

Topic Paper 4

Improve Housing Availability and Affordability

February 2019

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Topic Paper is to provide background information on the subject of housing availability and affordability in relation to the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. Further versions of these Topic Papers may be produced at later stages in the Plan making process.

Policy context

2. The National Planning Policy Framework¹ (NPPF) seeks to ensure that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. Strategic policies can be contained in "*joint or individual local plans, produced by authorities working together or independently (and which may also contain non-strategic policies)*"². Strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance.

3. The Planning Practice Guidance³ states that "*the standard method for assessing local housing need provides the minimum starting point in determining the number of homes needed in an area*" and explains that exceptional circumstances can justify going above the minimum standard approach. It sets out five circumstances where figures higher than that derived from the standard method need to be considered and, on the basis of which additional growth above historic trends is likely to or is planned to occur over the plan period, an appropriate uplift may be considered.

4. The size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

5. Strategic policy-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area, which shows the extent to which their identified housing need can be met over the plan period.

6. They should have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning

¹ Section 5, [NPPF](#) (July 2018) MHCLG

² Paragraph 17, [NPPF](#) (July 2018) MHCLG

³ Planning Practice Guidance: Housing Need Assessment paragraph 2a-010-20180913, (Sep 2018) MHCLG

policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. In the case of Oxfordshire these planning policies are expected to be within the subsequent Local Plans rather than the joint plan. Strategic policies should include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period.

7. The Planning Practice Guidance⁴ (PPG) includes further detail on Housing Needs Assessments to inform Plan making and Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments and Brownfield Registers to identify a future supply of housing. It provides guidance on Viability in Plan making; Starter Homes; Self and Custom Build housing; Rural Housing; Accessibility, adaptability and wheelchair housing standards.

Challenges for the Oxfordshire Plan

Delivering enough housing to meet need

8. The Oxfordshire district authorities are planning for and supporting delivery of 100,000 homes by 2031 through the Housing and Growth Deal⁵ with Government. A significant amount of joint work across the Oxfordshire authorities fed into the Growth Deal including the Strategic Housing Market Assessment⁶ (April 2014) which covered the period 2011-2031. This has fed into the current and emerging round of Local Plans which cover the period from 2011-2031/36. There is therefore a good deal of detail and certainty around the period up to 2031/36 as plans and strategies are well advanced.

9. The Oxfordshire authorities will work together to comprehensively test a range of options for growth, informed by the new standard methodology, up-to-date evidence and ongoing engagement with stakeholders.

10. The adopted Oxfordshire Plan will ultimately identify a housing requirement for the whole of Oxfordshire and apportion it to each of the five district authorities as set out in the Statement of Common Ground⁷. As District level Local Plans are reviewed in the future, the Oxfordshire Plan will form the strategic planning overview which Local Plans will need to be in broad conformity with. The precise level of detail that this information will be presented in will be determined through the production of the plan. It is envisaged that the Oxfordshire Plan will also identify strategic growth areas, especially for larger scales of development and where linked to strategic infrastructure.

⁴[Planning Practice Guidance](#) MHCLG

⁵ [Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal](#) (Mar 2018) MHCLG

⁶ [Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment](#) (Apr 2014) GLHearn

⁷ Oxfordshire Joint Statutory Spatial Plan [Statement of Common Ground](#) (Mar 2018) Oxfordshire Growth Board

A spatial strategy and broad locations for development

11. The Oxfordshire Plan will determine the spatial strategy for new development. A spatial strategy sets out broad development patterns for where new development should be located. The Plan will identify broad locations for development and it will be the role of future Local Plans to define precise locations and boundaries. It will not allocate sites except at the request of the relevant Local Planning Authority.

12. This consultation stage (Regulation 18 Part 1) starts the discussion around potential spatial strategies for considering the location of new development. It aims to focus development in the right places, to help balance the need for development with the need to both protect the environment and provide the environmental services needed for the future. It also provides an opportunity to think about the linkages between different places, infrastructure and activities and how these can be coordinated and improved to help achieve social and economic objectives.

13. Topic Paper 2: The Spatial Strategy⁸ provides further information. Options will be developed and refined through the consultation stages supplemented by evidence/data on issues such as sustainability appraisal, flood risk, natural capital, transport, social and utilities infrastructure, health impact, landscape and townscape, Green Belt and food security.

Housing Land Availability

14. The Plan will need to give some certainty that development can be delivered so an assessment of land availability will be undertaken.

15. The Plan is likely to focus on development of significant scale, such as that needed to deliver a new primary school, secondary school or major infrastructure project, should the housing need assessment justify it. For this reason, the assessment of land availability is likely to focus on strategic sites only and any development on sites of a smaller scale is likely to be more appropriate for an individual district authority to assess through reviews of their Local Plans.

16. To support the assessment of land availability and broad locations, a 'call for ideas' is being undertaken alongside the consultation on the Regulation 18 Part 1 document. The 'call for ideas' encourages suggestions from the public, organisations, landowners and developers. Further details are at www.oxfordshireplan.org.

Affordable Housing Requirements

17. The housing need assessment will also consider the affordability of housing within Oxfordshire using guidance in the PPG⁹. It will look at current and projected need and the

⁸ Topic Paper 2 – Spatial Strategy (Feb 2019), Oxfordshire Plan 2050

⁹ [Housing Need Assessment, Planning Practice Guidance](#) (Sep 2018) MHCLG

supply of affordable housing in line with the Government's definition in the NPPF and come to conclusions on the number of affordable homes needed.

18. This will help develop a framework for affordable housing provision across Oxfordshire. Currently, the adopted and emerging Local Plans within Oxfordshire have a range of affordable housing requirements based on need and viability which reflects the costs of development and the prices of houses.

19. The PPG provides guidance on viability and plan making¹⁰. Affordable Housing policy requirements should be informed by evidence of infrastructure and affordable housing need, and a proportionate assessment of viability, including the cost implications of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and section 106. Policy requirements should be clear so that they can be accurately accounted for in the price paid for land. Different requirements may be set for different locations, types of site or types of development.

20. Existing viability studies across the Oxfordshire districts will be reviewed and, if necessary, further work commissioned.

Need for specialist housing including older people, Gypsies, Travellers, boat dwellers and travelling show people

21. The household projections that form the baseline of the standard housing need assessment method are inclusive of all households including Gypsies and Travellers as defined by the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites¹¹. The assessment may review the existing needs assessments for Gypsies, Travellers, boat dwellers and travelling show people and update this information if required.

22. In line with the PPG¹², the housing need assessment will also consider the need for specialist housing such as housing for older persons, people with disabilities, the private rented sector, self and custom build, student accommodation. The Oxfordshire Plan will consider whether, at a strategic level, it is appropriate to have policies on specialist housing or whether this should be left to Local Plans.

¹⁰ [Viability, Planning Practice Guidance](#) (July 2018) MHCLG

¹¹ [Planning Policy for Traveller Sites](#) (Aug 2015) MHCLG

¹² [Housing Need Assessment, Planning Practice Guidance](#) (Sep 2018) MHCLG