

Chapter 6- A City that Respects its Heritage & Fosters Design of the Highest Quality

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Glossary

Conservation areas - an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Heritage assessment - May also be referred to as a Heritage Statement or Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA). This should set out the significance of a heritage asset or landscape within its wider setting and outline the proposal, assess the impact on significance and set out a mitigation strategy. The local Historic Environment Record should be consulted, and expert assessment will be required. It should have a level of detail appropriate to enable an informed decision to be reached.

Heritage assets - A building, monument, site, place, area, or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Heritage assets are the valued components of the historic environment. They include designated heritage assets and assets identified by Oxford City Council during the process of decision-making or through the plan-making process (including local listing).

Historic core - area of the city centre comprising the spires and towers that make up the historic skyline, and in which any additions of height will intrude directly into the view of the skyline.

Listed Building- A building deemed to be of special architectural or historical interest is placed on a statutory list maintained by Historic England. Such buildings cannot be demolished, extended, or altered without special permission from a local planning authority, which typically consults with Historic England before determining an application. The designation regime is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Listed buildings are classified into three grades:

- Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest
- Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest.
- Grade II buildings are of special interest warranting every effort to preserve them.

Listed building consent - permission required from a local planning authority before making changes that affect the character or appearance of a listed building.

Oxford Heritage Assets Register – A register of buildings, structures, features, or places that make a special contribution to the character of Oxford and its neighbourhoods through their locally significant historic, architectural, archaeological or artistic interest.

The City Centre Archaeological Area - area of the city centre where archaeological remains are almost certain to be present.

Introduction and wider context

6.1 A key theme of the Local Plan 2040 vision, which addresses both the social and environmental pillars of sustainability, is for Oxford to respect its culture and heritage and foster design of the highest quality. This is underpinned by two key objectives:

- Well-designed, beautiful buildings and public spaces that feel safe, that are sustainable, and that are attractive to be in and pass through; and
- To ensure that the significance of valued and important heritage is conserved and that understanding of the value and importance is enhanced.

6.2 To respond to this theme successfully, it will be important that we drive the highest quality design in all new development, which means developments are both aesthetically pleasing and functional, so that they enable people to live healthy, happy lives, and that they respond to climate change and make space for biodiversity.

6.3 Oxford is a world-renowned historic city with a rich and diverse built heritage. It is highly recognisable by its iconic skyline and its architecture. Oxford is also a dynamic city that must adapt and change. High quality design is key to managing this change positively, for the continued success of the city.

6.4 A cornerstone of good design is about ensuring proposals are informed by an understanding of existing context and designed to respond to this positively. Oxford has been shaped by its landscape and by development related to defending the city, church and academic institutions, industry and commerce. Oxford is a product of more than a thousand years of evolution, with layers of history both visible and buried resulting in many valuable heritage assets, together and individually contributing to a special character that defines and is particular to the place. The natural landscape around Oxford is key to its sense of place. The floodplains and valley sides provide a backdrop to Oxford's cityscape, and setting is defined by agricultural vales, wooded hills, and river valleys.

Heritage

6.5 Successful new design and the conservation and enhancement of the heritage of Oxford should not be separated. Managing change in a way that respects and draws from Oxford's heritage and landscape is vital for the continued success of the city. Therefore, new developments will need to come forward in a way that respects and responds to landscape, heritage and archaeology and takes opportunities to celebrate this history. Successful design in Oxford is reliant on first understanding this heritage and managing change that meets future needs (such as providing new homes, greening our streets and reaching net zero carbon) whilst ensuring that there is no harm to the special significance of these heritage assets so that they can continue to be understood, valued and enjoyed for years to come. Paragraphs 199-202 set out considerations for designated heritage assets, which are conservation areas, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and scheduled monuments. In all cases, significance must be understood, and the level of any harm on this significance. This must be weighed against public benefits, which could be wide ranging and will vary in magnitude but include delivery of needed homes and facilities and environmental improvements such as carbon efficiency.

Heritage Assets

Conservation areas

Conservation areas are designated heritage assets. They are ‘areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.’ Oxford has 18 conservation areas which are listed in Appendix 6.1 and defined on the Policies Map. They include a diverse range of qualities, reflecting the story of Oxford, from the medieval walled city to surrounding agricultural settlements, the open green space found in the Headington Hill Conservation Area to the meadows of the river valleys such as Wolvercote and Godstow. However, they all have the common element of containing features that link us to our past. The protection of these features needs to be effectively managed, ensuring future generations will value and enjoy their special qualities.

Conservation Area Appraisals and management plans help describe what makes the distinctive character, appearance, and historic interest of the conservation areas, and where these exist these should be a starting point in creating good, contextually responsive new development. Full regard should be given to the detailed character assessments and other relevant information set out any relevant conservation area appraisal and management plan.

Certain features may be characteristic in a particular conservation area, and these must be responded to sensitively. Characteristic features may include:

- The urban grain such as specific settlement patterns, plot types and groupings of buildings and their relationship to each other and the wider area.
- Proportions, such as height and massing, may be characteristic and may be harmed by developments that do not relate well to these;
- Views, which includes long distance and close views, focal points at the end of a view, glimpsed views of spaces beyond and between;
- Setting of the conservation area and what the setting contributes to its significance;
- Trees and other landscape features, including views and backdrops to views.
- Boundary treatments, which may include railings, walls and hedges are often characteristic and add to the significance of the area; and/or
- Architectural details such as the palette of materials, windows and doors, proportions, and rhythms.

Policy HD1 Conservation Areas

Planning permission will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford’s conservation areas, responding positively to their significance, character and distinctiveness.

For all planning decisions for planning permission or listed building consent affecting the significance of a conservation area or its setting, great weight will be

given to the conservation of that conservation area and to the setting of the conservation area where it contributes to that significance or appreciation of that significance.

An application for planning permission or listed building consent for development which would or may affect the significance of a conservation area, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment. This must be based on an understanding of the context and that includes a description of the conservation area and its significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the conservation area's significance.

Certain features may be characteristic of a particular conservation area, as outlined in the supporting text, and planning applications should set out how these have been responded to sensitively to avoid harm.

A heritage assessment must include information sufficient to demonstrate:

- a. an understanding of the significance of the conservation area, including recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits they may bring; and
- b. that the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the conservation area and that harm to its significance has been avoided or where it's not possible, any harm has been minimised through thoughtful design; and
- c. that, in cases where development would result in harm to the significance of a conservation area, including its setting, the levels of harm has been properly and accurately assessed and understood, that it is justified because alternative possibilities or design arrangements have been explored and that measures are incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce or compensate for the harm.

Where the setting of a conservation area is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the conservation area, as well as an assessment that the impact of the proposed development would have on the setting and the setting's contribution to the significance of the asset.

Where a development proposal would cause less than substantial harm to a conservation area, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Clear and convincing justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment. Substantial harm to or loss of significance of a conservation area should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a conservation area, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if all of the criteria in paragraph 201 (or equivalent in any update) of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) can be demonstrated, or unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, which should be set out in the heritage assessment.

Conservation areas are listed in Appendix 6.1 and defined on the Policies Map.

Listed Buildings

Oxford has a very high concentration of historic buildings. Oxford contains buildings of great rarity, group value and high aesthetic value, and with associations to people and events of history, that allows a visible understanding of the past of Oxford and the country, and that create a unique character and distinctiveness. Therefore, the impacts of alterations to listed buildings on the significance of listed buildings and their setting could potentially be very harmful if not fully informed by an understanding of the significance of the building.

Historic buildings need to be repaired and adapted to meet changing needs, which may be changing needs of occupants for example, or the need to respond to the climate emergency. It is important that this is carried out thoughtfully and in a manner that preserves the fabric of the building as well as notable features of the building or heritage asset that contribute to its significance and the reason it is protected.

Policy HD2 Listed Buildings

Planning permission or listed building consent will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford's listed buildings, responding positively to their significance, character and distinctiveness. For all planning decisions for planning permission or listed building consent affecting the significance of a listed building or its setting, great weight will be given to the conservation of that listed building and to the setting of the listed building where it contributes to that significance or appreciation of that significance.

An application for planning permission or listed building consent for development which would or may affect the significance of a listed building, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes

- a. a description of the listed building and information sufficient to demonstrate an understanding of the significance of the listed building including**
 - i. its rarity, group value and how it reveals its historic, architectural, archaeological and/or artistic interest and/or value for its associations to things that shape the identity and character of the area, the way it illustrates the past and helps our understanding of it, its aesthetic contribution to the area, and its importance to the community; and**
 - ii. recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits they may bring.**
- b. an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on significance of the listed building and its setting, including on the integrity of the building, the impact on group value and Oxford's/the local area's identity should be explained, including:**
 - i. that the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the listed**

**building and that harm to its significance has been avoided; or
ii. in cases where development would result in harm to the
significance of a listed building, including its setting, the extent of
harm must be properly and accurately assessed and understood, and
clearly and convincingly justified.**

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a listed building, clear and convincing justification must be provided within the heritage assessment. This should explain what alternative proposals have been considered and how measures have been incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce or compensate for the harm. Only then will the harm be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Substantial harm to or loss of Grade II listed buildings should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of Grade I and II* listed buildings should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a listed building, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if all of the criteria in paragraph 201 (or equivalent in any update) of the NPPF can be demonstrated, or unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, which should be set out in the heritage assessment.

The use of a listed building may be part of its significance. Changes of use should:
c. be to a use which would not be harmful to the special interest of the building or its setting; and
d. be suitable without harmful extensive reconstruction

Where the setting of a listed building is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the listed building, as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and its contribution to significance.

Registered Parks and Gardens

Many parks and gardens in Oxford contribute significantly to its townscape and are an important part of appreciating and understanding its heritage. Historic England's National Heritage List includes 15 parks and gardens in Oxford, 5 of which are Grade I, 1 is Grade II* and 9 of which are Grade II. These are designated heritage assets. The majority of these are related to colleges, but they also include High Wall in Pullens Lane, Park Town and St Sepulchre's Cemetery. Because of their heritage value as well as other functions as Green Infrastructure, these sites are protected as part of the Core Green Infrastructure Network under Policy G1. Many more parks and gardens are not registered but nevertheless contribute to local significance. The registered parks and gardens all have associated listed buildings and form a significant part of the setting of those listed buildings, so the impact of any proposals on associated heritage assets will also be a key consideration. Because the nature of Registered Parks and Gardens in the city is that they

are not stand alone heritage assets, but part of a wider heritage asset that includes listed buildings, so of the criteria in paragraph 201 of the NPPF referred to in Policy HD3, those about viable uses, grant-funding and bringing the site back into use are unlikely to apply.

The designation requires local authorities to consult Historic England on development affecting Grade I and II* Registered Parks. It also requires local authorities to consult the Garden History Society on works to all grades of parks and gardens. The effect of proposed development on a registered park or garden, or its setting, is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Policy HD3 Registered Parks and Gardens

Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a registered park and garden, clear and convincing justification must be provided within a heritage assessment. Substantial harm to or loss of Grade II registered parks and gardens should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a park or garden, planning permission (or other planning consents where relevant) will only be granted if all of the criteria in paragraph 201 (or equivalent in any update) of the NPPF can be demonstrated, or unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, which should be set out in the heritage assessment.

Any proposals that would result in harm to, or loss of, the significance of a Registered Park and Garden requires clear and convincing justification in a Heritage Assessment. Substantial harm to or loss of grade II Registered Parks and Gardens should be exceptional, and of grade I and II* registered should be wholly exceptional.

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a Registered Park and Garden unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or the criteria in paragraph 201 (or equivalent in any update) of the NPPF can be demonstrated. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Scheduled Monuments

A heritage asset is only made a Scheduled Monument if it is of national importance and also if that is the best means of its protection. It is a national designation, so designation is by Historic England. Scheduled Monuments may nor may not be visible above ground. There are 9 Scheduled Monuments in Oxford, which are varied in age and type. They are

the remains of Osney Abbey and Rewley Abbey, Oxford Castle and the City Walls, Seacourt Medieval Settlement, Old Abingdon Road Culverts, Grandpont Causeway, Port Meadow, and the Swing Bridge near Oxford Station. Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) is required for any works that will affect a scheduled monument, through an application to Historic England, in addition to any application for planning permission.

Policy HD4 Scheduled Monuments

An application for planning permission for development which would or may affect the significance of a Scheduled Monument, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes a description of the Scheduled Monument and its significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the listed building's significance.

The submitted heritage assessment must include information sufficient to demonstrate:

- a. an understanding of the significance of the Scheduled Monument, including recognition of its contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations and the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits they may bring; and**
- b. that the development of the proposal and its design process have been informed by an understanding of the significance of the Scheduled Monument and that harm to its significance has been avoided or minimised; and**
- c. that, in cases where development would result in harm to the significance of a Scheduled Monument, including its setting, the extent of harm has been properly and accurately assessed and understood, that it is justified, and that measures are incorporated into the proposal, where appropriate, that mitigate, reduce, or compensate for the harm.**

Where the setting of a Scheduled Monument is affected by a proposed development, the heritage assessment should include a description of the extent to which the setting contributes to the significance of the listed building, as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the setting and its contribution to significance.

Where a development proposal would cause less than substantial harm to a scheduled monument, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Clear and convincing justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment. Substantial harm to or loss of significance of a scheduled monument should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a scheduled monument, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if all of the criteria in paragraph 201 (or equivalent in any update) of the NPPF can be demonstrated, or unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, which should be set out in the heritage assessment.

Archaeology

Much of Oxford's history lies buried beneath the ground and so Oxford has a rich archaeological heritage that has been progressively built up from prehistoric times to the modern day. This archaeology has the potential to aid understanding of our heritage. Archaeological remains can't be renewed so it is essential they are managed carefully and treated with respect.

New development has the potential to harm or destroy these assets where their presence is not appropriately investigated, and impacts are not carefully mitigated. New development should seek to find creative innovative ways to conserve and protect Oxford's exceptional and irreplaceable archaeological legacy from cumulative harm and loss. Building designs should therefore aim to preserve significant archaeology in situ. Where the loss of archaeological assets is warranted by the merits and public benefits of the development then archaeological investigation and recording, public outreach, storage of artefacts and the publication and dissemination of results may be an acceptable alternative. In these cases, the potential for design that makes some acknowledgement of the understanding of the past that is gained through the archaeological discoveries should be considered. Understanding and incorporating archaeological remains into current designs will add interest and local distinctiveness.

The unique archaeological heritage of the city encompasses a wide variety of asset types. A few of these are formally designated heritage assets such as Scheduled Monuments, however many assets of comparable significance are not currently designated and warrant appropriate protection through the planning system. Notable assets include prehistoric domestic, ritual, and funerary sites located across north Oxford and the remains of an important Roman pottery manufacturing industry to the south and east of city. The town is also distinctive for its middle-late Saxon urban remains, its emergence as a major cloth trading town in the Norman period and for the numerous assets associated with Oxford's development as an international centre for academic study including the remains of multiple religious institutions, academic halls and endowed colleges. Other assets of note include the town defences, the distinctive remains associated with the medieval Jewish Community and the Royalist Civil War defences.

The City Centre Archaeological Area (defined on the Policies Map) has an exceptionally high concentration of archaeological remains, as do some allocated sites. Any significant breaking of the ground in these locations will require an archaeological assessment. An archaeological assessment may also be required outside of these areas where it is suspected there are archaeological remains. There are known concentrations of past human activity in many parts of Oxford, and early discussion with the City Council to ascertain whether an archaeological assessment is required is strongly advised.

Owing to the richness of archaeological remains in Oxford, especially in the historic core, there is a danger that allowing the recording of deposits rather than preservation in situ for several individual developments will lead to significant degradation of the archaeological record. In those cases, further work to ensure adequate contextual assessment and mitigation may be required, that takes into account cumulative impacts.

The City Centre Archaeological Area contains archaeology it is essential to preserve and understand. Development within the medieval core has a high potential to harm the

heritage value of the sites, if not carried out sensitively. There are many things to consider as part of the design of developments at these sites, so a comprehensive approach is essential that ensures archaeology, and cumulative impacts on archaeology, is part of wider considerations of how to develop a site.

Policy HD5 Archaeology

Within the City Centre Archaeological Area, on allocated sites where identified, or elsewhere where archaeological deposits and features are suspected to be present (including upstanding remains), applications should be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment. A Heritage Assessment should include and be informed by:

- a. a description of the impacted archaeological deposit or feature (including where relevant its setting), information to define the character, significance and extent of such deposits or features; and**
- b. an explanation of how early assessment and field evaluation has informed design that aims to preserve deposits and features in situ avoiding adverse effects from poor siting of foundations, drainage features and hard landscaping; and**
- c. an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the deposits of features, using a proportionate level of detail that is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal. The assessment should reference appropriate records (including the information held on the Oxford Historic Environment Record,); and**
- d. if appropriate, a full archaeological desk-based assessment and the results of evaluation by fieldwork. This should be produced by an appropriately qualified contractor. Pre- application discussion is encouraged to establish requirements. In the City Centre Archaeological Area, where significant archaeological asset types can be shown to be subject to cumulative impact from development, the desk-based assessment should contain appropriate contextual assessment of this impact. The desk-based assessment in the City Centre Archaeological area should also include a whole site plan (which may be beyond the red line to include a whole campus site, for example) that shows current understanding of any basement and underground servicing, likely locations of hidden archaeology, other heritage assets (including settings) to be considered and explain how this whole-site understanding has helped inform decisions about the layout and location of the development.**

Development proposals that affect archaeological deposits and features will be supported where they are designed to enhance or to better reveal the significance of the asset and will help secure a sustainable future for it.

Proposals which would or may affect archaeological deposits or features that are designated as heritage assets will be considered against the relevant policy approach (HD2 Listed Buildings, HD4 Scheduled Monuments).

Subject to the above, proposals that will lead to harm to the significance of non-designated archaeological deposits or features will be resisted unless a clear and convincing justification through public benefit can be demonstrated to outweigh

that harm, having regard to the significance of the deposits or features and the extent of harm. Where harm to an archaeological asset has been convincingly justified and is unavoidable, mitigation should be agreed with Oxford City Council and should be proportionate to the significance of the asset and impact. The aim of mitigation should be where possible to preserve archaeological remains in situ, to promote public enjoyment of heritage and to record and advance knowledge. Appropriate provision should be made for investigation, recording, analysis, publication, archive deposition and community involvement.

Non-designated Heritage Assets

The term 'heritage asset' describes valued components of the historic environment, which may include buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes that have been positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. Some heritage assets are designated, such as listed buildings. However, not all heritage assets are designated. These non-designated heritage assets may or may not be identified in the Oxford Heritage Asset Register. These are assets that have a local relevance that do not merit a national-level designation, but which are still important to consider in determining planning applications (and in developing proposals).

Policy HD6 Non-designated Heritage Assets

A non-designated building or group of buildings, monument or site, place or landscape will be considered a local heritage asset if it is found to have local interest, value, and significance. These assets may be identified through the Oxford Heritage Assets Register, conservation area appraisals, or the planning application process. Planning permission will only be granted for development affecting a local heritage asset or its setting if it is demonstrated that due regard has been given to the impact on the asset's significance and its setting and that it is demonstrated that the significance of the asset and its conservation has informed the design of the proposed development.

In determining whether planning permission should be granted for a development proposal that affects a local heritage asset, consideration will be given to the significance of the asset, the extent of impact on its significance, as well as the scale of any harm or loss to the asset as balanced against the public benefits that may result from the development proposals.

Recording should take place to advance understanding of the significance of any assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and that is publicly accessible. The ability to provide publicly accessible recording will not be a factor in deciding whether such loss should be permitted.

Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably

of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the requirements of Policy HD4.

High Quality Design

A rigorous design process and design-led solutions are crucial to achieving new developments of high quality. Design should have a clear rationale and be informed and inspired by the unique characteristics of the site and its wider setting, including an understanding of heritage. To enable decision makers to properly understand and assess the final design, the design process must be clearly explained and justified. Policies are intended to set out requirements for following a design process that will ensure development that responds to context including the immediate and wider surrounding and that works well for its intended use. Requirements for explaining the design process, including how early consideration of context has informed design, are also set out.

Principles of High-Quality Design

The value and benefits of good design and improvements to quality of life are so significant that good design is not a nice extra, it is essential. A successfully designed scheme will be a positive addition to its surroundings. It may blend in or stand out, but it should not detract from existing significant positive characteristics in the area, and it may add interest and variety. A well-designed scheme will meet the needs of all users and will stand the test of time.

Context and Built Form

Oxford has a rich legacy of buildings from iconic architectural set pieces to smaller domestic, medieval houses in the historic core and locally distinctive buildings within the many villages that now form part of the city. There is therefore a wealth of inspiration in terms of building form and character and great opportunity for creative, high quality complementary character to enhance the existing built form.

New buildings and alterations to existing buildings should be of high-quality design. They should respond appropriately to the existing form, materials and architectural detailing and should not have adverse impacts on existing and neighbouring buildings. Placement, style and proportions of doors and windows will be important, as will the choice of materials.

All new development should be informed and inspired by the unique characteristics of the site and its setting, and these considerations should go beyond the red line of the application site to adopt a true placemaking approach. The contextual analysis should consider the history and development of the site and surrounding area, landscape structure, biodiversity, the pattern, character and appearance of streets, buildings, and spaces. The level of detail in the analysis should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the development proposals.

As part of the contextual analysis, a constraints and opportunities plan should be created which will help visually draw out these crucial elements of the design development. Unique site features identified will present an opportunity to shape design and offer the opportunity for reinforcing existing character or creating an individual character drawing on the context. Constraints identified will help provide clarity about potential issues and open up the opportunity to explore imaginative solutions to them.

Holistic View for High Quality Design

High quality design should be seen as part of a holistic view of looking at a place. It is not just a matter of scrutinising the external visual appearance of a building, although that is important in itself, but also the spaces around, and between buildings, and open spaces, whether public or private. Following this approach means there will be areas of crossover/synergy with other policy areas. The most obvious of these linkages are sustainable design and construction, health and well-being impacts, and management of natural resources. What would be ingrained in good design is not only the visual and spatial impacts arising from the creation of a building or open space, but also the long term impact in terms of the capacity for adaptability in response to changing needs, types of users and climate, but also in terms of the long term impact on the identities and socioeconomic well-being of the communities development occurs in.

Other Points of Reference

- National Model Design Guide
- The national design guide sets out and illustrates the governments priorities for well-designed places. It is based on national planning policy, practice guidance and objectives for good design as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. It is a useful introductory guide to the principles of good design and the design process in general, and it provides a useful template from which specific local guidance and policy can be written. The 10 characteristics of well-designed places outlined by the guide has greatly informed the development of the assessment framework/checklist used by the City Council.
- Secure by Design
- As well as considering principles of good placemaking, developers are also encouraged to have due regard for the principles and physical security standards of the police's Secure by Design scheme in proposals for new development. Secure by Design is proven to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and provides a well-established approach for designing developments to minimise opportunities for criminal and anti-social behaviour, and for creating spaces that reduce the fear of crime.
- Building for a Healthy Life
- Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the latest edition of one of the most widely used design guides used in England and has as its emphasis healthy placemaking. It is a collaborative work between Homes England, NHS England, and NHS

Improvement. It comprises of 12 considerations organised under the headings (integrated neighbourhoods, distinctive places, and streets for all) to apply to development schemes to assess how well they match against the qualities of successful places. The guide may be useful in assisting local communities to set clear expectations of new developments by offering a series of easy to understand considerations that will also allow local communities to identify the qualities (or deficiencies) of development proposals more easily.

Design Review and preapplication process:

Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design of emerging schemes will help clarify expectations and allow the opportunity for creative ideas and problem solving to add value.

The Council has a Design Review Panel which operates under the nationally accepted [Design Review Principles and Practice](#) guidance document published by the Design Council. It is encouraged that all major development proposals are assessed by the Council's in-house design team and then by the Panel as part of the pre-application and then application process, in order that designs can be reviewed and improved at the informative stage prior to the formal determination of the application. In assessing applications, the Council will have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by Design Review Panel. However, the Design Review Panel will always remain as an advice panel and will not fetter it's the Council's discretion in the determination of a planning application.

Policy HD7 Principles of High-Quality Design

Planning permission will only be granted for development of high-quality design that is responsive to its context, creates or enhances local distinctiveness, and ensures that the amenity of the natural environment is protected.

All developments - other than changes of use without external alterations and householder applications - will be expected to be supported by a constraints and opportunities plan with supporting text and/or visuals to explain their design rationale in a design statement proportionate to the proposal (which could be part of a Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement or other demonstration of compliance with other plan policies that may be relevant), which should address the relevant checklist points set out in Appendix 1.1.

Planning permission will only be granted where proposals are designed to meet the key design objectives and principles for delivering high quality development as set out in Appendix 1.1.

Using context to determine appropriate density

Using scarce resources efficiently is vital to ensuring Oxford's sustainable growth and development. Oxford is a small, constrained city with a growing population. Oxford has

some very densely developed parts of the city and it is a city with an effective record for re-using previously developed land efficiently. However, there is also capacity to increase density in some parts of the city particularly in transport hubs such as the city centre and the district centre, along main arterial roads, and in parts of the suburban area that are less sensitive in terms of heritage and particularly heights (as set out in Policy HD9).

Making efficient use of land and delivering high quality design within new development requires a holistic understanding of a site’s context, and this will need to be demonstrated through any application. Understanding of site context includes consideration of the natural and historic environment and any sensitivities present in the local area.

Opportunities should be taken to thoroughly understand these sensitivities so that design can preserve and enhance valued features, whilst mitigating negative impacts that could exacerbate challenges. Whilst the context of each site will be different, such opportunities could include:

- the potential for valuable archaeological remains to be present on the site which should be safeguarded through careful positioning of foundations;
- whether there are sensitive views through the site which building heights should be tailored to avoid interrupting;
- whether there are deficiencies in particular types of green space which the proposal could help to address through provision on site;
- whether there are opportunities to orient layout/roof tops to maximise solar gain on photovoltaics solar panels for renewable energy generation.

Contextual considerations as set out within this policy are closely linked with the requirements of a range of policies elsewhere in the local plan and reference should be made to these where relevant, table HD1 sets out the key linkages:

Contextual consideration	Relevant policies
a. Appropriate for use	Site allocation policies
b. Context of heights/massing	HD9 and Area of Focus policies
c. Heritage assets	HD1-HD6
d. Biodiversity and green infrastructure	G1, G2, G3
e. Energy and carbon	RE1, RE2, RE3
f. Flooding	G7, G8

Policy HD8 Using Context to Determine Appropriate Density

Planning permission will only be granted where development proposals make efficient use of land, appropriate for the context of the site and its surroundings.

Development proposals must make best use of site capacity, in a manner compatible with the site itself, with a full understanding of the context of the site and its place in Oxford and the surrounding area. Balanced against the

need for development, it should be shown how the built form, scale, layout, and overall density:

- a. is appropriate for the use proposed;**
- b. is informed by an understanding of context, with building heights and massing that should conform to other policies in the plan;**
- c. is informed by an understanding of the impacts on heritage, including the presence of listed buildings or their setting, conservation areas or their setting, registered parks and gardens, likely or known archaeological deposits, etc; and**
- d. protects significant green infrastructure features such as biodiversity habitats, public open spaces and mature trees and considers existing provision of these in the local area as well as opportunities to enhance greening and biodiversity on the site; and**
- e. considers the opportunities for net zero carbon design, including energy efficiency measures, maximising renewable energy generation, reducing carbon dioxide emitted through construction process, and preserving carbon sinks;**
- f. considers presence of flood risk and, where relevant, locating more vulnerable uses in locations with reduced flood risk, less vulnerable uses in areas of higher risk;**

It is expected that sites at mobility hubs and within the city and district centres will be capable of accommodating development at an increased scale and density, although this will also be encouraged in all other appropriate locations where the impact of so doing is shown to be acceptable. High-density development (for residential development this will indicatively be taken as 100dph) is expected in the highly accessible locations of the district centres, and in the city centre where feasible in the context of the impacts on heritage.

Views and building heights

Taller buildings may be an appropriate built response to existing context, but successful design of taller buildings requires a particular range of considerations. Design choice about height of buildings should consider a range of factors. The context of the immediate surroundings and the impact on surrounding amenity is one consideration, the impact on views and heritage is a key consideration and design to ensure a good and sustainable living environment is another. In some contexts, a relatively low building of an additional storey above the existing prevailing height may be considered a tall building.

Particular care needs to be taken over the design and placement of taller buildings in Oxford because development might be in the setting of the buildings that create the iconic 'dreaming spires'. These buildings are a collection of nationally and internationally important buildings of historic and architectural significance. They sit in a compact area in the core of Oxford, which is raised slightly on a gravel terrace, giving more prominence to

these historic buildings, and meaning that Oxford's unique skyline can be viewed as a single entity whose composition varies according to the direction of viewing. Taller buildings should not negatively impact on views of the iconic skyline.

Quality design of high buildings

If it is established that a taller building is appropriate in a particular location, it is important it is designed to ensure it contributes positively to the character of the area, that it does not detract from the amenity of its surroundings, that it is sustainable and creates a good internal environment. Certain aspects of the design of high buildings require particular and specific consideration. Whether a building is considered a high building will depend on the context. The High Buildings Guidance Technical Advice Note (TAN) should be referred to. This includes guidance on differing heights across the city where the impacts from those heights will be minimal. Higher buildings may still be appropriate, and the TAN also sets out design considerations for exceeding those heights. Policy HD9 sets out the requirements for technological representations of the visual impact of high buildings to aid decision making; non-technical representations may also be appropriate. Higher buildings will often be appropriate in district centres and on arterial roads.

Areas of Greater Potential

The High Buildings Study identified three areas of Oxford where proposals for new high buildings are more likely to be appropriate (Areas of Greater Potential shown in Figure 7 of the High Buildings TAN). These areas are less constrained by heritage considerations and represent areas where there is more potential for them to contribute to regeneration opportunities, and that have good connectivity and availability of existing facilities of district centres. The identified Areas of Greater Potential are the northern suburbs, the eastern suburbs, and the south-eastern suburbs.

Heritage

The addition of a high building in the setting of a heritage asset needs particular attention. A new high building adjacent to a heritage asset could cause harm for reasons including obstruction of valued views to or from the asset, visual competition, and incongruous design. Even at some distance from an asset a new high building may cause harm by obstructing a valued view towards that asset, or by changing the historic character of informative views towards or from an asset with visual competition in the foreground or background.

The historic core area

Although from certain points of view the towers and spires that make up the historic skyline seem to be spaced very widely, the area from which the silhouette emerges is, in fact, very compact and does not extend far beyond the old city wall within the central core. The area within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax tower (defined on the Policies Map as the Historic Core Area) contains all the buildings that comprise the historic skyline. New buildings within the Historic Core Area have high potential to interfere with the character of the skyline, especially if their height is above that of Carfax Tower. These will be developments that exceed 18.2 m (60 ft) in height or ordnance datum (height above sea level) 79.3 m (260ft) (whichever is the lower).

The fragility and small height and volume of the spires means the character of the skyline is particularly vulnerable to change. The aim of any design within the historic core area should be to maintain the unique character and significance of views of the spires and to

ensure that variability and interest in the skyline is maintained. Design of development in the foreground of views is also important. As well as not intruding through height, the design of foreground buildings should aid appreciation of view of the spires, rather than harming it through too great a level of uniform building height, bulk and massing that creates a flat and uninteresting foreground view that detracts from appreciation of the spires.

View cones

View cones are drawn as triangles from important viewing points to encompass the width of the area containing buildings that constitute Oxford's historic skyline. The 10 identified view cones do not represent an exhaustive list of viewing points that provide an important view of Oxford's skyline. There may be glimpses of the famous skyline in other locations, and tall buildings in particular that are proposed outside of the view cones might still have an impact on the historic skyline.

Within view cones, proposed new buildings must not detract from the skyline and composition, and even where they will not intrude directly on to it their effect as a frame to it must be considered. However, it is not just a bulky intrusion into the skyline that might be damaging; the foreground is also an important element of a view. Development of a low and uniform height that does not recognise the importance of rooftop detailing and modulation can detract from the view of the skyline in the whole, as well as having a negative effect on townscape.

[A View Cones Assessment \(2015\)](#) has been endorsed by the City Council and is published on the City Council's website. It examines the contribution and significance of views, identifying their special qualities and elements. The View Cones Assessment sets out a methodology for heritage assessment of the Oxford views and applies this to each of the 10 view cones. The Study enables a greater understanding of the significance of all parts of the view, not just the skyline. It is designed to aid understanding of the impact of proposals on views, and should be referred to, understood, and reflected in designs within the view cones and the setting of view cones that might impact on the experience and heritage significance of the view. It should be remembered that, while some protected views are partly obscured by tree cover (especially in the summer), trees may become managed in the views in the future, so protection of the views is still important. Some views are from points outside the City Council's administrative boundaries. The City Council will work with Vale of White Horse to ensure these views are protected.

Roofscape and views

Views into the historic core from the surrounding landscape, including from the view cones, views out from the historic core, revealing the landscape setting of Oxford, and views across the core and from its edge to the green hills and floodplains are also important to consider. Even where buildings do not intrude directly into the skyline they may form a frame to it, and design choices should respond to this. To create more visual diversity that enhances the experience of the skyline, articulation of roofscape, and relatively short units of building are encouraged, with features to create a break in the line. A maximum ridge or parapet length of 25 metres without either a substantial vertical or horizontal break or interrupting features is a rule-of-thumb guideline that will be followed for Oxford's skyline. The City Council will resist the loss of any features, such as chimneys, if the loss would result in a simplification of the skyline.

Policy HD9 Views and Building Heights

Planning permission will not be granted for development that will not retain the special significance of views of the historic skyline, both from within Oxford and from outside.

Planning permission will be granted for developments of appropriate height or massing. Any proposal for height that is above the prevailing heights of the area and that could impact on character should be fully explained by the following criteria, all of which should be met:

- a. design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale; and
- b. regard should be had to the guidance on design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings Study TAN. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and
- c. it should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact on important views including both into the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting, through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and detailed design features including roofline and materials (including colour);
- d. taller buildings have been designed and orientated to avoid potential negative impacts, including on neighbouring amenity, such as overshadowing, overbearing and overlooking, reduced internal daylight and sunlight and wind-tunnel effects.

The area within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax tower (the Historic Core Area) contains all the buildings that comprise the historic skyline, so new developments that exceed 18.2 m (60 ft) in height or ordnance datum (height above sea level) 79.3 m (260 ft) (whichever is the lower) are likely to intrude into the skyline. Development above this height must be limited in bulk and must be of the highest design quality.

Applications for any building that exceeds 15 metres (or the height that the High Buildings TAN says may be impactful in that area if that is higher) will be required to provide extensive information so that the full impacts of any proposals can be understood and assessed, including:

- e. a Visual Impact Assessment, which includes the use of photos and verified views produced and used in a technically appropriate way, which are appropriate in size and resolution to match the perspective and detail as far as possible to that seen in the field, representing the landscape and proposed development as accurately as possible (produced in accordance with the Landscape Institute's GLVIA 3d Edition and Technical Guidance note TGN 06 19 or updated equivalents); and
- f. use of VuCity 3D modelling (or equivalent if updated by the City Council in future), shared with the City Council so that the impact of the development

can be understood from different locations, including any view cone views that are affected; and

g. if harm is caused to a heritage asset or its setting, a full explanation of other options that have been considered that may be less harmful, a justification that the benefits outweigh the harm and open book viability assessment if relied upon in the explanation.

Any proposals within the Historic Core Area or the View Cones that may impact on the foreground of views and roofscape (including proposals where they are below the Carfax datum point, for example plant) should be designed carefully, and should meet the following criteria:

j. they are based on a clear understanding of characteristic positive aspects of roofscape in the area; and

k. they contribute positively to the roofscape, to enhance any significant long views the development may be part of and also the experience at street level.

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposed within a View Cone or the setting of a View Cone if it would harm the special significance of the view.

The View Cones and the Historic Core Area (1,200m radius of Carfax tower) are defined on the Policies Map

Ensuring the wellbeing of occupants of new and surrounding buildings

It is important to ensure that new buildings create spaces that are of an adequate size and layout, with sunlight and daylight so that they provide a high quality, well-functioning environment for occupiers. The impact on the amenity of surrounding occupants of existing buildings must also be considered. Buildings should provide an internal space that is flexible to meet the needs of a wide range of people and takes account of how needs may change over time.

Health Impact Assessment

The built and natural environment is a key determinant of our health and wellbeing, and therefore it is crucial that through the planning system we plan for and design healthier built environments. Healthy built environments encourage and support good physical and mental health, and also help to reduce health inequalities. To ensure that development in Oxford promotes and contributes to healthy place shaping, proposals should consider health outcomes from the outset.

Applications for major development are expected to undertake and submit a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in support of their application. The scope of assessment for the HIA, including the issues it needs to cover, will vary with the nature of the development, however the structure of the assessment will need to follow a logical format that addresses the key steps outlined in the policy.

The HIA should include relevant contextual analysis to help inform an assessment of impacts on the health environment. This will include a description of the physical characteristics of the proposed development site and surrounding area, as well as identification of the key population groups and the geographical area that will be affected by the development (which may extend beyond the boundaries of the development itself). It should also consider the local health issues, inequalities and priorities with reference to published evidence/data where relevant, such as public health statistics. These steps are important in enabling the HIA to be as targeted as possible and appropriately scoped to provide the most benefit in terms of the key issues of relevance to the development.

Alongside the contextual analysis, the HIA should include an assessment identifying how the proposed development will impact upon the relevant population groups and the key health issues, inequalities and priorities in the local area. It should detail any alterations to design that have been incorporated to address these. Impacts identified may be positive, for example through including measures in the design that seek to improve the health environment such as through provision of facilities for physical recreation. Equally, the assessment may identify potential negative or neutral impacts on health which could be addressed through changes to design or other mitigations that will avoid or reduce these impacts. Where mitigations are proposed, it is important that the assessment considers how the effectiveness of these actions will be monitored going forward.

The analysis presented within the HIA should be of a sufficient level of detail to allow the Council to make a clear determination as to impacts the development will have on the health environment of the city. The analysis should be evidence based and set out how design of the development has taken into consideration the relevant health concerns and how it addresses these including where opportunities have been taken to achieve positive impacts and to avoid or mitigate negative impacts that could exacerbate issues and inequalities.

Supporting information for how to undertake a HIA including helpful resources can be found in Appendix 6.2 and within the Council's Health Impact Assessment Technical Advice Note.

Policy HD10 Health Impact Assessment

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is required to be submitted as part of the planning application for major development proposals.

The analysis within the submitted HIA should be of a sufficient level of detail to allow the Council to assess the potential impacts of the development on the health environment of the city and its residents. As a minimum, the assessment should include the following:

- a. A description of the physical characteristics of the proposed development site and surrounding area, including the current use;**
- b. Identification of relevant population groups that could be affected by the**

development and associated health issues, inequalities and priorities in the area, which should be supported with appropriate evidence/data;

c. An assessment of the impacts of the proposal on the identified population groups and local health issues, inequalities and priorities, including any potential positive and negative impacts, along with any mitigation measures incorporated into the design to reduce identified negative outcomes.

d. Details of monitoring which will be undertaken in relation to the proposed mitigation to be implemented.

The level of detail should be proportionate to the development and agreed with the relevant case officer. Applicants should refer to the additional information and guidance contained in Appendix 6.2 and the Council's Technical Advice Note.

Privacy, daylight and sunlight

Ensuring all homes are built with adequate privacy, daylight and sunlight (internal and external) helps to ensure the wellbeing of residents. It is also important to consider the impacts on neighbouring residential properties to ensure they do not lose their sense of privacy. This is particularly important in the context of Oxford, where high density development is expected in some areas of the city to make efficient use of land.

When planning new developments, regard should always be paid to the impact of windows overlooking other homes' windows (including French windows and patio doors) and gardens. Potential for unacceptable overlooking will depend on the proximity of windows to neighbours' habitable rooms and gardens and the angles of views and gardens.

New homes' access to daylight and sunlight will depend both on the way new and existing buildings relate to one another, and the orientation of windows in relation to the path of the sun. Windows that are overshadowed by buildings, walls, trees, or hedges, or that are north facing, will receive less light. The policy approach will ensure that new development provides adequate daylight and privacy and will not reduce privacy and daylight in existing development to an unacceptable level.

Policy HD11 Privacy, Daylight and Sunlight

Planning permission will only be granted for new development that provides reasonable privacy, daylight and sunlight for occupants of both existing and new homes and sensitive workplaces such as schools. Proposals should demonstrate consideration of all of the following criteria:

- a) Whether the degree of overlooking to and from neighbouring properties or gardens resulting from a proposed development significantly compromises the privacy of either existing or new homes (or existing other uses where there might be a safeguarding concern, particularly schools); and
- b) The size and orientation of windows in both existing and new developments in respect of access to daylight, sunlight, and solar gain (i.e., natural heating)

- from direct sunlight); and
- c) Room depths in relation to maximising natural light; and
 - d) Existing and proposed walls, hedge, trees, and fences, in respects of protecting or creating privacy and also in respect of their impact on overshadowing of both existing and new development.

To assess access to privacy, sunlight, and daylight in residential developments, the 25 degree and 45-degree guidelines will be used as illustrated in Appendix 6.3, alongside other material factors. On constrained sites with proposals for specialist accommodation, developers may use other methods to demonstrate that dwellings will receive adequate daylight.

Planning permission will not be granted for any development that has an overbearing effect on existing homes.

Internal space standards for residential development

It is important to ensure that new homes are of an adequate size and layout to provide high quality, functional homes that meet the needs of a wide range of people and take into account how those needs might change over time. This should apply to development at all scales, from large strategic sites to infill development, which represents an important contribution to meeting Oxford's housing need.

The pressure to deliver more homes leads to increased pressure to deliver smaller homes. This could result in housing that is unacceptable in terms of internal space because it doesn't offer occupiers appropriate living standards or meet the national aim that everyone should have access to a decent home. The pressure to make efficient use of land, and the fact that dense development is to be encouraged, makes it particularly necessary to ensure that the internal living environment of new homes is adequate.

The City Council has carefully considered the local need for space standards and the viability impact of taking such an approach and decided to adopt the optional [nationally described standards](#). In addition, minimum bedroom sizes for HMOs are governed by the Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Mandatory Conditions of Licences) (England) Regulations 2018.

This will ensure that new developments are designed and built to provide adequate space for occupants. It will be important to ensure that designs maximise the useable space within housing, through functional layout, and provide scope to adapt and modify housing to meet future requirements. The demand for housing in Oxford means that a small proportion of larger and family homes will be provided in the form of flats or apartments; ensuring adequate space and quality environments will play a crucial role in changing the perception of apartments and their suitability as family homes.

Policy HD12 Internal Space Standards for Residential Development

Planning permission will only be granted for new dwellings that provide good quality living accommodation for the intended use. All proposals for new build market and affordable homes (across all tenures) must comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards.

In flatted schemes, communal areas must be designed to enable neighbours to meet and interact, for example some fixed seating, and wider areas of corridor or lobby space.

Outdoor Amenity Space

The adequate provision of outdoor amenity space is a key factor in supporting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of residents. It provides a space to dry clothes, grow plants and vegetables, and can provide shade and limit urban heat-island effects. In addition, if the space is designed with permeable surfaces it can contribute towards flood risk management.

Where high density development and subdivision of properties are expected and where many sites are infill development, high standards for the delivery of good quality outdoor amenity space becomes increasingly important to ensure the health and wellbeing of residents.

New homes should provide some open space that allows the occupants to enjoy fresh air and light in privacy. Where appropriate, balconies or private terraces should be provided for flats. A private garden can be shared between flats, although all 3-bedroom flats should have direct access to an area of private amenity space. Houses with 2 or more bedrooms should provide direct access to outdoor amenity space with adequate space for children to play in, and for family activities. This should be equivalent in size to the footprint of the dwelling as it was built originally. It could be provided as shared amenity space, although there should always be an area of private amenity space.

It is important that both public and private amenity and garden spaces are well designed, to ensure that it is clear how each of the spaces are used without the need for extensive signage, avoiding narrow pathways to link spaces, optimising sunlight, and ensuring principles of good landscape design are incorporated.

Policy HD13 Outdoor Amenity Space

Planning permission will only be granted for dwellings and the subdivision of dwellings (including HMOs) that have direct, well-related and convenient access to an area of private open space (in addition to bin or bike storage space), to meet the following specifications:

a. 1- or 2-bedroom flats and maisonettes should provide either a private balcony or terrace of usable, level space, or have direct and convenient access to a private or shared garden.

b. flats and maisonettes of 3 or more bedrooms must provide private outdoor areas

with space for outside dining and/or clothes drying, with reasonable circulation with a minimum dimension of 1.5 metres depth by 3 metres length. This may be either a private balcony or terrace of useable level space, or, in the case of ground floor flats, direct and convenient access to a private garden or shared garden with some private space (which should not feel isolated).

c. all houses should provide a private garden, of adequate size and proportions for the size of house proposed, which will be at least equivalent in size to the footprint of the dwelling as built originally. Where a directly accessible private outside area is provided, the remaining requirement for outdoor amenity space could be met by provision of shared private amenity space that can be directly and conveniently accessed. The private outdoor areas should allow space for outside dining and/or clothes drying, with reasonable circulation, which will require a minimum dimension of 1.5 metres deep by 3 metres long.

It should also be shown how the following factors have been considered in order to ensure an outdoor space that is adequate and attractive to use:

- d. the location and context of the development, in relation to the layout of existing residential plots, and proximity to public open space; and
- e. the orientation of the outdoor area in relation to buildings and the path of the sun so that the whole outdoor space will not be continuously in shade or over-exposed;
- f. the degree to which enclosure and overlooking impact on the proposed new dwellings and any neighbouring dwellings; and
- g. the overall shape, access to and usability of the whole space to be provided; and
- h. clear delineation between public and private space; and
- i. for communal spaces that there is a variety of space, including provision of space to sit and to play, and that space is adaptable to the changing needs of residents, being easy to maintain with resilient materials, but with opportunities for communal gardening or food growing.

Accessible and Adaptable Homes

Housing provision across the city should meet the needs of everyone and new homes need to be accessible to all, including those with disabilities. As such, it is important to consider the demands and requirements people will have from their homes and how this may change over time. Homes need to be built with the flexibility to be adapted to the changing needs of residents. Adaptability is important to respond to changes to the size and compositions of households, and an ageing population.

Providing opportunities for residents to maintain their independence is important and can help to alleviate pressure on health and social care if older people can remain in their

homes adapted for their needs. In addition, housing needs to be adapted to support those with chronic health conditions and specialist housing needs. Ensuring we build homes that can be adapted to meet people's longer-term needs is an important part of good design.

Local authorities can adopt a policy to provide enhanced accessibility or adaptability through Requirement M4(2) Accessible and adaptable dwellings and/or M4(3) Wheelchair user dwellings in '[Approved Document M: access to and use of buildings](#)'. To ensure provision of housing to meet the range of needs that will exist in Oxford and because of the advantages of dwellings that can adapt to changing needs, requirements for accessible and adaptable dwellings are set out in the policy.

Oxford has a markedly young population compared to neighbouring districts and the UK, mainly because of the substantial number of students. The trend of Oxford having a younger population than average is set to continue; however, people are living longer and there will be an increase in the number of older people resident in the city. As it is likely that Oxford will have a greater proportion of older residents making up its population, there will be changing housing requirements over the Plan period. The Census 2021 showed 5.3% of the population of Oxford are 75 or over. This is lower than the national average, but that represents a section of the population more likely to need adaptable homes in order to remain living in them for longer. The Census 2021 shows that 29% of households in Oxford have one or more people with a disability. Some of those households will need specialist adaptations to their homes, so providing housing that is adaptable will play an important role in ensuring that these people have an adequate choice of homes available to them. The Government has found that 34% of disabled people have had to make adaptations to their homes <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-disability-survey-research-report-june-2021/uk-disability-survey-research-report-june-2021>. Therefore, at least 10% of homes should be adaptable, but given the increasingly aging population and the proportion that are already over 75, the policy requires that 15% of market homes meet Category 2 Standards of Part M of the Building Regulations

Some typologies of development will not be suitable for providing homes that meet M4 requirements because these require level access to the front door, and so must have lifts. As well as installation costs they have ongoing maintenance costs (which are likely to affect residents' ground rents). This will affect viability and will not be feasible unless a certain number of units are served by one lift shaft. This will be less likely on lower blocks of flats. There may be other options, such as provision of one and two bed units in terraced houses instead of flats, maisonettes with accessible homes below and so on. But these options will often not be feasible, in which case the policy allows schemes with fewer or no dwellings that meet Part M of the Building Regulations.

Policy HD14 Accessible and Adaptable Homes

Proposals for residential development should ensure that all affordable dwellings and 15% of general market dwellings on sites of 10 or more dwellings are constructed to the Category 2 standard as set out in the Building Regulations

Approved Document M4. 5% of all dwellings for which the City Council is responsible for allocations or nominations on sites of more than 20 dwellings should be provided to Category 3 (wheelchair user) standards as set out in the Building Regulations Approved Document M4. These M4(3) dwellings should be able to be adapted to the needs of the household who will be occupying them, ahead of their occupation.

An exception will be made for flatted schemes that are of two storeys or fewer and/or that are smaller than 50 units, whereby planning permission will be granted when no dwellings meet the requirements of Building Regulations Approved Document M4, if the following conditions are met:

- a. it can be demonstrated that there are strong design reasons for providing blocks of flats with a small number of storeys, and it is not purely to circumvent the requirement; and**
- b. it can be demonstrated that options to provide affordable units in an alternative way that enables level access have been explored, including where possible providing the dwellings required to meet M4 standards on the ground floor.**

Bin and Bike Stores and External Servicing Features

Good design is not only important to the internal layout of development but for a home to function properly and look attractive. Attention needs to be given to the design and location of storage facilities for bikes and bins at the initial stages of the design process. As so many residents cycle in the city and we want to encourage more cycle trips instead of using the private car, new development must incorporate well designed, secure and easy to use bike storage facilities. Examples of good practice can be found in the [Parking and Bike Parking](#) Technical Advice Note.

As the number of households grow it is essential that new development optimises the opportunities for residents to recycle as much waste as possible. Ensuring that there is adequate, well-placed space for the range of bins required will enable this. The location of these bin stores needs to be accessible to be collected efficiently and attractively designed so as not to detract from the appearance and amenity of the area. Guidance on the numbers and sizes of bins that are required for different types of development and design and placement of stores is set out in the Technical Advice Note on [Waste Storage](#).

Servicing features such as meter cupboards, pipes and gutters, flues, vents, and aerials can sometimes be designed as an integrated element of the architecture that can contribute positively to the overall design of the buildings or development. Chimneys and drainpipes can help to break up the monotony of a terrace, indicating the individual units within the whole. Detailing of these features can be an important contributor to the character of the area. However, servicing features can also create a cluttered appearance and detract from the design of the development.

As the city moves towards becoming net zero there will need to be infrastructure to

support this to include sufficient EV (Electric Vehicle) chargers, air source heat pumps, solar panels etc. All of this needs to be carefully designed into new developments. The location and design of these developments need to be considered and ensure it meets the requirements of Policies C9, R3 and

The policy approach seeks to ensure that careful attention is given to the positioning, design and materials used for external servicing features in new development.

Policy HD15 Bin and Bike Stores and External Servicing Features

Bin and bike stores and external servicing features should be considered from the start of the design process and provided in new development. Planning permission will be granted only where it can be demonstrated that:

- a) bin and bike storage is provided in a way that does not detract from the overall design of the scheme or the surrounding area, whilst meeting practical needs including the provision of electric charging points for e-bikes where applicable; and
- b) external servicing features have been designed as an integrated part of the overall design, or are positioned to minimise their visual impact; and
- c) materials used for detailed elements such as for stores or rainwater goods are of high quality so they enhance the overall design and will not degrade in a way that detracts from the overall design.

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