



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 17 JANUARY 2024
Subject	LOCAL PLAN ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT (AMR)
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Charlie Maynard – Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development. Email: charlie.maynard@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Chris Hargraves – Planning Policy Manager. Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To consider the Council's Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report for the two-year period 2021-2023.
Annexes	Annex A – Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2021-2023
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 covers the period 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021.
- 1.5** The Council did not produce an annual report for 2021/22 (primarily due to a lack of available monitoring officer resource at that time) and so Officers have now prepared a report that covers the extended 2-year period 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2023.
- 1.6** The 2021 – 2023 AMR is attached at Annex A and the key points of interest are summarised in Section 2 below.

2. AMR 2021/2023 – 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 spring 2024 with a more precise timetable for this and the steps beyond to be agreed through an update of the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) in February 2024.

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 any decision to formally adopt the AAP having since been held in abeyance pending the outcome of a 3rd party legal challenge, the hearing into which took place in mid-November 2023.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- 2.4** The AMR explains that the District Council has four Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) in place with one of these (Affordable Housing) having been formally adopted within the 2-year period covered by the AMR and two further SPDs (Developer Contributions and the Combe Village Design Statement) having been adopted since, 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 (Charlbury and Woodstock) having been adopted in the 2-year period covered by the AMR and two more (Cassington and Milton under Wychwood) adopted since, in June 2023.
- 2.6 The AMR explains that a further 6 NDPs are currently in preparation.

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 the current expectation is that a new draft CIL charging schedule will be published for consultation in early 2024 with submission, examination and adoption to follow later in the year.

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 a Statement 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 3,509 planning applications were determined during the 2-year monitoring period (1st April 2021 – 31st March 2023). The majority of these (2,967 applications) were approved or approved subject to a legal agreement.
- 2.15** Just under 50% of the applications determined were for relatively minor ‘householder’ type proposals and 20% 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** 77 appeals were determined during the monitoring period. The majority of these were dismissed with only 17 being allowed or allowed in part.
- 2.18** Over £6.5m was collected towards new infrastructure from new development in West Oxfordshire between 1 April 2021 and 30 March 2023. Over £1.6m 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 now published annually each December.

Providing New Homes

- 2.20** Planning permission was granted for 802 new dwellings during the monitoring period, with 203 of these granted in 2021/22 and 599 granted permission in 2022/23.
- 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 Chipping Norton, Woodstock, Eynsham and Hanborough.
- 2.22** There were 1,002 net residential completions in 2021/2022 and 729 net residential completions in 2022/23. Although completions fell slightly below the Local Plan housing requirement of 800 dwellings in 2022/23, this is the first time in 5 years that the housing requirement hasn’t been met.
- 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 2023, a total of 7,036 new homes have been completed which is only 64 less than the Local Plan requirement over the same period (7,100 homes).
- 2.24** There was one major proposal for residential development that was granted at appeal during the monitoring period, for 120 dwellings at the Moors in Ducklington.
- 2.25** Approximately 687 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 40% 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. A total of £593,049 was collected in the form of financial contributions towards the off-site provision of affordable homes within the District.
- 2.27** Outside of the monitoring period, 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.
- 2.30** Using this alternative measure of housing need, the Council's current housing land supply position statement demonstrates a 5.4 year supply of deliverable housing land as of 1st April 2023.

Sustainable Economic Growth

- 2.31** A total of 56,410m² 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.
- 2.32** A significant proportion of new business floorspace was approved at sites identified in the Local Plan for accommodating business development, including Down's Road at Witney and Ventura Park at Carterton.
- 2.33** Any new business development approved in the rural parts of the District during the monitoring period was relatively minor in nature.
- 2.34** The majority of tourism-related development during the monitoring period was for new tourist accommodation.
- 2.35** 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

- 2.36** 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.
- 2.37** Funding has been secured from a number of developments during the monitoring period to contribute towards public transport provision.

- 2.38** 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.
- 2.39** In terms of the strategic highways schemes identified in the Local Plan, good progress has been made in relation to the A40 with the new Eynsham Park and Ride having secured planning permission and now under construction.
- 2.40** The District Council continues to work closely with Oxfordshire County Council in relation to the wider A40 improvements being progressed under the Homes England Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF).
- 2.41** In July 2022, Oxfordshire County Council approved the preferred option proposals for the A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor (Duke's Cut, integrated bus lanes and the extension of the dual carriageway).
- 2.42** However, in light of global inflationary pressures, the A40 improvements programme was extensively reviewed between November 2022 and June 2023 and in July 2023, the County Council approved a new plan to build the programme in phases.
- 2.43** The initial phase includes dedicated bus lanes between Eynsham Park and Ride and Oxford, as well as the addition of controlled crossings and upgraded shared-use paths to make walking and cycling safer along the historically congested A40 between Witney and Oxford. Later phases of work will be planned and delivered as funding becomes available.
- 2.44** 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 outside of the monitoring period, in July 2023.

Environmental and Heritage Assets

- 2.45** 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.
- 2.46** 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.
- 2.47** There have been no significant changes to the area of protected habitats or number of protected species in West Oxfordshire during the monitoring period.
- 2.48** One scheme was approved for a ground mounted solar installation during the monitoring period, on land to the west of Ducklington.

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)