



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



Listening Learning Leading

**Monthly Monitoring Meeting
between MHCLG and SODC relating
to the Secretary of State's Direction
of March 2020 in relation to the
South Oxfordshire Local Plan**

Meeting Date: 3 June 2020

In attendance:

MHCLG

Benjamin Clayton, Deputy Director for Development Plans
John Romanski, Head of Development Plan Delivery
Eamon Mythen, Senior Planner

SODC

Suzanne Malcolm, Acting Deputy Chief Executive - Place
Adrian Duffield, Head of Planning
Lucy Murfett, Planning Policy Manager
Emma Baker, Planning Policy Team Leader

Apologies: Mark Stone, Chief Executive, SODC

1) Timetable

- Update from SODC of progress against Project Plan (see chart on page 4).
Key tasks undertaken since Direction:
 - Responded to additional Inspector's Question about the implications of the Oxford Brookes University appeal on 22 May, and published on the [examination webpage](#) (see IC5 response)
 - IC5 response accompanied by updates to main modifications and housing trajectory (documents PSD05, PSD24 and PSD26)

- 3 items behind schedule, but all on track to complete by 26 June and submit with matters statements:
 - 5 Year Supply update: This annual exercise normally starts 1st April each year. Because of COVID19 lockdown we could not do site visits and had to look for alternative information sources (building control records, council tax etc) which helped but did not give the full picture of housing completions. In May site visits resumed, and major sites have been completed. Small site to finish and report template to compile.
 - Viability Assessment Update: Draft due from consultants this week, will seek input of stakeholders e.g. OCC then finalise report
 - Statements of Common Ground: Underway with OCC and all of our strategic site promoters, other relevant SOCG were submitted with the local plan.

- Update received from PINS via Programme Officer on arrangements for examination:
 - The examination timetable has been set by the Inspector
 - Hearing dates now set for 14 July to 7 August
 - Matters Statements due by 26 June
 - Will be run as a virtual hearing
 - Guidance note for participants, matters and programme published on the [examination webpage](#) on 27 May
 - Inspector has given an indication in the Matters that "From my reading of the written evidence it appears that the Council has satisfied the

Duty to Cooperate and that the plan has met the legal requirements in respect of compliance with the Local Development Scheme and the Statement of Community Involvement, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Appropriate Assessment.”

- Inspector has directed that a number of modifications proposed by the Council are acceptable, including a set of amendments on climate change, while others are not (e.g. approach on local labour force).
- Update from SODC on partnership working (e.g. County Council):
 - Working closely with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) throughout May on transport, education and general infrastructure requirements.
 - Working closely with OCC on Didcot HIF
 - Convened joint meeting with OCC and all strategic site promoters on infrastructure
 - Working closely with all Oxfordshire authorities on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, current focus on evidence base studies and scope of plan
- Update from SODC on evidence base updates from consultants:
 - Consultants Aspinall Verdi appointed in March to update the Local Plan and CIL Viability Assessment for the examination with latest information on infrastructure requirements and costings

MHCLG recognised that progress has been made, with the examination arrangements now set, and that there is significant workload of matters statements and accompanying documents for SODC to complete by the end of June.

2) Resourcing

- Update from MHCLG on Covid-19
 - On 13 May MHCLG published new [advice on plan-making](#) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (paras 076- 078)
 - New Statutory Instrument on publicity
 - Recommended that Statements of Community Involvement may need amending to address Covid-19 processes. SODC confirmed that revising the SCI is in progress.
- Update from SODC on staffing and dedicated officer resource for examination
 - The Council is continuing with 100% home working as Covid-19 working arrangements continue.
 - Officers have successfully worked to deadlines and continue to work towards them.
 - SODC have a team of 3 officers ringfenced on the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, plus support available from 9 policy planners across the wider teams
 - During May successfully recruited to vacant Senior Policy Officer post on permanent full-time basis, and two fixed term full-time posts.
 - Annual 5 year housing land supply completions monitoring exercise in progress, some delays re: undertaking site visits because of Covid-19 restrictions, but site visits now underway

- Separate internal resource (within another service area) supporting Member engagement during local plan examination

MHCLG welcomed the approach of convening staff from across the wider South and Vale teams (Development Management, Vale Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans teams) to assist with the examination, recognising the advantage of a shared service for providing flexibility and positive opportunities for staff development.

3) Governance

- Update from SODC
 - Next stage for Cabinet and Council decisions will be adoption of South Oxfordshire Local Plan

4) Any other business

- SODC is working closely with PINS data protection team to get GDPR data protection provisions in place regarding the virtual hearings. MCHLG suggested this could be an area where the Council is leading nationally and will have useful lessons learned and good practice which will be of interest to PAS and other authorities.

ACTIONS:

- 1) John to check latest re: signing Didcot HIF
- 2) Adrian to send MHCLG copy of letter to PINS regarding virtual hearings

Date of next monthly monitoring meeting: 29 June 2020

Gantt chart showing key weekly progress on examination workstreams

	May				June				July				Aug
Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1
Response to Inspector's Question IC5			★✓										
Updates to modifications and trajectory			★✓										
Viability Assessment update				★									
Statements of Common Ground			★										
5 year housing land supply update					★								
Arrangements made for examination hearings				★✓									
Matters, Issues & Questions published				★✓									
Council prepares Statements on the Matters								★					
Hearings held											★	★	★

Key:

Deadline ★

Achieved ✓

