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The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum (WNF) seeks to represent the views, in relation to planning matters, of residents in the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan area, which lies entirely within Oxford City. The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) was approved overwhelmingly by our residents in a referendum in May 2021 and was subsequently 'made' by Oxford City Council.

Response to Oxford Local Plan 2042 Preferred Options consultation

Chapter 1 (Introduction and Strategy)

Policy S4 (Plan viability)

We note that this Policy recognises that imposing the 'low car requirement' in the parking policy (Policy C8) will be very unpopular with residents, will therefore reduce the selling price of properties, and will contribute to difficulty in achieving viability of developments meeting other requirements such as having 40% affordable homes.

Chapter 2 (A Healthy Inclusive Place to Live)

Policy H2 (Delivering affordable homes)

We are disappointed to see the Council's previous target of a minimum of 50% affordable homes in developments of 10 or more homes has been watered down to 40% (although we recognise that this figure is not yet confirmed).

Policy H5 (Affordable housing: financial contributions from new commercial development)

The current plan contains three options currently under consideration. Option (a) is 'Require financial contributions from all major commercial developments'. Our view is that this option should be chosen. All employment sites require workers, and a proportion of them will require affordable housing, so these sites should contribute to the cost of providing affordable housing.

Policy H9 (Houses in multiple occupation)

We believe the proposed limit of 20% on the proportion of HMOs among dwellings within 100metres of a new HMO is too high, and should be reduced to 10%.

Chapter 5 (A City that utilises its resources with care, protects the air, water and soil and aims for next zero carbon)

Policy R1 (Net zero buildings in operation)

We especially welcome the Policy's application of an upper limit to the Energy Use Intensity of proposed buildings: the limit must be chosen to very strongly motivate building designs with highest possible resistance to heat loss. We also welcome the Policy's zero-fossil-fuel requirement, and its

aim for zero-offsite-energy generation (with offset payments required otherwise). The level of offset payments required must be high enough to very strongly motivate building designs optimised for solar panels (via the topology and orientation of roofs, for example).

Chapter 6 (A City that Respects its Heritage and Fosters Design of the Highest Quality)

Policy HD9 (Views and building heights)

We welcome this Policy's intention to 'retain the special significance of the historic skyline' of Oxford. However we are concerned that, as currently written, the Policy places almost exclusive emphasis on views of the Historic Core Area. Another ancient heritage asset of extreme importance to our residents, and many other Oxford residents, is Port Meadow. Its character is unique in Oxford, and views across it, and from it, should be specifically protected within this Policy. Therefore the protection of Port Meadow views should be explicitly mentioned in the Policy. We emphasise this especially because para.6.41 refers to the 'northern suburbs' of Oxford as being 'Areas of Greater Potential' where 'new high buildings are more likely to be appropriate'. The Policy should explicitly prohibit such high buildings that would impinge on the skyline from Port Meadow, in order to ensure there is no repeat of the Castle Mill flats disaster and the more recent spoiling of Port Meadow views by the tall buildings at Oxford North.

Chapter 7 (A Liveable City With Strong Communities and Opportunities for All)

Policy C1 (City, District and Local Centres)

Both Lower Wolvercote and Cutteslowe provide shops, pubs and other community facilities, and act as community centres for their residents. So we are surprised to see this Policy includes neither of them among its list of 'Local Centres'. Under the terms of this Policy that will mean, for example, that no new hot food takeaway would be permitted, and planning permission for any further retail or other community facilities would be subject to more stringent requirements than if they were designated as 'Local Centres'. This risks strangling the development of both Lower Wolvercote and Cutteslowe as community hubs, needed to accommodate the currently growing populations that they serve. We ask that both Lower Wolvercote and Cutteslowe be included in the list of Local Centres.

Policy C8 (Motor vehicle parking design standards)

This Policy is deliberately designed to 'reduce the opportunities for parking across the city'. This has a worthy objective: to achieve 'fewer private car trips on Oxford roads' to help reduce congestion and encourage use of active travel modes. However, we believe the Policy is badly misconceived in its extreme emphasis on reducing car parking at residential developments. It ignores the obvious fact that car ownership is not solely driven by a determination to drive on congested Oxford roads. People need cars for many purposes, especially for longer journeys that have negligible effect on Oxford, as well as Oxford journeys that are impractical by other means.

- (1) It proposes 'Low car' schemes, in CPZs where public transport is within 400m and retail is within 800m. Here, homes would have no on-plot parking spaces at all, and only a 'small number' of shared spaces. What is meant by 'small number' is not specified. That is critical information, and should be specified as a percentage of the number of homes relying on these shared spaces. The implication is that residents could not be sure of having anywhere at all to park a car, and would be in constant conflict with neighbours for the few shared spaces. Such situations are damaging to relationships within a community, and should be avoided.

- (2) It proposes that, even outside the deliberately ‘low car’ schemes, homes that have a single on-plot parking space will be ineligible for CPZ parking permits and presumably therefore from visitor permits, and will be unable to entertain any visitor that arrives by car.

All such severe constraints are likely to be extremely unpopular with residents, and will be damaging to community cohesion. We consider that to be an unacceptable risk, and ask that the Policy in its present form is removed.

Chapter 8 (Infrastructure and new development)

Areas of Focus

The Plan proposes four ‘Areas of Focus’ that will each have ‘an overarching policy’. One of these is proposed to be ‘The Northern Edge of Oxford Area of Focus’, which will (presumably, in view of its name) overlap with the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum area. However the vagueness of its name makes this unclear. We are surprised there has been no consultation with WNF about it, and we note there is no mention of the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan in relation to it. Seven reasons are given for identifying this Area of Focus, one of which will be provocative to our residents: ‘Generally low density suburban development therefore has potential for intensification’. We ask that the Plan makes clear that the ‘overarching policy’ to be developed for this Area of Focus will be developed in collaboration with WNF, to ensure it fully takes account of the views of its residents.

Proposed Development Site Allocations

Among the already allocated sites there are three within our area: OUP Sports Ground; Northern Gateway; Peartree Farm. We ask that it be made clear that development at the last of these is conditional on a direct pedestrian/cycling route being constructed to link the site to Parkway station, which will require collaboration with Cherwell District Council.

A new proposed site within our area is at Elsfield Hall, on Elsfield Way. We are pleased to see a proposal to convert the existing office accommodation to residential, which will be more appropriate at that location.

On behalf of the WNF Steering Committee:

Paul Buckley

(Chair of Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum),

8 July, 2025

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