

This report is public	
Housing Delivery Action Plan	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	10 June 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	29 April 2025
Report of	Assistant Director – Planning and Development

Purpose of report

To present a Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) and seek agreement to the actions to improve Cherwell's five year housing land supply position.

1. Recommendations

That the Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the Housing Delivery Action Plan for publication and to invite comment
- 1.2 To instruct officers to keep the Housing Delivery Action Plan under review, having regard to comments received, and to make any necessary changes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
- 1.3 To instruct officers to present a comprehensive review of the five year housing land supply position to the Executive, should there be evidence of a significant change.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Housing Delivery Action Plan (Appendix 1) is prepared in response to the Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2024 (AMR) which was presented to the Executive in February 2025. The AMR assessed the Council's five year housing land supply position and concluded that the Council could only demonstrate a 2.3-year supply. The Executive resolved that a Housing Delivery Action Plan be prepared in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.
- 2.2 The purpose of this plan is to outline the actions the Council will take to improve housing delivery and achieve a requisite five year housing land supply.
- 2.3 This Action Plan complements existing Council plans, policies and strategies which provide a framework for the delivery of the Council's housing priorities.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	<p>If findings and actions of the HDAP are agreed, there is the potential need for additional resource to help with delivering improvement plans/action plans. However, if signing up more PPAs, this would bring in more income to cover the costs of additional planning staff. Also, the action plans will help reduce the number of appeals, reducing the risk of further costs to the Council.</p> <p>Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 29 April 2025</p>
Legal	<p>The report notes the need for the Council to re-assess its housing land supply following appeal decisions in 2024 as well as a High Court Judgement.</p> <p>Subject to the comments above, the report indicates that the result of these cases was to require Cherwell to produce a combined assessment of Cherwell and Oxford's unmet needs and produce a 5 year housing supply based on this combined need.</p> <p>The report sets out how the Housing Delivery Action Plan allows us to do this and therefore comply with our legal requirements going forward.</p> <p>The report also sets out the risks and impact to the Council if this approach is not followed.</p> <p>The report comments on delays which can be caused by completion of S106 Agreements and other planning obligations. The two tier nature of Cherwell/OCC means that we often require input from both authorities and sealing to take place from both authorities before the agreements can complete. It is also important to note that detailed negotiations need to take place in advance of legal instructions being provided in order to ensure that negotiations are not on-going during the legal drafting stage, therefore avoiding delays.</p> <p>These points are currently being worked on between the planning and legal departments as part of the transformation process and both departments are making a number of changes to the process to help improve the speed of delivery for these agreements going forward.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill Head of Legal Services</p>
Risk Management	<p>As things currently stand the proposed plan requires more resource than what is currently available to deliver it. Therefore the main risk with agreeing the action plan is the extent to which it can be implemented and therefore meet the desired outcomes. The council therefore has three options:</p> <p>To produce an action plan that meets the budget envelope available. Agree the plan and identify the budget needed to deliver it</p>

APPENDIX 1

	Agree Agree which projects can be paused to redirect the resources needed to deliver the plan Shona Ware, Assistant Director, Customer Focus, 30 April 2025			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		The action plan is not new planning policy but rather to help facilitate meeting existing policy. The environmental implications of development is consider through Local Plan and planning application processes
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Quality housing and place making – to deliver sustainable and strategic development that meets Cherwell’s needs now, and in the future and to achieve more high quality, secure, and affordable housing that caters for the diverse needs of our residents.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	The Action Plan was discussed with Cllr Creed and Cllr Conway. There will also be future consultation with developers and stakeholders			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1. At the February 2025 meeting of the Executive, members approved the preparation of a Housing Delivery Action Plan in response to the findings of the Annual Monitoring Report which found that the Council only had a 2.3 year supply of housing over the five year period 2024-2029.
- 3.2. As reported in February, the assessment of the five year land supply position was affected by an appeal decision in which it was considered by a Planning Inspector that the calculation for Cherwell's requirements and that for the district's contribution to the unmet housing needs of Oxford should be amalgamated. It was also affected by the Government's publication of a new standard method for assessing 'Local Housing Need' alongside a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024. This significantly increased the quantum of housing for Cherwell that needed to be factored into the five-year supply calculation.
- 3.3. As set out in the proposed Action Plan (Appendix 1), this had led to a higher five-year target against which the supply of deliverable housing is measured. From a housing supply perspective, the largest factor affecting the district's ability to meet this target has been the delay in the sites allocated for development in the Partial Review of the Local Plan (2020) – those to help meet Oxford's needs.
- 3.4. The current five-year housing land supply position can only be addressed by increasing the supply of housing that can be shown to be 'deliverable' over the rolling five-year period. This can be achieved by accelerating identified supply or by appropriately approving new supply where there is evidence of sufficient delivery within the five-year period to have positive impact on the land supply position. The attached Action Plan therefore analyses the causes of under delivery (i.e. sites that should have progressed further by this point in time) and the overall supply of housing, and sets out a series of measures and actions to tackle them.

4. Details

Key Issues

- 4.1. The Council's Annual Monitoring Report 2024 assessed the Council's five year housing land supply position and concluded that the Council could only demonstrate a 2.3-year supply.
- 4.2. Revised NPPF and national Standard Method calculations for local housing need have increased the annual housing need to 1871 dwellings for the current five year period 2024-2029 (including the planned requirement for Oxford's needs). Once a new Local Plan is adopted, the housing requirement from that Plan would be applied to land supply calculations instead of the Local Housing Need figure arising from the Standard Method.

- 4.3. At 31 March 2024, the district had over 8,000 homes with outline or full planning permission that had not yet been built. The Council has very limited influence in bringing forward approved sites. Developer finances and circumstances including upfront costs, market conditions and competition are influential as are constraints such as utility capacity and the timing of infrastructure works. Planning performance affects the speed at which new planning permissions are granted (including the completion of legal agreements) and the speed at which detailed matters are approved or discharged. Accelerating delivery requires unblocking the development pipeline where required. This is important so that any five year land supply shortfall is not met unnecessarily by additional unplanned development.

Past Housing Delivery

- 4.4. The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted by the Council in 2015. It makes provision for the development of 22,840 homes; an annualised requirement of 1,042 dwellings per annum.
- 4.5. Prior to Local Plan adoption, a total of 2052 homes were delivered from 2011-2015: an average of 513 homes per annum. Post-adoption, from 2015 to 2023, the level of housing delivery exceeded the requirements of the Plan. A total of 10,260 homes were completed over that eight year period (an average of 1282 per annum). 39.6% of those homes were completed at Banbury, 30.1% at Bicester and 30.3% elsewhere including at Heyford Park (2015-2023).
- 4.6. However, in 2023/24, total completions dropped to 805 new homes. 24.5% were built at Banbury, 28.1% at Bicester and 47.4% elsewhere. This fall in delivery in part reflects national and local housing market conditions and in part the complexity in delivering the Local Plan's remaining strategic development sites, particularly at Bicester (Graven Hill, North West Bicester, and South East Bicester) where specific site circumstances and infrastructure constraints are delaying delivery.
- 4.7. The Partial Review of the 2011-2031 Local Plan, required to contribute in meeting Oxford's unmet housing needs, was adopted in 2020 following delays caused by a lengthy Local Plan Examination and an unsuccessful legal challenge. The Plan had been prepared in the interest of securing delivery of an additional 4,400 homes from 2021 to 2031 with a staggered housing trajectory provide for 1,700 homes in the first five years to 2026. Although, most sites are progressing through the development management process, to date there has been no delivery.

Future Housing Delivery

- 4.8. The Local Housing Need for Cherwell arising from the national Standard Method has increased significantly to 1118 dwellings per annum (a 63% increase). In addition, a further allowance for Oxford's unmet needs has to be included in the calculations. This results in a revised annual requirement (including a required 5% buffer) of 1871 dwellings.
- 4.9. The current supply of sites considered to be 'deliverable' (not just developable) indicates that the district will fall well short of the required 1871 new homes per annum. The AMR reported that for the period 2024 to 2029, there is presently a total shortfall of 5017 homes in demonstrating a five-year supply (a deliverable supply of 4339 homes compared to a requirement of 9356).

Summary of Key Actions that are being taken/proposed to be taken:

- 4.10 The Action Plan at Appendix 1 has been prepared in the interest of the Council doing all that it reasonably can to address this five year land supply shortfall. In summary, this includes:
- i. submit the new Local Plan for examination and adopt it as soon as possible thereafter
 - ii. utilise the Council's Area Oversight Groups to bring together stakeholders and agree on local priorities
 - iii. increase the use Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) and a Planning Improvement Plan to improve efficiency of planning processes
 - iv. engage with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and review planning decision making process where required to support improvement
 - v. reconvene regular developer forums
 - vi. review the pre-application advice service.
 - vii. implement an Action Plan to support the management of strategic planning applications.

Monitoring

- 4.11 It is proposed that the actions will be monitored and reviewed quarterly with the benefit of development monitoring information, developer engagement and stakeholder feedback

Stakeholder engagement on the Action Plan

- 4.12 Subject to the Executive's approval, officers propose publishing the Action Plan without delay in taking positive steps to address the five year land supply shortfall. However, it is also proposed to invite comments upon it from developers and statutory consultees and to keep it under review in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management having regard to feedback received.

Risks

- 4.13 Implementing the Action Plan, along with other planned improvements and measures, will require officer resources. The Assistant Director – Planning and Development and Corporate Director – Communities are seeking to make the appropriate provision within existing budgets.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 Seek reconsideration of the Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- Cherwell District Council

Officers consider that the proposed action plan provides the necessary foundation for improving the housing land supply situation. It can be reviewed in response to changing circumstances in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

6. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 In order to improve the district's housing land supply position and address the obstacles and delays to housing delivery, it is recommended that the attached Action Plan is agreed.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Housing Delivery Action Plan
Background Papers	Executive , 3 rd February 2025
Reference Papers	Annual Monitoring Report 2024
Report Author	Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management
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Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Ian Boll, Communities Director, 30 April 2025