

Policy and Programmes

HEAD OF SERVICE: Tim Oruye



planning.consultation@westoxon.gov.uk

CONTACT OFFICER: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]@southoxon.gov.uk

Tel: 01235 422422

Textphone: 18001 01235 422422

Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon,
OXON, OX14 3JE

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Dear West Oxfordshire Planning Policy Team

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your Local Plan 2041 Preferred Policy Options Consultation.

We welcome the proposed vision and objectives, and that the Local Plan draws on the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision which is a collective vision agreed by all of the Oxfordshire local authorities.

Core Policies

CP1 Climate Change: We support the policy aims for net zero carbon.

CP4 Delivering new homes: We note that ORS have prepared a housing need assessment for West Oxfordshire using the new standard method. The level of housing need for West is 905 new homes per year in the period 2025 to 2041 or 14,480 new homes in total over the plan period. The policy also proposes a 10% buffer be applied to supply (Sustainability Appraisal Option 3), to account for potential slippages in expected delivery, resilience and to minimise reliance on speculative windfalls. This is a significant step change from 660 to 905 homes per year, excluding the 10% buffer.

We also note that you confirm that as a large rural district, with relatively few constraints compared to some, the identified housing need to 2041 should be met in full.

In relation to Oxford unmet housing need, your adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 identified two sites contributing to their previously agreed apportionment of 2,750 homes: 2,200 homes at Salt Cross Garden Village and 550 homes at the West Eynsham SDA (out of a total of 1,000 homes). Your consultation preferred options document states that there is uncertainty following the recent withdrawal of the Oxford City Local Plan 2040 and adopts an interim position.

We note that you have worked on the basis that Oxford's housing needs from its emerging Local Plan 2042 will apply from April 2025 and extend to 2042. This results in a total housing need for Oxford of 18,479 homes. This assumes the application of

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previous capacity assumptions of around 10,000 homes for Oxford, making unmet need from 2025 to 2042 around 8,500 homes, compared with the 14,900 previously agreed. We note that this is a provisionally lower level of unmet need than previously identified.

As you will be aware, South and Vale officers have proposed we need alignment across Oxfordshire about assumptions on delivery time periods for Oxford's unmet need. We would welcome further discussions between the Oxfordshire local authorities on this issue, to agree a consistent approach.

CP5 Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity: The Policy is supported by evidence in the form of an economic needs assessment (ENA), which informs the amount of land and floorspace to plan for by testing four main scenarios:

- Labour demand (based on forecast job growth);
- Labour supply (based on population and housing growth projections);
- Past take-up (a trend-based scenario based on a continuation of historical take-up rates);
- A policy-driven scenario.

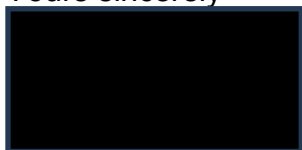
We understand the policy-driven scenario to be based on the employment levels that could be generated from an ambitious economic strategy reflecting Oxfordshire priority sectors. The inclusion of this scenario adds to the robustness of the ENA, because it indicates that an alternative to the 'labour demand' scenario is not producing radically different levels of need. However, the Preferred Options document does not refer to the policy-driven scenario as one of the tested scenarios.

We note that the ENA recommends using the labour demand scenario for office and industry, and past trends scenario for industry and warehousing which we support.

The total supply of vacant sites plus what is in the pipeline for delivery is 48.7 hectares, which leaves 19.2 hectares of supply headroom, therefore we note that no unmet need for employment is likely.

Thank you again for consulting us on your Local Plan 2041 Preferred Policy Options Consultation, and we look forward to working together to engage in the next stages of your plan.

Yours sincerely



Planning Policy Team Leader
South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council