

Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

Oxfordshire Growth Board Housing

Advisory Sub-Group

HELD ON TUESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 6.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Present:

Councillors Susan Brown (Chair), Robin Bennett, John Donaldson, Jeff Haine, Judy Roberts and Mike Rowley

Officers: John Disley (Oxfordshire County Council), Caroline Green (Oxford City Council), Kevin Jacob, (Oxfordshire Growth Board), Megan McFarlane (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal), Paul Staines (Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal) and Rachel Williams (Oxfordshire Plan 2050)

49 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutions, declarations of interests; Chair's announcements

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor Liz Brighthouse, (Oxfordshire County Council)

There were no declarations of interest or Chair's announcements.

50 Notes of the last meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 27 October 2020 were agreed.

As a matter arising relating to Community Land Trusts it was noted that HM Government had announced that it was to extend the Community Housing Fund with a further £4m of funding.

51 Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal 2020/2021 Quarter 3

The subgroup was provided with a presentation setting out performance information on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal since the previous meeting, relating to Homes from Infrastructure, (HFI) and the Affordable Housing Programme, (AHP).

The presentation included updated details of the negative impact of Covid-19 of the overall number of units under HFI, the projected trajectory for Quarter 3, Year 3 of the Deal against target and the overall trajectory against target over the whole Deal period. It was noted that one of the impacts of the pandemic had been on the arrangements for collection

of data on delivered units and therefore it was likely there would be some adjustment in the numbers as the situation eased.

The agreement by Homes England to extend the Deal period into a sixth and potentially seventh year offered the potential for up to 1,910 additional units considered to be 'accelerated' by the Deal and over 5,000 units overall. This was a positive development, but it was important that a strong narrative around the delivery of schemes was maintained as Homes England would be continuing to monitor delivery closely.

It was expected that the Year 3 target of 275 AHP units would be delivered and that the scheme had been extended into a fourth year because of the impact of the pandemic. This potentially could allow for the delivery of an additional 900 units, but it was important to robustly set out the process for delivery of units in Year 4 by end of March 2021 so that funding was secured. A process of prioritisation for AHP schemes was being worked upon so that appropriate and evidence based decisions could be taken on schemes submitted.

The subgroup noted the presentation.

52 Update on Low Carbon Housing Action Plan

The subgroup received a presentation setting out progress in the implementation of recommendations agreed by the Growth Board in March 2020 relating to the promotion and support of low/zero carbon housing across Oxfordshire. Points highlighted included:

- Good overall progress had been made with all the recommendations implemented or partly implemented
- HM Government had published the consultation on changes to Part L and Part F of the Building Regulations in January 2021
- HM Government had, for the present, decided not to amend the Planning and Energy Act 2008 which would enable local authorities to continue to set local efficiency standards for new homes, a key concern of the subgroup.
- A low carbon housing webinar held on 9 December 2020 had been successful and well attended with a broad representation of housing associations, developers, community groups, local authorities and councillors
- By Year 4 it was expected that approximately 380 units funded through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal through the AHP would be low/zero carbon.

In discussion, the decision by HM Government not to limit the current ability of local planning authorities to set local efficiency standards was welcomed by the subgroup although it was recognised that HM Government still intended to 'clarify' the long term role of local planning authorities in determining such standards post 2025. The subgroup was also updated on Oxford City Council's plans to retrofit and improve its council housing stock to at least EPC Band C standards by 2030.

Councillor Bennett referred to the withdrawal by HM Government of a large amount of funding from the Green Homes Grant programme, available for use in retrofitting existing homes to reduce their carbon impact and suggested that there might be value in a Growth Board response. After discussion, it was agreed to recommend to the Growth Board that it consider writing to HM Government to request it consider establishing a new housing retrofit programme which local authorities would be in an ideal position to administer.

53 Slides from Joint Oxfordshire Plan 2050/Infrastructure Subgroup 21 January

The subgroup was updated on the joint meeting of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and Infrastructure Subgroup held on 21 January 2021 and noted the slides used at the meeting which had been circulated to members for information.

In discussion, the subgroup welcomed the update and noted the measures in place to align the development of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 and other complementary strategic plans such as the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy and Local Travel and Connectivity Plan. The Chair referred to the importance of Local Plans of feeding into Oxfordshire Plan 2050 as a strategic level planning document and the importance of good housing in addressing health inequalities.

54 Changes to regulations concerning Community Land Trusts

The subgroup considered a briefing note as set out in the Agenda which described the development of new guidance by the Growth Deal Housing Project Team for the inclusion of Community Led Housing, (CLH) groups within the Affordable Housing Programme, (AHP).

Under the flexibilities contained within Housing and Growth Deal there had been the facility to offer AHP funding to schemes managed by a Registered Provider, without requiring a Registered Provider to own the scheme in contrast with national programmes. However, following discussions with Homes England it was recognised that the flexibility was creating challenges in the administration of grant funding and that in future CLH groups should be advised that in order to fulfil obligations to mitigate against financial risk to public funds, Housing and Growth Deal funding would only be available to CLH groups which could evidence they were or intended to become, a Registered Provider or that they would be partnering with a Registered Provider for the development and ongoing management of any CLH housing units.

The subgroup acknowledged and discussed the potential impact of this change including that it might potentially discourage some CLH groups from bringing forward schemes on the basis that they considered the Registered Provider requirements to be onerous. It was felt that such groups should be supported as much as possible to mitigate this impact, being mindful of the resources available, but that there was no other practical alternative to amending the process. In order to better understand the potential impact, Officers were requested to present information to the next meeting on the viability of planned CLH schemes across the county and what might be done potentially to assist the sector.

The subgroup noted the report.

55 Dates of future meetings

27 April 2021

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm