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7.1 Introduction and Definitions

7.1.1 In addition to providing for the right number of dwellings in each authority's area, the planning system seeks to ensure that the dwellings which are provided will meet the housing needs of local people. This is done through establishing what these needs are in terms of the type, affordability, and tenure of dwellings. These matters are dealt with in Oxford's Housing Requirements Study published in April 2004. The City Council will monitor housing needs in Oxford to ensure they are being addressed.

7.1.2 In Oxford, where house prices are extremely high, the problem of finding suitable accommodation for their needs affects not only the poorest people, but also many others on modest incomes. In fact, many people who earn the national average wage in Oxford are unable to afford even the minimum size and standard of accommodation they need.

7.1.3 The policies in this section seek to ensure that the most pressing of the housing needs in Oxford are addressed through the planning system. A range of policies seeks to increase the supply of housing available to those in most need (in terms of their household income) and to key workers. Other policies seek to protect the housing stock and to set criteria for the consideration of planning applications for particular types of housing.

7.1.4 This section of the Plan uses various terms that are defined below.

Definitions

Market Housing

Market housing is housing available to the general public, or to a particular group such as older people, either for sale or rent or a combination of sale and rent. The price payable should be substantially equivalent to the prevailing market price for that type of property as may be agreed between the owner and the occupant.

Key Worker Housing

A key worker dwelling must be occupied, as set out in a planning obligation, solely by a household that includes at least one person who is eligible for key worker housing under an agreement between their employer, the City Council and a registered social landlord (RSL).

'Key worker housing' is tenure neutral, i.e. it does not imply any particular form of ownership or tenancy. In each case, the terms of the agreement will state what proportion of the property value can be sold to the key worker household, and the rent.

Affordable Housing

A dwelling is affordable where:

- *it has the minimum number of rooms that a household currently in unsuitable accommodation would need; and*
- *the price for that dwelling (expressed as so much a week/month) is less than 30% of the net household income.*

This price should mean a regular cost to the household for rent, lease or mortgage equivalent to the cost for accommodation of similar size and quality provided by RSLs in Oxford (as listed in the Housing Strategy).

'Affordable housing' is tenure neutral: it can refer to dwellings for rent, for shared ownership, or for outright purchase. However, to be affordable it must comply with the above definition. Affordable

housing secured through the planning system should be made permanently available to those in housing need. Student accommodation does not count as affordable housing as there are other bodies with responsibility for it.

7.2 Affordable Housing

General Requirement to Provide Affordable Housing

7.2.1 The Housing Requirements Study 2004 shows that there is a huge need for between 1,700 and 1,800 new affordable dwellings per year in Oxford. The amount of affordable housing required to meet the needs of the homeless, those who are unemployed, and those on modest incomes and unable to afford market housing, is greater than the total housing allocation in this Plan. While some of this will be provided by the City Council and RSLs, most will have to come from private sector developments. In line with Government advice, every area in Oxford is considered suitable for affordable housing. Each area is easily accessible.

7.2.2 The expectation of affordable housing extends to all types of residential development (whether for general or specialist needs) including retirement homes, mixed-use developments, and conversion schemes.

7.2.3 Given the scale of need, the City Council is obliged to seek affordable housing from small developments. Sites that can accommodate ten or more dwellings are likely to be able to contribute in some way towards affordable housing. A threshold of ten or more dwellings will be used to trigger the affordable housing policy. For mixed-use developments, the City Council will consider the number of dwellings being proposed or the capacity of that part of the site proposed for residential development. For schemes involving demolition or conversion, the City Council will consider the gross number of new dwellings.

7.2.4 Across Oxford, affordable housing is required for various groups. It is particularly important to address the needs of people accepted as homeless and housed in temporary accommodation by the City Council. At 2003, in Oxford there were about 1,100 households in temporary accommodation, and the City Council accepts around 450 households (around 70% of which are families) as homeless each year.

7.2.5 To accompany the implementation of its affordable housing policies, the City Council will publish, and keep up to date, Supplementary Planning Documents on all appropriate related matters.

POLICY HS.4 - GENERAL REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The City Council will expect affordable housing (as defined) from any development of at least ten dwellings, that includes residential development on a site having the capacity for at least ten dwellings; or on a residential site of 0.25 ha or more in area.

Affordable housing should be available to those in housing need in perpetuity. Developers may not circumvent this policy by the artificial subdivision of sites.

The Proportion and Mix of Affordable Housing to be Provided

7.2.6 The housing need in Oxford (across all sectors) is so great that the City Council believes it should seek the maximum reasonable proportion of affordable housing as part of the development

of each site. The City Council will consider a site to be capable of providing generally a minimum of 50% affordable housing. This level of provision will be sought on all relevant sites unless the applicant can demonstrate that an alternative percentage of provision should be made to make the development viable.

7.2.7 Supplementary Planning Documents will set out the matters to be taken in account in the economics of provision including any physical, environmental or financial constraints. The mix of affordable housing to be secured through the planning system will also be indicated in Supplementary Planning Documents.

POLICY HS.5 - PROPORTION AND MIX OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO BE PROVIDED

When Policy HS.4 applies, the City Council will seek the provision of generally a minimum of 50% of the proposed dwellings as affordable housing.

In assessing the mix of affordable dwelling types and sizes, the City Council will have regard to the characteristics of the site and to its Supplementary Planning Documents.

On-site Provision of Affordable Housing

7.2.8 Affordable housing should usually be provided on-site as an integral part of the whole development. This will promote balanced communities and minimise the delay in making the affordable housing available. However, in exceptional circumstances affordable housing within the development may not be desirable.

7.2.9 Where affordable housing is required, but the City Council is satisfied that on-site provision is inappropriate, the developer will be expected to make a financial, or other, contribution to the City Council instead. The amount of any payment will have to be negotiated, but it should reflect the cost of providing the number, type and size of affordable dwellings that would otherwise have been created on-site. The City Council will need to be satisfied that the financial contribution will result in the provision of affordable housing.

POLICY HS.6 - ON SITE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing should be provided as part of the proposed development unless the City Council and the developer both consider that it is nonetheless preferable for a financial or other contribution to be made towards the provision of an element of affordable housing on another site.

7.3 Affordable Housing from Commercial Development

7.3.1 Certain commercial developments could worsen the existing housing situation by encouraging workers in housing need to move to Oxford. The City Council considers that such developments should contribute towards meeting the need for affordable housing by way of financial or other contributions. The amount of any payment would have to be negotiated. However, it should reflect the cost of providing the numbers, types and sizes of affordable dwellings for which an additional demand is created. The City Council will need to be satisfied that financial contributions will result in the provision of affordable housing.

7.3.2 This policy will be applied to all commercial developments that generate a significant demand for affordable housing. However, it will not be applied to retail developments or to non-profit making public sector projects, such as those in the education and health sectors.

POLICY HS.7 - AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Where a need for affordable housing is directly related to a commercial development, the City Council will seek a financial or other contribution appropriate to the scale and kind of the development.

7.4 Balance of Dwelling Type and Size

7.4.1 A predominance of one form of housing type in a locality may have unwelcome social effects. The City Council considers that a mix of dwelling types will help achieve social inclusion and cohesion. It believes that housing policy should cater for the whole community and that there should be no policy barrier against any size, tenure or specialist occupation of a dwelling in any locality. Furthermore, residents who wish to remain in their locality, but whose housing needs change over their lifetime, should be able to do so. The City Council may refuse permission for residential development that does not help achieve an appropriate mix of dwelling types. In addition, there should be a reasonable mix of dwelling sizes within each new development. The City Council will publish Supplementary Planning Documents and development guidelines to highlight sites, sizes of sites and localities where Policy HS.8 is likely to be critical.

POLICY HS.8 - BALANCE OF DWELLINGS

In determining planning applications for residential development, the City Council will have regard to the local distribution of dwelling types (including size of unit, tenure, and specialist occupation) with a view to achieving a balanced and suitable distribution of dwelling types; both within the site and within each locality.

7.5 Protection of Housing

7.5.1 There are insufficient dwellings in Oxford at present for people who are in unsuitable accommodation, who need affordable accommodation, or who wish to live here. Existing dwellings should therefore be protected. Non-residential uses almost never justify the loss of residential use.

7.5.2 The City Council accepts that working from home is a growing trend that can contribute to an overall reduction in travelling and thus lead to a more sustainable lifestyle. This is generally to be encouraged. Therefore, when planning permission is required, partial change of use to add a workspace to a residential property may be appropriate in certain circumstances. In assessing applications of this nature, the City Council will have particular regard to neighbourhood amenity and traffic generation.

7.5.3 The City Council may agree a change of use of part of a dwelling to a nursery, a primary health care facility, a local shop, or a guest house. The applicant would have to demonstrate that there was a local need for the facility, and that the development would reduce the need to travel by car. Such facilities can help build sustainable communities, but the City Council would carefully examine the merits of the proposed development. In all cases of a partial change of use to a mixed-use involving one of these facilities, a dwelling must be retained in the building.

POLICY HS.9 - CHANGE OF USE OF HOUSING

Planning permission will not be granted for the change of use of the whole of any dwelling to a non-residential use.

Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of any part of a dwelling to:

- a. a workspace that will not generate significant traffic;
- b. a primary health care facility (subject to Policy HH.3);
- c. a nursery (subject to Policy ED.2);
- d. a local shop; or
- e. a guest house (subject to Policy TA.4).

In every case of a partial change of use, the need for the proposed use will have to be demonstrated, and a self-contained residential unit of at least 25m² will have to be retained in the building.

7.5.4 In addition to the general need to retain dwellings, it is recognised that changes in society lead to a need for smaller dwellings. The need for small, self-contained dwellings is so great that there should be a presumption in favour of their retention. Their amalgamation into fewer dwellings (including the return to a single 'family' house) will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

POLICY HS.10 - LOSS OF DWELLINGS

Planning permission will not be granted for any development which results in the net loss of one or more self-contained dwellings.

7.6 Subdivision of Dwellings

7.6.1 The City Council wants to ensure that the conversion of houses to smaller dwellings is managed effectively to prevent an increase in poor quality accommodation. Policy HS.11 therefore sets minimum standards for flats and maisonettes created through a sub-division of dwellings.

POLICY HS.11 - SUB-DIVISION OF DWELLINGS

Planning permission will only be granted for the sub-division of a dwelling if:

- a. each resultant unit will be self-contained with its own lockable entrance, kitchen, and bathroom;
- b. each resultant unit will be a minimum size of 25 m² measured internally; and
- c. the proposal will not prejudice the aims of Policy HS.8.

7.7 Adaptable Dwellings

7.7.1 Building Regulations (Part M) require the provision of access to new dwellings for people with disabilities. Lifetime homes standards exceed the standards required by building regulations. Most affordable housing is built to lifetime homes standards. However, it is still important to increase the choice of dwellings available to people with disabilities and to assist special needs households currently in unsuitable accommodation. Therefore, the City Council considers that at least 15% of market housing on all suitable sites should be designed to lifetime homes standards or their equivalent. On-site gradients and ease of access to shops, services and public transport will be important factors when considering whether a site is suitable.

7.7.2 Lifetime homes can equally easily be lived in by people without special needs, and does not necessarily involve significant increase in space standards and cost. People who develop disabilities, through accident, illness or old age, will face less disruption if more homes are designed to be easily adapted to accommodate their changing needs. Details of the standards that will be sought for lifetime homes will be published in a Supplementary Planning Document.

POLICY HS.12 - ADAPTABLE DWELLINGS

The City Council will seek, on suitable sites, at least 15% of new market houses to be easily adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

7.8 Student Accommodation

Student Accommodation Development by Educational Institutions

7.8.1 Oxford has a high proportion of students relative to the non-student population. Students have specialist housing needs because they live in Oxford on a temporary basis; often only need accommodation during term time, have low incomes, and have particular lifestyles. The University of Oxford traditionally houses most of its students in purpose-built accommodation on land within the colleges' ownership. Oxford Brookes University also houses a proportion of its students in purpose-built accommodation. This, in the City Council's view, is a satisfactory method of housing university students. However, a substantial number of students rent or own accommodation in the general housing market. This demand reduces the availability and affordability of housing for the rest of the population. The City Council therefore wishes to see an increase in the proportion of university students housed in purpose-built accommodation and has identified several sites in the Local Plan that may be suitable (see Section 14.0, Development Sites). There may also be a limited role for purpose-built accommodation for further education students. However, because of the greater need to house university students and the severe shortage of sites, it is considered that any need in the further education sector should be dealt with on campus. Section 10.0, Education, comments more fully on the housing position of students in Oxford.

7.8.2 Purpose-built student accommodation often offers little personal space, with various shared facilities (kitchen, bathroom, amenity space). While this form of accommodation may sometimes be built to a high specification, it does not represent a suitable form of permanent accommodation for non-student occupants.

7.8.3 Generally student accommodation should be on land not suited to ordinary housing. The overall number of students at both the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University is controlled by Policies in Section 10.0, Education.

7.8.4 It is important therefore to restrict the occupation of purpose-built student accommodation to students. This is most likely to be satisfactorily achieved through the educational institution and through termly, annual or similarly appropriate lettings.

POLICY HS.13 - INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Planning permission will be granted for developments by educational institutions of purpose-built accommodation for students on suitable sites.

Planning permission will not be granted for the conversion of existing or new purpose-built student accommodation to any other use.

Speculative Student Accommodation

7.8.5 Student accommodation that is not provided by educational institutions may require further restrictions to safeguard the accommodation for students and to prevent possible future housing problems. In order that the development of the limited number of suitable sites makes the maximum contribution to easing the situation in the general housing market, the City Council will seek to ensure that the student accommodation is used by a named higher educational institution (either the University of Oxford or Oxford Brookes University).

POLICY HS.14 - SPECULATIVE STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Planning permission will only be granted for speculative developments involving purpose-built accommodation for students where:

- a. occupancy restrictions or other arrangements are secured to ensure the accommodation is only available to those in full-time education;
- b. appropriate management controls are secured, including an undertaking that students do not bring cars into Oxford;
- c. the development would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of local residents; and
- d. it provides accommodation for students of the University of Oxford or Oxford Brookes University.

The City Council will seek to secure these measures by means of planning conditions or a planning obligation.

7.9 Houses in Multiple Occupation

7.9.1 The City Council wishes to see the highest quality residential accommodation in Oxford. However, as discussed earlier, there is a great need for cheaper accommodation. The private sector can sometimes address this need by offering non-self-contained accommodation with the sharing of a bathroom, a toilet, or cooking facilities. This standard of accommodation is often lower than would otherwise be acceptable for new development. A characteristic of this type of accommodation is the often transient nature of the occupants. In Oxford, many houses are let to individual students, and public agencies have used such accommodation to house vulnerable people who might otherwise be homeless. Developments that involve shared facilities for two or more households are unlikely to be suitable for permanent accommodation.

7.9.2 The City Council therefore acknowledges that there may be a limited role for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). However, the City Council is concerned that too high a concentration of houses in some form of multiple occupancy can contribute to a general loss of amenity to neighbouring properties. This is the situation in East Oxford, so the City Council does not want to see any more HMOs in that area. In other areas of Oxford, planning applications for change of use to HMO will be assessed against the criteria in Policy HS.15.

7.9.3 Planning permission is not necessarily required when unrelated people occupy a property. Whether there is planning control largely depends on how many households occupy the dwelling. In reaching a view on whether a particular dwelling is occupied by more than one household, the City Council will take into account the range of factors (established in case law and planning appeal decisions) that describe the legal position of the occupiers and how they organise their domestic arrangements. Occupation by fewer than six people comprising more than one household may create a HMO subject to planning control. For the purpose of applying the 25%

criterion in Policy HS.15, only houses in multiple occupation that require planning permission will be counted.

7.9.4 The City Council considers that purpose-built HMOs have no role in meeting general housing needs in Oxford. These include the needs of families who would otherwise be homeless. However, sometimes purpose-built HMOs can be appropriate for people with special needs. Purpose-built accommodation that is let termly or annually to students does not fall under the control of Policy HS.15.

POLICY HS.15 - HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

Planning permission will not be granted for purpose-built houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) unless they are designed for, and will be occupied by, people with special housing needs (when the proposals will be considered on their individual merits).

Within the HMO Registration Area, shown on the Proposals Map, planning permission will not be granted for the change of use of any building to an HMO.

Outside the HMO Registration Area, and subject to HS.8, planning permission will be granted for the change of use of a building to an HMO if the proposal:

- a. makes appropriate provision for car / cycle parking;
- b. will create adequate levels of amenity for the occupiers;
- c. includes refuse storage space that is adequate in size and is accessible;
- d. will retain or create good access into, and within, the building; and
- e. will not result in more than 25% of the residential properties in the road being in shared use which has or requires planning permission.

Note: purpose-built accommodation that is let termly to students does not fall into this category.

7.10 Housing and Commercial Uses

Staff Accommodation

7.10.1 Many of Oxford's public service providers and the universities are major landowners. Together, they provide a significant proportion of Oxford's jobs. The benefits of these employers providing staff accommodation on their own land (whether as self-contained dwellings or as accommodation with shared facilities) include easing the general housing situation in Oxford, and possibly reduced travel-to-work times. Subject to other policies in the Plan, the City Council will not expect such developments that cater for staff of such organisations to provide affordable housing. This will be controlled by a planning obligation.

POLICY HS.16 - STAFF ACCOMMODATION

Planning permission will be granted for residential development on land owned or controlled by an employer that has entered into a key worker agreement with the City Council provided:

- a. at least 80% of the residential units to be created are to be subject to a planning obligation limiting occupation to those eligible for key worker housing (as defined);

- b. the site is not designated as a protected employment site under Policy EC.2; and
c. the site is not likely to be needed for the operational purposes of the employer.

To avoid doubt, such developments will be exempt from the provisions of Policy HS.4.

Live-Work Units

7.10.2 A live-work unit combines a home with a non-domestic work space (such as a small workshop, studio or office) for the business use of the household. Such units are a highly sustainable use of land and can contribute to a proper balance of dwelling types in a development. Any proposal for live-work units will be treated on its merits. The City Council will need to be satisfied that both the scheme's 'live' and 'work' element comply with the appropriate policies for their use in the Plan. Maintaining a balance between the living and working areas is important and may be controlled through a planning obligation. Live-work schemes are not exempt from the affordable housing policy.

7.11 Residential Moorings

7.11.1 Residential moorings and houseboats may contribute to the overall supply of housing in Oxford. There are some positive aspects of this form of housing, limited though it is:

- being provided for a limited period of time without necessarily causing a significant impact on the environment;
- overlooking and thus increasing the safety of otherwise potentially secluded areas of Oxford;
- offering car-free housing.

7.11.2 It is considered that there should be no more residential moorings on the Isis main river channel. However, there may be scope for a limited number of additional moorings, possibly as part of a mooring basin, on the other waterways that run through Oxford. The acceptability of proposals for such moorings will depend on site circumstances and whether they comply with other policies in the Plan.

POLICY HS.17 - RESIDENTIAL MOORINGS

Planning permission will be granted for further residential moorings on the canal or river systems if:

- a. they do not conflict with British Waterways or the Environment Agency's operational requirements;
- b. there is adequate servicing including water supply, electricity, and disposal facilities for sewage and rubbish;
- c. there is adequate access and car parking if required;
- d. there is adequate access for emergency services;
- e. there will be no significant effect on the amenity and conservation interest of the waterway; and
- f. they are not on the Isis main river channel.

7.12 Low-impact Housing

7.12.1 'Low-impact housing' means it is designed to minimise the environmental consequences of its construction and occupation. This means that the construction materials are natural products and available locally. These dwellings are usually self-built. They are not intended to be

permanent accommodation, but may exist for a number of years. They are unlikely to be connected to the full set of services. The limited impact of this type of housing may allow temporary planning permission to be granted on a site that would otherwise be considered unsuitable for housing development.

POLICY HS.18 - LOW-IMPACT HOUSING

Planning permission will be granted for low-impact housing on a temporary basis in exceptional circumstances where residential applications would otherwise be refused. Any application for such a proposal must be accompanied by such additional information as the City Council considers appropriate to describe the construction, impact, duration and occupation of the proposal.

7.13 Gypsies and Travellers

7.13.1 The management and provision of sites for gypsies and travellers is undertaken on a County-wide basis. An assessment concluded that the needs of travellers based in the Oxford area were adequately met by three sites just outside Oxford's boundary. Future reviews will be carried out on a County-wide basis.

7.14 Privacy and Amenity

7.14.1 It is difficult to set standards for privacy and amenity for all dwellings as each development site and building has its own circumstances. However, it will always be necessary to consider the main components of residential amenity for neighbours (and for potential occupiers of any proposed residential accommodation). The City Council will use the 45° code as set out in Appendix 6 to assess the impact of development on daylight, sunlight and outlook.

POLICY HS.19 - PRIVACY AND AMENITY

Planning permission will only be granted for development that adequately provides both for the protection, and/or creation, of the privacy or amenity of the occupants of the proposed and existing neighbouring, residential properties. The City Council will assess each development proposal in terms of:

- a. potential for overlooking into habitable rooms or private open space;
- b. potential for noise intrusion;
- c. sense of enclosure, or development of an overbearing nature;
- d. refuse and recycling storage;
- e. cycle storage;
- f. drying space; and
- g. sunlight and daylight standards.

Local Residential Environment

7.14.2 Residential developments remain in occupation for many decades after the developer has completed their construction. However, the site is usually sold to many different parties before the development is completed. The City Council wants to ensure that developments only take place after all foreseeable problems have been addressed.

POLICY HS.20 - LOCAL RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT

Developments involving residential uses should provide a good environmental standard within and outside each dwelling. Planning permission will only be granted where:

- a. all areas of land can be controlled and maintained;
- b. finished surfaces are specified; and
- c. any other identified management or operational problem has been resolved or its resolution agreed.

Private Open Space

7.14.3 Dwellings should provide an amount of private open space to allow their occupants to enjoy fresh air and light in privacy. Private and secure access to the open air for residents is important to allow people a place, for example, to grow plants and dry clothes. It may be acceptable to provide some of the private open space as a shared facility but not where the occupiers are likely to include children. The length for a private garden for a family house will generally be 10 metres.

POLICY HS.21 - PRIVATE OPEN SPACE

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals involving residential uses where insufficient or poor quality private open space is proposed. The City Council will expect each dwelling to have access to private open space, possibly in the form of a balcony. Family dwellings of two or more bedrooms should have exclusive use of an area of private open space.

7.15 Public Open Space Provision for Residential Development

Provision of New Open Space and Improvements to Sporting Facilities as Part of New Residential Development

7.15.1 On new residential developments involving 20 or more dwellings the City Council will require a minimum of 10% of the site area to be used to provide public open space, unless it is considered that the recreational needs of the development would be better served by taking a contribution towards improving existing local facilities. Such contributions will also be required on smaller sites where appropriate.

7.15.2 The nature of the open space provision will vary depending upon the size of development, the type of dwellings involved, the character of the area, and what public open space is already provided in the locality. Examples of the type of open space that may be appropriate, depending on the type of development, include a seating area, a nature area, a kickabout area or an equipped play area for children. In the case of some special needs housing, such as sheltered accommodation, it may be appropriate to target the use of the open space to the occupants. If such spaces are to become the responsibility of the City Council, its specification will have to be agreed beforehand. The City Council will wish to be sure that the space will function properly as designed and that maintenance is provided for, and will require applicants, where appropriate, to enter into a legal agreement about ownership and future maintenance. Supplementary Planning Documents will be published to indicate how Policy HS.22 will be applied.

7.15.3 Most developments in Oxford are on relatively small sites on which it is not normally reasonable to expect the provision of sports facilities. As such developments increase the numbers of people using sports facilities, the City Council will seek contributions towards improving local facilities, for example, by providing changing facilities, improved drainage, floodlighting or an all-weather pitch where the need arising from the development justifies it.

POLICY HS.22 - PROVISION OF NEW OPEN SPACE AND IMPROVEMENTS TO SPORTING FACILITIES AS PART OF NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The City Council will require residential development involving 20 or more dwellings, to provide a minimum of 10% of the site area as suitable public open space where:

- a. there is a shortage of public open space in the vicinity; or
- b. the development would create a significant additional need for public open space; or
- c. the site contains a feature of recreational, ecological, visual or historic interest which it is desirable to conserve; or
- d. the site adjoins a site that contains a feature of recreational, ecological, visual or historic interest and provides an opportunity to enhance it further.

Where appropriate developers will be asked to secure adequate maintenance of these areas.

On smaller sites, where appropriate, and where the needs of the development would be better served by improving existing areas of public open space in the locality, the City Council will require a contribution in the place of on-site provision.

The City Council will seek contributions from developers towards the improvement of local sports facilities when the need arising from the development justifies it. When necessary, these will be secured by a planning obligation.

Children's Play Space

7.15.4 Children's play space forms an important part of public open space provision. The City Council will seek to achieve as a minimum standard for play areas, the recommendation by the National Playing Field Association (NPFA) of 0.8 hectares per 1,000 population. When residential development is proposed, apart from accommodation specifically for older people, suitable play areas should either be provided on site or a contribution made towards establishing them elsewhere in the locality.

7.15.5 The NPFA groups play areas into three categories:

- local areas for play, which provide a small area of open space specifically designated for play activities close to the home;
- locally equipped areas for play, which should offer at least five types of play equipment and be within five minutes' walking distance of local homes;
- neighbourhood equipped areas for play, which should provide a minimum of eight items of play equipment and be within a walking distance of 15 minutes from the home.

7.15.6 Where new play areas need to be provided, it is important that they are readily visible, overlooked by nearby properties where this is possible, well designed and properly fenced, surfaced and equipped, with at least five items of play equipment and with safe pedestrian access. When play areas are proposed as part of a new development, developers must make adequate arrangements for their future maintenance. Where existing play areas are poorly located, the City Council will seek opportunities to relocate them. Home Zones, which are referred to in Section 3.0, Transport, also create the opportunity for children to play close to their home.

7.15.7 To meet the needs of older children, the City Council will seek to provide more skateboarding and streetsport facilities, which involve the provision of robust play equipment plus ancillary seating, at appropriate sites in Oxford. The City Council will seek to ensure that children living in all parts of Oxford have one of these facilities within a walking distance of 15 minutes from their home.

POLICY HS.23 - CHILDREN'S PLAY SPACE

The City Council will require residential developments involving 20 or more dwellings, to provide suitable play space for children as part of the public open space provision required under Policy HS.22. In suitable locations play provision should be made for older children. On smaller sites, where appropriate, and where the needs of the development would be better served by improving existing children's play space, the City Council will seek a contribution in the place of on-site provision. Children's play areas should be well designed, suitably located (with safe pedestrian access and, where possible, be visible from adjacent residential properties) and properly fenced, surfaced and equipped. Adequate arrangements must be made for their future maintenance.