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INTRODUCTION

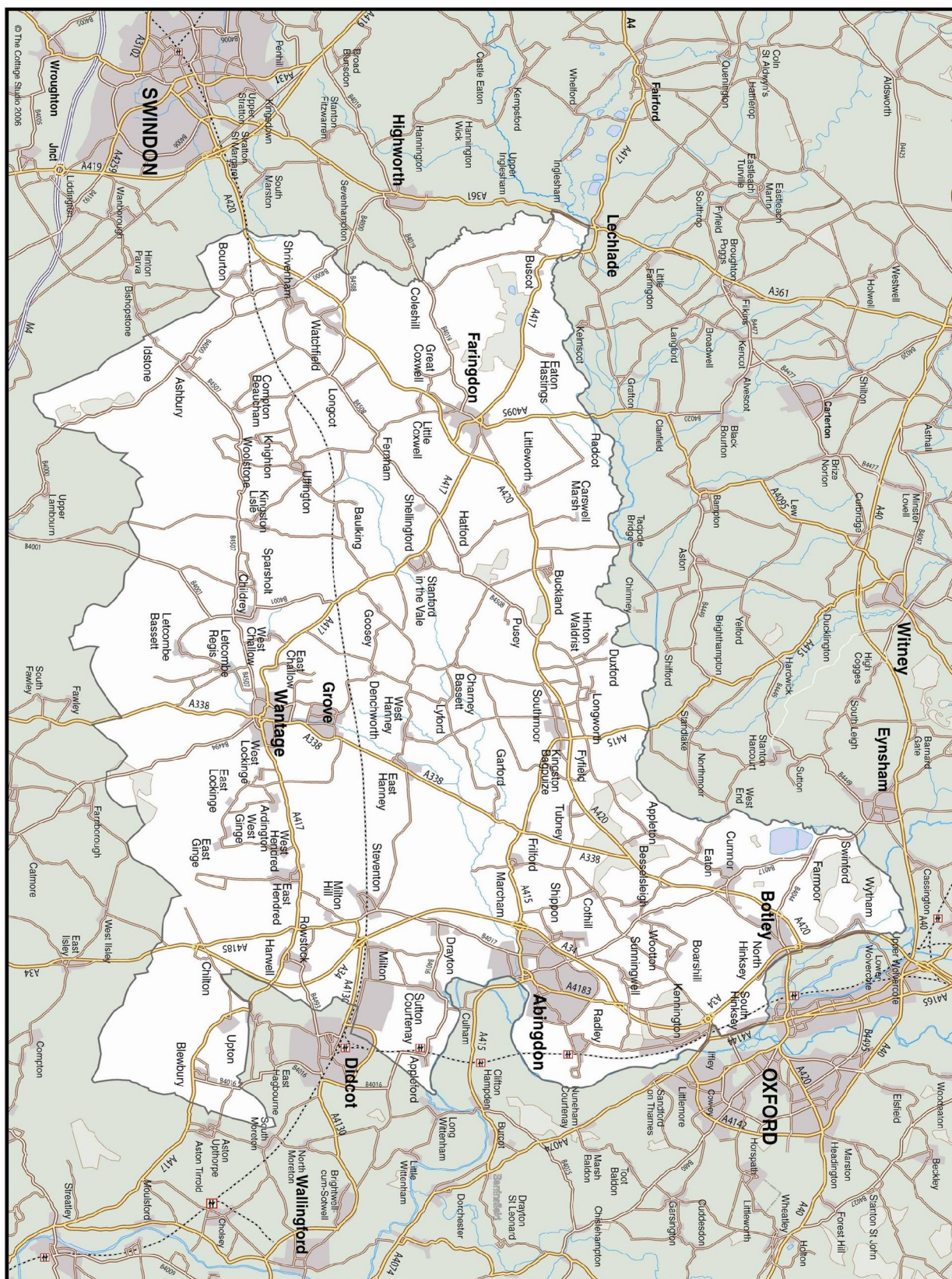
The Purpose of the Local Plan

- 1.1 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan is a statutory document prepared by the District Council to meet the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning Compensation Act 1991. Until it is replaced by the Local Development Framework it, together with the Structure Plan and Minerals and Waste Local Plan prepared by the County Council, forms the Development Plan for the area, the essential framework for planning decisions. In accordance with legal requirements the Local Plan covers the whole administrative area of the Vale of White Horse District, some 580 square kilometres (224 square miles). The area of the District and its main settlements are shown on Map 1. The Vale is an attractive and prosperous district and, like many similar areas, experiences considerable pressure for development. The land use planning system seeks to control and direct this pressure in the community's interest. The Local Plan's role in this system is to co-ordinate development at the local level and to set out detailed policies and proposals for the use of land, which will guide day-to-day planning decisions. The local plan process brings local and detailed planning issues before the public and enables them to participate in the future planning of their area.
- 1.2 In setting out its detailed land use policies the Council's main challenge has been to balance the protection of the existing high quality environment and the heritage and natural resources of the district with its objective of meeting the social and economic needs of the people who live and work in or visit the area. The Local Plan is an important corporate document. It will help to guide the work of the Council's Executive and other committees, in particular the Development Control Committee. It has taken into account other strategies of the Council including those for housing, economic development, leisure, tourism and arts ensuring that the land use issues emerging out of these strategies are addressed.

The Local Plan Timescale

- 1.3 The Local Plan supersedes the plan adopted in 1999 which looked ahead to 2001. This Local Plan covers the period up to 2011, which corresponds with the timescale of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2011. For some purposes, such as Green Belt policy and a number of transport, housing and employment issues, the policies have a longer perspective.

Map 1 - The Vale and Surrounding Areas



Key Stages of Consultation

- 1.4 An Issues Report was published and widely circulated in November 2000. The report presented the main issues and choices to be made in reviewing the Plan; in particular it put forward options for locating the new housing development proposed for the district in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. The responses were taken into account in preparing the first deposit version of the Local Plan.
- 1.5 The First Deposit Draft Local Plan was published in November 2002. A period of six weeks was allowed for representations. The Council carefully considered all the representations and responded by making a number of changes to the plan. The changes were the subject of further consultation at the Second Deposit stage in the Local Plan process in June 2004. A public inquiry into all the objections to the local plan closed in September 2005. The report of the inquiry made a number of recommendations and further changes were made to the local plan based on these recommendations. The local plan, as amended, was adopted in July 2006.

Format of the Plan

- 1.6 The Local Plan consists of a proposals map and a written statement. These should be read together to achieve full understanding of the policies and proposals.
- 1.7 The proposals map identifies the proposals referred to in the written statement; it shows the sites put forward for development and those areas to which specific policies will apply. In order to show the detail in built-up areas and to ensure important policy boundaries are clear, large-scale insets have been produced. These cover Abingdon, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, parts of Botley, settlements in the Green Belt and those parts of the western expansion of Didcot which will be built within the Vale. Although the existing settlement of Didcot is within South Oxfordshire District, future development, put forward in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, will extend into the Vale. The extent of this development is shown on Local Plan Proposals Map.
- 1.8 The written statement sets out the policies and proposals, which are distinguished from the rest of the text by the use of capital letters, and explains the reasons for them. The written statement is in four parts. Part One outlines the background and general strategy which underpins the Plan. It includes the general development control policies that will apply to most forms of new development. Parts Two to Four include chapters and policies which deal with environmental, social and economic issues respectively.

Using the Local Plan

- 1.9 Depending on the type of development proposed, many or only a few of the policies in the Local Plan will be relevant. Development proposals will be assessed against all relevant policies. Consequently the Plan needs to be read as a whole.

Just because a proposal accords with one policy does not mean it will be given permission. There are inevitable conflicts between policies and judgements will need to be made as to whether the overall objective of the Local Plan would be harmed by a particular development proposal.

- 1.10 The Local Plan cannot provide a policy for every eventuality; it would become far too long. Development proposals which are not addressed by a specific policy will be judged against the Plan's objectives and goals as well as against relevant government planning advice and the Local Plan strategy and general policies for development set out in Chapters 3 and 4.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 1.11 The Local Plan, together with the Structure Plan, includes most but not all of the planning guidance which will be used in assessing development proposals in the Vale. The Council has also prepared supplementary planning guidance in the form of design advice and site-specific planning briefs to give more detail to particular policies and proposals. This guidance is published separately but needs to be read in conjunction with the adopted Local Plan. Supplementary planning guidance carries less weight than the policies in the Plan itself; nevertheless it will be an important factor when planning applications are being considered.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.12 Government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Note 12: *Development Plans* requires local authorities to carry out a full environmental appraisal of their development plans. The purpose of the appraisal is to assess, in a systematic way, how the proposed policies and proposals in those plans contribute to the objectives of sustainable development.
- 1.13 In March 1999 the Council set up an independent panel of five experts from a range of backgrounds to carry out the assessment of this Local Plan. The panel met on a number of occasions during the preparation of the Plan and its views helped the Council in its decision-making process. The panel's findings have been written up and are published in a separate document alongside the Local Plan.

Monitoring

- 1.14 The Council recognises that it is important to monitor the implementation and effects of its planning policies and proposals to ensure they are achieving their intended purpose. A lot of monitoring work, particularly on housing and employment trends, is carried out in association with the County Council and it publishes a series of monitoring reports on an annual basis. The District Council will continue to support this work and will publish its own annual monitoring report to show how the local plan strategy guiding the location of development is performing. It will also assess how the policies are achieving the seven aims for the Local Plan set out in Chapter 2 of this Plan.

THE FUTURE OF THE VALE TO 2011

THE CONTEXT FOR THE LOCAL PLAN

- 2.1 In preparing the Local Plan the Council has taken into account the character of the Vale and the pressures for development it experiences. The Council has also been mindful of the policies and advice put forward in planning documents prepared at the national, regional and county level. These provide a clear context for the more specific and detailed policies needed at the local level.

The Character of the Vale

- 2.2 The Vale of White Horse takes its name from the oldest chalk figure in Britain which dates back over 3000 years. The Vale is located in the south-western quadrant of Oxfordshire and stretches from Oxford and Didcot in the east and almost to Swindon in the west. It is bounded to the north and east by the River Thames and to the south by the Berkshire Downs. The district covers some 580 square kilometres (224 square miles) of country which is attractive and mainly rural in character.
- 2.3 The census results show that in 2001 some 115,600 people lived in the Vale, an increase of 3% since 1991. Within the district there are three historic market towns, Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon, which provide many services for people living in the surrounding rural areas. There are more than seventy villages and small hamlets, ranging from Lyford and Eaton Hastings with a few dozen inhabitants to Grove which is home to some 8,200 people. The district takes in communities on the outskirts of the university city of Oxford at Botley¹, South Hinksey and Kennington. Just over half the population of the Vale lives in the three market towns and Botley and Grove, which together comprise the Vale's five main settlements. The district also incorporates the extensive employment areas of Milton Park and the former atomic energy complex with the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, one of the largest research centres in Europe.
- 2.4 The Vale's three market towns, and many of its villages, are of considerable conservation importance. Abingdon is England's oldest continuously inhabited

¹ For the purposes of this Plan, Botley consists of those parts of North Hinksey and Cumnor parishes south and east of the A420 not designated as Green Belt and including Cumnor Hill and Chawley, as shown on the proposals map.

town, and its town centre contains a conservation area of historic interest. The district contains part of the Oxford Green Belt and also an important section of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A remarkably high proportion of the area is therefore identified as having qualities which require special attention in planning for the future.

- 2.5 The Vale is well located in relation to key transport routes. The line of the A34 trunk road runs north - south through the district, linking the Solent ports with the Midlands. It also links the district with the motorway network: the M4 is just to the south and the M40 is just to the north-east. The main rail line from London Paddington to Bristol and the west passes through the Vale, although at present the only stations on the line are outside the area, at Didcot and Swindon.

The National Context

- 2.6 In recent years there has been a growing awareness of, and concern for, environmental matters, including the threat to the ozone layer, global warming, the loss of wildlife and biodiversity, pressures on water quality and the loss of green fields to new development. Increasingly it is being recognised that our current actions may be causing long-term damage to the environment which is important not only for our quality of life and general health but for those of generations to follow.

- 2.7 A key word in this context is 'sustainability' which is about meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. The Government recognises that the planning system, in regulating the development and use of land, has an important role to play in achieving sustainable development. A sustainable planning framework should:

- provide for people's needs for new homes, jobs and food, so enabling social progress which meets the needs of everyone;
- protect the environment and conserve cultural heritage and natural resources; and
- shape new development in a way which minimises the need to travel by private car and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Important supporting themes are to:

- make the most efficient use of land and buildings by re-using land that has been previously developed and raising the density of new developments above levels previously achieved to reduce the need to build on greenfield sites;

- concentrate most additional development within urban areas and promote urban renaissance so that towns are attractive places in which to live, work and socialise; and
- ensure high standards of design in new developments to reinforce civic pride and sense of place, attract business and investment and secure greater public acceptance of new development.

The Regional Context

- 2.8 Regional planning guidance, approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment, establishes the context within which county structure plans are prepared. The guidance for the South East Region, published in March 2001 (RPG9), seeks to focus development in urban areas, create a less dispersed pattern of development, increase economic opportunities by regenerating the less favoured parts of the region, enhance London's role as a world city, sustain the life of the countryside and the rural areas, and more closely integrate transport and land use planning.
- 2.9 The emerging regional spatial strategy for the south east, called "The South East Plan", will establish the framework for development in the region from 2006 to 2026. It is currently available in draft form and is likely to be adopted by Central Government in 2008, when it will become part of the development plan for the District. In the meantime the Oxfordshire Structure Plan will provide the strategic framework for development in this area.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 2.10 This local plan has been prepared in the context of The Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2011, adopted by the County Council in 1998, which seeks to provide a sustainable planning framework for development in the county. An alteration to policy H1 was adopted in April 2001. It is for local plans to identify specific areas of land for development in accordance with this framework. The key elements of the Structure Plan include:
- i) to protect the environment, character and natural resources of the county by restraining the overall level of development;
 - ii) to favour locations where;
 - the need to travel, particularly by private car, can be reduced;
 - walking, cycling and the use of public transport can be encouraged; and
 - a reasonable range of services and community facilities exist or can be provided;

- iii) concentrate developments which generate a lot of journeys in locations which are, or are capable of being, well served by public transport;
- iv) make the best use of land and buildings within built-up areas to reduce the need for the development of greenfield sites, while not permitting development on important open spaces;
- v) the preferred locations for development will be Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney; including Abingdon, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage in the Vale;
- vi) 5750 dwellings will be provided in the Vale between 1 April 1996 and 31 March 2011, of which 500 will be located at Didcot;
- vii) in rural areas, local plans will make appropriate provision for development and in doing so will have regard to the economic and social well-being of local communities; and
- viii) elsewhere most new housing development should take place in larger settlements where a reasonable amount of employment, services and community facilities exist or can be provided.

2.11 Oxfordshire County Council adopted the Structure Plan to 2016 in October 2005. The general approach and much of the policy framework in the 2011 Structure Plan has been carried into the 2016 plan. A major change for the Vale, however, is that Grove is identified as a main location for new housing development, to take about 2,100 dwellings between 2001 and 2016. The amount of housing to be built in the Vale is 7,150 dwellings over the 15 year period to 2016. This is a significant increase over the previous Structure Plan and to some extent has been anticipated by the District Council through the policies in the housing chapter of this plan.

The Council's Vision for the Vale

2.12 The vision of the District Council is to 'build and safeguard a fair, open and compassionate community' and its aims can be summarised as: strengthening local democracy and public involvement, creating a safer community and improving the quality of life among Vale residents, encouraging a strong and sustainable economy, helping disadvantaged groups and individuals to realise their full potential, providing and supporting high quality public services, and protecting and improving the natural and built environment . In preparing its Local Plan the Council considers it important to establish aims and goals which reflect and build on its overall vision and which are clearly focused on the land use issues which the Local Plan has to address.

The Aims and Goals of the Local Plan

- 2.13 The attractive countryside, many villages and three historic market towns give the Vale a very special and distinctive character. This, coupled with the location of the district within the prosperous South-East, the easy access to the motorway network and a high concentration of jobs in research and development mean that the Vale will inevitably face pressures for further development in the years to 2011. In this context the District Council believes **the overall aim** of the Local Plan should be:

In partnership with others find an acceptable balance between maintaining a thriving economy, enabling social progress which meets the needs of everyone and protecting the environment and character of the area for future generations.

This can only be achieved if development is contained and related to local needs, if natural resources are used prudently and provided all proposals for development are carefully assessed to ensure they are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

- 2.14 This overall aim underpins the Local Plan and to give greater clarity the Council has established seven, more detailed, aims which flow from it. These aims have guided the preparation of the policies and proposals in the Local Plan, and provide the framework against which the success of the Local Plan can be monitored. Each aim has a number of more specific goals. The Plan's aims and goals are set out below.

Aim 1: to safeguard the distinctive character of the Vale, and conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment for future generations.

- 2.15 The Vale has very attractive countryside including substantial parts of the Thames Valley and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It also has a range of wildlife habitats and a rich heritage, including conservation areas, listed buildings and ancient monuments. Through its planning policies the Council will seek to:

- i) protect and enhance the countryside for its own sake, particularly areas of attractive landscape and the setting of the River Thames;
- ii) maintain and enhance biodiversity and protect sites important for wildlife conservation;
- iii) protect and enhance the historic and built environment;
- iv) protect the distinctive character of the Vale's towns, villages and countryside;
- v) maintain the integrity of the Oxford Green Belt in the north-east of the district; and

- vi) restrain the overall level of development in accordance with the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.

Aim 2: to promote high quality, sustainable development.

2.16 Well designed and laid out new buildings can help to reinforce local distinctiveness and sense of place, and reduce energy consumption and crime. This will help integrate new development into the Vale and improve the quality of life of existing and future residents. To this end the Council will seek to:

- i) ensure that all new development is designed to a high standard, uses high quality materials and respects the character of the area;
- ii) make the best use of resources and infrastructure;
- iii) resist the unnecessary loss of floodplains, agricultural land, water, mineral and other natural resources;
- iv) minimise pollution and noise arising from new development;
- v) reduce the need for development on green fields by promoting
 - the re-use of vacant, under-used and previously developed land and buildings within existing settlements before greenfield sites are used
 - higher density developments where appropriate;
- vi) promote environmentally efficient design to reduce heat loss and maximise solar gain by the careful location, layout and design of new buildings and encourage the use of appropriate materials; and
- vii) encourage the harnessing and use of environmentally friendly energy sources.

Aim 3: to reduce the need to travel and the harmful effects of traffic on people and the environment.

2.17 Increased traffic has led to congestion, noise and air pollution which is harmful to people and the environment. The increased use of cars has diminished the economic viability of some public transport services which means that people without cars can be seriously disadvantaged. To help address these problems the Council will seek to:

- i) reduce the need to travel by car by
 - encouraging and enabling people to transfer to more environmentally friendly modes of transport by seeking improved facilities for walking, cycling and public transport and through the careful location of new development
 - locating most new development close to existing facilities and services or where they can be provided and avoiding sporadic and piecemeal development
 - enabling people to live close to where they work, including encouraging developments which have a mix of different land uses;

- ii) use traffic management measures to alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety and the environment; and
- iii) resist development which would give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic, such as heavy goods vehicles on narrow rural roads.

Aim 4: to maintain and improve the quality of life of all members of the local community.

2.18 The Local Plan can help to meet the social needs and improve the quality of life of the local community by:

- i) providing new housing in accordance with the Structure Plan requirement;
- ii) promoting mixed communities by ensuring a range of housing types is provided, including social housing to meet local needs;
- iii) maintaining and, where possible, improving the range of services and facilities for shopping, educational, health, leisure and recreational purposes;
- iv) securing the provision of local facilities, accessible to all sections of the community, in association with new developments;
- v) providing access for people with mobility impairments;
- vi) promoting design which helps to reduce crime and encourage community identity and pride;
- vii) protecting rights of way and promoting access to the countryside for leisure pursuits; and
- viii) protecting green open spaces of amenity value within settlements.

Aim 5: to encourage a strong and sustainable economy which is beneficial to all who live in, work in, or visit the Vale.

2.19 An essential part of improving people's quality of life is that they have access to opportunities for fulfilling work in a diverse economy. One of the Government's key objectives is to encourage continued economic development and growth; local authorities, through the planning system, can help create the right conditions in which businesses can thrive and prosper. The Council will therefore seek to:

- i) promote the diversity of the Vale's economy;
- ii) enhance its competitiveness, particularly its special emphasis in research and science-based industries;
- iii) improve employment opportunities and provide for local employment needs;
- iv) enable regeneration and modernisation; and
- v) promote sustainable tourism.

Aim 6: to ensure that the main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage are attractive places for living, working and pursuing leisure interests.

2.20 58% of the population live in the five main settlements and many others visit for work, shops, services and leisure pursuits. They are therefore very important to the social and economic life of the Vale. The Council will seek to:

- i) improve the environment of the urban areas;
- ii) reduce traffic congestion and improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians;
- iii) promote the vitality and viability of the main settlements particularly as local centres for shopping and other services; and
- iv) encourage the economic regeneration and sustainability of the main settlements.

Aim 7: to ensure that the countryside and villages of the Vale are prosperous and have a diverse economy.

2.21 There are significant changes taking place in the rural economy, particularly in agriculture where there are reducing numbers of people working in farming. To ensure there are local employment opportunities within the rural areas, which maintain a high quality environment, the Council will seek to enable:

- i) the appropriate diversification of the farming industry, particularly through the careful re-use of existing buildings;
- ii) the diversification and regeneration of the rural economy, particularly within the villages of the Vale and the areas identified for employment development.

THE LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Government advises that development plans should have a clear strategy designed to realise the aims and objectives of the plan and to provide a clear vision of what will be achieved. The policies in this chapter, which together comprise the general strategy of the Local Plan, have three broad themes – to guide the location of development, to make the best use of land and buildings and to reduce the need to travel by car. The policies flow from, and seek to achieve, the aims set out for the Plan in Chapter 2. In particular they seek to maintain a thriving economy and enable social progress while protecting the environment and character of the area for future generations.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The Location of Development

- 3.2 In deciding on a strategy for guiding the location of development in the Vale, outside the Didcot area, up to 2011, the Council has looked at a number of alternatives to help it choose the most sustainable approach. Eight different options were evaluated, ranging from concentrating development on sites adjacent to the main towns on the edge of the district (including Oxford and Swindon) to dispersing it across the villages. The Council has concluded that locating most of the new development in the main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage and limiting it elsewhere is the most sustainable strategy. It most closely accords with the Council's aims and with national, regional and structure plan guidance. The five main settlements of the Vale already play an important role as service centres for surrounding rural communities. They contain a wide range of jobs, shops, leisure, education and other services and are relatively easily accessible to most residents of the Vale by means other than the car. Focussing development in these locations, rather than spreading it more widely, will reduce the need to travel, enhance the vitality and viability of the towns and protect the rural character of the Vale. The locational strategy, with the implications for each part of the district, is set out more fully below.

Development in Existing Settlements

- 3.3 **The Five Main Settlements** The redevelopment of previously used land and buildings within the five main settlements will be promoted for housing, employment and other uses. However, important areas of open land – such as public open space, playing fields, amenity space, allotments and environmental corridors – will be protected from development. Proposals will be encouraged which make the best use of land and reduce the need to travel by car. Only when the Council has taken account of the amount of development within the built-up areas of the towns and villages will the phased release of greenfield land on the edges of the five main settlements be permitted.
- 3.4 Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: *Transport* advises that away from large urban areas local authorities should focus most development in or near local service centres such as market towns and that these should be defined in the development plan as the preferred locations for development. Accordingly in policy GS1 below the five main settlements in the Vale are defined as local service centres.
- 3.5 **Didcot** Didcot is identified in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan as one of the four preferred locations for development in the county. Didcot is in South Oxfordshire district but is close to the boundary with the Vale. The Structure Plan has determined that 500 of the 5,500 dwellings to be provided in the town between 1996 and 2011 will be built in the Vale as part of the town's western expansion area. In addition the Council must consider the future role of Milton Park, a large employment centre to the west of Didcot. These issues are discussed in more detail in the housing and employment chapters.
- 3.6 **The Villages** Villages are generally not sustainable locations for new development, in that most people will be likely to travel by car to jobs and services. The Council recognises, however, that some limited development can be acceptable and can help to maintain lively village communities and existing services. Using small sites within villages, particularly areas of previously developed land, can also help to reduce the need to build on greenfield sites elsewhere. For these reasons the Council will allow small-scale development within the built-up areas of villages.
- 3.7 There are some 63 rural parishes in the Vale containing a number of villages which are very varied in terms of size, location, character and the availability of services. The villages listed in policy H11 have a reasonable range of services and facilities and, within these, small groups of dwellings and small premises for business use may be permitted on land which is not important to keep open, either because it does not contribute to the rural character of the village or because it does not provide valuable recreational space. A significant change from the Local Plan to 2001 is that 'rounding off' outside the existing built-up limits of such villages will not be permitted. In the smaller villages listed in policy H12, where services and

facilities are much more limited, development of not more than four small dwellings, small extensions to existing business premises and the conversion of existing buildings will be allowed. Detailed policies for the villages are set out in later sections of the Plan. Policy GS1 below establishes the general locational strategy which underpins and provides the context for other key policies in the Plan.

POLICY GSI

THE GENERAL LOCATIONAL STRATEGY IS TO:

- i) **CONCENTRATE DEVELOPMENT AT THE FIVE MAIN SETTLEMENTS OF ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE, WHICH ARE DESIGNATED AS LOCAL SERVICE CENTRES AND ARE DEFINED BY THE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. IMPORTANT OPEN LAND WITHIN THESE SETTLEMENTS WILL BE PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT;**
- ii) **LOCATE DEVELOPMENT TO THE WEST OF DIDCOT, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE WESTERN EXPANSION OF THE TOWN; AND**
- iii) **ALLOW SMALL-SCALE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF VILLAGES AS SET OUT IN POLICIES H11, H12 AND H13, PROVIDED THAT IMPORTANT AREAS OF OPEN LAND AND THEIR RURAL CHARACTER ARE PROTECTED.**

DEVELOPMENT WHICH ACCORDS WITH THIS STRATEGY WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THERE IS NO CONFLICT WITH OTHER POLICIES IN THIS PLAN.

Development in the Countryside

- 3.8 The Government's policy, as expressed in Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*, is that planning authorities should ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced and that natural resources should be afforded protection. Both the national guidance and the Oxfordshire Structure Plan propose strict controls over building in the countryside away from existing settlements. This is to protect the character of the countryside and to limit development in locations which would encourage the use of the private car. However, the Council recognises that some new housing to sustain social and economic activity in the rural areas will be needed but considers that as far as possible this should occur within the towns and villages or through the re-use of existing appropriate buildings. Sporadic and ribbon development, including that near major road junctions, will not be permitted. Policy GS2 below recognises that in some very limited circumstances new building will be allowed outside the built-up areas of settlements to meet the

needs of local communities (such as social housing and recreational facilities on the edge of a village), for small-scale extensions to existing properties and to support activities which are based on the land and which cannot be accommodated in a nearby settlement (for example agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and leisure and equestrian centres). These circumstances are covered by other, more detailed policies in this Plan (including policies GS3 ii), GS6, H13, H18, CF2, L9, L13 – L20, E9 iii), and E16 – E21).

POLICY GS2

OUTSIDE THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF EXISTING SETTLEMENTS (COVERED BY POLICIES GSI, GS3, H11, H12 AND H13) NEW BUILDING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT IS ON LAND WHICH HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE LOCAL PLAN OR IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH OTHER SPECIFIC POLICIES BELOW.

Development in the Oxford Green Belt

- 3.9 In 1975 the Oxford Green Belt was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment as an amendment to the County Development Plan. There were areas of land around Oxford and to the north of Abingdon where the Green Belt policy operated on an interim basis to allow a detailed review of the boundaries to accommodate a limited amount of development to meet some of Oxford's housing and employment needs. The inner boundaries of the Green Belt were confirmed by the adoption of local plans: to the north of Abingdon in 1983 and around Oxford in 1991. Successive structure plans have confirmed the commitment to the Green Belt.
- 3.10 The most recent government advice specifically on Green Belts is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: *Green Belts* (PPG2). In brief this confirms that:
- i) the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and that the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness;
 - ii) the purposes of including land in Green Belts are to
 - check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
 - prevent neighbouring towns from merging together
 - safeguard the countryside from encroachment
 - preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
 - assist in urban regeneration;
 - iii) the use of land in Green Belts has a positive role to play in fulfilling the following objectives

- providing access to the countryside and opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation near to where people live
 - retaining and enhancing landscapes near to where people live
 - improving damaged and derelict land
 - securing nature conservation
 - retaining land in agricultural, forestry and related uses;
- iv) an essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence and once the general extent of a Green Belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances;
- v) there is a general presumption against inappropriate development which is harmful to the Green Belt;
- vi) the appearance of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within or conspicuous from it; and
- vii) land between the urban area and the Green Belt can be safeguarded to meet long-term development needs.
- 3.11 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan carries forward the advice in PPG2 and establishes that the special character of Oxford and its landscape setting is not just the University and the views of the dreaming spires but is a broader concept including all the countryside around the city and the floodplains of the River Thames. Its character also depends on the overall scale of activity within this area, since significant growth will generate more traffic and pressures for further development which are likely to threaten the nature, character and setting of the city.
- 3.12 In approving the Structure Plan in 1992 the Secretary of State confirmed that the unique historic character of Oxford and its setting in its natural environment should be conserved and protected and that the growth of the city should not continue indefinitely. The panel that conducted the examination in public on the Structure Plan, approved in 1998, agreed that the Green Belt should be seen as an important strategic element in terms of sustainability and there were no circumstances to justify a review of the Green Belt so recently fully established. The District Council also takes the view that there are no exceptional circumstances which necessitate a revision of the Green Belt boundaries in this Local Plan.
- 3.13 As the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open it follows that new building will be severely restricted and only allowed for a limited number of purposes. PPG2: *Green Belts* states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in Green Belts. Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is for the purposes discussed in more detail below.
- i) Agriculture and Forestry.** As much of the land in the Green Belt is used for farming and forestry it would be illogical to prevent development which is

necessary to sustain these activities. Policy E16 later in the Plan sets out the criteria that will be applied when considering proposals for new buildings associated with agriculture and forestry throughout the Vale. In the Green Belt the Council will take particular care over the siting, design, scale and visual impact of such buildings in order to maintain the openness of the Green Belt and safeguard its amenity against visually damaging development.

ii) Outdoor Sport, Recreation and Other Uses. Green Belts have a positive role to play in providing opportunities for people to have access to the countryside and participate in outdoor sport and recreation, much of which can be pursued without harm to the purposes of Green Belt policy. Other uses such as cemeteries and sewage works are found in Green Belts. New buildings which provide essential services and are ancillary to uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt – such as small changing rooms for cricket, football or golf for example, or small stables – will generally be acceptable where they can be absorbed without detriment to the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt. Particular care will be taken to ensure that the introduction of lighting, artificial surfaces and car parking associated with such facilities does not harm the openness or visual amenity of the Green Belt. New buildings which provide for indoor recreation or entertainment and stadia for football, athletics and other major sporting events will not be permitted.

iii) The Extension, Alteration or Replacement of Existing Dwellings. There are many existing dwellings in the Green Belt which, during the lifetime of this Local Plan, will be the subject of planning applications for some form of alteration, extension or replacement. These may be acceptable if the extension is in reasonable proportion to the size of the original building and provided the new dwelling is not materially larger than the one it is intended to replace. Care will also be taken to ensure that such proposals would not have an unacceptable impact on their surroundings and that the design of extension is compatible with the existing dwelling. The scale of extensions and increases in the size of replacement dwellings will be limited in order to safeguard the openness of the Green Belt and its visual amenities. As there are a number of small dwellings in the Green Belt, where a straight percentage increase would only enable a very small extension, the Council will operate a sliding scale so as to allow larger percentage increases of smaller dwellings as set out in policy GS3iii) below. This will give flexibility for people living in small dwellings and will help to prevent the increased erosion of the Green Belt as a result of over-large or unsympathetic extensions or replacement dwellings. The size of the existing dwellings will be taken as that at October 1995 (when the previous Local Plan was put on deposit). The measurements are to be made externally and will not include outbuildings.

iv) Infilling in Villages. Although there is an overall presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, it has long been recognised that limited infilling on sites within some villages washed over by the Green Belt designation would not be inappropriate. This is recognised in PPG2, paragraphs

2.11 and 3.4, and Structure Plan (2011) policy EN5. The designated village areas where limited infilling will be allowed are shown on the proposals map at Farmoor, Shippon, South Hinksey, Sunningwell, Wootton Old Village and Wytham. Where infilling in these areas is for housing, it will be allowed provided the scheme is for no more than one or two dwellings or is for a small group of dwellings to provide low-cost housing to local people in perpetuity in accordance with policy H18 and provided that there is no harm to the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt. Low-cost housing for local people will not be allowed outside the defined village boundaries unless it is through the conversion of an existing building in accordance with policy GS7 below.

v) Re-use of Buildings. Over time it is inevitable that some buildings in the Green Belt will become unsuited to, or redundant from, their present use. With suitable safeguards the re-use of existing buildings should not prejudice the openness of the Green Belt as the buildings are already there. In some cases an alternative use can help to secure the continuing stewardship of Green Belt land by helping farmers to diversify their enterprises. To be acceptable policy GS3 below makes it clear that the new use should not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it. In addition proposals will be expected to meet the requirements set out in policies GS7 and GS8 below for the re-use of rural buildings.

vi) Changes in the Use of Land and Engineering Operations. Proposals involving the change of use of land and the carrying out of engineering and other operations will only be acceptable if they maintain the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with its purposes. Mineral working, according to Government advice, need not be regarded as inappropriate development. Policies for this type of development are contained in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan prepared by Oxfordshire County Council.

vii) Limited Infilling or Redevelopment at Existing Major Developed Sites. The Oxford Green Belt contains some major developed sites which pre-date the Green Belt designation. PPG2 recognises that limited infilling at such sites may help to secure jobs and prosperity without further prejudicing the Green Belt and that complete or partial redevelopment may offer the opportunity for environmental improvement. The Council has identified nine major developed sites in its part of the Oxford Green Belt: Dalton Barracks north-west of Abingdon; Farmoor and Swinford water treatment works and Oaken Holt Nursing Home in the parish of Cumnor; Radley College north of Abingdon; Templeton College and Westminster Institute of Education to the south and west of Oxford; Cothill School in Marcham parish and Chandlings Manor, a school in the parish of Kennington. These are shown on the proposals map. Limited infilling and the partial redevelopment of sites will be allowed at all of the major developed sites, subject to the criteria in policy GS4 below. Not all the land identified within the boundaries of the major developed sites will be suitable for new buildings. Within the boundaries, the setting of the existing buildings, sense of place and the character of a particular

area must be taken into account. The Council considers there is no justification on environmental grounds for promoting the complete redevelopment of any of the major developed sites in its area. This is because, in the main, they are occupied by successful enterprises of long standing, which are housed in adequate buildings. No policy framework is advanced to deal with such developments and, although applications will be treated as departures from the development plan, policies GS3 and GS4 will be taken into account. Applications for infilling and the partial redevelopment of major developed sites should be put forward in the context of a comprehensive long-term plan for the site as a whole. They should seek to bring about environmental improvements both to the visual amenities of the Green Belt and its openness. The latter can be achieved by locating new buildings so as to avoid dispersal across the site and siting new buildings close to existing ones. In most cases the boundaries of the major developed sites have been drawn tightly around the present extent of existing buildings. However, in the case of Templeton College the boundary has been drawn to enable the extension of the college in accordance with a planning permission that has already been granted.

- 3.14 The policies below set out the Council's general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the limited circumstances under which new buildings might be permitted, including infilling and the partial redevelopment of existing major developed sites. The Council understands the aspirations of Oxford Brookes University who may wish to extend the built-up area outside the boundary of the major developed site on land owned by the Westminster Institute at Harcourt Hill to cater for an increase in student numbers and enable the modernisation and improvement of the current facilities. However, plans for the development of the whole university are not yet at a stage when they can be fully justified or assessed in the context of the impact on the Green Belt or the purposes of including land within it. The issue will be reassessed when the local plan is next reviewed (as a local development document under the new arrangements) or through a planning application (using the departure procedures) if a sound case can be made to extend the higher educational facilities at the site in the meantime. The Council would oppose any new buildings to the north east of the major developed site boundary as shown on the proposals map.

POLICY GS3

DEVELOPMENT (INCLUDING THE CHANGE OF USE OF LAND AND ENGINEERING AND OTHER OPERATIONS) WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF IT DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND IN THE GREEN BELT AND IF IT PRESERVES ITS OPENNESS AND THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF OXFORD AND ITS LANDSCAPE SETTING.

SUBJECT TO THE ABOVE CRITERIA NEW BUILDING WILL ONLY BE ALLOWED FOR THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

- i) **AGRICULTURE OR FORESTRY;**

- ii) **SMALL-SCALE FACILITIES ESSENTIAL FOR OUTDOOR SPORT, RECREATION, CEMETERIES AND OTHER USES OF LAND WHICH PRESERVE THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT;**
- iii) **LIMITED EXTENSION, ALTERATION OR REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING DWELLINGS. AN EXTENSION TO OR THE REPLACEMENT OF A DWELLING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT EXCEEDS THE FOLLOWING LIMITS:**
 - a) **EXISTING DWELLINGS WITH A FLOORSPACE OF LESS THAN 80 SQUARE METRES – UP TO 50% OF THE ORIGINAL VOLUME OF THE DWELLING (EXCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS);**
 - b) **EXISTING DWELLINGS WITH A FLOORSPACE OF 81–120 SQUARE METRES – UP TO 40% OF THE ORIGINAL VOLUME OF THE DWELLING (EXCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS);**
 - c) **EXISTING DWELLINGS WITH A FLOORSPACE GREATER THAN 121 SQUARE METRES – UP TO 30% OF THE ORIGINAL VOLUME OF THE DWELLING (EXCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS); AND**
- iv) **LIMITED INFILLING BETWEEN EXISTING BUILT DEVELOPMENT IN THE VILLAGES OF FARMOOR, SHIPPON, SOUTH HINKSEY, SUNNINGWELL, WOOTTON OLD VILLAGE AND WYTHAM, AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. RESIDENTIAL INFILLING WILL BE LIMITED TO SCHEMES OF 1 OR 2 DWELLINGS UNLESS IT IS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY H18.**

PROPOSALS FOR THE CONVERSION AND ADAPTATION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS SHOULD NOT HAVE A MATERIALLY GREATER IMPACT THAN THE EXISTING OR PREVIOUS USE ON THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT OR THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND IN IT.

THE VISUAL AMENITIES OF THE GREEN BELT WILL BE PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT WITHIN OR CONSPICUOUS FROM THE GREEN BELT WHICH MIGHT BE HARMFUL BY REASON OF ITS SITING, SCALE OR DESIGN.

POLICY GS4

LIMITED INFILLING AND THE PARTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OF SITES WILL BE PERMITTED WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NINE MAJOR DEVELOPED SITES OF DALTON BARRACKS, FARMOOR AND SWINFORD WATER TREATMENT WORKS, RADLEY COLLEGE, TEMPLETON COLLEGE, WESTMINSTER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, COTHILL SCHOOL, CHANDLINGS MANOR AND OAKEN HOLT NURSING HOME, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PROVIDED THAT:

- i) THERE WOULD BE NO GREATER IMPACT ON THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT OR THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND WITHIN IT;
- ii) ANY INFILLING RELATES TO THE CONTINUING USE OF THE SITE;
- iii) ANY PARTIAL REDEVELOPMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH APPROPRIATE COMPREHENSIVE LONG TERM PLANS FOR THE SITE AS A WHOLE WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTIVES FOR THE USE OF LAND IN GREEN BELTS;
- iv) THE BUILDINGS WOULD NOT EXCEED THE HEIGHT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS;
- v) IT WOULD NOT LEAD TO A MAJOR INCREASE IN THE DEVELOPED PROPORTION OF THE SITE; AND
- vi) IT WOULD NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE.

WHERE PROPOSALS FOR PARTIAL REDEVELOPMENT INVOLVE AN ISOLATED BUILDING ITS RE-SITING WITHIN THE MAIN GROUP OF BUILDINGS ON THE SITE WILL BE SOUGHT OR, FAILING THAT, IMMEDIATELY ALONGSIDE THEM. IN SUCH CASES IT WILL BE A REQUIREMENT THAT THE EXISTING ISOLATED BUILDING IS DEMOLISHED AND THAT ANY DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS ACCRUING TO IT ARE EXTINGUISHED.

Making Efficient Use of Land and Buildings

- 3.15 Two closely interlinking themes of Government policy in recent years have been to maximise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings and to avoid the inefficient use of land especially by promoting higher densities of development. These objectives are being pursued to promote urban regeneration, help sustain local services and public transport, conserve natural resources and minimise the amount of greenfield and other open land being taken for development. Previously developed land is defined in Government advice as that which is occupied by a permanent structure and associated fixed surface infrastructure. It excludes land and buildings used for agriculture or forestry; land such as parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land which was used previously where the remains of a structure or activity have blended into the landscape. The advice acknowledges that it will not always be appropriate for the whole of a previously developed site to be redeveloped, especially where there is open land within the site.

Land and Buildings Within Settlements

- 3.16 The Council is concerned at the continued loss of countryside to development in the district and is anxious to keep such loss to a minimum. Much housing development built in the Vale for example has been at densities of about 25 dwellings per hectare (10 to the acre) although in recent years higher densities

have been achieved. The Government has pointed out that more than half of all new housing being built in England is at densities less than 20 dwellings per hectare. This represents a high level of land take which cannot be sustained in the long term. Accordingly the Council will encourage developments which make the most efficient use of land especially in the five main settlements where there is good access to a range of jobs, services and public transport. Such development does not have to be cramped or high rise, but it does have to be to a high standard of design to achieve good quality environments for living, working and socialising. Where a site is close to the town centre or on a good public transport route for example it may be possible to achieve higher density schemes by reducing normal car parking requirements and by innovative designs. For housing schemes it may be possible to reduce the amount of private amenity space and increase the number of small units within a scheme. However, to be acceptable, high density developments must not be harmful to the character or amenity of the surrounding areas.

- 3.17 In the rural areas development densities are unlikely to be as high as in the main settlements because respect for village character will often rule this out and the mechanisms for achieving higher densities, such as reduced car parking standards, are unlikely to be appropriate. Policy GS5 below seeks to promote the re-use of previously developed and unused land and buildings in the Vale's towns and villages. Care will be taken to ensure that such development does not harm the site or its surroundings, including features of nature conservation value and historic interest.

POLICY GS5

WITHIN EXISTING SETTLEMENTS DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF IT MAKES EFFICIENT USE OF LAND AND BUILDINGS AND PROVIDED IT WOULD NOT RESULT IN:

- i) THE LOSS OF AN IMPORTANT LOCAL FACILITY;**
- ii) HARM TO THE SITE OR ITS SURROUNDINGS; OR**
- iii) A POOR QUALITY ENVIRONMENT FOR THOSE WHO LIVE IN, WORK IN, OR VISIT THE VALE.**

Redevelopment of Buildings Outside Settlements

- 3.18 While the Council is committed to developing previously developed land in the main settlements, it recognises the position is more complex for such sites in the countryside. Generally the Council will only allow new buildings on previously developed sites in the countryside where they comply with policy GS2 (that is, they are allocated for development or are covered by specific policies in this Plan) or where they are currently occupied by permanent buildings, provided they are not in agricultural or forestry use or are associated with parks, recreation grounds and allotments. On sites in the countryside which have been developed previously

but do not contain any buildings, or where the remains of buildings have blended into the landscape, new building will not be allowed. The only occasions where the fact that a site is previously developed can be used to justify the construction of a new building is where it involves the redevelopment of existing buildings which meet the criteria in policy GS6. This is consistent with the approach to protect the landscape character of the Vale and prevent a dispersal of development which would be difficult to serve by means other than the private car. It reflects long established planning policies which say that permission should not normally be given for isolated development in the countryside.

- 3.19 Policy GS6 below establishes that to be acceptable the redevelopment of buildings in the countryside must involve existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction. To prevent the loss of existing buildings which add to the understanding of the local history of the area and the landscape, the demolition of listed buildings will not be permitted. The Council accepts that in some circumstances farm and forestry buildings can be re-used for other purposes by virtue of the fact that the buildings are already there. However, the Council believes there is no justification to redevelop those buildings, either because they have come to the end of their life or for greater commercial profit, if they are not in locations where new buildings for non agricultural purposes would normally be allowed. The exception to this will be where redevelopment is needed for farm diversification in accordance with policy E17.
- 3.20 Dwellings are a scarce commodity in the countryside and command high land values which tend to exclude other uses. They also have a significant impact on the landscape by virtue of gardens and ancillary buildings. Given this context the construction of new dwellings on previously developed land in the countryside will only be allowed where they replace existing dwellings and then only on a one for one basis, or where the redevelopment of existing buildings is for a new use where an additional dwelling is essential for the functioning of the proposed new use and is ancillary to it. In these cases the dwellings will be tied to the overall development so they cannot be sold separately from it. Replacement dwellings in the countryside will be considered in accordance with policies GS6 and GS3 where they are in the Green Belt.
- 3.21 The redevelopment should not have a materially greater visual impact on its surroundings than the current building and opportunities will be taken to improve the appearance of the land, especially by clearing away unsightly structures and improving the landscape. Similarly the use proposed should be no less sustainable than the current use, otherwise it could lead to a significant intensification of activity in an unsustainable location. Generally the new buildings should occupy the same position as the existing ones unless an alternative location would have clear benefits in terms of its effect on the landscape. For example this could be siting a replacement building close to an existing building to be retained or in a less conspicuous, well-screened location.

POLICY GS6

OUTSIDE THE BUILT-UP AREA OF SETTLEMENTS, THE REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING BUILDINGS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- i) THE EXISTING BUILDINGS ARE OF PERMANENT AND SUBSTANTIAL CONSTRUCTION AND ARE NOT THE SUBJECT OF A TEMPORARY PERMISSION;**
- ii) THE EXISTING BUILDINGS WERE NOT ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED FOR AGRICULTURE OR FORESTRY (UNLESS IT IS PART OF A GENUINE FARM DIVERSIFICATION SCHEME IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY E17);**
- iii) IT DOES NOT INVOLVE THE CREATION OF AN ADDITIONAL DWELLING UNLESS IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT AND IS ANCILLARY TO IT;**
- iv) IT IS FOR A NEW DWELLING WHICH REPLACES AN EXISTING DWELLING AND THEN ONLY ON A ONE-FOR-ONE BASIS, SUBJECT TO THE SIZE LIMITS SET OUT IN POLICY GS3 iii) ABOVE FOR DWELLINGS IN THE GREEN BELT, AND FOR DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE OUTSIDE THE GREEN BELT BY UP TO 50% OF THE VOLUME OF THE ORIGINAL DWELLING EXCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS;**
- v) THE REDEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT HAVE A MATERIALLY GREATER VISUAL IMPACT ON THE COUNTRYSIDE THAN THE CURRENT BUILDINGS, AND WHERE POSSIBLE WOULD HAVE LESS;**
- vi) THE NEW USE PROPOSED WOULD BE AT LEAST AS SUSTAINABLE AS THE CURRENT USE; AND**
- vii) IT IS ON THE SITE OF THE EXISTING BUILDINGS UNLESS AN ALTERNATIVE SITE WOULD HAVE CLEAR BENEFITS IN TERMS OF IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE.**

Re-use of Buildings Outside Settlements

- 3.22 The countryside of the Vale away from settlements contains many buildings, some of traditional vernacular construction and others not. They include mills, schools, chapels, agricultural and industrial buildings. Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (PPS7) advises that the re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of rural areas where this would meet sustainable development objectives. This can reduce demands for new building in the countryside and avoid leaving existing buildings vacant and prone to vandalism and dereliction. However, balanced against this is the need to protect the countryside,

which includes not perpetuating the use of existing buildings which detract from the landscape, and preventing activities which would be harmful to the countryside. There is also concern that the conversion of buildings in the countryside may not be sustainable in terms of reducing the need to travel, as most people using the buildings are likely to need to travel by car for all or most of their journeys.

- 3.23 There is general consensus that buildings in the countryside of traditional, vernacular construction tend to be in keeping with their surroundings and should be retained and re-used. Vernacular buildings reflect local building styles and materials and many make an important contribution to the landscape and to understanding the history of the area. However, most modern buildings, including large portal frame or prefabricated buildings, or those built using unsympathetic materials, such as concrete blocks, asbestos sheeting or corrugated iron, cannot be said to make an important contribution to the landscape or our understanding of it and it is questionable whether they can be regarded as in keeping with their surroundings. Developers often argue that because these types of building have been part of the rural scene for some years they must be in keeping with the countryside. The Council does not accept this view and in deciding what is a suitably constructed rural building believes a more discerning approach is necessary.
- 3.24 To reflect these concerns the Council is proposing two policies for the re-use of rural buildings in the countryside. The first is for vernacular buildings where, subject to certain safeguards, new uses will generally be allowed. The second is for non-vernacular buildings where additional tests will have to be met before re-use will be permitted.
- 3.25 Proposals for the re-use of any building in the countryside which is derelict, or in such poor structural condition that it could not be used without substantial alteration or rebuilding, will not be permitted. Similarly proposals involving substantial alterations and extensions that would be tantamount to the erection of a new building will not be permitted. Such development would be contrary to Government advice and to the policies in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. Where a derelict building has been substantially re-built, prior to a planning application being submitted for a change of use in an attempt to circumvent this policy, planning permission is unlikely to be granted for the new use. To ensure that proposals can be assessed properly and speedily, applications for the change of use of buildings in the countryside should include detailed survey drawings of the original building, clearly showing those elements to be replaced, altered or removed and the impact of any new work proposed. In some cases applicants will need to submit a structural report to show that the building is capable of withstanding the alterations and the new use proposed. Government advice indicates that new building is to be strictly controlled in the countryside and consequently only small-scale extensions will be permitted where it is essential to achieve an appropriate conversion which would not otherwise be possible. The change of use of listed

buildings will also be considered in the light of policy HE7 and policy GS3 will also be taken into account in the Green Belt.

- 3.26 It is critical that the new uses proposed for vernacular buildings in the countryside respect the character and appearance of both the building and the wider area. For this reason the policy does not seek to favour one type of use over another as much will depend upon the impact of the use on the nature of the building and its setting. Conversion to residential use often involves major changes to the fabric of the building, its external appearance and its setting in the landscape. Traditional barns for example are simple structures, enclosing large open spaces without windows or chimneys, and, if not handled carefully, changes of such buildings to residential use can radically alter their character and appearance. In addition a residential use often involves the enclosure of adjoining land to form a garden and the erection of garden sheds, garages and other domestic structures which can have a harmful effect on the setting of the building and the character of the countryside, especially in areas of high quality landscape. In some cases the conversion of such buildings for holiday accommodation may be more acceptable as this may not require the same design standards or external ancillary facilities. The conversion of buildings to employment uses can, if handled with care, have less impact on the fabric and appearance of the buildings and may benefit rural communities by providing job opportunities locally. However, control needs to be exercised to ensure that the use of such buildings for business activities does not lead to a decline in the quality of the countryside through, for example, the scale of the activity, unsympathetic fencing, external storage and lighting, vehicle parking and noise, or through an unacceptable increase in traffic on rural roads. The Council will expect conversions for employment use to provide small-scale premises of up to 500 square metres or to be for a firm whose linkages make the particular location necessary in accordance with Structure Plan policy E4.
- 3.27 Whatever the use proposed it will be important to ensure that the necessary services and facilities are available or can be provided without overall harm to the environment. In particular a well established and adequate access road should be available from the building to the public highway network.
- 3.28 Buildings in the countryside are often used by barn owls and bats which are protected species (see policy NE5). A survey should be made of the building and any necessary measures to protect important species during and after the conversion work should be established before a planning application for re-use is submitted. This will enable the application to be processed speedily.

POLICY GS7

OUTSIDE THE BUILT-UP AREA OF SETTLEMENTS THE RE-USE AND ADAPTATION OF VERNACULAR BUILDINGS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED ALL THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:

- i) **THE BUILDING IS OF PERMANENT AND SUBSTANTIAL CONSTRUCTION AND IS CAPABLE OF CONVERSION WITHOUT MAJOR REBUILDING, EXTENSION OR ALTERATION;**
- ii) **THE RE-USE AND ADAPTATION WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING, ITS SETTING OR THE SURROUNDING AREA; AND**
- iii) **ANY SERVICES AND FACILITIES, INCLUDING ACCESS ROADS, NECESSARY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT ARE AVAILABLE OR CAN BE PROVIDED WITHOUT OVERALL HARM TO THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE AREA.**

3.29 The re-use of non-vernacular buildings in the countryside must comply with the criteria in policy GS7 above and a number of additional tests discussed below. The buildings, although not vernacular, must be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. The buildings should be structurally sound and appropriate for the use proposed. The buildings should be fully enclosed with walls and a roof and not require external cladding, otherwise the Council will consider that the requirements of policy GS7 criterion i) cannot be met. The re-use of non-vernacular buildings will be allowed where it is part of a genuine farm diversification scheme which adds value to the goods produced on the farm or where it is in association with a countryside use that cannot reasonably be located in a nearby settlement (e.g. a golf course, equestrian centre or other outdoor recreational use).

3.30 The majority of proposals to re-use non-vernacular buildings will be for some form of business use and this raises concerns in three key respects. The first is the effect of the change of use on the character of the building and its setting in the countryside. When such buildings are seen in the context of a working farmyard they are part of the rural scene. However, when all or most of the buildings in a farm complex change to business use they can take on the character and appearance of an industrial estate. The second concern arises over the dispersal of activity into areas where access by public transport, walking and cycling can be difficult. This encourages the use of the private car which is contrary to PPG13 and other government guidance on creating sustainable developments. The third concern relates to the scale of use. Given the number of farm complexes with large aggregate floor areas and the significant amount of land and buildings already available for business use in the district as a whole, a proliferation of business uses in the countryside could lead to an overheating of the local economy and undermine the policies of restraint in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. For these reasons the Council will limit the floor space that can be re-used for business purposes in a group of non-vernacular buildings to 500 square metres in total. The conversion of non-vernacular isolated buildings will generally not be allowed as they are not considered to be in keeping with their surroundings and their conversion is unlikely to produce sustainable developments. This is consistent

with the approach of encouraging small businesses in rural areas while protecting the character and environment of the Vale.

- 3.31 The Council will also ensure that the conversion of a building would not give rise to the need for additional buildings in the countryside to replace it. Where a farm building proposed for re-use was constructed under permitted development rights, applicants will be required to provide evidence of the original agricultural justification for its construction and of its subsequent agricultural use to demonstrate those rights are not being abused. Where the building was erected after 1 April 1997 and its agricultural use ceases within 10 years, the Council is seldom likely to permit its re-use.

POLICY GS8

OUTSIDE THE BUILT-UP AREA OF SETTLEMENTS THE RE-USE AND ADAPTATION OF NON-VERNACULAR BUILDINGS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THE CRITERIA IN POLICY GS7 CAN BE MET, AND:

- i) THE FORM, BULK AND GENERAL DESIGN OF THE BUILDING IS IN KEEPING WITH THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF ITS SURROUNDINGS;**
 - ii) IT IS SUSTAINABLY LOCATED FOR THE SCALE AND TYPE OF USE PROPOSED;**
 - iii) IT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE CREATION OF A DWELLING;**
 - iv) WHERE CONVERSION TO BUSINESS USE IS PROPOSED THE TOTAL BUSINESS FLOORSPEACE WOULD NOT EXCEED 500 SQUARE METRES IN THE GROUP OF BUILDINGS WITHIN WHICH IT IS LOCATED, UNLESS IT FORMS PART OF A FARM DIVERSIFICATION SCHEME IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY E17; AND**
 - v) THE CONVERSION WOULD NOT GIVE RISE TO THE NEED FOR REPLACEMENT BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.**
- 3.32 To ensure that developments remain small scale and their visual impact is minimised the Council will consider imposing conditions or seeking planning obligations to restrict the future expansion of business premises and secure environmental improvements. The Council may also seek to prevent the fragmentation of a farm holding, when a diversification scheme is proposed, or the separation of a dwelling conversion from the enterprise upon which it was originally justified. There are areas of the Vale where the local landscape is particularly sensitive and where the impact of new buildings could be seriously detrimental in visual terms. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a key area in this respect but there are other areas in the

countryside where new building requires careful control. The Council is concerned that the grant of planning permission for the re-use of an existing building should not be followed by an extension of that building under permitted development rights or a replacement farm building, as these could have a detrimental impact on the landscape. To prevent this the Council may, in appropriate circumstances, seek to remove permitted development rights to extend a converted building in the countryside or to erect new farm buildings elsewhere on the farm. Although it will seldom be necessary to restrict the permitted development rights on the whole of a farm holding it may be appropriate on a small farm or where the re-use of a number of buildings is being sought. Permitted development rights may also be withdrawn where a change of use between one use class and another could have a harmful effect on the environment. This could arise, for example, if a building used as an office or for research and development changed to warehousing and distribution. The removal of permitted development rights does not mean that buildings cannot be extended or new farm buildings erected but that planning permission has to be sought. The conditions set out in policy GS9 below will only be imposed where they are justified and are fairly and reasonably related to the proposed development.

POLICY GS9

WHEN GRANTING PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE RE-USE OF A BUILDING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE CONDITIONS MAY BE IMPOSED OR A PLANNING OBLIGATION SOUGHT TO COVER THE FOLLOWING:

- i) TO TIE THE BUILDING TO THE HOLDING TO DISCOURAGE FRAGMENTATION WHERE IT IS PART OF A FARM DIVERSIFICATION SCHEME;**
- ii) IN A MIXED USE SCHEME, TO TIE A PROPOSED CONVERSION TO A DWELLING TO THE OTHER USE(S) ON THE SITE WHERE THE CONVERSION WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN PERMITTED AND TO PREVENT ITS OCCUPATION BEFORE THE OTHER USE IS SECURED;**
- iii) WHERE BUSINESS USE IS PROPOSED, TO ENSURE THAT THE ACCOMMODATION REMAINS AVAILABLE FOR SMALL FIRMS (UP TO ABOUT 500 SQUARE METRES) OR FOR FIRMS WHOSE SOURCES OF SUPPLY, COMMERCIAL LINKAGES, LABOUR SUPPLY AND MARKETS MAKE THE SPECIFIC LOCATION NECESSARY FOR THEM;**
- iv) TO REMOVE PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO EXTEND THE BUILDING AND/OR CHANGE USES BETWEEN DIFFERENT CLASSES OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER;**
- v) TO WITHDRAW PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FOR NEW FARM BUILDINGS ON THE HOLDING OR PART OF THE HOLDING WHERE THE SCHEME MAY LEAD**

**TO A PROLIFERATION OF BUILDINGS WHICH WOULD HARM THE LANDSCAPE;
AND**

- vi) **TO SECURE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING AND ITS
SURROUNDINGS.**

Minimising the Need to Travel by Car and Reducing the Impact of Traffic

- 3.33 There is widespread concern that increased numbers of cars and goods vehicles has led to congestion, noise and air pollution and has diminished the viability of some public transport services. The principal responsibility for transport matters rests with the Department for Transport, the County Council and the public transport providers. The District Council's involvement extends to the provision and operation of public off-street car parks, influencing the location and nature of new developments and involvement in integrated transport studies for the main settlements. A fundamental element of the Council's local plan strategy will be to ensure that new developments occur in locations where the need to travel (in particular by car) can be reduced. It will also be important to ensure that new footpaths, cycleways and public transport facilities are, where possible, provided in association with new developments. Policy GS10 below reflects these aims and further details are given in the transport chapter. The approach is consistent with national guidance and structure plan policies and it underpins many of the policies guiding the location of development in this Local Plan.

POLICY GS10

NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IN LOCATIONS WHERE THE NEED TO TRAVEL, PARTICULARLY BY CAR, CAN BE MINIMISED OR WHERE IT IS SPECIFICALLY PROVIDED FOR IN OTHER POLICIES IN THIS PLAN. DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD GENERATE SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF TRAFFIC WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE TRAVEL BY MODES OTHER THAN THE PRIVATE CAR ARE NOT AVAILABLE OR CANNOT BE PROVIDED FOR EFFECTIVELY.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 4.1 The historic towns and villages of the Vale are a fine inheritance and much of the district's environment is acknowledged to be of great value and is subject to special policy protection. Other parts of the district may not possess any special status, but nevertheless have an attractive sense of place which is significant to local people, whilst some areas may be in need of environmental improvement or reinstatement. Whatever the existing appearance and character of the locality, the Council will promote high quality, sustainable, new development so that we hand on an even better environment to future generations. This reflects aim 2 of the Local Plan as set out in Chapter 2.
- 4.2 High quality sustainable development involves good design which is about the way in which the development functions, its appearance and its relationship to its surroundings. High quality, sustainable development involves the provision of safe access for all, controlling pollution and incorporating measures to assist in waste collection and recycling, energy conservation and increasing security and reducing crime. It is about locating and laying out new development to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport, and to ensure that neighbouring uses do not have a harmful effect on each other. It is about protecting and conserving natural resources and the heritage of the district.
- 4.3 The Vale also contains a wealth of natural resources including minerals, water and agricultural land, for example, which the Council wishes to protect and ensure are used prudently to safeguard the interests of future generations. This is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and reflects the Council's first aim for the Local Plan.
- 4.4 The following general development control policies set out criteria against which all proposals for new development will be judged. Planning not only aims to promote a sustainable pattern of land use but to influence how our towns, villages and countryside look. It also aims to protect and improve our heritage and our environment. Whatever the type or scale of development, whether it is for housing, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational or advertising purposes, this chapter sets out the detailed policies which the Council will apply to ensure proposals are sustainable and of a high quality in accordance with the overall aims of the Plan.
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The Structure of this Chapter

4.5 This chapter is divided into three broad sections containing policies as follows:

- i) to promote high quality development whilst making efficient use of land;
- ii) to protect natural resources; and
- iii) to control specific types of development including advertisements and shopfronts.

Government Advice and Structure Plan Policies

4.6 Government advice, particularly in its Planning Policy Statement 1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* (PPS1), and the Oxfordshire Structure Plan, have running through them the themes of promoting high quality sustainable development and protecting and conserving natural resources. Rather than discussing all aspects at the beginning of the chapter, the policy context provided by these two sources will be referred to as background to the individual policies below.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The Quality of New Development

Design

- 4.7 PPS1 recognises that new buildings and their curtilages have a significant effect on the character and quality of an area, and that the appearance of a proposed development and its relationship with its surroundings are material considerations when determining planning applications. Both of these aspects require an understanding of the context within which the development takes place and the relationship between all the elements of the built and unbuilt spaces. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan in policy G2 states that all development should be of a scale and type appropriate to its site and surroundings and incorporate a high quality of layout, design and landscaping.
- 4.8 Good design should be the aim of everyone involved in the development process, whether it be developers, architects, builders, entrepreneurs or householders, and it will be encouraged everywhere. Good design not only improves the quality of the environment, it also attracts business and investment and reinforces civic pride. It can help to secure public acceptance of new development.
- 4.9 Proposals should be based on a thorough assessment of the surrounding built and natural environment and the defining characteristics of the local area, including local building traditions and materials. Although the Council will seek to promote local distinctiveness, this does not mean that new designs should simply mimic their

surroundings: innovative designs and increases in density may be acceptable. Through policy DC1 below the Council will ensure that the scale, mass, height and layout of the development and the materials used do not harm the character and appearance of its surroundings and that wherever possible new development will enhance the local area. The preparation of Parish Plans will be helpful in enabling local communities to make known their views on planning matters in their areas.

- 4.10 People applying for planning permission should seek competent advice on design matters before an application is submitted. Applicants should explain the design principles they have adopted, should provide clear and accurate plans and drawings of the proposed elevations and, where appropriate, show the proposed development in relation to neighbouring buildings and uses. For large-scale or complex proposals and those involving sensitive areas, such as conservation areas for example, perspective drawings and in some cases models of the development and its surroundings may be required. Policy DC1 refers to inclusive design which is about ensuring buildings and places can be used by everyone. It means thinking about the way design affects our ability to move, see, hear and communicate. It aims to remove barriers, enabling everyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or ability, to participate in everyday activities.

POLICY DC1

DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

- i) **IT IS OF A HIGH QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE DESIGN SUCH THAT THE LAYOUT, SCALE, MASS, HEIGHT, DETAILING, MATERIALS USED AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO ADJOINING BUILDINGS AND OPEN SPACE DO NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THOSE ATTRIBUTES THAT MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHARACTER OF THE LOCALITY;**
- ii) **IT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS AND CHARACTER EITHER IN A MODERN OR A TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION.**

Energy and Resource Conservation

- 4.11 Creating sustainable development involves designing it in a way which minimises the consumption of natural resources. Although building regulations control the detailed design of buildings to secure energy efficiency, the planning system also has an important role to play through the location and orientation of buildings to maximise passive solar gain for heat and light and in avoiding overshadowing and reducing the cooling of buildings by providing shelter, particularly from cold northerly winds. The use of energy-efficient technologies such as solar panels or photovoltaic cells can collect energy and lead to significant energy savings. Similarly water is a valuable natural resource which should be used carefully. Measures such as water butts and grey water schemes should be incorporated into

new developments to conserve the use of water and once restored, the Wilts & Berks Canal may be used in conserving and supplying bulk water resources to the area in the long term. The Council will require measures to conserve energy and other resources to be incorporated into all appropriate new developments.

POLICY DC2

IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO MEASURES TO CONSERVE ENERGY AND THE USE OF OTHER RESOURCES. THESE MAY INCLUDE PASSIVE SOLAR DESIGN (WHICH INVOLVES INFLUENCING THE LAYOUT, DESIGN, ORIENTATION AND SHELTER OF BUILDINGS), THE USE OF ENERGY-EFFICIENT TECHNOLOGIES, MEASURES TO CONSERVE THE USE OF WATER AND MAXIMISING THE RE-USE OF RECYCLED AND WASTE MATERIALS.

Design Against Crime

- 4.12 Local planning authorities have a duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to promote community safety and PPS1 confirms that crime prevention is one of the social considerations to which regard must be given in development plans and development control. In designing new development, architects and developers should take the opportunity to introduce environmentally sensitive measures that will assist in reducing the likelihood of crime. The principles of natural surveillance and territoriality are considered fundamental in designing against crime. Natural surveillance requires that the design and layout of buildings allows people to see and monitor communal areas such as streets and play areas. Territoriality is concerned with ensuring that private space is clearly defined from public space, so that the public do not unwittingly intrude upon private property. The Council will require developers to consider measures which will assist in designing against crime, including CCTV, and will seek contributions for the provision of any such measures. The Council will also welcome security measures for existing development although any such proposals must have regard to their environmental impact.

POLICY DC3

THE DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF NEW BUILDINGS AND THE SPACES AROUND AND BETWEEN THEM AS WELL AS ACCESS PROVISIONS MUST BE ARRANGED TO INCREASE SECURITY AND DETER CRIME. PROPOSALS TO INCREASE SECURITY ON EXISTING DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THERE IS NO HARM TO THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA.

Public Art

- 4.13 Throughout history, towns have been enhanced by the use of decorative arts, crafts and design, from historic monuments and sculptures to innovative designs of

clocks, signs, fencing, gateways and decorative paving. The aim in providing public art is to improve the quality of new developments by producing a more stimulating environment which will enhance the appearance of the district and provide a higher quality of heritage for future generations to enjoy. The Council will seek to support and promote the arts in association with new development in a variety of locations. This is consistent with the Council's *Arts Development Strategy* (2001–2005). This seeks to encourage developers of public and private buildings to devote a proportion of their expenditure to the provision of a public work of art i.e. art that is accessible to local people. Works of art can give quality, character and human scale to new development. They can make a positive contribution to the character of an area, especially if they draw inspiration from local themes or associations and the use of decorative art to improve the 'sense of place' can be widely appreciated by the public.

- 4.14 Advice on public art in the Vale is contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance available from the Council and more general guidance can be obtained from Arts Council England, South East. On all sites of half a hectare or more the Council will seek the provision of public art. Major developers will be expected to set aside a proportion of the capital budget of their schemes (the Arts Council has recommended 1% of the contract sum) to commission works of art to benefit the community and the environment. Care and sensitivity is obviously needed in the selection and placing of works, especially in more heavily used public spaces. The Vale Council's Arts Strategy explains that the aim to use the arts to improve the physical environment will be developed and shared with planners, the private sector, artists and potential partners including local people and communities.

POLICY DC4

IN DEVELOPMENTS ON ALL SITES OF 0.5 OF A HECTARE OR MORE THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC ART WHICH MAKES A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE SCHEME OR THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA, OR WHICH BENEFITS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WILL BE SOUGHT.

Access

- 4.15 The physical form and qualities of a place shape the way it is used and the way people and vehicles move through it. New development should help to create places that connect with each other safely, attractively and sustainably and should provide the right conditions to encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: *Transport* (PPG13) stresses that people should come before traffic and acknowledges that the planning system has a substantial influence on the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and the occupants of vehicles through the design and layout of new development. The guidance confirms that it is important to ensure that new developments are accessible to all people, including wheelchair users, people with mobility, cognitive

and sensory impairments, older people and those with toddlers or infants in pushchairs. The Council is committed to ensuring that all people are able to participate in the economic, social, democratic and cultural life of the Vale and are not prevented from doing so because new developments are not permeable or the access arrangements to sites and buildings have not catered for their needs. Policy DC5 below sets out the access issues to which the Council will have regard when considering planning applications for new development.

- 4.16 Prospective developers should hold early discussions with the County Council as Highway Authority to clarify the highway design requirements in new developments. The County Council's *Highway Design Guide and Residential Road Design Guide* provides information on standards which the Highway Authority considers appropriate, including the design and construction of roads, footpaths and cycleways and innovative new approaches such as the introduction of homes zones. Clarification should also be sought from the County Council on any possible requirements for transport assessments, travel plans and contributions to on-site and off-site highways improvements which may arise, particularly in association with development proposals that generate significant demand for travel (see Chapter 5 Transport). The maximum parking standards to be applied across the county are published by the District Council as supplementary planning guidance.

POLICY DC5

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

- i) SAFE AND CONVENIENT ACCESS WILL BE PROVIDED BOTH WITHIN THE SITE AND TO AND FROM THE ADJOINING HIGHWAY NETWORK FOR ALL USERS INCLUDING THOSE WITH IMPAIRED MOBILITY, AND FOR ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT;**
- ii) THE ROAD NETWORK CAN ACCOMMODATE THE TRAFFIC ARISING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT CAUSING SAFETY, CONGESTION OR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS;**
- iii) ADEQUATE PROVISION WILL BE MADE FOR LOADING, UNLOADING, CIRCULATION, SERVICING AND VEHICLE TURNING;**
- iv) ADEQUATE AND SAFE PROVISION WILL BE MADE FOR PARKING VEHICLES AND CYCLES;**
- v) OFF-SITE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE (INCLUDING TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES), CYCLEWAYS, FOOTPATHS AND THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK CAN BE SECURED WHERE THESE ARE NOT ADEQUATE TO SERVICE THE DEVELOPMENT; AND**

- vi) THE SCHEME IS DESIGNED TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT OF VEHICLES AND GIVE PRIORITY TO THE NEEDS OF PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS, THE USERS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND THOSE WITH IMPAIRED MOBILITY.**

Landscaping

- 4.17 Existing landscape features, trees, hedgerows and ponds can make an important contribution to the character and biodiversity of an area and it is essential that new development does not lead to the loss of, or pose a future threat to, such features. The location and siting of new development, and in particular buildings, should seek to retain important landscape features and integrate them into the design of the development. The provision of new landscape features can often be an essential prerequisite for creating an attractive development which complements and enhances its surroundings. It can also enhance the quality of life of local people and contribute to local biodiversity through the conservation and creation of new wildlife habitats (see Chapter 7). For these reasons the Council will seek a high standard of landscaping associated with development proposals.
- 4.18 When designing a scheme careful consideration should be given to the functional and aesthetic aspects of landscaping. A survey of existing features will often be required from the applicant. Such surveys will be expected to include site contours, accurate positions of trees and shrubs, their condition, height, stem diameter, extent of canopy and species and details of other aspects of the site's ecology. The Council considers it particularly important to maintain mature trees and conditions will be attached to planning permissions to protect existing trees during and after site works. Where appropriate regard will be paid to the impact of landscaping on important views, in particular the views protected under policy NE8 of this Plan. Care should be taken to ensure that new planting will not impair visibility at access points or obstruct footpaths and cycleways. The Council will normally encourage the use of native species of local origin in landscaping schemes associated with new development. However, it is accepted that in some locations, for example in town centres, a case may exist for the use of non native species.

POLICY DC6

ALL PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO INCLUDE HARD AND SOFT LANDSCAPING MEASURES DESIGNED TO:

- i) PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE VISUAL AMENITIES OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS INCLUDING, WHERE APPROPRIATE, EXISTING IMPORTANT LANDSCAPE FEATURES; AND**
- ii) MAXIMISE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE HABITAT CREATION.**

Waste Collection and Recycling

- 4.19 It is widely recognised that the way in which society manages the waste products it produces needs to change if the environment is to be protected now and in the future. Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 10: *Planning for Sustainable Waste Management* (PPS10) provides advice about how the land-use planning system should contribute to sustainable waste management. The County Council is responsible for the planning and provision of waste disposal sites in Oxfordshire and district councils are responsible for collecting the waste. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan has policies to minimise waste generation and increase the re-use and recycling of materials so as to reduce the amount of waste which has to be disposed of by landfill. The County Council's *Minerals and Waste Local Plan* (1996) is currently being reviewed and the district councils in Oxfordshire are working with the County Council to develop sustainable waste management practices. The key role of this Local Plan in the process is to ensure that opportunities are taken for incorporating re-use and recycling facilities in new developments. This may involve ensuring that, for example, new housing developments make provision for such facilities as wheel bins, adequate space to sort recyclable waste in the home, home composting, water butts and grey water schemes. Policy DC7 below establishes this principle.

POLICY DC7

NEW DEVELOPMENTS MUST MAKE ADEQUATE PROVISION FOR THE SORTING, STORAGE AND COLLECTION OF WASTE ARISING FROM THE SITE AND FOR HOME COMPOSTING AND OTHER SUSTAINABLE WASTE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES AS APPROPRIATE.

The Provision of Infrastructure and Services

- 4.20 Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Development Frameworks* (PPS12) confirms that one of the purposes of the planning system is to co-ordinate development with the infrastructure required to service it. This can cover a whole range of facilities, which may be provided on or off site, including education, health, recreation, open space, community buildings, transport infrastructure and service support, waste recycling facilities, water supply, land drainage and sewage disposal. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan has a policy (G3) which states that development will not be permitted unless the infrastructure necessary to service the development is available or will be provided and that contributions towards new provision will be sought from developers. The District Council considers it essential to ensure that where the existing infrastructure and services are unable to cope satisfactorily with new development, the developers or landowners must provide the necessary new facilities on or off the site or make a

financial contribution to enable existing facilities to be improved. Without this the quality of life of existing residents of the Vale will be gradually eroded. The Council may also seek commuted payments to cover the costs of maintaining the new facilities and services provided for a period of at least 10 years. The Council will normally ask for these payments to be made before development starts, but on large sites phased payments may be appropriate, tied to the commencement of each phase. Improvements to essential infrastructure and services will be secured through planning obligations in accordance with Government guidance, currently given in Circular 05/2005 *Planning Obligations*. This circular advises that the provision for subsequent maintenance of facilities may be required in perpetuity where the facilities are predominantly for the users of the associated development. Further information on the local approach to planning obligations and agreements for development can be found in "Infrastructure and Service Needs for New Development" published by the County Council.

POLICY DC8

DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THE NECESSARY SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS OF FUTURE OCCUPIERS AND/OR USERS OF THE DEVELOPMENT ARE:

- i) **AVAILABLE AT A SUITABLE STANDARD; OR**
- ii) **WILL BE PROVIDED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT; OR**
- iii) **CAN BE SECURED OR IMPROVED TO A SUITABLE STANDARD THROUGH AN APPROPRIATE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION FROM THE DEVELOPERS OR LANDOWNERS.**

SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE MUST BE PROVIDED IN TIME TO ENSURE CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THEIR PROVISION AND NEEDS ARISING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT. WHERE APPROPRIATE COMMUTED SUMS TO COVER MAINTENANCE WILL ALSO BE SOUGHT FROM DEVELOPERS OR LANDOWNERS.

Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

- 4.21 In designing new development it is important to have regard to its relationship with neighbouring uses, in order to minimise the impact of the development on these uses both now and in the future. A range of issues needs to be taken into account.
- 4.22 **Amenities of Neighbours** Applicants will not only need to demonstrate that the development itself is of a high standard of design and that account has been taken of the characteristics of the local area but also that the design and proposed use will not cause harm to the amenities of neighbouring or nearby properties. Care will be taken to ensure that new development does not overshadow or visually

dominate existing properties or adversely affect their existing levels of privacy. Additionally, new development should not affect unacceptably the local or wider environments through, for example, noise, vibration, or external lighting, or effects on air or water quality. Particular care will be taken to ensure that new development is carried out in such a way as to minimise the effect of construction activities.

- 4.23 **Noise** Noise from road traffic, trains, aircraft, commercial and entertainment premises can have serious effects on people's lives and it is important that these effects are minimised. The planning process can assist by ensuring that as far as possible 'noise sensitive' developments, such as dwellings, schools, hospitals and nursing homes, are located away from existing sources of noise and that potentially noisy developments are located in areas where noise will not be such an important consideration. In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 24: *Planning and Noise* (PPG24), the Council will ensure that new development does not cause an unacceptable degree of disturbance. An environmental impact assessment may be sought for certain types of project (see section on this below). Measures can be required to control the exposure to noise through planning conditions. For example, developers may be required to insulate buildings, erect screens or natural barriers, ensure adequate distances between the noise and the noise sensitive land use or limit the operating times of a potentially noisy activity. Early consultation with the Council is desirable.
- 4.24 **Pollution** From time to time parts of the Vale experience problems from various forms of pollution. Many of the problems are dealt with under environmental health controls and by other statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. The planning system should not duplicate these controls but it has an important role to play in determining the location of development which may give rise to pollution and controlling proposals for development close to potential sources of pollution. The Council will aim to keep apart housing and other developments sensitive to pollution from potentially polluting uses where they cannot reasonably co-exist. Planning controls complement the pollution control regimes and can help secure the proper operation, rehabilitation and restoration of potentially polluting development. In some cases the scope of the planning system to protect the environment will be wider than the pollution control regime, particularly where the development is unsightly or would result in the loss of amenity. Therefore, in some cases, even though the development is acceptable to the pollution control authority, planning permission may be refused.
- 4.25 **External Lighting** Light is considered to be a form of pollution and the increasing number of situations where external lighting is used means that it can have a significant impact on the amenity of the surrounding area. More detailed coverage of this issue is set out in paragraphs 4.66 and 4.67 and policy DC20.

- 4.26 **Contaminated Land** Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 23: *Planning and Pollution Control* (PPS23) emphasises the principle of sustainable development and sets out the Government's objectives for contaminated land as set out in DETR Circular 02/2000 'Contaminated Land'. Examples of contaminated sites include land previously used for industrial purposes, old gas works, former landfill sites, old sewage works and petrol filling stations. Such recycling can provide an opportunity to deal with the threats posed by contamination. Very few sites are so badly contaminated that they cannot be re-used at all but the choice of new use may be restricted by the degree of contamination. It will not always be necessary to remove all the contamination but it will be necessary to bring the land to a standard where it is suitable for its intended use. Where applications are made on land which may be contaminated, the Council will require detailed information on the type and extent of the contamination, whether the land has acquired any nature conservation interest and the remedial measures that will make it safe for the proposed use. Detailed investigations are likely to be needed before an application is determined and specific remedial measures may be required through conditions attached to a planning permission.
- 4.27 **Hazardous Substances** The Health and Safety Regulations impose stringent controls on the safe operation of installations handling substances which are potentially hazardous. When determining planning applications involving the use of hazardous substances the Council will decide whether it is an appropriate use of the land, taking into account the existing and prospective development in the area, the nature and magnitude of the risks involved and the planning conditions that could reasonably be imposed to mitigate any potential harm. When considering such applications the Council will take account of the advice it receives from the Health and Safety Executive. The Council will not permit development involving the use of hazardous substances where they would pose a significant risk to neighbouring land uses, in particular in residential areas or close to facilities which could be used by a large number of people. Similarly development close to existing hazardous installations will be carefully controlled.

POLICY DC9

DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD UNACCEPTABLY HARM THE AMENITIES OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES AND THE WIDER ENVIRONMENT IN TERMS OF:

- i) LOSS OF PRIVACY, DAYLIGHT OR SUNLIGHT;**
- ii) DOMINANCE OR VISUAL INTRUSION;**
- iii) NOISE OR VIBRATION;**
- iv) SMELL, DUST, HEAT, GASES OR OTHER EMISSIONS;**

v) **POLLUTION, CONTAMINATION OR THE USE OF OR STORAGE OF HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES; AND**

vi) **EXTERNAL LIGHTING.**

The Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Development

- 4.28 As well as ensuring that the proposed development is acceptable in itself and to its neighbours, it is also important to ensure that the occupiers of new developments would not be harmed by the effects of existing neighbouring uses. These could include noisy uses or activities, sources of pollution, contaminated land and installations using or storing hazardous substances, as discussed in relation to policy DC9 above.

POLICY DC10

DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT IS LIKELY TO BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY EXISTING OR POTENTIAL SOURCES OF:

i) **NOISE OR VIBRATION;**

ii) **SMELL, DUST, HEAT, GASES OR OTHER EMISSIONS; OR**

iii) **POLLUTION, CONTAMINATION OF THE SITE OR ITS SURROUNDINGS AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES NEARBY.**

Protecting Natural Resources and Reducing Flood Risk

- 4.29 Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Development Frameworks* (PPS12) explains that the spatial planning approach is to ensure the most efficient use of land by balancing competing demands within the context of sustainable development. To further the Government's commitment to sustainable development, the social, environmental and economic effects of a development document will be appraised to ensure that decisions are made that accord with sustainable development.

- 4.30 These environmental considerations have set the context within which the whole of this Plan has been prepared but, specifically, the Government has identified the following issues as requiring particular attention:

- i) the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land;
- ii) the conservation of mineral resources;
- iii) water resources, both their availability and their protection.

These issues are covered in more detail below.

Agricultural Land

- 4.31 A competitive and sustainable agricultural industry is vital to the economic, social and environmental well-being of rural areas. The Government's White Paper *Our Countryside: Our Future* (2000) emphasised the Government's desire both for agriculture to be prosperous and sustainable and to encourage diversification and enterprise.
- 4.32 Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (PPS7) is that the development or protection of best and most versatile land should rest with local authorities. The guidance confirms that local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality, except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise. These might include, for example, its importance for biodiversity, the quality and character of the landscape, its amenity value or heritage interest, accessibility to infrastructure, workforce and markets and the protection of natural resources including soil quality. Policy DC11 below confirms the Council's commitment to safeguarding the best and most versatile farmland within the Vale, in accordance with Government advice. With regard to those development proposals which involve land where soil or agricultural quality is a consideration, the Council will seek advice from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

POLICY DC11

DEVELOPMENT ON BEST AND MOST VERSATILE LAND, DEFINED AS GRADES 1, 2 AND 3A OF THE AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) THERE ARE NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACCOMMODATING DEVELOPMENT OF THE TYPE PROPOSED ON PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED SITES OR LAND WITHIN EXISTING URBAN AREAS; AND**
- ii) WHERE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND IS UNAVOIDABLE, THE USE OF AREAS OF POORER QUALITY LAND IN PREFERENCE TO THOSE OF A HIGHER QUALITY IS NOT APPROPRIATE BECAUSE OF OTHER SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS.**

Mineral Resources

- 4.33 The planning policies which relate to mineral working are found in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and are consistent with the government's policy and advice as set out in the Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs).
- 4.34 Structure Plan policy M1, in essence, seeks to permit mineral workings in appropriate locations. Policy M2 in the Structure Plan to 2011 confirmed that, with

regard to the Vale, the principle of sharp sand and gravel working is accepted in the Sutton Courtenay area between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford, and in the Sutton Wick area south of Abingdon and north-west of Sutton Courtenay. The boundaries of the areas to be worked are not defined in this Local Plan. This is done through the County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Plan which also sets out policies for the protection of mineral-bearing land.

Water Quality and Resources

- 4.35 Improving water quality generally falls outside the scope of the planning process, although it is recognised that maintaining and enhancing the water quality of rivers and lakes and underground water bodies is important. Not only can these be an important source for water supply but they can also provide a valuable general amenity and recreational resource.
- 4.36 There are a large number of groundwater abstractions including public water supplies particularly from the chalk and upper greensand aquifers in the south of the district. The Environment Agency publication *Policy and Practice for the Protection of Groundwater* provides useful information and guidance on the risks to groundwater quality. It also explains the concepts of source and resource protection. This will be replaced by a set of documents "Groundwater Protection: Policy and Practice (GP3)."
- 4.37 Any site which may be contaminated to some degree by virtue of its previous usage forms a potential risk to water quality, especially if redevelopment takes place. The Environment Agency requests any potential developers of such a site to contact the Agency at their earliest opportunity to discuss the need for historical information and site investigations to determine the degree of contamination, if any, of both soil and groundwater.
- 4.38 Development should be limited to locations where adequate water resources already exist, or where new provision of water resources can be made in time for the new development and without adversely affecting abstraction, river flows, water quality, agriculture, fisheries, amenity or nature conservation (see also paragraph 4.20 above). Where development is allowed, the Council may require developers to undertake measures to ensure that a proposed development does not contaminate surface or groundwater resources, including ponds, streams and other watercourses. Development which causes an unacceptable risk to surface or groundwater resources will not be permitted.

POLICY DC12

DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE QUALITY OF WATER RESOURCES, INCLUDING GROUNDWATER, RIVERS AND LAKES, AS A RESULT OF ABSTRACTION, OR THE NATURE OF RELATED SURFACE OR WASTE WATER DISCHARGE, OR THE DISTURBANCE OF CONTAMINATED LAND.

Flood Risk and Water Run-Off

- 4.39 The Vale has a long frontage to the River Thames as well as much of the valley of the River Ock and its tributaries including the Letcombe Brook. It is important that the floodplains of these rivers are protected from the effects of development. Developers are advised to check with the Council for the most up-to-date information on floodplains. To assist members of the public, the Council has prepared Supplementary Planning Guidance to show those areas which the Environment Agency has identified as indicative floodplain. The Environment Agency should be consulted by developers before submitting an application to establish whether the development is likely to be affected by flooding or whether it could contribute to flooding problems elsewhere. In such instances, applications must be accompanied by an appropriate flood risk assessment.
- 4.40 The Council will only permit development where it is satisfied that, amongst other things, the development itself will not be at risk from flooding and any increased risk of flooding arising from the development will be successfully managed with the minimum environmental effect to ensure the site can be developed and occupied safely. Provision must be made for the long-term maintenance and management of any mitigation measures required, such as balancing ponds, for example.
- 4.41 Government guidance on flooding in Planning Policy Guidance Note 25: *Development and Flood Risk* (PPG25) explains the sequential test for development in various categories of flood risk and sets out the appropriate planning response. Development will be heavily restricted in high risk areas, particularly in functional floodplains and in undeveloped or sparsely developed areas. In high risk areas which are already developed, there may be more scope for new development provided the minimum standard of flood defence can be maintained for the lifetime of the development. In areas of lower risk the opportunities for development are greater but may still require measures to mitigate potential flood risk problems, including the use of suitable drainage systems.
- 4.42 The ecological, geomorphological, archaeological, landscape and recreational value of water courses and floodplains can be significant and the effect of increased flood risk or flood defence engineering on such features of interest should be taken into account. For example, certain mitigation measures could adversely affect the natural or current hydrological regime of a water course, remove waterside habitats or alter the water flow.
- 4.43 It is important for developers to discuss their proposals with both the Council and the Environment Agency at the earliest practical opportunity to identify flood risks and, in appropriate cases, to establish appropriate measures to mitigate these risks. Ideally, these discussions should take place before any planning application is made in order that the relevant matters can be resolved provisionally so that once the application is submitted any delay in finalising these matters can be kept to a minimum.

- 4.44 Where technical assessments, additional flood defences, other mitigation measures or warning measures are required in connection with new development, developers cannot rely on public resources to provide them. These will normally be fully funded by the developer, including adequate provision for on-going maintenance over a number of years.
- 4.45 Failure to submit a flood risk assessment, or to demonstrate that the development is acceptable in relation to flood risk, could result in the precautionary principle being used as a reason to refuse planning permission.

POLICY DC13

WHERE A RISK FROM FLOODING IS IDENTIFIED, NEW DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE INTENSIFICATION OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT OR PROPOSALS TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF THE LAND, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) AN ADEQUATE ASSESSMENT HAS BEEN MADE OF THAT RISK INCLUDING WHETHER THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT WOULD INCREASE THE RISK OF FLOODING ELSEWHERE; AND**
- ii) THE FLOOD RISK TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON FLOOD RISKS ELSEWHERE IN TERMS OF FLOOD FLOWS, FLOOD STORAGE CAPACITY AND RUN-OFF IMPLICATIONS ARE ACCEPTABLE; AND**
- iii) ANY MITIGATION MEASURES PROPOSED TO DEAL WITH THESE EFFECTS AND RISKS ARE ADEQUATE, EFFECTIVE AND ACCEPTABLE AND, AS APPROPRIATE, MAINTAIN OR ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY VALUE OF ANY ASSOCIATED LAND.**

WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED UNDER THIS POLICY, THE NATURE AND TIMING OF ANY ASSOCIATED MITIGATION MEASURES MUST BE AGREED BEFORE PLANNING PERMISSION IS GRANTED.

POLICY DC14

DEVELOPMENT GENERATING SURFACE WATER RUN-OFF LIKELY TO RESULT IN ADVERSE EFFECTS, SUCH AS AN INCREASED RISK OF FLOODING, CHANGES IN GROUND WATER LEVELS, AND RIVER CHANNEL INSTABILITY OR DAMAGE TO HABITATS, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) THE DEVELOPMENT'S SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ACCORDS WITH SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE PRINCIPLES AND HAS BEEN DESIGNED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT LAYOUT; AND**
- ii) THE SYSTEM WILL EFFECTIVELY CONTROL AND ADEQUATELY MITIGATE OR ATTENUATE ANY ADVERSE EFFECTS FROM SURFACE WATER RUN-OFF ON PEOPLE, HABITATS OF ACKNOWLEDGED IMPORTANCE AND PROPERTY.**

WHERE DEVELOPMENT IS PERMITTED UNDER THIS POLICY, THE ASSOCIATED APPROPRIATE ATTENUATION MEASURES MUST BE IN PLACE BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT COMMENCES.

Environmental Impact Assessments

- 4.46 Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is the whole process by which information on the environmental effects of certain types of development is taken into account as set out in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, as amended.
- 4.47 'Schedule 1' projects for which an EIA is required in every case would include, for example, major chemical and steel works, water reservoirs and quarries.
- 4.48 'Schedule 2' projects for which an EIA is required are listed in the regulations and the basic question is whether a particular development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. An EIA is likely to be required for developments in three main types of case:
- i) major developments of more than local significance;
 - ii) developments in environmentally sensitive locations; and
 - iii) developments which are complex or hazardous.
- 4.49 National research suggests that a high percentage of EIAs submitted are inadequate and fail to address satisfactorily all the relevant issues and impacts. In response, local authorities have found it increasingly necessary to carry out their own environmental assessments of projects in order to check the findings of the deposited EIA and this can lead to delay. It is therefore of benefit to all concerned that an EIA adequately addresses all the potential impacts of a scheme, makes use of recognised methodology and is objectively produced and presented.
- 4.50 To this end, the Council will welcome pre-application discussions on what the EIA should address so that all the fundamental aspects of the scheme can be considered at an early stage. If a draft planning obligation, detailing how any problems identified in the EIA will be resolved, is submitted with an application, any delay in determining it can be kept to a minimum.

Control of Specific Types of Development

- 4.51 The types of development covered in this section include advertising, shopfronts and external lighting.

Advertisements and Signs

- 4.52 Advertisements can take many different forms. They can for example include fascia signs on shops, poster hoardings, advance signs alongside the highway and pole signs at petrol stations. Many are displayed on or close to buildings. Some are illuminated. Advertisement signs can often make an important contribution to the commercial viability of local businesses. In some locations advertisements can enliven and enhance a building or a street scene. Conversely, unsympathetic, badly-positioned or intrusively illuminated signs can harm the appearance of a building or area and may also be dangerously distracting to road users. Signs acceptable in a modern shopping precinct or an industrial development may be quite out of character on a listed building, in a conservation area or in the open countryside. Additionally, the design or position of signs may be a hazard to people with sensory or mobility impairments.
- 4.53 For these reasons, the Council considers it appropriate to set out specific policies for the control of advertisements including those proposed on listed buildings, in conservation areas, within the AONB, as part of shopfronts and those which are to be illuminated.
- 4.54 The display of advertisements is controlled under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements Regulations 1992) to protect amenity and public safety. Under the regulations some signs may be displayed without the express consent of the Council provided that they comply with conditions set out in the regulations. Government advice on outdoor advertisements is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note19: *Outdoor Advertisement Control* (PPG19).
- 4.55 As a general principle the Council considers that the protection of local amenity and public safety can be best achieved by resisting advertisements which are garish, unduly prominent, badly sited or over-numerous. It also recognises that a balance needs to be struck between the requirements of local businesses and amenity and public safety considerations. The policies and guidance in the Plan seek to achieve this balance.
- 4.56 The policies are concerned not only with advertisements on buildings but also with roadside advertisements which can look unsightly and confuse road users. Signs on the public highway may only be displayed with the agreement of the County Highway Authority. In such circumstances the consent of the District Council is not always required. However, signs which are on private land beside the highway will require the consent of the District Council. Signs on roadsides can only be justified

where a business takes direct access from a road and where highway safety would be improved by clear warning of the entrance. Signs which are remote from the premises to which they refer are unlikely to be granted consent.

Outdoor Advertisements

- 4.57 Where advertisements are proposed they should be carefully designed and positioned, with particular attention being paid to their size, colour, materials and detailing. The advertisement or the exact location for its display should not be so distracting or confusing that it creates a hazard to highway safety.

POLICY DC15

EXPRESS CONSENT FOR AN OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENT WILL ONLY BE GIVEN WHERE IT, TOGETHER WITH OTHER EXISTING OR PROPOSED ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE VICINITY, WOULD NOT HARM THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA OR CAUSE A HAZARD TO HIGHWAY SAFETY.

Illuminated Advertisements

- 4.58 Advertisements are essential to commercial activity in the district and as the range of premises with flexible opening hours expands, the demand for illuminated advertisements has increased. The Council considers that illuminated signs can, if carefully designed, be appropriate in commercial areas where they can provide visual interest and vitality. Care must also be taken to ensure that no harm is caused by the cumulative effects of illuminated advertisements associated with commercial property. In residential areas they are likely to be visually intrusive and spoil the appearance of the neighbourhood. Considerable care needs to be taken over the design, size, choice of materials and degree of illumination to ensure they are not visually intrusive.
- 4.59 The Council is more likely to give favourable consideration to traditional painted signs and fascias using external illumination, so long as the illumination can be provided by discreet and unobtrusive fittings. Further advice on acceptable means of illumination can be obtained from the Council's planning service area. A proliferation of individually acceptable advertisements may not be acceptable where together they spoil the appearance of a town centre or the open countryside. Wherever possible businesses in the same general location should be encouraged to combine their essential advertising needs for this reason. Standard internally illuminated box signs and lettering are often bulky and poorly designed and use reflective synthetic materials which make them more difficult to integrate with the character of an area or an individual building. In some locations the illumination of

signs in connection with business premises may be limited by condition to the hours of operation of the business in order to minimise their impact.

- 4.60 In assessing proposals for the illumination of advertisements, reference will also be made to policy DC20.

POLICY DC16

CONSENT FOR AN ILLUMINATED ADVERTISEMENT WILL ONLY BE GIVEN IN PREDOMINANTLY COMMERCIAL AREAS OR WHERE IT IS NECESSARY FOR A BUSINESS OPERATING IN THE EVENINGS OR AT NIGHT PROVIDED THAT IT, TOGETHER WITH OTHER EXISTING OR PROPOSED ILLUMINATED ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE VICINITY, WOULD NOT HARM THE VISUAL AMENITY OF THE AREA OR CAUSE A HAZARD TO HIGHWAY SAFETY.

Advertisements on Listed Buildings

- 4.61 The display of signs and advertisements on or near a listed building can damage the character and appearance of the building or its setting. Signs and advertisements covered by this policy include those on blinds, canopies, awnings, shop windows and shutters, lettering, fascia boards and hanging signs and also those not fixed directly to the building but which would affect its setting. Listed building consent will be required for any signs which affect the character of a listed building whether or not consent is needed under the advertisement regulations. To display an advertisement or sign on a listed building, the position, size, colour, materials and detailing, including lettering and logos, should all be chosen to complement the building's character. Architectural features of the building should not be removed or obscured when an advertisement is installed. Standard company signs or logos may be inappropriate to local building styles or to the character of the area and may need to be modified. Non-illuminated hand-painted fascias and signs will be preferred. Shopfronts can raise particular issues and reference should also be made to policy DC19.

POLICY DC17

THE ERECTION OR DISPLAY OF ADVERTISEMENTS WHICH WOULD HARM THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OR SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING WILL NOT BE GRANTED CONSENT OR PERMITTED. THE USE OF SYNTHETIC MATERIALS AND/OR ILLUMINATION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER OF A LISTED BUILDING.

Advertisements in Conservation Areas and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 4.62 In conservation areas and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Council's main consideration will be the preservation and enhancement of the character or appearance of the area. Poorly designed signs or a proliferation of signs can be unsightly, detracting from and damaging to the appearance of an area or the countryside. Advertisements should therefore be designed and located so that they do not adversely affect an area's special designation. Signing should be discreet and illumination kept to a minimum or avoided altogether. Large brightly illuminated signs are unlikely to be acceptable. Shopfronts can raise particular issues and reference should also be made to policy DC19 below.

POLICY DC18

IN CONSERVATION AREAS AND THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY, AN ADVERTISEMENT WILL NOT BE GIVEN CONSENT IF IT, TOGETHER WITH OTHER EXISTING OR PROPOSED ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE VICINITY, WOULD FAIL TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA.

Display of Advertisements without Express Consent

- 4.63 Anyone who displays an advertisement without the consent required is acting illegally. In such circumstances it is open to the Council to bring a prosecution in the magistrates Court for an offence under Section 224 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Shopfronts

- 4.64 A careful balance has to be drawn between the needs of commercial enterprises to advertise and display their goods and services and the protection of the environment of our towns and villages.
- 4.65 Changes in the retail sector and the greater use of automatic teller machines can have an impact upon the design of shopfronts. In general, the Council looks for shopfront design which relates well to the building and area concerned. In particular, automatic teller machines may become crime generators and need to be sited in locations which combine security and safety with good design. The need for increased security is a current concern. While respecting the need for security the Council will not normally grant consent in conservation areas and on listed buildings for schemes for the introduction of solid shutters in unsympathetic materials and colours, or for freestanding security devices such as bollards and railings which might be a hazard to people with sensory or mobility impairments and affect access for all. The introduction of closed circuit television (CCTV)

schemes has helped to reduce crime. Within conservation areas or on listed buildings the siting and appearance of CCTV cameras needs special consideration. More detailed guidance on the design of shopfronts and advertisements is available from the District Council.

POLICY DC19

PROPOSALS FOR NEW SHOPFRONTS, OR FOR THE ALTERATION OF EXISTING SHOPFRONTS, WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT THE PROPOSAL:

- i) VISUALLY RESPECTS THE DESIGN, SIZE, MATERIALS AND COLOUR OF THE BUILDING OR BUILDINGS CONCERNED;**
- ii) INTEGRATES INTO THE OVERALL DESIGN OF SHOPFRONTS ANY AWNINGS, BLINDS AND CANOPIES;**
- iii) IS CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING IMPROVED SECURITY WITHOUT RESULTING IN A DEAD APPEARANCE AFTER TRADING HOURS OR UNNECESSARY CLUTTER IN THE STREET SCENE; AND**
- iv) WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT HIGHWAY AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY.**

SCHEMES WHICH INVOLVE THE REMOVAL OF INAPPROPRIATE SHOPFRONTS AND THEIR REINSTATEMENT WITH WELL-DESIGNED SHOPFRONTS USING SYMPATHETIC MATERIALS AND COLOURS WILL BE PERMITTED.

External Lighting

- 4.66 In recent years there has been an increasing demand for all types of outdoor lighting. Illuminated advertisements, security floodlights for commercial and residential premises, street lighting and floodlights for outdoor sports and recreational facilities can all have a significant impact on the amenity of the surrounding area. Light can be seen as a form of pollution, where it impedes a view of the night sky or causes sky glow in the countryside and reference will also be found to this in policy DC9.
- 4.67 In addition the actual light fittings can affect the visual amenity of an area. Inappropriately designed and sited spotlights illuminating a listed building can be detrimental to the character of that building. Pole-mounted light fittings are often required for many sport and recreational areas, and the height and number of fittings can be obtrusive, particularly in the open countryside or in a conservation area. Many light fittings are permitted development but the Council, when considering any applications involving lighting, will take particular account of the position, number and design of the light fittings, the mounting height of pole-

mounted fittings, the possible effects of light pollution and the need to restrict the hours in which the lighting may be used.

POLICY DC20

APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION, OR FOR CONSENT FOR THE DISPLAY OF ADVERTISEMENTS, WHICH INVOLVE EXTERNAL LIGHTING WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

- i) THERE WILL BE NO ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA OR THE AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES;**
- ii) THE LIGHTING PROPOSED IS THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO UNDERTAKE THE TASK FOR WHICH IT IS REQUIRED;**
- iii) THE POTENTIAL LIGHT POLLUTION FROM GLARE AND SPILLAGE IS MINIMISED; AND**
- iv) THERE WILL NOT BE A HAZARD TO HIGHWAY SAFETY.**

WHERE PERMISSION OR CONSENT IS GRANTED FOR EXTERNAL LIGHTING CONDITIONS MAY BE IMPOSED REQUIRING A LIGHT SPILLAGE TEST PRIOR TO ITS FIRST USE AND, WHERE NECESSARY, THE FITTING OF DEVICES TO REDUCE GLARE AND LIGHT SPILLAGE AND/OR TO RESTRICT THE HOURS DURING WHICH THE LIGHTING MAY BE USED.

TRANSPORT

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 5.1 Transport and land use planning are inextricably linked as there is a direct relationship between the use of land and the need for movement to and from that use. The policies and proposals of the Local Plan must therefore always have regard to the transport needs and demands arising from land use proposals.
- 5.2 The aims of the Local Plan (as set out in Chapter 2) include aim 3: 'to reduce the need to travel and the harmful effects of traffic on people and the environment'. In order to achieve this aim the Council will encourage people to transfer to more environmentally friendly modes of transport by improving facilities for walking, cycling and public transport. It will support traffic management measures to alleviate traffic congestion and improve safety and the environment and will seek to resist development that would give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic.

Structure of this Chapter

- 5.3 This chapter follows a structure which is designed to be broadly consistent with the strategy set out in Chapter 3. For the main settlements policies are put forward for:
- i) integrated transport and land use studies (this includes Didcot and the transport implications of the town's proposed western development for the Vale);
 - ii) cycling and walking, including pedestrian and cycle networks; and
 - iii) car parking.

Other sections concentrate on

- i) public transport;
 - ii) new transport related initiatives such as home zones;
 - iii) the requirement for transport assessments and travel plans to address the impact of new developments;
 - iv) improving the highway network, including proposals for the Marcham bypass; and
 - v) lorries and roadside services
- 5.4 It is inevitable that there will be overlap with policies in other chapters and appropriate cross-referencing is included in the supporting text to aid understanding of interrelated issues.

- 5.5 In developing the policies for this Local Plan the Council has taken full account of planning advice from central government, regional planning guidance, policies in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Oxfordshire as well as the results of the consultation carried out in association with the publication of the Local Plan Issues Report in August 2000. These are considered briefly below.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 5.6 The past increase and forecast growth in road traffic is viewed by the government as unsustainable in terms of its impact on climate change, the natural environment, the economy, and the health and well-being of local communities. National and regional planning guidance now recognise how future transport requirements must be developed in a sustainable way and be fully integrated with land use planning to meet economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 5.7 Government planning policy guidance on transport is set out principally in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: *Transport* (PPG13). This provides advice on how local authorities should integrate land use and transport, particularly through the development plan process. Its key objectives are to:
- i) promote more sustainable transport choices for people and the moving of freight;
 - ii) promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and
 - iii) reduce the need to travel, especially by car.
- 5.8 PPG13 aims to achieve these objectives by ensuring that major development is focused in locations that are well served by a range of transport modes and that local facilities should be provided close to the communities they serve to minimise the demand for travel and to encourage walking and cycling. It also acknowledges that parking policies can influence significantly the demand for travel by car.
- 5.9 The government's transport objectives are reflected in a range of other planning policy guidance documents and, where relevant, these have been referred to and taken into account in other chapters of this Plan.

Regional Policy Background

- 5.10 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) was published in March 2001 and defines the regional policy framework for a range of land use, planning and transportation issues that need to be considered by local authorities in their development plans and local transport plans. The guidance is generally consistent with government policy but because it pre-dates the final version of PPG13 it envisages that early reviews will be required for a number of subjects covered, including the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS).

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

5.11 The general policies of the Structure Plan reflect the integrated approach required by both national and regional planning guidance. They include:

- i) favouring locations for development 'where the need for travel, particularly by private car, can be reduced, walking and cycling and the use of public transport can be encouraged and a reasonable range of services and community facilities can be provided';
- ii) concentrating developments which generate a lot of journeys in locations which are or can be well served by public transport; and
- iii) advocating development which is designed so as to reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of walking, cycling, public transport and telecommunications as alternatives to the car.

The Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire

5.12 The delivery of government-integrated transport policy is carried out primarily through local transport plans which are the responsibility of county councils as highway authorities.

5.13 Oxfordshire County Council has adopted its provisional *Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire (2006-2011)*, setting out proposals and programmes for expenditure on transport over the next five years. Its ambition is that:

- Help the economy grow as fast as possible with a real choice of access to jobs, homes, leisure and services and in a way that does not prejudice the future of our environment;
- Give all of us – throughout our lives – the opportunity to enjoy effective teaching and learning;
- Safeguard our communities and maintain our rural character;
- Help our disadvantaged residents to live fulfilling and independent lives;
- Keep improving our services by listening to users' views; and
- Make Oxfordshire – its city, towns, villages and countryside – welcoming, safe and exceptional places to live, work, learn and visit.

The objectives of the plan are:

- Tackling congestion
- Delivering accessibility
- Safer roads
- Better air quality
- Improving the Street environment

Everything in the plan is directed towards meeting these objectives, and ultimately the success of the plan will be judged in terms of how well these objectives have been met.

- 5.14 The LTP is intended to deliver this ambition and to provide an integrated approach to transport and land use and many of its measures will relate to the development proposals contained in development plans. Most of the transport proposals in the LTP will be implemented by the County Council, but district councils can contribute significantly to the transport agenda. In setting the framework for planning decisions affecting land use, this Local Plan has an important role to play. For example, by concentrating development at the Vale's main settlements, the Local Plan can encourage greater use of public transport services and walking and cycling as alternatives to the private car. Its policies can also secure transport improvements through their use in the development control process.

Local Consultation

- 5.15 The Local Plan Issues Report, published in August 2000, sought the views of local people on a number of transport matters. The consultation responses showed overwhelming public support for the continued development of cycle and pedestrian networks in the main towns, with a wealth of ideas for improving these networks. There was also support for the concept of businesses being required to produce and implement travel plans in association with proposed new developments. Concerns were expressed at the possibility of applying lower parking standards in new developments in or close to town centres. The views expressed on the Issues Report have been taken into account in framing many of the policies and proposals which follow.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Integrated Transport and Land Use Studies

- 5.16 The District Council is working with the County Council and Abingdon Town Council on the implementation of the Abingdon Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy. It is also working with the County and South Oxfordshire District Councils on the preparation of a similar strategy for Didcot and is hoping to participate in a study at Wantage and Grove, leading to an integrated strategy for that area. These strategies will all be delivered primarily through the Local Transport Plan but inevitably the proposals and measures they contain will need to integrate with and influence the nature of development brought forward as a result of the policies in this Local Plan.

Abingdon Integrated Transport Study and Strategy

- 5.17 The Abingdon Integrated Transport and Land Use Study was commissioned in 1997 by Oxfordshire County Council, the Vale of White Horse District Council and Abingdon Town Council. The councils recognised the need to tackle Abingdon's growing traffic problems, particularly in the historic town centre and during peak hours, and to encourage the use of other forms of transport rather than the car. It was clear that if traffic growth continued and no action was taken these problems would worsen and become more widespread.
- 5.18 The strategy which emerged from the study has been endorsed in principle by all three councils and recommends a range of measures that will be put in place over the next five years with recognition that additional measures will be needed in the longer term. These will involve:
- i) changes to the road system including
 - making Stratton Way two-way
 - narrowing Stert Street and High Street to one lane
 - putting in traffic signals at the Drayton Road/Spring Road junction;
 - ii) improvements to public transport, such as
 - finding an appropriate central location for a bus interchange
 - additional bus services and new and improved bus stop facilities;
 - iii) better cycle and pedestrian facilities, to include
 - provision of an off-road footway and cycle track along Audlett Drive and Twelve Acre Drive
 - creation of a better and safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the town by, for example, widening town centre pavements and providing additional pedestrian and cycle routes and crossings;
 - iv) traffic management to discourage traffic from travelling through neighbouring villages;
 - v) a review of parking within the town, including on-street, off-street and commuter parking.

In the medium to longer term additional public transport measures such as additional park and ride sites, an extension of the Oxford Guided Transit Express (GTE) system to Abingdon and a bus lane on the A34 might be considered.

- 5.19 The County Council's submitted Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 and its Capital Programme includes specific funding for the implementation of the Abingdon Integrated Transport Study and Strategy over the years ahead.
- 5.20 The earlier stages of the Abingdon transport study showed that there is considerable local support for new river crossings and the possible introduction of south facing slip roads at the A34 Lodge Hill interchange and/or new slip roads onto the A34 at Drayton. The approved strategy acknowledges that new river crossings for Abingdon could only be implemented in the long term, well beyond the period covered by this Local Plan. The County Council will be carrying out a comprehensive feasibility study into new river crossings for Abingdon after it has completed a countywide *Transport Network Review* which will establish the long-term role of the A415 between Witney and Berinsfield. With regard to slip roads onto the A34, the County Council is continuing its dialogue with the Highways Agency in advance of an A34 scoping study. The Local Plan therefore can include no specific proposals for additional river crossings or A34 slip roads at this stage. Nevertheless the District Council considers a new river crossing to be a desirable long-term objective in the interests of securing the maximum environmental benefits for the town, particularly its historic centre.

Wantage and Grove Area Strategic Transport Study

- 5.21 The Local Transport Plan has identified Wantage and Grove as the next area of the Vale where a comprehensive integrated transport and land use study will be carried out to produce a strategy for improving the local transport network.
- 5.22 The County Council has agreed to establish a Wantage and Grove Area Strategic Transport study which will consider the transport issues arising from the planned growth in the Wantage and Grove area and the connections from Grove and Wantage in their wider context, including the expected job growth at Didcot, Milton Park, the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and the planned housing expansion at Didcot. The major transport issues raised by these developments are also under consideration in phase two of the Didcot Integrated Transport Study.
- 5.23 Grove and Wantage will not be able to absorb the additional traffic generated by the strategic housing site west of Grove without significant improvements in the highway network. It has been a long held objective of the District Council and Wantage Town Council that Wantage should have a relief road for the traffic which causes problems throughout the town, particularly in the historic town centre. These problems are likely to worsen in the future as a result of increasing levels of car ownership, the new development at Grove and the redevelopment of sites in Wantage. Relieving the town of through traffic would provide the opportunity to improve and enhance the town centre and improve its vitality and viability, help retain higher order retail and service facilities and enhance the tourism potential. For these reasons, the Council will pursue its vision of a Wantage relief road scheme and seek contributions towards its provision.

- 5.24 The phasing and timing of a relief road scheme will be determined through the Wantage and Grove Area Strategic Transport Study. In accordance with policies DC8 and TR1, the Council will seek appropriate contributions towards a relief road scheme from new developments within the Wantage and Grove area. The development will also be required to fund the construction of a new road from the strategic housing site west of Grove to join the A338 north of Grove to be started early in the second phase of development and completed before any more than 1500 dwellings in total have been built on the site.

POLICY TR1

CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE SOUGHT FROM DEVELOPMENTS IN THE GROVE AND WANTAGE AREA TOWARDS A WANTAGE RELIEF ROAD SCHEME

Didcot Integrated Transport and Land Use Study

- 5.25 The proposed western development at Didcot (part of which is located within the Vale) will have significant transport implications for the surrounding area. In 2001 Colin Buchanan and Partners were commissioned jointly by the County Council, this Council and the South Oxfordshire District Council to assess all the transport issues at, or in the vicinity of, Didcot. The assessment was necessary in order to provide a sound basis for advice on transport matters of relevance to the preparation of the local plans in the two districts, including advice on the transport requirements relating to major development sites in the Didcot area. Prior to the Buchanan study, it had already been made clear by the Highways Agency and the County Council that off-site road and other improvements to the transport network would be necessary at the Milton Heights A34 interchange to serve proposed new developments in the vicinity, including the Milton Heights Service Facilities, Milton Park, the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and the housing development west of Didcot. The Buchanan report was produced in February 2002 and provided the technical context for later work on the integrated transport strategy for Didcot.
- 5.26 The decision to undertake the integrated transport strategy for Didcot was taken in 2002 and the County Council, in association with this Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Didcot Town and Parish Councils in the area, commissioned the Halcrow Group to progress the study. Work on the development of a strategy started in September 2002. The study area included the major employment sites at Milton Park, Culham Science Park and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, together with the surrounding 21 parishes. In addition to drawing on the findings of the Buchanan study, it had regard to the influences outside the study area, including the various studies on the A34 trunk road and the Oxfordshire Transport Network Review. Phase 1 of the transport strategy was approved by the County Council in April 2004. It identified a large number of relatively small schemes in both Didcot and the surrounding villages which focused on improving road safety,

protecting various routes from an increase in traffic, encouraging walking and cycling and promoting the use of public transport. Implementation started on the initial phase of projects in 2004/2005.

5.27 Phase 2 of the transport strategy has the objective of developing a package of more major schemes for the Didcot Area in the context of the planned levels of growth for the area. This includes the housing development at Great Western Park, the employment growth expected at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and the major new housing development at Grove insofar as it will impact on roads in the Didcot area. The provisional Phase 2 strategy was approved by the County Council in October 2004 and is based on a package of measures which would improve traffic flows at key junctions throughout the area and provide an alternative for some of the east/west movements at the Milton Interchange (A34/A4130). The resulting reduction of congestion at this Interchange would benefit both traffic accessing and leaving the A34. In respect of traffic travelling south and exiting the A34 during peak hours, queues frequently back up the slip road, onto the main carriageway, which is a major safety issue. The measures proposed in the provisional phase 2 strategy include:

- Improvement to a number of key junctions
- A new road between the A4130 and B4493 through or around the new Great Western Park development
- Alternative routes for a Harwell bypass between the B4493 and A417
- A route from the A417 providing either a Harwell southern bypass or a link to the A4185 which will improve access to the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus
- Initiatives to reduce the reliance on car borne travel.

5.28 Detailed technical work is currently progressing on developing the provisional strategy. The strategy will also need to be appraised against the output from the stage 1 Wantage and Grove Strategic Transport Study which has recently been completed. The scale and nature of the improvements to the transport network at the Milton Heights A34 Interchange to serve proposed new development in the vicinity will need to be discussed with the highway authority. Account will need to be taken of the recommendations of the Didcot Phase 2 Strategy Study. Access to the service area and land south of Milton Park will be required to be taken from the A4130.

Implications of the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategies for New Development

5.29 The three integrated transport and land use strategies described above will be implemented during and beyond the period of this Local Plan. The Council is concerned to ensure that, where appropriate, new development in and around these towns should make provision for or contribute to the implementation of such measures. These are likely to include all significant commercial and housing developments. Policy TR2 below establishes this principle. Where necessary,

planning obligations will be sought to secure the funding or provision of specific measures in accordance with the advice in Government Circular 05/2005 and the relevant integrated transport and land use strategy.

POLICY TR2

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE LIKELY TO INCREASE TRAFFIC WILL BE REQUIRED TO INCLUDE PROVISION OF SPECIFIC MEASURES DESIGNED TO DELIVER MORE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CHOICES FOR PEOPLE AND/OR THE MOVING OF FREIGHT AND TO PROMOTE ACCESS TO JOBS, SHOPPING AND LEISURE FACILITIES WHILST REDUCING THE NEED TO TRAVEL, ESPECIALLY BY CAR. SUCH MEASURES WILL INCLUDE THE PROVISION AND/OR IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, WALKING OR CYCLING FACILITIES, NEW HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SPECIFIC MEASURES DETAILED IN THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGIES.

POLICY TR3

DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WOULD BE LIKELY TO INCREASE CONGESTION OR SAFETY RISKS IN THE VICINITY OF THE A34 MILTON INTERCHANGE WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF NECESSARY IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TRANSPORT NETWORK ARE SECURED. THIS WILL INCLUDE AMONG OTHERS THE DEVELOPERS OF:

- i) THE LAND IDENTIFIED FOR BUSINESS PROVISION AT MILTON PARK (POLICY E5);**
- ii) THE LAND IDENTIFIED FOR SERVICE FACILITIES AT MILTON HEIGHTS (POLICY TR10);**
- iii) THE LAND IDENTIFIED FOR BUSINESS PROVISION AT THE HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS (POLICY E7);**
- iv) DIDCOT WEST MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AREA (POLICY H7); AND**
- v) LAND IDENTIFIED AS A LARGE CAMPUS STYLE SITE AT MILTON HILL BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE (POLICY E12).**

Cycling and Walking

- 5.30 For short local journeys, as well as for recreation, many people walk or cycle. Good footpaths and cycleways, where they exist, tend to be discontinuous. Vehicular traffic is often heavy and fast-moving, which can make roads unsafe and unpleasant for cyclists to use. Efforts should be made to establish not just a few links here and there, valuable as they may be, but comprehensive networks of safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Where cyclists are concerned, these routes may involve shared road use, on-road cycle lanes, shared cycle and

pedestrian routes or cycle-only links depending on considerations such as the speed and flow of vehicular traffic and personal safety. Traffic calming can be used to emphasise that in certain areas (for example in shopping centres or near sports fields and schools) the pedestrian and cyclist have priority.

The Vale's Main Settlements and Didcot

- 5.31 The creation of complete networks of routes for pedestrians and cyclists is most likely to happen in areas of new development where measures can be planned comprehensively from the start. The District Council as local planning authority has tried to use such opportunities. In much of Grove, for example, and in north Abingdon, continuous routes have been created linking residential areas with schools, shops and recreation areas. In more established built-up areas, however, it can be much more difficult to create new footpaths and cycle links where none exist at present and it may take a longer time to build a comprehensive network.
- 5.32 The District Council worked closely with the County Council to develop proposals for a network of walking and cycling routes for Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Wantage and Grove and these were included on the proposals map of the previously adopted Local Plan. In Abingdon the network has been developed further in co-operation with the County and Town Councils as part of the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy referred to earlier. Similar networks are likely to evolve from the work on the Wantage and Grove and Didcot studies.
- 5.33 Oxfordshire County Council has recently adopted and published its cycling and walking strategies which recognise that the main opportunities for developing networks of safe and convenient walking and cycling routes are in the main towns. The *Oxfordshire Cycling Strategy* contains the cycle network proposals for Abingdon and it is also the intention to review and draw up network proposals for Wantage and Grove and Faringdon. The *Oxfordshire Walking Strategy* recommends the early identification of a core pedestrian network for Abingdon to link major attractors and generators of pedestrian journeys. The District Council has expressed its support for these strategies and will work with the County Council to protect, provide or improve the networks for Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage and Didcot and the links to surrounding villages.
- 5.34 When considering development proposals the District Council will wish to ensure that they include safe and convenient facilities for cyclists and pedestrians within the development sites, such as secure and covered cycle parking. Where appropriate, it will also seek to negotiate off-site extensions and improvements to the cycle and pedestrian networks. The Council will encourage the provision of pedestrian and cycle routes in new developments in the context of policy DC5. This may involve the establishment of off-road routes or the provision of on-highway measures such as cycle lanes, crossings and directional signs. Extensions to the cycle network on Marcham Road and Colwell Drive, Abingdon, have been funded in this way. The extent to which development proposals may be

reasonably expected to contribute to the funding and implementation of such off-site works will be considered in the context of policies DC8, TR2, TR3 and TR9 and on the advice of Oxfordshire County Council.

The National Cycle Network

- 5.35 A national cycle network is being developed by Sustrans, a national sustainable transport charity which works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects. Sustrans works in partnership with local authorities, the Countryside Agency, the Department for Transport, wildlife, environmental and local amenity groups and landowners. The National Cycle Network is a 6,500 mile national framework which will provide safe and attractive cycle routes on which cycling can flourish. It was the first national project to be chosen to mark the new millennium and £42 million (over four years) was awarded from the National Lottery towards the first 2500 miles of the network known as millennium routes. One of the millennium routes runs from Inverness to Dover and the section between Oxford and Reading passes through Abingdon. The District Council welcomed and supported the implementation of this section of the route which was completed in July 2001. Where possible the Council will seek to improve access to the millennium route and to the National Cycle Network.

POLICY TR4

THE NEEDS OF PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF HIGHWAY AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES BY SEEKING THE PROVISION OF SAFE AND CONVENIENT FACILITIES AND SECURE AND COVERED CYCLE PARKING.

POLICY TR5

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH INHIBITS THE USE OF ANY PART OF THE EXISTING FOOTPATH OR CYCLE NETWORK OR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE NETWORKS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSAL MAP FOR ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE UNLESS A SAFE DIRECT AND CONVENIENT ALTERNATIVE CAN BE PROVIDED.

Car Parking

- 5.36 The Local Plan is mainly concerned with off-street parking, which is an important land use, closely linked with general transport policy within towns. On-street car parking is the responsibility of the County Council, while the District Council is responsible for off-street car parking. In Abingdon an on-street parking scheme is

administered by Abingdon Town Council on behalf of the County Council and has helped to alleviate parking problems in the town centre.

- 5.37 The District Council has demonstrated its commitment to high quality public car parking and has a programme in place for the refurbishment of most of its main off-street car parks. Improvement schemes have already been carried out at Rye Farm, Abbey Close and West St Helen Street, Abingdon, Southampton Street, Faringdon and Chapel Way and Church Way, Botley. These schemes have focused not only on the operational needs of the car parks, but have also sought to enhance their appearance and image. Investment has also been made to improve the operation of Abingdon's multi-storey car park.

Public Car Parking in the Main Settlements

- 5.38 The ready availability of car parking plays a crucial role in supporting the prosperity of the district's town centres. As car ownership and use rises, and if edge-of-town car-served shopping is not to increase (often at locations outside the Vale, but within reach of its residents), it will be vital that the Vale's town centres continue to offer adequate car parking within a balanced transport framework to meet the growing needs and expectations of local communities. Nevertheless, the problems associated with the provision of additional town centre car parking must be recognised. In well-established built-up areas, there are often environmental constraints on the expansion of parking. There may be land availability and cost issues to resolve. There may also be constraints arising from the physical capacity of the highway system to deal with more traffic.
- 5.39 In the light of the obvious capacity problems of the local town road networks, town centre parking also needs to be seen as an important element in any transport strategy. Parking policy increasingly will form an integral part of a wider transport policy framework and for this reason the Council, as local planning authority, will seek to maintain a co-ordinating role in, and to influence the management of, all major car parks available for public use in Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage.
- 5.40 In the face of increasing demand and to ensure that in the town centres of Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage the correct balance is maintained between the provision of short-stay shopper parking spaces and long-stay commuter spaces, it will be essential to prevent the loss of existing public and private car parking space. Similarly at the neighbourhood centres at Botley and Grove and local centres at Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage, all of which provide valuable shopping facilities conveniently serving the surrounding residential areas, it will be important to maintain available parking space. The Council will therefore seek to resist the loss of car parking facilities available to the public at these town and local centres unless it can be convinced that the vitality and viability of the centres will not be harmed. This principle is confirmed in policy TR6 below.

- 5.41 One way of responding to increased demand is to use existing car parking spaces more effectively. Car parks closest to shops can be used to achieve a high turnover of shoppers' cars by the use of pricing and time controls. Long-stay car parking for commuters wishing to park all day, for example, can be located further from the town centre. Ideally this should be at the periphery of the town centre, where pricing can make their use attractive. The District Council already operates this kind of management in Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage. It is likely that most future additional car parking provision will be in the long-stay category in order to free up further valuable town centre spaces and because suitable sites are most likely to be found at the periphery of town centres or on the edge of town. It will be important to ensure that adequate public long-stay spaces are available to reduce the likelihood of increased parking in residential areas close to the centres. On-street parking controls, such as residents' parking schemes may well be necessary in such areas.
- 5.42 The **Abingdon** Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy referred to earlier recommends a review of parking policy in the town with the aim of increasing the number of short-stay car parking opportunities for shoppers and visitors. The necessary long-stay car parking will need to be accommodated at the available edge of town public car parks such as Rye Farm. The strategy also recommends monitoring to establish the extent of any encroachment of long-stay commuter parking into the residential areas around the town centre. If long-stay commuter parking is identified as a problem in these areas the strategy recommends that subject to public consultation residents' parking schemes should be considered.
- 5.43 In November 2000 the Council commissioned consultants TPK Consulting to undertake a study of parking in **Wantage**. The purpose of the study was to assess the current and future parking situation in the town and develop a parking strategy that is consistent with local and national planning guidance. The study concluded that there is currently an overall balance in parking supply and demand with very little reserve at times of peak demand.
- 5.44 The parking study was carried out in the context of proposals for new retail development at Limborough Road which were granted planning permission in 1996. This planning permission has now been superseded by proposals for the erection of a Sainsbury foodstore, seven comparison shop units and six retail warehouse units with a combined floorspace of 11,223 square metres. The proposals also include a link road and roundabout from the A338 and new private car parking with a consequential loss of 70 public spaces. Planning permission was granted for this scheme in February 2002. A revised application was granted planning permission in March 2006 which provided for a new Sainsbury foodstore, 7 small shops with 24 flats over and 5 large retail warehouses including approximately 650 private parking spaces.
- 5.45 The reduction in publicly controlled car parking space at Limborough Road makes the Council's policy of reducing long-stay parking in the town centre more difficult

to achieve. Accurate conclusions on how overall parking supply and demand will configure once the Limborough Road development is completed are difficult to reach. This is because parking habits may change, there may be linked journeys, more people may cycle, travel by public transport or the Wantage retail catchment may expand. However, the Council is predicting that a shortfall in long-stay parking will occur. The Limborough Road development will also involve the loss of the existing coach and lorry parking and the District Council is currently investigating the need for a replacement. The Council recognises that the resolution of these problems will need to be addressed having regard to the impending redevelopment of the Limborough Road area and in the context of the proposed transport study. Until such time, the Local Plan continues to identify the former canal basin, shown in the earlier adopted Local Plan, as a site suitable for additional public car parking. However, in 2006 planning permission was granted for 59 dwellings on the former canal basin.

- 5.46 In Faringdon the Council maintains separate long-stay and short-stay public car parking. The refurbished car park in Southampton Street is managed as a short-stay car park for visitors and shoppers. Although very busy it has sufficient turnover to meet existing and expected demand. Long-stay parking is provided at Gloucester Street where, based on current usage, some reserve capacity exists.
- 5.47 More effective use could be made of on-street car parking in Faringdon and as part of the scheme for environmental improvements in the Market Place, the parking on the east side of the Market Place is now formally controlled as short-stay.

POLICY TR6

WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRES OF ABINGDON, WANTAGE AND FARINGDON AND THE EXISTING LOCAL CENTRES AT ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE, THE LOSS OF PUBLIC CAR PARKING, PARTICULARLY FOR SHORT STAYS, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF THESE CENTRES. AT WANTAGE, THE WHARF AREA AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP WILL BE SAFEGUARDED AS AN AREA SUITABLE FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC CAR PARKING.

Public Transport

- 5.48 Good public transport is vital, not only to serve those residents who do not have access to a car but also as part of an overall strategy aimed at reducing the need to travel by car and thereby reducing congestion, pollution and the other harmful effects caused by increased traffic.
- 5.49 Buses are likely to remain the main public transport service in the Vale for the foreseeable future. Although the inter-city railway line from Paddington to Swindon runs through the District, there are at present no stations on this line in

the Vale (although moves are under way to re-open the station north of Grove – see below). On the Didcot to Oxford line, only Radley and Appleford have stations within the Vale: both are unstaffed halts. The stations at Oxford, Didcot and Swindon, all outside the district, serve as the main gateways to the wider railway network for local residents.

- 5.50 The District Council's involvement in the provision or management of bus or rail services is limited. A variety of private operators run services within a commercial framework, with the County Council giving financial support to some non-commercial bus services. The Council has helped to support local initiatives, such as the Stanford-in-the-Vale and Faringdon community buses, and it operates a concessionary fare scheme for elderly and some categories of disabled residents. However, the Council's main role is as a partner organisation in the preparation of the integrated transport strategies and the Local Transport Plan referred to earlier.
- 5.51 For the foreseeable future it seems likely that greater use of public transport, especially in the rural areas, will be difficult to stimulate due to a range of factors such as increasing car ownership and rising bus operating costs. Nevertheless, the availability of some form of public transport service will continue to be crucial for the significant proportion of the population which has no alternative means of transport. Where the withdrawal of conventional services is unavoidable, low-cost alternatives need to be explored, such as further community bus projects similar to that centred on the village of Stanford-in-the-Vale. This scheme has been in operation since 1982, when it was established to operate a limited service for the villages of Charney Bassett, Denchworth, Goosey, Hatford, Shellingford and Stanford-in-the-Vale. The project has its own minibus, bought with grants from the District and County Councils and supported by on-going grants from the County Council. The District Council would welcome further schemes where local interest and management skills are brought together.
- 5.52 The influence the District Council can exert on the use of public transport through the Local Plan is largely indirect but nevertheless important. It can be summarised as follows:
- by concentrating development, services and facilities at the most accessible locations in the district (principally the main settlements), the Plan can promote the greater use and enhancement of public transport services;
 - through the development control process the local plan policies can help to ensure that developments have public transport friendly layouts and designs and are focused on existing planned public transport corridors including the premium routes referred to below. Development which could prejudice potential improvements to public transport or which would block the long-term creation of an integrated transport policy can also be resisted;

- the Plan can ensure that appropriate developer contributions are sought where new development is permitted to support the County Council's public transport initiatives across the Vale and to support the integrated transport strategies for Abingdon, Wantage and Grove, and Didcot.

Bus Services

- 5.53 The Local Transport Plan sets out the County Council's strategy for supporting future services. As part of a process of improvement the County Council has decided to establish a hierarchy of routes in Oxfordshire. At the top of the hierarchy will be Premium Routes consisting of a network of high frequency and high quality services. The network will include bus priority measures, for example bus lanes and improvements at the bus stops along the routes. These routes will link with lower frequency bus, rail and other public transport services at various points around the county. The network will also include a series of key interchanges, where high quality passenger waiting facilities will be combined with appropriate highway measures. A *Premium Routes and Interchanges Study* was completed by consultants in April 2001. The County Council subsequently endorsed a broad ten-year programme of schemes and measures necessary to bring the network to the required standard. One of the main routes covered by the network will be from Wantage and Grove (via Abingdon and A34) to Oxford.

Rail Services – Grove Station

- 5.54 Between 1875 and 1947 a remarkable steam tramway ran from Wantage town centre to the main line station at Wantage Road, Grove, some 3.2km (2 miles) away. The Wantage Road main line station was closed down in 1964, and there have been no stopping trains serving Wantage and Grove since. It has been a long-term aspiration of the County and District Councils to see the re-opening of the rail station at Grove. The County Council is committed to the development of the station although concedes that the absence of a suitable train service to serve the rail station means that the proposal does not at present have rail industry support. Further feasibility work will be needed to obtain the backing required. A planning application was submitted in 2005. Where possible, the County Council will be seeking developer contributions towards this project as part of the future transport strategy for this area, and also contributions from the rail industry. All parties involved in the promotion of the new station at Grove will need to follow the guidance entitled "New Stations: A Guide for Promoters" issued by the Strategic Rail Authority.
- 5.55 The District Council continues to support the re-opening of the station at Grove, although it will be concerned to ensure that the station area maintains high standards in terms of access, safety and environment. (The present access close to The Volunteer pub presents potential traffic hazards in relation to the existing railway bridge and is clearly inadequate).

POLICY TR7

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL WILL NOT PERMIT DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE CONSIDERED LIKELY TO PREJUDICE THE RE-OPENING OF THE WANTAGE ROAD STATION, GROVE, ON THE SITE IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, AND WILL WORK WITH OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ON PROPOSALS FOR ITS RE-OPENING.

Public Transport Interchange Facilities

- 5.56 The District Council considers that if people are to be persuaded to use their cars less, alternatives to the car need to be encouraged and the necessary infrastructure put in place. The Council will therefore support proposals which improve public transport facilities in order to reduce reliance on car-based travel. Of particular importance are transport interchanges.
- 5.57 Many journeys will involve some form of change between different modes of transport, such as walking to a bus stop, or changing from car to bus at a park and ride site. Interchanges can help to improve the level of integration between types of transport, and ensure that connections can be made efficiently and conveniently. They are crucial to most journeys, since a bad interchange can negate the benefits of a good bus or rail service or a direct cycle route.
- 5.58 The Council will support well designed proposals for interchange facilities between different modes of transport such as car, bus, rail, taxis, cycling and walking. These should provide easier access to public transport and better connections between different forms of transport whilst at the same time having regard to the need to safeguard the character and environment of the area in which they are proposed to be located. The Council will work with the County Council, as highway authority, who have identified the crucial role of interchanges in the Local Transport Plan, and with public transport operators, to identify and implement suitable sites for public transport interchanges. The proposed Grove Station for example will be a proposal which will need to incorporate good links with buses and the local cycle and pedestrian networks.
- 5.59 Proposals for Transport Interchanges will be considered in the light of other policies in the local plan including policies in Chapter 3 relating to development in the Green Belt and Chapter 4 General Policies for Development.
- 5.60 As set out in PPG 2, proposals for park and ride facilities may be acceptable in the Green Belt in exceptional circumstances. All alternative options will have to have been evaluated and any proposals should not conflict with the principles set out in Policy GS3.

POLICY TR8

PROPOSALS WHICH PROVIDE IMPROVED PUBLIC TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE FACILITIES AND THEREBY ASSIST IN REDUCING THE RELIANCE ON CAR-BASED TRAVEL WILL BE PERMITTED.

New Transportation Initiatives

Rural Traffic – 'CountryWays'

- 5.61 The impacts of increased traffic on rural communities can be great. To manage these impacts, the County Council has developed the 'CountryWays' initiative. The aim of CountryWays is to develop new and innovative ways to comprehensively manage the traffic problems facing many parts of our rural road network. The problems can include speeding vehicles, heavy goods vehicles on inappropriate routes, lack of safe routes for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians and the sheer volume of traffic. The County Council recognises that each area will have its own combination of problems and therefore considers it essential to tailor the response to local conditions. Importantly the CountryWays scheme focuses on close consultation and liaison with the local community and will include the development of the projects through community-led 'design days', where issues and solutions can be developed jointly with local people.
- 5.62 A pilot scheme in the area of the Vale around Uffington has been completed in partnership with the District Council, parish councils and the Countryside Agency.
- 5.63 The County Council will continue to develop this and other pilot schemes throughout the life of the LTP and using this experience aims to develop guidance for the general development of Country Ways.

Home Zones

- 5.64 Home zones are residential streets designed so that vehicular traffic speeds are reduced and car access is limited and the road space is shared between cars, cyclists and pedestrians. The home zone concept not only helps to make streets safer but also improves the quality of the street environment through initiatives such as landscaping. The aim is to change the way streets are used, making them places for people, not just for traffic.
- 5.65 Home zones can be introduced into existing residential areas where the local community supports the initiative. The County Council was successful in the Government's *Home Zones Challenge* and has secured £400,000 for a scheme in Saxton Road, Abingdon. The aim of this scheme was to redesign the road to improve safety (especially for children) and the environment, reduce crime, manage the street's parking and encourage more cycling and walking. Consultants were appointed to manage the project and worked closely with the local community to develop the scheme which was completed in 2005. The District

Council supported this initiative and will support the County Council investigating the possibility of introducing home zone measures in other parts of the Vale.

- 5.66 Oxfordshire County Council has produced guidelines to encourage house builders to develop new housing sites as home zones. *Home Zone Characteristics for New Housing* was produced in conjunction with the Vale and other district councils in Oxfordshire. In appropriate circumstances the District Council will support and encourage the creation of home zones in new residential developments.

Transport Assessments and Travel Plans In Association with Major Development

- 5.67 Government policy and the local plan strategy seek to reduce the need to travel by car and promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and the movement of freight. For this approach to be successful it will be necessary to ensure not only that the traffic movements arising from a proposed development can be accommodated on the wider highway network without any adverse environmental impacts but that the development includes, where appropriate, practical measures to encourage alternative modes of travel including cycling, walking and public transport.
- 5.68 PPG13: *Transport* proposes that local authorities should require the submission of transport assessments (TAs) to accompany planning applications for developments which will have significant transport implications. The coverage and detail of TAs should reflect the scale of development and the extent of the transport implications. TAs should consider travel generated by the development in terms of the movement of residents, staff and all visitors to and from the site and should also carefully consider freight movement. TAs should also consider the impact of the development on the trunk road network. For large-scale proposals with more significant transport implications, the assessment should illustrate accessibility to the site by all modes and the likely modal split of journeys to and from the site. It should also give details of proposed measures to include access by public transport, walking and cycling, to reduce the need for parking and to secure highway improvements. Prospective developers should hold early discussions with the District Council and the County Council as highway authority in order to clarify whether proposals are likely to be acceptable in transport terms and to assess the requirement for and content of a TA including the requirement for a travel plan. Thresholds identified in PPG13 advise when a TA will be required. There may be instances where a TA will be required for development below the threshold in PPG13, particularly where development will generate further traffic on a saturated network.
- 5.69 Where appropriate a travel plan may also be required in association with a proposed development. The travel plan should stem from the TA and include measurable targets and arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the approach being pursued. Travel plans are dealt with by the County Council under its *Better Ways to Work* initiative and it has recently published a guide to carrying

out a site audit for use in preparing travel plans. They aim to encourage staff and visitors to choose alternatives to single occupancy car use and reduce the need to travel to work or during work. A travel plan will only be a requirement in certain circumstances but major non-residential development which would have a significant effect on transport patterns in the area is likely to be required to have a plan in place before the development commences. The content and commencement date of any travel plan should be agreed with the County Council and District Council prior to the commencement of development. The existence of a travel plan will not however be taken as justification for development which is unsuitable on other grounds.

POLICY TR9

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WHICH HAVE SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORT IMPLICATIONS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY A TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT IDENTIFYING THE TRANSPORT IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSAL, AND WHERE THOSE IMPACTS ARE ADEQUATELY MITIGATED. A TRAVEL PLAN WILL BE REQUIRED WHERE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ARE LIKELY TO GENERATE SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF TRAFFIC.

Improving the Highway Network

- 5.70 As noted earlier, while the District Council has the duty to prepare the Local Plan, it is the County Council which is generally responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the highway network (apart from trunk roads which currently are the responsibility of central government). Ideas and policies relating to road improvements and traffic management can therefore be effective only in the context of good co-operation and consultation between the responsible authorities.
- 5.71 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan (2011) identified the A420, the A34 and the Oxford ring road as part of the county's major through-route network. The policy on all other roads in the Vale is to restrict improvement schemes to those which will resolve severe accident or environmental problems, cater for minerals traffic or support new development. Any such schemes for improvement to the highway network should be so designed that there is no transfer of traffic to unsuitable routes and that road schemes do not prejudice the overall strategy of growth restraint in Oxfordshire by triggering further demands for development.

Marcham Bypass

- 5.72 The Local Transport Plan includes an aspiration for a Marcham bypass (A415). Oxfordshire County Council held a public exhibition in March 1995 to illustrate the options for the bypass. The District Council was consulted on these options and strongly supported the principle of a southern bypass, recommending that consideration should be given to moving the route further away from the village.

The District Council was a consultee on the County Council's planning application to construct the bypass in 1997. While again strongly supporting the principle of a southern route the District Council confirmed its view that consideration should be given to moving the route further south.

- 5.73 The County Council decided not to progress the 1997 scheme and has since proposed a new alignment further south of the village than previously shown. A public consultation exercise held in the village in May 2001 revealed overwhelming support for the revised route. The District Council remains committed to the bypass but has reserved its right to comment on the details of the scheme as a consultee on the future planning application. In 2005 the scheme failed to be included in the regional funding allocation in the 2008-11 period.

A34 Multi-Modal Study

- 5.74 There are growing problems of congestion on the A34, particularly around Oxford and at many of the interchanges along its length. In 2003 GOSE and SEERA jointly commissioned a 'scoping study' to review the key issues affecting the A34 Corridor and examine the case for a further study and the appropriate scale of that study. The scoping study took a long term strategic view and recommended the need for focused localised studies around South Hampshire and Oxford. The Highways Agency also commissioned an A34 route management study. The resulting draft strategy sets out a 10 year plan for the management and operation of the A34 and provides some short term solutions for making better use of existing capacity and increasing safety. The Department of Transport have made it clear that rather than pressing ahead with further study work in the A34 Corridor now, they consider it would be better for regional partners to consider how the Corridor's potential needs rate against other projects that people are hoping will find a place in the programme over the next few years. This is disappointing, but the County and District Councils will continue to press that local transport needs are taken into account when any decisions are made given that the A34 clearly serves a local as well as national function providing the main access link between major settlements and employment centres.

Lorries and Roadside Services

- 5.75 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan opposes the proliferation of roadside facilities for lorries and other road users on main through routes. Policy T14 in the Structure Plan (2011) seeks to limit environmental intrusion, reduce access on to major roads and encourage developers to provide higher standards of provision on a limited number of well-appointed sites by restricting the number of sites. The District Council shares these concerns in respect of the A34 and A420 within this Local Plan area. Policy T7 in the Structure Plan to 2016 addresses this issue.

- 5.76 The previous adopted Local Plan indicated that in the Council's view, the need for services facilities for the A420 had been met by the schemes which have been permitted and implemented at Buckland and Park Road, Faringdon. This remains the Council's position and it will oppose further sites, or extensions beyond the boundaries of existing sites, along the A420.
- 5.77 At Milton Heights, however the Council continues the allocation of land for additional service facilities to meet the needs of the A34 corridor within the Vale. The site is around 9.2 hectares (23 acres), situated to the south-east of the Milton Heights A34 interchange. Limited facilities are already available at this site including a petrol filling station, Travelodge with restaurant and a fast food outlet. The site is physically well contained by the A34 and the Milton Heights interchange to the west and the A4130 Didcot to Milton Heights link road to the north. The eastern boundary is well defined by trees and hedgerows, as is the boundary that extends along part of the frontage with the A4130. The range of facilities likely to be required in the future includes car, lorry, coach and abnormal load parking, an expanded fuel operation, a breakdown and recovery service, toilet facilities, additional picnic and children's play areas, as well as those appropriate to a major trunk road service area.
- 5.78 The land adjoins the main western approach to Didcot. It is essential for development of the site to be designed and landscaped to the highest standard. The District Council will accept a phased approach to the development of the land, but will require a comprehensive scheme to be prepared for the whole site. Access to the site will be required to be taken from the A4130 but substantial off-site road improvements are certain to be required to service an improved facility. Measures to improve the visual appearance of the site (in particular from the A4130 Didcot to Milton Heights link road) will also be required.

POLICY TR10

THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL SERVICE FACILITIES (INCLUDING FACILITIES FOR REFUELLING, CAR AND LORRY PARKING, TOILETS, REFRESHMENT FACILITIES AND PICNIC AREAS) ALONG THE TRUNK ROADS A420 AND A34 WILL NOT BE PERMITTED OTHER THAN WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE FOLLOWING SITES IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AT:

- i) **MILTON HEIGHTS;**
- ii) **BUCKLAND; AND**
- iii) **PARK ROAD, FARINGDON.**

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 6.1 One of the great assets of the Vale of White Horse is its rich and varied historic environment. Features of architectural or historic interest abound and contribute much towards the distinctive character and cherished identity of the district's towns, villages and countryside. These features add quality to the lives of both residents and visitors and lend support to the district's economic, social and cultural well-being.
- 6.2 The area covered by this Local Plan has supported human habitation for thousands of years, especially along the Downs where ancient hill-forts, long barrows and other remains are sited near the Ridgeway, one of England's oldest roads. The White Horse itself, from which the district takes its name, is a figure cut in the chalk thought to date from the Iron Age. Many settlements in the district were established in the Middle Ages and laid out in distinctive patterns which remain an essential part of their character. For example, the importance of Stanford-in-the-Vale as a medieval market centre is indicated by its two village greens. Some villages are compact and tightly knit, others are linear settlements stretching along roads. Estate villages, like Ardington and Coleshill, have a distinctive architectural character which derives from a long association with a single owner or estate.
- 6.3 The three market towns of the district also grew to prosperity in the Middle Ages; Abingdon, the largest, is now recognised as the oldest continuously inhabited town in England. It has a well-preserved centre with a medieval street pattern, numerous timber-framed buildings, monuments and major buildings of more than local significance (such as the County Hall and the almshouses around St Helen's Church), as well as associations with the once-great Benedictine Abbey. Wantage, located at the foot of the Downs, has roots deep in English history and is reputedly the birthplace of King Alfred the Great. It has a fine heritage of medieval and Georgian buildings and, in addition, some interesting Victorian architecture. The small town of Faringdon has Saxon origins. It retains a well-preserved medieval street pattern and the Market Place has a wealth of vernacular stone buildings from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.
- 6.4 What distinguishes the built heritage of the Vale is its variety. The district displays a subtle range of traditional building types and materials. This is because the geology of the landscape in which the buildings and villages stand is itself so varied. Traditional buildings have a close affinity with local materials: chalk and sarsen buildings are found on and near the Downs, rubble limestone walls and stone tile roofs on the corallian limestone ridge in the north of the district. The

timber-framed buildings of the clay vale, with thatched roofs, complemented sometimes by cob walls, are one of the district's most delightful features. Building materials are not strictly limited to local geology, however; timber framing is found throughout the Vale as are traditional Berkshire 'Orange' plain tiles and bricks.

- 6.5 As a resource the historic environment described above is of immense value but it is a resource that is finite and irreplaceable and especially vulnerable at times of change. The pace of change has quickened in recent years. Changes in farming are posing questions about the future use of traditional farm buildings and the volume of traffic is having a growing impact on the historic town centres. Traditional materials are expensive and owners of older buildings are turning increasingly to unsympathetic modern materials to repair or extend their properties. This emphasises the need for a strong policy framework which will help to manage change and safeguard the local heritage for the future. The responses to the Council's Local Plan Issues Report supported the proposition that much importance should be given to protecting our heritage and it should be given a high priority in the new Local Plan. This has been reflected in the policies set out later in this chapter.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 6.6 The government's advice to planning authorities on matters relating to the historic environment is contained mainly in two planning policy guidance notes, PPG15: *Planning and the Historic Environment*, published in 1994, and PPG16: *Archaeology and Planning*, published in 1990. In PPG15 the government has recognised that effective protection of all aspects of the historic environment is vitally important to achieving policies for environmental stewardship, especially those embodied in the concept of sustainable development. PPG16 emphasises the importance of archaeological remains as non-renewable resources, which in many cases are highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is essential if they are to survive in good condition. They should not needlessly or thoughtlessly be destroyed.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 6.7 The general strategy of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan as set out in policy G1 includes the requirement to restrain the overall development in the county in order to protect its environment, character and natural resources. More specifically, in relation to the historic environment, policy EN8 (EN4 in the plan to 2016) states that the fabric and setting of listed buildings should be preserved and the character or appearance of conservation areas should also be safeguarded or enhanced. Policy EN10 (EN6 in the plan to 2016) confirms that there should be a presumption in favour of physically preserving nationally important archaeological remains and their settings, whether scheduled or not. Where development affects other archaeological remains it should include appropriate measures to secure their preservation in situ, or where this is not feasible, features should be recorded

before the development takes place. These strategic policies provide the context for the more detailed local plan policies which follow.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Conservation Areas

- 6.8 The main instrument the Council has for bringing into effect policies for conserving historic areas is conservation area designation. Section 69 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the Council to designate conservation areas to cover the parts of the district that are of 'special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is considered desirable to preserve or enhance'. Conservation area designation introduces additional controls to an area: conservation area consent is required to demolish non-listed buildings, certain new building works that would elsewhere be permitted development require planning permission and written permission is required before carrying out certain works to trees. In addition designation requires the Council to formulate policies and proposals for the area's preservation and enhancement.
- 6.9 The prime consideration in the designation of a conservation area is the quality and interest of the area as a whole rather than of individual buildings. In the Vale there are currently 52 conservation areas. Their boundaries are shown on the proposals map and a list is included in Appendix 1. The majority were designated between 1969 and 1971, although reviews and extensions have been undertaken since. In 1990 a comprehensive review of all the rural conservation areas was carried out which resulted in amendments to seven conservation areas and the designation of three new ones.
- 6.10 The review of conservation areas cannot be carried out as part of the local plan process but has to be carried out separately in accordance with the requirements of the 1990 Act.

Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development

- 6.11 The purpose of designating conservation areas is not to bring change to a halt. Section 72 of the 1990 Act requires the Council to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character or appearance of a conservation area when considering proposals for development. This not only includes development within a conservation area but also outside it if such development is likely to affect its setting. In considering development proposals the Council will assess the impact they will have upon the features which comprise the conservation area's special interest and character. There will be a strong presumption against the granting of planning permission or conservation area consent for proposals which do not preserve or enhance the special character or appearance of the area concerned.

- 6.12 In assessing the appropriateness of proposals which involve the development or redevelopment of existing sites or buildings the Council's primary considerations will focus on:
- i) the special interest of the site or building;
 - ii) whether the site or building makes a positive contribution towards the character or appearance of the conservation area; and
 - iii) what the alternatives are for enhancing this contribution if it is not entirely positive.
- 6.13 Where the retention of a site or building in its existing condition is clearly desirable due to its special interest and/or the contribution it makes towards the area's character or appearance, the Council will expect developers to take this into account and will refuse proposals which do not achieve this objective. The Council will be particularly concerned to safeguard paddocks, greens, gaps between buildings and other open areas where these add positively to the character of a conservation area.
- 6.14 The Council recognises, however, that certain sites and buildings within conservation areas neither possess special interest nor make any positive contribution towards an area's character or appearance. In such cases, where it can be shown that an enhancement of the site or building can be achieved by new buildings or redevelopment, applications will be favourably considered (subject to other planning standards being complied with satisfactorily). To be acceptable new buildings will need to be designed to respect their context. The Council acknowledges that there can be no pre-determined design solutions, as what may be appropriate on one particular site may be undesirable on another, even within the same conservation area. Designing development in sensitive locations requires skill in the interpretation of local and distinctive characteristics and their translation into modern form. Successful designs for new buildings and extensions to existing buildings are most likely to reflect their context by a careful consideration of what the overall scale, form, height and massing of the building should be, where it should be located on the site or building, the materials to be used, and in what way, and the size, proportions and arrangement of doors and window openings. The Council may consider relaxing certain standards (e.g. car parking) which might otherwise rule out desirable proposals. Where total or partial demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area is proposed, and where a building has local architectural or historic significance an historic assessment will be required to be submitted as part of a planning application. If permission for demolition is granted a condition may be imposed requiring the building's recording prior to demolition.
- 6.15 In assessing the respect development proposals have for their context, the Council recognises that the special interest and character of a conservation area depends on much more than the quality and siting of its buildings. Whilst these are clearly important there are many other structures and features that can contribute

positively, such as walls, railings, gates and gate piers, paved and cobbled surfaces, trees, hedgerows and roadside verges. Other features such as the archaeological interest attached to street and plot boundaries may also be significant. These are often less easy to identify. The Council will seek to ensure the preservation of features like these and resist their removal or damage. At the same time it will welcome the removal or improvement of features which detract from the character of a conservation area, for example unattractive surfacing materials, signs, advertisements and shopfronts, lighting columns, bus shelters and telecommunication apparatus, which may be promoted under separate legislation.

- 6.16 Policies HE1 and HE2 below set out the criteria which development proposals, in conservation areas, will be expected to meet if planning permission and/or conservation area consent is to be granted.

POLICY HE1

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR OTHER WORKS WITHIN OR AFFECTING THE SETTING OF A CONSERVATION AREA WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THEY CAN BE SHOWN TO PRESERVE OR ENHANCE THE ESTABLISHED CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE AREA. DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED:

- i) **ON AREAS SUCH AS PADDOCKS, GREENS, GAPS BETWEEN BUILDINGS, GARDENS AND OTHER OPEN SPACES WHERE IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT THESE AREAS DO NOT MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO;**
 - a) **THE CONSERVATION AREA'S SPECIAL INTEREST INCLUDING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS LANDSCAPE SETTING, OR**
 - b) **VIEWS WITHIN, INTO, OR OUT FROM THE CONSERVATION AREA WHICH WOULD BE LOST OR DAMAGED WERE THE DEVELOPMENT TO BE PERMITTED.**
- ii) **WHERE IT RESPECTS ITS CONTEXT THROUGH APPROPRIATE SITING, SCALE, HEIGHT, FORM AND MASSING, DESIGN DETAILING AND THE CHOICE AND QUALITY OF MATERIALS AND FINISHES AND HAS REGARD TO THE DESIRABILITY OF;**
 - a) **PRESERVING THOSE FEATURES IMPORTANT TO THE SPECIAL INTEREST AND CHARACTER OF THE CONSERVATION AREA; AND**
 - b) **REMOVING OR IMPROVING FEATURES IN THE CONSERVATION AREA WHICH DETRACT FROM ITS SPECIAL INTEREST AND CHARACTER; AND**
- iii) **IF LEVELS OF TRAFFIC, PARKING, NOISE OR OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS GENERATED BY THE DEVELOPMENT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE**

PRESERVATION OR ENHANCEMENT OF THE ESTABLISHED CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA.

POLICY HE2

THE TOTAL OR SUBSTANTIAL DEMOLITION OF AN UNLISTED BUILDING THAT CONTRIBUTES POSITIVELY TOWARDS THE SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST, CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF A CONSERVATION AREA WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) THE BUILDING IS BEYOND REPAIR;**
- ii) THERE IS NO COMPATIBLE USE WHICH WOULD SECURE RETENTION OF THE BUILDING AND CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TOWARDS THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE CONSERVATION AREA; AND**
- iii) PROPOSALS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE HAVE BEEN PREPARED WHICH WILL BRING BENEFITS THAT OUTWEIGH THE LOSS RESULTING FROM THE DEMOLITION.**

6.17 Applicants will be required to submit supporting statements to substantiate that:

- a) the building is beyond economic repair and efforts made to secure its retention in a compatible use have failed; or
- b) substantial community benefits will be brought by a redevelopment of the building; and
- c) there is a firm commitment to the implementation of a redevelopment scheme within an agreed timescale.

Detailed Plans and Drawings

6.18 The Council will require the submission of detailed plans to illustrate how the design of the new development will respect its context and, where appropriate, to justify proposals involving demolition. Outline or change of use applications will only be accepted by the Council if these are accompanied by sufficiently detailed plans to show the effect of any new development on the features which contribute to the area's special character or appearance and which the Council considers it desirable to preserve or enhance.

6.19 Applications for conservation area consent to demolish unlisted buildings will also only be considered if they are accompanied by sufficiently detailed plans, showing, if appropriate, how the buildings will be replaced.

Historic Buildings

- 6.20 The main instrument that brings into effect policies for ensuring the protection of historic buildings is statutory listing. Section 1 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the compilation or approval of lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. This is done by English Heritage and the criteria used in the selection process are applied consistently across the country. The Vale is fortunate in possessing a fine stock of well over 2000 listed buildings. These range from magnificent country houses to modest cottages and include structures such as bridges, memorials, telephone kiosks and gravestones.
- 6.21 The listing of a building relates to its interior as well as its exterior and extends also to include any object or structure fixed to it or which is within its curtilage and is fixed to the land and has been so since before July 1948.
- 6.22 The fact that a building or historic feature is included on the Statutory List does not mean it has to be preserved intact and unchanged in all circumstances. It does, however, mean that listed building consent will be required for its demolition (including partial demolition) and for proposals to alter or extend it in any way that affects its character as a building of special architectural or historic interest.
- 6.23 When considering applications for consent the District Council will be guided in the first instance by the principle that, whatever their grade, there should be a presumption in favour of preserving listed buildings, including their settings and the features of special interest they possess. Applicants should therefore be prepared to justify their proposals and clearly demonstrate the effect of their proposal on the building concerned and, where appropriate, on its setting.
- 6.24 Proposals that involve the demolition of all or a substantial part of a listed building or major alterations or extensions that would significantly alter its character will require strong justification. The supporting information and evidence justifying the proposal should be submitted with the application and include photographs and accurate plans, including elevations and sections, and where appropriate a historical assessment of the building's development.
- 6.25 In the case of the total or substantial demolition of a listed building, applications have to be referred to the Secretary of State whose agreement is required if the scheme is to be given consent. The Secretary of State's expectations are: that such consent should not be given without clear and convincing evidence; that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing uses or to find viable new uses and that these efforts have failed; that preservation in some form of charitable or community ownership is not possible or suitable; or that redevelopment would produce substantial benefits to the community which would outweigh the loss from demolition or major change. In the case of these types of proposals the Council will therefore require evidence on:

- i) the condition of the building and the costs involved in its repair and maintenance to allow it to continue in its existing use. The fact that, economically, redevelopment is more attractive than to repair and re-use, or that a site was sold at a price reflecting its redevelopment potential, will not be accepted as justification for demolition; and
- ii) the efforts made to retain the building in its use, including evidence of attempts to sell at a realistic price on the open market; and
- iii) the community benefits brought by a redevelopment of the building.

Claims that a replacement building would have more architectural merit than the listed building would in itself be unlikely to justify a proposal for demolition. If consent for the demolition of all or part of a listed building is granted a condition may be imposed requiring its recording prior to demolition. In assessing proposals affecting listed buildings, including features of special interest, the guiding principle is that there will be presumption in favour of their preservation.

POLICY HE3

PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE TOTAL OR SUBSTANTIAL DEMOLITION OF A LISTED BUILDING OR ITS FEATURES OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE WILL NOT BE GRANTED LISTED BUILDING CONSENT EXCEPT IN THE MOST EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT:

- i) **EVERY EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO RETAIN THE BUILDING OR ITS FEATURES OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE BUT SUCH EFFORTS HAVE FAILED BECAUSE**
 - a) **THE BUILDING IS WHOLLY OR SUBSTANTIALLY BEYOND REPAIR AT REASONABLE COST; OR**
 - b) **THERE IS NO USE WHICH IS COMPATIBLE AND CAN SECURE THE RETENTION OF THE BUILDING; OR**
- ii) **PROPOSALS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDING HAVE BEEN PREPARED WHICH WILL BRING SUBSTANTIAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS THAT OUTWEIGH DECISIVELY THE LOSS RESULTING FROM ITS DEMOLITION AND CANNOT BE PROVIDED SATISFACTORILY ELSEWHERE.**

POLICY HE4

PLANNING PERMISSION, FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE SETTING OF LISTED BUILDINGS WILL NOT BE GRANTED UNLESS IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT THE SITING, SCALE, DESIGN, FORM, FINISHES (INCLUDING COLOUR) AND MATERIALS OF THE PROPOSAL RESPECT THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUILDING IN ITS SETTING,

INCLUDING ANY VISUAL, FUNCTIONAL, HISTORIC OR ARCHITECTURAL RELATIONSHIPS IT HAS.

6.26 When considering proposals for the alteration of listed buildings the Council will seek to adhere to the general principles and detailed guidance on the alteration of listed buildings set out in Annex C of PPG15. It will seek to safeguard listed buildings from unnecessary and inappropriate works, including demolition and unsuitable and insensitive alterations, additions or extensions. The Council will also seek to ensure schemes for external re-painting respect the character, detailing and style of the building. Listed building consent is unlikely to be forthcoming unless proper account is taken of the following issues relating to the special interest and character of the building:

- i) its importance and rarity value deriving from its type and function, its age and style, its siting and location, its historical association and its state of survival in an original or modified form;
- ii) its physical features of value. These may comprise features such as the design, arrangement and types of windows and doors, architectural elements of a decorative façade or, internally, fireplaces, doors, staircases, and panelling. Less obvious features such as the layout and plan form and the archaeological and technological interest of its surviving fabric (including the roof structure) may also be significant; and
- iii) its group value deriving from its location in a street, square, farm complex or other planned arrangement or from its association with other buildings close by sharing particular architectural forms or features.

POLICY HE5

DEVELOPMENT INVOLVING ALTERATIONS (INCLUDING PARTIAL DEMOLITION) ADDITIONS OR EXTENSIONS TO A LISTED BUILDING WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF:

- i) **ITS SITING, DESIGN, SCALE, FORM, FINISHES (INCLUDING COLOUR) AND MATERIALS ARE UNSYMPATHETIC TO THE BUILDING'S SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST;**
- ii) **IT FAILS TO RETAIN THOSE FEATURES OF THE EXISTING BUILDING WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO ITS SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST.**

6.27 Proposals for the alteration of a listed building may expose or destroy fabrics or features of architectural or historic interest. In these cases the Council may make it a condition of listed building consent that applicants arrange and undertake suitable programmes of recording. In some circumstances exploratory opening up, with

listed building consent, may be necessary before the listed building application for the main work is considered.

- 6.28 Hidden features of interest are sometimes revealed during alteration works, early windows and doors, panelling or wall paintings may come to light. In circumstances where the Council considers features of interest may be revealed during the course of the alteration works, a condition of the listed building consent will require a watching brief to be carried out during the course of the work. If hidden features of interest are revealed during the course of the works advice of the Council's Conservation Officer should be sought.

POLICY HE6

WHERE DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING A LISTED BUILDING IS PERMITTED THE PROPER RECORDING AND/OR RETENTION OR RE-USE OF FEATURES AND FABRIC OF THE BUILDING WILL BE REQUIRED WHERE SUCH FEATURES:-

- i) ARE KNOWN TO EXIST BUT WILL BE REMOVED IN THE COURSE OF THE DEVELOPMENT,**
- ii) WERE FORMERLY HIDDEN BUT ARE REVEALED IN THE COURSE OF WORKS WHICH HAVE BEEN PERMITTED SUBJECT TO A WATCHING BRIEF CONDITION.**

- 6.29 In the majority of cases the best way for preserving a listed building is to keep it in an active and economically viable use. The best use is normally one similar to that for which it was designed, as this is likely to be accommodated with minimal effect upon the special interest and character of the building. However, in cases where the original use is no longer viable or appropriate, or its continuation would now have a damaging effect on the building or its setting, the Council will consider alternative uses flexibly. Nevertheless it will wish to ensure that these represent the least damaging approach and will secure the retention of the building, including the features which contribute to its special interest.

POLICY HE7

PROPOSALS FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF ALL OR PART OF A LISTED BUILDING OR LAND AND BUILDINGS WITHIN IT'S CURTILAGE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT THE NEW USE CAN BE ACCOMMODATED WITHOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT UPON ITS FEATURES OF SPECIAL ARCHITECTURAL OR HISTORIC INTEREST, AND WILL NOT GIVE RISE TO ANY HARMFUL EFFECTS UPON THE BUILDING'S APPEARANCE OR CHARACTER.

Historic Parks and Gardens

- 6.30 English Heritage has compiled a *National Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*. The sites are categorised using the same grades as used for listed buildings (I, II* and II). At present no additional statutory controls follow from the inclusion of a site in the register but local planning authorities have a responsibility towards enabling and ensuring their protection when preparing development plans and determining planning applications.
- 6.31 In the Vale, eight historic parks and gardens have been included in the register, they are shown on the proposal map and listed in Appendix 2 of this Plan. The coverage of parks and gardens is to be extended and as part of that process a local register has been prepared for Oxfordshire.
- 6.32 The protection of these historic landscapes requires more than policies aimed at preventing unsympathetic development. Arrangements need to be in place for their proper management. Where development is to be permitted the Council may wish to secure via a legal agreement or a planning condition, an appropriate management plan for the park or garden which will cover such matters as the replanting or restoration of lost features, the on-going care of existing trees, hedges and wooded areas, and, where appropriate, the creation of new areas of landscaping. Expert advice on the conservation of historic parks and gardens can be obtained from English Heritage and the Garden History Society.

POLICY HE8

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN OR IN THE SETTING OF AN HISTORIC PARK OR GARDEN INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY CONSERVE AND CAUSE NO SIGNIFICANT HARM TO THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF THE SITE AND THE FEATURES OF SPECIAL INTEREST IT POSSESSES.

Archaeology

- 6.33 Archaeological remains are a finite and non-renewable resource that represent an irreplaceable record of past times. Often the remains are fragile and highly vulnerable to damage by development or agricultural activity.
- 6.34 The Vale has a long history of settlement and an important archaeological heritage, with remains dating from prehistoric times. The range of sites and features is very extensive including burial mounds, field systems, historic tracks and ancient settlements. Most are buried below ground but some, such as the Barn at Great Coxwell, are significant features in the local scene.
- 6.35 The presence of early people in the area, perhaps as much as 350,000 years ago, is shown by finds of flint tools in the gravel terraces of the Thames valley. Other

civilisations have come and gone over the centuries, leaving evidence of their way of life. The Vale has a wealth of settlements and routeways from the prehistoric, the Roman occupation and the Saxon, Norman and Medieval periods. Examples include the Neolithic long barrow at Wayland Smithy, the Iron Age hillfort at Uffington Castle, the Roman temple at Frilford, the lost medieval villages at Seacourt and Tulwick (near Grove) and the White Horse itself.

- 6.36 Some nationally important sites are scheduled as ancient monuments by the government on the advice of English Heritage. At present there are 68 scheduled monuments within the district. They are listed in Appendix 3. A re-survey of sites is currently being undertaken and is expected to increase the number significantly. Scheduled monuments are given statutory protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, which requires scheduled monument consent to be obtained from the Secretary of State for any works that affect them. The scope of this control is more extensive and more detailed than that applying to listed buildings.
- 6.37 Because the scheduling process is not comprehensive, many archaeological remains have no statutory protection; However, most of the known remains are identified on the Oxfordshire County Council's *Sites and Monuments Record* (SMR). Prospective developers are advised to refer to this and to consult the County Archaeologist prior to making a planning application. These consultations will give advance warning of sensitive sites where an archaeological assessment will be required prior to the submission of an application.
- 6.38 Development proposals affecting a site of archaeological interest (whether or not a scheduled ancient monument) will be examined carefully to determine whether or not remains and features will be damaged. In order to make this assessment developers will be expected to provide information in support of their application to include:
- i) the assessment of the nature, character and importance of the site and its setting in archaeological terms; and
 - ii) the likely impact of the proposed development on the archaeological remains; and
 - iii) if necessary the measures to be taken to ensure suitable mitigation of the impact of the proposed development, having regard to the desirability of avoiding disturbance of archaeological remains and of preserving them in situ.
- 6.39 The assessment should be carried out using a suitably qualified archaeological organisation and can involve desk-based studies, geophysical survey, non-invasive assessment and field evaluation e.g. trial trenching.
- 6.40 In some circumstances an archaeological watching brief may be a condition of consent.

POLICY HE9

WHERE THERE ARE REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING THAT IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS MAY BE DISTURBED OR OTHERWISE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY A DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL THE APPLICANT WILL BE REQUIRED TO CARRY OUT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION OF THE SITE AND ITS SETTING BEFORE THE PLANNING APPLICATION IS DETERMINED.

- 6.41 Where specially important archaeological remains and their settings would be damaged by proposed development, the Council will be guided by the principle that there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

POLICY HE10

DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD CAUSE DAMAGE TO THE SITE OR SETTING OF NATIONALLY IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS, WHETHER SCHEDULED OR NOT.

- 6.42 On other sites of archaeological importance the Council will need to be satisfied that either appropriate and satisfactory arrangements have been made to achieve preservation of remains in situ, or a programme of investigation and recording has been agreed, or that the impact of the proposed development is mitigated through suitable design, layout and construction methods. These requirements may be the subject of planning conditions or legal agreements.

POLICY HE11

DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING IMPORTANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE PRESERVATION IN SITU. WHERE THIS IS NOT PRACTICABLE OR DESIRABLE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO COMMENCE UNTIL A PROGRAMME OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION INCLUDING EXCAVATION, RECORDING, ANALYSIS AND PUBLISHING RESULTS HAS BEEN AGREED AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION SECURED.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 7.1 The Vale of White Horse district contains a rich variety of semi-natural habitats, including woodlands, hedgerows, streams and rivers, meadows, pastures and wetlands; together these habitats help to secure the survival of many species of wildlife. The diversity of wildlife helps to ensure that the countryside remains healthy and productive and that its complex natural cycles are kept in balance.
- 7.2 Much of the Vale's countryside is also of great natural beauty. The district occupies an attractive part of the upper Thames valley where the landforms have a gentle rounded nature. There is no dramatic scenery but the landscape, reflecting the underlying geology, presents a good deal of variety and interest, ranging from the rolling sweep of the chalk downs to the floodplain of the Thames.
- 7.3 The Vale's natural environment is being affected by a variety of pressures and changes which the Council will need to address in its role as planning authority and service provider. The following sections outline some of these issues and provide the context for the policies set out later in the chapter.

Nature Conservation

- 7.4 Among the diverse habitats found in the district, some are recognised as having special nature conservation interest, for example:
- i) **Ancient Woodland** there is a broken band of ancient woodland (woodland which broadly has been undisturbed since medieval times) on the ridge of corallian limestone in the north of the Local Plan area;
 - ii) **The Chalk Downs** the Berkshire Downs once presented a great expanse of unimproved chalk grassland grazed by sheep. This habitat, with its springy turf, colourful and scented wild flowers and rare butterflies, now survives in only small fragments. The largest remaining areas, at White Horse Hill and Hackpen Down, are protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and the latter is a candidate Special Area of Conservation. The Ridgeway track forms a natural wildlife corridor, a valuable habitat for native chalk grassland plants;

- iii) **Heathland and Fenland** some of Oxfordshire's rarest habitats – heathland, acid grassland and fenland – are found in the Local Plan area. Acid grasslands are found at Hurst Hill and around Frilford. Remnants of heathland survive at Frilford Heath. A complex of fens exists at Lashford Lane, Cothill and Dry Sandford, along the line of the Sandford Brook, a tributary of the River Ock. This particular complex is regarded as being of European importance and the Cothill Fen is a candidate Special Area of Conservation; and
- iv) **Wetlands** a few hay meadows are still managed traditionally on the floodplains of the Thames and Ock: Fernham Meadows and Grafton Lock Meadows are SSSIs. The river valleys generally form natural wildlife corridors, and rivers and streams are key elements for wildlife within the landscape structure of the Vale.

7.5 These and other areas in the Vale are rich in ecological value. They also suffer from unprecedented pressures for change. Damage and loss has occurred as a result of development and changes in farming and forestry practices. A habitat survey undertaken in the late 1990s by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) estimated that less than 4% of Oxfordshire can be considered to be of high nature conservation value. It is essential to avoid further erosion of this nature conservation resource.

7.6 To set against these pressures and losses there are more positive signs. Vigorous efforts are being made locally not only to protect important wildlife and natural habitats but also to create new areas of interest:

- i) a UK Biodiversity Action Plan, arising out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, was published in 1994 setting out a programme for the conservation and sustainable use of the country's ecological diversity. It identifies a range of 'priority' habitats and species of at least national importance;
- ii) the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum, an informal partnership of local and national organisations, co-ordinated the production of The Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan, published in 2000. This document describes important habitats and species in Oxfordshire. There are eighteen Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) targeting priority habitats as follows; beech and yew woodland, broadleaved woodland, canals, chalk grassland, farmland, fens and flushes, geodiversity, gravel pits, heathlands, hedgerows, neutral grassland, parkland, ponds, reed beds, reservoirs, rivers and ditches, settlements and wet woodland, all of which are found within the Vale. To complement these HAPs, 'species action plans' have also been prepared for locally important species. These HAPs can be seen at the Council offices, local libraries and the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum web-site www.oncf.org.uk;

- iii) these various action plans provide valuable information on the biodiversity of the district. These documents will be used as guidance on nature conservation issues in the district. In considering development, proposals advice will also be sought from English Nature (or its successor), the County Council's Ecologist and other relevant organisations, as appropriate;
- iv) the Great Western Community Forest should help to form a range of new habitats for wildlife in the west of the Vale;
- v) Natural Area documents have been produced by English Nature for three parts of the Vale of White Horse – the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs, the Thames and Avon Vales and the Midvale Ridge. Natural areas are based on landscape, wildlife and natural features. Each natural area has a unique identify resulting from the interaction of wildlife, landforms geology and human impact. They reflect a local 'sense of place'. The documents provide helpful background material as well as clarifying broad nature conservation goals;
- vi) the Upper Thames Tributaries Environmentally Sensitive Area was launched in 1994 by the then Department of Environment. The scheme, which includes parts of the Thames floodplain between Kelmscott and Oxford, aims to encourage and sustain the traditional management of permanent pasture. This will assist farmers and landowners in the sympathetic management of wildlife and natural habitats;
- vii) whole farm conservation plans are promoted through the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Strategy. These plans help farmers to identify all existing wildlife features, prioritise appropriate future conservation work and target grant aid. The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) also promotes whole farm conservation plans and provides farmers and landowners with practical conservation advice;
- viii) *The Oxfordshire Biodiversity Challenge* was published in 1996 by the local Wildlife Trust. It attempted to set specific nature conservation targets for 100 plants and animals in Oxfordshire;
- ix) the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project was established in 1998 to identify areas of county importance for wildlife that lack statutory protection and offer their owners conservation management advice. There are currently 84 County Wildlife Sites in the Vale of White Horse District covering an area of approximately 1248 ha supporting habitats such as chalk grassland, ancient woodland, hay meadows and wetland. These sites are listed in Appendix 4;

- x) 'alert maps', which collate information on significant known sites of nature conservation importance in the county. (These can be inspected at the District Council offices).

7.7 The District Council, through its own planting programmes and through its involvement in schemes for grant-aiding tree and hedgerow planting, pond reclamation and willow pollarding, is also making a positive contribution to the retention or establishment of natural habitats. The Council has expressed its concerns for the protection of wildlife and environmentally sensitive areas and has committed itself to encouraging the provision of nature reserves where appropriate. The District Council is also participating in the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum, promoting habitat protection and sympathetic land use management in conjunction with a range of like-minded organisations.

Landscapes of the Vale

- 7.8 The countryside of the district is worthy of protection not just for its farming and forestry value but for the general environmental quality of its varied and largely unspoilt landscapes.
- 7.9 The rolling open chalkland of the Berkshire Downs forms the southern boundary of the district. The clay vale itself is a pastoral landscape where willows and streams, watermeadows and wide skies combine to create a distinctive entity. A wooded ridge crosses the north of the district, its scarp facing north towards the Cotswolds across the upper Thames valley; at its east, this ridge forms part of the circle of hills which look down onto the dreaming spires of Oxford.
- 7.10 This variety of landscapes is directly reflected in the appearance of local buildings: many older buildings have an affinity with the landscape in which they stand. They are often built out of the materials found in the underlying geology and are themselves an important component of the landscape. Thus, chalk and sarsen stone as building materials are associated with the Downs, brick and timber with the clay vale, and limestone with the ridge along the northern part of the district.
- 7.11 Some landscapes, especially those on the fringes of urban areas, have been affected by the impact of unsightly developments, such as mineral extraction or major roads. Moreover, there is on-going concern about the effect of changing farming practices on the quality and appearance of the landscape: the removal of trees and hedgerows, the drainage of wetland areas, the neglect of small but important landscape features such as copses and ponds, continue to be potential threats. In its recent policies, central government has recognised the vital role that farmers and landowners have in managing the countryside and has introduced schemes to encourage better stewardship of the countryside and the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows. The District Council also has a role to play in

this process through its local planning responsibilities and through its administration of grant resources to help fund small planting schemes and willow pollarding.

- 7.12 Trees, small woodlands, ponds and streams are essential landscape elements of the Vale, making an important visual contribution to the district's scenery. They have ecological benefits by providing local wildlife habitats, and in the case of trees, they help to reduce the prospects of global warming. Trees may also have a role within the rural economy by providing timber for a variety of uses. A future trend may be the energy production of biomass from willows or other species. Where access is provided to the public, woodlands can also be a valued recreational resource.
- 7.13 The Council pursues a number of initiatives to encourage the growing of trees. It plants, or advises on the planting of, species of trees that will thrive in accordance with local conditions and the landscape zones identified below. It works to grant-aid planting and management works which can include willow pollarding and hedgerow restoration. It supports the Oxfordshire Woodland Project which provides advice for owners and managers on all aspects of small woodland management in the area and it seeks to identify possible sites for the planting of 'heritage woodland', areas of trees planted for public access and for the future heritage of the Vale. The Council can also prohibit the removal of important hedges under the government's Hedgerow Regulations (S.I. 1997. No. 1160).
- 7.14 Wherever possible in areas of woodland the District Council hopes that owners will enter into a Forestry Authority Woodland Grant Scheme to protect and improve the woodland over a contract period. In cases where owners are not prepared to enter into such an agreement, and trees of amenity value are considered to be at risk, the Council will use its powers to make tree preservation orders.

The Local Plan and its Role in Safeguarding the Vale's Natural Environment

- 7.15 The main aim of the Local Plan's strategy is to find an acceptable balance between maintaining a thriving economy, enabling social progress which meets the needs of everyone and protecting the environment and character of the area for future generations. This will entail accommodating necessary change in the countryside while maintaining and, where possible, enhancing the quality of the environment and the natural heritage for local people and visitors.
- 7.16 The Council is committed to planning for sustainable development and in this context the policies in this section of the Plan aim to conserve the natural heritage, to safeguard important areas of the Vale's open countryside, to protect and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape and to support the establishment of the Great Western Community Forest.
- 7.17 The policies in this chapter have sought to take account of changing guidance from central government in the form of planning policy guidance notes (PPGs) and

planning policy statement (PPSs) together with the strategic guidance in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 7.18 The main guidance on how the government's policies for the conservation of the natural heritage are to be reflected in land use planning is set out in Planning Policy Statement 9: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* (PPS9). This recognises that wildlife is an integral part of the countryside. It builds on the commitments of the 1990 White Paper, *This Common Inheritance*, to sustainable development and to conserving the natural heritage for the benefit of this and future generations. In 1992 the United Kingdom signed the Biodiversity Convention at the UN conference held in Brazil – the 'Rio Earth Summit'. Following this the Government published in 1994 an Action Plan setting out the UK's conservation strategy for the next twenty years.
- 7.19 Other guidance on the integration of nature conservation and land use planning can be found in Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* (PPS7). This requires planning authorities to balance economic, conservation, agricultural and other factors when considering development in the countryside.
- 7.20 The agency responsible for advising central and local government on nature conservation is English Nature. English Nature has a principal role in identifying and protecting statutory sites which have nature conservation interest and value and both the District and the County Council work with English Nature to ensure these interests are properly taken into account. Non-statutory sites are identified by the Oxfordshire Wildlife Sites Project which is supported by the Council.
- 7.21 The main guidance on how the government's policies for the protection of the countryside are to be reflected in land use planning is set out in Planning Policy Statements 1 and 7 (PPS1 and PPS7) which state that 'the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake' and that 'building away from existing settlements should be strictly controlled'.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 7.22 The conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a priority of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2011. Principally policies EN1 and EN2 sought to ensure that development will not have an unacceptable or adverse environmental impact, whilst EN4 sought to protect attractive landscapes and EN5 nature conservation sites. (This approach is carried forward in the Structure Plan to 2016 in policies EN1 and EN2.)
- 7.23 The Structure Plan recognises the contribution that Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan (prepared by the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum) can make to improve the environment for the benefit of wildlife and policy EN6 (EN2 in the plan

to 2016) covers the protection, enhancement and creation of different habitat types.

- 7.24 The general strategy of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011, and as now modified in the Structure Plan 2016 is to provide a framework to sustain economic prosperity, for development to meet housing, and other requirements and guide investment decisions over the period to 2011. The plan contains general policies to protect the environment, character and natural resources of the county including its areas of high landscape value and of local landscape character.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Nature Conservation and Biodiversity

- 7.25 Biodiversity is dependent upon a healthy and balanced environment. Conservation of this environment for the benefit of current and future generations is an important and fundamental part of sustainable development.
- 7.26 The Council wishes to ensure that areas of importance to nature conservation are not lost through development. It wishes to safeguard, maintain and enhance nature conservation value wherever it exists and particularly to encourage biodiversity. Features such as rivers, streams and banks, hedgerows, ponds and woods are relatively obvious examples. Even minor development proposals need to take full account of the effects upon biodiversity. Apparently insignificant small-scale developments may seriously damage the integrity of habitats or habitat networks, for example through landtake, fragmentation, severance or disturbance and hydrological changes. Similarly, even the smallest opportunities for habitat creation or enhancement can be significant and can build into major contributions over time.

The Need for Ecological Appraisals

- 7.27 Government guidance stresses the importance of taking nature conservation considerations into account in making decisions. If the Council considers that it has insufficient information available to assess the likely effects of a development proposal on a known or potential site of nature conservation value, an ecological appraisal will be required to be carried out by the applicant. Such an appraisal should be undertaken to the extent necessary to provide adequate information about the effects of the proposed development. Applicants must consider the issue of nature conservation including the likelihood of protected species, Biodiversity Action Plan species or priority habitats being affected by their proposals before making their applications so that the necessary full

appraisal can be submitted at the same time as the application is made, thereby avoiding delays in the planning process.

POLICY NE1

APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH ARE LIKELY TO AFFECT A KNOWN OR POTENTIAL SITE OF NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL WHICH ENABLES A PROPER ASSESSMENT TO BE MADE OF THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON THE ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE SITE.

Protection of Sites of Special Nature Conservation Importance

- 7.28 Within the district there are a number of sites which have been designated according to their nature conservation importance. These range from sites of international importance such as Special Areas of Conservation, sites of national importance such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest to sites of regional or local importance such as Local Nature Reserves.
- 7.29 **Special Areas of Conservation** are designated under the European Commission Directive, *Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora* (the Habitats Directive). Special Areas of Conservation and Candidate Special Areas of Conservation are of international importance and are the most important sites for wildlife in the country. Two candidate SACs have been designated in the Vale. One is at Cothill Fen where the calcium-rich springwater-fed fens are considered rare in the European context. The other is at Hackpen Down, an area of unimproved chalk grassland.
- 7.30 **National Nature Reserves** can be declared by English Nature under section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended by the Nature Conservancy Act 1973) or section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. In the Vale, part of the Cothill Fen is a National Nature Reserve.
- 7.31 **Sites of Special Scientific Interest.** English Nature has a duty under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to identify Sites of Special Scientific Interest which are of national importance and of outstanding interest as a result of their flora, fauna, physiographic or geological features. There are 23 such sites in the Vale, all of which are shown on the proposals map and listed in Appendix 4.
- 7.32 The District Council is concerned to protect these special sites from damage or destruction and policy NE2 will be applied where development likely to affect such sites is proposed.

POLICY NE2

DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD RESULT IN THE DESTRUCTION OF OR DAMAGE TO ANY SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION, NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE OR SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST.

- 7.33 Applicants are advised to contact the Council if they believe a site of nature conservation value is likely to be affected by the proposed development.

Geologically Important Sites

- 7.34 Biodiversity is linked to the landscape of the area. English Nature is promoting the identification of Regionally Important Geological Sites through the establishment of local groups. These sites will be non-statutory, locally based sites which will be designated and informally and voluntarily managed. Regionally Important Geological Sites are proposed at Coxwell Pit; Faringdon (Rogers Concrete); The Manger, Whitehorse Hill; Hatford Sand Pit; Gimbro Copse Quarry, Pusey; Dry Sandford Quarries; Tubney Woods; Shellingford Quarry; and Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon. Four of these sites are also identified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (see policy NE2 above and list of sites in Appendix 4).

POLICY NE3

DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD DESTROY OR DAMAGE A REGIONALLY IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL SITE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE DAMAGE CAN BE PREVENTED OR ACCEPTABLY MINIMISED.

Other Sites of Nature Conservation Value

- 7.35 Alert maps have been drawn up to collate information on all known sites of nature conservation interest in Oxfordshire and may be examined in the District Council offices. Many known sites do not have statutory protection but nonetheless contribute to the diversity of habitats for wildlife. On sites of this kind, development need not always be prejudicial to the wildlife interest but as the sites represent a considerable proportion of the nature conservation heritage of the area the District Council will consult with the relevant nature conservation bodies, including English Nature, when a planning application appears to affect wildlife interests. The range of non-statutory sites can be extensive, including geological sites, ancient woodlands, lakes, ponds, watercourses, heathlands, water meadows, unimproved pastures and marshes. Some of these are discussed below.

- 7.36 **Local Nature Reserves.** Local Nature Reserves may be established by local authorities in consultation with English Nature under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are habitats of local importance. In the Vale there is a Local Nature Reserve at Tuckmill Meadows, Watchfield, which is shown on the proposals map. Local Nature Reserves are proposed at the Abbey Fishponds and the western end of the Ock Valley in Abingdon, Chilswell Valley in South Hinksey, and Kennington Pond in Kennington. A local nature reserve is also proposed by Oxford City Council at the Iffley Fritillary Meadows, a small proportion of which lies within the area of the Vale (see Appendix 4). The Council may seek the designation of additional Local Nature Reserves during the life of this Local Plan. This is done under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
- 7.37 **County Wildlife Sites.** Sites of critical importance for nature conservation within Oxfordshire, which are not already statutory designations, are referred to as County Wildlife Sites. These are also called Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in PPS9. In the Vale, County Wildlife Sites have been re-surveyed in accordance with detailed criteria and are shown on the proposals map and listed in Appendix 4.
- 7.38 **Ancient Woodlands.** Ancient woodlands have been provisionally identified by English Nature as woodlands that have existed at least from medieval times and which have never been cleared for use other than timber production. Many are of nature conservation value as well as important landscape features. Ancient deciduous woodland is regarded as having special conservation value. The Vale's ancient woodlands are shown on the proposals map.
- 7.39 **Ecological Networks.** Although specific site protection is extremely important there is now recognition that the health and quality of the wider countryside can affect the long-term viability of individual habitats and species. Wildlife corridors and ecological networks can play an important role in maintaining the diversity of the conservation resource. Corridors and ecological networks (such as small woods, hedgerows, ancient and mature trees, road verges, watercourses, ponds and their banks and flood plains) can be both beneficial to nature conservation and to the landscape. These features may not be covered by a specific designation but if they are present on sites where development is proposed, applicants should be aware that the Council will expect any related nature conservation issues to have been fully addressed as part of the development proposal.
- 7.40 The District Council is determined to do all it can to protect and enhance the nature conservation heritage of the Vale and to this end will apply the following policy to other sites of nature conservation value in the district. In some cases legal agreements may be used to protect the nature conservation resource in accordance with the policy.

POLICY NE4

DEVELOPMENT LIKELY TO HARM A SITE OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE NOT COVERED IN POLICIES NE2 AND NE3 WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT CAN BE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT THE REASON FOR THE DEVELOPMENT CLEARLY OUTWEIGHS THE NEED TO SAFEGUARD THE NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE SITE AND ADEQUATE COMPENSATORY HABITATS WILL BE PROVIDED.

Protection of Species

- 7.41 In addition to habitats of importance to nature conservation, there are a number of plant and animal species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the European Commission Habitats Directive 1992. For example, it is an offence to intentionally disturb nesting birds or damage or destroy bat roosts. Other species such as badgers, great crested newts and water voles are protected by their own legislation. Government advice in PPS9 is that the presence of a protected species is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Where there are reasonable grounds to suggest that protected species are present, a survey by a competent person must be carried out prior to the determination of the planning application. (See also policy NE1). Planning permission is only likely to be granted if the protection of the species and its habitats can be secured through the use of planning conditions or legal agreements.
- 7.42 Development and protection of endangered and important species need not be incompatible. Measures to protect species or their habitats can be sensitively incorporated into the development proposal and in some cases relocation may be a practical option. The Council will use planning conditions and legal agreements to help safeguard and benefit important species.

POLICY NE5

DEVELOPMENT LIKELY TO HAVE AN ADVERSE AFFECT ON A SPECIALLY PROTECTED SPECIES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE ADVERSE AFFECTS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, CAN BE PREVENTED OR ACCEPTABLY MINIMISED OR ADEQUATE ALTERNATIVE HABITATS CAN BE PROVIDED.

Enhancement and Creation of Habitats

- 7.43 The Government has confirmed its commitment to not only conserve bio-diversity but to enhance it. In this context the Council believes encouraging the enhancement and management of habitats and the creation of new ones should be important objectives of the Local Plan. When considering development proposals the Council will seek to ensure that there is no net loss in biodiversity resources, and where appropriate it will seek gains for biodiversity.

- 7.44 Developers will be encouraged to enhance existing habitats or incorporate the provision of new habitats in their proposals, for example, through the use of native species of local provenance in landscaping schemes. In its consideration of development proposals, the Council will also be looking to see how any habitats within the development site relate to the surrounding area so that, where possible, they complement existing habitats.
- 7.45 Applicants are referred to policy DC6 relating to landscape enhancement which covers this issue. Where major development is proposed, as at Grove and Didcot, this aspect will be specifically covered in the detail of the respective development briefs.
- 7.46 Where it can, the District Council grant-aids appropriate schemes. Additionally, woodland projects are supported. The District Council recently acquired Besselsleigh Wood, an ancient semi-natural woodland, which is co-managed in partnership with Oxfordshire Woodland Project. Other financial help comes from the Forestry Commission as part of its Woodland Grant Scheme.

Countryside and Landscape Protection

- 7.47 Government guidance stresses that the countryside should be safeguarded for its own sake and that building away from settlements should be strictly controlled. In line with this guidance the main focus for new development will be in the main settlements and new building outside settlements will be strictly limited (policies GS1 and GS2).

The Landscapes of the Vale

- 7.48 Central Government has made it clear that development plans should include policies designed to secure the conservation of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside and to sustain its character and diversity.
- 7.49 The Oxfordshire Structure Plans (2011 and 2016) contain general policies to protect the local landscape character. In the sections which follow the Council has sought to develop these general policies and relate them more closely to specific areas of the Vale.
- 7.50 In 1990 the Countryside Agency recommended that an approach to landscape policy is best based on an assessment of landscape character, defining the characteristics and features that make one landscape different from another, rather than necessarily better or worse (*Countryside and Nature Conservation Issues in District Local Plans, 1990*). The character-based approach has been endorsed in PPS7 and followed by the Council. It has undertaken a detailed appraisal which

identifies four broad landscape zones in the area of the Local Plan, generally arranged in east–west bands.

Zone1: The North Vale Corallian Ridge The water meadows of the River Thames above Oxford, along with the east–west ridge of high ground between Wytham and Buscot, constitute a distinct northern landscape zone. Most of the woodlands in the Local Plan area are to be found in this zone, including a considerable amount of ancient woodland. Country houses in parkland take advantage of fine views to north and south. On this ridge, formed of corallian limestone, the local coral rag has been widely used as a building material for houses, barns and walls.

Zone 2: The Lowland Clay Vale The pastures of the clay vale, in the centre of the Local Plan area, form a second distinct landscape zone. Streams drain into the River Ock. Willows line the banks of the water meadows and floodable pastures. There are wide views of the sky and distant hills, and qualities of solitude, light and mist. Villages have often developed on islands of gravel above the flood plain: the suffix '-ey' after Charney, Hanney and Goosey denotes 'islands'. Brick, clay tile and some timber have been the predominant traditional building materials, along with local stone.

Zone 3: The Lower Chalk and Upper Greensand Along the northern scarp of the Berkshire Downs, a series of plateaux and small gentle scarps form a transitional landscape area between the Downs and the clay vale. A narrow band of fertile land on the Upper Greensand has distinctive villages whose character derives in part from their setting. The tree cover is higher than to the north or south. Old trackways, such as the Portway, follow the northern springline under the Downs.

Zone 4: The Middle and Upper Chalk The top scarp slope of the Berkshire Downs and the gentle dip slope to the south form the classic chalk downland landscape with wide open vistas broken only by a few clumps of trees. There are few settlements. The rolling large fields are now mostly in arable cultivation. The Ridgeway track follows broadly the top of the scarp, passing hill forts and other antiquities. Grassy combes are found on the scarp slope. There is a remote atmosphere and a sense of being closer to the elements than in the rest of the district.

7.51 A further description of the landscape zones is contained in Planning Advisory Notes available from the District Council.

7.52 The Council's appraisal forms the basis for the following landscape-related policies in the Local Plan which cover:

- The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty
- The North Vale Corallian Ridge
- The Landscape Setting of Oxford
- The Lowland Vale

- Urban Fringes and Countryside Gaps
- Areas for Landscape Enhancement
- Great Western Community Forest.

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

- 7.53 The Berkshire Downs within the district, together with part of the Greensand ridge at its foot (zones 3 and 4 in the landscape appraisal), fall within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- 7.54 The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 provided for the designation of such areas. Under Section 87 of the Act, the National Parks Commission (now the Countryside Agency) could designate an area which is not part of a national park but is of such outstanding natural beauty that some of the provisions for national parks should apply.
- 7.55 Designation of an AONB confers formal recognition that the natural beauty of the area is of national importance. The purposes of designation are set out below:
- i) the primary purpose of designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty;
 - ii) in pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry, other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment;
 - iii) recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of the natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.
- 7.56 In the Agency's view it would be inconsistent with the aims of designation to permit the siting of major development in AONBs whether this was minerals, industrial, commercial or housing development. Only proven national interest and lack of alternative sites can justify any exception. Applications for major developments should be accompanied by environmental impact assessments which demonstrate this.
- 7.57 Government guidance (PPS7) reiterates that the primary objective of AONB designation is conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape. It confirms that the environmental effects of development in an AONB will be a major consideration, and that applications for major developments should be subject to the most rigorous examination and be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

- 7.58 In policy NE6 the Council has taken into account the above advice. In applying the policy the Council will have regard to the local specific features and distinctive qualities which led to designation of the AONB, namely its value as one of the most extensive and least spoilt downland tracts in southern England, and its wildlife and archaeological interest.
- 7.59 The Council will seek to ensure that any new development: is not visually prominent; reflects the character of its surroundings in terms of scale and design; and that its external appearance, the choice of materials, lighting and associated landscaping do not detract from views from vantage points or otherwise spoil the appreciation of the area's landscape quality.

POLICY NE6

DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE WILL BE CONSERVED OR ENHANCED. DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD BE VISUALLY PROMINENT, WOULD DETRACT FROM VIEWS FROM PUBLIC VANTAGE POINTS OR WOULD SPOIL THE APPRECIATION OF THE LANDSCAPE QUALITY OF THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

MAJOR INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN THE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY UNLESS:

- i) IT IS PROVEN TO BE IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST AND NO ALTERNATIVE SITE CAN BE FOUND; AND**
- ii) ALL STEPS ARE TAKEN TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT ON THE BEAUTY OF THE AREA.**

- 7.60 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to produce management plans to look at positive ways of enhancing the beauty of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In the North Wessex Downs a Council of Partners has been established which brings together local authorities, relevant organisations, interest and community groups. This has produced a management plan for the North Wessex Downs. The District Council will assist with its implementation to secure a sound future for the AONB.

The North Vale Corallian Ridge

- 7.61 The Oxfordshire Structure Plans (2011 and 2016) seek to ensure that the local landscape character should not be damaged. The Council has identified the Corallian limestone and sandstone ridge and the adjoining Thames Valley between Buscot and Wytham as an area requiring special care in assessing the visual impact of proposals for development. The Council remains committed to protecting the

North Vale Corallian Ridge from development which would harm its special character and when considering applications will pay particular regard to the siting, mass, scale and appearance of the proposed development, the external materials that are to be used, any proposals for external lighting and the nature and extent of any associated landscaping proposals.

- 7.62 The North Vale Corallian Ridge has a striking landform with a steep north facing scarp slope separating the clay vale from the Thames valley. In the west the ridge has been dissected by streams, which have eroded steep slopes to hills such as Badbury Hill and Faringdon Folly. The ridge is characterised by woodland, including a significant proportion of ancient woodland, country houses designed to look out over the scarp, villages built of the local coral ragstone, and expansive views.

POLICY NE7

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD HARM THE PREVAILING CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE NORTH VALE CORALLIAN RIDGE, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THERE IS AN OVERRIDING NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND ALL STEPS WILL BE TAKEN TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE.

The Landscape Setting of Oxford

- 7.63 The need to protect Oxford and its setting in its natural environment is a key consideration in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. Policy EN9 of that plan (EN5 of the plan to 2016) state that 'the conservation of Oxford's architectural and historic heritage and its landscape setting will take priority in considering proposals for development in and around the city'.
- 7.64 The District Council has local planning responsibility for an important part of the countryside setting of Oxford, notably the slopes of Wytham Hill, Hinksey Hill, Harcourt Hill and Bagley Wood, along with the water meadows of the Hinksey and Seacourt Streams. The wooded hills in the Vale form backdrops to famous panoramas of Oxford's towers and spires.
- 7.65 The views towards collegiate Oxford from viewpoints in the Vale are unique and precious. They could be vulnerable to intrusive new development. The City Council's report on 'High Buildings in Oxford' (1962) described six key viewpoints of Oxford: two of them, Boars Hill and Raleigh Park, are located within this Local Plan area. The City Council has subsequently drawn attention to other viewpoints, including the A34 interchange at Hinksey Hill, and has emphasised that the absence of specific reference to other viewpoints does not diminish their importance. The District Council recognises that the protection of such world-famous views and panoramas requires policy consistency across Local Plan areas. The Council intends to take these vistas into account and make the conservation of Oxford's landscape setting a priority when considering applications for development or associated proposals for landscaping or tree-

planting in areas within view of the city. The Green Belt status of the area should protect it from inappropriate large-scale development but the following policy will apply. The Council will join with Oxford City Council in seeking that electricity cables be put underground and pylons removed where these have a significant impact on the landscape setting of Oxford in this area.

POLICY NE8

THE CONSERVATION OF OXFORD'S LANDSCAPE SETTING WILL TAKE PRIORITY IN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT IN AREAS WITHIN VIEW OF THE CITY. DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD:

- i) HARM THE LANDSCAPE SETTING OF OXFORD; OR**
- ii) OBSCURE OR DETRACT FROM AN IMPORTANT VIEW OF THE SKY LINE OF COLLEGIATE OXFORD, PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE VIEW CONES AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.**

The Lowland Vale

- 7.66 The bowl of countryside which lies between the AONB within the district and the North Vale Corallian Ridge can be broadly referred to as the Lowland Vale. This area has been celebrated for the contribution it makes to distant views from the higher land. The Lowland Vale is also distinctive and valued for its own quality.
- 7.67 The long views over the patchwork quilt of fields, farms and villages in the Vale are an essential part of the landscape quality of the district. Seen from the Ridgeway, Uffington Castle or Folly Hill, the open views of the Lowland Vale have retained their integrity, despite the imposition of the cooling towers of Didcot Power Station at its distant eastern horizon.
- 7.68 Insensitively located or designed proposals could have an adverse impact on these open vistas and on the intrinsic qualities of the Lowland Vale. Particular account will be taken of the colour, texture, height and scale of development proposals and their impact on the local landscape.

POLICY NE9

DEVELOPMENT IN THE LOWLAND VALE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE LANDSCAPE, PARTICULARLY ON THE LONG OPEN VIEWS WITHIN OR ACROSS THE AREA.

Urban Fringes and Countryside Gaps

- 7.69 It is well-established planning practice to exercise strict restraint on development in the countryside generally but there are special areas on the fringes of towns where the countryside needs additional care. The countryside in these areas can be prominent, being close to urban settlements and major transport routes. The Council has categorised these countryside areas using two definitions. The first, 'gaps', has been used to define land which is to be kept open in the interests of either safeguarding the separate identities of neighbouring settlements or to retain an open space between settlements and major transport routes. The second, 'fringes', has been used to describe land similar to 'gaps' but which has a wider function. Gaps or fringes between or on the edge of settlements have an important purpose in retaining the separate identities of, and in providing an attractive setting for and approach to, town and villages. In some circumstances, they may present an opportunity for informal recreational use, with better access in the form of footpaths and bridleways.
- 7.70 The gaps between Wantage and Grove, and Wantage and East Challow, and the tract of countryside between Faringdon and the Faringdon bypass and the vulnerable areas of urban fringe to the west and north-east of Didcot have been particularly identified and protected in past adopted plans by a special safeguarding policy context. This policy context has been given the strong support of inspectors at local plan inquiries, following careful scrutiny at the respective inquiries. The policy context is carried forward in this Local Plan under policy NE10 below.
- 7.71 Each of the areas designated under policy NE10 as fringe or as an important gap of open land has a particular purpose:
- i) the gap between Wantage and Grove was included in the adopted plan for Wantage and Grove in 1987. Since then new housing has been built at the northern edge of Wantage and the southern edge of Grove so that the perceived gap between the two settlements has extended westwards. The area currently designated aims to prevent the coalescence of Grove, Wantage, the industrial areas at the Grove Technology Park, the site occupied by Crown Cork and Seal and the village of East Challow. The area identified on the proposals map takes account of the strategic housing site proposed at Grove;
 - ii) the principle of retaining an area of open land between Faringdon and the A420 received strong support from the inspector at the Faringdon Local Plan Inquiry who wrote '....the preservation as far as practicable of this main open sweep of land between the town and the A420 remains a highly desirable objective'. The policy designation aims to retain the open countryside through which the bypass was designed to pass, well south of the town, taking account of the land identified for housing partly on the site

of the former Nursery (see policy H4) and the land identified for new business development (see policy E3);

- iii) the areas identified as urban fringe around the western and northern edges of Didcot are considered vulnerable to development pressures. These fringe areas also serve as gaps which help to maintain the separate identities of Didcot and its surrounding village communities and to avoid the coalescence of development in the area in general. The area identified on the proposals map takes account of the significant major development proposed to the west of Didcot.

Encroachment of development into the areas identified will therefore be resisted during the current Plan period.

POLICY NE10

IN THE URBAN FRINGES AND IMPORTANT OPEN GAPS BETWEEN SETTLEMENTS, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGES OF USE WHICH WOULD HARM THEIR ESSENTIALLY OPEN OR RURAL CHARACTER WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

Areas for Landscape Enhancement

- 7.72 Much of the Vale's landscape is of high quality, and there are relatively few features detracting from it. Some parts of the district, however, could benefit from enhancement by, for example, the removal of eyesores, the management of woodlands, or the planting of trees to enhance or frame views or to block less attractive views. The Council has set out in a Planning Advisory Note its approach to conserve and enhance landscape character. It will be used as a background against which development proposals will be judged under policy NE11 and also in promoting positive measures such as planting and maintenance schemes carried out or grant-aided by the Council. Landscaping will use locally native trees and shrubs in order to maintain local landscape character and biodiversity.
- 7.73 The strategy is based on an appraisal of the Vale's individual landscape areas. A key aspect of the strategy is to focus attention on two broad areas where the further planting of trees and woodlands, and other landscaping works, would be particularly valuable. The aim of enhancing the landscape in these areas does not imply either the promotion or preclusion of development: any development proposals within them will be considered under the other relevant policies in this Plan. The two areas concerned are indicated on the proposals map.

The A34 Corridor south of Abingdon The A34 trunk road (which is partly elevated), gravel workings, pylons and Didcot Power Station have all had an impact on this area in the east of the District. It was one of the last areas of the Vale to be drained and brought into agricultural use and it has a relatively light tree cover. As

gravel workings cease and restoration follows, there should be opportunities for improving the landscape. In the long term, other proposed developments will also be required to include measures to enhance the surrounding landscape as appropriate.

Land west of Grove Much of the landscape west of Grove was cleared of woodland and trees during the Second World War to make way for airstrips and other installations associated with Grove Airfield. The landscape has never fully recovered and opportunities should be taken to continue to enhance this area. This Plan proposes significant major development on that part of the airfield covered by runways and the area for landscape enhancement takes account of this proposed development.

- 7.74 Policy NE11 below confirms the Council's determination to seek and promote the enhancement of those parts of the local landscape which have become damaged or compromised.

POLICY NE11

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN OR AFFECTING AREAS OF DAMAGED OR COMPROMISED LANDSCAPE, IN PARTICULAR THOSE AREAS DEFINED FOR LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, MUST PROVIDE A LANDSCAPING SCHEME WHICH ENHANCES THE APPEARANCE OF THE AREA. DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD FURTHER ERODE OR DAMAGE THE CHARACTER OF THE LANDSCAPE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

Great Western Community Forest

- 7.75 The concept of Community Forests was launched in 1989. A Community Forest is not envisaged as solid woodland but as a variety of landscapes rich in woodland to various degrees. Such a 'forest' can incorporate farmland, wetland, flower meadows, lakes and parkland as well as traditional woodland.
- 7.76 The Great Western Community Forest was founded in 1994. It covers the whole of Swindon Borough and extends into neighbouring authorities in Wiltshire and Oxfordshire. It is backed by the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission with additional support coming from the authorities involved. The forest area has been divided on a geographical basis. Those parts which lie within the western end of the Vale are the 'White Horse Forest' and a small portion of the 'Upper Thames Forest'. The extent of the Great Western Community Forest is shown on the proposals map.
- 7.77 The Great Western Community Forest Plan, *A Forest Now and for the Future*, which covers the period 2006–2010, is the latest revision of the original forest plan published in 1994. The mission statement of the Great Western Community Forest

is 'to work with the community to create a diverse and integrated woodland environment now and for the future'.

7.78 This is accompanied by a set of aims and objectives for the Forest Plan. The aims include to create a multi-purpose forest embracing Swindon and its environs, to increase forest cover from an average 5% to 30%, to encourage community involvement and public access and to enhance biodiversity and landscape quality. Specific objectives for the White Horse Forest have been set down, including:

- to use woodland to define the western edge of the clay vale
- to enhance the road corridor of the A420, the railway line and the Wilts and Berks Canal
- to soften the impact of Watchfield and Shrivenham on their immediate landscape
- to conserve and enhance long distance views
- to create 'Forest Gateways'
- to develop the footpath system.

7.79 The full text of these aims and objectives can be found in the current Great Western Community Forest Plan. Community forests are intended to develop from a partnership of the whole community with local authorities, business, voluntary groups, schools, residents, farmers and landowners all working together to create a better environment. They are very long-term projects, possibly extending over 100 years. The aim is to ensure that all significant developments in community forest areas make an appropriate contribution – by their design, associated landscape works and planting – to the community forest.

7.80 Through policy NE12 and other policies, the District Council will seek to ensure that the design, siting, scale and landscaping of all development proposals are in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Forest Plan and do not prejudice its delivery.

POLICY NE12

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY FOREST, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, MUST, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A DIVERSE WOODLAND ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATE TO THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE AREA. PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD PREJUDICE THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GREAT WESTERN COMMUNITY FOREST WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

HOUSING

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 8.1 Two functions of the Local Plan are to identify land on which new housing can be built to 2011 and to set out the Council's policies for dealing with the many planning applications for housing development.
- 8.2 The aims of the Local Plan, as set out in Chapter 2, include aim 4: to maintain and improve the quality of life of all members of the local community. This is a particularly important principle for the housing chapter but there are other goals which the housing policies seek to achieve. The goals which are particularly relevant include:
- i) making sufficient land available to enable the Structure Plan housing requirements to 2011 to be met;
 - ii) ensuring a range of housing types is provided to meet the needs of the local community, including affordable housing and homes for those with impaired mobility;
 - iii) securing the provision of local facilities in association with new development;
 - iv) locating most new housing close to existing services and facilities so as to reduce the need to travel by car; and
 - v) reducing the need for development on greenfield sites by re-using vacant and under-used land and buildings in settlements and encouraging higher density developments where appropriate.

The Structure of this Chapter

- 8.3 This chapter follows a structure which is broadly consistent with the local plan strategy set out in Chapter 3. The policies are divided into four broad sections:
- i) the amount and location of new housing development;
 - ii) making the most efficient use of land and buildings;
 - iii) widening housing opportunity and choice; and
 - iv) extending and altering existing residential properties.
- 8.4 Policies in other chapters of the Plan will also be important when considering proposals for housing development including, in particular, the general strategy, development control and leisure chapters. Cross referencing is included in the supporting text to aid understanding of interrelated issues.

- 8.5 In developing the policies for this chapter the Council has taken full account of planning advice from central government, Regional Planning Guidance, the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the responses to the consultation carried out following publication of the Local Plan Issues Report in August 2000. These are considered briefly below.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 8.6 Government planning guidance on housing is set out principally in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: *Housing* (PPG3). The government intends that everyone should have the opportunity of a decent home and that local planning authorities should:
- i) meet the housing requirements of the whole community including those in need of affordable and specialist housing, and provide a better mix in the size, type and location of housing;
 - ii) provide sufficient housing land, in the right place at the right time, giving priority to re-using previously developed land in urban areas. The national target is to provide 60% of additional housing on previously developed land and through the conversion of existing buildings. In identifying sites, local planning authorities are advised to follow a search sequence starting with the re-use of previously developed land and buildings (which should be developed before greenfield sites), then urban extensions and finally around nodes in good public transport corridors. Sites should be located so as to be accessible to jobs and services by means other than the car, use spare capacity in existing infrastructure, help to build communities and take account of physical and environmental constraints. The provision of more housing in town centres is encouraged. Local planning authorities are advised to make the best use of land and seek developments of between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare and higher densities close to good public transport corridors. Rather than the previous approach of 'predict and provide' for new housing, the guidance encourages a 'plan – monitor – manage' approach, where the housing requirements and the ways in which they are to be met are kept under regular review;
 - iii) promote good design in order to create attractive high quality environments where people will want to live.

Regional Policy Background

- 8.7 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) carries forward the themes established by central government. Particular emphasis is given to meeting future development needs without perpetuating the trend for dispersed and land-extensive patterns of development, especially as the population is likely to consist of a higher proportion of one and two person households. A key feature of the guidance is to concentrate development in urban areas and achieve urban renaissance, so the

towns and cities are more attractive places in which to live, work and engage in cultural and leisure activities.

- 8.8 RPG9 requires that 39,000 dwellings should be provided each year between 2001 and 2006 in the area of the South East outside London. Oxfordshire is to provide 2,430 dwellings a year. Full use should be made of urban land, and outside London at least 60% of development should be on previously developed sites or should occur through the conversion of existing buildings. A range of house sizes and tenures is to be provided and a provisional indicator is that outside London 18,000–19,000 affordable houses should be provided each year. This is almost 50% of the annual provision. The draft South East Plan to 2026, which is likely to be approved in 2008, proposes a higher level of housing development for Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 8.9 The housing policies in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011, which pre-dated the regional guidance referred to above, required that 35,500 dwellings be provided in the county between 1996 and 2011. This was slightly less than the figure in RPG9. The Vale had to accommodate some 5,750 dwellings over this period, of which 500 were to be located to the west of Didcot as part of a major expansion of the town. In the 2011 and 2016 Structure Plans the main locations for housing in the county are Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney. Elsewhere most new housing development should take place in settlements where a reasonable range of employment services and community facilities exist or can be provided. Significant additional developments should be avoided where they are likely to result in cars commuting to urban areas and where travel needs are unlikely to be well served by public transport. Provision is to be made for a variety of dwellings in terms of location, size and density, including affordable housing. Proposals which make effective use of the housing stock will be encouraged. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2016 requires that some 7,150 homes be provided in the Vale between 2001 and 2016, and names Grove as one of the main locations for housing development in the county where some 2,100 homes should be built.

Local Consultation

- 8.10 The Local Plan Issues Report, published in August 2000, sought the views of local people on a number of housing issues the Council would need to address. The responses showed a majority of people in support of:
- concentrating development at the Vale's five main settlements. However, there was no clear view as to whether the development required on greenfield sites should be spread on a range of sites or concentrated in one location, such as west of Grove;
 - new building not being allowed to extend the built-up areas of villages into the surrounding countryside;
 - allowing groups of up to nine dwellings to be built on sites in the larger villages, but restricting developments to sites for one or two dwellings in the smaller

- villages;
- promoting well designed, higher density developments, although there were concerns that high density housing can harm communities and the environment if they are not planned with care; and
- the provision of more small residential units.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The New Housing to be Provided in the Vale to 2011

The Amount of New Housing

- 8.11 Significant progress has already been made in providing the housing requirements specified for the Vale in the Structure Plan to 2011. Table 8.1 below shows that at April 2005 4456 dwellings had already been built or had planning permission for development. An additional 80 dwellings are also likely to be provided on small sites not identified in the Plan (in accordance with policies H10–H13 below). A further 2126 dwellings are likely to be provided on the new allocations made in policies H2–H9 below. If all the development provided for in the plan was to take place by 2011 the Structure Plan requirement to 2011 would be exceeded. However, there are a number of areas of uncertainty which need to be taken into account. Some 80 dwellings are estimated to result from development on sites which cannot yet be identified, and 1550 dwellings are proposed on four greenfield sites, two of which have a complex package of services, facilities and infrastructure provision to be negotiated before development can commence. Some potential ‘over provision’ is therefore necessary to ensure that the Structure Plan housing provision can actually be met. The additional land identified in the plan will provide certainty and will count towards the housing required in the next plan period. This is consistent with government advice that local plans should identify ten years’ supply of housing land at the date of their adoption. The second and third phases of development on the former airfield at Grove, not included in the figures below, will also count towards the supply of housing land in the longer term.

Table 8.1 The number of dwellings to be provided in the Vale 1996 – 2011			
	Didcot Area (Vale)	Rest of the Vale	Total
Dwellings built 01.04.96 – 01.04.05		2784	2784
Dwellings with planning permission at 01.04.05		1672	1672
Estimate of additional dwellings to be built on small sites		80	80
Estimate of additional dwellings to be built on unidentified sites of 10 or more dwellings		0	0
Additional sites proposed for development in this plan :			
- within the main settlements or on previously developed sites		576	576
- greenfield on the edge of the main settlements	500	1050	1550
Total Supply 1996 - 2011	500	6162	6662
Structure Plan Requirement 1996 - 2011	500	5250	5750

The Distribution of New Housing

- 8.12 The sites proposed for development in this Plan take account of the findings of a detailed study of the capacity of the Vale's five main settlements to absorb more housing. Many of the sites are identified for future housing development within the built-up areas of Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage. All of these sites involve land which can be described as previously developed. Some are already the subject of planning applications or known developer interest and may well be permitted by the time the Plan is adopted. However, these sites do not provide sufficient housing to enable the Structure Plan requirement to be met and therefore additional greenfield land has had to be identified. The Council has decided to do this on the edges of the five main settlements in accordance with the general strategy for the location of development set out in Chapter 3 above. No new greenfield housing sites are identified on the edges of the Vale's villages and housing developments which extend their built-up areas will not be permitted.
- 8.13 The Council has carefully evaluated a range of sites on the edges of the five main settlements, sought the views of its Sustainability Panel and considered the responses to the consultation on the Issues Report and the first deposit Local Plan. As a result it has decided to concentrate most of the greenfield development needed to meet the Structure Plan requirement outside the Didcot area in two locations, on the former airfield west of Grove and the former nursery and existing cricket ground south east of Faringdon. In the Council's view development west of Grove offers an excellent opportunity to provide a high quality, sustainable development, which is reasonably well located in relation to the expanding job

opportunities at Milton Park, Harwell and Grove Technology Park. It offers the opportunity to build a community and support new physical and social infrastructure and will boost the regeneration of Wantage town centre. It is in a location which minimises the damage to natural resources and has the capacity to provide for housing beyond the end date of this Plan (see paragraph 8.16 below). The development of the former nursery and existing cricket ground at Faringdon will widen the choice in the location of new housing development and will support local services, facilities and businesses in the town. This will help maintain the town as a service centre for the western part of the Vale and is consistent with the Healthcheck and Action Plan for Faringdon (2002) supported by the District and Town Councils and the Countryside Agency. The alternative option, of spreading development on a range of smaller sites on the edges of all the five main settlements, was not chosen as it would be more harmful to physical and environmental factors, would be no more sustainable in transport terms and would be less successful in facilitating the provision of additional services and facilities to help build local communities. As a result of the Inspector's conclusions on the local plan inquiry that some limited new allocations are required to ensure that structure plan requirement to 2011 is met, two further sites have been identified for housing development on previously safeguarded land on the edge of Botley. Together these sites will provide an additional 280 dwellings in a highly sustainable location in terms of minimising the need to travel by car.

- 8.14 Table 8.2 below shows that of the houses to be built in the Vale from 1996, 74% will be in the five main settlements of the Vale and on the edge of Didcot. The three settlements taking the largest share of the growth will be Abingdon, Faringdon and Grove. The rural areas will accommodate 26% of the development (some 1736 dwellings) with the majority of this (87%) having already been built or with planning permission.

Table 8.2 The distribution of dwellings to be provided in the Vale 1996 – 2011					
	Dwellings built since 01.04.96 and dwellings permitted at 01.04.05	Dwellings to be provided on unidentified sites	Dwellings on new allocations not permitted as at 01.04.05	Total	% of total
Abingdon	1466		24	1490	22
Botley	150		490	640	10
Faringdon	604		437	1041	16
Grove	255		500	755	11
Wantage	469		0	469	7

Main settlements in the Vale sub total	2944	31	1451	4426 ¹	66
Didcot			500	500	8
The larger villages	1162	34		1196	18
The smaller villages	202	8	100	310	5
Elsewhere	148	7	75	230	3
Total	4456	80	2126	6662	100

¹ Total includes the 31 dwellings be provided on unidentified sites in the main settlements

The Managed Release of Sites

- 8.15 The government's good practice guide on the managed release of housing sites states that local authorities may wish to designate strategic sites which they consider to be essential to their strategy for meeting housing requirements over a longer term. This signals the foundation for future housing development in the area which may extend beyond the life of the plan. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2016 has proposed that Grove should be a location for major housing development to 2016 and beyond. The Council has thought carefully about the longer term potential offered by the Grove airfield site and considers that it should be designated a strategic site, where development will be planned to extend beyond the life of this Plan. The former airfield is a relatively homogenous site with few clear boundaries within it and once development starts in the area it would be difficult to resist its further spread. The Council has decided to identify the whole site, which could accommodate about 2,500 dwellings and associated facilities, so that it can be planned in a comprehensive way at the outset. This will be of benefit to the local community as it will give certainty in the future, and will enable the planned provision of services and infrastructure, which would be more difficult to achieve with a piecemeal approach to development. The airfield site is likely to be developed over a fifteen year period, from 2006 to 2021.

POLICY H1

LAND WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES H2–H12 BELOW TO ENABLE THE STRUCTURE PLAN HOUSING REQUIREMENTS TO 2011 TO BE MET. THE SITES IDENTIFIED IN POLICIES H2–H9 ARE DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.

New Housing Sites Identified in the Local Plan

- 8.16 Policies H2–H9 below identify sites for housing development. Some of these were permitted for development at 1 April 2005 (marked with *) and are generally included in the policies to give a more complete picture of where development is likely to occur in the district. If these permissions lapse the Council is likely to permit applications for their renewal, subject to detailed site considerations. The sites without an annotation were not permitted or allocated at April 2005, although some sites have been the subject of planning applications which the Council has resolved to permit, subject to details being finalised or a legal agreement being signed. An estimate of the number of dwellings that could be built on each site is included within the policies. These numbers only provide an indication of the likely scale of development and are not binding on the Council. The figures may be increased or decreased in the light of detailed design considerations when a planning application is made. The sites are shown on the proposals map and more detailed supplementary planning guidance has been prepared for the former nursery site at Faringdon and the strategic site west of Grove.

Housing Sites in Abingdon

- 8.17 The nine sites identified for development in Abingdon under policy H2 below are all on previously developed land within the built-up area of the town. Planning applications have been submitted on all the sites and at 1 April 2005 the Council had resolved to grant permission on all except that to the rear of the Police Station in Colwell Drive. These sites will be expected to provide high quality, high density housing commensurate with a historic market town location.

POLICY H2

THE FOLLOWING SITES IN ABINGDON (AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) ARE IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

<i>Site Ref</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Dwellings to 2011</i>
i) PENLON, THE VINEYARD *	90
ii) THE FORMER BRITISH GAS SITE, THE VINEYARD *	49
iii) REAR OF THE POLICE STATION, COLWELL DRIVE	24
iv) THE FORMER MALTINGS, THE VINEYARD *	90
v) CALDECOTT SCHOOL, SAXTON ROAD *	80
vi) THE RED LION, THE VINEYARD *	20
vii) 2 – 12 BERRY CROFT *	10
viii) SOUTH ABINGDON COMMUNITY CENTRE *	12
ix) HALF OF THE THAMES VIEW INDUSTRIAL ESTATE SOUTH OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL CAR PARK AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME FOR A MIXED HOUSING	

* *Sites with planning permission for ten or more dwellings at 1 April 2005*

Housing Sites in Botley

- 8.18 The Timbmet site at Cumnor Hill, Botley, will become available for redevelopment during the Plan period. The site is in a highly sustainable location, being close to a wide range of jobs, services and public transport facilities. Timbmet occupies some 8 hectares of land, of which some 3 hectares are in the Oxford Green Belt and part of the site is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSS1). The Council proposes that the part of the site fronting Cumnor Hill, which is not in the Green Belt or designated an SSS1, should be developed for housing. At an average of 40 dwellings per hectare, this part of the site could accommodate some 180 dwellings. The southern part of the site, which is within the Oxford Green Belt, should be restored to open space with access for the public. The removal of the large sheds and open storage areas will improve the visual amenities of the Green Belt and its openness. The redevelopment of part of the site for housing gives an opportunity for providing much needed affordable housing in the area and will help to redress the imbalance between jobs and housing in the Oxford area. The Council has resolved to permit housing on the nursery school and Timbmet sites. Following the Inspector's report on the Local Plan the Council has accepted his recommendations to allocate the formerly safeguarded land at Tilbury Lane and Lime Road for housing development to provide 280 dwellings in a highly sustainable location in terms of minimising the need to travel by car. The Tilbury Lane site is greenfield land and that at Lime Road is partly previously developed.

POLICY H3

THE FOLLOWING SITES IN BOTLEY (AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) ARE IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

	Estimated number of dwellings to 2011
i) THE TIMBMET SITE AT CUMNOR HILL FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN SPACE	180
ii) THE NURSERY SCHOOL SITE, ELMS ROAD	30
iii) 82 – 86 CUMNOR HILL *	14
iv) LAND SOUTH OF THE A420 (BOTH SIDES OF TILBURY LANE)	150
v) LAND SOUTH OF LIME ROAD	130

* Site with planning permission at April 2005

Housing Sites in Faringdon

- 8.19 Policy H4 below identifies two sites for housing development, at Swan Lane and the Tennis Club, on previously developed land within the built-up area of the town. The policy makes provision for housing development on two sites on the edge of the town. The first includes the properties of Winslow and Coxwell House to the east of Coxwell Road and the second, much larger site, involves land between Stanford Road and Park Road on the cricket pitch and former nursery. On this site B1 business uses will be permitted to the south of the housing, and access will be taken from Park Road. The site will only be permitted as part of a comprehensive scheme for housing and employment in association with an extension to the Folly Park (see policies E3iv and L13). Contributions will need to be made to improve the services and facilities in the town in accordance with policy DC8 of this plan. Supplementary planning guidance sets out detailed development principles and guidance.

POLICY H4

THE FOLLOWING SITES IN FARINGDON (AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) ARE IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

<i>Site Ref</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Dwellings to 2011</i>
i) SWAN LANE*	66
ii) THE TENNIS CLUB, PROVIDED AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE SITE IS AVAILABLE *	10
iii) LAND AT WINSLOW AND COXWELL HOUSE, COXWELL ROAD	37

DEVELOPMENT ON THE FOLLOWING SITE WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME INCLUDING HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, AN EXTENSION TO FOLLY PARK AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ACCESS TO THE PARK. NO DEVELOPMENT WILL BE ALLOWED ON THE CRICKET GROUND UNTIL AN ALTERNATIVE FACILITY OF EQUAL OR BETTER QUALITY IS AVAILABLE FOR USE.

iv)	THE CRICKET GROUND AND FORMER NURSERY	400
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* *Sites with planning permission at April 2005*

Strategic Housing Site West of Grove

- 8.20 Paragraphs 8.13 and 8.15 outline the reasons why the Council has decided to designate the former airfield west of Grove as a strategic housing site to last beyond this plan period. The proposal is in conformity with the Oxfordshire Structure Plan to 2016 which proposes Grove as a location for major housing development. It is envisaged that the development will occur in three broad

phases: 500 dwellings to be built between 2006 and 2011, 1000 dwellings between 2011 and 2016 and 1000 dwellings between 2016 and 2021.

- 8.21 The Council wishes to see a distinctive, high quality, sustainable development on the site where people will be pleased and proud to live. The Council recognises that development of this scale will be a very large addition to the community of Grove and will also impact on people living in Wantage and East Challow. For these reasons the Council will work with the local communities, the developer and those providing and managing the infrastructure and services to plan the new development in a way which integrates with and benefits the existing communities. The Council will seek funding for a community development worker and information centre to aid the process of integration throughout the site's development. Grove is a settlement which has developed in a piecemeal way, particularly as a result of the planning permissions that were granted on appeal in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a consequence it lacks many of the services and facilities that a settlement of its size (about 8,000 people) could expect and many of the services and facilities it does have, such as primary schools and community centres, are operating at capacity. For these reasons the Council will require that many of the services and facilities detailed in policy H5 below are provided at an early stage of the development. Although it will not be possible to provide everything at the beginning, the Council will be working with the existing community, the developer and the service providers (such as for health, education, libraries, sport and leisure facilities and community buildings) to seek ways of ensuring that the new residents have access to the facilities they need without overburdening the existing facilities in Grove. The phased provision of adequate services and facilities for the new residents must be guaranteed before the Council will grant planning permission for any development on the site. This will be achieved by conditions on the planning permissions and appropriate legal agreements with prospective developers.
- 8.22 In accordance with policy H16 below, the Council will be seeking about 50% of the dwellings on the site to have one or two bedrooms to meet the needs of the increasing number of small households. It will also seek that 10% of the dwellings are developed to lifetime home standards. 40% of the dwellings should be affordable for local people in accordance with the requirements of policy H17 below and the dwellings should be distributed evenly through the site. Further information on this is available in the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on affordable housing. Within these requirements the Council would also like to see the provision of housing for the elderly, with warden facilities, that would be suitable to rent or buy.
- 8.23 The Council envisages an attractive and vibrant local centre at the heart of the new development which will provide a range of uses including shops, a library, a civic open space (which could include a paved pedestrian area and garden), an indoor sports hall, a community centre, provision for pre-school children, a primary school, small offices and business premises, live-work units where the commercial use at street level would be linked internally to a dwelling at the upper floor levels and

closed circuit television for security purposes. A pub, wine bar or café would provide a valuable focus for the new development. Where possible, residential units should be provided on upper floors above these buildings where the design requirements indicate this would be appropriate. This could be above the library, shops and offices. Such dwellings would be particularly suitable for single person households and those without children.

- 8.24 The development should provide for the needs of pre-school children in the form of a building that can be used by young children and parents, and the need for crèche and day care facilities for working parents should also be investigated. Two primary schools will be provided, one of which will be required in the early stages of development as the existing primary schools are already operating over capacity. The question of whether the existing schools in Grove could be expanded on a temporary basis to take the very first children will be investigated. The issue of secondary education in the Grove and Wantage area has been the subject of much debate locally. King Alfred's Community and Sport College in Wantage currently operates on three separate sites which is far from ideal. The County Council, as education authority, is currently exploring a number of options to improve the situation, including the provision of a new school campus in Grove or a single new school to serve the needs of both Grove and Wantage pupils. Inevitably, the decision will be influenced by the District Council's decision to propose major development at Grove. It will not be possible for the children of secondary school age from the proposed development to be accommodated satisfactorily within the present form of the King Alfred's school. However, it is not for the Local Plan to express a view or take a decision on one of the options. The task is to ensure that land is identified, as necessary, to meet the future educational needs, in whatever form they are to be addressed, and to make sure that new development in the area makes appropriate financial contributions towards the agreed provision. Policy H5 below requires that a secondary school is provided as part of the new development. The form this should take will be the subject of discussion between the education authority and the local communities. An opinion poll carried out for the County Council in 2003 showed the majority of the community to be in favour of the two secondary schools option with one school located in each community. Ideally the Council would like to see a secondary school located on the edge of the local centre to improve its vitality and diversity. However, if a single new school is to be provided for Grove and Wantage, it would be preferable to locate this closer to Wantage, rather than within the centre of the new development. This will be the subject of further discussion.
- 8.25 The development site should contain a network of open spaces for children's play, playing fields, landscaping areas and a buffer zone to the noisy uses which take place on Grove Technology Park. As the site currently has few trees on it, it will be important for new planting to create smaller, more enclosed spaces to make a comfortable living environment. Opportunities should be taken to create green corridors and new wildlife habitats to benefit the biodiversity of the area. Civic spaces should also be created within the development which could comprise areas

of paved pedestrian areas and public gardens. There is also a need to provide space for informal recreation, such as walking, jogging, picnicking and flying kites, and a need to keep an open area between the two communities of Grove and Wantage to maintain their separate identities. Facilities such as a play wall, a multi-purpose, all-weather ball-game area or hang-out area will be necessary for teenagers, and public art projects should be provided in accordance with policy DC4. The need for allotment land and cemetery space should also be considered.

- 8.26 Policy H5 below seeks a safe and convenient network of movement corridors (for cars, buses, cyclists and pedestrians) within the site. This should be accessible to all users, including those with impaired mobility, in accordance with policy DC5. It will also be important to link the development to existing facilities in Grove and Wantage, including the proposed rail station, the health centre in Mably Way, Grove Technology Park and Wantage town centre. In particular the Council will seek effective measures to minimise traffic using the narrow and congested roads in Grove to gain access to the A338, and those through Charlton village to avoid the town centre. The realignment of Denchworth Road south of Grove to Mably Way, or the provision of an alternative road, to provide a convenient alternative route and an attractive approach to the major new development area will be necessary. Traffic from the site could impact on settlements outside Grove and Wantage, including East Challow, East Hanney and Denchworth, for example. The Council will seek to ensure these communities are not adversely affected by traffic from the development. Financial contributions will be sought for improvements to the A338 north of Grove and the A417 east of Wantage to improve highway safety. Contributions will also be necessary to improve the accesses to the A34 (see the transport chapter on the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy) and to improve public transport services to Wantage and the surrounding major employment areas.
- 8.27 The existing roads in Grove and Wantage are not capable of accommodating all the traffic from the development without seriously harming the amenities of existing residents or jeopardising highway safety. Significant improvements are likely to be necessary which will need to be the subject of further consultation. Excellent footpath and cycle and public transport links to the rest of Grove will need to be created and improvements to the Mably Way/A338 junction provided to increase the attractiveness of the southern link to the A338 in the first phase of the development to 2011 (500 dwellings). The second phase from 2011 to 2016 (1,000 dwellings) will include traffic management measures to seriously deter vehicles from using the existing roads within Grove. A new road from the site to the A338 north of Grove will be required to be started early in the second phase of development and completed before any more than 1,500 dwellings in total have been built on the site. In the third phase of the development from 2016 to 2021 (1,000 dwellings) it will also be necessary for contributions to be made towards the construction of a new relief road scheme for Wantage, the routing, phasing and timing of which will be determined through the Wantage and Grove Area Strategic Transport Study (see policy TR1 in chapter 5).

- 8.28 Financial contributions will be required to improve off-site facilities such as the transport measures outlined above and other facilities in Grove and Wantage, including for example the swimming pool at Wantage Leisure Centre. Improvements may be needed to Wantage Fire Station unless alternative facilities such as sprinklers, can be provided, or it may be preferable to establish a new base for the emergency services, more conveniently located to serve the new development and the existing communities. The development will also be expected to link to footpaths and cycleways in the surrounding area. This will include to Grove, Wantage and the surrounding villages. Two such links will be along the Letcombe Brook and the Wilts and Berks Canal (see Chapter 10) where contributions will be sought to help with its restoration. Given the amount of land still available for development on Grove Technology Park and the potential for job creation at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, no new employment land is identified in the Grove and Wantage area in the Plan beyond the small offices and business premises in the mixed-use local centre. However, this will be reviewed when the plan is rolled forward.
- 8.29 To ensure these requirements come together in a way which achieves a high quality, sustainable development, the Council will require that the development takes place in accordance with comprehensive development principles and guidelines which will include such matters as: design quality, accessibility and permeability, integration and inclusion, environmental protection and resource conservation, infrastructure and service provision, timescales and phasing. An outline of the development principles and guidelines is contained in supplementary planning guidance for the site and all planning applications will be expected to comply with it.
- 8.30 The implementation of the comprehensive development principles and guidelines will require all the landowners and developers on the site to work together. Ideally this would be a single body or a consortium of developers that would assume responsibility for all stages of planning, designing and implementing the development. If the site were developed by a number of developers sharing no common purpose it would be difficult to ensure the delivery of a high quality, sustainable development, with the services provided when needed by the new population. Accordingly the Council is committed to working with the developer, the local communities and service providers to achieve these objectives. Within the overall concept, a diversity of design will be sought through the establishment of different character areas. The Council recognises that the site will be built by different developers who will bring their own flavour to the site but this must be consistent with the overall design concept.
- 8.31 The development will be able to fund the majority of the measures outlined above. However, while the development could fund a new secondary school to serve the children on the new development, it could not reasonably be expected to provide the land and fund all the new buildings for major new secondary school to serve the secondary school children in both Grove and Wantage, or the Wantage relief road

scheme. The Council will therefore expect the developers and service providers to enter into partnerships where this is necessary to achieve the proper provision of services for the community as a whole. Most of the facilities on the site should be provided by the developer during the course of building the site or should be funded by the developer in total. A commuted sum will also be sought to cover the on-going maintenance costs of the facilities provided on the site in accordance with policy DC8. For the facilities to be provided away from the site, the Council will seek financial contributions, secured through a legal agreement in accordance with Circular 05/2005.

POLICY H5

THE FORMER AIRFIELD WEST OF GROVE IS IDENTIFIED AS A STRATEGIC HOUSING SITE WHERE DEVELOPMENT WILL LAST BEYOND THE LIFETIME OF THIS PLAN. PROPOSALS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES WHICH ACHIEVE A DISTINCTIVE HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WHICH WILL INTEGRATE SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE EXISTING VILLAGE AND ITS COMMUNITY AND WHERE ALL NECESSARY ON-SITE AND OFF-SITE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS ARE MET. THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES TO SERVICE THE NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO BE PROVIDED AT THE EARLIEST PRACTICABLE STAGE OF THE DEVELOPMENT. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE WILL INCLUDE THE ON-SITE PROVISION OF:

- i) ABOUT 2500 DWELLINGS TO 2021, OF WHICH SOME 500 DWELLINGS WILL BE BUILT BY 2011. THE LAND DEVELOPED FOR HOUSING (ABOUT 62.5 HECTARES) WILL BE AT 40 DWELLINGS PER HECTARE AVERAGE NET DENSITY OVER THE SITE AS A WHOLE;**
- ii) A MIX OF DWELLING TYPES AND SIZES IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY H16 BELOW;**
- iii) 40% OF THE DWELLING UNITS TO BE AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY H17, WITH THE UNITS DISTRIBUTED EVENLY THROUGHOUT THE AREA USED FOR HOUSING;**
- iv) HOUSING SUITABLE FOR THE ELDERLY, WITH WARDEN CONTROL, IF APPROPRIATE TO THE IDENTIFIED NEED;**
- v) A MIXED USE LOCAL CENTRE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL TO INCLUDE**
 - a) A PRIMARY SCHOOL**
 - b) A COMMUNITY CENTRE OF AT LEAST 1400 SQUARE METRES**
 - c) AN INDOOR COMMUNITY SPORTS HALL AND HARD SURFACED AREAS FOR SPORT**
 - d) A LIBRARY**

- e) LOCAL SHOPS AND RETAIL SERVICES, INCLUDING A SUPERMARKET AND FURTHER SMALL PREMISES INCLUDING AT LEAST A PHARMACY, A POST OFFICE AND A PUBLIC HOUSE, CAFÉ OR WINE BAR (NOT LESS THAN 1000 SQUARE METRES IN TOTAL)
 - f) SMALL PREMISES WITHIN CLASS B1 OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER
 - g) LIVE-WORK UNITS WITH INTERNAL ACCESS BETWEEN THE WORKSPACE AND A DWELLING AT UPPER FLOOR LEVEL
 - h) RESIDENTIAL USES ON THE UPPER STOREYS OF USES d–g) ABOVE, WHERE APPROPRIATE
 - i) A PRIMARY CIVIC SPACE INCLUDING A PAVED PEDESTRIAN AREA AND PUBLIC GARDEN
 - j) FACILITIES FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN
 - k) PARKING FOR CARS, MOTORCYCLES, MOPEDS AND CYCLES AND
 - l) CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION;
- vi) AN ADDITIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOL;
- vii) A SECONDARY SCHOOL;
- viii) FACILITIES FOR TEENAGERS;
- ix) A NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES LINKED BY SAFE AND CONVENIENT PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ROUTES TO THE LOCAL CENTRE AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE TO INCLUDE
- a) EQUIPPED AND INFORMAL CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS WITHIN OR CLOSE TO THE LAND DEVELOPED FOR HOUSING (ABOUT 5 HECTARES)
 - b) CIVIC SPACES (ABOUT 3 HECTARES)
 - c) PLAYING FIELDS FOR OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPORT (ABOUT 11.25 HECTARES)
 - d) A COMMUNITY PARK (OF SOME 23 HECTARES)
 - e) STRUCTURAL LANDSCAPING AREAS AND A BUFFER ZONE TO GROVE TECHNOLOGY PARK (OF SOME 12.5 HECTARES);
- x) A PUBLIC ART PROJECT OR PROJECTS;
- xi) MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE THE EFFICIENT USE OF ENERGY, WATER AND OTHER RESOURCES;
- xii) SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE WORKS;

- xiii) A NETWORK OF FOOTPATHS, CYCLE TRACKS, ROADS AND BUS ROUTES AND ASSOCIATED PROVISION WITHIN THE SITE WITH CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING AND FUTURE NETWORKS;
- xiv) THE REALIGNMENT OF DENCHWORTH ROAD OR AN ALTERNATIVE ROAD SOUTH OF GROVE TO MABLY WAY IN THE FIRST PHASE OF THE DEVELOPMENT;
- xv) A NEW ROAD FROM THE SITE TO THE A338 NORTH OF GROVE TO BE STARTED EARLY IN THE SECOND PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMPLETED BEFORE ANY MORE THAN 1,500 DWELLINGS IN TOTAL HAVE BEEN BUILT ON THE SITE;
- xvi) FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE SOUGHT TOWARDS THE FOLLOWING MEASURES THAT WILL NOT BE PROVIDED ON THE SITE INCLUDING:
 - a) THE PROVISION OF OFF-SITE FOOTPATHS AND CYCLE TRACK LINKS, ROAD IMPROVEMENTS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES IN GROVE, WANTAGE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA. THESE WILL INCLUDE
 - MEASURES TO MINIMISE TRAFFIC FROM THE DEVELOPMENT USING DENCHWORTH ROAD AND OXFORD LANE WITHIN THE CURRENT BUILT-UP AREA OF GROVE TO ACCESS THE A338, AND HARCOURT ROAD, HARCOURT WAY AND CHARLTON VILLAGE ROAD THROUGH WANTAGE
 - IMPROVING THE LINKS FROM THE SITE TO FACILITIES IN GROVE AND WANTAGE, INCLUDING TO THE PROPOSED RAIL STATION, THE HEALTH CENTRE IN MABLY WAY, WANTAGE TOWN CENTRE AND GROVE TECHNOLOGY PARK
 - IMPROVING CYCLE LINKS TO MILTON PARK AND THE HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS
 - IMPROVING THE A338 NORTH OF GROVE, THE A417 EAST OF WANTAGE AND ACCESSES TO THE A34
 - A RELIEF ROAD SCHEME FOR WANTAGE;
 - b) THE PROVISION OF IMPROVED PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES AND ASSOCIATED FACILITIES (INCLUDING BUS PRIORITY MEASURES AND HIGH QUALITY BUS WAITING FACILITIES) TO
 - THE PROPOSED RAIL STATION AT GROVE
 - WANTAGE AND THE MAIN EMPLOYMENT AREAS AT THE HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS, MILTON PARK, ABINGDON AND OXFORD; AND

- c) **ENHANCING EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES IN GROVE AND WANTAGE INCLUDING WANTAGE SWIMMING POOL AND FIRE STATION AND THE RESTORATION OF THE WILTS AND BERKS CANAL.**

Housing Sites in Wantage

- 8.32 Policy H6 below identifies three sites for housing in Wantage, all of which are on previously developed land within the town. All of the sites had planning permission at April 2005. These sites will be expected to provide high quality developments at densities appropriate to their location close to the town centre. The reorganisation of the secondary school could lead to additional brownfield sites being made available for development in the longer term.

POLICY H6

THE FOLLOWING SITES IN WANTAGE (AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) ARE IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

<i>Site Ref</i>	<i>Estimated Number of Dwellings 2011</i>
i) C OF E INFANTS SCHOOL, CHURCH STREET*	20
ii) GARSTON LANE SCHOOL *	65
iii) NORTH OF LIMBOROUGH ROAD*	24
* <i>Sites with planning permission for ten or more dwellings at 1 April 2005</i>	

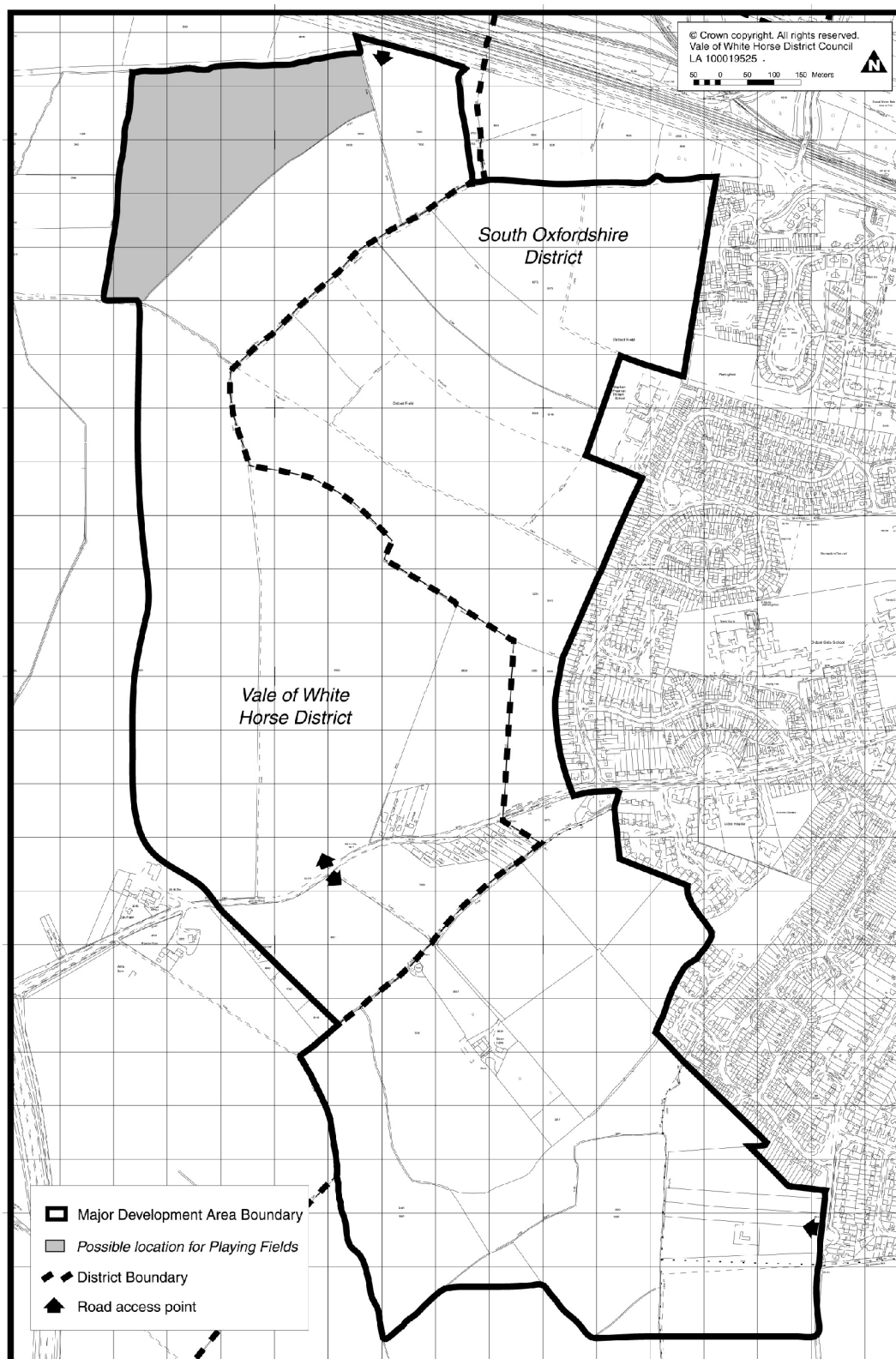
Major Development West of Didcot

- 8.33 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan proposes major housing development at Didcot adjoining the western edge of the town and extending north and south of the Wantage Road (B4493). Although Didcot is in South Oxfordshire, the administrative boundary between the two districts is close to the western edge of the town. In recognition of this, the Structure Plan requires some 500 dwellings of the western expansion of the town to be built in the Vale. In preparing their local plans the two councils worked together to determine the optimum form and layout of the development. The proposals map shows the land allocated for that part of the area which lies within the Vale. Fig 8.1 shows the whole extent of the area including that part which is allocated in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. It includes a 12 hectare field in the north western corner which is to be considered as a reserve allocation, solely for the purpose of accommodating playing fields, if such a facility cannot be located elsewhere within the area.

- 8.34 The Councils intend to deliver a high quality, sustainable, mixed-use development. This will necessitate landowners and/or developers with a legal interest in the land to work together. Ideally this would be as a single body – 'the Master Developer' or 'Promoter' – that would assume responsibility for all stages of the planning, design and implementation of the site. This is the approach advocated by the Urban Villages Forum as best able to achieve sustainable, high quality development. If the site was developed piecemeal by a number of landowners and developers sharing no common purpose then it would be difficult for the Councils to ensure the delivery of quality, sustainability and services when needed by the new resident population. The Councils will seek a legal agreement that would establish a single body to act as Master Developer.
- 8.35 The comprehensive planning of this major housing development should cover the following: the identity of the Master Developer; a site appraisal; the creation of walkable neighbourhoods; the disposition, function and design of all built development, public buildings, public urban space and public green space networks; a transport strategy; the definition of character areas; energy conservation and resource management; surface water drainage; protecting the historic environment; protecting and enhancing the ecology of the area; and the phased implementation of the development, delivery and management of infrastructure and services. Further details are contained in Appendix 5 to this Local Plan. These requirements are identical to those set out in South Oxfordshire's adopted Local Plan.
- 8.36 The criteria in policy H7 below set out the requirements for the development of the area. The average net housing density specified in criteria (i) is justified having regard to the need to make efficient use of the land and to the large proportion of small dwellings required in the area by criterion (ii). It is also justified by the intended delivery of very good accessibility to a wide range of services, facilities and employment opportunities in the site by all modes of transport.
- 8.37 The proportion of small dwellings in the general market housing sector required by criterion (ii) is justified by the local need for this type and category of dwellings as shown in the Councils' *Housing Needs Assessments*. The Council will seek about 10% 1 bedroom units, 40% 2 bedroom units, 30% 3 bedroom units and 20% 4 bedroom units and larger. As far as the mix of affordable housing is concerned the Councils will seek to ensure that the type and size of housing provided meets the need. The Council will also consider a mix of tenures depending on the identified needs and together with South Oxfordshire District Council will clarify the detailed requirements for different categories of affordable housing in the development area. This mix may change as the development progresses and the position alters.
- 8.38 The Councils will require the affordable housing required by criterion (iii) to be distributed evenly throughout the area in order to encourage the development of a mixed and balanced community as advocated in PPG3.

- 8.39 There will be three new neighbourhoods in the development area with the district centre being the focal point of the central neighbourhood as well as being the focal point of the development as a whole. Neighbourhood centres will be the focal points of the other two neighbourhoods.
- 8.40 These centres will enjoy good accessibility by all modes of transport and as such they are the appropriate locations for local services that generate many trips from new homes. The centres and the main movement corridors linking them are also the preferred locations for higher-density development containing large numbers of small dwellings in accordance with criterion (ii).
- 8.41 The requirement for the provision of new schools is based on information received from the County Council, acting as local education authority, and from the Learning and Skills Council. The school buildings should be focal points and key buildings in the townscape and should not be located away from street frontages in open campus settings where they would not fulfil these urban design functions.
- 8.42 The justification for the provision of three community centres on the site is based on the identified accommodation requirements of those voluntary and local authority bodies that intend to provide valued services to the new community. In planning the three community centres the Master Developer should have regard to the outline planning briefs that these bodies have supplied to South Oxfordshire District Council setting out their accommodation needs. The Councils, however, will seek to ensure by means of legal agreements that accommodation to be provided in all three community centres is not used exclusively by particular bodies. As with schools, the Councils will require the community centre buildings to act as focal points and key buildings in the townscape of the district and neighbourhood centres.
- 8.43 In planning the provision of indoor and outdoor community sports facilities the Councils will require the development to have regard to the background paper entitled *Didcot West Development: Sport and Recreation Facilities Planning Brief*, published by South Oxfordshire District Council. This recommends that all the community sports facilities be located at and adjacent to the new secondary school. This location will enable the provision of a dual-use sports facility maximising the benefits that can be obtained by both the school and the community in terms of the quality of the facilities to be provided and in terms of engaging young people in sports activity.

Fig 8.1 The Major Development Area West of Didcot



- 8.44 In accordance with PPS6, the Councils are proposing the establishment of convenience shops and other service uses in the district centre and two neighbourhood centres to meet people's day-to-day needs for convenience goods and services. The limitations on the number of such shop and service uses and the amount of floorspace to be provided are justified having regard to the position of the district and neighbourhood centres in the local hierarchy of centres. These local centres should be small in scale and the trade generated in them should not be such as to undermine the vitality and viability of Didcot town centre.
- 8.45 In order to enhance their vitality, the Councils will require the provision in the district centre and two neighbourhood centres of a number of two and three storey buildings with a mix of land uses in individual buildings. As a guideline, the Councils suggest the provision of about ten such individual buildings in mixed use in the district centre and three such buildings in each of the two neighbourhood centres. The reason for the limitation on the number and size of commercial uses is explained in paragraph 8.44 above. A proportion of these mixed use buildings will be 'live-work units' where the commercial use at street level would be linked internally to a dwelling at upper floor level. As a guideline, the Councils suggest that 50% of these mixed-use buildings should comprise 'live-work units'. Narrow-fronted buildings (5 to 8 metres wide) are required to create active frontages and a rich variety of buildings in the three centres.
- 8.46 The requirement for the provision of primary health care facilities located in the district centre is based on advice received from the local Primary Care Trust relating to the health care requirements of the new population.
- 8.47 The amount of land to be used for public space is based on the standards contained in the South Oxfordshire design guide and on the particular circumstances of the site. Public urban spaces will comprise focal points in the built-up area. Civic squares will have predominantly paved surfaces providing an open setting for buildings enclosing them. The focal points will also include public gardens with predominantly planted surfaces. The land uses to be accommodated in public greenspace are set out in criterion (vii) and the public realm functions are described in paragraph (iv) of Appendix 5. This requirement is justified particularly having regard to the need to provide generous space for informal recreation in an area containing a high proportion of small dwellings, some of which will lack private gardens. There is also a need to provide wide belts and blocks of woodland around the periphery of the site to screen and soften the landscape impact of buildings on an elevated and prominent site. These open areas will also form a buffer between the new development and nearby villages and the built development on the site will not extend further south than the line of the existing southern built-up limit of Didcot. The Council will seek commuted payments to cover the costs of maintaining the open spaces and other facilities in accordance with policy DC8 and paragraph 4.20. In the case of outdoor playing space this may be required in

perpetuity where the facilities are predominantly for the users of the associated development. The boundary of the major development area shown on figure 8.1 includes a field in the north western corner which may be necessary to accommodate playing fields if suitable land cannot be found elsewhere on the site. If it is not required for this purpose the land should not be developed and should remain in agricultural use.

8.48 It is important that as residents move into their new homes they are afforded the opportunity for ease of movement by all modes of transport from Didcot and within Didcot. Criterion (xi) will secure this objective by providing appropriate on and off-site transport infrastructure. The highway authority and the Highways Agency will advise on the transport measures required. These measures will be identified through the development of an integrated transport strategy for the Didcot area, having regard to the following objectives:

- To reduce reliance on the use of the private car by improving choices available to meet transport needs within Didcot and between Didcot and the surrounding settlements;
- To increase accessibility to facilities for those without cars and/or with mobility impairment;
- To promote the use of public transport (bus and rail);
- To identify and provide a safe, continuous and high quality network of pedestrian and cycle routes;
- To promote road safety and reduce the number and severity of road casualties;
- To promote efficient highway management including the identification of transport infrastructure as appropriate, and parking demand and supply;
- To improve provision for interchange between modes of transport; and
- To relieve traffic congestion where it is causing significant amenity or environmental problems.

8.49 The District Councils and Oxfordshire County Council should urgently consider the detailed options for an A4130 to A417 link, to include a Harwell by-pass. For the section between the A4130 and the B4493, this link should not require additional land outside the boundary of the major development area. The Council, together with South Oxfordshire District Council and the County Council, will be seeking the progression of measures identified in phase 2 of the provisional strategy as a matter of urgency. The provisional strategy proposes a range of transport measures which include a Harwell bypass in order to alleviate the impact of traffic arising from developments in the Didcot area. The Council considers that the provision of a Harwell by-pass is a priority.

POLICY H7

LAND WEST OF DIDCOT IS IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WHERE DEVELOPMENT CAN START BEFORE 1 APRIL 2006. PROPOSALS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF AND DESIGN STATEMENTS AND WHERE ALL NECESSARY ON-SITE AND OFF-SITE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS ARE MET. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE WILL INCLUDE:

- i) PROVISION OF ABOUT 3200 DWELLINGS OF WHICH ABOUT 500 DWELLINGS WILL BE LOCATED IN THE VALE OF WHITE HORSE DISTRICT. THE LAND DEVELOPED FOR HOUSING (ABOUT 80 HECTARES) WILL BE AT 40 DWELLINGS PER HECTARE AVERAGE NET DENSITY;**
- ii) A MIX OF DWELLING TYPES AND SIZES OF THE GENERAL MARKET HOUSING WITH ABOUT 50% SMALL (1 OR 2 BEDROOM) UNITS;**
- iii) PROVISION FOR AT LEAST 40% OF DWELLING UNITS TO BE AFFORDABLE HOUSING WITH THE UNITS DISTRIBUTED EVENLY THROUGHOUT THE AREA USED FOR HOUSING;**
- iv) PROVISION OF A DISTRICT CENTRE INCLUDING:**
 - a) A SECONDARY SCHOOL;**
 - b) A PRIMARY SCHOOL;**
 - c) A COMMUNITY CENTRE;**
 - d) AN INDOOR COMMUNITY SPORTS HALL;**
 - e) PLAYING FIELDS FOR OUTDOOR COMMUNITY SPORTS AND AN EQUIPPED CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA;**
 - f) PREMISES FOR A PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PRACTICE;**
 - g) LOCAL SHOPS AND RETAIL SERVICES, LIMITED TO USES WITHIN PART A OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER, INCLUDING A SMALL SUPERMARKET (ABOUT 500 SQUARE METRES) AND FURTHER SMALL UNIT PREMISES (ABOUT 1200 SQUARE METRES IN TOTAL);**
 - h) NARROW-FRONTED, MIXED-USE BUILDINGS GENERALLY MORE THAN TWO STOREYS IN HEIGHT. THE STREET-LEVEL USES IN THESE BUILDINGS WILL INCLUDE THE USES IN (g) ABOVE. A PROPORTION OF THESE MIXED-USE BUILDINGS WILL BE LIVE-WORK UNITS WITH INTERNAL ACCESS BETWEEN THE WORKSPACE AND A DWELLING AT UPPER FLOOR LEVEL; AND**
 - i) BUILDINGS IN RESIDENTIAL USE, WITHIN PART C OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER, GENERALLY NARROW-FRONTED AND MORE THAN TWO STOREYS IN HEIGHT.**

- v) **TWO NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES WITH EACH CENTRE INCLUDING:**
 - a) **A PRIMARY SCHOOL;**
 - b) **A COMMUNITY CENTRE;**
 - c) **LOCAL SHOPS AND RETAIL SERVICES, LIMITED TO USES WITHIN PART A OF THE USE CLASSES ORDER, IN SMALL UNIT PREMISES (ABOUT 500 SQUARE METRES IN TOTAL);**
 - d) **NARROW-FRONTED MIXED-USE BUILDINGS AS DESCRIBED IN H7 (iv) (h) ABOVE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SMALL SUPERMARKETS; AND**
 - e) **BUILDINGS IN RESIDENTIAL USE AS DESCRIBED IN (iv)(i) ABOVE;**
- vi) **PROVISION OF A NETWORK OF PUBLIC URBAN SPACES (NOT LESS THAN 8 HECTARES) INCLUDING A PRIMARY CIVIC SPACE IN THE DISTRICT CENTRE, SECONDARY CIVIC SPACES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES AND OTHER CIVIC SPACES WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREA LOCATED AT KEY JUNCTIONS IN THE MOVEMENT NETWORK;**
- vii) **PROVISION OF A NETWORK OF PUBLIC GREENSPACES (NOT LESS THAN 62 HECTARES) INCLUDING COMMUNITY OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE, CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS, PUBLIC GARDENS, OPEN GRASSLAND, WOODLAND, HEDGEROWS, WETLAND, PONDS AND WATERCOURSES A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE PUBLIC GREEN SPACE NETWORK WILL BE LOCATED AROUND THE WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EDGES OF THE BUILT-UP AREAS WITHIN THE SITE;**
- viii) **PROVISION OF CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS WITHIN THE LAND DEVELOPED FOR HOUSING;**
- ix) **PROVISION OF OFF-SITE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES INCLUDING, WHERE APPROPRIATE , FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS IMPROVING LIBRARY, ARTS, CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES IN DIDCOT TOWN CENTRE, IMPROVING COMMUNITY SPORTS FACILITIES AT DIDCOT WAVE LEISURE CENTRE, IMPROVEMENTS TO DIDCOT CIVIC HALL AND IMPROVEMENTS TO WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES IN OR NEAR DIDCOT;**
- x) **PROVISION OF OFF-SITE SURFACE WATER DRAINAGE WORKS; AND**
- xi) **PROVISION OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY TR2 AIMED AT ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRAVEL AND REDUCING THE NEED TO TRAVEL BY CAR INCLUDING:**

- a) **A MOVEMENT NETWORK OF FOOTWAYS, FOOTPATHS, CYCLETRACKS AND ROADS IN THE SITE, CONNECTING TO EXISTING AND PROPOSED NETWORKS AT THE SITE BOUNDARIES. THE INDICATIVE LOCATION OF ROAD NETWORK CONNECTIONS IS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP;**
- b) **FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENABLE THE PROVISION OF OFF-SITE FOOTWAY, FOOTPATH AND CYCLETRACK LINKS, ROAD IMPROVEMENTS AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES IN DIDCOT AND IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND VILLAGES AROUND DIDCOT AND ON THE A34 TRUNK ROAD MADE NECESSARY BY AND AS A CONSEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF;**
- c) **FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ENABLE THE PROVISION OF BUS SERVICES AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE TO AFFORD RESIDENTS ON THE SITE GOOD PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACCESS FROM DIDCOT AND WITHIN DIDCOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF.**

Housing on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus

- 8.50 The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus originally contained two areas of housing each with 100 pre-fabricated houses which have since been demolished. The adopted local plan 2001 allocated a site known as "Chilton Field" within the campus to replace these dwellings and allow for 275 dwellings in total; this is equivalent to a net increase of 75 dwellings. Planning permission was granted for this site, but it has now lapsed. Following the construction of the Diamond Synchrotron involving part of the site permitted for housing, the Council agreed that an alternative housing allocation should be made on land at the southern edge of the campus. It will be important to retain the eastern area, with its important trees, as open space and to provide substantial landscaping within the housing site to soften the impact of development on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the views from the Ridgeway in particular.

POLICY H8

LAND AT CHILTON FIELD FORMING PART OF THE HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS IS IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WHICH FOLLOWING THE DEMOLITION OF THE PRE-FABRICATED HOUSING WILL RESULT IN A NET INCREASE OF NO MORE THAN 75 DWELLINGS.

The former Dow Agro Sciences site in Letcombe Regis

- 8.51 The second site allocated for housing outside the towns is at the former Dow Agro Sciences in Letcombe Regis, where the house, lodge, stables and more modern research buildings and greenhouses have stood vacant since 2002. Although Letcombe Regis is one of the Vale's smaller villages with a very limited range of facilities where normally only a maximum of four small dwellings would be allowed, the Council accepts that a limited redevelopment for residential purposes could be more sustainable than a B1 business use on the site. However, great care will have to be taken to ensure that any redevelopment retains and enhances the Letcombe Brook corridor, provides new public open space, retains the existing trees and open paddocks and can be readily integrated into the village in both physical and visual terms. It will also be necessary for any scheme to protect the setting of the surrounding listed buildings and make a positive contribution to the conservation area, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the character and appearance of the village as a whole. Given the sensitivity of the surroundings, residential development on the site will only be permitted as part of a comprehensive scheme containing sufficient details to show that all the concerns raised above will be satisfactorily addressed. In addition to ensure that the redevelopment is no less sustainable than its previous use it will be necessary to contribute to on and off site infrastructure, and the volume of traffic generated should be no greater than if the site was reused for B1 purposes, preferably it should be less. To help achieve this, contributions, secured through a legal agreement, will be needed towards improving the bus service to Wantage. A proposal to redevelop the site as a continuing care retirement community, comprising care bedrooms, care suites and close care units, was permitted in July 2006.

POLICY H9

LAND AT THE FORMER DOW SITE AT LETCOMBE REGIS IS IDENTIFIED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT RESULTING IN A NET INCREASE OF NO MORE THAN 100 DWELLINGS FOLLOWING THE DEMOLITION OF THE FORMER EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURES. PROPOSALS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH A COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME FOR THE WHOLE SITE, INCLUDING LAND SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP TO BE RETAINED AS OPEN SPACE AND WHERE ALL NECESSARY ON SITE AND OFF SITE INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS ARE MET.

New Housing Development on Sites Not Identified in the Local Plan

- 8.52 The Council cannot identify all the sites that will be developed for housing in the coming years. A substantial number of dwellings will be provided on sites of less than 10 dwellings which are too small to allocate in the policies above or through the conversion of existing buildings and the subdivision of existing properties.

Others will be developed on sites which come forward as a result of the existing use ceasing, possibly as the result of the closure of a business, a school or a hospital for example. The redevelopment of the former Morlands Brewery in Abingdon and the former Yoplait Dairy in Grove are two recent examples of this.

- 8.53 The Local Plan makes provision for such unidentified sites to be developed in the plan period, both through a numerical assessment of their contribution (paragraph 8.11 above) and through a series of policies for the different types of settlements in the Vale. These reflect the Council's general strategy for locating most development in the five main settlements and limiting it elsewhere.

Development in the Five Main Settlements

- 8.54 In the five main settlements it is likely that, even though a detailed capacity study has been undertaken, unexpected opportunities will arise on sites that have not been taken into account in the Local Plan. In general the Plan has not identified sites such as private back gardens or where there is an existing, acceptable and well established use. Some sites which come forward may be significant in size but it may be possible to accommodate them successfully without harming the character and amenity of their surroundings if the proposal is sensitively designed. The Council will be keen to ensure that new housing developments within the settlements do not create an impression of town cramming, either because the new buildings are over-dominant or because they will result in the loss of public open space or open space which is important to the character of the neighbourhood. The Council will look carefully at the cumulative effects of infill development on the character of residential areas and may oppose further schemes it considers damaging. Development which would result in the loss of local facilities, including areas of informal open space, will not be permitted. (See also policies GS5, CF1, CF5, L1–L4, L7 and E14).

POLICY H10

WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE, AS DEFINED BY THE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED:

- i) IT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF FACILITIES IMPORTANT TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING AREAS OF INFORMAL PUBLIC OPEN SPACE; AND**
- ii) IT MAKES EFFICIENT USE OF THE LAND, AND THE LAYOUT, MASS AND DESIGN OF THE DWELLINGS WOULD NOT HARM THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA.**

Development in the Larger Villages

- 8.55 During the Plan period many applications will be made to build a single or a small group of houses in the villages listed in policy H11 below. The size and physical character of these villages and the range of services they possess (generally a

shop, post office, community facilities, a primary school and access to a reasonable public transport service and local employment opportunities) suggest they may be capable of accepting some small-scale development, provided the sites are chosen with care and the housing is designed and laid out with due regard to the character of the village concerned. Many of the villages have conservation areas where the interrelationship between buildings, open spaces and features such as walls, trees and hedgerows is fundamental to the character of the area, and this will limit opportunities for even small-scale development. Some villages have absorbed significant amounts of development and are now reaching their capacity. The Council will carefully consider the impact of new proposals on the character of the village concerned. The policies in the chapters containing the general policies for controlling development and the historic environment will be particularly important in this respect. Carefully designed proposals can have significant benefits where they result in the removal of an unneighbourly use or an unsightly building.

- 8.56 Housing in the villages listed in policy H11 below will be limited to sites within their built-up areas which can be developed in a way which safeguards their character. Applications will not be permitted outside the built-up area of the villages. Development will be limited to no more than fifteen dwellings on sites of up to 0.5 ha in size. This is necessary to ensure that the character of villages is not harmed by large-scale proposals and that significant amounts of development are not located in settlements where people are dependent on the private car when travelling to job opportunities and a wider range of services and facilities. It is also consistent with the Structure Plan policies to restrain the overall level of development in the county. Given the particular importance of community facilities and local jobs to the sustainability of villages care will be taken to ensure that new housing development would not result in the loss of facilities that would otherwise have been retained. This is consistent with policies GS5, CF1, CF5, L1-L4, L7 and E14.

POLICY H11

WITHIN THE BUILT UP AREAS OF THE VILLAGES LISTED BELOW, NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON SITES OF UP TO ABOUT 0.5 HA IN TOTAL SIZE AND NOT MORE THAN 15 DWELLINGS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED:

- i) THE SCALE, LAYOUT, MASS AND DESIGN OF THE NEW DWELLINGS WOULD NOT MATERIALLY HARM THE FORM, STRUCTURE OR CHARACTER OF THE SETTLEMENT; AND**
- ii) IT WOULD NOT RESULT IN THE LOSS OF FACILITIES IMPORTANT TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING AREAS OF FORMAL OR INFORMAL OPEN SPACE.**

THE VILLAGES ARE:

APPLETON	KINGSTON BAGPUIZE WITH SOUTHMOOR
ASHBURY	MARCHAM
BLEWBURY	MILTON (INCLUDING MILTON HEIGHTS)
CHILDREY	RADLEY
CUMNOR	SHRIVENHAM
DRAYTON	STANFORD-IN-THE-VALE
EAST CHALLOW	STEVENTON
EAST HANNEY	SUTTON COURTENAY
EAST HENDRED	UFFINGTON
HARWELL	WATCHFIELD
KENNINGTON	WOOTTON (BUT NOT WOOTTON OLD VILLAGE)

Development in the Smaller Villages

- 8.57 The Vale's smaller villages in policy H12 below have a lower order of services and facilities, and therefore a greater dependence on the private motor car, than those included in policy H11 above. For these reasons housing development will be limited to schemes for no more than four small dwellings. In the context of this policy schemes may include dwellings which are not overly large of up to three bedrooms where this is consistent with the objective of widening housing opportunity and choice. Restricting the number of dwellings is consistent with policies in the Structure Plan to restrain the overall level of development and avoid significant additional housing development where it is likely to result in people travelling to the urban areas by car. As in policies H10 and H11 above this does not mean that every space within the villages can be developed. The Council recognises that many spaces within settlements are important to their rural character. As in the villages listed in policy H11, the Council will consider the cumulative effects of individual schemes on the structure and character of the settlement and development will not be allowed outside the built-up area of the villages.

POLICY H12

WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF THE VILLAGES LISTED BELOW, NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WILL BE LIMITED TO SITES SUITABLE FOR NOT MORE THAN FOUR SMALL DWELLINGS, PROVIDED THE REQUIREMENTS SET OUT IN CRITERIA (i) – (ii) OF POLICY H11 ABOVE CAN BE MET.

THE VILLAGES ARE:

APPLEFORD	LITTLEWORTH
ARDINGTON	LOCKINGE
BUCKLAND	LONGCOT
CHILTON	LONGWORTH
FYFIELD	NORTH HINKSEY VILLAGE

KINGSTON LISLE
LETCOMBE BASSETT
LETCOMBE REGIS
LITTLE COXWELL

ROWSTOCK
SHELLINGFORD
UPTON
WEST HANNEY
WEST HENDRED

Development Elsewhere

- 8.58 Many of the Vale's smallest villages and hamlets have considerable character and being largely unaffected by change they contribute much to the overall rural character of the District. They also have very few services and facilities so people living there are almost entirely reliant on the private car to gain access to the jobs, services and facilities they need. However, there may be some very limited scope for further housing development in these smallest of the Vale's settlements, provided it is planned carefully. Given the constraints referred to above such development will be restricted to sites suitable for no more than one or two small dwellings. Particular care will be taken to ensure that such development would not cumulatively harm the structure and character of the settlement. The settlements where this policy will apply include the following: Baulking, Bourton, Buscot, Charney Bassett, Coleshill, Compton Beauchamp, Denchworth, Eaton Hastings, Fernham, Frilford, Garford, Goosey, Great Coxwell, Hinton Waldrist, Ildstone, Kingston Winslow, Lyford, Netherton, Pusey, Sparsholt, West Challow and Woolstone. However, the policy will not apply to very small groups of houses and ribbons of development in the rural areas, many of which had their origins in the early part of the twentieth century when planning controls did not exist. The intensification of these small groups and ribbons of housing would serve to exaggerate the effect of undesirable sporadic and ribbon development and new housing in these locations will only be permitted if it meets a clearly identified need in accordance with criterion b) in policy H13 below.
- 8.59 Policy H13 below confirms the approach set out in national guidance and the Structure Plan, that away from established settlements, and in small settlements with few services and facilities, development should be strictly controlled. This is in order to protect the quality of the countryside and the character of the Vale's smaller settlements and to minimise the need to travel, in particular by private car. The policy reflects the fact that these are not sustainable locations in which to build new houses.
- 8.60 With the exception of providing affordable rural housing in accordance with policy H18, the only occasions where permission will be given to build new houses outside existing settlements will be to meet the needs of an established viable rural enterprise genuinely requiring a countryside location (such as an agricultural or equestrian enterprise) which cannot be met in any other way. It will be necessary to establish whether it is essential for the proper functioning of the enterprise for a full-time worker to be available on-site at most times during the day and night and therefore for a new dwelling to be provided.

- 8.61 Where a new dwelling is justified, it should be carefully sited close to existing buildings and should be of a size commensurate with the established functional requirement. Dwellings which are unusually large in relation to the needs of the enterprise or unusually expensive to construct in relation to the income it can sustain will not be permitted. In some cases the Council may withdraw the permitted development rights attached to the new dwellings to prevent the construction of extensions and ancillary buildings within the curtilage. Conditions will always be imposed to ensure the dwelling meets the purpose for which it was originally justified and the Council will consider imposing occupancy conditions on other dwellings, not so controlled, on the unit. This will help protect the countryside against further pressures for new houses. As new dwellings in the countryside are only permitted where there is an exceptional justification, the Council will only allow the removal of an occupancy condition where it is satisfied that the dwelling is no longer needed, not only for the enterprise which originally justified it but also for the wider area. The Council will require evidence to show that the dwelling has been suitably marketed for a period of six months at a price which reflects its restricted occupancy. Proposals for a new dwelling which replaces an existing dwelling are covered by policy GS6 in the General Strategy Chapter.

POLICY H13

OUTSIDE THE BUILT UP AREAS OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES DEFINED IN POLICIES H10-H12 ABOVE, NEW HOUSES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED:

- a) AS INFILLING WITH NO MORE THAN ONE OR TWO SMALL NEW DWELLINGS WITHIN THE EXISTING BUILT UP AREA OF A SETTLEMENT OR;**
- b) IF PROVED TO BE ESSENTIAL TO MEET THE NEEDS OF AN AGRICULTURAL, ESQUESTRIAN OR OTHER RURAL ENTERPRISE GENUINELY REQUIRING A COUNTRYSIDE LOCATION.**

TO BE PERMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH b) ABOVE ANY NEW DWELLING MUST:

- i) BE LOCATED WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO AN EXISTING GROUP OF DWELLINGS, OR FARM OR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS, OR IN A WELL SCREENED LANDSCAPE SETTING;**
- ii) BE RELATED IN SIZE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ENTERPRISE; AND**
- iii) BE SUBJECT TO CONTROLS OVER OCCUPANCY TO ENSURE IT IS RETAINED FOR THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH IT WAS ORIGINALLY JUSTIFIED.**

APPLICATIONS TO REMOVE SUCH CONTROLS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY HAVE OUTLIVED THEIR USEFULNESS IN THE AREA AS A WHOLE.

The Efficient Use of Land and Buildings

8.62 The Council will encourage the efficient use of land and buildings for housing purposes through a range of policies including:

- i) identifying previously developed land for housing development (see policies H2–H4, H6, H8 and H9);
- ii) encouraging higher densities (see policies GS5 and H15);
- iii) enabling the change of use of existing buildings (see policies GS5, GS7 and GS8);
- iv) enabling the subdivision of existing dwellings (see policy H14);
- v) enabling the use of properties in town centres for residential purposes (see policies S4, S5 and S6).

While there are not many empty properties in the Vale, the Council will look at ways of bringing empty housing back into use. Policies for the sub-division of existing dwellings and housing densities are dealt with in more detail below.

The Sub-Division of Dwellings

8.63 With the increasing number of one and two person households and the high price of housing, there is an increasing trend towards the sub-division of existing residential properties into small dwellings (which can be in the form of flats). However, sub-divisions can give rise to significant changes in the external appearance of dwellings and their curtilage, especially where more off-street parking has to be provided and garden areas sub-divided. The Council will resist proposals which would harm the character of the existing building, or the character and appearance of the area, either on its own or cumulatively. To achieve accommodation of a satisfactory standard, particular attention needs to be paid to the provision of adequate living space, the layout of rooms, noise insulation measures, the availability of adequate parking within the site, the provision of garden or other amenity space and measures to minimise any adverse effect on the amenities of neighbouring properties.

POLICY H14

THE SUB-DIVISION OF PROPERTIES TO FORM ADDITIONAL DWELLINGS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

- i) **THE ACCOMMODATION WOULD BE COMPLETELY SELF-CONTAINED AND HAVE ADEQUATE LIVING SPACE, GARDEN OR PRIVATE AMENITY SPACE AND CAR PARKING PROVISION;**
- ii) **IT WOULD NOT HARM THE CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING OR THE SURROUNDING AREA; AND**

- iii) **THERE WOULD BE NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE OCCUPIERS OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES.**

Housing Densities

- 8.64 In accordance with government advice to seek the efficient use of land and policy GS5 above, houses should generally be built at more than 30 dwellings per hectare, especially in the urban areas where there is good access to a range of jobs, shops, services and other facilities. However, the Council recognises that it may be difficult to achieve higher densities on small and awkwardly shaped sites. Opportunities may also be limited in the rural areas where there is a need to respect the unique character of some villages and where the mechanisms for achieving higher densities, such as reducing off-street car parking, are less appropriate in the absence of good public transport. The policy below seeks a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare throughout the district wherever possible, a minimum of 40 dwellings per hectare in the five main settlements and a minimum of 50 dwellings per hectare in the three town centres and the district centre at Botley. This is consistent with the advice in PPG3: *Housing* and with the Council's own work on the impact of higher density housing. However, it is important that the design of new development is not compromised. High quality living environments must be created for new residents, and the impact of the development on the character of the surrounding area and the amenities of people in adjacent properties must be taken into account.

POLICY H15

DEVELOPMENT MUST PROVIDE FOR NET RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES OF AT LEAST

- i) **50 DWELLINGS PER HECTARE IN AND CLOSE TO THE CENTRES OF ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, AND WANTAGE**
- ii) **40 DWELLINGS PER HECTARE ELSEWHERE IN THE FIVE MAIN SETTLEMENTS AND AT DIDCOT AND**
- iii) **30 DWELLINGS PER HECTARE IN OTHER LOCATIONS**

PROVIDED THAT HIGH QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENTS CAN BE CREATED AND THERE WOULD BE NO HARM TO THE CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA OR THE AMENITIES OF ADJOINING PROPERTIES. DEVELOPMENTS THAT DO NOT MAKE EFFICIENT USE OF LAND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

Widening Housing Opportunity

Size of dwelling and lifetime homes

- 8.65 The government believes it is important to create mixed and inclusive communities which offer a choice of housing and life-style. It does not accept that different types of housing and tenures make bad neighbours. Policies H16–H22 seek to provide a variety of dwelling sizes, tenures and types that will meet the needs of existing and future residents. The number of one and two person households is expected to increase in the future and there is a need to increase the number of small dwellings available. This is especially important in an area of high house prices like the Vale, where people may not be able to afford the home of their aspirations. The Council's *Housing Needs Survey* shows that there will be a shortage of one and two bedroom dwellings in all tenure groups in the coming years. The consultants who prepared the survey considered that the shortage was so acute that the Council should be seeking 97% of the new dwellings in the owner occupied sector to have one or two bedrooms. However, the Council is concerned that this would not create mixed and balanced communities, particularly on larger developments. For these reasons it will generally require that at least 50% of new dwellings have two bedrooms or less, but in town centre locations, on sites which are suitable for higher density living, higher proportions may be appropriate.
- 8.66 In order to create inclusive communities the Council will seek a proportion of housing that is suitable for people with impaired mobility, as this can affect everyone at some stage in their lives. If an increasing proportion of the general housing stock can be easily adapted for people with disabilities, it will enable them to live as independently as possible in the community and reduce the need for costly adaptations to their existing homes when they become disabled. Although building regulations now require that the majority of new dwellings will have disabled access on the ground floor and ground floor toilets, there is no requirement to provide housing which is designed for disabled people throughout. There is very little housing available for people who use wheelchairs and, as the proportion of older people is expected to increase, the Council will require that 10% of housing on all sites over 10 dwellings are designed to meet lifetime homes standards. Such dwellings are suitable for people throughout their lives. Where flats are being provided, consideration should be given to installing lifts to the units above ground level. Only where there are overriding reasons why it is not possible to provide a satisfactory level access to the dwelling will this requirement be waived.

POLICY H16

THE COUNCIL WILL REQUIRE A VARIETY OF DWELLING TYPES AND SIZES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE EXISTING AND FUTURE POPULATION. IN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT THE EXPECTATION WILL BE THAT:

- i) **ON SITES REASONABLY CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING 10 OR MORE DWELLINGS IN SETTLEMENTS OF MORE THAN 3,000¹ PEOPLE, OR 5 OR MORE DWELLINGS IN SETTLEMENTS OF 3,000¹ PEOPLE OR LESS, ABOUT 50% OF NEW DWELLINGS SHOULD HAVE TWO BEDROOMS OR LESS; AND**
- ii) **ON SITES CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING 10 OR MORE DWELLINGS, 10% OF DWELLINGS SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO MEET LIFETIME HOMES STANDARDS.**

Affordable Housing

- 8.67 The government accepts that the community's need for affordable housing is a material consideration which the planning system should take into account. Planning Policy Guidance note 3: *Housing* advises that where there is evidence of a need for affordable housing, local plans should include a policy seeking an element of such housing on suitable sites. The policy should define what the authority regards as affordable, indicate how many affordable homes need to be provided throughout the plan area and establish the size of site to which the policy will apply. Government Circular 6/98 *Planning and Affordable Housing* states that generally affordable housing should only be sought on sites of 25 or more dwellings, except in inner London or where exceptional local constraints can be demonstrated, in which case the threshold could be reduced to 15 dwellings. In settlements with populations of 3,000¹ people or less, the government has also indicated that local planning authorities can adopt lower thresholds, based on assessments of local need and the available supply of land for housing.
- 8.68 The Vale is an area of high house prices relative to incomes where many people on low to average incomes find it difficult to rent or buy a house on the open market to meet their needs. The Council's *Housing Needs Survey* (April 2001), undertaken by Fordham Associates, indicated that over the following five years there would be a shortfall of around 860 affordable homes a year in the Vale, or 4,300 over the five year period. This is a substantial figure and it fully justifies the Council seeking a significant proportion of affordable housing throughout the district. On the basis of the *Housing Needs Survey*, and what can reasonably be negotiated, Fordham Associates recommended that the Council should seek to secure 40% affordable housing on all sites of 15 or more dwellings in settlements of over 3,000¹ people and on sites of five or more dwellings in settlements smaller than this. The Housing Needs Assessment Update (March 2005) indicated that over the following five years there would be a shortfall of around 845 affordable homes each year. This is still a substantial figure and is well in excess of the total number of homes to be built in the Vale and it fully justifies the policy. The Council will take into account the viability of the scheme including any exceptional costs in developing the site,

¹Those settlements with more than 3,000 people are Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage and Kennington.

the availability of public finance and the tenure mix of the affordable housing to be provided.

- 8.69 Affordable housing will be taken to be that which caters for people who are unable to buy or rent a home, suitable for their needs, on the open market. It will be provided with a subsidy to enable the asking price or rent to be substantially lower than prevailing market rates. Affordability can be defined in relation to local incomes and house prices and as a general guide it is reasonable to assume that households should not have to spend more than 30% of their net income on housing costs.
- 8.70 Given the restrictions on public sector housing finance, contributions from the increased land values obtained through the planning system are increasingly important for the delivery of affordable housing in the Vale. Fordham Associates recommended that fully serviced land should be transferred at zero cost. Developers can also sell dwellings at a price significantly below open market value. For the purposes of this plan affordable housing encompasses a range of tenures including that provided through a registered social landlord in the form of housing for rent and shared equity housing (where the occupier owns part of the house). It also includes intermediate housing for rent where the rents charged are lower than open market values and intermediate housing for sale which is substantially below market value to more than the first occupier. Shared equity housing and intermediate housing for rent or sale are particularly appropriate for key workers in the Vale who have a reasonable income but are unable to afford a home of their own. Slightly cheaper market housing, in a high house price area like the Vale, will not be affordable to local people in need and unless there is some form of legal covenant on the dwelling to ensure it remains substantially discounted below market value to more than the first occupier, such provision will not count towards the requirement in policy H17 below. As the interrelationship between the housing market, housing needs and housing finance will change over the lifetime of this Plan, the precise form that the affordable housing will take on each site will be determined when a planning application is made. The Council's objective is to secure the on-site provision of affordable housing. However, supplementary planning guidance will define the limited circumstances under which a commuted payment in lieu of on-site provision may be acceptable.
- 8.71 The Council will require that the affordable housing will be of a size and type to meet local needs and will remain available to local people in the long term. Where a registered social landlord is involved, this will normally be an effective way of controlling occupancy and ensuring it remains available in the long term. However, as the Government has given tenants the right to acquire their properties when any public subsidy has been involved in settlements of over 3,000¹ people, it will not be possible to require that the houses remain affordable in perpetuity. However, in

¹Those settlements with more than 3,000 people are Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage and Kennington.

smaller settlements or where no public subsidy is involved, the Council will impose conditions or seek a legal agreement requiring they remain affordable. To facilitate social inclusion, the affordable housing should be distributed evenly through the site and should be indistinguishable from the market housing in terms of its appearance. Further guidance on the provision of affordable housing is available as supplementary planning guidance.

POLICY H17

40% OF THE DWELLINGS PROVIDED ON THE FOLLOWING SITES WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE AFFORDABLE TO LOCAL PEOPLE WHO ARE UNABLE TO RENT OR BUY A HOUSE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR NEEDS ON THE OPEN MARKET:

- i) IN SETTLEMENTS OF MORE THAN 3,000¹ PEOPLE, ON ALL SITES WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING 15 OR MORE DWELLINGS OR WHICH ARE 0.5 HECTARES OR MORE;**
- ii) IN SETTLEMENTS OF 3,000¹ PEOPLE OR LESS, ON ALL SITES WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF ACCOMMODATING FIVE OR MORE DWELLINGS.**

THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROVIDED:

- a) WILL BE OF A SIZE AND TYPE TO MEET LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS;**
- b) WILL HAVE ARRANGEMENTS PUT IN PLACE TO ENSURE THE HOUSING REMAINS AFFORDABLE FOR LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE LONG TERM; AND**
- c) WILL BE DISTRIBUTED EVENLY ACROSS THE SITE AND WILL BE INDISTINGUISHABLE IN APPEARANCE FROM THE MARKET HOUSING.**

Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites

8.72 PPG3: *Housing* advises that in rural areas the stock of affordable dwellings can be augmented by an 'exception' policy which enables land within or adjoining villages, which would not normally be released for housing, to be developed provided it is for affordable housing to meet the needs of local people in perpetuity. The Council has been operating a rural exception policy since 1990 and it has enabled a small number of rural schemes to be developed, most notably at East Hendred, Steventon and Marcham. The Council will continue to work closely with local communities, housing providers and landowners to provide affordable housing in rural areas. It is hoped that the rural housing enabler, working across the Vale and South Oxfordshire, will encourage more exception schemes in the future. However, as this policy is aimed at providing local homes for local people, schemes should be supported in principle by the local community, as represented by the parish council.

8.73 Schemes approved under this policy must be for genuinely affordable homes designed to meet a specific local need. The homes must be affordable to people

who are unable to rent or buy a property on the open market. In this context local need will be defined as people living or working in the particular village where the scheme is located, or in an adjacent village. (This excludes people living in the five main settlements and Didcot as there will be opportunities to provide affordable housing within these settlements.) People who have long-standing links with these communities, either because they lived there previously or have relatives living there, will also be considered to have a local need. Officers from the Council's Housing Service will be able to give a preliminary indication whether there is sufficient need in the village to pursue a scheme. Before a planning application is made, a detailed housing needs survey must be carried out following a methodology agreed with the Council. It must include the following information: the present housing circumstances and income levels of those considered to be in need, related to local house prices and rent levels; the connection of the applicants with the village or nearby village; and the type and size of dwellings that would meet their requirements.

- 8.74 The sites chosen for this type of housing development must be small and be within or immediately adjacent to the existing built-up area of the village. Typically schemes will amount to about six houses but the precise number will be influenced by the detailed housing needs survey. For many people seeking affordable housing, access to key local services such as a primary school or shop is important. Rural exception schemes will most often be located within or adjoining the settlements which have a reasonable range of facilities and services, principally those included in policy H11 of this Plan. Schemes should take into account and provide for the need arising from surrounding smaller villages which will ensure these communities are not deprived of the opportunity to benefit from the new housing.
- 8.75 The exceptional release of land to provide affordable housing should take full account of environmental considerations. It is important that the style and character of the housing is in keeping with its surroundings and with local building styles. The effect of new housing on the landscape and rural setting of the village will also be important considerations. PPG3 advises that while the exceptions approach is not intended to apply in most Green Belt areas, very limited affordable housing, within or adjoining existing villages, may be acceptable and consistent with the function of the Green Belt. The villages where the Council would consider such schemes include the villages defined in policy GS3 and those inset in the Green Belt. Early discussion with the Council's planning officers will be essential to establish whether a particular site is likely to be suitable for a rural exceptions housing scheme.
- 8.76 Secure arrangements must be made to ensure that the scheme meets the local needs that have been identified, both initially and in respect of successive occupiers. The precise nature of these arrangements may vary but will most often be achieved through a legal agreement or planning conditions and the involvement of a housing association or village housing trust who can retain a long-term

interest in the housing and thus control subsequent changes of ownership and occupation in accordance with the agreed criteria.

- 8.77 Under the exception policy, schemes consisting of low cost market housing, or partly of market price housing used to cross-subsidise and produce low cost dwellings on the same site, will not be permitted. Such schemes would encourage landowners to promote speculative housing on inappropriate sites. The objective of the policy must remain clear and unambiguous: exceptions to the normal policies for the control of development will only be made for housing which will remain affordable for local people in the long term.

POLICY H18

SMALL-SCALE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES MAY BE PERMITTED WITHIN AND ON THE EDGES OF VILLAGES, ON SITES WHICH WOULD NOT OTHERWISE BE ACCEPTABLE, IF ALL THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA CAN BE MET:

- i) **IT WOULD MEET A CLEARLY ESTABLISHED LOCAL NEED WHICH CANNOT BE MET BY DEVELOPMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH OTHER POLICIES IN THIS PLAN;**
- ii) **THE SCHEME IS WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING BUILT-UP AREA OF THE VILLAGE AND WOULD NOT HARM ITS CHARACTER OR SETTING AND WOULD NOT UNDERMINE THE FUNCTIONS OR VISUAL AMENITIES OF THE GREEN BELT;**
- iii) **THE SCHEME IS DESIGNED TO MEET THE ESTABLISHED NEED IN TERMS OF DWELLING NUMBERS, TYPES, SIZES AND AFFORDABILITY; AND**
- iv) **SECURE ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT ALL THE HOUSES WILL BE OCCUPIED BY LOCAL PEOPLE IN NEED OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND THAT THE BENEFITS OF THE LOW COST PROVISION WILL REMAIN AVAILABLE TO LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE LONG TERM.**

Special Housing Needs

- 8.78 In requiring the creation of mixed and balanced communities, PPG3 states that local planning authorities should facilitate the provision of housing to meet the needs of special groups including the elderly, the disabled, students, young single people, rough sleepers, the homeless and other groups who may need hostel accommodation. The planning requirements relating to grouped accommodation to meet such needs can be significantly different to general needs housing. The Council considers that such provision should be made in the five main settlements, where a good range of jobs, services, facilities and public transport are available, rather than in the villages and rural areas of the Vale. It will also be important to ensure that such schemes relate well in physical terms to their surroundings, that the car parking and open space within the development are appropriate to the scheme concerned and there would be no demonstrable harm to the quality of life

of neighbouring properties. The Council may be prepared to relax the open space provisions it would normally seek as part of general purpose housing developments, recognising that such provision may be inappropriate in the context of some schemes. Nevertheless it will wish to be satisfied that the needs of the occupiers are adequately provided for. Where schemes are for the elderly or mobility impaired who are able to walk or use wheelchairs, the site should have a suitable level access and be within easy walking distance (no further than 400 metres) of shops, services and public transport so that the residents can retain a reasonably independent life. The policy does not preclude the small-scale development of dwellings suitable for appropriate special needs groups in the larger villages. Where the provision of special needs accommodation provides separate dwelling units, schemes will be expected to make a contribution to meeting affordable housing needs in accordance with policy H17 if a need can be demonstrated for the particular type of property.

POLICY H19

IN THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE, WANTAGE AND DIDCOT, AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, GROUPED ACCOMMODATION TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY AND OTHER DEFINED GROUPS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED:

- i) IN THE CASE OF SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY OR MOBILITY-IMPAIRED, THE SITE AND ACCESS TO IT IS LEVEL AND FREE FROM OTHER PHYSICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO MOVEMENT ON FOOT OR BY WHEELCHAIR:**
- ii) WHERE THE SCHEME IS FOR PEOPLE WITH LIMITED INDEPENDENCE, THE SITE IS WITHIN EASY WALKING DISTANCE (NO MORE THAN 400 METRES) OF SHOPS, LOCAL SERVICES AND A PUBLIC TRANSPORT ROUTE TO A TOWN CENTRE; AND**
- iii) THAT WHERE STANDARDS WHICH WOULD APPLY TO GENERAL HOUSING ARE RELAXED IN RESPONSE TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE OCCUPIERS OF THE SCHEME, THE OCCUPANCY WILL BE LIMITED TO ACCORD WITH THE NATURE OF THE SCHEME.**

Accommodation for Dependent Relatives

- 8.79 Each year planning applications are made to provide separate accommodation within the curtilages of existing dwellings to house dependent relatives. This can be of considerable help to families in ensuring that dependent relatives receive the care and attention they need. In such cases the Council may be prepared to relax the policies it would normally apply when considering applications to extend or sub-divide an existing dwelling or convert outbuildings to additional living accommodation. Where planning permission would not normally be granted for the proposal the Council will impose conditions, or seek a legal agreement, to ensure that the accommodation is occupied by a dependent relative and that at no time can it be used separately from the main dwelling. The Council is unlikely to relax

its policies to enable the construction of a new free-standing dwelling as it would be almost inevitable that permission would be sought to let or sell the unit on the open market once it was no longer required for its original purpose. Wherever possible it will be expected that the existing and new accommodation will share a single door or entrance hall and that when circumstances change the annex will be incorporated into the original dwelling.

POLICY H20

PROPOSALS TO EXTEND OR SUB-DIVIDE AN EXISTING DWELLING OR CONVERT AN OUTBUILDING WITHIN THE CURTILAGE OF A DWELLING, WHICH IN OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE, MAY BE PERMITTED IF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA CAN BE MET:

- i) THE PROPOSAL IS TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR AN AGED OR INFIRM OR DEPENDENT RELATIVE, AND WILL NOT BE USED SEPARATELY FROM THE MAIN RESIDENCE;**
- ii) THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT AMOUNT TO INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREEN BELT;**
- iii) THE SIZE OF ANY PROPOSED EXTENSION WILL BE SUBORDINATE TO THE EXISTING DWELLING;**
- iv) WHERE POSSIBLE THE PROPOSED ACCOMMODATION WILL BE SERVED BY A SHARED DOOR AND/OR ENTRANCE HALL AND IS CAPABLE OF BEING INCORPORATED INTO THE MAIN HOUSE WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE; AND**
- v) THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT GIVE RISE TO ACCESS PROBLEMS AND IS ACCEPTABLE IN TERMS OF ITS APPEARANCE.**

Mobile Homes Providing Permanent Residential Accommodation

- 8.80 Mobile homes provide an acceptable form of low cost home ownership for a significant number of people in the Vale. The infrastructure requirements of mobile home sites are very similar to those for permanent housing and include good road access, parking space and connections to utilities and services. Sites should be well located in relation to jobs, shops and schools so as to reduce the need to travel by car. For this reason they will be considered in the context of the policies for permanent housing in this Plan. Despite the variety of external finishes that are available for mobile homes, the development of sites will not be appropriate in all locations. Particular care needs to be taken to ensure that mobile home developments are located without harming the character of the area or the amenities of nearby residents. In particular reference should be made to plan policies GS1 – GS3, GS6, GS10 and DC1 – DC10.

Mobile Homes Providing Temporary Residential Accommodation

- 8.81 There are occasions when mobile homes or residential caravans are required for limited periods of time in locations where a permanent planning permission for such a development would not normally be granted. These can include when a person is building their own house, converting an existing building or caring for a dependent relative. It can also occur in association with an agricultural or equestrian enterprise where the justification to build a permanent dwelling has not been fully established (see policy H13). In these cases permission will be granted specifically to the person involved and for a specific period of time, after which the new or converted dwelling should be complete, or the need or otherwise for a new building in the countryside has been fully established. Care will be taken to ensure that the mobile home is sited to minimise the impact on the character of the surrounding area and the amenities of nearby properties.

POLICY H21

WHERE THERE ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, PLANNING PERMISSION MAY BE GIVEN FOR A MOBILE HOME OR RESIDENTIAL CARAVAN WHERE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE PERMITTED. IN THESE CASES A PERSONAL PERMISSION MAY BE GRANTED FOR A TEMPORARY PERIOD, PROVIDED THE MOBILE HOME IS SITED SO AS TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA AND THE AMENITIES OF NEARBY PROPERTIES.

Sites for Gypsies

- 8.82 The term gypsies refers to people of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, who travel for the purpose of seeking their livelihood. The government expects local plans to identify suitable sites for gypsies or have criteria-based policies for assessing proposals. There are currently four gypsy sites in the Vale at East Challow, Redbridge Hollow (near Kennington), Sutton Courtenay and Fyfield Wick. Together these sites provide for 64 residential caravans and eight transit caravans. The Government's key objective for planning for housing is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home. Circular 1/2006 *Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites* provides updated guidance on the planning aspects of finding sites for gypsies and travellers and how local authorities and gypsies and travellers can work together to achieve that aim. The policy below establishes the framework for assessing applications for gypsy sites.

POLICY H22

PROPOSALS FOR CARAVAN SITES FOR GYPSIES, INCLUDING TEMPORARY AND TRANSIT SITES, WILL BE PERMITTED ON SITES WHICH WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE APPROVED FOR HOUSING, WHERE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA CAN BE MET:

- i) **THERE IS AN ESTABLISHED NEED THAT CANNOT BE MET IN ANY OTHER WAY;**

- ii) **THE SITE WILL BE PROVIDED WITH ELECTRICITY, DRINKING WATER, SEWAGE AND WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITIES;**
- iii) **THE SITE IS WITHIN A REASONABLE DISTANCE OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL, SHOPS AND OTHER SERVICES;**
- iv) **THE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE WELL SCREENED AND WILL NOT HARM THE LANDSCAPE, ESPECIALLY IN AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND AREAS OF HIGH LANDSCAPE VALUE;**
- v) **THE DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT HARM SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION, HISTORIC OR ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE INCLUDING CONSERVATION AREAS AND LISTED BUILDINGS AND THEIR SETTING;**
- vi) **THE SITE IS NOT IN THE GREEN BELT; AND**
- vii) **IT WILL NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA OR THE AMENITIES OF PEOPLE IN NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES.**

Travelling Show People

- 8.83 Circular 22/91 requires local planning authorities to consider the needs of travelling show people who travel the country holding fairs, chiefly during the summer months. Travelling show people require secure permanent bases for storing and maintaining equipment and for residential use, particularly in winter when the sites are most intensively used. Some family members, particularly retired people and children remaining in uninterrupted education, may live on the sites most of the year.
- 8.84 There are at present no sites for travelling show people in the Vale of White Horse, and there have been no applications for permanent sites since the Council was formed in 1974. No demand, in the form of an application, for such a site has therefore been expressed. If an application is received which makes clear that the need for a site is established, it will be considered in the light of all relevant local plan policies, particularly those relating to mobile homes and employment (because of the storage and maintenance element). Other policies of the Plan will also be relevant, in particular policies in the chapters on the general strategy, the general policies for development and the natural environment chapters.

Other Policies

Open Space in New Housing Development

- 8.85 The provision of adequate open space is essential for the health and well being of the community. In order to ensure that adequate new provision is made and existing deficiencies are not exacerbated, the Council will seek the provision of

open space in association with new development. The National Playing Fields Association recommends a minimum standard of 2.4 hectares of playing space for every 1000 people. This should be provided in the ratio of:

- 0.6–0.8 hectares for children's play space, including equipped playgrounds and informal kick-about areas, which is safely accessible on foot from where they live; and
- 1.6–1.8 hectares for outdoor sport.

Play spaces should be safe, suitably equipped and landscaped and a commuted sum must be provided for their maintenance.

- 8.86 In addition to play space, the provision of open space to provide for a wide variety of informal recreation – such as walking and picnicking – is also important if the community is to achieve a good quality of life. There are no generally accepted standards covering the provision of informal open space and much will depend on the nature and context of the development. Such open spaces, however, are highly valued by local residents and can make a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the development and its environment. Generally the Council will look for 15% of the proposed residential area to be laid out as public open space to provide for children's play and informal recreation. On large schemes, involving 500 or more dwellings for example, the Council will also look for the provision of outdoor sport on the site. On schemes where outdoor sport cannot be provided on the site, contributions to improving off-site provision will be sought in accordance with policy DC8. Areas of landscaping, to help the development be assimilated in the environment, may also be required on the site which may mean that the proportion of open space is higher.
- 8.87 It may not always be appropriate to seek uniform standards of open space provision or for it always to be provided on the site. The amount and type of open space needed will depend on the size and type of the development and the availability, quality, quantity and location of the existing provision. Some housing developments such as that for the elderly, for example, are likely to generate relatively small demand for open space. However, even in these circumstances it will be necessary to provide attractive private sitting areas for communal use by the residents of the schemes. In the towns where high density housing is being proposed, and where there is a good range of easily accessible facilities nearby, the amount of open space required on the site may be reduced. Similarly on small housing sites it may not be appropriate to seek on-site provision of open space. However, cumulatively small developments can generate significant additional demand for outdoor playing space, and in appropriate cases the Council may seek financial contributions from developers to provide or improve off-site open space near to the development.

POLICY H23

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE SAFE, ATTRACTIVE AND CONVENIENT PUBLIC OPEN SPACE FOR OUTDOOR PLAY AND INFORMAL RECREATION. ALTHOUGH THE AMOUNT AND TYPE OF THE PROVISION WILL DEPEND ON THE NATURE AND SCALE OF THE SCHEME, THE NEEDS OF THE PROSPECTIVE OCCUPIERS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF SUITABLE EXISTING OFF-SITE PROVISION, DEVELOPERS WILL USUALLY BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE:

- i) 15% OF THE RESIDENTIAL AREA LAID OUT AS PUBLIC OPEN SPACE; AND**
- ii) SUITABLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS FUTURE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE.**

ON SITES OF LESS THAN 15 DWELLINGS, OR LESS THAN 0.5 OF A HECTARE, OR WHERE ON-SITE PROVISION IS NOT APPROPRIATE, FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS PROVIDING OR IMPROVING OFF-SITE PROVISION MAY BE SOUGHT.

Extensions to Dwellings and the Erection of Ancillary Buildings and Structures

- 8.88 In environmental terms, individual extensions or proposals for ancillary buildings or structures may have little impact on the character and appearance of a residential area but the cumulative effect of poorly designed extensions and garages, badly sited walls and fences and reduced off-street parking can, over time, lead to a serious deterioration in the general appearance and highway safety of the area. The enclosure of even small areas of open space can change the format of the area and be harmful to its overall character and appearance. In addition, poorly designed extensions or outbuildings can seriously affect the amenities of adjoining homes. In this respect, care needs to be taken to avoid overlooking and overshadowing and efforts must be made to consider the impact of a proposed extension or ancillary building on all surrounding properties. It is good practice for applicants to consult neighbours before submitting final plans to the Council, so they are fully aware of what is being proposed.
- 8.89 Extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt will not be allowed to increase the volume of the dwelling by more than 30% in accordance with policy GS3. Planning permission is not always required to extend existing dwellings or to build garages within the curtilage and people should check with the Council before alterations are made.

POLICY H24

EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING DWELLINGS, OR THE ERECTION OF ANCILLARY BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES WITHIN THE CURTILAGE OF A DWELLING, WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

- i) **IN THE GREEN BELT THE TOTAL VOLUME OF EXTENSIONS ACCORDS WITH THE LIMIT SET OUT IN POLICY GS3;**
- ii) **THE SCALE, MASSING AND POSITIONING OF THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT RESULT IN A DWELLING OF DESIGN AND APPEARANCE THAT WOULD CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF ITS SURROUNDINGS;**
- iii) **THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT HARM THE AMENITIES OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES, PARTICULARLY IN TERMS OF PRIVACY, OVERLOOKING AND OVERSHADOWING;**
- iv) **ADEQUATE OFF-STREET PARKING, TURNING SPACE AND GARDEN SPACE REMAIN;**
- v) **IN THE CASE OF GARAGES AND CAR PORTS, A SAFE ACCESS CAN BE PROVIDED TO THE PUBLIC HIGHWAY;**
- vi) **IN THE CASE OF WALLS AND FENCES, THERE IS NO HARM TO THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA AND THE VISIBILITY OF ROAD USERS, INCLUDING PEDESTRIANS, IS NOT IMPAIRED SUCH THAT A HIGHWAY SAFETY PROBLEM IS CREATED.**

Garden Extensions

- 8.90 The Council recognises that the provision of gardens can significantly enhance the quality of people's lives and that occasionally local residents will wish to extend their existing garden areas. Unless the land is in an adjoining residential curtilage, this will normally involve a material change in the use of land and planning permission will be required. There are cases, particularly when the land involved is on the edge of a settlement or when it is valuable open space within a settlement, that permission may be refused. Garden extensions, for example, will not normally be permitted if they involve the loss of areas of woodland or hedgerows which are important to the visual amenity of the area, or where they would encroach onto an area of recognised nature conservation importance.
- 8.91 The extension of gardens can have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the countryside as a result of enclosing the land with walls or fences and constructing sheds, greenhouses, garages, washing lines, swimming pools and tennis courts. When assessing applications the Council will ensure there is no conflict with the general policies for development in Chapter 4, the policies to protect the natural or historic environment in Chapters 6 and 7 of this Plan or with the need to safeguard important open land on the edges of settlements as defined on the proposals map. Proposals which would harm the open and rural nature of the Green Belt or its visual amenities, and those which would result in the loss of important open land within settlements where these contribute to local character,

will not be permitted. Care will also be taken to ensure there is no loss of privacy to adjoining residents and the enjoyment of people using public rights of way is not compromised.

- 8.92 When considering applications, account will be taken of the adequacy of the size of the existing garden. Proposals for garden extensions that seem over-large in relation to the size of the property and neighbouring gardens may be refused as this could lead to subsequent applications for the construction of additional dwellings. When granting planning permission, the Council may withdraw permitted development rights where the construction of new features and structures could have a harmful impact on the character of the area.

POLICY H25

PROPOSALS TO EXTEND RESIDENTIAL GARDENS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON:

- i) THE LANDSCAPE OR SETTING OF THE SETTLEMENT, OR THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA;**
- ii) THE OPENNESS AND VISUAL AMENITIES OF THE GREEN BELT;**
- iii) IMPORTANT OPEN AREAS WITHIN A SETTLEMENT;**
- iv) THE SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING;**
- v) THE CHARACTER OF A CONSERVATION AREA; OR**
- vi) THE AMENITY OF THE ADJOINING RESIDENTS AND USERS OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY.**

COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 9.1 This chapter of the Plan is concerned with the use and release of land for community services and facilities in the interests of local residents and the wider environment. It is not a programme for future provision, but sets out general policies against which planning applications for community services and facilities which involve land or buildings can be judged by the District Council.
- 9.2 The quality and convenience of everyday life is greatly influenced by the nature and extent of community services and facilities such as local schools, community halls, hospitals and public utilities. The provision and retention of such services and facilities are therefore important elements of this Plan as will be seen by reference to the Plan's aims. In particular, the Council wishes 'to promote high quality sustainable development' (aim 2) and 'to maintain and improve the quality of life of all members of the local community' (aim 4).

Role of the District Council and Others

- 9.3 Many organisations are involved in the planning, provision and running of community services and facilities. As well as the District Council these include: the County Council, responsible for education, libraries, social services and the fire service; town and parish councils, often responsible for halls, cemeteries and allotments and who also identify local need; and private and voluntary organisations and societies. At the wider level there are bodies like the Thames Valley Police Authority, the Oxfordshire Health Authority which administers the community hospitals and the Oxfordshire Family Health Services Authority which controls provision of primary health care facilities.
- 9.4 The District Council itself has a variety of roles: as local planning authority it deals with planning applications for community services and facilities, taking into account the policies in the Local Plan and those of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. At the same time it is a provider of some services, for example, the public halls in Abingdon and Wantage. The Council also makes available financial assistance to help with the development or improvement of facilities such as local halls and other community buildings and gives grants to a variety of community organisations. The Council through agency and contract arrangements is also responsible for refuse collection and street cleaning.
- 9.5 Other services such as electricity, telephones and gas are provided by the various private companies which increasingly are becoming providers of more than one

service. Water supply and water treatment in the Vale remain the responsibility of Thames Water. The land use requirements of these companies can range from the location of small-scale apparatus to major projects. Thames Water, for example, is responsible for a major new water supply pipeline from Swinford to Blunsden and is currently investigating a new reservoir proposal in the Steventon/East Hanney area.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 9.6 Government advice in Planning Policy Statement 12: *Local Development Frameworks* (PPS12) confirms that the purpose of planning is to co-ordinate development with the services it requires, like education, health and other community facilities. In PPS1: *Delivering Sustainable Development* the government emphasises development plans should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities, including suitable mixes of housing and that plan policies should ensure that the impact of development on the social fabric of communities is considered and taken into account. Government advice in PPG3: *Housing* confirms that authorities 'should create more sustainable patterns of development by building in ways which exploit and deliver... education and health facilities, and local services'. The Local Plan has a pivotal role to play in relation to all these objectives.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 9.7 The Government's general approach is reflected in the wording of the policies in the Oxfordshire Structure Plans to 2011 and to 2016. For example, policy G3 states that development proposals will not be permitted unless community facilities and service improvements will be provided whilst policy H1 seeks to ensure that most development takes place where a reasonable range of community facilities exist or can be provided in association with new housing development.

The Local Plan Policies

- 9.8 The Local Plan puts forward a range of policies to govern the provision of community services in accordance with the government guidance and structure plan policies outlined above. The Plan can facilitate the provision of services and facilities in appropriate cases by safeguarding sites. It can also identify at an early stage the need for contributions from new development towards facilities, ensuring that the need is taken into account by developers at the design stage. It must however be recognised that many works carried out by the utility companies can be carried out as permitted development (subject to environmental impact assessment) without the need for planning permission.
- 9.9 Within the context of policies similar to those put forward in this Plan, sites have been found in recent years for a range of facilities to serve the growing population of the Vale. These include the health centres at Wantage and

Faringdon and the foyer scheme at Abingdon, which provides training facilities and accommodation for young people. This Local Plan however, must look to the future. Central Government's policy of 'care in the community' means that facilities such as residential homes for the elderly and 'group homes' or hostels providing accommodation for mentally handicapped people or others in need of rehabilitation may need to be provided (see policy H19). Changing work patterns have seen a greater requirement for day nurseries for young children. It is important that the right planning policy framework is in place to deal with the land use implications of this kind of change.

- 9.10 The policies set out below aim to provide a framework to safeguard and make the best use of existing community services and facilities and to facilitate new provision to meet the needs of all people. In pursuit of these aims, it will be vital to safeguard the amenities of residents and to ensure that any future development is well-designed and of a high environmental standard.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Protection of Existing Services and Facilities

- 9.11 The Council will resist development proposals involving the loss of existing services and facilities, unless the proposal includes alternative provision sufficient to meet identified community needs. Developers will be encouraged to retain or enhance community uses on established sites unless alternative provision exists or is made available at an adequate standard elsewhere in the locality.

POLICY CF1

PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE LOSS OF LAND OR BUILDINGS IN COMMUNITY USE WHICH, IN TERMS OF THEIR LOCATION, PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND ACCESSIBILITY, ARE CONSIDERED SUITABLE TO MEET IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY NEEDS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, UNLESS:

- i) ADEQUATE, APPROPRIATE, ALTERNATIVE PROVISION SUFFICIENT TO ACCOMMODATE THE LOSS IS INCLUDED AS PART OF THE PROPOSAL, OR**
- ii) SUFFICIENT CONVENIENT PROVISION IS ALREADY AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE.**

Provision of New Community Services and Facilities

- 9.12 Planning applications for new community services and facilities, such as medical centres, schools, veterinary practices and places of worship which will meet the needs of local residents or provide for the defence of the realm will be considered sympathetically provided they are within the built-up area of a settlement, including the villages defined in policy GS3. Exceptionally a small scale

community facility may be allowed adjacent to the built up area of a settlement when a clearly identified need cannot be met in any other way or within or adjacent to a group of existing buildings providing for such uses, providing the site is not in the Green Belt. Extensions of an appropriate scale and design or, in appropriate circumstances, a change in the use of an existing building may also be acceptable ways of providing improved community services and facilities for the local community. A change of use may secure the future of a building that would otherwise remain vacant and could become derelict.

- 9.13 In considering any application, the Council will wish to ensure that the proposal will not have an adverse effect on the amenities of nearby residents, the occupiers of surrounding buildings or the local environment by, for example, causing noise, car parking or highway safety problems or by their use during unsociable hours. Proposals will be required to meet the Council's general policies for development as set out in Chapter 4 and will be expected to be located where they are easily accessible by foot, cycle and public transport, with special care being taken to maximise access for all. Proposals for new facilities for sport and recreation will be considered against the policies in the leisure chapter and not policy CF2 below. Proposals for changes of use will also be considered in the context of policies GS5, GS7 and GS8.

POLICY CF2

DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS PROPOSED IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROVISION OF NEW SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING EXTENSIONS TO AND CHANGES IN THE USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS, WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:

- i) THE PROPOSAL CONFORMS WITH THE GENERAL POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE PLAN AND IN PARTICULAR MAXIMISES AS FAR AS IS POSSIBLE ACCESS FOR ALL;**
- ii) ANY PROPOSAL FOR A NEW BUILDING IS WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREA OF A SETTLEMENT OR WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO A GROUP OF EXISTING BUILDINGS PROVIDING FOR SUCH USES AND IS NOT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT OUTSIDE A VILLAGE AREA DEFINED IN POLICY GS3 OR OUTSIDE A MAJOR DEVELOPED SITE DEFINED IN POLICY GS4;**
- iii) ANY EXTENSION WILL NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OR SETTING OF THE EXISTING BUILDING OR ITS SURROUNDINGS, OR SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE CHARACTER AND SCALE OF THE EXISTING ACTIVITY SO AS TO CAUSE HARM TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT; AND**

EXCEPTIONALLY, DEVELOPMENT OF A SMALL SCALE COMMUNITY FACILITY ADJACENT TO THE BUILT-UP AREA OF A SETTLEMENT WILL BE PERMITTED:

- a) **WHERE IT MEETS A CLEARLY IDENTIFIED LOCAL NEED THAT CANNOT BE MET IN ANY OTHER WAY; AND**
- b) **IT IS NOT WITHIN THE GREEN BELT OUTSIDE A VILLAGE AREA DEFINED IN POLICY GS3.**

Childcare Provision

- 9.14 In recent years the provision of childcare facilities has become an issue of heightened significance as more women seek employment. This trend has been reflected in an increasing number of planning applications being submitted for day nurseries and kindergartens. The District Council is anxious that the provision of childcare facilities in the Vale should be enhanced, recognising that a network of such facilities can be a considerable benefit to the local economy and to the district's residents. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that such provision, particularly in quiet residential areas, can give rise to problems caused by for example noise, traffic and parking.
- 9.15 Responsibility for enforcing standards and regulating childcare falls to OFSTED and they issue each childminder with a registration certificate indicating the number of children they are allowed to care for, in line with national standards. Government advice in PPG4 indicates that compliance with such ratios would normally mean that the character of the home's use as a single dwelling had not changed and that planning provision would not be required. The relevant ratios can be obtained from OFSTED.
- 9.16 Where proposals for childcare facilities require planning permission, applications will be considered against policy GS3 relating to development in the Green Belt and the general policies for development set out in Chapter 4 (principally policies DC1–DC3, DC5, DC9 and DC10).
- 9.17 New buildings to provide accommodation for childcare facilities will be considered sympathetically by the Council provided they are within the built-up areas of settlements (as defined in policies GS1, GS3, H11 and H12). The Council will be concerned to ensure that the proposals are located in sustainable locations which minimise the need to travel and that they do not have an adverse effect on the amenities of residential areas and can meet normal planning requirements in relation to issues such as parking and highway safety. In this respect a location within an established employment site may have advantages, as well as being convenient for those seeking to make use of the facility. Appropriate proposals on such sites will be encouraged by the Council.
- 9.18 Many proposals for childcare facilities involve the change of use of existing buildings, in particular dwellings. As with proposals for new buildings, the Council would want to ensure that existing residents are not adversely affected by such schemes.

9.19 The Council applies the following general guidelines to help determine applications involving the change of use of an existing building to a childcare facility.

- i) in the case of detached premises set in large grounds, permission may be granted for a childcare facility catering generally for up to a maximum of 24 children;
- ii) in a detached house on an estate or a large semi-detached house (with substantial party walls), the upper limit should be 12 children; and
- iii) in estates, terraces and small semi-detached houses, childcare facilities for more than six children are likely to create a nuisance in terms of noise and access and therefore are unlikely to be permitted.

It may, in some instances, be appropriate to use existing community buildings, where these are under-used in the day time. Such buildings are usually in accessible locations and have space around them to accommodate the needs associated with a childcare use.

Cemetery Provision

9.20 Whilst policy CF2 above provides the general policy context that applies to community services and facilities, the Council has been asked specifically to consider the need for future cemetery provision at Faringdon and Wantage.

9.21 In Faringdon there is concern that the existing cemetery in Coach Lane is approaching capacity and, due to the expansion of the town, that additional burial space will be needed very soon. From the junction of Coach Lane and Church Walk, it is some 200 metres to All Saints Church. On the eastern side of the existing cemetery there is an open field which is bounded on its northern side by Church Walk. As this land is on the edge of the built-up area of the town, has not been previously developed and is designated as an area of protected landscape it is an area where new buildings would be resisted. However, having regard to the need for additional burial space the Council believes an extension of the cemetery onto this adjoining land would be logical.

POLICY CF3

LAND AT CHURCH WALK, AS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, WILL BE RESERVED FOR AN EXTENSION TO THE FARINGDON CEMETERY.

9.22 Wantage Town Council has estimated that an area of approximately 6000 square metres (0.6 hectares) would be needed to accommodate burials in the town over the next 50 year period. The Town Council has commented that it considers any new burial land should avoid the need for significant new infrastructure, should

not be on land that might otherwise be more appropriate for other land uses and should be located so as not to cause objection to adjoining or nearby residents. The existing town cemetery is off Chain Hill. There is open land to the south. Although this land is not covered by a specific landscape constraint policy, it is outside the development boundary of the town and begins to rise steeply towards Chain Hill. For these reasons it is not an area which would be identified for new building. Having regard to the identified need for additional burial space the District Council believes this land would be a logical extension of the existing cemetery.

POLICY CF4

LAND AT CHAIN HILL, AS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, WILL BE RESERVED FOR AN EXTENSION TO THE WANTAGE CEMETERY.

Public Houses

- 9.23 Pubs, with their ancillary facilities such as restaurants, are important elements in the community life of most towns and villages. In some smaller villages, the pub may be the sole surviving retail and social facility, and in suburban areas it can provide a natural focus for community activity.
- 9.24 Set against the growing importance of leisure and tourism in the economy generally, it is perhaps surprising that there is a trend for the closure of public houses. There have been changes within the brewing industry, however, which have had an impact on the pattern of public house distribution: the smaller, remoter pub has come under particular threat, while interest has increased in the larger road house style of operation with restaurants, overnight accommodation and other ancillary facilities attached.
- 9.25 The steady erosion of village services such as shops, post offices and schools has been paralleled by losses of rural public houses. For rural communities and those concerned with rural life, this is a matter of concern.
- 9.26 The Rural White Paper *Our Countryside: the Future* (2000) sets out the Government's vision which seeks to promote 'a living countryside' with thriving rural communities and 'a working countryside' with a prosperous and diverse economy. To assist this vision the Government has set up a 'community service fund' managed by the Countryside Agency, to which businesses, such as village shops, pubs and garages, will be able to apply for grants. There is also a 50% rate relief to pubs and garages which benefit the rural community.
- 9.27 Planning Policy Statement 7: *Sustainable Development In Rural Areas* states that the Government's objectives for rural areas include the promotion of thriving, inclusive and sustainable rural communities whilst continuing to protect the open countryside for the benefit of all.

- 9.28 In an effort to bring this issue to public notice, the organisation Business in the Community recently carried out a promotion called 'The Pub is the Hub' which emphasised how important public houses are to rural life in particular.
- 9.29 There is clearly considerable support from many quarters for preventing the further loss of rural and other pubs of community importance. The District Council is anxious that pubs in the Vale which can be shown to be central to community life should not be lost unnecessarily and it will wish to consider carefully any proposal which involves the change of use of such a pub before an alternative use is permitted.
- 9.30 The Government's desire to deliver thriving and sustainable communities means that any proposal for the loss of a public house outside the five main towns will be looked at carefully. Consistent with this approach the Council will apply a presumption that the re-use or redevelopment of a public house will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the public house is not an important local community facility, it is not viable for the public house use to continue and, for pubs in rural areas, the building cannot be put to some other community use.
- 9.31 In its consideration of these issues, the Council will look carefully at the role any pub plays in its community and what services it provides; eg. as a traditional place to buy a drink; as a place for quality and good value foods; as a base for activities and teams involved in eg. darts, 'Aunt Sally', pool and dominoes; as a place where local groups meet eg. local sports teams, folk or other music groups and quiz nights; as a place offering other services eg. a rural shop, post office or bank; and as a venue for local events in general.
- 9.32 Regard will also be had to the location of the pub and to how easily it is for local people to go to an alternative facility. Current research suggests that the desirable accessibility for a pub should be a normal actual distance of within 800m (approx. ½ mile) and no more than 1000m (approx. 2/3 mile). This should ensure that the pub is as 'walkable' as possible. (*Sustainable Settlements, University of West of England and The Local Government Management Board (1995) and Shaping Neighbourhoods, Spon Press (2003).*)
- 9.33 Consequently, when assessing a pub's community value the Council will want to consider, in the round, factors such as its location, its distance from other pubs and the role it plays in the community.
- 9.34 Assessing the on-going viability of a pub can involve various matters such as examining financial turnover, consumption of barrels and comprehensive audits of accounting and operational details. It will also involve consideration of the marketing of the pub, whether as a going concern or where trading has actually ceased. Care will be taken to look at how the pub was operated over time, marketed and advertised for sale, whether the sale value was realistic, over what period it was advertised and whether the potential of the business was reflected

in this process. An applicant should provide as much information on all these matters as possible. If necessary, the Council will bring in outside expertise to comment on the information received. It will not be enough for an applicant to say that a pub is not viable if this cannot be proved to be correct.

- 9.35 Applicants and/or developers should be aware that the onus will be on them to clearly make the case for the re-use or redevelopment of a public house.
- 9.36 Where a public house is demonstrably not economically viable it may be difficult for a planning authority to resist its closure or change of use. However, the irreversible loss of an existing public house from a village or other local community could have especially severe implications, particularly if it is the only remaining facility in the area. In such circumstances, it is proposed to articulate the support for services recommended in government guidance through the following policy.

POLICY CF5

OUTSIDE THE FIVE MAIN TOWNS, THE REDEVELOPMENT OR CHANGE OF USE OF PREMISES WHICH ARE USED OR HAVE BEEN USED AS A PUBLIC HOUSE WILL BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THE PUBLIC HOUSE IS AN IMPORTANT LOCAL COMMUNITY FACILITY, WHEN IT MUST BE DEMONSTRATED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE TO CONTINUE WITH THAT USE;**
- ii) IN THE CASE OF PUBLIC HOUSES WITHIN OR IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE VILLAGES LISTED UNDER POLICIES H11 AND H12 THE APPLICANT CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT THERE IS NO REASONABLE LIKELIHOOD OF AN ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYMENT, RETAIL, SERVICE OR COMMUNITY USE, OR A MIX OF THESE USES, OF BENEFIT TO THE ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL LIFE OF THE VILLAGE MAKING USE OF THE BUILDING.**

- 9.37 Proposals for new pubs or restaurants (or for extensions or alterations to pub or restaurant buildings and sites) can involve building in particularly sensitive locations: for example in the open countryside, on sites immediately adjacent to houses or in some cases in a conservation area. The developments proposed can cause considerable concern in the locality. New facilities outside the built-up areas of existing settlements will be resisted under policy GS2 and new facilities in the Green Belt will be resisted under policy GS3. All new facilities will be considered against the Plan's general policies for development. (Proposals for the addition of bedrooms to public houses to provide visitor accommodation is considered in the tourism chapter of the Local Plan).

Telecommunications

- 9.38 Modern telecommunications and mobile services are hugely popular and make a significant contribution to the national economy. They include all forms of communication by electrical or optical wire and cable and radio signals, whether terrestrial or from satellite. To work effectively they need sufficient infrastructure. This can have a significant impact on the appearance of individual buildings, on towns and on the countryside. They have also given rise to health concerns. The policies in this section deal with the siting of apparatus in relation to both its impact on the visual quality of the environment and its possible health effects.

Masts and Antennae

- 9.39 In Planning Policy Guidance Note 8: *Telecommunications* (PPG8), the Government attaches considerable importance to keeping the number of radio and telecommunications masts and sites to a minimum. The sharing of masts and the erection of antennae on existing buildings and structures such as electricity pylons can help to achieve this. The Council will expect applications for new masts to be accompanied by information to show that these opportunities have first been explored.
- 9.40 There has been widespread public concern about the health effects of radio waves from telecommunications installations. This issue was considered in the Stewart Report, May 2000. The report recommended a precautionary approach to the use of mobile phone technologies until there is more information on any health effects. In accordance with this precautionary approach, applications will be considered against guidelines on limiting exposure to radio waves published by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). In the Government's view 'if a proposed development meets the ICNIRP guidelines it should not be necessary for a local planning authority, in processing a planning application ... to consider further the health aspects.' (PPG8).
- 9.41 In order that the health effects of a proposal can be fully considered, and to avoid delay in its determination, the Council considers that an application ought to be accompanied by the following information:
- i) a certificate of compliance with ICNIRP public exposure guidelines;
 - ii) where apparatus is proposed on or near a school, nursery, playgroup, playground, recreation ground or hospital property, a statement will be requested as to whether or not the beam of greatest intensity will fall on any part of the property in question. (One of the Stewart Report's recommendations was that the beam of greatest intensity should not fall on any part of a school's grounds or buildings);

- iii) details of the location of the apparatus, the height of the antennae, the frequency and modulation characteristics, details of the power output, the radiation pattern showing exposure related to bearing, range and elevation from the antennae (this pattern should reflect the full usage of the system) with the units being expressed as a proportion of the ICNIRP guidelines.
- 9.42 In addition, this Council has adopted a corporate policy in considering telecommunications masts on its own land which is 100 times more stringent than the ICNIRP guidelines.
- 9.43 Applicants should be aware that the Council will scrutinise carefully proposals for the siting of masts or antennae near places or premises visited or used by children, for example schools and childcare facilities. For masts with multiple installations (either existing or proposed), each operator's apparatus should be assessed separately and the results aggregated. This is because exposure to radio waves for multiple operators is generally additive.
- 9.44 In any development, significant and irremediable interference with other electrical equipment can be a material planning consideration. If there is clear evidence that such interference will arise, or will probably arise, from a proposal and there is no practicable remedy, the Council will take this into account when determining the planning application.
- 9.45 Development for telecommunications in the Green Belt will be expected to maintain openness in line with policy GS3. However, it is recognised that, due to the technical and operational characteristics of telecommunications development proposals may be made which do not maintain openness. Such development is inappropriate and will only be permitted if very special circumstances are demonstrated which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. In these circumstances the operator must demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative sites outside the Green Belt which would meet the needs of network coverage or capacity.

POLICY CF6

WHERE PLANNING PERMISSION IS NEEDED FOR DOMESTIC AND COMMERCIAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS APPARATUS, PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED PROVIDED:

- i) **THE APPARATUS WOULD NOT CONFLICT WITH POLICY GS3 TO PROTECT THE GREEN BELT OR CAUSE VISUAL HARM TO THE SURROUNDING AREA OR TO THE BUILDING OR STRUCTURE ON WHICH IT IS TO BE POSITIONED;**
- ii) **IN CASES WHERE THE VISUAL IMPACT OF THE APPARATUS ON THE SITE CHOSEN BY THE OPERATOR FAILS TO SATISFY CLAUSE (i), THE OPERATOR HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE ARE NO ALTERNATIVE SITES WHICH ARE BOTH TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE AND LESS HARMFUL TO VISUAL AMENITY. IN**

CONSIDERING THIS MATTER THERE SHOULD BE NO PRACTICABLE POSSIBILITY FOR SHARING EXISTING FACILITIES OR OF ERECTING ANTENNA ON AN EXISTING BUILDING OR STRUCTURE;

- iii) THE OPERATION OF THE APPARATUS WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE HEALTH OF LOCAL PEOPLE; AND**
- iv) THE OPERATION OF THE APPARATUS WILL NOT CAUSE SIGNIFICANT OR IRREMIEDIABLE INTERFERENCE TO OTHER ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT.**

PARTICULAR ATTENTION WILL BE PAID TO THE PROPOSED POSITION OF THE APPARATUS AND ITS SCALE, DESIGN AND MATERIALS.

Satellite Dishes

- 9.46 There has been significant growth in the range and use of satellite television and broadcasting where television signals are transmitted direct to individual receiving antennae, the more common ones known as satellite dishes.
- 9.47 Where permission is required to erect a dish, it is important to ensure it blends in with its background. The dish should be sited, so far as is practicable, to minimise its impact on amenity and on the external appearance of the building. Choosing an appropriate colour can also help to reduce visual impact. Siting and design concerns will be particularly important if the installation is proposed in an especially sensitive location, such as on a listed building, in a conservation area or within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Applicants are advised to discuss their proposals with the District Council before submitting them formally for consideration.
- 9.48 Helpful guidance on the siting of satellite television antennae can be found in *A Housebuilder's Planning Guide for the Installation of Satellite Television Dishes* available from the District Council.

POLICY CF7

APPLICATIONS FOR SATELLITE DISHES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THEY ARE SITED AND COLOURED SO AS TO MINIMISE THEIR VISUAL IMPACT ON THE STREETSCENE, THE APPEARANCE OR SETTING OF A BUILDING AND ON THE ENVIRONMENT GENERALLY, PARTICULARLY IN CONSERVATION AREAS, THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY, OR THE NORTH VALE CORALLIAN RIDGE. PROPOSALS FOR SATELLITE DISHES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY WOULD CAUSE HARM TO THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE OR SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING OR THE CHARACTER OF THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT.

- 9.49 Policies in the historic environment chapter of the Local Plan which deal with listed buildings and conservation areas should also be referred to where appropriate.

Development for Utility Companies on Operational Land

- 9.50 Many facilities are provided by utility companies such as those responsible for electricity, gas, water supply and sewage disposal. In some circumstances the development they wish to carry out on their operational land will be 'permitted development' and will not require planning permission. In the context of the recent regulations relating to environmental impact assessment (EIA) (Statutory Instrument 1999, no. 293, as amended), where it is the Council's opinion that an EIA is required for development, permitted development rights will be withdrawn and a planning application must be submitted and accompanied by an Environmental Statement.
- 9.51 In situations where utility companies propose developments which do require permission the Council, before granting such permission, will wish to be satisfied that the development concerned is required in that location to enable the utility company to fulfil its statutory obligations. It will also wish to be satisfied that the proposal will not adversely affect the local or wider environment, cause traffic problems or have an unacceptable visual impact. These requirements are set out in policy CF8 below.
- 9.52 Utility companies are advised to consult the Council in cases where they believe there is a possibility of an EIA being required, particularly where, under normal circumstances, the development would benefit from permitted development rights.
- 9.53 Where development is located in the Green Belt, reference should also be made to policy GS3.

POLICY CF8

OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED BY UTILITY COMPANIES WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

- i) IT IS NECESSARY TO MEET THE COMPANY'S STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS; AND**
- ii) IT WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE AMENITIES OF THE LOCAL OR WIDER ENVIRONMENT.**

Proposed Reservoir

- 9.54 The demand for water in the Thames region is rising, due to both an increase in the consumption per person and the increasing number of people living in the area. As a result of a study in the early 1990s, Thames Water identified a site south-west of Abingdon where the company considered it feasible to construct a new reservoir. The study area consisted of land to the north of the London–Bristol railway between the villages of East Hanney, Steventon, Drayton and Marcham.
- 9.55 In its *Water Resources for the Future: A Strategy for the Thames Region* (March 2001) the Environment Agency notes that the increasing demand for water will put pressure on the existing supply across the region with significant implications for the future given the long lead times for major schemes. The Agency has concluded that there should be 'further investigation of the need for, and impacts of, the development of new strategic resources, principally for the Upper Thames ... Options include new reservoir storage, such as the proposed Abingdon scheme ...'. The Agency's summary of regional options for public water supply by 2005 lists 'new reservoir storage' and comments that a scheme 'potentially of a significantly lesser size than currently being considered by the company (Thames Water) may be required'.
- 9.56 Against this background Thames Water is currently reviewing its *Water Resources Plan* which will set out how to maintain the balance of supply and demand over the next 25 years.
- 9.57 The growing demand for water has to be balanced with the needs of the environment but demand management and the introduction of new resource-efficient practices also have a role to play. Only if a proposal for a new reservoir can be shown to represent the best practical environmental option, all alternative options having been considered and shown not to be more sustainable in the longer term, will the Council respond positively to the scheme. It will seek to remove or mitigate the adverse effects of the development on local communities, the local and wider environment and existing infrastructure and will consider carefully any potential contribution which could be made in terms of recreation provision, nature conservation and enhanced biodiversity.

POLICY CF9

ANY PROPOSAL FOR A NEW RESERVOIR WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) **MEASURES TO MANAGE DEMAND FOR WATER IN THE THAMES WATER REGION PROVE INCAPABLE OF AVOIDING THE NEED FOR A NEW RESERVOIR; AND**

- ii) THE PROVISION OF A NEW RESERVOIR IS THE ONLY ECONOMICALLY VIABLE, LEAST ENVIRONMENTALLY DAMAGING AND MOST SUSTAINABLE MEANS IN THE LONGER TERM OF MEETING PROVEN NEED FOR INCREASED WATER RESOURCES IN THE WATER COMPANY'S REGION AS A WHOLE; AND
- iii) THE PROPOSED RESERVOIR REPRESENTS THE BEST PRACTICABLE ENVIRONMENTAL OPTION, HAVING REGARD TO ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS; AND
- iv) GEOLOGICAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS DEMONSTRATE THAT THE PROPOSED LOCATION IS UNAVOIDABLE.
- v) THE IMPACTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RESERVOIR AND ANY SUBSEQUENT RECREATIONAL USE ON EXISTING COMMUNITIES (INCLUDING RESIDENTS AND EXISTING FARM ENTERPRISES) THE LOCAL AND WIDER HIGHWAY NETWORK, THE LANDSCAPE AND NATURE CONSERVATION INTERESTS ARE MINIMISED; AND
- vi) THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS IN TERMS OF THE CREATION OF WILDLIFE HABITATS AND BIODIVERSITY AND THE RESTORATION OR PROVISION OF AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE FOR THE WILTS AND BERKS CANAL ARE MAXIMISED.

Production of Renewable Energy on a Commercial Basis

- 9.58 Renewable energy is the term used to cover those continuous energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment, for example, energy from the sun, the wind, the ocean, from plants and the fall of water. It also refers to the energy available in waste products and from the earth itself. It is a subject therefore, which is both wide ranging and complex, embracing a variety of activities and developments, many of which have different site requirements and can operate at different scales. Proposals can vary from a single wind turbine supplying the energy requirements of a single house to large municipal incinerators providing power to a conurbation.
- 9.59 Increasing the UK's reliance on renewable energy as a means of electricity production has become a priority for the current government. It therefore seems certain that interest in renewable energy projects will increase in the years ahead and the Council could be asked to determine planning applications for a whole variety of proposals. Schemes will require careful consideration and it is inevitable that difficult choices will need to be made. Whereas development of renewable energy and increased energy efficiency can bring environmental and economic benefits, in particular by contributing to the reduction in the use of more conventional energy sources such as fossil fuels, renewable energy projects can also have a significant impact on the local environment. The Council will need to weigh these issues carefully, a task which will be made more difficult by the continued advances being made in the technology associated with renewable energy schemes.

- 9.60 National and strategic planning policies and advice provide a context for the Council's local plan policy. The Government has placed a target requirement on electricity providers to produce 10% of electricity from renewable sources by 2010 (The Renewables Obligation, April 2002). A positive, strategic approach to planning for renewable energy is essential to help deliver this target. The Government's national planning policy is set out principally in PPS22: *Renewable Energy*. The Government's commitment to renewable energy is set out in the Energy White Paper (February 2003). The fundamental aim of Government policy is to stimulate the exploitation of renewable energy sources whenever they have prospects of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. To help stimulate the exploitation of renewable energy the Renewables Obligation requires electricity supply companies to secure a specified amount of their electricity capacity from renewable sources, such as wind and solar power (but not energy from mass incineration of domestic waste).
- 9.61 PPS22 gives planning authorities guidance on a range of issues that affect the siting of renewable energy projects. The PPS gives further guidance on specific forms of renewable energy, including wind, waste combustion, hydropower, energy crops all types of wood fuel, including wood residue, anaerobic digestion, land fill gas and active solar systems.
- 9.62 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan supports the development of renewable sources of energy subject to proper consideration of their environmental effects. The County Council has been in discussion with the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU) which has conducted an assessment of renewable energy. It is likely that the greatest potential renewable energy sources in the county will be municipal waste combustion and short rotation coppice (the latter involves generating electricity by the gasification of wood grown as a crop). Wind energy, land fill gas and straw combustion may have some limited potential. Structure Plan policies cover proposals for the development of renewable sources of energy, the development of wind energy, new power stations and combined heat and power schemes.
- 9.63 In view of the Government's support for renewable energy and acknowledging the benefits of moving away from a dependence on fossil and nuclear fuels, the Council wishes to respond positively, wherever possible, to proposals that encourage the production of energy via renewable resources. Nevertheless, the effect of schemes on the local environment, especially where there are special landscape, nature conservation, archaeological or historic designations, and the impact of proposals on the amenities of local residents will be important factors in the Council's deliberations. An appropriate balance must be sought between the conservation of the Vale's sensitive landscape, the protection of the amenities of its local residents and the development of long-term renewable energy sources.

- 9.64 Chapter 3 of this Local Plan makes it clear that there will be a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Vale's area of the Oxford Green Belt. The Council attaches the utmost importance to the protection of its Green Belt and will seek to keep the undeveloped land within it permanently open and to safeguard its visual amenity against potentially damaging new development. These considerations will be foremost in the Council's mind in the event of a proposal being submitted for a renewable energy scheme on Green Belt land. The Council will also have regard to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and will seek to ensure that any proposal for a renewable energy scheme does not conflict with these purposes.

POLICY CF10

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF RENEWABLE ENERGY ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT THEY AND ANY TRANSMISSION LINES REQUIRED:

- i) WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE OPEN AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE. IN THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND THE NORTH VALE CORALLIAN RIDGE, THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE LANDSCAPE MUST BE CONSERVED;**
- ii) WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, OR THE ENJOYMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE BY VISITORS, IN TERMS OF NOISE, VISUAL IMPACT, ODOUR, SMOKE, FUMES, ASH, DUST, GRIT, VIBRATION, ELECTRO-MAGNETIC INTERFERENCE OR TRAFFIC GENERATION;**
- iii) DO NOT AFFECT ADVERSELY AREAS AND FEATURES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL, HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL OR NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE (INCLUDING LISTED BUILDINGS, CONSERVATION AREAS, SCHEDULED MONUMENTS AND HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS), NATURE RESERVES, SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST OR ANCIENT WOODLANDS.**

LEISURE**INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT**

- 10.1 This section of the Local Plan is concerned with the use and release of land and buildings for leisure and with the control of recreational development in the interests of the community and the wider environment. It sets out the policies against which planning applications for leisure proposals will be assessed by the Council.
- 10.2 Leisure is vital to the quality of life, health and well-being of the local community; nevertheless planning for future provision and assessing new proposals can be difficult. Leisure activities are diverse, ranging from organised sports such as football and cricket to informal pursuits such as walking, fishing and boating. The need for particular facilities can vary over time as tastes and interests change. Furthermore, many organisations are involved in the provision and running of facilities. They include the County Council, mainly through its education and arts service, town and parish councils, private clubs and companies and voluntary groups and societies. Sport England also provide advice on planning and improving leisure facilities.
- 10.3 In the countryside changes in farming have increased demand for diversification of farmland, which can involve new leisure activities ranging from large-scale proposals such as golf courses, to smaller informal uses such as riding stables and picnic sites. Much of the western part of the Vale is included within the area designated for the Great Western Community Forest within which a range of new opportunities for informal recreation are likely to emerge. The Wilts & Berks Canal Partnership are actively restoring the former canal which crosses the Vale, opening up new areas of the countryside for public access. Within the towns there is continued demand for built leisure facilities from both the public and private sectors, reflecting people's changing expectations and the growing awareness of the benefits of sport and exercise.
- 10.4 The Council is alert to these pressures and wishes to ensure an appropriate planning policy framework is in place which will safeguard existing recreational facilities and allow new proposals to come forward. Aim 4 of this Plan is 'to maintain and improve the quality of life of all members of the local community'. The aim includes specific acknowledgement of the need to: maintain and improve the range of facilities available for leisure and recreation; protect rights of way and promote access to the countryside; and safeguard green open spaces within settlements. The policies set out later in this chapter seek to fulfil these aims

within the context provided by planning guidance from the government and the policies of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan as described briefly below.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 10.5 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 *Sport, Open Space and Recreation* published in July 2002 (PPG 17) provides a clear statement of the Government's intention to protect existing sport, open space and recreation facilities and create new ones. It states at para 1 "Local Authorities should undertake robust assessments of the existing and future needs of their communities for open space, sport and recreational facilities". Para 4 goes on to say "Assessments and audits will allow Local Authorities to identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in their areas. They form the starting point for establishing an effective strategy at the local level, and for effective planning through the development of appropriate policies in plans". The guidance makes it clear that the Government believes that open space standards are best set locally and included in development plans.
- 10.6 In PPG3: *Housing* the government emphasises the need for local plans to have clear policies for the protection and creation of open space and playing fields. New housing development should incorporate sufficient provision where such spaces are not already adequately provided within easy access of the new housing. Developing more housing within urban areas should not mean building on urban green spaces.
- 10.7 PPS6: *Planning for Town Centres* contains advice on the location of commercial leisure facilities. The advice confirms that some leisure uses, such as theatres and pubs, are best located in local centres whilst others need to attract customers from a wider area. Where appropriate sites can be found in or on the edge of town centres, these should be considered for major leisure uses such as small multi-screen cinemas and ten pin bowling. Where this is not possible they should be located where they are highly accessible by public transport.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 10.8 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan has a range of strategic policies covering recreation issues. These policies seek the optimum use of existing resources and give support to new provision in appropriate locations, especially in association with new development or where there are existing deficiencies. The policies also seek to protect the existing rights of way network in the county and to safeguard the character and environment of the River Thames, whilst at the same time encouraging wider access to the countryside.

The District Council's Cultural Strategy

- 10.9 The District Council has a dual role in planning for leisure; as local planning authority it has a remit to deal with planning applications for leisure use in the light of policies in the Local Plan, but it is also a major provider of leisure facilities and services. To assist in this latter role the District Council published in July 2000 *Our Cultural Vision – Leisure 2000–2005*. The vision sets out leisure priorities in the district for the period 2000–2005, covering the arts, sport, play, informal recreation, parks, open space and landscape, leisure community development, leisure facilities management, horticulture, arboriculture and recreational grants. The vision concludes with a list of 27 actions, most of which relate to the promotion and management of leisure services. Two actions relate specifically to the use of land or buildings; action 4 refers to addressing the identified playing field shortage in the Vale and action 12 seeks to ensure leisure involvement in the preparation of this Local Plan.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Provision for Leisure in Association with New Development

- 10.10 Government advice as referred to above makes it clear that local plans provide the appropriate context in which to assess local needs for recreational facilities and to ensure that provision is properly co-ordinated with other forms of development and other land use policies. The advice stresses that local plan policies should offer 'reasonable certainty to developers, landowners and residents about the weight to be given to sport, recreation and open space needs'. Sport and recreation facilities and open space can form important components of housing and major commercial developments and such developments in themselves can generate demand for new facilities or place existing facilities under greater pressure.
- 10.11 The Council wishes to ensure that local residents' recreational needs continue to be adequately provided for and, in accordance with aim 4 of this Local Plan, it will seek the provision of open space and other sporting and leisure facilities as appropriate, in association with new development. Government advice indicates that local authorities may enter into legal agreements with developers to secure such facilities. Policy DC8 confirms the Council's intention to use this mechanism as necessary, where a need for additional or improved recreation facilities can be directly related to a proposed development. In the case of small new developments, which in themselves do not justify provision of new leisure facilities, legal agreements may be sought to secure a contribution to existing or proposed provision nearby. Other specific policies in this Plan, in particular policies H5 and H7, demonstrate the Council's commitment to securing provision of open space,

sports and recreation facilities in association with proposals for new development. The requirement and standard for open space provision within new housing development is set out in policy H23.

- 10.12 It is the Council's intention to undertake an audit of existing recreational facilities, establish local provision standards and develop a programme designed to achieve those standards. This work will be used to inform and guide the preparation of future legal agreements and when completed will be published separately as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 10.13 Open spaces within or adjoining settlements are an important resource for the local community. The Government attaches great importance to the retention of open space and stresses the need for people, particularly children and the elderly, to have access to such space close to where they live.

Protecting Open Space Within Settlements

- 10.14 Open space within the Vale's settlements has a variety of forms and functions. Playing space is land recognised as being suitable for play and includes playing pitches for formal sports, play areas and other space suitable for play, to which the public have access. There are other areas of undeveloped land, which may not be suitable for play but which have important local amenity value. Such areas can include formal gardens, woods, water areas or even large highway verges. In addition, within Abingdon, Grove and Wantage, there are valuable linear spaces and green corridors adjacent to the rivers Stert, Ock, Thames and Letcombe Brook. The public has access to much of this land but some is in private ownership. The following sections of the Local Plan consider these types of space in more detail and set out the Council's policies for their protection.

Playing Space

- 10.15 Nationally recommended standards for the availability of playing space have been established by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA). These standards suggest that a total of 2.4 hectares (6 acres) of playing space should be provided for every 1000 population. The Council is committed to ensuring these minimum standards are achieved in the district and to this end has carried out a quantitative study of formal playing space provision in the Vale's five main settlements. (A summary of the study is included in a background paper published separately to this Local Plan). The survey has been restricted to the main settlements of Abingdon, Botley (including all of North Hinksey and Cumnor parishes), Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, acknowledging that in accordance with the Local Plan strategy, this is where most new development is likely to take place. It is hoped that a more detailed and comprehensive survey of existing leisure facilities (including playing space) can be undertaken for the whole district, from which a strategy will be formulated and a programme of future provision developed.

10.16 The results of the 2002 playing space survey are set out in the table below.

Survey of Playing Space 2002 – summary of findings						
Population (2001)	Sports Pitches 1.6–1.8ha per 1000		Outdoor Play Space 0.6–0.8ha per 1000		Total Hectares	
	NPFA	Provision (02)	NPFA	Provision (02)	NPFA	Provision (02)
Abingdon 32,526	52.04–58.55	49.25	19.5–26.0	45.60	71.54–84.55	94.85
Wantage 9,442	15.11–17.00	11.59	5.7– 7.5	10.18	20.81–24.5	21.77
Grove 8,212	13.14–14.78	10.54	4.93–6.6	7.74	18.03–21.38	18.28
Faringdon 6,053	9.7 –10.9	8.28	3.63–4.8	3.21	13.31–15.7	11.49
Botley 8,967	14.35–16.1	17.73	5.4– 7.2	4.96	19.75–23.3	22.69

10.17 In **Abingdon** the study suggests that the overall provision of playing space is adequate by comparison to the NPFA standard; however, sports pitches are under-provided but space suitable for play is well above standard. This is accounted for by the large areas of open space along the Thames, at Abbey Meadows, Albert Park and Long Furlong. The study indicates that **Wantage** is within standard for outdoor play space but is below standard for sports pitches. The proposal for a new pitch at Tuckwell Fields opposite the cricket ground on the A417 east of Wantage will help to address this shortfall. The situation at **Grove** is similar to Wantage with a shortfall of sports pitches but play space is within standard. In **Botley** sports pitches meet the standard and play space is just below standard. At **Faringdon** sports pitches and play space are below standard.

10.18 It is difficult to provide new playing space within existing built-up areas and yet this is where demand is concentrated. For this reason the Council will protect existing space with recreational value. The policy set out below will apply to proposals for development of non-recreation uses on both private and public playing space (including school playing fields, school playgrounds and existing and previous playspace). It will be applied throughout the district. (Policies to secure provision of new playing and other forms of open space in association with new development are set out elsewhere, including policy DC8 and the housing chapter of the Plan).

10.19 Departures from the policy will be permitted only rarely, for example where an alternative use can be demonstrated to be the best way of retaining or enhancing a facility or where a replacement of equivalent or greater benefit to the community is proposed. Alternative provision will need to be secured by a planning condition or by a legal agreement.

POLICY L1

DEVELOPMENT ON EXISTING OUTDOOR PLAYING SPACE (INCLUDING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPORTS AND PLAYING FIELDS, SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS AND PLAY AREAS) WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED, IF A DEFICIENCY IN SUCH SPACE WILL NOT BE CREATED, OR ADDED TO.

WHERE THERE IS AN EXISTING DEFICIENCY OF PLAYING SPACE OR WHERE A DEFICIENCY WOULD BE CREATED, THE LOSS OF ALL OR PART OF AN EXISTING PLAYING SPACE MAY BE PERMITTED EXCEPTIONALLY IF:

- i) ALTERNATIVE PROVISION CAN BE SECURED WHICH WILL REPLACE FULLY THE PLAYING SPACE LOST.**
- ii) IN THE CASE OF SPORTS OR PLAYING FIELDS (INCLUDING SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS AND PLAYGROUNDS), REDEVELOPMENT OF A SMALL PART OF THE SITE IS THE BEST WAY OF RETAINING OR ENHANCING THE EXISTING SPORTS AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND ONLY AFFECTS LAND WHICH IS INCAPABLE OF FORMING A PLAYING PITCH INCLUDING A PITCH OF JUNIOR SIZE.**
- iii) THE ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IS OF EQUAL OR BETTER VALUE IN TERMS OF SCALE, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY AND IS MADE AVAILABLE PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.**
- iv) THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS FOR AN OUTDOOR OR INDOOR SPORTS FACILITY OF SUFFICIENT BENEFIT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORT TO OUTWEIGH THE LOSS OF THE PLAYING SPACE.**

10.20 The above policy does not rule out the development of ancillary buildings and facilities such as changing rooms on existing recreational open space. The Council will seek to secure the fullest use of existing playing space by, for example, encouraging the dual or joint use of private or school facilities, or the provision of synthetic all-weather pitches, where this will not harm the environment or amenity of local residents.

Urban Open Space and Green Corridors

10.21 In addition to playing space there are many other areas of largely undeveloped land within settlements which contribute to the character of the settlement and help to create a local sense of place. Such areas include formal parks and gardens, small areas of woodland, water courses and even wide tree-lined highway verges. The Council attaches great importance to the retention of such areas.

10.22 Central government advice in PPG17 suggests that the designation of land as urban open space on the Local Plan proposals map will help to ensure that their amenity

and/or recreational value is acknowledged and taken into account in considering proposals for development.

- 10.23 Urban open space has therefore been identified on the proposals map in the main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage. Designation has been restricted to these parts of the district because, in the context of the Local Plan strategy, this is where the greatest development pressure is expected.
- 10.24 The proposals map also identifies four green corridors in the main settlements which the Council believes are deserving of special recognition and protection. They are the Ock and Stert Valleys and Thames Riverside in Abingdon and the Letcombe Brook in Wantage and Grove. The policy in the previous adopted Local Plan to 2001 has been effective in maintaining the special character of these corridors and it is proposed to carry the policy forward into this Local Plan (policy L3 below). The corridors are often important recreational spaces in their own right. In some cases they provide alternative routes for pedestrians and cyclists away from busy roads but they also have an enormous amenity value, introducing green areas into the built-up areas of the towns and bringing the natural environment closer to where people live. In addition to their amenity and recreational value the green corridors provide an important habitat for wildlife and it is important that the habitat on which the wildlife depends is protected or enhanced.
- 10.25 **Ock Valley, Abingdon:** The Ock Valley green corridor stretches from the centre of Abingdon right out to the countryside on the western edge of the town. As the River Ock meanders along its floodplain its course is braided and several ditches feed into the river at various points along its length. The floodplain has in the main remained undeveloped and most of the adjoining development turns its back to the river. The corridor has a very rural character which retains its natural appearance by low levels of maintenance. At its eastern end the corridor is narrower and the willows and riverside vegetation provide an attractive contrast to the mainly residential development to the north and south. At its western end the corridor is wider and there are fewer trees and views into the open countryside and of adjoining development giving the corridor a more open appearance. The adjoining development again tends to turn its back on the corridor and is more commercial in character. The whole corridor provides an attractive pedestrian route away from traffic both into the town centre and to the shopping development on the western edge of town.
- 10.26 **Stert Valley, including Boxhill Wood, Abingdon:** One of the smaller green corridors in the Local Plan area, the Stert Valley provides an attractive leafy open space at the heart of a densely developed urban space stretching north from the town centre. In addition to the stream itself an important feature of this corridor is the large number of mature and semi-mature trees. The woodland gives the corridor a strong sense of enclosure by restricting the views into and out of the valley. The maintenance of the woodland is kept to a minimum to ensure its natural appearance is retained. At Boxhill Road and Fitzharry's Road there are fewer trees

and the valley is more open, the grassed areas are regularly cut, giving a more manicured appearance. The remains of Fitzharry's Mound, an ancient fortification which is a scheduled ancient monument, is an important feature at the southern end of the valley. A public footpath runs along the corridor which is well used by residents and provides a direct link to the town centre away from the main roads. Elsewhere in the Local Plan it is proposed that a recreational cycleway should be created along the Stert Valley.

- 10.27 **Abingdon riverside:** The juxtaposition of the historic core of Abingdon close to the northern bank of the Thames, the river itself and the undeveloped floodplain, all combine to form what many consider to be one of the most attractive stretches along the Thames. The open areas within this corridor are for the most part owned and maintained by the District Council and, in addition to their visual importance, provide a well used recreational resource for both local residents and visitors. There are important views not only from the floodplain across to many outstanding historic buildings but also from the town and Abbey Meadows out across the floodplain. The open areas at the western end of the corridor are laid out as formal gardens where the grass areas and flower beds are all maintained to a high standard. At the eastern end of the corridor the Abbey Meadows is exclusively used for leisure purposes.
- 10.28 **The Letcombe Brook, Wantage and Grove:** One of the most delightful features of both Wantage and Grove is the valley of the Letcombe Brook which runs like a thread through both settlements. Although the valley is not physically well defined, the floodplain has for the most part been kept free from development with the result that a corridor of green leafy open space has remained along the brook. Public footpaths run by the side of the brook in many places and are much enjoyed by residents and visitors who appreciate the tranquillity of the surroundings largely free from traffic.
- 10.29 In Wantage the corridor forms an important feature in the conservation area, affording specific views of particular features such as the Church Tower and panoramic views of the predominantly Victorian roofscape. North of Mill Street the brook passes through a wider and more open valley. Along this stretch a footpath and corridor of open space has been created alongside the brook as part of the redevelopment of the former scrap yard. Between Wantage and Grove the brook passes briefly through an area more open in character before entering Grove. Within Grove the brook and adjacent open space has often been used to create a feature in new development. The area along the brook not only provides a much appreciated visual amenity but is also extensively used as an important recreational amenity.

POLICY L2

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF URBAN OPEN SPACES AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, OR WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THEIR VISUAL AMENITY, RECREATIONAL OR ECOLOGICAL VALUE, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

POLICY L3

WITHIN THE GREEN CORRIDORS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE IT WILL NOT:

- i) DESTROY OR DETRACT FROM THE PREDOMINANTLY OPEN NATURE AND CONTINUITY OF THE CORRIDOR CONCERNED OR BE HARMFUL TO ITS SPECIAL CHARACTER; OR**
- ii) BE VISUALLY INTRUSIVE.**
- iii) HARM THE ECOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE CORRIDOR.**
- iv) HARM AREAS OF EXISTING IMPORTANT TREE AND PLANT COVERAGE.**

Allotments

10.30 Responsibility for the provision and management of allotments rests mainly with the town and parish councils. At present the supply across the Vale appears to meet the current level of demand. The Council has not been made aware of any particular demand for new provision which needs to be taken into account in the Local Plan. Nevertheless it will seek to safeguard existing sites for future use. Proposals for development on allotment land will only be permitted if alternative land for allotment use of a similar or better quality is provided on a conveniently located site elsewhere.

POLICY L4

DEVELOPMENT ON EXISTING ALLOTMENTS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE;

- i) A DEFICIENCY IN PROVISION WILL NOT BE CREATED OR ADDED TO, OR**
- ii) IN CASES WHERE A DEFICIENCY IN PROVISION WOULD BE CREATED OR ADDED TO, ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IS SECURED WHICH IS OF EQUAL OR BETTER VALUE IN TERMS OF ITS SIZE, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY AND WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.**

Built Leisure Facilities

- 10.31 Whilst open space is fairly well distributed throughout the district, purpose-built indoor facilities tend to be concentrated in the main urban areas. The District Council is involved in the running of leisure centres at Faringdon, Wantage and the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre and Tilsley Park at Abingdon. Wherever practicable, the Council also seeks to encourage the increased community use of sporting facilities which are owned by public organisations, such as sports facilities in schools and on defence establishments, acknowledging that making fuller use of existing resources will contribute to sustainable development objectives by reducing the need for additional facilities and the potential loss of some resources. The Council's policies for dealing with proposals for new built leisure facilities have to address a wide range of possible circumstances, ranging from, for example, whole sports complexes to more modest ancillary developments associated with existing facilities. The majority of proposals are likely to come forward on sites within existing settlements and whilst the Council is sympathetic to the need for improvements to leisure provision it will be concerned to ensure that the environment and amenity of local residents and the character and appearance of the Vale's towns and villages will not be harmed by such proposals.

Regional and Sub-Regional Leisure Facilities

- 10.32 The District Council considers that commercial leisure attractions of a regional or sub-regional scale such as theme parks, major sport stadia or large leisure and holiday complexes are unlikely to be accommodated in the district without causing significant harm to its rural character. Such uses attract large numbers of people from a wide catchment area and are likely to cause environmental problems such as traffic congestion and noise. Suitable sites are unlikely to be found in built-up areas without conflict being caused with existing residential development and the scale of development is likely to be obtrusive in the countryside and would breach the policies of restraint referred to elsewhere in the Plan.

POLICY L5

PROPOSALS FOR REGIONAL OR SUB-REGIONAL LEISURE FACILITIES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THEY WOULD NOT:

- i) CONFLICT WITH THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY AND POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE COUNTRYSIDE;**
- ii) LEAD TO UNACCEPTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE AMENITIES OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS; OR**
- iii) PREJUDICE STRUCTURE AND LOCAL PLAN POLICIES OF DEVELOPMENT RESTRAINT.**

Major Leisure and Entertainment Facilities

10.33 Historically most major commercial leisure facilities such as cinemas, skating rinks and nightclubs have been located in town centres but, as with retail development, there has been a recent trend towards major edge-of-town commercial leisure schemes. In order to retain and enhance their viability and vitality, town centres remain the Council's preferred location for major commercial leisure facilities. Such locations provide optimum accessibility on foot and by public transport for potential customers, whilst the presence of leisure facilities can be an important component of the mix of town centre uses adding in particular to the evening economy. Following the sequential approach recommended in Government Planning Policy Statement 6: *Planning for Town Centres* (PPS6), if town centre locations are not available, the Council's next preference is for edge-of centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites that are accessible by a choice of transport. This is consistent with the approach to new retail development set out in Chapter 12 on shopping and town centres. Wherever large-scale commercial leisure facilities are proposed, the development will be expected to comply with the general policies for development set out in Chapter 4 of this Plan.

POLICY L6

MAJOR COMMERCIAL LEISURE FACILITIES WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE A LOCAL NEED HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AND:

- i) **THEY ARE PROPOSED TO BE LOCATED WITHIN TOWN CENTRES; OR**
- ii) **ON THE EDGES OF TOWN CENTRES AND AT DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES IF NO SUITABLE SITE CAN BE FOUND WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRES; OR**
- iii) **AT OUT OF TOWN CENTRES IF;**
 - a) **THERE ARE NO SUITABLE SITES WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRES, EDGE OF TOWN CENTRES, DISTRICT AND LOCAL CENTRES; AND**
 - b) **THE SITE IS ACCESSIBLE BY A RANGE OF TRANSPORT MODES INCLUDING WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT.**

10.34 Town centres are defined on the proposals map at Abingdon, Wantage, and Faringdon and local centres are defined at Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage.

- 10.35 The precise location of the leisure facilities to be built in association with the strategic housing site on the former airfield west of Grove, Policy H5 will be subject to the preparation of detailed Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Small-Scale Local Leisure Facilities

- 10.36 The District Council wishes to protect existing local open space, sport and recreational facilities which are available to the public and to prevent their loss to other uses. Policy L7 below establishes this principle. Proposals for new small-scale, open space, sport and recreation facilities designed to serve local communities, or schemes to extend such facilities, will be welcomed, provided they comply with the general policies for development set out in Chapter 4 of the Local Plan in particular policy DC5 which dealt with access and the requirements in policy L8 below:

POLICY L7

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF EXISTING LOCAL LEISURE FACILITIES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS:

- i) **THERE IS NO LONGER A NEED FOR THE FACILITY, OR**
- ii) **IF THERE IS A NEED FOR THE FACILITY ALTERNATIVE PROVISION IN TERMS OF ITS SIZE, QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.**

POLICY L8

SMALL SCALE DEVELOPMENTS FOR OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION WILL BE PERMITTED WITHIN OR ON THE EDGE OF SETTLEMENTS PROVIDED THEY:

- **MEET AN IDENTIFIED LOCAL NEED,**
- **DO NOT REQUIRE BUILDINGS OR WORKS OF A TYPE OR SCALE WHICH WOULD BE HARMFUL TO THE CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA,**
- **DO NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE ECOLOGY OF THE AREA.**

The Provision of Countryside Recreation Facilities

- 10.37 The countryside is used extensively for informal recreational activities such as walking, cycling, running, riding, fishing and picnicking. With the general increase in leisure activity and greater awareness of rural opportunities, participation in countryside pursuits is expected to grow, putting pressure on existing facilities and resources and creating demands for their expansion and for the provision of new facilities. This is occurring at a time when major changes are taking place in

agriculture. Farmers are being encouraged to seek new sources of income to support their farming activity and farm diversification is becoming commonplace. In this context, recreation may no longer be regarded as a threat to the countryside as, with careful planning, it can be a means of helping to conserve it.

- 10.38 In general, provided the interests of farming are safeguarded, and as long as the qualities of the rural environment are protected from damage, the Council believes that public access to, and enjoyment of, the countryside should be encouraged. Where opportunities arise to improve or develop facilities which will promote public enjoyment and understanding of the countryside, in principle they will be considered favourably. This might involve the provision of small picnic sites, roadside parking areas, viewing points and interpretation facilities. The after-use of mineral workings may also create an opportunity for enhancing the recreational facilities of an area by, for example, providing for new footpaths and picnic sites or small scale water-based activities such as canoeing, windsurfing or fishing.
- 10.39 Where the provision of a recreational facility is considered acceptable the Council will seek to ensure that car parking and access arrangements are adequate in accordance with policy DC5 of this Local Plan. It will also wish to be satisfied that the development will not detract from the character of the surrounding countryside. Within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and North Vale Corallian Ridge maintenance of the quality of the landscape will be a primary consideration and this may take precedence over the proposed provision of a new facility.

POLICY L9

SMALL-SCALE DEVELOPMENTS TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR INFORMAL COUNTRYSIDE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, OR WHICH WILL PROMOTE PUBLIC ENJOYMENT AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THEY:

- i) MAINTAIN THE OPEN AND UNDEVELOPED NATURE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND DO NOT REQUIRE BUILDINGS OF A TYPE OR SCALE WHICH WOULD BE HARMFUL TO THE CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA;**
- ii) DO NOT CONFLICT WITH THE NEEDS OF AGRICULTURE OR FORESTRY; AND**
- iii) DO NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE LANDSCAPE OR ECOLOGY OF THE AREA.**

Safeguarding and Improving Public Rights of Way

- 10.40 Compared with other counties Oxfordshire is relatively poorly endowed with extensive countryside offering general open access to the public. Access rights over the Vale's network of public rights of way are therefore all the more valued in maintaining accessibility to the countryside. Public rights of way are an important

recreational resource providing both residents and visitors to the district the opportunity to enjoy quiet, open countryside. Public rights of way are shown on a 'Definitive Map' prepared by Oxfordshire County Council who manage and maintain the existing network. The map was reviewed and republished in 1999.

- 10.41 Under the provision of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the County Council prepared a *Rights of Way Improvement Plan* (RoWIP) 2006-2011. The RoWIP, which was adopted by the County Council on 21st February 2006, sets out ambitions for the improvement of public rights of way in order to meet the Government's aim of better provision for walkers, cyclists, equestrians and people with mobility problems.
- 10.42 One way of encouraging the use of public rights of way is to establish circular walks. Both the Vale of White Horse District Council and the Oxfordshire County Council have been active in recent years in promoting circular walks based on local centres. These include a 'Two Rivers Walk' at Abingdon and routes starting from Wantage and Faringdon, the latter taking in Folly Hill.
- 10.43 In its role as local planning authority, the District Council will take into account the need to safeguard existing rights of way and in conjunction with the County Council will seek to improve the attractiveness and extent of the network, in particular where existing provision is known to be poor. To this end, the Council will seek to use planning conditions or legal agreements with developers to ensure rights of way are protected and opportunities to improve the network are secured.
- 10.44 If diversions to the existing network are proposed in association with a development proposal, a safe, attractive and convenient alternative must be provided which will benefit the public. It should be noted that the stopping up or diversion of an existing public right of way for whatever reason needs to be dealt with separately from any proposals which may require planning permission.
- 10.45 The Council will require new developments, for example housing or employment, to be linked into the existing rights of way network. This requirement is set out in policy DC5 of the Local Plan.

POLICY L10

DEVELOPMENT OVER PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS ALTERNATIVE PROVISION CAN BE MADE THAT IS EQUALLY OR MORE ATTRACTIVE, SAFE AND CONVENIENT TO RIGHTS OF WAY USERS.

Safeguarding Long-Distance Recreational Footpaths

- 10.46 There is an increasing interest in improving the national network of long distance paths because of the recreational opportunities they offer local people and the

economic benefits they can bring to an area by attracting visitors. Three such long-distance routes pass through the Vale, the Ridgeway and the Thames Path, both of which are National Trails, and the d'Arcy Dalton Way.

The Ridgeway

- 10.47 With its origins in the Stone Age, the Ridgeway can claim to be one of the oldest roads in Europe. It follows the highest part of the chalk escarpment, offering attractive views and in places a superb sense of remoteness.
- 10.48 The Vale's section of the Ridgeway forms part of the national trail from Overton Hill, near Avebury, Wiltshire, to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire. The route was designated a national trail in 1972; it runs for some 137 km (85 miles). Management of the Ridgeway national trail is undertaken by a management group consisting of representatives of the Countryside Agency and of local highway authorities. A national trails officer and team carry out the day-to-day management of the trail, along with the management of the Thames Path national trail.
- 10.49 The Management Strategy for the Ridgeway national trail covers the period 1999–2004. The management remit is to:
- provide and secure a high quality experience of the Ridgeway for all walkers and, where appropriate, cyclists and horseriders to include:
 - i) quality in the information provision and service before a visit
 - ii) quality in the variety of opportunities for enjoying the trail from just a short visit to an extended journey and, for walkers, the completion of the whole trail
 - iii) quality in the experience of the visit;
 - encourage and assist people into the countryside and to give them confidence and respect for it;
 - attract local, national and international visitors and to support the local economy;
 - encourage an appreciation, awareness and understanding of the Ridgeway, its surroundings, the people who live and work in the area and the variety of people who visit;
 - adopt a sustainable approach to the management of the Ridgeway;
 - encourage and assist the conservation and enhancement of the heritage and ecological landscape within the trail corridor.
- 10.50 Concern with the surface condition of the trail and the damage caused by the inappropriate use by motorised vehicles remains a major issue. Standards for the surface of the Ridgeway were established in 2001 and an audit against these new standards undertaken in March/April 2002. Over 22 miles of The Ridgeway through Oxfordshire and West Berkshire have become 'restricted byways' a new

category of public rights of way introduced under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. Restricted byways can be used by walkers, cyclists, horseriders and drivers of horse-drawn carriages, but not by recreational vehicles such as motorcycles and '4 by 4' vehicles.

- 10.51 The District Council clearly recognises the tourism, recreational, ecological and historic significance and potential of the Ridgeway. It supports in principle the management aims set out above. As the Ridgeway passes through the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the stringent controls set out elsewhere in the Local Plan will be used to prevent any development which might harm its special character or its surroundings. The District Council will also exercise its planning powers to ensure trees and hedgerows are protected and that new agricultural buildings are not erected which would harm the enjoyment of the trail. Existing buildings on or close to the Ridgeway may be considered suitable for conversion to provide accommodation or other services for walkers, horseriders and cyclists, subject to the general policies for development and tourism set out elsewhere in the Local Plan.

POLICY L11

DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD:

- i) HARM THE REMOTE AND TRANQUIL QUALITY OF THE RIDGEWAY**
- ii) CAUSE HARM TO THE PATH**
- iii) RESULT IN THE LOSS OF IMPORTANT TREES AND HEDGEROWS ALONG ITS ROUTE; OR**
- iv) DIMINISH THE ENJOYMENT EXPERIENCED BY ITS USERS THROUGH INCREASED EROSION, NOISE DISTURBANCE OR VISUAL INTRUSION.**

The Thames Path

- 10.52 The Thames Path, opened in 1996, is unique as a national trail being the only one to follow a river throughout its length of 184 miles, including a substantial stretch within a major city.
- 10.53 A 'gentle' national trail with few steep natural gradients, the Thames Path can provide opportunities for a broad range of people to visit the countryside.
- 10.54 In the Vale upstream of Oxford, the path travels through a relatively remote, attractive, agricultural landscape. Nevertheless it is within a reasonable distance of several settlements which provide a range of facilities and services for walkers. Downstream of Oxford it passes through Abingdon before re-emerging into the

countryside. The route of the Thames Path within the District is shown on the proposals map.

- 10.55 Like the Ridgeway the management of the Thames Path national trail is undertaken by a management group consisting of representatives of the Countryside Agency, the Environment Agency and of local highway authorities.
- 10.56 The current management strategy for the national trail covers the period 2001–2006. The management remit is very similar to that adopted for the Ridgeway (see paragraph 10.49 above). In April 2006 The Thames Path Management Group produced for consultation a Draft Thames Path Strategy which will cover the period 2006-2011.
- 10.57 The District Council recognises the value and importance of the Thames Path as a recreational and tourism resource and will exercise its planning powers to safeguard the path and its immediate environment. In particular it will seek to protect trees and hedgerows which contribute to the quality of the path and ensure that inappropriate built development (including agricultural buildings) is not permitted in the vicinity of the path.

POLICY L12

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE THAMES PATH OR ITS ENJOYMENT BY ITS USERS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

The d'Arcy Dalton Way

- 10.58 The Oxfordshire Fieldpaths Society in 1987 identified the potential for a long-distance footpath crossing the Upper Thames from north to south, to complement the broadly east–west routes of the Ridgeway and the Thames Path. The route, named the d'Arcy Dalton Way, links the Berkshire Downs around Waylands Smithy with the Cotswolds, north of Banbury, crossing the Thames at Radcot Bridge. It covers some 105km (65 miles) of definitive rights of way and public footpaths.
- 10.59 The Countryside Agency has recognised the d'Arcy Dalton Way as a Regional Route. Such routes are defined as those which provide walking or riding of a day or more duration and where this is linked to accommodation and public transport.
- 10.60 The District Council will seek to encourage the full establishment of the d'Arcy Dalton Way, protecting its route through the rights of way policy L10 above. The route in the Vale is shown on the proposals map.

Proposed Park at Folly Hill, Faringdon

- 10.61 Folly Hill on the outskirts of Faringdon is a well known feature in the landscape to which the public enjoy access. It acts as an informal recreational area providing a superb walk and giving unrivalled views across the surrounding countryside. In the Council's adopted Local Plan to 2001 this land, together with the former quarry at Jespers Hill, south of Stanford Road, was proposed as a park. The proposal was well received locally and therefore it is being carried forward into this Plan. The prominence and character of the land, much of which is in the conservation area, make it unsuitable for alternative uses which would involve substantial built development or radical change to the landscape.
- 10.62 Since the idea of the park was first put forward part of the former nursery (around the lake) has been acquired by the District Council. It has been developed as the first phase of the park. Plans were prepared for the site and work has been carried out to improve pedestrian access, provide a small car park and a picnic area. Fishing platforms have also been provided.
- 10.63 Policies elsewhere in this Local Plan propose additional housing (Policy H4) and additional employment (Policy E3) in the vicinity of the park. Legal agreements will be sought from the developers of adjoining land and other sites in the town to secure land and/or financial contributions towards the provision and on-going management and maintenance of the park as shown on the proposals map.
- 10.64 The advantages of extending the park with this additional land are that:
- i) it would link phase one of the park to the edge of Faringdon, thus providing an opportunity to improve pedestrian and cycle links from the town to the park and surrounding countryside;
 - iii) the character and appearance of the site and the edge of Faringdon could be enhanced; and
 - iv) the site is eminently suitable for this type of amenity; its elevated position offers fine views of the surrounding countryside.
- 10.65 It would be essential that the future development of the park for informal recreation is planned and co-ordinated in a comprehensive manner. The land is at present in a number of different ownerships and the Council will work with the owners and other potential partners to develop a comprehensive plan for its implementation and on-going management.

POLICY L13

LAND AT FARINGDON, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, IS PROPOSED FOR DEVELOPMENT AS A PARK TO PROVIDE OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. BECAUSE OF THE SITE'S PROMINENCE IN THE LANDSCAPE, BUILT DEVELOPMENT WILL BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND WILL BE REQUIRED TO BE DESIGNED AND LOCATED SO AS TO MINIMISE ITS VISUAL IMPACT.

The Wilts and Berks Canal

- 10.66 The Wilts and Berks Canal was constructed between 1785 and 1810 and linked the River Thames at Abingdon with the Kennet and Avon Canal at Semington near Melksham. The canal enjoyed profitable years until the development of the railways in the 1840s. It was finally abandoned in 1914 by an Act of Parliament. This returned the canal to the neighbouring landowners.
- 10.67 The canal crosses the Vale from south of Shrivenham in the west of the district, passing by Uffington, West Challow, East Challow, Wantage and Grove to Abingdon. At the western end of the Vale it winds gently across the flat valley floor. Between Acorn Bridge (Shrivenham) and the road from Kingston Lisle to Baulking the canal is remote from settlements and runs through open countryside with distant views of the Berkshire Downs. In this area the canal is bounded by hedgerows and standard trees.
- 10.68 From Kingston Lisle to the A338 east of Grove the canal winds close to the bottom of the greensand escarpment of the Downs. Views to the south are restricted by these hills but the slight elevation of the canal gives good views across the open countryside of the Vale to Faringdon Hill. The rural setting of the western section of the canal is modified by the canal's proximity to Wantage and Grove.
- 10.69 From the A338 at Grove to its junction with the Thames at Abingdon, the canal runs straight across a wide flat section of the Vale. It is extremely remote with distant views of the Berkshire Downs and Boars Hill. At the eastern end Didcot power station becomes more dominant.
- 10.70 East of the A34, the historic route of the canal has been built over and an alternative route needs to be found to the south of Abingdon if the restored canal is to link up to the Thames.
- 10.71 The canal is an important historic feature in the landscape and when close to settlements provides a well used recreational amenity. Where the canal is undisturbed or has been restored it provides a valuable ecological and nature conservation resource. Reinstatement of the towpath and its identification as a long-distance footpath, and if appropriate provide a cycle route, would greatly enhance the route's recreational value, perhaps eventually linking up with the Ridgeway and Thames Path.
- 10.72 The Wilts and Berks Canal Trust (2001), successor to the Wilts & Berks Amenity Group (1977), is working towards the restoration of the canal, its historic features

and towpath. The Trust has already carried out extensive restoration works on the sections of canal at Shrivenham, Wantage, Grove and Drayton. Some lengths are now in water. In the future British Waterways intend to oversee the restoration of the canal and will be keen to work in partnership with the District Council and other inland waterways organisations to reinstate the canal to full navigational use.

- 10.73 The District Council welcomes this activity and recognises the amenity, recreational and economic value of restoring sections of the canal, particularly close to urban centres. Opportunities should also be taken to investigate whether the canal could be used to alleviate drainage problems in the area. This Local Plan, in addition to protecting the historic route of the canal, seeks to safeguard a route for a new stretch of canal to the south of Abingdon as indicated on the proposals map.
- 10.74 The historic line of the Wilts and Berks Canal and the proposed new route to the south of Abingdon should be safeguarded from development which would prejudice the canal's restoration. The Council will welcome small-scale schemes which help to improve, restore and enhance the footpath and landscape features along the route of the canal and if appropriate provide a cycleway. As it becomes more intensively used there is likely to be growing pressure for facilities associated with the canal, for example, buildings, car parking areas, moorings and picnic sites. These facilities will be limited to sections of the canal where they do not restrict through-navigation, detract from the canal's environment, adversely affect wider views from the surrounding countryside or detract from the amenities of residential properties. The Council recognises that, thanks to the concerns of present owners, many sections of the canal already offer environmental and nature conservation benefits to the locality. In the process of seeking reinstatement, it will be important for all concerned to acknowledge the rights of the owners and these benefits.
- 10.75 In considering any planning applications for the restoration of the historic route or creation of the new route of a canal south of Abingdon, concerns such as the disturbance to the existing ecology and water supply will need to be satisfactorily addressed in an environmental impact statement. Regard will also need to be paid to minerals and waste issues as identified in Oxfordshire County Council's Minerals & Waste Local Plan.
- 10.76 Development on or near the route of the canal will be expected to contribute towards its restoration in order to enhance its role as a major recreational and leisure facility in the district, via planning conditions, legal agreements and/or in relation to surface water drainage arrangements.
- 10.77 The District Council will resist any proposals for development in association with the canal which would be in conflict with the restraint policies expressed elsewhere in this Plan.

POLICY L14

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE ESSENTIAL CHARACTER OF THE WILTS AND BERKS CANAL OR TO ITS SETTING, OR WOULD BE LIKELY TO PREVENT OR IMPAIR THE RESTORATION OF THE CANAL, OR WOULD RESULT IN THE LOSS OF ANY BUILDINGS, LOCKS OR OTHER STRUCTURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ORIGINAL WATERWAY FUNCTION OF THE CANAL WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

DEVELOPMENT ON OR CLOSE TO THE ROUTE OF THE CANAL WILL BE REQUIRED TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS RECREATIONAL POTENTIAL AND/OR PROTECT ITS NATURE CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE VALUE.

DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD PREVENT THE RESTORATION OF THE CANAL ON ITS HISTORIC ALIGNMENT AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE CANAL ON A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE ROUTE CAN BE SECURED BY THE DEVELOPER.

POLICY L15

DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD PREVENT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED NEW ROUTE FOR THE CANAL SOUTH OF ABINGDON AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP WILL BE REFUSED.

Golf Courses

- 10.78 Golf courses can help to retain the open nature of the countryside, make use of redundant buildings and, in some locations, can bring positive enhancement to an area. On the other hand if care is not taken in their choice of location and in their design, new courses can change and damage the character of the countryside by introducing unnatural features such as fairways, manicured greens and bunkers. They can disturb historic or archaeological sites, or areas of ecological importance, and can have a detrimental effect upon the water environment. Other disadvantages could be the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land from food production, the introduction of large volumes of traffic onto unsuitable roads and the need for urban style development to support the course such as car parks, clubhouses, fencing and lighting. Policy L16 and the guidance set out below is written with these issues in mind.
- 10.79 The Sports Council (Southern Region) (now Sport England) published *A Guide to Golf Provision in the Southern Region* in 1995. The Guide revealed that within Oxfordshire as a whole there is an over-provision of golf courses using a measurement of one 18-hole course per 20,000 people. In the Vale in May 2002 there were seven 18-hole courses, one for every 16,000 people in the district. Although demand for further courses may therefore seem unlikely, given their potential impact on the countryside the Council considers it important to make clear its policy towards the provision of new courses.

- 10.80 The impact of a golf course on the landscape is fundamental to its acceptability. In order to be able to assess whether a golf course could be integrated satisfactorily into the landscape the Council will require details of the layout, earthmoving, proposed changes in ground levels (including any material to be brought onto the site) and landscaping to be submitted with the application. Details will also be required of the access and expected traffic generation, footpaths or bridleways in and around the site, and any on-site features of historical, archaeological or wildlife importance, so that the effect of the development on any of these factors can be assessed during the consideration of the application. Views into the site should also be considered at the design stage. (English Heritage has prepared guidance on golf course proposals in historic landscapes and the Countryside Agency has published a useful advisory booklet, *Golf Courses in the Countryside*, which the Council will refer to where necessary).
- 10.81 Proposals should make maximum use of existing trees, hedgerows and other features of interest. New planting using native species will be favoured.
- 10.82 The County Council has adopted minimum design standards to protect rights of way on golf courses and developers should have regard to these in the design of the course. Proposals which would materially reduce the safety, convenience and enjoyment of people using rights of way will not normally be permitted. The course should also be designed to allow disabled people using wheelchairs or motorised transport to play.
- 10.83 Details accompanying an application should give an indication of the agricultural quality of the land and also show the effect of the golf course on the remainder of the farm-holding and adjoining farmland and whether it creates redundant farm buildings or farmhouses.
- 10.84 It is important to ensure that golf course proposals do not result in damage to the water environment. Golf courses often require large quantities of water for irrigation, before determining the application the Council will want to ensure that irrigation will not have a detrimental effect on local land drainage or water resources.
- 10.85 Planning policies elsewhere in the plan seek to restrict the erection of new buildings in the countryside. A clubhouse and maintenance building in scale with the golfing facilities will clearly be essential for most golf courses. If possible these should be housed in existing buildings. New buildings should be designed and landscaped to have the minimum effect on the countryside. Full details of any clubhouse, its facilities and car parking should be included with the application.
- 10.86 In accordance with the Local Plan's housing policies residential accommodation will not normally be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that it is essential for a person to be available at all times for security or the proper management of the golf

course. The Council will require to be satisfied that this need cannot be met through use of existing accommodation in the area or by the conversion of an existing appropriate building. If these solutions are not possible accommodation in the form of a flat within the clubhouse may be accepted.

10.87 Proposals for ancillary facilities such as hotels, self-catering accommodation, conference centres and leisure complexes on existing and proposed golf courses will be considered in the light of the tourism policies set out in Chapter 13 of this Plan and the policies in Chapter 3 relating to development in the Green Belt.

10.88 Proposals for golf driving ranges may include an element of floodlighting. These will be considered in relation to policy DC20. Where such proposals are acceptable, the impact of lighting emissions should be minimised by use of shielding and screening and by the selection of an appropriate intensity of lighting.

POLICY L16

PROPOSALS FOR GOLF COURSES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF:

- i) **THE OPENNESS AND RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IS MAINTAINED, IMPROVED OR RESTORED. GOLF COURSES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN PROMINENT LOCATIONS WHERE THE LANDSCAPE WOULD BE DAMAGED;**
- ii) **BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND (GRADE 1, 2 AND 3A) WILL NOT BE TAKEN AND THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL OR HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE, OR THE WATER ENVIRONMENT;**
- iii) **ANY NEED FOR BUILDINGS WOULD BE MET FIRST BY THE ADAPTATION AND RE-USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS ON THE SITE WHERE THESE ARE WORTHY OF RETENTION. WHERE EXISTING BUILDINGS ARE UNAVAILABLE, INSUFFICIENT OR UNSUITABLE, NEW BUILDING WILL BE LIMITED TO THAT STRICTLY NECESSARY FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOLF COURSE, SUCH AS A CLUBHOUSE, STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE BUILDINGS. SUCH BUILDINGS MUST BE IN KEEPING WITH THE LOCALITY IN TERMS OF THEIR SITING, DESIGN AND APPEARANCE; AND**
- iv) **THE COURSE IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT OR ENHANCE PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND WILDLIFE HABITATS.**

10.89 If there are special features on the site of a proposed golf course or if the course is in an area of special landscape designation it will be necessary to take into account the requirements of other policies in the Local Plan, for example those dealing with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and features or areas of historic,

archaeological or nature conservation importance. In the Oxford Green Belt policy GS3 will also be relevant. Potential applicants are advised to consult the Council on the likely policy implications of their proposals.

The River Thames

- 10.90 Much of the northern and eastern boundary of the Vale of White Horse district is formed by the River Thames. The river is a major leisure resource for the people of the Vale and for visitors.
- 10.91 To understand the special environment quality of the River Thames, which the policy below seeks to protect, it is necessary to understand and appreciate its physical characteristics. The Thames borders the district for over 60km, a long stretch which, for ease of reference, can be described in two sections: from Lechlade to Wytham along the northern boundary of the district, and south of Oxford from Kennington to Appleford along the eastern boundary of the district.
- 10.92 **Lechlade to Wytham** This stretch of the River Thames is considered by many to be particularly beautiful. It is predominantly rural in character with the river meandering along a flat wide floodplain. The landscape combines water meadows, pastures and small woodlands with willows growing on the banks and in the hedgerows. The river and its margins provide a micro-habitat for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The character of this stretch of the river is remote and tranquil, settlements are set away from the river and the activity that does take place is concentrated at the bridging points. All the bridges are of historic interest as are the few buildings which cluster around them. There is less boating activity on this stretch of the river than downstream; the most popular use is for informal countryside recreation such as fishing walking and picnicking.
- 10.93 **South of Oxford** South of Oxford the river continues to meander but the river and floodplain are in most places wider. Although many stretches are still agricultural in character there is more evidence of urbanisation and activity. In particular at Abingdon the river provides an important feature to the setting of the town and the watermeadows are used as an important recreational resource. This stretch of the river is extensively used for boating, with both Abingdon and Oxford being popular visitor destinations. To the north and south of Abingdon there is also much evidence of the landscape having been disturbed by gravel workings along the valley floor. Below Oxford the scale of the river can absorb more activity.
- 10.94 In recent years the number of boats registered on the Thames has declined. Research for Thames Ahead (an Environment Agency initiative to bring river interests together to improve co-ordination in planning) has revealed that nine out of ten boaters believe the river has improved for boating, with less traffic and a cleaner environment.

- 10.95 Clearly, the exploitation of the recreational potential of the river should be managed to the extent necessary to protect the general environment of the river and its landscape, including its nature conservation interest. In Oxfordshire, four district councils and the County Council exercise planning responsibilities involving the River Thames, often facing each other on opposite banks of the river. For many years, the Councils have sought to work together to secure consistency in leisure and development policy for the river. A Working Party was established in the 1970s consisting of officers from all of the authorities and the then Thames Water Authority. The policy recommendations of the Working Party published as *The River Thames Leisure Policy* (on boating) were largely accepted by the authorities, and were used as the general foundation for the County Council's strategic policies for the River Thames and for the policies in the district councils' local plans.
- 10.96 In 1992 The National Rivers Authority (now the Environment Agency) in conjunction with the Sports Council (now Sport England) decided to review *The River Thames Leisure Policy* (1980) and prepared a comprehensive recreation strategy for the river which was published in May 1995. Since this strategy was published the Government issued the policy document 'Waterways for Tomorrow (2000)' which requires navigation authorities and local authorities to work together to deliver maximum social and economic benefit from the inland waterways. In pursuit of this the River Thames Strategic Partnership has been established and a River Thames Alliance has now been set up.
- 10.97 Because of the decline in boat traffic in the 1980s and 1990s many boatyards along the Thames were lost to alternative forms of development. The District Council acknowledges that the services these businesses provide are vital to the infrastructure of the river and once lost they are difficult to replace. The policy below therefore seeks to resist the loss of boatyards to alternative forms of development.

POLICY L17

DEVELOPMENT ON SITES ADJACENT TO THE RIVER THAMES WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THE SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITIES OF THE RIVER AND ITS MARGINS, INCLUDING ITS VALUE AS A NATURE CONSERVATION RESOURCE, ARE PROTECTED AND WHERE POSSIBLE, ENHANCED. IN PARTICULAR:

- i) NEW BUILDINGS FOR RIVER RELATED DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO EXISTING SETTLEMENTS;**
- ii) IN THE OXFORD GREEN BELT DEVELOPMENT WILL BE LIMITED TO SMALL SCALE FACILITIES ESSENTIAL FOR A RIVER RELATED RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY, AND PROVIDED SUCH DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PURPOSES OF INCLUDING LAND WITHIN AND PRESERVING THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT;**

- iii) **DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH AN ORGANISED WATER SPORT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF IT WOULD NOT GIVE RISE TO SERIOUS CONGESTION ON THE RIVER OR INSUPERABLE CONFLICT WITH OTHER EXISTING RIVER USES;**
- iv) **THE RE-DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING BOAT YARDS FOR OTHER USES UNRELATED TO THE RIVER WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.**

WHERE APPROPRIATE, DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO INCLUDE MEASURES TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ACCESS ALONG, TO AND FROM THE RIVER, INCLUDING FOR THOSE WITH IMPAIRED MOBILITY AND CYCLISTS, PROVIDED THE LATTER DOES NOT HARM THE ENJOYMENT OF OTHERS, INCLUDING WALKERS.

10.98 South of the existing marina at Abingdon the Local Plan 2001 proposed an area suitable for low key water-based recreation. The District Council still considers it desirable to retain this attractive water feature which could be used for quiet informal recreation such as fishing and sailing.

POLICY L18

DEVELOPMENT NEEDED TO FACILITATE THE QUIET RECREATIONAL USE OF THE AREA SOUTH OF THE ABINGDON MARINA AS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP WILL BE PERMITTED, SUBJECT TO THE CRITERIA SET OUT IN POLICY L9 ABOVE, AND THE POLICIES IN CHAPTER 4 OF THIS PLAN.

Noisy Sports

10.99 The growth in leisure activity has led to increased interest in a variety of noisy recreational activities such as motorsports, shooting and war games, most of which require sites in the countryside. Such pursuits can cause damage to the landscape and can have a major impact on the amenity of local residents if they create excessive amounts of noise, traffic or other disturbance. They can also conflict with the interests of other users seeking to enjoy the countryside, such as walkers and riders. The provision of suitable authorised sites where activities are controlled and regulated can help to reduce such conflicts and prevent unauthorised use and damage to playing fields, footpaths, open land and woodlands. If care is taken in the choice of location, organised noisy sport provision may also help enhance or make use of degraded land. Some noisy sports have their own governing bodies which have drawn up useful codes of practice to regulate their particular activities with the aim of reducing potential conflict with other users of the countryside. The District Council welcomes such codes.

10.100 Where sporting activities are infrequent and of short duration they can usually operate with the benefit of permitted development rights. If however the land involved includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), planning permission will be required for any temporary recreational use, for war games, motorsports or

clay pigeon shooting. Where planning permission is required, the District Council will carefully consider the likely effects of the proposed activity on the amenity and rural character of the area and on any nearby residential properties or existing uses of the surrounding land. The degree of visual intrusion, noise, traffic generation and effect on public safety will be of particular concern. Where permission is granted, conditions may be imposed in order to limit the noise emanating from the activity and to reduce the visual impact of any structures required for the activity. Restrictions may also be imposed limiting the hours and days of the week during which the activity can take place.

- 10.101 Suitable sites for such activities may be found on former mineral workings or similar degraded land, provided proposals meet the criteria set out in the policy below. The District Council will also take into account the requirements of other policies in the Local Plan, where relevant, for example those which deal with the protection of the setting of listed buildings, areas of archaeological importance, ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens, conservation areas, sites of importance for nature conservation and public rights of way. Policies which cover the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the North Vale Corallian Ridge may also be relevant.

POLICY L19

PROPOSALS FOR NOISY OR OTHER POTENTIALLY INTRUSIVE RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY SUCH AS MOTORSPORTS, SHOOTING, WAR GAMES AND AIR SPORTS WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY:

- i) **WILL NOT CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS OR USERS OF ADJOINING OR NEARBY LAND IN TERMS OF NOISE AND DISTURBANCE, OR DETRACT FROM THE VISUAL AMENITY OF THE AREA; AND**
- ii) **HAS ADEQUATE PROVISION FOR ACCESS AND CAR PARKING.**

IN THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY AND THE NORTH VALE CORALLIAN RIDGE, THE SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF THESE AREAS WILL BE CONSERVED.

The Keeping & Rearing of Horses for Recreational Purposes

- 10.102 Horse riding for recreational purposes is a common activity in the district. There are two separate aspects of the activity as far as the need for planning permission is concerned; first the use of land, and secondly the erection of structures. The use of land for the grazing of horses is regarded as an agricultural use under the Planning Act and does not therefore require planning permission. However, if the keeping of horses, requires the erection of fences, jumps and shelters, planning

permission may be required. It is advisable to check with the District Council before carrying out any such development to ascertain if planning permission is required.

POLICY L20

DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE KEEPING OF HORSES FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED IT DOES NOT:

- **HARM THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA;**
- **CONFLICT WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE GREEN BELT;**
- **GIVE RISE TO EXCESSIVE USE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN TERMS OF TRAFFIC GENERATION OR DAMAGE TO A PATH'S FABRIC OR NOISE, SMELL OR OTHER DISTURBANCES WHICH WOULD BE HARMFUL TO THE AMENITY OF NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES OR OTHER PATH USERS.**

THE ECONOMY OF THE VALE

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 11.1 The Local Plan will provide the land use planning framework for business and other employment-generating development in the Vale over the period to 2011. The Plan will help to shape the local economy and will become a key element in the maintenance of the district's economic well-being. Chapter 2 of the Local Plan, *The Future Of The Vale to 2011*, contains seven aims for the Plan, the fifth being 'to encourage a strong and sustainable economy which is beneficial to all who live in, work in, or visit the Vale'. This is also one of the Council's objectives. The planning system can help to create the right conditions in which businesses can thrive and prosper, consistent with the principles of sustainable development, outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Local Plan. In this respect one of the main challenges for the Plan is to achieve the right balance between ensuring that opportunities continue to exist for business and employment growth sufficient to meet local needs, whilst safeguarding the Vale's environment against potentially damaging development.
- 11.2 The Vale of White Horse is an attractive location for business by virtue of its location, lying between major centres of population and being on, or close to, important communication links. Swindon is located just to the south-west, Oxford to the north-east and Reading close to the south-east. The line of the A34 trunk road runs north-south through the Vale, linking the Solent ports with the midlands, and the M4 motorway runs just to the south of the district. There are excellent links with London by road via the M4 (north of Newbury) and M40 (east of Oxford), and by rail at Didcot. The district benefits particularly from its location close to Oxford in terms of the influence of education and research facilities at Oxford University and also from the city's industrial base, which includes car manufacturing at Cowley and clusters of high tech and research based companies. The Vale is also attractive as a location for business in its own right due to the quality of the natural and built environment, which includes part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and numerous historic market towns and villages.
- 11.3 Journey to work patterns have become increasingly complex over the last 20 years reflecting changes in working practices and increased job mobility, as well as a greater acceptance of travelling longer distances for employment. The 1991 Census suggested that although the majority of residents (62%) worked within the Vale, a significant proportion of local residents travelled outside the district boundary to their place of work (including 19% travelling to Oxford, 9% to other Oxfordshire districts, 2.5% to Berkshire and 2.4% to London). This position may

alter over time and new trends may emerge such as increased working at home. Such trends will be important in considering future planning and economic policies for the district.

- 11.4 Since 1991 the Vale's economy has continued to perform well, showing consistently low levels of unemployment, averaging under 1.5%. Between March 2000 and February 2001 the working-age employment rate in the Vale was 83% compared with 80% in the South East and 74% in the UK. Furthermore, the Vale has a relatively highly skilled workforce, as indicated by figures for the same period, which showed that the proportion of the working-age population who had attained National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 or above was 55% compared with 45% in the South East and 41% in the UK (National Statistics). This corresponds with a change in the employment structure resulting in an increased importance of four key areas: knowledge based industries (including science and research based operations), the service sector (including growth in banking, finance and insurance), specialist manufacturing (including the production of medical instruments and laser technology) and leisure industries (including recreation and tourism).
- 11.5 Business and industry have been accommodated on a wide variety of sites throughout the district, ranging from the prestigious 77 hectare Milton Park development west of Didcot to small rural sites. Specific provision has been made for research and technology enterprises on the Abingdon Science Park and the Council has encouraged the re-use and redevelopment of older industrial sites for new purposes, for example the former MG car site in Abingdon, which is now thriving as the Abingdon Business Park, and the Minns industrial estate at Botley, which is being transformed into a development of high quality office and other business floorspace under a new name, 'Oxford West'. The district is also home to a number of major national and international companies and organisations, some of which (for example, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham and the Joint Service Command & Staff College at Watchfield) occupy extensive campus sites set in the heart of the Vale's countryside. In addition there are colleges elsewhere in the Vale including Abingdon and Witney College, Westminster Institute of Education (part of Oxford Brookes University) Templeton College (part of Oxford University) and Cranfield, together with many schools (both publicly funded and private) all of which make a significant contribution to the local economy.
- 11.6 Overall, therefore, opportunities for business development and enterprise in the Vale have been maintained and the economy of the district has remained in good health. In preparing and publishing the Local Plan the Council has been conscious of the need to ensure that this situation will continue. The policies in this chapter will need to take account of changing guidance from central government in the form of planning policy statements (PPSs), together with

Regional Guidance for South East England and the strategy of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. In addition, the Vale's own Economic Development Strategy will be an important consideration, together with background work undertaken on employment issues, and also views expressed in response to the Local Plan Issues Report and the questionnaire published in the Council's *Vale Views* newsletter.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 11.7 The government's advice to planning authorities on matters relating to employment and business development is contained largely in three planning policy guidance notes: PPG4: *Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms* published by the Department of the Environment in November 1992; PPS7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*, published in 2004; and PPG12: *Development Plans*, published in December 1999. Having regard to local circumstances, the following elements of the government's advice appear to be of particular relevance to the Vale:
- i) economic growth and a high quality environment have to be pursued together. The government's environment white paper *This Common Inheritance* emphasises that 'Economic growth is not an end in itself. It provides us with the means to lead better fuller lives. There is no contradiction in arguing both for economic growth and for environmental good sense. The challenge is to integrate the two'. Development plans provide the policy framework through which this integration can be attempted;
 - ii) local and other development plans should give industrial and commercial developers and local communities greater certainty about the types of development that will or will not be allowed in a given location;
 - iii) in allocating land for industry and commerce planning authorities should be realistic in their assessment of the needs of business. They should aim to ensure that sufficient land is available, readily capable of development, well served by infrastructure and on a variety of sites suited to differing needs;
 - iv) local and other development plans offer the opportunity to encourage new development where it will minimise the need to travel by motor vehicle; where it can be served by more energy-efficient modes of transport; and where it would not add unacceptably to congestion; and
 - v) bringing under-used or vacant land back into beneficial use is important to the regeneration of towns. Optimum use should be made of such land and local planning authorities should identify appropriate areas and indicate alternative uses, including industry and commerce.

Regional Guidance

11.8 The approved *Regional Planning Guidance for the South East* (RPG9) was published in March 2001. The main policies of relevance to the roll forward of the Local Plan require the Council to:

- i) take full account of emerging local economic strategies, which will need to reflect total capacity in terms of labour, land availability and transport infrastructure, build upon local strengths, including skills, local research strengths and strong business clusters, and should reflect changing work and living patterns;
- ii) reduce business-related travel, for example, ensuring that businesses are located in areas well served or capable of being well served by sustainable modes of transport and requiring travel plans for all substantial new travel generating development;
- iii) encourage forms of development which maximise environmental and social benefits, for example mixed-use development which links housing and employment;
- iv) allocate employment land within an overall strategy for urban renaissance (the revival and rejuvenation of cities and towns) and rural development, providing a range of premises and sites to meet the varied needs of business; and
- v) include policies and proposals which result from a review of existing and potential sites considering various factors including current use and scope for intensification, and scope for optimising the use of previously developed land.

11.9 Part of the Vale adjoins what in RPG9 is defined as the Thames Valley sub-region of the Western Policy Area. In this sub-region, policy RE8 of the guidance states that 'positive strategies should be developed for areas where congestion or labour or land shortages are constraining economic growth. "Hotspots" should be identified and specific policies developed to tackle problems'. This policy may have implications for the Local Plan, particularly in respect of policies for employment sites in the A34 corridor, for example Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus (the Harwell International Business Centre, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory and the Radiation Protection Division of the Health Protection Agency).

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 11.10 The general strategy of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan in its policy G1 includes restraining the overall level of development in the county to protect its environment, character and resources. Structure Plan policy E3 states that outside the main towns of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney, the provision of land for employment-generating development will be restrained and limited to activities which do not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic.
- 11.11 The Structure Plan does not provide a figure for the amount of employment land to be provided in the Vale over the Plan period. For Abingdon, Faringdon, Wantage and Grove the Plan states that a limited amount of land for employment intensive development will be made available. For the rest of the district only small-scale employment proposals are to be allowed and then only in appropriate locations. The Plan requires the Council to take account of the need for employment provision in the Didcot area because the town is identified as a location for significant housing and employment growth. Although Didcot itself lies in South Oxfordshire, there are two major employment sites within the Vale close to Didcot, at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, which provide jobs for some of the people living in the town.
- 11.12 In respect of rural areas the Structure Plan states that proposals for small-scale employment-generating development which support the diversification of the rural economy will normally be permitted in appropriate locations, taking particular account of the general need to reduce the need to travel by car. The conversion of existing rural buildings for employment-generating use will normally be permitted subject to criteria.

Regional and County Economic Development Strategies

- 11.13 The Local Plan needs to take account of the regional economic strategy document produced by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) entitled *Building a World Class Region: Towards an Economic Strategy for the South-East of England*, which is aimed at enabling the South East to become competitive and improve economic prosperity while combating deprivation and enhancing environmental quality. Also relevant is *The Economic Development Strategy for Oxfordshire*, produced by the County Council which aims 'to encourage the development of a high wage, high skill, high value added economy which enhances and protects the quality of life of residents of Oxfordshire and enables them to fulfil their potential'.

The Vale's Economic Development Strategy

- 11.14 The Council's *Economic Development Strategy* for 2001/2002 sets out a series of objectives to guide the Council's work on economic development, including the following requirements and actions which relate specifically to the Local Plan:

Requirement - Ensure a good range of sites and premises are available for businesses.

Actions - Monitor the amount, locations and marketability of sites identified for development and assess whether additional land should be made available through the Local Plan review.

- 11.15 This strategy has influenced the Local Plan in terms of the need for a range of policies to allow new sites to come forward and to retain existing key business sites. The strategy, in its area based programme, includes a requirement to promote the Wantage/Grove area as an economic sub-centre and in this respect the Local Plan includes policies aimed at strengthening the role of the Wantage/Grove area for business and employment opportunities.

Current Provision for Employment-generating Development in the Vale

- 11.16 In considering whether additional land needs to be identified for business uses account needs to be taken of existing vacant sites identified in the Council's previously adopted Local Plan in all of the towns in the Vale, at Milton Park and on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, as well as on a number of rural sites. In 2004 these vacant sites amounted to over 30 hectares.
- 11.17 There is also significant potential for the creation of jobs through the intensification, redevelopment and modernisation of existing employment sites in both the urban and rural areas of the Vale. For example, the respective landowners at Harwell and Milton Park have estimated that the redevelopment of existing land and buildings, plus the identified vacant land (see above), is likely to give an additional 2,500 jobs at each site by 2011. The major new synchrotron proposal at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus is likely to bring an additional 200 jobs. There is further potential for the creation of jobs on non-business sites; for example the new Joint Services Command and Staff College at Watchfield will employ about 350 people. National trends also show that more people are working from home.
- 11.18 Didcot is the only 'country town' in the south of the county. Country towns are defined in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan to take significant housing and employment growth. Didcot is in South Oxfordshire adjoining the Vale and there are two major employment sites within the Vale close to Didcot at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus which provide jobs for some of the town's residents. In making an overall assessment of the amount of employment land needed in the Vale, account should be taken of proposed development at Didcot. In this respect, South Oxfordshire District Council has estimated that there is potential for about 2,500 additional jobs in the Didcot area within its district which, added to the potential at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and Milton Park (see above), gives a forecast of 7,500 jobs.

This will meet the needs of the occupiers of the new housing at Didcot during the Plan period, without the requirement to release additional employment land.

- 11.19 The Council believes that across the district as a whole the amount of vacant business land currently available, the capacity of large employment areas to increase their workforce through regeneration and modernisation and the opportunities for employment provision on non-business sites (for example in town centres and at educational establishments) will be sufficient to meet the needs of the Vale up to 2011. It is also considered sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the Structure Plan in respect of the Vale as a whole and the Didcot area.

Local Plan Issues Report

- 11.20 The Local Plan 2011 Issues Report, published in August 2000, in considering the employment needs of the Vale to 2011, identified two key issues:
- i) whether additional land needs to be identified and further jobs provided;
 - ii) the policies and proposals which will be appropriate in securing a strong and sustainable economy.
- 11.21 The respondents to the Issues Report and the questionnaire published in the Council's *Vale Views* newsletter were generally supportive of the Council's approach as described in paragraphs 11.16–11.19 above. In particular, of the people who responded to the questionnaire, 92% did not think it was necessary to identify additional land for employment use.
- 11.22 The Issues Report considered whether the Council should seek to resist the further loss of employment sites in the towns and asked whether there are any existing sites in villages which should remain in employment/industrial use. Most of the respondents considered that the further loss of employment sites should be resisted, as a good range of employment land is needed to ensure that settlements are sustainable, vibrant and attractive to inward investors.
- 11.23 Policies for new employment development in the rural areas were also considered. In this respect the Issues Report asked whether the Council should continue to allow small-scale employment development within the larger villages but to resist new employment development in the smaller villages and countryside, apart from the conversion of existing buildings. The majority of respondents (86%) favoured allowing small-scale employment opportunities within the larger villages but the response was split almost 50/50 in terms of whether to continue with a restrictive approach in the smaller villages. Therefore the Council considers that it would be appropriate to restrict development in the smaller villages where they have infrequent or no public transport provision and there are few opportunities to live close to workplaces.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

Sites for Business Development

- 11.24 This section of the Plan identifies specific sites in the Vale on which the District Council expects new industrial development to take place. Policies are set out to control the use of the sites in terms of the business use class or classes which are appropriate. Where appropriate the policies also control the form of the development likely to be permitted, including any site specific requirements, such as access arrangements or landscaping. The definition of business use for the purposes of the Local Plan is set out in the glossary.
- 11.25 An assessment has been undertaken which concludes that other than the sites identified in the following policies E1 to E8, there is no need to identify additional vacant sites in the district for business purposes (see paragraph 11.19 above). The Local Plan does, however, include a policy framework which seeks to retain existing key employment sites across the district. Under policies E10 to E12, proposals which would lead to the loss of existing business land and premises to other uses on these key sites will not be permitted other than ancillary uses under policy E13. Redevelopment for business purposes within these sites will be permitted subject to criteria set out in policies E1 to E8.

The Main Settlements

Abingdon

- 11.26 There are currently vacant sites in three locations in the town which were identified for business purposes in the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan to 2001. These are: land at Abingdon Business Park and land at Abingdon Science Park. The Council considers that these areas should continue to be identified for business purposes and policies to control their future use are set out below. A further site at Thames View Industrial Estate has also been identified for partial redevelopment for business purposes.
- 11.27 **Abingdon Business Park** There are currently two vacant plots of land at Wyndyke Furlong in the north of Abingdon Business Park, a site of approximately 0.7 hectares to the north of Foxcombe Court, and an area of about 0.5 hectares in the north-western corner of the Park close to the junction between Wyndyke Furlong and Colwell Drive. These sites would both be suitable for B1, B2 or B8 uses. There is the possibility of land contamination at the Business Park as a result of previous activities and therefore site investigations prior to development will be necessary. The site in the north-western corner is immediately adjacent to a new building constructed for Swets Blackwell, a modern building of a

particularly high design standard. As part of the planning permission for Swets Blackwell there is a proposal for a new building on this site of a similar high standard of design.

- 11.28 **Abingdon Science Park** The 1983 Abingdon Local Plan allocated 8.1 hectares of land on the eastern edge of the town at Barton Lane for employment use. This site, now known as the Abingdon Science Park, has been developed progressively since that time, including about 2 hectares of the additional area allocated in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan to 2001. The current situation is that all of the remaining plots now have planning permission or are reserved for specific firms. Only one plot remains undeveloped and therefore continues to be identified in this Local Plan for business purposes.
- 11.29 The Science Park is geared strongly towards firms engaged in science and technology-related activities which require accommodation for research, design, production and administrative functions within one unit. The park has been designed as a low-density, high quality development in a parkland setting, and any new buildings will be required to be of a similar high standard of design with a strong emphasis on landscaping. In view of the above factors, the use of the site will be limited to 'light' business activities under class B1. As a former landfill site, site investigations prior to development will be necessary and development proposals will be required to include appropriate landfill gas control measures.
- 11.30 **Half of the Thames View Industrial Estate** Half of the Thames View Industrial Estate comprising the former Burgess premises and the smaller light industrial units abutting the Abbey Stream, is proposed for mixed housing and employment development. In the light of the current commercial market this is considered acceptable in the basis that 50% of the site is used for housing. It will be important that this development is designed comprehensively in order to make the most effective use of the site.

POLICY E1

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN ABINGDON WILL BE PERMITTED AT THE FOLLOWING SITES SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

- i) **ABINGDON BUSINESS PARK AT WYNDYKE FURLONG FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USES;**
- ii) **ABINGDON SCIENCE PARK AT BARTON LANE FOR B1 USES ONLY. WHERE APPROPRIATE PROPOSALS WILL NEED TO INCLUDE MEASURES FOR THE CONTROL OF LANDFILL GAS;**
- iii) **HALF OF THE THAMES VIEW INDUSTRIAL ESTATE SOUTH OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL CAR PARK FOR INDUSTRIAL USE, SUBJECT TO ANY B2 USES BEING**

LOCATED SO AS NOT TO HARM THE AMENITY OF EXISTING OR PROSPECTIVE RESIDENTS, AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE SCHEME FOR A MIXED HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT.

Botley Area

- 11.31 **Cumnor Hill** A site of about 0.8 hectares in size was allocated in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2001 at Cumnor Hill for business development. Part of the site has now been developed as offices for the Timbmet Timber Yard immediately to the east of the site but there is a remaining area of vacant land which is suitable for new business units. The use of the site is limited to B1 purposes due to its location adjoining a residential area.
- 11.32 **North Hinksey** The Minns Business Park at West Way, Botley has planning permission for redevelopment for B1 office use. About two-thirds of this 1.5 hectare site has been developed or has detailed planning permission, leaving about one-third with outline permission. The use of the site has been restricted to Class B1 uses in view of its location close to residential properties.

POLICY E2

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES IN THE BOTLEY AREA WILL BE PERMITTED AT THE FOLLOWING SITES SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

- i) **CUMNOR HILL ON LAND TO THE WEST OF TIMBMET TIMBER YARD FOR B1 USE ONLY. PROPOSALS FOR OTHER USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED;**
- ii) **MINNS BUSINESS PARK AT NORTH HINKSEY FOR B1 USE ONLY.**

Faringdon

- 11.33 There are three sites which were originally identified for business purposes in the Faringdon Local Plan (1991) and were carried forward into the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan to 2001. These sites consist first of vacant land south of Willes Close and north of Pioneer Road and secondly vacant land north of Park Road. There is still land available at these sites, which is considered to be appropriate for business uses. The third site is a concrete processing and products plant in a quarry to the south of the town, where potential for redevelopment was recognised. However, this site is likely to remain in its current use for the lifetime of this plan and has not been carried forward into the second deposit plan. Two additional sites are identified for business use, the first on part of the former nursery between the town and the A420 and the second on land north of Park Road adjacent to the A420. These four sites will

provide the opportunity for additional employment development to meet the future needs of the Faringdon area, as set out below.

- 11.34 Land south of Willes Close and north of Pioneer Road** In the Vale of White Horse Local Plan to 2001, this site of about 1.3 hectares was described as land within the former Junior School Site. It has been re-named in this Plan as land south of Willes Close and north of Pioneer Road for ease of identification. The southern half of the site was granted planning permission in January 2002 for three class B1 industrial units with access from Pioneer Road and provision of a landscaped bund on the eastern boundary of the site to provide screening for the dwellings in Southampton Street and Berners Way. A requirement of policy E3 below is that a landscape buffer should also be provided between the site and the housing development to the north at Willes Close which will be protected as open space. Given its proximity to existing housing, development on this site will be restricted to small-scale business uses within class B1.
- 11.35 Land north of Park Road** A site of approximately 2.0 hectares in size, located on one of the most important approaches to the town, has now been partly developed for a B1 industrial unit and a new medical centre. There are two remaining strips of land which remain undeveloped on the site, an area to the east of existing industrial units on Pioneer Road and an area adjoining Park Road. It is appropriate that these remaining areas of land are identified in this Local Plan for business uses. However, in view of the proximity of the site to housing and the sensitivity of its location, the use of the site is restricted to B1 business uses and it is considered that businesses requiring significant provision of open storage are inappropriate in this area, especially on the southern part of the site along the frontage with Park Road. In this location development should be designed to enhance visually the approach to the town.
- 11.36 Land adjacent to Park Road and the A420.** This site is well located on the main approach road into Faringdon but is clearly visible from parts of the A420. It is essential that the development of this site is of a high standard of design, and that a landscape buffer is provided and maintained along the boundary of the site with the A420. This employment land does not fall within the area of comprehensive development applying to the proposed housing, employment (on part of the former nursery) and extension to Folly Park as also covered in the housing chapter proposed changes to policy H4(iv).
- 11.37 Land at the former nursery** This site is located on the edge of the town to the south of the Cricket Ground. B1 business uses will be permitted but only as part of a comprehensive scheme for housing, employment and open space in association with an extension to the Folly Park (see policies H4 and L13).

POLICY E3

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN FARINGDON WILL BE PERMITTED AT THE FOLLOWING SITES SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

- i) SOUTH OF WILLES CLOSE AND NORTH OF PIONEER ROAD FOR B1 USE ONLY, WITH ACCESS FROM PIONEER ROAD. A LANDSCAPE BUFFER SHALL BE PROVIDED AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AND DEVELOPERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE FOR ITS FUTURE MAINTENANCE;
- ii) NORTH OF PARK ROAD FOR B1 USE ONLY. OPEN STORAGE USE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE IT WOULD BE VISUALLY PROMINENT FROM PARK ROAD OR ADJOINING RESIDENTIAL AREAS;
- iii) PART OF THE FORMER NURSERY FOR B1 USE ONLY;
- iv) LAND ADJACENT TO PARK ROAD AND THE A420 BYPASS FOR B1 OR B2 EMPLOYMENT USE TO INCLUDE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPING AS GENERALLY SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AND DEVELOPERS WILL BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE FOR ITS FUTURE MAINTENANCE.

Wantage and Grove

- 11.38 Wantage and Grove are the largest centres of population in the southern half of the Vale; however, in employment terms a significant proportion of the working residents from the two settlements travel elsewhere to their jobs, for example to the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Milton Park near Didcot and to Abingdon and Oxford. Local employment is mainly focused on a small number of major companies operating from individual sites including Autotype, Crown Cork and Seal and Williams F1; and there are relatively few firms on business parks or industrial estate developments. The District Council has recognised that the employment base of Wantage and Grove should be protected and where possible widened as the local economy could be vulnerable to the loss of its few major employers. For this reason the Vale of White Horse Local Plan to 2001 identified land at Grove Technology Park for business purposes. The need to strengthen the economy of the Wantage and Grove area is still a priority, as identified in the District Council's Economic Development Strategy, and therefore this Local Plan continues to allocate all of the vacant land at Grove Technology Park for business uses. This site is considered in more detail below. In addition, this Local Plan introduces a new policy E10 which seeks to retain significant existing major business sites in the Wantage and Grove area to ensure that this current economic base is maintained into the future.
- 11.39 **Grove Technology Park** Policy E4 below confirms Grove Technology Park as the primary location for employment-generating development in the Wantage and Grove area, where accommodation can be provided for a variety of occupiers, including small firms and badly sited companies, who might wish to relocate from elsewhere in the locality.

- 11.40 Despite the improved connection between the site and the A338 associated with the construction of Mably Way, the A338 itself is a difficult road and provides a poor link to the trunk road network beyond. Traffic has either to be routed through the built-up area of Wantage to the south or negotiate the unsatisfactory section of the A338 to the north through Venn Mill and the A415 junction. The A417, which runs eastwards and westwards through Wantage, is also unsatisfactory in terms of linking Wantage and Grove to the trunk road network. In the absence of specific proposals in the County Council's highways programme to improve these roads, the District Council believes that goods vehicle movements on these routes should be kept to a minimum and therefore substantial development for warehousing and distribution (which would depend heavily on such movements) should not be encouraged on the Technology Park. For these reasons policy E4 limits B8 uses to a maximum of 1.6 hectares (this figure was agreed as part of the legal agreement for the development of the site), although business uses which incorporate an ancillary distribution function will generally not count towards the limit. Contributions may be sought to further improve the A338 and A417.
- 11.41 The Council is concerned that this large site is developed in a comprehensive manner. In this respect, being in an area of relatively flat and open countryside, the site would benefit from extensive landscaping and tree planting, particularly on its periphery.
- 11.42 Although policy H5 identifies the former airfield west of Grove as a strategic housing site where development will start after 1 April 2006, it is considered that land identified for business development at Grove Technology Park, as set out in policy E4 below, is sufficient to serve the Wantage and Grove area over the plan period to 2011. There is still at least 5 hectares of vacant land at the park which is available to accommodate the needs of firms, including local businesses wishing to expand. The park will provide jobs for local people as vacant sites within it are developed and employment opportunities will also continue to exist elsewhere, including other business sites in the area, and at shopping and commercial centres in Wantage and Grove. The local employment situation and availability of business land in the area will be monitored by the District Council and if necessary a future review of the Local Plan will identify additional land for business purposes.

POLICY E4

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN GROVE WILL BE PERMITTED AT GROVE TECHNOLOGY PARK AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP FOR B1 AND B2 USES. DEVELOPMENT FOR B8 USE (STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION) WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED ON UP TO 1.6 HA OF THE SITE IN TOTAL.

The Didcot Area

- 11.43 As explained earlier in this chapter the Local Plan needs to consider the requirement for business development in the Didcot area because the town is identified in the Structure Plan as a location for significant housing and employment growth. There are major business sites within the Vale close to Didcot, at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, which provide jobs for some of the people living in the town. In assessing the town's future needs, the potential for employment growth on these sites must be borne in mind.
- 11.44 A review of the current provision of employment-generating development in the Didcot area has been undertaken, including vacant sites identified in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2001 which have not yet come forward for development. Taking into account these sites together with the likelihood of intensification of existing sites for business purposes and the potential for additional jobs in the Didcot area (in both the Vale and South Oxfordshire), the Council has concluded that there is no need to identify additional land in this new Local Plan. The Plan continues to identify vacant sites from the 2001 Plan at Milton Park, the Milton disused reservoir and the pumping station to the west of Didcot Power Station as locations suitable for business development.
- 11.45 There is a 64 hectare site immediately to the west of Didcot B Power Station which is owned by RWE Innogy (formerly National Power). Within this site there is an educational field centre, some existing business uses, including land in use for B8 (storage and distribution), B2 (general industrial) and open storage and also areas of vacant and underused land. Although RWE Innogy has indicated that these vacant and underused areas of land are surplus to their requirements, the Council is satisfied that proposals in this Local Plan and that of South Oxfordshire District Council already ensure that sufficient jobs should be generated in business and industry to meet the requirements of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan up to the year 2011 (see para 11.44 above). However, proposals for the redevelopment of buildings in existing business use on this site at Didcot Power Station would be acceptable subject to contributions towards necessary highway improvements which may be required, as specified by the County Council as highway authority, and other planning and environmental considerations.

Milton Park

- 11.46 Situated to the south of Abingdon and north-west of Didcot, Milton Park is one of the largest employment sites in the Vale. It extends to about 77 hectares and is the largest concentration of business activities in Oxfordshire, managed and developed by a single owner. MEPC Ltd has now owned and operated Milton

Park for over 15 years under a number of different names, currently as MEPC Milton Park Ltd (MMPL). The site has been progressing as a business park for over thirty years and there remains scope for further redevelopment of areas currently occupied by older buildings, as well as new development on the vacant site to the south of the railway, for which planning permission for B1 business uses has been granted. There is the possibility of land contamination at Milton Park as a result of previous activities in the area, and therefore site investigations prior to development will be necessary.

- 11.47 The redevelopment of land at Milton Park has been generally in accordance with strategic and local planning policies, and also with MMPL's master plan which is well advanced. The character and appearance of the park has been transformed and substantially enhanced. A range of ancillary services and facilities has been provided to meet the needs of employees, including day-care facilities for young children, a gym and other health facilities, shops, banking facilities, and a café/restaurant. (Policy E13 will allow further ancillary facilities to be provided on the park, provided the proposals are small scale and designed to provide for employees on the site and not to attract users from a wider area.)
- 11.48 Both this Council and neighbouring South Oxfordshire District Council acknowledge the contribution Milton Park is making to the local economy and to Didcot's strategic role as a location for further employment-generating development. MMPL's annual census of companies revealed that in 2001 approximately 4,600 people were employed by about 140 businesses on the park. It is estimated that new development together with the redevelopment of sites could contribute a further 2,500 jobs by 2011. Policy E5 below recognises the on-going role of the park in providing accommodation for new and expanding businesses.
- 11.49 In recent years the pace of development has increased at the park, which has coincided with a greater awareness of the need for more sustainable forms of development. At the same time, significant increases in traffic on the local and strategic road networks have meant that transport issues and traffic impact of major development need to be considered and addressed with particular care.
- 11.50 In planning for future developments at Milton Park there is a clear need for opportunities to improve access to the site by all modes of transport to be assessed and exploited. Policy E5 therefore requires that development is in accordance with, and makes the necessary contributions to, a travel plan for the park (to be agreed with the District Council and Oxfordshire County Council as highway authority) with the aim of minimising car usage and increasing use of public transport, walking and cycling. The government, in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: *Transport*, considers that travel plans should be submitted alongside planning applications which are likely to have significant transport implications, including those for major employment developments. Policy TR9 in Chapter 5 also refers to the requirement for travel plans.

- 11.51 The District Council and the highway authorities recognise that, having regard to developments already proposed and to the potential for further developments at Milton Park, improvements will be necessary to the strategic and local highway network, in particular the A34 at the Milton interchange and the A4130 to the south of the park. The requirements of Network Rail will also be relevant in respect of its involvement in improving road access to the Park which comes over the railway. The Council therefore intends to seek contributions from MMPL (or developers on the park) for such improvements in accordance with policy E5 below and also, in respect of the A34, policy TR3 in Chapter 5.
- 11.52 The landscape enhancement of the park began in the 1970s in a limited way but has been developed over time to become an integral and essential part of the park's development. There are now open areas of green space, segregated footways and a 'trim trail', networks of water channels and pools and plantations and rough grass areas, all of which provide the landscape framework of the site. In order to ensure that the park retains its character as a high quality environment for businesses, employees and visitors, policy E5 below seeks to retain, and increase where appropriate, areas of open space and landscaping including outdoor recreation areas. The policy seeks the retention of wildlife habitats and the creation of new habitats where appropriate.
- 11.53 An integrated transport strategy and travel management plan have been prepared for Milton Park, as well as a landscape strategy. DPDS Consulting on behalf of MMPL produced a draft development brief which proposed further guidance on these issues which the District Council and County Council (as highway authority) are considering.

POLICY E5

WITHIN MILTON PARK, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND THE REDEVELOPMENT OF LAND FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES WILL BE PERMITTED FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USES SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- i) THE DEVELOPMENT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH AND MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE TRAVEL PLAN FOR THE PARK TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CONTRIBUTIONS IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INITIATIVES INCLUDING MINIMISING CAR USAGE AND INCREASING THE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, WALKING AND CYCLING;**
- ii) APPROPRIATE CONTRIBUTIONS FUNDED BY THE LANDOWNER OR DEVELOPER BEING MADE TO IMPROVING/ UPGRADING ACCESS TO AND FROM THE PARK FROM THE A34 TRUNK ROAD AND THE A4130 TO THE SOUTH, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE RELEVANT HIGHWAY AUTHORITY;**

- iii) **NO DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED ON EXISTING LANDSCAPED AREAS OR RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE PARK. IN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT, A HIGH QUALITY OF LANDSCAPING WILL BE REQUIRED AND EXISTING WILDLIFE HABITATS WILL BE RETAINED. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CREATION OF NEW WILDLIFE HABITATS WILL BE TAKEN, WHERE POSSIBLE.**

Disused Milton Reservoir and Pumping Station

- 11.54 This site is located on the eastern side of Sutton Courtenay Lane to the west of Didcot Power Station and extends to around 1.2 hectares. It was first allocated as land suitable for redevelopment for industrial purposes in the adopted local plan for Didcot in 1984 and is owned by RWE Innogy. Policy E6 continues to allocate this site for B1, B2 or B8 purposes. Potential developers of the site should be aware that the road through Milton Park to the west of the site is not an adopted public highway and a routing agreement will be required ensuring the use of public roads including Manor Bridge. The County Council, as highway authority, has indicated that improvements will be needed to the Didcot/Milton Heights link road and to Manor Bridge and that any development which would result in an increase in traffic using the bridge and road should contribute to such improvements. The requirements of Network Rail will also be relevant in respect of its involvement in improving road access to the site which crosses over the railway.

POLICY E6

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TO THE WEST OF DIDCOT POWER STATION AT THE DISUSED MILTON RESERVOIR AND PUMPING STATION SITE IN SUTTON COURTENAY LANE, AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSAL MAP, WILL BE PERMITTED FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USES SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- i) **THAT TRAFFIC SERVING THE SITE IS ROUTED AWAY FROM, AND NOT THROUGH, SUTTON COURTENAY VILLAGE, MILTON VILLAGE, OR MILTON PARK;**
- ii) **APPROPRIATE CONTRIBUTIONS FUNDED BY THE LANDOWNER OR DEVELOPER ARE MADE TO IMPROVING/UPGRADING ACCESS TO AND FROM THE SITE FROM THE A34 TRUNK ROAD AND THE A4130 TO THE SOUTH.**

Harwell Science and Innovation Campus

- 11.55 The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, located between the villages of Harwell, Chilton and East Hendred, has been one of the most significant concentrations of research and scientific activity in the UK for over 50 years. It

is also one of the largest employment centres in the Vale with a site population of over 4,000 people working for more than 70 organisations. The Campus, developed on the site of a wartime airfield, covers about 300 hectares (740 acres) and comprises three freehold estates.

- Harwell International Business Centre (HIBC) – most of the site is owned by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) whose land ownership extends to 258 hectares (637 acres). As a consequence of a strategic review of the authority in the late 1980s, UKAEA has been engaged in a comprehensive programme to rationalise and restructure the site. This has involved an ongoing building clearance programme which by May 2002 had resulted in the demolition of some 78,000 square metres of redundant floorspace, the construction of over 15,000 square metres of class B1 and class B2 business development and planning permission for a hotel. In addition, UKAEA has been involved in a long-term site infrastructure renewal programme, including the rationalisation and improvement of the access to the site, re-organisation of the internal road network and substantial improvements to car parking provision.
- The Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (RAL) – owned by the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CLRC). RAL was originally part of the research establishment founded at Harwell after the war. The site is owner occupied and its principal purpose is to support the core business of CLRC. In May 2002, CLRC and the UKAEA secured outline planning permission for Diamond, the new UK Synchrotron light source, a scientific tool for analysing a wide range of chemical, physical and biological problems at the atomic scale. Diamond is scheduled to become operational in 2006.
- Health Protection Agency (HPA) – a small island in the middle of the campus was transferred to The National Radiological Protection Board in the early years of the development of the site. The Board is now the Radiation Protection Division of the Health Protection Agency. In common with RAL, its principal purpose is to support the core business of its owner.

11.56 The Medical Research Council (MRC) also has a major presence on the campus as the longest standing tenant on the Harwell International Business Centre. The MRC has plans to consolidate further through the development of the Mary Lyon Centre.

11.57 The UKAEA, CLRC, HPA and MRC have distinct and different purposes. However, they are all in the public sector and operate in the science and technology field. By virtue of the fact that they occupy a single campus and also share infrastructure (both on and off the campus) the Local Plan adopts a 'whole site approach' to cover the land owned by all of the above organisations. This will enable the Council to consider planning applications and issues in a

consistent and integrated way in relation to a range of requirements, referred to in policy E7 below.

- 11.58 The location of the campus, away from major centres of population, means there is a clear need for access by all modes of transport to be carefully managed, and for future development to be planned and executed with sustainable transport objectives in mind. In this respect policy E7 requires that development is in accordance with, and makes the necessary contributions to, a travel plan for the whole campus with the aim of minimising car usage and increasing use of public transport, walking and cycling. It will be essential to secure safe and convenient access to the campus by public transport, bicycle and in some cases on foot from nearby settlements, including Grove, Wantage and Didcot, as well as from surrounding villages. The government, in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: *Transport*, considers that travel plans should be submitted alongside planning applications which are likely to have significant transport implications, including those for major employment developments. Policy TR9 in Chapter 5 also refers to the requirement for travel plans.
- 11.59 The District Council and the County Council as highway authority recognise that, having regard to developments already proposed and the likely future potential of the campus for research based proposals, further improvements will be necessary to the strategic and local highway network. In particular, access from the campus to the trunk road network at the Chilton interchange of the A34 is southbound only, and to the north involves use of the busy Rowstock junction and then the already congested Milton interchange. The Council intends to seek the necessary contributions from the landowners or developers towards improvements required by the County Council as highway authority in accordance with policy E7 below and also, in respect of the A34, policy TR3 in Chapter 5.
- 11.60 There are significant areas of open space, landscaping and tree planting within the campus, including playing fields and more informal areas, some of which have been identified by English Nature as having considerable nature conservation interest. In this respect sites of nature conservation importance, would be covered by policy NE4 in Chapter 7 – Natural Environment. This policy seeks to protect important nature conservation sites from development. Furthermore, policy NE1 states that before determining planning applications for development which may affect a known or potential site of nature conservation value, the Council may require applicants to carry out an ecological appraisal to establish the likely impact of development. Policy E7 seeks to maintain, and increase where appropriate, structural areas of open space and perimeter landscaping. This is in the interests of protecting wildlife habitats, securing a high quality working environment and reducing the visual impact of the campus in the wider landscape, which forms part of the designated North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

- 11.61 When considering planning applications for buildings and structures, including masts and other specialist equipment, the Council will consider the likely impact of such proposals on the appearance and character of surrounding areas, including the AONB, and the effect on local communities. Proposed buildings and structures over 12 metres in height will be subject to particular scrutiny.
- 11.62 There have been concerns in the past over the impact of external lighting schemes in locations within the AONB, for example floodlighting for outdoor sports or lighting for car parks. The Council is keen to ensure that future proposals have a minimal impact in terms of light pollution, which is reflected in policy E7 below and policy DC20 in Chapter 4.
- 11.63 A range of ancillary services and facilities has been provided to meet the needs of employees on and visitors to the campus, including day-care facilities for young children, a squash club and other health facilities, shops, banking facilities and a café. Policy E13 allows ancillary facilities on key employment sites, including the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, provided the proposals are small-scale and designed to provide for employees on the site and not to attract users from a wider area.
- 11.64 Further planning guidance will need to be prepared by, or on behalf of, the various landowners and agreed with the District Council and Oxfordshire County Council (where appropriate) to consider detailed matters including a travel plan, a comprehensive landscape plan and provision for ancillary facilities (including their joint use where possible).

POLICY E7

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WILL BE CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO THE WHOLE HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS. NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES WILL BE PERMITTED AT THE HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP FOR B1 AND B2 PURPOSES SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- i) THE DEVELOPMENT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH AND MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE TRAVEL PLAN FOR THE WHOLE CAMPUS TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CONTRIBUTIONS IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INITIATIVES INCLUDING MINIMISING CAR USAGE AND INCREASING THE USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, WALKING AND CYCLING;**
- ii) APPROPRIATE CONTRIBUTIONS FUNDED BY THE LANDOWNER OR DEVELOPER BEING MADE TO IMPROVING/UPGRADING ACCESS TO THE CAMPUS FROM THE A34 TRUNK ROAD, THE A4185 TO THE EAST, AND THE A417 TO THE NORTH;**

- iii) **THE DEVELOPMENT IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH AND MAKES THE NECESSARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO A COMPREHENSIVE LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE WHOLE CAMPUS. NO DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED WITHIN STRUCTURAL AREAS OF OPEN SPACE AND PERIMETER LANDSCAPING. IN CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT, A HIGH QUALITY OF LANDSCAPING WILL BE REQUIRED EXISTING IMPORTANT WILDLIFE HABITATS WILL BE RETAINED IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY NE4 AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CREATION OF NEW WILDLIFE HABITATS WILL BE TAKEN, WHERE POSSIBLE;**
- iv) **THAT PROPOSALS FOR BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES (INCLUDING THEIR EXTENSIONS) WILL NOT UNACCEPTABLY HARM THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE SURROUNDING AREA, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THEIR LOCATION, SCALE, BULK AND HEIGHT;**
- v) **ANY EXTERNAL LIGHTING SCHEME MUST HAVE A MINIMAL IMPACT IN TERMS OF LIGHT POLLUTION; AND**
- vi) **DEVELOPMENT INVOLVING ANCILLARY FACILITIES WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO POLICY E13.**

Local Rural Sites

- 11.65 There are currently vacant sites available for business development on several local rural business sites in the district. These sites offer an alternative to vacant sites available on the larger business parks and industrial estates for firms wishing to locate in a rural area. They also have the potential to provide valuable local employment, in particular for the residents of villages nearby. The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2001 identified a number of sites in the rural parts of the district for business purposes. Many of these sites no longer have vacant premises, but there is vacant land available at four sites: Kingston Business Park at Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor, White Horse Business Park at Stanford-in-the-Vale, Wootton Business Park at Wootton and Shrivenham Hundred Business Park at Watchfield. Accordingly, policy E8 identifies these sites for business purposes and they are also included in the sites listed in policy E11 which seeks to retain key local rural multi-user sites for business purposes. Uffington Station in Uffington parish is also identified under policy E8 where there is a small area of vacant land available for business purposes.
- 11.66 As in the previous Local Plan it is the Council's firm intention that new development on these sites should provide for small businesses in accordance with Structure Plan objectives. Premises suitable for occupation by relatively larger firms will continue to be available in Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove, Wantage, and at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, which have the infrastructure and other services appropriate to the needs of such

firms. The Council will seek therefore to limit the size of individual buildings and will only permit larger buildings in exceptional circumstances where, for example, they are to be sub-divided for occupation by more than one firm, or the development is for the limited expansion of a local firm occupying a building already on the site.

- 11.67 The Council has prepared supplementary planning guidance for some of the sites listed in policy E8 and will take this into account when considering applications for new business development.

POLICY E8

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ON VACANT LAND OR REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING PREMISES FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES WILL BE PERMITTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCAL RURAL BUSINESS SITES AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

- i) **KINGSTON BUSINESS PARK IN KINGSTON BAGPUIZE AND SOUTHMOOR PARISH FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USES;**
- ii) **WHITE HORSE BUSINESS PARK IN STANFORD-IN-THE-VALE FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USES;**
- iii) **UFFINGTON STATION IN UFFINGTON PARISH FOR B1, B2 AND B8 USES;**
- iv) **WOOTTON BUSINESS PARK AT WOOTTON FOR B1 USE ONLY; AND**
- v) **SHRIVENHAM HUNDRED BUSINESS PARK FOR B1 USE ONLY.**

DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT AT ANY SITE IDENTIFIED UNDER THIS POLICY WILL BE LIMITED TO THE CREATION OF PREMISES OF UP TO 500 SQUARE METRES GROSS FLOOR AREA FOR OCCUPATION BY A SINGLE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE, EXCEPT WHERE THE PROPOSAL IS FOR THE EXPANSION OF A BUSINESS ALREADY ESTABLISHED ON THE SITE, OR FOR A FIRM THAT CANNOT REASONABLY BE EXPECTED TO RELOCATE TO ONE OF THE FIVE MAIN SETTLEMENTS, OR WHERE THERE IS A COMMITMENT WHICH PRE-DATES THE LOCAL PLAN.

New Development on Sites not Identified in the Local Plan

- 11.68 The District Council recognises that the vitality of the five main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage is partly dependent upon the existence of mixed uses, and believes that the Local Plan should allow new business premises on suitable sites within their development boundaries, subject to appropriate safeguards. In this respect, the criteria of policy DC9 must be met

to ensure that such proposals can be accommodated without causing environmental or other planning problems, especially for neighbouring properties.

- 11.69 There are also a large number of sites for business use away from the towns in the more rural parts of the Vale. These occur both within villages and on land outside villages; for example many sites have been developed from former airfields or farm complexes. In such locations the Council is concerned to strike the right balance between encouraging the diversification of the local economy and the need to protect the character of the countryside and ensure that development is sustainable in travel terms. Within the rural areas there is already capacity for new business premises to be provided on some of the business parks and industrial estates and new or expanding rural businesses can also use existing commercial premises in the villages and countryside as they become available. Nevertheless, the importance of small businesses to the local economy is vital and, in this respect, the Council will look favourably on proposals for appropriate small new premises (for firms generally requiring no more than 500 square metres in area) where they are on sites within the built-up area of a village listed in policy H11.
- 11.70 In the Council's opinion it would not be sustainable to allow new premises for employment purposes in the smaller villages and countryside within the Vale unless there is a special justification, for example premises for an agriculture related business where it is essential that it be located in a rural area. The smaller villages have infrequent or no public transport provision and there are few opportunities to live close to workplaces. Furthermore, the Council's proposed strategy is to concentrate development including most new housebuilding in the larger settlements and to resist development in the smaller villages and countryside, other than conversions of existing buildings. Therefore, there should be little need to provide additional employment opportunities in these rural areas. A later section of this chapter on the countryside and its rural economy considers business uses which are directly related to the countryside, including agriculture, farm diversification and commercial equestrian establishments. Policy GS5 permits the change of use of existing buildings to other uses within all settlements in the district, subject to certain criteria. This could include business and employment uses.
- 11.71 There are numerous existing industrial and commercial enterprises throughout the Vale. Inevitably, some firms will wish to expand their present sites as their business grows. The success of the Vale's established firms is vital to the local economy, and in principle the Council believes that their growth and expansion is to be encouraged unless the business is unneighbourly (causing disturbance to communities, for example through noise or the generation of heavy traffic on unsuitable roads) or is badly sited (for example in an isolated and conspicuous position in the open countryside, or in an area where serious traffic hazards would be perpetuated). It would be inappropriate to allow the continued expansion of such firms where this would make existing problems worse. Where

it is possible to overcome potential difficulties by attaching conditions to any planning permission which may be required for the expansion, or by the use of a legal agreement, the Council will pursue this option, otherwise planning permission will not be granted.

- 11.72 The Council is anxious to ensure that further employment growth does not create pressures for housing above existing and planned levels. This is in accordance with the general strategy of the Structure Plan in its policy G1 which seeks to restrain the overall level of development, and with Structure Plan policy E5 (E6 in the plan to 2016) which seeks to maintain a balance between employment-generating development and the capacity of the local housing market to absorb any new employment growth generated.

POLICY E9

DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES ON SITES NOT IDENTIFIED UNDER SPECIFIC POLICIES OF THE LOCAL PLAN WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THE PROPOSAL:

- i) **IS ON A SITE WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES OF THE FIVE MAIN SETTLEMENTS OF ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE; OR**
- ii) **IS FOR SMALL FIRMS REQUIRING NO MORE THAN 500 SQUARE METRES GROSS FLOORSPACE ON A SITE WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREA OF A VILLAGE LISTED UNDER POLICY H11 OF THE LOCAL PLAN; OR**
- iii) **IN LOCATIONS OUTSIDE THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF THE FIVE MAIN SETTLEMENTS AND THE VILLAGES LISTED UNDER POLICY H11 IS FOR THE EXPANSION, ON ITS EXISTING SITE, OF AN EXISTING INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE WHOSE SOURCES OF SUPPLY, COMMERCIAL LINKAGES, LABOUR SUPPLY AND MARKETS MAKE THE SPECIFIC LOCATION NECESSARY, UNLESS THE ENTERPRISE IS KNOWN TO BE UNNEIGHBOURLY OR BADLY SITED, IN WHICH CASE THE PROPOSED EXPANSION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED AND THE RELOCATION OF THE BUSINESS TO A MORE APPROPRIATE LOCATION WILL BE SOUGHT; AND**
- iv) **DOES NOT GENERATE A DEMAND FOR HOUSING WHICH CANNOT BE MET BY EXISTING OR PLANNED HOUSING PROVISION.**

Protecting Key Sites for Business Use

- 11.73 There have been a number of cases in recent years involving pressure for changes of use from business uses to residential, particularly in the Vale's main

towns. For example, in Abingdon several large sites formerly in employment use have been or are being redeveloped for housing purposes, such as the former Pavlova Leather Works, The Maltings in the Vineyard and Morlands Brewery. The redevelopment of such sites for residential purposes is consistent with government guidance in PPG3 which seeks to maximise the use of brownfield land in urban areas for housing development.

- 11.74 The importance of employment land is also recognised in a variety of government planning policy guidance notes. PPG4: *Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms* states that Development Plans should ensure that there is a variety of sites to meet differing needs. PPS7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*, which contains government guidance on sustainable development in rural areas, has as one of its key themes the need to meet the economic and social needs of people who live and work in rural areas. The guidance states that local authorities may wish to express a preference for the retention of land currently in employment use in villages and country towns. PPG13: *Transport* states that a key planning objective in the interests of sustainability is to ensure that jobs are accessible by public transport, walking and cycling. In this respect, the loss of employment sites close to residential areas could result in increased travelling distances to workplaces, including out of town locations which puts more reliance on the use of the private car for journeys to work.
- 11.75 In the light of the above government advice, the Local Plan Issues Report (published in August 2000) asked questions on whether the Council should seek to resist the further loss of employment sites. The majority of respondents considered that the further loss of employment sites should be avoided as a good range of employment sites is needed to ensure that settlements are sustainable, vibrant and attractive to inward investors. However, the consensus seemed to be that a 'blanket' policy to protect all employment land in the Vale is unnecessary and in some cases undesirable. Such a policy could conflict with government and local objectives for maximising housing provision on brownfield urban land. Also, it would be difficult to sustain such an approach in the Vale considering the employment generating potential which exists, particularly on major sites such as Milton Park, the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and Abingdon Business Park. In addition, there may be cases where changes of use will help to ameliorate problems associated with existing uses, for example where business activities on a site have become incompatible with adjoining residential uses.
- 11.76 Accordingly, this Local Plan introduces new policies (E10–E12) which seek to resist the loss of existing business land and premises to other uses on certain key employment sites. On such sites, apart from business development, only small-scale proposals for ancillary uses such as crèches, cafés/restaurants, shops and gyms provided for the benefit of the users of the site will be permitted. The Council considers it essential to safeguard key sites in both the urban and rural

areas of the district to help maintain the diversity and vitality of the local economy as a whole.

Key Business Sites

- 11.77 These sites have a range of premises in terms of size and type and their retention for business use is essential to the economic health of the Vale. The sites in the five main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage are particularly important in helping to maintain sustainable and balanced communities, being located within walking and cycling distance of existing residential areas. The list also includes the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus which is of international importance and Milton Park, which together with existing business premises at Didcot Power Station serve the town of Didcot, and southern Oxfordshire to some extent. Milton Park is one of the largest concentrations of business activities in the county and is of particular importance for businesses wishing to be in a strategic location relative to the south-east and other parts of the country.
- 11.78 There are several significant single user employment sites in the Grove and Wantage area which the Council considers should be included within its policies to retain employment sites in order to maintain and maximise local employment opportunities. These sites are at Autotype, Crown Cork and Seal and Williams F1.

POLICY E10

AT THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT SITES AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE LOSS OF EXISTING BUSINESS LAND AND PREMISES TO OTHER USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, OTHER THAN ANCILLARY USES REFERRED TO UNDER POLICY E13. PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO POLICIES E1 TO E7.

ABINGDON:

ASHVILLE TRADING ESTATE, ABINGDON BUSINESS PARK, NUFFIELD WAY, DRAYTON ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, FITZHARRIS TRADING ESTATE, ABINGDON SCIENCE PARK, RADLEY ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, BARTON MILL IN AUDLETT DRIVE, HALF OF THE THAMES VIEW INDUSTRIAL ESTATE INCLUDING THE BURGESS SITE);

BOTLEY:

CURTIS INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, HINKSEY BUSINESS CENTRE, MINNS BUSINESS PARK, SEACOURT TOWER;

FARINGDON:

PARK ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE;

GROVE:

GROVE TECHNOLOGY PARK; GROVE ROAD, WANTAGE; DOWNSVIEW ROAD, GROVE AND STATION ROAD, GROVE

DIDCOT POWER STATION:

EXISTING BUSINESS PREMISES AT DIDCOT POWER STATION (NOT INCLUDING VACANT SURPLUS LAND);

MILTON PARK:

MILTON PARK SITE;

HARWELL SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS:

HARWELL INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CENTRE, RUTHERFORD APPLETON LABORATORY & HEALTH PROTECTION AGENCY.

Rural Multi-User Sites

- 11.79 The sites listed in policy E11 below are geographically spread across the rural areas of the Vale. They all have a range of business premises, and offer alternative accommodation to that which is available in the larger business parks and industrial estates in the district, in some cases at reasonably low cost. As well as contributing to the local economy, these sites provide employment opportunities in rural locations and they may provide services which benefit local communities. Also, they can contribute to community identity recognising the importance of villages as living and working environments. The identification in the Local Plan of local rural sites with a range of business premises which should be retained as such may also help to steer firms seeking rural premises away from unsustainable countryside locations.

POLICY E11

AT THE FOLLOWING RURAL SITES AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE LOSS OF EXISTING BUSINESS LAND AND PREMISES TO OTHER USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED, OTHER THAN TO THOSE ANCILLARY USES REFERRED TO UNDER POLICY E13. PROPOSALS FOR BUSINESS

DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES WITHIN THESE SITES WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO POLICY E8.

ARDINGTON:

HOME FARM, AND THE WORKS AND BAKERS YARD

CHALLOW:

W&G ESTATE;

RADLEY PARISH:

SANDFORD LANE INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, KENNINGTON

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE AND SOUTHMOOR:

KINGSTON BUSINESS PARK;

STANFORD-IN-THE-VALE:

WHITE HORSE BUSINESS PARK;

STEVENTON:

STATION YARD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE;

WATCHFIELD:

SHRIVENHAM HUNDRED BUSINESS PARK;

WOOTTON:

WOOTTON BUSINESS PARK.

Large Campus Style Sites

- 11.80 Within the Vale there are several large campus style business sites which have become established in rural locations, including the former Esso Research Centre at Milton Hill (now known as Milton Hill Business and Technology Centre), Amey at Sutton Courtenay and Oxford Instruments at Tubney Woods. These sites have developed and expanded over many years, typically to meet the needs of single organisations which require on-site facilities for research and development purposes. As a result of re-assessments of their operational needs, some of these organisations have concluded or may in future conclude that their sites are surplus to requirements, causing speculation and uncertainty concerning their future use.
- 11.81 In this context the Council considers that the introduction of a new policy in the Local Plan would be beneficial in order to ensure that future development proposals on these sites would not result in the overall use of the site being less sustainable than the existing use. The sites concerned may be ideal for other organisations which require a large campus-style facility, for example a business involved in research and development. There can also be advantages in development which helps to foster the growth of 'innovative cluster areas' of knowledge based industries, which have become a feature of the Vale's economy. However, the countryside locations of these sites makes them largely unsuitable for major redevelopment for housing purposes and their redevelopment for multi-user business parks may create problems, particularly in terms of increased traffic movements, visual intrusion in the wider landscape and

other environmental concerns. Policy E12 below sets the criteria against which alternative development proposals will be considered.

POLICY E12

ON THE FOLLOWING LARGE SITES AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP:

MILTON HILL – MILTON HILL BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

SUTTON COURTENAY – AMEY

TUBNEY WOOD – OXFORD INSTRUMENTS

PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE LOSS OF EXISTING BUSINESS LAND AND PREMISES TO OTHER NON-BUSINESS USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED APART FROM ANCILLARY USES REFERRED TO UNDER POLICY E13. PROPOSALS FOR NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THE RESULTANT OVERALL USE OF THE SITE AS A WHOLE CAN BE DEMONSTRATED TO BE AT LEAST AS SUSTAINABLE AS THE EXISTING USE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT:

- i) THE IMPACT OF VEHICLE MOVEMENTS TO AND FROM THE SITE ON THE LOCAL AND STRATEGIC ROAD NETWORK;**
- ii) THE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA, INCLUDING CONSERVATION AND LANDSCAPE CONSIDERATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISUAL OR OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENTS OF THE SITE;**
- iii) THE NUMBER OF JOBS PROVIDED AND THE IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY;**
- iv) THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE SITE BY MODES OF TRANSPORT OTHER THAN PRIVATE MOTOR VEHICLES, INCLUDING WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT;**
- v) IN RELATION TO THE OXFORD INSTRUMENTS SITE AT TUBNEY WOODS, THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE OPENNESS OF THE GREEN BELT IS MAINTAINED.**

Ancillary Uses on Key Employment Sites

- 11.82 Some of the strategic business sites in the district are located outside of any settlement, for example Milton Park and Harwell, or are in suburban locations some distance from a town or commercial centre, for example Abingdon Business Park and Grove Technology Park. These sites are not within easy walking distance of shops and facilities which in some cases has led to a demand for on-site provision to serve employees of the business site and visitors. On the Harwell Campus and at Milton Park for example there is a range of ancillary

services now available, including cafés/restaurants, shops, recreation and sporting facilities.

- 11.83 The provision of facilities which are ancillary to business uses can help to make business sites more attractive to incoming firms and can improve the quality of the working environment for employees. They can also help to make business sites more sustainable by reducing traffic movements. However, in some cases allowing larger scale uses on such sites, for example food superstores, non-food retail warehouses, hotels or conference facilities, could adversely affect the vitality and viability of nearby commercial centres or the social and community vitality of a nearby village. They could also prejudice the availability of land for business uses. In this context the following policy allows for ancillary uses on business parks or industrial estates provided proposals are small-scale and would not cause significant harm in respect of the above factors.

POLICY E13

ON THE KEY EMPLOYMENT SITES LISTED UNDER POLICIES E10 TO E12, PROPOSALS FOR USES OTHER THAN BUSINESS USES, INCLUDING CRÈCHE FACILITIES, RESTAURANTS/CAFES, RECREATION AND SPORTS FACILITIES, MEDICAL FACILITIES AND SHOPS, WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE SATISFIED:

- i) THE PROPOSAL IS SMALL-SCALE AND CLEARLY DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FOR USERS OF THE EMPLOYMENT SITE;**
- ii) THE USE IS ANCILLARY AND INCIDENTAL TO THE OVERALL BUSINESS USE OF THE PARK OR ESTATE AND IS OF A SCALE WHICH WOULD NOT DOMINATE OR UNDERMINE ITS BUSINESS OR EMPLOYMENT FUNCTION;**
- iii) THE USE, EITHER ALONE OR COMBINED WITH OTHER EXISTING OR PROPOSED USES, WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF ANY TOWN CENTRE OR SHOPPING CENTRE (INCLUDING LOCAL CENTRES) OR THE SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY VITALITY OF A NEARBY VILLAGE.**

IN CONNECTION WITH ANY PLANNING PERMISSION, CONDITIONS WILL BE IMPOSED OR A PLANNING OBLIGATION SOUGHT TO LIMIT THE SCALE OF THE OPERATION AND TO RESTRICT THE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES PROPOSED OR GOODS SOLD, WHERE NECESSARY, TO ENSURE THAT THE CRITERIA SET OUT ABOVE ARE MET.

The Retention of Small-Scale Commercial Premises in Settlements

- 11.84 Policies E10–E12 above seek to resist the loss of existing business land and premises to other uses on key employment sites within the district which are considered to be vital to the economy of the Vale as a whole. In addition to these key sites there are many smaller scale commercial premises scattered

throughout the Vale, including business premises for individual firms and commercial garages and filling stations. The cumulative loss of these smaller premises, sometimes as a result of redevelopment proposals, has given rise to concerns in recent years due to the reduction in local employment opportunities and also in some cases the loss of local community facilities (particularly where garages which serve to some degree as the village shop have closed). The loss of commercial premises may also lead to an increased need to travel by car, particularly in the rural areas, associated with residents needing to travel to larger centres for employment or other needs. This recent trend is of particular concern in the villages which the Council wishes to see retained as living and working communities. However, there may be instances where a particular enterprise is known to be un-neighbourly or badly sited in which case the Council may grant planning permission if the proposal would result in its relocation to a more appropriate location.

- 11.85 In this respect several of the aims for the Local Plan are relevant. Aim 3 is 'to reduce the need to travel and the harmful effects of traffic on people and the environment', aim 4 is 'to maintain and improve the quality of life of all members of the local community', and aim 7 is 'to ensure that the countryside and villages of the Vale are prosperous and have a diverse economy'. To ensure there are local employment opportunities within the rural areas, paragraph 2.21 of the Local Plan states that the Council will seek to enable the diversification and regeneration of the rural economy, particularly within the villages of the Vale. Policy E14 below considers planning applications which would result in the loss of commercial premises on sites within settlements other than key employment sites listed in policies E10–E12.
- 11.86 Proposals for the redevelopment of commercial premises outside settlements for other uses will be subject to policy GS6 in Chapter 3, which deals generally with previously developed land outside settlements.

POLICY E14

PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE LOSS OF APPROPRIATELY LOCATED SMALL-SCALE COMMERCIAL PREMISES WITHIN SETTLEMENTS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY WOULD:

- i) REDUCE EMPLOYMENT IN LOCATIONS WHERE OTHER LOCAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES ARE LIMITED;**
- ii) HARM THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA, INCLUDING THE DIVERSITY OF USES AND LOCAL COMMUNITY NEEDS;**
- iii) RESULT IN INAPPROPRIATE LEVELS OF TRAFFIC WHERE TRAVEL BY MODES OTHER THAN THE PRIVATE CAR CANNOT BE PROVIDED.**

PROPOSALS WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE THE PREMISES ARE OCCUPIED BY AN ENTERPRISE KNOWN TO BE UN-NEIGHBOURLY OR BADLY SITED AND THE PROPOSAL WOULD RESULT IN ITS RELOCATION TO A MORE APPROPRIATE LOCATION.

Steventon Storage Facility (former Home Office Stores site), Steventon

- 11.87 This site, formerly owned by the government's Home Office as a storage and distribution centre, is situated to the south of the Steventon to East Hanney Road and is about 30 hectares in size. There is a Certificate of Lawfulness relating to the site which confirms the use of the buildings as B8 (which includes warehouses and distribution centres). There are many buildings on the site including 91 large Nissen huts, warehouses and Dutch barns providing a total of 44,540 sq metres (479,440 sq feet) of floorspace. It is currently owned by MEPC, the owners of Milton Park, who have marketed the site as Steventon Storage Facility and have granted a number of short-term leases for low key storage uses.
- 11.88 Notwithstanding the relatively low traffic generation which takes place at the present time, the Council is very concerned that if the site were to be intensively used or redeveloped for storage and distribution purposes significant traffic generation could result on the local road network, including large numbers of heavy goods vehicle movements. This would be wholly unsatisfactory. Currently there is inadequate access from the A34 Milton interchange to the site, via Steventon Hill, Steventon village and the Steventon to Hanney Road. Furthermore, access from the west would involve vehicles travelling through the village of East Hanney.
- 11.89 The use or redevelopment of the site for other business purposes including B1 (such as light industry or office) or B2 (general industrial) would also be inappropriate due to the potential for significant traffic generation as a result of likely increases in the number of people employed on the site. In accordance with policies in Chapter 8, residential uses will not be permitted on the site in view of its countryside location outside of existing settlements where use of the private car for most journeys would be inevitable.
- 11.90 In view of the size and nature of the site and the potentially harmful impact of its future use on the local road network, and on local villages including Steventon and East Hanney, the Council is prepared to negotiate with MEPC for them to achieve the complete cessation of business uses and clearance and restoration of the site. This will involve aiming to identify an alternative, more sustainable replacement site (or sites) for business development in recognition of the Steventon Storage Facility's lawful status as a site for B8 uses. Negotiations will continue with MEPC, and other landowners as appropriate, to seek to bring forward a suitable alternative site or sites. In this respect, the Council recognises

that although there is vacant land identified for business purposes on sites throughout the district, as allocated in policies E1 to E8 of the Plan, these sites are unlikely to be suitable for B8 uses other than on a small scale.

POLICY E15

AT STEVENTON STORAGE FACILITY, STEVENTON (AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSAL MAP), PROPOSALS FOR NEW BUILDINGS, INCREASES IN OVERALL FLOORSPACE OR CHANGES OF USE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. THE COUNCIL WILL SEEK THE COMPLETE CESSATION OF BUSINESS USES AND CLEARANCE AND RESTORATION OF THE SITE.

The Countryside and its Economy

- 11.91 This section considers activities which support the rural economy in the countryside outside of the towns and villages in the Vale and outside of any business sites identified earlier in this chapter. It deals exclusively with business activities which are directly related to the countryside in particular: farming and forestry (including new farm buildings and farm diversification) and the keeping, rearing, training and livery of horses on a commercial basis. A general policy controlling new development in the countryside and policies for the re-use of buildings outside settlements, including barn conversions, is considered in Chapter 3. Also contributing to sustaining the rural economy are farm shops, which are considered in this chapter, and tourist developments, which are considered in Chapter 13. The protection of high grade agricultural land for farming purposes is considered in Chapter 4.
- 11.92 The government's policy as expressed in PPS7: *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* and the White Paper *Rural England: A Nation Committed to a Living Countryside* emphasises the importance of the pursuit of sustainable development and economic and social diversity in the countryside, consistent with the need to retain its distinctiveness and character and with the protection of the landscape, wildlife and historic features. The guidance acknowledges that there have been considerable changes in the countryside over recent decades associated with a steep fall in employment in agriculture; however, it recognises that farming uses still occupy around three-quarters of the land surface of England. Food production and a competitive agricultural industry continue to be highly important and provide a basis for many other economic activities in rural areas. In this respect, a booklet has been published by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister entitled "A Farmer's Guide to the Planning System", which is designed to assist farm businesses considering development changes.

New Buildings Required for Agricultural Purposes

- 11.93 Much agriculture and forestry development does not require planning permission, and some agricultural development is permitted under the General Permitted Development Order. In some cases, prospective developers are required to submit a written description and site plan of proposed farm buildings and accesses to the District Council's planning service which has 28 days to determine whether prior approval will be required for certain details. This enables the Council to determine the landscape impact of the development, as well as the desirability of preserving sites of historic or nature conservation value. If no determination is made, the works may be carried out in accordance with the original information submitted.
- 11.94 Applicants wishing to construct agricultural buildings are advised to approach the Council for advice on whether or not planning permission is needed. The following policy will be applied to proposals requiring full planning applications and will be relevant to cases where the planning authority has power to determine whether prior approval is required. Where the proposed buildings are in the Oxford Green Belt, policy GS3 will also apply.

POLICY E16

PROPOSALS FOR NEW BUILDINGS AND DEVELOPMENT NECESSARY FOR THE OPERATION OF AGRICULTURE OR FORESTRY WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THEY DO NOT CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO:

- i) THE VISUAL AMENITY OF THE LANDSCAPE; OR
- ii) ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES; OR
- iii) LISTED BUILDINGS AND THEIR SETTING; OR
- iv) SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE.

NEW BUILDINGS SHOULD, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, BE LOCATED WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO AN EXISTING GROUP OF FARM OR FORESTRY BUILDINGS. WHERE THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE THEY SHOULD BE IN AN EXISTING WELL-SCREENED SETTING OR BE ACCOMPANIED BY LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE SUCH SCREENING. BUILDINGS SHOULD BE SITED SO AS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF NUISANCE TO THE OCCUPIERS OF NEARBY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES.

Farm Diversification

- 11.95 Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is bringing farmers closer to the market place through farm-based enterprises supplying niche markets such as regional and speciality foods and larger scale group collaborations such as central fruit and vegetable packing operations and grain stores. These ventures can add value to local produce. Farmers are increasingly looking to diversify to supplement their incomes. The Rural White Paper encourages farm diversification as a source of extra income to farmers and as a means of sustaining farms, and

in this respect, it is recognised that for farming to evolve and thrive, it needs to diversify. Some producers could benefit from getting closer to the market, for example by establishing farm shops to sell their produce direct to the public (see policy E18 below). In other cases it may be beneficial for producers to provide other farm and land related services, for example farmers providing agricultural equipment hire and maintenance facilities can have advantages in terms of economies in the purchase of larger and more specialised machinery. It can also enable the retention of jobs on farms and the continued use of vernacular farm buildings considered worthy of preservation (see policy E17) (see also policy GS7 which permits the re-use and adaptation of vernacular buildings). PPS7 considers development related to farm diversification in paragraphs 30 to 31.

- 11.96 For the purposes of this Local Plan the Council will define 'farm diversification' as a business activity on a farm which is both related and ancillary to the use of the farm for agriculture. For example, packing of locally grown fruit and vegetable produce on the farm would be classed as farm diversification, whereas a proposal for business or commercial development which is *not* related to agriculture, such as a printing company or IT consultancy, would *not* be classed as farm diversification. The term 'ancillary' in relation to farm diversification will be interpreted as a use which is not the dominant enterprise on the farm. In this respect, agriculture should remain the dominant use on the farm holding. Therefore, a proposal which used at least half of a farm holding for non-agricultural purposes would *not* be regarded as ancillary.
- 11.97 A variety of farm diversification activities may be appropriate in the Vale's countryside provided that proposals are consistent with the need to conserve the landscape and protect high grade agricultural land and with other planning matters such as highway and parking considerations and the effect on neighbouring properties, including potential noise and disturbance. The advice in PPS7 is that local planning authorities should consider the nature and scale of activity which would be appropriate and should seek to limit them where there is concern about the impact of future expansion. In this respect, the District Council would support small-scale farm diversification proposals which create employment opportunities particularly where they use existing buildings in accordance with Local Plan policies GS7 and GS8 for the re-use of buildings outside settlements.

POLICY E17

PROPOSALS FOR FARM DIVERSIFICATION WHICH ARE SMALL-SCALE WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THEY ARE ANCILLARY AND RELATED TO THE CONTINUED FARMING USE OF THE HOLDING. WHERE A NEW BUILDING IS PROPOSED TO ACCOMMODATE THE ACTIVITY, THE APPLICANT WILL BE EXPECTED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT IT IS NOT POSSIBLE OR APPROPRIATE TO USE AN EXISTING BUILDING ON THE FARM OR NEARBY. IN ADDITION PROPOSALS SHOULD COMPLY

WITH POLICY E16 TO ENSURE THAT THEY DO NOT CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO LANDSCAPE, COUNTRYSIDE OR CONSERVATION INTERESTS.

Farm Shops

- 11.98 Increased car ownership among town dwellers has allowed more people to have easy access to the countryside. Many businesses in the rural areas have therefore been encouraged to sell produce directly to the public. A number of farms now have widely-advertised pick-your-own-produce schemes, and farm shops and plant nurseries increasingly concentrate on sales to private consumers or gardeners. Farm shops can bring significant benefits in terms of improving farm viability and providing local employment opportunities. They can also provide greater choice and availability of local produce for consumers and can fulfil an educational role in terms of engendering a greater appreciation by the public (particularly children) of the link between food, farming and the countryside. They bring benefits to the local economy including contributing towards a more diverse countryside which can also provide interest for tourists visiting the Vale. Craft industries in the villages also attract a growing number of visitors who are interested to see the craft processes as well as to buy the products.
- 11.99 Government guidance on farm shops is contained in PPS6 *Planning for Town Centres* and PPS7. The guidance states that farm shops help meet demand from consumers who want fresh produce at the point of production and can provide new sources of jobs and services in rural areas and outlets for producers of regional speciality foods. When planning applications are needed, local planning authorities should take account of:
- i) the desirability for the farmer to provide a service throughout the year, which may require bringing in non-local produce to overcome the problems of seasonality and provide continuity of employment and to ensure that a sufficiently wide selection of produce can be offered;
 - ii) the potential impact on village shops; and
 - iii) the transport effects in terms of traffic likely to be generated and the highways, access and parking arrangements.
- 11.100 If the size of the operation remains small, it is unlikely to disturb local amenities and indeed may be exempt from planning control, particularly where only the sale of the farm's own produce is concerned. Where the scale of activity is limited by the variety and amount of merchandise produced on the site, it is unlikely also that the general pattern of shopping in the area will be affected.

- 11.101 However, large-scale proposals for farm shops can cause problems arising from the attraction of large volumes of traffic, the display of unsightly advertisements, proposals to erect new buildings or construct car parks and the erection of stalls on busy main roads. Such problems tend to emerge where the business seeks to expand its range of goods by bringing in merchandise which is not produced on site. Therefore, the Council is concerned to ensure that such operations should sell mainly goods grown or made on site, that any associated development should be small in scale, that any proposed retail outlet is subordinate to the particular rural enterprise concerned and does not undermine the viability of nearby shops. Taking account of the range and nature of goods which any rural retail outlet proposes to sell the Council will seek by planning condition or planning obligation with the retailers to specify that not less than 60% of the grown or produced merchandise sold will be grown or produced within an agreed local area. The needs of the operator of the shop to overcome the problems of seasonality and provide continuity of employment will also be taken into account where relevant.
- 11.102 The Council may seek to limit the size of such shops in the first instance, to help ensure those sales are of locally grown or locally produced merchandise and to enable the viability of the enterprise and its effect on the surrounding rural area to be assessed. Applications to expand an existing shop may be refused if the operation of that shop is considered to have given rise to planning or environmental problems. Even where an extension to a farm shop is permitted the Council will seek to ensure that not less than 60% of the merchandise sold will be grown or produced within an agreed local area.

POLICY E18

PROPOSALS FOR FARM SHOPS OR FOR THE DIRECT SALE OF CRAFTS AND OTHER LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS WHICH REQUIRE PLANNING PERMISSION WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THEY ARE SMALL SCALE AND SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- i) THE PROPOSED RETAIL OUTLET IS SUBORDINATE TO THE PARTICULAR RURAL ENTERPRISE CONCERNED;**
- ii) THE PREMISES ARE ACCESSIBLE BY A VARIETY OF MEANS OF TRANSPORT;**
- iii) AT LEAST 60% OF THE PROPOSED MERCHANDISE SOLD WILL BE GROWN OR PRODUCED WITHIN AN AGREED LOCAL AREA;**
- iv) NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM WILL BE CAUSED TO THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF A NEARBY VILLAGE SHOP WHICH PROVIDES EASILY ACCESSIBLE CONVENIENCE SHOPPING AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY;**

DEVELOPMENT OF AN UNRESTRICTED RETAIL USE LIKELY TO RESULT IN A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON NEARBY SHOPS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. THEREFORE, CONTROL OVER THE BROAD TYPES OF PRODUCE SOLD FROM THE PROPOSED USE MAY BE SOUGHT, BY PLANNING CONDITION OR PLANNING OBLIGATION, SO AS TO ENABLE PERMISSION TO BE GIVEN.

WHEREVER POSSIBLE, PROPOSED RETAIL OUTLETS SHOULD USE EXISTING BUILDINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY GS7 OR GS8 OF THE LOCAL PLAN. NEW BUILDINGS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE THEY WILL NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE VISUAL AMENITY OF THE LANDSCAPE, ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, LISTED BUILDINGS AND THEIR SETTING OR SITES OF NATURE CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE. NEW BUILDINGS WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE SITED WITHIN OR ADJACENT TO AN EXISTING GROUP OF BUILDINGS OR IN AN EXISTING WELL-SCREENED LANDSCAPE SETTING AND BE SYMPATHETICALLY DESIGNED TO REFLECT THEIR RURAL SURROUNDINGS.

POLICY E19

PROPOSALS FOR THE MODEST EXPANSION OR EXTENSION OF FARM AND CRAFT SHOPS WILL BE PERMITTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- i) THE RETAIL OUTLET, AFTER THE PROPOSED EXPANSION OR EXTENSION, REMAINS SUBORDINATE TO THE PARTICULAR RURAL ENTERPRISE CONCERNED;
- ii) AT LEAST 60% OF THE PROPOSED MERCHANDISE SOLD WILL BE GROWN OR PRODUCED WITHIN AN AGREED LOCAL AREA;
- iii) NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM WILL BE CAUSED TO THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF A NEARBY VILLAGE SHOP WHICH PROVIDES EASILY ACCESSIBLE CONVENIENCE SHOPPING AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY; AND
- iv) THE OPERATION OF THE EXISTING RETAIL OUTLET CAUSES NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM IN HIGHWAY, ENVIRONMENTAL OR AMENITY TERMS.

The Keeping, Rearing and Training of Horses

- 11.103 Parts of the Vale of White Horse are strongly associated with stables and racing yards, particularly in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where there is a long tradition of both recreational horse riding and the rearing and training of horses for the racehorse industry, for example at Letcombe Bassett, Letcombe Regis, Woolstone and Blewbury. Commercial equestrian enterprises are crucial to the Vale's rural economy and frequently give rise to pressures for new development in sensitive countryside locations. The

Council's attitude towards such development therefore needs to be made clear. This is set out below and in policy E20.

- 11.104 In dealing with applications for horse-related development the Council will take into consideration the advice in Planning Policy Statement 7, which states that policies should ensure the maintenance of environmental quality and countryside character in relation to equine enterprises. Applicants should take particular care to minimise the effect their proposals will have on the appearance of the countryside. Buildings should be sited and designed to blend in with their surroundings and applicants may be required to assess the effects of their proposed development on soil erosion, the vegetation of the land to be used and the rights of way network. In addition, applicants will be expected to comply with recommended standards for safety and comfort of horses (further advice is given in the Countryside Agency booklet *Horses in the Countryside*).
- 11.105 As horse-related developments can occur in countryside locations where development is not normally permitted for other uses, or at a scale larger than allowable for other uses, the Council wishes to be sure, prior to the grant of planning permission for commercial equestrian facilities, that the horse-related use will be a long-term operation with a genuine likelihood of viability and permanence and that the use and occupation of buildings will be strictly controlled.
- 11.106 It is the Council's intention to protect suitably located large-scale commercial stables with an appropriate range of facilities from redevelopment for other uses, in recognition of their contribution to the local rural economy. In addition, the loss of such facilities could lead to pressure for more commercial establishments in the open countryside which may not be so well located in relation to access to equestrian or other facilities or in terms of the impact of proposals on the landscape. In this respect, policy E21 will apply.

POLICY E20

PROPOSALS FOR THE KEEPING, REARING, TRAINING AND LIVERY OF HORSES ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- i) **THE PROPOSED PREMISES WILL HAVE SAFE ACCESS FROM THE SITE TO PUBLIC BRIDLEWAYS, GALLOPS OR OTHER EXERCISE AREAS IN ORDER TO AVOID CONFLICT BETWEEN HORSES AND OTHER PUBLIC HIGHWAY USERS; AND**
- ii) **THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT RESULT IN EROSION OF SOIL OR VEGETATION THROUGH OVERGRAZING OR OVERUSE; AND**
- iii) **THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT HARM THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE OR ITS LANDSCAPE SETTING.**

ANY REQUIREMENT FOR BUILDINGS SHOULD BE MET THROUGH THE RE-USE OR REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING RURAL BUILDINGS OR THROUGH THE REDEVELOPMENT OF AN EXISTING DEVELOPED SITE. WHERE THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE OR APPROPRIATE, PROPOSALS REQUIRING THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDINGS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF, IN ADDITION TO (i), (ii) AND (iii), THE EXTENT AND SCALE OF BUILDINGS PROPOSED IS THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO OPERATE THE USE.

PROPOSALS WHICH INCLUDE ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE APPLICANT DEMONSTRATES THAT THERE IS A PROVEN NEED FOR THE ACCOMMODATION WHICH CANNOT BE MET WITHIN A NEARBY SETTLEMENT OR THROUGH THE RE-USE OR ADAPTATION OF AN EXISTING RURAL BUILDING. IF THERE IS A PROVEN NEED FOR THE ACCOMMODATION WHICH CANNOT BE MET OTHER THAN BY CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW BUILDING, THEN THE AMOUNT AND TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION ON SITE WILL BE RESTRICTED TO THE MINIMUM JUSTIFIED BY THE EQUESTRIAN SCHEME CONCERNED.

POLICY E21

PROPOSALS FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OR RE-DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING AND SUITABLY LOCATED LARGE-SCALE ESTABLISHMENTS FOR THE KEEPING, TRAINING AND BREEDING OF HORSES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

Minimising the Need to Travel by Car

- 11.107 There is widespread concern that increased numbers of cars and goods vehicles has led to congestion, noise and air pollution. Accordingly, aim 3 for this Local Plan as identified in Chapter 2 is 'to reduce the need to travel and the harmful effects of traffic on people and the environment'. Policy GS10 in Chapter 3 also proposes that 'new development should be guided to locations where the need to travel, particularly by car, can be minimised'. In the interests of encouraging sustainable development and reducing the need to travel, the Local Plan includes a range of policies aimed at achieving this objective. There are policies in this chapter to provide new business sites in locations which are accessible by means of transport other than the private car (policies E1–E8). Also, the protection of key sites for business use (policies E10–E12) and policy E13 (which allows ancillary uses such as crèche facilities and cafes on such sites) can help to minimise the need to travel by car. With the same objective in mind the following section considers and seeks to encourage working from home.

Working from Home

- 11.108 The District Council recognises that many successful businesses begin with people working from home and that this process can bring significant economic benefits to the local area in the longer term if such businesses are able to flourish and grow. However, there is a need to ensure that activities which take place in connection with the business do not adversely affect neighbouring properties. Increasingly advances in technology are enabling people to work at home, which can benefit the environment by reducing the need to travel and hence reducing vehicle emissions of carbon dioxide and other pollutants.
- 11.109 Planning permission is not usually required where only a small part of the home is used for business purposes and the overall character of the property as a dwellinghouse is not changed (a good example would be use by a householder of a single room as an office). When the business use is no longer ancillary to the use of the property as a dwelling, however, a material change in the use of the property is almost certain to have taken place, for which planning permission would be required. Any permission granted may be subject to conditions in order to ensure that there is no adverse effect on neighbouring properties. Such conditions may include restricting the number of employees, the hours during which the business can operate and the type of activities which can be carried out.
- 11.110 Inevitably, there are certain business activities which cannot be satisfactorily accommodated in a residential area, for example where the business is likely to generate (or is already generating) significant traffic, noise or other disturbance. In such cases, the District Council will refuse planning permission or, if the business already exists, it will take enforcement action where appropriate to cease the use.
- 11.111 Policy GS10 in Chapter 3 of the Local Plan states that new development will be guided to locations where the need to travel, particularly by car, can be minimised. If the proposed business use in connection with working from home is in an unsustainable location which would result in a material increase in the amount of traffic movements to and from the site, then planning permission will not be granted.

POLICY E22

WHERE PLANNING PERMISSION FOR WORKING AT HOME IS REQUIRED PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED PROVIDED:

- i) **THERE IS NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT OR TO RESIDENTIAL AMENITY IN TERMS OF NOISE, DUST, SMELL, TRAFFIC, PARKING, LOSS OF PRIVACY OR CHANGES TO THE VISUAL APPEARANCE OF THE PROPERTY;**

- ii) THE SCALE AND TYPE OF BUSINESS WOULD RESPECT THE PREVAILING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCALITY; AND
- iii) THE BUSINESS USE DUE TO ITS PROPOSED LOCATION DOES NOT GENERATE A LEVEL OF TRAFFIC MOVEMENT BY PRIVATE CAR OR SERVICE VEHICLES WHICH WOULD OUTWEIGH THE BENEFITS OF WORKING FROM HOME, HAVING REGARD TO THE LIKELY NEED FOR ACCESS TO THE BUSINESS BY SUPPLIERS AND/OR CUSTOMERS.

SHOPPING AND TOWN CENTRES

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

- 12.1 Shopping is an activity which is constantly changing and evolving in response to changes in the retail industry, patterns of consumer spending and demands, the national and local economy and technology (for example shopping via the internet). Shopping is also very significant in terms of its importance to the economy, employing about 10% of the UK workforce and creating over 20% of new jobs. As well as being a necessity, shopping is also a major social activity for many people and in this respect the quality of the shopping experience, particularly in town centres, is associated with a wider range of facilities and activities than just shops. It includes being able to visit cafes and restaurants, banking and professional services and leisure facilities. Access to these services is therefore important to the quality of peoples' lives, as is the quality of the shopping environment itself. The existence of attractive and safe walkways, good street furniture, town squares and convenient seating areas all contribute to how a centre is viewed by its users.
- 12.2 It is important that the Local Plan sets out a clear policy framework for guiding shopping development and helping to maintain thriving town centres. The traditional shopping facilities for the residents of the Vale are the town centres of Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon; the shopping centres at Botley and Grove; local centres in Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon; and village shops. In addition, Abingdon and Botley now have well established out-of-centre shopping facilities at Fairacres and Seacourt respectively. There are also other forms of retail development throughout the district including garages/filling stations, and their ancillary shops, garden centres and plant nurseries. Competition has grown for local spending as shopping centres and out-of-centre retail developments attract customers across district boundaries. Shops in the Vale face competition from sub-regional shopping centres at Oxford, Reading, Swindon and Newbury; and accessibility to London's shopping attractions has improved as a result of regular and affordable bus services from Oxford to the capital.
- 12.3 The aims of the Local Plan (as set out in Chapter 2) include aim 6: 'to ensure that the main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage are attractive places for living, working and pursuing leisure interests'. In order to achieve this, the Council will seek to safeguard and promote the vitality and viability of the town centres and the local centres at Botley and Grove and to reduce traffic congestion and improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians.

Structure of this Chapter

12.4 Policies and proposals in this chapter are broadly consistent with and follow the *Local Plan Strategy* set out in Chapter 3. For the main settlements, policies are put forward for:

- defined town centre areas at Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon and the uses within them;
- existing shopping centres at the main settlements of Grove and Botley, and local shopping centres at Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon;
- for Didcot, provision is made for new local shops in the proposed neighbourhood and district centres associated with the town's western development (part of which is located within the Vale);
- provision is made for new local shops and retail services within the proposed mixed use local centre associated with the strategic housing site at the former airfield west of Grove.

In the predominantly rural parts of the Vale, policies focus on:

- small-scale local shops within villages;
- garages and garage shops.

(Policies dealing with developments such as farm shops and pubs can be found in Chapters 11 and 9 respectively).

12.5 There is widespread concern that increased numbers of cars and goods vehicles has led to congestion, noise and air pollution. Accordingly, aim 3 of this local plan, as identified in Chapter 2 is 'to reduce the need to travel and the harmful effects of traffic on people and the environment'. Furthermore policy GS10, a key element in the overall local plan strategy, states that 'new development will only be permitted in locations where the need to travel, particularly by car, can be minimised'. In the interests of encouraging sustainable development and reducing the need to travel, this chapter includes a range of policies aimed at achieving this objective.

12.6 It is inevitable that there will be overlap with policies in other chapters, and appropriate cross-referencing is included in the supporting text to aid understanding of the more complex and interrelated issues.

12.7 In framing policies for this Local Plan the Council has taken full account of planning advice from central government, regional planning guidance, and policies in the Oxfordshire Structure Plan. The findings of a report by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners Ltd on shopping in the Vale (dated 1991) and its review

(in 1996) are also still relevant, as are the results of consultation through the Local Plan Issues Report (published in 2000). Town centre surveys undertaken more recently have also influenced the Council's thinking. These factors are considered briefly below.

Planning Guidance from Central Government

- 12.8 Current government advice to planning authorities on shopping related issues is contained in PPS6: *Planning for Town Centres* (2005) and PPG13: *Transport* (2001). PPS6 emphasises the role of existing town centres, clearly stating that the government's key objective for town centres is to promote the vitality and viability by:

- planning for the growth and development of existing centres; and
- promoting and enhancing existing centres, by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment accessible to all.

There are other Government objectives which need to be taken into account in the context of the key objective above:

- enhancing consumer choice and allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community;
- supporting efficient, competitive and innovative retail, leisure, tourism and other sectors, with improving productivity; and
- improving accessibility, ensuring good access by a choice of means of transport.

- 12.9 The potential for reducing the need to travel, and reliance on the private car, are key government objectives. This view is emphasised in both PPG13 and PPS6, which advise that shopping should be promoted in existing town centres which are more likely to offer access by a choice of means of transport. PPS6 also places emphasis on a sequential approach being taken to the location of new retail development.

Regional Policy Background

- 12.10 *Regional Planning Guidance for the South East* (RPG9), published in March 2001, emphasises the importance of urban renaissance incorporating mechanisms to revive and rejuvenate town centres. The regional guidance acknowledges that town centres have suffered from the last recession and from the diversion of investment to out-of-centre retail developments. To reverse this trend there is a need to focus retail development in town centres and to avoid further development in out-of-centre locations. In preparing development plans, the guidance advises that local authorities should assess the need for retail, leisure and office development in their area. It suggests that town and district improvement strategies and management schemes can help to improve the vitality and viability of centres. These will require a close partnership between retailers and other town centre interests including local authorities.

The Oxfordshire Structure Plan

- 12.11 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 (policy TC1) states that further shopping provision will be permitted in the existing shopping centres of Banbury and Oxford to meet the comparison and specialised requirements of the population of the wider catchment areas of these towns. In respect of Oxford, the wider catchment area includes a significant part of the Vale. Whilst the principal locations for major new shopping development will be in the country towns of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney (policy TC2), the Structure Plan permits proposals for shopping development sufficient to meet the day-to-day shopping needs of the local population in towns and villages throughout the county (policy TC3), including settlements in the Vale. (This approach is continued in the plan to 2016.)
- 12.12 Structure Plan policy TC4 (TC2 of the plan to 2016) reflects government guidance in PPS6, confirming that major new development in towns should be located in accordance with the sequential approach. First preference should be for town centre sites, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres, and only then in out-of-centre locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. Proposals should sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres by, amongst other things, extending the range and quality of shops and other central facilities and encouraging a diversity of uses, including residential accommodation.

Shopping Study Review (1991) and Further Review (1996)

- 12.13 In February 1991, the Council commissioned consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners to undertake a review and update of the 1979 Abingdon Shopping Study. The brief extended the scope of the study to include the other main centres in the district (Wantage, Grove, Faringdon and Botley) along with out-of-centre retailing sites and local or neighbourhood shops. In March 1996, the Council commissioned the same consultants to undertake a further review of their earlier work taking into account new government advice on the sequential approach to the location of new retail development. This would enable new policies to be incorporated into the emerging district wide Local Plan. The 1996 Review looked at the need and potential for additional retail floorspace of various kinds in the existing shopping centres and in edge or out-of-centre locations. The availability of development sites to meet the potential for different types of shopping was also considered.
- 12.14 A summary of the consultants' conclusions and recommendations is set out in supplementary guidance. In general terms, the more recent 1996 review confirmed the findings of the earlier study, concluding that taking into account existing and committed provision of out-of-centre convenience stores in and around the Vale, the district is amply provided for. Any new convenience floorspace should be located in the town centre of Wantage where it would help to improve the quality of the centre and bring significant benefits. No further

major convenience floorspace is required in Abingdon. There is scope for further non-food shopping in the town centres of both Abingdon and Wantage and they could be enhanced by, for example, further encouraging tourism, improving the environment and pedestrian circulation and making better use of existing car parks.

Local Consultation

12.15 The Local Plan Issues Report (August 2000) sought views on whether the vitality and viability of the district's town centres would benefit from allowing throughout the centres a wider range of uses. It was suggested that this could help to make them more attractive to local residents, shoppers and visitors and would fit better with changing retail patterns. Such uses could include restaurants, bars, cafes and leisure facilities which would benefit the evening economy of the towns, as well as residential accommodation, including in particular, flats above shops. The response from public consultation was overwhelmingly in favour of such an approach and Oxfordshire County Council as the strategic planning authority confirmed that a relaxation of the current more restrictive policies would be in line with the Structure Plan.

Town Centre Surveys

12.16 The Council has recently undertaken a composition study to identify all the ground floor uses in the shopping streets of the three town centres. The results were then compared with the findings of the studies undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (referred to above). The composition study identified three key changes to the town centres over the last 11 years, as follows:

- i) the town centres have all contracted in size and the trend appears to be towards further contraction. There has been a move towards changes of use to residential on the margins of the town centre area and this seems to be continuing;
- ii) there has been little change in the overall number of vacant units in Abingdon Town Centre but in Wantage and Faringdon a marked reduction was revealed. Although the number of vacant units in Abingdon increased very slightly only about five or six of these have been vacant on a long-standing basis. The survey results reveal the following statistics:
 - Abingdon:1991 = 11 vacant units, Feb 2002 = 12 vacant units
 - Wantage: 1991 = 25 vacant units, Feb 2002 = 7 vacant units
 - Faringdon:1991 = 7 vacant units, Feb 2002 = 3 vacant units;
- iii) there has been a decrease of about 10% in class A1 shop units in both Abingdon town centre (from a total of 119 to 108 units) and Wantage town centre (from a total of 97 to 85 units). These have occurred predominantly within the secondary frontages. In Faringdon town centre

the overall number of retail units has stayed broadly the same (36 to 38 units respectively). The changes of use in these centres have been mainly to A2 uses (banks, building societies, financial and professional services) and A3 uses (restaurants, pubs, cafes).

- 12.17 In 2004 the Council commissioned Nathaniel Lichfield to carry out a review of their 1996 study. This, together with the recent town centre composition study, underpins the shopping policies in this chapter, as set out below.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

The Location of New Retail Development

- 12.18 It is the Council's intention to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Vale's existing shopping centres and to oppose proposals for shopping developments which could put at risk its strategy for these centres. This aim is in accordance with up-to-date government guidance, the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the recommendations of the Council's consultants.
- 12.19 For this Local Plan period up to 2011, the Council still accepts the conclusions put forward in Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners 1996 Shopping Study Review, i.e. that no further large out-of-centre or edge-of-town food stores are needed within the district. At Wantage, the Study Review recognised that provision to meet the needs of the town for food shopping would be met by a planning permission for a major development at Limborough Road comprising a foodstore and other retail units. This permission has now been superseded by a new proposal for a Sainsbury food store, seven comparison goods shop units and six retail warehouse units, for which planning permission was granted in February 2002. The Council is satisfied that this new permission will meet the needs of Wantage for food shopping.
- 12.20 The 1996 Review confirmed that the Vale is also well served in qualitative and quantitative terms with non-food retail warehouse floorspace both within and beyond its boundaries. Significant provision within the Vale exists at Seacourt, Botley (close to the Oxford Ring Road), and at Fairacres, Abingdon (close to the Marcham Road). The Review also confirmed that the provision of additional non-food shopping as part of the planning permission at Limborough Road (referred to above) would meet the scope for additional floorspace in Wantage and enable the town centre to maintain and enhance its position in the retail hierarchy. This permission has since been superseded by the new proposal in 2002, described above, which the Council is satisfied will meet the needs of the town for non-food retail floorspace.

The Sequential Approach to the Location of New Retail Development

- 12.21 The Local Plan seeks to keep town centres as a whole relatively compact. Compact town centres, where a range of town centre shops, services and facilities are reasonably close together, have the advantage of being convenient for town centre users and are more likely to be sustainable in terms of being within walking distance of town centre bus stops, cycle parks or car parks. The outward spread of retail development could put at risk the vitality of a town centre which needs to remain compact to function effectively. Furthermore, commercial activities should not be allowed to encroach on residential areas because of the potential damaging effects of parking, servicing or advertising associated with such activities.
- 12.22 In preparing policies for this Local Plan the Council has paid regard to government advice in PPS6 (as referred to above) which states that in drawing up their development plans local planning authorities should, after considering the need for new development, adopt a sequential approach to selecting sites for new retail development. Adopting a sequential approach means that the first preference should be for town centre sites, where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. It should be demonstrated that all potential town centre options have been thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered for development. The guidance states that if there is no need or capacity for further developments, there will be no need to identify additional sites in the town.
- 12.23 In relation to the above, the Council is satisfied that adequate provision exists or has been made for new retail development for both food and non-food shopping in the main town centres. Therefore in respect of the sequential test there is no need to look any further than the town centres for the location of new retail development and no need to identify any additional sites. Furthermore, it is appropriate for the local plan to include a policy to allow retail development (including re-development) in the town centres but to resist proposals involving the expansion of such development beyond them. This will facilitate the concentration of retail uses in order to maintain town centre vitality and viability and will provide shopping facilities at a focal point which is accessible to those who travel by public transport or on foot to shop.

Hierarchy of New Retail Provision

- 12.24 In accordance with PPS6, including the sequential test, the general policy for the location of new retail development (policy S1 below) sets out a hierarchy of shopping provision. This approach is also consistent with the general strategy for guiding the location of development in the Local Plan, as set out in Chapter 3. The hierarchy is described briefly below starting with town centre areas, followed by existing local shopping centres at Grove, Botley, Abingdon, Wantage

and Faringdon, and the policies for small-scale shops within villages. Outside these locations retail development will not be permitted unless it is in accordance with policy S15 for new service/petrol filling stations and their shops, policies E18 and E19 for farm and craft shops or policy E13 for small-scale ancillary retail development on key business sites.

- 12.25 Town Centre Areas in Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon.** In defining town centre areas for Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon, the areas identified in the Local Plan to 2001 have been reviewed and amended to take into account recent changes. One of the key findings of the town centre composition study outlined above is the trend towards the contraction of town centres, in particular, changes from commercial to residential use on their margins. The town centre areas, as now defined on the Local Plan proposals map, have been drawn up taking into account the results of the composition study and detailed surveys of each centre.
- 12.26 Existing local shopping centres at Grove and Botley and in the main towns of Abingdon, Wantage, and Faringdon.** Grove has two local shopping centres (at Millbrook Square and Grovelands), Botley has a shopping centre (at West Way and Elms Parade) and there are also smaller local centres in each of the Vale's main towns. New retail development will be permitted within all of these locations, as defined on the proposals map.
- 12.27 Local shops and retail services at Grove and Didcot associated with Policy H5 for the strategic housing site at the former airfield west of Grove, which includes a mixed use local centre, and Policy H7 for the proposed neighbourhood and district centres associated with Didcot's western development.** The precise location of these centres and the composition and size of local shops and retail services within them will be subject to the preparation of detailed planning and development briefs. Therefore at the present time it is not possible to define them on the proposals map.
- 12.28 Small-scale local shops within villages.** It is not appropriate to identify specific shopping or commercial areas within villages since they tend not to have a definable concentration of such premises. The Council believes small-scale local shops should generally be permitted within villages to meet the local needs of the settlement, provided their provision can be accommodated without harming the amenity of nearby residents or causing highway safety problems.
- 12.29 New service/petrol filling stations and their shops.** Proposals for new petrol filling stations will only be permitted in the built-up areas of the towns and villages, in accordance with policy S15. The Council considers new stations are not generally appropriate in countryside locations where such development would be likely to damage the character of the landscape.
- 12.30 Shops in the countryside outside settlements, and other retail development.** Policies dealing with proposals for farm and craft shops, including proposals for

their modest expansion, are set out in Chapter 11. Plant nurseries, which sell only produce grown on site, are unlikely to require planning permission. However, garden centres, where a significant proportion of the goods sold are not produced on site, will always require permission. It is considered that this form of retail development is not appropriate within the countryside because it tends to give rise to significant planning and environmental problems, including causing harm to the landscape and creating additional traffic movements, often on unsuitable rural roads. Given their primarily retail emphasis garden centres should be considered in relation to the sequential test in PPS6, (referred to above) which means that the first preference should be for a town centre site.

- 12.31 Small-scale ancillary retail development will be allowed on key business sites to meet the needs of users of the business site in accordance with policy E13 in Chapter 11. Such small-scale retail provision potentially has the advantage of helping to make strategic business sites more sustainable by reducing the need for employees to travel by car to larger retail centres.

POLICY S1

PROPOSALS FOR NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT OR CHANGES OF USE TO RETAIL WILL BE PERMITTED IN THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS PROVIDED THEY ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE CENTRE OR AREA CONCERNED AND WOULD NOT CREATE UNACCEPTABLE TRAFFIC OR ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS:

- i) **WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRE AREAS OF ABINGDON, WANTAGE AND FARINGDON AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP SUBJECT TO POLICIES S2, S3 AND TR6 (THE RETENTION OF PUBLIC CAR PARKING SPACES);**
- ii) **WITHIN THE LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRES AT ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP SUBJECT TO POLICIES S12 AND TR6 (THE RETENTION OF PUBLIC CAR PARKING SPACES);**
- iii) **IN VILLAGES, TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY S13.**

PROPOSALS FOR NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING CHANGES OF USE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED OUTSIDE THESE LOCATIONS OTHER THAN IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES H5, H7, S15, E13, E18 OR E19.

Town Centre Policies

Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages for Abingdon and Wantage

- 12.32 In recent years there has been increasing pressure to replace shops in town centres by other uses. The Council's Local Plan to 2001 distinguished between

primary shopping frontages, where there is a high proportion of retail uses, and secondary frontages, where there is a wider range of non-retail uses such as banks, building societies and restaurants. The policies in the Local Plan to 2001 aimed to resist the loss of shops from ground floor premises in the primary shopping frontages and to direct other uses to the secondary shopping streets or to upper floors above primary frontages. They were introduced in order to underpin the shopping function of the town centres at a time when there was particular pressure to convert shops to banks, building societies, offices and estate agents. There is now demand to allow the conversion of shop units (class A1) in primary areas to restaurants and cafes (class A3 uses) and to some extent to allow office uses within class B1 of the Use Classes Order rather than those which offer a direct service to the customer in respect of financial and professional services (class A2).

- 12.33 In its Local Plan Issues Report the Council consulted on whether the vitality and viability of the district's town centres would benefit from allowing a wider range of uses that would fit better with changing consumer demand and emerging retail patterns. Local people were generally supportive of such an approach and the Council has concluded that the policies for Abingdon and Wantage town centres should be made more flexible. The Council has sought to achieve this through a redefinition of the primary and secondary frontage areas, and by being more explicit in the wording of its policies to allow a wider range of uses in those parts of the town centre outside of primary and secondary areas. In the review of the primary and secondary frontages some have been demoted from primary to secondary which will allow a wider range of uses to occur, and some secondary frontages have been deleted, either entirely or in part. Although the Local Plan defines primary and secondary shopping frontages for Abingdon and Wantage town centres, they are not appropriate for Faringdon because the town centre is too small for such policies to be meaningful.

Primary Shopping Frontages

- 12.34 A high proportion of retail uses in the main shopping streets is vital to the character, vitality and viability of the town centres and it is still considered justifiable in the primary shopping core area to resist the change of retail frontages to other uses including A3 (cafes and restaurants). Many of the primary frontages already include units which are not in A1 use. Some are in A3 use, others are in uses which could be the subject of proposals for change to A3 use at some time in the future. Without a policy to retain A1 uses, there is a danger that rows of non A1 uses will develop, creating 'dead frontage' which interrupts retail frontage and through lack of activity at certain times or the absence of varied and interesting window displays can affect the vitality of the centre. The primary frontages in Abingdon and Wantage are considered and described below.
- 12.35 **Abingdon.** The following frontages will form the primary shopping core of Abingdon and include a wide range of shop units in terms of size and type: High

Street, Bury Street, Market Place, Stert Street and the top of West St Helen Street (west side) to include the Co-op supermarket. They are in accessible locations relative to town centre bus stops, cycle parking and public car parks. The Council believes their retention as primary frontages is crucial to the long term vitality and viability of the town centre. In Bury Street, the previously defined primary frontages have been extended to include three small units adjacent to Superdrug (currently a shoe repairer, sandwich bar and florists). The primary frontage on High Street, which extends to the Market Place opposite the County Hall, has been extended to include the end property (the Punch Bowl public house) for the sake of completion and consistency with other frontages.

12.36 Although Stert Street has been generally less attractive as a shopping environment, there has been an increase in activity in recent years, including the take-up of previously vacant retail units. The street is likely to become more attractive for shoppers as a result of proposals being put forward under the Abingdon Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy (ABITS) as discussed in Chapter 5. The proposals will include footpath widening, resurfacing and improved pedestrian crossings. Therefore, Stert Street is being confirmed as part of the town centre primary frontage.

12.37 **Wantage.** The Local Plan continues to identify Market Place as the heart of the primary shopping core of the town with primary frontages feeding into it along parts of Wallingford Street, Newbury Street, Grove Street and Mill Street. Victoria Cross Gallery, linking Market Street with Church Street, and Post Office Vaults, on the eastern side of the Market Place, also continue to be identified as primary frontages at ground floor level. An extension to the primary frontage on Mill Street is proposed, which includes ground floor commercial premises as far as the junction with Limborough Road. This is in order to reflect the increase in shop units within the street over recent years.

Secondary Shopping Frontages

12.38 The policy wording for secondary shopping frontages makes it clear that the Council will refuse proposals for the change of use of A1 shop units to other uses where the proposal would individually or cumulatively with other non-retail uses cause harm to the function, character or appearance of the frontage concerned or to the town centre as a whole. There is clearly no need to define secondary shopping frontages where there are no remaining shop units in a frontage and it should be noted that removal of a secondary frontage designation will not prevent new shops being established in these premises in the future. The extent of secondary shopping frontages defined in the Local Plan to 2001 has been reviewed and reduced significantly in the light of more recent survey work.

12.39 **Abingdon.** The following areas are considered still to be appropriate for inclusion as secondary shopping frontage: the west side of Bridge Street (which has several shop units including one large unit); West St Helen Street south of

the Co-op supermarket as far as number 25 (the newsagent shop); Bath Street (northern part of the frontage to the south of Stratton Way) and Coxeter House. Most of Bath Street was formerly identified as primary shopping frontage but is now proposed as secondary frontage to recognise changes over recent years which have resulted in a wider mix of uses becoming established including restaurants, cafés, surveyors and estate agents, offices and residential. Relatively few shop units now remain in the street.

- 12.40 Secondary shopping frontages have been deleted where they have no remaining retail units, such as Ock Street between the Square and the junction with Stratton Way, and in peripheral locations where there is little demand for shops and very low pedestrian flows, for example East St Helen Street and Lombard Street. This will allow empty shop units to be converted to alternative uses, subject to market demand.
- 12.41 **Wantage.** Changes are proposed to the secondary shopping frontages previously shown in the Local Plan to 2001 to reflect recent changes in the composition of certain streets. Alfred Street, Market Place behind Barclays Bank, Church Street, Regent Arcade, Wallingford Street, parts of Grove Street and Newbury Street continue to have a range of town centre uses including shop units where it is appropriate to continue the secondary shopping frontage designation. Newbury Street (west side) now has a mix of uses including only one shop unit and is therefore redesignated as secondary frontage. Secondary shopping frontage designation has been removed from Wallingford Street (north side) to the east of the entrance to Campbell's Yard where there are no shop units, and at Newbury Street where there are two units which are physically separate from any other shopping frontage and lie outside the town centre.
- 12.42 Policies S2 and S3 below make clear the types of use which will be permitted in the primary and secondary shopping frontages identified for Abingdon and Wantage on the Local Plan proposals map.

POLICY S2

IN THE PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP FOR ABINGDON AND WANTAGE, PROPOSALS WHICH INVOLVE A NET LOSS OF CLASS A1 SHOPPING FLOORSPEACE AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL WILL BE NOT BE PERMITTED.

POLICY S3

IN THE SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGES DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP FOR ABINGDON AND WANTAGE, PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR USES WITHIN CLASSES A2, A3 AND FOR AMUSEMENT/ENTERTAINMENT USES PROVIDED:

- i) THE PROPOSALS WOULD NOT INDIVIDUALLY OR CUMULATIVELY WITH OTHER NON-RETAIL USES CAUSE HARM TO THE FUNCTION, CHARACTER OR**

APPEARANCE OF THE FRONTAGE CONCERNED OR TO THE TOWN CENTRE AS A WHOLE; AND

- ii) **THERE WOULD BE NO HARM CAUSED TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF ANY NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTS IN TERMS OF NOISE, COOKING SMELLS OR GENERAL DISTURBANCE.**

WHERE PERMISSION IS GRANTED FOR SUCH USES, CONDITIONS RELATING TO HOURS OF OPENING, SOUND PROOFING AND THE CONTROL OF COOKING ODOURS WILL BE IMPOSED AS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF RESIDENTIAL AMENITY.

Non Retail Uses in Town Centres

- 12.43 According to PPS6 the vitality and viability of town centres depends on retaining and developing a wide range of attractions, uses and amenities; creating and maintaining an attractive environment; and attracting continuing investment in development or refurbishment of existing buildings. Local planning authorities are advised to encourage diversification of uses in town centres as a whole, whilst recognising and supporting their primary function as shopping areas. This means that as well as retaining shop units, the vitality and viability of town centres should also depend on accommodating a range of other uses. This will have the additional benefit of helping to secure continued occupation and on-going maintenance of town centre buildings, many of which are within conservation areas.
- 12.44 In all of the town centres provision needs to be made for A2, A3, B1 and amusement/entertainment uses. In Abingdon and Wantage the Council believes these should be accommodated in non-primary shopping locations (which would include the upper floors of premises in the primary and secondary shopping frontages, and property in other town centre locations). However, the Council will be concerned to ensure that such uses will not harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents or damage to the overall character and function of the town centres. Furthermore, healthcare facilities (within Class D1) may also be appropriately located within town centres, especially where they need to be accessible to a large number of people.
- 12.45 Policy S4 below allows a diverse range of uses to become established in appropriate town centre locations in Abingdon and Wantage including new residential accommodation, such as flats above shops. This flexible approach to uses outside of primary shopping frontages is intended to help enhance town centre vitality and viability and encourage regeneration where appropriate.
- 12.46 A different approach is necessary in Faringdon taking into account its smaller town centre. In Faringdon, A2, A3 and amusement/entertainment uses will be permitted within the town centre, including ground floor premises, subject to

certain criteria as described in policy S5 below. However, the Council considers that new B1 uses at ground floor level could harm the town centre by diluting its shopping and service role. Instead B1 uses will only be allowed on upper floors, where residential uses will also be permitted.

POLICY S4

IN THE TOWN CENTRES OF ABINGDON AND WANTAGE (OTHER THAN ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF PREMISES IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY FRONTAGES DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR USES WITHIN CLASSES A2, A3, B1 (OFFICES), FOR HEALTHCARE FACILITIES (WITHIN CLASS D1), FOR AMUSEMENT/ENTERTAINMENT USES AND FOR RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION (CLASS C3) PROVIDED THERE WOULD BE NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM CAUSED TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF ANY NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTS IN TERMS OF NOISE, COOKING SMELLS OR GENERAL DISTURBANCE.

WHERE PERMISSION IS GRANTED FOR SUCH USES, CONDITIONS RELATING TO HOURS OF OPENING, SOUND PROOFING AND THE CONTROL OF COOKING ODOURS WILL BE IMPOSED AS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT ENVIRONMENTAL, HIGHWAY OR OTHER PROBLEMS ARE NOT CREATED AND THAT RESIDENTIAL AMENITIES ARE PROTECTED.

POLICY S5

IN THE TOWN CENTRE AREA OF FARINGDON AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PERMISSION WILL BE GRANTED FOR USES WITHIN CLASSES A2 AND A3 PROVIDED:

- i) THE PROPOSALS WOULD NOT INDIVIDUALLY OR CUMULATIVELY WITH OTHERS CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE FUNCTION, CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE FRONTAGE CONCERNED OR TO THE TOWN CENTRE AS A WHOLE; AND**
- ii) THERE WOULD BE NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM CAUSED TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF ANY NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTS IN TERMS OF NOISE, COOKING SMELLS OR GENERAL DISTURBANCE.**

WHERE PERMISSION IS GRANTED FOR SUCH USES, CONDITIONS RELATING TO HOURS OF OPENING, SOUND PROOFING AND THE CONTROL OF COOKING ODOURS WILL BE IMPOSED, AS NECESSARY, TO ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF RESIDENTIAL AMENITY.

CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASSES A1, A2 AND A3 TO OTHER USES INCLUDING RESIDENTIAL (CLASS C3), HEALTHCARE FACILITIES (WITHIN CLASS D1) OR OFFICE (CLASS B1) USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED ON GROUND FLOOR FRONTAGES.

NEW RESIDENTIAL, HEALTHCARE OR B1 USES WILL BE PERMITTED ON UPPER FLOORS SUBJECT TO CRITERION (ii) ABOVE BEING MET.

Upper Floors in Town Centres

- 12.47 The under-use of upper floors above commercial premises can lead to lack of maintenance to the detriment of the fabric of town centre buildings. Cumulatively, vacant upper floors can also adversely affect the appearance and character of the centre as a whole. The Council is anxious to avoid this and to exploit the potential economic resource of upper floors for commercial or for residential uses. It is therefore considered desirable that new shopping and commercial proposals within the town centres, including changes of use, should incorporate specific provision to maintain and, where possible, improve the means of access to upper floors.
- 12.48 PPS6 states that the vitality and viability of town centres depends on more than retailing. It stems from the range and quality of activities the centres offer and their accessibility to people living and working in the area. PPG13: *Transport* provides guidance on the policies local authorities should adopt in order to reduce the need to travel, including locating employment and residential uses close to each other and providing housing in central locations close to facilities. Policy S6 below can help to achieve these objectives, as well as being justified in the interests of maintaining and maximising the economic potential of buildings in the Vale's town centres.

POLICY S6

NEW SHOPPING AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (INCLUDING CHANGES OF USE) WITHIN THE TOWN CENTRES OF ABINGDON, FARINGDON AND WANTAGE AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP SHALL, WHERE POSSIBLE, INCORPORATE SPECIFIC PROVISION TO MAINTAIN OR IMPROVE THE MEANS OF ACCESS TO UPPER FLOORS.

The Bury Street Precinct, Abingdon

- 12.49 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2001 included three areas within Abingdon town centre where there were policies to guide new development or redevelopment: the Vineyard policy area (including part of the old cinema site), West Central and the Bury Street Precinct. The future of the Vineyard and West Central areas has now been largely resolved. Schemes have come forward in the Vineyard area, predominantly for housing, and at West Central the Council has resolved to grant detailed planning permission for a mixed-use scheme including residential, a foyer (a residential/training facility for young people) and offices uses. However, no comprehensive proposals have come forward on the Bury Street Precinct and therefore it is appropriate to continue with a policy in the

Local Plan seeking environmental enhancement and major refurbishment for this area.

- 12.50 The 1991 Shopping Study recommended that long-term consideration should be given to the redevelopment or extensive refurbishment of the Bury Street precinct to provide modern well-serviced retail accommodation. A sensitively designed scheme, it was suggested, would significantly enhance the whole central area of Abingdon. This recommendation was reiterated in the 1996 Review for implementation as a shorter term priority.
- 12.51 The Bury Street precinct was designed over 30 years ago and, although it is well-positioned on major pedestrian routes and offers the potential for attractive traffic-free shopping, it is now dated in design. Although the Council has designed, funded and implemented a new scheme for re-paving and street furniture, the precinct remains in need of major refurbishment. Such a scheme could include the rationalisation or provision of new and larger shop units and measures to improve pedestrian circulation, weather protection, security and the overall appearance of the area. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of high quality shop fronts. The improvement of the precinct together with proposals in the Abingdon Integrated Transport Strategy (ABITS) described in Chapter 5 are vital elements in any strategy aimed at enhancing the vitality and viability of Abingdon's town centre.
- 12.52 It is considered that the policy for environmental enhancement and refurbishment of the Bury Street precinct should be extended to include The Charter, the multi-storey car park and the adjoining service areas in the interests of achieving a comprehensive approach. Policy S1 will be relevant in considering proposals for new shopping associated with any refurbishment scheme.

POLICY S7

WITHIN THE BURY STREET PRECINCT AND CHARTER AREAS (AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP) PROPOSALS WHICH LEAD TO ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MAJOR REFURBISHMENT WILL BE PERMITTED.

The Limborough Road Area, Wantage

- 12.53 The Local Plan to 2001 set out 'to support the role of the town's centre as the social and commercial heart of Wantage and as an important centre for a wider hinterland, including Grove'. It acknowledged the historic quality of Wantage town centre focused on the outstanding Market Square. Area-based policies were included in the Local Plan to guide new development or redevelopment at the Limborough Road area and Campbell's Yard.
- 12.54 Campbell's Yard on Wallingford Street (which was originally allocated in the 1987 Local Plan for Wantage and Grove for housing and/or commercial

development) was identified in the 2001 Local Plan for mixed commercial/residential development with an emphasis on small-scale retail development. However, this has not come to fruition and no planning applications have been submitted for such development. In view of the lack of progress in this site coming forward for development, it is questionable whether there is a market demand for mixed uses in this location. Instead, the site is now considered to be suitable wholly for residential purposes and it is therefore no longer being identified for mixed use. Accordingly, the town centre area for Wantage shown on the proposals map now excludes this site.

- 12.55 The Local Plan continues to identify Limborough Road for a comprehensive scheme including major new shopping development in policy S8 below. A detailed development brief for the area was published by the Council in 1992. In the context of this brief, planning permission was granted in 1995 for an attractive shopping development incorporating a supermarket (3995 square metres gross floorspace), together with a small precinct of four shop units leading to Grove Street and Mill Street, a new road access from the A338 (Grove Street) and car parking for 388 cars.
- 12.56 Since then two further planning permissions have been granted, both of which involved a significantly enlarged site area. The first of these, submitted in 1996 by developers Master Property Ltd, has now been superseded by a planning application submitted in 2001 by Master Property Trading Ltd and Sainsbury Supermarkets Ltd for the erection of a foodstore, seven comparison goods shop units and six retail warehouse units with a combined floorspace of 11,223 square metres, together with a new link road and roundabout access from the A338. Planning permission was granted for this scheme in February 2002. A revised application was granted planning permission in March 2006 which provided for a new Sainsbury foodstore, seven small shops with twenty four flats over and five retail warehouses
- 12.57 The Local Plan carries forward proposals for the area which reflect the 2002 planning permission and show the site within the re-defined Town Centre Policy Area (Policy S1) for Wantage as indicated on the proposals map. This will provide a convenience store of modern scale and standards, open up a new northern entrance to the town centre, create attractive new urban spaces in a currently unsightly area, thereby enhancing the visual character of the town centre and underpinning economically the whole shopping area.

POLICY S8

THE LIMBOROUGH ROAD AREA AS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP IS PROPOSED AS THE SITE FOR ANY MAJOR NEW SHOPPING PROVISION FOR WANTAGE. A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH WILL BE REQUIRED FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT ON THIS SITE TO INCLUDE RETAIL USES (SUBJECT TO POLICY S1) AND PARKING PROVISION. RESIDENTIAL OR B1 OFFICE USES WILL BE ALLOWED ON UPPER FLOOR LEVELS.

Faringdon Market Place

- 12.58 Faringdon is an important 'local needs' shopping and service centre for its own population and surrounding rural area and its maintenance and enhancement as such must continue to be a prime planning concern for the Council.
- 12.59 The 1991 Lichfield Study recommended that greater use of existing premises should be encouraged by promoting the town as a tourist attraction in its own right. The Study identified little need in either quantitative or qualitative terms for an increase in comparison (non-food) or convenience (food) goods floorspace. Faringdon's role in the retail hierarchy was nevertheless seen as an important one which should be maintained, even though there was no justification for major new development. The 1996 Review reiterated the above recommendations, stressing Faringdon's 'local needs' shopping role and the continued importance of maintaining and enhancing this role.
- 12.60 The Local Plan to 2001 identified land in the Swan Lane area of the town centre for mixed residential and commercial development, possibly including some limited expansion for shopping. However, such development has not and is unlikely to come forward and the Council now considers that the site is most suitable for a wholly residential scheme. This is reflected in the revised town centre area for Faringdon shown on the proposals map, which now excludes the Swan Lane site.
- 12.61 The conclusions of 1991 Study concerning the promotion of the town as a tourist attraction and attractive centre for local shopping are still considered to be relevant. Accordingly, the District Council has prepared a scheme for the enhancement of Faringdon Market Place, which was aimed at improving significantly the heart of the town centre as an environment for shoppers and other town centre users, including visitors. The scheme, which involved conservation area enhancement measures to improve surfacing and street furniture, together with initiatives to improve security and safety in the area, was implemented by the Council in 2004.

POLICY S9

FARINGDON MARKET PLACE IS IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT SCHEME. PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD JEOPARDISE ITS IMPLEMENTATION WILL NOT BE PERMITTED.

- 12.62 At Faringdon, the Countryside Agency has funded a 'Health Check' under its market town initiative in order to look at a wide range of issues which may affect people's quality of life and the vitality of the town. An action plan has been produced in order to help bring forward projects which may include measures to improve the town centre and its market place.

Town Centre Approaches

12.63 The Local Plan to 2001 included two policies for town centre approaches: Ock Street in Abingdon and Park Road in Faringdon, aimed at protecting and enhancing their attractiveness and, indirectly, helping the image of the town centres. The Ock Street policy has been beneficial in terms of securing a high standard of design for development which has taken place over recent years, for example residential schemes at Crown Mews, Ock Mews and more recently the entrance to the Morland Brewery development. In Faringdon, developer contributions have been made for enhancement and landscape improvements to Park Road. There are further opportunities for sites to come forward for development or redevelopment in Abingdon and Faringdon along both of these approaches to the town centres and therefore it is considered that these policies are still relevant. Accordingly, this Local Plan continues to identify Ock Street in Abingdon and Park Road in Faringdon on the proposals map as key town centre approaches where particular care needs to be taken in the design of development proposals.

12.64 **Ock Street, Abingdon.** Ock Street, although not of conservation area status, has a distinctive historic quality, with its wide gentle curve and its own traditions (its Morris team and ancient mayor-making ceremony, for example). For many years, the street formed part of the main Southampton–Birmingham trunk road, and during this period parts of its frontage were redeveloped in a commercial style, which in places remains incongruous. Nevertheless, the general appearance of Ock Street retains its integrity and there are a number of individual buildings of great historic interest and merit, such as Tomkins Almshouses and the Baptist Church. Its environmental quality remains fragile and could easily be eroded further.

12.65 The Council considers it important to draw attention to the significance and potential of Ock Street and to urge all concerned to take every opportunity to reinstate the quality of the environment by new building or refurbishment and by improvements to street furniture, shop fronts, landscaping or paving. Proposals should not result in any further erosion of the environmental quality of the street. The amount of traffic passing through the centre of Abingdon may be reduced as a result of the Abingdon Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy (referred to in Chapter 5). This may provide the opportunity to improve Ock Street as a pedestrian, residential and in part commercial environment. Planning applications for development and redevelopment in the Ock Street area will be considered in the light of the following policy.

POLICY S10

WITHIN THE OCK STREET POLICY AREA AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, PROPOSALS WHICH LEAD TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE PERMITTED. PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT WHICH HAVE A

SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE OCK STREET APPROACH TO THE TOWN CENTRE WILL BE REFUSED.

- 12.66 **Park Road, Faringdon.** Whereas Ock Street was once a trunk road which has been reduced to the level of a local distributor, Park Road in Faringdon has experienced the opposite process. It was once a cul-de-sac at the edge of town and at that time business and industrial units grew up alongside it in an uncoordinated and unscreened way on the site of a former branch line and railway sidings. Subsequently, Park Road was linked into the Faringdon bypass and has now become one of the main approaches into the town centre. The business and industrial site remains largely unscreened and presents an unattractive introduction to the town. The site does not show itself to best advantage and this in the long term may affect its business and employment prospects. There is an opportunity for new development to enhance the approach to Faringdon in respect of land north of Park Road identified under policy E3 of this Plan. Part of the site fronts on to Park Road and any development in this location should be designed to enhance visually the approach to the town. In recent years the District Council and the Joint Environmental Trust have sought to facilitate a co-ordinated enhancement and landscaping programme for the edge of the industrial estate and other Park Road frontages but it has proved difficult to achieve improvements. Nevertheless the Council continues to consider that landscape treatment along the length of Park Road remains desirable, even if only a minimal amount of planting and screening may be practicable. The District Council will therefore use the following policy to promote and seek further improvements.

POLICY S11

ON THE PARK ROAD FRONTAGE IDENTIFIED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP PROPOSALS WHICH LEAD TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS BY MEANS OF SCREENING, LANDSCAPING OR BUILDING DESIGN WILL BE PERMITTED. PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT WHICH HAVE A SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE PARK ROAD APPROACH TO THE TOWN CENTRE WILL BE REFUSED.

Other Policies for Shopping

Policies for Local Shopping Centres

- 12.67 The following section relates to neighbourhood shopping centres and local shopping parades. Survey work in the autumn/winter of 2000 confirmed the largest local centres in this category to be:

Botley (39 units)

Millbrook Square, Grove (13 units)
Grovelands, Grove (10 units)
Peachcroft, Abingdon (9 units)

Each of these centres has a small anchor supermarket, with a reasonable range of other shops and services.

12.68 Other local centres include Reynolds Way, Wootton Road, Northcourt Road, Parsons Mead, Hadland Road and Oxford Road in Abingdon; Barnards Way in Wantage; and Folly View Road in Faringdon. These generally have a smaller range of convenience shops and services to meet local needs, although there are a few specialist shops in some of the local Abingdon centres. At the time of the 2000 survey, three vacancies were recorded in the four larger local centres and three vacancies in the remainder. The Lichfield Study Review of November 1996 concluded that Botley and Grove and the other local centres provide valuable shopping facilities conveniently serving the surrounding residential areas and that their maintenance is essential in order to complement town centre facilities. The Council continues to share this view and, accordingly, policy S12 below seeks to maintain the role of these centres.

12.69 **New retail development.** Policy S1, which considers the location of new retail development, states that proposals for retail development or changes of use to retail will be permitted within the existing local centres at Grove, Botley, Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon, subject to certain criteria. The criteria include that proposals are in keeping with the scale and character of the centre or area concerned, that they reflect the need to ensure the proposed development will not adversely affect the vitality and viability of an existing town centre and that planning, traffic and other environmental problems will not be caused.

12.70 **Non-retail uses.** The change of use of units from shopping to non-retail use in these centres is an issue which has arisen regularly in recent years and is likely to continue to arise. Financial and professional uses (class A2) and food and drink uses (class A3) may provide a service for local residents but the spread of such uses in relatively small shopping centres at the expense of retail units can be problematic. In considering planning applications for changes of use to non-retail the Council will be concerned to ensure that proposals will not narrow the choice of neighbourhood shopping and that a range of facilities is maintained consistent with the scale and function of the centre and the need to provide for people's day-to-day shopping needs, locally, so reducing their need to travel. The Council will, in particular, seek to retain facilities such as post offices and pharmacies. Proposals should not cause parking and other traffic problems or affect the amenities of residents.

12.71 Unlike the town centres, which are of a sufficient size to accommodate a wide range of uses including residential and B1 office uses, the Vale's local shopping centres are much smaller and do not have the capacity for accommodating such

uses at ground floor level without harm being caused to their function and character. Therefore, at ground floor level although changes of uses from retail to class A2 or class A3 uses may be permitted subject to criteria, residential (class C3) or class B1 office uses will not. On upper floors in local shopping centres, however, residential or B1 office uses can be of benefit in helping to secure the on-going maintenance of buildings and viability of the centres as a whole, as well as helping to reduce the need to travel. Residential use, for example flats over shops, can help to meet local housing needs and office uses can provide local employment opportunities.

POLICY S12

WITHIN THE EXISTING LOCAL SHOPPING CENTRES AT ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE AS DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS A1 (RETAIL) TO CLASSES A2 AND A3 WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF:

- i) THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT INDIVIDUALLY, OR CUMULATIVELY WITH OTHER EXISTING NON-RETAIL USES, CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE FUNCTION, CHARACTER OR APPEARANCE OF THE SHOPPING CENTRE CONCERNED;**
- ii) THE PROPOSAL WOULD ADD TO THE RANGE AND VARIETY OF GOODS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL RESIDENTS; AND**
- iii) THERE WOULD BE NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM CAUSED TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF ANY NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTS IN TERMS OF NOISE, COOKING SMELLS, OR GENERAL DISTURBANCE.**

CHANGES OF USE TO RESIDENTIAL (CLASS C3) OR OFFICE (CLASS B1) USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL. SUCH USES WILL BE PERMITTED ON UPPER FLOORS SUBJECT TO CRITERIA (i) AND (iii) ABOVE BEING MET.

Village and Other Small Local Shops

- 12.72 The Council recognises the importance to local communities of small neighbourhood shops, particularly village shops. Government guidance in PPS6 acknowledges that village shops play a crucial role in maintaining villages as viable communities. PPS6 states that local planning authorities should respond positively to proposals for the conversion and extension of shops, which are designed to improve their viability. Their importance to the local community should be taken into account in assessing proposals which would result in their loss or change of use.

- 12.73 In assessing whether all reasonable efforts have been made to sell or let a village shop this will involve consideration of the marketing, either as a going concern or where it has ceased trading. It will need to take account of how the shop was operated over time and what efforts were made to advertise and market it on the open market, whether or not the sale value was realistic and whether the potential of the business was made clear. It will not be sufficient for an applicant to state that a village shop is not viable if this cannot be proved to be correct.
- 12.74 Village shops can help to minimise the need to travel by car and are invaluable to residents who may not have access to a car. They may also be significant as places of social contact and local employment. The Council therefore supports the retention of such facilities and will look favourably on proposals for new provision provided they do not give rise to planning or environmental problems. In locations where the provision of shops on a commercial basis has not been viable, the Council encourages local initiatives by the community to maintain a service. The Council has given encouragement and financial support to such community shops, for example at Appleton, Letcombe Bassett and the Hanneys, and grants may continue to be available to support local initiatives via the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council.

POLICY S13

PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OR EXTENSION OF VILLAGE AND OTHER SMALL SHOPS DESIGNED TO MEET THE DAY-TO-DAY NEEDS OF THE LOCAL POPULATION WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THEY DO NOT GIVE RISE TO PLANNING OR HIGHWAY PROBLEMS.

POLICY S14

PROPOSALS INVOLVING THE LOSS OF VILLAGE AND OTHER LOCAL SHOPS TO OTHER USES WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS THE COUNCIL IS SATISFIED THAT THERE ARE OTHER SIMILAR FACILITIES OF EQUIVALENT COMMUNITY BENEFIT AVAILABLE IN THE AREA, AND:

- i) THE BUILDING IS OR HAS BECOME UNSUITABLE FOR ITS EXISTING USE AND CANNOT REALISTICALLY BE ADAPTED TO ALLOW CONTINUATION OF THE USE;**
- ii) THE RETENTION OF THE SHOP IS NOT ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED THAT ALL REASONABLE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO SELL OR LET THE PROPERTY AS A SHOP ON THE OPEN MARKET AT A REALISTIC PRICE; OR**
- iii) THERE IS NO REASONABLE LIKELIHOOD OF AN ALTERNATIVE APPROPRIATE FACILITY OR SERVICE OF BENEFIT TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY MAKING USE OF THE BUILDING; OR**

- iv) **THE RELOCATION OF THE SHOP TO A CONVENIENT LOCATION TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, INVOLVING THE RE-USE OF AN EXISTING BUILDING OR THE PROVISION OF NEW PREMISES, IS NOT ECONOMICALLY VIABLE; OR**
- v) **THAT EXISTING BUILDINGS WORTHY OF RETENTION DO NOT BECOME UNUSED IN THE LONG TERM AND THEREBY DECAY.**

Garages and Garage Shops

- 12.75 Service stations can be intrusive features, especially in the open countryside where they can seriously damage the character and appearance of the local landscape. It is difficult to blend the buildings, canopies, advertisements and parking areas associated with modern service station development into the rural environment. There are clear conflicts between the needs of the operator for adequate, direct and clear access to the highway, a prominent position and distinct advertising to attract trade, and the requirement to protect the character and appearance of the countryside from inappropriate and conspicuous sporadic development. The Council is generally opposed to the provision of new service stations in the countryside for this reason. Similarly it is concerned to ensure that the expansion or redevelopment of existing stations causes the minimum harm to the amenity and character of the local environment. In opposing the development of new service stations in the countryside the Council has taken into account the fact that some large villages already have garages, which supply petrol during normal business hours, and that in the towns and on most principal routes through the district there are now stations which operate late into the evening and which offer a wider service to motorists.
- 12.76 The closure of small garages and filling stations has given rise to concern in recent years, in relation to their loss as local facilities and, to a lesser extent, as a provider of employment. There is a trend towards village garages serving to some degree as the village shop. The Council will look favourably on such facilities in recognition of their contribution to the social vitality of villages, particularly where no other similar facility exists. The crucial role of village shops (including those which are ancillary to petrol filling stations) in maintaining villages as viable communities is recognised in PPS6, however care should be taken to ensure that shops ancillary to rural petrol stations do not adversely affect easily accessible convenience shopping available to local communities. Extensions of petrol filling stations including their shops may be permitted, subject to criteria. Proposals for the redevelopment of garages and service stations outside settlements for other uses will be subject to policy GS6 in Chapter 3 of the Plan, which deals generally with previously developed land outside settlements. Proposals for the redevelopment of garages/service stations for other uses in villages will be considered in relation to policies elsewhere in the Local Plan depending on the use proposed (for example proposals for residential development will be subject to policies in Chapter 8). Special policies are needed

to deal with proposals for service facilities to meet the particular needs of drivers on local stretches of the A34 and A420 trunk roads and these are set out in Chapter 5, together with their background justification.

POLICY S15

PROPOSALS FOR NEW SERVICE/PETROL FILLING STATIONS INCLUDING THOSE WITH ANCILLARY SHOPS WILL BE PERMITTED IN THE BUILT AREAS OF THE VALE'S MAIN SETTLEMENTS AND VILLAGES ONLY, PROVIDED CRITERIA (i) to (iii) BELOW ARE ALL MET. PROPOSALS FOR THE EXTENSION OF PETROL FILLING STATIONS OR GARAGE SHOPS OR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING STATIONS WITHIN THE SAME USE WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED:

- i) THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING, LIGHTING AND CANOPIES WILL NOT CAUSE DEMONSTRABLE HARM TO THE CHARACTER OR THE QUALITY OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT;**
- ii) NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM WILL BE CAUSED TO THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS IN TERMS OF VISUAL INTRUSION, NOISE, DISTURBANCE OR POLLUTION; AND**
- iii) THE SCALE OF THE PROPOSAL IS IN KEEPING WITH ITS SURROUNDINGS;**
- iv) WHERE THE DEVELOPMENT IS IN A RURAL AREA NO DEMONSTRABLE HARM WILL BE CAUSED TO THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF A NEARBY VILLAGE SHOP WHICH PROVIDES EASILY ACCESSIBLE CONVENIENCE SHOPPING AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.**

Other Shops/Retail uses

- 12.77 There are other retail uses for which policies are required in the Local Plan. They relate primarily to activities covered in other chapters, as follows. Farm shops are considered in Chapter 11, in recognition of their role in helping farms to diversify. Public houses, which often make a strong contribution to the social life of communities in both urban and rural areas, are dealt with in Chapter 9.

TOURISM**INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT**

- 13.1 The Vale of White Horse is a well-established tourist destination, with historic associations, pleasant market towns and attractive countryside. The district has one of the longest frontages to the River Thames; it is on the doorstep of Oxford and the Cotswolds which are among England's most popular visitor destinations and it has good communications to many other parts of the country.
- 13.2 Abingdon is an important tourist destination in its own right and has been included among the top 44 historic towns in England which each receive more than 20,000 staying visits by overseas visitors.
- 13.3 The District Council welcomes visitors to the Vale with all the facilities and attractions of the area that can be enjoyed by the public. The Council recognises that tourism can bring valuable benefits to the local economy, whether visitors come as day trippers, for longer stays or as business people attending conferences. Visitor spending can help to keep in existence local facilities which might otherwise not be able to survive. Catering for visitors helps to create local job opportunities and can increasingly be seen as a key factor in the rural economy, helping to make up for the loss of employment in agriculture. In 1996 an estimated £11 million was spent by visitors to the Vale on tourist accommodation alone (See *Economic Impact of Tourism in Vale of White Horse, 1996*).
- 13.4 In addition to the direct economic benefits, tourism can be a positive force for protecting and improving the environment since its success depends on the maintenance of the beauty and distinctive character of the area. The tourist industry helps to pay for repairs to historic buildings and can offer a range of potential new uses for redundant historic buildings.
- 13.5 While the tourist industry is to be welcomed, the Council recognises that there can be environmental costs arising from local pressures created by the industry. Problems can include traffic congestion, parking difficulties, noise, litter, intrusive advertising and the physical erosion of the environment. To avoid such problems, tourism needs to be properly managed and directed. Planning policies should be aimed at ensuring that the adverse effects of tourism are kept to a minimum.

Background to the Local Plan Policies

- 13.6 In its planning policy guidance, Central Government has emphasised that tourism is important to the economy (Planning Policy Guidance 21: *Tourism* (1992) (PPG21). It is also acknowledged that planning for tourism should respect the environment. Local authorities are advised that the needs of tourism should be managed in ways which reflect well-established planning aims, such as the protection of the countryside, special landscapes and habitats, the Green Belt, conservation areas and historic buildings. In land-use terms, tourism developments are considered no different from other types of development. Location, scale and environmental factors will be important in considering proposals. When planning for historic towns, the needs of tourism and of traffic and environmental management should be integrated. In the countryside, development to meet the needs of visitors should respond sensitively to the local environment. Proposals should demonstrate high design standards and be of an appropriate scale and location. PPG21 refers to the report of the national task force (*Tourism and the Environment: Maintaining the Balance*). The task force concluded that the environment has an intrinsic value which outweighs its value as a tourism asset and a balance is required between the development of tourism, the conservation of the environment and the needs of the host community.
- 13.7 The Vale is part of the Southern Tourist Board (STB), now Tourism South East, region and within the 'Thames and Chilterns Country' sub-region. An STB report in 1999 (*A Tourism Strategy for the Southern Region of England*) notes that tourism is an important part of the region's economy and that although the region has lost market share, the long-term prospects for tourism are good – for example, the region is well placed in terms of location, catchment and resources to benefit from any growth in activities such as overseas visitors, business tourism and domestic short breaks. The regional basis on which the various tourist boards are set up is being reviewed to consider whether it should be changed in the future.
- 13.8 The balance referred to above between the development of tourism, conservation of the environment and community needs is carried forward in the concept of sustainable or green tourism which respects and reflects the scale and quality of the area and seeks to continue to direct most tourism development towards the five main settlements and encourages visitors to arrive at tourist destinations by public transport, on foot or by cycle.
- 13.9 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 comments that a positive approach is needed towards the provision of facilities for tourism in ways which contribute to, rather than detract from, the quality of the environment. Policy E7 of that Plan (EN5 of the plan to 2016) states:

'Tourism projects which are based on the conservation and enjoyment of the County's inherent qualities and heritage will be encouraged in

appropriate locations, particularly where the proposed development is accessible by foot, cycle or public transport.'

- 13.10 In the past, the District Council has sought to achieve a balance between encouragement and protection and to guide larger tourist developments to the towns and away from the countryside areas unless they were small in scale and drew upon the natural or built heritage of the Vale. Past examples include a new hotel in Marcham Road, Abingdon, to meet demand and in the countryside the creation of the Court Hill Centre for walkers on the Ridgeway, a project designed to reflect the scale and needs of its sensitive downland setting.
- 13.11 The Vale's *Issues Report* (2000) asked if the Council's current approach to tourism was soundly based and whether significant tourist development should only be located in the main settlements. As a result of the response to the Issues Report the Council agreed that the tourism policies be updated in the context of new guidance but that the approach followed in the previously adopted Local Plan of encouraging sustainable forms of tourism by directing most tourist development towards the five main settlements be continued.

Tourism in the Vale

- 13.12 **The Vale's Market Towns** As referred to above, the current approach of encouraging sustainable forms of tourism by directing most development towards the five main settlements helps limit the impact of development on the countryside and equally brings a variety of benefits to the towns. The Council's Shopping Study Review (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 1996) noted that encouraging tourism has several advantages, e.g. in generating demand for tourist related activities, such as cafés, speciality shops and 'spin-off' trade in town centres and in raising their image for shoppers, visitors and investors. The Study listed some positive measures to maximise the benefit from increasing numbers of tourists visiting the centres, including better publicised car parks, the strengthening of pedestrian links between car parks, tourist attractions and the central shopping areas, and encouraging greater circulation of tourists through central shopping areas.
- 13.13 **The Oxford Outskirts** Oxford is an international tourist destination. Adjacent areas in the Vale, such as Botley, Kennington and nearby rural areas, experience consistent pressure to increase hotel and guest house accommodation and to provide other facilities for visitors. Much of this area is designated as Green Belt, where priority will be given to the implementation of stringent policies for the control of development and tourist-related development will need to be assessed against Green Belt objectives.
- 13.14 The hills encircling Oxford are a particularly important feature of the city's environment, contributing much to the perception of the city which visitors enjoy. They are included in the designated Green Belt but are also identified in

this Plan as the North Vale Corallian Ridge, where the Council will take special care to ensure that the visual impact of any proposed development is acceptable.

- 13.15 In the built-up areas of the Oxford fringes which are not included in the Green Belt, however, there may be scope in appropriate circumstances for tourist-related development. It is recognised that there is a shortage of visitor accommodation and there may be economic and employment benefits to be gained from additional accommodation. Subject to detailed consideration of scale, siting, design and transport issues, proposals in these areas might make a useful contribution to meeting demand.
- 13.16 **The River Thames** Much of the northern and eastern boundaries of the Vale are formed by the River Thames with the River Ock and its tributary the Letcombe Brook running through the heart of the district to join the Thames at Abingdon. The river and its valley is a major leisure resource for visitors to the Vale.
- 13.17 The Environment Agency has launched its Thames Waterway Plan, with the 'aim to manage the healthy growth of the non-tidal River Thames for leisure, for business, for local communities and for wildlife'. As part of this initiative, the Agency is actively marketing the non-tidal river, which includes the stretches bordering the Vale, with a number of initiatives including tourist promotions, leaflets and publications.
- 13.18 As with other tourist attractions, it will be important to reconcile the public enjoyment of the River Thames and its amenities and the protection of its environmental value.
- 13.19 **The Rural Areas** The Council supports the principle of 'sustainable' development which contributes to and does not diminish the environmental resources of the area. A key resource is the landscape of the Vale: its unity and distinctiveness is described in the Natural Environment chapter of the Plan. 'To safeguard the distinctive character of the Vale, and conserve and enhance the natural, built and historic environment for future generations' is one of the key aims of this Local Plan. The response to the Issues Report (2000) supported the approach of protecting the natural, built and historic environment. The building of major new tourist facilities in the countryside would be contrary to these aims and will, therefore, not normally be permitted. However, the Council will welcome small-scale 'sustainable' rural tourism projects which are more likely to be in keeping with the landscape and character of the area. There may, for example, be scope for small-scale tourism enterprises and for increased public access to the countryside through farm diversification schemes. The Council will generally favour such developments, subject to local and site factors and compliance with other relevant policies in the Local Plan.
- 13.20 The approach to tourism in the Local Plan reflects the Vale of White Horse Draft Visitor Strategy 1997 which is based on the principle of sustainable tourism, i.e.

that tourism development should respect the balance between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community and economic development objectives to promote diversity in the Vale's economy.

POLICIES AND PROPOSALS

General Policy

- 13.21 The Council aims to encourage and support tourism in the Vale. While welcoming the economic benefits to be gained from a prosperous tourist industry, there is a vital need to protect the quality of the local environment (which is the attraction for many visitors in the first place). It is the nature of tourism and tourist-related development that it has many forms which themselves have differing characteristics and locational requirements. Any development of tourism should be appropriate in scale and based on an appreciation of the Plan's general locational strategy as well as the local heritage and local attractions. Large-scale proposals unrelated to the area are not likely to be favourably considered and in the rural areas only appropriately small-scale and low-key proposals are likely to be acceptable.

POLICY T1

PROPOSALS FOR NEW TOURIST-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE SCALE AND CHARACTER OF THE AREA, AND WHICH AIM TO PROMOTE THE INHERENT QUALITIES AND ASSETS OF THE VALE, WILL BE PERMITTED AS FOLLOWS:

- i) **WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF ABINGDON, BOTLEY, FARINGDON, GROVE AND WANTAGE, LARGER SCALE TOURIST DEVELOPMENTS, MUSEUMS, HERITAGE CENTRES, HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES AND ASSOCIATED TOURIST FACILITIES;**
- ii) **WITHIN THE BUILT-UP AREAS OF THE VILLAGES LISTED IN POLICIES H11 AND H12, SMALLER SCALE TOURIST DEVELOPMENTS, MUSEUMS, HERITAGE CENTRES, HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES, SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION AND ASSOCIATED TOURIST FACILITIES;**
- iii) **OUTSIDE THE ABOVE LOCATIONS, WHERE THE PROPOSAL INVOLVES THE RE-USE, CONVERSION OR ADAPTATION OF SUITABLE EXISTING BUILDINGS TO HOTEL, GUEST HOUSE OR YOUTH HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION, SELF-CATERING ACCOMMODATION AND COUNTRYSIDE CRAFT CENTRES SUBJECT TO POLICIES GS3, GS7, GS8 AND GS9.**

Major Tourism Facilities

- 13.22 Major tourism facilities are those which are of regional or sub-regional importance in terms of visitor numbers or catchment area, site area, building demands or employment or traffic generation. National planning guidance recognises that they may provide the opportunity to take pressure from popular and sensitive tourist centres or to help meet other social and economic planning policy objectives. In some parts of southern England, major new tourist attractions have been created in the form of leisure complexes, theme parks and holiday villages. There have been no examples of such schemes in the Vale's Local Plan area to date. The District Council considers that large-scale proposals of this type are unlikely to be acceptable having regard to the nature and sensitivity of the countryside and landscape of the Vale and the approved policies of development restraint.

Tourist Facilities and Attractions

- 13.23 A number of visitor attractions have developed in the Vale over the years, based on archaeological or topographical features (such as White Horse Hill, Folly Hill, Jarn Mound) or on architectural or historic sites (for example, the Great Coxwell Tithe Barn and Buscot House). The location of these types of attraction is fixed by history or geography. In addition, more recent purpose-designed facilities have been created, both to provide a service for visitors and to attract them to the area. These include small-scale schemes such as museums, galleries, heritage centres and countryside craft centres. New businesses can also be created through the conversion of appropriate existing buildings. These minor forms of development accord well with the approach the Council is seeking to adopt for tourism in the Vale and will continue to be supported in appropriate locations. New buildings for tourist development are 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt unless they accord with policy GS3.

Museum and Heritage Centres

- 13.24 Proposals for museums and heritage centres are generally to be welcomed in the built-up areas of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage as long as there are no environmental or other objections to their development. The Council recognises that there could be local advantages to the development of further facilities of this type. In Abingdon, for example, interest has been shown in a museum based on the association with MG cars. Similarly in Faringdon there may be scope for a small museum explaining the history of the town and its role in the Civil War or for a larger White Horse Heritage Centre which could look more widely at the historical attraction of the town and its surrounding area including the White Horse itself, the River Thames and the Community Forest. In the villages listed in policies H11 and H12 there might be scope for suitable small-scale museum, heritage and countryside craft centres especially in converted buildings and where there is a strong historical or geographical link.

Associated Tourist Facilities in the Countryside

- 13.25 In relation to more modest proposals which are based on local historical or geographical features, planning decisions will need to be considered very carefully when associated facilities are required, sometimes in environmentally sensitive places.
- 13.26 Much of the attraction of the rural Vale rests in the quality of its landscape, archaeological and built heritage. In order that visitors may fully enjoy this heritage, features such as ticket booths, toilets, car parks and notice boards in association with existing tourist destinations in rural areas may sometimes be necessary, even in the countryside where development is strictly controlled. Policy T2 below provides for this. However the Council will wish to ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the high quality environment of the Vale.

POLICY T2

PROPOSALS FOR NEW ASSOCIATED TOURIST RELATED DEVELOPMENT WHICH SERVE THE NEEDS OF VISITORS TO EXISTING TOURIST SITES WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA, ARE MET:

- i) IT COMPLIES WITH THE GENERAL POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT;**
- ii) THE RANGE, SCALE AND NATURE OF PROVISION IS LIMITED TO THAT COMMENSURATE WITH ESTABLISHED VISITOR NUMBERS TO THE TOURIST SITE CONCERNED.**

Visitor Accommodation

- 13.27 In 1996, the profile of commercial accommodation stock in the district indicated that there were 1409 bed spaces for tourist occupation in the Vale: of those 606 were in hotels, 117 in guest houses and 411 in bed and breakfast establishments.
- 13.28 Since then, a new hotel adjacent to Ock Mill, Abingdon (30 rooms) has been opened and there is an outstanding planning consent for a hotel at Harwell. Twenty bed spaces will be lost in Faringdon where planning permission for the conversion of the Faringdon Hotel to residential use has been granted. Nevertheless a reasonable range of visitor accommodation exists in the district but there may well be pressure for further provision in the years ahead and the Local Plan must establish a policy framework for dealing with such proposals.
- 13.29 The Council has expressed its support for the English Tourist Board's aim of encouraging good quality tourist accommodation through a national classification and optional grading scheme. Applicants may be supplied with ETB information on the Crown Classification and Grading System and an 'Informative' may be

attached to any relevant planning consent to remind successful applicants of the system. It is also intended to include inspected only premises in the *Accommodation Guide* and at Tourist Information Centres.

Hotels, Guest Houses and Public Houses

- 13.30 The Council's preferred locations for new hotels and guest houses are the main market towns of Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon, along with Grove and Botley. In the rural areas new buildings for guest houses or visitor accommodation may also be allowed within existing villages listed in policies H11 and H12. Outside of these locations new buildings to provide visitor accommodation will not be allowed unless they are an extension to an existing hotel, guest house or public house. Such proposals are covered by T3 below.

POLICY T3

EXTENSIONS TO EXISTING HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES OR TO PROVIDE OVERNIGHT VISITOR ACCOMMODATION AT PUBLIC HOUSES WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED:

- i) **THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE BUILDING IN TERMS OF SITING, SCALE, DESIGN, AND MATERIALS OR SPOIL THE VISUAL QUALITIES OF ITS SETTING; AND**
- ii) **THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT SO INTENSIFY BUSINESS ACTIVITY AT THE PREMISES AS TO CAUSE HARM TO THE QUALITY OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT IN TERMS OF NOISE, DISTURBANCE, TRAFFIC GENERATION OR PARKING IN THE VICINITY.**

PROPOSALS FOR EXTENSION TO EXISTING HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES OR PUBLIC HOUSES IN THE GREEN BELT WILL BE SUBJECT TO POLICY GS3.

Self-Catering Accommodation

- 13.31 There is an increasing demand for self-catering accommodation, most often in cottages or converted properties in the countryside. The Council is keen to see self-catering holiday accommodation provided through the conversion of appropriate rural buildings rather than in new buildings. This is consistent with the policies to protect the countryside, to diversify the agricultural and rural economies and to find new uses for suitable rural buildings. Such proposals will be considered under policies GS7, GS8 and GS9. Self-catering units can be a particularly good use of suitable buildings in the countryside because holiday use can be more appropriate and sympathetic than a conversion to a permanent home. Holiday homes, for example, can be more simply designed and will often not need the domestic trim of fenced gardens, garages, garden sheds and

greenhouses which can be alien features in the countryside and detract from the setting of a traditional rural building.

- 13.32 The construction of purpose-built holiday accommodation, including holiday chalets and static caravan sites, has a similar impact on its surroundings as permanent housing and therefore it needs to be considered in the same way. PPS7 affirms that new housebuilding and other development in the countryside, away from areas allocated for development, should be strictly controlled. Proposals for new buildings for self-catering accommodation will be steered away from the countryside in accordance with policy GS2. However, there may be some scope for providing new holiday homes within existing settlements provided they are outside the Green Belt and would not adversely affect the character or amenities of their surroundings.

Bed and Breakfast

- 13.33 Bed and breakfast accommodation is seen as a valuable element in the range of visitor accommodation; it benefits local residents and in general is welcomed by the Council as long as the amenities of residential areas are not harmed. Parking arrangements may need to be considered with special care. When the use of a property for bed and breakfast reaches a level where it is no longer considered ancillary to the residential use, the proposal will be considered under policies T1 and T3.

Camping and Caravanning

- 13.34 Large camping and caravanning sites can be environmentally intrusive, both in visual terms and because of the level of traffic and activity they generate. Such large sites (one within Oxford has 129 pitches) are unlikely to be acceptable in the open countryside of the Vale and particularly in the Oxford Green Belt.
- 13.35 Small sites, limited under Caravan Club rules to five caravans or tents, are permitted development. The Vale Council considers that, with care, sites of up to around 10 pitches can usually be accommodated in the countryside. New sites of this size would accord with the Council's aim of encouraging the quiet enjoyment of the rural Vale, if they are carefully sited to safeguard the local environment. Sites providing in excess of 10 pitches and extensions to existing sites will be closely scrutinised and a proliferation of sites in any one area will be avoided. It would also be undesirable if sites which were acceptable for touring caravans and camping became established as permanent sites and were occupied all the year round. Permissions for the use of a site may be restricted either by the imposition of planning conditions or by a legal agreement which may require the removal from the site of all caravans and tents by the date specified in the condition or the agreement. The Council is concerned particularly that the importance of Oxford as an international tourist centre might lead to a

proliferation of camping and caravanning sites close to the city: this would contribute to an impression of increasing urban encroachment into the countryside around the city and would be detrimental to the quality of the Green Belt and to the objective of preserving the character and landscape setting of Oxford. The establishment of camping and caravanning sites will therefore be opposed in the approved Oxford Green Belt.

POLICY T4

PROPOSALS FOR TOURING CARAVANS AND CAMPING SITES WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED:

- i) THE SITE IS NOT IN THE OXFORD GREEN BELT;**
- ii) THE SITE IS IN A WELL SCREENED LANDSCAPE SETTING;**
- iii) ANY PROPOSAL IS LIMITED IN SCALE IN GENERAL NOT INVOLVING MORE THAN 10 CARAVANS OR CAMPING PITCHES AND WOULD NOT AFFECT ADVERSELY THE AMENITIES OF ADJACENT OCCUPIERS OR THE QUIET INFORMAL ENJOYMENT OF THE COUNTRYSIDE;**
- iv) THERE WILL BE NO ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE CHARACTER, APPEARANCE OR NATURAL QUALITY OF THE LANDSCAPE OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, ESPECIALLY WHERE THE PROPOSED SITE IS IN THE NORTH WESSEX DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY OR THE NORTH VALE CORALLIAN RIDGE AND;**
- v) PERMISSION FOR THE USE OF THE SITE FOR TOURING CARAVANS OR CAMPING WILL BE RESTRICTED, TO ENSURE THERE IS NO PERMANENT AND UNINTERRUPTED OCCUPATION OF THE SITE FOR THAT USE.**

WHERE POSSIBLE ASSOCIATED FACILITIES SHOULD BE SITED IN EXISTING BUILDINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICIES GS7 AND GS8. WHERE NEW BUILDINGS ARE ESSENTIAL THESE MUST BE DESIGNED TO A HIGH STANDARD AND BE SENSITIVELY SITED IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY T2.

CONSERVATION AREAS

	DATE OF DESIGNATION	DATE OF AMENDMENT(S)
Abingdon Town Centre	December 1968	14 March 1973 31 July 1974 25 October 1976 13 June 1977
Abingdon, Albert Park	24 February 1975	
Abingdon, Northcourt	27 February 1978	
Appleton	9 July 1969	18 December 1990
Ardington & East Lockinge	22 July 1970	
Ashbury	3 February 1970	
Baulking	3 February 1971	
Blewbury	22 July 1970	18 December 1990
Bourton	3 February 1971	
Buckland	3 February 1971	
Buscot	3 February 1971	
Charney Bassett	27 February 1978	
Childrey	22 July 1970	18 December 1990
Coleshill	3 February 1971	
Cumnor	9 July 1969	24 July 1990
Denchworth	22 July 1970	
Drayton	9 July 1969	
East Hanney	27 February 1978	18 December 1990
East Hendred	Sept 1968	
East Lockinge (See Ardington)	22 July 1970	
Faringdon	17 September 1969	2 March 1982
Fyfield & Netherton	9 July 1969	
Goosey	9 July 1990	
Great Coxwell	3 February 1971	
Grove	28 February 1984	
Harwell	22 July 1970	

	DATE OF DESIGNATION	DATE OF AMENDMENT(S)
Hatford	3 February 1971	
Hinton Waldrist	3 February 1971	
Idstone	3 February 1970	
Kingston Bagpuize	18 March 1970	18 December 1990
Kingston Lisle	18 December 1990	
Letcombe Bassett	22 July 1970	
Letcombe Regis	22 July 1970	
Little Coxwell	3 February 1971	
Littleworth	26 February 1991	
Longworth	3 February 1971	
Marcham	9 July 1969	
Milton	9 July 1969	
North Hinksey	9 July 1969	
Pusey	3 February 1971	14 May 1991
Shellingford	3 February 1971	
Shrivenham	3 February 1971	
Sparsholt	22 July 1970	
Stanford in the Vale	17 March 1971	
Steventon	9 July 1969	
Sutton Courtenay	9 July 1969	
Uffington	3 February 1970	
Wantage - Town Centre	18 March 1970	26 February 1985
Wantage - Charlton	28 February 1984	
West Hanney	22 July 1970	24 July 1990
West Hendred	22 July 1970	
Woolstone	3 February 1971	
Wytham	18 March 1970	

HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS

ENGLISH HERITAGE REGISTER OF PARKS AND GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST

LOCATION	GRID REF	GRADE
Albert Park, Abingdon	SU4997	II
Ashdown House, Ashbury	SU2882	II*
Buckland House, Buckland	SU3498	II*
Buscot House, Buscot	SU2496	II*
Compton Beauchamp House, Compton Beauchamp	SU2786	II
Hinton Manor, Hinton Waldrist	SU3799	II
Pusey House, Pusey	SU3596	II
Sutton Courtenay Manor House, Sutton Courtenay	SU5094	II

SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS

PARISH	NATIONAL NUMBER	COUNTY NO.	MONUMENT TITLE	GRID REF
Abingdon		218	Abingdon Abbey (remains of)	SU 499 970 SU 498 970 SU 500 971
Abingdon		219	Barton (remains of)	SU 504 974
Abingdon		222	Castle mound at Fitzharris	SU 497 975
Abingdon		231	Abingdon Bridge including Maud Haile's Bridge - also South Oxfordshire: Culham	SU 498 969 SU 500 967
Abingdon		232	Ock Bridge	SU 488 969
Abingdon (Drayton)		242	Sutton Wick settlement site	SU 483 957
Appleford		243	Settlement site SE of church	SU 533 933
Ardington		212	Grim's Ditch: section 200yds (180m) long west of Scotch Fir Belt	SU 434 849 SU 436 849
Ardington (West Hendred)		213	Grim's Ditch: section 600yds (550m) long on East Ginge Down	SU 443 853 SU 449 855
Ashbury		188	Three round barrows south of Harley Bushes	SU 276 810
Ashbury	21775	198	Wayland's Smithy (Wayland Smith's Forge)	SU 281 854
Ashbury	28163	203	Alfred's Castle	SU 277 823
Blewbury	28187	189	Group of barrows east of Churn Farm	SU 514 837
Blewbury	28188	190	Churn Knob (barrow), Churn Hill	SU 522 846
Blewbury	28189	191	Two round barrows ¼ mile (400m) north of Lower Chance Farm	SU 520 833
Blewbury	28190	192	Round barrow 350yds (320m) south east of Lower Chance Farm	SU 523 826
Blewbury		205	Blewburton Hill - also South Oxfordshire: Aston Upthorpe	SU 547 862
Blewbury		214	Grim's Ditch; section on Aston Upthorpe Down - also South Oxfordshire: Aston Upthorpe	SU 535 833 SU 543 830
Blewbury	12044		Bowl barrow (500m) west of Church Park Cottage - also Berkshire 12044	SU 507 831
Blewbury	28198		Bowl barrow 700m NE of Churn Farm	SU 506 839
Bourton	28152	253	Village Cross	SU 232 870
Buckland	35543		Causeway enclosure and associated features on south bank of River Thames	SP 321 000
Buckland	35544		Long mortuary enclosure and associated barrow 120m south of Rushey Weir	SU 323 999
Charney		238	Cherbury Camp	SU 374 963

PARISH	NATIONAL NUMBER	COUNTY NO.	MONUMENT TITLE	GRID REF
Bassett				
Childrey	28191	194	Hackpen Hill round barrow	SU 351 852
Childrey	28192	195	Round barrow 900yds (820m) south west of Sincombe Farm	SU 343 852
Chilton		216	Grim's Ditch; section west of Chilton Plantation also Berkshire 102	SU 467 851 SU 471 847
Chilton		260	Grim's Ditch; section 1200yds (1100m) long from Chilton Plantation to Ridge Hill – also Berkshire 109	SU 475 846 SU 482 845
Compton	28167	206	Hardwell Camp	SU 288 867
Beauchamp				
Cumnor		233	Swinford Bridge	SU 443 086
Drayton		248	Settlement site	SU 486 935
East Hendred	28193	197	East Hendred Down round barrow	SU 463 849
East Hendred		215	Grim's Ditch; section south of Tile Barn	SU 455 855 SU 457 855
East Hendred		224	Scutchamore Knob	SU 456 850
Great Coxwell		225	Tithe Barn	SU 269 941
Great Coxwell		257	Badbury Camp	SU 261 946
Great- Faringdon		7	Radcot Bridge – also West Oxfordshire: Grafton and Radcot	SU 286 995
Great Faringdon	30838		Wyke monastic grange and section of 18 th Century turnpike road 780m south of Tudor Farm	SU 289 965
Hatford		246	Earthwork in Ewedown Copse	SU 319 958
Kingston- Bagpuize with Southmoor		247	New Bridge – also West Oxfordshire: Northmoor	SP 403 014
Letcombe- Bassett		199	Mere End Down disc barrow	SU 366 821
Letcombe- Bassett		12069	Two bowl barrows (500m) north east of Stancombe Farm also West Oxfordshire:Northmoor	SU3570 8251
Letcombe- Regis	28183	209	Letcombe Castle (or Segsbury Camp)	SU 385 845
Little Coxwell		207	Little Coxwell Camp	SU 288 928
Lockinge	28194	201	Yew Down round barrow	SU 420 842
Lockinge		217	Grim's Ditch; section 650yds (590m) long NW of Betterton Down	SU 421 844 SU 425 846
Longworth		228	Barn at Longworth House (Hospital)	SU 387 982
Marcham		211	Site SE of Noah's Ark Inn, Frilford	SU 440 962
Marcham		245	Settlement site north of Cow Lane	SU 462 978
North Hinksey	28132	196	Conduit House	SP 495 050
Radley		240	Settlement sites north of Wick Hall	SU 517 983 SU 513 981
Radley		241	Settlement site east of Goose Acre Farm	SU 525 984
Sparsholt	28195	202	Sparsholt Down round barrow	SU 328 838
Sparsholt	12241		Bowl barrow (390m) north of Seven Barrows House: part of Seven Barrows cemetery – also Berkshire 12241	SU3250 8327

PARISH	NATIONAL NUMBER	COUNTY NO.	MONUMENT TITLE	GRID REF
Sparsholt	12352		Disc barrow (700m) north east of Seven Barrows House: part of Seven Barrows cemetery	SU3283 8350
Sparsholt	12025		Long barrow (400m) north west of Sevenbarrows House – also Berkshire, Lambourn	SU 323 833
Sutton- Courtenay		250	Settlement site	SU 497 923
Uffington	21776		Neolithic long barrow and Romano- British inhumation cemetery 70m north of Uffington Castle	SU 300 865
Uffington	21777		Bronze age bowl barrow and pair of Anglo-Saxon burial mounds 70m south of The White Horse	SU 301 865
Uffington	21778	210	Uffington Castle	SU 300 863
Uffington	21785	230	The White Horse	SU 301 866
Uffington/ Woolstone		229	Dragon Hill	SU 301 869
Watchfield		20602	Watchfield Anglo Saxon Cemetery	SU 249 907 SU 249 908
West Challow		251	Roman Villa east of Cornhill Farm	SU 374 879
West- Hendred/ Ardington		213	Grim's Ditch; section 600yds (550m) long on East Ginge Down	SU 443 858 SU 449 855
West Hendred		20601	Goldbury Hill Anglo Saxon Cemetery	SU447 898
Wytham Wytham		173	Bridge west of Godstow Abbey Seacourt deserted village (site of) east of Marleywood Plantation	SP 483 091

NATURE CONSERVATION DESIGNATED SITES

Nature Conservation Sites – Explanatory Note

Within the District sites have been designated according to their nature conservation importance. The hierarchy of designated sites is explained below and the sites are listed in the following schedule:

Hierarchy of Sites

1. Special Areas of Conservation

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) are designated under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the Habitats Directive). Candidate SAC's are selected from Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

2. Ramsar Sites and Special Protection Areas

None in the Vale.

3. National Nature Reserves

National Nature Reserves (NNR's) can be declared under section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as amended by the Nature Conservancy Act 1973) or section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

4. Site of Special Scientific Interest

English Nature has a duty under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to identify Sites of Special Scientific Nature (SSSI's) which are of outstanding interest as a result of their flora, fauna or geological features. There are 21 such sites in the Vale.

5. Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) may be established by Local Authorities in consultation with English Nature under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are habitats of local importance.

6. County Wildlife Sites

Sites of critical importance for nature conservation within Oxfordshire, which are not already statutory designations, are referred to as County Wildlife Sites (CWS's).

7. Ancient Woodlands

Ancient Woodlands are those areas of woodland which have had a continuous cover of native trees since at least 1600AD to the present day, having not been cleared and/or extensively replanted since then. The term applies to the site only, not the trees present. The data collection for the Oxfordshire ancient woodlands was carried out in the 1980's on behalf of the Nature Conservancy Council, now English Nature and the report was entitled 'Oxfordshire Inventory of Ancient Woodlands', D P Hughes, 1988.

8. Ecological Networks

Although specific site protection is extremely important there is now recognition that the health and quality of the wider countryside can affect the long term viability of individual habitats and species. Wildlife corridors and ecological networks can play an important role in maintaining the diversity of the environment. Corridors (such as hedgerows, road verges, watercourses and their banks) and ecological networks (including small woods and ponds) can be both beneficial to nature conservation and landscape features in their own right but may not be covered by a specific designation.

9. Alert Maps

Alert Maps collate information on significant known sites of nature conservation importance in Oxfordshire. These Alert Maps can be inspected at the District Council's Offices, in Abingdon.

10. Local Wildlife Sites, also known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's)

None.

11. Geologically Important Sites

English Nature is promoting the identification of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIG's) through the establishment of local groups. RIG's will be non-statutory, locally based sites which will be designated and managed informally and voluntarily.

Schedule of Designated Sites

1. Special Areas of Conservation	Parish
Cothill Fen, Candidate status	Besselsleigh
Hackpen Hill, Candidate status	Childrey
2. National Nature Reserves	
Cothill, part of SSSI	Besselsleigh
3. Sites of Special Scientific Interest	
Appleton Lower Common	Appleton with Eaton
Ashdown Park	Ashbury
Aston Upthorpe Downs	Blewbury
Barrow Farm Fen	Marcham and St Helen Without
Buckland Warren	Buckland
Cothill Fen and Parsonage Moor (this site includes a National Nature Reserve)	Besselsleigh and St Helen Without
Cumnor (Near Spring Farm)	Cumnor
Dry Sandford Pit	St Helen Without
Fernham Meadows	Uffington and Fernham
Frilford Heath, Ponds and Fens	Frilford, Fyfield and Tubney
Grafton Lock Meadow	Eaton Hastings
Hackpen, Warren and Gramps Hill Downs	Childrey
Hurst Hill (Including Chawley Brick-Pitts SSSI)	Cumnor
Iffley Meadow, Kennington	Kennington
Lamb and Flag Quarry	Hinton Waldrist
Lashford Lane Fen	Besselsleigh and Wootton
Shellingford Crossroads Quarry	Stanford in the Vale
Sugworth	Radley
Tuckmill Meadows	Shrivenham and Watchfield
Whitehorse Hill	Uffington
Wickleham and Coxwell Pits	Little Coxwell and Faringdon
Wytham Ditches and Flushes	Wytham
Wytham Woods	Wytham and Cumnor

4. Local Nature Reserves

Tuckmill Meadows	Shrivenham
Abbey Fishponds (proposed)	Abingdon
Chilswell Valley (proposed)	South Hinksey
Iffley Fritillary Meadows (proposed)	Kennington (part only)
Kennington Pond (proposed)	Kennington

5. County Wildlife Sites

Appleton-with-Eaton	Appleton Upper Common	50.78 ha
Ardington	Hutchins's Copse	4.48 ha
Ardington	Isley Bottom	8.48 ha
Ardington	Knollend Grassland	4.12 ha
Ardington	The Cuttings	13.5 ha
Ardington	The Cuttings	0.71 ha
Ashbury	Kingstone Coombes	8.74 ha
Ashbury	Kingstone Down	8.29 ha
Ashbury	Kingstone Down	1.27 ha
Ashbury	Kingstone Down	14.57 ha
Ashbury	Middle and Hailey Woods	46.67 ha
Ashbury	Odstone Coombes	7.84 ha
Ashbury	Odstone Hill Lane	2.07 ha
Ashbury	Upper Wood	38 ha
Blewbury	Above Lids Bottom	10.38 ha
Blewbury	Blewburton Hill	5.32 ha
Blewbury	Blewbury Hill	2.24 ha
Blewbury	Blewbury Hill	1.14 ha
Blewbury	Chilton Disused Railway Line	7.99 ha
Blewbury	Chilton Disused Railway Line	0.53 ha
Blewbury	Chilton Disused Railway Line	0.32 ha
Buckland	Buckland Marsh (East)	20.45 ha
Buckland	Buckland Warren Woods	128.04 ha
Buscot	Buscot Park Lake	8.72 ha
Charney Bassett	Cherbury Camp	10.02 ha
Childrey	Pigtrough Bottom	2.9 ha
Cumnor	Bushey Leaze Copse	6.04 ha
Cumnor	Chawley Footpath	3.18 ha
Cumnor	Farmoor Reservoir	190.96 ha
Cumnor	Long Copse	3.3 ha
Cumnor	Long Leys Farm Meadows	4.46 ha
Cumnor	Pasture near Chawley	1.71 ha
Cumnor	Smith Hill Copse	4.99 ha
Cumnor	Somerford Mead	5.76 ha

Cumnor	Thames Island west of Farmoor	1.76 ha
Denchworth	North Mead Lane Meadow	6.72 ha
East Hanney	Cowslip Meadow	14.82 ha
East Hendred	Knollend Down	8.66 ha
Eaton Hastings	Taylor's Hill Annexe	1.06 ha
Fyfield and Tubney	Tubney Woods	54.27 ha
Fyfield and Tubney	Tubney Woods	48.92 ha
Great Coxwell	Coxwell Wood	48.73 ha
Great Faringdon	Badbury Forest – Eaton Wood	121.1 ha
Great Faringdon	Faringdon Wet Meadow	3.65 ha
Hatford	Chinaman Copse	2.44 ha
Kennington	Bagley Wood (3 areas)	56.91 ha
Kennington	Bagley Wood (3 areas)	124.2 ha
Kennington	Bagley Wood (3 areas)	36.44 ha
Kennington	Fiddlers Elbow Island	2.39 ha
Kennington	Kennington Memorial Field	4.8 ha
Kennington	Kennington Pool	0.85 ha
Kingston Lisle	Crog Hill and Scary Hill	9.12 ha
Kingston Lisle	Long Spinney Copse	6.85 ha
Letcombe Regis	Castlehill	0.88 ha
Letcombe Regis	Castlehill	0.95 ha
Letcombe Regis	Letcombe Cress Beds	7.37 ha
Letcombe Regis	Letcombe Reed Swamp	1.24 ha
Littleworth	Edge of Grove Wood	0.87 ha
Lockinge	Lattin Down, Lockinge	4.37 ha
Longworth	Newhouse Cover	7.51 ha
Marcham	Denman Fishponds	1.09 ha
Marcham	Gozzards Ford Fen	1.79 ha
Marcham	Marcham Salt Spring	0.56 ha
North Hinksey	Harcourt Hill Scrub	17.29 ha
Pusey	Turf Pits Covert	10.81 ha
Radley	Radley Large Wood	21.98 ha
Radley	Radley Little Wood	3.02 ha
Radley	Thames Cut	1.25 ha
Shellingford	Chaslins Copse	3.23 ha
Shellingford	Lyde Copse	2.07 ha
Shrivenham	Pennyhooks Brook Marsh	2.44 ha
South Hinksey	Chilswell Valley	6.83 ha
South Hinksey	Limekiln Copse and Valley	8.96 ha
Sparsholt	Beech Wood, Westcot Down	2.67 ha
Sparsholt	Wixen Bush	0.84 ha
Steventon	Steventon Copse	3.17 ha
Uffington	Kingstone Warren Down (north)	10 ha
Wantage	Ashen Pen	4.53 ha

Wantage	Black Bushes Wood	4.76 ha
Wantage	Upper Black Bushes	4.83 ha
West Hendred	Ginge Brook	5.5 ha
Woolstone	Kingston Warren Down (South)	1.2 ha
Wootton	Foxcombe	11.14 ha
Wootton	Memorial Garden	0.74 ha

6. Ancient Woodlands

Oxfordshire Inventory (Provisional) held on maps available in Planning Strategy Section (at the District Council Offices in Abingdon).

7. Geologically Important Sites

Coxwell Pit	Faringdon
Faringdon (Rogers Concrete)	Faringdon
The Manger, Whitehorse Hill	Woolstone
Hatford Sand Pit	Hatford
Gimbro Copse Quarry	Pusey
Dry Sandford Quarries	St Helens Without
Tubney Woods	Fyfield and Tubney
Shellingford Quarry	Shellingford
Wicklesham Quarry	Faringdon

THE CONTENT OF THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF AND DESIGN STATEMENTS FOR THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT WEST OF DIDCOT

The Planning and Development Brief will comprise a master plan and written statement with such drawings and illustrative material as necessary to indicate the following information:

- i) the identity of the master developer with details of the land in the developer's control and with a programme for the assembly of any further land needed to implement the scheme as a whole. The Council will expect the master developer to acquire land by private treaty but will be prepared to exercise its powers of compulsory land acquisition to overcome land ownership constraints where the Council considers it expedient to do so and where all costs involved in such action would be reimbursed to the Council;
- ii) a site appraisal indicating how the constraints of existing topography, watercourses, boundaries, buildings and transport infrastructure, both on and off the site, have influenced the urban form shown on the plans described in iii) and iv) below;
- iii) a development strategy showing how the scheme would comprise one or more "walkable neighbourhoods" with homes in each neighbourhood within walking distance of local services located in centres on public transport routes. The development strategy will show the disposition of all built development in the form of perimeter street blocks with accompanying information on each block relating to its area, its net housing density, the estimated number and size of dwellings, the proportion of dwellings in the affordable category, and location and size of buildings in non-residential use;
- iv) a public realm strategy showing the disposition of public buildings and of public urban space and public greenspace networks within and around the built development. With regard to public realm buildings to be provided, the strategy will give details and show the location of all schools, community centres, primary medical health care facilities, local convenience shops, emergency services facilities and indoor sports facilities. With regard to the public urban space and public greenspace networks, the strategy will contain information on each space relating to its dimensions and design and to the

public realm functions and facilities to be provided within it. These functions and facilities will include:

- outdoor community sports;
 - equipped children's play areas;
 - allotment gardens;
 - informal recreation (to be provided by civic spaces with paved surfaces, public gardens, open land with meadows and a varied topography including woodland, wetland, ponds and watercourses);
 - the assimilation and screening of buildings in the landscape (to be achieved by tree and woodland planting);
 - energy conservation including the shelter of buildings, mitigation of atmospheric pollution and safeguarding residential amenity from sources of noise (to be achieved by the provision of open land with meadows and woodland);
 - the enhancement of biodiversity (to be achieved by the provision of open land with meadows, public gardens, woodland, wetland, ponds and watercourses); and
 - the creation of local distinctiveness (to include works of public art).
- v) a transport strategy consistent with the objectives of the Didcot Area ITS, showing the layout and design of all proposed footways, footpaths, cycletracks and roads in the site based on a permeable, generally rectilinear, grid pattern of movement corridors. The strategy will indicate proposals for the extension of this transport infrastructure where it is necessary to provide good communications between the site, key destinations in Didcot, local employment centres, the A34 trunk road and the countryside. The transport strategy will also contain proposals for the enhancement of existing and provision of new transport routes and services affording residents of the site good public transport access from Didcot and within Didcot. The master developer will undertake a transport assessment and this assessment will inform the contents of the transport strategy;
- vi) the definition of a number of character areas with each area comprising groups of adjacent perimeter street blocks. Information will be given on how building design, building materials, plot dimensions and boundary details and the design of the public realm would be varied between the character areas to achieve distinctiveness and thereby a sense of place and a legible townscape within each neighbourhood. The development brief will contain details of the layout of all buildings and public spaces in the local service centres, including streetscape illustrations of all building frontages in those centres;

- vii) an energy conservation and resource management strategy indicating proposals for meeting targets for the conservation of energy and use of water resources and proposals for the recycling and disposal of waste. In relation to energy conservation the strategy will have regard to the targets recommended in the technical report entitled Energy Conservation Measures for Didcot Development - Targets produced for South Oxfordshire District Council by AEA Technology Environment in July 2001;
- viii) a surface water drainage strategy indicating proposals for a sustainable urban drainage system, including works and measures to prevent flooding of adjacent land and pollution of the water environment;
- ix) a strategy for the protection of the historic environment indicating proposals for the protection of buildings and places of architectural or historic interest and proposals for the preservation of archaeological remains that may exist on or under the land;
- x) an ecological strategy indicating proposals for the protection of sites of ecological importance on the land and proposals for the development of new sites of ecological importance to enhance biodiversity and to compensate for habitats lost through development. Particular attention will be given to the provision of continuous corridors for the movement of wildlife around and through the site;
- xi) the management of site development. This will include a plan and accompanying timetable showing the master developer's intentions for the phased implementation of the site. In exceptional circumstances the Council may consider the desirability of compulsory purchase of land identified for housing, to bring it forward for development. However, this will only be considered where land remains undeveloped for a prolonged period because of ownership constraints, and where the Council's efforts to persuade owners to bring the land forward for development have failed;
- xii) the management of the delivery of infrastructure and services. The Council must be assured that all elements of the public buildings, of the public urban space and public greenspace networks and of all the facilities and services described in iii) to x) above will be made available for use by residents of the development when needed by them. The development brief will indicate when in the development timetable each element of these facilities and services will be delivered. It will also identify the body (including the master developer if appropriate) that has agreed to be responsible for the provision, including the construction and completion, of each element. In addition, the development brief will identify the body that has agreed to be responsible for the long-term management, including the maintenance, of each of these public realm facilities.

The Council will require an application for the approval of reserved matters following an outline planning permission, or an application for full planning permission, to be accompanied by a design statement. A design statement will include a written statement with such plans, drawings and other illustrative material as is necessary to convey the following information:

- i) a site analysis with an explanation of how the layout of buildings and public spaces takes account of the opportunities, constraints and characteristics of the site;
- ii) a design framework with an explanation of how the layout of buildings, public spaces and transport corridors will conform with the master plan framework contained in the development brief;
- iii) a design concept plan for the site with an explanation of how building frontages will be located so as to enclose strongly-defined streets and public spaces and with details of the location of important vistas, gateways, focal points and key buildings; and
- iv) a character area framework for the site with an explanation of how the design of buildings, plot dimensions, boundary treatments, public spaces, and the choice of materials used will conform with the character area for each part of the site.

The Council may refuse planning permission in cases where the plans and drawings submitted with a planning application indicate to the Council that the development would not achieve the quality to which the design statement aspires.