

Policy DE2: Sustainable Construction

- a. Development shall demonstrate passive solar benefits, (heating, ventilation, cooling and lighting) in accordance with Policy DE1, through the layout and design of the site, and orientation and design of buildings.
- b. All major development (see glossary) shall meet the following sustainable construction standards

| Development type | By April 2013 ⁷ | 2013 – 2016 ⁷ | 2016 ⁷ |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| Residential | Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 (in full) | Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 (In full) | Code for Sustainable Homes level 5 (In full) |
| Non-residential | BREEAM Excellent | | |

- c. Where on-site provision of renewable technologies is not appropriate, new development can meet CO₂ reduction requirements through off-site provision by making ‘allowable solutions contributions’. Funds gathered will be used for wider energy efficiency and energy generation initiatives.
- d. The use of combined heat and power (CHP), and/or combined, cooling, heat and power (CCHP) with district heating is encouraged. Within the identified “District Heating Priority Areas” and strategic allocations, as shown on the Proposals Map, major development shall:
 - demonstrate a thermal master-planning approach considering issues such as mix of uses, anchor loads, density and heat load profiles to maximise opportunities for the use of district heating; and
 - incorporate infrastructure for district heating and connect to existing systems where and when they are available or fully justify any alternative approach.

⁷ Timescales in line with current building regulations which may be subject to change

- 4.33 Policy DE2 aims to ensure new developments are designed and constructed to minimise their environmental impact, and contribute to meeting statutory targets for reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Sustainable energy is a key focus for the Borough Council and the approach to this follows the energy hierarchy in addressing energy conservation and energy efficiency before considering low and zero carbon energy generation. Whilst this policy focuses on new development, opportunities to improve the energy efficiency and resilience of existing buildings are encouraged.

Passive Solar Benefits

- 4.34 A design which takes advantage of natural heat and light from the sun (known as “passive solar gain”), and uses air movement for ventilation, can reduce the need for artificial light, heat, cooling and ventilation. Designing in energy efficiency should begin at the start of the planning process to ensure maximum savings are made and potential risks around overheating are fully addressed.
- 4.35 Different approaches are required depending on the size and use of buildings, but all must demonstrate that they have given consideration to how the principles of passive solar gain could be applied.

Sustainable Construction

- 4.36 The sustainable construction requirements of this policy mirror the national timescale for zero carbon development. The national zero carbon requirement relates to CO₂ reduction and will be implemented through the Building Regulations. Each zero carbon milestone to 2016 also relates to a level of the ‘Code for Sustainable Homes’, which includes wider issues such as water use and sustainable materials. The aim of this element of the policy is to harmonise the zero carbon timescale with the wider requirements of the ‘Code for Sustainable Homes’.
- 4.37 Additionally, for non-residential development, a requirement of BREEAM “excellent” is required of all major development to ensure sustainable construction issues are addressed in all forms of development.

Allowable Solutions

- 4.38 The requirement for new buildings to be ‘zero carbon’ will occur within the timescale of this plan and is likely to require the adoption of ‘Allowable Solutions’. Allowable Solutions is a concept that has been developed to account for the fact that it may not always be possible to achieve zero carbon on-site using carbon compliance measures (i.e. energy efficiency and renewable energy). Whilst the exact definition for measures that would meet the requirements for Allowable Solutions has not yet been established, it is likely to include additional measures that may be either ‘on-site’ (but not duplicating carbon compliance measures), ‘near site’ (within the Local Planning Authority area) or ‘off-site’ (outside the Local Planning Authority area).

- 4.39 Allowable Solutions could make a significant contribution to delivering sustainable energy schemes within Swindon. The Council intends to establish a Community Energy Fund to use Allowable Solutions payments to deliver additional benefits in Swindon. These measures may include but are not limited to energy efficiency measures in existing buildings, decentralised energy networks, or renewable energy schemes. The fund will deliver carbon reduction and maximize the benefits to local communities.

District Heating

- 4.40 District heating schemes deliver heating and hot water to multiple buildings from a local plant via a network of insulated pipes buried underground. These can often be installed at the same time as the other services when a site is being developed and can also be retrofitted to existing buildings. District heating can be combined with electricity production combined heat and power (CHP) or in combined cooling, heat and power (CCHP). This is an efficient form of decentralised energy supply providing heat and electricity at the same time.
- 4.41 District heating feasibility work undertaken in Swindon indicates the areas with the most immediate potential for district heating are the existing areas of high heat demand in the urban area of Swindon and the larger new development areas where district heating infrastructure can be laid in step with new development. The Town Centre and industrial areas around Stratton and South Marston, along with the new urban extensions, are therefore the focus of this policy.
- 4.42 Further detail on the requirements of this policy including testing economic and technical feasibility, how the CO₂ offset fund works, and what should be submitted with a planning application will be included within a Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.43 The delivery of sustainable construction will be achieved through the application of this policy and through:
- the application of Building Regulations (Part L) standards as a minimum requirement;
 - working in partnership with key stakeholders such as the Swindon Energy Partnership, local communities, businesses, Parish Councils and amenity groups;
 - application of The Swindon Sustainable Energy Framework;
 - the development management process; and,
 - the requirement of a post-construction review and certification of sustainable construction standards, required by condition.
- 4.44 Major developments will require a 'Code for Sustainable Homes' and/or BREEAM pre-assessment estimator/design stage assessment undertaken by accredited assessors in line with the targets.

Theme 2: Delivering Sustainable Economic Growth

The Economy theme's policies flow directly from and help to implement the following Strategic Objectives set out in Part 2 of this Plan:

SO1: High Quality Sustainable Development

SO3: Economy

SO5: Education

4.45 Theme 2 sets out policies to:

- enhance existing and provide new high quality employment space;
- direct new employment provision to the appropriate locations;
- support key employment sectors and the aspiration for a University;
- protect and enhance the role of the town and local centres; and,
- provide a framework for farm diversification.

4.46 It provides a planning framework to help retain current levels of economic activity and productivity and help provide the built infrastructure to enable recovery and sustainable economic growth. In doing so it will help ensure Swindon remains "open for business" and is supportive of the needs of businesses across the Borough.

Key Issues

4.47 Sustainable economic development is a key element of the National Planning Policy Framework. Historically, Swindon's economy has been very successful based on its location, the diversity and resilience of the sectors present in the Borough, land availability, comparatively low commercial property prices and high business start-up rates. According to the latest data, in 2009 the Gross Value Added (GVA) per head at current basic prices for Swindon was £27,616; this is 138.1% of the UK average. What is notable about the Swindon economy in terms of sector output is the relatively small role of the public sector (only 12.3% of GVA) and relatively large production (including, manufacturing) sector at 25% of GVA. (Source: ONS Gross Value Added 1997-2009, ONS Dec 11).

4.48 The recent economic recession, however, has had a significant impact on Swindon's local economy with a rise in unemployment observed. The future focus for Swindon Borough should be on maintaining the existing economic base, adapting to changes and realising opportunities in key employment sectors and sustaining economic recovery. The restructure of the economic base of Swindon Borough as guided by the Swindon Borough Economic Strategy is critical issue for the Local Plan to address.

- 4.49 The retail sector has also felt the impact of the recession as consumer spending has fallen and the types of goods being bought has changed. The Town Centre continues to provide an important economic and social role for the Borough and the wider area, augmented by district and local centres. Supported by the NPPF, local policies should support the role of the Town Centre whilst allowing it to adapt to changing patterns of consumer spending. A key part of this will be to achieve a “step-up” in the quality of the central urban area of the town, encapsulated by the Swindon Central Area Action Plan and the policies in Theme 1 of this Plan.
- 4.50 Central to developing a more sustainable economy will be ensuring that school-leavers have access to training and skills development, through both continuing through to further education and finding a place with local employers. Providing such opportunities locally will help to ensure that Swindon has a competitive workforce which does not seek to leave the area for training and jobs elsewhere. For a town of Swindon's size, provision of these types of opportunities would be strengthened further through development of a University or enhanced tertiary provision.
- 4.51 For businesses to have the opportunity to grow and thrive, they need the right type of building space to do so, whether that is for office, industrial or other employment uses. It will be important to ensure that a range of the right type and size of employment buildings is available to allow such growth and change to occur, from start-up units to flexible space to larger scale warehousing. It is important that employment floorspace which responds to economic needs in Swindon should be provided at the right time, so that it does not lay dormant for extended periods, although the commercial building market will be a key barometer of need and is likely to react accordingly.
- 4.52 Broadly speaking, economic development will need to be supported by an appropriate level of housing growth to help retain Swindon residents who work in the town and also provide capacity for economic migrants who find work in Swindon and would also like to live in the town. The quantum of housing and employment growth allocated in this Plan in Policy SD2 responds, in part, to that relationship.
- 4.53 Swindon currently lacks a university presence, which is unusual for a town of Swindon's size. The business community has highlighted the importance of attracting a university to deliver the skills needed to support Swindon's future economic growth, raising Swindon's profile and establishing the town as a destination. The delivery of a university and/or enhanced tertiary education provision would be beneficial for economic growth; however it is not reliant upon it. Without a university Swindon's growth prospects remain significant but a university would add significant value as a hub for attracting and retaining visitors, increasing skill levels, aligning them with business needs and reinforcing strong local economic sectors.
- 4.54 The Swindon Borough Economic Strategy provides further detail on these and other issues and action needed to develop the local economy.

- 4.55 The private sector has a critical role in the economic recovery of the town, augmented by the work of the Borough Council and Forward Swindon in facilitating investment and through the implementation of the Economic Strategy, with which the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 is aligned. Planning policies should also enable the delivery of infrastructure to support businesses and the economic needs of the Borough.

Key Evidence Base for Theme 2

- 4.56 Key evidence base documents for delivering sustainable growth include:
- Swindon Joint Study 2026 (2005)
 - Swindon Employment Land Review (2007)
 - Swindon Workspace Strategy (2009)
 - An Economic Strategy for Swindon 2012-26: Consultation Document (SBC, 2012)
 - Economic Testing of Swindon Core Strategy (2012)
 - Retail and Leisure Study Update (2007)
 - Swindon Retail Capacity Update (2009)



Policy EC1: Economic Growth through Existing Business and Inward Investment

- a. **Inward investment and the growth and retention of existing business will be enabled by:**
 - promoting Swindon Central Area as the first preference for office development;
 - protecting the best employment sites for employment use (B-class) and enabling development opportunities at others where it will enhance investment opportunities;
 - identifying new employment sites;
 - supporting large inward investment proposals where there is significant net economic or social benefit; and
 - the provision of a university and/or enhanced higher education facilities in Swindon Central Area to meet business skills needs, enhance the town's profile and provide a local highly qualified and skilled workforce.
- b. **Opportunities to develop the following key employment sectors will be particularly supported:**
 - specialist manufacturing in East Swindon;
 - financial and business services at the Central Area;
 - distribution and logistics in the A419 corridor;
 - environmental, tourism and leisure, information communication technologies (ICT), education, health, retailing and creative industries at appropriate locations; and
 - low carbon development and manufacturing at appropriate locations and in conjunction with Policy IN4.

4.57 The objectives of the Swindon Economic Strategy are to develop sectors of the economy that are already strong and to grow sectors with long-term potential through inward investment and business retention. Other sectors will not be restricted, but Policy EC1 sets out the planning framework to support these key sectors.

4.58 There is potential for specialist manufacturing growth, particularly in the motor vehicles industry, as a cluster in east Swindon, associated with existing employers and transport links. Distribution and logistics are centred on the A419 corridor, which will continue to be a key location for growth in this sector. The potential for growth in the financial and business sector remains strong in the medium and long term, especially in supporting regeneration in Swindon's Central Area. Given the varied nature of activity and workspace requirements in the ICT, creative and environmental industries, a flexible approach to this sector is supported, particularly in their potential to contribute to town centre regeneration and rural employment.

- 4.59 Retail, leisure, tourism, health and education make an important contribution to the economy. By 2026 it is anticipated that these sectors will account for 39% of total job growth (high growth scenario). Growth in these sectors should complement growth in other sectors to ensure a balanced and mixed economy.
- 4.60 Should any large inward investment proposals come forward these will be supported, especially where it would support town centre regeneration and provide significant employment opportunities. The town centre will be the first priority for the location of such investment, but where the town centre would not be suitable, development must not harm town centre regeneration or conflict with other policies of this plan and must be accessible with a good range of travel choices.
- 4.61 The retention of key employment areas for employment use is seen as important in providing for a range of sites across the Borough. Policy EC2 provides more detail on the protection afforded to such areas. Intensification of existing employment sites will be supported to allow business to expand and encourage development in accessible locations subject to other policies in this Plan.
- 4.62 A vibrant and prosperous town centre is essential to support economic growth and prosperity. Office development will be focused at Swindon's Central Area to support regeneration, particularly in the early phases of the plan, and provision is made for additional office floorspace in Policy SD2 and within the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan.
- 4.63 To provide for future investment and business expansion, additional employment allocations are made at Commonhead, Wichelstowe, Tadpole Farm and the New Eastern Villages as detailed in Policy SD2.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.64 Economic growth through existing business and inward investment will be enabled through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - the actions of Forward Swindon; and,
 - implementation of the Swindon Borough Economic Strategy.

Policy EC2: Employment Land and Premises (B-Use Classes)

- a. The Key Employment Areas defined on the Proposals Map and listed below, shall be retained primarily for employment generating uses within the Use Classes B1, B2 and B8. Planning permission will be given for Class B1, B2 and B8 uses, and for sui generis uses, in these areas, subject to the Class B1(a) office development not adversely impacting upon the regeneration of Swindon Central Area.
- b. The change of use or redevelopment of land and buildings or development for other uses, within the key employment areas and Central Swindon, shall only be supported where it can be demonstrated that:
 - the development proposal will not adversely impact upon the regeneration of the Swindon Central Area; and
 - the premises has been vacant for 6 months or more and genuine marketing for commercial (B class) uses for that period of time, at reasonable market values, has proved unsuccessful, and
 - a sequential site search has been undertaken that takes account of the current quality of the employment area such that loss of the highest quality employment land is minimised, assessing the following factors:
 - o strategic and local road access;
 - o access to labour, public transport and services;
 - o compatibility of adjacent land uses;
 - o site characteristics, conditions and development constraints; and
 - o attractiveness to the market including vacancy and market activity.
 - proposals for retail development have undertaken a sequential site search in accordance with Policy EC3,

In addition the change of use proposal should demonstrate at least one of the following criteria:

- the development proposal will generate the same number, or more permanent jobs than could be expected from the existing, or any potential employment use; and/or
- the site is not appropriate for the continuation of its present or any employment use due to a significant detriment to the environment or amenity of the area; and/or

- the site is no longer capable of meeting modern business needs; and/or
 - it can be shown that the loss of a small proportion of employment floorspace would facilitate the redevelopment and continuation of employment uses on a greater part of the site, providing the same number or more permanent jobs than on the original whole site; and/or
 - the change of use is to facilitate the relocation of an existing business from buildings that are no longer fit for purpose to more suitable premises elsewhere within the Borough and no other B-class occupiers are likely to take up the site.
- c. At the strategic allocations of Wichelstowe, Commonhead, Tadpole Farm, Kingsdown and the New Eastern Villages, employment land allocations will be implemented in accordance with Policies NC1, NC2, NC3, NC4 and NC5. To ensure the delivery of sustainable mixed-use developments, these sites will be protected for specified B class employment uses for a period of 18 months from completion of buildings. After this point, proposals for the change of use of buildings or redevelopment will be subject to Policy EC2b.
- d. Proposals for office development (Use Class B1(a)) over 1,000m² gross floorspace which are located outside of Swindon's Central Area will be supported where they:
- do not harm or undermine the regeneration of Swindon's Central Area; and,
 - demonstrate a sequential approach to site selection in order of preference and priority as follows:
 1. Swindon's Central Area
 2. Swindon's urban area well served by public transport or the employment allocation at the New Eastern Villages; within the floor space limits specified in NC4; and,
 3. Peripheral sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of transport modes.
- e. Where employment development does not comply with parking standards, development may be permitted where the impact of off-street parking, safety and amenity is acceptable, including parking provision for disabled people. Parking dedicated for the use of disabled persons should always be provided in accordance with the required standard.

- 4.65 Swindon Borough has a large amount of employment land for a centre of its size, providing a good range of premises suitable for industry and business in a variety of locations. The majority of Class B-uses occupy sites on the key employment areas in the Borough, which provide the infrastructure and facilities to enable their continued role and function.
- 4.66 The Key Employment Areas have been identified taking account of the following factors:
- Quality and range of units;
 - Current and historic vacancy;
 - Accessibility;
 - Nature and range of uses; and
 - Environmental quality

The Key Employment Areas in the Borough are

| Area Name | Area Name |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Blackworth, Highworth | Kembrey Park |
| Blagrove/Euroway | Keypoint, South Marston |
| Bridge End Road | Marshgate |
| Central Trading Estate | Parsonage Farm (BMW) |
| Cheney Manor | Pipers Way (Nationwide) |
| Churchward | Pipers Way (Intel) |
| Delta | River Ray |
| Dorcan | Rivermead |
| Drakes Way | Rushey Platt |
| Elgin | Techno |
| Europa/Britannia | The Triangle (G-Park) |
| Greenbridge | South Marston Airfield (Honda) |
| Groundwell | South Marston Park |
| Groundwell West | Westlea |
| Gypsy Lane South | Westmead |
| Hillmead | Windmill Hill |
| Isis/Stratton Road | |

- 4.67 'Good quality' employment sites benefit from good strategic and local access and may display evidence of recent investment. Vacancies are generally relatively low and the market attractiveness is generally high.
- 4.68 Existing employment land is vital to ensure the supply of employment opportunities and sustainable economic growth. Sites within Key Employment Areas are particularly valuable and the loss of land in these areas may generate additional pressure for the release of new land in less acceptable locations. The Key Employment Areas are therefore protected primarily for Class B-uses and as such, the loss of these sites is not acceptable unless it can be demonstrated that the site has been unsuccessfully marketed at a reasonable market value for a continuous period of 6 months or more.

- 4.69 Proposals for other employment uses falling outside the B-Use Class can provide significant employment opportunities and may be acceptable in employment areas. Other uses may also positively contribute to the viability and vitality of employment areas or provide appropriate support services to assist in the day-to-day functioning of the employment areas. Proposals for non-B Class uses will be assessed on their own merits informed by the Workspace Strategy (2009). In addition to the main criteria, the number and quality of jobs provided by a proposed non-B Class use will be an important consideration. Applicants are encouraged to submit a pre-application enquiry for proposals relating to non-B Class uses to obtain a view on the acceptability of the alternative use.
- 4.70 The Borough Council will monitor the occupancy of the key employment sites to ensure that the methodology applied benefits their vitality and viability.
- 4.71 A number of existing older employment areas within Swindon are in need of some form of redevelopment to ensure that they are fit for purpose for modern business needs. Whilst the Borough Council recognises these needs, this Plan is not considered the appropriate planning document within which to include a detailed, structured and managed approach to their redevelopment. Such potential for longer-term managed release and redevelopment of sites will be explored through further work on possible options for change in the future. Small scale redevelopment proposals may be appropriate, initiated by the private sector, where they satisfy the criteria of the policy and do not undermine the role and function of the employment area as a whole.
- 4.72 The Borough Council is seeking to encourage an increase in floorspace for Class B1 (a) office use in the Central Area as part of the regeneration of that area. Class B1 (a) uses attract significant numbers of people and as such are best located where there is maximum accessibility for public transport. However, it is recognised that some vacant office space can be difficult to fill, not only due to economic circumstances but also due to it not meeting market requirements for modern office accommodation, particularly if it is old stock. Policy EC2 provides sufficient flexibility for such office buildings to change to alternative uses, if it meets the policy criteria.
- 4.73 The Borough Council acknowledges that there will be continued demand for office accommodation outside Swindon's Central Area. In accordance with the NPPF, the Council has set a local threshold of 1,000m² floorspace for out-of-centre office development. Proposals exceeding this threshold will be subject to an impact assessment in line with paragraph 26 of the NPPF. Such applications will also be required to demonstrate that the sequential approach has been applied to justify the site selection. A sequential test will be assessed in accordance with paragraph 24 of the NPPF. The sequential approach will become more flexible as the Central Area regeneration becomes substantially complete.
- 4.74 Proposals for development will be considered against policies DE1 and DE2. In all cases, due consideration will be given to design, sustainability and the highways impact of the proposal.

- 4.75 In order not to constrain economic development, development for employment proposals will be permitted where parking standards cannot be achieved providing the impact in terms of parking, safety and amenity is acceptable.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.76 Employment land and premises shall be enhanced and new premises delivered through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - up-to-date monitoring of the quality and quantity of employment premises;
 - commercial and employment premises developers;
 - the development management process;
 - discussion on pre-application proposals prior to applications being submitted;
 - neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council; and / or,
 - further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy EC3: The Role of the Centre and Town Centre Uses

- a. Proposals for main town centre uses⁸ (not including offices covered by Policy EC2c above) outside Swindon Central Area shall be permitted:
- where they do not harm or undermine the regeneration of Swindon's Central Area; and,
 - where they do not undermine the vitality and viability of existing District, Primary Rural Centres and Local Centres; and
 - a sequential approach to site selection has been undertaken and demonstrated, where a proposal's delivery is not dependant on location at a specific site because its use is tied to that location, in order of preference and priority as follows:
 1. Swindon Town Centre;
 2. Edge of Town Centre;
 3. District and Primary Rural Centres: Cavendish Square, Gorse Hill, Highworth Town Centre, Orbital Retail Park, Old Town, West Swindon, Wroughton Village Centre and the Eastern Villages District Centre
 4. Local Centres: as shown on the Proposals Map including those at Wichelstowe, Commonhead, Tadpole Farm and Kingsdown developments
- b. Outside the defined hierarchy of centres:
- proposals for new single shop units (A1-Use Class) will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they provide only for the daily shopping needs of the local population and do not harm the vitality and viability of existing centres; and
 - existing single shop units (A1-Use Class) will be protected from changes of use to non-A1 uses, where the proposed use is not compatible with the local area in which it is set.
- c. To protect the shopping function of the Town Centre and other centres, as defined on the Proposals Map:
- in Swindon Town Centre, Class A1 uses should occupy at least 75% of the primary frontage and 60% of the secondary frontage;
 - in District and Primary Rural Centres Class A1 uses should occupy at least 70% of the street frontage; and,

⁸ Defined in the Glossary of the NPPF as Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)

- in Local Centres Class A1 uses should be predominant. Proposals for non-class A1 uses will be permitted only where they enhance the local retail centre function and do not by themselves or cumulatively harm the vitality and viability of the centre's retail function.
- d. All retail development proposals with a floorspace exceeding 600m² should be accompanied by a Retail Impact Assessment to ensure they would not have an adverse impact on Swindon Town Centre or hierarchy of centres.
- e. Within Swindon Town Centre, or any District or Primary Rural centre, where the percentage of the street frontage is already at or below the threshold of the desired Class A1 Uses (retail) identified above, proposals for more than 323m² for non-A1 uses will normally be permitted where they demonstrate that:
 - at least 12 consecutive months active marketing of the premises for Class A1 Use (retail) has been undertaken; and,
 - the proposed use is appropriate for its location.
- f. Street trading will be permitted where it satisfies other development management policies, and is in accordance with the adopted Street Trading & Ancillary Retail Kiosks Development Management Guidance Note.

- 4.77 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines "town centres", a definition which includes reference to district and local centres. In the context of this Plan, district centres comprise a group of shops, usually including a supermarket and a range of non-retail uses such as banks and building societies, public facilities and restaurants. Local centres include a range of shops of a more local nature to serve the day-to-day needs of the community.
- 4.78 Retail development is to be focused at existing centres, with the priority being Swindon Town Centre. Higher density, mixed-use schemes are advocated in these locations. An approach which encourages main town centre uses to be subject to a sequential test when proposed outside of the centre, the effective use of land and mixed-use development is supported by the NPPF.
- 4.79 There will be continued pressure for more out-of-centre development of retail warehouses, and pressure to relax bulky goods conditions on existing retail warehouses in Swindon. It will be important to resist such pressure in order to protect the vitality of the town centre. There will also be continued pressure from out-of-centre food retailers to develop more space for comparison goods sales, particularly in existing out-of-centre superstores. There is a strong presumption against new out-of-centre developments. However, small extensions to existing schemes may be permitted where they meet the requirements of the Policy, and some account is to be taken of applicants' business models.

- 4.80 A new district centre to serve the New Eastern Villages will need to be anchored by a food superstore in a highly accessible location.
- 4.81 Current national policy concerning the continued vitality of the town centre encourages local planning policies to produce a competitive town centre which can provide consumers with a diverse range of retail offer and individuality. It aims to support the creation of a well-defined hierarchy of centres, whilst ensuring the network is resilient to any anticipated economic changes. The NPPF advises the Local Planning Authority to request an impact assessment for all retail developments which exceed the floorspace threshold. If the local planning authority has not implemented any local thresholds, then applications will be assessed against the national threshold of 2,500m².
- 4.82 The Borough Council consider that the national threshold of 2,500m² may result in developments that have the potential to adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre and/or other defined centres. Using evidence on average gross unit size in existing centres a locally set threshold of 600m² has been set. Any development proposals greater than this threshold will be assessed in terms of the proposal's impact on any existing and future investment in the surrounding area and its impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre. The threshold will be applied to all new buildings providing retail floorspace and to any alterations to a development where an extension would result in the total floorspace of that store exceeding the threshold. It will be relevant to all locations within Swindon Borough, whether they are situated in the town centre, on the edge of centre or out of town.
- 4.83 Policy EC3 encourages the clawing back of Class A1 Uses in local, rural and district centre frontages where there are currently lower levels than aspired to by this Plan. This is in the interest of protecting the retail function of such centres and ensuring that measures are put in place to encourage and re-establish the viability and vitality of those frontages that have in the past seen an unacceptable loss of retail.
- 4.84 The Old Town and Fleet Street areas are coming under pressure for change of use for A3/A4/A5 uses⁹. This undermines the function of these areas during the day. The same approach would protect the local centres from a proliferation of A5 uses.
- 4.85 Although street trading (including hot food vending, ice cream vans, markets and stalls) can be a positive addition to a retail centre, this informal way of trading should be carefully controlled to ensure a positive rather than negative impact on the centre in which it is located. It is noted that the term "street" includes any road, footway, or other area to which the public have access.
- 4.86 Annual monitoring of implementation is to be undertaken which will encompass a regular review of town centre vitality and viability.

⁹ The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) places uses of land and buildings into various categories called Use Classes. A Use Class is a grouping together of similar land uses. For example, restaurants and cafes are A3, drinking establishments such as pubs and wine bars are A4, and hot food takeaways are A5.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.87 Retail and leisure development shall be appropriately located and of an appropriate scale through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;
 - implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - up-to-date monitoring of retail and leisure premises and facilities;
 - commercial premises developers;
 - the development management process;
 - discussion on pre-application proposals prior to applications being submitted;
 - Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council; and / or,
 - further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy EC4: Conversion of Buildings to Employment Use in the Countryside

In the countryside, proposals for the conversion of a building or structure for employment use not related to policy EC5 shall be permitted provided:

- **it is structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction;**
- **the conversion maintains the original character of the building and does not have a detrimental effect on the fabric and character of any adjacent buildings, including listed buildings, or the landscape character type generally;**
- **utilities can be provided and the building has adequate access to a metalled road without creating traffic hazards and without involving road improvements incompatible with the character of the area; and**
- **the conversion does not lead to a dispersal of employment activity on such a scale as to adversely affect the vitality of neighbouring rural settlements.**

- 4.88 Re-using or adapting existing rural buildings has a valuable role in meeting the need for commerce and industry in rural areas. It helps to reduce the demand for new buildings, can provide local jobs and improve derelict or vacant buildings.
- 4.89 The Borough Council wishes to support such proposals provided they are appropriate in scale and impact to their countryside location.
- 4.90 Where buildings in the countryside have either become so derelict that reuse is only possible following complete or substantial reconstruction, or their construction and materials are such as to require considerable alteration to make the building suitable for the new purpose, the proposal will be assessed as if it were for an entirely new development in the countryside. In such cases proposals will be considered under Policy SD2.
- 4.91 The Borough Council seeks to ensure that countryside buildings retain their original character wherever possible. It is, however, acknowledged that alterations may be required to upgrade the appearance or quality of a building to adapt it for employment use. Such changes will be acceptable provided they maintain the original character of the building and its surroundings.
- 4.92 Consideration will also be given to the transport implications arising from proposals to convert buildings in the countryside to employment use, as the road network in rural areas frequently has lower capacity levels to accommodate increased volumes of traffic.
- 4.93 Any proposals should be appropriate in scale for their location. The conversion of buildings to employment use will only be acceptable where they do not significantly affect the vitality of nearby rural settlements.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.94 Appropriate conversion of buildings to employment use in the countryside will be delivered through the application of this policy through the development management process. Applicants will be encouraged to have early pre-application discussions with the Borough Council to ensure that criteria are satisfied.

Policy EC5: Farm Diversification

In rural areas, proposals for economic activities that bring about farm diversification (as defined by the EU) shall normally be permitted, providing that:

- **the proposals are operated as part of a viable farm holding and contribute to the viability of the holding;**
- **it is not detrimental to the character and appearance of existing buildings and their setting within the Landscape Character Area;**
- **existing buildings are used in preference to new buildings or extensions;**
- **utilities and other infrastructure is available or can be provided; and**
- **there is access by means of an existing road; no traffic hazards are created or increased; and road improvements incompatible with the character of the surrounding area are not required.**

4.95 Paragraph 28 of the National Planning Policy Framework supports economic growth in rural areas by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development, including the promotion of the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

4.96 The policy refers to the EU definition of farm diversification in order to provide clarity and consistency, and to conform with nationally collected statistics. The EU defines farm diversification as all activities other than farm work that have an economic impact on the holding. These activities must make use of the farm's resources (such as the land, buildings or machinery) or products. If only the farm's labour force and no other resources are used for the activity then this is not classed as being a diversified activity. Agricultural work for other holdings is included. Exclusions are: pure financial investments, commercial activity on the holding which is not linked to any agricultural or horticultural activity (e.g. a hairdresser or insurance company), renting out the land for diverse activities where there is no further involvement in these activities, and letting out of buildings. Included in the definition are:

- Contracting and haulage, including any agricultural contracting, haulage and clearing snow;
- Tourism, which includes accommodation and sport/leisure activities;
- Environment, which includes aquaculture and forestry; and
- Processing and food manufacture, including animal or arable products (e.g. cheese making), handicraft and wood processing.

- 4.97 Diversification provides opportunities to generate additional income for the farming business, reduces reliance on a single income stream and reduces risk. Policy EC5 sets out the criteria within which farm diversification can contribute to a prosperous and viable rural economy in the Swindon rural area in accordance with the principles set out in SD1. In doing so the policy ensures that farm diversification as promoted in paragraph 28 of the NPPF meets the definition of sustainable development as set out in paragraph 7 of the NPPF. It also ensures that farm holdings can remain viable, and agricultural buildings can remain in use, without causing harm to the environment by new construction, and without increasing traffic hazards on rural roads.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.98 Additional information includes:

- Farming Statistics: Diversification and Renewable Energy Production on Farms in England 2010, (National Statistics & DEFRA, 2012)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.99 Appropriate farm diversification will be delivered through the application of this policy through the development management process. Applicants will be encouraged to have early pre-application discussions with the Council to ensure that criteria are satisfied.

Theme 3: Housing and Accommodation

The Housing and Accommodation theme's policies flow directly from and help to implement the following Strategic Objectives set out in Part 2 of this Plan:

**SO1: High Quality Sustainable Development; and,
SO4: Housing**

4.101 Theme 3 sets out policies to:

- deliver planned housing growth set out in the Plan (SD2);
- deliver affordable housing to meet current needs;
- assess and determine proposals for housing development and other types of accommodation which come forward in locations where this Plan does not propose additional development, including small scale development; and,
- assess and determine proposals for specific types of accommodation.

Key Issues

- 4.102 Housing and accommodation is important to us all and across all sections of society. In Swindon, there are a number of key housing issues facing its population and which demonstrate a need for housing growth in the Borough.
- 4.103 As incomes on average remain constant or go down in real terms, housing is becoming more expensive. The "affordability gap" between earnings and the ability to pay rent for accommodation affects those who are trying to access the rental market (private rented or social housing) the most.
- 4.104 Government policy continues to place an emphasis on sustainable economic (and housing) growth, to which Swindon is responding to through its spatial strategy encapsulated in the Sustainable Development Strategy. As the economy changes and recovers from recession, additional housing will be needed to support economic migration to the area and retain Swindon's resident workers of all ages, from those moving to their first rented or owned home at a young age to those seeking to upsize or downsize to or from a family home. In particular a range of housing is needed, including at the high end of the market, to attract economic migrants to the Borough.

- 4.105 Nationally and locally there is an ageing population, with people living longer and needing more accessible accommodation. This will include provision of different types of adaptable accommodation such as lifetime homes and lifetime neighbourhoods with nearby access to facilities and services required particularly by the elderly.
- 4.106 Despite the changes to the economy, with the cost of market housing falling since before the recession, access to homes for first time buyers in particular has remained difficult.
- 4.107 However, effective planning for housing is not all about housing provision at any cost anywhere. The delivery of housing in sustainable locations and to the appropriate scale is as important and there are clearly parts of the Borough where, set against the Government's presumption in favour of sustainable development, there will be limitations on housing development that should and should not be built.

Addressing the Key Issues

- 4.108 Planning has a key role to play in helping to resolve many of these issues. However, the Local Planning Authority's and planning system's key role in helping to deliver positive change is as an enabler. It cannot guarantee that planned changes will happen. Other mechanisms, legislation and bodies (private and public sector) have key roles in the implementation and regulation of housing and accommodation growth and change (including, but not limited to, private developers, Registered Social Landlords / Housing Associations and the Council's Building Control and Housing teams).

Key Evidence Base for Theme 3

- 4.109 Key evidence base documents for housing and accommodation include:
- Swindon Joint Study 2026 (2005)
 - Swindon Housing Needs Assessment (2006)
 - Swindon Small Scale Urban Extensions Study (2008)
 - Swindon Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2009)
 - Swindon Housing Market Area Strategy (2009)
 - Swindon Borough Housing Requirement Update Report (2012)
 - Swindon Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2012)

Policy HA1: Mix, Types and Density

- a. **Housing development should be design-led, in particular:**
 - **densities, house types and sizes should respect the character of the surrounding area;**
 - **there should be a variety of densities, house types and sizes within larger developments;**
 - **higher densities should be directed towards Swindon's Central Area and locations served by a good range of services and facilities; and**
 - **lower densities and larger homes should be provided to satisfy the higher value end of the market where they are in accord with the context and character of the local area.**
- b. **Large development proposals will be expected to consider the contribution self-build can make to the mix and type of development**

- 4.110 To gain an understanding of the types of housing that are needed in Swindon Borough, a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has been undertaken. The NPPF requires that SHMAs should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need during the lifetime of the Plan. This housing needs to be responsive to demand, meet future anticipated household and population growth, and address the need for all types of housing and the needs of different groups of people in the local community.
- 4.111 The type and mix of new housing can play a role in improving the physical environment; diluting concentrations of disadvantage; attracting industry to locate to Swindon and higher skilled workers to live here; and improving Swindon's overall image. Whilst there is a pressing need for affordable housing in the rural parts of the Borough, especially Blunsdon & Highworth and Ridgeway wards (see Policy HA2), building more prestigious homes in Swindon or high quality landmark schemes in the town centre can contribute to the improvement of the urban environment. The Local Plan needs to have policies in place to articulate the preferred "look and feel" to new housing development in Swindon Borough, whether large or small scale and whether in the urban or rural setting.
- 4.112 A key challenge already identified for Swindon Borough is to ensure that new development is well-designed to help bring about and create high quality urban environments. Swindon Borough is promoting a design led approach to housing that reflects the character of the local area. This is the starting point for the approach to the design and density of development, but where it is innovative, high quality or highly accessible an alternative design approach may be acceptable. Therefore, all new housing developments will have the highest regard to good design in accord with Policy DE1 in particular.

- 4.113 Overall, forecast demand and need for housing suggests growth in one-person households as Table 4 shows, translating to a future need for predominantly 1 and 2 bedroom properties

Table 4. Projected Household Types

| Household Type | 2011 | 2016 | 2021 | 2026 |
|----------------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| Couples | 46% | 44.5% | 43.5% | 42.5% |
| Singles | 31% | 32.5% | 34% | 35% |
| Multi-person e.g. families | 23% | 23% | 22.5% | 22.5% |

- 4.114 However, when considering these figures it is too simplistic to plan just for smaller dwellings, as this does not take into account the demand from some small households for larger properties. It is essential to get a mix of housing that best reflects the needs and aspirations of Swindon Borough's growing population and when considered alongside the forecasts of household types, this suggests accommodating, in particular, a growing population of older people and meeting the needs of younger families.
- 4.115 Providing a mix of housing types and sizes helps to provide new development with character whilst different sized households with a variety of socio-economic make-up can help to foster a sense of community and variety, and prevent homogenous neighbourhoods forming. Policy HA1 responds to the guidance in the NPPF which requires plans to provide for a full range of types of market and affordable housing to reflect locally assessed needs, identified through the SHMA and to provide mixed and inclusive communities.
- 4.116 New housing in Swindon in recent years has been characterised by high-density schemes often dominated by flats. Over the period 2006 to 2010, approximately 41 per cent of new housing was in the form of flats with only 12.5 per cent in the form of lower density four bedroom houses. The proportion of four-bed homes fell to a low of 5.2 per cent in 2009/10 with the balance made up of an increase in the proportion of two-bed houses. Table 5 illustrates the percentage of the number of completions in recent years by dwelling size (number of bedrooms) and Table 6 shows the densities achieved since 2006.

Table 5: Dwelling Size and Past Distribution of Housing Completions by percentage of total completions

| Year | Flats | | | Houses | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1 bed | 2 bed | 3 bed | 1 bed | 2 bed | 3 bed | 4 bed |
| 2006/7 | 13 | 29 | 0 | 5 | 13 | 25 | 16 |
| 2007/8 | 12 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 13 | 27 | 17 |
| 2008/9 | 13 | 32 | 0 | 2 | 13 | 28 | 11 |
| 2009/10 | 7 | 34 | 0 | 3 | 26 | 24 | 5 |

Source: Swindon Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012.

- 4.117 Translating this into the number of dwellings per hectare, densities have started to fall in recent years.

Table 6: Density of Past Housing Completions (dwellings per hectare)

| Area | 2006/7 | 2007/8 | 2008/9 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Northern Development Area | 45.15 | 44.23 | 44.17 | 33.85 | 26.02 |
| Wichelstowe | 0 | 0 | 63.14 | 58.79 | 50.90 |
| Swindon remainder | 88.30 | 82.18 | 68.48 | 62.35 | 49.54 |

Source: Swindon Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012.

- 4.118 The NPPF supports local planning authorities setting their own approach to housing densities to reflect local circumstances. Housing densities help to define the character of new housing development. What might be appropriate in one location may be inappropriate in another and so it is important that densities respect the character of the urban or rural area within which they are located. Without dictating strict housing densities in Swindon Borough, Policy HA1 aims to encourage higher densities, for example, in the central area and allow lower densities, for example, in more rural locations.
- 4.119 Other factors will influence the appropriate density of new development. Higher density development will, for example, help to encourage walking and cycling, the economic viability of public transport and minimise the need for developing greenfield land. Lower density housing will help meet demand for larger and higher value homes not currently well catered for in Swindon Borough. The application of design codes and other mechanisms such as the development management process will help to ensure that the right densities are applied to proposed housing developments.
- 4.120 The criteria required to guide the type, mix and density of new housing development should not be designed as a "one size fits all" standard and so policy needs to be responsive to and set a framework which allows appropriate scale, density, type and mix of housing depending on its location. The detail of housing development identified in the Local Plan and in other locations will need to be brought out further through the application of other policies in this plan, masterplans, design codes, management plans and planning applications.
- 4.121 The self-build sector is a component of the housing supply, but currently is largely restricted to single dwellings. In order to increase the supply of housing, larger developments should consider how self-build units can be incorporated in the proposal. The Borough Council will work with developers to agree a suitable approach to delivering self-build homes as part of larger schemes. The Borough Council will also work with the Self-Build community to further understand their requirements and promote on their behalf.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.122 The appropriate mix, type and density of housing developments shall be delivered through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;
 - implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - engagement between the Council, developers and the community;
 - development of Framework Plans, Design Codes and masterplans;
 - phasing to control the release of housing land which will better match the housing requirements generated by Swindon's changing economy;
 - using previously developed land wherever possible;
 - an up-to-date understanding of development viability;
 - the development management process;
 - Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or,
 - further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy HA2: Affordable Housing

- a. **On all developments of 15 homes or more, or on sites larger than 0.5 hectares and subject to economic viability assessment:**
- **a target of 30%¹⁰ affordable homes should be provided on-site; or**
 - **a proportionate contribution should be provided towards affordable homes off-site where on-site provision is not suitable.**
- b. **Where affordable homes are to be provided on-site affordable housing should be integrated within the design and layout of a development and of a mix and tenure that reflects current need.**

- 4.123 According to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), in September 2010 there were 6,166 households classed as 'in housing need' on the Council's Housing Register, representing around 7 per cent of all households in the Borough. Those staying with friends or relatives made up almost half of this total. The greatest need from households on the Register is for one-bedroom accommodation; 59.4 per cent of all households on the Register require one-bedroom; 20.5 per cent require two-bedrooms; 17.9 per cent require three-bedrooms; and, 2 per cent require four or more.

¹⁰ This level of provision should be delivered with nil public subsidy, unless otherwise agreed by the council

- 4.124 The SHMA has established that there is an annual average shortfall in Swindon Borough of around 801 affordable homes. As a result, it recommended that Swindon Borough should maintain its existing policy of seeking a 30% affordable housing contribution on sites large enough to qualify. Additionally, it stressed a need to increase the supply of affordable housing in the rural wards of Ridgeway, and Blunsdon & Highworth, where the current supply is most limited, and housing is least affordable.
- 4.125 The number of affordable homes that can be provided is constrained by both available public sector funding and the level of cross subsidy that can realistically be achieved from land value enhancement associated with planning permission (planning gain). In current housing market conditions, the number of affordable homes which can be delivered is inextricably linked with the development of market homes and if planning policies push for too high a quota of affordable homes it may both reduce the overall number of dwellings built, and the proportion of those that are affordable. It is also important that the delivery of all types of housing is not undermined by development sites becoming unviable, which can happen as a result of the recession's impact on residential values and access to borrowing.
- 4.126 In light of concerns over the viability of delivering development to accommodate affordable housing to the thresholds identified in the SHMA as a result of the recession, the Borough Council commissioned independent consultants (GVA) to test the viability of delivering affordable housing and tenure split, having regard to the NPPF. With regard to the appropriate proportion of affordable housing to be sought, the study recommended that "taking into consideration the need for development to contribute towards strategic infrastructure through a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as well as on-site S.106, that Swindon Borough can provide for its anticipated growth agenda. The Borough Council takes an approach to affordable housing based on the assumption of today's 'weak' market conditions, and allows itself flexibility when negotiating affordable housing provision by setting an affordable housing target of 30%." The accompanying Community Infrastructure Levy Viability Study, which should be read in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Viability Study, demonstrated that in the vast majority of developments, development is viable with more than 20% affordable housing. The study also noted that "Should the Council believe that development could in theory afford to contribute lower or higher levels of affordable housing without prejudicing its ability to contribute to CIL and on site S.106, the Council should enter into negotiations with the respective developer / landowner to determine the appropriate level of affordable housing." This suggests that site by site viability testing should take place for the foreseeable future.
- 4.127 Therefore, in order to maintain an up-to-date understanding of deliverability, the SHMA will be updated periodically (which will include review of the overall affordable housing target) and individual development schemes' viability and ability to deliver affordable housing will be tested through an 'open book' approach as part of the planning application / development management process. Where the provision of on-site affordable housing is demonstrated to be unviable, contributions to the provision of affordable housing off-site to the scale which would have been required on-site can be made (where it is in accord with paragraph 50 of the NPPF).

- 4.128 Intermediate housing¹¹ is important in the delivery of the affordable housing requirements. The SHMA recommended that the relative affordability that the market presents on new housing schemes, as well as the effective affordability of the 'affordable housing' (particularly low cost home ownership), should be taken into account when considering proportions of market, affordable and intermediate housing on a site. It also recommends that Registered Providers and housing developers should be required to demonstrate on a scheme-by-scheme basis the market demand for additional one and two bedroom flats for the intermediate sale and key worker market.
- 4.129 With regard to tenure split, the consultant report which tested viability also looked at the appropriate split in Swindon Borough. It recommended that "the tenure split within the affordable housing provision does not have a significant effect on development viability, and we would therefore suggest that the Borough Council considers its housing need and the desire of its Members and RP's (Registered Providers) to adopt the 'Affordable Rent' model in coming to a decision on which tenure split would be most advantageous for the Borough."
- 4.130 In all cases, where the affordable housing is a proportion of the overall scheme, in the interests of developing inclusive, mixed and socially integrated communities in Swindon Borough, affordable and intermediate housing should be well-designed and integrated with the rest of the development scheme. This approach is supported by the NPPF¹².
- 4.131 In summary, Policy HA2 is designed to help deliver affordable housing in response to the evidence gathered in the SHMA, whilst introducing some flexibility which recognises that the current housing market is struggling to deliver the scale of housing (market, intermediate and affordable) due to the impact of the recession. The required thresholds introduced in the policy are derived directly from the SHMA and have been tested as part of the viability assessment and are aligned with the NPPF, which requires local planning authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that "their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing" (paragraph 47).

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.132 Additional information includes:

- Affordable Housing Viability Study (2012)

¹¹ Intermediate market housing refers to affordable homes for sale through schemes such as shared-ownership, or rented properties offered at a discount to market rent, usually 80 per cent. Both forms of intermediate housing have increasingly been included in the supply of new affordable homes." p.197, SHMA⁷ See paragraph 50 of the NPPF.

¹² See paragraph 50 of the NPPF

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.133 The delivery of affordable housing shall be achieved through application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;
 - the provision of affordable and intermediate housing by developers and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs);
 - engagement between the Council and developers and the negotiation of developer contributions towards the provision of affordable housing based on the Council's adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
 - the development management process;
 - neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council; and / or,
 - further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy HA3: Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Development proposals for 50 dwellings or more should provide at least 2% of the dwellings to be suitable for occupation by wheelchair users to ensure all delivered housing is of a high quality and there is a wide choice of housing available.

- 4.134 An underlying theme within the National Planning Policy Framework is the creation of healthy and inclusive communities. Inclusive access and good design are key to creating sustainable communities and lifetime neighbourhoods, and therefore important in achieving sustainable development. Ensuring that future homes meet the needs of a wide range of people is essential in the creation of a mixed and sustainable community. This is particularly important if we are to meet the challenges of development and relieve the forecast unsustainable pressure on homes, social care and health services.
- 4.135 Dwellings built to wheelchair housing standards should be designed specifically to meet the diverse and changing needs of wheelchair users and the multiplicity of impairments that some wheelchair users experience. Lifetime Homes, while suitable and offering choice for some people with impairments will not have the additional spatial requirements all wheelchair users need to access every room and facility of the dwelling.

- 4.136 The Inclusive Design Access for All Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) highlights the different specifications in respect of Lifetime Homes and Wheelchair Accessible Housing.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.137 Additional information includes:

- Swindon Borough Council Wheelchair Accessible Housing in New Housing Developments (2012)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.138 The delivery of wheelchair accessible housing shall be delivered through the application of this policy and through the development management process.

Policy HA4: Subdivision of Housing and Houses in Multiple Occupation

- a. **Proposals for sub-division of dwellings into flats and for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), where planning permission is required shall only be permitted where:**
- the internal floorspace of the original dwelling is at least 100m²;
 - they will not harm the character of the area, streetscene or amenity of neighbouring residents including through the provision of parking, refuse and cycle storage;
 - the application of car parking standards does not result in the loss of the majority of existing front and rear garden space and landscaping;
 - they will not harm traffic or pedestrian safety due to increased parking pressures or exacerbate existing parking problems; and
 - room sizes and internal arrangements meet the current standards defined by Swindon Borough Council.
- b. **In order to support mixed and balanced communities, and to ensure that a range of household needs continue to be accommodated throughout the Borough, applications for changes of use to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)¹³ shall only be permitted where the proposal would not adversely affect the character of the surrounding area or lead to an unacceptable concentration of Houses in Multiple Occupation within a given area.**

¹³ For the purposes of this policy, dwellings in use as Class C4, mixed C3/C4 use and HMOs in sui generis use will be considered to be HMOs.

- 4.139 Although the sub-division of dwellings can increase the number of dwellings available and is a means of bringing empty property back into use, they can have a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties. It is important that the subdivision does not create a building that is out of context with its surroundings. The subdivision of houses into self-contained units of accommodation should only be undertaken with great care and should have regard to the subsequent effects on the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers and the character of the area.
- 4.140 The policy specifies a minimum size for properties to be subdivided. Swindon has a number of smaller older properties that are effectively one room width. The experience of development management has shown that the conversion of these properties does cause difficulties for the amenity of potential occupiers, and that this minimum requirement effectively excludes these inappropriate properties. This standard has been supported at appeals and remains an effective way of controlling subdivision. Similarly, the subdivision of a property should not result in unsuitably small rooms and cramped living conditions for the future occupiers. A Residential Space Standards Supplementary Planning Document will set out minimum standards for room sizes.
- 4.141 The availability of parking will also be a factor. The amount of parking to be allowed at subdivisions will be a factor of the intensity of the proposed habitation, the space available for parking and the need to avoid creating highway problems and annoyance for neighbouring residents.
- 4.142 Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) provide more flexibility and accessibility than owner occupation and conventional affordable housing, and have an important role in sustaining the flexibility of the labour market. However, a concentration of HMOs can have an accumulative adverse impact on the local area. There are concerns in some local communities, particularly close to Swindon Town Centre, about the current proliferation of HMOs already in existence. Proposals in these areas should be considered with particular regard to protecting the existing community and the character of the area.
- 4.143 In April 2010 the Use Classes Order was amended and a new Use Class (C4 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)) was created. The definition has been based on that used in the Housing Act (2004)¹⁴. The General Permitted Development Order (6) (GPDO) grants automatic planning permission for certain categories of development, meaning there is no need, in these instances, to submit a planning application. This is known as 'permitted development' and includes cases where a change from one Use Class to another does not require planning permission. In October 2010 the GPDO was amended to include the change of use from a Use Class C3 'dwelling house' to a Use Class C4 'HMO' in the categories of permitted development, removing the need to apply for planning permission.

¹⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/section/254>

- 4.144 At the same time, the Government stated that where an authority wanted to retain planning control by maintaining the requirement to submit a planning application, they could use existing powers to do so, called Article 4 Directions. In the case of HMOs, an Article 4 Direction can be used to remove the permitted development right for a change from Use Class C3 to Use Class C4. The removal of permitted development rights in any area covered by an Article 4 Direction would mean that planning permission would be required for a change of use from C3 to C4.
- 4.145 At present, the Borough Council has no Article 4 direction in place in relation to HMOs. However, in order to have a policy in place to guide change of use in the event of an Article 4 direction being invoked in the future, Policy HA4 includes HMOs as well as sub-division of dwellings.
- 4.146 The NPPF (para. 50) makes reference to creating sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. An over concentration of any one particular type of housing or household would not be in-line with the aim of creating mixed communities. In setting a local threshold above which no further HMOs will generally be granted planning permission, a balance needs to be struck. There is a need to maintain a mix of dwelling types in areas of high demand for HMOs, whilst not reducing the overall supply of HMOs across the Borough and therefore limiting the housing available to meet the needs of the population.
- 4.147 At the time of issuing any Article 4 Direction the Borough Council will set a local threshold of the percentage of HMOs within a set distance of any proposed HMO application, based on local circumstances. For guidance a reasonable threshold is that the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation should not exceed 20% of the total number of properties within a 100 metre diameter buffer of the application property. Consultation will be undertaken with the local community to determine the appropriate thresholds. The Borough Council will use planning and housing records to determine the local concentration of HMOs in a given area.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.148 Additional information includes:

- Development management experience supported by appeal decisions.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.149 The subdivision of dwellings and larger houses in multiple occupation will be considered through the application of this policy when assessing development proposals and through:
- the development management process;
 - the use Article 4 Directions where necessary for part or whole of the Borough to remove permitted development rights for HMOs;
 - checking the location of proposals against a database holding all existing HMOs, in order to determine if the proposed location would fall within an area of concentration; and
 - development of supplementary guidance setting out in greater detail how the policy will be applied(c).

Policy HA5: Rural Exception Sites

- a. **As an exception to the rural strategy principles in Policy SD2c, housing development to meet local affordable housing needs may be permitted outside defined rural settlement boundaries where it can be demonstrated that the following criteria can be met :**
 - **no other suitable sites are available within the settlement boundary;**
 - **the housing shall remain affordable in perpetuity to people with a local connection;**
 - **there is evidence of local need, through the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment and/or a Local Needs Survey;**
 - **the proposal is appropriate in scale and style taking into account landscape value, settlement character, and site characteristics;**
 - **environmentally sensitive sites such as SSSIs are not affected;**
 - **good design principles are demonstrated that meet the Council's residential design standards, with the design process beginning from the outset; and**
 - **an option with the landowner is secured at an early stage in the development process to ensure the scheme can proceed.**
- b. **Where such a proposal is initiated and supported by the local community and it is aligned with the Local Plan policies, there will be a presumption to grant.**
- c. **In exceptional circumstances, where it is demonstrated, by means of a viability assessment, that there is insufficient public funding to make the scheme viable, an element of private market housing will be acceptable to provide a cross subsidy, secured through a legal obligation. The market housing would need to meet the same design principles as the affordable element.**

4.150 In the past there has been the opportunity for Rural Exception Sites to come forward outside rural settlement boundaries, where housing would not normally be permitted, to enable the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. However, these have been insufficient to meet the need for affordable housing, especially in recent years with the reduced availability of public funding. The National Planning Policy Framework encourages the allocation of sites for affordable housing, and the Plan proposes that rural exception sites should be allowed for at rural settlements, adjacent to settlement boundaries, and within rural settlements where there is no defined settlement boundary. Preferably sites will be allocated through forthcoming Neighbourhood Plans or through further site identification and allocation by the Borough Council, but it is not practical to expect that all sites will be identified in this way. It is also proposed that rural exception sites should reflect a recommendation in the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing Living Working Countryside (2008) regarding Community Led Affordable Housing.

Additional Evidence Base

4.151 Additional information includes:

- The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing: Living Working Countryside (2008).

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.152 The delivery of housing on exceptions sites shall be achieved through the application of this policy and through:

- engagement between the local community, developers, land owners and the Council;
- the development management process; and,
- allocations to be made through development of Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders or further work undertaken by the Council on site specific allocations in rural areas where community-led neighbourhood planning does not take place.

Policy HA6: Agricultural Workers Dwellings

a. Planning permission for a new dwelling in the countryside based upon the essential needs of agriculture and forestry shall only be permitted where:

- an independent appraisal is submitted with the application demonstrating that there is a functional need for the proposed dwelling which cannot be met by existing suitable accommodation available in the area, or by rearranging duties and responsibilities between workers; and
- the size of the proposed dwelling is appropriate to its functional need; and
- in all cases a financial test is also submitted to demonstrate the viability of the business proposed or as proposed to be expanded; and
- the dwelling cannot be provided by adapting an existing building on the holding; and
- the proposed dwelling is located within or adjacent to the existing farm buildings or other dwellings on the holding; and
- the design of the proposed dwelling is in harmony with the landscape character type and appearance of the countryside, particularly in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
- occupancy is limited by way of a planning condition or obligation.

b. Any proposal for a farm unit which has been subject to fragmentation, or is known to be about to be affected by it, shall be subject to planning obligations to tie the dwellings to adjacent farm buildings to prevent them being sold separately.

- 4.153 Policy HA6 is intended to ensure a consistent approach by the Local Planning Authority in determining applications for new dwellings outside the settlement boundaries. In the open countryside isolated new dwellings are not normally permitted as they conflict with strategies to protect the countryside and are generally in unsustainable locations. However, those who work in the rural economy may need to live in close proximity to where they work. Consequently, to conform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), proposals of this nature are allowed as an exception to development constraints in the countryside.
- 4.154 The criteria specified are considered appropriate to determine whether such a special justification is valid and to detect possible abuse. Each appraisal should be submitted with the application and be undertaken at the applicant's expense by an independent and qualified agricultural consultant. Where required, this financial appraisal should show in particular that the net income generated by the business is wholly capable of supporting the proposed size and cost of the dwelling, and the livelihood of its occupant, on a sound continuing basis.
- 4.155 Should these appraisals establish the need for a dwelling in principle, the availability of any suitable existing accommodation in the vicinity (such as the nearest settlement) will be regarded as material in determining the application. Where no such accommodation exists, inordinately large or extensive new dwellings relative to the needs of the enterprise, or those of inappropriate design for their location, will not be permitted. Where the Local Planning Authority is concerned about possible abuse of this exception policy, the history of the holding, the recent pattern of land use and building and recent disposals of land and property may be investigated. Such information will be treated as material to the Local Planning Authority's determination of planning applications, as part of the consideration of the individual merits of each case. Such a sale could constitute evidence of lack of agricultural need.
- 4.156 To ensure that new dwellings permitted to meet such special needs remain available to meet any continuing essential needs of agriculture or forestry enterprises in the locality an occupancy condition will be attached by the Local Planning Authority to all permissions granted under this policy. Consideration will also be given to agreeing occupancy conditions on existing dwellings under the control of the applicant, which do not have such conditions, but need at the time of the application to be used in conjunction with the enterprise. Fragmentation has resulted in a new set of problems in relation to agricultural policy. The separate sale of farmhouses, divorced from the rest of the farm, has brought about the loss of much needed residential accommodation. To prevent this situation continuing in the future, planning obligations may be attached to agricultural workers consents to tie them to the associated unit.
- 4.157 Entirely new sites where there are currently no existing buildings at all are especially sensitive and could be unnecessarily damaged were partial implementation and/or the abandonment of a proposed enterprise to occur. To ensure that such opportunities are not unnecessarily denied, in circumstances where the functional and financial tests have resulted in a finely balanced conclusion, the Local Planning Authority will be prepared to

consider inviting an application for a mobile home on a temporary basis, normally for three years. Such temporary permission would rarely be renewed other than to provide continued accommodation whilst a permanent dwelling was promptly constructed on any such site as might have been permitted for that purpose.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.158 Agricultural workers' dwellings will be considered through the application of this policy when assessing proposals and through the development management process.

Policy HA7: Conversion of Buildings to Residential Use in the Countryside

In the countryside, proposals for the conversion of an existing building or structure to residential shall be permitted provided they comply with the following criteria:

- **the building is worthy of retention, structurally sound and capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction; and**
- **the conversion is in keeping with the original character of the building and enhances the fabric and character of any adjacent buildings, or the landscape character type generally; and**
- **the number of units and density of development is appropriate to the building's location; and**
- **the building shall have an existing curtilage or a curtilage can be created which does not adversely affect the landscape character type, the building itself or any adjacent structure; and**
- **utilities can be provided and the building has adequate access to a metalled road without creating traffic hazards and without involving road improvements incompatible with the character of the area**

- 4.159 Planning applications involving the conversion and reuse for residential purposes of buildings previously used for various other purposes have become increasingly common. This trend is associated both with changes within the agricultural industry and greater demand from people to live in the countryside. Whilst applications for employment and community use, particularly of traditionally designed buildings, will prevail conversions for residential purposes will be considered where the location is acceptable and where the development is appropriate to the original building. Where suitable the conversion and re-use of a building can help to reduce the demand for new developments in the countryside.

- 4.160 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, new isolated homes will be avoided in the countryside, unless redundant or disused buildings will be re-used during the development, leading to an enhancement of the immediate setting. The Local Planning Authority would wish to support such proposals, provided they are appropriate in scale, enhance the original character of the building and its surrounding landscape, and minimise the impact on their countryside location. Proposals which result in the long term safe guarding of a heritage asset will also be encouraged by the Borough Council.
- 4.161 The NPPF attaches great importance to developments being of a high quality design; as such the Borough Council requires all proposals to improve the visual appearance and character of the area. Ensuring the vitality of rural communities is maintained or enhanced is also an important consideration during the Local Planning Authority's decision making process.
- 4.162 The Borough Council is seeking to ensure that countryside buildings are retained in their original form as far as possible, that re-use of buildings is sought for employment or community use first of all and only in circumstances where this cannot be achieved should it be residential (thereby avoiding the urbanisation of the rural area). Where residential conversion may in such cases be acceptable in principle, a proliferation of such schemes may be detrimental to a sparsely populated area. Development of this nature is therefore expected to be modest in scale and take account of the building's features and its landscape setting. Avoidance of traffic hazards and inappropriate locations in relation to public services and utilities is also sought together with creation of a dwelling of adequate size.
- 4.163 Where buildings in the countryside have either become so derelict that re-use is only possible following complete or substantial reconstruction, or their construction and materials are such as to require considerable alteration to make the building suitable for the new purpose, the proposal will be assessed as if it were for an entirely new development in the countryside. In such cases proposals will be considered under Policy DE1. Any proposed dwelling which will be strictly for the use of a rural worker will be considered under Policy HA6.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.164 Additional information includes:
- Wiltshire County and Swindon Borough Rural Facilities Study (2008)
 - Swindon Borough Core Strategy Rural Issues Paper (2009)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.165 The conversion of buildings to residential use in the countryside will be considered primarily through the application of this policy through the development management process. Applicants will be encouraged to have early pre-application discussions with the Borough Council.

Policy HA8: Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Pitches and Sites

- a. Provision for gypsies and travellers and travelling show people will be made in accordance with the updated Need Assessment. The location(s) of this additional requirement will be identified in a Site Allocations Development Plan Document.**
- b. Development to accommodate Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People will be permitted provided that the site:**
 - is accessible to shops, schools and health facilities by public transport, on foot or by cycle;
 - has good access to the highway network and will not cause traffic congestion or safety problems;
 - has sufficient space for the parking and manoeuvring of all vehicles associated with the occupiers;
 - is provided with adequate on-site services for water supply; power; drainage; sewage disposal; and waste disposal facilities;
 - includes appropriate landscape measures to avoid any adverse visual impact and to ensure adequate levels of privacy and residential amenity for occupiers and adjacent occupiers, that avoid the use of high walls and fences;
 - does not accommodate non-residential uses that would not cause, by virtue of smell, noise or vibration, significant adverse impact on neighbouring business or residents; and
 - is in accord with the Flood Risk Policy EN6
- c. In addition, development for travelling show people will be permitted provided that the site:**
 - be occupied by bona fide members of the Showmen's Guild; and
 - includes sufficient space for storage and maintenance of equipment separate from residential caravans.
- d. Unless the site is in close proximity to an existing children's recreational area, the site should also include a designated area for children's games and recreation.**

- 4.166 The residential accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers are currently met on 2 sites within the Borough, at Hay Lane (37 plots) and Small Acres (Kingsdown Lane - 3 plots). Hay Lane is Council owned and maintained whilst Small Acres is privately owned. In addition 12 pitches are provided at the Chiseldon Firs Council transit site. From time to time unauthorised encampments occur within the Borough and there is no recognisable pattern to their timing, duration or location.
- 4.167 The Wiltshire and Swindon Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) (2006) identified a need for 8 additional residential pitches and no increase in transit pitches at Swindon Borough by 2011.
- 4.168 Travelling showpeople require a permanent base where they can maintain, store and repair their equipment and where they can station their caravans, when they are not travelling for the purposes of their business. Guidance on the requirements for travelling showpeople is given in the Showpeople's Guilds' Model Standard Package for Sites (2007).
- 4.169 Further work to identify sites for the allocation of additional pitches will be undertaken following adoption of this Plan. The Council will continue to work with the nomadic community to understand their requirements.
- 4.170 The design and layout of sites should take account of the CLG Good Practice Guide 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller sites' (2008).
- 4.171 Sites for nomadic communities should follow the same basic criteria as brick and mortar housing in terms of their sustainable credentials. However it must be recognised that there are specific aspects of such sites that need additional criteria to be specified.
- 4.172 Many gypsies and travellers would like to run their business from the sites on which their caravans are stationed. It is important to ensure that where this occurs there is no adverse impact on existing residents in the vicinity from noise, fumes, or other disturbances that could arise. Proposals will have to meet highway safety standards, especially in the manoeuvring of large vehicles and trailers.
- 4.173 The objective is to create sites that are well designed and are sympathetic to the local landscape. The use of shrubs and trees on the edge of the site will be encouraged in order to avoid creating the feeling of isolation, however it is recognised that for safety, security fences and walls will sometimes also be needed.

Additional Evidence Base Documents

- 4.174 Additional information includes:
- Wiltshire and Swindon Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (2006)
 - Showpeople's Guilds' Model Standard Package for Sites (2007)
 - Good Practice Guide 'Designing Gypsy and Traveller sites' (2008).

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.175 This policy will be implemented through planning decisions taken in the development management process and through:

- Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and/or,
- further work on the detailed location and specification of individual sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Theme 4: Transport

The Transport theme's policies flow directly from and help to implement the following Strategic Objectives set out in Part 2 of this Plan.

SO4: Transport

SO6: Community and Health

4.176 Theme 4 sets out policies to:

- improve key transport gateways and corridors;
- provide good access to Swindon Town Centre and key destinations;
- reduce severance caused by transport corridors and the dominance of the car on the streetscene;
- minimise the environmental impact from transport (for example, vehicle emissions);
- minimise congestion and therefore journey time, noise and air quality;
- promote healthy lifestyles and travel choices and maximise opportunities to walk and cycle;
- support good public transport provision; and
- encourage innovative transport initiatives for rural areas.

Key Issues

- 4.177 The transport issues faced in Swindon are common to many other towns and cities across the country. These include, for example, traffic congestion at peak travel times, a lowering of air quality during those peak times in certain parts of the town and maintaining an effective public transport (bus) service, particularly to and from rural areas outside the town.
- 4.178 New development will also pose further challenges such as good integration with and minimising impact on the existing transport network, extending public transport services into those areas and achieving good level access throughout the day.
- 4.179 Effective accessibility is important in all modes of transport, from walking and cycling to public transport to the private car and transportation of goods, to all ages and across all parts of the economy. Therefore, there remains a need to improve the transport network to improve accessibility and reduce journey times, but also to improve air quality and reduce transport emissions. Whilst maintaining and improving the existing network, being able to provide the opportunity for more people to take their shorter trips by foot or bicycle, and to do this safely, is still a key issue.

Addressing the key issues

- 4.180 We are all dependent on transport to live our lives the way we do. We use transport for work, leisure, shopping, the “school run” and countless other activities. There are many factors influencing our choice of transport such as convenience, distance and time, the weather, our economic circumstances, congestion on our roads and necessity when our choices are limited. People’s behaviour is also a key determinant of the use of transport modes. Many of these issues cannot be dealt with through planning policies, but they can provide the platform to improve transport networks (of all modes), enhance sustainability and influence how people use transport by providing the opportunities to make more sustainable access to services, facilities and destinations easier.

Key Evidence Base for Theme 4

- 4.181 Key evidence base documents for transport include:
- A Climate Change Action Plan for Swindon Borough 2006-2010 (2006)
 - Swindon Workspace Strategy (2009)
 - Swindon Transport Strategy (2009)
 - Swindon Borough Local Transport Plan 3 (2011 - 2026)
 - Active Swindon Strategy 2009-2015 (2009)
 - Wiltshire and Swindon Strategic Plan for Accident Reduction (2008)
 - The Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Swindon 2007-2011 (2007)

Policy TR1: Sustainable Transport Networks

- a. The council will use its planning and transport powers to help reduce the need to travel, and support and encourage the sustainable, safe and efficient movement of people and goods within and through the Borough. This will be achieved by:
 - enabling a reliable and efficient transport network that:
 - o minimises congestion;
 - o maximises consistent journey times;
 - o prioritises trips to and from Swindon Town Centre; and
 - o supports the distribution and logistics employment sector.
 - promoting and improving safety, security and healthy lifestyles through:
 - o maximising opportunities to walk and cycle;
 - o reducing severance caused by transport corridors and the dominance of the car on the streetscene;
 - o education, training and enforcement;
 - o engineering and design and highway maintenance; and
 - o overlooking and surveillance of bus stops, car parks, footpaths and cycleways to increase safety.
 - promoting equality of opportunity and access to services and facilities for all by:
 - o delivering walkable mixed use development;
 - o inclusive design;
 - o good public transport provision; and
 - o encouraging innovative transport initiatives for rural areas.
 - minimising emissions from transport by:
 - o reducing the need to travel;
 - o promoting more sustainable travel choices;
 - o personal, workplace and school travel planning; and
 - o designing the built environment to encourage healthy lifestyles and travel choices.

- supporting and contributing towards improving Swindon's sense of place and quality of life by:
 - o integrating public realm and green infrastructure into the design of transport schemes;
 - o minimising the impact of congestion, noise and air quality;
 - o improving the legibility and ease of movement within Swindon Town Centre; and
 - o improving the image and experience of using Swindon's public transport.
 - targeted investment to improve key junctions and corridors
 - enabling the provision of a rapid transit network from the new urban extensions to Swindon Town Centre
 - medium to long distance vehicle movements will be positively encouraged through site access/egress locations, road design, and other highway measures to access the strategic highway network at its nearest point in Swindon rather than rat-run through inappropriate rural roads in the Borough, Wiltshire and adjacent areas
- b. The route of the Thamesdown Drive to Barnfield Roundabout Link Road as shown on the Proposals Map is safeguarded to enable its future construction.**

- 4.182 Swindon's position on the strategic transport network, with fast links by road and rail to London, Heathrow Airport and many other areas is a key strength for the town. Within Swindon there is congestion at peak hours but it can be unpredictable in the places it affects and the times it occurs. North-south movements are particularly affected.
- 4.183 Generally residents have good access to services and facilities on foot or by public transport within Swindon, but this is more limited in the rural areas. There are also difficulties in making bus journeys across Swindon without the need to change in the town centre. The railway line is a barrier for movements between the town centre and the northern parts of the town, particularly by walking or cycling.
- 4.184 The aims for transport within Swindon Borough are to deliver a vibrant local economy, improve the sense of place and reduce the need to travel. Short distance trips by walking and cycling will be encouraged through design, mixed use development and housing density. Encouraging trips to Swindon Town Centre is important in supporting regeneration objectives, attracting investment and jobs and diverting trips that currently leave Swindon for other destinations. The Plan recognises that not all trips will be made to the town centre and therefore aims to encourage journeys within the town. Access to the strategic transport network is critical to Swindon's economy and it is essential that growth does not undermine this strength.

Reliable and Efficient Transport Network

- 4.185 The transport network has an important role to play in supporting economic growth, regeneration and housing growth. Congestion and poor journey time reliability results in lost productive time for businesses and impacts on the cost and time spent on journeys to and from work. This is particularly important for freight movement in Swindon's distribution and logistics sector.
- 4.186 To support town centre regeneration and Swindon's economic growth the aim is to facilitate ease of movement into, out of and around the town centre. Sustainable travel choices will be enhanced so that the car does not dominate or have a detrimental impact on the environment, or the quality of the experience in the town centre. The strategy seeks to improve the capacity and performance of the existing road network by discouraging through traffic and reducing circulating traffic.

Safety, Security and Health

- 4.187 The attractiveness of walking and cycling in Swindon will be improved to support healthy lifestyle choices but also to address climate change, congestion and improve air quality. Reliance on car use can lead to inactive lifestyles whilst walking and cycling are a good way to improve health as it builds exercise into everyday activities.
- 4.188 Road safety at Swindon has been steadily improving since the mid-nineties. Education and enforcement will be promoted to support responsible driving and continue to assist in developing practical skills needed when using our roads. The design, layout and maintenance of the transport network will create a safe environment that is a pleasant and attractive place to be. Fear of crime is a significant factor in discouraging travel choices for some sections of our community, especially those travelling alone and at night. Waiting at bus stops and taxi ranks, entering multi-storey car parks, isolated footpaths and cycleways and poor security of cycle racks all discourage sustainable travel choices and personal mobility.

Minimising Emissions from Transport

- 4.189 Swindon must play its part in reducing greenhouse gas emissions whilst facilitating economic growth. CO₂ emissions from transport account for around 26% of Swindon's total and are in line with regional and national averages. Decarbonising transport is a key aspect in mitigating climate change nationally. Swindon's approach will largely focus on influencing travel behaviour by promoting low carbon alternatives to the car.
- 4.190 Travel planning, promotional activities, access to travel information, investment in walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure and better integration between travel modes will be at the heart of Swindon's strategy. Mixed-use development and sustainable urban design also have an important role in reducing the need to travel. There are opportunities for Swindon to investigate and pioneer alternative fuels and vehicle technology.

Sense of Place and Quality of Life

- 4.191 The railway lines and road corridors sever communities and act as a barrier to movement especially by walking and cycling. This will be particularly important to address at the 'New Eastern Villages'. It will be expected that transport infrastructure in Swindon should go beyond a traditional engineering solution to make a positive contribution to Swindon's sense of place, image and the quality of life of its residents.
- 4.192 Delivering a high quality, safe and easy to understand transport network through the town centre with clear links to the wider urban area is an essential part of the strategy to make it a more attractive place to visit and invest in. Clear cycleway signage from existing and new communities and cycle parking will be important in supporting travel choice to the town centre.

Swindon's Transport Priorities

- 4.193 The Swindon Transport Strategy aims to reduce reliance on the car by improving travel choices. A combination of public transport, cycling and walking will maximise that choice, but infrastructure investment and a comprehensive parking strategy must support it. It recommends delivery of a high frequency rapid transit network linking the urban extensions, through Swindon's existing communities to Swindon Town Centre. The Strategy supports the provision of a new town centre bus exchange and a new orbital bus service providing for trips that do not need to travel through the town centre and Urban Traffic Management and Control systems (UTMC). UTMC will improve network efficiency and provide priority for public transport removing key conflict points across busy and congested highway links. Targeted investment in the following priority transport corridors to promote travel choices, will support trips to Swindon town centre:

- Covingham Road / Dorcan Way
- Cricklade Road
- Great Western Way
- Marlborough Road / Queens Drive
- Mead Way
- Oxford Road / Drakes Way
- Thamesdown Drive / Oakhurst Way Corridor

- 4.194 From Swindon's first Local Transport Plan and into LTP2 the Council pursued the idea of a Major Scheme bid around increasing highway capacity on the Thamesdown Drive to Barnfield Roundabout (formerly known as the Purton Road to Iffley Junction) corridor in the north and north west of Swindon. Substantial S106 developer contributions were secured from the Northern Sector urban extension in order to mitigate the traffic impacts of the development. The scheme that was identified provided increased capacity from Thamesdown Drive through to Great Western Way either through a new road on one of a number of alignments or by upgrading the existing link provided by Mead Way. To reflect changes in the transport policy background during LTP2 the potential Major Scheme bid was re-focussed as

the “North Swindon Transport Strategy” which combined a public transport priority corridor between the Northern Sector and the town centre with measures to address the traffic issues on the Thamesdown Drive to Barnfield Roundabout corridor.

- 4.195 The delivery of the Thamesdown Drive to Barnfield Roundabout Link Road remains a long-term ambition of the Council. It is important that development proposals do not prevent its construction and therefore the route is safeguarded. At present there is not sufficient funding to deliver the relief road.
- 4.196 Investment in completing the cycling network in particular and increasing the permeability of walkways where there are barriers and a perceived lack of safety will be a critical in complementing the priority transport corridor approach.

Access to Services and Facilities

- 4.197 Swindon's communities should be walkable neighbourhoods, well served by public transport to ensure all people are able to access health and education facilities, employment, retail and leisure facilities. This is particularly important to people without access to a car, on low incomes, living in rural areas, with disabilities and young and old people. In general Swindon has good access to services and facilities and bus coverage is good to Swindon town centre. However cross-town trips require passengers to change in central Swindon. This is time-consuming, inconvenient and in effect limits personal choice for certain members of the community. In rural areas opportunities for walking, cycling and access to public transport is limited due to its isolated nature. Conventional rural public transport will be promoted and cost-effective community-based and demand responsive transport schemes will be explored.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;
- framework Plans and masterplanning for new communities;
- public funding where it can be secured, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- the Local Transport Plan 3;
- implementation of the Swindon Transport Strategy; and
- implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan.

Policy TR2: Transport and Development

- a. New development should be located and designed to reduce the need to travel and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives, particularly walking and cycling, and provide the potential to maximise bus travel.
- b. Development shall be permitted where proposals provide access that is appropriate to the scale, type and location without detriment to highways safety and local amenity, and where there is an existing safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle access or provision is made for such access.
- c. Development shall be permitted where proposals will not prejudice or impede an existing or planned cycle route, or provision is made for a more satisfactory route.
- d. Development that results in the loss of existing rights of way or their disruption shall only be permitted when adequate, acceptable alternative provision or diversions be arranged.
- e. Development shall be permitted where proposals do not remove, narrow or materially impair the approved line of the Thames Path or Ridgeway National Trails, and/or public access to them.
- f. Developments shall provide appropriate mitigating measures to offset any adverse impacts on the transport network at both the construction and operational stages.
- g. To assess and mitigate the impact of development and to promote sustainable travel choices, the following information will be required to support planning applications:
 - A Transport Assessment: where the proposed development is likely to have significant transport and related environmental impact (in accordance with Department for Transport guidance);
 - A Transport Statement: where the development has relatively minor transport implications (in accordance with Department for Transport guidance); and
 - A Travel Plan: where the proposed development is likely to have significant transport and related environmental impact (in accordance with Department for Transport guidance).
- h. Parking provision, including secure cycle and motorcycle parking, should be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards.

- 4.198 It is desirable for new developments to be located where there is good public access, in order to reduce the need to travel by car. In all cases development should provide a level of access that is appropriate to its location, and the type and nature of the vehicles that will use it. All proposals must ensure that they do not constitute an unacceptable impact on local amenity as a consequence of inadequate access and must not compromise highways safety. Development should provide for access by public transport, cycling and walking, including proper provision for access for all sections of the community in accordance with Policy DE1.
- 4.199 As well as the need to improve the cycle network, there is a need to make sure development proposals do not harm existing provision. As new routes may be included in further Local Transport Plan (LTP) they cannot all be known at present, this policy seeks to protect any future routes that may be identified through a revised LTP.
- 4.200 The rights of way within the Borough provide a range of important functions including access and recreation. Where rights of way are affected by development, adequate and acceptable diversions should be put in place. Permission to divert, remove or create rights of way must be sought through the appropriate legislation.
- 4.201 Two national trails pass through the Borough, the Thames Path and the Ridgeway, and are shown on the Proposals Map. The Borough Council recognises their national and local importance and will ensure that these routes are protected from any development which would adversely affect the route itself or the character of the area through which they pass.
- 4.202 The requirements of this policy will be achieved through the preparation of comprehensive documents to support a planning application. Applicants are encouraged to seek advice from the Borough Council at the pre-application stage to ensure that the content and structure of these documents meets the requirements of the policy. The documents will take a holistic approach to the impact of development on the transport network. The documentation should have regard to the Council's other policies on transport.
- 4.203 The Borough Council's Transport Requirements for Development guidance sets out the thresholds for the above documents. However, such requirements are not exhaustive and additional information may be required depending upon scale of development and local circumstances. The key factor is that applicants liaise with the Council at the earliest opportunity preferably at the pre-application stage, thus ensuring that the content and structure of the documentation submitted meets the required standard.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.204 Additional information includes:
- Department for Transport guidance on travel assessments and transport statements.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.205 Transport requirements placed upon development proposals will be considered through the application of this policy as development proposals are brought forward and through:

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;
- the implementation of Local Transport Plan (including any subsequent reviews);
- the development management process; and,
- early discussion with developers about transport requirements, preferably at the pre-application stage will help to ensure that requirements are understood and met.

Theme 5: Infrastructure Needs

The Infrastructure Needs theme's policies flow directly from and help to implement the following Strategic Objectives set out in Part 2 of this Plan:

SO2: Infrastructure Requirements
SO6: Community and Health
SO7: Transport
SO8: Culture and Leisure
SO9: Green Infrastructure

4.206 Theme 5 sets out policies to:

- require strategic, local and site-specific infrastructure to be provided as a result of needs generated by new development;
- ensure that the particular issues related to wastewater and water supply resulting from new development are addressed;
- support and require ICT infrastructure to be in place to support Swindon's residents and businesses; and,
- encourage the development of low carbon and renewable forms of energy generation.

Key Issues

- 4.207 Infrastructure is critical to support the provision of all development. Whether transport infrastructure, Information Communication Technology (ICT), utilities such as water supply or sewerage (wastewater) systems, or energy generation, such supporting infrastructure must be in place for new development. Whilst much of this type of infrastructure is provided through statutory undertakings (for example, essential water, wastewater, gas or electricity provision), new development can put additional pressure on existing infrastructure requiring upgrades or new facilities to cope with the change. This is particularly the case with utility infrastructure
- 4.208 As well as the identification and provision of new infrastructure, ensuring that it is provided at the right time can be critical, both from a deliverability and cost point of view, as well as ensuring that the capacity is in place to serve new development when it becomes occupied.
- 4.209 Set against rising demand from new and existing development and the impact of a changing climate, water supply is an issue which will need to be monitored. Likewise, the capacity to treat wastewater to required standards in Swindon Borough as a result of additional development during the plan period will also need to be monitored.

- 4.210 With ICT and in particular broadband speed becoming increasingly more important to business and commerce, ensuring that Swindon Borough maintains or exceeds industry standard high speed communication will be a key factor in helping the recovery of the economy particularly in some high-tech sectors and multi-national companies.
- 4.211 As Theme 1 has already demonstrated, climate change mitigation is leading to new innovations in sustainable construction and measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to comply with legislation and regulation. With the cost of energy rising and the security of supply becoming an issue, opportunities are being taken to develop low carbon and renewable energy technologies from the small to large scale.

Addressing the Key Issues

- 4.212 The planning system and in particular the policies set by this Plan will play a key role in helping to ensure that key strategic, local and site-specific infrastructure is provided at the right time and in the right place to absorb the impact of and provide for new development. Other mechanisms, in particular statutory requirements related to provision for new development, will play a key role. It is particularly important that planning policies, through their application to proposals for new development, help to ensure that unnecessary additional burden is not placed upon existing infrastructure and needs generated by new development are provided for satisfactorily.
- 4.213 In addition to the policies in this plan, the on-going Infrastructure Delivery Plan will play a key role in helping to identify, co-ordinate and deliver key infrastructure in Swindon Borough.
- 4.213 In addition to the policies in this plan, the on-going Infrastructure Delivery Plan will play a key role in helping to identify, co-ordinate and deliver key infrastructure in Swindon Borough.

Key Evidence Base for Theme 5:

- 4.214 Key evidence base documents for infrastructure include:
- Swindon Joint Study 2026 (2005)
 - Swindon Transport Strategy (2009)
 - Swindon Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2026)
 - A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2010-26: Revised Consultation Document (2011)
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)
 - Swindon Water Cycle Study Phase 1 (2007)
 - Swindon School Place Planning Study Update (2011)
 - Delivering Excellence for Swindon 2008-2013 (2008)
 - Wiltshire County and Swindon Borough Rural Facilities Survey (Wiltshire Council and SBC, 2008)
 - Swindon Borough Core Strategy Rural Issues Study (2009)
 - Various New Eastern Villages, South Marston and West of Swindon Studies

Policy IN1: Infrastructure Provision

- a. In order to make a positive contribution to the sustainable growth of Swindon, all development, including development adjacent to but outside the Swindon Borough boundary, shall where appropriate, and within the context of economic viability make provision to:
- meet the cost of new infrastructure made necessary by the development;
 - mitigate the impact of development on existing infrastructure;
 - provide for the on-going maintenance of infrastructure delivered as a result of development where appropriate;
 - contribute to the delivery of strategic infrastructure to address the cumulative impacts of development; and,
 - contribute to initiatives to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of infrastructure.

- 4.215 In order to achieve sustainable development it is important that infrastructure and services are provided to support new and existing communities and facilitate economic development.
- 4.216 The coordinated delivery of adequately funded infrastructure at the right time and in the right place is key to a successful and sustainable Swindon Borough. Identifying and securing sources of funding to facilitate the provision of, or directly deliver infrastructure to support housing and economic growth is vital.
- 4.217 This policy reflects infrastructure provision across the following levels:
1. **Strategic Infrastructure** will usually be delivered off-site and is outlined in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which includes a phased identification of needs to support Borough-wide growth to 2026. These infrastructure items have been identified through relevant supporting studies and evidence based documents. Some infrastructure needs may be cross-boundary.
 2. **Local Infrastructure** can be delivered in a variety of ways including on-site delivery integral to larger scale developments and through off-site investment in existing infrastructure within the vicinity of the development to mitigate the cumulative impact of development. These infrastructure items are identified through relevant evidence based documents.
 3. **On-site or site specific Infrastructure** relates to needs arising where there is direct linkage between the new development and supporting infrastructure and should be delivered integral to the development, such as affordable housing or open space. In exceptional circumstances, where off-site provision is considered an acceptable alternative, a contribution in lieu of on-site delivery may be sought.

4.218 Infrastructure items covered by this policy include:

- Education and Children's Services¹⁵;
- Transport Infrastructure;
- Green Infrastructure, including open space (including maintenance);
- Affordable Housing;
- Public Art;
- Cultural Facilities;
- Leisure Facilities;
- Public Realm;
- Adult Social Care;
- Community, Faith and Neighbourhood Facilities;
- Waste;
- Water Supply and Treatment;
- Local and Strategic Health Facilities;
- Emergency Services; and
- Community Forest.

4.219 This list is not exhaustive. Where a development has unique and/or significant impact on an area, scope may exist to secure provision to address such impact. Furthermore, where service areas or the community are in a position to draw attention to a newly generated need for infrastructure resulting from development, or the cumulative impact of development, scope may exist to secure its provision by legal agreement, or as a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) chargeable item as appropriate.

Legislative Framework

4.220 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and supported by the Planning Act 2008 alongside the Community Infrastructure Levy ("CIL") Regulations 2010 (Statutory Instrument 2010 No.948) as amended under the Localism Act 2012, (or any regulations that supersede these) sets out the Government's approach for securing development contributions towards future infrastructure provision. The Government's approach is to scale back the scope of section 106 of the TCPA 1990 (as amended) to focus on site specific mitigation in favour of the application of a standardised CIL tariff secured under a local charging schedule as the framework for managing delivery of infrastructure that is required as a consequence of the cumulative impact of development.

4.221 The Borough Council will update and amend local policy and guidance as required to reflect a transition from the delivery of infrastructure under planning obligation that constitutes a CIL chargeable item into a localised charging schedule. Thereafter it will ensure that its policy and guidance remains reflective of future legislative change.

¹⁵ Incorporates Primary schools, Secondary schools, Early years and Children's Centres, Post 16, Special Education Needs and Child Social Care

The Market

- 4.222 The Local Plan is a long-term plan and must incorporate a degree of flexibility. This is increasingly important given fluctuations in market conditions. A policy framework should be in place for the Borough Council to make practical, commercially sensitive decisions about development that facilitates its delivery without disadvantaging established or new communities. This demands a balance of interests across private and public sectors.

The Economic Viability of Development

- 4.223 Development furthermore can, on occasion, face genuinely abnormal costs that could threaten its economic viability, thus compromising sites from being brought forward. The viability of development is material to any decision and requires consideration in the context of the future delivery of infrastructure provision. Exceptional circumstances may arise under which benefits of development outweigh the harm of not providing for infrastructure contributions e.g. bringing buildings back into use, key regeneration schemes and regenerating important listed buildings.
- 4.224 In adopting a CIL charging schedule for Swindon Borough, economic viability will inform rate settings. The assessment of the viability of the development reflects a snapshot of time. For this reason it is important to ensure that policy and guidance incorporate flexibility to accommodate and consider the commercial reality of changes in market conditions over the lifetime of a planning permission and its development construction period.
- 4.225 It is important to safeguard against the banking or extending of planning permissions granted during challenging economic periods, for implementation at a time of improved market conditions, as the implementation of permissions will assist in the stimulation of continued development activity. The drafting of guidance and the application of local policy will address such matters.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.226 Additional information includes:
- Swindon Borough Community Infrastructure Viability Report (GVA) (2012)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.227 The required strategic, local and on-site infrastructure to support development will be secured through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;

- public funding where this can be secured, developer contributions, the Community Infrastructure Levy and / or other funding mechanisms;
- testing of the economic viability of sites where appropriate;
- the development management process; and,
- the development of a Supplementary Planning Document which will in the context the type and scope of infrastructure needs (supported by evidence) arising as a consequence of development Borough-wide, and adjacent to but outside the administrative boundary:
 - i. explain how and when infrastructure requirements are to be secured and delivered by planning obligations;
 - ii. explain the process by which infrastructure requirements are to be administered and monitored;
 - iii. explain the mechanism(s) to be used to support infrastructure delivery both on-site and off-site, through for example:
 - community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule;
 - commuted sums; and,
 - section 106 agreements.
 - iv. explain the mechanism for the operation of the impact of economic viability and development, in the local context

4.228 The Duty to Co-operate Statement also signposts where co-operation and collaboration with key stakeholders has influenced decision-making on the approach to infrastructure provision.

Policy IN2: Water Supply and Wastewater

- a. **Future water supply will be addressed through the implementation of demand management measures in new development to reduce the use of water and the prevention of leakage to increase supply.**
- b. **The development or expansion of water supply or sewerage waste/ water treatment facilities, including sewage sludge, shall normally be permitted either where needed to serve existing or proposed new development, or in the interests of long-term water supply and waste water management provided that the need for such facilities outweighs any adverse land use or environmental impact that any such adverse impact is minimised.**
- c. **Future wastewater treatment and improvements in related river quality will be addressed through the timely expansion of the Rodbourne Sewage Treatment Works and / or an additional Sewage Treatment Works to the east of Swindon to serve the New Eastern Villages developments, if proven to be the most sustainable option, particularly to ensure delivery of the housing trajectory.**
- d. **Development proposals should take account of the capacity of existing off-site water and sewerage/waste water treatment infrastructure and the impact of development proposals on them. Where necessary, the Council will seek improvements to water and/or sewerage/waste water treatment infrastructure related and appropriate to the development so that the improvements are completed prior to occupation of the development.**

4.229 Water supply and wastewater treatment are issues which cover a much wider area than Swindon Borough's boundaries, with both fitting more closely to utility company areas and river catchments. This Plan's proposals need to be seen within that wider functional context.

4.230 A key part of the evidence base for this Plan has been the Water Cycle Study. It was developed to provide an understanding of the needs which could arise for future water supply and wastewater treatment from the scale and possible location of development proposed. The study was undertaken to ensure that proposed growth does not adversely impact on the existing water cycle environment and that new water services infrastructure can be planned for and provided alongside new development in a sustainable, timely, phased and cost effective manner.

4.231 The main water and wastewater issues which have been explored in relation to the proposed growth in the Local Plan are:

- uncertainty over water resources environmental capacity;
- uncertainty about the capacity of the river systems to accept any increase in treated effluent without worsening water quality; and,
- the ability to supply required freshwater to new development.

- 4.232 Further exploration of these issues through the Phase 2 Water Cycle Study highlighted the following conclusions.
- 4.233 In terms of wastewater, additional infrastructure can be provided in the longer term which will allow development to proceed within acceptable environmental standards, with the exception of achieving "good ecological status" for the discharge of phosphate. Notwithstanding this, the study found that additional development of the scale proposed will not lead to further deterioration of current status of the watercourses in terms of phosphate. However, any action taken to improve compliance with phosphate targets will need to be managed and coordinated on a whole river catchment basis as part of the Thames River Basin Management Plan. Whilst outside the remit of this Plan it is likely, therefore, that a programme of water quality improvements to manage phosphate discharges, in line with the Water Framework Directive will need to be initiated.
- 4.234 The Local Plan is limited in the policies it can set out to help improve phosphate levels, with many actions being outside the remit of the planning system. However, Policy IN2 introduces a requirement to reduce demand for water in new developments, which will reduce the risk of a deterioration of standards. This policy criterion is also effective in helping to manage demand and increase water efficiency in line with sustainable building standards and to mitigate against the potential impacts of water extraction.
- 4.235 Thames Water has plans in place to provide the necessary sewerage infrastructure to increase capacity in line with proposed new developments, and to fulfil requirements identified by Ofwat.
- 4.236 Whilst there are still uncertainties about the availability of water for Swindon Borough, it is not considered by the Water Cycle Study findings to be a barrier to the Local Plan's proposed scale of and locations for development. Thames Water and the Environment Agency consider that the demand for water within the Severn and South West Oxfordshire (SWOX) resource zone, in the period to 2026, can be met with a combination of demand management measures and planned water resource infrastructure schemes.
- 4.237 In light of the study's conclusions, policy IN2 seeks to ensure that there is adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage treatment capacity to serve all new developments. Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate capacity both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing infrastructure. Where there is a capacity problem and no improvements are programmed by the water company, the Borough Council will require the developer to fund appropriate improvements which must be completed prior to occupation of the development.

- 4.238 The policy also provides for the development or expansion of water supply or sewerage waste/water treatment facilities, including sewage sludge, to normally be permitted either where needed to serve existing or proposed new development, or in the interests of long term water supply and waste water management (provided that the need for such facilities outweighs any adverse land use or environmental impact that any such adverse impact is minimised).

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.239 Additional information includes:

- Thames Water Resources Management Plan 2010-35; and,
- Thames Water Resources Five Year Plan 2010-15.
- Emerging Swindon Water Cycle Study Phase 2

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.240 Future wastewater treatment and water supply related to the provision of new development, will be addressed through the application of this policy and through:

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
- working closely with the Environment Agency and Thames Water (as the responsible utility service infrastructure provider for wastewater and water supply) to continue to assess, understand and monitor requirements;
- developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- the development management process; and,
- the implementation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

- 4.241 The Duty to Co-operate Statement also signposts where co-operation and collaboration with key stakeholders has influenced decision-making on the approach to water supply and wastewater.

Policy IN3: ICT and Telecommunications

- a. **All Information Communication Technology (ICT) and telecommunications proposals should be sited and designed in such a way that the appearance of the surrounding area is not adversely affected by the development. Proposals for ICT and telecommunications developments shall be supported provided that:**
- **the siting of the proposal and any other additional equipment involved with the development does not unduly detract from the appearance of the surrounding area or form an intrusive addition to the street scene; and**
 - **the amenities of any neighbouring sites are not unacceptably harmed by the proximity of the proposed telecommunication development; and**
 - **the colour and profile are sympathetic to the sites surroundings and the size of the development is kept to a technical minimum to ensure any adverse impact on the environment is minimised; and**
 - **there is justification demonstrating that all alternative sites and potential mast sharing opportunities which fulfil the functional requirements of the development have been assessed**
- b. **Development should where possible make provision to incorporate super-fast broadband.**

4.242 Information Communication Technology (ICT) and telecommunications equipment, especially mobile communications has fast become integral to the growth of many business operations as well as being widely used by individuals. It is therefore essential that everybody should have access to a wide range of services and have the opportunity to use the latest technologies. The National Planning Policy Framework also states that the development of high speed broadband and other communication networks can play a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services. To ensure this can be achieved the Local Planning Authority need to support the facilitation of telecommunications growth but must also ensure that any adverse impact to the character of the built form or physical environment is minimised.

4.243 This criteria based policy aims to provide a thorough assessment for all telecommunication proposals, whether they are prior approval applications or developments requiring full planning permission. It provides guidance for both new and replacement masts, whilst providing the flexibility to allow for an efficient expansion of the network and to meet the demands imposed by technological advancements.

- 4.244 Appropriate camouflage and screening may be necessary where the proposed development would cause an intrusive visual impact on the surroundings. Reasonable justification should be provided by the applicant to demonstrate why the chosen site is the preferred option. In order to ensure this has been reasonably considered, the Local Planning Authority requires evidence demonstrating that mast sharing has been investigated and that alternative sites have been explored. The onus is on the developer to demonstrate that the preferred site is the most suitable for the proposal; without sufficient information being provided the local planning authority have the right to refuse an application. They should also seek to demonstrate how the needs of the occupiers will be met.
- 4.245 The National Planning Policy Framework also requires the applicant to supply information relating to the outcomes of any consultations with local communities or other organisations which have an interest in the proposal. It is especially important to gain these views if the proposed siting is close to a sensitive location such as a school or hospital. In accordance with the Mobile Operators Association's (MOA) Ten Commitments, the proposal must be able demonstrate that it complies with the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) Guidelines for public exposure.
- 4.246 Fast broadband connection is an increasing critical factor for businesses and residents alike. Developers are encouraged to engage with broad band providers at the earliest opportunity to enable the highest possible internet connection speeds to be provided in new developments.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.247 Additional information includes:

- Mobile Operators Association's (MOA) Ten Commitments

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- Alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
- Working closely with the Telecommunications Industry and their representatives to continue to assess, understand and monitor requirements;
- The development management process; and
- The implementation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Policy IN4: Low Carbon and Renewable Energy

- a. Appropriate renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure which has benefits for local communities and the local economy will be encouraged and supported. Proposals for low carbon and renewable energy infrastructure, including large-scale freestanding installations, will be assessed under national policies and against the following:

- social and economic benefits (including local job creation opportunities);
- the impacts on, and benefits to local communities; and,
- environmental impact

Any heat produced as part of a renewable energy or combined heat and power (CHP) installation should be productively used on-site or linked to a district energy network.

- b. A locally delivered modular district energy network shall be enabled and supported which is:

- focused around areas of high and constant heat demand; and
- capable of incorporating additional low and zero carbon energy sources and generation technologies e.g. biomass, waste and combined heat and power.

- c. Energy efficiency and low carbon energy generation schemes brought forward by communities, or with major community benefits, will be encouraged and supported in principle.

- d. Proposals for wind turbines, including any ancillary buildings and structures, shall be permitted only where there is no unacceptably adverse impact due to noise, shadow flicker, amplitude modulation, reflected light or electronic disturbance on:

- the built and natural heritage; and/or
- the amenity of properties; and/or
- areas important for tourism or recreational use of the countryside

Visual impact shall be minimised through siting, landscaping, design and use of materials.

Energy Infrastructure

- 4.248 The UK Renewable Energy Strategy sets out to achieve 15% of energy to be generated from renewable sources by 2020. Policy IN4 aims to contribute to this and to facilitate a secure, sustainable and affordable energy supply for communities and businesses in Swindon Borough. The policy seeks to achieve an increase in the level of renewable energy generation in Swindon Borough through integrating renewable / low carbon energy in new development and providing a positive framework for considering large scale proposals for renewable/low carbon development.

- 4.249 Local sources of renewable and low carbon energy currently meet less than 1% of Swindon Borough's current energy demand (RegenSW). The development of local and more sustainable sources of electricity and heat is therefore a priority to support a long-term low carbon growth and secure energy future for Swindon Borough, whilst addressing wider climate change issues. The main large-scale opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy in Swindon Borough are likely to be from wind, energy from waste, biomass and solar.
- 4.250 Whether through direct connection to an energy scheme (e.g. district heating) or through access to a more sustainable energy supply and jobs associated with the low carbon economy, communities and businesses are well placed to benefit from renewable energy schemes. The policy aims to maximise community and business benefits of renewal energy development whilst providing a robust framework for assessing potential impacts.
- 4.251 The Borough Council has adopted a Sustainable Energy Framework to ensure that new skills and jobs are secured locally as we move to a low carbon economy. Linked to this, a business focused Energy Partnership, which brings together key stakeholders in Swindon, has been formed to ensure best practice is shared and development occurs in an integrated way.

District Energy Network

- 4.252 A local district energy network supplying heat, cooling, and electricity and utilising waste to energy, biomass and other efficient energy sources has the potential to deliver a sustainable and cost effective energy supply to business and residents in Swindon Borough. Greatest potential in the short term is within Swindon's urban area where heat demand is high from employment areas in South Marston, Stratton and Swindon Town Centre. In the medium to longer term the network could include additional heat sources and benefit existing communities in east Swindon, and support town centre regeneration.
- 4.253 An integrated approach to waste and energy is a significant opportunity in Swindon Borough. The Borough Council has a legal obligation to reduce its quantity of waste sent to landfill, with its existing landfill contract ending in 2016. Swindon Borough's approach seeks to minimise waste, maximise reuse, recycling and composting and the delivery of additional waste treatment capacity. The strategy aims to develop a waste to energy solution for non-recyclable municipal waste, which is a key opportunity to contribute to a more sustainable energy supply for Swindon Borough.

Community Schemes

- 4.254 There are growing opportunities for communities to benefit from sustainable energy schemes. Whether brought forward through neighbourhood planning or otherwise, such schemes are encouraged and will be supported in principle.

Wind Turbines

4.255 Wind turbines are a potential source of renewable energy in the Borough but should be in the context of their surroundings. The National Planning Policy Framework (para. 97) states that Local Planning Authorities should design their policies to maximise renewable and low carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily, including cumulative landscape and visual impacts. It adds that in assessing the likely impacts of potential wind energy development when identifying suitable areas, and in determining planning applications for such development, planning authorities should follow the approach set out in the National Policy Statement for Renewable Energy Infrastructure (read with the relevant sections of the Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy Infrastructure, including that on aviation impacts). Large scale wind-turbines (individual or collectively) are unlikely to be supported in close proximity to residential properties, but will be assessed on a site by site basis according to the height of the turbine and local factors such as land-form, orientation, vegetation and other buildings ¹⁶.

North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

4.256 The North Wessex Downs AONB is particularly sensitive to developments that are visually prominent, of an urban, suburban or industrial nature or are noisy, therefore within or in close proximity to the AONB, large-scale renewable energy developments are unlikely to be supported.

Additional Evidence Base

4.257 Additional information includes:

- The UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009)
- Wiltshire and Swindon Submission Waste Site Allocations Local Plan (2012)
- Swindon Borough Core Strategy Sustainable Development Policies (2009)
- Swindon District Energy Pre-Feasibility Study (2011)
- North Wessex Downs AONB - A Study of Landscape Sensitivities and Constraints to Wind Turbine Development (2006)
- North Wessex Downs AONB Position Statement on Renewable Energy (2012)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.258 The delivery of renewable and low carbon energy schemes shall be achieved through the application of this policy and through:

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;

¹⁶ England has no separation distance, although noise limits suggest a minimum separation distance of 350 metres for a typical wind turbine (Deleted companion guide to PPS22). Scotland has guidance suggesting 2km (largely on visual impact) and Wales suggests 500m between a wind turbine and housing, however neither imposes a blanket restriction on development within these distances. This footnote is for information only.

- development of a Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document setting out the detailed issues involved in determining applications for large scale renewable energy infrastructure including factors such as noise, emissions and visual impact;
- ad hoc advice on key emerging issues as necessary, due to the rapidly changing nature of related issues;
- working in partnership with key stakeholders such as the Swindon Energy Partnership, local communities, businesses, Parish councils and amenity groups;
- the application of the Swindon Sustainable Energy Framework which sets out a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of infrastructure through the formation of an energy partnership involving key energy users in Swindon Borough. Working in partnership with Forward Swindon, a further aim of the Framework is to put in place an approach to reap the benefits of the “green” economy by ensuring Swindon Borough benefits from jobs and skills related to renewable energy and environmental technology; and,
- the development management process.

Theme 6: Healthy and Supported Communities

The Infrastructure Needs theme's policies flow directly from and help to implement the following Strategic Objectives set out in Part 2 of this Plan:

SO2: Infrastructure Requirements
SO6: Community and Health
SO7: Transport
SO8: Culture and Leisure
SO9: Green Infrastructure

4.259 Theme 6 sets out policies to:

- protect existing facilities where there is a demonstrable need for their continued presence;
- provide new and / or expanding schools, colleges and higher education provision;
- increase opportunities to use and access sport, leisure, cultural and community facilities;
- ensure that required health and emergency service facilities are provided; and,
- to integrate and co-locate services and facilities in flexible, multi-use buildings which complement each other in terms of type of provision, requirements and physical space needs.

4.260 Facilities which are covered by this theme include education, sport, leisure, social care, faith, library, youth and other "cultural" facilities, as well as facilities for the fire, ambulance and police services. Together, these types of facility play a key role in creating and sustaining healthy, inclusive communities. Other, related facilities which also play a key role in the wellbeing of local communities include formal and informal green infrastructure spaces which are covered in Theme 7 "Natural and Built Environment" and particularly in Policy EN1: Green Infrastructure.

Key Issues

4.261 Education, community and health facilities and services are central to maintaining our welfare and a healthy lifestyle throughout our lifetime. From schools to care facilities, they are important to all sections and all ages of society.

- 4.262 The provision of these types of facility is key to the development of sustainable and inclusive communities, particularly given the scale of new development proposed in Swindon Borough. In turn, such provision will help to support the area's ambition to grow and sustain the local economy, with an accessible and high quality urban environment. The provision of green infrastructure as a key component of wider community provision, giving people the opportunity to access and use outdoor space and have active and healthy lifestyles, is covered in Theme 7 of the Plan. Whilst the retention and improvement of existing facilities is important, current gaps in provision and needs arising from new development will also need to be met.
- 4.263 The provision of such facilities is undergoing change, with less funding available since the start of the recession for the development of new public service buildings and providing the services themselves. New solutions are likely to be a key part of future provision including shared services, providers and buildings, particularly as the role of the public and private sectors in their provision changes. At the same time, the impact of the recession has meant that there is less funding available to be secured through developer contributions (section 106 payments) and other funding mechanisms used to provide necessary infrastructure and facilities arising from needs generated from new development.

Addressing the Key Issues

- 4.264 In order to support community facilities, the Local Plan introduces policies which require new facilities as a result of needs placed upon facilities and services arising from the additional resident population in the Borough. This will ensure that new development pays for new community infrastructure where necessary. Policies will also help to ensure that provision is made in the right places at the right time.
- 4.265 In addition to the policies in this Plan, the on-going Infrastructure Delivery Plan will play a key role in helping to identify, co-ordinate and deliver wellbeing facilities.
- 4.266 Although Swindon Borough is relatively prosperous there are challenges around health, education and economic inequality between communities. As well as a growing population, Swindon Borough is experiencing a large increase in the proportion of elderly residents, which presents a particular challenge in meeting that part of the population's health and social needs. It is also important to meet the needs of Swindon Borough's young population, the more deprived communities, the ethnic minority population and those with other specific needs.

- 4.267 Development will be located and designed in order to promote social inclusion and community cohesion. The physical environment cannot determine social outcomes; however it can contribute to and influence them. Facilities for social, community and faith purposes are important in promoting social cohesion. Such facilities can be in public ownership, including Parish/Town Councils, as well as community and voluntary groups. Such facilities should be accessible to all and well located to the population they serve.
- 4.268 The Active Swindon Partnership highlights significant health inequalities between affluent and deprived communities. There is a particular need to invest in deprived communities.
- 4.269 Part of the response to this issue and also in response to the desire for healthy and active communities in the Borough is dealt with in Theme 7 "Natural and Built Environment", where active and healthy lifestyles are supported through the application of policies which cover the provision of green infrastructure, protection and management of outdoor space and protection and enhancement of sports and leisure facilities. The provision of new and improved green infrastructure will help to increase opportunities to walk and cycle, thereby encouraging more sustainable travel choices, and promote good health and mental wellbeing.
- 4.270 The Borough Council is promoting the concept of Lifetime Homes and Lifetime Neighbourhoods. Lifetime Homes aim to ensure a home is flexible enough to meet existing and changing needs of most households, from young families to older people and those with temporary or permanent physical impairments. Lifetime Neighbourhoods are welcoming, accessible, and inviting for everyone, regardless of age, health or disability. They are sustainable in terms of changing climatic conditions, and provide housing, transport, service, public services, civic space and amenities which make it possible for everyone to take part in the life of the community around them.
- 4.271 There are 62 primary schools and 11 secondary schools within the Borough. As Swindon has expanded it has led to peaks and troughs of school place demand. At present there is significant pressure for places in the north of Swindon, the town centre and Old Town and there is an increasing surplus of places in the east of Swindon. There are 3 primary and 3 secondary special schools, supported by 12 Special Resource Provisions attached to mainstream schools.
- 4.272 Post-16 provision is supplied predominately by Swindon College and New College, complemented by Sixth Form at Ridgeway and St Josephs, Swindon Academy and Uplands. The proportion of Swindon Borough's residents with a degree or equivalent qualification is lower than the national average¹⁷ in part due to the lack of a university in the town.

¹⁷ 2001 Census

Key Evidence Base for Theme 6

4.273 Key evidence base documents for healthy and supported communities include:

- Active Swindon Strategy (2009)
- Cultural & Leisure Strategy for Swindon 2003-2013 (2003)
- Delivering Excellence for Swindon 2008-2013 (2008)
- Strategy for Major Sports Facilities Provision 2009-2026 (2009)
- Swindon Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2009) and Review (2012)
- A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2012-26: Revised Consultation Document (2011)
- Swindon Playing Pitch Strategy (2007)
- Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Risk Strategy for Swindon Borough 2006-2026 (2011)
- Policing Plan for Wiltshire 2012/13 (2012)
- Swindon Borough Council Library Strategy 2011 (2011)



Policy CM1: Education

- a. To meet the long-term primary and secondary school place needs the provision for the following should be made:
 - 11 new primary schools (or 22 new forms of entry in total);
 - 3 new secondary schools, expansion of existing schools and the use of projected surplus places (or 22 new forms of entry in total); and
 - Additional temporary primary and secondary school accommodation at the urban extensions to manage the temporary demographic peak in pupils
- b. To meet the long-term needs for post-16 education provision, the following will be enabled:
 - expansion of Swindon College and New College;
 - provision of a 13-19 year-old Specialist Vocational Centre;
 - provision of new 6th Forms at existing and new Secondary Schools; and,
 - a new university or enhanced tertiary facility in Swindon's Central Area.
- c. To meet long-term Special Education Needs (SEN) the following will be enabled:
 - the extension of existing SEN facilities;
 - provision of Special Resource facilities at new and existing primary and secondary schools; and
 - provision of a new 0-19 SEN facility as part of an integrated education campus for severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- d. To meet the long-term early years needs the following will be enabled:
 - the provision of nursery facilities at all new primary schools; and
 - the provision of facilities by the private and voluntary sector.
- e. Schools should be sited within the heart of their communities and be designed to provide safe walking and cycling access

- 4.274 The Community Strategy aims to ensure children and young people are safe and healthy, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. The aim is to create a 'learning town' at Swindon, with a seamless partnership of schools, a university, colleges and early years. This approach will develop the quality and skills of Swindon Borough's workforce ensuring business needs are met and to provide the best opportunities for young people in Swindon Borough gaining levels of achievement above the national average.

Schools

- 4.275 There will be a need for an additional 22 forms of entry for primary schools and 22 forms of entry for secondary schools to accommodate growth in the child population. Additionally the temporary peak in pupil demand must be managed without over-providing schools that would create a revenue burden and possibly lead to school closures in the longer-term. Temporary accommodation is proposed to manage this peak, which is anticipated to be up to 50% of the final school place need.

Post-16 Provision

- 4.276 Growth in post-16 places is anticipated both as a consequence of growth and to meet changing national requirements. In practice this will only apply to young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Based on Swindon Borough's existing NEET figures, this will be at around 600 pupils a year, or 6 forms of entry across the Borough. The long-term strategy for post-16 provision will be formalised through the Higher Education Strategy.

Special Education Needs

- 4.277 Swindon's Special Education Needs Inclusion Policy aims to give children and young people with Special Education Needs (SEN) every opportunity to reach their full potential in an inclusive environment. The strategy aims to maximise integration of SEN at mainstream schools where possible, largely through attached Special Resource Provision. However there will remain a need to educate children and young people with Severe Learning Difficulties and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties in a specialist provision.
- 4.278 A new 0-19 special school for severe, profound and multiple learning disabilities will be needed to accommodate the impact of housing growth, ideally co-located with a secondary school. There may also be a need to expand existing schools catering for children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties if demand increases.

Early Years Provision

- 4.279 For the purposes of long-term planning a nursery should be provided with every new primary school. The private sector will provide the remaining proportion of nursery facilities to meet market demand.

Additional Evidence Base

4.280 Additional information includes:

- Swindon School Place Planning Study: Future Demand to 2026 (2009)
- Swindon School Place Planning Study Update (2011)
- Children and Young People's Plan for Swindon 2008-2011 (2008)
- Swindon Borough School Organisation Plan 2010-2013 (2010)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.281 New education related development will be managed and assessed through the application of this policy and through:

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies identified in the "Evidence Base" above; Implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
- implementation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
- New Eastern Villages Supplementary Planning Document;
- new community development framework plans, design codes and masterplans;
- public funding where this can be secured, private or academic sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- the development management process; and
- neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or, further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy CM2: Active, Healthy and Safe Lifestyles

- a. Active, healthy and safe lifestyles will be enabled by:
 - increasing opportunities to walk and cycle and encouraging more sustainable travel choices;
 - increasing access to green spaces to promote health and mental wellbeing;
 - designing out crime and designing in health;
 - the provision of open space, sports and leisure facilities;
 - the protection and improvement in the stock of playing pitches; and,
 - the provision of cultural, health, fire, police, faith and multi-use community facilities.
- b. To meet demand, promote sporting participation and achievement, the following will be enabled:
 - measures to increase the capacity and quality of existing sports centres;
 - the provision of new sports centres;
 - the development of a network of sporting centres of excellence; and
 - the co-location of sports centres with schools.
- c. To improve the cultural offer in Swindon Borough the following will be enabled:
 - the development of a cultural quarter in Swindon Town Centre as a focus for cultural activities;
 - the promotion of Swindon Town Centre as a key centre for the arts and creative industries; and
 - the enhancement of tourism and cultural venues to help sustain their viability, particularly:
 - o The Wyvern Theatre;
 - o The Steam Museum;
 - o The Science Museum at Wroughton;
 - o The Swindon & Cricklade Railway; and
 - o The Wilts & Berks Canal.
- d. Proposals for the redevelopment of Swindon Town Football Club at the County Ground will be supported where they deliver enhanced facilities and do not conflict with town centre regeneration.

- 4.282 This theme encompasses not only health and social care but also the promotion of active and healthy lifestyles, community safety, inclusiveness and social cohesion. To realise a greater benefit from a coordinated approach to these issues, Swindon is adopting an integrated service delivery process.
- 4.283 Design will play an integral part in the delivery of successful facilities which encourage active and healthy lifestyles. In order to help ensure that the opportunities that new facilities can provide are realised and their full potential met, good design will play a key role in ensuring that facilities and environments are safe and designed in a way to encourage return use.

Sport and Activity

- 4.284 There is a good distribution of sports facilities across the Borough, but there are issues around age and capacity of some. Sports facilities in the Borough include Oasis, the Link Centre, Croft Sport Centre, Dorcan Recreational Complex, the Health Hydro, the County Ground and the Haydon Centre, as well as a range of tennis, golf and other specialist facilities. Some sport facilities are owned and maintained by Parish/Town Councils, and the private sector also has an important role in provision and offering choice.
- 4.285 Although physical activity levels within Swindon Borough are increasing, there is a high proportion of the Borough's population that is not achieving the level of activity required to impact positively on their health. The Borough Council aims to increase physical activity, promote it as part of everyday life and increase the capacity of facilities to support it. The Local Plan has an important role to play in creating an environment that promotes activity through high quality design, access to playing pitches and green space and creating opportunities to walk and cycle safely, and ensuring that existing facilities and opportunities are protected and enhanced.
- 4.286 Policy EN1 will also play a key role in meeting these aspirations, facilitating the provision of informal and formal green networks and open space.
- 4.287 Protecting and investing in existing sports facilities is the most efficient way of increasing capacity in the network. In addition, each sports facility will provide a specialism in pursuit of sporting excellence for the whole Borough. Community use of school and college facilities is an important way of increasing local access to both indoor sports facilities and playing pitches without great cost and supports the role of schools in the heart of their community. New facilities will also be needed to serve new communities and to increase access for existing communities.

4.288 The following have been identified in the Strategy for Major Sports Facilities Provision for Swindon as means of delivering a network of specialist sports centres:

- The re-development of the Oasis as a regional leisure facility at the heart of the network; and
- Increased capacity at local sports centres to establish a sporting specialism whilst continuing to serve the local community as follows:
 - an enhanced County Ground with a specialist focus on athletics and cricket;
 - new sports facilities at Oakfield with a specialist focus on rugby;
 - an enhanced Dorcan Recreation Complex with a specialist focus on netball and hockey;
 - an enhanced Esprit Academy with a specialist focus on gymnastics;
 - an enhanced Haydon Leisure Centre with a specialist focus on indoor sports;
 - An enhanced Croft Sports Centre with a specialist focus on football and indoor cricket; and
 - An enhanced Link Centre with a specialist focus on ice sports, swimming and indoor sports.

Leisure and Culture

4.289 Leisure and culture has a distinct role to play in Swindon's physical, economic and social development. Leisure and cultural activities include; the historic environment, arts and theatres, museums and galleries, leisure, sport and recreation and libraries. Examples are the Wyvern Theatre, STEAM Museum, the Science Museum at Wroughton, Swindon Art Gallery, and the Museum of Computers. Swindon Central Area, as the most accessible location, should be the main focus for this type of development.

4.290 The attractiveness and diversity of activities for residents and visitors will be crucial in driving regeneration, attracting inward investment and supporting recruitment and retention, especially of higher skilled and higher earning workers. Leisure and culture also has a role to play in community cohesion and social inclusion breaking down barriers and bringing people together. It also has a role to play in promoting Swindon's sense of identity and the image of the town.

4.291 Swindon Town Football Club plays an important role in the town's cultural identity, providing a source of inspiration with the potential to encourage sporting excellence. With the costs involved in redeveloping an ageing stadium, a commercial approach to redevelopment is recognised. The scale and mix of uses should not conflict with town centre regeneration.

- 4.292 The Swindon & Cricklade Railway is an important visitor attraction and heritage asset. The Borough Council is supportive of the Swindon & Cricklade Railway Society's ambitions to extend the track and provide a link to the Swindon to Kemble mainline where it is compatible with the delivery of the Cricklade Country Way, the role and amenity of the Mouldon Hill Country Park, the re-instatement of the Wilts & Berks Canal and the re-doubling of the mainline rail track.
- 4.293 The Science Museum at Wroughton is also an important visitor attraction and heritage asset. The Borough Council supports development in support of the museum activities as long as they are in line with the sustainability principles and in accordance with other policies in this plan as set out in Policy RA2.
- 4.294 Although Swindon Borough caters well for young children, the community have identified that investment is needed to provide activities for older children and young people, such as internet access, pool and table football and recreational spaces where young people can meet. Integrating facilities for young people with other community facilities will be key to their delivery.
- 4.295 This need for closer integration and multi-use of facilities and services across community, cultural, faith, voluntary and public sector services in particular is recognised in Policy CM3: Integrating Facilities and Delivering Services.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.296 Active, healthy and safe lifestyles will be promoted and leisure and sports opportunities delivered through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - implementation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
 - a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
 - an Eastern Villages Supplementary Planning Document;
 - new community development Framework Plans and masterplans;
 - public funding where this can be secured, private sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
 - the development management process; and,
 - neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or,
 - further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy CM3: Integrating Facilities and Delivering Services

- a. Increased local and integrated service delivery will be supported in conjunction with local communities, particularly:
 - flexible multi-use buildings in public and community ownership;
 - co-location of sports centres and playing pitches with schools;
 - agreements to use schools and other public buildings for community use;
 - co-location of doctor, dentist and pharmacy facilities; and
 - to share and integrate police, fire and ambulance facilities.
- b. To meet the long-term health, social care and emergency service needs in the Borough and the wider population the following will be enabled:
 - expansion of The Great Western Hospital as required;
 - enhanced and new social care and local healthcare facilities; and
 - a reorganisation of existing fire infrastructure and provision of new fire stations.

Emergency Services

- 4.297 The Fire Service provides cover from Central, Westlea and Stratton Fire Stations. Current operational effectiveness and response times for the Fire Service cannot be met at proposed growth areas by the existing distribution of fire stations. Therefore a redistribution of assets is proposed including the provision of new fire stations and co-location with other emergency services, particularly the Ambulance Service to manage growth. To meet future provision the following have been identified:
- shared emergency service facilities at Drove Ambulance Station;
 - a new fire station in the northeast of Swindon if required;
 - a new fire station in the southeast of Swindon if required; and
 - increased capacity of Westlea Fire Station
- 4.298 Wiltshire Police are likely to continue to operate from Gablecross Police Station supported by shared public service facilities where possible and appropriate.

Health and Social Care

- 4.299 The Great Western Hospital provides acute and emergency health care supported by a range of GP surgeries, dentists, optometrists and pharmacies. Swindon Borough is adopting an integrated approach to health and social care that aims to increase access to services, increase patient choice, provide more personalised services and deliver services more locally. The Plan aims to increase capacity and widen the scope of services provided at existing local health and social care facilities and to provide new facilities to support the increase in population as a consequence of growth. The NHS Trust has identified a need for further land to accommodate growth adjacent to the Great Western Hospital, which will continue to deliver acute and emergency healthcare. The PCT have indicated that the typical ratio is 1,750-1,850 patients per GP.

Multi-Purpose Community Facilities

- 4.300 The Borough Council and its public sector partners are committed to increasing access to facilities for the community, increasing value and the efficient use of public assets and delivering services more locally. Providing access to existing schools, their playing pitches and public buildings can create a local community resource without the need for major investment and provide a more efficient and cost effective way of utilising public assets. Co-location of local healthcare facilities will reduce costs and create a one-stop-shop for healthcare needs, and the co-location of ambulance, fire and police services will also help increase the efficiency and reduce costs for the public sector.

Social Inclusion

- 4.301 Homes and other buildings should be designed to overlook streets and spaces to reduce the fear of crime and opportunities to commit crime.

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.302 The delivery of integrated facilities and services shall be achieved through the application of this policy and through:
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - implementation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
 - a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
 - an Eastern Villages Supplementary Planning Document;
 - new community development Framework Plans and masterplans;
 - public funding where this can be secured, private sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
 - the development management process; and,

- neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or, further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.



Policy CM4: Maintaining and Enhancing Community Facilities

- a. **Proposals for new or extended community facilities will be supported, particularly where:**
 - the site is located within or adjacent to existing settlements;
 - it is accessible for all members of the community and promotes social inclusion, and
 - if possible they can be co-located with other community uses.
- b. **Proposals that result in the loss of established community facilities shall only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:**
 - commercial facilities have been genuinely marketed for the established use for at least one year; and
 - the facility is no longer economically viable for the established use, or there is a suitable and sustainable alternative to that facility nearby, or the facility is no longer required.

Provision of New or Extended Facilities

- 4.303 Proposals for new facilities or the extension of existing community facilities will be supported where they promote the principle of creating and/or maintaining sustainable communities, for example through the co-location of services on a single site. The development of new sites should be located within or adjacent to existing settlements, and be well located to the intended catchment population to maximise the opportunity to travel to these facilities by sustainable transport means, particularly walking and cycling.
- 4.304 For larger developments, more significant community facilities should be provided, facilities that would normally not have been delivered by the private sector such as the provision of swimming and sports halls and synthetic turf pitches.

Protection of Established Facilities

- 4.305 In order to create and maintain sustainable communities it is also important to retain existing community facilities, such as GP surgeries and community halls.
- 4.306 There continues to be increasing concern over the loss of existing community facilities, and particularly so in rural areas. Typical examples include small convenience stores, post offices and pubs, which can perform a vital function in terms of the economic and social well-being of such areas, although other facilities to which this Part relates may also be under threat during the course of the plan period.

4.307 Where a development proposal comes forward which involves the loss of an existing community facility, this may be appropriate where sufficient evidence is provided to demonstrate that there is either a suitable and sustainable alternative and/or that the facility is no longer required and/or that the facility is longer economically viable.

4.308 Community facilities include:

- Public Halls (including community/youth centres);
- Church Halls;
- Post Offices;
- Local shops within both urban and rural areas;
- Indoor and outdoor sports facilities;
- Schools and non-residential education and training centres;
- Places of worship;
- Libraries;
- Day nurseries/crèches;
- Health centres, clinics, consulting rooms (including GP surgeries and dental practices);
- Museums, art galleries;
- Public Houses;
- Leisure facilities;
- Open space;
- Emergency services;
- Cultural event space; and
- Cemetery/ burial ground.

4.309 This above list is not exhaustive and all proposals will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the importance of the facility to the local community.

4.310 During the lifetime of the Plan existing facilities may become no longer 'fit for purpose', through for example legislative requirements; or where it can be demonstrated there is no longer a need for that particular facility. In these circumstances then the re-use for purposes other than community use may be appropriate. The appropriate use for such sites will need to be determined on a site-by-site basis.

4.311 An established facility may become economically unviable, particularly where this involves a commercially run facility, for example a post office or pub. The Local Planning Authority would expect clear and genuine efforts to be made and demonstrated to market the premises for the established use, over a period of at least one year. In some instances, multiple use or investigation of assistance (e.g. new technologies, grants) may significantly improve economic viability, particularly where there is active community support to retain the facility.

Additional Evidence Base

4.312 Additional information includes:

- Wiltshire County and Swindon Borough Rural Facilities Survey (2008)
- Swindon Borough Sustainable Neighbourhoods Study (2009); and,
- Shaping Your Community Report (2011).

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.313 Maintaining and enhancing community facilities will be enabled through the application of this policy and through:

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the “Evidence Base” above;
- implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
- implementation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
- a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
- an Eastern Villages Supplementary Planning Document;
- new community development Framework Plans and masterplans;
- public funding where this can be secured, private sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- the development management process; and,
- neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or, further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Theme 7: Natural and Built Environment

The Natural and Built Environment theme's policies flow directly from and help to implement the following Strategic Objectives set out in Part 2 of this Plan:

**SO1: High Quality Sustainable Development;
SO2: Infrastructure Requirements;
SO6: Community and Health
SO9: Green Infrastructure; and,
SO10: The Natural and Built Environment.**

4.314 Theme 7 sets out policies to:

- protect, enhance and manage the natural and built environment
- ensure that the appropriate provisions are in place to deliver green and open space as part of new development.

Key Issues

- 4.315 The protection of and improvement to both Swindon's natural and built environment is important to those living in, working in and visiting the Borough.
- 4.316 In the context of the natural environment, Swindon Borough has a wealth of natural and "man-made" green spaces, open spaces and habitats. These spaces are part of our everyday lives: where we work, do business and learn, the way we travel around, where we play, celebrate and spend our leisure time. They play host to wildlife, are part of our cultural heritage and sit in a landscape shaped over the centuries. Their presence, cumulatively, contribute to providing cleaner air in the urban environment, help attenuate flood risk, and help mitigate against carbon dioxide emissions and the wider challenge of a changing climate.
- 4.317 Given its importance, high quality green infrastructure will need to continue to be integral to new development in the Borough, which will also need to respect flood risk areas and not exacerbate existing flood risk.
- 4.318 The need for improvement to Swindon Borough's built environment is captured through Theme 1 and whilst there is a need to make the town's urban landscape of much higher quality than exists at present, there are, nonetheless, heritage assets which will play a key role in any long-term urban renaissance. Heritage assets in rural areas can also play a key role in cultural, historic and landscape terms. Where heritage assets are not protected by national designations but are valued locally, policies within this theme can afford them some protection.

- 4.319 Valued green spaces and urban landscapes play a major role in enriching our quality of life, environment and the economy. They give us a sense of place and are important to our physical and mental health. The policies in this theme will play a key role in helping to ensure such value is recognised, retained and enhanced.

Addressing the Key Issues

- 4.320 Planning has a key role to play in helping to respond to many of these issues. Whilst the Local Planning Authority's and planning system's key role in helping to deliver positive change is as an enabler, other mechanisms, legislation and bodies (private and public sector) have key roles in the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment (including, but not limited to, the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage, private developers and the Council's Environmental Health team).

Key Evidence Base for Theme 7

- 4.321 Key evidence base documents for natural and built environment include:
- A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2010-2026: Revised Consultation Document (2011);
 - Swindon Borough Open Space Audit and Assessment Report (2004)
 - Swindon Borough Open Space Audit and Assessment Review (2011);
 - Swindon Biodiversity Action Plan (2005 and 2010);
 - Great Western Community Forest Plan (1994, 2002-2027);
 - Swindon Water Cycle Study (Phase 1) (2007);
 - Swindon Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008);
 - Swindon Borough Core Strategy Sustainable Development Policies (2009);
 - Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy (2009);
 - Swindon Municipal Waste Management Strategy (2006);
 - Swindon District Energy Pre-Feasibility Study (2011);
 - The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-14 (2009)
 - A Climate Change Action Plan for Swindon Borough 2006-2010 (2008)

Policy EN1: Green Infrastructure Network

- a. **Development shall protect and enhance green infrastructure and assets as identified in Appendix 5. This includes the requirement that development must provide for the protection and integration of existing trees, hedges and woodlands.**
- b. **Development shall design green infrastructure to maximise its connections and functions and ensure the sustainable maintenance and management of it.**

- 4.322 Swindon Borough is set within a beautiful landscape context including the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Upper Thames Vale. It includes sections of the Ridgeway National Trail and is part of the Great Western Community Forest. Swindon has a wealth of green spaces including Lydiard Park, Coate Water Park, Mouldon Hill Country Park, Stanton Park, The Lawns and the River Ray and River Cole corridors. There are a range of biodiversity areas within the Borough including farmland, water and wetlands, grassland, gardens and woodland. Protected species present include bats, water vole, white-clawed crayfish and great crested newts. There are 9 nationally protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) including two geodiversity sites, 91 locally designated County Wildlife Sites and 5 Local Nature Reserves.
- 4.323 Community consultation has highlighted the importance of green spaces to the Borough's residents. Swindon's green infrastructure will continue to play a key role in Swindon's sustainable growth and regeneration and it will sit at the heart of a far-reaching network of interconnected green spaces that:
- Connect and enrich biodiversity habitats;
 - Improve access, recreation and tourism opportunities;
 - Enhance landscape character and respect local distinctiveness;
 - Help meet the challenges of climate change; and
 - Realise the potential of historical and cultural heritage features to contribute to local identity and sense of place.
- 4.324 The Swindon Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy provides a comprehensive plan for the protection of existing and the creation of new green infrastructure in the Borough.
- 4.325 Where trees, hedges or woodlands are present on or adjacent to a development site a full report to BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – recommendations' will be required when considering the proposal. This will define the minimum distance between construction and retained trees and hedges which the Borough Council may increase where appropriate to account for site specific circumstances and to eliminate post development pressure on trees, hedges and woodlands.

- 4.326 Where it is apparent that trees are at risk the Borough Council will make Tree Preservation Orders to protect individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands.
- 4.327 The Green Infrastructure Strategy aims to realise a multifunctional and connected green infrastructure network throughout the Borough of Swindon, extending into adjoining areas. Within developments it is important to ensure that green infrastructure is designed in such a way that opportunities to provide connectivity at Borough wide and local level are taken forward. Consideration of sustainable maintenance and management of the green infrastructure must be provided at the application stage.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.328 Additional information includes:
- A Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2010-2026: Revised Consultation Document (2011)
 - Swindon Borough Open Space Audit and Assessment Review (2011)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.329 Green infrastructure will be delivered through the application of this policy and through:
- a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swindon 2010-2026 Revised Consultation Document (2011)
 - open Space Audit and Assessment Review (2011)
 - a Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document;
 - alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
 - an Eastern Villages Supplementary Planning Document;
 - new community development Framework Plans and masterplans;
 - public funding where this can be secured, private sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
 - the development management process;
 - neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or,
 - further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.
- 4.330 The Duty to Co-operate Statement also signposts where co-operation and collaboration with key stakeholders has influenced decision-making on the approach to the provision of green infrastructure.

Policy EN2: Community Forest

Development shall contribute towards the aims and objectives of the Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) in Swindon. This will be achieved by:

- **ensuring a net increase in tree cover through the planting of new woodland and trees;**
- **creating or enhancing habitats for biodiversity, including built structures in accordance with Policies EN1 and EN4; and**
- **ensuring access to local woodlands and opportunities for communities and businesses to benefit from GWCF.**

- 4.331 The Great Western Community Forest (GWCF) covers the whole of Swindon Borough and reaches into neighbouring Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. The purpose of GWCF is to create a multi-purpose forest throughout Swindon Borough from the centre of the town and into the surrounding countryside. Multi-purpose forestry encompasses the creation and use of a diverse natural and built environment including trees and woodland, grassland, wetlands, hedgerows, ponds and rivers. A Forest Plan (1994, 2002- 2027) sets out GWCF objectives to meet environmental, social and economic aims. The GWCF is an integral part of developing Swindon's green infrastructure.
- 4.332 A priority for the GWCF is to achieve a substantial increase in tree and woodland cover across Swindon. The range of functions and benefits trees provide are highlighted in Swindon's GI Strategy and include carbon capture, biomass production, and control of micro-climate in addition to landscape, recreation, biodiversity and other eco-system service benefits. The GWCF has an overall target of achieving 30% woodland and tree cover across the Borough although the target for increasing woodland cover in particular areas will depend on location and landscape character. The Forest Plan gives further detail. The contribution made to increasing tree cover will be dependent to the scale and nature of the development.
- 4.333 The GWCF aims to deliver biodiversity improvements other than those associated with trees. By seeking to create a mosaic of bio-diverse habitats within a framework of woodland and trees, the GWCF provides a basis for a landscape scale approach to nature conservation throughout the town and into the surrounding countryside. Swindon Borough's Green Infrastructure Strategy calls for the creation of a greater patch-work of semi-natural habitats across the town and, in that context, built structures can play an important role for example through installation of green roofs and green walls.

- 4.334 The GWCF aims to provide opportunities for the Borough's residents and businesses to directly benefit from multi-purpose forestry. Associated activities include:
- recreation, community events and activities and health promotion;
 - tourism, food production, wood products and the developing carbon economy; and
 - land-based education and training.
- 4.335 By seeking to integrate social, environmental and economic functions of woodlands, trees and other habitats, GWCF will play a crucial role in contributing to Swindon Borough's approach to developing green infrastructure. The spatial scale of GWCF provides the opportunity to link across authority boundaries into Wiltshire and Oxfordshire.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.336 Additional information includes:

- Great Western Community Forest Plan (1994, 2002-2027).

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies and strategies:

- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
- Community Forest Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004)
- the development management process; and,
- Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or, further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy EN3: Open Space

- a. All development shall provide or contribute towards public open space in line with open space standards as set out at Appendix 4, including:
 - children and teenager's play areas
 - outdoor sports facilities
 - general recreational areas
 - allotments

Residential development of 25 dwellings or more should provide open space on site.
- b. Public open space assets defined on the Proposals Map will be protected from development unless:
 - it can be demonstrated that alternative provision can be made locally of equivalent or better size, quality and accessibility; or
 - the proposed development is ancillary to the main use of the site and protects its public open space function; or
 - the proposed development is subject to an appraisal to ensure it does not adversely affect local needs and existing quality of open space within the area in accordance with the Council's Standards, as set out in Appendix 4 and in the most recent Open Space Audit and Assessment); or
 - the proposed development provides community benefit which outweighs the loss of open space.

Public Open Space

- 4.337 Public open space can be defined as primarily open land, whether green or hard surfaced, which has a recreational function and public access. This includes parks and gardens, public amenity areas, play areas, allotments, private and public playing fields and other outdoor sports provision such as bowling greens.
- 4.338 The value of open space is well acknowledged and the importance of protecting important areas is made clear in national guidance. The Local Planning Authority considers that important open spaces should be protected from development unless particular circumstances apply. There is considerable variation in the provision of open space across the Borough.
- 4.339 Whilst the Borough has a good level of access to a diverse range of open spaces, particularly to local and major open space, there is an unequal provision of open space within local communities. The Open Space Audit and Assessment Review highlights these shortfalls in local provision, and provides an assessment of quality and accessibility of open space. The Green Infrastructure Strategy highlights the requirement to improve quality of open space within the Borough.

- 4.340 The Borough Council acknowledges the particular importance and role of allotments, not only as open space but also in the production of local food and the health and social benefits they provide to the local community.
- 4.341 In exceptional circumstances the wider community benefits of the development, such as a school or community centre, may outweigh the loss of open space.

Additional Evidence Base

- 4.342 Additional information includes:

- Swindon Borough Open Space Audit and Assessment (2004)
- Swindon Borough Open Space Audit and Assessment Review (2011)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

- 4.343 The protection of existing and provision of new open space will be ensured through the application of this policy when considering proposals for development and through:
- Alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
 - Implementation of the adopted Swindon Central Area Action Plan;
 - Discussion with developers at an early (preferably pre-application) stage of requirements for open space;
 - A Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document;
 - An Eastern Villages Supplementary Planning Document;
 - New community development Framework Plans and masterplans;
 - Public funding where this can be secured, private sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
 - The development management process; and,
 - Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders which might be developed by Neighbourhood Forums and are then consequently adopted by the Council, and / or, further work on the detailed location and specification of individual development sites undertaken by the Council (through masterplanning, site allocations work, development briefs and so on) augmented by Parish and other Community Plans.

Policy EN4: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- a. **Development will avoid direct and indirect negative impacts upon biodiversity and geodiversity sites as identified on the Proposals Map. This will be achieved through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment. Damage or disturbance to local sites will generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts are:**
 - **unavoidable and reduced as far as possible or are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest, and**
 - **where appropriate compensation measures can be secured.**
- b. **All development shall protect and enhance biodiversity and provide net local biodiversity gain. Where this is demonstrably not achievable, mitigation and compensation measures may be acceptable.**

- 4.344 Biodiversity applies to the variety of life on earth and describes the richness and variety of all living things, from the tiniest microscopic organism to the largest tree. All development proposals have an impact in some way on a habitat and the species that use them. Specific contributions will be sought to improve existing biodiversity sites, as defined on the Proposals Map, and to create new sites to compensate for or mitigate the net biodiversity impact of development.
- 4.345 Biodiversity sites are varied both in scale and type. Sites with national designation, such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are protected nationally. In addition, North Meadow and Clattinger Farm, located within Wiltshire near Cricklade, are identified as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Local Nature Reserves are also protected and are of local importance. County Wildlife Sites are sites designated as being of local conservation interest.
- 4.346 It is vital that where development is proposed which would generate increased recreational pressure on protected biodiversity sites, suitable alternative provision is made to offset this impact. In addition, care should be taken in the design of development proposals to ensure compatibility between GI functions, for instance, where sustainable drainage systems are proposed.

Additional Evidence Base

4.347 Additional information includes:

- Great Western Community Forest Plan (1994, 2002-2027)

Delivery and Links with Other Key Policies

4.348 Habitats and species which could be affected by development proposals will be protected and enhanced through the application of this policy and through:

- the application of national and local habitat designations;
- alignment of proposals with other related (but non-planning) strategies and plans identified in the "Evidence Base" above;
- a Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document;
- public funding where this can be secured, private sector funding, developer contributions and / or the Community Infrastructure Levy;
- new community development Framework Plans and masterplans;
- the development management process; and
- nature Conservation Development Control Guidance Note (2007).



Policy EN5: Landscape

(Landscape Character and Historic Landscape)

- a. Proposals for development should ensure that:
 - the intrinsic character, diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape within Swindon Borough are protected, conserved and enhanced;
 - the design of the development and materials used are sympathetic to the surrounding landscape;
 - unacceptable impacts upon the landscape are avoided; and,
 - where other negative impacts are considered unavoidable, they are satisfactorily mitigated.
- b. In meeting the requirements of EN5a, applicants for development should demonstrate how they have taken into account Landscape Character Assessments and assessed the potential impact of the proposal upon the following attributes of the landscape:
 - existing landscape form, features, topography and character;
 - the contribution of the landscape to biodiversity and wildlife;
 - local geology and geo-diversity;
 - views, visual amenity and the landscape setting;
 - valuable historic and heritage areas and assets;
 - environmental amenity such as tranquillity & noise, pollution and light pollution); and,
 - the existing social, physical, economic and environmental roles and functions of the landscape at the local and strategic scale (for example as a place of cultural and leisure activity, living, employment and separation of settlements).
- c. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally recognised area of landscape protection. Proposals within the Borough which are within and / or about the North Wessex Downs AONB must accord with relevant criteria set out in the AONB Management Plan. Proposals outside the AONB should not adversely affect its setting.

4.349 Development proposals should take account of their natural surroundings, incorporating and harmonising with the surroundings and the local landscape features. It is essential that new development should help sustain and/or create landscapes with a strong sense of place and local identity and takes account of the following features:

- **Biodiversity** - locally distinctive and characteristic pattern and species composition of natural features such as trees hedgerows, woodland field boundaries watercourses and water-bodies;
- **Geology** - locally distinctive and characteristic landforms and topographical features throughout the Borough such as locally important views, visually sensitive sky lines, ridges and valleys;
- **History** - locally distinctive settlement patterns, building materials, and heritage assets;
- **Views both in and out** - visually sensitive skyline, geological and topographical features; and
- The **separate identity** of settlements and the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the urban fringe.

4.350 The North Wessex Downs AONB lies to the south, partly within Swindon. Its landscape is predominantly a chalk land landscape of scarp slopes and moulded dip slopes that reflects the underlying chalk geology. National guidance has confirmed that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs which have been confirmed as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. AONBs are protected under the existing statutory requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, specifically under Section 85 it is a legal duty for all relevant authorities to have regard to the primary purpose of AONBs to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area.

4.351 The North Wessex Downs Management Plan sets out a planning and management approach to the North Wessex Downs and should be used to inform relevant development proposals.

Additional Evidence Base

4.352 Additional information includes:

- An Urban Fringe Action Plan for Southern Swindon (2006)
- Swindon Borough Landscape Character Areas Supplementary Planning Guidance (2004)
- Conservation Area Appraisals