

INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 The location of West Oxfordshire and its high environmental quality has helped to sustain a high demand for housing locally. This situation has been reinforced by strategic planning policies operating since the 1970's that have steered growth away from central Oxfordshire. In the 25 years since 1981, the population of West Oxfordshire has grown by about 25%. (Appendix I contains a breakdown of house completions by parish).
- 5.2 The impact of new housing and associated traffic upon the character of West Oxfordshire is a key concern of local people. The domination of volume house builders and their standardised house types and layouts, particularly on the larger developments, and a shortage of suitable accommodation for people on lower incomes is increasing that concern. This Plan recognises the need for additional housing in West Oxfordshire but seeks to ensure that new residential development is provided in a way that minimises any adverse impact upon the District as well as benefiting the wider community.
- 5.3 The present housing stock of West Oxfordshire is estimated to be about 40,000, of which about 14,000 are in Witney and Carterton, the two largest towns. About 70% of the total stock is owner occupied and 12% is social rented affordable housing. The remainder includes private rented housing, Ministry of Defence properties at Carterton (1,400 approx.) and a very small element of shared ownership.
- 5.4 This key chapter is divided into the following sections:

Objectives and Strategy

Planning, Monitoring and Managing Housing Provision

Proposals

Policies

- Quality of residential development
- Location of new dwellings
- Affordable housing
- Residential caravans and mobile homes

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

- 5.5 Development of land for residential purposes will be the main land use change under the policies of this Plan. In addition to the overall aim of the Local Plan to secure development that is sustainable and the specific objectives for transport and movement (see the General Strategy Chapter), the key objectives which have guided the housing policies and proposals are as follows:

Objectives

- To identify sufficient sources of new housing to meet the Structure Plan provision for West Oxfordshire during the period up to 31st March 2011 but, at the same time to ensure that land is not released for major areas of new development until the appropriate level of supporting infrastructure and facilities is secured.
- To locate new housing where it will have the least adverse impact upon the character and resources of West Oxfordshire and to ensure that the new development makes a positive contribution to high quality built environment. Development will be phased to ensure that priority will be given to the reuse of previously developed land.
- To seek a range of new residential accommodation which provides a variety of sizes, types and affordability, with special emphasis on the provision of dwellings for local people who cannot afford local housing market prices

Housing Strategy for Oxfordshire

- 5.6 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 was adopted by the County Council in August 1998. Policy H1 distributes 6,750 additional dwellings (net) to West Oxfordshire to be built between 1st April 1996 and 31st March 2011. The Structure Plan proposes that about 2,700 of these dwellings will be at Witney.
- 5.7 The replacement Structure Plan 2016 (adopted October 2005) distributes 6,800 additional dwellings to the District during the period 2001–2016, of which about 3,000 will be built at Witney. On a pro-rata basis, this equates to about 2,000 dwellings for Witney and about 2,500 for the remainder of the District during 2001-2011.
- 5.8 Outside the main locations for housing (i.e. Witney for West Oxfordshire) Structure Plan Policy H1 states that “most development should take place in larger settlements where a reasonable range of employment, services and community facilities exist, are planned or can be provided at reasonable cost.”

Housing Strategy for West Oxfordshire

- 5.9 This Plan steers the majority of new house building to Witney and four of the largest towns and key service centres i.e. Carterton, Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Woodstock. This reflects the strategy adopted by the Council following the pre-deposit consultation. These towns have
- a wide range of existing services and facilities.
 - an existing employment base in excess of 1,000 jobs.
 - a reasonable level of public transport provision compared to the District as a whole.
- 5.10 This housing strategy reflects the approach set out in national guidance, in particular PPG3, and in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.
- 5.11 The specific proposals for Witney and Carterton are set out in the individual Chapters for these towns. The proposals for Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Woodstock are set out in the Proposals section of this chapter.

- 5.12 The 1997 adopted Local Plan contains two major Development Areas at North East Witney and North East Carterton. These will be a significant source of new housing and associated facilities well beyond the end of that plan period and are taken into account in this 2011 Plan.
- 5.13 Apart from allocated sites in the five towns/ service centres, the remaining provision for new housing during the plan period is likely to arise from unidentified sites (or windfalls). These are generally sites less than one hectare, although occasionally larger sites do emerge in the towns. Windfalls have been and are considered likely to continue to be a source of new housing in the District.
- 5.14 Outside local plan allocated sites, new dwellings will be created from:
- the conversion of appropriate existing non-residential buildings within towns and villages. This includes the re-use of agricultural buildings which historically have formed a significant source of new dwellings.
 - sub-division of existing dwellings and construction of new dwellings primarily within the larger and medium sized villages and towns under the locational policy approach (see Policies H5 – H8, and Figure 5.2).
- 5.15 Other proposals for new dwellings will only be permitted where there are specific local needs or other genuine special circumstances.

PLANNING, MONITORING AND MANAGING HOUSING PROVISION

- 5.16 This Plan makes sufficient provision to meet the Structure Plan housing targets for West Oxfordshire. Figure 5.1 breaks down this provision into phases, taking into account the re-phasing to be introduced through adoption of the replacement Structure Plan 2016. Sites will be brought forward to ensure the requisite number of houses are built through the provisions of Policy H1 and its Plan, Monitor and Manage approach. Sufficient sites are identified on the Proposals Map to ensure at

least a five year supply without recourse to windfalls as required by PPG3. The addition of windfall sites and the reserve site of North Curbridge will ensure a longer term supply of new housing.

5.17 About 40 – 45% of the houses to be built during the period 2001-2011 are anticipated to be on previously developed land as defined in PPG3.

5.18 Proposals for Witney are set out in the separate chapter for the town. Provision for additional dwellings comprises:

- existing planning permissions, including sites under construction. Included are former allocations at Early’s Mill and Bridge Street Mills and the major North East Development Area (Madley Park) allocated in the 1997 Plan and under construction since 2000 (annotated as sites under construction on the Witney Inset Maps).
- additional development on unidentified sites (or windfalls) within the existing built-up areas taking into account past completion rates on such sites but also having regard to Government guidance on urban capacity assessments.
- allocated sites within the existing built-up area, including sites from the 1997 Plan.

Assessment of the future supply of housing from windfalls and the identification of larger sites for residential development within the existing built-up areas was undertaken as part of the Witney Urban Capacity Study (available as a separate Background Paper).

5.19 In addition to the above provision in Witney, land to the west of the town (North Curbridge Development Area) has been identified as a reserve site to meet the longer term needs of the community and future housing requirements. This identification of a supply of new housing beyond the plan period meets Government guidance. The provisions of Policy H1 will inform timing of land release in this area. The specific land-use mix, including the amount of employment land required, will influence the total number of dwellings to be built on this site.

Figure 5.1 Amount and Distribution of New Housing 1996 – 2001 - 2011

Position at 1 April 2005	No. of dwellings 1996 - 2001	No. of dwellings 2001-2011
WITNEY		
Completions	275	875
Dwellings remaining to be built at:		
NE Development Area		540
Burford Road North (Early’s Mill)		219
Bridge Street Mills		176
Other outstanding planning consents		212
Additional development on unidentified sites		100-150
Allocations (subject to Policy H1):		
Newland (6)		20
Cogges (7)		46
West of High Street (13)		200
Buttercross Works (5)		50
Witney Total	275	2,438-2,488
Reserve Site - North Curbridge Development Area (8)		
REMAINDER OF WEST OXFORDSHIRE		
Completions	1,190	1,160
Dwellings remaining to be built at:		
NE Carterton (1998 permission)		686
Other outstanding planning consents		950
Additional development on unidentified sites		250-350
Allocations (subject to Policy H1):		
NE Carterton Development Area (remaining) (15)		180-200
Carterton - Shilton Road (16)		50
Chipping Norton - Cromwell Park (1)		40-80
Chipping Norton - Rock Hill (2)		25
Eynsham (3)		100
Woodstock (4)		60
Remainder Total	1,190	3,501-3,661
District Total	1,465	5,939-6,149
(Proposal numbers are in brackets)		
Note: under the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016, the pro-rata housing provision 2001-2011 for Witney and the remainder of the District equates to about 2,000 and about 2,500 dwellings respectively		

Housing

- 5.20 Proposals in the remainder of West Oxfordshire include land allocated for housing on six sites as listed in Figure 5.1. Proposals for Carterton are separately set out in the Carterton Chapter. Proposals for the other sites at Chipping Norton, Eynsham and Woodstock are contained in the following Section (Proposals).
- 5.21 Housing on previously unidentified sites (windfalls) will continue to form a significant part of future supply, although sites coming forward which are appropriate for much more than 10 dwellings are few in number. However, housing demand remains high. The estimate of an additional 250-300 dwellings from unidentified sites is based upon a range, taking into account past supply and completion rates, as well as the revised locational policy of this Plan. The assessment of additional housing on windfall sites forms part of the separate background paper on the Housing Capacity of West Oxfordshire.

POLICY HI - Phasing

Development of the sites allocated in this Plan for residential development or mixed uses, including housing, will take place in accordance with the following phasing requirements:

First phase – planning permission on these sites may be granted prior to 1 April 2008:

Rock Hill, Chipping Norton

Buttercross Works, Witney

West of High Street, Witney

Second phase - planning permission on these sites will not be granted before 1 April 2008 unless monitoring of housing completions and outstanding commitments, including progress on the development of sites included in the first phase and any otherwise unidentified sites on previously developed land, suggests that additional land should be released either a) to ensure a five year supply of housing land in accordance with the annualised structure plan requirement or b) in order to satisfy a proven need for affordable housing in a particular settlement or its environs which cannot be met by any other means, including rural exception sites.

Cromwell Park, Chipping Norton

Shipton Road, Woodstock

Eynsham East

Newland, Witney

Cogges, Witney

North East Carterton Development Area
(remaining)

Shilton Road, Carterton

The allocation at North Curbridge will not be granted permission until monitoring demonstrates an overriding need for its release either prior to 2011 or prior to a review of the plan strategy.

- 5.22 Policy HI takes the allocated sites listed in Fig. 5.1 and sets out the intended phasing of land releases under the Plan, Monitor and Manage approach. Priority is given to the use of previously developed land. Completions on unidentified windfall sites permitted under the locational policies of this Plan will continue throughout both phases. A primary source of new housing during the first phase will be completion of the North East Witney and North East Carterton Development Areas with outstanding planning permission (as shown on the Witney and Carterton Inset Maps).
- 5.23 Sites listed in the second phase of Policy HI are greenfield sites. These proposals in the five largest towns and villages are important to the Council's overall strategy to secure substantial levels of affordable housing in the local service centres. The actual timing of land releases of sites in the second phase may be brought forward or held back subject to the outcome of the monitoring process. Planning permission for these sites before 1 April 2008 will only be granted:
- a) if monitoring should reveal an inadequate supply of housing land i.e. house completions on previously developed land or on other committed sites are unlikely to deliver a five year supply under the structure plan provisions, or
 - b) there is a priority need for affordable housing which cannot be met by any means other than the release of an allocated greenfield site before 1 April 2008.
- 5.24 During the local plan period, housing land supply requirements in West Oxfordshire will be reviewed through new Local Development Documents prepared under the 2004 Planning Act in order to respond to Government requirements and the new regional spatial strategy for the years up to 2026.

PROPOSALS - CHIPPING NORTON, EYNHAM AND WOODSTOCK (see separate Chapters for proposals in Witney and Carterton)

Proposal 1 - Cromwell Park, Chipping Norton

Land adjacent to Cromwell Park is allocated for mixed use development as defined on the Chipping Norton Inset Map. Within the allocated area provision will be made for:

- a) Employment (B1) uses on the former highways depot land (0.9ha);
- b) Structural landscaping (0.6ha);
- c) Non-residential uses on a minimum area of 1.6ha, to include employment (B1) and community health care facilities (Use Classes C2);
- d) Housing on the residual area to include up to 50% affordable housing.

- 5.25 This site on the eastern edge of Chipping Norton includes a highway depot and land in agricultural use. It is defined by a field hedge to the east, the existing Cromwell Park employment site on the Banbury Road to the north and a conifer hedge to the south on the tree-lined London Road. Recent residential development lies to the west.
- 5.26 This area is important in the street scene, being at the entrance to the town and the Conservation Area. The development will need to satisfy the general environment policies of this Plan. Good urban design will be expected to satisfactorily integrate the new development into the town and carefully address the importance of the site in the wider landscape.
- 5.27 An area of structural landscaping has been identified on the eastern edge, to incorporate the existing hedge. The design of this landscape area together with the adjacent development should create a positive interface between the new edge of the town and the surrounding countryside.

- 5.28 The developable area of 4.5 hectares is expected to accommodate a range of uses with priority to be given to new health care services and/or other community facilities and employment use. The former depot is specifically identified for employment development. The amount of housing on the greenfield part of the allocation will be determined by the extent of land required for the priority uses and the needs of the town at the time when release of the site is considered appropriate. The Council will seek up to 50% affordable housing.
- 5.29 Planning permission for B1 use has been granted on the site proposed for employment. Permission has also been given for a new ambulance depot. These uses will need to form an integral part of the development proposal. Only B1 uses, other than the ambulance depot, will be permitted due to the proximity of existing and proposed residential units and the shared access arrangements.
- 5.30 The only vehicular access to the site will be taken from the existing Banbury Road access into Cromwell Park. The existing vehicular access to the highway depot shall be closed on the Banbury Road but with a pedestrian and cycle link retained.
- 5.31 Pedestrian and cycle links should also be provided onto London Road, with improvements to the route into the town centre, including safe crossing facilities to nearby schools.
- 5.32 Under Policy BE1 the Council will seek to secure planning obligations in respect of any identified shortfall in local supporting infrastructure. A detailed planning brief will be approved by the Local Planning Authority before further development is permitted on the site.

Proposal 2 - Rock Hill, Chipping Norton

Land at Rock Hill is allocated for housing (0.4 ha) as defined on the Chipping Norton Inset Map. Vehicular access will be provided from Cooper Close/Albion Street only. Access to Rock Hill itself will be limited to pedestrian, cycle and emergency vehicular use only.

5.33 This site, including a former Council yard off Rock Hill is the remaining area of a previous larger housing allocation now developed. About 25 dwellings can be accommodated on this site. Vehicular access will be provided from Cooper Close rather than the narrow Rock Hill. As landowner the Council wishes to see the site developed for affordable housing.

**Proposal 3 -
Eynsham East**

Land to the west of the B4449 Eynsham eastern by pass as shown on the Eynsham Inset Map is allocated for housing. Within this area the following provision will be made:

- a) Housing (2.8ha) which shall include up to 50% affordable housing, taking into account the level of local housing need;
- b) Structural landscaping and amenity open space (0.9ha).

5.34 The site should accommodate around 100 dwellings together with open space and structural landscaping on the boundary with the by pass. The site lies within the Eynsham Conservation Area and any application should be of sufficient detail to enable the Local Planning Authority to assess the impact of the proposed development. Development will not be permitted before a planning brief has been approved by the Local Planning Authority. The brief shall include measures for improving pedestrian and cycle links between the site and the centre of the village. Investigations will be required to demonstrate sufficient sewerage capacity before development is permitted. An archaeological field evaluation will be required prior to development.

**Proposal 4 -
Land to the east of Marlborough School, Woodstock**

Land to the east of Marlborough School, Woodstock as shown on the Woodstock Inset Map is allocated for housing which shall include up to 50% affordable housing, taking into account the level of local housing need.

5.35 The site should accommodate at least 60 dwellings. In order to maximise the efficient use of land and to help secure a more sympathetic development on this rural edge, the existing residential property, The Holding, is included within the housing proposal. Development will not be permitted before a planning brief has been approved by the Local Planning Authority but is also subject to the phasing policy HI. The brief shall include measures for improving pedestrian and cycle links between the site and the town centre and the retention and protection of the trees and hedges lining the western side of Samsons Lane. Investigations will be required to demonstrate sufficient sewerage capacity before development is permitted.

POLICIES - QUALITY OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

POLICY H2 - General residential development standards

Proposals for additional dwellings (including the conversion of existing buildings), replacement dwellings and extensions or alterations to existing dwellings should not:

- a) erode the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including important buildings and public and private open space;
- b) adversely affect features of historical, architectural, or ecological or geological importance and their setting;
- c) eliminate existing useful community facilities;
- d) create unacceptable living conditions for existing and new residents;
- e) create unsafe conditions for the movement of people and vehicles;
- f) set an undesirable precedent for other sites where in equity development would be difficult to resist and where cumulatively the resultant scale of development would erode the character and environment of the area.

Proposals for extensions or alterations to an existing dwelling to create a self-contained unit of accommodation may be subject to a condition ensuring the extra accommodation remains ancillary to the main dwelling.

- 5.36 Policy H2 applies specifically to all new residential development, whether new build or conversions of existing buildings, or extensions and alterations to existing dwellings. The policy supplements the general development standards contained in Policies BE2 and BE3. Policy TLC12 sets out the specific criteria for assessing proposals which may involve the loss of existing community facilities.

- 5.37 The residential environment in West Oxfordshire is generally of high quality. This should be reflected in new housing development. Where the existing environment may not be of the highest standard, it is even more important that new development should actively seek to improve and upgrade the environment and not merely reflect and reinforce previous standards.
- 5.38 High quality design and layout, provision of reasonable standards of privacy and space, satisfactory provision for the parking of vehicles and for movement of both people and vehicles is even more important with the increased emphasis on accommodating more new dwellings within existing built up areas. With house prices high in the District many planning applications are submitted for extensions or alterations to accommodate changing requirements of the household in situ. Care must be taken to avoid over-development.
- 5.39 It is important to recognise the cumulative effects of small-scale residential development repeated again and again, particularly in the rural areas. A single site in a village, if developed for housing, may have only a marginal impact upon the character of the area. However, where there are other similar sites in the village and in other similar villages that are equally likely to come forward for development, the resultant impact could seriously erode the local character and environment. In such cases, Policy H2f) will be applicable.

Conversion of Existing Buildings

- 5.40 Proposals for the residential use of existing buildings should respect the character of the original building. Policies BE10 and H10 address the conversion of existing buildings to dwellings.

Extensions to Dwellings

- 5.41 Proposed extensions to existing dwellings which create unsatisfactory living conditions by virtue of loss of privacy or daylighting or are over-dominating will not be permitted. Equally, extensions which unacceptably dominate the original dwelling or a neighbouring building to the detriment of the character of the building and the local scene will be refused permission

(see also Green Belt Policy NE5). This is especially important when changes are proposed to existing dwellings created from the conversion of traditional farm buildings. In such cases, extensions or other significant alterations should not erode the original character of the building.

- 5.42 Many proposals for extra residential accommodation are permitted through extensions and conversions of ancillary buildings that provide living space for single person households. A noticeable trend in recent years is the number of planning applications for “granny annexes”. These can provide ancillary but separate accommodation for elderly members of the family. However, the dwellings provided are not counted towards the number of houses identified by the Structure Plan unless they involve the formation of a separate household.
- 5.43 Where extensions or additions are proposed to dwellings to provide self contained accommodation for members of the family, or sometimes for staff providing domestic help, as opposed to creation of a completely separate dwelling unit, planning conditions may be imposed to ensure that the extension or addition remains ancillary accommodation to the main dwelling.
- 5.44 Where ancillary self-contained accommodation is proposed in the form of a free-standing building in a location where a new dwelling would not normally be permitted, the applicant should clearly demonstrate why the accommodation cannot be provided in any other way. Planning permission will only be granted for the extra accommodation in special circumstances with occupancy controlled by condition or legal agreement as appropriate.

Replacement Dwellings

- 5.45 Policy H2 equally applies to new dwellings that are intended to replace existing housing stock. A replacement dwelling would not breach the objectives of this Plan where the existing permanent dwelling (i.e. not a caravan) has a lawful residential use and is not a building of historical or architectural value, and the proposed development would not erode the quality of the environment.

- 5.46 In the open countryside and in small villages where new dwellings are generally not permitted, the replacement should be on a one for one basis only. In these locations it is unlikely that the criteria of Policy H2, particularly in respect of visual impact or sustainability objectives in general, would be met by proposals for a replacement dwelling materially larger than the original property. Where proposals are submitted for a significantly larger replacement the applicant will need to demonstrate that the development would make a positive contribution to the local area. In the Oxford Green Belt proposals to replace or extend existing dwellings should not result in a materially larger dwelling (see Policy NE5).

POLICY H3 - Range and type of residential accommodation

Proposals for all new housing should use land efficiently. Based on the housing needs of the area, housing development of 6 or more dwellings or sites of 0.2 hectares or more shall provide a mix of dwelling sizes and types, including accommodation for the elderly and the disabled.

In addition, proposals for larger residential developments of 0.5 hectares or more should:

- a) be accompanied by a statement setting out the design approach for the proposed development;
- b) provide attractive, safe and convenient amenity open space, including play space where appropriate, commensurate with the scale and type of development.

- 5.47 Local authorities and developers are asked in PPG3 to make efficient use of land brought forward for development in order to minimise the need to release yet more greenfield sites. Efficient use of land is defined as net residential densities of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare. In a rural authority like West Oxfordshire the main opportunity for densities towards the upper end of the range will lie within the existing urban areas and in the larger developments proposed in Witney.

Housing

- 5.48 Policy H3 seeks the efficient use of land by new residential development and supplements Policies BE3, BE4 and H2. Higher residential densities can place greater demands upon the skills and ingenuity of the designer. The quality of the future environment remains the overriding consideration.
- 5.49 A wide range of densities is a feature of villages and market towns as typified by a large detached property in its own grounds sitting alongside terraced cottages. New housing with large groups of standard unvarying dwelling sizes, all set within individual standard sized plots, is unlikely to be appropriate. This form of development is rarely complementary to the local character and does not make a positive contribution to the wide range of residential accommodation required to meet future needs.
- 5.50 Planning applications for significant new residential development should clearly set out the design approach being followed and illustrate how the proposals fit into the wider context. In most cases this should take the form of a comprehensive planning brief.
- 5.51 New residential developments should not be viewed simply as areas of family housing. A wide range of accommodation should be provided, in both price and type. This is particularly the case on the larger sites allocated for housing in this Plan.
- 5.52 Specific provision for the elderly within appropriate residential developments will be made in the form of lifetime homes, sheltered accommodation and care homes. Without prejudice to the provision of such development elsewhere, where sites have good access to local facilities, including bus services, the Council will particularly encourage housing specifically for older and disabled people. Flats and maisonettes should be included to meet the needs of one or two person households seeking more compact accommodation. An increasing number of people wish to work from home, including businesses such as dentists or vets where location within a residential environment can improve accessibility to the services available. A significant element of new housing should be included to help meet the needs of

local people on lower incomes i.e. dwellings managed by a registered social landlord (see Policy H11), supplemented by new houses at the lower end of market prices.

- 5.53 Attractive amenity open space, well sited and landscaped, should be an integral part of a new residential environment. Very small fragmented landscape areas should be avoided. Generally on sites of 0.5 hectares or more, a minimum of 10% of the total site area should be used, with provision of play areas as appropriate. On smaller sites the achievement of a good environment may also necessitate the provision of open space, particularly where existing trees are to be retained.
- 5.54 Children's play space should be designed so it is safe to use with provision to meet the needs of a range of children's ages as appropriate, in accordance with the National Playing Fields Association (NPFSA) standards. The Council will wish to be assured prior to the issue of detailed planning consent that proper provision for future landscape maintenance has been made. A private scheme may be agreed or alternatively, a legal agreement entered into with the Council to secure a financial contribution towards the cost of future maintenance by the adopting authority.

LOCATION OF NEW DWELLINGS

- 5.55 The following policies comprise the locational strategy for the provision of new housing. These policies should not be read in isolation but in conjunction with other policies in this Plan, particularly those in the Environment Chapter. In addition the ability of proposals to contribute towards meeting affordable housing needs as defined in the Council's Housing Strategy will also be taken into account to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between the Council's environmental and social objectives as set out in the introduction to this chapter.

Countryside and Small Villages

POLICY H4 - Construction of new dwellings in the countryside and in small villages.

Proposals for the construction of additional new dwellings in the countryside and in all villages and groups of houses not listed in Figure 5.2 will only be permitted if there is a genuine essential agricultural or other operational need for a full-time worker to live on the site and:

- a) the need cannot be met through the use of existing buildings on or close to the enterprise or in any other way; and
- b) the proposed dwelling is of a size appropriate to both its functional requirement and the financial viability of the enterprise; and
- c) the enterprise is in operation, is economically viable and is capable of being sustained for a reasonable period of time.

An occupancy condition will be imposed on a new dwelling permitted in response to an essential operational need as well as on appropriate existing dwellings on the holding. The condition will limit occupation of agricultural dwellings to:

- i. a person employed or last employed in agriculture or forestry, or
- ii. to a widow or widower of such a person, or
- iii. to any resident dependants.

Conditions restricting occupancy will only be removed where it is clearly demonstrated that the dwelling is no longer required to serve the needs of the agricultural community in the area as a whole.

Where appropriate, a legal agreement will be sought tying the provision of a new agricultural dwelling to buildings and land comprising the agricultural holding.

- 5.56 Policy H4 relates to the construction of new dwellings in the countryside, including additions to small villages and isolated groups of housing not listed in Figure 5.2. The conversion or use of existing buildings and replacement dwellings are covered by separate policies.
- 5.57 Long standing national policy has strictly controlled new house building in the countryside in order to protect its character and resources and to minimise the cost of providing services. Traditionally isolated residential development has been permitted only in response to operational needs where it is essential for workers to live on or close to the site of their work. This in most cases has been justified by agricultural or forestry requirements although in exceptional circumstances other enterprises may justify a residential presence.
- 5.58 However, the 1998 Oxfordshire Farming Study showed that the traditional role of the farmer as primarily a food producer is undergoing fundamental change. Although in 1991 West Oxfordshire was the only district in the County where agricultural employment exceeded 4% of the total workforce, full time workers in agriculture are declining, whereas part-time farmers are increasing in number. The area of land farmed in the district has fallen.
- 5.59 The Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (now part of DEFRA) advises that all applications for new agricultural dwellings are to service farmland that has been adequately supervised in the past although there are many buildings which formally accommodated farm workers now used for non-agricultural purposes. FRCA considers that the case for additional accommodation for farm workers in West Oxfordshire needs careful scrutiny, with use of specialist advice as necessary.

- 5.60 The detailed statement submitted with the planning application for a new dwelling to serve an existing enterprise will need to justify the proposal on both functional and financial grounds. This will include sufficient information to demonstrate the viability of the enterprise now and in the longer term, the need for workers to live on or near the site and the availability and suitability of existing accommodation in the area.
- 5.61 Where an existing enterprise justifies a residential presence, the use of existing buildings in the vicinity must first be investigated i.e. either use of existing dwellings or conversion to residential use of an appropriate building. Where there is no alternative to new build, the scale of new buildings should be commensurate with the functional requirement of the enterprise. Dwellings which are unusually large in relation to the needs of the enterprise or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain in the long-term, will not be permitted.
- 5.62 If permitted, planning conditions in accordance with Policy H4 will control the occupation of a new agricultural dwelling. Occupancy conditions may also be imposed on existing dwellings on the farm holding which are under the control of the applicant and which do not have occupancy conditions attached at the time of the planning application.
- 5.63 Applications for the removal of such conditions will only be allowed when the applicant can demonstrate that the dwelling is no longer required for someone solely, mainly or last working in agriculture. It is important to bear in mind that it is the need for a dwelling in the area as a whole, and not just on a particular holding, that is relevant. Information supplied by the applicant should include evidence of recent marketing for agricultural workers accommodation with the restrictive condition still in place and at a price which reflects that restriction.

- 5.64 Where a new farming activity is being established and it can be demonstrated that the activity, if viable, would necessitate a residential presence, the Council may be prepared to grant temporary permission for a residential mobile home on the site (see Policy H14). Sufficient time would need to elapse (normally 3 years) in order to demonstrate the sound financial basis of the venture before a permanent dwelling would be considered. However, if the functional and financial tests can not be satisfied in accordance with Policy H4 after a three year period, the mobile home should be removed from the site.

Villages and Towns

POLICY H5 - Villages

New dwellings will be permitted in villages in Group A (listed in Figure 5.2) in the following circumstances:

- a) infilling; and
- b) the conversion of appropriate existing buildings.

POLICY H6 - Medium-sized villages

New dwellings will be permitted in villages in Group B (listed in Figure 5.2) in the following circumstances:

- a) infilling;
- b) rounding off within the existing built-up area; and
- c) the conversion of appropriate existing buildings.

POLICY H7 - Service Centres

New dwellings will be permitted in the towns and villages in Group C (listed in Figure 5.2) in the following circumstances:

- a) infilling;
- b) rounding off within the existing built-up area;
- c) the conversion of appropriate existing buildings; and
- d) on sites specifically allocated for residential development in this plan.

Definitions:

Infilling is defined as the filling of a small gap in an otherwise continuous built up frontage. However, all gaps may not be appropriate for infill development. Some may form important features in the village and/or allow attractive views to be gained of features beyond the site. In assessing proposals for infill development particular regard will be given to Policy BE4. Infilling may include the redevelopment, alteration or extension of existing buildings to create new dwellings.

Rounding off is defined as residential development on a site within the existing built-up areas of a settlement that would be a logical complement to the existing pattern of development, would not extend that settlement into open countryside and would not conflict with other policies of this Plan. Such sites will be previously developed land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the associated curtilage.

Figure 5.2: Hierarchy of Settlements

GROUP A: Villages

Alvescot
 Ascott-under-Wychwood
 Bladon
 Brize Norton
 Cassington
 Chadlington
 Churchill
 Clanfield
 Combe
 Curbridge
 Filkins & Broughton Poggs
 Finstock
 Fulbrook
 Great Rollright
 Kingham
 Langford
 Leafield
 Over Norton
 Stanton Harcourt & Sutton
 Tackley
 Wootton

GROUP B: Medium-Sized Villages

Aston
 Ducklington
 Enstone
 Freeland
 Hailey
 Middle Barton
 Milton-under-Wychwood
 Minster Lovell (south of B4047)
 North Leigh
 Shipton-under-Wychwood
 Standlake
 Stonesfield

GROUP C: Service Centres Main Centres

Witney
 Carterton
 Chipping Norton

Other Centres

Bampton
 Burford
 Charlbury
 Eynsham
 Long Hanborough
 Woodstock

- 5.65 Policies H5, H6 and H7 identify the criteria for distribution of new housing amongst the 42 villages and towns listed in Figure 5.2. This does not mean that sites which satisfy the locational policies are necessarily acceptable for new housing. Each site will still need to be considered under other policies of the Plan such as H2 and the environmental policies. Separate policies determine whether existing buildings are appropriate for conversion or sub-division for residential use. The quality and range of residential accommodation is addressed by many policies in this Plan, particularly Housing Policies H3 and H11.
- 5.66 The villages and towns are divided into three groups A, B or C. (see Figure 5.2). This classification reflects the services and facilities offered and takes into account the sequential approach to the location of new housing which determined the allocation of housing sites in the Plan.
- 5.67 In recognition of their place in the settlement hierarchy new housing is directed towards the service centres of the District covered by Policy H7. Most of the new housing will take place in Witney and Carterton, and to a lesser extent in Chipping Norton; the three main towns.
- 5.68 Infill and rounding-off within existing built-up areas will take place, in accordance with the housing strategy, in the towns and villages covered by Policies H6 and H7. This will allow, subject to compliance with the definitions of infill and rounding-off and Policies E6, TLC5 and SH5 among others, the redevelopment of previously developed sites which were not identified in the housing capacity study. If any site within an existing settlement and occupied by agricultural buildings is proposed for housing development the Council will wish to be satisfied that the scheme would result in a positive benefit to the local community and that the loss of agricultural buildings through redevelopment for residential purposes will not lead to proposals for new agricultural buildings in the open countryside.

- 5.69 Most Group A settlements have a school and at least one shop but accessibility to public transport is generally poor. They are not, therefore, suitable locations for significant numbers of new houses and development is restricted to infilling and the conversion of existing buildings subject again to the provisions of Policies E6, TLC5 and SH5 amongst others. Infilling should not result in the loss of a space which forms an integral part of the character or setting of a settlement.
- 5.70 Sufficient land has been identified in this Plan to provide a 5 year supply of housing and therefore the release of undeveloped greenfield land not allocated in this Plan will be resisted, irrespective of location, other than where it meets the requirements of Policy H12 for rural exceptions sites.

Sub-division of dwellings

POLICY H8 -

Sub-division of existing dwellings

Proposals for the sub-division or conversion of an existing dwelling into two or more units of residential accommodation will be permitted if:

- a) the site lies within the existing built-up area of a village or town in Figure 5.2; or
- b) the proposal involves a large property in a small village or in the open countryside where its continued existence in residential use cannot be secured in any other way;

and the proposal meets all of the following criteria:

- i. there would be no harm to the amenity of the occupants of the proposed dwellings or of nearby properties; and
- ii. the character or appearance of the building would not be adversely affected; and
- iii. the proposal would not result in over-development.

- 5.71 Subdivision of appropriate existing dwellings is a useful way of providing additional housing with little impact upon the character of the District. There is an increasing demand for smaller (and less expensive) accommodation, primarily in the larger settlements.
- 5.72 Policy H8 balances the need to make better use of the existing housing stock (rather than developing even more greenfield sites) against the need to minimise the number of additional households who would live in the more remote areas lacking basic services and facilities. Consequently, the policy approach reflects the overall strategy and objectives of the Plan to concentrate new dwellings in the larger settlements.
- 5.73 Outside towns and villages listed in Figure 5.2 sub-division of existing houses will not generally be permitted. On occasion there may be a special case where it is desirable to keep a large rural property in residential use which can only be secured by conversion to smaller units, normally flats.
- 5.74 In towns and villages sub-division of existing dwellings is usually more suitable in areas of mixed character. Where the unified character of a residential area would be eroded by sub-division of existing properties, such proposals will not be permitted. Increased use of the existing housing stock should also avoid the loss of attractive amenity space and the creation of highway safety problems through unacceptable on-street parking.

Conversions

POLICY H9 - Conversion of existing buildings to residential use within villages and towns

Policy deleted.

POLICY H10 - Conversion of existing buildings to residential use in the countryside and small villages.

The conversion of an existing building to a dwelling outside the built-up areas of the settlements listed in Figure 5.2 will be permitted in the following exceptional circumstances and where retention of the building meets overall sustainability objectives:

- a) the building is not suitable or reasonably capable of the re-use for employment purposes, recreational or community uses, visitor facilities or tourist accommodation and it is demonstrated that its retention can only be secured through its conversion to residential use; or
- b) there is an essential operational or social need for a dwelling in accordance with the provisions of Policy H4.

In addition the following criteria should be met:

- c) the building is of substantial construction and capable of accommodating residential use without major reconstruction or significant enlargement; and
- d) the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

- 5.75 Outside existing built-up areas of towns and villages listed in Figure 5.2, residential use, other than for holiday accommodation, will rarely be appropriate. In special cases where use for a permanent dwelling would comply with Policy H10, the applicant will need to demonstrate that the existing building is capable of conversion without major rebuilding or significant enlargement. Holiday accommodation or non-residential uses are the preferred new uses for existing rural buildings in the open countryside and small villages.
- 5.76 If the principle of conversion is acceptable then the detailed works proposed will be assessed against all the relevant policies in this Plan covering quality of development and environmental considerations, particularly Policies BE2 and H2. Built Environment Policies BE9 and BE10 relate especially to the change of use of listed buildings and the conversion of unlisted vernacular buildings respectively. Where existing buildings may have become the home of specially protected species such as bats, householders must apply for a DEFRA development licence for any permitted conversion for residential use and must provide for the continued presence of that species. Advice can be sought from English Nature on all protected species including owls and bats.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

POLICY H11 -

Affordable housing on allocated and previously unidentified sites

Taking into account the housing needs of the area and subject to any site specific constraints, an element of affordable housing will be sought as part of residential development schemes on the following basis:

- a) on land allocated in this plan for residential development or mixed uses including housing; 30% on sites in the towns of Witney and Carterton and up to 50% in the remainder of the District;
- b) on unallocated land, which comes forward in accordance with the locational policies of this plan, up to 50% affordable housing will be sought where:
 - i) the site is in Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton or Eynsham and has an area of 0.5 ha or greater or when 15 or more dwellings are proposed; or
 - ii) elsewhere, when a development of 2 or more dwellings are proposed.

Affordable housing is defined as being affordable to those who cannot afford market priced housing locally to either rent or purchase. It is housing provided with either public or private subsidy for people who are unable to resolve their housing requirements in the local housing market because of the relationship between housing cost and local incomes.

Low cost market housing will be available for the first and subsequent purchasers at an agreed discount below full market value in response to an identified need.

Key workers wishing to move into the District will be considered for their eligibility, taking into account their particular circumstances and local housing need at the time.

- 5.77 A high quality environment which is predominantly Cotswold in character, located within a reasonable distance of major employment centres, has created a housing demand in West Oxfordshire that outstrips supply. Increased house prices in villages is displacing local families as more affluent people move into the area from further afield. Part of the demand comes from people who wish to retire or buy second homes within the Cotswolds or people who commute long distances to work in larger urban areas outside the District.
- 5.78 This trend leads to a significant number of local people who cannot afford to buy or rent houses at market prices. Increased emphasis is placed upon the role of housing associations (Registered Social Landlords) to provide social housing to meet this need. However, without intervention in the housing market, these bodies are unable to acquire land in competition with speculative house builders in locations where land values are high. In March 2001 the Council transferred its housing stock to a newly formed Registered Social Landlord (West Oxfordshire Housing now known as Cottsway Housing). It is no longer a direct provider of affordable housing.
- 5.79 Without provision of affordable housing to meet the needs of local families on lower incomes, the social structure of West Oxfordshire will become even more biased towards the elderly and wealthy. People below the age of 45 are forecast to be a declining percentage of the future population, especially in the rural areas.
- 5.80 Government guidance recognises that a community's need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration. Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to include a policy in local plans to seek an element of affordable housing on suitable sites where there is evidence of need.
- 5.81 The term affordable housing used in Government guidance encompasses both social housing and "low-cost market housing". In West Oxfordshire new build at the lower end of market prices is still too highly priced to meet the main identified housing need. Where house purchase is feasible for people on lower incomes, the existing housing stock with its prices markedly lower than new houses would form the main supply. New low cost housing is only affordable where the market price is significantly discounted.
- 5.82 In 2002 the Council commissioned a third Housing Needs Survey of West Oxfordshire (updated in 2004). This included questionnaires sent to households in the District. The survey clearly illustrates the affordability problem at a time of radically increased house prices and reduction in the supply of social housing stock. The level of need identified in the latest Survey is dramatically higher than the level shown in the 1999 Survey. On the basis of the current housing market, the forecast need for affordable dwellings exceeds the total number of new dwellings planned to be built in West Oxfordshire by 2011. This level of new affordable dwellings is not economically deliverable or sustainable.
- 5.83 The 2002 Survey analysis of current house prices shows access to home ownership beyond the reach of 95% of new/concealed households identified in the survey. Any household with an income below £30,000 in Witney would struggle financially to access the local new or second-hand housing market. Access in the rural areas is even more difficult because of higher price levels and the more limited range of accommodation available. The private rented sector makes little contribution.
- 5.84 The need for affordable housing is concentrated mainly in Witney and other local service centres. Lower levels of need are however evident throughout the rural areas (the District was divided into sub-areas for analysis purposes).

Housing

5.85 The recommendations arising from the Housing Survey include the need to 'negotiate with prospective developers towards achieving the maximum level of subsidised affordable homes, principally for rent but also discounted housing to buy and shared ownership, from the total of all suitable sites coming forward for planning consent over the period of the Local Plan. Each site will need to be assessed individually, targets being subject to wider planning, economic priority and sustainability considerations'.

5.86 Further surveys of housing need in the District and in particular towns/parishes will be carried out from time to time during the local plan period. The Council also continues to maintain an up to date waiting list of applicants for affordable housing. This data base is used to determine the required location, types of dwelling and tenure mix to satisfy specific identified housing need.

Type and Location of Affordable Housing Required

5.87 In its role as enabler of affordable housing, the Council has set, through its Housing Strategy Statement, an annual target of at least 110 new build affordable homes. The main priority is to enable provision of rented units at affordable rents in Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, but also to secure affordable units throughout the rural areas wherever the opportunity arises.

5.88 The Council recognises the need to be flexible when negotiating affordable housing as part of open market housing sites, especially when public subsidy cannot be secured. Subject to there being a need, shared ownership or discount market units may be acceptable in lieu of some rented units, particularly on larger sites where this would help the delivery of a proportion of rented units that would otherwise require public subsidy. Discount market housing is likely to be the most cost effective way of securing affordable units on the smaller windfall sites in the villages.

5.89 The level of housing need means a significant percentage of land allocated for residential development should be secured for affordable housing. The individual proposals for the

sites allocated in this Plan reserve a specific percentage of the developable area for affordable housing. This percentage is higher in the rural areas (up to 50%) reflecting the relatively low number of dwellings allocated for development in this part of the District compared to the larger urban centres of Witney and Carterton (30%). Given the high levels of housing need outside the two towns, the Council must maximise the opportunities to secure affordable housing wherever possible and feasible.

5.90 Proposals for sites allocated in this Plan for residential development are set out earlier in this chapter and in the individual Witney and Carterton Chapters. The total provision of affordable housing from this source is unlikely to meet even the Council's minimum target. In particular, the amount of affordable housing to be secured in greenfield sites is subject, inter alia, to overall phasing of land releases (see Policy H1).

5.91 Given this shortfall in affordable housing provision and uncertainties over the timing of larger scale development, additional affordable housing will be secured on previously unidentified sites that come forward for residential development during the plan period. Here the Council will apply Policy H1(b). Monitoring shows that the windfall sites coming forward in the rural areas are normally small in size. Between 1996 and 2004 all but one site has accommodated less than 15 dwellings. It is vital that such sites of two or more dwellings contribute towards affordable housing provision to help the Council meet its annual targets. Application of this threshold could provide up to about 100 additional affordable dwellings in the rural areas by 2011. On previously unidentified sites up to 50% will be sought for affordable housing depending on the level of local housing need at the time, the characteristics and location of the particular site involved and the financial viability of the proposed development.

5.92 This approach deliberately seeks to address the challenge set out in the Government’s Rural White Paper “Our Countryside :The Future” which suggests that local authorities have not exploited to full effect affordable housing policies. The White Paper says “there is no reason why, in small villages if there is evidence of need and subject to financial viability, they should not seek to match every new market house with an affordable home”. However, in limited circumstances such as on very small sites the Council and developer may agree that the housing need would be more satisfactorily met elsewhere in the locality. In such cases a financial or other contribution towards the provision of affordable housing would comply with Policy H11.

**POLICY H12 -
Affordable housing on rural
exception sites**

Small-scale affordable housing schemes will be permitted which satisfy the particular local needs of:

- a) long-standing local residents;
- b) persons who have family links with the parish or appropriate adjoining parishes, and/or
- c) persons who have full-time employment in the locality,

and whose needs cannot be satisfied in any other way, provided that:

- i. the housing will remain affordable in perpetuity for local people on low incomes;
- ii. the proposal is well-related to the existing built-up areas and does not adversely affect the character and quality of the local environment.

5.93 In accordance with PPG3, Policy H12 continues the District Council policy operated since 1988. This allows the release of small sites within or adjoining settlements which would not otherwise be released for housing, specifically to meet local housing needs that cannot be accommodated in any other way.

5.94 The main need for rural exception sites is in parts of the District where there are no sites specifically allocated for housing in this Plan. A percentage of affordable housing is sought on allocated sites but the need for additional provision to be found through other sites in those settlements will be determined by the timing of affordable housing sites already in the pipeline and by the overall level of housing need.

5.95 Schemes proposed under Policy H12 must be demonstrated to be economically viable and to be capable of proper management by a registered social landlord, who will also ensure that the accommodation remains low cost and is reserved for local people in need. Dwellings allowed under this policy will not count towards the Structure Plan housing provision (until built) in accordance with Government guidelines. In the first nine years of the plan period 64 dwellings were built on rural exception sites.

5.96 Before issuing planning permission for these housing schemes, the Council will seek a legal agreement under Section 106 of the 1990 Town and County Planning Act with all parties having a controlling interest in the land to ensure the Council’s objectives for such schemes are met, both in the short-term and long-term.

5.97 The legal agreement will restrict eligibility of applicants to those (and only those) in housing need and to those applicants who have ties with the specific parish in which the houses are to be built and appropriate adjoining parishes (neighbouring communities whose population does not exceed 75% of the main parish's population), in accordance with the following criteria:

- i. existing residents (1 year) or previous residents (3 years in aggregate). Longer standing residents are given preference, i.e. where applicants have been resident for three years or more or five or more years previous residence;
- ii. family links with the parish(es); and/or
- iii. full-time employment in the parish(es); and/or
- iv. key workers being moved into the locality;

5.98 To ensure continued occupation and adequate revenue stream for the managers of exceptional housing sites, if accommodation remains unallocated after a certain time the criteria will be widened to cover people in housing need living within or with connections with West Oxfordshire District. Securing affordable housing under this approach is complex and early discussion with the Council's Housing Department is advised.

5.99 An exception to normal planning policies does not mean allowing houses which cause unacceptable amenity, environmental, or highway problems. Sites selected must be well related to the existing village or town, and comply with the other policies of the Plan.

RESIDENTIAL CARAVANS AND MOBILE HOMES

POLICY H13 - Gypsies

Proposals for residential and transit caravan sites to meet the needs of gypsies will be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

- a) the site is not located within the Oxford Green Belt, a conservation area or site of special scientific interest;
- b) the character and appearance of the surrounding area is not adversely affected;
- c) the size of the site and proposed screening is appropriate for the area;
- d) local services and facilities are located within a reasonable distance from the site;
- e) satisfactory amenity is retained for residents of existing and proposed housing in the area;
- f) satisfactory arrangements are made for the movement of vehicles and pedestrians on the site and public highway and for parking provision.

5.100 The Council's planning policy for determining proposals for gypsy caravan sites is based on Government advice, particularly Circular 1/94 "Gypsy Sites and Planning." It is framed in the recognition of the need to accommodate the nomadic lifestyle of gypsies as statutorily defined, without losing the importance of the plan-led nature of the planning system.

5.101 In the early 1990's a widespread search for suitable gypsy sites in West Oxfordshire was undertaken in accordance with the duty (subsequently repealed) for local authorities to provide such sites. Additional provision was secured such as the new site at Standlake (16 pitches).

- 5.102 There are a total of some 50 pitches in the District with planning permission for gypsy accommodation (approximately 150 residential caravans). In the light of this provision, the Council takes the view it will not be necessary to identify locations for further sites. Any private proposals which come forward to accommodate additional gypsy families will be looked at on their merits, taking into account the criteria of Policy H13.
- 5.103 It is recognised that transit groups regularly pass through the District and other parts of the County and their special needs will have to be met in the most appropriate location(s).

POLICY H14 - Residential mobile homes

Proposals for residential mobile homes will be permitted for a temporary period only if all the following criteria are met:

- a) there is a genuine need for a residential mobile home on the site;
- b) the need for residential accommodation cannot be met through use of existing buildings;
- c) the character and appearance of the area is not adversely affected;
- d) the proposal is well related to existing or proposed buildings and/or screened by landscape features.

- 5.104 The general site specific criteria applicable to the location of new residential development is often applicable to proposals for residential mobile homes, although such proposals are normally temporary in nature and out of place in the middle of ordinary housing. Policy H14 applies to proposals for residential mobile homes (other than for gypsies or travelling showpeople) whether they are in the form of a caravan park, temporary units on a farm holding, or needed to provide accommodation while a new house is under construction. Protection of the countryside and distance from local services and facilities would normally preclude the location of a mobile home in the open countryside or in small villages and hamlets.

Justification for any proposal would include the particular need for such accommodation and the need for it to be located on a specific site.

- 5.105 Where a new mobile home is justified, conditions will be imposed requiring the structures to be removed and the site restored after the permitted temporary period expires. The replacement of a residential mobile home by a new permanent dwelling will only be permitted where the local plan locational policies for new dwellings are met, particularly in the open countryside.

Policy H15 - Travelling Showpeople

Sites to accommodate travelling showpeople will be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

- a) the site is not located within the Oxford Green Belt, a conservation area or site of special scientific interest;
- b) the character and appearance of the surrounding area is not adversely affected;
- c) the size of the site and proposed screening is appropriate for the area;
- d) local services and facilities are located within a reasonable distance from the site;
- e) satisfactory amenity is retained for residents of existing and proposed housing in the area;
- f) satisfactory arrangements are made for the movement of vehicles and pedestrians on the site and public highway and for parking provision.

- 5.106 Although showpeople travel for much of the year, they require secure, permanent bases for the storage, repair and testing of fairground equipment as well as for their caravans and vehicles. Sites are often most intensively occupied during the winter months but not exclusively so.

Housing

- 5.107 Circular 22/91 contains Government advice on the provision of sites for travelling showpeople who are specifically excluded from the definition of gypsies. Sites should be reasonably flat, have good vehicular access and be reasonably convenient for schools and other community facilities.
- 5.108 Sites for showpeople associated with circuses and fairs have been provided in West Oxfordshire over the years. A new site at the disused Shilton Airfield permitted subject to conditions and a routing agreement, is a replacement for an existing site due to be redeveloped in Carterton.
- 5.109 As West Oxfordshire is a very attractive, rural area, the overriding concern of the Council is to avoid visual encroachment into the open countryside as well as the introduction of an inappropriate activity near residential areas. When assessing any proposals for showpeople's sites, the Council will have regard to the policies of this Plan, particularly those in the Environment Chapter.