

Appendix 1 (of Action Plan)

Appendix 1: Action log

Ref	Action / topic	Category	Timescales	External partners	Commentary
1 33	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 (<10 homes) so that automatic updates can be extended to them.</p>

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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.

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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 35	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	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	Planning	Ongoing – work commenced already	Oxfordshire County Council	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.

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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	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>

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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.

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