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## 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 One of the roles of the planning system is to ensure that new homes are provided in the right place at the right time, whether through new development or the conversion of existing buildings. The broad distribution of housing is set by the regional planning body (SEERA - the South East England Regional Assembly). This is contained within Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), which was published in March 2001 and covers the period up to 2016. RPG9 will be superseded by the South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy), a draft of which was published in January 2005.

## 6.2 Structure Plan and Regional Planning Guidance Numbers

6.2.1 Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 set a target for Oxford, of 3,750 dwellings between 1996-2011, which was achieved during 2002-3. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016 proposes that a total of 6,500 dwellings should be built in Oxford between 2001-2016.

6.2.2 The South East Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy) will set out build rates for Oxfordshire for the period 2006 to 2026.

6.2.3 In the first three years of the Plan period, from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005, a total of 2,002 dwellings (net) were completed.

## 6.3 Urban Potential

6.3.1 The City Council has undertaken a housing Urban Potential Study (UPS) (2005) which updated the Urban Capacity Study Update (2003). This sets out the systematic approach taken in assessing the development potential for sites and buildings and the search sequence by which the sites have been assessed. The groundwork for the UPS considered various options in relation to density of development, amount of parking space, different residential layouts and mix of housing types.

6.3.2 The City Council believes it is appropriate for Oxford, as the main urban area within the county, to maximise its contribution to the housing numbers on previously developed (brownfield) land, subject to the other objectives of the Plan. As a result, the housing numbers set out in this Plan is a result of the capacity of Oxford over the Plan period.

## 6.4 Oxford's Housing Capacity

6.4.1 Over the Plan period, dwellings will be created through new building or conversion. For forward planning and monitoring purposes, these dwellings will be categorised as follows:

- commitments - dwellings yet to be built on sites which have at least outline planning permission at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005, and which are not counted in another category;
- small sites - dwellings on sites of less than 0.4 ha (unless the site is identified on the Proposals Map and described in Section 14.0, Development Sites); and
- large windfalls - dwellings on sites of more than 0.4 ha that have not been identified on the Proposals Map and described in Section 14.0, Development Sites, which come forward during the life of the Plan; and

- allocated sites – dwellings on the sites identified on the Proposals Map and described in Section 14.0, Development Sites without full or reserved matters planning permission.

6.4.2 Each of these contributing sources is described in the following paragraphs. All self-contained dwellings irrespective of size, type and tenure are counted.

### Commitments

6.4.3 At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005, planning permission (either outline or full) existed for 1,897 dwellings that had not been built, and it is assumed that these sites will be completed within the Plan period.

### Small Windfall Sites

6.4.4 A significant proportion of residential development will be met by the development of small windfall sites (less than 0.4 ha). Past completion rates on the different types of small windfall sites are, in themselves, too erratic to form a reliable basis for estimating the number of dwellings these sites are likely to yield over the Plan period. However, the total figure for all types of small site can be used to forecast future yield. Taken together, small sites contributed an average of 150 dwellings a year from 1991 to 2001. Due to the continued demand and the high prices achieved for housing in Oxford, the number of dwellings completed between 2001 to 2005 averaged almost 200 dwellings per year on small sites. Taking both rates into account this source is assessed to yield an average of 175 dwellings a year, and a total of 2,625 dwellings over the Plan period. The number of dwellings built on small sites will be closely monitored to test the accuracy of these assumptions.

### Large Windfall Sites

6.4.5 Despite carrying out a rigorous UPS, it is not possible to identify all the large sites that will come forward for residential development within the Plan period. It is therefore appropriate to make a further allowance for such development on large sites. A figure of 300 dwellings over the Plan period has been included, based upon past trend rates and the survey work undertaken as part of the UPS.

### Allocated Sites

6.4.6 Section 14.0, Development Sites, allocates many sites for residential development or for mixed-use development including residential. They are all expected to be developed within the Plan period. The number of dwellings that each site is forecast to yield has been taken from either the latest planning permission relating to the site, or from a design-based assessment. In total, these allocated sites are assessed as having a capacity of 1,384 dwellings. Because the actual number of dwellings to be built on each site may vary, this total will also be discounted by 15% for forecasting purposes. Thus, the sites shown on the Proposals Map are expected to produce 1,176 dwellings over the Plan period. Where dwellings have been completed on allocated sites, they have been counted under 'completions'. Similarly, where an allocated site has full or reserved matters permission for dwellings, it has been counted under 'commitments'. This is because it is not necessary to discount completions as they are certainties, or full or reserved matters permissions as they are highly likely to yield the number of dwellings in the permission. A full breakdown of the assessed capacity of each allocated site is set out in the City Council's Urban Potential Study, which is available to view on the Council's website.

## 6.5 Planned Housing Growth

6.5.1 The four sources of housing described above are expected to yield a total of 6,500 dwellings over the Plan period. This equates to an annual average completion rate of approximately 433 dwellings. These figures are based on a careful analysis of Oxford's potential for residential development and incorporate a small precautionary discount to allow a margin of error. The City Council considers that this level of development is appropriate and sustainable. The table below summarises the provision over the Plan period from all four sources.

Position at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2005

| Source  | Cumulative provision over:  |  |                             |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
|   | Provision over short term<br>(1 <sup>st</sup> April 01 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 06) | Provision over medium term<br>(1 <sup>st</sup> April 06 – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 11) | Total Plan period 2001-2016 |
| Completions                                   | 2,002   | 2,002  | 2,002                       |
| Commitments                                   | 1,897   | 1,897  | 1,897                       |
| Allocated large sites                         | 311   | 1,019  | 1,176                       |
| Large windfall sites <sup>1</sup><br>(≥0.4ha) | 20  | 120  | 220                         |
| Small windfall sites <sup>2</sup><br>(<0.4ha) | 175   | 1,050  | 1,925                       |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>4,405</b>  | <b>6,088</b>   | <b>7,220</b>                |

<sup>1</sup> 11 years (remainder of the Plan period) of 20 dwellings per year

<sup>2</sup> 11 years (remainder of the Plan period) of 175 dwellings per year

6.5.2 Planning for this number of additional dwellings accords with the Structure Plan proposals, and reflects Oxford's role in the sub-region and its level of housing need, and will help to ease its housing shortage without endangering its inherent character. However, land for residential development is a finite resource, therefore it must be used in the most appropriate manner. There is a need to meet the housing needs of the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing. Oxford suffers from the twin problem of being an attractive place to live for high earners and not being able to provide housing for people in need or key workers who often have a long commute. It is necessary to ensure that a high proportion of additional housing is affordable and

does not just add to the gap between the large amount of expensive housing and the insufficient amount of affordable housing.

**POLICY HS.1 - PROVISION OF SITES FOR HOUSING**

The City Council will, (provided that the necessary affordable housing is secured), grant planning permission on sufficient sites that involve residential development to achieve an average annual completion rate of about 433 dwellings throughout the Plan period, to achieve a total of 6,500 dwellings. These sites will comprise the sites identified for residential development, or mixed-use development including residential, in Section 14.0 Development Sites and other acceptable previously developed sites.

**6.6 Previously Developed Land**

6.6.1 The assessment of Oxford's housing potential shows that there is no need to allow building on any previously undeveloped land for residential development (except any sites specifically allocated in Section 14.0, Development Sites). This situation will need to be reviewed before 2011, taking into account any changes in regional guidance and updates to Oxford's UPS.

6.6.2 In 2004-05 99.85% of all new homes complete in Oxford were on previously developed land. The City Council expects this figure to be between 95% and 100% over the Plan period.

**POLICY HS.2 - RECYCLING LAND TARGET**

Subject to Policy HS.1, planning permission will only be granted for residential development, or mixed-use development involving residential, on any site that is:

- a. identified for that use in Section 14.0, Development Sites; or
- b. previously developed land.

6.6.3 Oxford has one of the lowest rates of empty homes in the country. The number of privately owned empty properties is about 50. The City Council has limited planning powers deal with of empty homes but it could use a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). This would depend on the site-specific circumstances and available resources.

**POLICY HS.3 - EMPTY HOMES**

The City Council will use its planning powers, where applicable, to bring empty homes into use.

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