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# Student Numbers in Oxford

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Oxford is known world wide for its universities, associated medical institutions, students and academic achievement. This success brings with it student numbers totalling around 32,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students. The vast majority of these students live in the city, which leads to pressure on housing and potential conflict in lifestyle with other residents. This causes interest, concern and speculation about student numbers, particularly those living outside of college or university premises. The City Council and the universities have an agreed strategy to minimise the impacts. This report sets out the context for this strategy, reports on actual student numbers in the city, explains how they are monitored and measured and reconciles as far as is possible, the various data sets available.

## Executive Summary

This report aims to clarify the situation with regard to accommodation for university students in Oxford. A brief introduction discusses the background of the situation in Oxford. The various policies in relation to planning permission and licensing of the variety of premises used to accommodate students are discussed. These include Council adopted policies and national legislation. The second part of the report discusses student accommodation in relation to Council Tax and the exemptions allowed for students. This is used as a proxy to measure the number of students using the private rental sector. The grounds for exemption on the basis of student status are set out.

Some confusion has arisen in the past with regard to the numbers of students living outside of university owned or managed accommodation and the number of students claiming Council Tax exemption while living in owner occupied or privately rented premises (including Houses in Multiple Occupancy). Data collected for the purposes of Council Tax and data collected by the universities, which the Council's planning department record in their Annual Monitoring Report, utilise very different sources of information and will never entirely match. Whilst acknowledging this difficulty, this report aims to reconcile the data and provide an overview of the situation in the city of Oxford.

The analysis of the data does not categorically prove or disprove that the returns from the universities are correct. However, it is consistent with the returns provided by the universities and confirms that around 50 per cent of the houses in multiple occupation in the city are occupied by students from the two universities.

## Introduction

Oxford is a world-renowned brand for educational excellence, principally because of the historic University of Oxford but latterly due to the highly respected Oxford Brookes University. It is as a result of this reputation that Oxford derives much of its prosperity. There are approximately 22,000 university jobs in Oxford, and many other jobs which rely on business from the universities. In addition to this Oxford's reputation attracts tourists, language students, publishing businesses, spin-out university enterprises and medical research. For most of the last century Oxford's economy was centred around two main areas –the universities and car manufacturing – but the decline of manufacturing jobs means that Oxford is more reliant than ever on its reputation as a university city.

The presence of two large universities has a significant impact upon the characteristics of the city's population. In 2010, 32,000 students studied full-time at the two universities, meaning that approximately one in five residents is a university student. The students are predominantly aged between 18 and 24 years and many are from overseas. This also means there is a large turnover in population – every year one quarter of the city's residents moves house. It also means there are large seasonal changes in the city's population as many university students leave the city over the Christmas, Easter and summer holidays to be replaced by conference attendees and language school students.

The majority of university students live in halls of residence, either purpose built or university-owned accommodation, but there are not enough places in halls of residence to accommodate all students. Most students not living in halls will be living in private rented accommodation; one reason why one in five properties in Oxford are privately rented. Some of the housing let to students is very poorly maintained. The most popular area for students in rented housing is the area around the Cowley Road and so

the effect on the make-up of the population in this area is much more marked than in the city as a whole. The demand for private rented housing is another factor why – along with constrained land supply and a prosperous economy – house prices in Oxford remain unaffordably high for many residents.

Another perennial issue in the city is the potential for polarisation between different communities – the old Town vs. Gown rivalries. Oxford is a city with many inequalities, and inescapably many of these are linked to the universities. On the one hand we have a young, highly educated, internationally-mobile population with extremely bright prospects; on the other hand we have many people with few or no qualifications working for low wages with relatively sparse opportunities.

## University Plans For Expansion and How Student Numbers Are Managed

### University of Oxford

The University of Oxford is the oldest English university, founded in 1170 and consisting of 38 independent, self-governing colleges and 6 permanent private halls. It is a world-renowned centre of academic excellence as well as one of the largest employers in Oxford and a significant powerhouse of the local economy. The majority of its buildings are in central Oxford, most of which falls within a Conservation Area, with some sites in East Oxford, Summertown, Headington and outside the city at Begbroke.

In overall space terms, the University has grown significantly in recent years with expansion of its building stock supported by increasing levels of funding from Government and private bodies. It was reported in 2008 that, excluding individual colleges, the estate now comprises some 520,000 m<sup>2</sup>, an increase of 34% over the previous 10 years<sup>1</sup>.

The focus for current and future development in Oxford is the former Radcliffe Infirmary site, which is being redeveloped as a campus to provide facilities for ‘dry’ science, humanities and social science activities (to be known as the Radcliffe Observatory

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Role of the Higher Education, Health and Retail Sectors in the Oxford Economy (2008), Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners

Quarter). The University is also proposing further redevelopment and infilling within the existing Science Area, centred on South Parks Road, to support planned growth in research activity. The other area of proposed development in the city is at the Old Road campus in Headington, which is in the process of being developed for new medical research facilities to take advantage of synergies with the Headington hospitals. A masterplan has been produced to guide development at the former Radcliffe Infirmary, and another masterplan is currently being produced for the Science Area.

Taken together, the above sites have the capacity to meet the University of Oxford's main land-use needs over the period covered by the City Council's adopted planning policies (up to 2026), although individual colleges are likely to continue to bring forward proposals for extensions or redevelopment on their own sites within the city.

During the 1980's and 1990's, the number of students grew steadily at around 15% per decade. The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 forecasts an expected growth rate of 1% per annum in student numbers, which would take the number of full-time students from approximately 16,400 in 1999/2000 to approximately 19,500 by 2016. However, more recently the University introduced a policy of a 19,400 ceiling on full time student numbers. Within these figures, the proportion of postgraduates to undergraduates is likely to increase. The total number of students, including part-time and visiting students, was reported to be 21,590 as at December 2010.

### **Oxford Brookes University**

Oxford Brookes University can trace its origins back to 1865, becoming Oxford Polytechnic in 1970 and then Oxford Brookes University in the early 1990's. It has established a reputation for academic excellence and is important to the local economy. The university consists of several loosely connected sites in Headington and Marston, of which the Gipsy Lane and Headington Hill Hall sites in Headington are the largest. Oxford Brookes University also has sites at Wheatley and Harcourt Hill (formerly Westminster College) in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse districts respectively.

Oxford Brookes University's Headington campus grew significantly in the 1990's, and in more recent years it acquired the former Milham Ford School to provide accommodation

for the School of Health and Social Care. The University is reviewing its Estate Strategy in respect of all of its campuses and, whilst the details are still being worked through, it is clear that whatever options are chosen will necessitate substantial new build and refurbishment on the Headington Campus to ensure that the quality of the buildings supports and reflects the high quality of the University's teaching and learning. The university has produced a masterplan that sets out how it plans to substantially redevelop the Headington Hill Hall and Gipsy Lane sites, in order to improve learning space and make more efficient and flexible use of buildings.

The university expects that its core academic needs will be met by the intensification and better use of its existing sites over the period up to 2026. Work is currently progressing on the erection of a new library and teaching building on the site of the former Darcy building at the Gipsy Lane site.

The Oxford Local Plan notes that the number of full-time students increased substantially during the 1990's, from approximately 6,000 in 1989 to 10,500 in 1999 (not including students from the former Westminster College). The Oxford Local Plan forecast an average growth rate of 0.5 to 1% per annum over the fifteen years from 2001 to 2016, which would have resulted in approximately an extra 1,800 full-time students at the university by 2016. By 2004/05, however, the number of full-time students had already risen to 12,170, an increase of about 1,650 in five years. Since then, the number of full-time on-site students has remained relatively steady, reaching 12,470 in November 2010. It should be noted however, that these figures include those students studying off campus (see below) as well as measuring growth on an artificially lowered 1999 baseline which excludes the former Westminster College students who were already part of the institution in 1999. In fact, university provided figures show a much lower rate of growth of 4.5% of on-campus students (full and part time) between 1999 and 2010.

The Core Strategy indicates that student numbers are expected to increase in line with the historic trend, typically 1-2% per academic year, for the foreseeable future. However, recent changes in Government policy, such as the rise in tuition fees, may well have the effect of reducing the level of future growth. Furthermore, Oxford Brookes plans to transfer approximately 1,000 full time students from on campus to delivery by

Franchise (i.e. at other institutions) over the period 2012-2015, which would reverse this growth. The total number of students, including part-time students and those studying in Swindon or at Franchise organisations, was reported to be 17,876 as at November 2010.

### **Local Planning Policy and Where It Comes From**

Oxford will always have a large student population, given the presence of two major universities and a number of private colleges. The student communities, which include undergraduates and postgraduate researchers, contribute greatly to the diversity and cultural vibrancy of Oxford.

The accommodation needs of most students are generally short-term, and different to those of long-term Oxford residents. The number of students who house-share in privately rented accommodation affects the availability of larger houses in the general market. Development of new purpose-built student accommodation benefits the wider housing market, as it frees up homes that are suitable for families and couples.

The City Council has had a longstanding planning approach to support the growth of the two universities because of their key importance to the city's economy, but the right balance must be struck between their growth and other land-use requirements in Oxford. In particular, it is important that an appropriate balance is maintained between the allocation of sites for normal housing (market and affordable) and those sites for student accommodation.

Planning policies over a number of years have sought to encourage the universities to accommodate additional students in purpose-built accommodation and to limit the number not in university provided accommodation, so as to reduce the impact which students have on the amount of housing available for other Oxford residents. The mechanism for doing this has been by insisting that any additional academic floor space is matched by a proportionate increase in purpose-built student accommodation, and by setting a target for the overall number of students living outside of university provided accommodation at each institution.

The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 (adopted November 2005) set a target for each university that the number of full-time students living in Oxford in accommodation not provided by their university or college did not exceed 3,500 in the academic years up to 2008 and 3,000 after that date. The Oxford Core Strategy 2026 (adopted March 2011) rolls forward the same target of 3,000 for each university.

Both universities have worked hard to reduce the number of students living outside university provided accommodation. This is in order to reduce the resulting pressure on the housing market. Furthermore, both Universities are keen to offer prospective students attractive accommodation since this helps them to compete with other universities for high calibre students.

Nevertheless, complying with the 3,000 target has been, and continues to be, a significant challenge for each university in the context of the growth in overall student numbers that has taken place (in line with the national expansion of higher education in recent years). Furthermore, the universities cannot force students to live in halls, and many postgraduate and continuing, as opposed to first year, students may prefer to live outside of university/college provided accommodation.

### Current planning policies

Core Strategy **Policy CS25 – Student Accommodation** seeks to manage the number of students in the private housing market. It does this by only allowing planning permission to be granted for additional teaching or administrative accommodation where it can be demonstrated that the number of full-time students, at whichever University is proposing the development, who live in Oxford outside University-provided accommodation, does not exceed 3000 *at the time of completion*. It must also be demonstrated that all future increases in academic or administrative floor-space must be matched by a corresponding increase in student accommodation.

Policy CS25 is used when assessing planning applications by the two universities. If the evidence is that the university does not have sufficient student accommodation then either:

1. Planning permission would be refused if the institution had no way of complying with the policy; or
2. If it was a timing issue, then either a condition or obligation would be imposed at the time of granting planning permission which would prevent development or occupation of the development until sufficient student accommodation was provided (a so-called “Grampian” style condition).

Following a binding recommendation made by an independent Planning Inspector, the Core Strategy removes the Local Plan policy condition that restricted occupancy of new student accommodation to Oxford Brookes University or the University of Oxford. Instead Policy CS25 includes the requirement that student accommodation be restricted to occupation by students in full-time education and on courses of an academic year or more. Any speculatively built student accommodation may be occupied by students of private colleges or language schools provided they are studying full-time and are enrolled on a course for at least one academic year.

The above restriction does not apply outside the semester or term-time, provided that during term-time the development is occupied only by university students. This ensures opportunity for efficient use of the buildings for short-stay visitors, such as conference delegates or summer language school students, whilst providing permanent university student accommodation when needed.

When the Core Strategy was adopted, the previous Local Plan policies relating to the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University were superseded. However, policies in the Local Plan relating to private colleges have been saved and therefore remain relevant. Local Plan **Policy ED.10 – Private Colleges: Student Accommodation** indicates that planning permission will only be granted for the establishment of new educational establishments or the expansion of existing ones where the applicant agrees to a limit on the overall number of students, and to accommodate the students in other educational premises, purpose built accommodation or family lodgings.

Core Strategy Policy CS25 and Local Plan Policy ED.10 are reproduced in Appendix 2.

## Emerging Planning Policies

The City Council is currently preparing a planning policy document called the Sites and Housing Development Plan Document (DPD), which will allocate specific sites for development and will include new policies against which planning applications for residential development will be judged. A draft document was approved by full Council in December 2011 for consultation and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.

The Sites and Housing DPD contains a more detailed policy about the location of new student accommodation, building on the strategic policy in the Core Strategy. It identifies that accessibility by public transport is important, as students in bespoke accommodation do not have access to a car. It is also important to locate student accommodation in a way that avoids great increases in activity along quieter residential streets. The emerging policy therefore aims to ensure that students are able to live in a convenient location, while seeking to maintain the character of residential areas.

Oxford Brookes University has said that it would like to reorganise the location of its student accommodation so that it is provided in the Headington area, close to its existing Gipsy Lane campus. The university has indicated that those students studying or using facilities in Headington show a clear preference for living close to the Headington campus. Furthermore, given the choice, many students are more likely to choose to live in privately rented family housing closer to the campus than to live in purpose built student halls further away. The University has stated that this is a critical factor in encouraging students into University accommodation and out of the private rented sector.

The Core Strategy Inspector thought that whilst it was desirable for Oxford Brookes University to have its student accommodation close to the campus, that was not the only possible geographical solution considering that Oxford is a compact city with good public transport provision. The Inspector also raised the issue of the impact of the concentration of institutional uses and student numbers within a tightly defined area such as Headington, and the concerns of the local communities who feel that the concentrations of students in such areas have had a considerable adverse impact on the sense of community and on general living conditions there.

The City Council therefore considers that the most appropriate sites for new student accommodation are on main thoroughfares, or in parts of Oxford that are highly accessible to local public transport and cycle networks. This approach also has the advantage of avoiding large concentrations of student accommodation in quieter residential areas. This approach is reflected in draft **Policy HP5 – Student Accommodation** of the emerging Sites and Housing DPD.

The Sites and Housing DPD also addresses the issue that new student halls are often proposed on sites that could otherwise be developed for housing, which would include affordable homes as part of a wider tenure mix. **Emerging Policy HP6 – Affordable Housing from Student Accommodation** therefore sets out how accommodation proposals should contribute to affordable housing delivery, to ensure that the objective of achieving mixed and balanced communities is met. If the applicant can robustly demonstrate that the sum required by applying a standard formula would make the scheme unviable, and this is accepted by the City Council, a lower contribution may be negotiated. This will be on the basis of the evidence submitted.

Draft policies HP5 and HP6 are reproduced in Appendix 2.

### **Halls of Residence**

The term “Halls of Residence” includes Oxford University college accommodation, on site and in annexes. As indicated above, there has been a longstanding planning policy approach in Oxford of encouraging the two universities to develop new purpose-built halls of residence in order to reduce the impact of students on the private housing market. Such halls of residence may be built by the universities or colleges themselves, or built speculatively and marketed to the universities for use by their students. Sometimes university students may be placed in halls through nomination agreements with private providers. University accommodation & large private providers of student accommodation are accredited by ANUK or UNIPOL and are exempt from HMO Licensing (see below) by virtue of paragraph 4 of Schedule 14 to the Housing Act 2004A.

Many, though not all, of the colleges that make up the University of Oxford have campuses with a significant amount of land attached. This has enabled colleges to make provision for their own accommodation needs on their land-holdings, in addition to student accommodation developments undertaken by the central university. However, the location of many of these colleges within the City centre Conservation Area has often placed constraints on the siting, density and design of new halls in order to comply with the City Council's conservation policies.

Oxford Brookes University is in a more difficult position in terms of landholdings, and although it has been able to develop student accommodation on its own sites, the university has often had to compete in the market place for the purchase of a limited supply of development land. The City Council has sought to ensure that Oxford Brookes can meet their objectives by allocating sites for student accommodation in areas of the city that may be convenient for Brookes students. The City Council has also in the past allocated a small number of development sites specifically for use as student accommodation for Oxford Brookes. However, if those sites are not purchased by Oxford Brookes University, then such a policy effectively sterilises the site from being used for any other purpose. Given the huge range of development pressures in Oxford and the desirability of not having potential development land lying vacant, the City Council's emerging policies do not tend to allocate sites for only one end user in this way.

Both universities have undertaken a considerable building programme over the past two decades. The table below shows the number of units of purpose-built accommodation reported by the universities since 2004/05, with a figure from around the turn of the century for comparative purposes.

Notwithstanding annual fluctuations, the number of student accommodation units has risen at both universities during the past decade, with a greater proportionate increase at Oxford Brookes University because of the lower baseline position. Some residents groups have expressed surprise that the number of places in halls of residence has not gone up by a greater amount, given the number of units that have been built in recent years (for instance, almost 1,000 additional units were

Year	Oxford Brookes University	University of Oxford
1998/99		13,091
2000	2,928	
2004/05	3,784	13,650
2005/06	3,639	13,863
2006/07	3,639	13,799
2007/08	3,742	13,799
2008/09	3,674	13,720
2009/10	3,516	14,058
2010/11	4,094	13,862

**Table 1:** Number of student accommodation units in halls of residence at each university (*Source: Oxford City Council Annual Monitoring Reports*)

completed in the five years from May 2005 to June 2010). The most likely explanation for this is that some former student accommodation units have been replaced as part of redevelopment schemes, or have been disposed of because they are of sub-standard quality. In addition, some of the new developments may have been occupied by students from private colleges rather than the universities.

The City Council has not previously monitored occupancy levels in halls of residence, but this question was asked for the first time when the universities were approached for their annual returns in the autumn of 2011 (see below). The University of Oxford stated that it had not previously collated overall occupancy rates, and therefore was unable to provide this data for December last year. However, the university will attempt to put together this data in future if that would be helpful, adding that it would expect the vacancy rate to be low. Oxford Brookes University indicated that the occupancy rate for university halls was 98% and for nomination halls 100%.

### Head Lease Scheme

In addition to the places in halls reported above, Oxford Brookes University has housed approximately 400 students in its Head Lease Scheme, whereby the university rents properties from property owners and acts as landlord to the students. The relevant

planning policies in the Local Plan and now the Core Strategy refer to 'university-provided' accommodation, rather than 'purpose-built' accommodation. Students living in these Head-Leased properties are regarded as living in university-provided accommodation, and are therefore excluded from the total of students living in private rented accommodation.

### **Private Rental Accommodation and HMO Controls**

A portion of students live in private rented accommodation within the city, the majority in Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). In total, more than 20 per cent of the city's residents live in an HMO, of which students make up a large portion, but by no means all, of this figure. Past surveys have suggested that a significant proportion of these HMOs provide the worst housing conditions in the city and generate problems for local residents through poor management.

Oxford City Council has adopted various measures in order to take a proactive approach towards managing HMOs in the City. Utilising national legislation which came into force in 2006, and a city-wide licensing scheme, which the Council approved in October 2010, Oxford City Council is attempting to control and improve standards for both tenants and local residents.

The first stage of the City scheme came into force in January 2011, requiring landlords of all three or more storey HMOs and all two storey HMOs occupied by five or more people to obtain a licence to operate the HMO. In January 2012 the second stage came into force, widening the requirement to include all single or two storey properties occupied by three or more people forming separate households to operate the property as an HMO.

Licensing a large proportion of the city's private rented housing is intended to improve the quality of the HMO housing stock. This is being achieved by ensuring that the number of occupants is suitable to the building, the properties are fit for purpose and managed appropriately and the properties are integrated into neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour reduced.

In February 2012 the Council also altered the policy towards HMOs from a planning perspective. Before this date HMOs were considered a permitted development, effectively allowing properties to be converted from single household dwelling into HMOs, without obtaining planning permission. As of February 2012, this changed, providing the Council with greater control over the number and density of HMOs in the city. The Council is now able to consider the impact on wider housing mix and the character of the local area and communities.

### Returns by Universities

Each year since 2004/05 the City Council has published an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to assess the effectiveness of its adopted planning policies. The AMR collects and makes publicly available information about progress against a range of targets and indicators. It includes a section which monitors progress against the target that no more than 3,000 full time students live outside of accommodation provided by the relevant university.

During the preparation of the AMR, City Council planning officers work with both universities to establish the number of students who are living in private rented accommodation. It is difficult to gather exact data on student numbers and student accommodation as the AMR monitoring period (April-March) does not coincide with the period which the universities use to complete their returns to the government, which is linked to the academic year. Actual student numbers may fluctuate during the academic year due to factors relating to individual students (e.g. dropping out of courses, or moving into or out of student halls) and due to factors relating to the institution (e.g. temporary closures of blocks of student accommodation). The information presented in the AMR therefore represents a snapshot taken at a particular point in the year.

Despite these difficulties, the universities invest significant time to produce accurate data. The University of Oxford obtains data on student numbers from the individual colleges, which is collated with data held centrally and reviewed to ensure consistency. Oxford Brookes University has in recent years carried out a postcode analysis of where

its full-time students live on a particular date. Both universities normally use November or December as the point in the year from which their data is derived.

The universities report on the total number of students, and then exclude certain categories of student which have been agreed with the City Council (see below). By then discounting the number of students who were housed in university accommodation (halls of residence and Head Lease scheme provided), it is possible to estimate the number of students living in private rented accommodation.

The following exclusions have been agreed with the universities:

- Students living outside postcodes OX1, OX2, OX3 and OX4 (these students are not living within Oxford City Council's administrative area);
- Local students who were living in Oxford prior to taking up their course, and those living with their parents (these students do not therefore amount to a net increase in people, of their age, living in Oxford);
- Visiting students (this is an exclusion agreed with the University of Oxford relating to students registered as such with the university under the terms of its Regulations. They are not members of the university and are not matriculated, but they are temporarily members of a college and are usually international students studying in Oxford as part of a period abroad from their home university. They are almost invariably housed in college accommodation);
- Part-time students (the relevant planning policies have always applied to full-time students only);
- Post-graduate research students past year 4 of their course or assumed to be writing up (since these are generally no longer full-time students)
- Students working full-time for the NHS (this exclusion relates to students on the Doctoral course of Clinical Psychology at the University of Oxford. These students have an employment contract with the NHS and are on placement throughout Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire during the course);
- Specific course exclusions, relating to Bachelor of Theology, Certificate of Theology and Master of Theology in Applied Theology students at the University of Oxford (the BTh and CTh courses are primarily intended as preparation for

ordination in Christian ministry, while the Master of Theology course is designed to enable theoretical reflection upon experience in pastoral practice);

- Students who are also members of staff (this exclusion applies to members of staff who take up study while already working for the university, but not to students who happen to do part time paid work for the university while studying); and
- Students on a sandwich year placement or a year abroad.

All other full-time students are included in the figures reported by the universities, including those on short-term courses (if those courses coincide with the date upon which the returns are based).

The postcode analysis undertaken by Oxford Brookes University is based on where students live, rather than where they study. This means that students who are based at their Wheatley or Harcourt Hill campuses, but live within Oxford city, are included within the figures, notwithstanding the fact that the City Council has no planning control over development at those campuses.

Type	Oxford Brookes University	University of Oxford
Part-time	3,558	1,732
Living at home/not in Oxford postcodes/already living in Oxford	4,365 + 253	114 + 418 + 421
Franchise	1,311	
Placement	284	
Visiting		508
Working full time for the NHS & specific course exclusions		60 + 92
Not attending the institution		12
Member of staff		179
On year abroad		307
Postgraduate research students past year 4 of study or assumed to be writing up		634
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,771</b>	<b>17,113</b>

Table 2: Breakdown of Exempt Students

The table below shows the number of students living outside university provided accommodation, as reported for each university in the AMR.

The figures for both universities remain above the 3,000 target in the Core Strategy. There is a common perception that this target is immediately enforceable. However, it is important to note that the Council has agreed with the Universities that the 3,000 target can take into account the number of university provided accommodation units either under construction or with planning permission. As at December 2011 there were 992 accommodation units either under construction or with planning permission for the University of Oxford, bringing the University well within the target.

Year	Oxford Brookes University	University of Oxford
2004/05	3,032	3,504
2005/06	3,852	3,123
2006/07	3,425	3,144
2007/08	3,425	3,221
2008/09	3,795	3,619
2009/10	3,493	2,991
2010/11	3,686	3,251

**Table 3:** Number of students reported as “living out” of university-provided accommodation in Oxford (Source: Oxford City Council Annual Monitoring Reports)

Oxford Brookes has 430 units due for completion or with planning permission, leaving it above the target. However, any enforcement action is tied to certain buildings under construction and due for completion in 2013 (the so-called Grampian style planning permission clause). Provided that Oxford Brookes has reached the 3,000 target by 2013, there would be no question of enforcement action. Oxford Brookes has been working hard to ensure that it meets the limit and anticipates complying with the policy by 2013.

### Council Tax Data

The data captured by Council Tax returns does not entirely align with planning data. Differing legal requirements and definitions mean that whilst there is a good deal of overlap, there are also variances between information expressed in the Annual Monitoring Report and that collated for Council Tax purposes.

There are a variety of reasons why properties might be exempt from Council tax.

The table below shows exemptions for occupied dwellings:

Class	Description
M	Hall of Residence (property occupied by students and owned or managed by the educational establishment)
N	Occupied solely by students, disregarded spouses or school leavers
O	Ministry of Defence accommodation
P	Occupied where one of the liable persons has a relevant association under the Visiting Forces Act.
S	Occupied solely by persons under the age of 18 years old
U	Occupied by one or more Severely Mentally Impaired persons where the liable person/s is either Severely Mentally Impaired or a student. or Occupied by at least one Severely Mentally Impaired person and at least one student, regardless of who is liable.
V	Occupied by a diplomat
W	Annexe occupied by a relative who is over 65 years old or who is disabled.

**Table 4:** Council Tax exemption categories for occupied dwellings (Source: Oxford City Council website, last reviewed 18<sup>th</sup> August 2011).

The two main categories of student Council Tax exemption relate to Halls of Residence and private dwellings (classes M and N). These exemptions originate in the Local Authority Finance Act 1992 – schedule 1, paragraph 4, and The Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) Order 1992:

Class	Description
M:	<p>a dwelling comprising a hall of residence provided predominantly for the accommodation of students which is either–</p> <p>(a) owned or managed by an institution within the meaning of paragraph 5 of Schedule 1 to the Act(3); or</p> <p>(b) the subject of an agreement allowing such an institution to nominate persons to occupy all the accommodation so provided;</p>
Class N:	<p>(1)</p> <p>A dwelling which is either–</p> <p>(a) occupied by one or more residents all of whom are students;</p> <p>(b) occupied only by one or more students as term time accommodation;</p>

	(2)	<p>for the purposes of paragraph (1), a dwelling is to be regarded as occupied by a student as term time accommodation during any vacation in which he—</p> <p>(a) holds a freehold or leasehold interest in or licence to occupy the whole or any part of the dwelling; and</p> <p>(b) has previously used or intends to use the dwelling as term time accommodation;</p>
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Table 5: Exemption Classes (Source: Local Authority Finance Act 1992)

### Class M Exemptions

As at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, the number of properties exempt under class M from Council Tax relating to the two universities was 2,207. Additionally, 282 properties relating to smaller educational establishments (e.g. boarding schools or other educational establishments, not including language schools) were exempt in this class in Oxford.

Of the 2,207 properties, 555 were properties associated with Oxford Brookes University. Obviously these are the numbers for whole buildings rather than rooms or bed spaces. They include the purpose built halls of residences but also a large number of houses owned by Oxford University and Colleges used specifically for student accommodation.

This figure does not include properties rented by Oxford Brookes under a Head Lease for the purpose of housing students. Whilst they do theoretically come under class M exemption, instead they are included with the figures for class N exemption (see below).

### Class N Exemption

As at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, the total number of properties within the city exempt from Council Tax on the basis of class N was 2,890. This includes those properties within the city with a discount on Council Tax on the basis of one or more (but not solely) students occupying the property.

While class N exemptions require the individual to name his or her educational affiliation for verification purposes, it is not currently possible to identify the number of exempted properties by university in reports.

It is important to note that in the case of rental properties, Council Tax liability is based upon those individuals named on the lease. If five persons are named on the lease, for total Council tax exemption all five individuals need to provide proof of student status. If however, only one person is named on the lease, only one proof of student status would be required to exempt the dwelling. The Council accepts the legal status of the occupation of the house as set out in the lease and does not carry out visits to verify this unless there is a suspicion of fraud.

In total, the number of properties exempt or partially exempt from Council tax due to student status in Oxford was 5,389 as at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011. For clarity, please see the table below for a breakdown of figures.

<b>Number of units of accommodation or students</b>	<b>Oxford University</b>	<b>Oxford Brookes University</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
No of university-provided accommodation units 2010/11 (excluding Head Lease)*	13,862	4,021*	unknown	17,883
Students living out (as per University returns) and with certain agreed exclusions	3,251	3,686		6,937
Head Lease Properties		398		398
Exempt students	4,477	9,771		14,248
<b>Total student numbers accounted for</b>	<b>21,590</b>	<b>17,876</b>		<b>39,466</b>

**Table 6:** Student Numbers and Units of University-Provided Accommodation

\* In the case of Oxford Brookes, number of students living in university-provided student accommodation (i.e. taking into account occupancy rates).

Number of properties	Oxford University	Oxford Brookes University	Other	Total
Class M Exemption (Halls of Residence)	1,652	555	282	2,489
Class N Exemption – full or partial				2,890
<b>TOTAL Exemptions</b>				<b>5,379</b>

Table 7: Property Numbers

### Discussion Around Data

The data available measures different things at different dates for different purposes so it is impossible to come to firm conclusions from these to answer the questions posed by those members of the public challenging the returns provided by the universities.

In respect of the numbers of non exempt students living in the private rented sector in Oxford there appears to be ample premises which are either fully or partially exempted for Council Tax purposes to accommodate them. If one assumes that the vast majority of students living within Oxford are affiliated with Oxford University or Oxford Brookes University and if one assumes that partially exempt premises house just one student occupier, the remaining premises would need to provide, on average, accommodation for fewer than three students. This is well within the capacity of the typical house in multiple occupation in the city and is consistent with the observations of the private rented sector in the city.

**So why might people have the impression that there are more students living in the private rented sector than is set out in the returns from the university?**

Local students who were living in Oxford prior to taking up their course are exempt from the university figures. They could be living with parents, or living as a couple. In the latter case this might be perceived as a student dwelling by local residents, increasing the number of dwellings assumed to be student houses and adding to the confusion.

There are, at latest estimate, between 5,000-6,000 houses in multiple occupation in the city. Only 3,000 of these are occupied by non-exempt students based on the Council Tax exemptions data, which would be just 50 per cent.

Oxford is an area of high house prices and many young professionals working at the universities, in the health service or otherwise in the city live in multiple occupied houses as it provides easily accessible and affordable accommodation. Some HMOs are a mix of students and young professionals, though these are often perceived to be occupied entirely by students

HMOs are typically the accommodation first bought out by migrants to the area. In addition there are students at institutions other than Oxford University or Oxford Brookes University that may live in the private rented sector in Oxford.

It may also be that people are seeing houses that look like ordinary private rented stock which are in fact premises owned by the universities and are therefore not counted in the returns of students living in the private rented sector.

Qualitative Data suggests that a number of students live outside the city boundaries in areas such as Kennington and Botley, where rent is often a little cheaper. These numbers would therefore not count within the City Council Tax data.

## Appendix 1 – UPDATED Extract from Oxford Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11 regarding student numbers at the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes\* University

### Indicator 7

#### STUDENTS AND PURPOSE BUILT STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

##### **Target**

*That no more than 3,000 full-time students live outside of accommodation provided by the relevant university (Oxford Core Strategy)*

**1.23** It is difficult to gather data on student numbers and student accommodation as the Annual Monitoring Report monitoring period (April to March) does not coincide with the period which universities use to complete their returns to the government, which is linked to the academic year. The data used was submitted by the two universities as relevant to the monitoring year.

**1.24** Core Strategy Policy CS25 rolls forward a former Local Plan policy target, whereby each university is required to have no more than 3,000 full-time students living in Oxford outside of university-provided accommodation. This policy is intended to reduce the pressures from students on the private rental market. To avoid worsening the existing situation, all increases in student numbers at the two universities should be matched at least by an equivalent increase in student accommodation. All applications for new or redeveloped academic floorspace will be assessed in this light.

**1.25** The Inspectors who conducted the Core Strategy examination considered that it was inappropriate to restrict occupation of new purpose-built accommodation to students of the two universities, as had previously been the case. New student developments may therefore potentially be occupied by students from other non-university institutions, although those students will need to be in full time education on courses of an academic year or more. This change will potentially make it more difficult

for the universities to provide additional student accommodation in future because of increased competition in the market from non-university institutions.

**1.26** The City Council is currently preparing the Sites and Housing DPD, which proposes a new criteria-based policy on the location of student accommodation and a proposal to seek contributions for affordable housing from student accommodation.

## University of Oxford

**1.27** The University of Oxford state that there were a total of 21,590 students attending the university in December 2010. There are a number of exclusions as follows: students who don't live in OX1, 2, 3 or 4 postcodes (421); local students already in Oxford who do not therefore amount to a net increase in people, of their age, living in Oxford (418); visiting students or those not attending the institution (520); part time students (1,732); postgraduate research students past year 4 of study or assumed to be writing up (634); students working full time for the NHS (60); specific course exclusions e.g. BTh Theology (92); students who are also members of staff (179); students living with parents (114); students on year abroad (307). This results in 17,113 full-time students with accommodation requirements. In December 2010 there were 13,862 units of university (or college) provided accommodation. This means that there were 3,251 students at the University of Oxford without a place in provided accommodation, above the target of 3,000 (although see 1.28 below).

**1.28** However, it is likely that the number of students living outside of university provided accommodation will fall in the next monitoring year. There are an additional 340 units of student accommodation for the University of Oxford under construction. When completed this will bring the number of students living outside of provided accommodation to 2,911, under the 3,000 target. In addition there are a further 652 units with planning permission. This is a large number, which should have a significant impact on the figures for future monitoring years. The agreed target of 3000 is calculated to include these planned units. As such, the University is well below the 3,000 threshold.

## Oxford Brookes University

**1.29** Oxford Brookes University state that there were a total of 17,876 students attending the university in November 2010. There are a number of exclusions as follows: students who don't live in Oxford or local students already in Oxford who do not therefore amount to a net increase in people, of their age, living in Oxford (4,365); part time students (3,558); students studying at franchise institutions (1,311); students studying at the Swindon campus (253); placement students away from the university (284). This results in 8,105 students with accommodation requirements. In order to ensure consistency with the methodology applied to the University of Oxford, there may be some other exclusions that should apply to Oxford Brookes. These relate to visiting students; postgraduate research students past year 4 of study; students working full time for the NHS; and students who are also members of staff.

**1.30** In November 2010, there were 4,419 places in accommodation provided by Oxford Brookes. The accommodation comprised 3,398 places in university halls of residence, 623 places in private halls of residence with Oxford Brookes nomination agreements, and 398 places in other properties managed by the university. Taking into account occupancy rates, in total there were 3,686 non-exempt students at Oxford Brookes University without a place in university-provided accommodation.

**1.31** However, it is likely that the number of students living outside of university provided accommodation will fall in the next two monitoring years. In the academic year 2011/12 there have been an additional 117 places at Clive Booth Hall and in 2012/13 there will be new halls of residence at Dorset House (313 places) and Harcourt Hill.

## New permissions

**1.32** In the monitoring year April 2010 to March 2011 there were 8 planning permissions issued for the development of student accommodation (the Dorset House permission was granted after this monitoring period). These permissions were for a combined total of 520 units; of these 484 were for students at the University of Oxford and the other 36

were conditioned to restrict the use to either the University of Oxford or Oxford Brookes University.

\* The report extract has been substantially updated in paragraph 1.30 to reflect the actual occupancy rates in Oxford Brookes provided accommodation.

## Appendix 2 – Planning Policy, Oxford City Council, regarding student numbers and exemption of the universities

### Extract from adopted Oxford Core Strategy showing Policy CS25

#### **Policy CS25**

##### **Student accommodation**

Planning permission will only be granted for additional academic/administrative accommodation for the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University where that University can demonstrate: in the first place that the number of full-time students at that University, who live in Oxford but outside of university-provided accommodation, will, before the particular development is completed, be below the 3,000 level and once that figure is reached, thereafter will not exceed that level. All future increases in student numbers at the two Universities as a result of increases in academic/administrative floor-space must be matched by a corresponding increase in purpose built student accommodation.

Student accommodation will be restricted in occupation to students in full-time education on courses of an academic year or more. Appropriate management controls will be secured, including an undertaking that students do not bring cars to Oxford.

- 7.4.5 Note: the reference to students not living in accommodation provided by either Oxford Brookes University or the University of Oxford excludes those students who were resident in Oxford before applying to study at the university and continue to live at their home address while studying.

### Extract from adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 showing Policy ED10

#### **POLICY ED.10 - PRIVATE COLLEGES - STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

Planning permission will only be granted for the establishment of new educational establishments or the expansion of existing ones where the applicant agrees to:

- a. a limit on the overall number of students; and
- b. to accommodate the students in other educational premises, purpose built accommodation or family lodgings.

## Extract from emerging Sites and Housing DPD showing draft policies HP5 and HP6

### **POLICY HP5 LOCATION OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

Planning permission will only be granted for student accommodation in the following locations:

- a. on or adjacent to an existing university campus, higher or further education college, or other hospital or research campus (and only if the use during university terms or semesters is to accommodate students being taught or conducting research at that site), or
- b. in the City centre or a District centre, or
- c. located adjacent to a main thoroughfare\*, or
- d. on a site which is allocated in the development plan to potentially include student accommodation.

Also, planning permission will only be granted for student accommodation if:

- e. for developments of 20 or more bedrooms, the design includes some indoor and outdoor communal space, and
- f. a management regime has been agreed with the City Council that will be implemented on first occupation of the development (to be secured by a planning condition or planning obligation), and
- g. the developer undertakes to prevent residents from parking their cars anywhere on the site, and anywhere in Oxford.

Planning permission will not be granted for any proposal that results in a net loss of student accommodation

\*this means sites that existed as a college or campus on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011 (the date at which the Housing Policies became a material consideration) and continues to exist as such

**POLICY HP6 AFFORDABLE HOUSING FROM STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

Planning permission will only be granted for new student accommodation that includes 8 or more bedrooms if a financial contribution is secured towards delivering affordable housing elsewhere in Oxford. The contribution will be calculated using the formula in Appendix 4.

An exception to this requirement will be made for any proposal that is within an existing\* academic campus or college site that includes regular teaching activities and facilities.

Developers may not circumvent this policy by artificially subdividing sites. For mixed-use developments of student accommodation with general housing or commercial floorspace, a pro-rata approach will be used to determine whether a contribution is required, and how much this should be.