

PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR PLANNING

Planning Project 1: Opportunities for a joint approach to viability assessments

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

When property developers propose large scale developments, LPAs require a range of contributions to be made (via s106, CIL and other methods) to maintaining and developing local communities, transport links, community infrastructure, social housing etc. This will now include a commitment to biodiversity net gain at a minimum of 10 percent, although many would like to see it at 20 percent or higher still. It is not uncommon for developers to make claims that some, or all, of the above can make a development not commercially viable and, therefore, to negotiate down the requirements.

Although all of the LPAs have done some local work on challenging these viability assessments, there has not, to date, been a county wide, robust approach to challenging these assumptions. The project proposes to look at work already done by partners; share best practice; and consider options for developing a robust way of measuring and challenging viability assessments, in order to get the maximum social, environmental, educational and cultural benefit for local residents in, and close to, major housing developments.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project supports:

- our **natural environment** being left in a better state than in which we found it.
- our **residents being healthier, happier** and overall wellbeing improving.
- our county becoming a more equal, fair and inclusive place for everyone.
- providing **energy efficient and affordable homes**, in the right number, location and tenure.
- our **county's connectivity being transformed** in ways that enhance wellbeing.

DELIVERABLES

- Minimum: sharing of best practice
- Maximum: a new piece of work to robustly assess and challenge viability assessments.

ROUGH TIMETABLE

To be confirmed.

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

To be determined.

Planning Project 2: Opportunities for a joint approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In partnership with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.

Biodiversity Net Gain is a new planning policy that will required developers to increase the amount of nature on their site by at least 10%. If they can't deliver this onsite, they have the option to purchase credits (derived from offsite habitat creation) to meet their shortfall. This becomes mandatory for nearly all new developments across England from November 2023.

BNG has the potential to contribute significantly to nature recovery ambitions in Oxfordshire, but there are some threats and challenges to overcome in order to achieve this. OLNPN has created a set of guiding principles that, if applied, would help LPAs to maximise the benefits to nature that this policy can deliver.

Local Authorities across Oxfordshire, working together, could share the costs and burdens associated with implementation of biodiversity net gain to ensure better outcomes. This could manifest in shared production of a template Section 106 agreement and associated processes and guidance. It could also include a shared programme of monitoring and enforcement, to ensure what is promised is delivered. Further, this shared working could explore the potential for policy alignment (to the extent that this is practical and desirable), including a move towards a requirement of at least 20% or greater (instead of the mandatory 10%, which has been shown to only ensure no net loss in practice).

Currently there are insufficient offsite units available to meet expected demand. This could lead to delays in granting planning permission, and a further slow-down in housebuilding. It is suggested Councils jointly support a project to boost provision of high integrity offsite BNG units.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project is crucial to:

- leaving our **natural environment** in a better state than that in which we found it

It also supports:

- accelerating towards a **carbon neutral** near term future, and a **carbon negative** longer term future, and
- our **residents being healthier, happier** and overall **wellbeing** improving.

In turn these will contribute to:

- enabling our **diverse and vibrant communities to thrive**, and
- enabling our **local economy to be globally competitive, diverse and sustainable**, and also
- our county being a **more fair and equal place** for everyone, and also
- supporting our **vibrant, rich and diverse cultural offer**

DELIVERABLES

- The production of high integrity policies and processes across Oxfordshire LPAs, ensuring maximum biodiversity benefit is realised from BNG.
- A proposal for a shared BNG resource to help ensure smooth implementation, monitoring and enforcement of BNG.
- A proposal for council support to stimulate supply of offsite biodiversity units, removing potential delays to the planning system.

ROUGH TIMETABLE

TBA

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

TBA

Planning Project 3: Opportunities for a joint approach to advanced methods of construction

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Advanced, or modern methods of construction, describes the design, planning and manufacturing of construction components in a factory controlled setting, that than using traditional on-site construction techniques.

This includes methods such as modular construction, panelised construction, off-site fabrication and 3D printing, amongst others. All factory made elements are then assembled on-site for a faster build time and improved quality control.

There is a reduced need for large teams of on-site workers, resources, materials and vehicles. This means faster turnaround times with less disruption to local residents and communities in the vicinity. Because components are often made with high grade materials such as timber, steel, concrete and bamboo fibres, they require less maintenance over their lifetime and can last longer than traditional buildings.

Another major benefit is safety. Risks are reduced by ensuring that all materials used meet safety standards; meaning that there is less risk of errors or costly reworks during installation. Additionally, prefabricated elements that are constructed off-site, and then assembled on-site, reduce the risk associated with working at heights, or on scaffolding, as well as associated risks to the public.

Sustainable building practices are an important consideration when it comes to any new construction project. Because most components are manufactured offsite, there is less impact on the environment from transportation emissions and noise pollution from heavy machinery. Using prefabricated components also reduces waste by using only what is necessary for the job, instead of excess supplies, or ordering too much material that will go unused and possibly end up in landfills later.

It is proposed that a project is initiated to explore how these advanced methods might be encouraged across Oxfordshire.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project supports :

- having **energy efficient and affordable homes**

And also to:

- our **natural environment** being in a better state than in which we found it
- working towards **carbon neutrality** and then **carbon negativity**

It will also help

- our county's **connectivity being transformed** in ways that **enhance wellbeing**, and
- enabling our **diverse and vibrant communities to thrive**.

DELIVERABLES

TBA

ROUGH TIMETABLE

TBA

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

TBA

Planning Project 4: Support the engagement of local planning authorities with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board to support the provision of healthcare infrastructure.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The NHS has its own internal mechanisms for strategic planning and provision of healthcare services. Over many years, LPAs have faced challenges in understanding these, and liaising with the NHS on provision of services, particularly on new developments. This has led to significant gaps in knowledge, for example the most recent iteration of OxIS did not contain a comprehensive suite of planned, or needed healthcare infrastructure.

The BOB ICB are part of the Planning Advisory Group and are keen to reach a better understanding of the challenges everyone faces in planning. As an initial phase, the BOB ICB will provide a short paper to the group, followed by a fuller session to discuss the issues. A project can be established from there to enable better joint working between the LPAs and the BOB ICB. It is recognised that this piece of work is important and could bring multiple benefits to all parties, but we are not yet in the position of identifying a clear project scope for it.

LINK TO THE OXFORDSHIRE STRATEGIC VISION

This project particularly supports:

- our residents being **healthier, happier** and overall **wellbeing** improving

It also supports:

- our county will becoming a **more equal, fair and inclusive** place for everyone.
- our **diverse and vibrant communities thriving**, with a strong sense of identity.

DELIVERABLES

Minimum: better understanding of the planning issues faced by the BOB ICB and enhancing their understanding of LPA planning issues

Maximum: a more defined project to help with planning for health infrastructure

ROUGH TIMETABLE

TBA

GOVERNANCE, REPORTING AND RESOURCING

TBA