

Decision type: Single Member Decision
Decision date: 26 January 2026
Decision maker: Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Decision title: Project approval and delegation to develop two small sites for affordable housing

Summary	
Decision being taken:	Grant project approval to develop affordable housing at sites at Underhill Circus and Leiden Road; Delegate authority to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law, Governance and Strategy to enter into contracts and any other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivering affordable housing at Underhill Circus and Leiden Road.
Key decision:	Yes <u>Issue details - Project Approval and Delegations for Underhill Circus and Leiden Road affordable housing schemes Oxford City Council</u>
Source of delegation:	Section 9E (2)(a) and (b) of the Local Government Act 2000 - the Leader is empowered to discharge any function of Cabinet and also delegate any functions of Cabinet.
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) - Finance and Asset Management
Corporate Priority:	More Affordable Housing and Meeting Housing Needs
Policy Framework:	Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2023 to 2028

The Leader of the Council decides as follows to:

1. **Grant project approval** to develop brownfield land sites at Underhill Circus and Leiden Road for affordable housing;

2. **Delegate authority** to the Deputy Chief Executive Place where they do not already have the authority under the Constitution, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Group Finance Director/Section 151 Officer and the Director of Law Governance and Strategy/Monitoring Officer, to enter into contracts and any other necessary agreements for the purpose of delivering affordable housing at Underhill Circus and Leiden Road within the allocated Housing Revenue Account capital budget and business plan.

Introduction and background

1. The Council continues to develop a supply programme to deliver more affordable housing through multiple work streams, including the delivery of homes through the Council's housing company – OX Place (OCH(D)L); direct delivery by the Council; joint ventures; regeneration schemes; acquisitions; and enabling activity with Registered Providers, community-led housing groups, and other partners. The Council seeks to deliver over 1,600 affordable tenure homes across the next four years (to March 2029), with at least 850 of those at the most affordable Social Rent level.
2. This report seeks approval to progress the Underhill Circus and Leiden Road sites for the delivery of affordable housing. It requests project approvals and delegated authority to enable the development of up to 18 affordable homes, funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and delivered by the Council. The Council will contract with a developer to carry out the works and with OCH(D)L who will provide professional support services and act as development manager.
3. Both sites are currently held within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and will remain under HRA ownership throughout development, completion, and ongoing management.
4. The Council has successfully secured Brownfield Land Release Funding (BLRF) and commenced demolition works with ODS in contract on both sites.

Underhill Circus

1. The Underhill Circus site is a brownfield site in the ownership of Oxford City Council (OCC).
2. The land is currently held in the General Fund. The land has been appropriated to a planning purpose by Cabinet in September 2025 and the intention is to appropriate it into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), once planning permission has been secured, to develop affordable housing on this site.
3. The garages at Underhill Circus have been fully demolished with BLRF. These activities are being carried out in compliance with the grant conditions to ensure the site is ready for housing delivery.
4. There is no planning consent on this site as no planning application has been made for the housing delivery yet. The scheme remains at an early stage of development. It is expected that the site will deliver up to nine new homes at social rent although the number of units is subject to change as work progresses through Planning.

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5. There have been previous schemes proposed at this site which have not been able to progress for reasons of financial viability. A strong consultation and programme will be established with necessary contingency for additional design fees.
6. £3.4 million have been approved for the budget of this scheme ensuring value for money for the Council.

Leiden Road

7. Leiden Road site is a brownfield site in the ownership of Oxford City Council (OCC). The site is located in Wood Farm and is currently occupied by two decanted bungalows. The site sits at the edge of Magdalen woods.
8. This scheme has been approved for feasibility study and a capacity study has been undertaken.
9. The full site, including the bungalows are currently held in the HRA.
10. As detailed above there is no planning consent on this site as no planning application has been made for the housing development. The scheme remains at a relatively early stage of development. It is expected that the site will deliver up to nine new homes at social rent although this is subject to change following feedback from Planning.
11. The Council is in contract with ODS and are working on the demolition of the bungalows on this site.
12. £2.7 million have been approved for the budget of this scheme ensuring value for money for the Council.

Delivery model

13. The Council contracting directly with a developer for the works and contracting with OCH(D)L for development support services is considered the best approach for delivery of this scheme. It is low development risk, therefore represents the best value for money for the HRA, whilst also providing an appropriate/ risk-adjusted fee to OCH(D)L to reflect the work undertaken to secure this opportunity and manage the development on behalf of the Council to completion.
14. Officers are seeking delegated authority to enter into agreements to deliver the development.
15. Both schemes have been financially assessed through the HRA development scheme appraisal tool. The HRA financial parameters have been met, including a development and admin fee payable to OCH(D)L. The schemes meet all the financial requirements of the HRA.

Equalities Impact

16. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not considered necessary for this decision. The developments aim to provide affordable housing, which will positively impact residents in housing need. Equalities impacts have been considered and are deemed to be beneficial.

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Risks

17. There is a risk of BLRF grant repayment if milestones are not met, which is mitigated by progressing these schemes promptly.

Carbon and Environmental Considerations

18. The developments aim to achieve a 40% carbon reduction on 2022 building regulations through a fabric-first approach and renewable energy. OCH(D)L and the Council are committed to delivering environmentally sustainable homes.

Implications of making the decision

Financial implications	Both schemes have sufficient budget in the HRA to undertake the developments	Completed by: Nigel Kennedy Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer) Date: 20/1/2026
Legal implications	Under Parts 4.5 (10) 4.5 (11) 18.12 and 19 (17) of the Constitution Cabinet is responsible for giving project approval and agreeing to enter into contracts in excess of £750,000. Under section 9E (2)(a) and (b) of the Local Government Act 2000 the Leader is empowered to discharge any functions of Cabinet and to also delegate any function of Cabinet. Whilst the 2 sites subject to this decision were referred to in a report concerning the development of small sites for affordable housing considered by Cabinet in January 2024, this Member decision is needed for clarity as to exact nature of the project to develop these 2 sites.	Completed by: Joanna Williams Solicitor Date: 9/1/26
Other implications	N/A	Completed by: Anneri Gatial Date: 26 January 2026

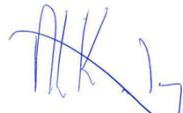
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Member declared interests	N/A	Completed by: Anneri Gatial Date: 26 January 2026
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Background Documents

Report author	Dave Scholes
Job title	Affordable Housing Supply Corporate Lead
Service area or department	Economy, Regeneration & Sustainability
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Consultee checklist

Consultees	Name and job title	Date
Senior officer e.g. the relevant service manager / Director where the decision maker is the Chief Executive or a Deputy Chief Executive.	N/A	
Group Finance Director Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	 Nigel Kennedy, Group Finance Director (Section 151 Officer)	20/01/26
Director of Law, Governance and Strategy Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	Emma-Louise Jackman, Head of Law & Governance	15/01/26
Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities Councillor Ed Turner, Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management	20/01/26 20/01/26

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Where required by the conditions of the delegation		
Ward Members Where required by the Constitution or conditions of the delegation	N/A	

Decision Maker Approval

<i>Name and job title</i>	<i>Date</i>
Councillor Susan Brown Leader, and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth	26/01/2026

This form must be completed and sent to Committee and Member Services **on the date that the decision maker signs it. This must be only done once all consultees have given their approval. The decision shall be effective from the date of publication; therefore, it is important that you send to Committee and Member Services as soon as it is completed and dated by the decision maker. Please note that it is not effective until it is published and the call in period has passed.**

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NOTES

The law¹ requires the Council to record executive and non-executive decisions taken by officers under delegated powers and to publish them on the Council's website.

These requirements apply to decisions that would have been taken by Council or the Cabinet if delegated powers had not been given to an officer:

- under an express delegation granted at a meeting of Cabinet, Council or a Committee.
- in accordance with Part 4.4 of the Constitution as follows:
 - Awarding a contract where authority has been specifically delegated to officers by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (regardless of value)
 - Acquiring or disposing of freeholds or leaseholds granting new leaseholds (excluding assignments and rent reviews) where authority has been specifically delegated to officers by Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (regardless of value)
 - Making a regulatory order which affects a number of people, for example a Public Space Protection Order or a Parking Place Order
 - Where the effect of a decision is to grant a licence or permission or it affects the rights of citizens
 - Discharging any other express delegation from Cabinet or a Cabinet Member a committee or Council.

These requirements **do not** apply to:

- planning and licencing matters where there are established arrangements for recording decisions: or
- decisions which are purely administrative or operational in nature

All other officer decisions should be recorded on an officer decision form but do not need to be published. They must though be stored so as to ensure that they are not lost should an officer leave the authority.

Exempt or Confidential information

Information relating to a delegated officer or single member decision does not have to be made public if it is exempt or confidential. Summary information from this decision sheet (excluding all exempt or confidential information) will be published on the Council's website.

¹ the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012/2089 (Regulation 13(4)) and The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014/2095 (Regulation 7)

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Key or Non Key Decision

A key decision is an executive decision which is likely to:

- Have a significant effect on people living or working in at least two wards or
- Involve spending, income, or saving a significant amount – whether an amount is significant depends on the Council's total budget for the service involved. For this Council 'significant' in budgetary terms is:
 - Expenditure, income, or savings of £750,000 or greater in the context of the medium term financial strategy,
 - Acquiring or disposing of freeholds with a consideration over £500,000 in the context of the medium term financial strategy except for disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation
 - Acquiring or disposing of leaseholds where either the rental value is in excess of £250,000 per annum and/or the premium is £750,000 except for statutory lease renewals under Part 2 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 and disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation and disposals pursuant to right to buy legislation.
 - Acquiring or disposing of easements with a value over £750,000 and/or rental value over £250,000 each year

A key decision can only be taken and recorded here if notice of it has been published on the Forward Plan for at least 28 clear days. Key decisions taken by officers may be "called in" by any four councillors or the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee within two days of the notice of decision being published.

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