

PRESCRIBING THE CHARACTERISTIC OF DEVELOPMENT ON STRATEGIC SITES

The emerging South Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2011-2034 proposes 3% Self Build and Custom Housing on all strategic sites and 50% affordable housing (17.5% social rented) on the fringe of Oxford's urban boundary.

The proposed allocation of 4,600 homes across three strategic Oxford fringe sites, would thus result in 138 self- and custom-build homes.

Policy H12 Self Build and Custom Housing expects these to be open market homes but encourages affordable delivery in 'certain circumstances'¹.

By not designating site-specific characteristic of self- and custom-build housing the homes are likely to be provided as single-dwelling plots provided at a premium and will not match the need that has been found in research and engagement across Oxfordshire (see Evidence section E1 below).

Sites on the fringe of Oxford constitute the special circumstance referred to under Policy H12 due to the lack of sub-market housing to meet demand found in the Oxfordshire SHLAA and reiterated by the Oxfordshire Growth Board, the Local Economic Partnership and others.

While we understand the need to avoid putting in place barriers to deliverability through being overly-prescriptive, the community-led housing sector offers approaches to delivering these strategic sites which would reduce risk to developers and landowners whilst meeting wider objectives. This is due to:

- Self- and custom-build models bringing the future residents of the housing scheme into the pre-development process and using these early-adopters to forward-fund elements of the scheme. Pre-selling homes reduces development risk and lowers the level of commercial development finance required.
- Government support for this sector, such as through the [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015](#) and the [Community Housing Fund 2018](#) which offers pre-development, infrastructure and capital cost cover for affordable homes which are in addition to planning contributions.
- Community support for greater development-densities due to higher-levels of shared space and facilities on community-led schemes, reducing the need for redundant internal space in larger properties such as empty bedrooms, and support for low-car-use developments.

¹ p105 Scrutiny Meeting Agenda Item 6, '2018-11-29 SODC LP2034 Publication document_Plan' ([link](#))

Proposal

If these sites are to be allocated, we would recommend:

1. The self- and custom-build serviced plots on these strategic sites should be designated primarily as collective self-build plots. These plots could then access finance from the Community Housing Fund.
2. Reflecting demand on SODC's Self-build register, a higher designation of at least 5% should be made to match the requirement of other Local Authorities²³. This would assist in meeting SODC's density aspirations of 70 dwellings per hectare on some of these sites and avoid further-overheating of Oxford's housing market through single-dwelling self-build plots.
3. Prescribing a wider designation of 20% 'innovative housing models' on these sites, which is inclusive of the Self build and Custom Housing policy. This would be to meet the demand within the County from cohousing and co-operative housing groups and showcase the positive approach required to meet the characteristic of Oxford's affordability problem. There would be no cost to take this stance on quality as the innovation allocation would revert to traditional housing designations if lower demand is found using the mechanism proposed in [Policy H12 Paragraph 4](#).

Evidence

E1 – Evidenced demand in the Oxford Housing Market

In October 2017 Oxford City Council commissioned a report on how new collaborative delivery routes could contribute to unmet need in the Oxford Housing Market Area. This report primarily explores how socio-spatial practices could be mainstreamed from learnings found in the cohousing, co-operative and Community Land Trust (CLT) sectors. The findings of the feasibility section of the report demonstrated that the cost of rented and mortgaged housing could be up to 30% lower than equivalent developer-led schemes when utilising collaborative approaches, whilst also delivering myriad benefits to the environment, health and wellbeing. The report will be launched in January 2019 but a copy can be requested if required to aid decision-making.

Historic cities with similar characteristics like Freiburg, Tübingen and Strasbourg have been meeting these demands through new quarters of housing innovation since the early 1990s⁴.

E2 – Government support

In July 2016 the Government launched the £163m Community Housing Fund which supports pre-development and development capital costs as well as finance for local authorities to provide enabling roles similar to the support offered by innovative authorities in France, Germany and The Netherlands.

² Oxford City Council Local Plan 2036 Policy H7 (p.47)

³ Teignbridge District Council Local Plan Policy WE7 and Custom and Self Build Housing SPD July 2016 ([link](#))

⁴ <http://righttobuildtoolkit.org.uk/case-studies>

E3 – Benefits of community-led housing

Public Health

- **Reduced loneliness** and higher well-being in co-operative and community-led housing ([link](#))
- Community-led housing can create a living environment where people are in frequent contact and “look out for each other” (Older Women’s Co-Housing, <http://www.owch.org.uk>)
- **Greater social cohesion** and generation of social capital through co-operative and community-led models (Lang & Novy 2014)

Children’s Services

- **Greater levels of mutual support** between residents, including young children and their parents through mixed tenure housing arranged as cohousing.
- **Children get a better start in life** through a focus on planning and designing healthier housing. Cohousing has shown to offer a better physical environments for children to grow up. ([YouTube link](#))
- **Greater focus on affordable housing in perpetuity**, both for rent and ownership which is vital for families with young children ([e.g. LILAC in Leeds](#))

Adult social care

- **Responsive to the changing needs of older residents** and those living with disabilities (Coele 2014) particularly through cohousing models.
- Recent CLH schemes led by, and aimed specifically at, older people **offer support networks to those who may otherwise find themselves living alone** but do not want ‘paternalistic’ conventional housing for older people provided by Local Authorities or Charities (Scanlon and Arrigoitia 2015)
- Independent research shows that service provision statistics from community-led housing are generally as good as, if not better, than the best of other housing providers, **with high satisfaction rates** (Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing 2009)
- There is a growing demand for greater social and financial autonomy in later life which cohousing can offer. eg [a mutual care home in Stroud](#).
- Community led housing schemes focus on keeping people well, living healthy, happy lives in their own communities, rather than in need of expensive, institution-based treatment and care. (Powerful Communities, Strong Economies, Locality)
- Cohousing may reduce, or offset, the need for residential care due **to enabling active, independent ageing throughout life-stages**. Downsizers have the option of remaining in their existing homes (HAPPI 2009)
- Cohousing for older people has advantages, such as age-friendly living environments, that help people self-care for longer and therefore avoid traditional forms of care and support provision (Riseborough 2013)

The Environment

- CLH schemes have been shown to engage more readily with the low carbon agenda (Chatterton 2013) as residents are more invested to ensure energy bills are low on occupation
- CLH schemes typically have environmentally-friendly construction, improved air quality, wider environmental benefits.

The Local Economy

- CLTs slow gentrification (Choi et al. 2018) and enable a more genuinely sustainable economy because the model enables low income workers to remain local.
- CLTs retain the benefit of investment for the local community. They also avoid Right to Buy which enables such affordable homes to remain permanently so. In a recent case study by OCLT and OCH this was valued at £4.7m in rental savings to local people living there, some of which would directly reduce the local housing benefit bill (Oxford City Council: Routes to Delivery Report)
- CLH housing schemes can retain resources within the local economy. Public and private sector spending is retained in the area and the leakage of money is reduced. Wealth created locally is multiplied through the use of local supply chains and local labour. Underused resources – such as derelict land and people's skills and talents – are identified and used. Materials and products are reused, recycled and shared through refurbishment, libraries and the establishment of a sharing economy (The Money Trail New Economics Foundation 2002)
- CLH can bring empty homes back into use with efficient use of grant resources (Mullins and Sacranie 2015)
- benefits for individuals involved in developing and managing the housing - community - led approaches help many develop skills helping them into employment (Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing 2009)
- Community-led organisations tend to increase local employment and increase the business of local traders and services (*Leeds Empties: Social Impact and Social Value Evaluation Report for 2014-15*, Real-Improvement 2015, and Commission on Co-operative and Mutual Housing report 2009)
- Government acknowledges that self-build homes have high levels of quality and design compared to traditional housebuilding (Prisk, 2012; UK Cohousing Network, 2013a) and larger space-standards (Barlow et al., 2001).
- Collective Custom Build housing is more affordable than developer-led speculative housing (Roberts, 2012, p. 10)

Community Safety

Good housing design contributes to increased community cohesion and pride and reduced vandalism and crime

- In one report by Exeter University comparing housing schemes across England, CLH residents had 40% more trust in local people, 4x more feel they have influence on

decision, six times the number of friends and acquaintances, very little fear of crime and all reported higher levels of satisfaction with their local area (Clarke 2012).

- Cohousing communities are more engaged in society and form stronger bonds between neighbours (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17, Schreurer et al., 2009)
- CLH groups around the world are more engaged in political processes (Berggren 2013, Stephen Hill 2016)
- Collective builders put down deep roots and move on average every 25 years compared to the national average of 6 years. ([The Guardian 2018](#))

Bibliography

Berggren HM (2013) Cohousing as Civic Society: Cohousing Involvement and Political Participation in Massachusetts Heidi M. Berggren University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. *New England Journal of Political Science* 7(1): 21.

Chatterton P (2013) Towards an agenda for post-carbon cities: Lessons from lilac, the UK's first ecological, affordable cohousing community. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37(5): 1654–1674

Clarke, E., 2012. Ashley Vale Quality of Life Assessment 2012.

Choi M, Van Zandt S and Matarrita-Cascante D (2018) Can community land trusts slow gentrification? *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Routledge 40(3): 394–411.

Coele M (2014) Co-housing and intergenerational exchange: Exchange of housing equity for personal care assistance in intentional communities. *Working with Older People* 18(2): 75–81. ([link 1](#)) ([link2](#))

Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) ([link](#))

Richard Lang & Andreas Novy (2014) Cooperative Housing and Social Cohesion: The Role of Linking Social Capital, *European Planning Studies*, 22:8, 1744-1764, ([link](#))

Monbiot, G (2018) The town that's found a potent cure for illness – community, *The Guardian* 21/02/2018 ([link](#))

Mullins D and Sacranie H (2015) Building A Legacy: The Impact Of Empty Homes Community Grants Programme In The North East And Yorkshire And Humberside.

Riseborough, M (2013), Work on the wild side: for commissioners and housing and social care providers, Housing LIN Cohousing Briefing Paper 2 ([link](#))

Scanlon, K and Arrigoitia Fernández, M (2015) Development of new cohousing: lessons from a London scheme for the over-50s. *Urban Research & Practice* 8(1).

Schreurer, J. and Newman, P. (2009) Vauban: A European Model Bridging the Green and Brown Agendas Case Study Prepared for the Revisiting Urban Planning: Global Report on Human Settlements. UN Habitat.

UK Cabinet Office & NESTA (2015), *Investing to Tackle Loneliness* June 2015