

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 Rulebook¹ 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.

¹<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
Target	Household Projections	Household Projections	Standard Method	Standard Method or Local Plan	Local Plan	Local Plan
	375	529	743	746 or 475 [▲]	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	-	-	1,151	1,502	1,906	2,107
Actual and Expected HDT Result	-	-	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 UK². 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 rates³ The issue of housing affordability and inequality within the City was acknowledged by the Inspectors in their recent report to the Local Plan⁴.
- 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

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

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

⁴ 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 Appendix 1 . 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.