

Cherwell Local Plan Review: Responses to Overview and Scrutiny

O&S Comment	Topic/Area	Internal Officer Response	Actions
The balance of affordable housing included in the plan is not ambitious enough or adequate.	Housing Viability	<p>Officers tested the viability of the Draft Plan policies at an early stage of preparation. The purpose of the viability assessment is to test the policies to ensure they consider policy standards, affordable housing, and infrastructure needs whilst allowing development to be deliverable without further need for viability assessment at planning application stage.</p> <p>Affordable housing requirements ranging from 0 to 50% were tested alongside other emerging policy requirements. The draft policies proposed are set at a level where the Council does not compromise sustainable development, the policies are deliverable and able to stand to scrutiny.</p> <p>Viability evidence supporting the plan is complex and Members would benefit from a briefing with planning and housing officers aimed at exploring the effects of choosing different requirements of affordable housing on other policy areas to assist their understanding of the policy choices required.</p>	<p>No change to HEENA to look at affordable housing mix is required at this time. Clarifications sought from consultants on mix.</p> <p>Meeting with housing colleagues to discuss Scrutiny comments and their view on affordable housing delivery and other programmes.</p> <p>Consider potential for housing requirement topic paper to expand section for affordable housing for publication.</p> <p>Recommend Local Plan viability briefing with the Local Plan Members Advisory Group (MAG). This would explore how the different policy levers can be applied and allow Members the opportunity to prioritise policy.</p>

		<p>The HENA identifies affordable housing need for social rented, affordable rent and affordable home ownership. It recommends that a Council policy is not split between social and affordable rent in terms of % requirement.</p> <p>The HENA identifies an affordable housing need of 426 dwellings per annum (excluding existing households) in Cherwell. It shows that affordable housing provided at 30% would provide 303 dwellings per year of the 1009 dwelling need. Need would only be met at 45% provision. If the total amount of development identified in the plan is delivered then the identified AH need is met in full. Comparative figures can be provided in a briefing note (see actions)</p> <p>The report does not specifically recommend an affordable housing % for a policy. The report states that viability is a key consideration and viability evidence would be the key driver for identifying the % for a policy. The report also highlights that there are other means of delivering affordable housing other than through planning obligations for new dwellings.</p> <p>Housing colleagues have in the past expressed satisfaction with current % requirement in the policy as it generally delivers.</p>	
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Clarity and assurance there is no change from the partial review of the Local Plan regarding Frieze Farm in Kidlington and its provision as an alternative Golf Course location.	Kidlington Area	Policies PR6b Land West of Oxford Road and Policy PR6c Land as Frieze Farm and all of their proposals are to be retained in the emerging Plan.	Improvements to the Plan with clear mapping of retained and proposed allocations and additional clarification text.
It is important that all infrastructure keeps pace with development as well as ensuring satisfactory integration between new developments and established communities.	Infrastructure	<p>The right type of development in the right place supported by appropriate infrastructure has been the central aim of the plan's vision, the evidence to support the development of policies and the place focus approach within the emerging area strategies.</p> <p>There is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally specific evidence in the Transport Assessment and IDP which looks maximising public benefit (integration of existing and proposed communities). • Forthcoming Local Transport and Connectivity Plans • A range of realistic and viable policies to ensure contributions can be secured. • There is an important role for planning but there are limitations too and the need for a range wider stakeholders to 	<p>More clarity provided in the plan text regarding infrastructure requirements.</p> <p>An infrastructure briefing for MAG recommended. This could be combined with briefing on viability.</p>

		<p>deliver the vision in the plan and strengthen communities etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of an up to date plan to avoid speculative development <p>The strategy as developed, would generate additional funding to help unlock essential infrastructure (for example at Bicester - where significant funding shortfalls exist) and to provide more negotiating opportunity in new funding bids.</p>	
The importance of farming in the district has been recognised in the draft, but it should be given more prominence.	Rural Areas	The plan recognises the role of the rural economy, but references could be strengthened through minor amendments.	Additional references to agriculture added to text. Importance of farm diversification highlighted under the Rural Area Strategy.
Noting the reference to Bicester Strategic Corridors, consideration should be given to creating a formal Green Belt around Bicester.	Bicester Area/ Green Belt	<p>Exceptional circumstances are required to designate new Green Belt. Officers do not consider that those circumstances exist.</p> <p>Additional landscape evidence is being commissioned to complement the GI Strategy.</p>	No specific actions/changes are proposed to the plan.
More should be done to maintain the Green Ring around Kidlington.	Kidlington Area	While preparing the Plan the Council commissioned a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy which includes Kidlington as one of its 5 focus areas. Workshops were held and participants included Kidlington Parish Council.	Indicative maps added which illustrate our initial proposals for green and blue infrastructure. Further landscape evidence required and is being commissioned to inform Reg 19.

		<p>The strategy proposes strategic projects for the wider Kidlington area and illustrates how these fit within the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network which include the valuable areas of habitat and green space along the Oxford Canal and the River Cherwell in the Kidlington wider area.</p> <p>The strategy findings and proposals have been integrated within the emerging Draft Plan and three out of the ten plan priorities for Kidlington and the Kidlington Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy aims to protect and enhance the natural resource and landscape setting of the wider Kidlington area.</p> <p>The maps to accompany the Plan for publication intended to illustrate these and other proposals in a visual manner but it is recognised that more can be done to show visually within the Draft Plan the Green Infrastructure work supporting the policies and proposals.</p> <p>Site specific information needs to be proportionate to the stage of plan preparation (Regulation 18). More detailed site-specific design will be prepared once sites are selected for plan Submission stage (Regulation 19).</p>	
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Rural allocation of housing should be equitable.		A background paper on the revised proposed settlement hierarchy will be published with the Reg 18 draft plan. The total rural allocation and its distribution across the villages is indicative only at this time. Further work is required before the Reg 19 plan, to finalise these figures, based on the consultation feedback we receive. Work is also progressing on assessing specific site proposals, but this has not yet been completed.	Plan text redrafted seeking views on rural allocations and numbers. The revised text makes it clear that we want to understand the preferences of local communities regarding the quantum and location of the rural housing requirements.
Executive to assure itself that the wording of policies included in the plan is strong enough, particularly those in relation to Climate Action and viability.		Under current NPPF (2021) planning applications compliant with the Plan are assumed viable but applicants can still submit viability assessments at planning application stage if they can demonstrate the circumstances exist to justify it. These may include whether the viability evidence supporting the Plan is up to date. Given the long-term nature of Local Plans, policies are often future proofed to ensure they can be applied if changes of local circumstance occur during the life of the Plan. Viability sentences in policies are not aimed at inviting challenge or weaken requirements but to future proof the Plan and its policies.	No changes to these policies are proposed in the draft plan. However, the regulation 18 consultation will provide opportunities for interested parties and others to comment on the policies so that they can be refined as necessary. We are aware that the national picture is constantly under review and we are working closely with the Council's Climate Action Manager and consultants to ensure that the Reg 19 Plan reflects the most up to date best practice.

		<p>The most effective protection is to set policy requirements at a level where their cumulative cost (i.e. the combined effect of policy requirements) does not undermine the deliverability of the plan.</p> <p>Having in place strong mechanisms to review, monitor and report delivery of development, local market conditions and contributions secured through development proposals also helps the Council to be prepared when a viability assessment is submitted at application stage to determine whether it is justified.</p>	
<p>That Members be given more opportunities to engage, provide feedback and comments during the Regulation 18 consultation.</p>		<p>Noted.</p>	<p>Members will have a number of opportunities, through MAG and O&S to influence the draft plan. Further engagement through the Reg 18 consultation has been included within the Local Plan consultation programme.</p> <p>The opportunity has also been taken to undertake a wider review of the scope and tone of the draft plan. It has been substantially redrafted with an emphasis on consultation. Feedback is actively encouraged and a number of specific questions have been added. Where</p>

			<p>possible the language has been made more accessible (less technical). In places information has also been reworked in a simpler, more understandable, and transparent way.</p> <p>The key message is that this is a consultation draft plan where no decisions have been finalised. Topics where further work is needed has also been highlighted.</p>
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