

Home Builders Federation

Matter 2

OXFORD CITY LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Matter 2: Housing capacity in Oxford

Whether the capacity-based housing requirement for Oxford of 10,884 (544 dwellings per annum over 20 years) set out in OCC1.B is realistic.

Whether the policies of the Plan adequately promote housing delivery, and whether the Plan provides an adequate basis for ensuring that the best use would be made of land within Oxford to maximise housing provision.

Whether the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is a reliable indication of the capacity of the city for housing and whether greater clarity is required for the numbers to be provided on housing sites and mixed-use sites.

The HBF does not wish to comment on the capacity of individual sites identified in the plan but we are concerned about the change in approach taken by the Council with regard to student accommodation as set out in the HELAA. We note that the Council in its update Housing Trajectory (PSD3) has adjusted its ratios with regard to student accommodation to 1:2.5 to reflect the approach taken in the Housing Delivery Test (HDT). Whilst we recognise the desire to have consistent approach it must be recognised this is a national average used for the purposes of determining the nationally set HDT paragraph 68-034 of PPG requires a more local consideration of the impact of student accommodation. If there is local evidence to suggest a different ratio this should be used when considering land supply to avoid overestimating the effects of student accommodation on housing supply. The Council state in paragraph 1.3.7 of the 2017 HEELA and in paragraph 3.11 of the 2017/18 AMR that evidence on of occupancy rates of HMOs suggest that on average there are five people sharing such properties. We also note that both Oxford and Cambridge City Council's commissioned Cambridge University to undertake a study¹ on this issue. However, the only published evidence under this research we could find relates to Cambridge City

¹ <https://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/Research/Start-Year/2016/Assessment-Student-Housing-Demand-Supply-Cambridge-City-Council-Oxford-City-Council>



Council. The study produced for Cambridge City Council notes in paragraph 1.6 of the executive summary that the evidence suggested that there was an average of between 3.5 to 5 students per rental property.

This change in the ratio will double the assumed contribution of homes returning to the general market housing stock as a result of new bed spaces for student accommodation compared to the previous approach taken by the Council. Instead of for every 5 student units provided one home being released the new approach assumes for every 2.5 student units provided a new home will be released. The Council must provide the necessary evidence to justify this change in the ratio.

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