**Healthy Place Shaping Policy to create strong and healthy communities**

It is important that Local Plans include a healthy place shaping policy that set out a range of principles that will help to shape, direct and create communities that are strong, healthy, inclusive, accessible, safe, cohesive and well designed.

This guidance, issued by the Public Health team at Oxfordshire County Council, offers an example of such a policy for use by local planning teams.

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| **Healthy Place Shaping Policy: creating healthy places** A. In order to support the creation of healthy places, new development and regeneration proposals (excluding householder and other minor applications) will be expected to demonstrate how they will: * explicitly address the existing and projected health and wellbeing needs of an area, including the needs of an ageing population and those with disabilities;
* help to reduce obesity and levels of physical inactivity through the provision of good quality green spaces including parks which encourage informal activity, playing pitches, and multifunctional open space, sports and active leisure facilities that are accessible to all;
* use the 10 Healthy Streets indicators[[1]](#footnote-1) to ensure that health is embedded in the design, experience and management of streets, green spaces and the public realm, while improving connectivity between new development, local services and facilities, access to parks and open spaces and public transport. New walking and cycling networks should be well integrated, and also safe, direct, and legible;
* provide good-quality community infrastructure which provides access to community and cultural activities, encourages social interaction and helps to support the growth of friendly and walkable communities.
* support community development activity to tackle loneliness, promote mental wellbeing and encourage community cohesion and resilience;
* support access to local employment opportunities which can be accessed by active travel and which support the development of an inclusive economy;
* support the enhancement and provision of new health, care and community facilities in sustainable locations to address Oxfordshire’s existing and future health and social needs. Where possible, these should be co-located;
* promote healthy weight environments, including access to healthier food choices through the provision of community food-growing opportunities, such as allotments, orchards, roof gardens and edible landscaping around new schools and housing developments involving fruit and nut trees;
* resist the proliferation of particular types of hot food takeaways in inappropriate locations, such as within a 5 minute walk of schools and playgrounds and where they would result in harmful cumulative impacts because of any existing or consented outlets in the immediate vicinity;
* resist the loss of existing community uses (e.g. allotment land) unless it can replaced of at least equivalent quantity, accessibility and value;
* ensure new buildings are adequately orientated, ventilated and well-insulated to prevent health issues associated with overheating, cold and damp;
* avoid or minimise pollution from odours (landfills, etc), noise, light spill or glare and protect dark skies;
* improve air quality through locating and designing pollution generating land uses and roads in places that avoid adverse impacts on sensitive land uses (e.g. housing) and discourage short car journeys, ensuring adequate air quality mitigation measures and barriers are incorporated into the scheme’s design to reduce risks to users;
* design new or renovated buildings and spaces that are universally accessible and inclusive;
* enable and improve access to green spaces, water spaces and connection with nature to promote physical health and mental wellbeing; and
* create safe and secure environments, addressing the fear and perception of crime and ensuring sufficient natural surveillance (including the remediation of existing areas) .

B. Major development proposals will be required to submit a health impact assessment, demonstrating how the health and wellbeing impacts (benefits and harm) of new major development will be assessed and mitigated.  |

**Explanation**

This policy sets out an integrated and consistent approach to the creation of beautiful, distinctive and healthy places in Oxfordshire, built on the principles of good design and healthy place shaping, in which people can access essential goods and services, in mixed and walkable neighbourhoods, close to open space and active travel routes, placing local communities at the heart of decision making and civic life.

Evidence suggests that only 10%[[2]](#footnote-2) of our health and well-being is determined by access to health care. The rest is influenced by housing, the quality of our work, income, education and skills, the food we eat, access to green space and nature, sport and recreation, transport, family, friends and communities.

Significant benefits for our local communities can therefore be achieved through bringing together planning for housing, infrastructure and the economy with planning for residents’ health and well-being. No single aspect of people’s lives determines their health and wellbeing with factors as varied as employment status, transport options, quality of housing, sense of belonging, and access to green space and nature all affect people’s health outcomes. The healthy place shaping policy seeks to address these wider social determinants of health.

A Health impact assessment (HIA) is a tool designed to ensure that health and wellbeing are carefully considered in planning policy and proposals throughout Oxfordshire. The Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit has been developed to inform and guide the preparation of HIAs of major and strategic development proposals[[3]](#footnote-3). The length and detail of the assessment should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the proposed development.

Using the Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit as a guide, major development proposals will be expected to demonstrate how they will contribute to the creation of sustainable and healthy places, based on the criteria set out in part A above, such as safer streets, enhanced public transport connectivity and well-maintained green spaces, through good design, which will, in turn, promote more active lifestyles. The Oxfordshire County Council Street Design Guide, as well as local level design guides, should also be used to ensure development responds to the character, variety and distinctiveness of the county and its places.

1. [The Healthy Streets Approach](https://www.healthystreets.com/what-is-healthy-streets) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.health.org.uk/blogs/health-care-only-accounts-for-10-of-a-population%E2%80%99s-health#:~:text=And%20while%20estimates%20vary%2C%20it,shaped%20by%20socio%2Deconomic%20factors>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The toolkit can be found at <https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/projects/oxfordshire-health-impact-assessment-toolkit/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)