

Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy Consultation Results Summary

Thank you for those who participated in the Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy Consultation

Introduction

This consultation was undertaken to help Cherwell District Council develop a new Housing Strategy to help shape how the Council will deliver housing services during the period 2025-2030. Councils are required to undertake a consultation when a new strategy is developed.

The Council is required to consult a range of key partners, including statutory, voluntary and third sector organisations.

Methodology

The consultation ran between September and November 2025. The consultation was carried out in the form of an online survey that was available on the Council's website. The Council also used its associated website of HomeChoice, where applicants manage their housing waiting list application, to further raise awareness of the consultation. The Council directly contacted some of its key housing stakeholders, such as the tenants of its small stock holding.

Press and social media communications were used to promote the survey and encourage responses. Council staff also held and attended housing events in the community within the consultation period in which the strategy was promoted. Key partner agencies were also engaged and directly approached to participate.

The strategy was also discussed at the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the consultation period.

The survey asked for views on the vision and three priorities identified as part of the strategy and asked whether there was anything they wanted to see included in the strategy that wasn't covered in the priorities. Respondents were then asked regarding the alignment to the Council's current Business Plan priorities. There was also general opportunity for suggestions regarding any other actions suggested that are not covered by other questions, to allow for further comments from respondents.

The vision within the Housing Strategy that views were requested on, in terms of the extent to which the respondent agreed, is outlined below

“For all Cherwell residents to live in a safe, secure, quality and affordable home that is suitable for their needs and fit for the future.”

The three main themes within the Housing Strategy that views were requested on, in terms of the extent to which the respondent agreed, were

1. Prioritise the delivery of homes that people can afford and that are suitable for the needs of the community

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2. Improving the existing condition of properties within Cherwell. Ensuring high property standards and properties that are fit for the future, working towards net zero.
3. Promoting health and wellbeing through housing, tackling homelessness, improving support. Helping to create sustainable communities.

Questions on the vision and the themes reflected question 1-4 of the survey. In questions 1-4, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the theme or statement.

The vision requested a yes/no response. In response to the themes, responses were graded from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” through 5 responses and respondents were asked to choose one.

Question 5 asked respondents

Would you like to add any other comments to the 3 priorities above or any further suggested amendments?

A free text box was then provided for respondents to type their answer.

Question 6 asked respondents to what extent the new Housing Strategy and its priorities reflected and delivered the Business Plan priorities.

Respondents could provide their views by scoring from 1 to 10, 10 being the most positive response.

Are there any priorities that you feel that we should include instead? If yes, please tell us what you would like for us to include.

A free text box was then provided for respondents to type their answer.

Question 7 asked respondents whether there were any other actions that respondents felt should be adopted within the Housing Strategy that are not covered.

This was a Yes/No question that was followed by a free text box.

Surveys were anonymised to ensure impartial views were obtained. Documents were made accessible and other ways to participate were made available if and when requested.

Survey Response and Results

A total of 18 responses were received to the consultation. 17 of those completed a survey and there was 1 additional submission. Thank you to everyone that took part

In response to the three proposed themes and the vision, respondents were broadly supportive and agreed with their importance. The responses to these are shown in Table 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 below

Vision

“For all Cherwell residents to live in a safe, secure, quality and affordable home that is suitable for their needs and fit for the future.”

94% of people respondents advised that they agreed with the vision statement.

Priorities

Priority 1

In response to priority one, “Prioritise the delivery of homes that people can afford and that are suitable for the needs of the community”, 76% of respondents have advised that they are supportive of the statement or have expressed no negative preference.

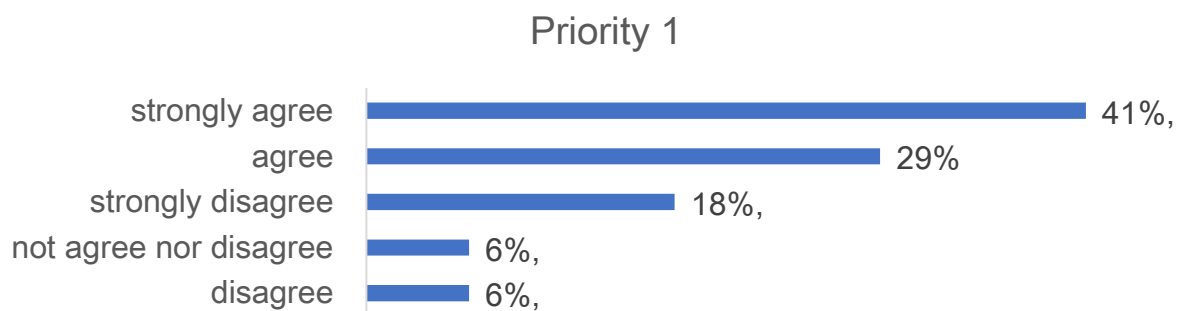


Table 1

Priority 2

In response to Priority 2, “Improving the existing condition of properties within Cherwell. Ensuring high property standards and properties that are fit for the future, working towards net zero”, 76% of respondents have advised that they are supportive of the statement or have expressed no negative preference.

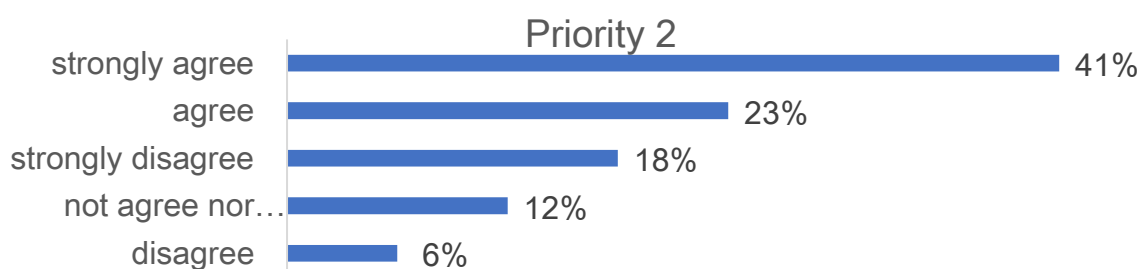


Table 2

Priority 3

In response to Priority 3, “Promoting health and wellbeing through housing, tackling homelessness, improving support. Helping to create sustainable communities”, 82% of respondents have advised that they are supportive of the statement or have expressed no negative preference.

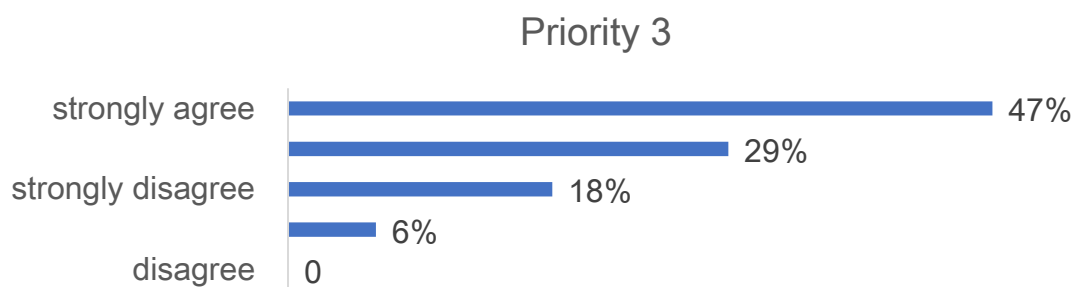


Table 3

Wider Corporate Objectives

Consultees were asked for their comments on the wider alignment with the Council Business Plan 2024-2025.

A summary of these responses are below

- 94% of the respondents consider that to some extent that the priorities reflect and align with the business plan objective, “Housing that meets your needs”
- 82% of the respondents consider that to some extent that the priorities reflect and align with the business plan objective, “supporting environmental sustainability”
- 70% of the respondents consider that to some extent that the priorities reflect and align with the business plan objective, “an enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres”
- 76% of the respondents consider that to some extent that the priorities reflect and align with the business plan objective, “healthy, resilient and engaged communities”

How the consultation feedback has helped to shape the Strategy

From the responses received both as part of the resident and stakeholder strategy along with the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, there has

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been general support that the vision and the priority themes that inform the actions that will be taken through the action plan.

As a result of the comments received, the following changes or additions have been made.

- Reference to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 has been removed
- Clearer and further reference has been made to Oxford's Unmet Housing Need.
- A proposed method of monitoring registered provider performance of those operating within Cherwell has been added to the action plan.
- Action plan action added that specifically references housing options for vulnerable groups
- The Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment that accompanies the strategy has been more appropriately reflected within the final report.

As outlined in the Methodology, the Council as part of the consultation process asked for comments from those completing the consultation survey. A summary of these comments is provided below. Where multiple comments have been received that are similar, this is indicated.

Additionally, the comments and questions posed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are also reflected in the below table, with a summary of the responses provided at the Committee by Officers.

Due to the time gap between the consultation draft, the consultation and potential implementation dates, some matters affecting context changed in response to wider context change, such as government policy but also the evolving Cherwell Local Plan process. These changes have been made for accuracy in the final version but do not make any changes or affect any of the proposed actions and objectives.

Summary of Consultation Comments

Would you like to add any comments to the 3 Priorities or suggest further amendments?

Summary of comments made by respondents

Officer Response

“Environment and infrastructure requirements are not specified”.

Matters that relate to infrastructure and the context of individual development schemes or the wider context of urban and rural centres within Cherwell are matters for the Cherwell District Council Local Plan as they are planning processes.

“Any new builds should be exempt from Right to Buy”

Right to Buy and related policy relates to national government policy and the tenancy arrangements of individual providers.

The Council, whilst supporting the delivery of affordable housing, cannot make stipulations regarding this matter.

“Incentives in order to deliver more truly affordable (social rents)?”

It is not clear from the comment what is meant by “incentives” and who for, developers, buyers etc.

As outlined in the Housing Strategy, the Council recognises the significant housing demand it has for social rented properties and this is shown, in part, by the growing waiting list.

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<p>Greater commitment to social rent in all rental accommodation delivered through s106 agreements (1 similar comment)</p>	<p>As outlined in the strategy document, the Council's housing team works to prioritise the delivery of social rent within the affordable housing allocation. This is also reflected in the Council's draft Local Plan.</p>
<p>"Explore with RP partners to acquire more homes for use as temporary accommodation" (1 similar comment)</p>	<p>The Council has partnered with different Registered Providers to deliver temporary accommodation over recent years. Providing funding for their purchase or development directly.</p> <p>It has most recently done this through applying to the governments Local Authority Housing Fund and by using some S.106 commuted sums.</p> <p>Should opportunities similar arise in the future and the Council be in the position to support through Capital grant, these opportunities will be explored.</p>
<p>"On Priority 2, ask for copies of regulatory assessments of your RP partners rather than asking for a separate reporting system, to make best use of existing systems."</p>	<p>The strategy has been reviewed to reflect this suggestion within the Action Plan.</p>
<p>"Great to see allocations policy will be reviewed annually" (1 similar comment)</p>	<p>Noted. It is important that we understand whether our scheme is responding to changes in local need.</p>
<p>"It is of concern that there is no mention of facilities/amenities</p>	<p>These are matters that are addressed through planning and</p>

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<p>being increased considering a potential increase in population”.</p>	<p>development processes and through strategic documents such as the Local Plan.</p>
<p>“How are you going to help listed buildings achieve net zero when we occupants are not allowed to make changes without full planning consent?”</p>	<p>Changes to any planning rules are not within the scope of the Housing Strategy and therefore any requirements for consent because of the type of building owned will remain. If it difficult to comment on individual circumstances and fully understand the contexts and circumstances involved.</p> <p>All buildings, homes, commercial, public buildings etc are within the scope of the national Heat and Buildings Strategy and will still need to take steps to decarbonise, as alluded to in the strategy document. This strategy document was brought forward by a previous government administration, so further measures or changes could be announced in the future following the change in government.</p>
<p>“Affordability is essential, safe housing away from crime and within green, sustainable neighbourhoods with trees would go a long way to ensuring people with health conditions could access work more easily through the therapeutic benefits of good quality shelter.”</p>	<p>The Housing Strategy and its priorities would seem to be compatible with the general tone of this statement.</p>
<p>“Please try to lobby Westminster for the funds and legislation to stop failures from government.”</p>	<p>The Council does communicate with central government directly, and also through its partnerships with other similar Council’s, to express views and comment on local and common pressures.</p>

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<p>“Feel it is key to improve the situation of housing for those who need it first prior to working towards net zero as the situation of affordable housing is dire in the district and the country.”</p>	<p>Working to provide more affordable housing and improving housing outcomes and working towards net zero are separate priorities within the Strategy. The commitment to net zero is a wider commitment and is therefore not just something that this strategy alone is committing to.</p>
<p>“Homelessness should not be allowed. However, some people just need some help to get onto the housing ladder.”</p>	<p>Homelessness is a growing national issue and the Council works to improve housing outcomes for those that face homelessness as part of its wider strategy.</p> <p>The Council, through planning processes, enables the delivery of a mix of tenures, including tenures such as Shared Ownership, to enable certain groups to access lower cost home ownership.</p>
<p>“Delivery of new homes should not be at the detriment of rural communities”</p>	<p>The Local Plan processes and planning policy frameworks determine what houses are built and can be built and where, balancing local needs.</p>
<p>“Families that require affordable homes to do not respect their neighbourhoods and are disruptive to their neighbours”</p>	<p>People can have negative experiences with neighbours, regardless of location or tenure of occupants. It is unfortunate when these circumstances occur, but there is legislation that the Council or Police as appropriate can use to tackle neighbourhood issues.</p>
<p>“There are many vacant properties that would benefit from modernisation and provide ideal affordable homes or</p>	<p>The Council would like to see more empty properties brought back into use and this is referenced within the Housing</p>

<p>shelters for homeless individuals. This would be a great initiative for sustainability and working towards net zero. Recycling and reusing extant properties is a smart use of funds.”</p>	<p>Strategy.</p> <p>Some vacant buildings have been utilised for accommodation in the past within Cherwell and these have been used to help homeless people. Where the opportunity arises and funding is available, the Council will consider these opportunities.</p>
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<p>Are there any other actions you feel should be adopted within the Housing Strategy which are not covered?</p>	
<p>Summary of comments made by respondents</p>	<p>Officer Response</p>
<p>“More small or single developments. Too many large-scale projects destroying the countryside and farmland. No development allowed unless infrastructure in place, i.e., sewage systems able to cope”.</p>	<p>There have been similar responses within the above section where the response to this has been outlined.</p>
<p>“Limited mention of the Oxfordshire Homelessness Alliance, just wondering if this is intentional? Many actions within the countywide action plan fall within the remit of the Alliance provision.”</p>	<p>The Cherwell District Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029 has more mention of the Council’s strategy and response to homelessness.</p> <p>There are however more references within the Action Plan regarding how some of the objectives of Priority 3 are going to be addressed in practical terms.</p>

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<p>“Help landlords realistically achieve better energy especially if listed or other restraints. Also consider those who owns and live in listed under similar restrictions as they are also entitled to be warm.”</p>	<p>It is difficult to comment on individual circumstances and understand what help may be available that applies.</p> <p>There are grants available, such as the HUG through Oxfordshire County Council, the Great British Insulation Fund and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) funding that can assist in certain circumstances with the costs associated with retrofitting properties for tenants and landlords in turn.</p>
<p>“Trees, greenery, well designed and managed landscapes which are simple, understandable, within close proximity with a high degree of safety from the onset of design.</p> <p>Semi-natural environment with human elements... attractive safe surroundings... not too heavily vegetated... evidence of management... well maintained hard surfaces for pedestrians, cyclists and people with wheelchairs and pushchairs... well-designed low lighting to avoid harsh shadows and dark corners.</p> <p>This would greatly enhance the living environment of the tenants and provide an interdependent relationship with nature and wildlife.”</p>	<p>What properties are built and the design of neighbourhoods are matters for Local Plan processes.</p> <p>However, safer and more accessible neighbourhoods that create sustainable communities and living environments are general and supported principles of the Housing Strategy.</p>
<p>“Allow asylum seekers to work and engage with the community”.</p>	<p>The status and rights of individuals to live and work in the UK are matters for HM Government and not locally determined.</p>

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<p>“We fully support Cherwell's three overarching priorities for the Housing Strategy and look forward to working together in partnership to deliver against these.”</p>	<p>Thank you for the welcome support</p>
<p>“We recognise the need for new homes to be genuinely affordable to Cherwell residents. The strategy makes reference to increasing the delivery of new affordable homes, including making a contribution to addressing Oxford City Council's unmet housing need.</p> <p>The Housing Strategy should explicitly set out how local lettings plans for sites provided for Oxford's unmet need will be developed, how management standards will be upheld and to set a common standard across similar sites adjacent to Oxford city.”</p> <p>(1 similar response regarding Oxford's unmet housing need)</p>	<p>The strategy has been updated to apply in further detail some of the arrangements to Oxford's unmet housing need.</p> <p>Practical development of Local Lettings Plans on individual sites is something that the Housing Strategy would or can influence in a strategic and broad sense, and is mentioned in Priority 1's section, but it is not the role of the strategy to define specific arrangements on specific sites, as they would depend on the nature of the scheme and the partners involved.</p>

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 15 October 2024

Summary of comments made and responses given at Overview and Scrutiny (October 2024)	
Summary of comments made by the Committee	Officer Response
<p><u>Consultation</u></p> <p>Beyond what is stated on the Council Consultations pages, are there any specific key questions/areas that the consultation is seeking input on?</p> <p>What key stakeholders are being engaged with for their views on the consultation? How are they being engaged?</p> <p>How will the results of the consultation be taken into account? How exactly will the results of the consultation impact o the final Housing Strategy?</p> <p>How and when will the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be taken into account? Will the views be incorporated with the results of the Consultation?</p>	<p>The consultation will focus on the views of residents and stakeholders on the priority themes</p> <p>The consultation will be available on the consultation pages of the website and there will be press releases and social media posts inviting people to participate.</p> <p>We will also aim to reach people on our housing register and those who are residents within our small stock holding with more targeted communication</p> <p>There will also be a face-to-face consultation event during November.</p> <p>Consultation responses will be an appendix to the final report with a response from officers as to how they have been addressed.</p>

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<p><u>National Policy Context</u></p> <p>To what extent does the new Housing Strategy dovetail with the current National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) consultation? What impact does the new NPPF have on the current strategy?</p> <p>Are there any funding opportunities from government initiatives that have not been explored in relation to Housing in Cherwell?</p>	<p>The Housing Strategy dovetails with the current Local Plan and therefore the current NPPF.</p> <p>In relation to the current NPPF consultation, it would be to be determined, as the status of this is not confirmed.</p> <p>The Council has accessed the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to bring back into use/bring forward 56 units of additional affordable housing. We have accessed the 3 iterations of the LAHF thus far.</p> <p>New homes on new developments are developed through other providers, such as Registered Providers of Social Housing, and they access grants available to develop these sites.</p> <p>The Council has a history of delivering from previous funding initiatives.</p>
<p><u>Local Policy Context</u></p> <p>To what extent does the new Housing Strategy dovetail with the current CDC Local Plan? Are there any areas that need to be updated/aligned?</p>	<p>Services within the Council will and are liaising regarding the production of the separate documents and ensuring that they dovetail and do not contradict.</p> <p>It should be noted that they are delivering different things and have objectives.</p>

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<p><u>Scope of the Policy</u></p> <p>Have there been any changes to the strategy since the previous iteration was published?</p> <p>The Strategy refers to the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, which has subsequently been scrapped, can you provide clarification on this?</p> <p>Is the categorisation of Grey Belt within Green Belt land a CDC decision or a Government decision?</p> <p>Does the strategy take into account young men aged 18-25 years who may be sofa surfing and are vulnerable/have additional needs?</p>	<p>There have been significant changes to the previous strategy but the overall strategic themes remain similar as the Council's statutory duties in relation to housing remain the same.</p> <p>The reference to the 2050 plan will be removed from the strategy. It was placed within for context since the last strategy was produced. This will be removed to provide clarity.</p> <p>The NPPF will define what is classed as grey and green belt, and as this remain in consultation, it is difficult to clarify at this point.</p> <p>Sofa surfing individuals are more within the scope of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy or the Allocations Scheme. There is a priority within the strategy relating to vulnerable groups and this is within Priority 3.</p> <p>Young vulnerable people also have their own pathways through as potential care leavers or through the Young Persons Supported Accommodation Pathway (YPSA)</p> <p>An action will be placed within the Action Plan will have an action regarding the provision of services of services for vulnerable groups that are homeless or threatened with homelessness and the support that is provided.</p> <p>There is partnership work ongoing with other Districts, City and County Council regarding the provision and commissioning of supported accommodation</p>
<p><u>Existing Housing Stock</u></p>	<p>Records within the Council advised that there are between 1600-1700 properties that may be vacant within Cherwell.</p>

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<p>What is the current number of empty/vacant properties within Cherwell?</p> <p>What policies are in place for restoring and repairing housing stock for re-letting?</p>	<p>The Council does take action to try and bring empty properties back into use where it is practical to do so, and the new draft strategy is supportive of these aims.</p>
<p><u>Types of Housing Development</u></p> <p>Can we clarify incentives for the development of particular local need and affordable housing?</p> <p>There is a large demand for 1 bedroom properties, is there any incentives or initiatives to increase the number of 1 bedroom properties being built?</p> <p>With house prices within Cherwell being 10x salaries on average, are there further incentives for affordable housing, and is there opportunities to focus on these types of developments to tackle supply issues within Cherwell?</p> <p>Whilst the attempts at “affordable”, as in purchase price, is attempted to be covered, the “affordability” should include in use. In other words, I question the lack of detail on reducing the load at the point of use of housing and employment of course. By requiring ALL buildings to have forms of energy generation such as solar PV panels and Solar Thermal panels, the demand from the grid is reduced and hence the cost of running the property is also reduced making the dwelling more “affordable” in use.</p> <p>Good to read that the huge opportunities that Modular Housing can provide in speed of delivery, accuracy of build and super</p>	<p>The Local Plan dictates what is developed and what is required in each location. Partnership work is ongoing with other Districts, City and County Council regarding the increasing of supply of one bedroom accommodation in the wider system, to assist more vulnerable people.</p> <p>Shared Ownership and First Homes are targeted at those on more modest earnings who wish to become a home owner. There are also schemes that are offered by government to assist first time buyers.</p> <p>Affordable housing is nationally defined.</p> <p>It would be likely that properties would be more expensive to produce and therefore purchase if they had more facilities provided as standard, understanding that there is long term pay back periods potentially for those living within.</p> <p>There are no modular units currently being planned or developed in Cherwell. But the Housing Team and Strategy supports the delivery of more affordable housing and understands that modular housing can deliver housing more quickly to meet housing pressures more quickly. The Council is appraised of some of the challenges in delivering modular products.</p>

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<p>efficiency with huge reductions in carbon and waste are to be investigated. However, what plans are there to increase opportunities for those developers to get onto proposed sites?</p>	
<p><u>Social and Physical Infrastructure</u></p> <p>To what extent are the social and physical infrastructure planned and anticipated to coincide with the planned new housing development? What provisions need to be incorporated into the Local Plan and local health and social services provision – eg access to schools/GP/transport/roads infrastructure</p> <p>The requirement for other infrastructure such as major road upgrades requires the “plan” to have been worked with these other bodies; Has this been done?</p> <p>How will Thames Water manage to supply drinking water and sewage removal within the time scales of the plan?</p>	<p>These are matters for the Local Plan and not for the Housing Strategy</p>
<p><u>Environmental Impact</u></p> <p>Please can we clarify further to what extent the carbon impact of new housing and impact on the natural environment and ecology by fully assessed? What further work ay be required on this?</p> <p>To what extent has the carbon impact of new housing – and associated population increase and social and physical infrastructure – been taken into account? Surely the increased</p>	<p>These are matters for the Local Plan and not for the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>The Climate and Environmental Impact will be updated following the comments of the Committee.</p>

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<p>housing and associated infrastructure will necessarily increase carbon emissions impact?</p> <p>To what extent has the impact on the natural environment been fully assessed? Including, specifically, the impact on local ecology and wildlife?</p> <p>The requirement for green corridors, i.e. connected routes for wildlife seems to have been omitted?</p>	
<p><u>Targets, Metrics and Measuring Success</u></p> <p>The Housing Strategy highlights the priorities for the Council and a high level plan to address and deliver them. Please can we clarify further the timescales for the development of the delivery action plan and when and how this will be monitored and reviewed, including the targets for tackling homelessness?</p> <p>What are the metrics for measuring success of the Housing Strategy over time? What mechanisms are there for monitoring progress and impact?</p> <p>Out of the 300,000 target for house building nationally in Cherwell how much has actually been delivered?</p>	<p>How the Housing Strategy will be monitored is within the draft strategy and will be through an Action Plan. This will be reviewed throughout the life of the strategy.</p> <p>The Annual Monitoring Report will show how many houses have been built across Cherwell.</p>

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<u>Targets for Housing Development</u>	
<p>What are the targets for Cherwell District House Building over the next 5 years and over the period of the Strategy?</p> <p>With the withdrawal of the Oxford City Local Plan due to too high housing numbers, will the Cherwell requirement for the “unmet” need also be reduced?</p> <p>To what extent are the targets for housing: Realistic? Sufficient to meet rising demand? Fully assessed for impact on physical environment / carbon emissions/net zero?</p>	<p>These are matters for the Local Plan and not for the Housing Strategy.</p> <p>The Council is confident in its modelling that has been done as part of the Local Plan.</p> <p>This is the purpose of the Local Plan and ensuring this is aligned and answered.</p>