



## 3. General policies for development

- G1 The general strategy is to provide a framework for development to sustain economic prosperity, meet housing and other requirements and guide the investment decisions of a range of organisations for the period to 2016 in ways which will:
- a) deliver the level of development required to meet the objectives of this Plan while protecting and enhancing the environment, character and natural resources of the county;
  - b) concentrate development in locations where:
    - i. a reasonable range of services and community facilities exist or can be provided; and
    - ii. the need to travel, particularly by private car, can be reduced and walking, cycling and the use of public transport can be encouraged;
  - c) make the best use of previously developed land and buildings within urban areas to reduce the need for the development of greenfield sites, while not permitting development on important open spaces.

The larger urban areas will be the main focus for development.

In smaller towns and villages development will be of an appropriate scale and type to meet the social and economic needs of local communities.

- 3.1 The key elements of the strategy are outlined in chapter 2.
- 3.2 National and regional policy guidance promotes urban areas as the main focus for development. Most development will be located within or adjoining the main urban areas to make best use of previously developed land and put houses close to jobs, shops, services and other facilities. Development should be located where it helps in reducing the need to travel and might encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Developments which generate a lot of journeys should be in locations which are, or are capable of being well served by public transport.
- 3.3 The reuse of previously developed urban land is a key objective of national planning policy. Densities of housing development in many areas will need to increase with good quality design to help achieve this.
- 3.4 A priority for the local planning authorities in determining planning applications and allocating land in local plans will be to first maximise the use of previously developed urban land. In encouraging the development of such sites the Plan includes safeguards to protect the character of towns and villages and important open spaces.
- 3.5 Apart from the larger urban areas, the smaller towns and villages have a role in helping to meet the needs of local communities and businesses. Local needs may be identified by means such as local housing needs assessments, community plans, village appraisals, market town health checks or other such initiatives. The Plan provides a framework which supports this role but which does not encourage unsustainable travel patterns.

## Improving the quality and design of development.

G2 All development should;

- a) be of a scale and type appropriate to the site and its surroundings, and not cause harm to the character and amenities of the area;
- b) incorporate a high quality of layout, design and landscaping; and
- c) be designed so as to reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of walking, cycling and public transport and telecommunications as alternatives to the car.

Development which would have an unacceptable impact on the environment because of its nature, scale, location or cumulative effects will not be permitted.

- 3.6 High quality design has a major role to play in improving people's quality of life, enhancing the built environment and making communities safer, for example in designing energy efficient buildings or car-free neighbourhoods. Proposals for mixed use developments and provision for home working can help to reduce travel. Redevelopment of previously developed land and buildings within built up areas will provide opportunities to improve the quality of the built environment. At the same time the best of the cultural and natural heritage needs to be protected.



- 3.7 It will be for local plans and local development frameworks to establish the principles for the design, layout and landscaping of new development to provide high quality, safe environments which encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport and incorporate measures to reduce crime. The County Council's Home Zones design guide<sup>11</sup> shows how road space can be shared. Local planning authorities should work in partnership with the police, and new development should incorporate features to improve community safety.

<sup>11</sup> Home Zone Characteristics for New Housing Developments, Oxfordshire County Council, February 2002.



## Infrastructure and service provision

**G3** Proposals for development will not be permitted unless the planning authorities are satisfied that necessary infrastructure, on- or off-site transport measures, recreation, leisure, educational, health and community facilities, services and environmental improvements are available, or will be provided. Where appropriate phasing will be used to coordinate development with the provision of infrastructure.

In determining infrastructure and other requirements the local planning authorities will take into account the cumulative impacts of development.

Contributions will be sought from developers and/or landowners in accordance with Government advice.

The provision of recreation, leisure, educational, health and community facilities will be encouraged in settlements where there are deficiencies.

3.8 Good quality development can only be provided if the necessary infrastructure and services are available at the right time. Where existing community facilities, infrastructure and services are inadequate to deal with the extra demands made as a result of new development, developers are expected to ensure that the necessary additional provision is made at no extra public cost. Where the proposed development requires new facilities or the upgrading of existing facilities, the planning authorities will seek the provision of the facility or contributions towards the requirements from the developer, in accordance with Government advice. The range of requirements include affordable housing, community facilities and buildings, recreational open space, sport, leisure and cultural facilities, cycle and pedestrian routes, public transport, roads, schools, libraries, health, childcare facilities, water supply and sewage treatment, and environmental improvements. Infrastructure provision may be triggered when development has reached a certain stage, or it may need to be in place before any development commences. In some cases phasing will be used to coordinate development with the provision of infrastructure. The County Council has, in conjunction with the four district councils, produced guidance on its approach to infrastructure and service needs<sup>12</sup>.



<sup>12</sup> Infrastructure and Service Needs for New Development. The approach to planning obligations and agreements for development in Oxfordshire. An information guide for developers and landowners, Summer 2002.



## Green Belt

**G4 A Green Belt will be maintained around Oxford, to:**

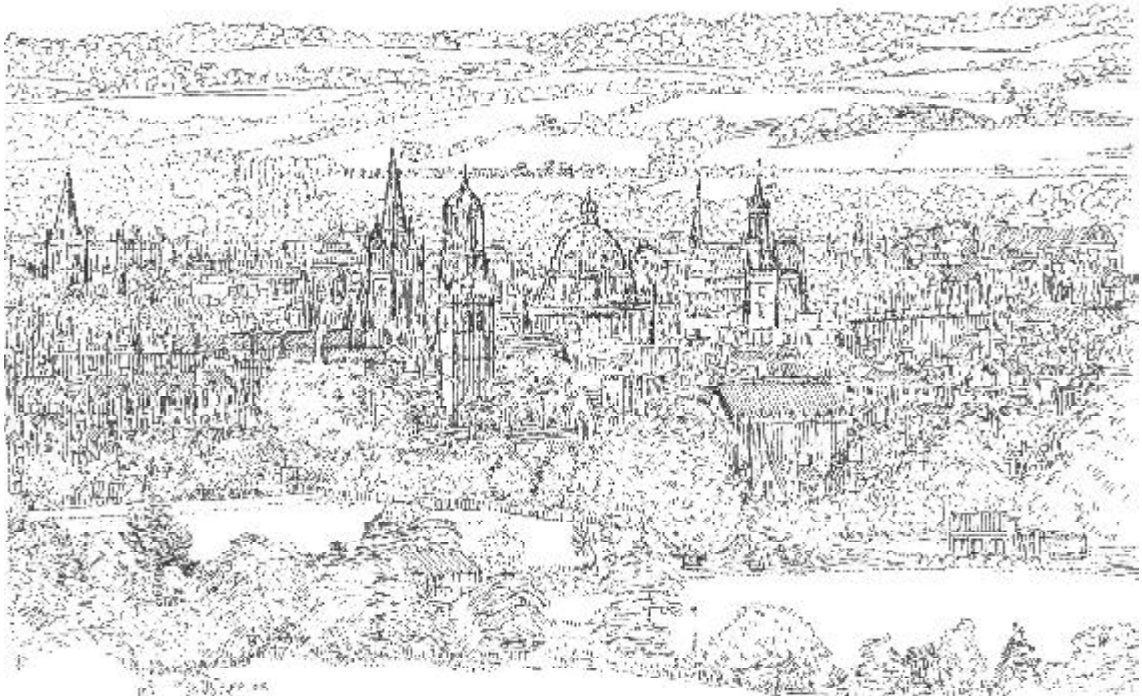
- a) preserve the special character and landscape setting of Oxford;
- b) check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl;
- c) prevent the coalescence of settlements;
- d) assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- e) assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

**Development in the Green Belt will only be permitted if it maintains its openness and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities.**

- 3.9 The protection of the character of Oxford in its broadest sense has been an objective of planning policy since the 1940s. The special character of Oxford and its landscape setting means not just the University and the views of the dreaming spires, but a much broader concept including the countryside around the city, the Cherwell and Thames floodplains, and the relationship of nearby settlements to Oxford. Its character also includes the overall scale of activity, since significant growth will generate more traffic and pressures for further development, which could threaten the nature, character and setting of the city.
- 3.10 Government policy on green belts is set out in PPG2 (Green Belts). PPG2 says there is a presumption against inappropriate development within green belts. Development in the Green Belt other than for uses identified in PPG2 will not be permitted except in very special circumstances.
- 3.11 The use of land in the Green Belt may have a role in fulfilling the following objectives which reflect the advice in PPG2:
- provide opportunities for public access to the countryside;
  - provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation;
  - retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes near to where people live;
  - improve damaged and derelict land around Oxford;
  - secure nature conservation interests;
  - retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.
- 3.12 The County Council is keen to pursue opportunities which fulfil these objectives, particularly where they offer opportunities to enhance the appearance of the urban fringe. One example might be the planting of managed woodland which could combine opportunities for public access and nature conservation with landscape enhancement. Another would be to lay underground the electricity cables, particularly to the west of Oxford, which at present spoil views of Oxford's skyline. In many cases these objectives will be consistent with the purposes of the Green Belt set out in policy G4. However, in the event of conflict the purposes of including land in the Green Belt are of paramount importance and will take precedence over these objectives, and proposals will need to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist that outweigh harm to the Green Belt.



- 3.13 Development in the Oxford Green Belt, will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional cases will be treated as departures from the development plan to be referred to the Secretary of State. Proposals for outdoor sport and recreation involving substantial building or “urbanisation” (eg intensive floodlighting) are unacceptable as are those for waste disposal involving landraising. Proposals for mineral working are not necessarily contrary to the objectives of the Green Belt, although working which would damage the landscape setting of Oxford will not be permitted. Examples of exceptions that have been allowed are the Oxford park and ride sites, which are part of a transport strategy which is itself aimed at protecting Oxford’s character, and waste facilities where there was no other suitable site available. It will be for the local planning authorities to judge whether the provision of low cost housing development for local community needs in Green Belt settlements falls within the scope of local plan policies.



- 3.14 Subject to certain criteria, PPG2 allows for the re-use of buildings in the Green Belt provided the proposed use does not have a greater impact than the current use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it. PPG2 also offers guidelines on the future of major developed sites in the Green Belt, and the circumstances in which their redevelopment can be acceptable. Any such sites will be identified in local plans.



## Development outside settlements

**G5 The countryside will be protected from harmful development.**

**Special consideration will be given to development for agricultural, forestry or outdoor recreational needs or for other uses appropriate to a rural area which cannot reasonably be accommodated in a nearby settlement.**

- 3.15 The Government is committed to protecting the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character. Protecting and maintaining the character of the countryside depends on sustainable rural communities. Where development is allowed on sites adjoining settlements it should respect existing settlement patterns, the gaps between them and the character of the countryside. While most development needs should be met within and adjacent to existing settlements, exceptional consideration will be given to proposals in other locations providing they make a positive contribution to sustainability and do not have significant adverse effects on established rural activities, countryside quality and the natural environment. Otherwise new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements will be strictly controlled.
- 3.16 Development which may be permitted by the policy will normally be small in scale and could include such uses as agricultural buildings, farm workers' dwellings, sports changing facilities, pavilions and small clubhouses, and uses which are generally rural in character and need to be located outside a settlement. Significant development in the vicinity of motorway or major road junctions will not be allowed.

## Energy and resource conservation

**G6 All new developments should incorporate best practice in energy efficiency and resource conservation, in particular through passive solar design, small scale renewable energy, providing high levels of insulation, water conservation measures and by minimising the use of construction materials, maximising use of recycled and secondary materials in place of primary aggregates and minimising production of waste.**

**New developments should make adequate provision to facilitate storage, re-use, recycling and composting of waste.**



3.17 A key area in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and climate change is to seek to reduce energy consumption and encourage the use of renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power. Passive solar design aims to reduce the demand for energy for space heating, lighting and air conditioning by making best use of free solar gain to buildings. Landscaping can also play a role, for example by providing screening from winds. To encourage the provision of renewable energy in line with PPS22 (Renewable Energy), local planning authorities may include policies in local plans and local development documents requiring a percentage of the energy to be used in new development to be provided from renewable energy on site. Water is a valuable natural resource and managing it wisely can reduce the need to develop new water resources which can be environmentally damaging. For new housing development best practice will normally be taken to mean achieving at least BREAM Eco-homes standard 'very good' rating, except for developments that are only a very small number of dwellings.



3.18 The use of combined heat and power is to be encouraged. Policy guidance on combined heat and power and proposals for the development of renewable energy sources is in Chapter 10, policy EG2.



- 3.19 It is County Council policy to encourage the recycling of materials, which has the benefit of conserving non-renewable mineral resources, reducing the environmental harm caused by mineral extraction and reducing the amount of waste.
- 3.20 Highway schemes should be designed to minimise the production and disposal of waste. The maximum quantities of recycled and secondary materials consistent with the currently prevailing standards should be used in place of primary aggregates.