

Public Questions to the City Executive Board

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Item 10: Approval of the Housing Strategy 2015-18

- 1. The report records 113 new Council homes developed during 2011-2015 – what was the carbon emission cost of building these homes, measured in Tonnes CO2 equivalent?**
- 2. What is the anticipated Carbon emission cost of building the 354 homes predicted under the new strategy?**
- 3. If the carbon emission values are not available, can you please explain why this information is not recorded, particularly in regard to the Council's commitment to a "Cleaner, Greener Oxford"?**
- 4. How does the carbon emission cost of building this number of homes contribute to the Council's commitment to a "Cleaner, Greener Oxford"?**

Answer to Questions 1-4:

The properties are built to at least the Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 which should have an emissions factor at design and post construction phase on Dwellings Emission Rate (DER), this is the estimated CO2 emissions per m2 per year (KgCO2/m2/year) for the dwelling as designed. It accounts for energy used in heating, fixed cooling, hot water and lighting. This is not an assessment of embodied carbon which is what the questioner appears to be asking for. That information is not held and cannot be provided.

The City Council sets a carbon dioxide target around its own estate and operations where it is the bill payer and thus responsible for use. Our approach is set out in our Carbon Management Plan. We have no access to any data in council properties since individual tenants are responsible for bill payment and use of utilities.

- 5. Can you please explain why the housing project currently under development at Barns Road in Cowley, Northway and Marston included the transfer of Council land at no cost to the developers?**

It is incorrect to assert that the sites at Northway and Cowley passed to Green Square for no value. As well as the creation of 75 new affordable and private housing, and the building of new community facilities, and other related benefits (like improved facilities for the Emmaus social enterprise and the funding of a Community Support Officer) the Council is to receive a form of profit share on the receipts actually achieved (subject to certain values being met).

- 6. Is it part of the Council housing policy to make Council land available to developers free of charge, and under what conditions would such a transfer of land be applicable?**

The Council does not make land available to developers free of charge. Where appropriate the Council will contribute land suitable for housing development in exchange for the development of additional affordable homes for rent.

7. Why has the land comprising the Barton West development been transferred through the joint venture at a nominal value of £850,000?

There was an initial payment to the Council of £850,000 on the establishment of the joint venture. The land was valued by an external valuer at the time .

8. Clearly the receipts from developers paying for the land at Barton West will be considerably in excess of the nominal £850,000 value transferred from the council into the joint venture. How will the profits from the land receipts be split between the council and the other party comprising the joint venture, and what value do you expect this to be?

There is a formula which provides for the sharing of profits between the Council and its joint venture partner after costs have been met. The details are commercial and confidential. The terms of the joint venture were independently assessed by external advisers and subject to an independent audit by PWC and assessed as sound and in accordance with best practice.

9. The new central government announced during the election the return of the “right to buy” for council tenants; how will this affect the policy, and what is the council doing to safeguard and retain the council housing stock?

Right to Buy existed before the general election. The Council has kept under review options to mitigate Right to Buy and has made provision for Right to Buy in its financial plans.

10. How long will a tenant need to be resident in one of the 354 new council houses in Barton West before they can invoke their right to buy, and what restrictions will the Council place on any future sale by that tenant?

Presently one a person has been a Council tenant for 5 years, they can exercise the Right to Buy. From 26th May 2015 the Government has reduced this to 3 years. If the property is sold within 10 years from purchase, the Council has to be given the first refusal on the purchase. If sold within 5 years, there is a sliding scale by which the purchaser must repay some of the discount given.

11. Section 1.2.2 of your policy talks about aiming to “unleash a new wave of innovation-led growth”, referring to the Oxford City Deal expanding employment opportunities. How does this increase in employment growth address in any way the current housing shortage, in particular the Northern Gateway initiative where so few homes are planned?

The City Deal provides for employment growth and new homes, and its forecasts for growth are included in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Northern Gateway is designated as an employment-led development site, and the provision for housing in the scheme has been increased from 200 to 500 homes. The inspector at the recent Northern Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP) found the principles of the AAP sound.

12. The Council managed to subvert the SHMA report, turning an original forecast of downturn in housing demand into a 'need' for some 24,000-31,000 homes by 2031. Since you have a policy of 50% affordable homes, this implies a growth in affordable homes during the period covered by this strategy of approximately 3,000 – how will this strategy achieve this, particularly as you only appear to be forecasting a tenth of that figure (354)?

The Oxfordshire SHMA was prepared by independent consultants and approved by the City, District and County Councils. This shows that the city will require around 30,000 new homes to meet its forecast housing need. A proportion of this need can be found within the city boundary, and this is estimated at around 10,000 homes. The balance will need to be found in the surrounding Districts. The Councils have agreed a process for this under the planning requirement known as the Duty to Co-operate.

13. Section 5.3 of the policy references 151,900 people registered in the 2011 census – how many of those are students, and are student statistics included in consideration of the 43,000 born outside the UK, and ethnic group distribution?

At the 2011 Census, 24% of the city's adult population was a full-time student (30,000 people) - Around one-third of full-time students were born outside the UK so, around 10,000.

14. Section 5.6 – 313 of total applicants on the housing register – how many of these are in bands 1-4, and how many in band 5 (which confers no entitlement to housing)?

There were 193 applicants with this requirement in bands 1-4 and 120 in band 5.

15. Section 6 – how will building homes (of any volume or type, affordable or un-affordable) address the issue of house prices, which will continue to increase regardless of the number built, since there is only so much land space available, and Oxford City is finite?

Increasing the number of homes will provide a greater choice of market and affordable homes for those who wish to live in the city. This is the primary objective. It may contribute to a lower rate of price increase, but there is no suggestion that delivering Oxford's housing need will reduce house prices.

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