

- 5.12 A key element in RPG9 is that urban areas should become the main focus for development. At the same time however the best of the region's cultural and natural heritage needs to be protected and preserved. The future development of urban areas must therefore be based on an understanding of their historic character; preserving and adapting historic buildings to accommodate new uses and provide a focus for urban communities; and by enhancing urban rivers, canals, parks and other green spaces. Apart from the need to protect the historic character of Oxford for its own sake, the city is the county's largest urban area and will see significant housing and other development over the next decade. It is also a major tourist destination and its character is an important factor in its attractiveness as a business location. Policy EN5 recognises Oxford's particular importance, and should be read in conjunction with the policy on the Green Belt.

Archaeology

EN6 There will be a presumption in favour of preserving in situ nationally and internationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings. Development affecting other archaeological remains should include measures to secure their preservation in situ or where this is not feasible, their recording or removal to another site.

- 5.13 Archaeological remains are by their nature a finite and non-renewable resource which once destroyed cannot be recreated. Development proposals which would affect Scheduled Ancient Monuments also require scheduled monument consent from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Oxfordshire has a rich archaeological resource with nearly 300 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. However, these represent only about 2% of the known archaeology resource in the county. Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for maintaining the Sites and Monument Record which currently holds information on more than 13,000 archaeological remains.
- 5.14 There is considerable archaeological potential on many sites for which information is presently limited. Historic town and village centres, greenfield and previously developed sites may all contain significant levels of surviving archaeology. In assessing proposals for development local planning authorities will seek to identify this potential by requiring archaeological desk-based assessments and field evaluations in accordance with PPG16. Advice on the implications of development should be sought from the County Archaeologist at an early stage and preferably before planning applications are submitted. Where planning permission is to be sought from Oxford City Council advice should be sought from the City Archaeologist.

Geology

EN7 Nationally and regionally important geological features including geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Regionally Important Geological Sites shall be protected from harmful development and retained in situ unless there are exceptional reasons justifying their removal, in which event their presence shall be appropriately recorded.

- 5.15 Oxfordshire has a rich geological resource, including a full range of limestone rocks from lias clays to chalk. In addition to important geological sites which are designated as SSSIs and protected by policy EN2 and regionally important geological sites (RIGS)²², previously unknown geological remains may sometimes be discovered. The County Council considers that where such finds are made, all efforts should be made to protect those of national or international importance and, if this is not possible, they should at least be recorded. The Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum is proposing to prepare a geodiversity action plan (GAP) to help recognise the significance of geological resources and enable their protection.

Water quality

EN8 Development that will lead to unacceptable deterioration in water quality will not be permitted.

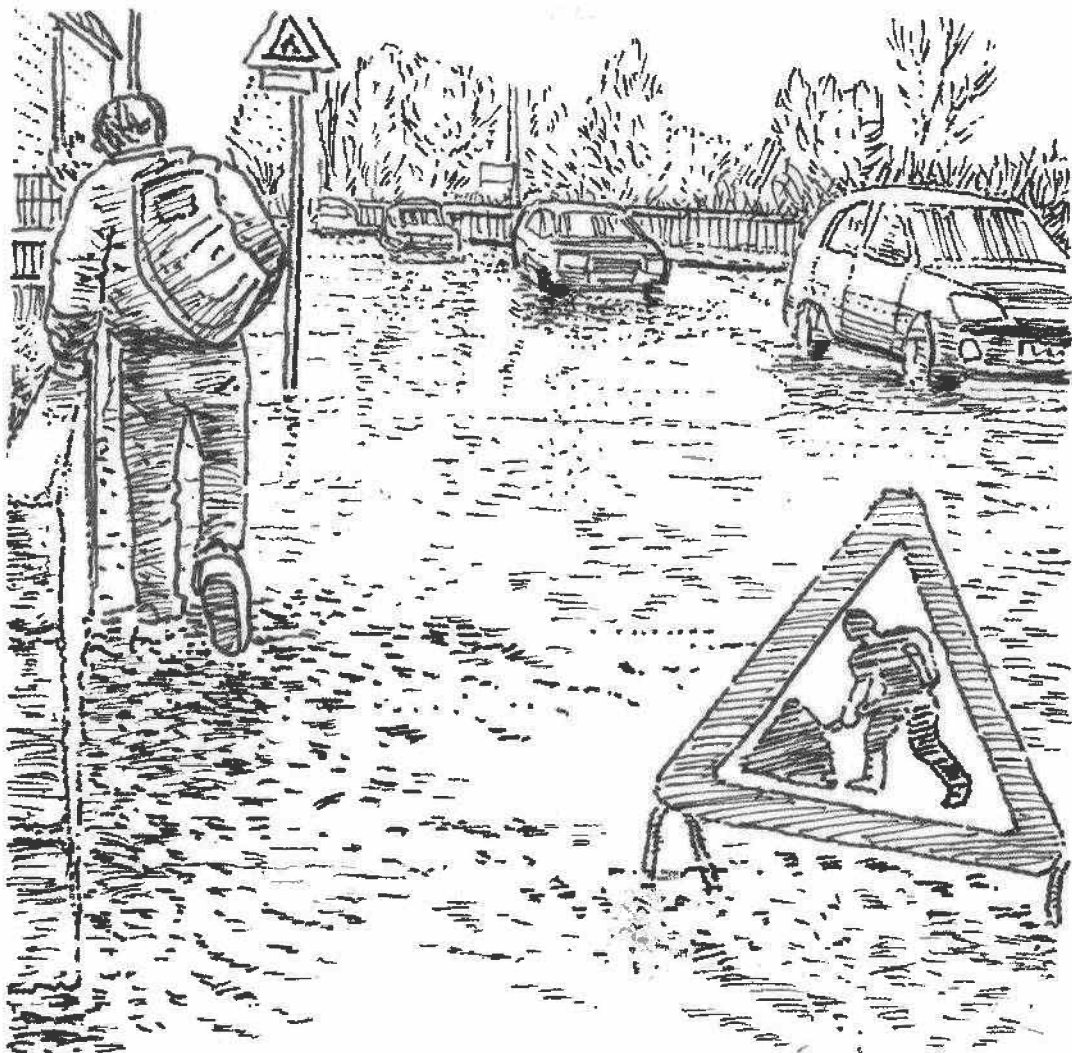
- 5.16 Rivers, canals, lakes, ground-water, ponds and wetlands are amongst the areas protected by this policy. New development can have significant effects on the quality of surface and groundwater, and proposals which would place it at risk will not be permitted. Development proposals can offer opportunities to enhance the water environment by increasing public access or improving water-related habitats, landscape or water quality. Such proposals will be welcomed where they comply with other development plan policies.
- 5.17 Achieving a continuing overall improvement in the quality of water through the control of pollution is a principal aim of the Environment Agency, and also British Waterways.

²² The full title of RIGS is Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites.

Flood risk and surface water drainage

EN9 Development in undeveloped areas at high risk from flooding or in the functional floodplain will not be permitted. A flood risk assessment will be required for proposals for development except where there is little or no flood risk. Proposals for redevelopment of existing buildings and their curtilage within areas of high flood risk should aim to improve conditions locally and not worsen flood risk elsewhere.

New development should not lead to an increase in run-off, which would exacerbate flood risk elsewhere. The use of sustainable drainage systems to regulate run-off will be required as part of development proposals.



- 5.18 Large areas of Oxfordshire within each of the main river catchments are prone to flooding. In recent years Oxfordshire, as with other parts of the country, has experienced significant damage to property due to flooding. The predicted impact of climate change is likely to include increased flood risk as a result of more intense periods of rainfall, hotter drier summers and wetter winters, and a greater incidence of extreme weather. Wetter winters may also result in instances of groundwater flooding. Farmers and land managers can assist the seasonal control of water by providing winter water storage on farms.
- 5.19 Government policy in PPG25: Development and Flood Risk is to reduce the risks to people and the developed and natural environment from flooding. Policy EN8 sets out how the County Council will apply a risk based approach to development proposals in accordance with PPG25. This may result in development being permitted that requires the provision of flood defence and mitigation measures, generally funded by the developer. If agreement cannot be reached on the provision of contributions, the applications for development should be refused in accordance with the precautionary principle. An indication of the extent of land at risk of flooding is available from the Environment Agency.
- 5.20 Development can have an impact on flooding by increasing run-off, even in areas of little or no flood risk, and PPG25 encourages surface water run-off to be controlled as near to the source as possible by encouraging sustainable drainage systems²³.

Water resources and waste water infrastructure

EN10 Development will be permitted only where adequate water resources and waste water infrastructure for the development already exist or can readily be provided without risk to existing abstractions, water quality, the water environment or nature conservation.

- 5.21 Demand for water in Oxfordshire is growing and is likely to become a more significant issue over the next few decades due to climate change. RPG9 says that the need to balance the growing demand for water with the needs of the environment is crucial. It states that new development should be located and its implementation planned in such a way as to allow for sustainable provision of water services and timely investment in sewage treatment and discharge systems to maintain the appropriate standard of water quality. Consultation with the Environment Agency and Thames Water Utilities (or other relevant water utility company) should be carried out at the earliest possible stage in preparing development proposals.

²³ Sustainable drainage systems use techniques to control surface water run-off as close to the source as possible before it enters a watercourse. It includes a range of measures such as preventative measures (e.g. rain water recycling), filter strips and swales, filter drains and permeable and porous pavements, infiltration devices, basins and ponds.

EN11 Proposals for major new reservoirs in Oxfordshire will be permitted only if there is a proven need for increased water resources which cannot be met in more economical and environmentally less intrusive ways, and all reasonable measures to manage demand for water, including controlling loss through water leakage, have been taken.

- 5.22 The demand for water resources in Oxfordshire and the South East is growing. Thames Water continues to undertake studies into the feasibility of developing a new reservoir within Vale of the White Horse district. However, a formal planning application for this proposal has yet to be submitted.

6. Developing the local economy

Economic strategy

- 6.1 The Plan seeks to sustain prosperity by supporting sustainable and appropriate economic development. A successful economy is fundamental to ensuring that the quality of life in Oxfordshire is protected and improved. This does not mean encouraging indiscriminate economic growth but supporting investment in high value sectors that have low environmental impact, or 'smart' growth. The County Council will work with partners, including the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, to promote economic benefits to all sectors of society and to provide infrastructure that supports the demands of the economy.
- 6.2 This broad approach is reflected in the Regional Economic Strategy for South East England²⁴, and in particular, the Oxfordshire Economic Development Strategy²⁵. This strategy seeks to sustain and develop the county's educational, scientific and technological economy and to deliver continued economic prosperity through improved competitiveness and productivity, skills development, and job and firm creation, in a way that protects the county's important environmental assets.
- 6.3 Oxfordshire has a well integrated network of support for business, linking together industry, local government, private agencies and research and education institutes. New science, technology and business parks and centres provide a choice of locations for innovative companies and entrepreneurs who wish to benefit from proximity to a world class knowledge base.
- 6.4 The County Council approach is about building steadily on Oxfordshire's strengths and providing employment opportunities for local people, but not of a scale that encourages significant commuting into the area or which attracts large footloose firms or large warehousing and distribution facilities.

²⁴ Regional Economic Strategy for South East England 2002-2012, SEEDA.

²⁵ Oxfordshire Economic Development Strategy 2001-2005, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership, December 2001. The County Council is a member of the Partnership.

Provision for employment development

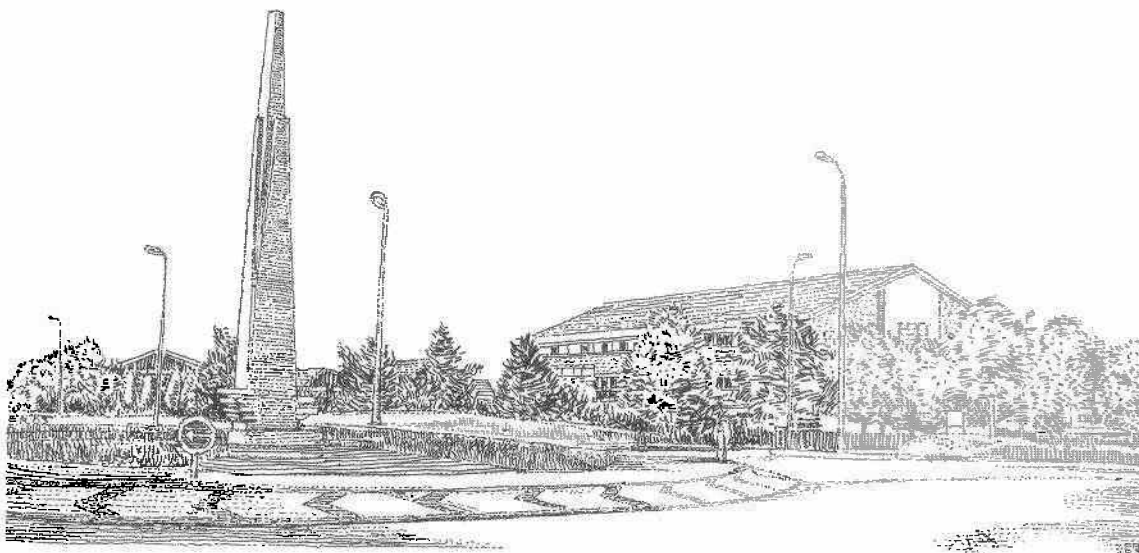
E1 Development for employment purposes should be located so as to meet the objectives and priorities of this Plan. In particular it should:

- provide for the requirements of activities which contribute to the regional and local priorities for economic development. This includes providing a range of accommodation for small businesses and innovation, skills development, business infrastructure and linkages within the knowledge based economy;
- be located mainly in or adjoining urban areas or in existing concentrations of employment with good accessibility from residential areas, particularly by non-car modes of transport;
- as far as practicable incorporate measures to encourage shorter journeys to work and travel on foot, by cycle or public transport;
- not be of a scale or character that gives rise to large increases in commuting in the area or low intensity uses of land which generate heavy traffic on local roads.

Priority should be given to development which supports educational, scientific and technological sectors and responds to the needs of established and emerging clusters within the county.

6.5 Policy E1 sets out the focus of the Plan's approach to economic development in line with the principles described in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.4 above.

6.6 Within the context of the overall strategy as set out in policy G1, the role of the development plan in sustaining prosperity and supporting the local economy is to ensure that sufficient land is available in appropriate locations to meet the needs of small businesses – including for start ups and incubator space, existing firms and firms which need to be in Oxfordshire. This means a focus on development within larger urban areas and where employment generating development can contribute to reducing the need to travel and where walking, cycling and use of public transport can be encouraged.



- 6.7 A key objective is to support the development of Oxfordshire's existing and emerging growth sectors and clusters. The educational, scientific and technological industries and services are important both regionally and locally. To this end, the Plan proposes a strategy that provides for the growth of firms in this sector in the main urban areas, which will assist with the diversification of the economic base of the city and the main towns.
- 6.8 In its wider role, the County Council with its partners will seek to address employment related issues such as increasing the level of educational attainment, supporting learning and skills development and business support.

Oxford City

E2 In Oxford, development for employment uses will be expected to take place primarily on previously developed land or in conjunction with redevelopment schemes for mixed uses incorporating housing, town centre or other facilities. Development should have regard to the priorities set out in Policy E1 and to the objective of providing a range of accommodation for businesses in Oxford and contributing to the diversity of local employment opportunities, while maintaining or improving the balance between jobs and resident workforce in the city.

Where employment use of a site ceases, its future use should be assessed in the light of the above considerations, its suitability for alternative uses and whether there is a realistic prospect of it being re-used for employment purposes.

- 6.9 In Oxford, because the number of jobs is much greater than the resident workforce²⁶ causing substantial in-commuting and housing pressures, new land allocations for employment generating uses are not proposed. Rather, the approach is to make better use of existing developed land, through for example, redevelopment and intensification. Redevelopment schemes in the centre provide an opportunity for a mix of uses including the provision of new retail floorspace but also for employment and housing. The West End area of Oxford represents by far the most significant potential for new mixed use development where already schemes for conversion of the Prison and Castle Mound for hotel and cultural activity, and proposals for redevelopment of the Westgate shopping centre indicate significant intent to rejuvenate the area under the guidance of a partnership project between the County and City Councils with SEEDA.
- 6.10 Oxford is an important economic centre, significant in terms of the types of employment activity and presence of major employers. Policy E2 seeks to enable diversity of employment opportunities while providing for the necessary requirements of key sectors. Land is available in Oxford for new employment development including to meet university and hospital requirements. There is also potential for modernisation, intensification and change of use.
- 6.11 The planned consolidation and modernisation of Oxford's hospital activity over the Plan period will generate new transport pressures in the city. The health authorities should devise and fund measures to reduce car traffic and ensure appropriate access, particularly by public transport, in consultation with the County Council and others.

²⁶ Resident workforce includes people in employment and unemployed.