



NEWS

Thames Valley planning news, April 2018

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Headline news

Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal – funding announced for the first year's infrastructure

The Oxfordshire Growth Board (which includes the local authorities within the Oxfordshire LEP comprising Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council) has published details of the first round of infrastructure projects to receive funding in year one of the five year Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal that was signed in February, 2018.

The Government has committed to providing Oxfordshire with up to £215m funding in total for infrastructure and affordable housing.

Ten Oxfordshire infrastructure projects will have a share of around £12m funding over the next year. They include:

- a feasibility study to provide a westbound bus lane linking Wolvercote to the proposed Eynsham Park and Ride site;
- improvements to key link roads in Carterton and Banbury;
- widening of the Botley Road rail bridge in Oxford and improvements to the Botley Road corridor; and
- upgrading Featherbed Lane, near Milton Hill to provide improved and safer access between the Didcot and Wantage areas.

In addition, a further £20m of funding has been announced by the Growth Board to be used in South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, Cherwell, West Oxfordshire and Oxford to support a range of other infrastructure projects that are currently being finalised with developers and landowners.

The Deal itself is also intended to support Oxfordshire's six local authorities in producing a county-wide joint statutory spatial plan, and planning for the delivery of 100,000 new homes by 2031, reflecting the need for new homes in this economically vibrant part of the country. It includes increased provision of affordable housing that will in turn boost the labour supply and 'maximise' Oxfordshire's economic potential (Budget 2017, pages 54 and 62). The Autumn Budget 2017 also refers to how agreeing this target is in return for a package of Government support over the next five years, including £30 million a year for infrastructure that will unlock key housing sites and provide further support for affordable housing and local capacity.

All of the Deal's proposals are being underpinned by a 'credible' plan for delivery, outlining interim milestones and targets as agreed with Homes England and central Government. Options are being explored with regard to granting Oxfordshire certain time-limited planning freedoms and flexibilities, subject to consultation where appropriate.

It is clear that the Housing and Growth Deal shows an alignment across the main political parties locally and with central Government.

Quote of the month



I just signed the first Housing Deal at Heyford Park with Oxfordshire's ambitious councils. @mhclg providing £215mn for roads, bridges and other infrastructure to unlock 100,000 new homes. This govt is determined to build more homes working people can afford.' #HousingDeals

Housing Minister Dominic Raab, on 22 March 2018, on Twitter

Draft NPPF debate in House of Commons on new housing and infrastructure delivery

During a debate on the new draft revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in the House of Commons on 5 March, Robert Courts MP asked:

'In rural areas such as west Oxfordshire, it is absolutely essential that, when new houses are built, infrastructure is built to accompany them. Will the Secretary of State please confirm that the intention of the NPPF revision is that developers are not only made to pay for that infrastructure, but that it will be delivered in advance of, or at the very least at the same time as, the houses are being built—not long afterwards, or, worse, not at all?'

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Sajid Javid responded:

'There is obviously a role for Government Departments to play with regard to strategic infrastructure—for example, the housing deal in Oxfordshire helps to provide some of the strategic infrastructure—but my hon. Friend is absolutely right about the role that developers must play in providing infrastructure. Many do not meet those obligations, which is why we set out the consultation on developer contributions. I hope he will contribute to it.'

House of Commons debate (Hansard), NPPF, 5 March 2018

National news

Prime Minister launches revised NPPF to improve the delivery of new homes

A major overhaul of the NPPF has been launched, the intention being to deliver the homes that England needs. Optimising the use of land, creating well-designed places, strengthened protection for the Green Belt and a greater emphasis on converting planning permissions into new homes are all at the heart of the new draft Framework.

Local authorities will have to satisfy a housing delivery test, focused on driving up the number of homes completed in their areas, in addition to using a new standardised methodology for 'determining the minimum number of homes needed [...] unless there are exceptional circumstances that justify an alternative approach'.

To provide increased certainty for the development industry, the new draft national policy also intends that plans should set out the contributions expected in association with particular sites and types of project. Draft planning practice guidance to accompany the new Framework refers to developer accountability and transparency in the context of viability assessments, in order to enable communities 'to understand the outcomes of viability assessment and see what infrastructure and affordable housing has been delivered through developer contributions'.

[DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework, 2012](#)

[MHCLG, National Planning Policy Framework, draft text for consultation, 5 March 2018](#)

[Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, Theresa May's speech on making housing fairer, 5 March 2018](#)

[MHCLG, Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework: consultation proposals, draft text, and associated documents including draft planning practice guidance and Housing Delivery Test: draft measurement rulebook](#)

[Lichfields, National Planning Policy Framework Review: what to expect? \(focusing on the then most anticipated elements of the subsequently published draft\)](#)

[Lichfields, Draft revised National Planning Policy Framework: a change in narrative, \(a post-publication blog, covering draft policies not included in the blog above\)](#)

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'Supporting housing delivery through developer contributions': new consultation proposes changes to planning obligations and CIL

An MHCLG consultation on developer contributions launched alongside the new draft NPPF follows on from announcements at Autumn Budget 2017. The Government is seeking views until 10 May on a series of reforms to the existing system of contributions in the short term; the intention is that the proposed reforms will 'benefit the local authorities who administer them,

developers who pay them and the communities in which development takes place'.

The proposals that are of particular note - all of which would require changes to legislation - are as follows:

- streamlining requirements for setting/reviewing community infrastructure levy (CIL) charging schedules;
- removing s106 pooling restrictions (for authorities that have adopted CIL, or that satisfy other requirements);
- allowing CIL to be based on the existing use of land;
- introducing a 'Strategic Infrastructure Tariff', for combined authorities, and joint committees with plan-making powers; and
- indexation being linked to house prices, or CPI/CPI and a factor of house prices for non-residential development.

The consultation makes it clear that the Government:

'[...] will continue to explore options to create a clearer and more robust developer contribution system that really delivers for prospective homeowners and communities accommodating new development.'

And in the longer term:

'[...] the Government will continue to explore options for going further. One option could be for contributions to affordable housing and infrastructure to be set nationally, and to be non-negotiable.'

[MHCLG, Supporting housing delivery through developer contributions: consultation](#)

[MHCLG, Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy in England, 2016 to 2017: report of study: The Incidence, Value and Delivery of Planning Obligations and Community Infrastructure Levy in England in 2016-17](#)

[Lichfields Planning News March 2017, report of the independent CIL Review Group \(page 7\)](#)

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Draft revised NPPF: themes and the detail on housing and other land uses

Lichfields has published a series of blogs on the draft NPPF's themes and proposed policies for different land uses.

In addition, the Lichfields' Insight Focus on the draft revised NPPF provides an overview and commentary on the housing-related policy proposals of the NPPF, including:

- the staged introduction of a standard methodology for identifying local housing need;
- the housing delivery test;
- the Statement of Common Ground (that in effect would document steps taken in the Duty to Cooperate);
- viability and developer contributions at plan-making stage; and

- the allocation of housing sites for achieving a sufficient supply of land for new homes.

[Lichfields Insight Focus, Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework](#)

[Lichfields blog, NPPF consultation proposals – what could they mean for town centres?](#)

[Lichfields blog, NPPF consultations – what could they mean for designers?](#)

[Lichfields blog, Draft NPPF: heritage policy is conserved...](#)

[Lichfields blog, Draft NPPF: implications for aviation?](#)

[Lichfields blog, Draft NPPF: business as usual?](#)

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Draft planning practice guidance on viability and housing matters

Following the launch of the draft NPPF and developer contributions' consultations, MHCLG published draft Planning Practice Guidance on:

- Viability (also published as a separate draft, on 5 March);
- Housing delivery;
- Local housing need assessment;
- Neighbourhood plans;
- Plan-making; and
- Build to rent.

No formal consultation deadline is given for the submission of comments although it is assumed that responses should be made as for the main consultations i.e. by 10 May.

[MHCLG, Draft Planning Practice Guidance: Draft updates to planning guidance which will form part of the Government's online Planning Practice Guidance](#)

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The Lichfields perspective



There is very clear evidence that the private sector is buying into [the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal] now, with a number of very big sites being promoted in local plans, and there are also competing sites coming forward.

Daniel Lampard, Senior Director, Head of Thames Valley Office for Building Magazine, 21 March 2018

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