

Memorandum of Understanding on co-operating to meet Oxford's unmet housing need

between

**Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council,
Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council**

Regulation 20 stage of the Oxford Local Plan 2045

02 July 2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is prepared in relation to Oxford City Council's submission version of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 and submitted alongside it. This MoU builds upon the agreement reached in the Interim Joint Statement of Common Ground signed by all five Oxfordshire district councils in January 2026.
- 1.2 All the Oxfordshire Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have engaged with Oxford in the production of this MoU and are signatories to it (listed in alphabetical order):
- Cherwell District Council
 - Oxford City Council
 - South Oxfordshire District Council
 - Vale of White Horse District Council
 - West Oxfordshire District Council
- 1.3 This MoU focuses solely on the key strategic matter of Oxford's unmet housing need which arises from the proposed Oxford Local Plan 2025-2045.¹ In addition, Statements of Common Ground on other matters will be prepared on a bi-lateral basis between Oxford City Council and each of the other Local Planning Authorities. Oxford City Council has also signed SOCGs for the Local Plan Examinations of the other LPAs.
- 1.4 National planning policy emphasises the importance of local planning authorities working collaboratively on strategic matters with potential cross-boundary implications such as the provision of new homes, jobs and infrastructure, where effective co-operation would assist sound plan-making.
- 1.5 This MoU forms part of an overall evidence base which demonstrates that the Oxfordshire local authorities are engaging effectively and continuously on key strategic matters arising from the Oxford Local Plan 2045, including unmet housing need, in accordance with national policy.

¹ This Plan period was updated following the Regulation 18 consultation that took place in June-August 2025, having previously been 2022-2042

- 1.6 The MoU has been prepared through the Oxfordshire Development Plan Cooperation Forum (formerly the Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum) comprised of the planning policy manager (or equivalent) from each council.

2 Calculating Oxford's Housing Need and Unmet Need

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires strategic policies to be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the Standard Method. Needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be taken into account in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for. Through the process of drafting the Oxford Local Plan 2045 the calculation of the need and capacity (and therefore unmet need) has developed over time. At October 2025 (when Oxford made a formal request for help with unmet need) the need was calculated as 1,087 and capacity as 410 homes per annum. At January 2026 (Reg19) the need was calculated as 1,087 and capacity as 463 homes per annum.
- 2.2 The latest Standard Method (as at May 2026) identifies a housing need in Oxford of 1,078 dwellings per annum. Over the plan period of the Oxford Local Plan- 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2045- this results in a total need of 21,560 homes.²
- 2.3 In accordance with national policy, to provide a clear understanding of the land available in Oxford, the City Council has prepared a strategic housing land availability assessment (SHLAA). The most recent SHLAA, dated June 2026, identifies total anticipated housing supply of 452 dwellings per annum over the 20-year period 2025 – 2045 (9,041 in total (rounded numbers)).
- 2.4 When Oxford's housing need (21,560) is set against anticipated supply (9,041) it results in a total unmet housing need of 12,519 dwellings between 2025-2045.³
- 2.5 In writing to the other LPAs in Oxfordshire on 31st October 2025, the City Council formally requested help with meeting its unmet housing need resulting from its emerging local plan. In each of their responses to this request all the Oxfordshire LPAs agreed to assist with the City's unmet need and acknowledged that continued co-operation was needed, subject to agreeing some principles.
- 2.6 In January 2026 an Interim Joint Statement of Common Ground between the signatories was agreed, reflecting the effective cooperation between all the authorities since the start of production of the Oxford Local Plan 2045. It was prepared specifically in relation to Oxford City Council's Regulation 19 consultation draft of the Oxford Local Plan 2045 and was published alongside it.
- 2.7 Following continuous, constructive joint working, including meetings, and formal letters, this MoU sets out the agreed position of each LPA in terms of the amount of unmet need

³ N.B. there was a slight error in the numbers quoted in the January 2026 Interim Statement of Common Ground. The numbers quoted in this MoU are correct.

arising from the Oxford Local Plan 2045, confirms how the previously agreed apportionment is being honoured in existing adopted local plans and now being addressed in emerging plans, and the anticipated timescales for the delivery of these homes.

Key principles agreed

2.8 All parties agree the following:

- **Use of the Government's Standard Method to calculate Oxford's Local Housing need is consistent with national policy.**
- **The use of a housing 'base date' of 1st April 2025 for the Oxford Local Plan is clear and appropriate.**
- **Oxford's housing need is represented by use of the Standard Method inputs as at May 2026, which is 1,078 dwellings per annum (21,560 over the Plan period).**
- **The June 2026 Oxford SHLAA assesses the capacity of Oxford. All parties agree that the details of the SHLAA will be subject to Examination, but that the assumed capacity of 452 dwellings per annum established by the SHLAA in the period 2025 – 2045, is a reasonable working assumption that can form the basis of discussions about unmet need.**
- **When Oxford's housing need (21,560) is set against anticipated supply (9,041) it results in a total unmet housing need of 12,519 dwellings between 2025 – 2045.**
- **All the other Oxfordshire districts have agreed to help meet this unmet need in their emerging local plans.**
- **The affordability uplift step of the Standard Method takes account of any previous under delivery.**

3 Background to previous co-operation

- 3.1 The Oxfordshire authorities have a long history of working together on strategic housing matters. A working assumption of 15,000 unmet need homes for the City over the period 2011-2031 was agreed at the Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting on 19th November 2015. The following apportionment of Oxford's unmet need was agreed in a Memorandum of Cooperation dated November 2016.

Table 1: Apportionment agreed in 2016 Memorandum of Cooperation:

District	Apportionment (2011-2031)
Cherwell	4400
Oxford	550
South Oxfordshire	4950*
Vale of White Horse	2200
West Oxfordshire	2750
Total	14,850

*South Oxfordshire did not sign the MoC although this figure was planned for and incorporated within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035

- 3.2 Each local authority then made provision for this unmet need totalling 14,300 homes (the 14,850 minus the 550 apportioned to Oxford) in subsequent local plans. Further detail on each local plan is provided in Section 4 below.
- 3.3 The November 2016 Memorandum of Cooperation anticipated that delivery of housing to meet this unmet need would have an assumed start date of 1st April 2021, which was after the Local Plans were due to be adopted.
- 3.4 The apportionment of Oxford's unmet needs amongst the districts was informed by the work of what was the Oxfordshire Growth Board. This work included a Green Belt Assessment (LUC, 2016) that informed further Green Belt assessments carried out by the districts, as well as the Oxford Spatial Options Assessment (LUC with BBP Regeneration, 2016), which developed and implemented a methodology for testing spatial options to meet Oxford's unmet housing need, providing guidance and evidence about how the unmet need could best be distributed.
- 3.5 The apportionment was tested and found sound at respective local plan examinations.

4 Current adopted Local Plan positions

- 4.1 Each Oxfordshire district has incorporated a level of housing to help meet Oxford's unmet need within its housing requirement in a current extant plan. The Oxfordshire rural districts have previously committed to providing 14,300 within their plans.

Cherwell District Council:

- 4.2 In September 2020 Cherwell District Council adopted its Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031. The Plan made provision for **4,400** homes to be provided for Oxford from 2021 – 2031 on six specific sites to the north of Oxford (allocated as PR sites). The adopted policies were subject to a Regulation 10A Review in December 2025. At 31 March 2025 none of these homes had been delivered, although development briefs have been prepared and most have outline planning permission. Construction has commenced on site PR7a. All 4,400 homes are allocated to contribute to Oxford's needs.

South Oxfordshire District Council:

- 4.3 In December 2020 South Oxfordshire adopted its Local Plan 2035. It covers the period 2011 – 2035. It incorporates unmet need arising from Oxford City of **4,950** homes, as part of its the housing requirement 2021-2035. The Plan includes sites removed from the Green Belt to meet South Oxfordshire's and Oxford's unmet need. The adopted policies were subject to a Regulation 10A review in November 2025. To date, no homes for Oxford's unmet needs have been delivered on the three sites adjacent to Oxford which are still to be delivered post 2025.

Vale of White Horse District Council:

- 4.4 In October 2019 Vale of White Horse adopted its Local Plan 2031 Part Two. It covers the period 2011 – 2031. It incorporates unmet need arising from Oxford City of **2,200** homes as part of its housing requirement between 2019 and 2031. It makes provision for these to be

provided within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area but acknowledges these needs could, in reality, be met anywhere across the district. The adopted policies were subject to a Regulation 10A review in September 2024.

West Oxfordshire District Council:

- 4.5 In September 2018 West Oxfordshire adopted its Local Plan 2031. It covers the period 2011-2031. It makes provision for 2,750 new homes to assist Oxford City in the period 2021-2031 at two specific sites: Salt Cross Garden Village (allocated for 2,200 homes all for Oxford's unmet need) and West of Eynsham (allocated for 1,000 homes, 550 of which for Oxford's unmet need). To date, no homes at Salt Cross have been delivered but the District Council is in active discussion with the site promoter following the recent adoption of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) in February 2026. At West Eynsham, although 237 homes have been completed, none of the affordable homes have been made available to those on Oxford's housing register. The District Council remain in active discussion with the site promoters with a site-wide masterplan having been approved in 2022 and further applications expected later this year.

Key principles agreed

- 4.6 **All parties agree the following key principles:**
- **The previously agreed apportionment of Oxford's unmet housing need for the period 2021 – 2031 was informed by a programme of joint work following the SHMA (2014) which assessed strategic options for locations and an understanding of where deliverable sites are well located to Oxford. This was tested at respective Examinations and embedded into adopted Local Plans.**
 - **There has been no change in position in relation to the principles behind the distribution of sites that would contribute to meeting Oxford's unmet need, and the basis of the original apportionment is still considered sound.**
 - **In combination, the adopted Plans of Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire make provision for the whole 14,300 as agreed in the 2016 Memorandum of Co-operation, with a surplus of provision.**
 - **Until such a time that emerging Plans are adopted, the currently adopted Plans and the provisions they make for Oxford's unmet need remain extant.**

5 Position of emerging Local Plans and delivery to date

- 5.1 Each authority in Oxfordshire is currently working on a new Local Plan or Joint Local Plan covering periods overlapping and running beyond the adopted Plans. Each district remains committed to providing for Oxford's unmet need in their emerging local plans.
- 5.2 A programme of work was agreed between the parties to co-operate on developing a joint position on Oxford's unmet need (Appendix 1). Joint working through a number of meetings, formal letters, an Interim Joint Statement of Common Ground and publication of Oxford Proposed Submission Local Plan (Reg. 19) has helped to inform the position of each of the Oxfordshire LPAs in relation to the amount, potential apportionment and delivery timescales of identified unmet need for Oxford City.

- 5.3 The LPAs are at different stages with their emerging local plans; their respective current positions are as follows:

Cherwell District Council:

- 5.4 The Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042, covering the period 2020 – 2042, was submitted to the Secretary of State on 31 July 2025. The submitted Plan’s overall housing requirement includes the provision of 4,400 homes to meet Oxford’s unmet need across a plan period of 2020-2042. The Plan proposes to ‘save’ the six previously allocated sites in the 2020 Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2015 identified specifically to meet Oxford’s need. The emerging Plan’s housing trajectory expects the full 4,400 homes to meet Oxford’s unmet need to be delivered between 2025-2042.

- 5.5 Initial examination hearings were held in February 2026 and included a matter on Oxford’s Unmet Need. At those hearings Oxford City Council supported Cherwell’s commitment to the 4,400 homes to meet Oxford’s unmet need between 2025-2045. The adoption of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 is expected in early 2027, but is dependent on the progress of the current examination.

- **In its emerging Local Plan, Cherwell’s commitment towards Oxford’s unmet need is 4,400 homes to be delivered by 2042 on the ‘saved’ Partial Review sites**

Oxford City Council:

- 5.6 Work commenced on the emerging Oxford Local Plan 2045 (for the period 2025-2045) in March 2025, with Regulation 19 consultation held between January and March 2026. The intention is to submit the plan in June 2026 with adoption anticipated in 2027.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils:

- 5.7 The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041 covering the period 2021 – 2041, was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9 December 2024 and is currently at examination. At submission, this plan added Oxford’s unmet need to South Oxfordshire’s and Vale of White Horse’s local level housing need to reach the housing requirements set out in Policy HOU1. The plan included provision for the previously agreed levels of unmet need for the years that overlapped with the plan period for Joint Local Plan. Vale of White Horse calculate that 370 homes (2 years of 185 per annum) relate to the period before the base date of the emerging Joint Local Plan. The housing requirement at submission therefore included 4,950 for South Oxfordshire towards Oxford’s unmet need from 2021 to 2036 and 1,830 for the Vale of White Horse towards Oxford’s unmet need from 2021 to 2031.

- 5.8 Initial examination hearings addressing procedural and legal requirements, the duty to co-operate and the housing and employment requirements were held in June 2025. Further hearings are now to take place in July 2026 to address changes in circumstances since the earlier hearings. Adoption is currently anticipated in late 2026/early 2027.

- **In its emerging Joint Local Plan, South Oxfordshire has included 4,950 homes in their requirement towards Oxford’s unmet need**
- **In its emerging Joint Local Plan, Vale of White Horse has included 1,830 homes in their housing requirement towards Oxford’s unmet need**

- **Vale of White Horse calculate that 370 homes (2 years of 185 per annum) relate to the period before the base date of the Joint Local Plan**

West Oxfordshire District Council:

- 5.9 West Oxfordshire is in the process of developing its Regulation 19 draft Local Plan which it intends to formally publish in July 2026. As this Plan is much earlier in the process of development than the others, West Oxfordshire's current thinking is presented here for completeness. Further conversations on their proposed approach will take place between the parties as it formalises.
- 5.10 West Oxfordshire intends its Plan to have a housing base date of 1st April 2025, in common with the Oxford Local Plan, but covering a shorter, 18-year period to 31st March 2043. West Oxfordshire has confirmed that its Regulation 19 Plan will include a housing requirement that is based on meeting its own Standard Method figure in full (905 homes per year) as well as a proportion of Oxford's unmet need in the period 1st April 2025 - 31st March 2043.
- 5.11 For the purposes of establishing the Oxford unmet need element of its overall housing requirement, West Oxfordshire District Council intend to apply the overall agreed unmet need figure of 12,519 on a pro-rata basis covering the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2043 (18 years) and using the same apportionment for West Oxfordshire that was agreed in the 2016 Memorandum of Co-Operation (18% of the overall unmet need having been apportioned to West Oxfordshire). This results in an assumed unmet housing need figure of 2,028 homes to be accommodated in West Oxfordshire in the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2043. West Oxfordshire intend to continue to make provision for this assumed proportion of Oxford's unmet need at Salt Cross Garden Village and West Eynsham as proposed in its adopted Local Plan 2031.
- **In its emerging Local Plan, West Oxfordshire intend to provide for 2,028 homes towards Oxford's unmet need in the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2043 on the allocated sites previously identified for this purpose**

Collective commitments in emerging Local Plans:

- 5.12 In combination, the commitments included within the emerging Local Plans of each Oxfordshire district provide for 13,208 homes for Oxford's unmet need; this is greater than the 12,519 identified as Oxford's unmet need for the plan period 2025-2045.

Key principles agreed

- 5.13 **All parties agree the following key principles:**
- **All parties have been working together to co-ordinate and present their positions collectively on Oxford's unmet need.**
 - **In combination, these proposed renewed commitments of Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire in their emerging plans are for 13,208 homes, exceeding Oxford's unmet need of 12,519 for the period 2025-2045 as shown in Table 2 (below).**
 - **All parties commit to working together to facilitate delivery of these homes within their respective, relevant plan periods.**

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 Of the original commitment of 14,300 homes in adopted Local Plans, there are 13,208 homes committed in emerging plans. This is more than enough to meet the new unmet need of 12,519.
- 6.2 Table 2 shows that each district is committed to taking a proportion of unmet need. Collectively these commitments are more than sufficient to meet the unmet housing need arising from the Oxford Local Plan 2045. Current extant plans already make provision for this level of unmet need, the majority of which are on specific sites that are yet to be delivered. Exactly how the unmet need is dealt with by the districts in new or emerging plans is a matter for each district, but each district is committed to ensuring a sustainable pattern of development, and it is clear that each district has developable sites available that will be delivered over the period of the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

Table 2: Level of unmet need arising from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 that each other Oxfordshire district has agreed as their apportionment:

District	Amount of Oxford's unmet need arising from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 to be incorporated in the housing requirements of emerging or new local plans
Cherwell	4,400
South Oxfordshire	4,950
Vale of White Horse	1,830
West Oxfordshire	2,028
Total	13,208

7 Next steps and reviewing this Memorandum of Understanding

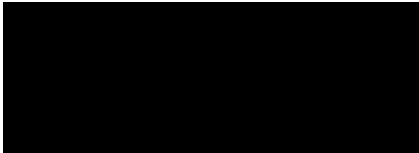
- 7.1 This MoU is written and agreed at 02 July 2026 to set out how the level of unmet need arising from the Oxford Local Plan 2045 is being met by surrounding districts. It presents the position of each authority and their anticipated future positions at this point in time. The parties agree to work together constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis.
- 7.2 The signatories to this MoU from each of the Councils are set out below:

Signed on behalf of Cherwell District Council:



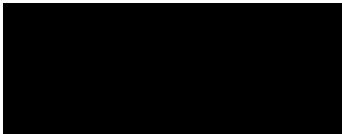
David Peckford
Assistant Director – Planning
Cherwell District Council

Signed on behalf of Oxford City Council:



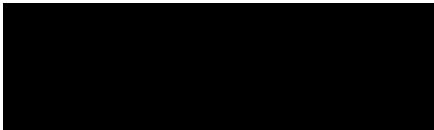
David Butler, Director of Planning and Regulation

Signed on behalf of South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Councils:



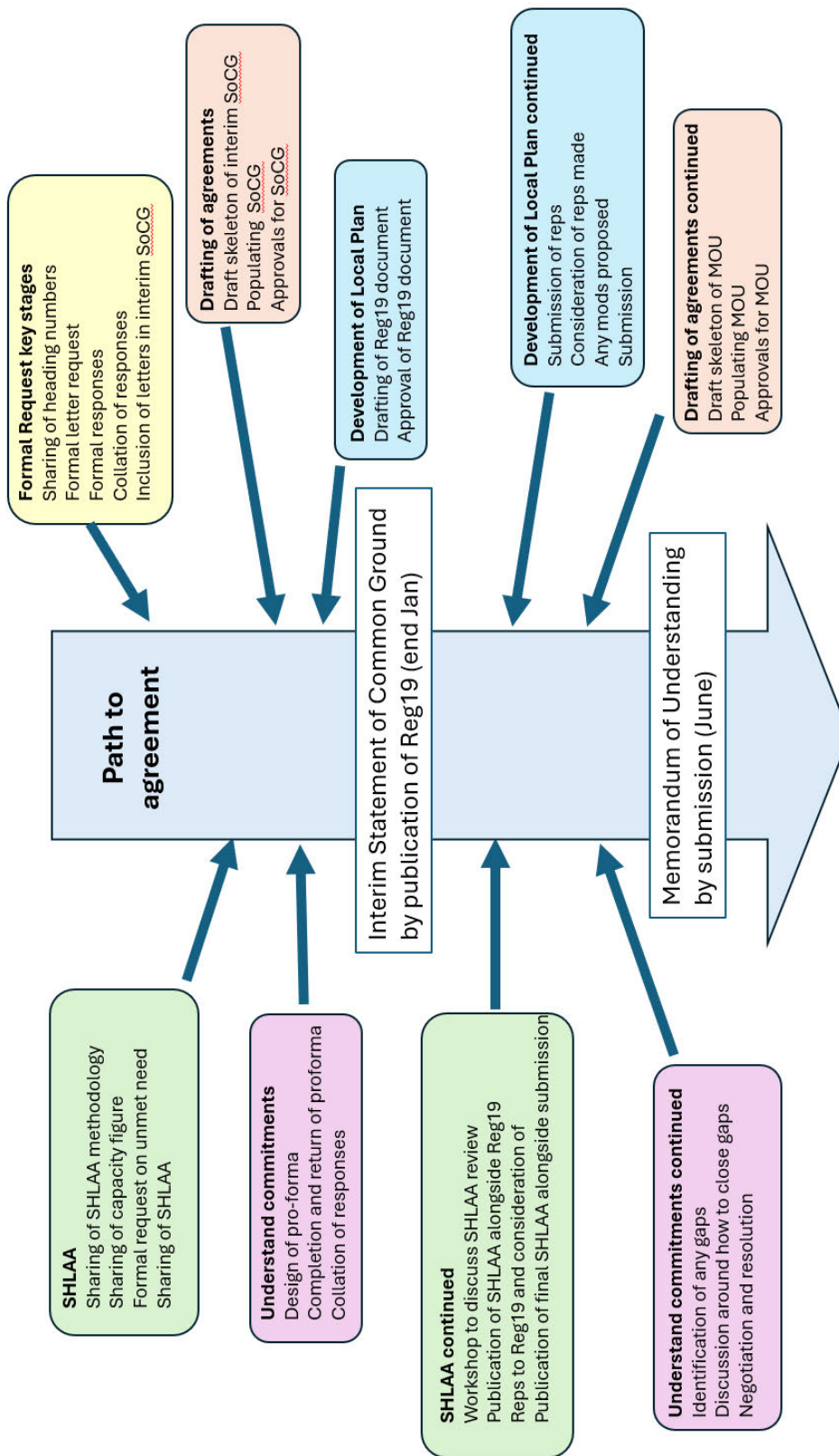
Tim Oruye – Director of Policy and Programmes

Signed on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council:



Chris Hargraves – Head of Planning

Appendix 1: Agreed programme of work to develop a joint position on Oxford's unmet



Appendix 1 Continued: Agreed programme of work to develop a joint position on Oxford's unmet need

Updated Paper 1 - Proposed programme of work for group discussion on Oxford's housing need, unmet need and apportionment of

From an Oxford point of view, ideally we'd get to:

- an Interim Statement of Common Ground by publication of Reg19 (end Jan), and
- a Memorandum of Understanding by submission (June).

Part One – agreeing Interim Statement of Common Ground by end January 2026: (COMPLETE)

Stage of work OLP2042 Plan / meeting	Date	Who	Proposed outcome
Additional workshop on SHLAA	11 th September 2025	All	Workshop collectively through SHLAA approach
Oxford prepare summary of the workshop	Week after workshop	Oxford	Oxford share summary of workshop for each district to discuss internally
Districts prepare to report back on the workshop outcomes at the September Forum	Ahead of September Forum	Districts	Each district has considered others' positions and the workshop's potential solutions; and identified any sticking points
September DtC Forum	23 rd September 2025	All	Oxford share new Local Plan dates and headline numbers on capacity
Oxford confirm calculated need and unmet need	16 th October 2025	Oxford	Emailed confirmation of need, capacity and unmet need ahead of formal request
October DtC Forum	21 st October 2025	All	Confirm process for responding to formal request
Formal request on unmet need made	31 st October 2025	Oxford	Formal request sent by letter by Chief Executive
Oxford draft paper explaining position and responses to formal request	By end October	Oxford	Draft circulated
November DtC Forum	14 th November 2025	All	Presentation on site selection, confirmation that capacity is changed very little, promise to share SHLAA when ready
Responses to formal request received by letter	20 th November	All	Formal responses to request for help on unmet need received from all districts
December DtC Forum	10 th December 2025	Oxford	Oxford present updated timetable for conversation
Oxford collate responses and use to inform skeleton Interim SoCG; Oxford issue proforma on commitments	By 15 th December 2025	Oxford	Skeleton of Interim SoCG (with appended formal request and response letters) and proforma issued to understand commitments shared for completion
Oxford share SHLAA	By 19 th December 2025	Oxford	Final SHLAA for Reg 19 shared
Districts to return proforma on commitments to Oxford for collation	By 5 th January 2026	Districts and Oxford	Districts to return proforma on commitments to Oxford for collation and incorporation into draft Interim SoCG

Scrutiny, Cabinet and Council for Reg19	January	Oxford	Papers go public on 5 th January. Oxford decision to publish Reg19 on 26 th January
Oxford circulate draft Interim SoCG	By 9 th January 2026	Oxford	Oxford circulate draft Interim SOCG for discussion at January DtC Forum
January DtC Forum	15 th January 2026		Discussion on Interim SoCG
Oxford refine Interim SoCG and all secure approvals	By 30 th January 2026	Oxford and all	Refined and approved Interim SoCG ready for publication
Consultation starts on Reg19	30 th January 2026	Oxford	Consultation on Reg19 and Interim SoCG is published alongside

Part Two – agreeing a Memorandum of Understanding by end June 2026: (For agreement)

Consultation starts on Reg19	30 th January 2026	Oxford	Consultation on Reg19 and Interim SoCG is published alongside
Districts work through Reg19 for response	February to March	All	Reg19 representations
February DtC Forum	26 th February 2026		Workshop to discuss SHLAA review
Skeleton of Memorandum of Understanding	February/early March	Oxford	Oxford start work on a skeleton of the Memorandum of Understanding
Individual DtC meetings (as required)	Late February/ Early March	All	Oxford can hold bi-lateral DtC meetings as reps are being prepared if that would be helpful. Districts to request as appropriate.
Consultation closes on Reg 19	13 th March 2026		Consultation closes
Oxford reviews and collates Reg19 reps	Early/mid March	Oxford	Oxford reviews and collates Reg19 reps
Oxford shares skeleton of MoU	Circulated by 20 th March (ahead of Forum)	Oxford	Oxford reflects on Reg19 reps and uses them to inform skeleton of MoU which is shared ahead of the March Forum
March DtC Forum	26 th March 2026	All	Discussion of reg19 reps, skeleton MoU and identification of any gaps and discussion on how to close them
Series of bi-lateral DtC meetings	Mid/late March 2026	Oxford/all	Bi-lateral DtC meetings to input into MoU but also cover wider conversations, inform bi-lateral SoCG, and consider any modifications
Oxford work up first draft MoU	Early April 2026	Oxford	Oxford work up first draft MoU after March discussion
Oxford to circulate first draft MoU	Mid April (ahead of Forum) 2026	Oxford	Oxford circulate first draft MoU ahead of April DtC
April DtC Forum	Late April 2026	All	Discuss first draft MoU
Oxford to work up second draft MoU with district input	Late April/early May 2026	Oxford/all	Oxford to update MoU after April DtC discussion, discuss any areas bi-laterally if necessary
Senior discussion of second draft MoU	Early May 2026	All	Discussion of Heads of Service/Chief Execs on emerging MoU
Oxford to share second draft MoU	Circulated ahead of May Forum	Oxford	Oxford share a second draft for discussion and agreement at May DtC Forum

May DtC Forum	Mid/late May 2026	All	Work through and agree the updated MoU and all to secure sign offs for publication at submission
Oxford to amend and finalise MoU	Late May 2026	Oxford	Oxford to finalise MoU following May discussion
Oxford to co-ordinate senior approvals of MoU	June 2026	Oxford/all	All parties to work through approvals process together, including a Head of Service/Chief Execs discussion
Signing of MoU	June 2026	All	Final signing of MoU
Submission	June -updated to July 2026	Oxford	Publication of MoU ahead of submission