

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER POLICY 2026

**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY
COUNCIL**

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1.0 Introduction

Oxfordshire County Council (“the Council”) Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy seeks to recognise and maximise the benefits of the devolution of assets to local communities.

The Local Government Association defines a CAT as: *‘transferring the ownership of land or buildings from a statutory body to a Community Organisation at “less than best consideration” – that is at less than its full market value – in order to achieve a public benefit’*.

This policy sets out OCC’s approach to CAT. It outlines the principles behind community asset transfers together with details of who is eligible to apply, what support will be provided to assist organisations seeking to take a transfer and how proposals will be assessed. It also sets a clear process for CAT applications.

An asset is defined as a building and/or land owned by the Council.

CAT differs from Community Leasing as CAT deals with **transfer of ownership** of assets for less than best consideration. Community Leasing refers to the **leasing** of assets to community groups for less than best consideration. See the Community Leasing Policy 2026 for more information on community leasing.

This policy replaces the Community Asset Transfer Policy 2019. It does this by differentiating between Community Asset Transfer and Community Leasing and further clarifies the application process.

1.1 The National Policy Context

When making decisions with regard to our asset portfolio, the Council needs to be mindful of the following legislation:

- **The Local Government Act 1973** s123 requires councils to obtain the “best consideration reasonably obtainable” when disposing of land or buildings.
- **General Disposal Consent (England) 2003** gives permission for Councils to dispose at less than best consideration, provided that the undervalue is less than £2m (in capital terms), **and** the transfer benefits the economic, social, or environmental well-being of the area.

1.2 CAT in the Oxfordshire County Council Policy Landscape

Strategic Plan 2025-2028

One of the three core pillars for the [2025-28 Strategic Plan](#) is ‘Fairer’, ensuring that the local economy benefits everyone, our services are as easy to access as possible and that we help communities in need. CAT enables more community groups to have access to local facilities and thrive in our county.

Property and Assets Strategy 2022

Any CAT decisions need to fit within the Council's 2022 Property and Assets Strategy. This strategy sets out the ten-year ambition for the Council's property portfolio to create an efficient, innovative and accessible property estate which delivers climate action objectives and generates social value for residents.

Marmot Place

Oxfordshire is a Marmot Place - a programme of work across public sector partners, businesses and voluntary sector organisations which aim to tackle health inequalities and improve health fairness in Oxfordshire. CAT contributes towards this by empowering local communities to generate social benefits in their local spaces.

Delivering the Future Together

As part of the Delivering the Future Together agenda, the Council is committing to becoming a place shaper and partner of choice. This means working proactively with our voluntary sector to help them thrive throughout the county.

1.3 When will a property or asset be applicable for Community Asset Transfer?

The Council has a large and varied property and assets portfolio, with most of the estate used for corporate purposes, let, or held for redevelopment or sale.

When an asset is identified as being surplus to the Council's requirements, consideration will be given as to whether there is an alternative requirement internally or if the asset is required in the longer term. Not all assets are deemed suitable for asset transfer and there are some that will be reserved for the commercial disposal route, generating a capital receipt for the Council. Assets which have the potential to generate significant capital receipts are less likely to be considered as suitable for a CAT.

In general, assets will be made available for transfer unless one of the following principles applies:

- a. Property revenue savings or capital receipts from the property are essential to contribute to Council savings.
- b. There is another Council need for the property which would be financially disadvantageous to meet in any other way.
- c. The asset is leased by the Council.
- d. The property has already been identified for utilisation under One Public Estate.
- e. Grant conditions for capital expenditure on the property prevent the property being transferred or prevent a change of use within a specified timescale.
- f. The proposed use and terms of the transfer would result in a liability upon the Council to repay grant monies.
- g. The condition of the asset is not deemed fit for purpose or does not meet the current Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards without capital investment.
- h. The proposed use is not compatible with the existing or intended use of adjacent Council retained land/buildings.

1.4 Eligibility

You can apply if your organisation has a significant social or environmental benefit to residents of Oxfordshire. You are eligible to apply if you are a:

- constituted voluntary or community organisation
- constituted group or club
- registered charity
- charitable incorporated organisation (CIO)
- community interest company (CIC)
- community benefit society (CBS)

See section 3.1 for the Assessment Criteria by which applications will be judged

2.0 Principles of CAT

1. Transparent

- We will be open about the properties that we have available. They will be advertised on the Council website at: [Council land and buildings | Oxfordshire County Council](#). The CAT / Community Leasing Working Group will review this list quarterly, and update it whenever appropriate properties are identified.
- We will be open and clear about the application progress, as well as the timescale of the process, and will respond to all applications as quickly as possible.
- We will be open about the criteria which we judge applications against. (See section 3.1)

2. Fair

- We will be open to applications from all eligible groups.
- We will judge all applications against our assessment criteria (see section 3.1)

3. Accountable

- All final decisions regarding a CAT will be made through the CAT / Community Leasing Working Group, taking into account the needs from across the Council.
- Any accepted CAT will be financially sustainable and not incur ongoing costs for the Council.
- We will ask that all applications demonstrate a sound business plan that shows how community partners will be able to care for the asset.

2.1 CAT / Community Leasing Working Group

To enable full oversight for opportunities for CAT and to enable a cross-Council view, a CAT and Community Leasing Working Group will be established. Membership of the Working Group will be comprised of:

- Properties and Assets officer. Nominated by the Director of Properties and Assets. This officer will chair the Working Group.

- Economy and Place officer. Nominated by the Director of Economy and Place. This officer will represent the Council's place shaping and community wealth building objectives.
- Asset-based programmes. An officer from relevant service areas with asset-based programmes or projects (such as Family Hubs or Community Hubs) will be invited to sit on the Working Group for the duration of the programme.
- Relevant service area. Where necessary, the Working Group will call in an officer relevant to the service area which a CAT or CL application relates to. This is to ensure that the Working Group is making informed decisions about the possible benefits of applications.

The Working Group's first function will be to identify properties suitable for CAT / Community Leasing, and to maintain and update the published list of available properties. The Working Group will meet quarterly to review this list. It will keep a record of any requests that VCS groups have made for properties to be added to the list, which will feed into decision making.

The Working Group's second function will be to assess applications, using the Assessment Criteria set out in Section 3.1. A multi-Service approach will be taken, so that services relevant to the VCS group applying are present to help assess the application.

Following consideration of each proposal, the Working Group will make a formal recommendation to the Director of Property and Assets, who holds delegated authority under the Council's Scheme of Delegation to Officers to take decisions relating to the management, leasing, and disposal of Council property and assets.

The Director of Property and Assets will act as the final decision-maker, applying the Council's principles of decision-making and ensuring compliance with all relevant financial, legal and constitutional requirements. Where a proposal constitutes a Key Decision, it will be escalated in accordance with the Constitution.

3.0 The Application Process

- 1.) A list of available properties will be published online at: [Council land and buildings | Oxfordshire County Council](#). If you have any questions regarding any of these properties, please contact: Estates.Enquiries@Oxfordshire.gov.uk. Members will be informed of any properties in their wards that have been designated for Community Asset Transfer.
- 2.) If you would like to apply for a CAT, you will need to fill in a Full Application form (See Annex 1). This form goes into detail about your intended use for the asset, as well as your business plan. Please ensure that you have read the full CAT policy – in particular ensure that your organisation is eligible (1.4 Eligibility) and refer to Section 3.1 Assessment Criteria for how your Full Application will be judged.
- 3.) The CAT / Community Leasing Working Group will evaluate your application against the assessment criteria and arrive at a recommendation that will be

put forward for decision. Members will be informed of any applications made for properties within their wards.

- 4.) The CAT / Community Leasing Working Group will inform you in writing of the decision.

Only applications for properties published online as available for CAT or Community Leasing will be considered. However, organisations are encouraged to indicate interest in a Council owned property for future CAT or Community Leasing by emailing Estates.Enquiries@Oxfordshire.gov.uk. A log will be maintained of all notices of interest, which will be used to inform future decision making.

It is the responsibility of the CAT / Community Leasing Working Group to respond to each stage of the application process in a timely manner, and to communicate each stage with the applicant.

Preparing the information and documents required for the application form can be a lengthy and time-consuming process. Once the Full Application has been submitted, the Council will aim to get Heads of Terms (a non-binding summary of key terms agreed before drafting a full housing contract) agreed and solicitors instructed as soon as possible.

3.1 Assessment Criteria

The CAT / Community Leasing Working Group will consider each Business Proposal made against the following criteria:

- a) The proposed use for the asset will generate significant social value for the county. This could be through supporting:
 - The Council's Social Value Local Priorities, as established in the Social Value Policy. These can be found here: [Social Value Policy | Oxfordshire County Council](#)
 - The Council's Marmot Place objectives. These can be found here: [Oxfordshire as a Marmot Place | Oxfordshire County Council](#)
 - Please note, applications do not need to support multiple priorities, and there is no hierarchy of which priorities are preferable.
- b) The proposal supports the Council to deliver its statutory services or makes a cost saving for the Council by supporting a statutory service.
- c) The application proposes to invest into the repair or improvement of the property.
- d) They have a viable business plan that covers the costs of holding the property and managing it effectively OR an evidenced track record of good financial management.
- e) There is evidence of community need and support for the proposal
- f) The proposal will be focused on providing a clear long-term benefit to the local community, rather than a national focus.
- g) The proposal comes from an appropriately constituted organisation (see section 1.4)

Particular weight will be given to applications that support the Council's priorities. Service areas will be consulted on applications that are related directly to their services in order to assess the level of potential impact.

3.2 Long-term considerations

First refusal

CAT contracts will also contain provisions which ensure that the Council have first refusal should the successful CAT applicant choose to move on from the property. These will be at the same value of the asset as originally set out in the originally CAT – i.e., if a property is transferred at peppercorn rate, it will be returned as such. This is to guarantee that the long-term value and use of this asset is retained by the public.

Appendix 1: Full Application

Community Asset Transfer Full Application

1. The Asset

Name of Asset

Address of Asset

2. Details of the organisation making the application

Name of Organisation

Address of Organisation

Telephone number

Email address

3. Contact Details

Your name

Contact address

Telephone number

Email address

Position in the
Organisation

4. Organisation Structure

What kind of organisation are you?
E.g., Registered charity, Community Interest Company etc. See Section 1.4 Eligibility.

Charity / Company number:

5. Governance

When was your organisation established?

Does your organisation have a written constitution, governing document, or set of rules?
If yes, please attach to this document

Yes

☐

No

☐

How many people are involved in your organisation in the following positions?

Management committee		Paid full time staff	
Paid part time staff		Volunteers	

Please tell us the type of insurance your organisation holds and provide the levels of cover.
E.g., Public Liability, Employer Liability, Professional Indemnity

6. Terms of Request

What price are you prepared to pay for the asset requested?

Proposed price:

£

Please attach a note setting out any other terms and conditions you wish to apply to the request

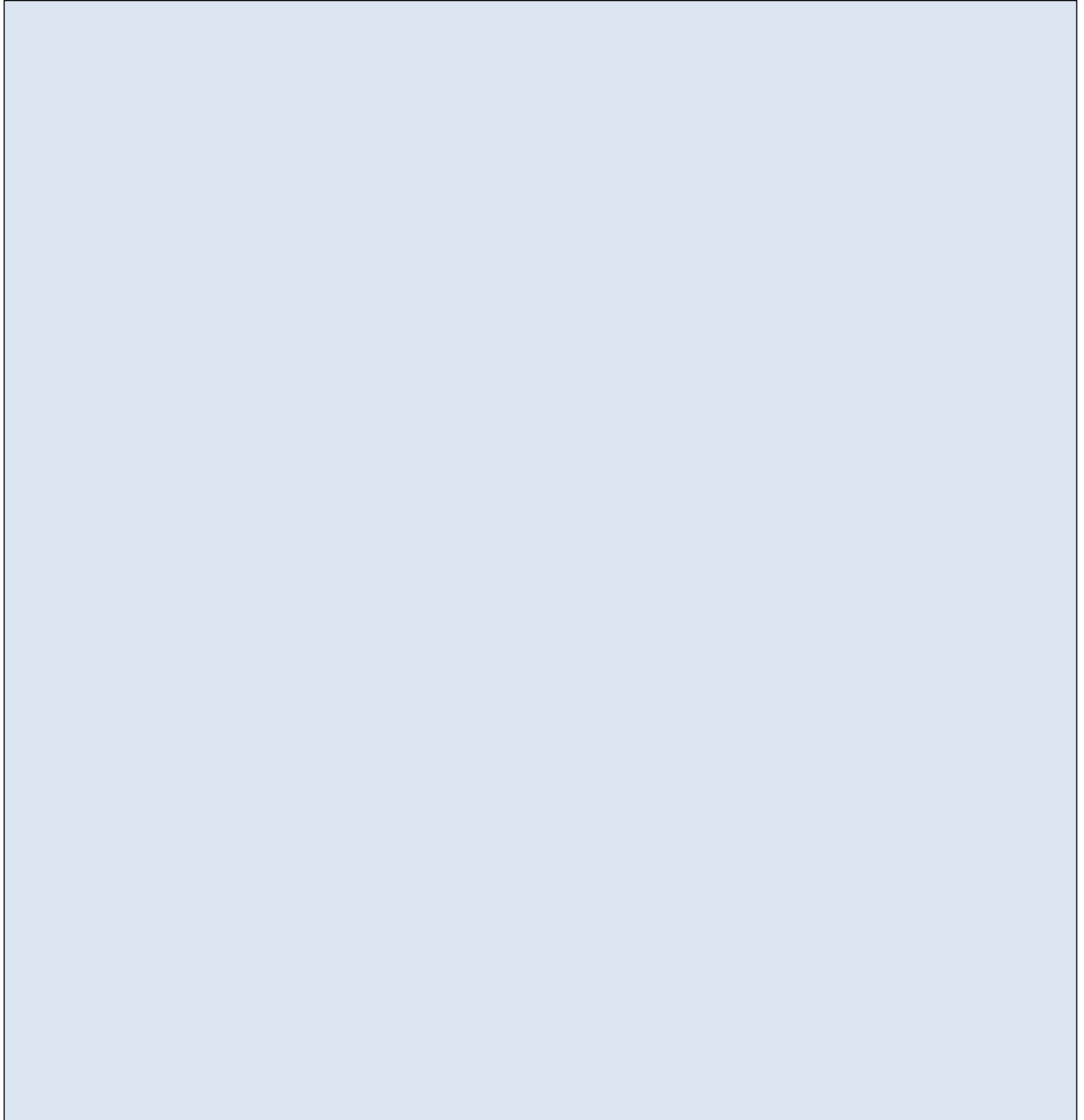
7. Business Plan

For the following section, refer to Section 3.1 to read the Assessment Criteria which will be used to judge your application.

7.1 Use - Set out how you plan to use the asset. Explain the objectives of your project, why there is a need for it, and any activities that will take place there. Please also include your budget for the first year of the lease.

Please note that all applicants will be required to meet statutory consents (the legally required approvals that must be obtained before the CAT can take place, such as planning permission, building regulations, listed building consent or licensing).

(500 words max)



7.2 Funding

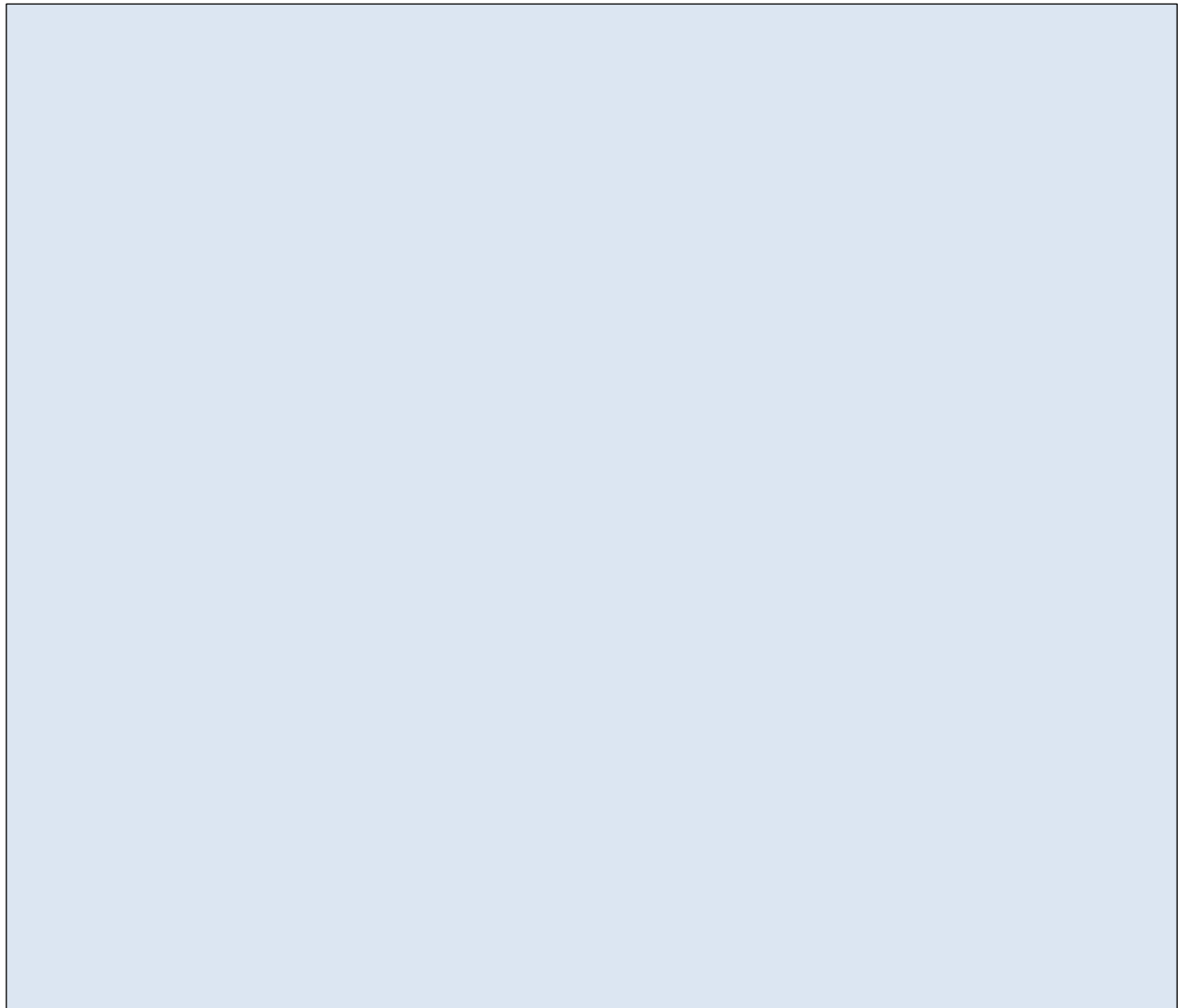
Lay out how you intend to fund the running of the property, as well as any repairs / development.

Established groups will need to provide accounts that demonstrate three years of good financial management.

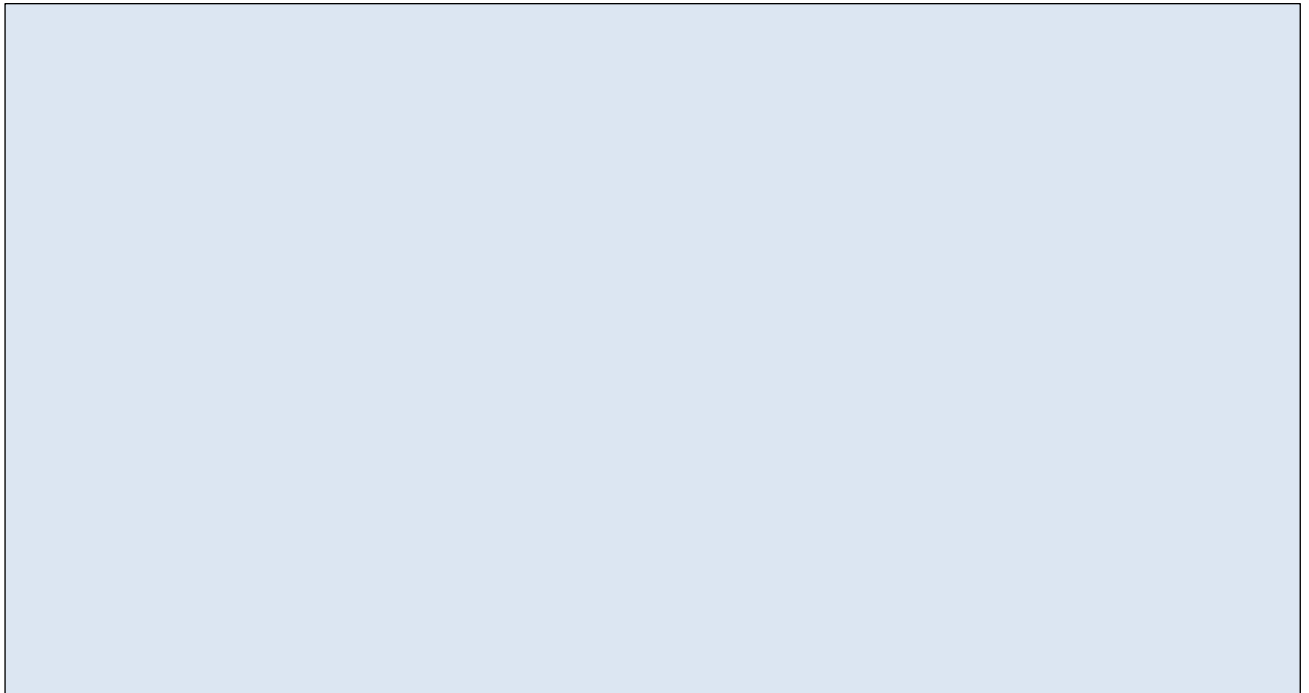
For new groups, please provide an outline of how you propose to fund the rent you are prepared to pay for the land, as well as how you are going to hold the property and manage it effectively. You should show your calculations of the costs associated with the transfer of the land or building and your future use of it, including any redevelopment, ongoing maintenance and the costs of your activities. *

**Please note that Council grant funding cannot be used to fund rent or planned investment or repairs.*

(250 words max)



Please set out any investment, development or changes you plan to make to the land or building. (250 words)

A large, empty light blue rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response regarding investment, development, or changes to the land or building.

7.4 Social Value – Please set out the social value that will be generated should your application be approved. Consider how your proposal might generate social, economic or environmental benefits for the local community. Consider how your proposal will support either the Council’s Social Value Local Priorities (found in the [Social Value Policy](#)) or [Marmot Place](#) objectives. If applicable, also detail how your proposal would support the Council to deliver any of its statutory services.

Please note that applications do not need to support multiple priorities, and there is no hierarchy of which priorities are preferable.

(500 words max)

7.5 Negative consequences – What negative consequences (if any) may occur if your request is agreed to? How would you propose to minimise these? You should consider any potential negative consequences for the local economy, environment, or any group of people, and explain how you could reduce these. (250 words)

7.6 Level and Nature of Support - Please provide details of the level and nature of support for the request, from your community and, if relevant, from others. This could include information on the proportion of your community who are involved with the request, how you have engaged with your community beyond the members of your organisation and what their response has been. (250 words max)

8. Equalities and Inclusion

How will you ensure that your services / activities are accessible for everyone in your community? (250 words max)

Completed application should be emailed to: Estates.Enquiries@Oxfordshire.gov.uk