



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Cherwell District Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and related guidance set out the government's objective to significantly boost the supply of homes and that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a critical role in planning for and delivering an adequate supply of housing.
- 1.1.2 In particular, LPAs need to demonstrate a **5-year housing land supply** to show that it has enough identified, suitable, and deliverable land to meet its housing needs for the next five years. The supply is calculated as follows:
- **Five-year timeframe:** The supply must cover a rolling five-year period from the current date.
 - **Identified sites:** The council must have specific sites allocated or with planning permission that are expected to come forward for housing development.
 - **Suitable:** The land must be appropriate for housing in terms of location, accessibility, and environmental constraints.
 - **Deliverable:** There must be a realistic prospect that housing can be delivered on these sites within the five-year period. This considers factors like viability, infrastructure, and developer interest.
- 1.1.3 Up until recently, Cherwell District Council (CDC) has monitored and calculated two separate housing land supply positions: one for Cherwell's needs¹, and one for Oxford's unmet needs².
- 1.1.4 However, following 2024 appeal decisions and a recent High Court judgment, a combined assessment of the district's housing land supply position for both needs is now required. Furthermore, in December 2024, the Government published a revised NPPF and a new revised Standard Method calculation for assessing housing need.
- 1.1.5 Using the latest Standard Method calculations there is now a need to provide 1118 dwellings per annum to meet Cherwell's needs (compared to 742 under the previous

¹ Based on the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) – see para 4.3

² Based on Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need – see para 4.3

method) plus adding in Oxford's Unmet needs results in a revised annual requirement (including a 5% buffer) of 1871 dwellings. This is a level of housing delivery that has not been delivered in Cherwell before.

- 1.1.6 The Council's latest combined assessment, as detailed in CDC's 2024 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) shows that the District can only demonstrate a 2.3 year housing land supply for the period 2024 to 2029, as detailed below:

Description	5-year Period 2024 to 2029
Combined base requirement over next 5 years plus buffers	9356
Revised Annual Requirement (Over next 5 years)	1871
Deliverable Supply Over Next 5 Years	4339
Total Years Supply Over next 5 Year	2.3
Shortfall	-5017

1.2 Purpose of the Housing Delivery Action Plan

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this Housing Delivery Action Plan is to outline the actions the Council will take to improve housing delivery and achieve a requisite 5-year housing land supply.
- 1.2.2 This Action Plan complements existing Council plans, policies and strategies which provide a framework for the delivery of the Council's housing priorities. These include the following:

Corporate Plan (2025-2030)

- 1.2.3 The Corporate Plan has key priorities to increase delivery of affordable and green housing and deliver the new Local Plan and at the heart of the Council's Vision is its commitment to being "a modern Council, inspiring and enabling positive, lasting change".

Housing Strategy (2025-2030):

- 1.2.4 The Strategy sets out how the Council will respond to challenges in delivering and managing high-quality housing across all tenures in the District over the next 5 years. The Three priority areas of the strategy are:
- Increase the supply and diversity of affordable housing to ensure the right types of housing are available in the right places;
 - Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes and build thriving, healthy communities; and

- Enhance opportunities for residents to access suitable homes and have housing choices.

1.3 Aims and Scope of the Action Plan

1.3.1 The main aims and scope of the Housing Delivery Action Plan are as follows:

- To provide an analysis of the key reasons for the current under-delivery of new homes in the district against its housing requirement;
- To identify the measures the Council has already undertaken and intends to take to increase and accelerate the delivery of new housing in the district; and
- To identify the monitoring arrangements for the Housing Delivery Action Plan.

2. The Housing Delivery Test (HDT)

2.1 HDT explained

2.1.1 The HDT, introduced by the government, monitors housing delivery by Local Planning Authorities against annual targets. It measures net additional dwellings delivered over the previous **three-year period** against the homes the Government requires each Local Planning Authority (LPA) in England to deliver.

2.2 HDT Requirements

2.2.1 The Government publishes results on performance for each LPA on an annual basis. The HDT has three requirements:

- If delivery is less than 95% of the housing target, the LPA should prepare an Action Plan.
- If delivery is less than 85% of the housing target, the LPA should include a 20% buffer in calculating its 5-year housing land supply.
- If delivery is less than 75%, the presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF para. 11 d) is engaged.

2.2.2 The recently published HDT for CDC demonstrates that we have actually delivered 146% against the last three-year HDT monitoring period. Therefore, this Action Plan

is being put together voluntarily to support improved housing delivery, in order to achieve the requisite five-year housing land supply, not an Action Plan required by the Housing Delivery Test.

3. The Implications of Not Having a Five-Year Housing Land Supply

3.1 The 'tilted balance' is engaged

3.1.1 The absence of a five-year supply 'tilts the balance' in the weighing-up of considerations involved in decision making. The presumption in favour of sustainable development at para. 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged.

3.1.2 This states that (where there is a lack of a five-year supply) planning permission should be approved unless:

- a proposed development is in a defined protected area or the asset is of particular importance which provides a strong reason for refusal; or
- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the NPPF as whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

3.2 Material Considerations and the Development Plan

3.2.1 The tilted balance does not guarantee planning permission nor does it replace the statutory responsibility of the decision-maker to consider whether planning permission should be granted in accordance with the Development Plan, when read as a whole, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF and whether the 'tilted balance' would be engaged are potential material considerations.

3.2.2 Planning permission can still be refused where the tilted balance is engaged if the harm associated with a proposed development outweighs the benefits.

4. Housing Delivery Analysis

4.1 Geographical Context

- 4.1.1 Cherwell District is a largely affluent district in the South East of England. It is connected to London, Birmingham and Oxford by fast rail links from Banbury, Bicester and a few of its villages and has attractive features such as a rich fabric of historic settlements, buildings, parks and other green spaces, plus a wide and expanding economic employment base.
- 4.1.2 The strategic highway network also provides ready access to those cities and beyond for Cherwell residents, its workforce and businesses via the M40 motorway and the A34 and A43 trunk roads.
- 4.1.3 However, the district faces specific constraints, including Green Belt policies, infrastructure delays, and market conditions

4.2 Local Housing Market

Property Prices and Affordability

- 4.2.1 The median house price in the District in September 2023 was **£396,000**, which is significantly higher than the UK average of £282,000 in 2024, although lower than the Oxfordshire wide and South East wider level. Sold houses data from 2023-24 suggests that the average price for properties sold in Bicester and Kidlington were around 21% higher than those sold in Banbury (source: Zoopla).
- 4.2.2 The District's median gross annual workplace-based earnings in 2023 were **£30,749** which is lower than the Oxfordshire median of £34,005 but higher than the national figure of £29,669. The workplace earnings to house price ratio within Cherwell is wider therefore than at a national level. In 2021, the house price to workplace earnings ratio was over 10 times and this gap has widened such that by 2023 it was almost 13 times, compared to a national ratio of 9.5 times. This means that purchasing a home is out of the reach for many working households and significantly more difficult than across much of the UK.
- 4.2.3 Affordability is not just an issue for homeowners and those seeking homeownership. It is a cross-tenure issue, and the issues facing the private rented sector are similarly challenging. The median rental cost per month for a property in Cherwell in 2022 was **£975**. This is below the Oxfordshire level of £1100 but higher than the overall national and South East levels. Median rents in Cherwell rose **11+%** over the 3 prior years, which is a faster acceleration than in the County as a whole.
- 4.2.4 The private rented sector locally is a challenging market with high demand for accommodation and a buoyant market. Therefore, those that are on the lowest incomes face the most significant challenges in accessing private rented sector tenancies.

- 4.2.5 As Cherwell is adjacent to Oxford city, prices have been pushed up by the Oxford market and its thriving rental market, driven by its location, commerce and student market, particularly in HMO's. Median rents in Oxford city are around £300 per month more than they are in Cherwell and, given their proximity, it also affects rental properties in Kidlington and is also starting to affect Bicester, following improvements in rail connectivity with Oxford.

Social Housing Demand

- 4.2.6 There are presently just over 2,000 households in Cherwell on the Council's housing register, and this has increased by almost 100% in the last five years.
- 4.2.7 There were 546 lettings through the housing register in 2023/24. There is an identified increasing need for 1-bedroom accommodation within Cherwell, with 50% of new applicants in the year requiring a 1-bed property and 84% requiring either 1 or 2-bed accommodation.
- 4.2.8 Fortunately, the supply of smaller accommodation is strong, both through new delivery and through relets, so waiting times for this type of social accommodation is shorter than for larger 4 and 4+ bedroom family accommodation, regardless of what priority band applicants are in. The average wait for a larger property in 2023/24 through the housing register was 2 years and 11 months.

4.3 Local Planning Context

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1)

- 4.3.1 This Local Plan, adopted in July 2015, sought to boost significantly the supply of housing from previous years, and meet the objectively assessed need for Cherwell identified in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014. This is a total of 22,800 homes from 2011 to 2031 or some 1140 dwellings per annum. The Plan's spatial strategy is to direct most development to Banbury and Bicester. In addition, some growth was proposed at the former RAF Upper Heyford. Elsewhere development is limited.
- 4.3.2 Over the Plan period 10,129 homes are to be provided at Bicester, 7,319 at Banbury, and 5,392 in the rural areas, including Heyford and Kidlington.
- 4.3.3 The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in 2015 and hence is over five years old. A review of the Plan's policies was presented to the Executive in January 2021. The review concluded that the majority of the Plan's policies were generally up to date. This included the Local Plan requirement of 1,142 homes per annum (22,840) which then remained the default starting point for the purposes of calculating the 5-year supply.

- 4.3.4 A further review in 2023 however, concluded that the strategic policies in the adopted local plan relating to housing needed updating. Subsequently the Council reverted to applying the standard methodology for the assessment of local housing need for Cherwell for the purpose of calculating the five-year housing land supply.

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review - Oxford's Unmet Housing Need

- 4.3.5 In the 2015 Local Plan the Council committed to working on an on-going basis with all other Oxfordshire local authorities to address the need for housing across the Oxfordshire Housing Market area. All of the Oxfordshire councils accepted that Oxford cannot fully meet its own needs. This Partial Review Local Plan subsequently identified land for 4,400 additional homes to meet Cherwell's agreed share of Oxford's unmet need to 2031. This was adopted in September 2020.
- 4.3.6 As this local plan is less than 5-years old the housing requirements of the Partial Review continues to be applied for the purpose of calculating the five-year housing land supply for Cherwell's contribution to Oxford's unmet housing need.

Emerging Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042

- 4.3.7 The Council is currently preparing a new local plan for the district which covers the period 2020 to 2042. The pre-submission (Regulation 19) Plan was published for consultation between December 2024, and 25 February 2025. Submission for examination is expected early summer 2025.
- 4.3.8 This emerging Local Plan requires 20,042 homes to be delivered to meet housing need between 2020 and 2042. This equates to 911 dwellings per annum. An additional 4,545 homes are provided to help deliver further social/affordable housing, support place making and provide contingency. This brings the total number of homes planned to 24,587.

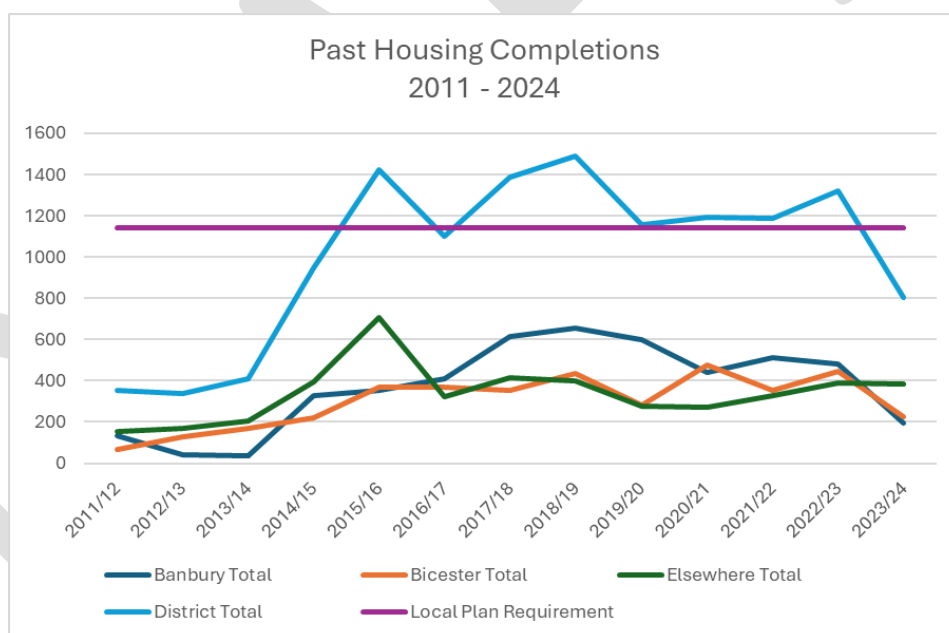
Neighbourhood Planning

- 4.3.9 There are a number of 'made' neighbourhood plans in the district.
- Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan - 19 October 2015
 - Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan - 19 December 2016
 - Adderbury Neighbourhood Plan - 16 July 2018
 - Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan - 14 May 2019
 - Weston-on-the-Green Neighbourhood Plan - 19 May 2021
 - Deddington Neighbourhood Plan – 22 May 2024

5. Housing Delivery Progress

5.1 Current Position

- 5.1.1 Cherwell has for many years facilitated the delivery of new homes, and for the most part exceeded local plan targets. However, the significant increase in Cherwell's housing requirement presents a significant challenge moving forward. Current delivery rates indicate that the Council will fall well short of the required 1871 new homes per annum.
- 5.1.2 The 2024 AMR shows that of the 13,117 homes built since 2011, 37% have been at Banbury, 30% at Bicester and 33% elsewhere in the district. In 2023/24, 28% of completions were at Bicester, 24% at Banbury and 47% elsewhere. The graph below shows how this figure has fluctuated over the past thirteen years and in particular that developments at the two main towns of the district and where most development is focused and allocated in the Local Plan has dropped significantly in the past year, with more being built in the rural areas.



- 5.1.3 When compared with the required annual delivery rate required by the 2015 adopted Cherwell Local Plan this is an average under delivery of 131 dwellings per annum, although for most of the past 13 years delivery has been above that required by the local plan.
- 5.1.4 However, there has been a noticeable dip in delivery in the monitoring year 2023/24, with only 805 dwellings completed. Early indications are that this trend is continuing in 2024/25.

5.2 Progress of Allocated Sites

5.2.1 The progress being made on strategic sites (100 or more dwellings) allocated in the 2015 Local Plan, is detailed below:

Site	Allocation	Permissions	% of allocation granted permission	Completions (2011 – 2024)	% of allocation built	Permissions remaining
BICESTER						
North West Bicester	6000	2642	44%	412	7%	2230
Graven Hill	2100	750	36%	511	24%	239
South West Bicester Phase 2	726	649	89%	649	89%	0
South East Bicester	1500	1500	100%	0	0%	1500
Gavray Drive	300	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	10626	5541	52%	1572	15%	3969
BANBURY						
Canalside, Banbury	700	19	3%	0	0%	19
Southam Road	600	627	105%	537	90%	90
West of Bretch Hill	400	480	120%	480	120%	0
Bankside Phase 2	600	820	137%	0	0%	820
North of Hanwell Fields	544	590	108%	590	108%	0
Bolton Road	200	78	39%	0	0%	78
South of Salt Way (West)	150	343	229%	324	216%	19
South of Salt Way (East)	1345	1448	108%	359	27%	1089
Drayton Lodge Farm	250	320	128%	0	0%	320
Higham Way	150	0	0%	0	0%	0
Total	4939	4725	96%	2290	47%	2435
ELSEWHERE						
Former RAF Upper Heyford	2361	2590	110%	1150	49%	1440
TOTAL	17926	12856	72%	5012	28%	7844

5.2.2 The above table demonstrates that almost all the allocations at both Banbury and Heyford have been granted planning permission, but only 52% at Bicester. Furthermore, whilst delivery at Banbury and Heyford has been coming forward, with almost 50% of the housing from the allocations being completed, Bicester has only

completed 15% of its housing from the allocations. Most notable is the completion of just 7% of the largest allocation in the Local Plan, the 6000 houses at North-West Bicester.

5.3 Progress of Windfall/Rural Sites

- 5.3.1 At the Category A and Category B villages, the adopted Local plan anticipated that about 750 largely windfall developments would come forward within the plan period to 2031. In fact, over 1,130 dwellings have actually been completed on sites at and around those settlements and permissions exist for more. In particular, 219 houses have been delivered at Adderbury, 313 at Ambrosden, 313 at Bloxham, 180 at Deddington and 200 at Hook Norton.

5.4 Progress of Allocated Sites for Oxford's Housing Needs

- 5.4.1 The progress being made on the sites allocated to meet Oxford's unmet need in the Partial review Local Plan, is detailed below:

Site	Allocation	Applications	Resolution to approve	Permissions Issued	% of allocation granted permission	Completions
Policy PR6a - Land East of Oxford Road	690	690	690	0	0%	0
Policy PR6b - Land West of Oxford Road	670	0	0	0	0%	0
Policy PR7a - Land South East of Kidlington	430	370	0	370	86%	0
Policy PR7b - Land at Stratfield Farm	120	118	118	0	0%	0
Policy PR8 - Land East of the A4	1950	2200	2200	0	0%	0
Policy PR9 - Land West of Yarnton	540	540	0	540	100%	0
TOTAL	4400	3918	3008	910	21%	0

- 5.4.2 The above table demonstrates that whilst applications have been submitted for 89% of the 4400 housing allocated (with nearly all the sites having adopted Development

Briefs) only two sites have the benefit of planning permission, equating to 910 houses, which is just 21%. Leaving 3490 houses yet to receive permission.

- 5.4.3 Whilst applications for 3008 of these dwellings (86%) have been to planning committee and have received a resolution to approve, which shows that delivery is expected to start and will pick up over the coming years, the delay to the Partial Review sites being developed is a big factor in the under delivery of housing.

5.5 Affordable Housing Progress

- 5.5.1 The AMR shows that in the monitoring year 2023/24, there were 266 net affordable housing completions secured through Section 106 agreements. This figure represents an annual increase in affordable housing completions since the 2021/22 monitoring year. Furthermore, affordable housing completions accounted for approximately 33% of the total net housing completions (805 homes) in 2023/24.
- 5.5.2 The AMR indicates that 99% of social housing in Cherwell is delivered by Registered Providers, highlighting the importance of this partnership for future affordable housing provision.
- 5.5.3 The AMR acknowledges a significant imbalance between the high demand for social housing and the limited supply, particularly for larger family homes.

6. Challenges to Delivery / Planning Processes

6.1 Power Supply

- 6.1.1 One of the biggest issues to delivery at Bicester has been ensuring sufficient electricity supply to meet the demands of the growing town. A number of sites have stalled as capacity in the grid to serve the homes is not there and not anticipated for a number of years. This has affected confidence of the housebuilders on some sites to start building if the houses cannot connect to the grid.

6.2 Transport Infrastructure

- 6.2.1 Whilst 6,000 homes have been allocated for development at North-West Bicester in the 2015 Local Plan and over 2,230 have been granted permission, only 412

dwellings have thus far been completed on the site. Lack of funding to construct an essential new strategic link road to serve the largest North-West Bicester allocation has been a major constraint.

6.3 Foul Drainage

- 6.3.1 Foul water drainage capacity limitations have been significant constraints to development completions around Kidlington, particularly on the Partial Review Sites. This has delayed the ability of the LPA to grant planning permission for these sites while this matter is being resolved.

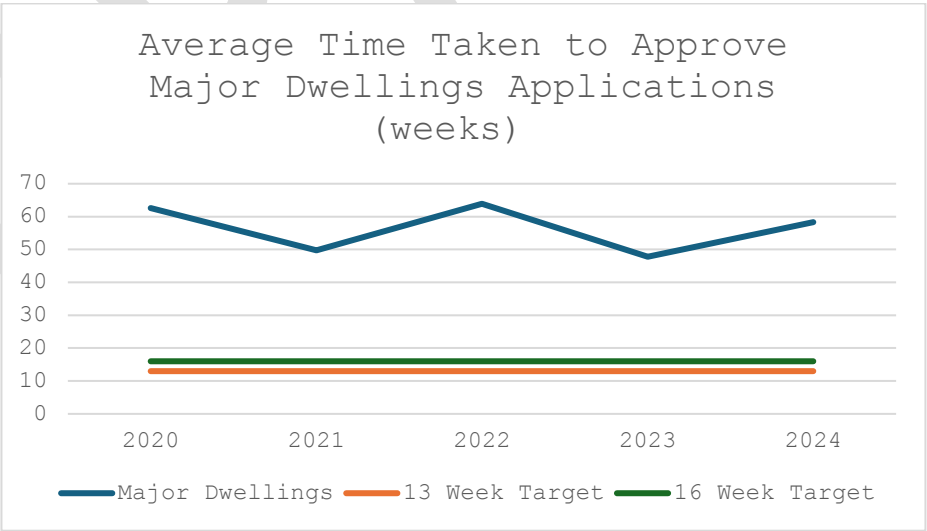
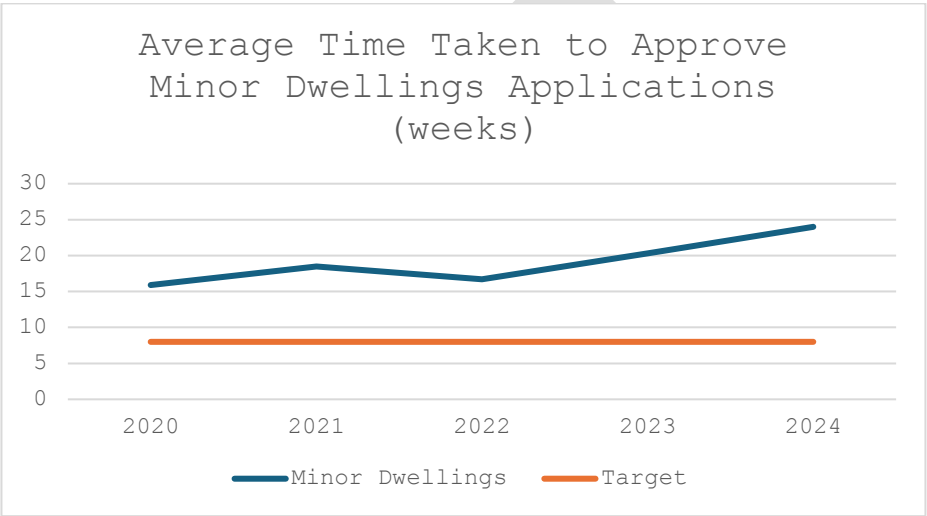
6.4 Planning Performance

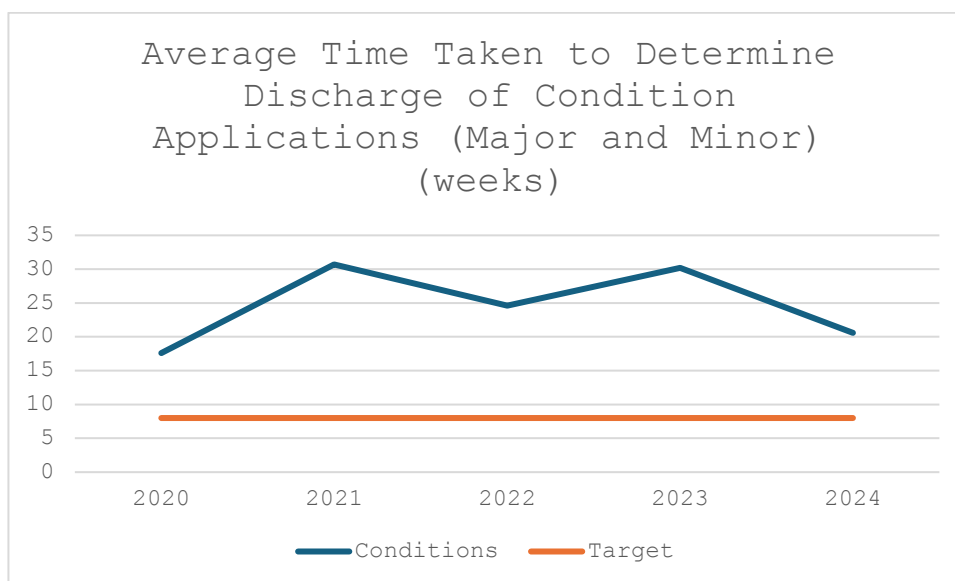
- 6.4.1 The LPA is significantly exceeding Government targets for the Speed of determining applications with over 80% of both major and non-major applications decided on time. However, in terms of quality of decision making the Council has gone over the 10% Threshold, due to the number of major appeals allowed. See table below:

Measure and type of Application	Threshold and assessment period October 2023 to September 2024	CDC Performance
Speed of major Development	60%	86.21% (50/58 applications determined in time)
Speed of non-major Development	70%	82.97% (955/1151 applications determined in time)
Measure and type of Application	Threshold and assessment period April 2022 to March 2024	CDC Performance
Quality of major Development	10%	10.4% (12 applications allowed at appeal, against 115 determined)
Quality of non-major Development	10%	0.74%

		(17 applications allowed, against 2308 applications determined)
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6.4.2 In addition, whilst the Council is meeting the targets on Speed, this is heavily reliant on the use of ‘Extension of Time’, which means applications are taking a lot longer to determine than the 8, 13 and 16 week timeframes. which delays the granting of planning permissions. In addition the delays in granting discharge of condition applications has been significantly above the 8 week target over the last 5 years. See graphs below:





6.4.3 The time taken to determine applications and discharging conditions does contribute to delaying delivery of developments.

6.5 Consultation Responses

6.5.1 A significant proportion of the major planning applications are delayed due to the time taken to engage with statutory consultees and awaiting their response, and the repeat requests for amended/more information. In particular the Environment Agency, OCC Highways and National Highways. These delays can add many months if not more than a year to the consideration of applications.

6.6 Legal Agreements

6.6.1 Following on from the above the process of agreeing developer contributions to affordable housing and infrastructure through legal agreements (Section 106 agreements) can significantly delay delivery by planning permissions taking a long time to be issued whilst finalising the S106 agreement (often by more than a year and occasionally up to several years).

6.6.2 For example, in 23/24, 58 applications for major development (including S106 agreements) were determined. 48 were determined within time or with an agreed extension of time, but only 12/58 (21%) were determined within time without using an agreed extension of time. The average time taken to determine applications with a S106 was 67 weeks.

6.7 Planning Appeals

- 6.7.1 Whilst there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF para.11d), the perception of some stakeholders is that individual planning decisions do not always reflect this, and that this can adversely affect housing delivery in the District.
- 6.7.2 The Council's failure to successfully defend refusals of planning permission for housing developments, particularly around Banbury, Heyford Park and some of the Category A villages and in a number of cases following Member overturns of Officer recommendations of approval has resulted in the Government formally identifying Cherwell District Council as an underperforming authority because more than 10% of refusals for major housing projects have been overturned at appeal in the last two years (10.4%).
- 6.7.3 In addition, dealing with a high number of planning appeals over the past few years, particularly the significant number of Public Inquiries has taken up a significant amount of time and resource, taking our most experienced planning officers and solicitors away from processing live applications, leading to additional delays.

6.8 Staffing

- 6.8.1 Despite the successful filling of all vacancies within the Development Management Team with permanent or agency staff, the sheer number of applications received, coupled with the intricate nature of strategic development proposals and the requirements of Planning Performance Agreements, places considerable pressure on the service. Resource levels are subject to ongoing review, with careful consideration given to budgetary limitations.

6.9 External factors

- 6.9.1. *Market Conditions:* Fluctuations in the housing market, including house prices and demand, affect the viability of development and the willingness of developers to build. The lower completion rates in 2023/24, reflect the broader national market conditions.
- 6.9.2. *Construction Costs:* Rising costs of materials and labour are making developments less financially viable, potentially leading to delays or cancellations, particularly for affordable housing projects with tighter margins. The slow rates of delivery on ongoing strategic sites with the benefit of planning permission reflects this.
- 6.9.3. *Environmental Regulations:* Increasingly stringent environmental regulations, such as those related to biodiversity net gain, can create significant hurdles and delays for housing developments, requiring complex mitigation strategies.
- 6.9.4. *Infrastructure Providers:* The timely delivery of essential infrastructure (roads, utilities, schools, healthcare) by external agencies is critical for making housing

developments viable and sustainable. Delays in infrastructure can hold up housing completion.

7. Key Actions and Responses

7.1 Interventions and Partnerships

- 7.1.1 This Housing Delivery Action Plan focuses on the intervention options open to the Council, recognising that a wide range of partners will need to be involved in helping to achieve the objectives of the Housing Delivery Action Plan. This will involve working with landowners, developers, registered providers and development bodies, as well as infrastructure providers to ensure that more new housing is delivered within Cherwell District.
- 7.1.2 The Council is committed to working constructively with Government and other partners to take advantage of funding opportunities to help deliver new housing and supporting infrastructure, in line with national planning policy.

7.2 What the Council has done / is doing so far

- 7.2.1 Table 1 below provides the specific actions that have been undertaken by CDC so far / in progress in tackling housing supply and delivery.

7.3 What more the Council will do

- 7.3.1 Table 2 sets out the proposed actions to further tackle housing supply and delivery.

7.4 The Housing Delivery Action Plan for CDC

- 7.4.1. The 11 actions within Tables 1 & 2 below form the Housing Delivery Action Plan for CDC to address the under delivery of housing in Cherwell District.

Table 1 – The Actions the Council has undertaken / is undertaking so far

Action	Description	How is/will this help supply and delivery?	Timescale (short/medium/long/ongoing)	Responsible Teams	Action progress at April 2025
1. Local Plan	Prepare and adopt a new Local Plan to meet Cherwell's needs, protect its environment and secure sustainable development.	The adoption of the plan would bring the annual housing target down to 911 from 1118 in the current local plan, making delivery more achievable	Medium - It is expected that the Local Plan will be adopted in 2026.	Planning Policy	<p>Consultation on the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan took place between December 2024 to Feb 2025.</p> <p>The Planning Policy team are now preparing documents for the Council to consider and for submission as soon as possible.</p>
2. Oxford Sewage Treatment Works (OSTW)	Engagement with MHCLG / DEFRA / Environment Agency / Thames Water / developers / CDC / OCC / WODC to find a solution to the capacity issue at the OSTW.	<p>For many months applications had been held in abeyance due to an objection by the Environment Agency on applications in and around Oxford due to environmental harm that would be caused by new development as a result of OSTW being at capacity.</p> <p>By overcoming this issue, applications would be a step closer to receiving permission</p>	Short -	<p>Development Management</p> <p>Assistant Director</p>	A series of high level meetings with these external partners has led to the Environment Agency withdrawing their objections to the developments in and around Oxford. This resulted in Thames Water confirming that the Oxford Sewage Treatment Works will be upgraded in time to serve these developments, including the partial review sites within CDC.
3. CDC Area Oversight Groups (AOGs)	These groups have been established to bring together key stakeholders and agree local priorities under an Area Priority Plan. Groups meet quarterly. Stakeholders include County, District and Town/Parish Councillors, developers / landowners, education establishments, businesses, community groups etc.	<p>Key Areas of Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Planning colleagues to resolve outstanding S106 issues. Engagement with / applying for funding from MHCLG / Homes England. Developer Forum engagement / specific landowner discussions to resolve issues ahead of planning. Energy infrastructure needs – engagement with the newly formed National Energy System Operator through Regional Energy Strategic Plan Forums for Central England. Helping manage local expectations around S106 contributions and infrastructure improvements, particularly around timescales. 	Ongoing	<p>Banbury Area Lead</p> <p>Bicester Area Lead</p> <p>Kidlington Area Lead</p> <p>Development Management</p> <p>Planning Policy</p> <p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Area Leads have been appointed to advance / take actions against Area Priority Plans.</p> <p>Area Priority Plans outline projects and actions that help address area priorities. This is a working document which is monitored and updated by the associated Area Lead.</p> <p>AOG Officer Meetings – Ahead of the quarterly AOG meetings, officers from the District and County meet to provide updates from their area of specialism. This enables Area Leads to provide updates at AOG meetings and reduce the time burden on other officers.</p> <p>Area Developer Forums are being / have been established to enable discussions to take place outside the planning arena, where Area Leads can provide CDC updates, shared developer issues can be discussed, and opportunities can</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning / preparation for the receipt of S106 infrastructure contributions to ensure efficient spend / delivery. 			<p>be explored. These forums will meet quarterly and feed into the AOGs.</p> <p>Area Economic Forum / Action Groups will be established to engage key area companies to better understand how we can support local businesses. These groups will meet quarterly and feed into the AOGs.</p>
4. Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)	A PPA is a project management tool which allows us to work with applicants within a framework of agreed timescales, actions and resources for handling particular applications. We look to agree identifiable stages: such as pre-application, application, and post decision and plan for the required elements of each stage.	The securing of PPAs helps fund the department as well as secure additional and dedicated resource and expert advice. This in turn provides focus and resource to ensure timely decision on applications and overcome issues.	Short and ongoing	Development Management	<p>We currently have PPAs in place for a high number of large-scale housing (and other) applications across the district. Particularly around Bicester and North of Oxford.</p> <p>Developers will be encouraged to enter into PPAs across the district</p>
5. Planning Improvement Plan	Officers have been carrying out a Planning improvement Plan since mid 2023, which followed service review. This resulted in areas where improvements were highlighted and a number of improvements proposed to put in place, to provide efficiency in working practices, quicker decisions and improved customer service.	This is helping to speed up the average times to determine applications and analyse data.	Medium and Ongoing	Development Management Planning Policy	<p>To date the Improvement Plan, has resulted in the implementation of a number of standardised report templates and checklist reports, return of the Duty Officer system; process checklist, local validation list, improved sign off processes, staff training, councillor training, creation of an interactive dashboard of planning data; updated suite of planning conditions, regular team meetings and so on.</p> <p>However, progress on the Improvement Plan has slowed due to heavy caseloads, other competing priorities and sufficient resource to deliver the improvements</p>
6. Engagement with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS)	We need to reduce the % of decisions on major developments overturned at appeal. We have been discussing the matter with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) who are to undertake a	Alongside the Peer Review, Officers, with guidance from PAS, are putting together an Action Plan for the processing of major applications. The outcome is expected to improve decision making and increased approvals of acceptable development	Short	Development Management Planning Policy	The decision making review has been organised and will take place in May 2025

	review with a focus on decision-making.				
7. S106 Process Improvement	In recognition of the lengthy time taken to determine applications with a S106, officers have put in place a S106 Process Improvement Project looking at the end to end process involved.	The aim is to reduce the average time taken to determine major applications with a S106 to 32 weeks by September 2025.	Short – completion of Action Plan by 31 st March 2025	Development Management Transformation Team	Whilst good progress has been made mapping the process and highlighting areas of improvement and putting actions together to improve the process, progress has stalled due to heavy caseloads, other competing priorities and sufficient resource to deliver the improvements.
8. Management of Strategic Planning Applications - Action Plan	An Action Plan is being put together to ensure that there are improved processes in place to project manage the strategic planning applications	<p>The aim of the Outcome of the Action so that they support delivery of the housing (and other development) and the applications are considered in as an efficient and timely way as possible.</p> <p>It also looks to reduce the number of planning appeals and to minimise the risks of costs that might be awarded against the Council following appeal decisions.</p> <p>The Key Themes of the Actions within the plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Improvement • Applicant Engagement • Strategic Partnerships and Stakeholder Management • Committee • Performance Management • Planning Officer Recommendations • Planning Performance Agreements • Resource and Document Management 	Finalisation of Action Plan - Short Implementation - Ongoing	Development Management Strategic Programme Board CLT PH Briefings Head of Digital and Innovation Resources & Transformation Customer Services Manager ICT Planning Policy	The Action Plan is currently being drafted and will be reported to the Corporate Leadership Team, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and BPM, before seeking endorsement by the Executive in June 2025
9. Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP)	The Council, with all the other Oxfordshire authorities, is working to develop Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPS) for Oxfordshire.	As the UK transitions away from fossil fuels to renewable, locally generated energy sources, the energy grid will need to work differently to store and distribute energy. The grid also needs to be prepared for fluctuations in energy demand which result	Medium – The LAEPS will be developed throughout 2025.	Climate Action Team.	The LAEPS are currently being developed and there will be a number of opportunities for communities and stakeholders to engage with their development. The process for validating Plans for each district is scheduled for early 2026.

		<p>from the delivery of other council ambitions, such as housing delivery and decarbonisation.</p> <p>The LAEPs will bring together this information together to provide a plan of clear, community-focused actions for transforming how energy is generated, used and managed in Oxfordshire. The LAEPs will identify the actions needed within each district, alongside cross-boundary initiatives to be delivered at the county level.</p>			
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Table 2 – The Further Actions the Council proposes to do

Action	Description	How is/will this help supply and delivery?	Timescale (short/medium/long/ongoing)	Responsible Teams	Proposed Actions
9. Agents / Developers Forum & improved engagement with Developers	Reconvene regular developer forums and to build relationships with developers and housebuilders to understand the challenges in bringing sites forward.	By understanding the challenges and issues in bringing sites forward, solutions and ways forward could be found to unlock the barriers and delays preventing developments commencing and/or progressing. It will also assist in tracking delivery of housing.	Short – Medium to be set up by Summer 2025 Then ongoing	Planning Policy Development Management	<p>Month 1 – 3 - Proactive Development Monitoring & Information Gathering (Immediate & Ongoing): We will implement a robust system to closely monitor the progress of significant housing developments (5-year horizon), proactively seeking regular, structured updates and information directly from developers starting. This ongoing process will allow us to identify potential delays and offer targeted Council support.</p> <p>Month 4- 6 - Regular Developer Forums for Collaboration (Short-Term & Ongoing): We will establish and host regular forums bringing together Council officers and developers. These forums will serve as key platforms for discussing progress, addressing challenges collaboratively, and exploring opportunities for accelerated delivery.</p>
10. Review of Pre-	The current pre-application service and charging schedule has not been renewed	Reduce Delays: The planning process can be slow, and pre-application advice is intended to streamline it. The review will	Medium – to be completed in 6 months	Development Management	Month 1 - Establish a Review Team and Define Scope and Objectives

Application Advice Service		<p>identify bottlenecks and areas for improvement.</p> <p>Improve Quality of Applications: Better pre-application advice can lead to fewer invalid applications and fewer revisions, saving time for both applicants and the council.</p> <p>Increase Housing Delivery: A more efficient planning service will encourage development, including much-needed housing.</p> <p>Ensure Consistency and Transparency: A clear and well-defined pre-application process will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and understand what is expected of them.</p> <p>Align with National Policy: Planning policies and best practices evolve. A review will ensure the council's approach is up-to-date and compliant.</p> <p>Improve Customer Satisfaction: A good service will lead to better relationships with developers and the community.</p>			<p>Month 2 – 3 - Data Collection and Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing pre-application records Survey applicants: Interview planning officers: Benchmark against other councils: Analyse relevant policies and guidance. <p>Month 4 – Identify Key Issues and Opportunities and Develop Recommendations, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Standards: Online Portal Officer Training: Review Fees and Charges: Scope of Advice: Promote use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs): <p>Month 5 - Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>Month 6 – Implementation Plan (Month 7):</p> <p>Ongoing - Monitoring and Evaluation based on</p> <p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average time taken to provide pre-application advice. Number of applications submitted following pre-application advice. Percentage of applications approved following pre-application advice. Applicant satisfaction with the pre-application service. Reduction in the number of invalid applications. Speed of determining planning applications.
11. Review of Planning Conditions	This review is to enable Cherwell District Council to streamline planning conditions and accelerate both the commencement of development and the discharge of conditions.	<p>Overarching Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportionality: Ensure conditions are necessary, reasonable, and directly related to the development. Clarity: Use unambiguous language in all conditions. 	Long – to be completed in 8 months	Development Management	<p>Months 1-2 Internal Audit of Current Practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Collection: Discharge Application Analysis: Staff Feedback: Benchmarking:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency: Design processes to minimize delays and administrative burden. • Collaboration: Foster better communication between the council, applicants, and statutory consultees. • Transparency: Make information about conditions and the discharge process readily accessible. 			<p>Month 3 - Stakeholder Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developer Forum ▪ Consultee Feedback <p>Month 4 – 5 Develop a Revised Approach to Planning Conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standard Condition Review: ▪ Condition Templates and Guidance ▪ Upfront Conditions ▪ Staged Conditions <p>Month 6 - Streamline the Discharge of Conditions Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear Timelines and Communication ▪ Standard Information Requirements and report templates ▪ Risk-Based Approach: allowing for a lighter touch for less complex matters. <p>Month 7 - Improve Internal Processes and Training</p> <p>Month 8 onwards - Implementation and Monitoring (Months 7 onwards)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) such as the average number of conditions per permission, the time taken to discharge conditions, and applicant satisfaction levels. ▪ Conduct regular reviews of the effectiveness of the new procedures and guidance, making adjustments as necessary based on data and feedback.
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8. Monitoring Arrangements

- 8.1 The 11 actions set out in this plan will be monitored and reviewed annually.
- 8.2 Monitoring information will be collected from various sources, including the Annual Monitoring Report, the Corporate Plan, Quarterly Returns, appeals monitoring, and housing trajectory data.
- 8.3 The Council will continue to maintain a strong housing-related evidence base and set future goals for housing delivery to support increased housing delivery.
- 8.4 Furthermore, the Council does welcome suggestions on the existing action plan measures and any future actions the Council may take to help support house building in Cherwell District. If you do have any suggestions on the existing or further measures the Council can take to support housebuilding within Cherwell, please contact us using the following details:

planning@cherwell-dc.gov.uk