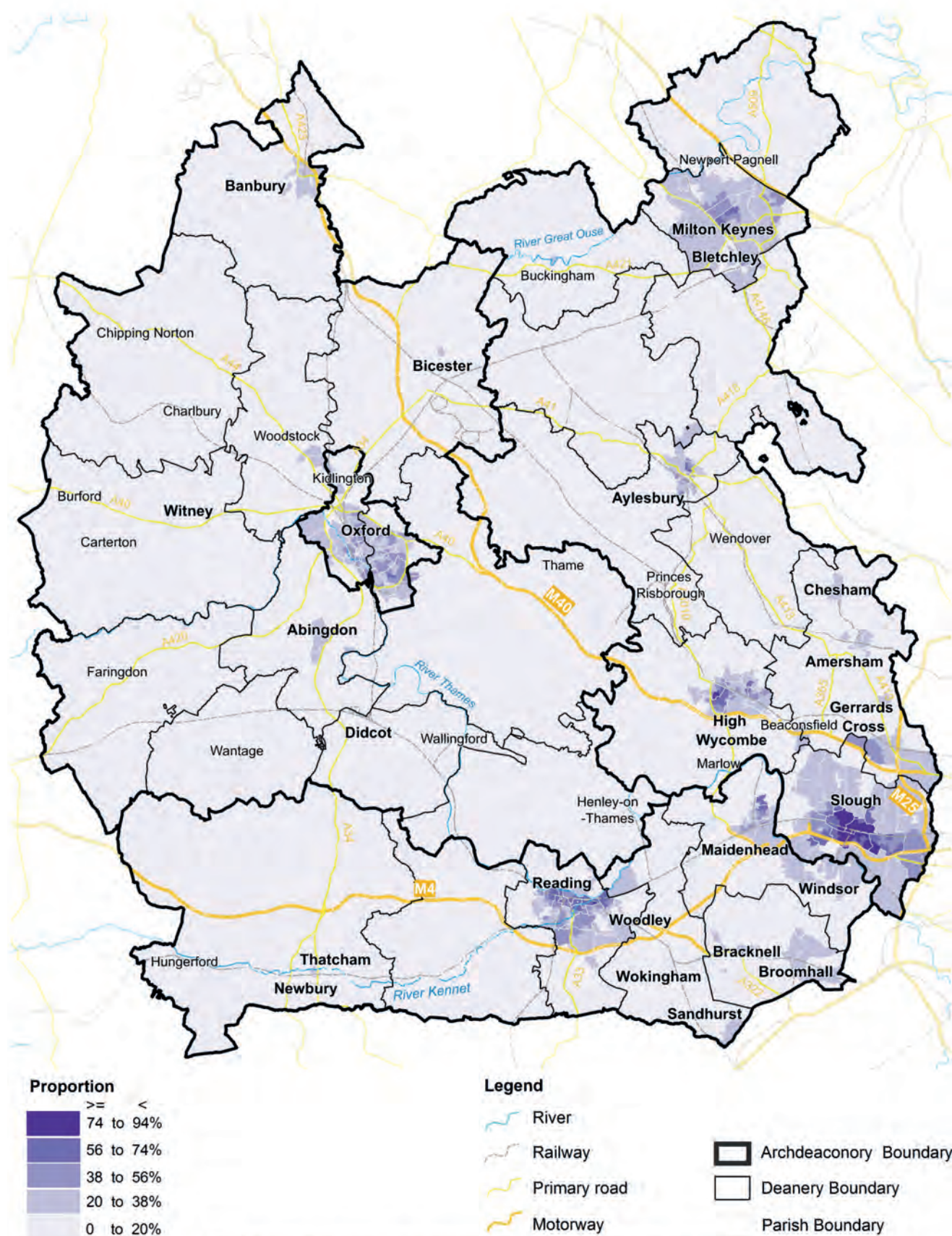
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3. Data divided into 5 equal ranges – very high = more than 74%; high = 56% to 74%

**Figure 2. Ethnic Diversity – % identifying as other than ‘White British’**



**Map 6. Ethnic Diversity – % Non-White British (National Statistics: Census 2011)**



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## 2.3 OTHER FAITH GROUPS

The 2011 Census also asked about religion. Map 7 combines the proportion of the population who reported an active faith identity other than Christian<sup>4</sup>. As might be expected, this shows a similar distribution to the 'Other Ethnic Groups', but more concentrated.

Overall, the average (mean) for 'Other Faith Groups' was 12%, with a range from 0.5% in the neighbourhood with the lowest proportion, to 78.6% in the highest. Nearly half of neighbourhoods across the Diocese fell in the lowest 20%.

Map 7 shows the areas with very high to high<sup>5</sup> proportions of Other Faith Groups:

- Slough (21 very high neighbourhoods; 24 high neighbourhoods)
- Wycombe (2 very high; 6 high)
- Reading (1 very high)
- Milton Keynes (3 high)
- Windsor, and Maidenhead/Wokingham (1 high neighbourhood each).

This suggests that in the high Other Ethnic Group neighbourhoods found in Aylesbury Vale and Oxford, residents were less likely than in other areas to report an active faith identity other than Christian.

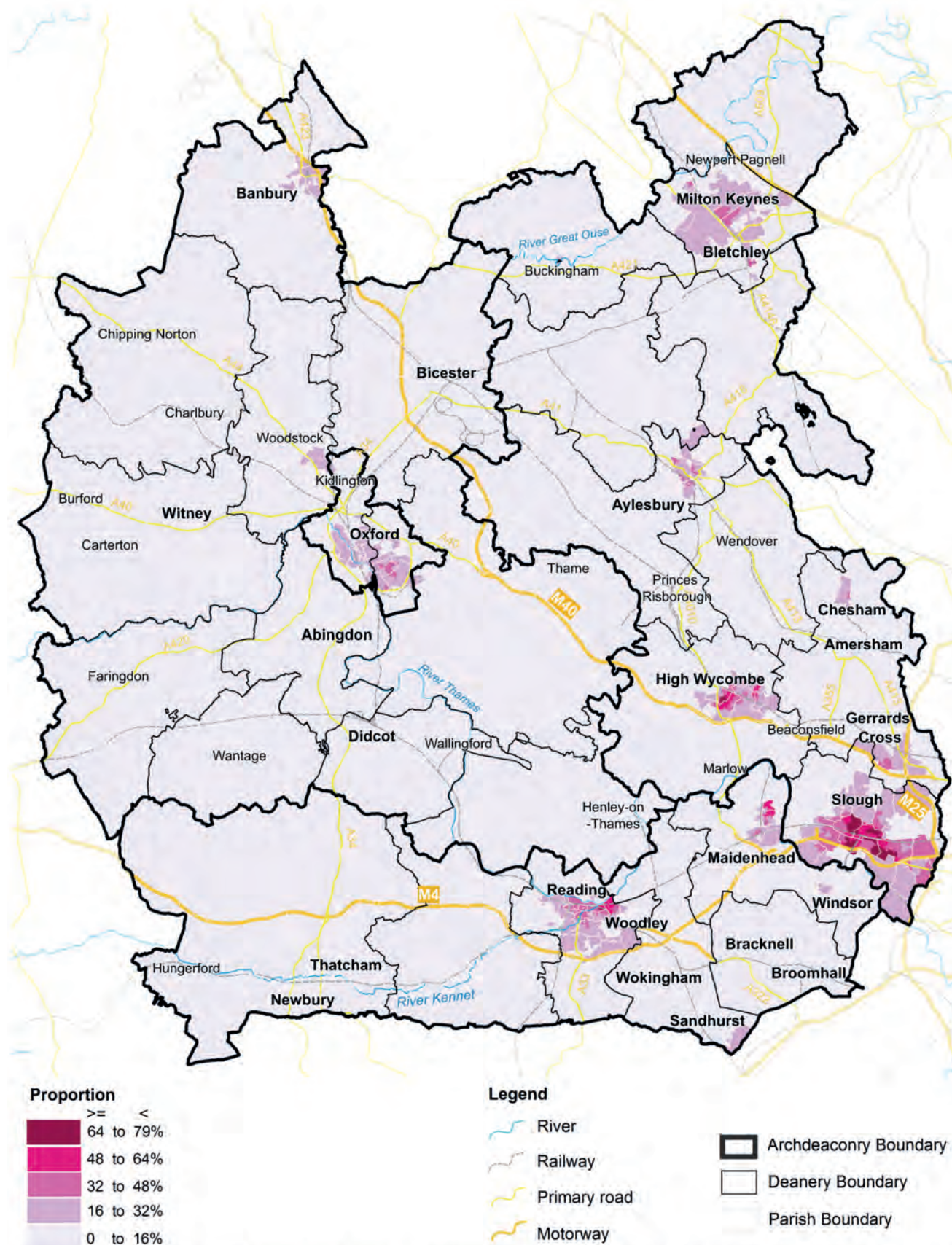
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4. % other faiths = all those not 'Christian', 'no religion' or 'not stated'

5. Data divided into 5 equal ranges – very high = more than 64%; high = 48% to 64%



**Map 7. Other Faiths – % ‘not Christian/No religion/Not stated’  
(National Statistics: Census 2011)**



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## 2.4 AGE PROFILE

Another key area of social change identified in early conversations related to the impact of an ageing population: the need to understand further how the age profile of neighbourhoods and parishes across the Diocese is changing.

For example, one commentator observed, whilst still younger than the average, the age profile of Milton Keynes appears to be changing rapidly, with a growing population of over 65s as some people move to be nearer relatives and other longer term residents retire but do not move away. It was felt this would result in high concentrations of young and old, with a 'missing generation' of those in their 20-30's as younger people move out.

It was recognised that social change will affect areas differently. For example, higher inward migration (eg in areas with new housing developments) will inevitably affect the age profile of communities.

Being 'young' or 'old' mediates different facets of poverty and marginalisation. For example, many older people live alone and may be more prone to social isolation, which in turn may contribute to mental health issues including anxiety, depression and dementia.

As with ethnic diversity, readily available National Statistics capture age profiles only at a specific point in time (the 2011 census). The following analysis therefore concentrates on that distributional pattern, but cannot provide a description of demographic change.

### ***Neighbourhood Analysis***

Across the Diocese the average (mean) proportion of residents aged under 16 is 20%, with a minimum of 1.4% and maximum of 35%. Unlike many other descriptors covered so far, the distribution for '% under 16' was closer to a 'normal distribution' – that is a similar proportion of neighbourhoods positioned either side of the mean (the median being 19%).

A few neighbourhoods stand out as having particularly high or low proportions of children:

- 19 neighbourhoods (1% of all neighbourhoods) with less than 10% children are predominantly located close to universities: 12 in Oxford<sup>6</sup>, 5 in Reading, 1 in Milton Keynes (University of Bedfordshire) and 1 in Aylesbury Vale.

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6. Three neighbourhoods had less than 5% aged under 16 – all in central Oxford.

- 23 neighbourhoods with the highest proportions of children (more than 30%) are more diverse and distributed – 10 in Milton Keynes, 3 each in Oxford and Slough, and 1 each in Aylesbury Vale, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead and Wycombe. This is likely to be attributable to ethnic diversity and housing type but also location of large boarding schools.

“ Being ‘young’ or ‘old’ mediates different facets of poverty and marginalisation. For example, many older people live alone and may be more prone to social isolation, which in turn may contribute to mental health issues including anxiety, depression and dementia. ”

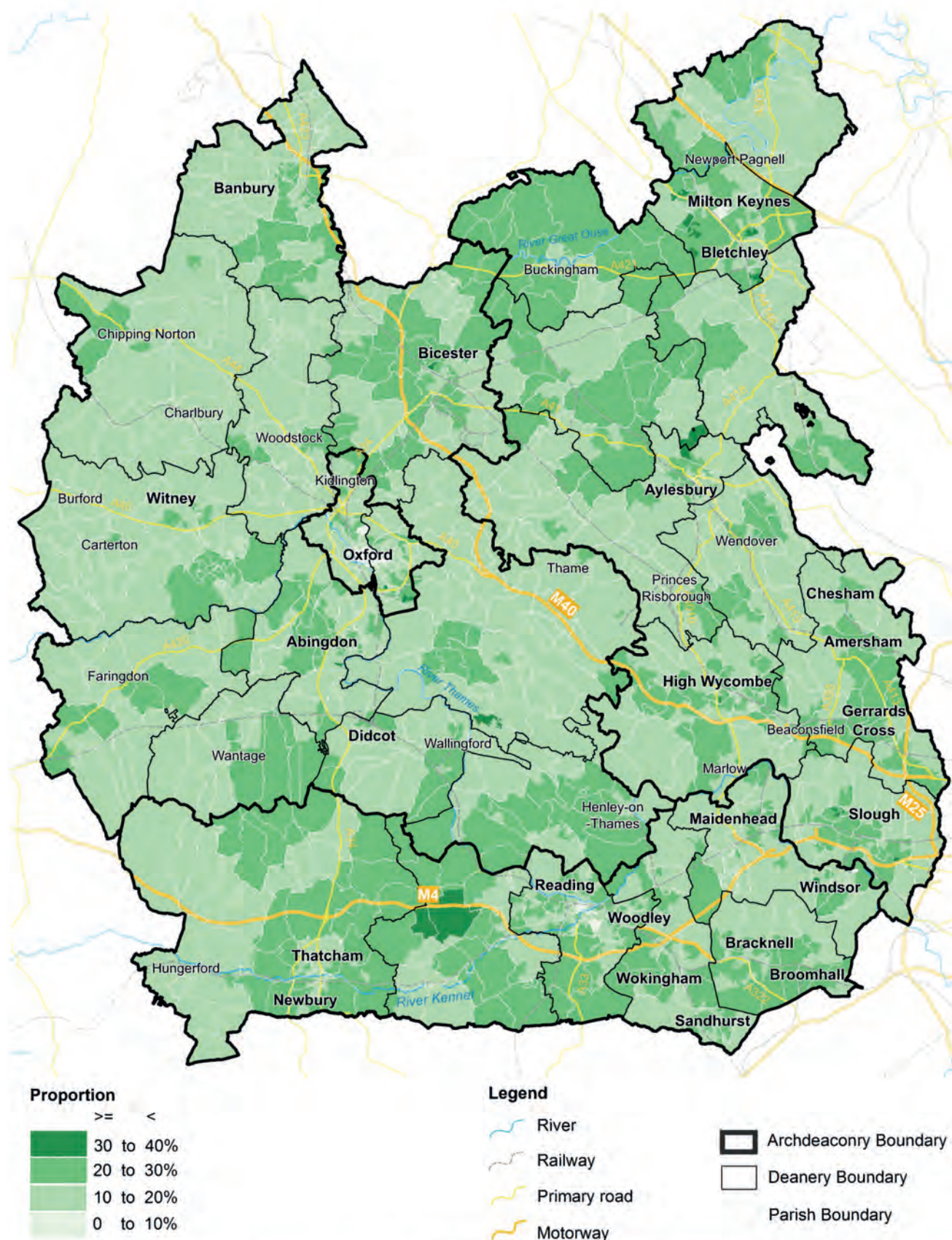
For residents aged 75 and over the neighbourhood average (mean) across the Diocese was 7%, with a minimum of 0.2% and maximum of 26.3%.

Again, a few neighbourhoods stood out as having particularly low or high proportions of older people:

- 29 neighbourhoods with less than 1% aged over 75 were found in Milton Keynes (16 neighbourhoods), Bracknell Forest, Cherwell, Oxford, Slough and West Oxfordshire (2 neighbourhoods each) and Aylesbury Vale, Reading and Wycombe
- 4 neighbourhoods with over 21% aged over 75 were located in Wycombe (in the parish of Market Risborough and Princes Risborough with Ilmer); Wokingham; South Buckinghamshire (Gerrards Cross with Fulmer), South Oxfordshire (Goring).



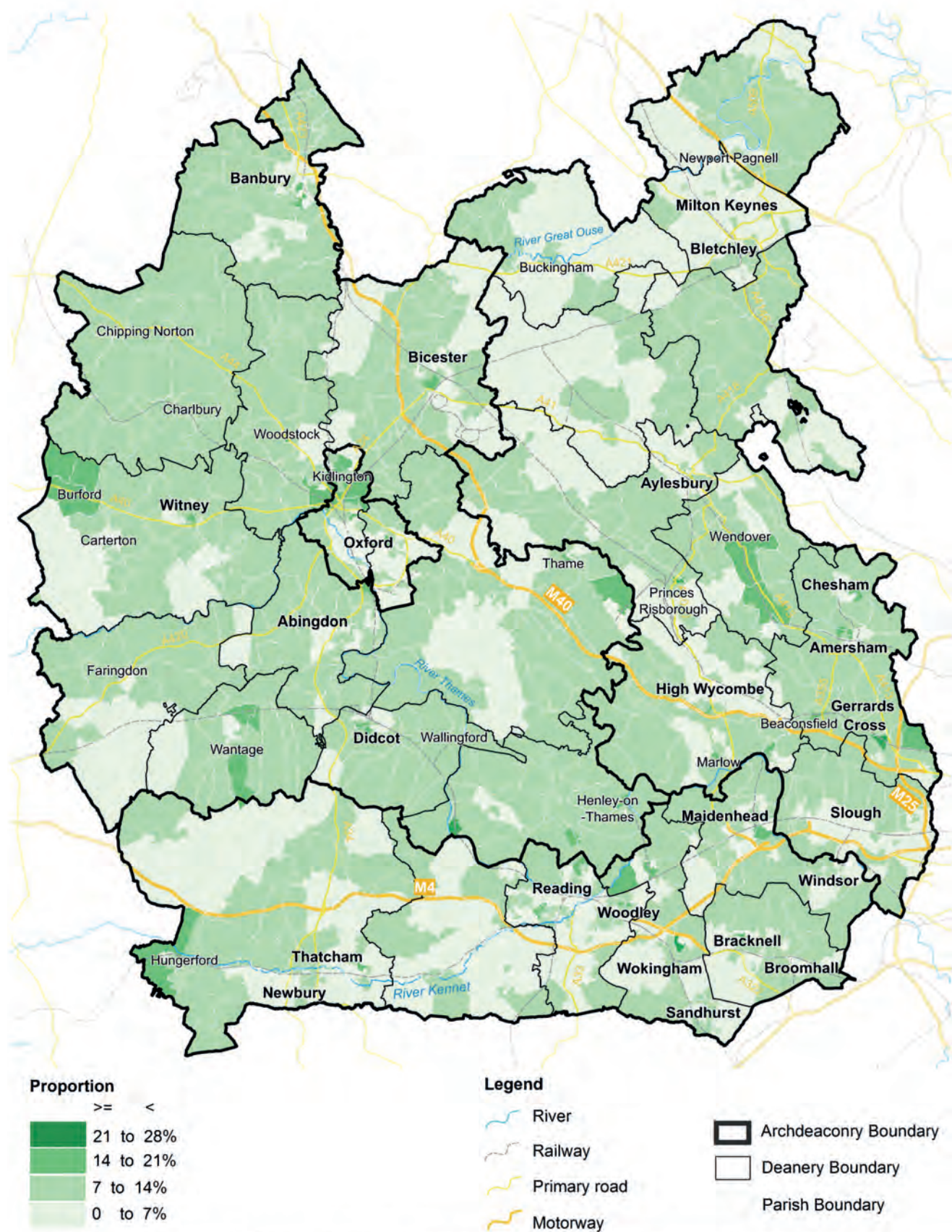
**Map 8. Children – % under 16 (National Statistics: Census 2011)**



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### Map 9. Older People – % over 75 (National Statistics: Census 2011)



# **3. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'POVERTY'?**

Initial conversations revealed a wide range of ways in which poverty and marginalisation are experienced across Oxford Diocese and emphasised the following key points:

- Poverty comes in many guises – people can be disadvantaged in any number of ways which are both caused by and contribute to income poverty. These include mental health, poor educational achievement, nutrition
- Monetary poverty makes it much more challenging for people to access opportunities, even where they are available to them. For example, you need clean clothes to get a job, but also to have social life and make friends. However, to access opportunities money is not always enough. People also need confidence, motivation and basic skills (e.g. financial management, cooking)
- As one interviewee put it, ‘Real deprivation is hopelessness – having no hope or aspiration that anything could ever change for you.’

“ *Real deprivation is hopelessness – having no hope or aspiration that anything could ever change for you* ”

### ***Hidden poverty***

Initial conversations also identified various ways in which poverty may be hidden:

- When it is not included in statistics (e.g. homeless people and other marginalised groups are often just not counted)
- Individual poverty can be hidden by the relative affluence of a local area – the danger of statistical averages across areas
- Poverty may not automatically be obvious – people may be ‘keeping up appearances’, or be income-poor and asset-rich
- Marginalisation by other dimensions (e.g. difficulty accessing services in rural areas) can be a type of ‘poverty’ not necessarily directly related to income (although experienced most acutely by lower income people in those communities)
- Families may not be ‘poor’ in the sense of having a low income, but they may be struggling to meet lifestyle costs (including high housing costs) – leaving them

vulnerable to pressures caused by financial stress and, ultimately, in danger of being tipped into crisis (it is a common foodbank manager observation that ‘this could be any of us’ or ‘it only takes one or two things’).

The perception that Oxford is ‘such an affluent Diocese’ therefore does not always tie up with what is seen on the ground. This is perhaps particularly acute when deprivation occurs alongside extreme affluence. This may result not only in individuals’ and families’ struggles not being recognised by official statistics, but also in requiring them to share services (schools, hospitals etc.) with others with different extremes of experience, exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and isolation:

“ At its heart, the definition of poverty is a moral question – it refers to hardship which is unacceptable ”

*‘Poverty which goes unseen, but is actually quite severe, is even more emphasised by relative deprivation (comparison with near neighbours). This also enforces a perceived lack of opportunity for any sort of change, with people seeing nothing they can possibly aspire to.’*

### **Defining poverty**

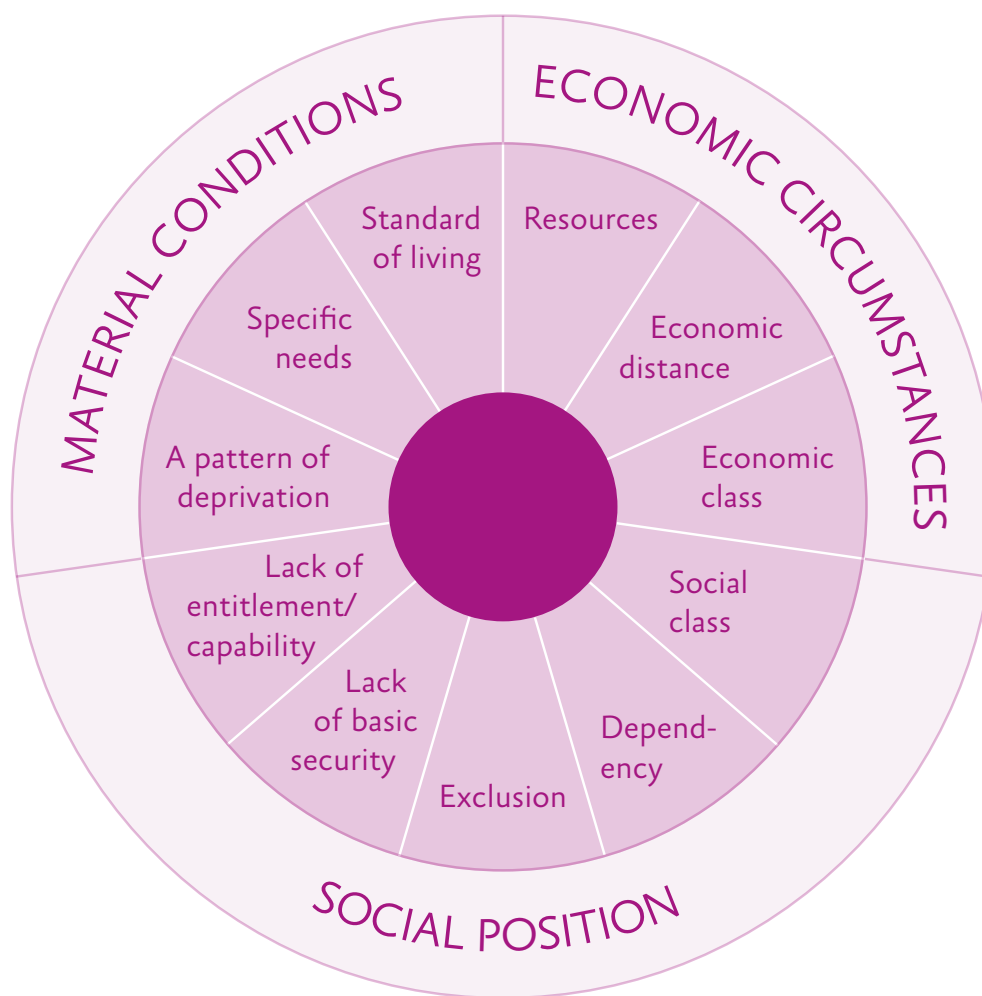
Defining ‘poverty’ is a highly complex issue. There is no single definition of poverty in the UK, or indeed any single concept of poverty which stands outside of history and culture. Rather, understanding what it means to be ‘poor’ is shaped by the socio-economic, structural and cultural contexts in which discussions take place. Because poverty is a construction, different societies and groups within any society may construct it in different ways. Defining poverty is also highly political, because of the moral imperative to tackle poverty and the implications for distribution of resources. As such, it is highly contested.<sup>7</sup>

At its heart, the definition of poverty is a moral question – it refers to hardship which is unacceptable. Poverty may refer to:

- **Economic position** – low income, limited resources, inequality or low social class
- **Material conditions** – access to goods and services, multiple deprivation or a low standard of living

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7. Thomas Brown, ‘Causes of Poverty in the United Kingdom’, 2016, p. 1 [www.researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/LLN-2016-0036#fullreport](http://www.researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/LLN-2016-0036#fullreport); Ruth Lister, *Poverty*, 1 edition (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004), p. 3.



- **Social position** – through lack of entitlement, dependency or social exclusion.<sup>8</sup>

The Church Urban Fund conceptualises poverty as ‘a web of interlinked factors that together have a significant impact on an individual’s ability to flourish’. Recognising that people can be impoverished in different ways, they group the multiple and diverse experiences of poverty into three categories:

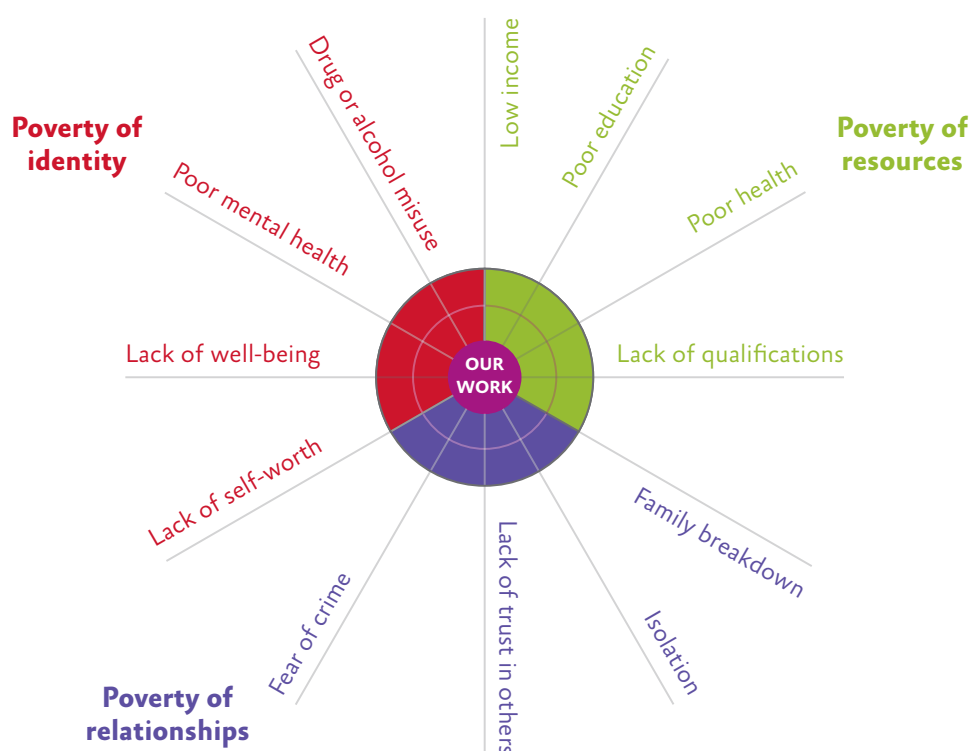
- **Poverty of resources** – when people lack sufficient resources such as income, skills, qualifications or health, to achieve a good standard of living. Where resources are limited, so are people’s choices and opportunities
- **Poverty of relationships** – when people lack the strong and supportive relationships on which individual, family and community life are built, resulting in loneliness and isolation. Where relationships are under pressure or where communities are fragmented and hostile, it is difficult to thrive in human terms

8. Paul Spicker, ‘Poverty’, An Introduction to Social Policy, 2016 [www.spicker.uk/social-policy/poverty.htm#measure](http://www.spicker.uk/social-policy/poverty.htm#measure)



- **Poverty of identity** – when people lack a strong sense of self-worth and a belief in their own ability to respond to challenges. Where these are missing, it can lead to low self-esteem, a lack of resilience and aspiration, poor mental health and even drug and alcohol misuse.

**Figure 4. Web of Poverty – Church Urban Fund**



Just as there is no agreed definition of poverty, there is no single definitive measure of poverty:

*'Poverty is complex and affects different people in different ways throughout their lives. As such, the Government does not have one recognised definition, or measure, of poverty which applies to [every] stage of someone's life. Our focus is on ensuring we have measures which drive the right approaches to tackling the root causes of poverty.'*<sup>9</sup>

Whilst sometimes frustrating lack of a single, clearly defined definition of poverty may not be such a bad thing:

*'A fairly narrowly focused definition of poverty best underpins measures designed to estimate the incidence of poverty. However, on its own, it would represent but a thin portrayal of the reality of poverty.'*<sup>10</sup>

9. 'Written Question: Poverty HL3820' (House of Lords, 2015)

[www.parliament.uk/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/lords/2015-11-23/HL3820](http://www.parliament.uk/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/lords/2015-11-23/HL3820)

10. Lister, p. 3.

## ***Absolute and Relative Poverty***

Even if definitions were agreed, though, poverty would be complex and difficult to quantify. At best, measures of poverty are ‘indicators’, or signposts.

Measures of poverty divide into two main types:

- **Absolute poverty** is based on subsistence, a minimum standard needed for survival. Absolute poverty is the basis of the World Bank’s standard of \$1.25 per day, at this level there are about 1,300 million poor people in the world, at \$2 a day, another arbitrary line, the figure approaches 2.5 billion.<sup>11</sup>

Such absolute poverty measures underlie claims that ‘there is no such thing as poverty in the UK today’. It is true that the UK does not, typically, see incomes or living standards which are desperately low by international or historical standards. However, absolute poverty is closely related to **destitution**, defined by Joseph Rowntree Foundation as, ‘*Not being able to afford to buy the essentials required to eat, stay warm and dry, and keep clean*’.

JRF estimates that 1.25 million people (184,500 households) in the UK experienced destitution at some point during 2015.<sup>12</sup>

- **Relative Poverty** is based on comparison with others in society. Relative poverty is most commonly assessed using arbitrary income measures. This method looks at how much income households have, taking into consideration the number and type of people in the household. Thresholds are then set which allow the household to be compared with all other households, such as the commonly used Government measure of poverty as having income lower than 60% of median household income. This itself can be measured before or after housing costs, with the latter giving a more realistic impression of the disposable income available to households.

An alternative poverty definition which considers the relative nature of poverty comes from JRF: ‘*Poverty is when a person’s resources are well below their minimum needs, including the need to take part in society.*’ This definition is relative because both ‘minimum needs’ and social participation depend on the standards and expectations of the society around us.

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11. Spicker.

12. Destitution in the UK (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 22 April 2016) [www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk/report/destitution-uk)

To determine a measure of this definition of poverty, JRF uses a **consensual method – the Minimum Income Standard (MIS)** which provides a benchmark of minimum needs based on what goods and services members of the public think are required for an adequate standard of living (including food, clothing, household bills, transport, and social and cultural participation). JRF uses 75% of MIS as an indicator of poverty.<sup>13</sup>

### ***This analysis***

Absolute poverty remains perhaps the most easily grasped and powerful representation of poverty. However, it is now generally accepted that ‘what it means to be poor’ needs to include some understanding of social participation and, therefore, of comparison with what is the generally accepted norm for the society in which someone is living (that is some element of relative poverty expressed on several different dimensions).

This briefing therefore relies on the most commonly used measures of relative income poverty expressed for children and pensioners. To capture the multidimensional nature of poverty, it then turns to the other commonly used National Statistics data on poverty as experienced by communities – the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

“ *Absolute poverty remains perhaps the most easily grasped and powerful representation of poverty. However... ‘what it means to be poor’ needs to include some understanding of social participation and, therefore, of comparison with what is the generally accepted norm for the society in which someone is living.* ”

Making sense of poverty, particularly its social and geographic distribution, recourse to official statistics is inevitable. However, it is important always bear in mind the points raised at the beginning of this section – that there are many ways that poverty can be obscured or hidden in official statistics.

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13. ‘We Can Solve Poverty in the UK’, JRF, 2016, p. 6 [www.jrf.org.uk/report/we-can-solve-poverty-uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk/report/we-can-solve-poverty-uk)



## 3.1 INCOME POVERTY

As discussed above, the most commonly used official measure of income poverty is having household income lower than 60% of median household income. There are two income poverty indicators, from published National Statistics, which are available at a local level:

- Child Poverty – the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in households receiving out-of-work benefits or tax credits with incomes less than 60% of median<sup>14</sup>
- Pensioner Poverty – the proportion of all those aged 60 or over who experience receiving Income Support or income-based Jobseekers Allowance or income-based Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit (Guarantee)<sup>15</sup>.

### *Neighbourhood Analysis*

Average (mean) neighbourhood rate of Child Poverty in the Diocese was 12%, with a range between 0.7% and 62.1% – Figure 5.

Two neighbourhoods, both in Milton Keynes, had rates of child poverty over 50% – one spanning parishes of Fenny Stratford, Water Eaton, Woughton, Bow Brickhill and Little Brickhill (62%) and another in Water Eaton (55%). A further 19 neighbourhoods had child poverty rates of 40-50% – 8 in Milton Keynes, 6 in Reading, 3 in Oxford, 1 in Cherwell.<sup>16</sup>

Average (mean) neighbourhood rate of 'Pensioner Poverty' in the Diocese was also 12%. Actual neighbourhood rates ranged from 0.8% to 54.2% – Figure 6.

Three neighbourhoods, all in Reading, had rates of Pensioner Poverty over 50% – one in the parish of St John the Evangelist, Reading, one spanning St John the Evangelist and St Bartholomew, and one in the parish of St Agnes with St Paul and St Barnabas. A further 14 neighbourhoods had pensioner poverty rates of 40-50% – 6 in Reading, 6 in Slough and 2 in Wycombe.<sup>17</sup>

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14. Source: IMD 2015 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index'. 'Income deprived families' defined as families that either receive Income Support or income-based Jobseekers Allowance or income-based Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit (Guarantee) or families not in receipt of these benefits but in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit with an equivalised income (excluding housing benefit) below 60 per cent of the national median before housing costs. (IMD Technical Report, p.33)

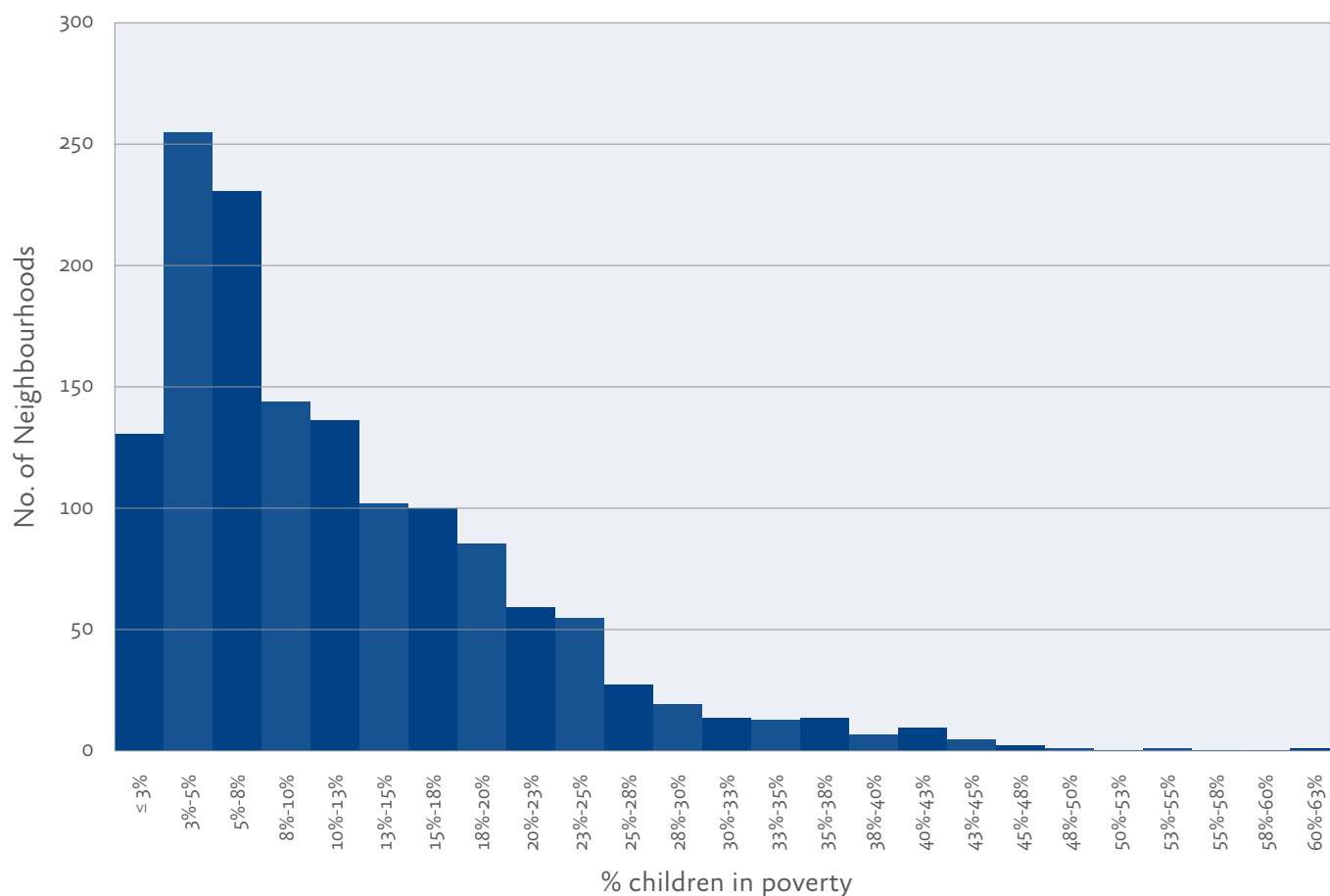
15. Source: IMD 2015 'Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index' (IMD Technical Report, p.33)

16. Alternatively, there were 27 neighbourhoods in the top 10% for child poverty in England (cut off <=38.7) – 12 in Milton Keynes, 6 in Oxford, 6 in Reading, and 1 each in Cherwell, Chiltern and West Berkshire – and a further 43 in the top 10-20% (30.3-38.6%)

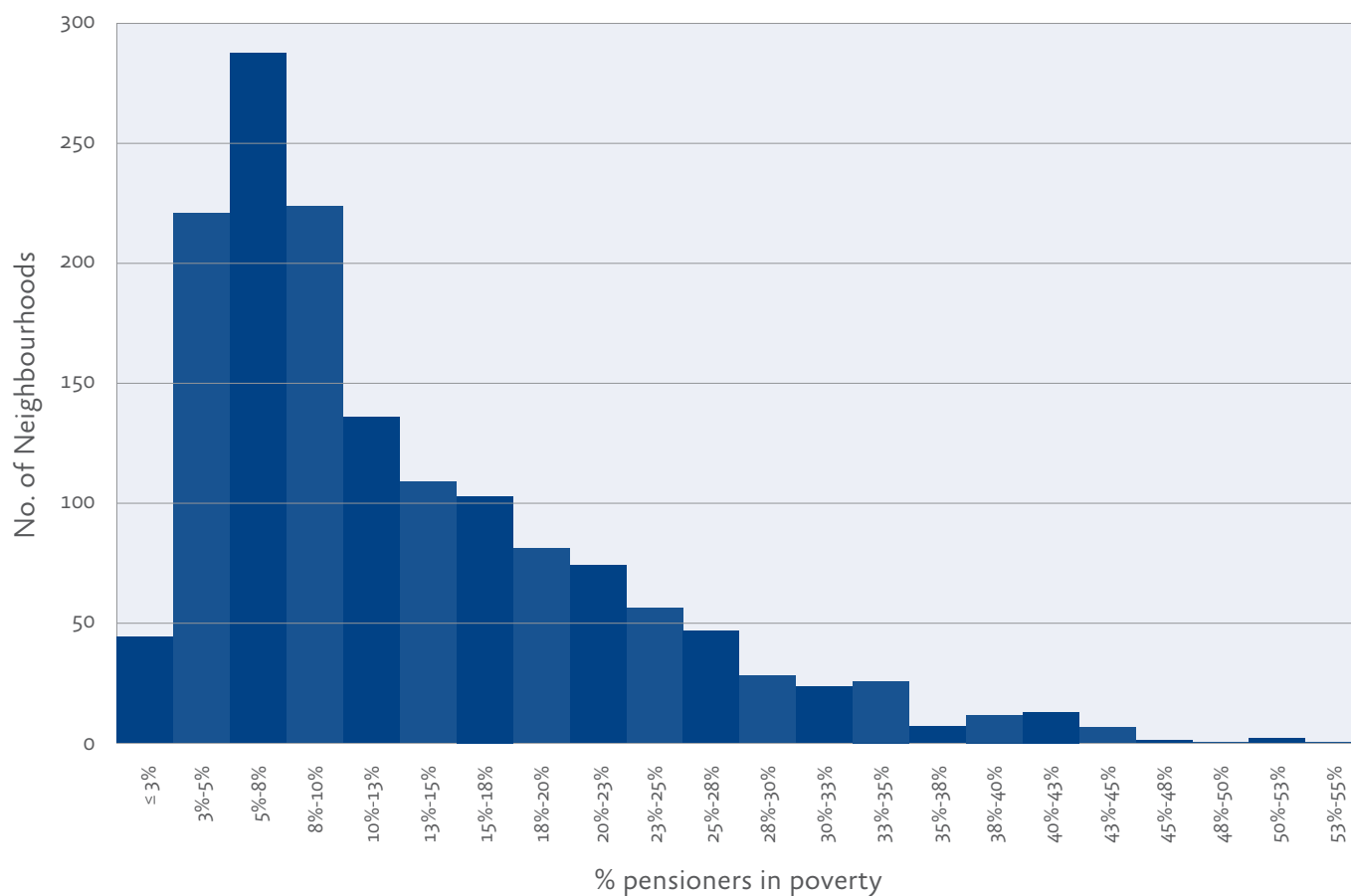
17. Alternatively, there were 36 neighbourhoods in the top 10% for pensioner poverty in England (cut off <=37%) – 14 in Reading, 11 in Slough, 5 in Wycombe, 4 in Milton Keynes, 1 in Aylesbury Vale and 1 in Cherwell – and 62 in the top 10-20% (28.5-36.7%)

There was a statistically significant correlation between child and pensioner poverty – indicating that, typically, areas with higher child poverty were more likely to have higher rates of pensioner poverty. However, this relationship weakened in higher poverty neighbourhoods: those with highest rates of either pensioner or child poverty only had medium-high levels of the other. Further analysis would be required to fully understand these patterns, but it seems likely that this is related to the demographics and, possibly, housing types in those neighbourhoods.

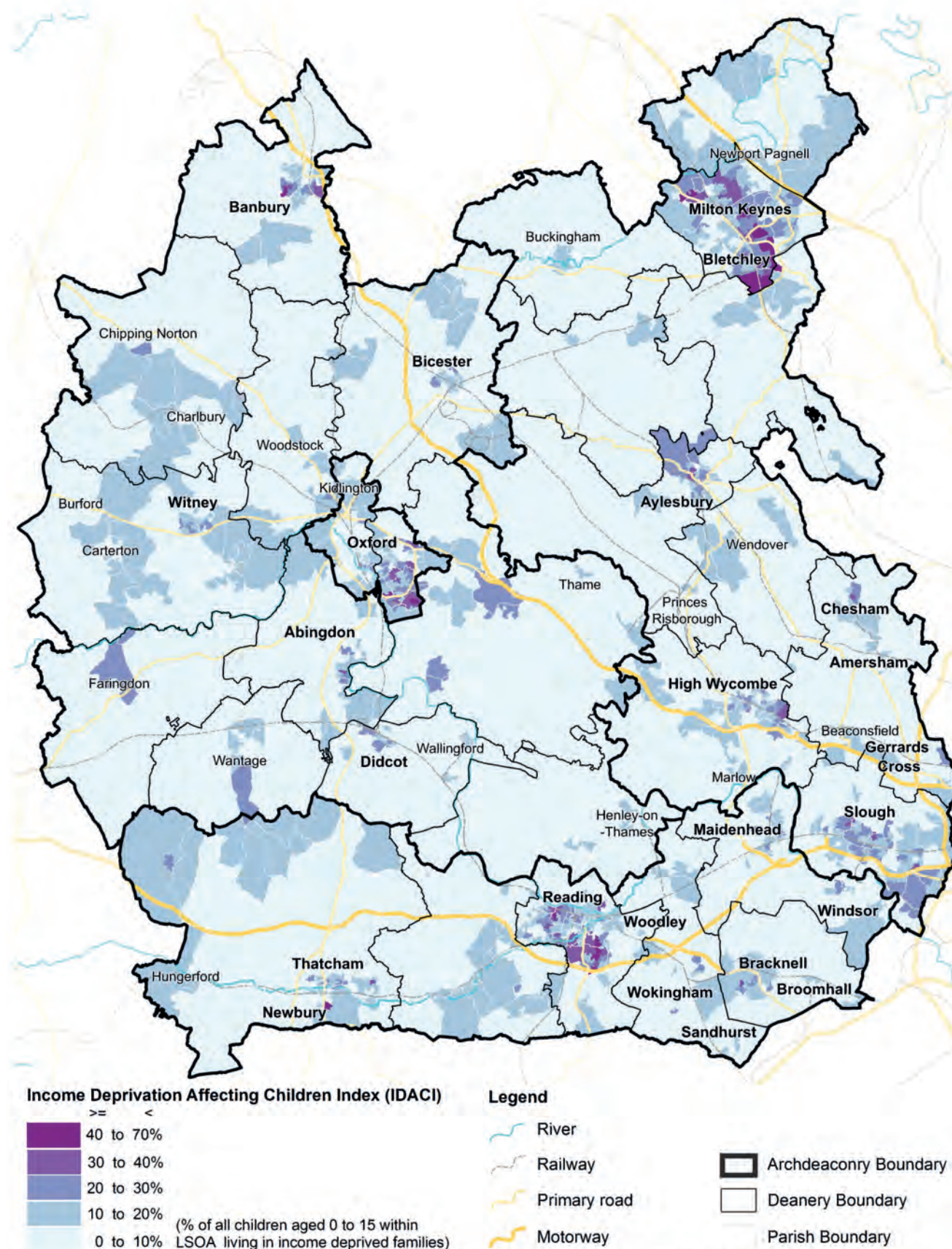
**Figure 5. Child Poverty**



**Figure 6. Pensioner Poverty**



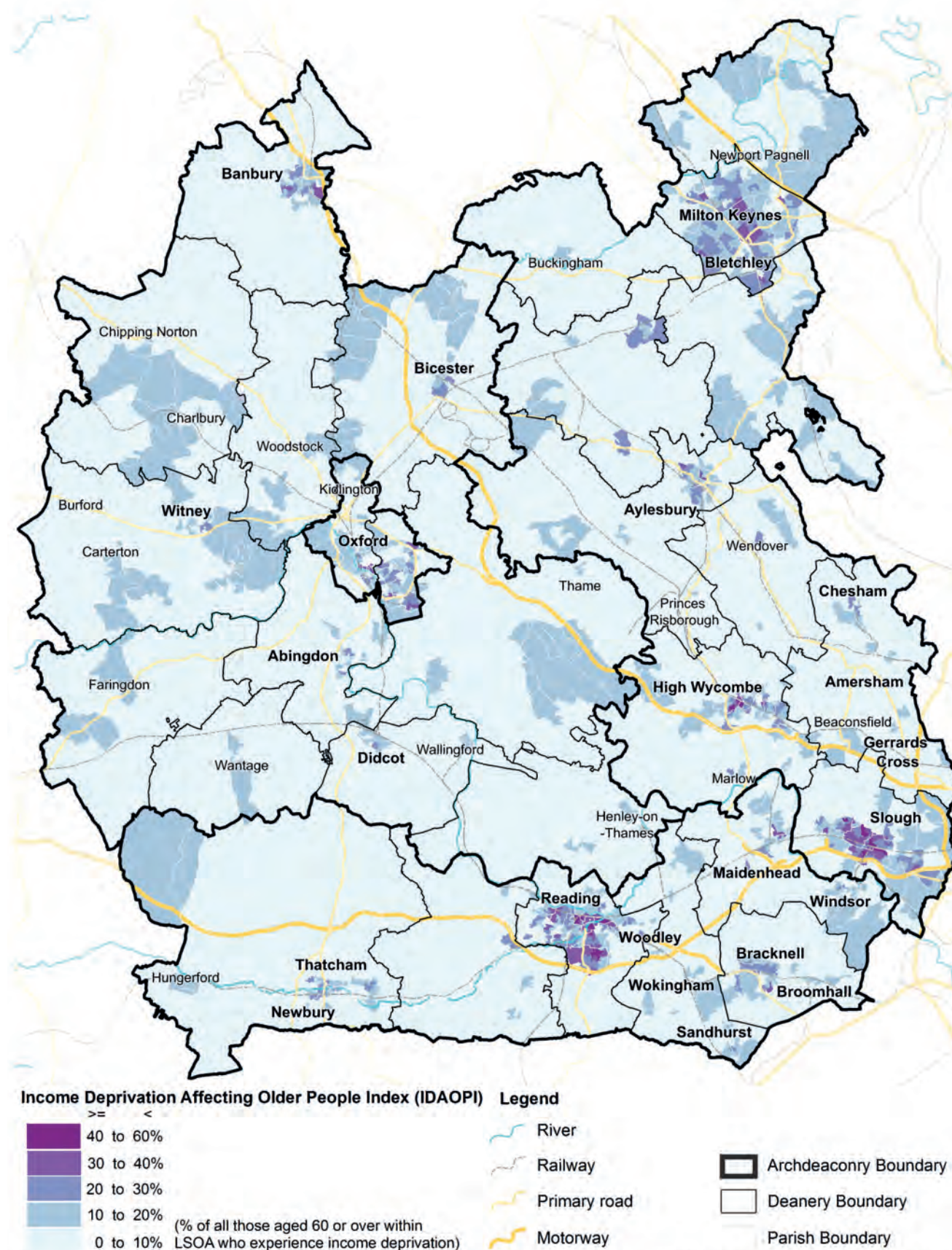
**Map 10. Income Poverty – Children (National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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**Map 11. Income Poverty – Pensioners (National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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# **4. DIMENSIONS OF DEPRIVATION**

As discussed in Section 2, poverty can be experienced in a variety of different ways. It can also be experienced and measured at a community level.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD 2015) is the official measure of relative deprivation for neighbourhoods<sup>18</sup> in England.

IMD 2015 ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). There is no definitive cut-off at which an area is described as 'deprived'. It can be useful, however, to describe how relatively deprived a small area is by saying whether it falls among the most deprived 10 per cent, 20 per cent or 30 per cent of small areas in England.

National and local organisations use the Index of Multiple Deprivation, sometimes in conjunction with other data, to distribute funding or target resources to areas. It is widely used across central government to focus programmes on the most deprived areas. Locally, it is often used as evidence in the development of strategies, to target interventions, and in bids for funding. The voluntary and community sector also uses the Index, for example, to identify areas where people may benefit from the services they provide.<sup>19</sup>

“ The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD 2015) is the official measure of relative deprivation for neighbourhoods in England. [It] ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area). ”

IMD can be used for comparing small areas across England, identifying the most deprived areas, exploring domains (or types) of deprivation and looking at changes in relative deprivation across time. It cannot be used to quantify how deprived a small area is (you can tell if one area is more deprived than other, but not by how much) or saying how affluent a place is<sup>20</sup>.

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18. Lower-layer Super Output Areas, based on the 2011 Census

19. *English Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 – Guidance* (Office for National Statistics, 2015), p. 2 [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/464430/English\\_Index\\_of\\_Multiple\\_Deprivation\\_2015\\_-\\_Guidance.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/464430/English_Index_of_Multiple_Deprivation_2015_-_Guidance.pdf)

20. IMD identifies aspects of deprivation, not affluence. For example, an area might have a relatively small proportion of people on low incomes, but also relatively few people in high incomes. Such an area may be ranked among the least deprived in the country, but it is not necessarily among the most affluent.

## ***How is IMD constructed?***

The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 are based on 37 separate indicators, organised across seven distinct domains of deprivation: Income; Employment; Education, Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services; Living Environment.

Each of these domains is based on a basket of indicators. Combining information from the seven domains, using appropriate weights, produces an overall relative measure of deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015.

The analysis presented here first examines the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles for neighbourhoods across the Diocese. Overall IMD score/rank hides very different patterns for different types (or domains) of deprivation. Further analysis therefore takes each domain or type of deprivation in turn, examining the distribution of deprivation for that domain.

Detailed analysis is not completed by parish because of the additional complexity of applying relative scores and ranking to aggregated units.

In summary, the analysis presented in this Section, and demonstrated graphically in Figure 7, reveals:

- Overall, the profile for Oxford Diocese is less deprived than for England as a whole – with a markedly higher proportion (28%) of neighbourhoods in the least deprived 10% nationally and above average proportions in the least deprived 40%
  - However, this prosperity is not shared across all neighbourhoods – 13 neighbourhoods (1% of all in the Diocese) are in the top 10% most deprived in England and 42 (3%) in the top 10-20%
- Deprivation in terms of Income and Employment broadly follow the profile of overall IMD (with income slightly more evenly distributed):
  - Generally, rates of employment across the Diocese are high: 32% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% for employment, 50% in the least deprived 20%. There were 9 neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived for employment, and 32 in the 10-20% most. (Note: this dimension indicates overall levels of worklessness, it does not relate to quality of employment, pay, terms and conditions etc.)

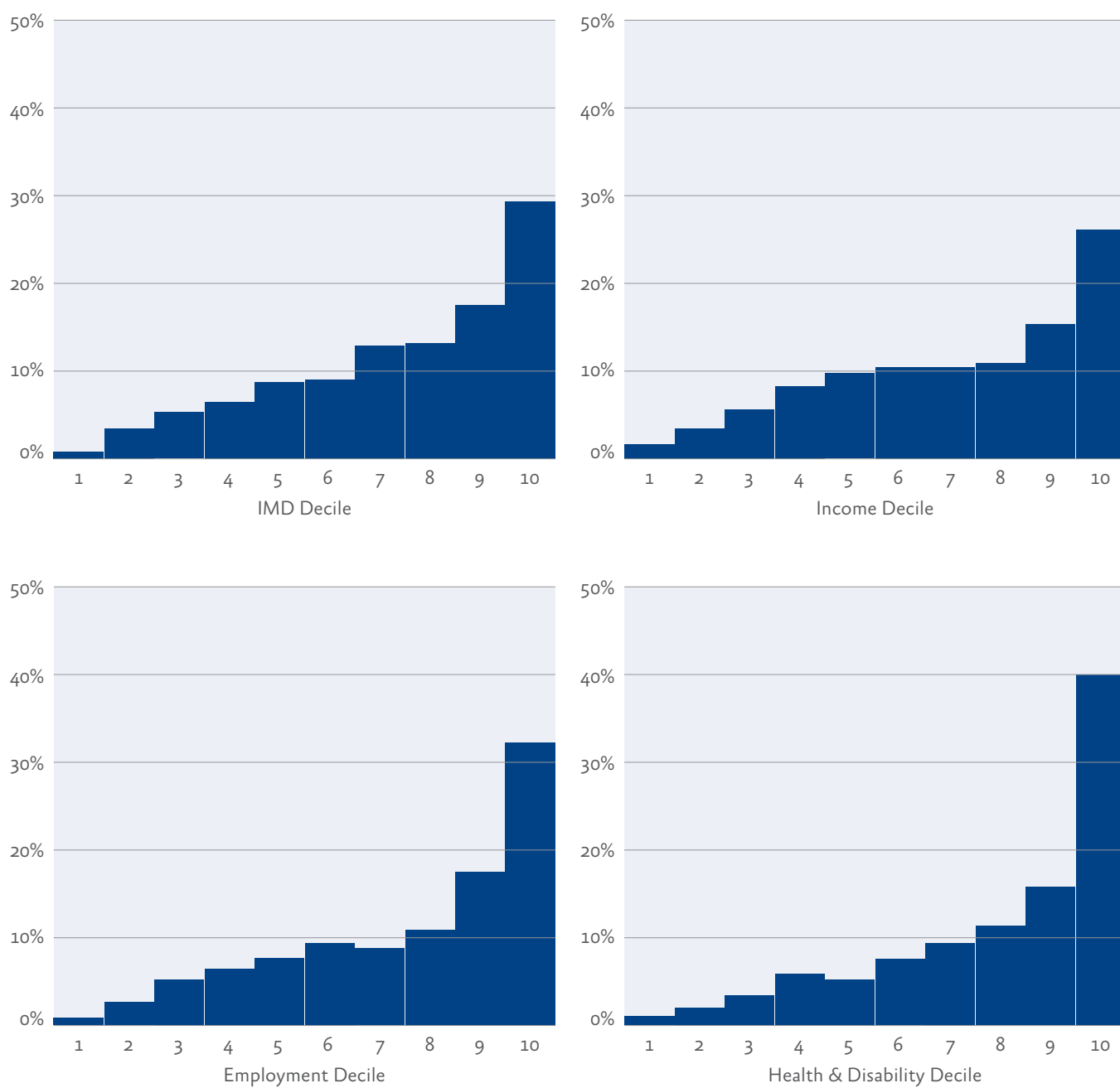
- Similarly, there were a high proportion of neighbourhoods in the least deprived 10% for Health/Disability deprivation
- Living Environment (housing quality and outdoor air quality/road safety) follows the overall profile – but these are very different areas, concentrated on Reading, Oxford and Slough but also including a wider distribution across areas not featuring in other dimensions; with much less prevalence in Milton Keynes
- Education, skills and training and Crime both showed a higher proportion of neighbourhoods in more deprived deciles, closer to (but still less deprived than) the national profile
- A very different picture emerges for Barriers to Housing and Services which measures distance to services and access to housing – 58% of our neighbourhoods are in the bottom 50% nationally.

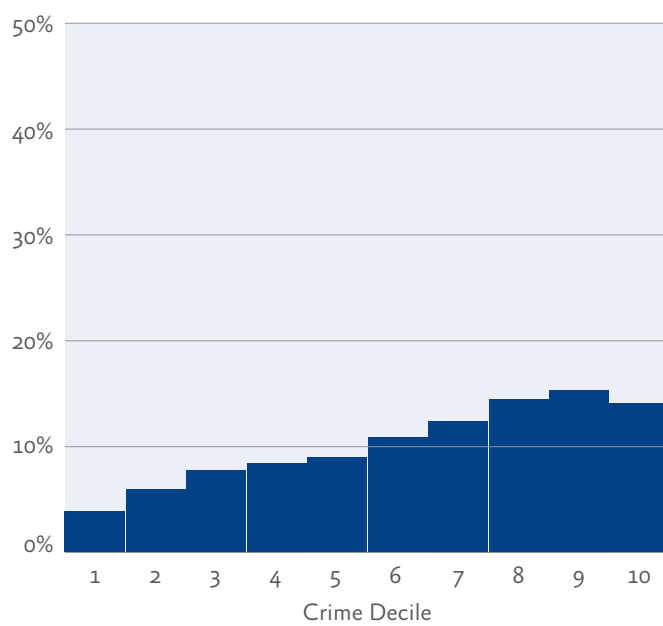
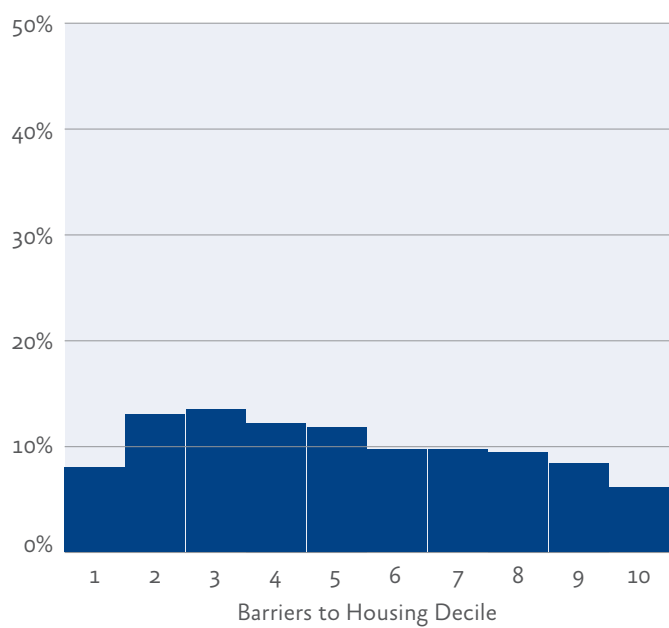
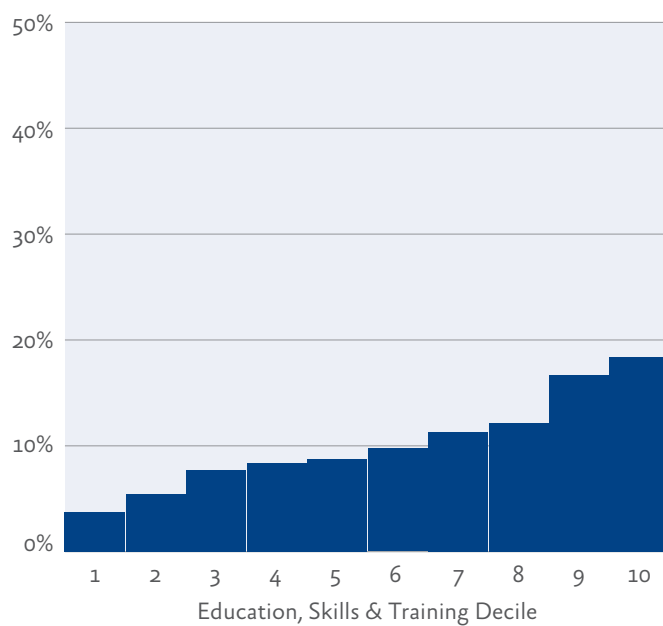
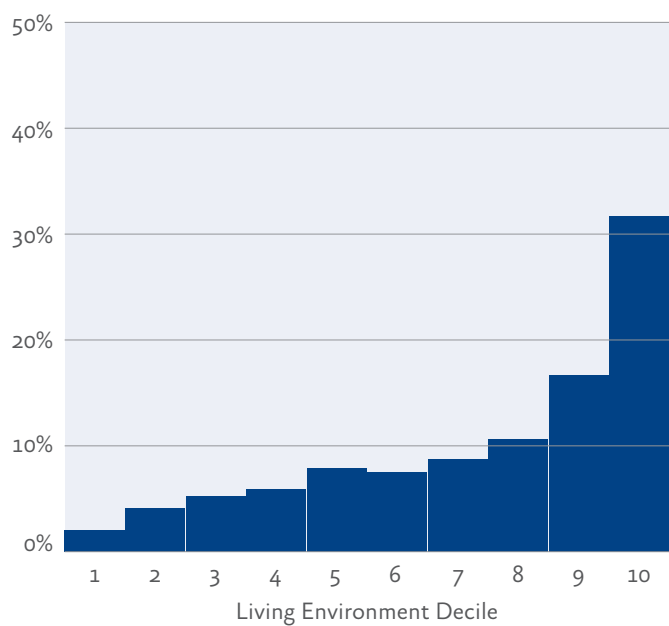
Note: In interpreting these IMD statistics, it is important to maintain awareness of their relative status. IMD profiles and deciles are a descriptor of current distributions of deprivation, relative to England as a whole. They cannot provide a clear indication of what 'ought' to happen. If, on income or employment for example, Oxford Diocese was to move closer to the national profile, this would result in some neighbourhoods shifting from less deprived towards more deprived. Alternatively, one or more neighbourhoods succeeding in becoming 'less deprived' would only result in them being relatively better placed within the whole national distribution, with other neighbourhoods replacing them in the most deprived groups.

Where relative IMD measures are most useful is in providing a broad-brush understanding of what the Diocese looks like, and in helping to identify neighbourhoods or communities which may be particularly struggling. This will then need to be backed up with closer understanding of the local context, in terms of statistics and local knowledge: which statistical indicators contribute to the ranking and why? What are the issues (which themselves may, or may not, be easily represented in statistics) that local people are particularly struggling with?



**Figure 7. IMD Profiles – Oxford Diocese according to national deciles**





## 4.1 OVERALL INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

### *Neighbourhood analysis (Overall IMD)*

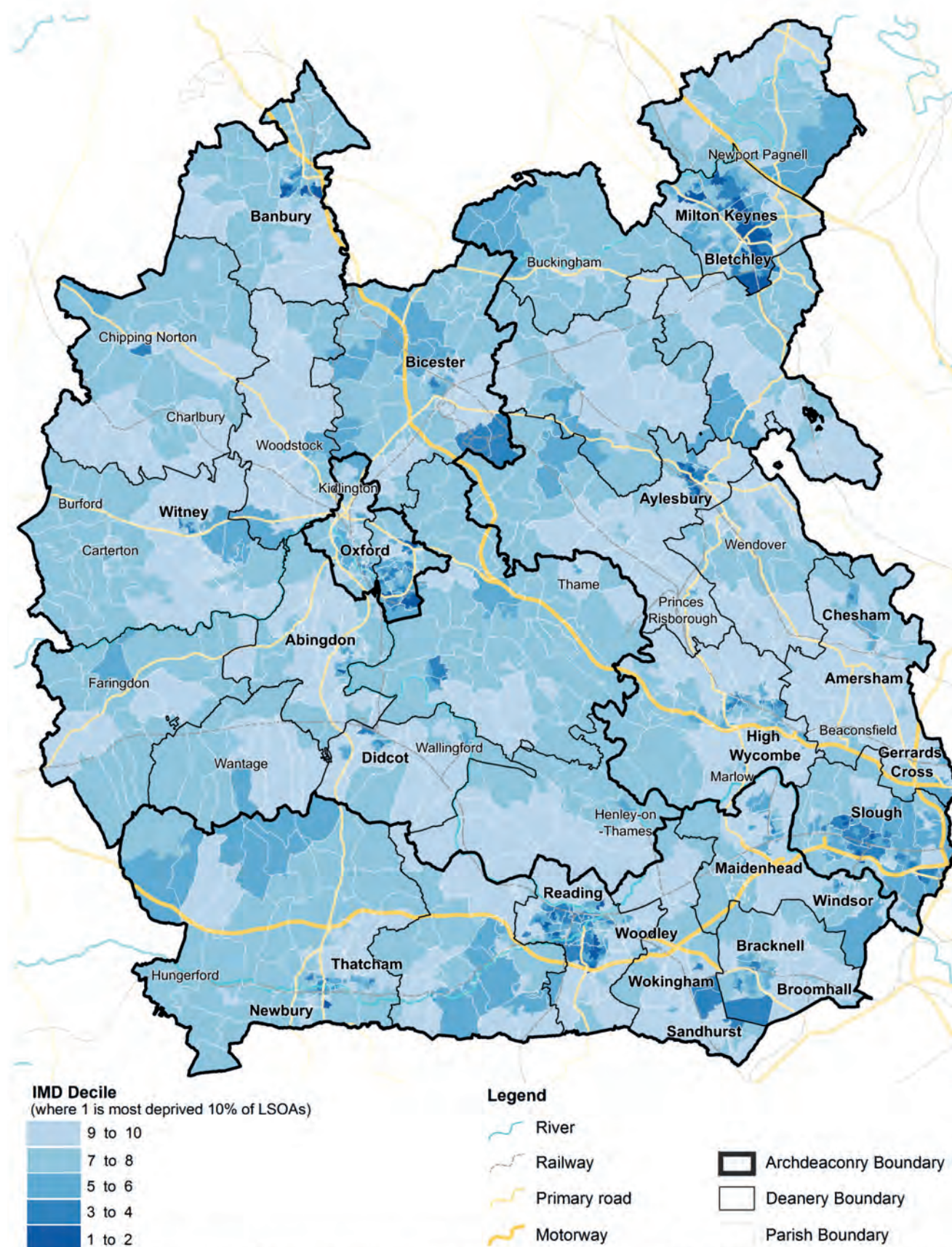
Overall, the IMD profile for Oxford Diocese is less deprived than for England as a whole – with a markedly higher proportion (28%) of neighbourhoods in the least deprived 10% nationally and above average proportions in the least deprived 40%.

However, this prosperity is not shared across all neighbourhoods:

- 13 neighbourhoods (1%) are in the 10% most deprived in England – 9 in Milton Keynes, 2 in Oxford and 2 in Reading
- 42 neighbourhoods (3%) in the 10-20% most deprived – 12 Milton Keynes; 8 Oxford; 8 Reading; 5 Slough; 4 Cherwell, 3 Aylesbury Vale, 1 Vale of White Horse; 1 West Berkshire
- 70 neighbourhoods (5%) in 20-30% most deprived – 22 Slough; 14 Reading; 10 Milton Keynes; 8 Oxford; 6 Aylesbury Vale; 3 Cherwell; 2 Wycombe; 1 each in Bracknell Forest, Chiltern, South Oxfordshire, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead.

“ Overall, the IMD profile for Oxford Diocese is less deprived than for England as a whole – with a markedly higher proportion (28%) of neighbourhoods in the least deprived 10% nationally and above average proportions in the least deprived 40%. ”

**Map 12. Index of Multiple Deprivation (National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.2 INCOME DEPRIVATION

The Income Deprivation domain represents the proportion of people on low incomes who are in receipt of benefits (Income Support, income-based JSA and ESA, Pension Credit) or tax credits with income below 60% of median income, plus asylum seekers in England in receipt of subsistence support, accommodation support, or both.

Note: those in this count receiving tax credits (but with income below 60% of median income) will be predominantly households where one or more adults are in work. It is important to be clear that income poverty is not just about worklessness. Nationally, 55% of working age families in poverty are in work<sup>21</sup>. Access to work is important, but not sufficient. It also matters what sort of work people can get, for what pay and on what terms and conditions – something which is not included in IMD statistics.

Income deprivation across the Diocese broadly followed the pattern for overall IMD. Out of the 1,430 neighbourhoods across Oxford Diocese:

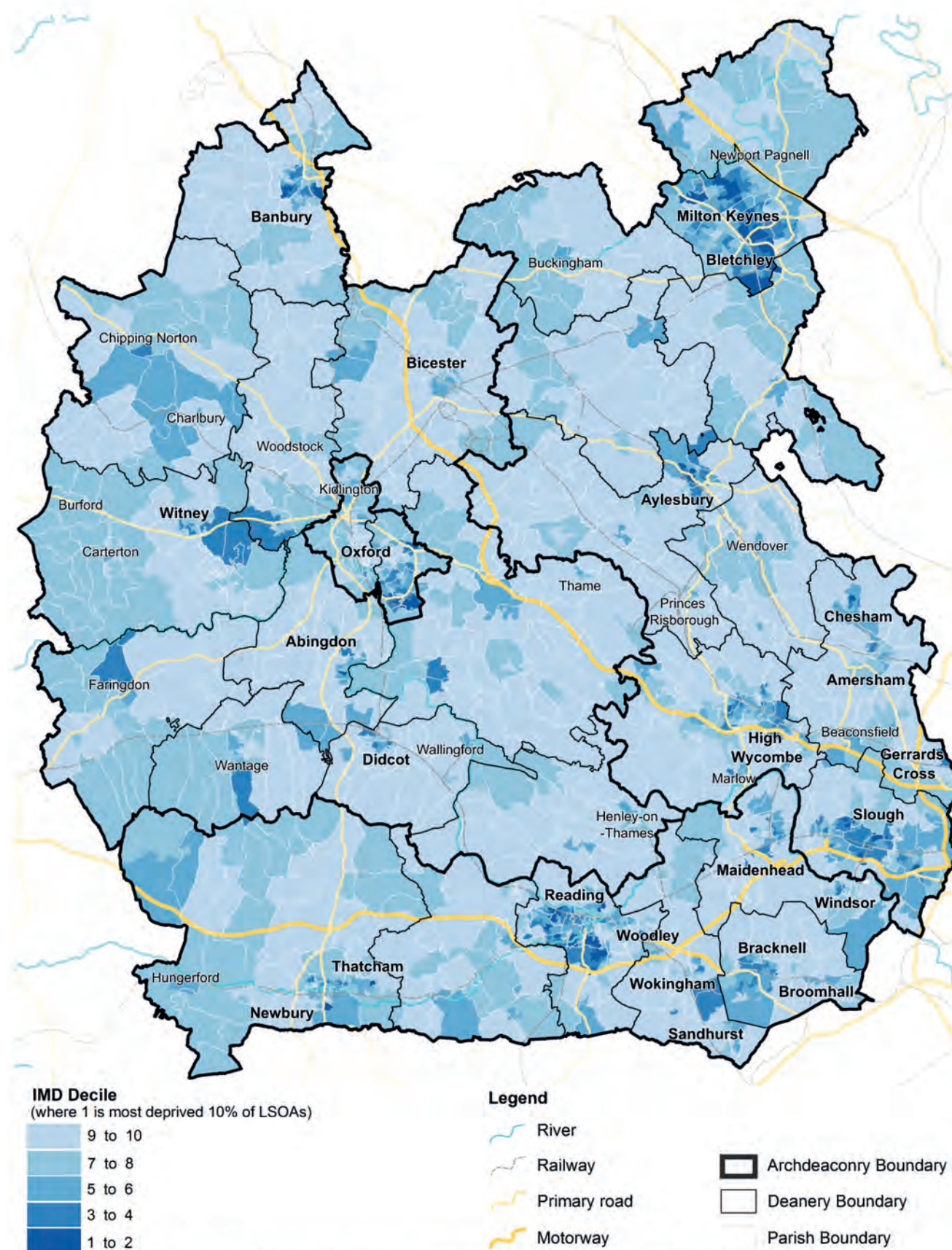
- 18 neighbourhoods (1%) were in the 10% most Income deprived in England<sup>22</sup> – 10 in Milton Keynes, 5 in Reading, 3 in Oxford
- 46 neighbourhoods (3%) in the 10-20% most Income deprived – 13 Milton Keynes; 10 in Reading; 7 Oxford; 6 Slough; 3 Cherwell; 2 Aylesbury Vale and in West Berkshire; 1 each in Chiltern, Vale of White Horse and Wycombe
- 78 neighbourhoods (6%) in 20-30% most deprived – 18 in Slough; 15 Milton Keynes; 10 Reading; 7 Oxford; 7 in Aylesbury Vale; 6 in Wycombe; 5 in Cherwell; 3 in Windsor and Maidenhead; 2 West Berkshire and West Oxfordshire; 1 each in Bracknell Forest, South Oxfordshire and Wokingham
- 26% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% across England for income
- 52% in the least deprived 30% of neighbourhoods.

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21. [www.jrf.org.uk/press/work-poverty-hits-record-high-housing-crisis-fuels-insecurity](http://www.jrf.org.uk/press/work-poverty-hits-record-high-housing-crisis-fuels-insecurity)

22. Being in the top 10% of Income IMD nationally indicates an income poverty rate of over approximately 31% of households, the highest in Oxford Diocese being 44%

**Map 13. IMD – Income Deprivation (National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.3 EMPLOYMENT

Conversations early in this work identified the significance of changing labour-markets for the changing profile of poverty and marginalisation across Oxford Diocese.

Examples given included:

- ‘Oxford used to be an industrial city in its own right, with the car industry having a major impact on employment statistics.’
- ‘There has been a similar pattern of loss of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in other areas, including Banbury, with local people finding it difficult to switch sectors to find alternative employment.’
- ‘The influx of high-tech jobs hasn’t benefited the local population because they are taken by people moving in from further afield.’
- ‘There is a cycle of low pay-no pay for those in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, as many jobs become less secure.’

The Employment Deprivation domain is based on receipt of out-of-work benefits among working age<sup>23</sup> adults, comprising both conventional unemployment (those claiming JSA), sickness/disability benefits (Employment and Support Allowance; Incapacity Benefit; and Severe Disablement Allowance) and Carer’s Allowance.

“Oxford used to be an industrial city in it’s own right, with the car industry having a major impact on employment statistics.”

“The influx of high-tech jobs hasn’t benefited the local population because they are taken by people moving in from further afield.”

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23. Aged 18-59/64

## ***Neighbourhood analysis***

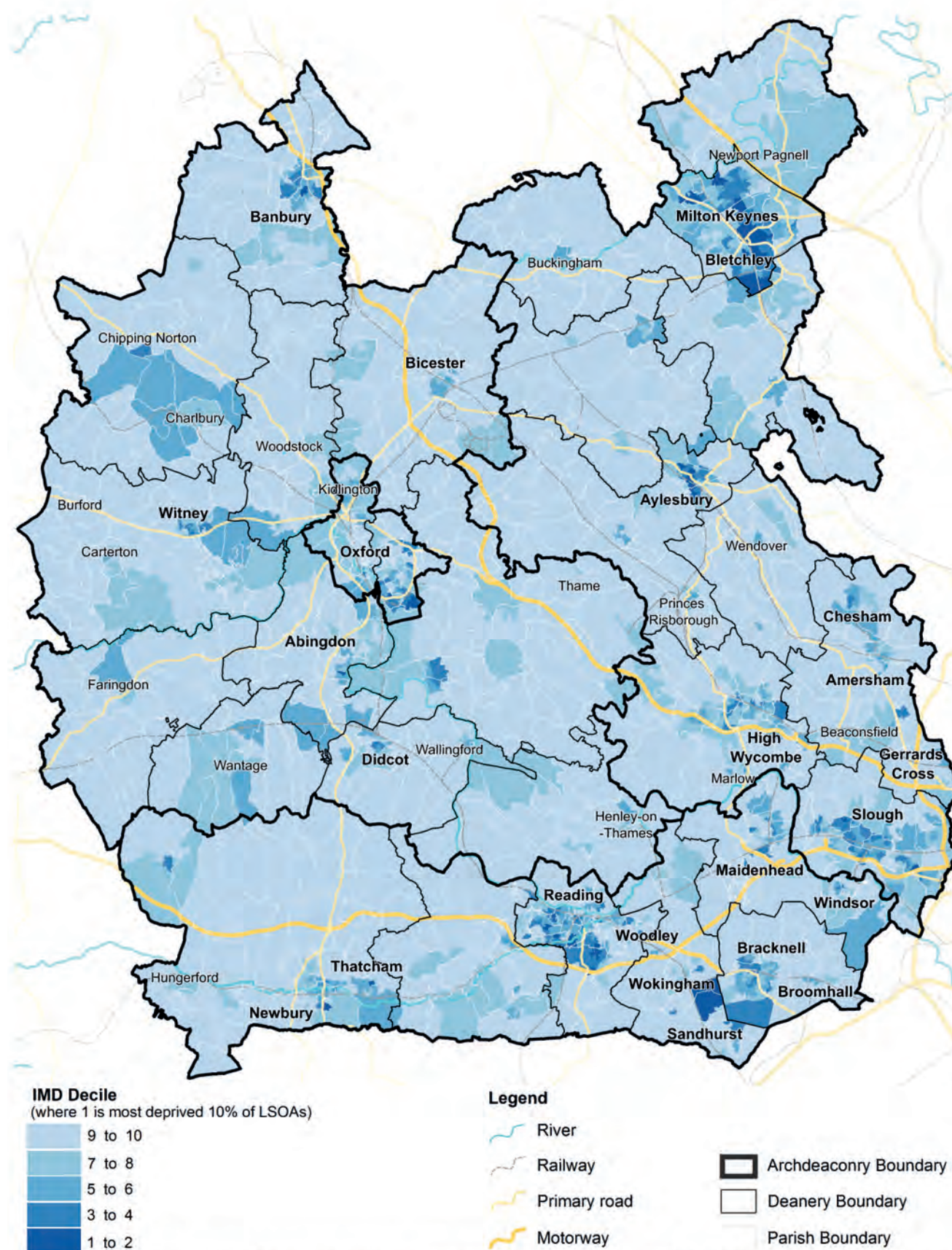
Across Oxford Diocese, neighbourhoods were less likely to be highly ranked for employment deprivation (compared with income or overall IMD). Indicating that, generally, rates of employment across the Diocese are high:

- 32% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% for employment, 50% in the least deprived 20%
- Only 9 neighbourhoods (less than 1%) were in the 10% most deprived in England for employment – 7 in Milton Keynes; 2 in Reading
- 34 neighbourhoods (2%) in the 10-20% most deprived – 12 Milton Keynes; 6 in Reading; 5 in Oxford; 4 in Aylesbury Vale; 2 each in Slough and West Berkshire; 1 each in Cherwell, Vale of White Horse and Wokingham
- 70 neighbourhoods (5%) in 20-30% most deprived – 12 Milton Keynes; 12 in Slough; 9 each in Reading and Oxford; 6 each in Aylesbury Vale and Cherwell; 4 in Windsor and Maidenhead and Wycombe; 2 in Bracknell Forest, Chiltern, West Oxfordshire and 1 in Wokingham.

(Note: this dimension indicates overall levels of worklessness, it does not relate to quality of employment, pay, terms and conditions etc.)



**Map 14. IMD – Employment (National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.4 HEALTH DEPRIVATION AND DISABILITY

For the Diocese as a whole, life-expectancy for boys (80 years) and girls (84 years) stands at around the national average (79 years and 83 years, respectively)<sup>24</sup>.

Three aspects of poor health were raised by contributors to the initial conversations:

- ‘The relationship between ill-health and work – once people lose their job for health-related reasons, their quality of life dramatically reduces on several fronts (income, loss of wider benefits of work, loss of social interaction). The combination of loss of income and illness can make it very hard to get out and participate in society, this in turn can make returning to working seem even harder.’
- ‘There are challenges faced by young carers.’
- Mental Health – reported to be a significant challenge in several communities, specifically Reading. Commentators observed particular challenges around reductions in funding for community based mental health services.

In the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Health Deprivation and Disability domain is comprised of the following indicators:

- Years of potential life lost
- Comparative illness and disability ratio
- Acute morbidity
- Mood and anxiety disorders.

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24. Source: Church Urban Fund Diocesan Briefings ([www.cuf.org.uk/diocesan-briefings](http://www.cuf.org.uk/diocesan-briefings)).

Note: only includes parishes with more than 500 residents.

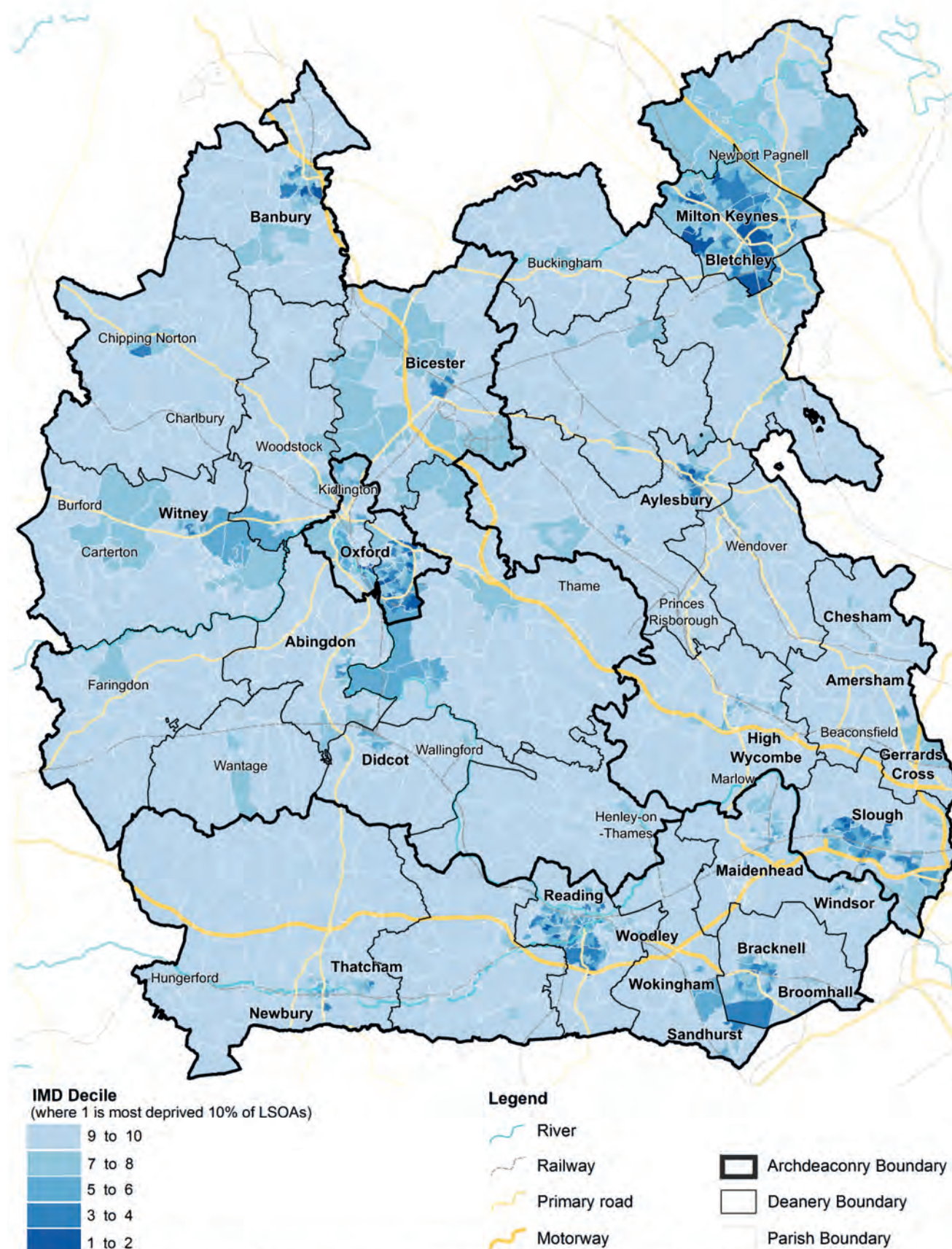
40% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% across England, and 56% in the least deprived 20% of neighbourhoods

Out of the 1,430 neighbourhoods across Oxford Diocese:

- 8 neighbourhoods (1%) were in the 10% most deprived for Health and Disability in England – 6 in Milton Keynes; 2 in Oxford
- 26 neighbourhoods (2%) in the 10-20% most deprived – 10 in Oxford; 8 in Milton Keynes; 3 in Reading; 2 each in Cherwell and Slough; 1 in Aylesbury Vale
- 46 neighbourhoods (3%) in 20-30% most deprived – 14 in Milton Keynes; 9 each in Oxford and Slough; 5 in Reading; 4 in Cherwell; 2 in Aylesbury Vale; 1 each in Bracknell Forest, West Oxfordshire and Windsor and Maidenhead.



**Map 15. IMD – Health Deprivation and Disability  
(National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.5 LIVING ENVIRONMENT

The Living Environment Domain comprises: Two very different sorts of indicators:

- Indoors:
  - Housing in poor condition
  - Houses without central heating
- Outdoors:
  - Air quality
  - Road traffic accidents

It is possible that different indicators may play a different role in the overall score in different areas.

The Living Environment domain follows a similar profile to Health and Disability deprivation – but occurs in very different areas, concentrated on Reading, Oxford and Slough but also including a wider distribution across areas not featuring on other dimensions; with much less prevalence in Milton Keynes. High rates in some more rural areas may reflect quality of housing, particularly lack of access to mains gas for central heating.

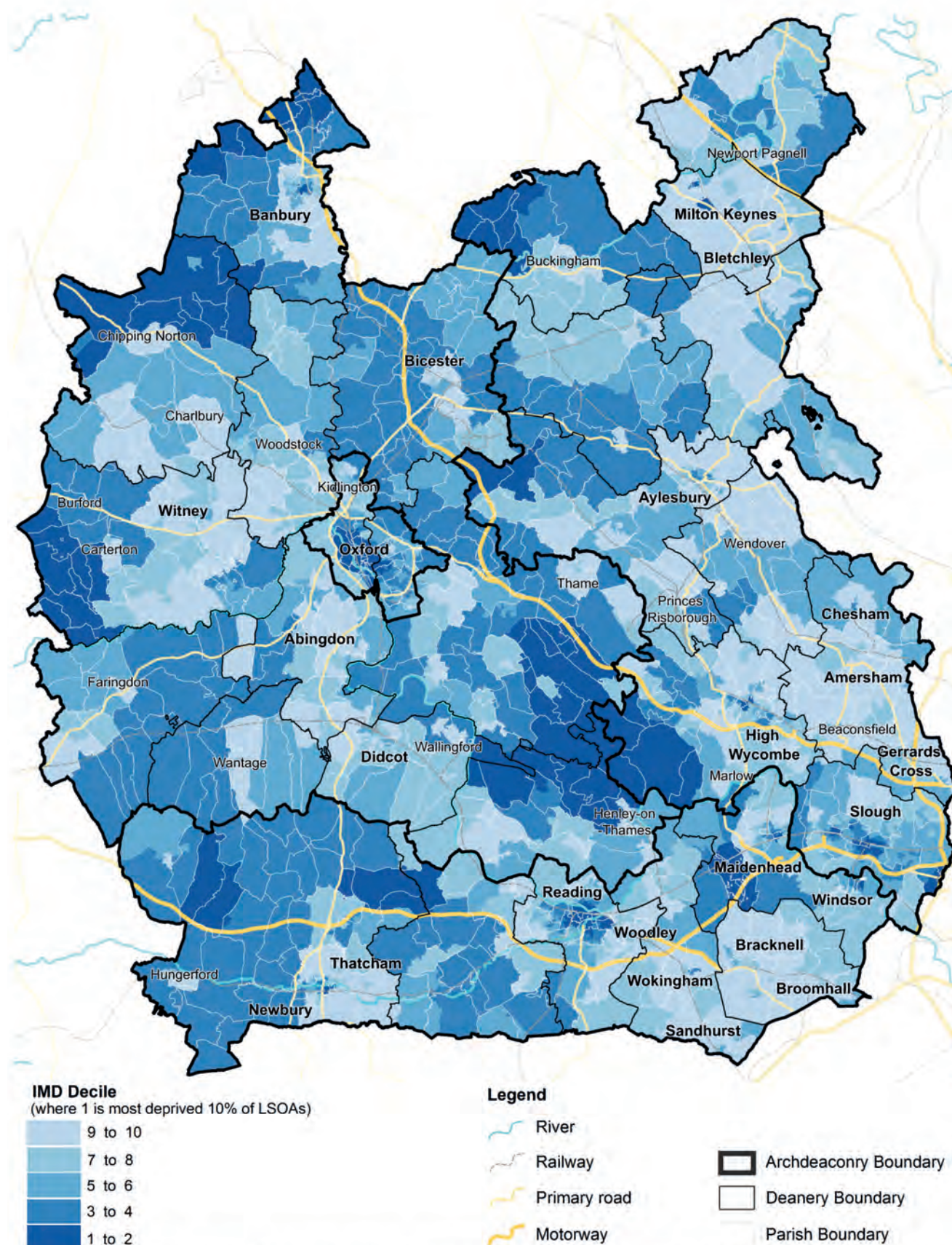
Out of the 1,430 neighbourhoods across Oxford Diocese:

- 30 neighbourhoods (2%) were in the 10% most deprived for Living Environment in England – 19 in Reading; 6 in Oxford; 4 in Slough and 1 in Cherwell
- 55 neighbourhoods (4%) in the 10-20% most deprived – 12 in Oxford; 10 in Reading; 8 in Slough; 4 in South Oxfordshire; 3 each in Cherwell, West Berkshire, West Oxfordshire, Windsor and Maidenhead and Wycombe; 2 each in Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes; 1 each in South Northamptonshire and Stratford-on-Avon
- 72 neighbourhoods (5%) in 20-30% most deprived – 9 each in Oxford, Reading, Cherwell and West Berkshire; 8 in Slough and Aylesbury Vale; 5 in South Oxfordshire and Windsor and Maidenhead; 3 in Wycombe; 2 in Milton Keynes and Vale of White Horse; 1 each in West Oxfordshire, Cotswold and Wokingham.

32% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% across England for Living Environment. 48% in the least deprived 20% of neighbourhoods. These appear to correlate with more affluent areas.



**Map 16. IMD – Living Environment  
(National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.6 EDUCATION, SKILLS AND TRAINING

The Education, Skills and Training domain is comprised of the following indicators:

- For children and young people:
  - Key stage 2 attainment: average points score
  - Key stage 4 attainment: average points score
  - Secondary school absence
  - Staying on in education post 16
  - Entry to higher education
- For working age adults<sup>25</sup>:
  - Adults with no or low qualifications,
  - English language proficiency, aged 25-59/64

Across the Diocese of Oxford:

- 50 neighbourhoods (4%) were in the 10% most deprived for Education and Skills in England – 10 in Oxford; 9 in Reading; 8 each in Cherwell and Milton Keynes; 6 in Aylesbury Vale; 4 in South Oxfordshire; 2 in West Oxfordshire; 1 each in Vale of White Horse, West Berkshire and Wycombe
- 78 neighbourhoods (6%) in the 10-20% most deprived for Education and Skills – 15 Milton Keynes; 9 in Reading; 8 each in Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe; 7 in Slough; 6 each in Cherwell and West Berkshire; 5 in Oxford; 4 in Windsor and Maidenhead; 3 each in South Oxfordshire and Wokingham; 2 in Bracknell Forest; 1 each in Chiltern and Vale of White Horse
- 102 neighbourhoods (7%) in 20-30% most deprived – 15 Milton Keynes; 15 in Slough; 11 in Cherwell; 9 each in Reading and Wycombe; 8 in Bracknell Forest; 6 each in Aylesbury Vale and Oxford; 5 in West Oxfordshire; 4 each in West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead and South Oxfordshire; 2 each in Vale of White Horse and Chiltern; 1 each in Wokingham and South Buckinghamshire.

18% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% across England for Education and Skills.

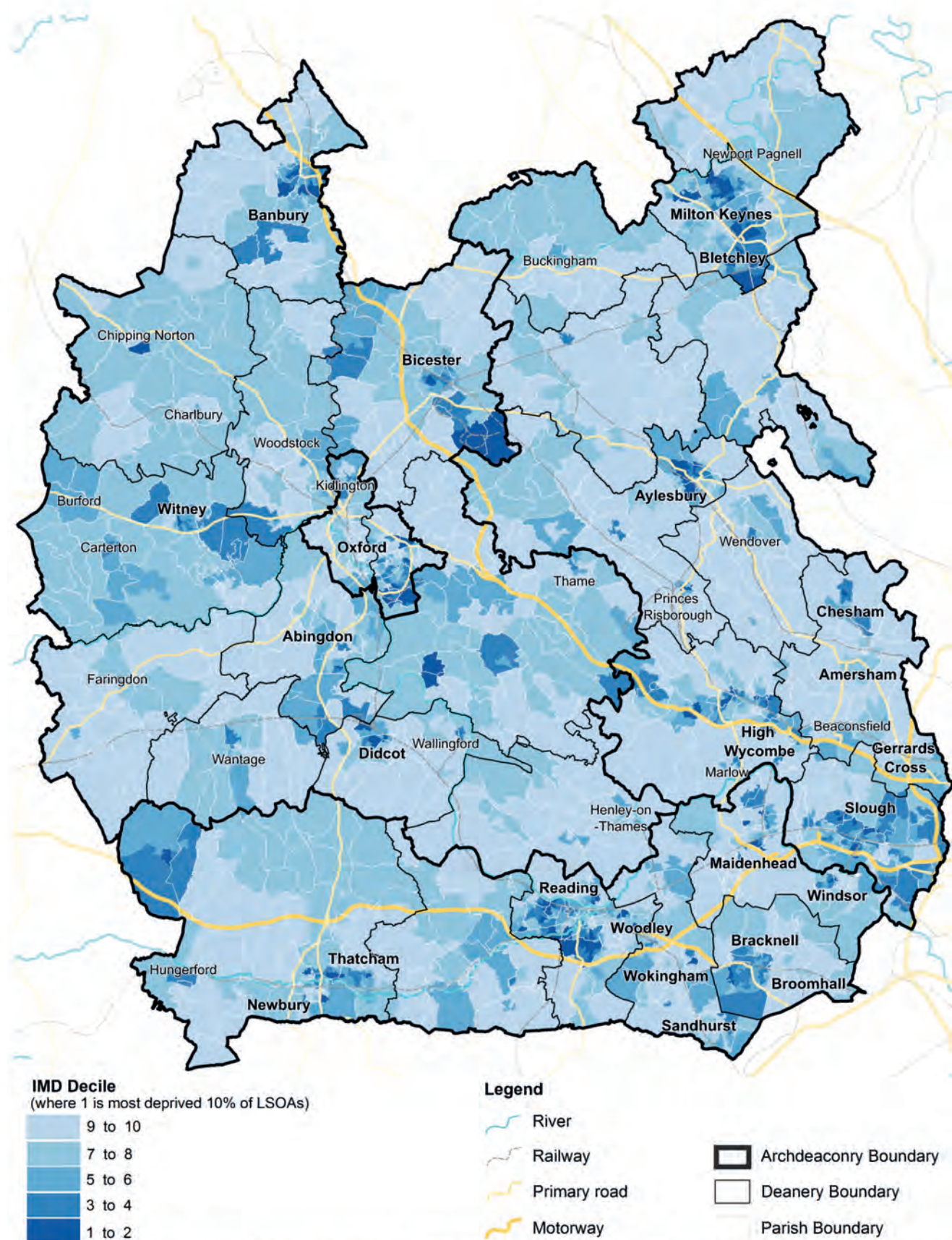
46% in the least deprived 30% of neighbourhoods.

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<sup>25</sup>. Working age defined as “aged 25-59 for women, 25-64 for men”



**Map 17. IMD – Education, Skills and Training  
(National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.7 CRIME

The Crime domain is comprised of recorded crime rates for:

- Violence
- Burglary
- Theft
- Criminal damage

14% of neighbourhoods were in the least deprived 10% across England for crime – a lower proportion than for other dimensions (other than Barriers to Housing and Services), indicating that lower deprivation is not necessarily directly correlated with lower reported crime<sup>26</sup>.

Out of the 1,430 neighbourhoods across Oxford Diocese:

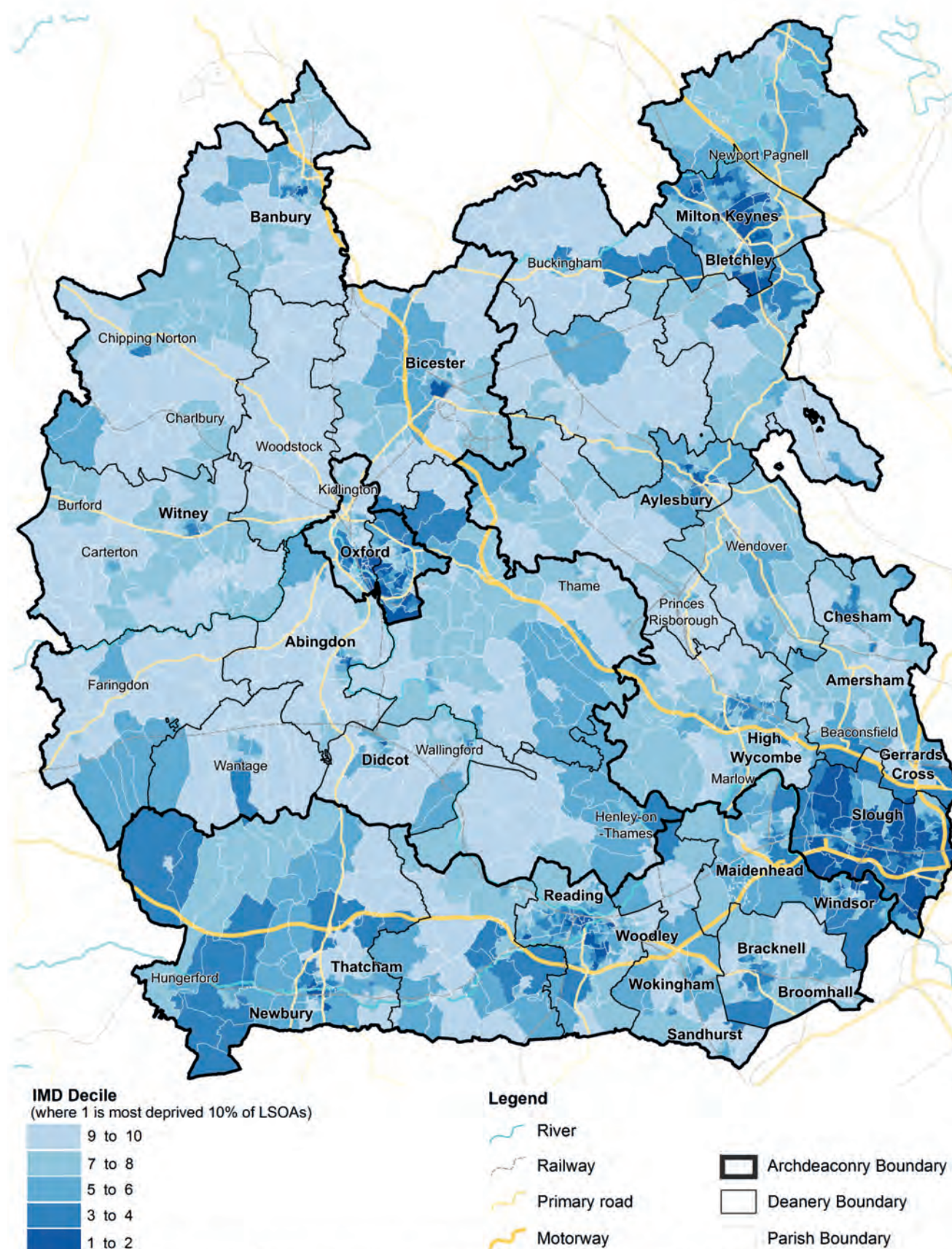
- 50 neighbourhoods (4%) were in the 10% most deprived for Crime in England – 19 in Slough; 11 in Milton Keynes; 6 in Oxford; 6 in Reading; 3 in Windsor and Maidenhead; 2 each in Aylesbury Vale and South Buckinghamshire; 1 in Cherwell
- 81 neighbourhoods (6%) in the 10-20% most deprived – 20 in Slough; 14 in Milton Keynes; 13 in Oxford; 10 in Reading; 6 in South Bucks; 5 in Windsor and Maidenhead; 3 in Cherwell; 2 in Aylesbury Vale and South Oxfordshire; 1 in Vale of White Horse
- 107 neighbourhoods (8%) in 20-30% most deprived – 18 in Slough; 15 Milton Keynes; 14 Reading; 12 Oxford; 10 in Windsor and Maidenhead; 9 in Aylesbury Vale; 6 in Wycombe; 5 in South Buckinghamshire and 5 in West Berkshire; 4 in Bracknell Forest; 2 each in Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and Chiltern; 1 in West Oxfordshire.

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<sup>26</sup>. Note: these are recorded crime rates – overall levels of crime may be higher.



**Map 18. IMD – Crime (National Statistics: IMD 2015)**



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## 4.8 BARRIERS TO HOUSING AND SERVICES

Within the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the Barriers to Housing and Services domain comprises:

- Geographical barriers
  - Road distance to post office; primary school; general store/supermarket; GP surgery
- Wider barriers
  - Household overcrowding
  - Homelessness
  - Housing affordability

The profile for Barriers to Housing and Services for neighbourhoods across Oxford Diocese was unlike any other dimension. Compared to other dimensions, it was much closer to – indeed slightly more deprived than – England as a whole: 58% of neighbourhoods in the 50% most deprived across England (Figure 8).

It is important to reflect that the Barriers to Housing and Services domain combines two very different sets of issues: distance to services, and housing (suitability, availability and affordability). It is likely that these will play out differently in different areas. This may be an area for future research.

**Figure 8. Barriers to Housing and Services – Deciles**

Decile	Percent	Number
1	8	112
2	13	184
3	13	190
4	12	173
5	12	166
6	10	136
7	9	135
8	9	132
9	8	118
10	6	84
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>1430</i>

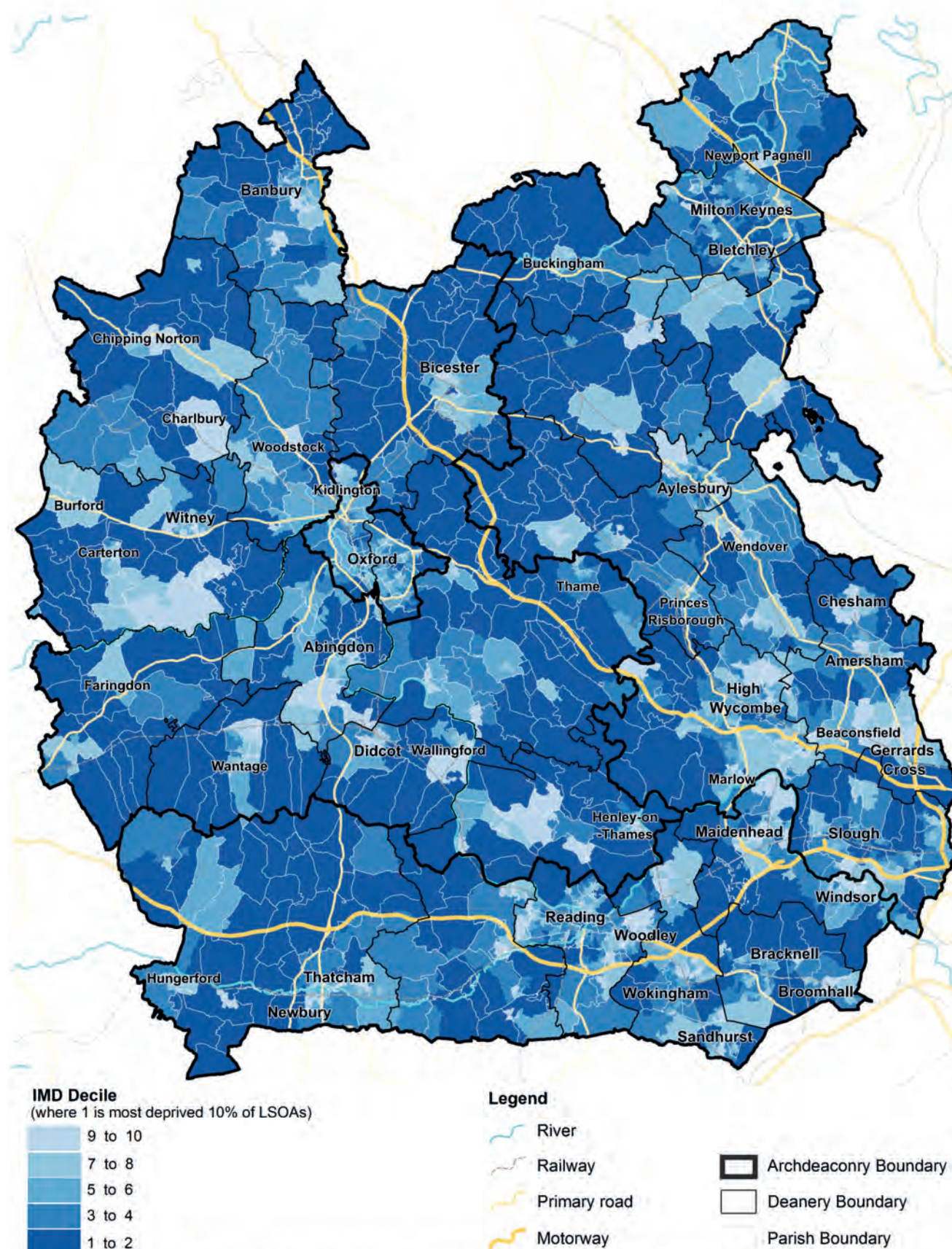
Overall:

- 112 neighbourhoods (8%) were in the 10% most deprived in England for Barriers to Housing and Services
- 184 neighbourhoods (13%) in the 10-20% most deprived
- 190 neighbourhoods (13%) in 20-30% most deprived
- 173 (12%) in the 30-40% most deprived
- 166 (12% in the 40-50% most deprived.

The most deprived areas were predominantly, but not exclusively, rural areas (Map 19)



**Map 19. IMD – Barriers to Housing and Services**  
(National Statistics: IMD 2015)



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Conversations with key individuals identified the separate issues of housing, and access to services, as key themes in relation to livelihoods and poverty across the Diocese.

In summary, the main areas of concern raised were:

- Housing – Access and Affordability
  - ‘High private rents make housing unaffordable to most local working families. So-called affordable housing in new developments often isn’t affordable at all.’
  - ‘Housing costs are driven up by commuter populations to London and other cities. Problems with access and affordability are driven by bottlenecks in land release and planning.’
  - ‘Housing prices impact on the wider society and economy – schools, hospitals and other public services are not able to recruit and keep keyworkers. There are so many knock-on effects.’
  - ‘The housing situation creates waves of transient populations which has a huge impact on communities.’
- Reduced access to social housing
  - Across the Diocese, rates of social housing are below average<sup>27</sup>. The supply of social housing is going down as demand is going up, with a particular effect on young families because of difficulty matching jobs and housing; families relocated for social housing may experience job loss because of an inability to travel
  - Example: in Reading the length of social housing lists means that the bar for eligibility is set high, but it is still very over-subscribed; people who lose their homes are in danger of being shipped out a long way (e.g. Slough), losing contact with family and friends
  - What social provision there is, is in poor condition, as Local Authorities are not keeping up with repairs.

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27. For example, Church Urban Fund reports Social Housing rates for Oxford Diocese as 14% compared to 18% for England as a whole. (Source: Church Urban Fund Diocesan Briefings; [www.cuf.org.uk/diocesan-briefings](http://www.cuf.org.uk/diocesan-briefings). Note: only includes parishes with more than 500 residents.)

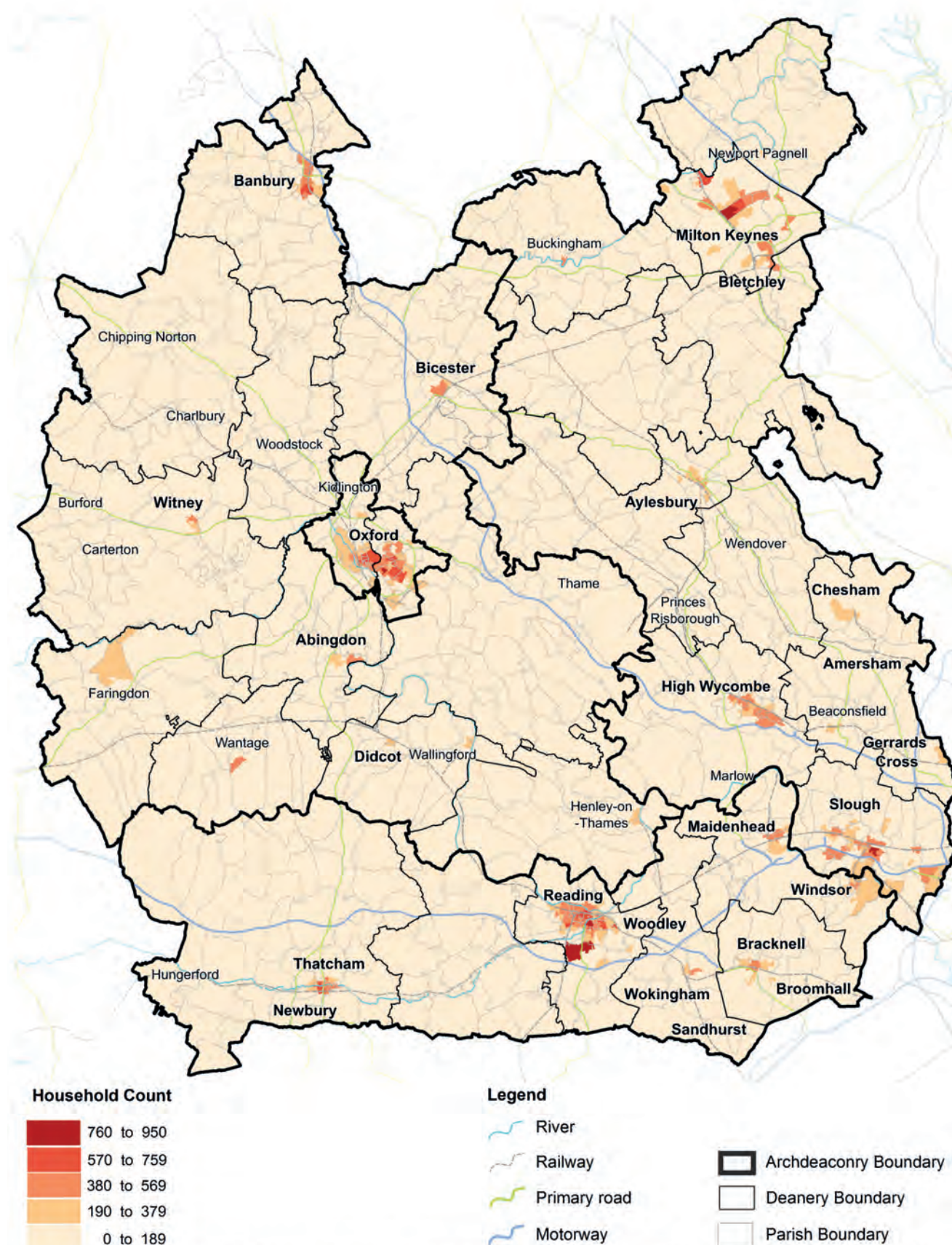
- Resulting challenges for local areas with higher social housing:
  - ‘People placed in social housing have to be in a particularly bad social and economic situation; this means that areas of social housing often get a bad name and are stigmatised. Help with housing becomes a disempowering thing that people don’t want.’
  - ‘The high turnover in social housing (because of scarcity and natural progression) results in a “turnover of deprivation”. This can leave areas feeling like they haven’t changed or moved on. People have, but the area hasn’t.’
- Homelessness – perceived increase both in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping:
  - ‘It’s literally on our church doorstep. It’s very hard to know how to help.’
  - ‘Newbury’s profile is changing more and more. It’s like “tent city”.’
  - ‘In Milton Keynes it’s a rising problem. We have winter night shelters for the first time.’
  - ‘In Reading it’s a growing problem – numbers and people who don’t fit the traditional profile – younger, articulate. The council don’t want organisations to serve homeless people because it thinks it will draw them in.’
  - ‘There’s lots of Sofa-surfing – the difficulty of families “not qualifying” for social housing.’

“ *[Homelessness is] literally on our church doorstep. It’s very hard to know how to help.* ”

“ *There’s lots of Sofa-surfing – the difficulty of families “not qualifying” for social housing.* ”

Map 20 shows the areas with particularly high numbers of households in rented accommodation. This highlights particular rental hot-spots around universities, but also other urban centres.

**Map 20. Count of Households in Rented Accommodation**  
**(Experian: MOSAIC, 2016)**



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# 5. CONCLUSIONS



This report is invaluable for anybody who needs to take a diocesan perspective on our current social context and articulate their place within it. But it is also helpful for anyone whose focus is purely local. Those engaged in mission at local level are rightly focused on their immediate context. But that context is rarely comprehensible without taking account of and understanding the bigger picture.

*'For Richer For Poorer'* draws out for us some of the key dynamics at work in our diocese:

- For many it is relative poverty that bites hardest. 'Only just managing' is tough enough, but if those living close by seem to have so much more than you do, it is much harder still. Relative deprivation in close proximity to excessive wealth is a reality for many living in the Diocese of Oxford
- The housing crisis is acute in a diocese where housing is some of the least affordable in the UK. Insecure housing and homelessness (in many forms) are experienced across our region, with the resulting challenge for churches of how to respond. A separate resource<sup>28</sup> is being published by the Department of Mission addressing this theme in more detail
- We have a greater wealth in our diversity than perhaps we imagined. Our racial and ethnic diversity is higher than the national average<sup>29</sup>, and we have many people of other faiths in our communities. Since this diversity is concentrated in particular geographical areas, we should consider how to listen better to deaneries like Burnham and Slough, Wycombe, Reading and Milton Keynes, about the joys and challenges of integration and what we can learn from them
- Much hardship and struggle is hidden, by isolation or by stigma. How can we become more alert to, and aware of, those experiencing, for example, the stress induced by debt; hunger brought about by food poverty; cold and misery resulting from being unable to afford fuel; loneliness brought about by lack of transport, mobility problems due to age, ill-health or caring responsibilities? As church we need proactively to look for what is hidden, bringing reality to light.

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28. Dwelling Places: Housing & Homelessness in the Diocese of Oxford.

29. For example, Church Urban Fund reports Ethnic Diversity for Oxford Diocese as 22% compared to 20% for England as a whole. (Source: Church Urban Fund Diocesan Briefings; [www.cuf.org.uk/diocesan-briefings](http://www.cuf.org.uk/diocesan-briefings). Note: only includes parishes with more than 500 residents.)

Our diocesan focus on mission shapes our way forward, for it emphasises the following:

- That God is at work on our communities right now, whether or not we recognise or take notice of this
- We are most effective in mission when we learn to notice where and how this is the case. Often God is at work where, and amongst those with whom, we would least expect it. We need to expand our imaginations and sharpen our powers of discernment
- We need to reach out to those in our communities who share our vision, if not our faith perspective. These so-called 'people of peace' are our potential partners in God's mission and we will be *engaging with* them, not doing things *to* or *for* them
- As we build relationships with our partners in the community, there will be a new sense of flourishing for those touched by those relationships. This is a task for laity and clergy together
- Statistics take us only so far. There is no substitute for building local intelligence by getting out and about, intentionally observing and noticing how people's lives are, by striking up conversations whenever and wherever possible, listening, and reflecting together on what we have found, and what we think God is telling us through it.

## ***Next steps***

Our parishes are our key frontline for learning, connecting and supporting. *'For Richer For Poorer'* is the beginning of a process, not the end of one. In the report's wake, our focus will be to enable deaneries, parishes, or clusters of parishes, to engage in a process of listening – not least to the voices of those in parishes identified in this report, where particular processes of marginalisation are at work. Through a series of gatherings and further action-research, we will continue to explore how to be a church of and for those the Bible calls, 'the poor', and to understand the complexities of what that means. If you have insights and experience to offer, and would like to join us in this process, please contact the report's editor, Alison Webster (contact details on back page).

## ***Further Resources***

**Community Foundations:** there are 46 Community Foundations (CFs) across the UK and together in aggregate they are the 4th largest independent grant maker in the UK, distributing annually in excess £65m. Community Foundations are committed to developing a knowledge of and understanding of the needs and social problems facing those in our communities and they collaborate with private philanthropists, family trusts, businesses and the public sector to provide a permanent, flexible and growing source of local charitable funding. Across the Thames Valley, the four Community Foundations of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire have an excellent track record of working in partnership and are always looking to collaborate and to share their knowledge and expertise on identifying those projects that are delivering the greatest social impact.

[www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](http://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk)

[www.oxfordshire.org](http://www.oxfordshire.org)

[www.heartofbucks.org](http://www.heartofbucks.org)

[www.berkshirecf.org](http://www.berkshirecf.org)

### **Useful Organisations:**

Church Action on Poverty: [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk)

Christians Against Poverty: [www.capuk.org](http://www.capuk.org)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation: [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

Church Urban Fund: [www.cuf.org.uk](http://www.cuf.org.uk)

Joint Public Issues Team: [www.jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk)

Germinate: The Arthur Rank Centre: : [www.germinate.net](http://www.germinate.net)

Housing Justice: [www.housingjustice.org.uk](http://www.housingjustice.org.uk)

### **Useful links for further statistical information:**

Neighbourhood summary by postcode on the Neighbourhood Statistics site:  
[bit.ly/2n5LlxF](https://bit.ly/2n5LlxF)

Church of England Statistics page, noting that parish level data:  
[www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats.aspx](http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/facts-stats.aspx)

Church Urban Fund profiles, for parishes with populations of over 500 people:  
[www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool](http://www2.cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool)



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Jane Perry is an experienced social research professional with particular interests in welfare, poverty and community development. Jane previously worked within government, at the Department for Work and Pensions, and for the Policy Studies Institute and National Centre for Social Research. Since 2008, she has undertaken freelance work for a variety of clients, including Church Action on Poverty, Oxfam and Save the Children. Her recent work includes Emergency Use Only, the first systematic UK-wide investigation into food bank use; and the Listen Up! project exploring the impact of welfare reform. Jane is currently undertaking a Certificate in Theology, Ministry and Mission through Church Mission Society/Durham University Common Awards, and provides support with research and evaluation to a variety of church and community projects.

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