

# Notes

OF A MEETING OF THE

## **Oxfordshire Growth Board Housing Advisory Sub-Group**

HELD ON TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2020 AT 6.30 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

### **Present:**

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

**Officers:** Caroline Green (Oxford City Council), Kevin Jacob and Paul Staines

### **43 Apologies for absence and notification of substitutions, declarations of interest; Chair's announcements**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Donaldson, (Cherwell District Council).

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

### **44 Notes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020**

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed subject to a typographical correction to minute 40.

As a matter arising, the subgroup was updated that the draft letter to the Secretary of State relating to low carbon building standards referred to in minute 4 had not yet been sent, but would now be considered by the Growth Board on 24 November as part of the update report on the promotion of low/zero carbon housing in Oxfordshire.

### **45 Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal 2020/2021**

The subgroup was provided with a presentation setting out a series of headline updates on the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal since the previous meeting, relating to Homes from Infrastructure and the Affordable Housing Programme, (AHP). This included details of the impact of Covid-19 which was delaying the delivery of some anticipated Year 3 schemes into Year 4, a breakdown of tenure and units delivered by authority. The presentation also covered photo examples of delivered AHP supported schemes across the county, Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy, (OxIS) headlines, and Oxfordshire Plan 2050 headlines.

The subgroup was informed there were real challenges including the effects of Covid 19 delaying delivery, but the revised Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal timelines negotiated with HM Government presented an opportunity to still meet targets for Homes from Infrastructure and the Affordable Housing Programme.

In discussion, members of the subgroup referred to the progress of the revised OxIS and expressed the view that it important that its drafting should as much as possible be a bottom up process, whilst acknowledging that there would be cross county authority input via an officer steering group and that the Growth Board Infrastructure subgroup.

The subgroup **noted** the presentation.

## **46 The promotion of Low/Zero Carbon Housing in Oxfordshire**

The subgroup considered a draft report to the Growth Board setting out current work being progressed in response to recommendations endorsed by the Board in March 2020 promoting Low/Zero Carbon Housing and a summary of wider partnership work being undertaken in this area. The subgroup's attention was drawn to the planning of a public webinar scheduled for 9 December which aimed to raise the profile of Oxfordshire's low-carbon agenda within the context of the Housing and Growth Deal.

In discussion, members of the subgroup referred to some of the uncertainties around Low Carbon Housing and national policy as referenced in the report, particularly in the relation to the Government's proposed reforms to the planning system as set out in the Planning for the Future White Paper. It was felt that these reforms if enacted could pose a threat to the delivery of low and zero carbon homes, particularly if not supported by robust building regulations. Members also reiterated previously made comments that it was better and more cost effective to build new homes which were zero/low carbon compliant rather than having to existing homes in the future.

The subgroup **supported** the draft report.

## **47 Changes to the Planning Regulations, White Paper and Affordable Housing Prospectus**

The subgroup considered a report which provided an overview of the proposed changes by HM Government to the new Affordable Housing Budget and Prospectus, current planning regulations, and the Planning for the Future White paper, as they affected the provision of affordable housing. Three key themes were highlighted to the subgroup:

- A strong emphasis by HM Government towards the encouragement of home ownership and the implications of this for other forms of housing tenure
- Temporary changes to the small site threshold for the delivery of affordable housing from 10 units to either 40 or 50 units
- The replacement of the current Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 regimes with a new simplified and comprehensive levy at national level.

Members of the subgroup expressed concern over what was felt to be the negative impact of many of the proposed changes on the provision of genuinely affordable housing in Oxfordshire, noting that individual councils were considering submitting their own individual general responses to the White Paper consultation. Particular concerns were expressed in relation to the intention to apply a requirement for 'First Homes' in rural

exception sites and uncertainty around the proportion of any new national development levy which would be set aside to support affordable housing. The point was also made that a wider definition of developer contributions was needed which recognised the need to mitigate the impacts of development on the delivery of local services, which should go beyond infrastructure and affordable housing, e.g. greater demand on specialist educational support such SEN.

The subgroup **noted** the report.

## **48 Dates of future meetings**

15 December 2020

### Any other business

Councillor Bennett suggested that the subgroup and Growth Board write to HM Government in support of the Community Land Trust Network's request that the Community Housing Fund be extended. In discussion, the subgroup supported this in principle, noting that a draft letter would need to be taken through the Growth Board's approval processes with consideration by the subgroup, Growth Board Executive Officer Group and Growth Board itself.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm