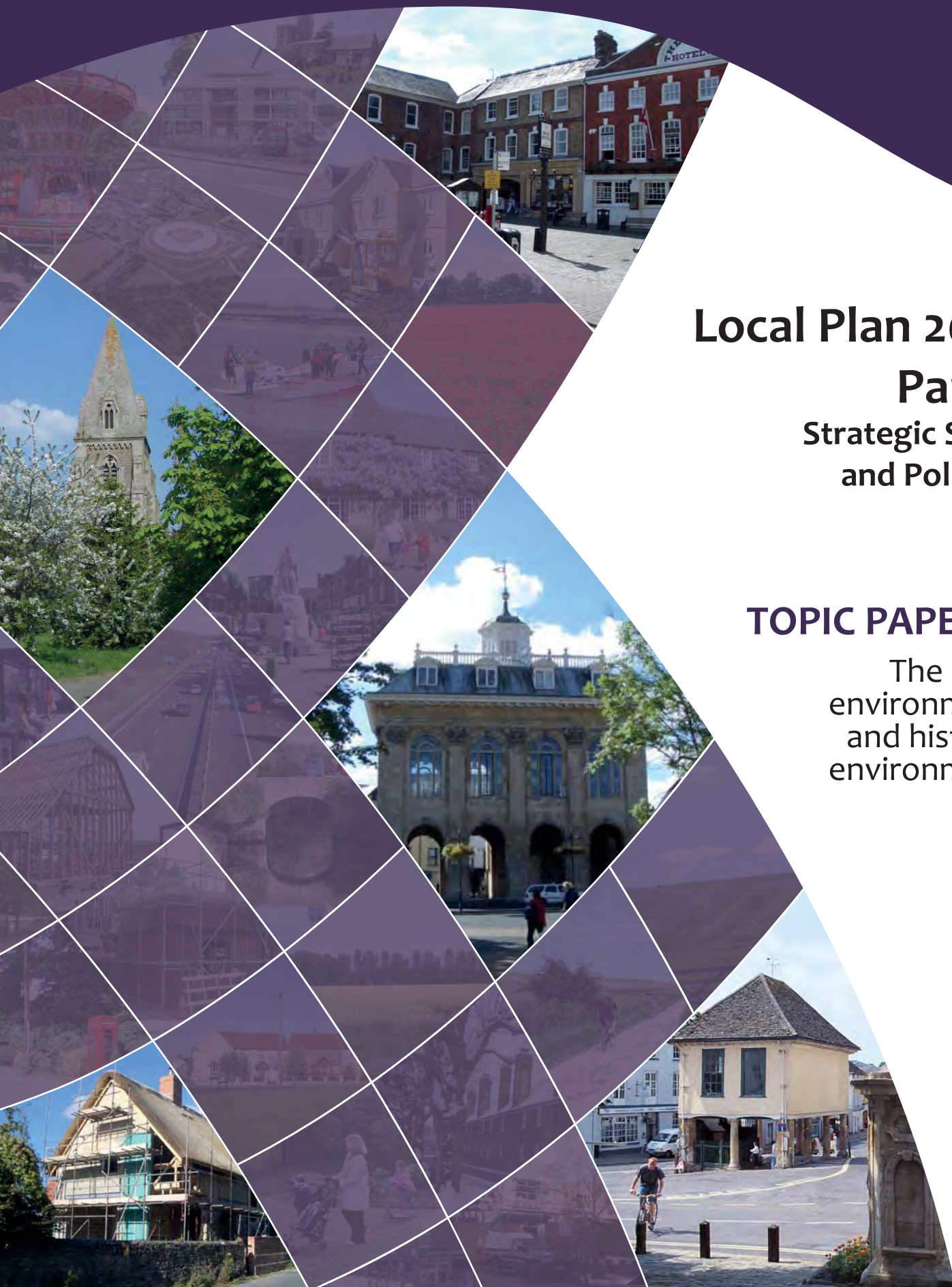




**Vale  
of White Horse**

*District Council*

**Publication Version  
November 2014**



# **Local Plan 2031**

## **Part 1**

### **Strategic Sites and Policies**

## **TOPIC PAPER 8**

The built  
environment  
and historic  
environment

This paper is one of 9 topic papers, listed below which form part of the evidence base in support of the draft Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (previously referred to as the Local Development Framework Core Strategy).

These topic papers have been produced to present a coordinated view of the evidence that has been considered in drafting the publication version of the Local Plan. It is hoped that this will make it easier to understand how we have reached our conclusions.

The papers are available from the council's website at:

[www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence)

#### Topic Papers

1. Duty to cooperate and cross boundary issues
2. Spatial strategy
3. Strategic Sites Selection
4. Housing
5. Supporting economic prosperity
6. Transport and accessibility
7. Responding to climate change
8. The built environment and historic environment
9. The natural environment

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This topic paper provides a brief summary of the evidence relating to the built environment and the historic environment, and includes a further examination of the Vale's heritage assets.
- 1.2 The evidence summarised in this paper has helped to inform the preparation of the draft Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1- Strategic Sites and Policies (LPP1), which was previously referred to as the Local Development Framework (LDF), Core Strategy.
- 1.3 The draft Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 will set out the strategic priorities for the district to deliver sustainable development. It will identify the number of new homes and jobs to be provided in the area for the plan period up to 2031. It will also make appropriate provision for retail, leisure and commercial development and for the infrastructure needed to support them.
- 1.4 Significant work has been carried out to inform the Local Plan, starting in 2007, and several stages of consultation have been undertaken with the public and stakeholders over the last few years. These stages have informed the preparation of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and include:
  - Issues and Options (November 2007) – which identified a range of options for how we should plan for the Vale
  - Preferred Options (January 2009) – which outlined the council's preferred approach for planning for the Vale
  - Additional Consultation (January 2010) – which consulted on a few additional policies relating to specific issues
  - Draft Local Plan Consultation (February 2013) – which consulted on a complete draft of the Local Plan Part 1, and
  - Housing Delivery Update (February 2014) – which consulted on an updated housing target for the district based on objectively assessed housing need identified in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing market Assessment and the strategic sites package needed to meet the new target
- 1.5 The Vale of White Horse district is rich in built, natural and cultural heritage. The very name of the district is taken from the figure cut in the chalk of the downs, thought to have dated back from the Iron Age. The Vale district has 52 conservation areas, over 2000 listed buildings, 8 Registered Parks and Gardens and 65 Ancient Monuments.

- 1.6 The purpose of this topic paper is to summarise key evidence that has helped inform the drafting of policies to be included in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 relating to the built and historic environment.
- 1.7 It is important that the options we develop for policies are tested through the Sustainability Appraisal (SA)<sup>1</sup> process. This is a legislative requirement of the plan making process<sup>2</sup> and has taken place alongside the preparation of the plan. The SA helps to identify a preferred policy option to inform the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 1.8 This topic paper is arranged into the following sections:
- Section 2: Policy review** – a brief summary of how any national, regional and local policies should influence the preparation of the local plan
  - Section 3: Evidence** – a short summary of any key issues identified from previous stages of consultation; any key issues identified at a community level; and any other evidence that should inform plan preparation
  - Section 4: Issues (challenges and opportunities)** – a brief summary of any issues identified from Sections 2 and 3 of the paper that the Vale Local Plan 2031: Part 1 will need to respond to
  - Section 5: Policy options** – an overview of those policy options which have been tested for possible inclusion within the local plan
  - Section 6: Recommendations** – the key findings for how this topic area should be addressed in the local plan

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<sup>1</sup> for more information on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) please visit:  
<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence>

<sup>2</sup> refer to legislation/national requirement

## 2.0 Policy Review

### *National policy*

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>3</sup> sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF addresses the need for the planning system to perform economic, social and environmental roles in order to promote sustainable development.

#### Historic Environment

- 2.2 The NPPF states that

*“Local planning authorities should set out the key strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This should include strategic policies to deliver... conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape”<sup>4</sup>.*

- 2.3 In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:

- Identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance<sup>5</sup>
- Contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment<sup>6</sup>
- Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.<sup>7</sup>

- 2.4 Paragraph 126 of the NPPF requires that all local planning authorities should set out in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment including heritage assets most at risk. It further sets out key principles local planning authorities should address when developing this strategy which include (emphasis added):

- **Sustaining and enhancing** the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation
- The wider **social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits** that conservation of the historic environment can bring

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<sup>3</sup> DCLG (2012) *The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*- available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>4</sup> National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 156

<sup>5</sup> NPPF, paragraph 157, bullet point 7

<sup>6</sup> NPPF, paragraph 157, bullet point 7

<sup>7</sup> NPPF, paragraph 17, bullet point 10

- Desirability of new development making a **positive contribution** to the **local character** and **distinctiveness**; and
- Opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the **character of a place**.

## Design

2.5 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, and it is recognised that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.<sup>8</sup>

2.6 Paragraph 57 of the NPPF states that

*“It is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes”*

2.7 Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that:

*“Local plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:*

- *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses... and support local facilities and transport networks*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation*
- *create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion, and*

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<sup>8</sup> NPPF, paragraph 56



- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.*<sup>9</sup>

2.8 Paragraph 59 of the NPPF states that

*“...design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should focus on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout, materials and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.”*

### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 2013**

- 2.9 The Government has recently published the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)<sup>10</sup> which complements the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and provides additional guidance for practitioners.
- 2.10 The NPPG contains a number of sections that cover a range of topic areas. The main factors that need to be taken into account for the built and historic environment are outlined below.

#### Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 2.11 The NPPG explains that conservation is an active process of maintenance and managing change. In the case of buildings, generally the risks of neglect and decay are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation. This is likely to require sympathetic changes to be made from time to time<sup>11</sup>.
- 2.12 In relation to the positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, this should recognise that conservation is not a passive exercise. Local planning authorities should identify specific opportunities for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets. This could include the delivery of development within their setting that will make a positive contribution to, or better reveal the significance of, the heritage asset.<sup>12</sup>

#### Design

- 2.13 The NPPG suggest the following issues are considered as part of planning policies and decision making:
- local character (including landscape setting)

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<sup>9</sup> NPPF, paragraph 58

<sup>10</sup> DCLG (2013) *The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)*- available at: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

<sup>11</sup> NPPG, Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 18a-003-20140306, Revision date 06 03 2014

<sup>12</sup> NPPG, Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 18a-004-20140306, Revision date 06 03 2014



- safe, connected and efficient street spaces
- a network of greenspaces (including parks) and public places
- crime prevention
- security measures
- access and inclusion
- efficient use of natural resources
- cohesive and vibrant neighbourhoods<sup>13</sup>

2.14 The NPPG recognises a well designed place as:

- being functional
- supporting mixed use and tenures
- including successful public and private spaces
- being adaptable and resilient
- having a distinct character
- being attractive
- encouraging ease of movement<sup>14</sup>

2.15 In terms of policy formation, the NPPG states that good design interprets and builds on historic character, natural resources and the aspirations of local communities. It recognises that viability is also an important consideration but that good design should be the starting point<sup>15</sup>.

## ***Regional Policy***

### **South East Plan, 2009**

2.16 Until recently, the overarching policies for individual regions across the UK were set out within Regional Strategies, such as the South East Plan, which includes Oxfordshire. However, the South East Plan has now been revoked and Local authorities are responsible for establishing their own strategies including the level of local housing provision in their area, in collaboration with neighbouring authorities within the Housing Market Area and identifying a long term supply of housing land.

2.17 The South East Plan (SEP) was extant until March 2013 and therefore was used to inform the development of the Local Plan 2031 until this point. When producing the policies for the February 2013 consultation an assessment of the SEP policies was made to ascertain any important considerations that might need to be taken forward once the plan was revoked.

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<sup>13</sup> NPPG, paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 26-006-20140306, Revision date 06 03 2014

<sup>14</sup> NPPG, paragraph: 015 Reference ID: 26-015-20140306, Revision date 06 03 2014

<sup>15</sup> NPPG, paragraph: 030 Reference ID: 26-030-20140306, Revision date 06 03 2014

- 2.18 A full assessment of the relevant SEP policies can be found in Appendix 1.

## ***Local policy***

### **Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011**

- 2.19 An assessment of the Local Plan 2011 policies has been undertaken to ascertain if any of them should be incorporated into new policies in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1, or if they should be saved for consideration to be included in the Vale Local Plan Part 2. The policies, both saved and unsaved, have been assessed for conformity with the Framework to ascertain the weight they can be afforded. The issues identified with this assessment were that Policy DC1 did not adequately cover specific urban design issues and placemaking. A full assessment of the Local Plan 2011 can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Vale of White Horse Communities Strategy 2008-2016**

- 2.20 The strategy recognises achieving a high quality historic and natural environment as a priority for the district. It states that the Vale Partnership is working to manage change in a way that will protect and enhance the Vale's distinctive natural and historic character. It expects local plans to contribute by:

- making sure that new development is imaginatively designed so that it can complement the special character of our towns, villages and countryside
- continuing to safeguard and enhance listed buildings and their settings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens and scheduled monuments, enabling them to be modernised and improved in ways that respect and enhance their character
- making sure the archaeological potential of sites and buildings affected by development is fully considered and where possible is preserved in situ or, if necessary, is fully recorded before development takes place, and
- making sure that new development retains important local landscape features and makes use of planting and landforms to help blend into its surroundings and to enhance biodiversity.

- 2.21 One of the priorities for the strategy is to create safer communities. This is to be supported through the local plan by planning new developments that reduce the possibility of crime and the fear of crime. Another priority is to foster a greater sense of community, which will be encouraged through the local plan by planning balanced communities

that offer a variety of different house types and sizes, including housing for families.

### **Oxfordshire 2030: Sustainable Community Strategy**

- 2.22 The Oxfordshire 2030 Sustainable Community Strategy<sup>16</sup> sets out the long-term vision for Oxfordshire's future. One of the strategic objectives of the strategy is to create healthy and thriving communities. This means providing communities with a good quality environment where crime and fear of crime are low.

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<sup>16</sup> Oxfordshire Partnership *Oxfordshire 2030 Delivery Plan- Delivering on our pledges to improve quality of life in the county*, available at:  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-2030>

## **3.0 Evidence**

### ***Summary of previous consultation stages***

- 3.1 The previous stages to the production of the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 were the Issues and Options Consultation (2007), Preferred Options Consultation (2009) and Additional Consultation (2010). The comments from these previous stages of consultation have been taken into consideration in preparing the publication version of the final Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1.
- 3.2 A brief summary of the key issues are identified below. In addition to the previous stage, further consultation on the draft Local Plan Part 1 was undertaken in February 2013 which consisted of consulting on the proposed Strategic Objectives for the area, as well as proposed strategic policies and strategic site allocations.
- 3.3 Additional consultation was undertaken in February 2014 in light of the published Oxfordshire wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), an evidence base document carried out by all the Oxfordshire authorities that identified each local authority's Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for their district. The consultation was a focused consultation on additional strategic site allocations, a revised housing target and revision to specific core policies, which included design.

### **Preferred Options (January 2009)**

- 3.4 At the Preferred Options consultation stage, comments generally supported the inclusion of a policy to protect the built heritage of the Vale. English Heritage commented that the thrust of policies should be expressed in terms of the natural, built and historic environment as not all the historic environment is "built" or "natural".
- 3.5 The Preferred Options consultation included particular comments from Thames Valley Police and Sport England on design. Thames Valley Police stated that high quality design should explicitly include the creation of communities that are safe. Sport England stated that 'Active Design' should be taken in to account when considering policies for the Local Plan.

### **Regulation 18 consultation: draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies (February 2013)**

- 3.6 At Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1, comments generally supported Core Policy 38: The Historic Environment, including from English Heritage. However English Heritage raised issues with soundness, in particular that, whilst

determining planning applications will be the main means through which the historic environment will be conserved and enhanced, they would like to see more positive, proactive measures included in the policy. Such measures could include a commitment to a programme of conservation area appraisals and management plans, considering the use of Article 4 Directions, actively seeking appropriate solutions to heritage at risk, compiling or reviewing a local list, assessing Grade II buildings at risk etc. It was recommended that Part 2 of the Local Plan (Part 2) specifically identifies any land where development would be inappropriate because of its historic significance

- 3.7 Another point raised by English Heritage was in relation to the evidence base for the historic environment, which it was said should be more robust and it should be clearer how it has informed the strategic option in the Local Plan. The evidence base could include historic landscape character assessments, extensive urban surveys for the main towns and Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Greater mention should be made of the importance of non-designated heritage assets.
- 3.8 English Heritage also recommended that the Council make close reference to the current Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project being carried out by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and commissioned by English Heritage.
- 3.9 In relation to design, Thames Valley Police recommended that the plan included a policy addressing community safety and crime prevention.

#### **Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Housing Delivery update consultation (February 2014)**

- 3.10 The Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Housing Delivery update consultation was a focused consultation that included the revision of specific core policies, including design. After the 2013 consultation the Council appointed an Urban Design Officer who re-worked the design policy.
- 3.11 The Urban Design Officer wished to improve the robustness of the design policy included in the February 2013 to better inform the determination of planning applications and specific major development proposals. As a result, the Council updated and strengthened the proposed design policy (Core Policy 37: Design and Local Distinctiveness).
- 3.12 In addition to the revised design policy, and reflecting experience with major planning applications, the Urban Design Officer recognised that the Local Plan should include a policy to ensure delivery of good design. It was a particular concern that design principles set out in an outline planning applications might not be robust enough to be enforced on Reserved Matters. Core Policy 37a: Design Briefs for Strategic and Major Sites was therefore written to ensure that the

design principles set out in Core Policy 37 were properly thought through, captured and realised.

- 3.13 The majority of the representations were based on the redevelopment of the West Way Centre in Botley, a current planning application, which had generated a significant number of responses.
- 3.14 English Heritage supported the recognition of the built and historic environment throughout the plan document, in particular Core Policies 37 and 37a. However they stated they would like to see acknowledgement or reference to the incorporation and celebration of historic features within the development proposals.
- 3.15 It was recognised that the adopted Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was not comprehensive enough to determine design principles, particularly in relation to strategic sites. Therefore it was decided that a new draft Design Guide SPD should be produced with the aim of setting out clear design principles to guide future development within the District and to encourage a design led approach to development across all types of development, not just residential.

### ***Identifying priorities at a community level***

- 3.16 A number of Community-Led Plans (Parish Plans) have been prepared by town and parish councils across the Vale district. These plans provide a useful summary of community priorities that have been identified at a local level through consultation. The main issues raised in these relate to expanding an existing conservation area or to preserving listed buildings and their settings.

### ***Other evidence***

#### **Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Character Assessment (2015)**

- 3.17 The Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HCLA) is a tool that provides a framework for broadening the understanding of the whole landscape and contributes to decisions affecting the landscape<sup>17</sup>.
- 3.18 The project, commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council and English Heritage sets out a detailed timetable for each local authority. The Council's position within this timetable indicates that at present, the information is unavailable for the Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

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<sup>17</sup> For more information please visit: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/research/landscapes-and-areas/characterisation/historic-landscape-character/>

- 3.19 However, Oxfordshire County Council was able to provide a focused study of the potential sites for allocation to inform the strategic site selection. The study didn't raise any significant issues that would prevent development of any of the sites.
- 3.20 It is anticipated that a full Oxfordshire wide Historic Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA) will be published towards the beginning of next year.

### **Oxford View Cones Study<sup>18</sup>**

- 3.21 This is a study prepared by Oxford City Council, Oxford Preservation Trust and English Heritage to assess ten view cones of Oxford's heritage from the surrounding countryside. It is intended that the study will provide an evidence base for addressing challenges to meet the needs of the developing city whilst protecting important views of the 'dreaming spires'. The study was consulted on between 13 June 2014 and 25 July 2014.
- 3.22 The ten viewpoints in the current Oxford Local Plan are examples of places from which Oxford can be appreciated in its landscape. These can broadly be grouped into:

They can be broadly grouped into:

- Views from the western hills - examples: Raleigh Park, Boars Hill and A34 Interchange at Hinksey Hill
  - Views from the north eastern hills - example: Elsfield
  - Views across the Thames floodplain - example: Port Meadow
  - Views from the eastern hills - examples: Doris Field Memorial Park, Headington Hill Allotments and South Park
  - Views from south-east Oxford - examples: Crescent Road and Rose Hill.
- 3.23 The views from the Vale of White Horse District are:
- Raleigh Park - with views from Harcourt Hill above North Hinksey
  - Boars Hill – one of the most famous and unspoilt views of Oxford
  - Hinksey Hill A34 Interchange – recognising the prospect of the city from a highways interchange, both modern and historic

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/OxfordViewsStudy.htm>



## Portrait of the District's heritage

3.24 The Vale has:

- 52 conservation areas
- Over 2000 listed buildings
- 8 Registered Parks and Gardens
- 65 ancient monuments

3.25 The Conservation Areas in the Vale were designated from 1968 to 1991. Five of the conservation areas have Conservation Area Character Appraisals, these are:

- Abingdon Northcourt
- Wytham
- East Hendred
- Bourton
- Cumnor

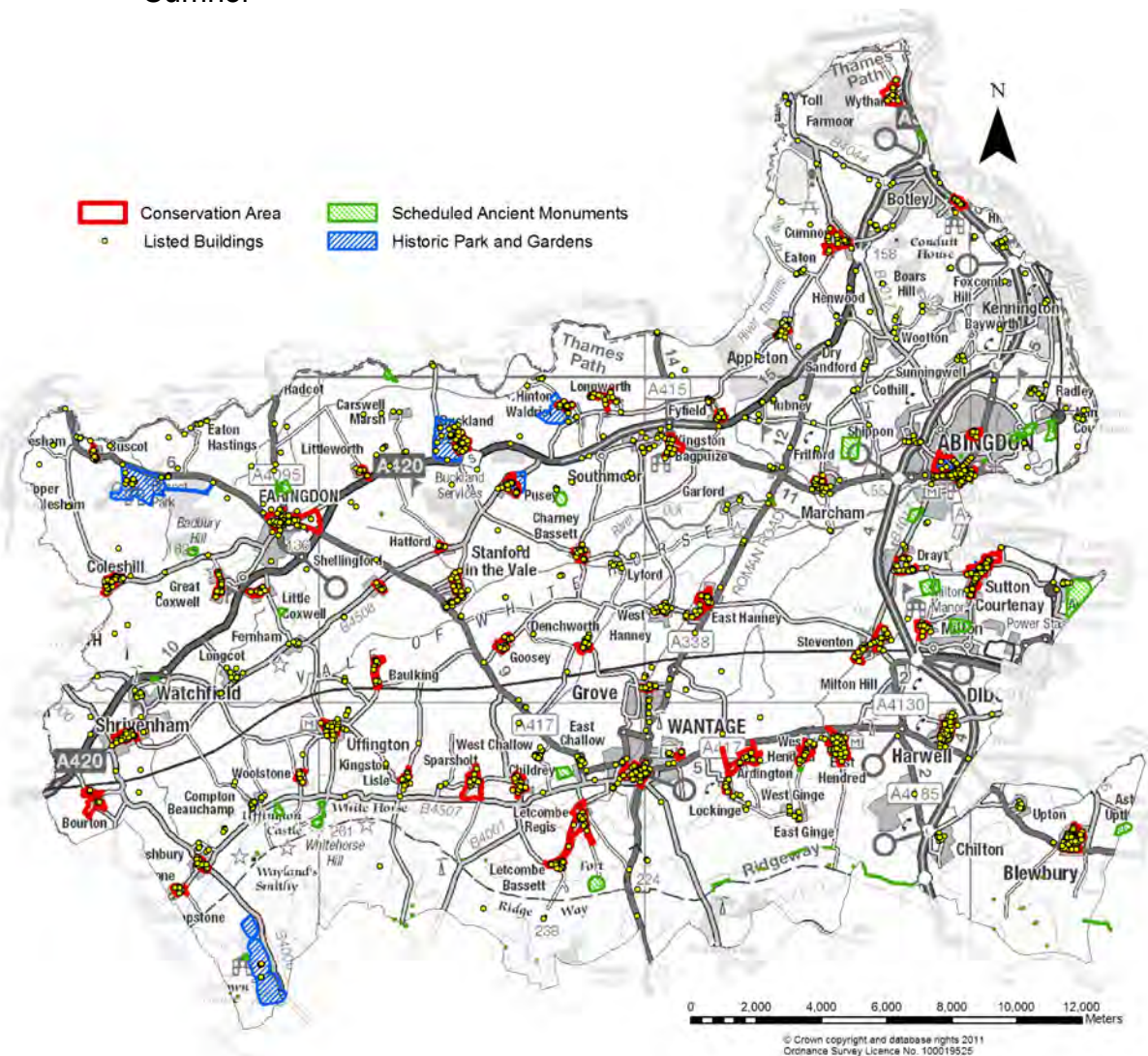


Figure 1: Map showing designated heritage assets in the district

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

- 3.30 The Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document<sup>19</sup> (SPD) (which will supersede the Residential Design Guide SPD 2009) groups the influence of the geological landscape on the built environment into five zones. These are as shown in Figure 2 and discussed in further detail on Figure E23 of the Vale of White Horse Design Guide (November 2014) SPD.



**Figure 2: Map showing character areas in the district**

- 3.31 These will be explored briefly below to highlight the variety of character areas apparent in the district.

### **Golden Ridge & Wooded Estate Villages**

- 3.32 This zone is the northern-most in the district abutting the River Thames. The majority of the settlements are set back from the river on higher ground along the Corallian Ridge line. Settlements are often based around country estates and large manor houses with gardens

designed to look out over the north-facing scarp. Settlements are typically limestone villages built of locally sourced, hard Corallian Ragstone, with pitched roofs, narrow gables and dormer windows.

- 3.33 The larger villages within this character area are: Cumnor, Kingston Bagpuize, Shrivenham, Southmoor, Watchfield. The former three of these include Conservation Areas.
- 3.34 Faringdon is the main town in this character area. It has a wider spectrum of building materials influenced by the arrival of the canal and railway, including brick, stone and limewashed and painted renders. The predominant roofing materials are blue and stone slates.

### **Eastern Thames**

- 3.35 This area differs from the previous character area largely due to its proximity to Oxford. It is a much more developed area with better transport links, which has led to the availability of a wider range of building materials. Many of the settlements are situated in low lying areas in close proximity to the River Thames. The Corallian limestone again has a strong presence, particularly on cottages in villages.
- 3.36 The larger villages in this area are: Kennington, Radley and Wootton. None of these villages contain a conservation area.
- 3.37 One of the largest settlements in this area is Botley, which sits on the edge of Oxford. The topography rises up from the Thames at Cumnor Hill, from where there are expansive views to the north. Although it was first settled in Saxon times, its major development has taken place since the 1930s and generally to the west of the ring road. The character of Botley includes a mix of styles, ranging from stone cottages and Victorian terraces to 20th century residential suburbs. Cumnor Hill extends to the west of Botley and links to the village of Cumnor. It has a distinctive low density, well landscaped character and includes a variety of substantial detached properties and a number of contemporary apartment buildings.
- 3.38 Abingdon on Thames is the largest town in the district but maintains its character as a historic market town. Brick is the predominant building material, although stone and render are also well used. The predominant roofing material is clay tiles.

### **Western Vale Villages**

- 3.39 As the original landscape of the Clay Vale was low lying and either heavily wooded or very wet marshland, it had relatively few settlements. These are generally smaller villages and hamlets, usually located on outcrops of gravel raised above the wet land. Although a clay vale, the proximity to stone has led to it being the predominant

building material. It is a rural zone with many wide frontage cottages and low thatched roofs.

- 3.40 The larger villages in this character area are:  
East Challow and Stanford in the Vale. The latter village contains a conservation area.
- 3.41 Grove is one of largest settlements in this area. It differs significantly in character from other settlements as it has been substantially expanded since the Second World War, although there are a number of older buildings concentrated around the conservation area. In the old village the traditional materials include stone, brick, render and timber framing. The roofing materials include blue slate and plain clay tiles, but also thatch and stone.

### **Central Alluvial Island Villages**

- 3.42 The 'island' villages were established in pre-Norman times on a gravel bed set in the marshy low lying Vale. This gave rise to the building of raised causeways to connect settlements as the surrounding lower fields had the potential to flood. A number of watercourses such as the Letcombe Brook, Land Brook and Childrey Brook flow through the area. These led to the building of a number of water mills that provided the power for the production of flour, silk and wool at different periods in history.
- 3.43 This area has the greatest mix of materials for walls and roofs with no one material predominating. The clay provided local bricks with stone and timber also being readily available nearby. Small wide frontage 1 ½ - 2 storey cottages are prevalent.
- 3.44 The larger villages in this character area are:  
East Hanney and Marcham. Both of these villages contain conservation areas.

### **Lowland Villages**

- 3.45 This character area stretches from Steventon in the west to Appleford in the east, and from Harwell in the south northwards to Abingdon on Thames. The Thames passes along the northern boundary of the area. The area is bisected by the A34 and views to the east are dominated by Didcot Power Station. The area west of the A34 is characterised by a feeling of openness.
- 3.46 This area is dominated by the use of timber framing and brick from the local brickworks. The orange/red Berkshire brick is often combined with blue or buff in detailing, strong courses or diaper work.
- 3.47 The larger villages in this character area are:

Drayton, Harwell, Milton, Steventon and Sutton Courtenay. All of these contain conservation areas.

- 3.48 This character area also includes the more modern part of Abingdon on Thames south of the River Ock.

### **Rolling Farmland Villages**

- 3.49 The villages in this zone are situated at the edge of the northern scarp of the North Wessex Downs. They are located along a spring line running through an area of Lower Chalk and Upper Greensand. The zone has the most predominant use of timber framing and brick, originally infilled with limewashed wattle and daub or early brick. However this was often replaced with modern brick or plaster.
- 3.50 The larger villages in this character area are: Blewbury, Childrey and East Hendred. All of these villages contain conservation areas.
- 3.51 Wantage, the second largest settlement in the Vale, is also located within this character area. Originally a Roman settlement, the town has changed dramatically over the centuries, particularly with the arrival of the canal and railways and, in recent years, with the redevelopment of parts of the town centre.
- 3.52 The Uffington Brick and Tile Company provided a large quantity of bricks for Wantage in the 19th Century, which enabled the development of Victorian red-brick properties. Traditional building materials in Wantage include orange brick (sometimes with blue headers) and render, with blue slate and plain clay tile roofs.

### **Chalk Villages**

- 3.53 This area is characterised by small settlements. The character of the villages is distinctly rural, typically comprising informal cottages and farmsteads, although some villages include large manor houses. The most prominent material is local chalk blocks set on a foundation of sarsen stones. Sometimes sarsen stones alone make up the walls. As these are extremely difficult to cut, they are always laid as whole stones in a random uncoursed fashion. Small 1 ½ - 2 storey wide frontage cottages with thatched roofs predominate.
- 3.54 Uffington is the only larger village in this character area. It contains a conservation area.

### **Upper Chalk Downs**

- 3.55 This area is sparsely settled and contains only one settlement of any size, Letcombe Bassett. The remaining built environment comprises a mix of farmsteads and the notable Ashdown House. The most

prominent material is timber framing infilled with either chalk, stone or render.

- 3.56 The north-facing escarpment of the North Wessex Downs is prominent from this character area. The Ridgeway, Britain's oldest road, runs along the top of the Downs and includes a number of nationally important archaeological sites, such as White Horse Hill and Waylands Smithy.
- 3.57 This character area does not contain any larger villages.

### ***Cultural Heritage***

- 3.58 As well as built heritage, the Vale is also home to a wealth of cultural heritage, particularly with its past literary connections. The village of Uffington is known for its proximity to the White Horse itself, but also for some of its former residents:
- Thomas Hughes, author of *"Tom Brown's School Days"* was born at the vicarage at Uffington in 1822. His books feature people and places from the village. The Uffington Museum was opened in 1984 and is dedicated to Thomas Hughes' memory. It is located in the old schoolroom that featured in *"Tom Brown's School Days"*.
  - John Betjeman, Poet Laureate, lived in Uffington from 1934 to 1945 at Garrads Farmhouse, located in the centre of the village. In 1951 he moved to The Mead in Wantage. Wantage was to feature in many of Betjeman's poems and his legacy remains today in the annual Wantage Betjeman Literary festival.
  - Thomas Hardy's final novel 'Jude the Obscure' was set in Oxford, which he called Christminster. Arabella's cottage in Letcombe Bassett is well known through its association with the novel. Hardy also refers to Wantage in the novel as Alfredston.

### ***Archaeology***

- 3.59 The Vale of White Horse area has a rich and extensive heritage that dates from the earliest prehistoric period to the present day. This includes the Downs, the Vale and the towns and villages. Many of the features that are still visible have had an impact upon the wider historic landscape and the history of the Vale.
- 3.60 The Downlands are home to such iconic prehistoric sites as the Uffington White Horse and Waylands Smithy longbarrow. The wider downland area is scattered with monuments of that period including barrows and hillforts, along with evidence of early cultivation during the later prehistoric and Roman periods. This appears to have covered



most of this upland area. Much of this can be seen from the Ridgeway, a prehistoric track that follows the crest of the downs.

- 3.61 The Clay Vale area supported extensive settlement from the prehistoric period onwards with settlements and farmsteads within a well organised rural landscape. There were also large funerary and ritual monuments including several cursuses and barrow cemeteries. During the Roman period villas were built that formed the heart of rural estates along with roads linking the settlements to the wider empire.
- 3.62 The medieval villages formed the heart of the rural life and their original pattern is still visibly discernable around greens, manor houses and the churches. Outside of the villages, ridge and furrow is still visible in places and shows the extent of medieval cultivation and its close relationship with the settlements.
- 3.63 The towns of the Vale all have extensive and attractive historic cores and all have played their parts in the history of the country. Abingdon on Thames supported one of the largest Abbeys in England and had an integral role in the Civil War. Wantage also dating to the prehistoric period was the birthplace of Alfred the Great. To the west, Faringdon with its distinctive folly on the site of a medieval fortification, also played a significant role in the Civil War.
- 3.64 In more modern times the landscape has been shaped by enclosure that saw the change from the open field system to the ordered landscape of fields and hedgerows that we see today. This has been further changed by the construction of the Wilts & Berks Canal and the Great Western Railway. More recent construction of airbases during WW II has had a further impact.
- 3.65 All these provide us with a unique and varied historical environment that is visible to us all and has been shaped by events and development for over four thousand years.
- 3.66 There are 68 Scheduled Monuments in the district; however the range of these monuments represents only a proportion of the archaeological record as found in the Historic Environment Record (HER). Therefore many other archaeological remains are not designated.
- 3.67 Oxfordshire County Council maintains the Oxfordshire HER, which contains information relating to the historic environment of the Vale and the rest of the county. It is used to identify areas of archaeological interest. These include sites where archaeological artefacts have been found and where there are likely to be potential archaeological constraints. The information highlights that the historic environment is an important and material part of the Vale, beyond the designated assets.

## Heritage at Risk

- 3.68 The Heritage at Risk Register<sup>20</sup> is a national list compiled and maintained by English Heritage. The latest register (published October 2014) shows there are eleven assets at risk in the Vale. Seven of these are Ancient Monuments, six of which are declining with extensive significant problems primarily caused by arable ploughing and one that is declining due to visitor erosion.
- 3.69 Three of the assets are new to the register as of 2014 and they are all places of worship in poor condition. However, Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been awarded to undertake the necessary repair work.
- 3.70 The final asset on the register is Milton Manor House, High Street, Milton, a Grade I listed building located in a Conservation Area. The site is privately owned.
- 3.71 From reviewing the Heritage at Risk Register it appears that Ancient Monuments are the assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.

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<sup>20</sup> English Heritage (2013), *Heritage at Risk Register*, available at: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/>

## **4.0 Issues (Challenges and Opportunities)**

4.1 This section summarises all of the issues identified in the previous sections and highlights any matters that will need to be addressed in the Local Plan. Each issue will be assessed to ascertain whether it is strategic or non-strategic and therefore whether it should be dealt with as Part 1 or Part 2 of the Local Plan 2031 or by another mechanism.

4.2 The key issues relating to the historic environment are:

- National policy requires that local planning authorities include strategic policies in the Local Plan to conserve and enhance the historic environment. This should contain a clear strategy for enhancing the historic environment; it is not a passive exercise.
- The evidence base for the historic environment needs to be more robust and should include studies such as Historic Landscape Character Assessments, urban surveys for the main towns and Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Greater mention should also be made of non-designated heritage assets. The Vale is lacking a robust evidence base for the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.
- The policy needs to be positive and proactive and not just focus on development management as a tool for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. The policy should enable an evidence base for the historic environment to be improved.
- Risks of neglect and decay are best addressed through ensuring that they remain in active use that is consistent with their conservation.

4.3 The key issues in relation to design are:

- Local Plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area and these should cover the areas set out in national policy and guidance.
- The Local Plan should include a policy addressing community safety and crime prevention. Policy DC3 of the adopted Local Plan 2011 already addresses community safety. This policy will continue to be saved and will be reviewed as part of Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

## **5.0 Strategic Policy Options**

- 5.1 This section draws conclusions from the previous sections to provide broad options for the direction of policies to be included in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Publication Version. In some cases there will not be any suitable options, because the evidence, or the NPPF requirements are such that there is only one way to proceed. Where options are identified, they will be assessed through Stage 1 of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA). These options are assessed against a 'business as usual' approach, which compares the policy options with the option of not producing a policy and relying on the existing policies and guidance.
- 5.2 The NPPF is clear that a strategic policy is required for conserving and enhancing the historic environment. In deriving the options for a policy in 2013, it was noted that archaeology was particularly at risk in the district and that an option for the policy was to focus on giving additional protection to ancient monuments. However, this would not reflect the NPPF, which gives weight to conserving and enhancing all designated assets according to their significance. Second, such a policy would be difficult to enforce.
- 5.3 On this basis, there are considered to be no reasonable alternative options to assess in relation to a policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- 5.4 In relation to reasonable options for a design policy, it is widely recognised, and is stated in paragraph 56 of the Framework, that good design is indivisible from good planning. Therefore a the plan must have a policy relating to quality of design that will be required from development. All development, regardless of size or use class should be of good design and therefore there is no option to limit it to a particular kind of development. On this basis, there are not considered to be any reasonable alternative options for a design policy.

## 6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 In order to create a historic environment policy that is sound, English Heritage has advised that it needs to be a positive strategy for the enjoyment of the historic environment, inline with national policy. Such a policy needs to have a wider remit than determining planning applications. Such a strategy could include production of Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans and local lists of non designated heritage assets. Such a policy would benefit the Vale as it is currently lacking an evidence base to support the historic environment as only five of the 52 conservation areas have Character Appraisals.
- 6.2 On this basis, it is recommended that a policy be included setting out how the Council will improve its understanding of the historic environment through producing an evidence base. Whilst such a policy should not focus on particular heritage assets, it should include reference to heritage at risk and the assets on the list.
- 6.3 The policy should also make reference to finding appropriate re-use for vacant buildings to ensure they do not fall in to decay.
- 6.4 The adopted Local Plan Policies 2011 relating to the historic environment (listed below) should continue to be saved to provide more specific interpretation of the strategic policy.
- HE1: Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development
  - HE4: Development within setting of listed building
  - HE5: Development involving alterations to a listed building
  - HE7: Change of use of listed building
  - HE8: Historic Parks and Gardens
  - HE9: Archaeology
  - HE10: Archaeology
  - HE11: Archaeology
- 6.5 National policy is also clear that Local Plans should contain design policies, including what such policies should cover. It is recommended that design policies reflect the information found in national policy and guidance. It is also recommended that design policies are clear on what information is required to support planning applications to ensure good design principles are carried through from outline permission to Reserved Matters.
- 6.6 The adopted Local Plan Policies relating to design (listed below) should be continued to be saved:
- DC3: Design Against Crime

- DC4: Public Art
- DC5: Access
- DC6: Landscaping
- DC7: Waste Collection and Recycling
- DC9: The Impact of Development of Neighbouring Uses
- DC10: The Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Development

## Appendix 1

**Table A.1: Policies relating to the built environment set out within the South East Plan<sup>21</sup>**

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the Framework	Identified Issues
BE1: Management for an Urban Renaissance	Provide significant improvements to the built environment focusing on design.	Consistent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Community Strategy as guide in drafting policies.</li> <li>• Ensure that plan contains strategy for enhancing the quality of life in each urban area that reflects Community Strategy.</li> <li>• Continue to work closely with key service providers in planning infrastructure.</li> <li>• Establish innovative management arrangements for town centres, business parks and residential neighbourhoods.</li> <li>• Develop public realm and open space strategies.</li> <li>• Design solutions relevant to context and build on local character including re-use of historic buildings.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for higher density and mixed use schemes.</li> <li>• Draw up design led SPD to help implement development briefs, design codes and masterplans.</li> </ul>
BE6: Management of the Historic Environment	Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment with nationally and internationally designated assets receiving highest level of protection.	Consistent	None – policy detail covered by Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment of the Framework.
CC6: Sustainable Communities and Character of the	Encourages a shared local vision that respects and enhances character of settlements and landscapes using high quality and innovative design.	Consistent	None – covered by Section 7: Requiring good design and Section 11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment of the Framework.

<sup>21</sup> Government Office for the South East (2009) The South East Plan/ Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East of England.



Policy	Summary	Consistency with the Framework	Identified Issues
Environment			

**Table A.2: Policies relating to the built environment set out within the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011<sup>22</sup>**

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the Framework	Identified Issues
DC1: Design	Development of high quality and inclusive design will be permitted.	Fully consistent	This policy does not adequately cover urban design issues and placemaking.
DC3: Design Against Crime	Provision must be made to increase safety and deter crime.	Fully consistent	None
DC4: Public Art	Developments of 0.5ha to include public art where to makes a significant contribution to appearance of scheme.	Fully consistent	None
DC5: Access	Proposals for development will only be permitted provided criteria for access are met.	Fully consistent	None
DC6: Landscaping	All developments will be required to include hard and soft landscaping.	Fully consistent	None
DC7: Waste Collection and Recycling	New developments must make adequate provision for the sorting, storage and collection of waste.	Fully consistent	None
DC9: The Impact of Development of Neighbouring Uses	Development will not be permitted if it would unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment.	Fully consistent	None
DC17: Advertisements on Listed Buildings (not saved)	The erection of an advertisement on a listed building will not be permitted if it would harm its character and appearance.	Not consistent	None - covered by other legislation.
DC18: Advertisements in Conservation Areas or the North Wessex	Advertisements in these areas will not be given consent if they fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.	Not consistent	None - covered by other legislation.

<sup>22</sup> Vale of White Horse District Council (2006) Local Plan 2011/ Adopted Plan July 2006.

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the Framework	Identified Issues
Downs AONB (not saved)			
DC19: Shopfronts (not saved)	Proposals for new shopfronts will be permitted taking account of respecting host building and the wider area.	Consistent	None – covered by other adopted Local Plan policies eg. DC1 and DC5.
HE1: Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development	Development affecting the setting of a conservation area will not be permitted unless it can be shown to preserve or enhance the area.	Fully consistent	None
HE2: Preservation and Enhancement: Implications for Development (not saved)	Demolition of an unlisted building that contributes towards conservation area will not be permitted unless certain criteria are met.	Not consistent	None – covered by other legislation.
HE3: Historic Buildings (not saved)	Demolition of a listed building will not be permitted except in the most exceptional circumstances.	Consistent, in part	None – covered by other legislation.
HE4: Development within setting of listed building	Development within the setting of a listed building will not be permitted unless it respects the characteristics of the building.	Consistent	None
HE5: Development involving alterations to a listed building	Alterations to a listed building will not be permitted if it is unsympathetic to the listed building or fails to retain features of special architectural or historic interest.	Consistent	None
HE6: Historic Buildings (not saved)	Where development is permitted the proper recording or re-use of the features of the building will be required.	Not consistent	None – covered by other legislation.
HE7: Change of use of listed building	Proposals for a change of use of a listed building will not be permitted unless it will not harm the building.	Fully consistent	None
HE8: Historic Parks and Gardens	Development within or in the setting of a historic park or garden will only be permitted where there is no significant harm to the site.	Fully consistent	None
HE9: Archaeology	An archaeological field evaluation is required where there are reasonable grounds for believing that important remains will be disturbed.	Fully consistent	None
HE10: Archaeology	Development will not be permitted if it would cause damage to the site or setting of nationally important	Fully consistent	None

Policy	Summary	Consistency with the Framework	Identified Issues
	archaeological remains.		
HE11: Archaeology	Archaeology should be preserved in situ. Where this is not possible, recording should be undertaken.	Fully consistent.	None

## Appendix 2: List of Conservation Areas

Conservation Area	Does Area have a Character Appraisal?
Abingdon Town Centre	
Abingdon Albert Park	
Abingdon, Northcourt	Yes
Appleton	
Ardington & East Lockinge	
Ashbury	
Baulking	
Blewbury	
Bourton	Yes
Buckland	
Buscot	
Charney Bassett	
Childrey	
Coleshill	
Cumnor	Yes
Denchworth	
Drayton	
East Hanney	
East Hendred	Yes
East Lockinge (See Ardington)	
Faringdon	
Fyfield & Netherton	
Goosey	
Great Coxwell	
Grove	
Harwell	
Hatford	
Hinton Waldrist	
Idstone	
Kingston Bagpuize	
Kingston Lisle	
Letcombe Bassett	
Letcombe Regis	
Little Coxwell	
Littleworth	
Longworth	
Marcham	
Milton	
North Hinksey	
Pusey	
Shellingford	
Shrivenham	

Sparsholt	
Stanford in the Vale	
Steventon	
Sutton Courtenay	
Uffington	
Wantage - Town Centre	
Wantage - Charlton	
West Hanney	
West Hendred	
Woolstone	
Wytham	Yes

## Appendix 3: List of abbreviations/Glossary

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Active Design		Active Design is a set of guidelines, outlined by Sport England, to promote opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and layout of development.
Code for Sustainable Homes	The Code	Provides a comprehensive measure of sustainability of a new home by rating and certifying new homes against nine categories of sustainable design: energy/CO <sub>2</sub> , pollution, water, health and well-being, materials, management, surface water run-off, ecology and waste.
Conservation Area		Conservation areas are designated by the district council when an area is recognised to have a special character or appearance worthy of protection.
Heritage Asset		A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
Historic Environment Record	HER	Historic Environment Records provide comprehensive information and evidence about the historic environment in a particular area.
Listed Building		Buildings are listed by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for their special architectural or historic interest.  Buildings that qualify for listing are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All buildings before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition</li> <li>• Most buildings between 1700 and 1840, though selection is necessary</li> <li>• Buildings between 1840 and 1914 of definite quality and character (including principal works of principal architects)</li> <li>• Important post-war buildings more than thirty years old and selected buildings of high quality between 1914</li> </ul>

		<p>and 1939.</p> <p>Buildings are classified in grades to show their relative importance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grade I - buildings of exceptional interest</li> <li>• Grade II* - particularly important buildings of more than special interest</li> <li>• Grade II - buildings of special interest warranting preservation</li> </ul>
National Planning Policy Framework	The Framework	This sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied at a local level.
National Planning Practice Guidance	NPPG	This is a web based resource providing detailed information to help practitioners interpret the National Planning Policy Framework.
Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest		The English Heritage 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England', established in 1983, currently identifies over 1,600 sites assessed to be of national importance. The emphasis of the Register is on gardens, grounds and other planned open spaces, such as town squares. The majority of sites registered are, or started life as, the grounds of private houses, but public parks and cemeteries form important categories. The emphasis of the Register is on 'designed' landscapes, rather than on planting or botanical importance.
Ancient Monument		'Scheduling' is shorthand for the process through which nationally important sites and monuments are given legal protection by being placed on a list, or 'schedule'. English Heritage takes the lead in identifying sites in England that should be placed on the schedule by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. A schedule has been kept since 1882 of monuments considered to be of national importance by the Government. The current legislation, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, supports a formal system of Scheduled Monument Consent for any work to a designated monument. Scheduling is the only legal protection specifically for archaeological sites.



Secured by Design		Owned by the Association of Chief Police Officers, Secured by Design is the corporate title for a group of national police projects focusing on crime prevention of homes and commercial premises and promotes the use of security standards for a wide range of applications and products.
Sustainability Appraisal	SA	The process of assess the economic, social and environmental effects of a proposed plan. This process implements the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.

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