

Statement of Common Ground between Oxford City Council and Cherwell District Council

Submission Draft (Regulation 19) Oxford Local Plan 2045

July 2026

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared by Oxford City Council and Cherwell District Council [the parties]. It documents those matters agreed by the parties with regard to the Oxford Local Plan 2045.

1.2 The area covered by this Statement is Oxford City Council, which is the area covered by the Local Plan 2045. The matters in this Statement are cross boundary between the City and Cherwell. Other SoCGs have been prepared on cross boundary matters with other authorities and stakeholders, in addition to an Interim Joint Statement of Common Ground and a Memorandum of Understanding between the five Oxfordshire districts specifically on the subject of Oxford's housing need.. This Statement of Common Ground goes into more detail on matters specific to Cherwell and Oxford, to be considered alongside the Memorandum of Understanding.

1.3 The Local Plan 2045 has been prepared within a changing strategic national context. The legal Duty to cooperate test was revoked on 25 March 2026 and has been replaced by a policy test whereby plan-making authorities now should demonstrate 'effective cooperation'. This SoCG reflects and confirms the current position on matters agreed or not agreed by both parties, with regard to the test of 'effective cooperation'.

1.4 This statement is provided without prejudice to other matters of detail that Cherwell District Council may wish to raise during the Oxford Local Plan examination.

2.0 Background and governance arrangements

2.1 Oxford City and Cherwell District Council have a long history of working effectively together and have been working closely together on a number of matters of strategic cross boundary importance that require effective cooperation. A particular focus of joint working between both authorities has been on housing matters.

2.2 Various mechanisms for cooperation exist, as set out in Table 1 of the City Council's Cooperation Statement. This includes the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee, which has replaced the Oxfordshire Growth Board. At the strategic level, the authorities collaborate on economic matters through the Enterprise Oxfordshire, which prepares the Strategic Economic Plan.

3.0 Matters on which the parties agree

Maintenance of Effective Cooperation

3.1 Oxford City Council has proactively engaged with Cherwell District Council through the preparation of the Oxford City Local Plan 2045 on relevant strategic cross boundary issues, including

unmet housing need, gypsy and traveller provision, and infrastructure provision. More information and details of this engagement can be found in Oxford City's Cooperation Statement.

3.2 The parties agree that Oxford City and Cherwell District Councils have engaged constructively, actively and on an on-going basis to secure effective cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters in relation to the preparation of their respective Plans.

Housing need

3.3 Following the failure of the Oxford Local Plan 2040, which relied on evidence of Objectively Assessed Housing Need from the 2022 Housing and Employment Needs Assessment (HENA), jointly commissioned with Cherwell, both councils have reverted to use of the Standard Method to represent housing need in their districts.

3.4 The parties agree that:

- The December 2024 NPPF is clear that the SM should be used to understand housing need.
- The housing need for Oxford is therefore 1,078 dwellings per annum.
- The SM is a forward-looking assessment of Local Housing Need (LHN).

Housing capacity

3.5 The parties agree:

- That Oxford does not have the capacity to meet in full its identified housing needs from 2025-2045.
- Cherwell accepts the principle of the City's housing requirement being set to represent housing capacity.

Unmet housing need

3.6 The parties agree that:

- When Oxford's housing need (21,560) is set against anticipated supply (9,041) it results in a total unmet need of 12,519 dwellings between 2025 – 2045.
- Oxford City Council has made a formal request to all Oxfordshire district councils to help meet its unmet housing needs.
- The commitments in adopted and emerging local plans of surrounding districts, including Cherwell, are more than sufficient to meet these unmet needs.
- Cherwell District will meet all of its identified housing needs and does not require Oxford to meet any of its housing needs.

Employment need

3.7 Cherwell has made representations at Regulation 19 on some issues relating to employment strategy and the Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA). These are summarised in Appendix 2, with comments from both parties.

3.8 The parties agree that

- Oxford City does not require Cherwell District to accommodate any of its employment needs to 2045.
- Cherwell District does not require the city to accommodate any of its employment needs to 2045.

Other strategic matters

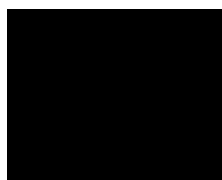
3.9 A number of other potential cooperation matters were identified in Oxford City Council's Cooperation Statement as outlined below. Conversations have been on going around these matters. Both parties are in agreement that there are no outstanding cooperation or other soundness concerns in relation to these matters.

3.10 On the issue of the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape, at Regulation 19, Cherwell asked for clarity regarding the approach to Green Belt and open space/playing pitch/golf provision . These representations are summarised in Appendix 2, with responses from both parties.

3.11 In relation to other strategic matters, the parties agree that:

- Part of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies in the south-west of Cherwell District and within Oxford City. Air quality and recreation are the key issues affecting the quality of the SAC. The Councils have ensured their work on respective HRAs is coordinated.
- The cumulative impact of growth on the local and wider transport network is a strategic matter and the Councils continue to work constructively with Oxfordshire County Council, Highways England and other stakeholders to plan for future highway infrastructure improvements (e.g. through joint working on OXIS) and to support the delivery of the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.
- The parties have worked collaboratively with the other Oxfordshire authorities on a Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment to inform their respective Local Plans. There is no need arising from Oxford City.
- There are currently no outstanding cooperation concerns between the two parties in relation to the issue of provision of health infrastructure and local facilities.
- There are currently no outstanding cooperation concerns between the two parties in relation to the issue of climate change mitigation and adaptation including flood risk.
- There are currently no unresolved cooperation concerns relating to the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development.

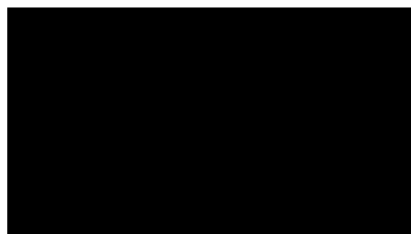
Signed on behalf of Cherwell District Council



David Peckford, Assistant Director - Planning

Date: 7/7/26

Signed on behalf of Oxford City Council



David Butler, Director of Planning and Regulation

Date: 13/07/26

Appendix 1: Key meetings and information sharing during development of the OLP2045

Date	Type of engagement	Topic/s
26.02.25	HELAA workshop Oxfordshire authorities (LPAs and County)	General update on start of HELAA process
24.04.25	Meeting between all Oxfordshire LPAs	Scope of the Duty to Cooperate, mechanisms of cooperation, Green belt, housing need and supply, specialist housing need.
19.06.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Housing capacity, housing need, Green Belt, ELNA
23.06.25	Bilateral meeting	Progress update of both parties' plans, Oxford's Regulation 19 rep to Cherwell's Local Plan Review, bi-lateral SoCG.
10.07.25	ELNA workshop all Oxfordshire authorities	Rapley's led workshop on emerging methodology and findings.
24.07.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Housing need and apportionment, ELNA, retail needs
19.08.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	ELNA, housing need, specialist housing need
11.09.25	SHLAA Workshop all Oxfordshire authorities	Presentation from the city. Explained change of Plan period and resulting updates to the evidence base, including SHLAA. Went through new and updated sites, explained site size threshold and windfall approach and approach to Green Belt.
23.09.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Housing need including amendment of Plan period and impacts on delivery. Made clear again there would be unmet need.

15.10.25	Bilateral meeting	To discuss Cherwell's developing Regulation 10A Review that includes Partial Review sites
21.10.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Unmet housing need, water cycle study, green infrastructure and Green Belt.
31.10.25	OXFORD FORMAL REQUEST LETTER	Letter sent to other Oxfordshire LPAs formally asking for help with Oxford's unmet need.
20.11.25	Cherwell District Council respond positively to formal request letter	
14.11.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Focus on city sites following the further call for sites made as a result of the changed plan period, update on sites. Acknowledgement formal request letter had been sent.
10.12.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Discussion mainly about the proposed programme for work for the group about agreements for Oxford's unmet housing need apportionment.
18.12.26	Oxford circulate draft SHLAA	
15.01.25	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Draft interim joint SoCG between all Oxfordshire LPAs
26.02.26	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	SHLAA workshop
16.03.26	Oxfordshire Duty to Cooperate Forum	Unmet Housing Need
14.04.26	Bilateral meeting	Discussion about Reg 19 rep and SoCG

Appendix 2: Detailed comments and responses

Summary of Comment in Cherwell District Council's representation	Oxford City Council response	Final position
Housing need and requirement We would welcome a clear table with the number of homes to be delivered and when. The capacity-based context of the OLP should also be explained within the Local Plan, including delivery or the housing requirement and the housing trajectory.	This trajectory was included in the Plan in support of H1  This will be updated as the SHLAA is updated, ahead of submission. Considering some additional text about unmet. The SHLAA does provide greater details on delivery, not all of which need to be in the Plan. A mod is proposed to add information about unmet need to the 4th bullet of the Context section of H1, as follows: <u>Oxford's unmet housing need is therefore 12,519. The surrounding Oxfordshire districts have formally agreed to meet this need, with the following distribution:</u>	The graph does not provide a detailed table of homes to be delivered and when, but we recognise it does give the overall totals. Expect the final trajectory to be shown in latest update to SHLAA. The Plan talks around capacity and that the need is greater than the city's capacity to deliver, but it could be made explicit that the requirement is a capacity based.
Employment need Policy E1 would benefit from greater clarity in the interest of usability and to ensure that appropriate opportunities are not overlooked.	A modification is proposed to Policy E1 to make it clearer (with no change to meaning, just presenting it differently: <u>On existing employment sites or those in lawful use for the proposed employment use class, which are outside of these locations, the city centre or district centres, and which are not</u>	The policy is still not very clear.

The approach to B8 in Policy E2 should be more flexible to sustainably support logistics operations within the city boundary to meet Oxford's needs.	<u>designated as Key Employment Sites, proposals for regeneration and/or additional floorspace with employment-generating uses will only be supported if:</u> a) Existing employment sites not designated as Key Employment Sites (or those in lawful use for the proposed employment use class), can only be regenerated with employment-generating uses if better and more intensive use is made of the site through the redevelopment, up-grading or re-use of existing under-used buildings, and b) Proposals for additional floorspace for employment-generating uses on existing employment sites not designated as Key Employment Sites (or those in lawful use for the proposed employment use class), outside the city and district centres must follow the sequential approach <u>is followed</u> for new town centre uses as set out in Policy C1. The approach to B8 set out in Policy E2 is considered appropriate in the city. It allows for new B8 in the way that is most relevant in the city, i.e. to support Key Employment Sites.	We still do not agree with the approach to B8 set out.
Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA) It should be noted, for accuracy, that in Table 2.1 of the ELNA the period which is covered by Cherwell's ENA is 2020-2042, rather than 2021-2042. The ELNA recognises that many of Oxford's employees travel in from neighbouring authorities and this pattern will be exacerbated, and commuting will increase unless significant	We will update the dates of the ENA in the ELNA. Paragraph 5.60 is in the Property Market Analysis section. This paragraph is simply noting the current situation, which is that there is not demand in the city and because the city does not see any large strategic warehousing, due to the lack of available suitable sites, with these requirements accommodated outside of the city in places such as Symmetry Park, Bicester and Central M40 at Banbury. Paragraph 5.88 concludes this section and notes that the city's industrial/warehouse market is relatively small.	The use of land for R and D as seen in recent permissions has exacerbated this issue and this is not addressed in the Plan/ELNA.

residential development is delivered within the city and land suitable for housing development is not unreasonably lost for employment. The large pipeline of R&D (recognised in the ELNA) in advance of housing will impact commuting levels. Paragraph 5.60 suggests that industrial/warehousing space is accommodated outside the city and refers to locations within Cherwell. It is not clear if it is being indicated that Oxford's warehousing need is being met by these locations, but we anticipate that Policy E2 will address this.	Paragraph 8.21 summarises the overall need for employment floorspace in the city as follows: <i>we do not recommend a need to identify land for the modest office, industrial and warehousing need because growth in these uses can be absorbed in the existing portfolio. The considerable minimum need for R&D/lab space (the 345,000 sq m) can be met from within the committed and potential supply that has been promoted to the Council.</i> The City Council is therefore making no request for any neighbouring district to take any kind of employment need.	
Areas of Focus (NEOAOF) We would welcome greater clarity on the sites within Cherwell that are allocated in the Cherwell Local Plan Partial Review to meet Oxford's housing needs (PR6a, PR6b, PR7a, PR7b, PR8 and PR9). A correction is also needed to the supporting paragraph to Policy NEOAOF as site PR6c (Land at Frieze Farm) is not a housing site. It is reserved only for the potential construction of a golf course should this be required as the result of the residential development of Land to the West of Oxford Road under Policy PR6b (North Oxford Golf Course). A criterion should be added to make clear that any development within the AoF will be expected to support (and not undermine) the delivery of nearby sites PR6a, PR6b, PR7a and PR7b and not delay their delivery in meetings Oxford's housing needs.	Modification suggested to the reference to Frieze Farm in the supporting text of Policy NEOAOF: The area adjoins several large housing allocation sites, which fall within Cherwell District (PR6a Land East of Oxford Road, and PR6b Land West of Oxford Road and PR6c Land at Frieze Farm,) but nonetheless adjoin existing communities in Oxford... Amendment to bullet point f of Policy NEOAOF High quality design which capitalises opportunities for growth e) Good urban design and place making across the AoF, including the introduction of new public open space; f) Successful integration of new development into the existing built environment, <u>consideration of longer-term potential for integration with unmet need sites in Cherwell (without harming their delivery)</u> and enhanced facilities for both new and existing communities.	The proposed modification would overcome the objection.

Open space, recreation and playing pitches It is not clear how the assessment of open space, recreation and playing pitch needs within the city has been used to inform the assessment of sites in the HELAA 2026 and the allocation of sites in the OLP2045. Further clarity may be helpful. We note that there is not evidence on golf needs in the interim PPS 2026. It is important that this gap in the evidence is addressed considering the allocation of the North Oxford Golf Course by Cherwell for housing development and the reservation of Frieze Farm for an alternative golfing facility should this be required to meet need.	It is not considered that the lack of golf in the PPS means there is a gap in the evidence that needs to be addressed. The PPS focuses on pitches, which host sports with various associations and clubs, and in some case may be able to be turned over to alternative pitch use depending on demand. Golf is very different. The City has only one golf course and one driving range that is not within a private school or college. At the current time, the landowners have not put these sites forward for development and there is no intention for them to be lost and therefore to need to be reprovided elsewhere (or shown to be surplus). It is also highly unlikely that there could be potential within the City for another golf course. The Playing Pitch Strategy does not suggest an excess of sports pitches, and these sites are not considered surplus. They are allocated for housing because a detailed consideration of the site and discussion with landowners suggests that there is potential to re-provide sports provision (in nearly all cases within the site, intensifying it into a smaller area) allowing housing to come forward on the remaining space that has been freed up. At the current time the landowners of the OUP sports ground and Jesus and Lincoln College do not have alternative, suitable off-site provision that they have identified. However, this could potentially be identified over the course of the plan, which would increase the capacity of the sites. The capacity assumptions for the plan though need to be on the basis of what is known to be achievable and deliverable, rather than what it may be hoped could happen by the end of the plan period.	Cherwell District Council remain concerned that the City has not assessed the needs for golf.
Green Belt The Green Belt assessment of additional sites 2025 carried out by LUC and published alongside the consultation focuses on whether any of the	It is not the case that the 2025 Green Belt assessment of additional sites focuses on sites previously assessed by LUC. The latest assessment does revisit previously assessed sites, to ensure the assessment is up-to-date according to the revised NPPF, and	Paragraphs 1.1-1.5 of the 2025 LUC assessment of additional sites is not clear that both previously assessed

previously assessed sites meet the criteria for 'grey belt' The starting point for this study appears to be the earlier work, also undertaken by LUC. Therefore, there might be other opportunities within your area of the Green Belt (e.g. to provide affordable housing). Bearing in mind the development pressure on adjoining authorities, it would be helpful if the circumstances in which Oxford would consider meeting its development needs within its parts of the Green Belt could be clearly set out.	it identifies which of these previously assessed sites are grey belt. In addition, there are also a number of new sites assessed, which had not previously been assessed. New sites were included to ensure compliance with the intention of the NPPF- sites were only excluded from review if they were greenfield sites where the amount of Flood Zone 3b means they are intrinsically not developable, or where they have national biodiversity protections, which also makes them intrinsically not developable. Sites with local wildlife protection or other designations were not excluded from review, as they had been previously, and so there are additional sites assessed. A few sites were identified where development may have the potential to have a fundamental impact on the Green Belt purposes. A number of parcels (some newly assessed and some revisited) were found to be grey belt. Whatever the outcome of the Green Belt assessment, all sites (other than those already identified as having intrinsic constraints) were still considered further. However, on application of the plan's strategy and other further considerations, such as landowner interest, very little potential was found in the Green Belt, with only one site being allocated. The Evidence Base has been assessed but this does seem to be set out in the Green Belt Assessment 2025 and this is set out clearly in Background Paper BGP006: Green Belt, which says in paragraph 3.2: <i>The first stage of the most recent assessment required Oxford City Council to determine the location, scale and most appropriate parcel size as set out in the Paragraph 003 (Reference ID: 64-003-20250225) of the PPG. All green sites including those in the Green Belt are already in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), therefore it was considered that any SHLAA site which contained any Green Belt would be looked at in the first instance. This resulted in an initial 121 parcels of or including Green Belt (one was</i>	sites and additional sites were included
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	<i>subsequently split into two for allocation purposes), which can be found in Appendix 1 of this background paper</i>	