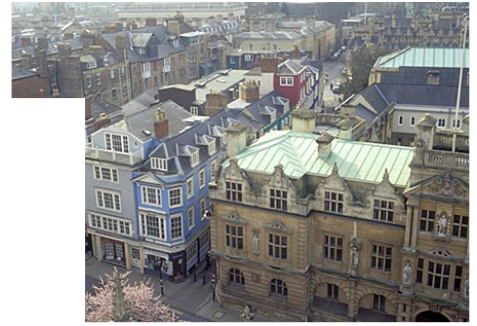


Thames Valley planning news



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Headline news

Prime Minister's discussion with stakeholders on how to increase housing supply

On 17 October, Prime Minister Theresa May met with a variety of stakeholders in the house building industry, together with representatives of local government, to discuss 'achieving a step change in the delivery of new homes'.

Described afterwards by No.10 as 'a positive and collaborative meeting', the Prime Minister took the same approach as the *Housing White Paper* – one of explaining the Government's policy line and its range of actions intended to boost supply, and in return, the expectation of housebuilders playing their part and turning these proposals into reality.

Recent Government measures that were discussed included the additional funding for Help to Buy and the further £2 billion for affordable housing, both announced at the time of the Conservative Party Conference and reported in full in last month's *Lichfields' Thames Valley News*.

Local news

Oxfordshire authorities remain committed to 2014 SHMA housing requirements

The Oxfordshire authorities are remaining committed to 2014 strategic housing market assessment (SHMA) housing requirements,

despite DCLG's 'Planning for the right homes in the right places: consultation proposals' (the ongoing consultation on a proposed standardised housing need assessment methodology) generating lower levels of housing need.

The *Oxfordshire SHMA (2014)* provided an objective assessment of need for housing in the Oxfordshire market area between 2011 and 2031, based in part on housing need figures which are 'necessary to support committed economic growth'. The proposed DCLG figures are for a considerably lower level of housing need for each of the local authorities (see table on page 2).

These differences are likely to reflect the circumstances identified by the Government, whereby 'for some local planning authorities, a reduction in their local housing need compared to the existing approach can be attributed to our method not making a specific adjustment to take account of anticipated employment growth'. (Para. 28)²

The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that strategies for housing and employment in local plans should be integrated (para. 158): the *SHMA (2014)* clearly reflects economic growth proposals. The *DCLG consultation paper* (para. 46) outlines the Government's recommended approach:

'Plan makers may put forward proposals that lead to a local housing need above that given by our proposed approach. This could be as a result of a strategic infrastructure project, or through increased employment (and hence housing) ambition as a result of a Local Economic Partnership investment strategy, a bespoke housing deal with Government or through delivering the modern Industrial Strategy. We want to make sure that we give proper support to those ambitious authorities who want to deliver more homes. To facilitate this we ►►

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



While there was a shortfall in the number of houses built as against the target, in percentage terms it was very small. The progress against this measure was agreed, overall, to have been a very positive one, with the shortfall attributable, almost exclusively, to the after effects of the 2007/8 financial crisis.

Minutes of the Oxford City Council Scrutiny Committee item, regarding the Annual Monitoring Report 2016/17 and its approval for publication, 9 October 2017

THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

It is very encouraging to see that at least two local authorities in the Thames Valley recognise that given the acute housing shortage, it is not appropriate to delay local plan preparation pending the outcome of DCLG's current consultation on a standardised housing need methodology.

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LICHFIELDS

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propose to amend planning guidance so that where a plan is based on an assessment of local housing need in excess of that which the standard method would provide, Planning Inspectors are advised to work on the assumption that the approach adopted is sound unless there are compelling reasons to indicate otherwise.'

It is evident that the Oxfordshire authorities are keen to progress with the preparation of the Local Plans on the basis of the 2014 SHMA. Leader of Oxford City Council Bob Price has said that the DCLG consultation is:

'[...] a first stage and does not reflect the realities of local economic and employment growth, or the demand for affordable housing, that we know local people, our businesses and Oxfordshire's stretched public services desperately need.'

He continues:

'It will be some considerable time before the government implements the new approach, and in the meantime, it is essential that we do not lose focus on delivering the homes that Oxford and Oxfordshire needs.' (Oxford Mail, 2017).

As reported by Lichfields last month, South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is currently consulting on its Local Plan. The SODC Member for Strategic Policy concluded (at a Cabinet meeting held on 21 September 2017):

'[...] as this was a government consultation at this stage, and the final proposals would not be available until 2018, the council should proceed with its work on the local plan. Using the government's proposed housing numbers would require significant re-working of the local plan and would delay achieving a five-year housing land supply, the result being the council would continue to be open to speculative development.'

The Oxfordshire authorities, alongside the Local Enterprise Partnership, have stated their intention to review DCLG's consultation document and the technical detail accompanying the formula, before considering their response to the current consultation.

Local Authority	Current local assessment of housing need, based on most recent publicly available document (dwellings per annum) ¹ (Oxfordshire SHMA, 2014)	Draft DCLG indicative assessment of housing need figure based on proposed formula, 2016 to 2026 (DCLG, 2017)	Percentage decrease
West Oxfordshire District Council	660	601	9%
Oxford City Council	1400	746	47%
South Oxfordshire District Council	775	617	20%
Vale of White Horse District Council	1,028	689	33%
Cherwell District Council	1,142	762	33%
Total	5005	3415	32%

Source: DCLG Housing Need Consultation Data Table (Sept 2017)

National news

20% application fee rise and new fees for PDR prior approvals

After some delay and as referred to in the February 2017 Housing White Paper, draft amendment regulations providing for a 20% increase in planning application fees in England have been laid before Parliament.

The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2017 will come into force once approved by resolution of both Houses of Parliament; the actual date will be 'on the 28th day after the day on which they are made'. The new rules are expected to be in force before the end of the year.

The amendment Regulations will introduce:

- a fee for applications for permission in principle (£402 for each 0.1 hectare of site area) – the necessary secondary legislation for being able to make such applications has not yet been laid/made;

- Mayoral development corporations and urban development corporations being able to charge for giving pre-application advice;
- a planning application fee where there is an article 4 direction in force, withdrawing permitted development rights (PDRs) or where PDRs have been withdrawn by a planning permission condition; and
- a fee of £96 for prior approval processes for various PDRs that have been in force since April.

The Housing White Paper (para. 2.15) outlined that this nationally set planning fee increase would be only for those local authorities that committed to investing the additional fee income in their planning departments. DCLG's Simon Gallagher wrote to council chief executives to this effect in February this year, requiring also 'that existing baseline and income assumptions' would 'not be adjusted down as a result during this Parliament'. According to a recently published Government response to a House of Commons DCLG Committee report (on the house building industry's capacity), 'all 366 local planning authorities (LPAs) have agreed to ring fence the additional income' (see page 11 of the Response). ■

¹Mid-point range figure.

²DCLG 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' consultation paper, 2017.