

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Policy Bulletin

April 2014



Where key elements of legislation, government bills, recently enacted legislation, news etc. are not noted, the information can be found in previous ORCC policy bulletins.

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Government Bills/ Regulations/ White Papers

Care Bill

A Bill to reform the law relating to care and support for adults and the law relating to support for carers, to make provision about safeguarding adults from abuse or neglect, to make provision about care standards, to establish and make provision about Health Education England, to establish and make provision about the Health Research Authority, and for connected purposes: [Care Bill 2013-14](#)

Links:

- All Care Bill documents: *see link above*
- Carers UK, [Briefing on Key Changes in the Care Bill- May 2013](#)

The new Care Bill published on the 10th of May consolidates the framework of social care law and introduces important new rights for carers which for the first time give them the same rights to assessments and care services from local authorities as those they care for.

The Bill also implements recommendations made by the Dilnot Commission on long-term care costs; introducing a new model of paying for long-term care by placing a cap on the amount of money an individual has to spend on their social care.

Current Stage:

- Ping Pong, 7/5/14.

Latest comment:

[MPs grant powers to close local hospitals.](#) BBC News, 11/3/14

MPs have voted through a controversial measure that gives England's health secretary powers to close local hospitals, even if they are performing well. Clause 119 in the Care Bill allows a hospital to be closed or downgraded if a neighbouring trust is struggling financially. The government maintains it is a good way to address local care issues. But critics say the powers put finances ahead of patient care. Clause 119 gives special administrators the power to make changes to neighbouring services while trying to rescue failing NHS trusts.

Open Public Services

Open Public Services (OPS) is the government's reform programme for public services. We work with people across government, local government, the private sector and civil society to make sure that everyone has access to the best possible public services.

Our principles

Through the open public services programme, government is:

- increasing choice and giving people control over the services they use
- allowing local decision-making, decentralising power to the lowest appropriate level
- opening up public service provision to a range of providers
- giving everyone fair access to public services (which means ensuring the most disadvantaged don't miss out)
- making public service providers accountable to users and taxpayers

Cabinet Office, [Open Public Services](#).

Links:

- Open Public Services, [all documents relating to choice and opening up public services](#)
- Open Public Services, [2014 Progress Report](#). The report explores the following themes:
 - Increasing choice and control to deliver personalised services tailored to an individual service user's unique needs
 - Allowing local decision-making and decentralising power to the lowest appropriate level by empowering neighbourhoods and communities
 - Opening up public services to a range of providers through top class commissioning, social investment innovations and challenging the public sector to innovate in their business models
 - Giving everyone fair access to public services
 - Making public service providers accountable to users and taxpayers for the quality of service and the outcomes they achieve

High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Bill 2013-14

On 25 November 2013 the Government published the High Speed Rail (London-West Midlands) Bill. The Bill confers the powers required to construct phase 1 of the proposed HS2 scheme from London Euston to Birmingham Curzon Street with intermediate stations in West London (Old Oak Common) and at Birmingham Airport. It provides for a connection to the existing rail link to the Channel Tunnel (HS1) but not to Heathrow Airport: [High Speed Rail \(London - West Midlands\) Bill 2013-14](#)

Current Stage:

- 2nd reading House of Commons, 28/4/14

Links:

- Bill documents, *see link above*
- [High Speed Rail \(London-West Midlands\) Bill 2013-14 - Commons Library Research Paper](#)
- [High Speed 2](#)
- [HS2 Action Alliance](#)

Latest comment:**[High-speed rail's long journey.](#) BBC News, 17/3/14**

The government plans a new high-speed rail network, from London to Birmingham and to Manchester and Leeds, known as HS2. Ministers say it will improve the transport network and boost the economy but there has been controversy about the exact route of the line and its effect on those living near it. *The article then covers various key points about HS2.*

[A new property compensation scheme has been launched for HS2 Phase One property owners.](#) HS2, 9/4/14

On 9 April 2014, the Secretary of State for Transport launched a new property compensation scheme for Phase One owners called 'express purchase', along with a new measure to accompany property schemes called 'rent back'. He also announced further schemes that will be launched later in the year.

[High Speed Rail \(London-West Midlands\) Bill 2013-14 - Commons Library Research Paper, 22/4/14.](#)

This paper deals with the Hybrid Bill to authorise the building of Phase One of the High Speed 2 (HS2) project from London to the West Midlands. The Bill, if passed, would give both Parliamentary and planning approval for the scheme.

HS2 is the Government's flagship transport infrastructure project to build a high speed rail line from London to Manchester and Leeds, via Birmingham, the East Midlands, Sheffield and Crewe, to begin operation in 2026 and be completed by 2032. It was supported by the Labour Government after 2009 and has had the support of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government since May 2010.

There are two 'phases' of the scheme: Phase One from London to the West Midlands and Phase Two from the West Midlands to Leeds and Manchester.

Supporters claim that the line is urgently needed to meet projected future demand; to tackle the capacity constraints on the West Coast Main Line; and to deliver wider economic and regional benefits. Opponents maintain that these claims are overstated and that future demand and capacity can be met via other, cheaper means. The total cost of the scheme is currently estimated at £40.6 billion for both phases with an additional £6.93 billion for rolling stock.

Latest News and Emerging Issues: National

Welfare Reform

Latest news:

[Two million poorest families hit by welfare reforms, says Oxfam.](#) Independent, 22/4/14

Nearly two million of the poorest families in Britain have been made poorer by a “perfect storm” of below-inflation benefit rises and changes to the welfare system, a new report warns. An analysis by Oxfam and the New Policy Institute found the worst-affected 200,000 families were losing £864 a year as a result of benefit cuts.

It concluded that about 1.75 million households had been hit by one or more changes to welfare payments, including fewer council tax exemptions and the “bedroom tax”. The charity called on the Government to introduce an “absolute minimum” level of financial support regardless of where people lived, which would be “high enough to prevent people from having to walk the breadline”.

Providing Social Housing for Local People

In October 2013, the government consulted on proposals to issue new statutory guidance for local authorities to assist them to use the flexibilities in the Localism Act 2011 to meet the needs of local residents and local communities; and to encourage them to be open and transparent about who is applying for and being allocated social housing in their local area.

gov.uk, April 2014

Extracts from Summary of Responses (link below)

Respondents were generally supportive of the proposal that local authorities should make full use of their new allocation freedoms to meet the needs of local residents and communities; and most were in favour of a residency test. The vast majority were also in favour of local authorities adopting other criteria alongside a residency test to ensure those with a strong association to the local area are not disadvantaged, and agreed that local authorities should provide for appropriate exceptions to a residency test to meet special circumstances. There was overwhelming agreement that local authorities should be more open about who is applying for and being allocated social housing in their local area.

Links:

- [Summary of Responses](#)

Beyond 2011: Census Consultation Response

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) consultation on the census and the future provision of population statistics in England and Wales closed on December 13 2013.

Extracts from [consultation response](#)

Whilst respondents varied in their views, there were some consistent key messages. In particular:

- there was continuing demand from government, local authorities, public bodies, business, the voluntary sector and individual citizens for detailed information about small areas and small populations offered by the decennial census, whether online or paper-based;
- there was a strong concern that the proposed use of an annual survey of 4 per cent of households (to support the use of existing administrative data) would not meet these needs, nor deliver the required small area and small population statistics offered by the decennial census;
- the more frequent statistics that could be provided between censuses by the use of administrative data and annual surveys would be welcomed, but not at the expense of the detailed statistics;
- whilst the methods using administrative data and surveys show considerable potential, there was concern that these were not yet mature enough to replace the decennial census;
- many respondents proposed a hybrid approach, making the best of both approaches, with an online census in 2021 enhanced by administrative data and household surveys.

Links:

- [Beyond 2011 Consultation](#)
- [Consultation response](#)

Latest News and Emerging Issues: Regional and Local

Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment

The key findings of the 2014 Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SHMA) for Oxfordshire have now been published. The full report is being finalised by the consultants and will be published in the next few weeks. The six main local authorities across the county are now reviewing the findings of the assessment and considering how it will affect their areas.

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What is the SHMA?

- A technical study, required by the National Planning Policy Framework, to help local planning authorities understand how many homes will be needed in the period 2011 – 2031.
- Also considers the housing needs of specific groups such as older people, minority groups and people with disabilities
- Prepared by professional, independent consultants with a track record of preparing similar studies elsewhere.
- Replaces the previous SHMA published in 2007

The key headline from the SHMA is an identified need for the provision of between 4678 – 5328 homes a year over the 2011 - 2031 period. The figures for individual local authorities are set out below:

Housing Needed per Year (2011-31)	Housing Need Per Year	Midpoint of Range
Cherwell	1090-1190	1140
Oxford	1200 - 1600	1400
South Oxfordshire	725-825	775
Vale of White Horse	1028	1028
West Oxfordshire	635-685	660
Oxfordshire	4678 - 5328	5003

These figures identify the overall housing needed to support population change and economic growth over the period as well as contributing towards need for affordable housing and reducing affordability pressures across the county. These figures do not in themselves constitute plan targets they represent an overall assessment of need without applying any limitations such as the supply of land for

new development, historic under performance, housing market, infrastructure or environmental constraints. As such each council will consider these numbers alongside other evidence to identify specific policies within development plans.

[The county's new housing market assessment](#), Oxfordshire County Council, March 2014

Links:

- [Strategic Housing Market Assessment- key findings](#)
- [Strategic Housing Market Assessment- final report](#)

Local Development Frameworks/ Local Plans
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West Oxfordshire District Council

The Council already has an adopted Local Plan in place that was published in 2006. The plan provides the overarching framework against which planning applications are determined. Although the plan is several years old, the majority of policies have been formally 'saved' and where consistent with the Government's more recent National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) those policies are still able to be used to guide planning decisions.

We are currently working on a replacement Local Plan and published a draft plan in November 2012. The draft plan covers the period 2011 – 2029 and aims to deliver 5,500 new homes (306 per year) and 600,000 m2 of new business land, focused primarily on Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. We had hoped to publish and submit the new Local Plan to Government in 2013 however this was postponed so that the Council could take account of a new study into the future housing needs of Oxfordshire.

The [recently published] Strategic Housing Market Assessment [see above] recommends a significant increase in the number of new homes needed in West Oxfordshire compared to the draft Local Plan. There are a number of reasons for this, the main one being that the SHMA provides an 'unconstrained' assessment of housing need that takes no account of housing land supply or environmental and infrastructure constraints, whereas the draft Local Plan is based on a 'constrained' assessment of housing need taken from the South East Plan (2009).

The Council will now consider the results of the SHMA and undertake further evidence and analysis before determining a new housing target and the strategy and sites for delivering it.

At its meeting on 12th March 2014, the Council's Cabinet agreed the timetable for taking the Local Plan forward in light of the new SHMA. The key stages are summarised below:

- July 2014 – focused consultation on housing and other related matters
- October 2014 – publication of final draft plan (statutory 6-week period)
- December 2014 – submission of final draft plan to Planning Inspectorate
- March 2015 – independent examination
- July 2015 - adoption

Extracted from [West Oxfordshire District Council Local Development Framework Update, April 2014](#).

Links:

- WODC, [Draft Local Plan Pages](#)

Cherwell District Council

The proposed new Cherwell Local Plan (2006-2031) was submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for formal Examination on 31st January 2014. Mr Nigel Payne BSc (Hons), DipTP, MRTPI, MCMI has been appointed to undertake an independent examination into the soundness of Cherwell Local Plan 2006 - 2031. The Inspector's task is to consider the soundness of the submitted Local Plan, based on the criteria set out in paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework): [Cherwell Local Plan 2006-2031](#).

Links:

- All plan documentation available via link above

South Oxfordshire District Council

The Local Plan: Sites and General Policies document is part two of our new Local Plan, with the recently adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy forming the first part. It will help us achieve a number of key objectives set out in our core strategy. For example, the plan will need to ensure that we have enough sites to deliver 1,154 homes in our 12 larger villages. It will also allocate sites for a range of other uses. Part of the plan will update our general policies that we use to make decisions on planning applications: [Local Plan: Sites and General Policies](#).

Links:

- All plan documentation available via link above

Vale of White Horse District Council

Local Plan email update from VWHDC, April 2014

The consultation for our local plan housing delivery update has now closed. Thank you to everybody that has taken the time to provide their comments. At the time we posted this message [4/4/14], we estimated that we've received responses from approximately 1,500 people and groups. The next step includes uploading and processing all of your comments.

Links:

- All plan documentation, [The New Local Plan 2031](#)
- You can subscribe to Local Plan updates at: localplan@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Oxfordshire County Council Flooding Survey

In response to the recent flooding across Oxfordshire, the county council is looking at its impact and the response of communities and public services so we can consider how we might do things differently in the future. As you may be aware, the council is organising a "Flooding Summit" on the 21 March 2014. The aim of the summit is to bring together local and national organisations with a role in reducing the risk of flooding, and agree a way forward. Results from this questionnaire will be shared with all groups and organisations attending the Flooding Summit and it will be used to inform discussions.

Oxfordshire County Council, [Flooding Survey](#)

Latest News:

**[Oxfordshire Flooding Summit commits to taking flood channel project forward](#),
Oxfordshire County Council, 21/3/14**

Around 40 politicians and representative of local and national agencies came together to consider reducing the long-term risks of flooding in Oxfordshire. This followed a community forum, which looked at the impact of the recent floods in the county. There was strong support for taking the Western Conveyance, a major scheme proposed by the Environment Agency to carry flood water west of Oxford. Representatives at the Summit agreed to form a working party to take the project forward.

Open Consultations: National

European Social Fund Operational Programme 2014 to 2020

This consultation seeks comments and views on the contents of the draft European Social Fund (ESF) Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020 (part of the 2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme in England).

The ESF Operational Programme is the main document for setting out the strategy and priorities for use of the fund to support the [Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth](#). It also contains high level information on how the fund will be delivered, managed and evaluated, including partnership arrangements.

We are running this consultation before submitting the ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020 document to the European Commission. This ensures we provide partners with the opportunity to comment on and provide views on the operational programme.

[gov.uk](#), 14/4/14

Links:

- [Consultation documents](#)

Local Bus Services: Revised Statutory Guidance

This is the second consultation on the Senior Traffic Commissioner's revision of existing statutory guidance on local bus services, the first was completed between 21 August 2013 and 13 November 2013.

The Senior Traffic Commissioner is required to provide guidance and directions as to the way that traffic commissioners will approach their duties as part of the Local Transport Act 2008. We are seeking feedback on this revised publication which takes account of the many responses to the first consultation, including from local authorities, operators, passenger groups, trade associations and individuals.

[gov.uk](#), 7/4/14

Links:

- [Consultation documents](#)

Child Poverty: a Draft Strategy

This Government is focused on breaking the cycle of disadvantage – where you start in life should not determine where you end up. Ending child poverty is an essential part of this vision. We firmly believe the way to end poverty is to tackle the root causes now and across generations so we can transform lives. We want to know what more can be done and how we can work together to end child poverty. Only by working together can we transform the lives of the poorest children in our society. We are seeking views on our draft strategy, which sets out what action we plan to take from 2014 to 2017 to tackle child poverty.

gov.uk, 11/3/14

Links:

- [Consultation documents](#)
- [Consultation on the Child Poverty Strategy 2014-17](#)

Draft Transparency Code for Parish Councils

The [Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014](#) received Royal Assent on 30 January 2014. The Act sets out a new audit framework for local public authorities which are currently covered by the Audit Commission regime. Under this new framework, smaller authorities with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000, including parish councils, will be exempt from routine external audit. Instead, these parish councils will be subject to the new transparency requirements laid out in the draft Code included in this consultation document.

This consultation asks questions on the content and application of a draft audit-substitute transparency code for parish councils. Specifically, the consultation requests feedback on:

- whether the code should be mandatory for parish councils with an annual turnover not exceeding £25,000
- whether parish meeting should be exempt from complying with the code
- whether authorities should publish the required information online
- how much additional staff time and cost will be involved for authorities in publishing the required data online

gov.uk, 10/3/14

Links:

- [Consultation documents](#)

Closed Consultations: Regional and Local

Oxfordshire County Council- Minerals and Waste Core Strategy

The County Council is reviewing the current planning policies for mineral working and waste management in Oxfordshire. We are preparing a new Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. This will provide planning strategies and policies to guide the development that will be needed for the supply of minerals and management of waste in Oxfordshire over the period to 2030, including where in the county mineral workings and waste management facilities should be located.

Consultation on Draft Plan

The Council has published the Draft Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Core Strategy for consultation. This sets out the Council's preferred approach to strategies and policies for minerals and waste, after the consideration of alternative options. We want to get as wide a response as possible to this consultation draft plan. This is an important opportunity to tell us your views on planning for minerals and waste development in Oxfordshire.

What we will do with Responses

The comments received in response to this consultation will be reported to the Council's Cabinet and the Full Council later in 2014. We will take all the comments received into consideration in the next stage of the plan process, which will be preparation of the pre-submission draft of the plan. We expect to publish this towards the end of 2014, providing a further opportunity for representations to be made.

The plan and the representations received will then be submitted to the Secretary of State in 2015, for independent examination by a government appointed inspector. We hope that the final plan will be adopted by the end of 2015.

The consultation has closed and the results will be published by **15 Jul 2014**.

Links:

- [All consultation documents](#)

Closed Consultations: National**Biodiversity: implementing the Nagoya Protocol in the UK**

We want to know what you think about how we propose to implement rules on the use of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge in the UK.

A genetic resource can be defined as any potentially useful genetic material that contains 'functional units of heredity'. Utilising genetic resources means attempting to extract any useful traits from them. Often this is done with the intention of commercialising those useful traits. A definition of what we mean by genetic resources and traditional knowledge is available in the glossary of the consultation document.

The Nagoya Protocol obliges the UK and EU to set out how to use and share the benefits from genetic resources. Where genetic resources have been obtained from another country, they must be used in accordance with their laws.

In particular, we want to know what you think about how we plan to enforce these rules. Most of the rules are in an EU Regulation that will be binding in the UK.

gov.uk, 17/3/14

Consultation is now closed and the feedback is being analysed.

Links:

- [Consultation details](#)

Visit the ORCC website: www.oxonrcc.org.uk

Contact ORCC: orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk, 01865 883 488