



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 4 DECEMBER 2024 EXECUTIVE – 11 DECEMBER 2024
Subject	LOCAL PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT (AMR)
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning Email: hugo.ashton@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Andrew Thomson – Lead Planning Policy and Implementation Officer Email: andrew.thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrew Thomson – Lead Planning Policy and Implementation Officer. Email: andrew.thomson@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report for the period 2024-2024.
Annexes	Annex A – Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2023-2024
Recommendation	That the Executive Resolves to: I. Note the content of the report.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All• Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	There is no requirement to consult on the AMR.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Members will be aware that under current planning legislation, the Council is required to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 1.2** The main purpose of the AMR is to monitor the implementation of adopted Local Plan policies but it must also include information on the following:
 - Progress of the Local Plan and any other related documents against agreed timetables;
 - Neighbourhood Planning;
 - The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) where this has been introduced; and
 - How the Council has fulfilled its obligations under the Duty to Co-Operate.
- 1.3** The AMR must be made available on the Council's website, at its main offices and at any other appropriate locations.
- 1.4** The Council's most recently published AMR covered the two-year period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.
- 1.5** The new draft AMR for 2023 – 2024 is attached at Annex A and the key points of interest are summarised in Section 2 below.

2. AMR 2023/2024 – OVERVIEW

Local Plan Progress

- 2.1** The AMR explains that the District Council has committed to the preparation of a new Local Plan covering the period to 2041 and that two rounds of informal (Regulation 18) consultation have taken place to inform the scope and direction of the emerging plan.
- 2.2** Whilst further informal consultation was initially planned to take place before the end of 2023, this is now expected to take place in May 2025 which is largely a result of forthcoming significant changes to national policy. The council has recently updated its Local Development Scheme setting out the expected timetable for Local Plan preparation up to submission for Examination by March 2026.

Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (AAP)

- 2.3** The AMR provides an update on the progress of the Salt Cross AAP with the Inspector's final report having been received on 1st March 2023 but then subject to a subsequent legal challenge which led to those parts of the report relating to Policy 2 Net Zero Carbon being formally quashed. The examination was re-opened in April 2024 and at the time of writing, examination hearing sessions are due to be held in February 2025.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- 2.4** The AMR explains that the District Council has four Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in place with two of these (Developer Contributions and the Combe Village Design Statement) having been adopted during the monitoring period, in July 2023.

Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.5** The AMR provides an update on Neighbourhood Planning in West Oxfordshire, explaining that there are now 9 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) in West

Oxfordshire with two of these (Cassington and Milton under Wychwood) adopted during the monitoring period, in June 2023.

- 2.6 The AMR explains that a further 6 NDPs are currently in preparation, with Brize Norton NDP nearing the point of submission for Examination.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 2.7 The AMR provides an update on the District Council's progress with introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) into West Oxfordshire. In March 2023, the Council's executive agreed that new viability evidence should be commissioned to inform a new draft CIL charging schedule (and also to help inform the emerging Local Plan 2041).

- 2.8 Consultants have since been appointed and a new draft CIL charging schedule was published for consultation in August 2024. Submission, examination and adoption will follow in 2025.

Duty to Co-Operate

- 2.9 The Duty to Cooperate is a legal requirement on local planning authorities to engage with other relevant authorities and certain prescribed bodies in relation to cross-boundary strategic planning matters. The AMR therefore provides an update on how the District Council has fulfilled its obligations under the duty.

- 2.10 This includes the conclusion reached by the Salt Cross AAP Inspector that the District Council had met the requirements of the duty in preparing the AAP.

- 2.11 The AMR also outlines that ongoing Oxfordshire-wide discussions are currently taking place around plan-making and are expected to culminate in the publication of Statements of Common Ground which will form part of the District Council's evidence to demonstrate that it has complied with the duty to co-operate in preparing the new Local Plan 2041.

Implementation of Local Plan Policies

- 2.12 The AMR is structured around the five main sections of the current Local Plan 2031:

- Overall strategy
- Providing new homes
- Sustainable Economic Growth
- Transport and Movement
- Environmental and Heritage Assets

- 2.13 The key points to note under each heading are summarised below.

Overall Strategy

- 2.14** A total of 1,437 planning applications were determined during the monitoring period (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024). The majority of these (1,162 applications) were approved or approved subject to a legal agreement.
- 2.15** 44% of the applications determined were for relatively minor 'householder' type proposals and 23% were for full or outline planning approval.
- 2.16** The majority of planning approvals were concentrated within the Main Service Centres, Rural Service Centres and larger villages of the District in accordance with Local Plan Policy OS2, which seeks to focus development primarily at larger settlements due to their relative sustainability in terms of available services and facilities.
- 2.17** 43 appeals were determined during the monitoring period. The majority of these were dismissed with 18 being allowed or allowed in part.
- 2.18** £892,062 was collected towards new infrastructure from new development in West Oxfordshire between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Over £1.5m was spent on new infrastructure during the same period.
- 2.19** A detailed breakdown of infrastructure funding (received and spent) is set out in the Council's separate Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) which is published annually each December.

Providing New Homes

- 2.20** Planning permission was granted for 918 new dwellings during the monitoring period, a net gain of 898 dwellings.
- 2.21** The largest concentrations of outstanding residential commitments are located within, or on the edge of Main Service Centres within neighbouring Parishes, e.g. Witney / Curbridge and Carterton /Brize Norton. There are also significant concentrations at Woodstock, Minster Lovell and Long Hanborough.
- 2.22** There were 683 net residential completions in 2023/2024. This is below the Local Plan housing requirement of 975 dwellings for the monitoring period, but above the standard calculation of housing need (549 dwellings per annum), which the council is currently utilising for housing land supply calculations.
- 2.23** It is also important to note that since the start of the current Local Plan period 1st April 2011 up to 31st March 2024, a total of 7,719 new homes have been completed which falls below the requirement of 8,075 set in the Local Plan for the period. This minor shortfall is partly a result of under-delivery on strategic housing sites in the district.
- 2.24** Major housing schemes were allowed at appeal during the monitoring period, for development at Woodstock, Minster Lovell and Aston.
- 2.25** Approximately 238 new affordable homes were completed during the monitoring period, comprising a mixture of affordable rented, social rented and shared ownership properties. These were located predominantly on larger sites in accordance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy H3.

- 2.26** Approximately 35% of total housing completions during the monitoring period were classed as affordable, which is broadly consistent with the requirements of Local Plan Policy H3 which adopts a tiered approach ranging from 35% - 50% depending on location.
- 2.27** In September 2023, the Council undertook a formal review of the Local Plan 2031 in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 2.28** Importantly, the review concluded that the Local Plan housing requirement set out in Policy H2 (which has previously been used to calculate the Council's 5-year housing land supply) needs updating because it is based on 2014 evidence which pre-dates the introduction of the standard method for assessing local housing need.
- 2.29** The significance of this is that because the current Local Plan is now more than 5-years old, the District Council is able to calculate its 5-year housing land supply position using the Government's standard method for assessing local housing need. Notwithstanding this, at the present time, the Council is not able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land.

Sustainable Economic Growth

- 2.30** A total of 27,709m² of new business floorspace was approved during the monitoring period, the majority of which was for mixed business uses, including general industrial, offices and storage and distribution.
- 2.31** The majority of new business floorspace is located at areas allocated for business purposes in the Local Plan 2031. The most significant proportion of newly approved floorspace during the monitoring period was at Lakeside Industrial Estate at Standlake.
- 2.32** Any new business development approved in the rural parts of the District during the monitoring period was relatively minor in nature.
- 2.33** The majority of tourism-related development during the monitoring period was for new tourist accommodation.
- 2.34** The mix of town centre uses continues to evolve in the 5 existing town centres in West Oxfordshire, to include retail, hospitality professional services and residential. There have been a limited number of changes of use during the monitoring period but nothing major in nature. There remain a number of empty units within each of the town centres in line with national trends.

Transport and Movement

- 2.35** The majority of new development continues to be focussed within the Main Service Centres and Rural Service Centres, which are the most accessible locations to access services and facilities by a range of transport options, including public transport, walking and cycling.
- 2.36** Funding has been secured from a number of developments during the monitoring period to contribute towards public transport provision, most significantly, for the A40 transport improvements between Eynsham Park and Ride and Wolvercote.
- 2.37** Access to some key services remains poor in West Oxfordshire compared to the rest of Oxfordshire and car ownership remains higher than the rest of the county.

2.38 The access to Witney (Shores Green) junction improvements will be funded by a combination of Housing and Growth Deal (HGD) funds and Section 106 developer contributions. Planning permission for the scheme was granted in July 2023 and initial enabling works are expected to begin later this year.

Environmental and Heritage Assets

2.39 No major development was approved within the Cotswolds National Landscape (formerly referred to as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) during the monitoring period.

2.40 The majority of new development is steered away from environmentally sensitive locations in West Oxfordshire, particularly areas with ecological, landscape or heritage sensitivities or areas at risk of flooding.

2.41 There have been no significant changes to the area of protected habitats or number of protected species in West Oxfordshire during the monitoring period.

2.42 The number of heritage assets recorded on the Heritage at Risk register has fallen from 8 in 2023 to 5 in 2024.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1 None.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The report raises no direct financial implications.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6. Preparation of the AMR is a legal requirement under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 The AMR raises no significant risks.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 The report raises no specific equality implications for any specific group/protected characteristic. The adopted Local Plan was supported by a separate Equalities Impact Assessment.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The AMR reports on a number of climate and ecological related issues.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

(END)