


Oxford Core Strategy Examination Statement of Oxford City Council		<a href="http://www.oxford.gov.uk">www.oxford.gov.uk</a>  <b>OXFORD CITY COUNCIL</b>
C/M5/2	<b>Matter 5 – Housing Issue 2 – Densities</b>	

**i) Does the plan contain sufficient information/is it sufficiently clear on appropriate densities?**

The approach of the plan is to focus on high quality developments that deliver a high number of homes with an appropriate mix of housing. This approach should mean that relatively high densities are an important part of the end solution, and aims to reflect the way that National Guidance has now moved beyond the raw densities approach of PPG3 to the good design and range of densities of PPS3 (CD11/3 pp47/48).

The Core Strategy makes it clear that land should be used efficiently, and it is officers experience that developers will wish to take this further in terms of the number of units a site can provide. Indeed, the particular nature of Oxford, with constrained boundaries, limited available sites and relatively high GDV and land values mean that the market will tend to naturally provide high densities. This is demonstrated by the success of the Local Plan (CD7/6 Policy CP.6) that requires densities of only 40 units a hectare (dph), but actual delivery was higher, with densities of 50 – 60dph being typical for houses and densities considerably higher in the case of flats – 171dph at DS.45 (Lucy’s Factory Site).

The Balance of Dwellings SPD (CD7/14) ensures a mix of dwelling sizes that naturally affects density. The City Council believes that this is a more useful tool in delivering the right type of housing whilst also achieving appropriate densities. Furthermore, Policy CS24 states that the City and district centres will be expected to deliver higher densities, and appropriate housing mixes for different areas of the city are set out in the adopted Balance of Dwellings SPD. This is proving a successful and robust document, with 73% of appeals being upheld on Balance of Dwellings SPD grounds at time of writing.

**ii) Does the Core Strategy approach properly reflect RSS guidance?**

Yes. Policy H5 of the South East Plan (CD10/1) deals with both design and density and sets a regional target of 40dph, and states that Local Authorities will reflect this target with appropriate local variations. As densities in Oxford will naturally be above the 40 dph target of the RSS, it is considered appropriate to focus on the number of dwellings, their mix and design rather than risk anchoring expectations on

a number below what is currently being provided or risk inappropriate proposals due to an over rigid focus on a higher density figure.

It is the Council's opinion that development will naturally tend to bring forward high densities in the local context and a further Policy steer is unnecessary.

**iii) Should the density requirements be more prescriptive?**

No. It is the opinion of officers that the Balance of Dwellings SPD (CD7/14) is sufficient and more prescriptive density requirements would deliver little if anything in the way of additional homes, and shift the focus away from the quality and mix of development, which are areas that can usefully be improved upon.