

Planning Policy Team

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



# Housing

## Technical Advice Note (TAN) 1

January 2021

[www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk)



# 1. Introduction

The Oxford Local Plan 2036 recognises the importance of good quality affordable homes in the right locations, enabling people to live healthy, happy, stable and secure lives. Good housing helps to create stronger communities that can attract investment and skilled workers. The series of policies in Chapter 3 of the Plan: 'A pleasant place to live, delivering housing with a mixed and balanced community', are aimed at ensuring housing developed in the city, achieves these aims.

## Purpose of this TAN

The intention of this TAN is to provide additional advice and guidance to developers, landowners and planning officers on the detailed application of several housing policies. It provides further guidance on when affordable housing is required, tenures, viability and securing its delivery. It gives further detail about employer-linked housing. It explains the policy requirement for self-build plots, including what will be accepted within this definition. It also gives greater detail about suitable locations for new student accommodation.

# 2. Affordable housing delivery from self-contained sites (Policy H2)

## What types of development are liable

Affordable housing is expected to be provided in accordance with the following criteria:

- As on-site accommodation on **self-contained** residential developments (C2 and C3 including retirement homes, sheltered housing but excluding student accommodation and employer-linked housing).
- Affordable homes must be provided on-site to ensure a balanced community. Where affordable housing is provided on-site it should incorporate a mix of unit sizes as described in Policy H4: 'Mix of dwelling sizes'. An exception is student accommodation, both self-contained and non-self-contained; from this use Policy H2 requires a contribution to affordable housing.
- Where sites have capacity for 10 or more homes (gross) or exceed 0.5 ha, a minimum of 50% of units on a site should be provided as homes that are truly affordable in the context of the Oxford housing market as per the definition within the Oxford Local Plan 2036.
- At least 40% of the overall number of units on a site should be provided as on-site social rented dwellings, the remaining element of the affordable housing may be provided as intermediate forms of housing provided that they are affordable in the Oxford market.

## Tenure and affordability

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines affordable housing as comprising the following:

- social rent (homes that are let at a level of rent set much lower than those charged on the open market);
- affordable rented; and
- intermediate housing (such as shared ownership, starter homes and rent to buy) provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the open market.

For Build to Rent schemes, affordable rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

The government's definition of affordable rent is 80% of market rents. However, high land values and the affordability gap in Oxford is so extreme that many of the models used elsewhere for making housing more affordable, do not achieve genuine affordability for the majority looking to rent or to buy in Oxford. For this reason, the definition of affordable housing in Oxford includes the requirement that affordable housing is affordable in Oxford, as assessed using the most recent Tenancy Strategy.

The Housing Tenancy Strategy looks at overall earnings and tenure costs in Oxford. The benchmark for affordability in this study is that rent and/or mortgage costs should be 35% or less of net household income. Affordable rent in Oxford exceeds the Local Housing Allowance levels and cannot be considered genuinely affordable in Oxford. For this to be achieved, rents would need to be further reduced from 80% of market rents. Of the 50% affordable housing requirement, 10% is expected to be intermediate housing that is genuinely affordable in Oxford (the Oxford Local Plan 2036 defines affordable housing in this way in the Glossary).

When applying the Policy H2 to the tenure split, including the cascade approach where triggered (see below), the applicant will be expected to round up the number of affordable units overall, and social rented units, to the nearest whole number.

## Mixed use schemes and ensuring sufficient housing numbers

Where homes, student accommodation or commercial development are proposed as part of a mixed-use scheme, account will be taken of the overall floorspace of all development on the site. Where a mix of uses is proposed consideration will be given to the total amount of housing, and whether the mix has been artificially determined with the intention of avoiding the thresholds for affordable housing. Across all types of development, where the number of dwellings proposed falls below the

relevant thresholds set out above to require affordable housing, the Council will consider whether or not the site reasonably has capacity to provide the number of dwellings that would trigger a requirement to make a contribution towards affordable housing. This is to ensure that developers may not circumvent the policy requirement by artificially subdividing sites or making an inefficient use of the land.

This policy will apply to all types of residential development including conversions and changes of use.

To help ensure sufficient housing comes forward across the city, the site allocation Policies of the Local Plan, where the suitable use includes housing, minimum housing numbers are stated.

Paragraph 9.2 of the Local Plan provides further guidance on calculating this, including in situations where only part of a mixed-use site is coming forward:

*'Sites allocated in this Plan will be expected to deliver the minimum net number of homes shown in the site policies (where stated). The minimum number shall be exceeded where it is possible to do so consistent with the other policies in the Plan. The homes should be delivered as general market and affordable housing in accordance with Policy H2 unless it is expressly stated in the site allocation policy that student accommodation or employer-linked affordable housing are suitable on the site. Other specialist forms of housing will be considered on their merits. If communal accommodation is to be provided, the minimum quantum shall be calculated on the basis of the national policy ratio (or any amendment or replacement thereof). The ratio at the time of adoption of the Local Plan is that 2.5 new student bed spaces is considered as the equivalent of 1 new home and for other communal accommodation 1.8 bed spaces is considered as equivalent to 1 new home. On mixed-use sites, if only part of the site is being brought forward and the proposal does not include residential development, the potential to achieve the minimum housing capacity on remaining parts of the site when they come forward for development will be considered.'*

The relevant method for calculating the contribution will be used in respect of each qualifying use, in a pro rata approach to the uses on site. For example, if the principal use is housing, and the total gross development floorspace of all uses combined is equal to or exceeds the floorspace of a 10 dwelling development appropriate to that site, the City Council is likely to seek on-site provision of at least 50% of the C3 dwellings as affordable housing in line with Policy H2. Where the housing element is deemed by the City Council as ancillary to the main use a financial contribution may be sought.

## **Viability**

### **When may viability evidence be presented**

The City Council will always expect developers to have considered the financial implications of affordable housing policy requirements and local market indicators when purchasing the land for development.

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that where there are up-to-date policies, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. Paragraph 57 states:

*‘Where up-to-date policies have set out the contributions expected from development, planning applications that comply with them should be assumed to be viable. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage. The weight to be given to a viability assessment is a matter for the decision maker, having regard to all the circumstances in the case, including whether the plan and the viability evidence underpinning it is up to date, and any change in site circumstances since the plan was brought into force. All viability assessments, including any undertaken at the plan-making stage, should reflect the recommended approach in national planning guidance, including standardised inputs, and should be made publicly available.’*

In light of this, Policy H2 states that where an applicant wishes to argue a viability case for reducing the affordable housing level using the cascade, then it is up to the applicant to demonstrate particular circumstances that justify the need for a viability exercise. The Oxford Local Plan was adopted on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020. It is based on a whole-plan viability assessment, which is available [online](#). The viability assessment tested various scenarios of development types and locations across the city. This looked at the likely cost implications of the broad spectrum of the Plan’s policies. It found that housing development brought forward in compliance with the Plan’s policies was likely to be viable. This viability report sets out the assumptions made in the assessment. If an applicant considers there are particular viability issues that mean that the cascade approach needs to be applied to the delivery of affordable housing, then they must first show that undertaking a viability assessment is justified. We will expect the applicant to be able to explain the differences in circumstances that apply to their site compared to the assumptions made in the viability report that therefore justify the use of a new viability report to support their application. This justification should reference the viability report that supports the Local Plan and explain the assumptions that don’t apply (e.g. challenging remediation, very complex access or likely S106 requests, GI offsetting, etc.).

As set out in Appendix 3.3 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036, the robust viability evidence expected of the applicant to support a reduction in affordable housing through the cascade must be in the form of an independent viability appraisal. The City Council will expect the developer to negotiate on an “open book” basis which relates to the particular site circumstances that have resulted in the development’s non-viability; this means it should be publicly accessible including all the values, consistent with RICS and NPPG guidance. The viability assessment should be compliant with RICS guidance, and should state this clearly in the report. The City Council will always expect developers to have considered the financial implications of affordable housing policy requirements, and local market indicators, when purchasing the land for development.

## **The cascade**

If developers can robustly prove that meeting the affordable housing requirement will make a site (of 10 or more units) unviable due to the scheme delivering significant infrastructure or social benefits, developers and the City Council will work through a cascade approach in the following order until a scheme is made viable:

- Firstly, reduce the percentage of affordable housing provided (to a minimum of 40% of all homes) by reducing the intermediate housing element only;
- Secondly, at 40% affordable housing, reintroduce an element of intermediate housing incrementally up to a maximum 8% of all homes;
- Thirdly, make a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision, to be calculated using the approach set out in Appendix 3.1 of the Local Plan.

Robust evidence must be in the form of an independent viability appraisal. The City Council will expect the developer to negotiate on an “open book” basis which relates to the particular site circumstances that have resulted in the development’s non-viability.

## **Securing affordable housing**

Paragraph 3.16 of the Local Plan says that a financial contribution will be secured through a planning condition, but in fact the affordable housing contribution can be secured in two ways- either as a planning obligation or in a legal agreement requiring a planning obligation that a financial contribution will be made. A legal agreement would need to prevent development commencing until a planning obligation is entered into, i.e. it would be framed in the negative and would be a Grampian condition. As best practice it would be expected that the draft planning obligation should be attached to the planning permission, so that it is clear what is required of the applicant. It should not be difficult to be precise as the point of the decision about the financial amount for affordable housing as that would have been calculated by that stage. However, given this, the developer may prefer instead to enter into the agreement simultaneously with the grant of permission, and this is the preferable option.

### **3. Affordable housing delivery from student accommodation**

#### **Calculating the correct level of contributions**

Other than for the exceptions set out in Policy H2, all new student accommodation of 25 or more student units (or 10 or more self-contained student units (the policy is not restricted only to C2 units)), a financial contribution should be secured towards delivering affordable housing elsewhere in Oxford. The contribution would only be required from the number of units creating a net gain. Alternatively, the affordable housing contribution can be provided on-site where both the City Council and the applicant agree that this provision is appropriate.

For mixed-use developments of student accommodation with general housing, a pro-rata approach will be used to determine whether a contribution is required, and how much this should be. Contributions towards affordable housing provision from new student accommodation will not be sought where the proposal is within an existing or proposed student campus site as defined in the Local Plan Glossary, or if the proposal is for the redevelopment of an existing purpose-built student accommodation site which at the date of adoption of the Plan is owned by a university and which will continue to be owned by a university to meet the accommodation needs of its students.

#### **How the contributions are calculated**

From student accommodation or in other circumstances where it is agreed that a financial contribution is more suitable than on-site affordable housing, the City Council will seek a standard development contribution based on the amount of net additional residential floorspace measured internally and the 'development surplus' of sites assessed as viable in the viability study. The figures to use in the calculation will be included in the authority's Annual Monitoring Report.

This figure will be reviewed annually to reflect the All-in Tender Price Index published by the Building Cost Information Service of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. In addition to this, a 5% administration charge will be levied on the calculated sum payable.

## **4. Employer-linked affordable housing (Policy H3)**

### **Purpose of employer-linked affordable housing**

Employers in Oxford are facing significant challenges in recruiting and retaining staff as a result of the lack of availability and affordability of housing. There is not only a shortage of homes in Oxford, but a shortage of homes that are affordable to local people working in Oxford. Many of these workers are unable to afford market housing or even private rented accommodation in the city and if they take a job in the city they are faced with long commutes. This is having a huge impact upon some of Oxford's major employers – such as the hospitals, universities, schools, and public sector organisations.

The intention of Policy H3 is that, under certain circumstances, employers would be able to provide homes for their own staff. It would be possible to include a third party developer, but the site would need to remain in the ownership of the employer, with the homes rented out to their staff. The homes should be made affordable for staff in perpetuity, which will be secured through the legal agreement.

### **Affordable housing approach**

Policy H3 allows an alternative approach to be taken to providing affordable housing, on specified sites. The approach allows for employer-linked affordable housing. Rather than 50% market housing and 50% affordable housing, of which 80% should be social rented, this approach allows for 100% employer-linked affordable housing, with no requirement to provide social rented housing.

As this is a form of affordable housing it should meet the definition of affordable housing set out in the Local Plan Glossary. This says that housing should be affordable in Oxford. The definition starts: 'Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers). The most recent Tenancy Strategy will be used to assess whether proposed forms of affordable housing are genuinely affordable in Oxford.'

Generally, 'affordable rent', which is accommodation rented at 80% of market values, is not affordable in Oxford. However, employers will have information about the incomes of their staff and households. What will be important is that rents are set at a level that is affordable, which according to the Tenancy Strategy means that no more than 35% of household income is spent on accommodation. Whilst it might be possible that 80% market rent does constitute affordable housing in Oxford in this case, for these employees, it is very unlikely that any lesser reduction would be considered affordable housing.



The affordable housing approach should be agreed with the City Council during the application process. This should set out access and eligibility criteria. It is expected that the accommodation will be available to a cross-section of staff, focusing on those in greatest need. It could be targeted to a particular type of staff, but if so this must be justified by explaining why those particular staff are targeted. The rent policy and rent levels should be set out, explaining how they will be genuinely affordable to the staff who will be accommodated.

## **Where can employer-linked housing be developed**

Policy H3 only allows this form of housing to come forward as an alternative to market housing and social rented housing in a limited number of locations. These locations are listed in Appendix 3.4 of the Local Plan 2036. No other sites will be considered acceptable. The sites are limited to key hospital trust sites, two County Council sites (although only one of the two can be used for this purpose), two schools and university sites.

The suitable university sites are those specifically listed in Appendix 3.4, and also any campus site(s). These are sites with academic accommodation existing on them at the time of the Plan's adoption (8<sup>th</sup> June 2020), and where it is intended that academic use would remain on site alongside the development of housing.

## **Mixed tenure schemes that include employer-linked housing**

If a site is being proposed for employer-linked housing to be delivered under H3, there is no requirement to say that all of the housing proposed must be delivered using this model. Some market housing may also come forward. This is not anticipated often because the intention of the sites chosen is that they are less likely to come forward for general market housing.

If housing is to be delivered under H3 and H2 it is important to note the employer-linked affordable housing cannot be counted as the 50% affordable housing requirement of Policy H2. This is because the strategy of the Plan and Policy H2 is to maximise provision of social rented housing. Employer-linked affordable housing meets a need but the need is not considered as great as the need for social rented housing. The employer-linked housing element of the proposals could however count as the 10% intermediate housing required under Policy H2.

## **5. Suitable locations for new student accommodation**

### **Policy Background**

The Oxford Local Plan 2036 aims to guide uses to the most appropriate locations and to balance competing uses. The greatest need in Oxford was judged to be for affordable housing. The severe shortage of housing and affordable housing affects people's quality of life, increases homelessness and also affects the economy of the city, including the functioning of essential services such as education and healthcare.

Student accommodation is often the most appropriate and desirable location for students, and without purpose built student accommodation a far greater number of students would need to live in family homes, which would otherwise be available on the market. However, student accommodation does have amenity impacts for local residents and is unsuitable in quiet residential streets. It is most suitable in the busy district centres and the city centre. The policy therefore directs student accommodation to these locations. In addition student accommodation is suitable on and adjacent to existing campuses, although only if it is providing accommodation for those students who will be taught at that campus. These locations are unlikely to come forward for general market and affordable housing and therefore development of student accommodation would not be competing with opportunities to develop general market housing. Unlike the previous policy approach in the Sites and Housing Plan, Policy H8: 'Provision of new student accommodation' also prevents development of new student accommodation along radial roads but outside of the district centres. Whilst these routes are generally well connected in terms of public transport, walking and cycling, their character is also often mainly residential. The spread of student accommodation along these routes can begin to change the character of the streets and affect residential amenity, as well as preventing general market and affordable housing coming forward.

### **What will be considered as suitable locations?**

Suitable locations for new student accommodation are set out in Policy H8. Suitable locations are on or adjacent to an existing campus, within a city or district centre (as defined on the Policies Map).

Student accommodation is permitted on or adjacent to existing campus sites. Campus sites does not include sites of purely student accommodation; there should be some academic and/or administrative function on the sites. Adjacent means that part of the development sites should be next to part of the existing site. A road will be overlooked; it is possible to be adjacent but on the other side of a road. The Policy H8 is also clear that any development of student accommodation allowed because it is adjacent to an existing campus site should be to house students who are based

at that specific site, rather than being students of another institution or of the same institution but not otherwise linked to the adjacent site.

Policy H8 relates specifically to new student accommodation. Therefore, it does not apply to any proposals to redevelop or intensify student accommodation on existing sites that are already in use for student accommodation. Even if these sites are not in locations specified by Policy H8, redevelopment and intensification on these sites is not prevented. Making more efficient use of the sites would generally be encouraged according to Policy RE2: 'Efficient use of land', assuming that there is no conflict with other policies of the Plan, for example relating to design.

## **6. Mix of dwelling sizes**

### **Policy Context**

Policy H4 sets out the required mix of dwellings sizes. A fairly flexible policy approach has been taken, leaving opportunities to react to the site context and the current market. However, Oxford is constrained and has only a limited number of sites and few large sites. It is therefore important that opportunities are not lost to deliver a range of housing sizes, which will help to ensure there are a suitable range of uses overtime. This is particularly important for affordable housing.. Therefore, Policy H4 does include a policy mix. The stated mix only applies to proposals of 25 or more homes or 0.5 hectares (for mixed use sites this will apply to the size of the residential part of the development and related open space), which are outside of the city or district centres. This mix only applies to the affordable element of the development (although the threshold is triggered by all residential units).

The mix was set on the basis of a wide range of considerations. The range of need on the housing list was an important consideration for the policy mix, but that does give only a snapshot of need, and it was not the only basis of the mix. Changes over time were considered and also the rate of turnover and re-lets. . Information showed that 3-bed homes were coming up less often than 1 and 2 beds for re-lets, even though demand for them on the list was high, so a new source (i.e. new homes) is needed for this size of unit. As well as meeting the needs for affordable housing, it is important that mixed and balanced communities are created. This helps to ensure strong communities and attractive places to live.

### **What is expected outside the affordable housing mix requirement**

It should be demonstrated for all schemes that a balanced mix of dwelling sizes is proposed that will meet a range of housing needs and create mixed and balanced communities. Where the policy does not specify a mix, i.e. inside the city and district centres, and for any scheme under 25 units (particularly major schemes) it should be set out how the proposal has had regard to local housing

demand. This should include affordable housing demand for any scheme providing affordable housing that is not required to provide the specified mix.

Evidence to show that the proposal has been drawn up with consideration to creating mixed and balanced communities and has had regard to local housing demand should be proportionate. There are limited opportunities to achieve this with smaller schemes, so a reference to how the mix of uses has been determined, which could be set out in the design statement relating to Policy DH1: 'High quality design and placemaking', is likely to be sufficient. For major schemes:

- If the specified affordable housing mix does not apply, it should be demonstrated that the mix of affordable housing dwelling sizes has been chosen with regard to the housing register and current requirements.
- The choice of mix of market units should be explained. There are many things that may inform the mix. There may be a desire to maximize the use of the site with a high-density development of mainly small units. The market demand in the area may suggest a particular mix of units is desirable.
- The potential for mixing sizes will depend on the size and context of the site and there may be design considerations guiding the mix of units of the site. This should be explained.

## 7. Self-build housing

### Background to the policy

The National Planning Practice Guidance states:

*“Relevant authorities should consider how they can best support self-build and custom housebuilding in their area. This could include:*

- *developing policies in their Local Plan for self-build and custom housebuilding;*
- *using their own land if available and suitable for self-build and custom housebuilding and marketing it to those on the register;*
- *engaging with landowners who own sites that are suitable for housing and encouraging them to consider self-build and custom housebuilding and facilitating access to those on the register where the landowner is interested; and*
- *working with custom build developers to maximise opportunities for self-build and custom housebuilding.”*

Oxford is a unique case with respect to its spatial and physical constraints, which in turn affects the number of sites that could be available for housing. The majority of the allocated sites in the Local Plan are small sites of less than 50 units that are not best suited for volume housebuilding. Therefore, priority is given to provision for social rented/affordable homes for which there is a great need. The

threshold requiring the allocation of suitable land has been set bearing in mind the relative lack of large sites within the Oxford area.

## Definition of self-build housing

Self-build and custom housebuilding is defined in the Housing and Planning Act as:

*“...the building or completion by—*

*(a) individuals,*

*(b) associations of individuals, or*

*(c) persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals,*

*of houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. But it does not include the building of a house on a plot acquired from a person who builds the house wholly or mainly to plans or specifications decided or offered by that person”.*

## Forms of self-build housing

We do not accept ‘self-finish’ projects as a form of self-build housing under this policy. We want to ensure that the owner of the homes will have an input into the final design and layout from the beginning.

Other forms of ‘self-finish’ Custom Build where the dwelling is not built or commissioned by the occupant may not be considered by the Council to be true self build and are not recognized as such by the CIL regulations.

A new dwelling would not be classed as a self-build or custom built home:

- If the future occupier of the dwelling chose a design for the dwelling from a collection of stock designs offered by a developer.
- If there is no evidence that the future occupier had a primary input into the design of the building, even if the building appears to be a ‘one-off’ bespoke design.

Where a plot has been sold to a customer and built out under contract by the original plot owner with no reasonable option for the customer to freely plan and design their own building, the development will not be considered self-build for planning purposes and neither will the development benefit from the CIL exemption. This reflects the legal definition of self-build as set out in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the CIL Regulations 2010.

The council will expect the self-build plots to be sold with outline planning permission, services to the boundary and access to the highway. The outline permission would need to include some parameters relating to design, for example heights. However, the detailed design of houses on these plots would

then be guided by the design guidance from the developer and/or any design guide and would then come forward as a reserved matters application. Prospective self-builders are encouraged to engage in pre-application consultation with the council.

## **Ensuring cohesive design across a site**

Policy H7: 'Community-led housing and self-build housing' states *"On residential sites of 50 units or more, 5% of the site area developed for residential should be made available as self-build plots."*

We want to ensure that the self-build element of these sites fits effectively with the rest of the housing on the site. Therefore to ensure there is a cohesive design across a site, we want to promote the use of a design code/ guide. Sites with multiple self-build plots are encouraged to come with a design guide. This will ensure there is high standard of urban design in the area and will assist with the marketing of plots. It must be emphasized that a planning application for a self-build plots will still be subject to the relevant Local Plan policies and national planning policies. Although these self-build schemes may be regulated by design codes, there must still be scope for meaningful input by those wanting to build their own home.

A design code for the whole self-build element of a site may be produced in agreement between the developer and the Council. This code will help to clarify and guide what forms of development are acceptable on a site, giving greater certainty to all parties.

### **What should a design code consist of?**

A design code should set out a number of design parameters or rules as such for the self-build plots. Examples of parameters which could be included in this code include:

- Maximum heights
- Building lines (frontage continuity)
- Developable footprint
- Materials
- Colours
- Parking standards

A 'plot passport' can provide potential self-builders and purchasers of plots with clear and concise information on available plots such as the total plot size, design and siting parameters, cost and location of plot. A plot passport may also include any relevant information in the design code. Examples of plot passports are found in Appendix 1.

## Identifying interest and marketing of unsold plots

Policy H7 states:

*“A legal agreement will be used to ensure that if the self-build plots have not sold after 12 months of marketing, then dwellings should be built and brought forward in the normal way, in accordance with other policies including regarding affordable housing and housing mix.”*

A site would be classed as being appropriately marketed by: ...

- Evidence of extensive advertising. All details of offers should be provided to the Council during the marketing period together with full reasons as to why any offer has not been accepted.
- Demonstrating there has been a marketing period of 12 months from when the serviced plot(s) are first available for purchase (it may start earlier, but must extend to cover the 12 months following when the first availability for purchase). Ideally the plots would be available to view with the plot boundary demarcated. The plot provider should provide notification at the start of the marketing period.
- Setting out a marketing strategy that includes advertisement; an active local marketing campaign including consideration of targeted marketing to potential self-builders and local community groups, and; roadside marketing boards.

There is further information [online](#) on self-build and custom housebuilding as part of the National Planning Practice Guidance.

## 8. Community housing

### What is community housing

#### Definition of Community Led Housing

- Community-led housing schemes are a means of delivering housing which allows for people to be more involved in the process of meeting their specific needs and wants. These are developments driven by groups that are formed on the basis of a geographical connection or any other characteristic the members have in common. The Local Plan has no requirements for this housing type, but is generally supportive of it (see Policy H7).
- Schemes that are community-led generally have the following characteristics that make them distinct from other forms of development:
  - The benefits of the scheme to the local area and/or specified community must be clearly defined and legally protected in perpetuity.

- The community must be integrally involved throughout the process in key decisions, whether or not they initiate and manage the development process, or build the homes themselves
- The homes are owned, managed or stewarded by the community group driving the development in a manner of their choosing.
- These schemes can vary in terms of their size and tenure make up, depending on what the community identifies as its main need. It is likely that for many that the primary tenure would be affordable rented, combined with different forms of affordable sale. They may also include market housing, either as a means of cross subsidy of affordable homes or because that is the community believes it needs.
- There are various approaches that can be followed in delivering housing this way, which can encompass new build on a market housing or other type of site, included as part of a wider regeneration scheme or the adaptation of existing buildings.

## How we will assess schemes

### Project objectives

- Proposals for community-led housing will be supported because of the benefits they are expected to bring in terms of community cohesion, permanent affordability and sustainable development. Applications would be expected to be submitted by, or on behalf of, an established community group that can demonstrate that they promote these objectives. There would be no restrictions on the type of incorporation an eligible group can take, e.g. registered charity, social enterprise etc. There only needs to be demonstration that they are an established group with an identifiable membership and purpose.
- The group may wish to develop the homes themselves, being fully or partially responsible for all aspects including raising finance, creating a business plan, submitting the planning application and managing the build contract. They can also work in partnership with local authorities, or other organisations such as an existing Registered Provider or private developer. Whatever level of responsibility is taken on by the group, they would be expected to be directly involved in the development and responsible for key decisions. Furthermore it would be expected that these groups going forward would take a long term formal role in the ownership, management and/or stewardship of the homes. There are already several organised groups with ambitions for providing community-led housing in Oxford.
- There are overlaps with the self-build policy. The area allocation for self-build housing required for larger sites in policy H7 can also be used by community led housing that meets the definition of self-build. Groups of people can apply to be on our self-build register to register their interest in self building as a group, although it is not necessary to be on the self-



build register in order for a community housing group to bring forward a scheme that meets the definition of self-build. Key will be the involvement of individuals in designing their own accommodation. If a community housing group wants to bring forward a self-build housing scheme for greater numbers than are formally part of the group, they will need to demonstrate that they have wider interest and are in contact with a larger number of individuals, even if they are not formalised into the group, who will be able to contribute to the design process.

## Relevant policies in the Local Plan

- While community led housing schemes may have a different form or pattern of use to other housing development, they would still be expected to be in compliance with other policies in the local plan. This is to ensure that these developments in seeking to gain the benefits of CLH do not forgo adhering to appropriate building or living space standards, or detract from the wider objectives of the plan to promote high quality and sustainable development.
- Proposals would be assessed against the entirety of the Plan, although it is anticipated that the key relevant policies would be H15 (internal space standards) and H16 (Outdoor amenity space) with relation to the quality of living space for occupants and M3 (Car parking) with relation to transport impacts of the development.

*Extract from Policy H16:*

*d) the following factors will be material in assessing whether adequate space has been provided:*

- *vi. 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.*

*Extract from Policy M3:*

*In Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) or employer-linked housing areas (where occupants do not have an operational need for a car) where development is located within a 400m walk to frequent (15minute) public transport services and within 800m walk to a local supermarket or equivalent facilities (measured from the mid-point of the proposed development) planning permission will only be granted for residential development\* that is car-free.*

*In all other locations, planning permission will only be granted where the relevant maximum standards set out in Appendix 7.3 are complied with.*

*The need for disabled parking must be considered in all residential developments in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix 7.3.*

*Parking for car club vehicles must be provided in all residential developments with the standards set out in Appendix 7.3.*

# 9. Appendix 1

Example of a plot passport:



