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Via email

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20 November 2025

Dear Caroline,

We write in reply to your letter of 31 October 2025, containing a formal request to assist with Oxford unmet housing need.

As you will know, we have long been assisting Oxford by planning to accommodate housing in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse that Oxford is not able to accommodate. This has been the case for decades and has seen areas like Old Marston, Littlemore, Risinghurst & Sandhills and Greater Leys eventually incorporated into Oxford. Through the years of the Oxfordshire Structure Plans, housing was directed to 'country towns' like Didcot because of growth constraints at Oxford. In more recent years since the Localism Act 2011, in the absence of a Structure Plan and under the formal process of Duty to Cooperate, the district councils have worked together to address Oxford's unmet needs. This process will be changing again (for local plans after this current round) under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, which, once secondary legislation is passed, will remove the Duty and introduce an Alignment Policy. In the near future, under the government's devolution proposals, a new Mayoral Strategic Authority will total up and redistribute housing numbers between the unitary authorities to meet housing needs, through the preparation of Spatial Development Strategies.

We note that in your letter you comment that "it may be the case that existing provisions are ultimately found to be enough to meet need". On the basis of interim calculations, we agree that this is very likely to be the case. Looking at the housing need and housing supply in each Oxfordshire district between 2025-2045, there appears to be more than

enough supply to accommodate the 13,538 homes you identify in your letter that you may not have capacity for in Oxford.

Based on figures you have provided in your letter, we are confident that the unmet need over the emerging Oxford Local Plan period (2025-2045) is addressed in full in our adopted local plans and maintained in the emerging Joint Local Plan. As you will know we have committed 4,950 homes in South Oxfordshire and 2,200 in Vale of White Horse through our adopted local plans. We are honouring that commitment, with delivery already underway in Vale and in South Oxfordshire the first edge of Oxford strategic site has been granted planning permission (for a number in excess of the number allocated in the local plan).

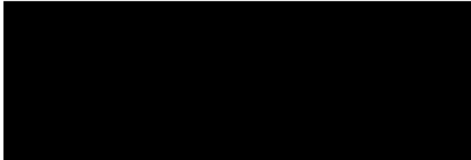
You ask us to accept as a principle that unmet need is generated from the Oxford Local Plan 2025-2045, and that we will work with you to provide for this unmet need. Our answer is provisionally yes, as it has been before, there is likely to be some unmet need subject to the following principles, which we seek your agreement on in return:

Suggested principles:

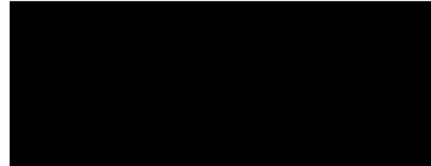
1. Agreement to use the government's Standard Method to calculate housing need.
2. Agreement that Oxford City Council does all it can in finalising the Oxford Local Plan 2045 to accommodate housing within Oxford in order to minimise the unmet need numbers.
3. Agreement by Oxford to share with all the neighbouring district councils the data still outstanding which will influence Oxford's final capacity (for example the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment), in order to assess the position and finalise the calculations.
4. Agreement that it is legitimate for neighbouring district councils to scrutinise Oxford's assessment of its capacity.
5. Agreement that unmet need is generated from the Oxford Local Plan 2025-2045, and that we will work with you and the other neighbouring district councils to (a) seek to agree the amount and (b), subject to point (4) above, provide for the unmet need through emerging local plans (including our Joint Local Plan).
6. Agreement for each district council to identify which years overlap between their own emerging plan periods and Oxford's proposed plan period (2025-2045) and calculate unmet need for those years that overlap.
7. Agreement to honour the existing commitments to unmet need made in the last round of local plans.

We would like to suggest that these principles and the latest figures form part of a new Memorandum of Cooperation. Our officers would be happy to work with you and the other district councils on developing such a document to update the previously agreed version.

Yours sincerely



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Deputy Chief Executive - Place



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