

5. South East Vale Sub-Area Strategy

Introduction

- 5.52 The South East Vale Sub-Area provides an important strand to our Spatial Strategy and is where around 75 % of our planned strategic housing growth and around 70 % of our projected new jobs are located (15,830 of 23,000).
- 5.53 The South East Vale Sub-Area houses a number of significant centres of employment, including several sites located within the Science Vale area. These include Harwell Campus and Milton Park, which were designated as an Enterprise Zone in 2011.
- 5.54 Science Vale is one of the key growth areas set out within the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and is the focus of significant investment. The Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal announced in 2014 will continue to unleash a new wave of innovation-led growth by maximising the area's world class assets. The Science Vale sites are central to the City Deal programme and the area is benefiting from part of £95 million of Government investment for the county.
- 5.55 Didcot A Power Station, a feature on the area's landscape for over forty years, closed in March 2013 and offers a significant opportunity for further development when it is fully decommissioned.
- 5.56 This sub-area contains the market town of Wantage, the nearby large village of Grove (which functions as a local service centre in its own right), and extends within Harwell and Milton parishes, to the western edge of Didcot. Although the town of Didcot is located within South Oxfordshire, some of the proposed housing for this area is to be located within the Vale. For this reason we are working closely with South Oxfordshire District Council to prepare our Local Plan and ensure that appropriate services and facilities and infrastructure are available for the new communities in this area.
- 5.57 The historic market town of Wantage and the nearby Larger Village of Grove are separate settlements with their own unique character and identity. They have a strong functional relationship with many shared services including for health, education and leisure. It is important that growth here is carefully coordinated to seek to ensure that service and infrastructure provision closely matches the needs of the two communities. Grove Airfield¹ will contribute up to 2,500 homes to Grove and provide services and facilities. New development should be successfully integrated with the existing and newly planned communities.

¹ Saved Local Plan (2011) allocation

- 5.58 The South East Vale Sub-Area also houses many attractive rural villages and approximately half of the area lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB. These more rural settlements are an important part of the wider community and their historic character should be conserved and enhanced.
- 5.59 The proposals within the South East Vale Sub-Area will be supported where appropriate, by additional policies in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 to provide additional delivery and implementation detail to cover the Didcot garden town area that falls within the vale district. LPP2 will set out greater plan detail to support the delivery of high quality development and supporting infrastructure across the area.
- 5.60 To help to ensure that our vision for the Vale of White Horse is achieved, our focus for this sub-area is to ensure that employment growth centred on the Enterprise Zone and Science Vale sits alongside strategic housing and infrastructure to support sustainable growth.
- 5.61 This section sets out:
- how the sub-area will change by 2031, and
 - our strategic policies to address the key challenges and opportunities identified for this sub-area in relation to our four thematic areas:

Building healthy and sustainable communities

Core Policy 15: Spatial Strategy for the South East Vale Sub-Area – which sets out our strategic site allocations for this area

Supporting economic prosperity

Core Policy 16: Didcot A Power Station – which safeguards land at this site for employment development

Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility

Core Policy 17: Transport Delivery for the South East Vale Sub-Area – which sets out the approach for delivering critical transport infrastructure within this area

Core Policy 18: Safeguarding of land for strategic highway schemes in the South East Vale Sub-Area – which seeks to ensure land required for the critical transport infrastructure in this area is protected

Core Policy 19: Re-opening Grove Railway Station – which sets out the Council's commitment to support the ambition to re-open the station at Grove

Protecting the environment and responding to climate change

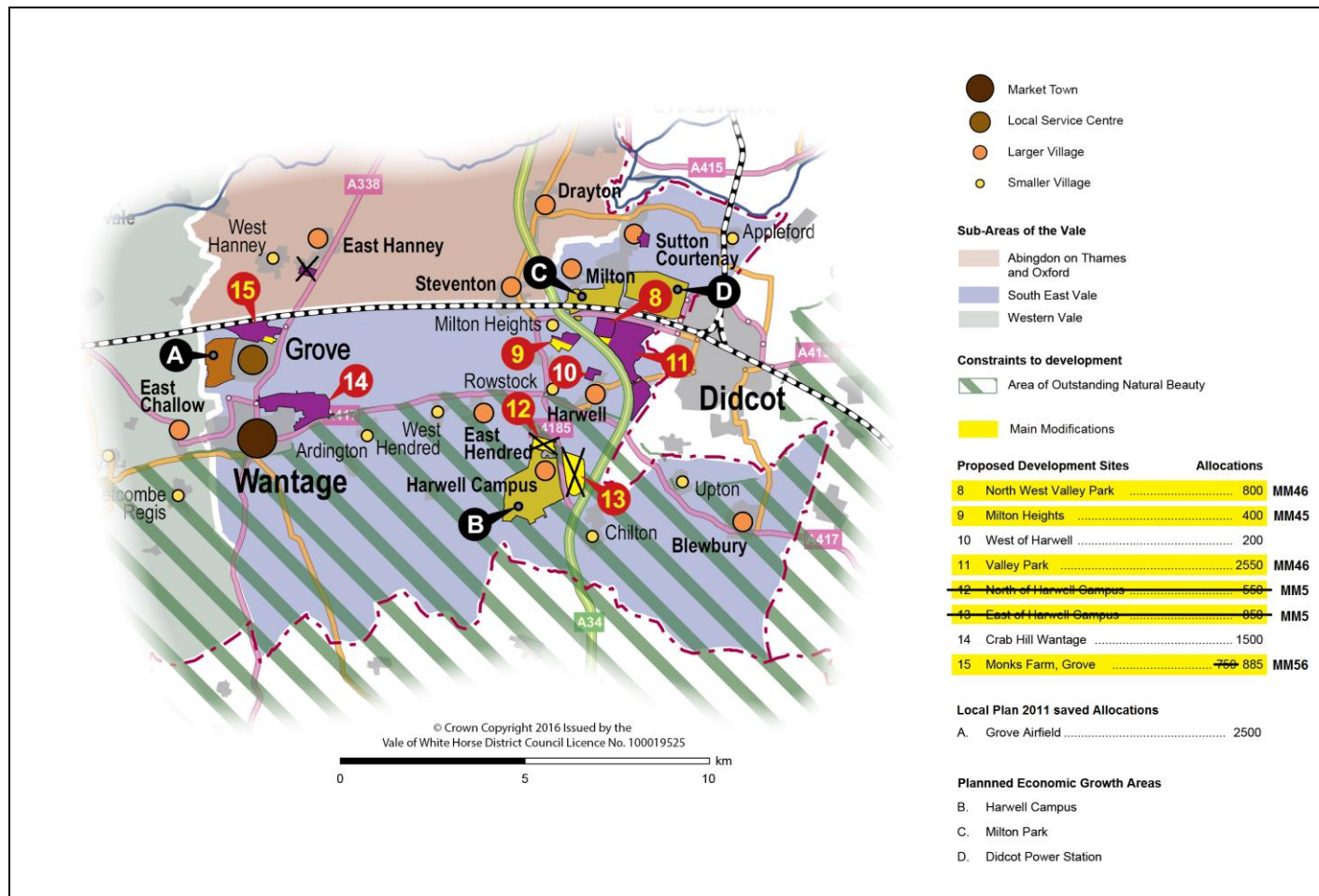


Figure 5.4: South East Vale Sub-Area

How the South East Vale Sub-Area will change by 2031

The South East Vale Sub-Area will consist of thriving communities that have benefited from sustainable growth and the successful delivery of major infrastructure. The area will continue to be a vital economic area for Oxfordshire, including employment of international importance, where new jobs have been provided alongside housing and community facilities.

Wantage and Grove will be places where people are proud to live and work and recognised as a vital part of the Science Vale area. Growth in these settlements will have been balanced alongside the delivery of community facilities. This will have included new schools and significant highway improvements, including the Wantage Eastern Link Road and the Grove Northern Link Road. The area will benefit from improved public transport and strategic growth in these settlements will have provided more local job opportunities.

The ecological value of the Letcombe Brook as an important wildlife habitat will have been enhanced. The strategic development sites will have successfully extended the network of green spaces in the area for both recreation and wildlife benefits.

Strategic development in Harwell and Milton parishes, to the west of Didcot, will have provided a sustainable urban extension of high quality homes and community facilities. The strategic road and public transport improvements identified in the Science Vale Area Strategy will have been delivered and will be helping to reduce traffic congestion.

The town centre in Wantage will have been conserved and enhanced and the local centre in Grove will have been strengthened. The countryside and villages will have maintained their distinctive character. The Larger Villages will have retained their separate identities and their services will provide for residents' day-to-day needs. New residents in the villages will be helping to sustain the services and social life of the rural communities.

Strategic policies for the South East Vale Sub-Area

Building healthy and sustainable communities

- 5.62 The South East Vale Sub-Area forms the focus of our proposals for new housing and will accommodate around 60 % of the total planned and permitted new housing for the district and around 75 % of our strategic housing allocations.
- 5.63 The provision of new housing in this area will help to improve the self-sufficiency of the South East Vale Sub-Area overall and provide opportunities for living closer to places of work. For this reason, a number of sites have been identified as sustainable locations for strategic housing development within the sub-area.
- 5.64 The strategic housing growth will complement the new employment and job creation forecast and will also support the vitality and viability of the area and help to facilitate the delivery of a package of new or enhanced infrastructure, services and facilities. The new homes allocated to this sub-area will be in balance with the forecast new jobs, thus helping to deliver sustainable growth².
- 5.65 Primary school places in Wantage and Grove are currently close to full capacity. Strategic growth at these settlements will provide additional capacity as part of a long term and sustainable strategy for education provision in the area. The additional school places to be provided across the sub-area will need to be phased appropriately alongside housing delivery.
- 5.66 Our strategy for meeting our housing needs in this sub-area are set out in **Core Policy 15: Spatial Strategy for the South East Vale Sub-Area**.

Core Policy 15: Spatial Strategy for South East Vale Sub-Area

Our over-arching priority for this sub-area is to secure the aligned delivery of housing and employment growth together with the infrastructure required to achieve sustainable development.

Development in the South East Vale Area should be in accordance with the Settlement Hierarchy set out in **Core Policy 3**:

South East Vale Sub-Area

Market Town:	Wantage
Local Service Centre:	Grove

² GL Hearn (2014) *Science Vale Housing and Employment Study, Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council draft report*, (June 2014)

Core Policy 15: Spatial Strategy for South East Vale Sub-Area continued from previous page

Larger Villages: Blewbury, East Hendred, Harwell, Harwell Campus*, Milton and **SUTTON COURTENAY**

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Smaller Villages: Appleford, Ardington, Chilton, Milton Heights**, Rowstock, Upton and West Hendred

*Harwell Campus has facilities and services equivalent to a Larger Village

** Milton Heights has facilities and services within a short walk that are equivalent to those offered by a Larger Village.

Housing Delivery

At least 12,450 new homes will be delivered in the plan period between 2011 and 2031. 9,055 dwellings will be delivered through strategic allocations. 416 dwellings remain to be identified and will be allocated through the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 or Neighbourhood Development Plans or through the Development Management Process. The contribution of all sources of housing for this sub-area are shown by the following table:

Category		Number of Dwellings
Housing requirement for the full plan period (Apr 2011 to Mar 2031)		12,450 ^a
Housing Completions (Apr 2011 to Mar 2016)		1,031
Housing Supply (Apr 2016 to Mar 2031)	Known Commitments	1,725
	Local Plan 2031 Part 1 allocations	9,055
	Local Plan 2031 Part 2 allocations	56 ^b
	Windfalls	360

^a This target addresses needs arising in the Vale of White Horse. If or when required, needs arising elsewhere in the Housing Market Area, will be addressed in accordance with **Core Policy 2**.

^b The Local Plan Part 2 allocation identified in the above table will be reduced where dwellings are allocated in Neighbourhood Development Plans or come forward through the Development Management Process.

Housing Supply Ring Fence

11,850 new homes are 'ring-fenced' for the purposes of the assessment of housing land supply within this sub-area in accordance with **Core Policy 5**. Development will be supported at the strategic site allocations through a masterplanning process involving the community, local planning authority, developer and other stakeholders where development meets the requirements set out within the Site Development Templates shown by **Appendix A** and are in accordance with the Development Plan taken as a whole. Design, delivery and implementation detail will also be set out in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. The following table shows how the level of housing required within this sub-area through the strategic development sites will be distributed:

Core Policy 15: Spatial Strategy for South East Vale Sub-Area continued from previous page

Part 1 Allocations

Settlement/ Parish	Settlement Type	Site Name	Number of Dwellings
Wantage	Market Town	Crab Hill (North East Wantage and South East Grove)	1,500
Grove	Local Service Centre	Monks Farm (North Grove)	750 885
		Grove Airfield ^{c, d}	2,500
Harwell and Milton parishes, east of the A34 adjoining Didcot town	Adjoining Didcot Town	Valley Park ^e	2,550
		North West Valley Park	800
Milton parish west of the A34	Larger Village	Milton Heights (Smaller Village)	400
Harwell Campus		East Harwell Campus	850
		North West Harwell Campus	550
Harwell		West of Harwell	200
Sutton Courtenay		East of Sutton Courtenay	220
Total			10,320 9055

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^c This site has 'Resolution to Grant' planning permission subject to a legal agreement as at Sept 2014.

^d Saved Local Plan 2011 Allocation

^e The allocation at Valley Park has the capacity to deliver considerably more housing, subject to appropriate infrastructure improvements. Housing which is in addition to the 2,550 homes is expected to be delivered after 2031.

Employment

208 hectares of employment land will be provided for business and employment growth in accordance with **Core Policy 6**. In addition, the following strategic employment sites will be safeguarded for employment use in line with **Core Policy 29**:

Strategic employment sites:

Grove Technology Park
Grove Road, Wantage
Downsview Road, Grove
Station Road, Grove
Existing Business Premises around Didcot Power Station (not including vacant surplus land)
Milton Park Site
Harwell Campus

Supporting economic prosperity

- 5.67 The Science Vale area spans from Didcot in the east to Wantage and Grove in the west and includes the Science Centre at Culham within South Oxfordshire. Vale of White Horse District Council is committed to the future growth and development of the Science Vale area, which has been identified as a strategic priority of the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)³.
- 5.68 There is an ambitious programme of job creation and growth for the Science Vale area, including the two Enterprise Zone sites at Harwell Campus and Milton Park designated in 2011. It is important this growth is delivered alongside new housing and the provision of appropriate infrastructure to help make the area more self-contained and to achieve a sustainable pattern of development.
- 5.69 Job growth in this sub-area will therefore be focused at the Science Vale sites, which make a nationally significant contribution to the UK economy and provide the area with a positive opportunity for job creation.
- 5.70 The Harwell Campus and Milton Park sites are both identified as strategic employment sites in **Core Policy 15**, providing a combined total of 156 hectares of available employment land. Other employment sites across the sub-area notably include Williams F1 and Grove Technology Park and the former power station at Didcot.
- 5.71 A Local Development Order has been adopted for Milton Park, which simplifies the planning process at the site for a period of 15 years. A Local Development Order may also be appropriate for the Harwell Campus; the council will work with partners to ensure appropriate future planning for the development of this site.
- 5.72 As part of delivering this growth, a key challenge is ensuring that the area remains attractive for private sector investment. A number of projects to enable the continuing attractiveness of the area have already been funded and some have already been delivered. For example, a Science Vale Broadband project will secure superfast broadband to the Enterprise Zone, providing market advantage and ensuring occupants of the Zone are fully digitally enabled. The electrification and signalling of the Great Western main line and improvements to Didcot Parkway Station Interchange will further enhance the accessibility of the Science Vale area by rail.
- 5.73 A key challenge to the continued attractiveness of this rapidly expanding area is the capacity of the local road network and a number of improvements have been identified in the Science Vale Area

³ Southern Central Oxfordshire transport Study (SCOTS) final report, 2008

Strategy⁴. These are outlined in the ‘Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility’ section of this Sub-Area Strategy.

Didcot A Power Station

- 5.74 The redevelopment of the Didcot A Power Station site provides the area with an opportunity for the regeneration of around 47 hectares of brownfield land⁵ and the site will be instrumental in the future place shaping of Didcot (**Figure 5.5**).
- 5.75 The provision of the Science Bridge, a new bridge over the railway at the Didcot A power station site, aims to help reduce congestion on the A4130 through Didcot and reduce severance caused by the railway line. The new bridge will also help to create direct connections with the new housing developments of Great Western Park and Valley Park to the south of the site.
- 5.76 The Employment Land Review⁶ highlighted that part of the Didcot A Power Station site (29 hectares; refer to **Core Policy 6**) should be safeguarded for employment uses. This is to ensure the district can provide sufficient employment to deliver new jobs alongside new housing in line with forecast population growth up to 2031⁷.
- 5.77 The distribution of the employment and other potential uses across the site, as identified in **Core Policy 16**, will need to be carefully considered through a detailed masterplanning process. Development proposals will need to reflect the aspirations for Didcot as a whole. Achieving a high quality development with active frontages will be important, particularly due to the site’s location on what will become a key access route into the town.
- 5.78 Part of the site is located within South Oxfordshire District and so it is important that development proposals are considered jointly with both local authorities. The Local Plan 2031 Part 2 will set out more detail to help inform the master planning of the site.

⁴ Oxfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 3, 2011-2030

⁵ The south eastern corner of the site lies within the administrative boundary of South Oxfordshire District Council.

⁶ Employment Land Review Update Addendum (July 2014)

⁷ Employment Land Review Update Addendum (July 2014) P.10

Core Policy 16: Didcot A Power Station

The Council supports the redevelopment of the Didcot A site to provide a high quality mixed-use development. ~~Up to 29 hectares of~~ The site will continue to be reserved for a range of employment uses, predominantly B1 particularly **EMPLOYMENT (B1, B2 AND B8)**. ~~on active frontages, there is scope for other B2 and B8 uses elsewhere on the site. The provision of other uses on the remainder of the site such as~~ **OTHER ACCEPTABLE USES FOR THE SITE INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO,** residential **(C1, C2 AND C3)**, ancillary retail, ~~(including~~ **AN ELEMENT OF** bulky goods retailing), institutional or **LEISURE (D2) AND** community use**S**, will be considered favourably. **ANY PROPOSED USES FOR THE SITE MUST HAVE REGARD TO RELEVANT POLICIES CONTAINED WITHIN SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S ADOPTED CORE STRATEGY.**

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PROPOSALS FOR RETAIL DEVELOPMENT THAT EXCEED 500 SQUARE METRES GROSS RETAIL FLOORSPEACE WILL NEED TO BE SUBJECT TO A RETAIL IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO DEMONSTRATE THERE WOULD BE NO ADVERSE IMPACTS ON THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY ON NEARBY CENTRES.

~~These uses need to be carefully considered in the master planning process to ensure that the site encourages active frontages along key transport/ movement corridors connecting it with Didcot Town Centre, Milton Park and Valley Park for example via the new Science Bridge.~~

The mix of these uses will need to reflect demand, suitability of the site and any transport implications to be identified by a detailed transport assessment **WITH APPROPRIATE MITIGATION PROVIDED**. Any development will need to be appropriate to the site's location adjacent to Didcot B Power Station.

THESE USES NEED TO BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED IN THE MASTERPLANNING PROCESS TO ENSURE THAT THE SITE INCORPORATES THE FOLLOWING KEY DESIGN PRINCIPLES:

- **THE CREATION OF A MIXED-USE LOCAL CENTRE FORMING A HIGH STREET AND ACTIVE FRONTAGES ON THE MAIN ROUTES THROUGH THE SITE;**
- **STRONG CONNECTIVITY WITH DIDCOT TOWN CENTRE, MILTON PARK AND VALLEY PARK;**
- **DESIGN ACROSS THE SITE MUST HAVE REGARD TO SENSITIVE VIEWS FROM ELEVATED POSITIONS TOWARDS (BUT NOT LIMITED TO) RESIDENTIAL AMENITY SPACE, THE TREATMENT OF FACADES AND ROOFTOPS OF PROMINENT BUILDINGS, AND REDUCING THE VISUAL IMPACT OF CAR PARKS;**
- **ANY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (C2 AND C3) TO BE SITUATED TOWARDS THE SOUTH OF THE SITE AND SEPARATE FROM THE MOVEMENT OF HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES ALONG KEY TRANSPORT CORRIDORS; AND**
- **INTEGRATED SUDS AND NATURAL LANDSCAPE FEATURES THROUGHOUT THE SITE.**

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The proposed route of the new Science Bridge and A4130 re-routing is safeguarded. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the construction or effective operation of this highway infrastructure in accordance with **Core Policy 17**.

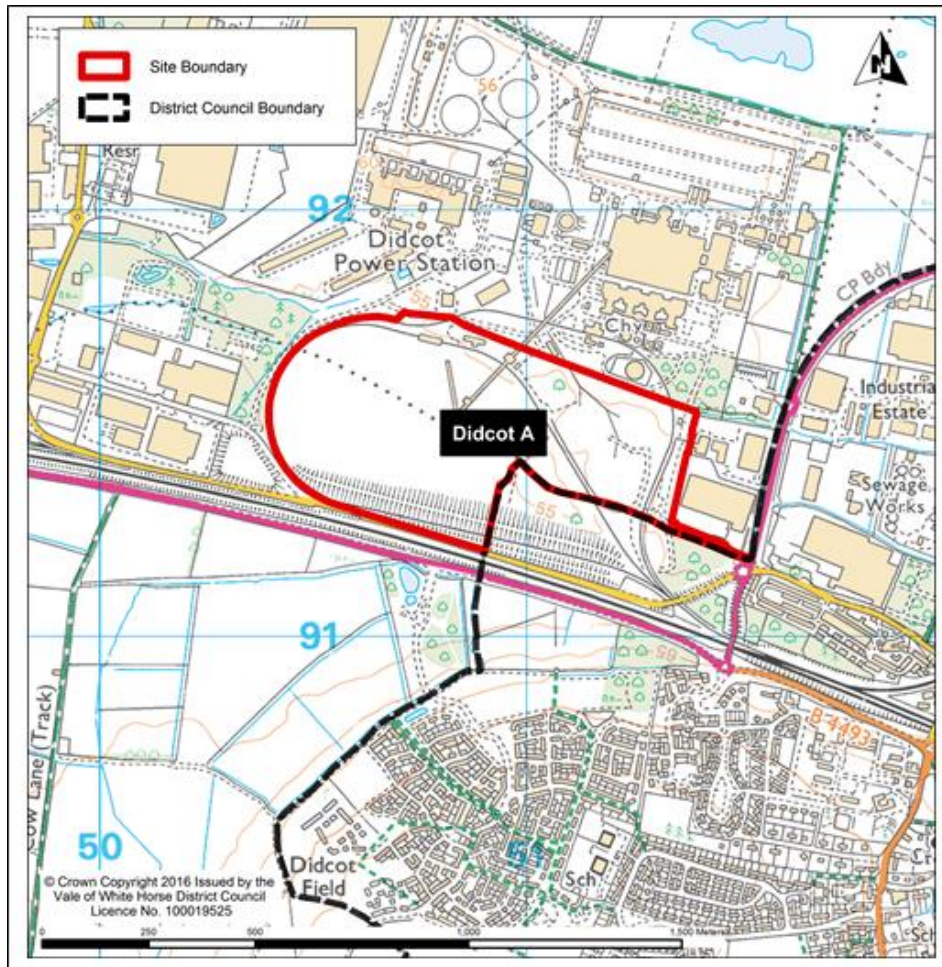


Figure 5.5: Didcot A Power Station Site

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Science Vale

5.79 The Science Vale area is a nationally and internationally significant location for research and innovation and is the focus for large-scale expansion. The area is predominately located within the South East Vale Sub-Area and this is where we are focusing most of our future development. As outlined above, the area is home to the largest of our significant employment sites, and is where the largest number of our new jobs will be created.

5.80 The area extends into South Oxfordshire and it is important we plan effectively across our district boundaries to ensure the coordinated delivery of new infrastructure, services and facilities.

5.81 The town boundary of Didcot is located within our neighbouring district of South Oxfordshire and adjoins parts of the Vale to the north and west.

The Vale parishes of Appleford-on-Thames, Sutton Courtenay and Harwell all have borders with Didcot. Some of these parishes house the important employment land to the west of Didcot, including the Didcot A Power Station and Milton Park sites.

- 5.82 Parts of Harwell and Milton parishes have been identified for future housing, which although located within the Vale, clearly relate to Didcot. As a larger settlement and service centre, Didcot will provide many important services and facilities for the new development, including for retail and leisure.
- 5.83 Didcot is identified as a location for strategic growth within the adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, which allocates 6,300 homes within South Oxfordshire at Didcot⁸. The core strategy also identifies the need for significant regeneration and outlines proposals for improvements to the central area of the town, the Orchard Centre and the railway station.
- 5.84 Overall there is significant change proposed around Didcot, in both the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Districts, which includes housing, employment and large infrastructure projects. There is also significant change proposed across other parts of the Science Vale area, as described in the rest of our South East Vale Sub-Area Strategy.
- 5.85 The Didcot area forms part of Science Vale and has been designated by central government as a Garden Town. To ensure our aspiration for this area of change is met (refer to **Figure 2.2**), this will be considered further through the Local Plan Part 2, which will provide additional focus on delivery and implementation and on successful place making.

Meeting the needs for retailing

- 5.86 The main retail facilities in the Wantage and Grove area are provided by Wantage town centre. Large improvements were delivered to the retail offer in Wantage in 2007 when a major food store and several large non-food (comparison) stores were built, just to the north of the town centre. These new stores successfully complement the historic Market Square, which includes a number of attractive historic buildings.
- 5.87 Wantage is one of the main shopping and commercial centres within the District. The centre provides a reasonable range and mix of national and independent comparison retailers and has a good range and choice of non-retail services. The vitality and viability of Wantage town centre will be maintained and enhanced through the implementation of **Core Policy 32**.

⁸ South Oxfordshire District Council, South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, December 2012, available at: <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/core-strategy/adopted-core-strategy>

5.88 Grove functions as a small neighbourhood shopping centre with a limited range of non-food (comparison) shops and predominantly independent traders serving day-to-day shopping needs. Grove's role as a local service centre will be supported by **Core Policy 32**. The Local Plan 2011 allocation of 2,500 new homes on the former Grove Airfield site will provide a new local centre, which will help to improve the range of shops available in the village.

5.89 The nearby settlement of Didcot, located in South Oxfordshire, also provides for the shopping needs of residents within the sub-area. Furthermore, housing growth in the Vale of White Horse makes a significant contribution to the continued viability and vitality of Didcot Town Centre.

Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility

Delivery of strategic highway infrastructure within the South East Vale Sub-Area

5.90 We are planning to focus most of our development within the South East Vale Sub-Area (around 75 % of the proposed strategic growth). This is because the area is home to the largest of our significant employment sites and where the largest number of new jobs will be created. Locating the majority of the planned housing within this area, also provides the opportunity to promote and deliver sustainable transport options, allowing easy access between homes, employment and facilities.

5.91 Working jointly with key partners, including Oxfordshire County Council, we have investigated the impact of the proposed growth within this area and have identified a significant package of new infrastructure. This includes new roads and improvements to public transport, to ensure that development is sustainable. The identified package of measures complements and builds upon those already identified in the 'Science Vale Area Strategy' as set out in the Local Transport Plan 3⁹ which was the relevant document up until July 2015.

5.92 The main focus of these improvements is to ensure that there are efficient and effective transport linkages between the major Science Vale employment sites (as well as those within the Science Transit Arc) and the planned housing growth, as well as allowing for strategic public transport and road access to the area. The package includes improvements to the cycle and public transport network within, and to, the area, as well as necessary upgrades to roads and road junctions to allow for growth (**Figures 5.6 a to c**).

⁹ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-2011-2030>

- 5.93 The measures are consistent with the local transport plan 4 which was approved by Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet in July 2015. Of relevance to Vale of White Horse, Local Transport Plan 4 includes a Science Vale Area Strategy, as well as a Science Transit Strategy and an A420 Strategy. In addition to the highway schemes identified in the LTP4 Science Vale Area Strategy the Local Plan also safeguards land to deliver a West Wantage Link Road (WWLR) connecting the A417 from Mably Way in Wantage to East Challow, a South Abingdon bypass crossing the Thames and connecting with the A415 and some junction improvement schemes. These are safeguarded to ensure their future delivery is not compromised, should they be found to be needed later in the plan period, or beyond.

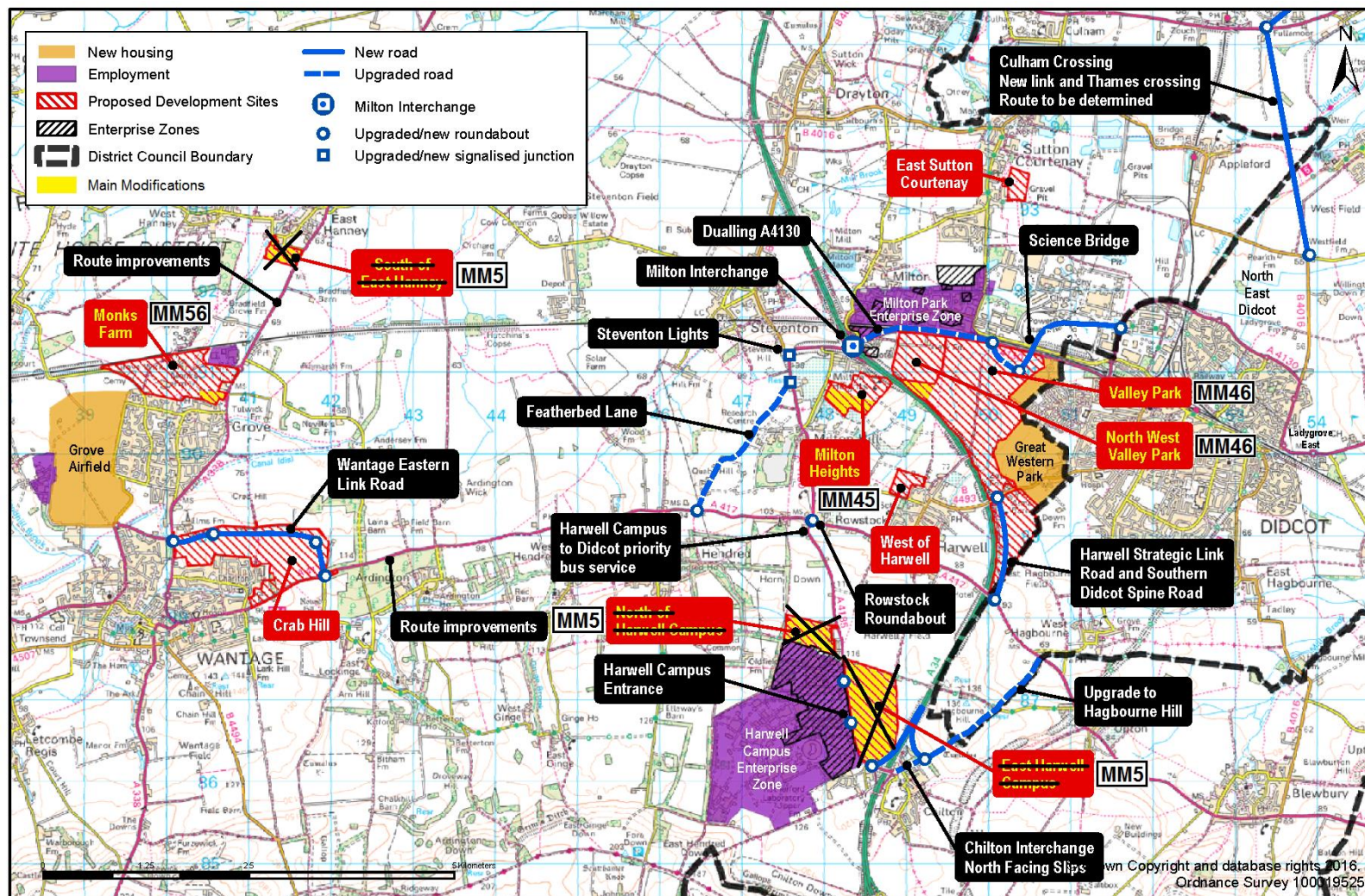


Figure 5.6a: Map showing the proposed road and junction improvements within the Science Vale area

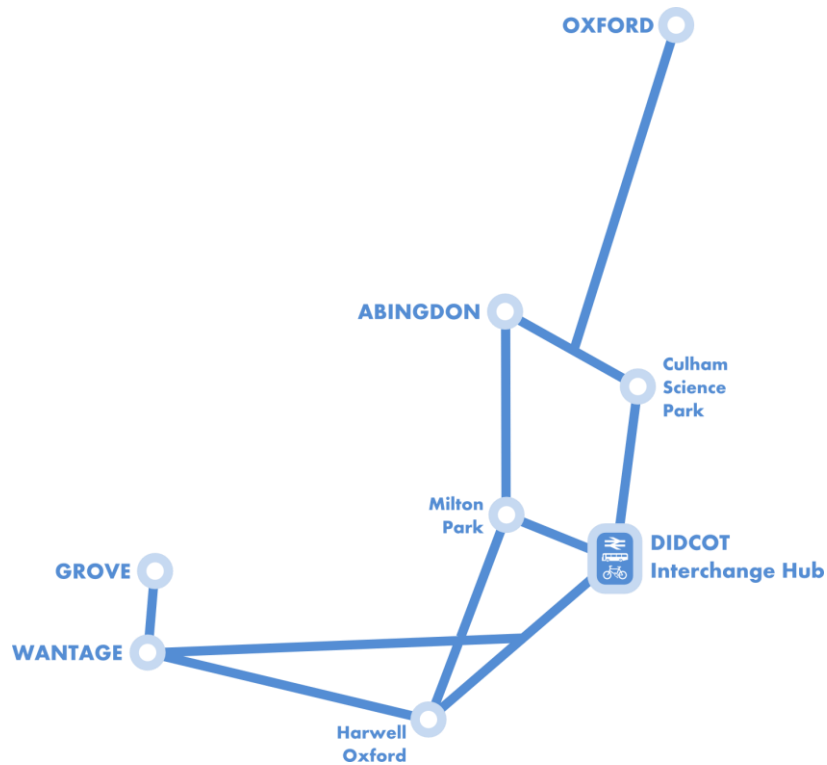


Figure 5.6b: Map showing the proposed Science Vale strategic cycle network

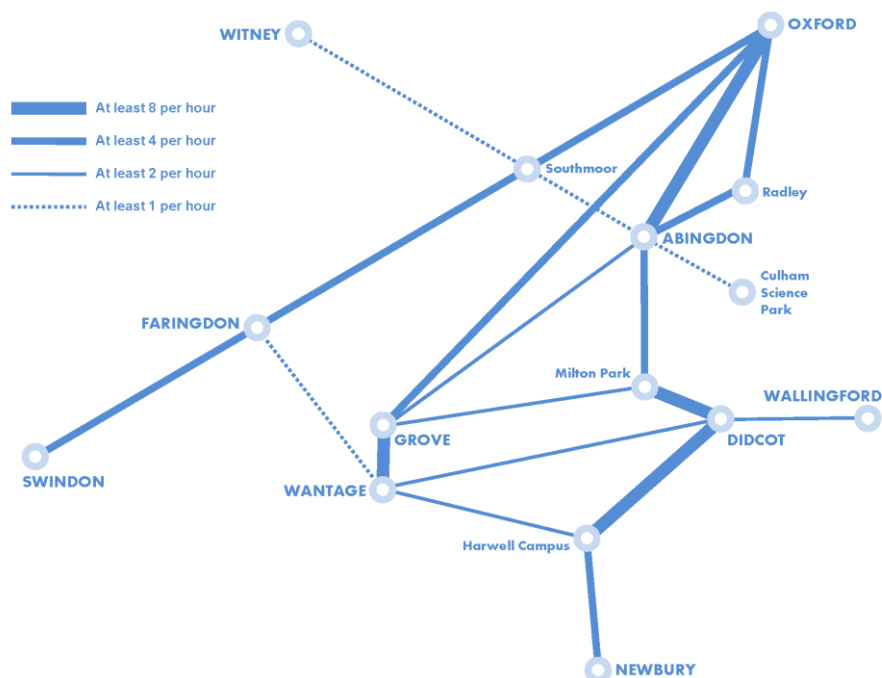


Figure 5.6c: Map showing the proposed improvements to the bus network within the Science Vale area

- 5.94 The strategic importance of the highway schemes identified in the Science Vale Area Strategy have been acknowledged at a larger than local planning level. Local authorities have been working together through the Oxfordshire Growth Board and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to identify funding mechanisms for this infrastructure to secure its delivery. As part of this work the package has been identified as one of the top priority projects within the Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan¹⁰.
- 5.95 **Core Policy 7 (Chapter 4)** sets out the principle that all developments will contribute to infrastructure provision as identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan¹¹ that supports the Local Plan 2031 Part 1.
- 5.96 Without investment in the identified infrastructure, the growth in the Science Vale area would be unsustainable and be put at risk. For this reason, **Core Policy 17** sets out the requirement for all strategic growth within the sub-area to contribute towards strategic highway infrastructure.
- 5.97 The housing supply ring-fence (**Core Policy 5 - Chapter 4**) supports our Spatial Strategy to ensure housing is located in the Science Vale area and in close proximity to the projected new jobs. This approach will also focus financial contributions from development to help deliver the essential infrastructure needed to support sustainable development.
- 5.98 In addition to the infrastructure identified within the Science Vale Area Strategy, there is an existing requirement for a development road to serve the Local Plan 2011 allocation at Grove Airfield. This is known as the Grove Northern Link Road (GNLR) and is required to provide access to the Grove Airfield site from the A338. It does not form part of the Science Vale Area Strategy and will be provided in association with the Saved Local Plan 2011 allocation at Grove Airfield and the new strategic allocation at Monks Farm (refer to the Site Development Templates shown by **Appendix A**).

¹⁰ Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership (2010) *Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan*, available at:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/download/501/oxfordshire_local_investment_plan

¹¹ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence>

Core Policy 17: Delivery of Strategic Highway Improvements within the South-East Vale Sub-Area

In order to deliver the growth in the South East Vale Sub-Area and the wider Science Vale area, the Science Vale Area Strategy has identified highways infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the planned growth across Science Vale and secure the future economic viability of the area. The package will be further refined through development of the Local Transport Plan 4 being developed by Oxfordshire County Council, and the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

All development within the South East Vale Sub-Area will be required to contribute in accordance with **Core Policy 7: Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services**. Within the South East Vale Sub-Area this will include contributions towards the infrastructure identified within the Science Vale Area Strategy:

- access to the strategic road network, for example, improvements to the A34 at the Milton and Chilton junctions
- Backhill Lane tunnel (pedestrian and cycle link) and junction on the A4130
- a new link road at north east Wantage between the A338 and A417 (known as the Wantage Eastern Link Road)
- relief to the road network at Rowstock and Harwell (including an improved junction configuration at Steventon Lights, upgrading Featherbed Lane and Hagbourne Hill)
- Science Bridge and A4130 re-routing through the Didcot A site
- A4130 dualling between Milton Interchange and Science Bridge
- a new Harwell Link Road between the B4493 and A417 and Southern Didcot Spine Road a new strategic road connection between the A415 east of Abingdon-on-Thames and the A4130 north of Didcot, including a new crossing of the River Thames
- route improvements to the A417 between Wantage and Blewbury
- improvement of the strategic cycle network
- improvement to the bus network, particularly between the strategic housing and employment growth, including a priority bus system between Harwell Campus and Didcot
- a West Wantage Relief Road

Safeguarding of land for strategic highway improvements within the South East Vale Sub-Area

- 5.99 The planning and funding of transport infrastructure can take a long time to prepare and it is therefore important that our plans are not compromised by inappropriate development occurring in the interim. **Core Policy 18** seeks to prevent development that may prejudice the delivery of the required schemes identified in the Science Vale Area Strategy.

Core Policy 18: Safeguarding of Land for Transport Schemes in the South East Vale Sub- Area

Land is safeguarded to support the delivery of the identified transport schemes listed by **Core Policies 17 and 19**.

Any proposals for development that may reasonably be considered to impact the delivery of the identified transport schemes (as ~~shown~~ by the maps in Appendix E and the Adopted Policies Map)* should demonstrate the proposal would not harm their delivery.

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the construction or effective operation of the transport schemes listed.

New development in these areas should be carefully designed having regard to matters such as building layout, noise insulation, landscaping, the historic environment and means of access. Where appropriate, further detail for these schemes will be set out in Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

* the area shown on the Adopted Policies Map illustrates where **Core Policy 18** will apply. It does not seek to show a precise alignment for the transport schemes, which will need to be informed by detailed design work, carried out in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council and other relevant parties.

Rail services

Didcot

- 5.100 The Council is working with Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to examine how the rail network can be accessed more effectively and to deliver improvements to facilities at stations.
- 5.101 Whilst located within South Oxfordshire, Didcot Station is nonetheless an important transport hub for Vale residents, particularly for those commuting or travelling outside of the district and functions as an important gateway for Science Vale. For these reasons, Didcot Station is the focus for investment that will lead to a step change in the

station's capacity for rail services, the delivery of an integrated transport hub with facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and bus users.

5.102 The Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan¹² identifies six discrete measures for improving Didcot Railway Station, which are:

- construction of a deck access car park on to the existing Foxhall Road car park to increase car parking capacity
- improved connectivity to enable four stopping trains an hour between Didcot and Oxford
- additional platform to enable north-south trains from Southampton and Birmingham to stop at Didcot
- construction of an underpass to provide access from the north into the station
- firm plans for direct access to Heathrow as part of the Western Rail Access to Heathrow project without changes at Reading, and
- rebuilding of Didcot Station to create an appropriate fit for purpose gateway to Science Vale.

Wantage and Grove

5.103 There are long-standing ambitions to re-open the railway station at Grove and the council will continue to support this aim in accordance with **Core Policy 19**.

5.104 In 2009 the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) published *Connecting Communities: Expanding Access to the Rail Network*¹³, which identified *the re-opening of Grove Station* as being within the top five best business cases for opening a new station across the whole of the UK.

5.105 Furthermore, wider initiatives already being brought forward to enhance the national rail network, may also help to enable the re-opening of Grove Station. Examples include:

- the electrification of the London to Bristol main line will increase capacity of the network, and
- the East West Rail link that will eventually connect Oxford and Cambridge may offer a longer term opportunity to connect Oxford with Swindon or Bristol.

¹² Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) March (2014), *Strategic Economic Plan: Driving economic growth through innovation*, available at:

<http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-strategic-economic-plan>

¹³ http://www.atoc.org/clientfiles/files/publicationsdocuments/ConnectingCommunitiesReport_S10.pdf

Core Policy 19: Re-opening of Grove Railway Station

The council will continue to support the re-opening of the railway station at Grove, ideally within the lifetime of this plan, and will work with rail operators, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to develop and implement a strategy to re-open the station and ensure opportunities to do so are maximised.

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would prejudice the construction or effective operation of the re-opening of Grove Railway Station in accordance with **Core Policy 18**.

Protecting the environment and responding to climate change

- 5.106 The sub-area contains many areas important for their environmental or landscape value. These include the Letcombe Brook, a green corridor, which provides informal recreation, amenity and wildlife value and is an important flood management feature. Other land between East Challow and Wantage, and Wantage and Grove helps to preserve the separate and unique identities of these communities and so it is important these areas are protected from development.
- 5.107 Wantage Market Place contains many historic buildings and groups of buildings that are important to the overall 'sense of place' and quality of the town centre. Future development should be of high quality design and well integrated with the existing built form and landscape setting of the town. Heritage assets and their respective settings should be conserved.
- 5.108 The conservation and enhancement of the North Wessex Downs AONB (as identified in **Figure 5.4**) together with its Management Plan will be supported (as required by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000).