

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2013

CABINET – WEDNESDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2013

LOCAL PLAN MONITORING REPORT 2012/2013

REPORT OF ANDREW TUCKER, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

(Contact: Chris Hargraves, Tel: (01993) 861686 or Adrian Smith, Tel: (01993) 861689)

(The report is for information)

1. PURPOSE

To consider the Council's Local Plan monitoring report for 2012/13 prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That, the content of the 2012 / 2013 Local Plan monitoring report is noted for information.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1. As part of the Local Plan process the Council is required to prepare a monitoring report to include the following:

- A summary of Local Plan progress;
- An assessment of the impact of local plan policies;
- Information on any Neighbourhood Development Orders and Neighbourhood Development Plans that are in place;
- Information on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where this has been introduced; and
- A summary of how the Council is fulfilling its obligations under the 'duty to co-operate'

3.2. Previously there was a requirement to prepare the monitoring report annually and to submit it to Central Government by the end of December each year. Under current legislative arrangements, local authorities are able to choose how often they prepare their monitoring reports and are no longer required to submit it to Government for approval. Instead, monitoring information must be made freely available for inspection, for example via the Council's website.

3.3. Attached at Appendix I is a copy of the Council's latest LDF monitoring report which covers the period 1st April 2012 – 31st March 2013. The main elements are summarised below.

Local Plan Progress

3.4. Members will be aware that the progress of the Local Plan has been delayed for various reasons and that as such the milestones identified in the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) have not been achieved.

- 3.5. It had been the Council's intention to formally publish and submit the Local Plan in summer 2013 however a decision was taken to defer publication pending the outcome of a new housing study for Oxfordshire that is currently being undertaken.
- 3.6. Once the outputs of that study are known the Council will be in a position to determine how and when to proceed with the Local Plan.
- 3.7. A decision will also be made on whether and when to progress a follow-up 'site allocation' document once the new Oxfordshire housing study is made available and the Council is in a clearer position on the content and timing of the new Local Plan.

Policy Implementation

- 3.8. The monitoring report includes a broad range of information on the impact of existing Local Plan policies. The main headlines are summarised below:

Housing

- 278 new homes were built during the reporting year (2012/13).
- Nearly 80% of these (220) were completed in the District's service centres.
- 60% of residential development took place on previously developed (brownfield land) during the reporting year.
- 28 new build affordable homes were completed during the reporting year.
- Average house prices in West Oxfordshire whilst having fallen remain higher than the national average.
- The Council is able to demonstrate that it has in excess of a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites.
- The 2011 census shows a decrease in average household size in West Oxfordshire from 2.44 in 2001 to 2.37 in 2011.
- There were three times as many 1 and 2 bedroom properties permitted than 3 bed or larger 4 or more bed properties during the monitoring period.

Economy

- The most recent data indicates that there are 52,000 jobs in total in West Oxfordshire, equating to a jobs density of 0.78 (number of jobs per working age resident).
- Manufacturing retains an above average presence in the local economy (13.6% of employee jobs) remaining steady against a national picture of decline in this sector.
- The amount of employment floorspace completed in the reporting year was 8,901 m² (although this was largely as a result of change of use rather than new-build floorspace).
- Survival rates of business enterprises in West Oxfordshire are generally above average.
- There has been a 2% increase in total business turnover from tourism to £260m.
- The proportion of working age people claiming job seekers allowance has decreased by 0.2% to 1.2% and this remains lower than the regional and national averages.
- Town centre vibrancy and viability remains strong in the District. There has been an overall decrease in floorspace completions for town centre uses during 2012/13 but a greater proportion of such developments have been completed within the designated town centres.

- The number of vacant town centre units in Witney has decreased to 8 approximately 3% which is much lower than the national average of approximately 14%.

Environment

- There have been no additional sites allocated for their wildlife value during the reporting year.
- There has been a 5.5% decrease in the BAP priority resource in West Oxfordshire recorded in this monitoring period.
- There has been an increase of two UK Biodiversity Action Plan species in West Oxfordshire.
- The population of water voles in West Oxfordshire's waterways remains stable.
- There has been continued decline in the number of farmland birds recorded in the District which does not reflect the general increase in the rest of Oxfordshire. Recent surveys indicate a decline in some species including lapwing and yellowhammer although numbers of skylark and linnet and grey partridge have increased.
- The sustainability of buildings in West Oxfordshire continues to improve with 538 renewable energy installations benefitting from the feed in tariff, with a capacity of 1,504Kw, recorded in the District in 2012/13.
- Applications for large scale solar farms continue to come forward with a 27MW proposal approved at Kencot.

Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders

- 3.9. There is one Neighbourhood Development Plan underway at Chipping Norton. In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations (2012), Chipping Norton Town Council applied for area designation to West Oxfordshire District Council in April 2012.
- 3.10. A Public Notice announced the application of the area designation, the boundary of which follows the Chipping Norton Parish Boundary, giving a consultation period on the area designation for 6 weeks until 28 May 2012. One comment was received from the Cotswold Conservation Board which was in support of the Area Designation.
- 3.11. Chipping Norton Town Council's Area Designation was formally determined by West Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet on 12 December 2012.
- 3.12. Neighbourhood Development Orders (NDOs) allow certain types of development to come forward without the need for planning permission. No qualifying bodies have initiated the process for introducing any such order within the District.
- 3.13. In August 2013, building on several stages of earlier consultation, the Town Council published for comment a document entitled 'Chipping Norton: Looking Back Stepping Forward'. The consultation closed on 22nd September 2013 and a summary of the comments received has been prepared.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 3.14. In November 2013 Cabinet agreed to publish the West Oxfordshire CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (PDCS) for consultation. The consultation runs from 11th December 2013 until 5th February 2014.
- 3.15. The comments received will be taken into account in preparing a draft charging schedule for publication and submission in spring/summer 2014.

Duty to Co-operate

- 3.16. Section 110 of the Localism Act sets out a new 'duty to co-operate' which essentially means that local planning authorities and other 'prescribed bodies' must engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to address cross-boundary issues of strategic importance such as housing and transport.
- 3.17. West Oxfordshire District Council has actively engaged with a broad range of parties throughout the preparation of the Local Plan and supporting evidence base. The intention is to produce a statement setting out in detail how the Council has fulfilled the duty to co-operate prior to formal publication of the proposed submission draft local plan.

Next Steps

- 3.18. The monitoring report attached at Appendix I will be made available on the Council's website.

4. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

None applicable

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None as regards existing budget as the monitoring report was prepared with in-house resources

6. RISKS

The preparation of the Local Plan monitoring report is intended to demonstrate that application of development plan policies is helping produce the intended outcomes and mitigate the risk of non-delivery of key elements of the Council's Planning Strategy.

7. REASONS

The preparation of a regular monitoring report is necessary to inform the Council and local communities of progress in delivering its planning strategy and targets. It is also a statutory requirement.

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Background Papers:

None