New housing sites in Culham, Chalgrove and at the Brookes University Wheatley campus are the best way to tackle the urgent need for houses in South Oxfordshire, that’s according to the district council’s Local Plan, which it expects to submit to the government at the end of the year.

The council will publish its final draft of the local plan on 11 October and will invite a further round of comments from the public, which will then be submitted along with the plan to the government.  The plan and the comments will be considered by a planning inspector as part of a public examination, which will take place next year.

The Local Plan is the document that explains how the council will address the need for housing in the district until the year 2033, including helping Oxford City’s unmet housing need. The total number of homes that the council is planning for over the 22 year period is approximately 22,500 homes although most of these have already been granted permission or been built. The council is now allocating space for the remaining 9,671 homes, so the plan identifies the locations for two major new housing sites – one in Culham and another on Chalgrove Airfield.

The site in Culham, for 3,500 homes, would require land to be removed from the Oxfordshire Green Belt.  National guidelines allow councils to make a case for the removal of land from the Green Belt in exceptional circumstances.  The council believes these circumstances exist in Culham, particularly due to its proximity to high quality employment and transport links.  The planning inspector will consider the case for this when he or she examines the plan. As the plan explains, these homes will add to the pressure for a new bridge across the Thames.

Part of Chalgrove Airfield is set to be developed into a new housing site of 3,000 homes.  Due to its proximity to existing and future employment sites and partially brownfield status, the Council considers this a suitable location at which to develop. However, the plan explains that significant investment in transport infrastructure will be required. This site is not within the Green Belt.

Following comments received from residents the council has reduced the number of houses allocated to some areas in earlier versions of the plan. Previously proposed housing sites in Crowmarsh Gifford have been removed from the plan to allow a forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan in the parish to allocate the sites. A number of Neighbourhood Plans across the District are also supporting the need for additional housing by allocating sites.

Cllr John Cotton, Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, said: “Making sure we get this right is a great responsibility and one we take very seriously. There’s no silver bullet solution when talking about building thousands of houses in a rural district, but we are very confident our local plan represents the best possible balance of homes in effective, sustainable locations, supported by the right infrastructure and in a way that protects and enhances what’s best about South Oxfordshire.”

As well as setting out new housing sites, the local plan explains how the new homes would be supported by roads, schools, shops, parks, leisure centres, community facilities and other infrastructure. Before the plan is published for its final round of public consultation, it will have been considered at the council’s scrutiny committee, cabinet and full council meetings in September.

**Notes to editors – the local plan will be considered at the following council committee meetings:**

 **• Wednesday 13 September – Scrutiny committee
• Wednesday 20 September – Cabinet
• Thursday 28 September – Full council**