



West Oxfordshire District Council  
Woodgreen  
Witney  
OX28 1NB  
22/12/2022

Dear Sir / Madam

West Oxfordshire District Council recently undertook consultation of our new validation checklists, and we are pleased to advise you that the consultation was positive and we can now progress with implementing the new checklists.

Please be advised that the new checklists will be available for use from the **1st February 2023**. This should give you sufficient time to review any upcoming applications that may be submitted following this date. Please be aware, that from the 1st February 2023, the current validation checklist for your application type will no longer be sufficient, and applications still working to this criteria risk being sent back as invalid.

We are required to review and consult on our checklists every two years, as is every local authority, and we believe that we have taken this opportunity to create a much more informative, streamlined and relevant checklist, that takes into account the needs of the applicant alongside important factors such as biodiversity, climate change, sustainability amongst others. I hope you find that the new checklists enable you to provide quality, and successful applications, that are valid and can move through the consideration process as quickly as possible.

### **Key areas for improvement and benefits**

A lot has changed and improved in our checklists to bring our requirements inline with national standards and legislation, take into account changes to other agencies requirements, local plan policies and also key areas of focus such as climate, biodiversity, sustainability and healthy place shaping. Below are a few examples of some of the changes we have made, although this is not an exhaustive list.

**Biodiversity** - It is key that we protect our wildlife and biodiversity. To ensure that this is considered at the beginning of a proposal we want applicants to complete a self assessment form for all applications which will guide the applicant and case officer to assess whether or not environmental surveys are required. We are also streamlining the reports that we will accept, to ensure that the highest standards have been met for ecological protection and enhancement and that all areas of biodiversity have been considered holistically. For each report we are also asking that a 'Declaration of Adequacy' is submitted which will need to be completed by the specialist ecologist completing the survey, to confirm that this has been achieved.

**Climate sustainability** - sustainability statement is now required. A climate and ecological emergency has been declared, and we need to demonstrate that consideration has been made during the application process as early as possible, ensuring that it can achieve high standards of sustainability. To do this, we are asking applicants to submit a sustainability statement which sets out compliance against a range of standards, including areas such as water use and flood risk, green and active travel, biodiversity, net zero carbon and energy performance and sustainable construction and waste. Please see the web page with information on our checklists and detailed guides on what needs to be provided for your application type.

**Healthy place shaping** - We want to ensure we have healthy neighbourhoods, therefore we are requiring an increased focus on achieving highly accessible developments, improving key services, employment and outdoor space. We want to look at how residents can access these, such as looking at walking and cycling routes and public transport. Our requirements now ask that major applications (at a minimum) provide a Health Impact Assessment outlining how the development meets these needs

From the 1st February 2023, our new checklists will be available on our website. The checklists will also be available on the Planning Portal.

Kind Regards

The Planning Team