

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



**OXFORD  
CITY  
COUNCIL**

*Housing Mix*

# **Oxford Local Plan 2040**

**BACKGROUND  
PAPER 3**

## This topic addresses

**SA Objective:**

To meet local housing needs by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent affordable home;

**SEA theme (s):**

Healthy and inclusive city to live in; Respects its heritage, landscape, archaeology, cultural assets and fosters high quality design; Liveable city with opportunities for all.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Oxford has acute housing pressures that need to be addressed. The city has an urgent need for more housing, and it is widely recognised that demand continues to outstrip supply. However, it is not only delivering enough housing that is important; the type and size of housing also need to be considered and met as far as possible. It is important to consider and address the mix of housing sizes, as some family units will need smaller, 1-bed, homes and others will require much larger homes to accommodate additional people.

1.2 This topic links with others covered in separate background papers. For example, particular groups will have individual housing needs, including students, those who need extra care housing, gypsy, traveller and boat dwellers (see background paper 5: specialist housing need). Particular housing types such as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are also important to consider (see background paper 4: Houses in Multiple Occupation).

### 2. Policy Framework

#### National Planning Policy Framework

2.1 Paragraph 60: To support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

2.2 Paragraph 61: To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. In addition to the local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

2.3 Paragraph 62: Within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes).

### 3. Current situation

3.1 The HENA provides an analysis of housing need including mix, size and types of homes needed. As shown in Table 1 below, at the time of the 2011 Census, 27% of properties in Oxford were family households, a relatively low figure compared to more rural parts of Oxfordshire. Oxford does however see a higher proportion of lone parent households than other locations. There are some considerable differences by household type with lone parents having a very high proportion living in the social rented sector and also in private rented accommodation.

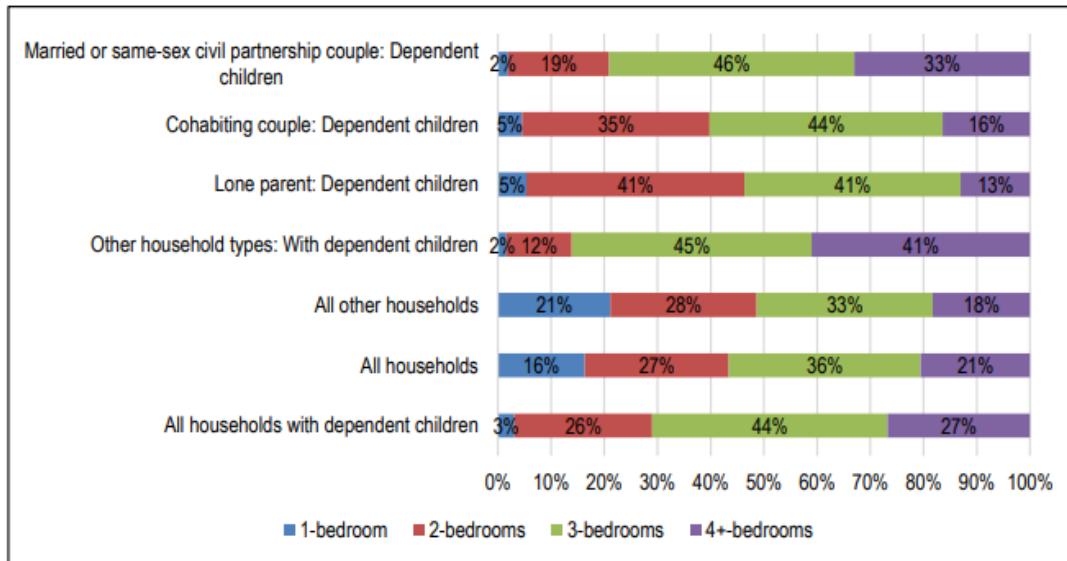
*Table 1: Households with dependent children (2011)*

	Married couple	Cohabiting couple	Lone parent	Other household (with dependents)	All other households (no dependent children)	Total	Total with dependent children
Cherwell	18.9%	4.2%	5.9%	2.4%	68.6%	100.0%	31.4%
Oxford	13.6%	3.1%	7.1%	3.1%	73.2%	100.0%	26.8%
Oxfordshire	18.1%	3.6%	5.5%	2.2%	70.7%	100.0%	29.3%
South East	17.1%	3.9%	6.1%	2.3%	70.6%	100.0%	29.4%
England	15.3%	4.0%	7.1%	2.6%	70.9%	100.0%	29.1%

*Source: Census (2011)*

3.2 Table 2 shows the number of bedrooms for family households at the point of the 2011 Census. The analysis shows the differences between married, cohabiting and lone parent families. The tendency is for family households to occupy 3-bedroom housing. The data also highlights the small level of 1-bed stock occupied by families.

*Table 2: Number of bedrooms by family household type (2011)*



Source: Census (2011)

3.3 The HENA analysed the current balance of housing in the city as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Number of bedrooms by tenure (2011):

		Cherwell	Oxford	Oxfordshire	South East	England
Owner-occupied	1-bedroom	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%
	2-bedrooms	18%	21%	19%	22%	23%
	3-bedrooms	47%	47%	44%	44%	48%
	4+-bedrooms	31%	27%	33%	30%	25%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Social rented	1-bedroom	24%	31%	26%	32%	31%
	2-bedrooms	30%	33%	34%	33%	34%
	3-bedrooms	42%	31%	35%	31%	31%
	4+-bedrooms	4%	6%	5%	4%	4%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Private rented	1-bedroom	20%	24%	19%	24%	23%
	2-bedrooms	37%	32%	35%	37%	39%
	3-bedrooms	32%	23%	30%	27%	28%
	4+-bedrooms	11%	21%	16%	12%	10%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Census (2011)

3.4 An analysis of the housing register also helps develop the profile of need. Table 4 below breaks down the housing register by bedroom need.

Table 4: Breakdown of the housing register by current bedroom need (2021):

	1-bedroom	2-bedrooms	3-bedrooms	4+-bedrooms
Cherwell	46%	31%	16%	7%
Oxford	51%	28%	16%	6%
Oxfordshire	55%	27%	13%	5%

Source: Local Authority Housing Statistics, 2021

## 4. Feedback from consultation

### **Issues stage consultation (2021)**

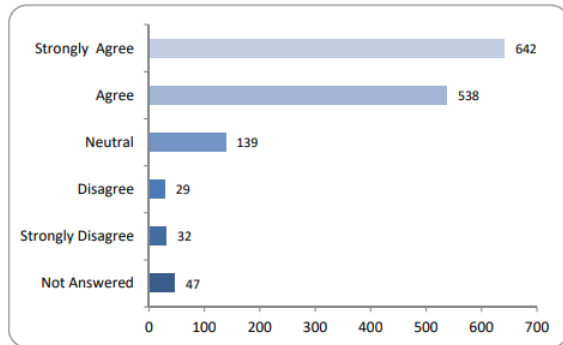
4.1 Feedback from the consultation was varied, with comments also covering a broad range of linked issues and concerns including: student accommodation; HMOs and subdivision of housing; boat dwellers; and elderly persons accommodation. These are referenced in additional background papers. A number of people noted that a big proportion of adults live alone or live in shared housing and that household take many different and changing forms. It is clear that a range of types and sizes of accommodation are desired to meet various needs.

### **Preferred Options consultation (Autumn 2022)**

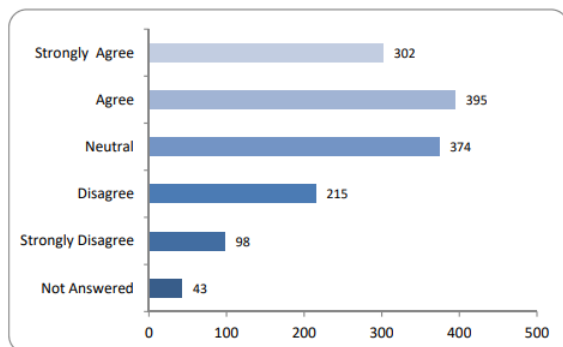
4.3 The Autumn 2022 Preferred Options consultation explored these views in more detail, the vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a mix of dwelling sizes and types should be provided for different needs. The response was more mixed to the question about whether smaller houses and flats should be prioritised in order to provide more homes overall (table 5 below). Other comments relating to housing mix covered a range of issues including: the provision of affordable housing responding to the site context; use of the housing register to determine the appropriate mix for a development and a need to understand this policy in the context of others; suggestions for larger housing sites to be tenure blind; the need for staff housing proposals to have their own mix; and some wishing to see a particular mix mandated in highest density areas.

*Table 5: Responses to Preferred Options consultation (taken from the consultation report):*

Should we continue to deliver a mix of dwelling sizes (number of bedrooms) and types (housing for specialist needs, accessible homes) for different people's needs?



Should we prioritise smaller houses or flats, in order to provide more homes overall?



### Preferred Options Part 2 consultation (Spring 2023)

4.4 There were a variety of comments received from the consultation including: concern over provision for affordable and key worker housing, as well as sufficient provision of student accommodation and residential moorings; suggestions for higher density, smaller dwellings including elderly and first homes accommodation.

## 5. Likely trends without a new local plan

5.1 Whilst the proportion of people who live in social rented property has been declining, the proportion of households living in private rented homes has been increasing, with more people in Oxford now living in privately rented homes than owner-occupied. As housing affordability looks likely to continue to worsen this trend looks set to continue. Planning policies in recent years have prioritised social rent tenures (of the 50% affordable housing provision, policy has sought 80% social rent and 20% intermediate forms of affordable housing). This approach is facing challenges in the light of changes to national policy away from social rent tenures, and this coupled with welfare reform changes which cap rental incomes and housing benefit, and increased Right to Buy, then it will be increasingly challenging to deliver and retain social rent tenure properties in Oxford.

5.2 The size of housing which households occupy relates more strongly to their wealth and age than the number of people they contain – particularly for owner occupied homes. Equally issues of supply can also impact occupancy patterns, for example it may be that a supply of additional smaller bungalows (say 2-bedrooms) would encourage older people to downsize but

in the absence of such accommodation these households remain living in their larger accommodation. The issue of choice is less relevant in the affordable sector (particularly since the introduction of the social sector size criteria) where households are allocated properties which reflect the size of the household, although there will still be some level of under-occupation.

5.3 Issues of supply can impact occupancy patterns, for example it may be that a supply of additional smaller bungalows (say 2-bedrooms) would encourage older people to downsize but in the absence of such accommodation these households remain living in their larger accommodation. The issue of choice is less relevant in the affordable sector (particularly since the introduction of the social sector size criteria) where households are allocated properties which reflect the size of the household, although there will still be some level of under-occupation.

5.4 In recent years, external economic factors – including Brexit and the war in Ukraine – have also affected construction costs and availability of materials, as well as rises in the costs of borrowing. These have significantly affected viability of developments, as explained in more detail in the Viability Study. This affects how much value can be captured to deliver public goods, such as the supply of housing, and also impacts the economy as employers in key sectors in Oxford have problems recruiting and retaining staff. If economic growth is constrained, then this affects not just Oxford but the wider region and even national economy as Oxford is a net contributor nationally.

## 6. Policies in LP2040 to address these issues and evidence that has shaped Policy H6

6.1 It is important that an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes is provided to help meet the needs of the range of household types. There are a number of factors that influence the appropriate mix including the site context and local needs. Policy H6 sets out that evidence will be required to support the proposed mix on residential sites, which can draw from the HENA, market demand, design considerations and housing register.

6.2 More specifically in the case of the affordable element of a scheme Policy H6 sets out the appropriate mix of dwelling sizes. A mix is provided for affordable rented forms of dwellings, and separately for affordable ownership forms of homes. These mixes are provided in the form of range to allow for the other site-specific considerations set out above.

6.2 In setting the mix for the affordable housing element of a scheme, there are two important elements: the model outputs from the HENA, and conversations with the City Council's Housing Services team on the immediate and pressing needs.

6.3 The HENA developed a model that starts with the current profile of housing in terms of size (bedrooms) and tenure and uses information about the age of households and the typical sizes of homes they occupy. By using projections for demographic growth (associated with the housing need scenario) it is possible to see which age groups are expected to change in number

and by how much. On the assumption that occupancy patterns for each age group (within each tenure) remain the same, it is therefore possible to assess the profile of housing needed over the plan period.

6.4 Following consultation with Housing Services, it was established that the current (and immediate) demand for 2-bed homes is relatively low. On the other hand, there are currently long waits for 1 bedroom properties. This is expected to be a long-term trend, with countywide homelessness transformation moving to a Housing-Led model seeking to move people into supported accommodation and rough sleepers quickly into one bedroom accommodation, so demand will continue and expect this pressure to further build.

## 7. Conclusions

### Policy H6 Mix of dwelling sizes (number of bedrooms)

**Planning permission will be granted for residential development that is demonstrated will deliver an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes that responds to the site context, including local needs, and that results in mixed and balanced communities. Evidence to support the proposed mix should be proportionate to the application and may include evidence from the HENA, market demand, design considerations, and should include regard to the housing register and current requirements if the below mix for affordable housing does not apply.**

**Proposals for 25 or more homes (gross) (C3 residential) or sites of 0.5ha and greater, and which are outside of the city centre or district centres, will be expected to comply with the following mix of unit sizes for the affordable housing element, unless it can be shown not to be feasible (this does not apply to employer-linked affordable housing):**

**Mix of dwelling sizes for affordable rented forms of homes:**

Size of dwelling	% of the affordable housing element
<b>1 bedroom homes (all 2 person unless by agreement based on specific need. Or: At least half of these to be 2 person)</b>	<b>30-35%</b>
<b>2 bedroom homes</b>	<b>25-35%</b>
<b>3 bedroom homes</b>	<b>20-35%</b>
<b>4+ bedroom homes</b>	<b>6-15%</b>

**For affordable ownership forms of homes: When there are 10 or more units of affordable home ownership types (excluding employer-linked housing):**

Size of dwelling	% of the affordable housing element
<b>1 bedroom homes (all 2 person unless by agreement based on specific need. Or: At least half of these to be 2 person)</b>	<b>20-35%</b>
<b>2 bedroom homes</b>	<b>30-40%</b>



<b>3 bedroom homes</b>	<b>20-35%</b>
<b>4+ bedroom homes</b>	<b>6-15%</b>