



NEWS

Thames Valley planning news, March 2018

01 Mar 2018

Contents

- 01 **Oxford City Council awarded almost £20m from Housing Infrastructure Fund**
- 02 **Bracknell Forest Local Plan consultation**
- 03 **Thames Valley: ONS house prices and private housing rental indices**
- 04 **PPG updates - local plans and more**
- 05 **PM chairs inaugural meeting of Housing Implementation Taskforce**
- 06 **MPs debate housing, planning and the Green Belt**

Headline news

Oxford City Council awarded almost £20m from Housing Infrastructure Fund

Oxford City Council (OCC) has been awarded £19.84m of funding from CLG's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The HIF forms part of a wider government capital grant programme of up to £2.3 billion that seeks to aid the delivery of up to 100,000 new homes in England.

The bids have been awarded to OCC under the Marginal Viability Fund (MVF) intervention sub-section of the HIF and seek to allow the Council to proceed with partners on the delivery of three key housing-led developments across Oxford by 2025. The three schemes and their awards comprise:

- **Leys Regeneration Project** - £3.75 million to assist in the development of at least 300 new homes (including affordable dwellings), the redevelopment of the central shopping area, a new community centre in the local area and improved public realm on Blackbird Leys Road by 2025;
- **Northern Gateway/Oxford North** - £10 million to enable a scheme which seeks to strengthen Oxford's knowledge-based economy, with proposals including a 44 hectare employment site north of Wolvercote, 480 new homes (including affordable dwellings), a 90,000 sqm commercial innovation quarter, a 180 bed hotel and highway works that incorporate access to the site from the A40 and A44 by 2025; and
- **Osney Mead Innovation Quarter** - £6.09 million to fund proposals for a mixed use commercial and residential quarter. In partnership with Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency, the University of Oxford is seeking to provide 600 new homes for key university staff and students by 2025.

Councillor Bob Price, City Council Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development, said:

'We are very pleased that the City Council's three bids have been approved for funding through the HIF. We will be working with Homes England and MHCLG to deliver the required infrastructure to boost the number of affordable and market homes that will be available for the people of the city by 2025.

Oxford has [a] huge backlog of pent up housing demand and these three projects will make a big contribution to tackling the problems that we face. In order to move closer to resolving the crisis of unavailability and unaffordability, we will be working with our colleagues in the neighbouring districts over the next ten years to expand house building close to the city boundaries.'

County Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said:

'Securing funding for these three bids across Oxford is fantastic news. This money will ensure that necessary infrastructure is provided at the early stage of development helping to unlock key housing sites.

It will deliver much needed housing provision across the city and provide infrastructure that benefits the wider county.'

[Oxford City Council, 'Oxford City Council secures £20m from Housing Infrastructure Fund bids'](#)

[Return to contents](#)

Quote of the month



In so far as we turn increasingly to the rest of the world – as we are – then we will be able to do our own thing [...] We can simplify planning, and speed up public procurement, and perhaps we would then be faster in building the homes young people need; and we might decide that it was indeed absolutely necessary for every environmental impact assessment to monitor two life cycles of the snail and build special swimming pools for newts – not all of which they use – but it would at least be our decision.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's Brexit speech, 14 February 2018

Bracknell Forest Local Plan consultation

Bracknell Forest Council is consulting on the Draft Bracknell Forest Local Plan until 26 March 2018.

The consultation document outlines the Council's emerging spatial vision, spatial objectives, and strategy for the distribution of development up to 2036. It is anticipated that the emerging Bracknell Forest Local Plan will be adopted in February 2019.

[Bracknell Forest District Council, Draft Bracknell Forest Local Plan](#)

[Return to contents](#)

Thames Valley: ONS house prices and private housing rental indices

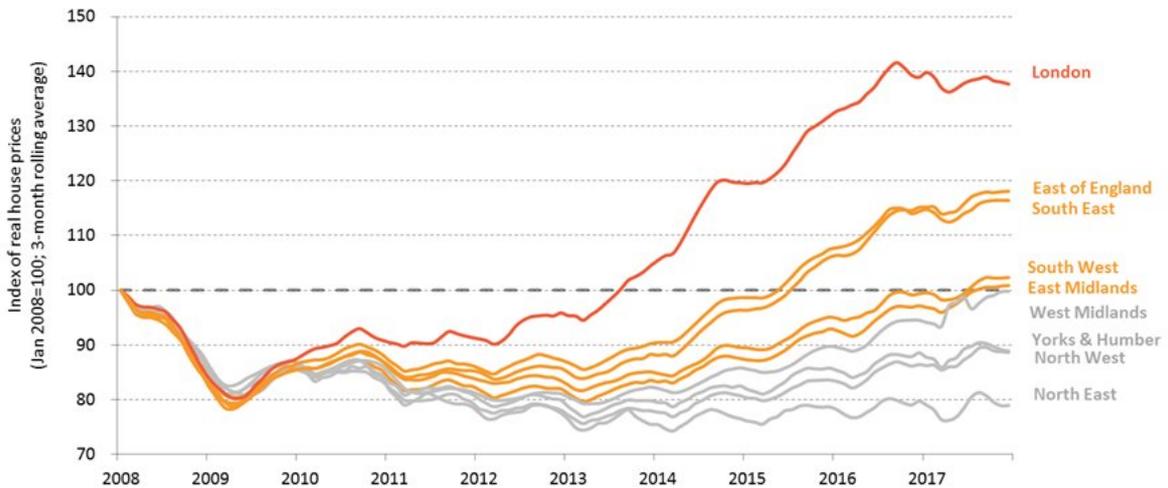
The latest data from the ONS shows that real house prices are now above their pre-crash peak in London and the South East (and in the South West, the East and the East Midlands). The data also shows that private rent levels are increasing faster in England outside London (+1.7% since last year) than in London (+0.2%).

[Lichfields on house prices on Twitter](#)

[Lichfields on housing rental prices on Twitter](#)

Crossing the line

When did real house prices surpass the pre-crash peak?



Source: ONS, Lichfields analysis

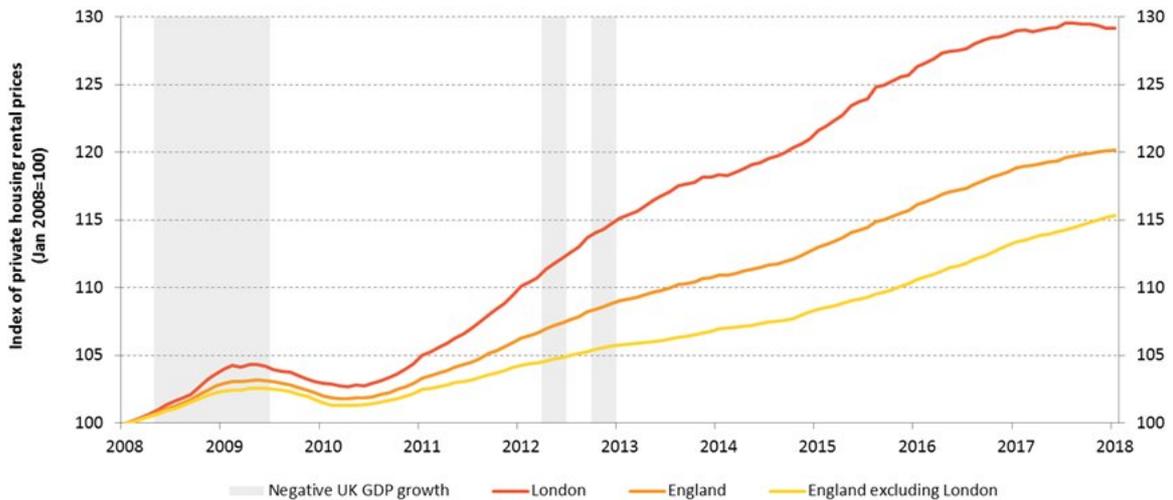
House price data for December 2017 highlights the range of housing markets England has.

Over the year to December, house prices in England have grown by 5.0%, slower than the previous month (5.3%). The South West saw the fastest annual growth (7.5%), followed by the East Midlands and West Midlands (6.3%). London (2.5%) has the slowest annual growth of all regions in England.

The range of markets is best shown when we compare real house prices (prices after accounting for inflation) to the pre-crash peak of 2008. Real house prices have surpassed the pre-crash peak in five regions: London (passing in 2013) is now 38% higher in real terms; East of England and South East (both passing in 2015) are 18% and 16% higher, respectively; and the South West and East Midlands (both passing in 2017) have both just crept over the line.

Private Housing Rental Prices

Private rents increased in 12 months to January 2018



Note: the chart only shows the rate of private rental housing price growth since 2008. It does not reflect the difference in absolute rent levels.

Source: ONS, Lichfields analysis

The latest release of the Index of Private Housing Rental Price from the ONS shows that private rents in London were 29.2% higher in January 2018 than in January 2008, a 0.2% increase from 12 months earlier. Over the same 12-month period the East Midlands, the South West and the East of England experienced the fastest increase in private rent levels across Great Britain (+2.6%, +2.1% and +1.9% respectively).

Rent levels in England (excluding London) are now 15.4% higher than in January 2008.

For the first time since records began in 2006, England's (excluding London) private rent levels (+1.7%) have been rising faster than London's (+0.2%) for 15 consecutive 12-month period releases.

PPG updates - local plans and more

Several paragraphs of the national Planning Practice Guidance have been revised and other new ones have been added.

The updates and new paragraphs primarily reflect changes to legislation and provide points of clarification regarding: permitted development; local and neighbourhood plan-making and modification procedures; CIL reliefs; and planning application fees. They also cover: short term lets outside London; pre-application advice services, fee structures and outputs; application fee categories; when planning permission is required for listed buildings; and enforcement (with reference to procedures and deliberate concealment).

There is also updated guidance on building works associated with change of use from agricultural to residential, and whether or not planning permission is required for certain farm works.

The new CIL guidance is for the most part about self-build and residential extension exemptions.

Local plans' guidance has been revised to reflect Regulation 22(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 being revoked by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 on 15 January 2018. The changes relate to local planning authorities no longer as a matter of law having to submit local plans and accompanying documents both electronically and in paper form but the guidance does acknowledge:

'On an individual basis it may be necessary for local planning authorities to provide the Planning Inspectorate or Inspector both electronic and paper copies of some key documents on request.'

[National Planning Practice Guidance](#)

[National Planning Practice Guidance, Paragraph: 021 Reference ID: I2-021-20180201](#)

[Return to contents](#)

PM chairs inaugural meeting of Housing Implementation Taskforce

On 5 February, Prime Minister Theresa May chaired the inaugural meeting of the Housing Implementation Taskforce.

The Taskforce were reported as having discussed:

'... the steps Government has already taken, including further investment at the Budget, planning reform, releasing land faster, the Housing White Paper and building more affordable housing. They emphasised the key role of Homes England in driving forward change, and also focused on the supply of new housing, public sector land sales, land banking, house-building skills and building the infrastructure needed for new housing developments.'

[Prime Minister's Office, No. 10 PM chairs inaugural meeting of the Housing Implementation Taskforce](#)

[Return to contents](#)

MPs debate housing, planning and the Green Belt

On 6 February, during a debate in the House of Commons on housing, planning and the Green Belt, Housing and Planning Minister Dominic Raab implied that the Government is to look at clarifying national planning policy on Green Belt and housing. He commented when concluding the debate:

‘The determination to build ever more houses has led to some councils being persuaded that they need to build on the Green Belt in order to meet what is assumed to be their assessed housing need. That points to a confusion and contradiction in Green Belt policy. The Government’s planning guidance states that the Green Belt should not be developed other than in ‘exceptional circumstances’, yet it fails to describe what constitutes ‘exceptional circumstances’. The housing White Paper goes on to say:

‘Green Belt boundaries should be amended only in exceptional circumstances when local authorities can demonstrate that they have fully examined all other reasonable options for meeting their identified housing requirements.’

However, crucially for the point I am making, planning guidance also says:

‘Unmet housing need...is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the ‘very special circumstances’ justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.’

Planning guidance is going around in circles, because in effect it says that the green belt should not be built on unless nowhere else can be found to build the houses, but that unmet housing need is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt in importance.’

Also in concluding the debate, Minister for Housing Dominic Raab responded to various points about regional variations in demand and affordability made earlier by MPs. He stated:

‘There is a broader point here about home building and the overriding need to carry local communities with us, whether rural, suburban or urban communities. That is why last week the Government announced the first wave of money being allocated from the homes infrastructure fund. Last week alone, we targeted £866 million of investment, or 133 local housing projects, from London to Manchester, Cornwall to County Durham, to unlock building capacity for up to 200,000 new homes. We recognise we need more homes, but we also know that communities worry about new developments [...]: what will it mean for congestion on the roads, and what will it mean for pressures on schools and local NHS services? There is certainly a link with pressures from immigration. Once we have left the EU, we will have greater scope and control over that to get the balance right.’

[House of Commons, Housing, Planning and the Green Belt debate, 6 February 2018](#)

[Return to contents](#)

The Lichfields perspective



While we wait for MHCLG's consultation on proposed revisions to the NPPF – currently expected to launch on 5 March – ministers and the Department have given various indications to the development sector of what the changes will include. As yet though, there are only very sketchy details of what the Government will be consulting on by way of CIL reform, and when. The uncertainty being created in the sector is palpable, especially when it is not known when and if the NPPF and CIL-related changes to national guidance in the PPG will be consulted on too, or simply published in the summer alongside the finalised Framework.

Margaret Baddeley, Planning Director

Disclaimer: This publication has been written in general terms and cannot be relied on to cover specific situations. We recommend that you obtain professional advice before acting or refraining from acting on any of the contents of this publication. Lichfields accepts no duty of care or liability for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of any material in this publication. Lichfields is the trading name of Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Limited. Registered in England, no.2778116

Share



LICHFIELDS



© Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners Ltd 2018

Registered office:
14 Regent's Wharf
All Saints Street
London N1 9RL