

Housing In Oxfordshire – An Overview

A paper by Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably (POETS)

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POETS recognise that housing need is a major issue for Oxfordshire and Oxford city in particular. However, meeting housing need is about far more than simply allocating land for developers to build predominantly market housing. The need is for housing that people who live and work in Oxfordshire can afford to buy or rent.

We have prepared two reports, which are available on our web site, www.poetsplanningoxon.uk, that consider

- a) housing need and growth, with particular reference to what is being proposed in Oxfordshire
[poets housing need and growth in oxfordshire final nov2019.pdf](#), and
- b) how best to provide genuinely affordable housing
[poets affordable housing final nov2019.pdf](#)

The currently planned rates of housebuilding are without precedent in Oxfordshire, and could result in doubling the population and housing stock of the county in the space of thirty years. At the same time the much vaunted “Growth Deal” stands to provide less than 3% of the £9bn funding for infrastructure that the local authorities themselves say is needed.

The paper on affordable housing reflects on the government’s own admission that the housing market is broken. It reviews recent studies and concludes that government policy across the board has failed to deliver the amount of affordable and social housing needed. After the war until the late 1970s both Conservative and Labour governments pursued a twin track of public and private sector housing provision. However, from the 1980s onwards council house building has come to a virtual standstill and the right to buy has further reduced the stock of affordable housing.

At the same time, spending on housing benefit has rocketed, while other policy changes have served to reduce both the quality and affordability of housing for those in need. Moves such as the government’s abandonment of the code for sustainable homes in 2015 represent an astonishingly short-sighted approach given the need to respond to climate change.

We consider that there is a need for significant changes in housing and planning policy both nationally and locally. Nationally, among the changes we would like to see are a reinvigoration of public sector housing, and capturing a much higher proportion of the rise in land values arising from planning permission.

We consider that the current round of local plans in Oxfordshire is unlikely to cater significantly for local needs. The housing need figures that have been put forward for Oxford do not stand up to rigorous examination, relying as they do on deals with the government that have no mandate from the electorate. Furthermore, the plans would result in the irrevocable loss of key areas of the Oxford Green Belt, compound existing transport problems, and put further pressure on other infrastructure and services.

Given the imminent examination of the Oxford Local Plan, it would be premature to release large areas of green belt for development.