

- 7.6 The location of housing development and rate of building will be monitored throughout the Plan period to assess the progress of the locational strategy and previously developed land target. This information will enable the County Council to advise the planning authorities on phasing to manage the release of larger housing sites to give priority to the re-use of previously developed land within urban areas.



Upper Heyford

- H2 a) Land at RAF Upper Heyford will provide for a new settlement of about 1000 dwellings and necessary supporting infrastructure, including a primary school and appropriate community, recreational and employment opportunities, as a means of enabling environmental improvements and the heritage interest of the site as a military base with Cold War associations to be conserved, compatible with achieving a satisfactory living environment.**
- b) Proposals for development must reflect a revised comprehensive planning brief adopted by the district council and demonstrate that the conservation of heritage resources, landscape, restoration, enhancement of biodiversity and other environmental improvements will be achieved across the whole of the former air base in association with the provision of the new settlement.**
- c) The new settlement should be designed to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport rather than travel by private car. Improvements to bus and rail facilities and measures to minimise the impact of traffic generated by the development on the surrounding road network will be required.**

- 7.7 Land declared surplus by the Ministry of Defence at the former airbase at Upper Heyford represents an opportunity to achieve an appropriate balance between environmental improvements to a rural part of Oxfordshire, conservation of the heritage interest from the Cold War, and re-use of some existing buildings and previously developed land located in the former technical and residential core area of the base. However, the scale of development must be appropriate to the location and surroundings. The County Council is opposed to the development of a large new settlement due to the site's relatively isolated and unsustainable rural location, the threat of urbanisation in a rural area, the location of the site in relation to Bicester with which it would compete for investment in services and facilities, and conflict with the objectives of Government planning policy in PPG13 to provide accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling and to reduce the need to travel by car²⁹. Therefore, the Plan provides for modest development of about 1,000 houses. There are about 300 existing houses on the site of which some or all could be retained or demolished, but the total limit of about 1,000 dwellings will be the determining factor. This proposal has been recognised by the First Secretary of State as 'an exception to normal sustainability objectives as a means of facilitating the remediation of the former airbase to enable the site to present a more environmentally acceptable face than it does now'³⁰.
- 7.8 Proposals for development must be in accordance with a revised comprehensive planning brief for the site adopted by Cherwell District Council. Care should be taken to ensure that the heritage interest of the site as an air base with Cold War associations, landscape restoration and biodiversity are all taken into account in deciding appropriate measures. In revising the comprehensive planning brief, the District Council should continue to consult English Heritage and the developer on how heritage conservation issues should be addressed, including treatment of buildings from the Cold War era that English Heritage have recommended for protection. A conservation plan for the whole area of the air base is being prepared by the District Council in partnership with English Heritage, to enable appropriate decisions to be reached in revising the comprehensive planning brief.
- 7.9 In drawing up development proposals attention should be paid to ensure a satisfactory living environment is provided for future residents. Proposals should be designed to a high quality in accordance with policy H3 and will need to provide for appropriate on- and off-site infrastructure to meet the needs of the development in accordance with policy G3, including primary and secondary education, library facilities, and public transport and other highway and transport improvements. Proposals should not provide for any further significant growth beyond that envisaged in policy H2.

²⁹ In June 2003 the Secretary of State refused permission for proposals for development of a settlement on the site because he considered that the scheme did not comply with the development plan. Cherwell District Council is to review the comprehensive planning brief to bring it up to date and to make it consistent with the Secretary of State's decision.

³⁰ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 23 June 2003, reference APP/C3105/A/02/1080800.

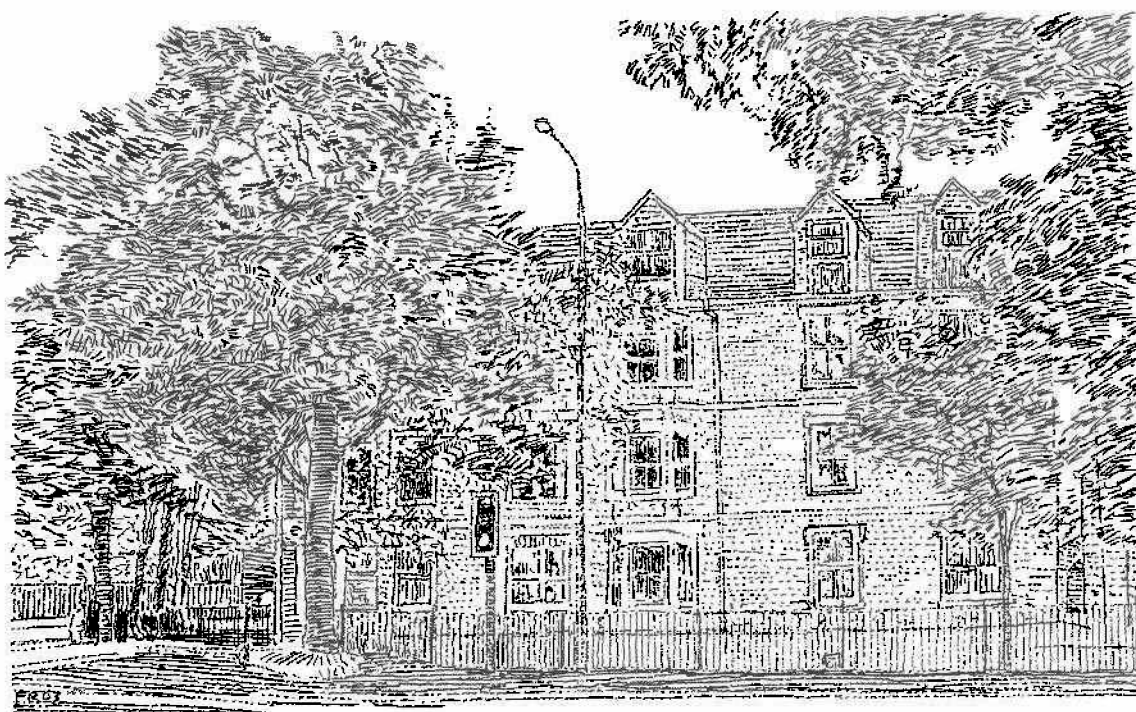
Design, quality and density of housing development

H3 Housing development should be at a density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare. Higher densities will be sought on sites within urban areas, close to town centres or where there is a good range of existing or planned services and facilities. Densities of at least 50 dwellings per hectare will be required in locations which are or can be well served by public transport. New housing development should:

- a) be designed to a high quality, taking into account the character of the site and surroundings; and
- b) include a variety of dwelling types and sizes to help create balanced communities and to meet the needs of all sections of the community, including small households.

Major urban extensions should be planned as mixed communities and should provide the services and facilities needed to support them and create safe and attractive places to live.

7.10 The average density of housing development built or planned in Oxfordshire in recent years has been about 25 dwellings per hectare. This is low compared to the densities of housing development which the Government wishes to see of between 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare. In Oxfordshire, increasing the density of housing development will make better use of land and will help reduce the amount of greenfield land needed for development.



- 7.11 Higher development densities need not mean high rise development or that the design and quality of development should be compromised. All proposals for development should aim for high quality of design and layout in order to raise the quality of urban areas and create attractive and safe areas in which to live. The design of new developments should promote community safety and help to prevent crime, for example through the "Secured by Design" initiative. Well designed and practical proposals for "car-free" housing areas and the creation of "Home Zones" within new residential development will be welcomed. Incorporation of energy efficiency and resource conservation measures including water conservation in new development is encouraged by policy G6.
- 7.12 Policy H3 encourages account to be taken of the needs of local communities for different types and sizes of dwellings, including the need for 2-3 bedroom houses and more dwellings for small households. The type and size of dwellings to be built will be determined by the local planning authorities according to local needs within the overall principles set out in this policy. Assessments of local housing need by the local planning authorities generally indicate that the greatest proportion of need is for smaller houses.
- 7.13 People's needs change over time, and there will always be a proportion of the population who have special requirements. Therefore, developers are encouraged to build a proportion of new housing developments to the "homes for life" standard. This allows people to stay in their homes longer and places less pressure on support services such as health and social care.
- 7.14 A significant number of new dwellings will be built in extensions to existing urban areas. The County Council's vision is that urban extensions should provide attractive and interesting places to live, where residents have access to the day-to-day services and facilities they need, and where they are able to walk, cycle or travel by public transport for at least most local journeys. They should be planned as mixed communities with a range of dwelling types and sizes according to local need. Local planning authorities are encouraged to prepare development briefs to provide more detailed guidance about how this will be achieved on specific sites.

Affordable housing

- H4 Provision shall be made in local plans or development frameworks and through the determination of applications for planning permission, for affordable housing including housing for key workers, at a level commensurate with the identified need for such housing in each District. The amount and size of site where provision will be sought will be determined by local planning authorities based on assessments of local need. Provision will normally be made on site and be subject to permanent and enforceable arrangements to ensure the benefits will be passed on to subsequent occupiers.**
- 7.15 The need for affordable housing is one of the most important issues currently facing Oxfordshire, and is the top priority of the Oxfordshire Community Partnership. Oxfordshire currently has the third highest house prices of counties in the South East outside London, and low levels of unemployment. The inability to recruit and retain workers threatens the ability to deliver public services and sustain prosperity in Oxfordshire. Being unable to afford suitable housing leads to social deprivation and reduced quality of life for people.

- 7.16 Affordable housing is defined as housing which meets the needs of people who cannot afford accommodation to rent or purchase on the open market which is suitable for their needs, including housing for rent, shared ownership or low cost market housing. People who may not be able to afford housing at market rates include key workers.
- 7.17 RPG9 suggests that about 48% of new dwellings built in the South East region need to be affordable. Local levels of housing need are assessed by the district councils to inform their housing strategies and local plan policies. The most recent surveys indicate levels of need for affordable housing far exceeding total housing supply. It would not be possible for all the new dwellings built in Oxfordshire to be affordable in order to meet the predicted level of need. Between 1996 to 2003, only 20% of dwellings built were affordable. Almost half of these were built in the rural areas of the county.
- 7.18 Given the levels of need in the county and the importance to the local economy and delivery of services of the ability to recruit and retain workers, the delivery of affordable housing will be monitored against the expectation that 50% of the additional housing provided in Oxfordshire should be affordable, including houses for key workers. This is consistent with the overall level of need indicated in RPG9. This will require a significant change from current levels of provision, which in turn will depend on major policy changes by the Government and other agencies and a significant increase in the funding available for affordable housing, over which the planning system has no influence. However, to assist local authorities in the Thames Valley, practical guidance on the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system has been published³¹.



³¹ Affordable Housing Practical Guide, Association of Councils in the Thames Valley Region (ACTVaR), June 2003.