

# Agenda

## Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

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streamed to the Council's YouTube channel  
when the meeting  
starts, <https://www.youtube.com/oxfordcitycouncil>**

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Monday 3 August 2020**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

**For further information** please contact:

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Please contact the Committee Services Officer to register to speak; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

## **Committee Membership**

Councillors: Membership 6: Quorum 3: substitutes are not permitted.

Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers

Councillor Shaista Aziz (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Michael Gotch

Councillor Sian Taylor

Councillor Elizabeth Wade

Councillor Dick Wolff

Tony Buchanan

Apologies received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting.

# Agenda

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>1 Election of Chair for 2020/21</b>	
<p>At its meeting on 02 June 2020 the Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Chair of the Housing and Homelessness Panel would be elected by the Panel at its first meeting. The Panel, therefore, is asked to elect a Chair for the civic year 2020/21.</p>	
<b>2 Apologies</b>	
<p>Substitutes are not allowed.</p>	
<b>3 Declarations of interest</b>	
<b>4 Housing Panel Work Plan</b>	9 - 12
<p>For the Panel to note and agree its work plan, which can be adjusted to reflect the wishes of the Panel.</p>	
<b>5 Notes of previous meeting</b>	13 - 20
<p>For the Panel to approve the record of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019.</p>	
<b>6 Housing Delivery Plan</b>	21 - 54
<p>Cabinet will be considering the Housing Delivery Plan at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> August. The Panel is asked to consider the report and make any recommendations accordingly.</p>	
<p>Carolyn Ploszynski,, Planning Policy and Place Manager, and Tom Rice, Principal Planner will be attending the meeting to present the report. Councillor Alex Hollingsworth has also been invited to attend and speak to the report.</p>	
<b>7 Presentation: Impact of Covid on Private Rented Sector</b>	

## **Tenants**

Members of the Oxford Tenants Union will be presenting to the Panel on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on tenants within the private rented sector. This will be followed by time for discussion. The Panel is asked to consider the issues raised and make any recommendations accordingly.

NB This is no report for this item.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

Meetings are scheduled as follows:

- 08 October 2020
- 05 November 2020

The Panel is also asked to note that an additional meeting will be scheduled in early February 2021, the precise date TBC.

All meetings begin at 6.00pm.

## **Information for those attending**

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### **Councillors declaring interests**

#### **General duty**

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

#### **What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?**

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your\* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

#### **Declaring an interest**

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

#### **Members' Code of Conduct and public perception**

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

\*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

## 2020/21 Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

### 08 October 2020 - Provisional reports

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Review of the Additional HMO licensing scheme	Yes	The report provides findings from a review carried out for the HMO Licensing Scheme and seeks approval from members to conduct a statutory consultation to renew the scheme in January 2021	Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery	Gail Siddall, Team Leader , HMO Enforcement Team
Proposal to improve the Private Rented Sector through Selective Licensing	Yes	The report provides findings from a review carried out into the housing conditions within the private rented sector and seeks approval from members to conduct a statutory consultation into the introduction of selective licensing of the private rented sector across the city	Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery	Gail Siddall, Team Leader , HMO Enforcement Team
Housing Performance 2020/21 Q2	No	An update on the Council's Housing Performance against its KPIs for Q2		Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies

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## 05 November 2020 - Provisional reports

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Floyds Row update	No	An update report on the activities at Floyds Row since opening, the impacts of Covid, and future plans	Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing	Nerys Parry, Housing Strategy & Needs Manager

## February Meeting - date TBC

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Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Housing Performance 2020/21 Q3	No	An update on the Council's Housing Performance against its KPIs for Q3		Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies
Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds 2021/22	Yes	A report to approve the allocation of homelessness prevention funds for 2021/22.	Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing	Sheetal Tanna, Senior Commissioning Officer, Polly McKinlay, Senior Commissioning Officer
Housing Performance 2020/21 Q3	No	An update on the Council's Housing Performance against its KPIs for Q3		Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies
Additional HMO licensing scheme renewal	Yes	To report on the findings of the consultation and to seek approval for the next steps in relation to additional HMO licensing in the city	Affordable Housing	Gail Siddall, Team Leader , HMO Enforcement Team

## 04 March 2021 – Provisionally no reports at present

### Items with dates to be determined

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Retrofitting of Council Properties	No	A report to inform the Committee of the Council's current plans for the retrofitting of Council properties to higher energy efficiency standards	Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies
Tenant Satisfaction	No	An update report on the results of the tenant satisfaction survey, and actions being taken in light of the learnings	Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies
Funding energy efficiency measures through capitalisation of energy savings	No	An exploration of the feasibility of levying charges on homes with additional energy saving measures on the savings made through those measures as a means to fund or part-fund the original works. Specific comparisons to be made with the Nottingham City Homes Comfort Payment system.	Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing	Stephen Clarke, Head of Housing Services / Director Housing Companies

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## **Minutes of a meeting of the HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE) on Thursday 7 November 2019**

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### **Committee members:**

Councillor Bely-Summers (Chair)                      Councillor Gotch  
Councillor Howlett    Councillor Taylor  
Councillor Wade

### **Officers:**

Richard Wood, Strategy and Service Development Manager  
Polly McKinlay, Senior Commissioning Manager  
Paul Wilding, Systems Change Manager  
Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

### **Also present:**

Tony Buchanan, Housing Panel (tenant co-optee)  
Councillor Linda Smith  
Councillor Mike Rowley  
Charlie Fisher, Transition by Design  
Three representatives of the Lived Experience Advisory Forum (names not published)

### **207. Apologies**

Councillor Wolf tendered apologies

### **208. Declarations of interest**

None

### **209. Housing Panel Work Plan**

The Scrutiny Officer informed the Panel that there had been no changes to the workplan.

It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would agree a scope on the topic of Hidden Homelessness, to be heard in March.

It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would schedule a pre-meeting briefing for Panel members on Housing Management and Council Housing Repairs and Investment immediately prior to the March meeting.

### **210. Notes of previous meeting**

The Panel agreed the notes of the meetings of 27 June and 3 October.

## **211. Community Land Trusts**

The Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Councillor Mike Rowley, introduced the report. It was explained to the Panel that the report sought to do two things: to provide an update on the progress made against the actions recommended in a previously commissioned report on how Community Led Housing could be delivered in Oxford, and to consider a land disposal by way of a long lease of a plot containing seven garages and a forecourt at Champion Way in Littlemore.

Regarding the actions recommended to support the delivery of Community Led Housing it was noted that the majority of major actions had already been taken forward. The one area which had not progressed was the suggestion that s.106 agreements be used to require provision of community led housing sites on larger developments. The rationale behind the decision not to progress this was due to the negative implications on scheme viability and therefore the overall number of social housing projects developed.

Charlie Fisher of Transition by Design, one of the authors of the previously commissioned report on how Community Led Housing could be delivered in Oxford, presented to the Panel regarding the definition of Community Led Housing, which covered multiple models but all had in common a shared and communal approach regarding finance, risk and management of a scheme. The progress made by the Council against the recommended actions of the previous report were commended, and four key issues were identified as particularly important in continuing to drive the delivery of Community Led Housing forward:

- a. Continued political support
- b. Continued officer support, particularly with regards to the upcoming application for funding from the Oxfordshire Growth Deal in March 2020, but also in the development and contribution to the work of the Community Led Housing regional hub and its work of ensuring a pipeline of land for projects, and matchmaking suitable stakeholders to projects.
- c. Developing a mechanism for shortlisting suitable prospective tenants from the housing register who actively wished to be involved in a housing environment with a cooperative element to it.
- d. Ensuring that land values included the social and environmental factors of potential developments. Bristol was held up as an exemplar in this regard.

The challenges of the proposed disposal site were explained to the Panel: its small size, proximity to the ring road, difficult access arrangements and protected trees. It was suggested that in the absence of any other developers wishing to work on the site, it would offer the opportunity to demonstrate proof of concept should it prove possible to develop through Community Led Housing.

The Panel sought reassurance on the degree of community involvement there had been to date in the design of the site. It was explained that the site was a very unusual site in that it was fairly isolated from other housing due to its position by the ring road and its proximity to the Oxford Academy. As such, no consultation had been undertaken to date. On other prospective garage sites, which were more squarely situated within an existing community there would be, backed by existing funding, far

greater consultation than simply that required by virtue of going through the planning process.

In response to questions by the Panel on what practical support was required from the Council, officer participation in planning and submitting a bid to the Oxfordshire Growth Deal in March was identified as the near-term need, but that further into the future officer support would be needed in engaging with the work of the community-led housing regional hub and its work of creating a pipeline of opportunities and matchmaking groups interested in bringing a community-led housing development forward. Further development sites, particularly former garage sites, would also be welcomed. The Panel welcomed the repurposing of garage sites.

The other major area of discussion by the Panel concerned how the Champion Way project and other community-led housing projects would be publicised, how they would attract those outside the traditional 'co-operative demographic' and the practicalities of choosing suitable people to participate whilst also fitting within the Council's wider responsibilities and infrastructure as a housing authority. It was recognised that community-led housing projects did face a challenge in engaging wider demographics in the opportunities and benefits of community-led housing, but that Oxfordshire Community Land Trust had been awarded £15k of Cohesive Communities funding and were starting the process of recruiting a worker whose role would include greater publicity amongst target demographics. Whilst co-operative housing did tend to be popular amongst particular demographic types, experience from Oxfordshire Community Land Trust at Dean Court and other projects suggested that the benefits were equally viable for all, but that it was fundamental that whoever joined was of the mindset of wanting to live within a community setting. How the Council might identify people interested in living in such a way and involving them at an early stage was a key issue, with concern being raised that people may be steered towards such housing purely because it was 'housing'. This was explained not to be the case - community led housing availability was to provide more options to those on the waiting list; it would not act as a replacement for other provision, those who did not want to live communally would not be pressured into doing so, nor would they be penalised for not doing so. In light of Oxfordshire Community Land Trust's experience in identifying tenants suited to community led housing projects it was suggested that the Council should draw on their experience to identify tenants who would flourish in a community led housing scheme.

It was **AGREED** that the Panel would refer the following two recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration whether to refer to the December meeting of Cabinet:

***Recommendation 1: That the Council will, when publicising and raising awareness of Community Led Housing, take steps to ensure that the barriers to demographic groups with less exposure to the concepts of communal living (particularly social housing tenants) are identified and addressed, and to ensure that these groups are equally equipped to understand the benefits of and to participate in the opportunities afforded by Community Led Housing.***

**Recommendation 2: *That the Council will, in identifying tenants with the values, skills and motivations suited to community living, give the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust a formal role in the selection process.***

## **212. Housing and Homelessness Strategy mid-point update**

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, introduced the report, focusing on the delivery of affordable housing. At the mid-point of the strategy a large number of successes had been achieved, notably the commencement of the Oxford Housing Company on work to deliver over 500 affordable homes, with over 100 delivered in the previous year (including over 30 Council-owned homes in the Barton development) and with over 100 anticipated in the current year. The challenge of delivering housing within a context of near nation-topping house-prices was recognised, and with over 2000 people still on the Council waiting list further work was required. A significant amount of work had been undertaken with the County Council and neighbouring District Councils in developing the Oxfordshire Growth Deal, which would underpin a lot the necessary work to ensure the meeting of local housing need.

Richard Wood, Strategy and Service Development Manager, introduced the progress made in relation to homelessness reduction. Notable achievements were identified as a significant increase in places for rough sleepers commissioned by the Council, securing significant government funding, the establishment of Oxford Homelessness Movement, the implementation of the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act, the trial of the Oxfordshire Trailblazer programme. Housing demand, the need to consider the Climate Emergency and relations with registered social housing providers and transforming provision of rough sleeping services to a county-wide approach were recognised to be areas where further work was required. Suggested changes to the strategy put forward included the inclusion of a separate document detailing the Council's Rough Sleeping Strategy, greater cross-working throughout the County and building in the now-agreed Floyds Row and its associated services.

Questions to the Panel were addressed to members of the Lived Experience Advisory Forum on their experience of the Council and its duty to prevent homelessness. Feedback indicated that that within the last year there had been challenges with establishing a local connection, and that interaction with non-specialist homelessness Council staff had not proven valuable in terms of homelessness prevention, with advice being given to ensure that one individual was on the housing register. It was suggested that more signposting information should be available to officers, particularly those on the front desk at the Council, such as leaflets containing the details of local homelessness-related services.

In discussing the Council's plans for supported rent the Panel, following corroborative feedback from the Lived Experience representatives present, emphasised the vital role of supported housing for those on the journey from homelessness to stability, but it was also brought up that not all supported housing schemes were providing the level of support needed to realise the potential for positive outcomes. O'Hanlon House, particularly, was discussed in this regard with reports of access being problematic at times. The number of recovery houses for addiction was also mentioned, with support being given for increased capacity for such services. In response to the issues raised, it was explained to the Panel that the Council was in the process of seeking to transform

homelessness services, which would include supported housing. As part of that work needs analysis would be done in consultation with other district councils in the county, the County Council, Crisis, services users and service providers.

Further discussion was held in relation the progress made by the Council in the transition to having a county-wide approach to homelessness. Already, good progress was being made. In previous years each district had made independent bids to central government for funding, whereas this year the councils were working together on a joint bid. The value of Oxford being a hub, hosting a concentration of services was recognised by the other local authorities and a pooled funding arrangement was already in place. Floyds Row would form a particularly important part of this hub, and neighbouring districts had recognised the need to contribute to its funding.

Cabinet members, Panel members and officers all commented on the value of having people from the Lived Experience Advisory Forum at the meeting to share their perspectives and feedback. The Panel sought to ensure that the Lived Experience Advisory Forum would be given the opportunity to contribute towards the shaping of services and the drafting of the new strategy. It was confirmed that this would be the case from 2020.

It was **AGREED** that the Panel would refer the following three recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration whether to refer to the December meeting of Cabinet:

**Recommendation 1: That the Council will develop an informed qualitative understanding of the support provided by supported housing providers particularly through additional consultation with recent and current service users, and that anonymised feedback will be provided to the Lived Experience Advisory Forum for the opportunity to make additional comment.**

**Recommendation 2: That the Council will discuss with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum to agree the most appropriate means of ensuring those with lived experience of homelessness are involved in the transformation programme of homelessness services at strategic and service design levels, as well as the development the new Housing and Homelessness Strategy.**

**Recommendation 3: That the Council should map its expectations of how the various arms of the Council contribute to the homelessness prevention agenda, also to include the expectations of those organisations which are under a duty to refer people under the Homelessness Reduction Act, and to run a mystery shopper process to check their current efficacy**

### **213.No local connection review**

Polly McKinlay, Senior Commissioning Officer, introduced the six month update report on the work of the No Local Connection Group.

Addressing the overall themes of the report, strong progress had been made regarding the key driver behind its recommendations – to become more person centred in its approach. The Council's view that after a period of six months living in Oxford, the

likelihood would be that a homeless individual would have developed a network and a connection to Oxford, and that reconnection to another area would not necessarily be in their interests, was now embedded into its service structure. Improved and increased services, such as 12 Somewhere Safe to Stay places in Simon House had been were not contingent on a local connection, meaning any rough sleeper would be able to access the service.

The changes made had had significant impacts on individuals, including helping a rough sleeper of 12 years who had been able to find a suitable tenancy.

A number of recommendations were highlighted as having not yet been implemented, namely around the extension of the Council's rules to the wider Common Operating Protocol used across the county. Significant amount of work had been done in preparing the ground for implementing the changes, other districts had begun implementing the changes, and agreement reached in principle across all districts. However, the finalised legal text was not agreed.

Questions from the Panel arose around the degree to which the changes would encourage homeless people to gravitate towards Oxford in order to access improved services, particularly around addiction. Whilst it was recognised as a risk, there was a need for to make a judgement call on whether reconnecting individuals to their original area would be in their best interests, or whether it was better for them to stay and receive services, and that this exercise should be understood in the context of the Council not wishing to participate in a race to the bottom for services. Further, the view of those with lived experience of homelessness indicated that this risk was not being realised, and that minimal numbers of individuals were being drawn to Oxford solely due to the quality of its services.

The Panel formally recognised the work done by the No Local Connection Group and commended it.

## **214. Outcome of the Homelessness Trailblazer and early intervention analysis**

Paul Wilding, Systems Change Manager (Rough Sleeping) presented a report to the Panel on the Outcomes of the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer programme.

The purpose of the Trailblazer programme was introduced as being an opportunity to learn what was needed and how homelessness prevention might be implemented across local authorities and other public sector organisations in the county, rather than the launch of a new set of services. Whilst some regret at the ending of the services was understandable, an encouraging element of the learning was that the Trailblazer indicated the need for improved communication – between individuals at risk of homelessness and service providers, and also between the service providers involved in homelessness prevention – and that improving such communication was relatively straightforward and did not require ongoing services, but simply maintaining the relationships created by the programme. The positive impact of the services, however, was recognised. There had been a great value in providing support to 1400 individuals, and funding had been received by Aspire from the Lottery to extend its element of the programme, the Community Navigators for another three years. Aspire had also raised

fund locally to support the extension of this service, which had been match funded by the Oxfordshire Community Foundation.

The Panel sought to identify what work would be undertaken to ensure that homelessness did not create a delayed transfer of care from hospital, and was informed that funding for the healthcare element of the programme had also been extended by Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust, albeit presently only until March. Beyond that, discussions were being held between the Council and the Health Improvement Board.

Other questions were raised in regards to the opportunities for external funding. Government sources of funding were reported to be automatically flagged to the team, but funding had also been raised from elsewhere.

Clarification was also sought by the Panel on the impact of Universal Credit as a cause of homelessness. Whilst in the second half of the programme a significant number of people who were referred to the programme were on Universal Credit because their referrals come via the Job Centre, it was not felt that the experience from the programme indicated that Universal Credit was a cause of homelessness. Though over 50% of referees did have financial and debt issues, this was a consistent issue across both Universal Credit and non-Universal Credit referrals. Though not a cause of homelessness, the delay in payment of Universal Credit did at times mean that it could exacerbate existing issues and make homelessness more likely.

In response to questions as to how the lessons of the programme would be embedded rather than allowed to drift away the Panel was informed that the Homelessness Champions Network would be extended for a further year, providing a forum to provide wider stakeholders in homelessness prevention training and updates, as well as aiding communication and relationships. Also, an e-learning module had been made available on the back of the learning from the programme, which had been made available across the county and would help to safeguard the knowledge derived from the programme in the face of future staff turnover.

### **215. Date of next meeting**

The Panel noted that the date of the next meeting as 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

**The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.08 pm**

**Chair .....**

**Date: Thursday 5 March 2020**

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**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 August 2020  
**Report of:** Head of Planning Services  
**Title of Report:** Oxford Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2020

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present the Action Plan for continuing to support and improve housing delivery in Oxford.
<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	Deliver more affordable housing
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Oxford Local Plan 2036 and National Planning Policy Framework
<b>Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:</b>	
1. Approve the Oxford Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2020	
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Oxford Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2020

## Introduction and background

1. The Oxford Housing Delivery Test Action Plan seeks to explore what the key risks to housing delivery in the city are and looks to identify a range of actions that seek to reduce that risk and indeed seek to improve levels of housing delivery in Oxford.
2. Paragraph 75 of the NPPF states that to maintain the supply of housing, local planning authorities should monitor progress in building out sites that have permission. Where the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) indicates that delivery has fallen below 95% of the local planning authority's housing requirement over the previous three years, the authority should prepare an Action Plan in line with national planning guidance, to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years.

3. The Housing Delivery Test Rulebook<sup>1</sup> provides the Council with the guidance for working out its results. When setting the requirement for the past three years, if a Council doesn't have an up-to-date plan in place (i.e. it is less than 5 years' old), then the rulebook directs them to use the minimum local housing need figure; often the "standard method" for working out housing need set out in the NPPF. However, as the standard method has only been in place since 2018, and HDTs currently look back further than this, the guidebook directs a council to use household projections from MHCLG for years before 2018/19. When the HDT was undertaken in November 2019, the Oxford Core Strategy was more than 5 years old, and so Oxford's test was affected by this. The table below explains the various "targets" identified in the HDT rulebook.

**Table 1: Housing Delivery Test results and forecasts**

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Target	Household Projections	Household Projections	Standard Method	Standard Method or Local Plan	Local Plan	Local Plan
	375	529	743	746 or 475 <sup>▲</sup>	475	567
Completions / (projections)	435	373	343*	(786)	(777)	(544)
Three year target	-	-	1,647	2,018 or 1,479	1,964 or 1,425	1,788 or 1,517
Three year completions	-	-	1151	1,502	1,906	2,107
Actual and Expected HDT Result	-	-	70%	74% or 102%	97% or 134%	118% or 139%

<sup>▲</sup> It is currently unclear whether the November 2020 measurement will apply the standard method or the newly adopted Local Plan requirement. Interim conclusions from the Inspectors were received in January 2020 confirming the approach to a stepped trajectory and housing requirement were considered sound but the final Inspectors' report was received in May 2020 and the Local Plan was adopted in June 2020.

\* Oxford City Council monitoring report includes 351 completions for 2018/19, which would have still resulted in a result of 70%. MHCLG appear to have used a different figure from the housing flow reconciliation.

4. For the years following the adoption of the Local Plan the HDT results will be measured against the housing requirement in the plan of 475 homes per annum from to 2020/21, increasing to 567 homes per annum from 2021/22 to 2035/36. As set out in the table above there remains some uncertainty about whether the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book>

Local Plan requirement will apply for 2019/20 or whether the standard method will apply. Officers will be seeking clarification of this with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

5. Regardless of the national requirements around the HDT the Council is committed to ensure we deliver our housing requirements and boost affordable housing in the city given the acute need. This is considered increasingly important given the wider factors now impacting relating to the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, this Action Plan is the first of a series of Action Plans that will be published each year as part of our monitoring work. If our HDT result exceeds 95%, we will still conduct this assessment.
6. Furthermore, the programme of work that feeds into the HDT features frequent meetings and information gathering. We will be constantly monitoring the actions in this plan, and if new information suggests the actions change, we will consider publishing an update to the Action Plan before the next annual publication.

### **Summary of key aspects of the Oxford Housing Delivery Test Action Plan**

7. The Council recognises that it needs to take a proactive approach to monitoring development sites if it is going to better understand housing delivery and ensure local targets are met. The Council's approach in the past has been robust, with a large monitoring report produced annually assessing the supply of housing. However, engaging with site promoters once per year only provided a snapshot of issues often at a point in the year that issues were identified at a point where we were unable to take action. The first step in our Action Plan was therefore to establish a methodology for improving our engagement with the following key stakeholders:
  - Site promoters and developers in our housing trajectory
  - Oxfordshire County Council
  - Utilities and other infrastructure providers
  - Landowners who may wish to bring previously unknown land forward for development
  - Planning and property agents
  - Our own Councillors
  - Members of the public
8. Having received the Housing Delivery Test results in February 2020, officers began establishing a programme of work in early 2020. This included many face to face meetings and forums that have not been implemented due to the Coronavirus restrictions. The Action Plan also explains what work has been completed so far. This is set out in Section 3 of the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan and the summary table is included below.

**Table 2: Programme of engagement and progress to date**

Engagement	Explanation	Status
Agents and developers forum	Quarterly meetings held between the City Council and active agents in the city. Allows us to explain work we are doing, as well as canvassing opinion on city-wide actions to boost delivery, and taking suggestions from attendees. This forum is intended for officers to also challenge site promoters, recognising that the City Council is not solely responsible for housing delivery.	First held 6 March 2020 Paused due to Coronavirus
Infrastructure Forum	Quarterly meetings held between the City Council and infrastructure / utility providers in the city. Allows us to explain work we are doing, as well as canvassing opinion on city-wide actions to boost delivery. As work progresses, officers intend to hold themed meetings so that not all infrastructure providers need to attend every meeting. None of these forums have been organised.	No meetings held, paused due to Coronavirus
Monthly site information requests	Creation of a new interactive database (Smartsheets) – this sends monthly update requests to all site promoters of major development sites asking a series of questions relating to housing delivery, and asks them to confirm their expected trajectory for the site. The questions asked in this update are given in <b>Appendix 1</b> . Uptake on this has been low, with only 4 site promoters responding since May 2020. Further “softer” engagement of the automatic update request is therefore required – through site promoter meetings, pre-application discussions, other meetings etc.	Commenced – ongoing monitoring of participation required
Site Promoter Meetings	These launched in June 2020. We ask developers a series of questions pertaining to housing delivery on their site. These questions have been written based on officers reviews of HDT Action Plans published last year by other authorities, the NPPG and officer experience of criticisms of housing delivery evidence at local plan examinations and Section 78 Planning Appeal inquiries.	Commenced – next tranche of meetings to be arranged
Housing Supply Group	These are monthly meetings held between senior officers responsible for housing delivery / planning across Oxford. Officers’ feedback to this meeting on the progress of other elements of this work, and will share initial / emerging ideas for how to boost housing delivery in Oxford.	Commenced and ongoing
Member workshops	Quarterly or six monthly meetings to brief Councillors on the housing supply information received, and to advise on Officers’ thoughts on actions to take in response.	Not commenced – paused due to Coronavirus
Drop in Call for Sites	Set up a monthly / fortnightly day where members of the public / developers / agents can book a one hour slot for some high level advice on development sites. These sites must not already be in our trajectory. This will help us identify any potential deliverable windfall sites, and provide potential developers with the confidence to begin formal engagement with the Council.	Not commenced – paused due to Coronavirus

9. From the work so far engaging with key site promoter and stakeholders we have identified several topics that we will focus upon to try and support housing delivery

in the city. Each topic contains specific actions. Many of the identified actions are areas where work has already begun and will be continued and enhanced to support housing delivery.

10. Although the requirement for this Action Plan is rooted in the planning system, problems affecting housing delivery extend far beyond this. The Action Plan identifies several actions that are focussed on the planning stages to continue to do all we can to provide a streamlined approach. However, these actions are only likely to result in minor improvements to delivery compared to other interventions.
11. The work to date and feedback from site promoters in Oxford did not identify issues with planning as a risk to delivery. Many highlighted macro issues outside of planning. Most of these actions will extend beyond the functions of a local authority as most relate to ownership of land, supply of materials and labour. The Council does own land and has a housing company to deliver new housing and so where relevant, we have identified more direct, proactive actions to delivering new homes. In addition, the City Council will continue to do what it can to promote the need for infrastructure investment and seek to secure external funding as it has in the past. For example, funding was successfully secured from the Housing Infrastructure Fund for Oxford North, Osney Mead and Blackbird Leys. The City Council also has itself taken on a delivery role for some growth deal funded infrastructure for example a new pedestrian/cycle bridge at Osney.
12. Further consideration and detail around the Council's influencing role and in addressing other macro issues will continue to be refined with the intention that in the next Action Plan we will be able to give more detail of the progress and opportunities in this area.
13. A summary of the key actions and progress to date is summarised in the table below.

**Table 3: Summary of key actions contained within the HDT Action Plan**

Topic No.	Action / topic	Progress
1	Improve quality and frequency of engagement with site promoters to inform monitoring of housing sites – (implementation of the methodology section)	Comprehensive engagement process commenced. Some work on hold due to coronavirus, moving to digital platforms.
2	Continue implementation of corporate programme for housing delivery	Commenced – Housing Supply Group set up, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery Appointed.
3	Continue to drive housing delivery through developing land owned by the Council through joint venture or it is wholly owned housing company	The housing company is expecting to build 709 homes (464 of which will be affordable homes) over the next 5 years through its housing company. The Council is also aiming to develop 79 other affordable units through our HRA account.
4	Continue monitoring of validation of planning applications	A validation strategy has been developed to provide more clarity to developers.
5	Continue programme of service level and	Commenced

Topic No.	Action / topic	Progress
	planning performance agreements	
6	Continue infrastructure planning and delivery programme	The Council is preparing a new CIL Charging Schedule and Infrastructure Funding Statement to meet the requirements of the regulations. In addition to this we will also continue to support the County Council for external funding bids such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and the Active Travel Fund
7	Continue to reduce pre-commencement conditions and triggers	Ongoing
8	Work with the Oxfordshire County Council to align processes	We will continue to work with the county to identify a way for larger schemes to incorporate their services into our PPA/SLA approach.
9	Provide additional policy advice for the new Local Plan 2036	The Council has recently published its Local Development Scheme (LDS) (July 2020) committing to a programme of technical advice notes and supplementary planning documents.
10	Councillor engagement	Commenced – further rollout affected by coronavirus
11	Market demand and impact of Coronavirus	Mixed response from site promoters on impact of coronavirus, we will continue to monitor this.  One action is to include advice about ensuring effective pre-application consultation for developments in the upcoming update to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for planning. The Local Development Scheme seeks to consult on a new SCI in Autumn 2020. This will aim to include advice about ensuring effective virtual consultation whilst forms of social distancing and limitations on gatherings remain.
12	Availability of materials and labour	Some site promoters identified shortages in materials and / or labour as a potential issue for delivery.
13	Site promoters' programme of site delivery	Oxford is home to several large institutions with land interests in the City. These institutions will often have their own operational needs, not driven by market demand for new homes.

### Financial implications

14. The Housing Delivery Test Action Plan for this year is a requirement of national policy and therefore is required as part of our statutory obligations as part of the planning system. However, as set out our commitment is that we will continue to undertake the actions and update the plan annually.
15. The actions set out in the Action Plan itself do not have any additional financial implications for the Council. This has and will continue to be resourced from existing planning resource in collaboration with other service areas and the

resources that have already been put in place to support housing delivery in these areas, for example through the housing service and housing company.

**Legal issues**

- 16. As set out above the preparation and publication of the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan is a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework due to the 2019 measurement falling below 95%. The Council are required to submit the Action Plan to Government 6 months following the release of the HDT measurement. As this was published in February we are required to submit to Government in August.

**Equalities impact**

- 17. There are no equalities impacts arising from this report as the purpose of the Action Plan is to monitor and support the delivery of housing already committed through the Oxford Local Plan 2036 which was subject to its own equalities impact assessment.

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**Background Papers:** None

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# Oxford City Housing Delivery Test (HDT) Action Plan

August 2020

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## Introduction

- 1.1. National policy reflects the Government’s objective to significantly boost the supply and delivery of new homes. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) sets out that it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with planning permission is developed without unnecessary delay.
- 1.2. Paragraph 75 of the NPPF states that to maintain the supply of housing, local planning authorities should monitor progress in building out sites that have planning permission. Where the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) indicates that delivery has fallen below 95% of the local planning authority’s housing requirement over the previous three years, the authority should prepare an Action Plan. The Action Plan’s role, in line with National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), is to assess the causes of under-delivery and identify actions to increase delivery in future years. NPPG states that Action Plans should identify reasons for under-delivery, explore ways to reduce the risk of further under-delivery and set out measures to improve levels of delivery.
- 1.3. The Housing Delivery Test Rulebook<sup>1</sup> provides the Council with the guidance for working out its results. When setting the target, if a council doesn’t have an up-to-date plan in place (i.e. it is less than 5 years’ old), then the rulebook directs them to use the minimum local housing need figure; often the “standard method” for working out housing need set out in the NPPF. However, as the standard method has only been in place since 2018, and HDTs currently look back further than this, the guidebook directs a council to use household projections from MHCLG for years before 2018/19. When the HDT was undertaken in November 2019, the Oxford Core Strategy was more than 5 years old, and so Oxford’s test was affected by this. Table 1 overleaf explains the various “targets” identified in the HDT rulebook.
- 1.4. Future HDT results will be measured against the housing requirement as set out in the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 (adopted in June 2020). As set out in the table above there remains some uncertainty about whether the Local Plan requirement will apply for 2019/20 or whether the standard method will apply. It is not possible to accommodate the standard method levels of housing or the housing need established through more recent assessments. The Local Plan sets a capacity based housing requirement of 475 homes per annum from 2016/17 to 2020/21, increasing to 567 homes per annum from 2021/22 to 2035/36.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book>

Table 1: HDT results projections and explanation						
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<b>Target</b>	Household Projections	Household Projections	Standard Method	Standard Method or Local Plan	Local Plan	Local Plan
	375	529	743	746 or 475 <sup>▲</sup>	475	567
<b>Completions / (projections)</b>	435	373	343*	(786)	(777)	(544)
<b>Three year target</b>	-	-	1,647	2,018 or 1,479	1,964 or 1,425	1,788 or 1,517
<b>Three year completions</b>	-	-	1,151	1,502	1,906	2,107
<b>Actual and Expected HDT Result</b>	-	-	70%	74% or 102%	97% or 134%	118% or 139%

▲ It is currently unclear whether the November 2020 measurement will apply the standard method or the newly adopted Local Plan requirement. Interim conclusions from the Inspectors were received in January 2020 confirming the approach to a stepped trajectory and housing requirement were considered sound but the final Inspectors' report was received in May 2020 and the Local Plan was adopted in June 2020.

\* Oxford City Council monitoring report includes 351 completions for 2018/19, which would have still resulted in a result of 70%. MHCLG appear to have used a different figure from the housing flow reconciliation.

- 1.5. The Council is committed to delivering our housing requirements and boost affordable housing. Therefore, this Action Plan is the first of a series of Action Plans that we will publish each year as part of our monitoring work. If our HDT result exceeds 95%, we will still publish an Action Plan.
- 1.6. The Action Plan sets out our methodology for the work we have done to date, and our proposals for expanding this over the coming months. It then goes on to identify the key issues affecting housing delivery in Oxford ascertained to date, before identifying the key actions the Council can take to address them. It also identifies issues affecting delivery that are beyond the control of the Council, but areas where we can influence other decision makers to take action.
- 1.7. This Action Plan identifies several actions that are focussed on the planning stages to continue to do all we can to provide a streamlined approach. However, these actions are only likely to result in minor improvements to delivery compared to other interventions. The work to date and feedback from site promoters in Oxford did not identify issues with planning as the risk to delivery. Many related to more macro issues outside of planning, extending beyond the functions of a local authority such as issues with land ownership and finance. However, the Council does own land and has a housing company to deliver new housing and so where relevant, we have identified more direct, proactive actions to delivering new homes.

## Context

- 2.1. Oxford is one of the most unaffordable places to live in the UK<sup>2</sup>. High house prices and rental rates are, in part, affected by the supply of new homes in Oxford. This has obvious social impacts on our residents as people find it harder and harder to secure a place to live in the city. It also impacts the economy of Oxford, with key employers such as BMW, the NHS, and the University of Oxford citing a lack of housing affecting staff retention rates<sup>3</sup> The issue of housing affordability and inequality within the City was acknowledged by the Inspectors in their recent report to the Local Plan<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.2. Oxford City Council is committed to meeting the housing needs of Oxford and has made significant progress toward this in recent years. With initiatives spanning across the functions of the Council as set out below.

### **Corporate work to date**

- 2.3. Housing delivery is embedded within the corporate objectives of the Council. To support this corporate priority the Council has appointed a new Portfolio Holder for Housing Delivery, giving the topic area its own political representation. The Council has also established a Housing Supply Group – comprised of Directors and Heads of Departments for all arms of the Council with an impact on housing delivery. This group has representation from the Council’s Housing Team, Property Team, Regeneration Team, Planning Team, and the Council’s own housing company. It allows the Council to escalate issues affecting supply to senior management, and make a corporate decision on how to address them. This group meets once per month.
- 2.4. Oxford City Council is also a signatory to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. This is a partnership between the Oxfordshire Councils, central government and Homes England to accelerate housing delivery and identify where infrastructure investment can unlock or speed up housing delivery.
- 2.5. The Council has its own land portfolio that it uses to meet corporate objectives, notably delivering more affordable housing. Over several years the Council has brought its land forward to deliver homes and it continues to do so through several key routes:
  - Utilising its Housing Revenue Account to deliver affordable housing schemes
  - Joint Ventures with other landowners and developers to bring forward development for example at Barton Park and Oxpens
  - Establishing its own housing company – Oxford City Housing Company

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<sup>2</sup> Centre for Cities, ‘*Cities Outlook*’, (January 2018)  
Lloyds Bank, ‘*Affordable Cities Review*’ (2019)

<sup>3</sup> Oxford City Council, ‘*Corporate Plan 2016-20*’, (no date)

<sup>4</sup> Oxford Local Plan 2036, Inspectors’ Report, May 2020, Paragraphs 22-33

### **Oxford City Housing Company**

- 2.6. In June 2016 to help address the city's acute housing need, the Council set up the Oxford City Housing Company Ltd. The company, which is wholly owned by the Council, develops new build housing on Council owned land and buys affordable housing from developers on private land and undertakes estate regeneration schemes.
- 2.7. By acquiring sites and building houses, the company seeks to influence the pace and type of house building in the city. The Council will also seek to purchase additional sites for housing that have stalled and sell it to the company to bring forward development more quickly.

### **Planning work to date**

- 2.8. In June 2020 the Council adopted its new Local Plan, the Oxford Local Plan 2036 (OLP2036), which will support the development of around 11,000 homes in the city to 2036. In developing the Plan, we have worked with our neighbouring councils in Oxfordshire to identify additional housing land outside the Oxford city boundary to further relieve pressure on the city's housing market.
- 2.9. The Local Plan seeks to maximise housing delivery in Oxford recognising the acute affordability issues, but must balance this against other key considerations such as Green Belt, Flood Risk, Heritage and the need to protect high quality employment land. The Local Plan also sets out the housing requirement, capacity, and development sites in Oxford that have been allocated to help address the city's housing crisis. The housing supply identified within the Plan contains a diverse range of sites in terms of size, tenure, and developers. The plan also includes flexible policies that would allow other sites to be delivered for housing if they become available in the future.
- 2.10. The planning service has also reviewed several internal processes over the past few years and has sought to ensure the service is appropriately resourced to deal with the significant growth that the city faces over the years.
- 2.11. The service recently implemented a new Validation Strategy following a review of issues around validation. This is aimed at reducing the amount of invalid applications and improving quality of submissions to save time in the overall process.
- 2.12. Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) have been utilised to agree timescales, actions and resources for handling significant applications. We also employ a range of specialist officers to support the planning case officers to ensure that the complex issues that face development in Oxford can be addressed expediently. The service also ensures its staff and members have regular training to help manage the work that comes through the system.
- 2.13. The Council has also operated agent forums and planning user groups for several years to gain feedback to the service and identify areas of improvement to support delivery. This Action Plan seeks to build upon some of the groups to focus on the key actions and continue to reflect on what key topics and actions are as these can change over time.

## Methodology

- 3.1. The Council recognises that it needs to take a proactive approach to monitoring development sites if it is going to better understand housing delivery and ensure local targets are met. The Council's approach in the past has been robust, with a large monitoring report produced annually assessing the supply of housing. However, engaging with site promoters once per year only provided a snapshot of issues. Furthermore these issues were often identified at a time when it was not possible to undertake action to resolve them. The first step in our Action Plan was therefore to establish a methodology for improving our engagement with the following key stakeholders:
- Site promoters and developers in our housing trajectory
  - Oxfordshire County Council
  - Utilities and other infrastructure providers
  - Landowners who may wish to bring previously unknown land forward for development
  - Planning and property agents
  - Our own Councillors
  - Members of the public
- 3.2. Receiving the HDT results in February 2020, officers began establishing a programme of work in early 2020. This included arranging a number of face to face meetings and forums that have not been undertaken due to the Coronavirus restrictions. Table 2 below sets out our methodology and programme of engagement.

Table 2: Summary of methodology and programme of engagement to date		
Engagement	Explanation	Status
Agents and developers forum	Quarterly meetings held between the City Council and active agents in the city. Allows the Council to explain the work being undertaken, as well as canvassing opinion on city-wide actions to boost delivery, and taking suggestions from attendees. This forum is intended for officers to also challenge site promoters, recognising that the City Council is not solely responsible for housing delivery.	First held 6 March 2020  Paused due to Coronavirus
Infrastructure Forum	Quarterly meetings held between the City Council and infrastructure / utility providers in the city. Allows the Council to explain the work being undertaken, as well as canvassing opinion on city-wide actions to boost delivery. As work progresses, officers intend to hold themed meetings so that not all infrastructure providers need to attend every meeting. None of these forums have been organised.	No meetings held, paused due to Coronavirus
Monthly site information requests	Creation of a new interactive database (Smartsheets) – this sends monthly update requests to all site promoters of major development sites asking a series of questions relating to housing delivery, and asks them to confirm their expected trajectory for the site. The questions asked in this update are given in <b>Appendix 1</b> . Uptake on this has been low, with only 4 site promoters responding since May 2020. Further “softer” engagement of the automatic update request is therefore required – through site promoter meetings, pre-application discussions, other meetings etc.	Commenced – ongoing monitoring of participation required
Site Promoter Meetings	These launched in June 2020. The Council asks developers a series of questions pertaining to housing delivery on their site. These questions have been written based on officers reviews of HDT Action Plans published last year by other authorities, the NPPG and officer experience of criticisms of housing delivery evidence at local plan examinations and Section 78 Planning Appeal inquiries.	Commenced – next tranche of meetings to be arranged
Housing Supply Group	These are monthly meetings held between senior officers responsible for housing delivery / planning across Oxford. Officers’ feedback to this meeting on the progress of other elements of this work, and will share initial / emerging ideas for how to boost housing delivery in Oxford.	Commenced and ongoing
Member workshops	Quarterly or six monthly meetings to brief Councillors on the housing supply information received, and to advise on Officers’ thoughts on actions to take in response.	Not commenced – paused due to Coronavirus
Drop in Call for Sites	Set up a monthly / fortnightly day where members of the public / developers / agents can book a one hour slot for some high level advice on development sites. These sites must not already be in our trajectory. This will help the Council identify any potential deliverable windfall sites, and provide potential developers with the confidence to begin formal engagement with the Council.	Not commenced – paused due to Coronavirus

## Delivery topics and actions

- 4.1. Following the above methodology, we have identified several key areas that could affect housing delivery in Oxford. Under each issue we then identify the actions we have already commenced to address this, as well as new interventions identified in this Action Plan. We have also categorised these actions into one of the following:
- a. Planning
  - b. Land ownership
  - c. Market demand and supply
  - d. Government regulations and powers
  - e. Other
- 4.2. These topics and actions are based on our analysis of feedback from all stakeholders, as well as our own experience of working closely with housing delivery. The actions are therefore not site specific. Publishing site specific actions could be prejudicial toward the decision making process, and could also breach commercial confidentiality for the site promoter. We are keeping our own internal list of actions to address site specific issues. This is reported monthly to the Council's Housing Supply Group; consisting of Directors and representatives from the Oxford Housing Company Ltd.

### **Topic 1: Monitoring and engagement**

- 4.3. At the start of this Action Plan process we realised that we need to know more information about sites and delivery issues before identifying actions. This new Action Plan will link closely to our annual monitoring of sites, and our reporting of progress on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal to government. We had recently engaged with all site promoters in our trajectory through the work on the OLP2036 examination, which concluded in May 2020. However, the Action Plan must look at matters beyond the planning system and so more information, on a more regular basis, will be needed.

### **Action 1: Continue rolling out frequent engagement and monitoring programme**

#### ***Planning***

- 4.4. The Council publishes an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) each year, presenting housing completions for that year, and assessing the likely delivery rates of housing over the next five years. Following the publication of the HDT results in February this year, the Council has commenced a more regular assessment of housing delivery in the city. This programme of work requires regular engagement with key stakeholders involved in the planning and delivery of housing sites as set out in the methodology section of this report.

## **Topic 2: Corporate priorities of Oxford City Council**

- 4.5. The Council is committed to boosting housing supply and this is embedded in its Corporate Plan. The Council acknowledges that this requires prioritisation and resourcing to ensure it is effective.

### **Action 2: Continue implementation of corporate programme for housing delivery**

#### ***Other***

- 4.6. The Council has appointed a new Portfolio Holder for Housing Delivery, giving the topic area its own political representation. The Council has also established a Housing Supply Group – comprising Directors and Heads of Departments for all arms of the Council with an impact on housing delivery. This group has representation from the Council’s Housing, Regeneration, Planning, and Property teams as well as the Council’s own housing company. It allows the Council to escalate issues affecting supply to senior management, and make a corporate decision on how to address them. This group meets once per month. The Council also has dedicated staff in the regeneration and housing teams that focus on bringing forward key development sites where the Council has a land interest, as well as staff that focus on housing supply and delivery.

## **Topic 3: Council owned land available for development**

The Council owns several sites in Oxford, some of which would be challenging to develop for open market developers due to physical or policy constraints. In addition the Council continues to seek to purchase land where they feel they can help accelerate delivery, unlock development and/or deliver more affordable housing.

### **Action 3: Continue to drive housing delivery through developing land owned by the Council through joint venture or it is wholly owned housing company**

#### ***Land ownership***

- 4.7. In 2016 the Council established the Oxford Housing Company Ltd to assist in developing sites. The Council is expecting to deliver around 700 homes over the next 5 years through its housing company. The Council will continue to bring forward its land for development and support the housing company in delivering new homes in Oxford. The Council will continue to borrow against its HRA to boost delivery of affordable housing in the city, and is expected to deliver a further 79 affordable homes over the next five years. This is normally achieved through purchasing affordable housing from an existing site, giving certainty to the developer to build the homes.

#### **Topic 4: Validation of planning applications**

- 4.8. In meetings, some site promoters identified the validation of planning applications as causing delays to starting development on site. The Council acknowledges that there are delays caused by invalid plans and the need to go back to the applicant for further information. The Council cannot accept invalid applications however and so if an application does not meet the requirements of the validation checklist, we cannot validate it.

#### **Action 4: Continue monitoring of validation of planning applications**

##### ***Planning***

- 4.9. In order to streamline this process, a validation strategy has been developed to provide more clarity to developers on the level of information that would be required in order to help them 'get it right first time' and speed up the process. In addition to this the Council introduced a fee for dealing with invalid applications. This aims to encourage applicants to engage in the validation strategy to reduce the amount of invalid applications and improve the quality of submissions.
- 4.10. The Council will continue examine this issue, however the validation checklist is clear what the Council expects, and applications will only be invalidated when the applicant has not submitted sufficient information. Approving applications with insufficient material may delay determination as the case officer needs to ask for additional information. Furthermore, approving applications with insufficient information will "start the clock" on the application determination, and place the Council at increased risk of failing to determine applications on time.

#### **Topic 5: Ensuring a well-resourced planning service with a focus on project management**

- 4.11. Most site promoters who we met with supported the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and Service Level Agreements to help resource complicated applications, and to ensure that key dates in the determination of the application are met.

#### **Action 5: Continue programme of Service Level and Planning Performance Agreements**

##### ***Planning***

- 4.12. The Council already has SLAs in place with landowners who are bringing forward multiple key sites on their land holdings. We also have PPAs in place with several other key sites. These allow for dedicated resource to ensure that these planning applications are appropriately resourced and progressed to deliver against agreed timetables. As stated above, site promoters were supportive of these tools and wished to see them continue to be rolled out. The Council is able to increase the level of resource in the planning team to assist with meeting demand.

## **Topic 6: Infrastructure certainty**

- 4.13. Although none of our engagement as part of this Action Plan has suggested there are specific issues with infrastructure causing delays at this time, we know that uncertainty around infrastructure requirements can cause potential blockages and delay. Therefore, we need to keep our approach under review so that it does not become a challenge to delivery causing delays in signing legal agreements.

### **Action 6: Continue infrastructure planning and delivery programme**

#### ***Planning***

- 4.14. The Council recently prepared a revised CIL Charging Schedule and submitted it to the Planning Inspectorate for a public examination. However, during this process government amended the CIL Regulations, leading the Council to re-examine its position in light of the new regulations. The Council is therefore preparing a new CIL Charging Schedule and Infrastructure Funding Statement to meet the requirements of the regulations. This work will build on the significant amount of infrastructure assessments that informed the OLP 2036; notably the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) and Oxford Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).
- 4.15. We will also continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council and neighbouring authorities. This will involve identifying strategic infrastructure as part of updates to the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS), and collaboration on the monitoring and implementation of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Undertaking this work will ensure that infrastructure needs are clearly understood and published. It will give developers greater certainty about expected site costs, reducing the risk of “surprise” contributions at application stage threatening deliverability. It will also assist the Council and applicants in setting out draft heads of terms for legal agreements before taking applications before planning committee; reducing the time it takes for such agreements to be signed after the planning decision is made.
- 4.16. In addition, the City Council will continue to do what it can to promote the need for infrastructure investment and where necessary work with key partners to secure external funding such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and the Active Travel Fund. To date, HIF monies have been secured towards the delivery of infrastructure to support developments at Oxford North, Osney, and Blackbird Leys. The Council is also an active partner in the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal which has secured investment for infrastructure projects across the city. This has included taking on a delivery role for some of the projects within the city to ensure they are designed and built when needed. An example includes taking on the delivery of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge at Osney.

### **Topic 7: Pre-commencement conditions and infrastructure triggers**

- 4.17. The Council is aware that pre-commencement conditions and triggers in Section 106 agreements affect delivery. Since 2018 the Council has been unable to attach pre-commencement conditions to planning applications without the express written consent of the applicant.

### **Action 7: Continue to reduce pre-commencement conditions and triggers**

#### ***Planning***

- 4.18. The Council will only use these where the applicant has been unable to provide the relevant evidence during the determination process, and, where they have agreed to address this as a pre-commencement condition. Since 2018 the Council has reduced the number of pre-commencement conditions generally, and seek to deal with such issues as much as is possible as part of the main consent. There is a significant opportunity for overlap with Action 5 (PPAs and SLAs), whereby closer working with the applicant will allow us to identify where such information will be needed as early as possible. We will continue to reduce the number of pre-commencement conditions and monitor this through service performance indicators.

### **Topic 8: Working with Oxfordshire County Council**

- 4.19. Through discussions with site promoters as part of this Action Plan, it was emphasised that many issues affecting delivery require joint working between the applicant, the City Council, and Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Highway and Education Authority. As set out in the methodology section, we had intended to invite Oxfordshire County Council to these meetings, but the impact of Coronavirus meant we were unable to for the first tranche.
- 4.20. There were also a number of site specific issues that relied on Oxfordshire County Council's input – particularly relating to highways infrastructure. The Council's currently operate a separate pre-application advice service, which can add delays to securing advice, and risks the Councils presenting conflicting advice on a matter to an applicant.

## **Action 8 – Work with the Oxfordshire County Council to align processes**

### ***Planning***

- 4.21. We will continue to work with the County Council to identify a way for larger schemes to incorporate their services into our PPA/SLA approach.

### **Topic 9: New policy requirements in the Local Plan 2016 to 2036**

- 4.22. The Council adopted the OLP2036 in June 2020. It introduces new policies that applicants in Oxford may not have had to respond to in the past. To allow a smoother transition between the old and new policies, the Council will need to provide additional advice to communicate to applicants what information we expect as part of the application.

## **Action 9: Provide additional policy advice for the new Local Plan 2036**

### ***Planning***

- 4.23. The Council has recently published its Local Development Scheme (LDS) (July 2020) committing to a programme of technical advice notes and supplementary planning documents. Providing this up-front as soon as possible after the adoption of the plan will enable developers to factor these into their scheme designs from the start; rather than responding to a request during the determination of the application.

### **Topic 10: Relationship between applicants and Councillors**

- 4.24. Some site promoters identified the risk of securing officer and technical consultee support for an application, only for it to be overturned by Planning Committee. This is a difficult issue to manage, as democratic input into the planning system is one of its fundamental tenants and National Planning Practice Guidance is clear that Members are entitled to take a different view to officers. However, Councillors are bound by the same decision making criteria as professional officers in that they can only take account of material planning considerations in reaching their decisions. Site promoters felt that the planning committee does not allow for a proper interrogation of their proposals, nor for them to explain or justify them.

## **Action 10: Councillor engagement**

### ***Planning***

- 4.25. The Council already undertakes training for Planning Committee members on general planning principles and relevant planning policies and guidance. The number of overturns of officer recommendations by the Planning Committee is very low in Oxford, which is in part a result of the training they receive on the planning system. The Council is already aware of this potential challenge to housing delivery and will therefore continue this programme of member engagement. We will also trial site specific briefings for members on complicated schemes ahead of Planning Committee. This will present the applicant, members, and officers an open forum to ask questions and challenge each other on key issues before the application is taken to Planning Committee.

### **Topic 11: Market demand and impact of Coronavirus**

#### ***Market demand and supply/other***

- 4.26. Most site promoters advised that Oxford still experiences high market demand for housing, even taking into account the impact of Coronavirus. Some suggested an increase in demand for private rental properties over market sale. However, overall, there appears to be limited impact from Coronavirus at this time. Inevitably, this will need to be kept under review to consider how economic changes affect the supply chain, overall market demand, market demand for certain typologies and tenures of housing, and the mortgage market.
- 4.27. Although this topic mainly related to the market and delivery, one specific issue that was identified is how to ensure effective pre-application consultation at the current time as it is likely to need to be undertaken virtually whilst social distancing and limitations on gatherings remain. There were concerns raised that the public perception may be that a virtual type of consultation could be considered ineffective and therefore risk delays to applications coming forward.

#### **Action 11: Discuss consultation at pre-application stage and provide advice in the upcoming review of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for Planning**

##### ***Planning***

- 4.28. Planning officers will as appropriate discuss with applicants concerns about options for consultation at the current time as part of the pre-application discussions. We will also seek to include advice about ensuring effective pre-application consultation for developments in the upcoming update to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for planning. The recently updated Local Development Scheme seeks to consult on a new SCI in Autumn 2020. This will aim to include advice about ensuring effective virtual consultation whilst forms of social distancing and limitations on gatherings remain.

### **Topic 12: Availability of materials and labour**

#### ***Market demand and supply***

- 4.29. Some site promoters identified shortages in materials and / or labour as a potential issue for delivery. Larger sites that had not yet started development were highlighting this as a concern, due to the impact of Coronavirus on the supply chain. Not all sites were identifying this as an issue however.

### **Topic13: Site promoters' programme of site delivery**

#### ***Market demand / land ownership***

- 4.30. Oxford is home to several large institutions with land interests in the city. These institutions will often have their own operational needs, not driven by market demand for new homes. This means that some sites will continue to serve the needs of the institution before they are used for housing development. Conversely, larger institutions are able to take a longer term view to their investments and are more likely to build during a recession than those developers who build to sell to the market.

### **Actions relating to Topics 11 to 13**

- 4.31. Many of the actions associated with Topics 11 to 13 relate to the Council's influencing roles and as such the actions for all of these are to continue work in partnership with the Oxfordshire LEP and neighbouring authorities to raise the profile of these issues and seek to identify solutions and opportunities at a larger than local scale for example by exploring opportunities for Community Employment Plans. We will also continue to engage with site promoters to understand the issues encourage them to bring forward land for the allocated use.

### Conclusions and next steps

- 5.1. Although the Council has scored 70% on its HDT for 2019, this is in part caused by the inclusion of figures higher than the capacity figures now identified in the Local Plan. Delivering this level of housing for a prolonged period of time would not have been possible as Oxford does not have the capacity to sustain this due to the compact and highly constrained nature of the city. This has now been confirmed in the Local Plan adopted in June 2020. The new Local Plan 2036 identifies a new housing trajectory for Oxford which is deliverable within the city's administrative boundaries, and this will form the basis for future HDTs.
- 5.2. Nevertheless, the Council is committed to addressing housing delivery issues in Oxford, and is therefore intending to roll out its robust programme of engagement and maintain this Action Plan regardless of the results of the HDT.
- 5.3. The Council will continue to monitor the Coronavirus restrictions and expand our programme of engagement when safe and practical to do so.
- 5.4. The Council will keep the actions and influences of this plan under review throughout the year; informed by the live evidence from monthly site promoter updates, quarterly site promoter meetings, and feedback from Development Management officers. In particular, we will seek to give further consideration on how the Council can support and influence areas where we do not have direct control.

## Appendix 1: Action log

Ref	Action / topic	Category	Timescales	External partners	Commentary
1 43	Improve quality and frequency of engagement with site promoters to inform monitoring of housing sites – (implementation of the methodology section)	Planning	Commenced – further engagement measures dependent on Coronavirus restrictions	Site promoters Developers Oxfordshire County Council	<p>Creation of a new interactive database (Smartsheets) complete – this sends monthly update requests to all site promoters of major development sites asking a series of questions relating to housing delivery, and asks them to confirm their expected trajectory for the site. The questions asked in this update are given in Appendix 3. Uptake on this has been low, with only 4 site promoters responding since May 2020. Further “softer” engagement of the automatic update request is therefore required – through site promoter meetings, pre-application discussions, other meetings etc.</p> <p>First of Agents Forum held on 6 March 2020. Agents forums currently on hold due to Corona Virus, will be arranged as a digital forum.</p> <p>First set of site promoter meetings held in June 2020. These will be held quarterly / six monthly depending on issues identified Currently taking place virtually.</p> <p>Infrastructure forum to be set up as part of the Council’s CIL review, Infrastructure Funding Statement, and to understand issues affecting housing delivery (such as trigger points for infrastructure contributions from developers).</p> <p>Drop in call for sites not yet held. Not yet progressed due to the challenges with coronavirus restrictions. Under review as to whether this can be resourced effectively virtually.</p> <p>Extension of interactive database to include minor development sites (&lt;10 homes) so that automatic updates can be extended to them.</p>

Ref	Action / topic	Category	Timescales	External partners	Commentary
2	Continue implementation of corporate programme for housing delivery	Other	Commenced – ongoing programme	None	The Council has appointed a new Portfolio Holder for Housing Delivery, giving the topic area its own political representation. The Council has also established a Housing Supply Group – comprising Directors and Heads of Departments for all arms of the Council with an impact on housing delivery. The Council also has dedicated staff in the regeneration and housing teams that focus on bringing key development sites where the Council has a land interest forward as well as staff that focus on housing supply and delivery.
3	Continue to drive housing delivery through developing land owned by the Council through joint venture or it is wholly owned housing company	Land ownership	Commenced	Landowners, infrastructure providers	In 2016 the Council established the Oxford Housing Company Ltd to assist in developing sites. The housing company is expecting to build 709 homes (464 of which will be affordable homes) over the next 5 years through its housing company. The Council is also aiming to develop 79 other affordable units through our HRA account.
4	Continue monitoring of validation of planning applications	Planning	Commenced	None	In order to streamline this process, a validation strategy has been developed to provide more clarity to developers on the level of information that would be required in order to help them 'get it right first time' and speed up the process. In addition to this the Council introduced a fee for dealing with invalid applications in order to encourage applicants to engage in the validation strategy and therefore reduce the amount of invalid applications and improve the quality of submissions. The Council will continue examine this issue.
5	Continue programme of service level and planning performance agreements	Planning	Commenced	None	Many site promoters we met with were in the process of securing a PPA, or had one in place. Those who were doing so supported their use. The Council believes these add value as they set out clear deadlines (assisting with confidence in assessing the likely timescales of development) and provide the Council with the resources to focus on the application.

Ref	Action / topic	Category	Timescales	External partners	Commentary
6	Continue infrastructure planning and delivery programme	Planning	Ongoing (tied to CIL review)	Oxfordshire County Council Other infrastructure providers as appropriate (e.g. NHS)	<p>The Council is preparing a new CIL Charging Schedule and Infrastructure Funding Statement to meet the requirements of the regulations.</p> <p>We will also continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council and neighbouring authorities to identify strategic infrastructure as part of updates to OxIS and as part of the wider activities associated with the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.</p> <p>In addition to this we will also continue to support the County Council for external funding bids such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and the Active Travel Fund</p>
7 45	Continue to reduce pre-commencement conditions and triggers	Planning	Ongoing	Oxfordshire County Council  Other infrastructure providers as appropriate (e.g. NHS)	<p>Since 2018 the Council has reduced the number of pre-commencement conditions generally, and seek to deal with such issues as much as is possible as part of the main consent. There is a significant opportunity for overlap with Action 5 (PPAs and SLAs), whereby closer working with the applicant will allow us to identify where such information will be needed as early as possible. We will continue to reduce the number of pre-commencement conditions and monitor this through service performance indicators.</p>
8	Work with the Oxfordshire County Council to align processes	Planning	Ongoing (tied to CIL review)	Oxfordshire County Council	<p>We will continue to work with the county to identify a way for larger schemes to incorporate their services into our PPA/SLA approach.</p>
9	Provide additional policy advice for the new Local Plan 2036	Planning	Ongoing – work commenced already	Oxfordshire County Council	<p>The Council adopted the OLP2036 in June 2020. It introduces new policies that applicants in Oxford may not have had to respond to in the past. To allow a smoother transition between the old and new policies, the Council will need to provide additional advice to communicate to applicants what information we expect as part of the application.</p>

Ref	Action / topic	Category	Timescales	External partners	Commentary
10	Councillor engagement	Other	Complete by end of December 2020	None	Some site promoters were concerned of the risk presented by planning committee decisions, especially where they have worked with officers and consultees to narrow or remove the objections to an application. Engagement with members and the local community is a responsibility of the applicant, and the Council and its officers cannot do this on behalf of the applicant. However, where an applicant has demonstrated a commitment to pro-active consultation, officers will brief members on the technical aspects of an application prior to determination at planning committee. This will need to be carefully managed – this is not intended to be a “pre-meeting” to unduly influence Councillors, but to provide them with a venue under which they can ask questions without the strict measures of planning committee.
11 46	Market demand and impact of Coronavirus	Market demand and supply/other	Ongoing	Landowners, site promoters, developers, government	<p>Most site promoters advised that Oxford still experiences high market demand for housing, even taking into account the impact of Coronavirus. Some suggested an increase in demand for private rental properties over market sale. However, overall, there appears to be limited impact from Coronavirus at this time. Inevitably, this will need to be kept under review to consider how economic changes affect the supply chain, overall market demand, market demand for certain typologies and tenures of housing, and the mortgage market.</p> <p>One specific issue that was identified is how to ensure effective pre-application consultation at the current time as it is likely to need to be undertaken virtually whilst social distancing and limitations on gatherings remain. There were concerns raised that the perception may be that a virtual type of consultation could be considered ineffective and therefore risk delays to applications coming forward. Planning officers will as appropriate discuss with applicants concerns about options for consultation at the current time as part of the pre-application discussions. We will also seek to include advice about ensuring effective pre-application consultation for developments in the upcoming update to the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for planning.</p>

Ref	Action / topic	Category	Timescales	External partners	Commentary
12	Availability of materials and labour	Other	Ongoing	Site promoters, landowners, builders' merchants, supply chain	Some site promoters identified shortages in materials and / or labour as a potential issue for delivery. Larger sites that had not yet started development were highlighting this as a concern, due to the impact of Coronavirus on the supply chain. Not all sites were identifying this as an issue however.
13	Site promoters' programme of site delivery	Land ownership	Ongoing	Landowners	Oxford is home to several large institutions with land interests in the City. These institutions will often have their own operational needs, not driven by market demand for new homes. This means that some sites will continue to serve the needs of the institution before they are used for housing development. Conversely, larger institutions are able to take a longer term view to their investments and are more likely to build during a recession than those developers who build to sell to the market.



## Oxford City Council - Development site update request form

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this. If you have any questions, please contact Tom Rice at [trice@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:trice@oxford.gov.uk)

Site name

Contact 1

Contact 1 email address

Current planning status

Total proposed C3

Proposed C3 market

Proposed C3 affordable

Proposed student rooms

Proposed communal care rooms

Proposed B1a floorspace (m2)



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Proposed B1b floorspace (m2)

Proposed B1c floorspace (m2)

Proposed B2 floorspace (m2)

Proposed B8 floorspace (m2)

Proposed other uses classes

Is the site currently vacant?

Are there any tenancies on site?

Is the site under the control of one party?

Are there any ransom strips?

Please detail any site assessment work undertaken

Have you sought pre-application advice?



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Is a planning performance agreement in place?

Details of other promotion work undertaken

Have you begun work on a planning application?

Progress discharging pre-commencement conditions?

Any known infrastructure constraints?

Is there still market demand for the development?

Is there a sufficient supply of labour & materials

Any abnormal site preparation costs?

Impact of planning conditions / obligations?

Have you considered subdividing the site?

Any suggestions to overcome delivery challenges?



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2016/17 Dwelling completions

2017/18 Dwelling completions

2018/19 Dwelling completions

2019/20 Dwelling completions

Forecast dwelling completions 2020/21

Forecast dwelling completions 2021/22

Forecast dwelling completions 2022/23

Forecast dwelling completions 2023/24

Forecast dwelling completions 2024/25

Forecast dwelling completions 2025/26

Forecast dwelling completions 2026/27



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Forecast dwelling completions 2029/30

Forecast dwelling completions 2030/31

Forecast dwelling completions 2031/32

Forecast dwelling completions 2032/33

Forecast dwelling completions 2033/34

Forecast dwelling completions 2034/35

Forecast dwelling completions 2035/36

Non-residential completions to date

Non-residential forecast completions to 2035/36

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