

## **Oxfordshire Planning Policy Officers' Interim Meeting**

**1.30 pm on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2010**

**St Aldates Room, Oxford Town Hall**

### **Attendees:**

David Paine (GOSE)  
Tina Rowley (West Oxfordshire District Council)  
Philip Clarke (Cherwell District Council)  
Julie King (Cherwell District Council)  
Alison Bailey (South East England Partnership Board)  
Miles Thompson (South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council)  
Lucy Murfett (South Oxfordshire District Council)  
Peter Williams (Vale of White Horse District Council)  
Mark Jaggard (Oxford City Council)  
Adrian Roche (Oxford City Council)  
Amanda Jacobs (Oxfordshire County Council)

### **Notes of discussion in relation to setting local housing targets**

David Paine (DP) ran through the guidance provided in the Q&A attached to the Steve Quartermain letter of 6<sup>th</sup> July 2010. DP indicated that items 10, 11 and 12 in the Q&A may possibly be as much extra guidance as local planning authorities will receive on the setting of local housing provision targets (given what still remains in paragraphs 32 & 33 of PPS3). DP has not seen anything to suggest that there would be much in the way of additional practice guidance alongside the Decentralisation and Localism Bill. .

With regard to paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 in the Q&A attached to the Steve Quatermain letter, DP confirmed that local planning authorities would still need to “collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the LDF examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in PPS3” (paragraph 11). This applies whether LPAs decide to retain their existing housing targets that were set out in the revoked RS; replace RS targets with “option 1 numbers” or something else because “any target selected may be tested during the examination process especially if challenged and authorities will need to be ready to defend them” (paragraph 12). He added that although the RSS has been revoked, the evidence base underlying it remains valid and can be used by local planning authorities along with more up to date material.

Alison Bailey (AB) indicated that the evidence base that informed the RSS would remain publicly available on the Partnership's website for at least the next few months, and would also be transferred to the South East England Council's website so that it is not lost. AB added that much of the work on the RSS was informed by bottom-up evidence that remains of value, albeit in

terms of demographic statistics the lower down the geographic scale they are applied the less robust they become.

With regard to paragraph 12 in the Q&A attached to the Steve Quatermain letter, DP confirmed that a local authority could replace RS targets with “option 1 numbers”, or something else, but you would need to justify “why that is the right thing to do for your area”.

There followed a discussion about the evidence base for setting local targets. This covered the possibility of using the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA); using population and household forecasts; having regard to figures relating to the workforce/employment balance; and having regard to neighbouring plans.

There was some discussion about the methodology produced by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, which had been circulated in advance by DP for information purposes. All the local authorities indicated that they have limited budgets to commission new surveys and the group concluded that there was a need for a simple cost-effective methodology to establish local housing figures that would be acceptable to Inspectors, rather than examples such as Nathaniel Lichfield's chart that may possibly involve considerable cost. DP indicated that GOSE cannot provide a preferred methodology because the Secretary of State wants local areas to take responsibility but pointed out that legislation has not yet changed and sustainability appraisal is therefore required (see also PPS3, paragraph 33).

A question was posed as to whether it would be acceptable for a local authority to set its housing target with regard only to meeting local needs (i.e. using a zero net migration scenario). DP indicated that this was a matter for the local authority concerned to justify. There was some discussion on methodology including feasibility of forecasting small-area household size and formation rates across the different settlements in the district. DP mentioned the proposed “duty to cooperate” and suggested that the need to consider what is happening cross boundary may have implications.

Another question was posed as to the relative importance of household and population statistics if there is insufficient capacity to meet identified need in any event. DP responded that it must be a matter of judgement for the local authority whether or not it could put forward a capacity-led justification for its proposed housing target given the point in paragraph 12 about testing at examination. Whether or not the SHLAA would be a material consideration under this scenario could well depend on various circumstances including robustness of evidence. .