Local Plan 2029
Part 1
Strategic Sites and Policies

Previously referred to as the Local Development Framework Core Strategy

**Vale
of White Horse**
District Council

Foreword

We are preparing a new Local Plan for the Vale which will help us make the right decisions about development in the district over the next fifteen years.

The Vale has two key strengths:

It is a beautiful rural district; our heritage sites and our villages define what makes it such a desirable place to live. We will ensure that they are protected and continue to make an important contribution to supporting our vibrant rural economy.

It also has a dynamic local economy and is home to Science Vale UK, one of the country's most progressive and thriving areas of cutting edge high-tech business and research.

The central task of our local plan is to provide a balanced strategy that supports growth including sufficient housing whilst protecting and enhancing local quality of life. We want to concentrate new housing development on sites in or around our larger towns and villages so that everyone has a decent place to live and work, with good access to leisure and community services. The key locations we are proposing are Grove, Wantage, Harwell and Faringdon.

The housing proposals in this plan are based on the South East Plan housing target, as these numbers are currently the best available for us to work with. We were expecting the Government to announce the abolition of the South East Plan and this has just recently been confirmed. When the South East Plan is abolished its housing target will no longer apply. [1]
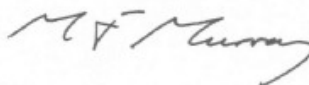
Over the summer a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment and other studies will become available that will help us make a local decision on what our future housing numbers should be. The housing figures in the final plan will be based on this evidence and may be different to those we are publishing now.

We are asking you to tell us what you think about this early draft of the Local Plan. To help explain the proposals in the plan we are holding a series of exhibitions and roadshows over the coming months.

The Vale is your home, so your opinions matter

Councillor Matthew Barber
Leader of the Council

Council Michael Murray
Cabinet Member for Planning Policy

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1   http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/February_2013/14-February/6.DCLG-Regional-Planning.pdf

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How to comment on this document

The purpose of this consultation document is to seek the views of organisations, local communities and individuals across the Vale of White Horse District on draft policies and proposals to inform the preparation of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029 Part 1 (LPP1).

The consultation runs from the 28 February 2013 to the 9 May 2013.

We are also publishing a series of supporting documents to accompany this consultation document. These will be available from the 28 March 2013 from the council website: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence

Specific questions are set out within the consultation document.

We would be very grateful for any comments either in response to the specific consultation questions or on the document more generally. Please make clear which policy/paragraph or diagram your comments relate to. It is also very helpful if your comments are clear and concise. If you wish to propose alternative wording for a particular policy or part of the plan, please include this in your representation.

An interactive website has been set up which enables those with access to the internet to respond to the consultation online. It would be very helpful if you are able to use this method to respond, as it makes it easier for us to record your views. The website can be found at: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/localplanpartone

A Local Plan newsletter called 'Vale Community' is also available via email. To receive this just type 'Subscribe' in an e-mail header to the following address: localplan@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Alternatively, written forms can be requested from the planning policy team, or downloaded from the council's website, where comments can also be added.

Development Policy Team

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Please submit any views to us by 5pm on 9 May 2013.

Local Plan Questions

The first set of our consultation questions are about the way we have prepared the plan and our Sustainability Appraisal. These are set out below. Our other questions are included at the start of each chapter.

Question 1

Do our policies provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should react to a development proposal? Please identify any that do not, suggesting how they could be improved

Question 2

Do you consider that the plan in its current form would meet the tests of soundness summarised below? Please identify any significant areas where you consider the plan unsound, indicating what changes or further work you suggest are required to make it sound.

To be sound, a plan must be:

Positively prepared – a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements

Justified – the most appropriate strategy of the reasonable alternatives

Effective – deliverable over its period

Consistent with national policy – enables the delivery of sustainable development meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Question 3

The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029 will comprise Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies, and Part 2 : Detailed Policies and Local Sites. Before Part 2 is adopted we will continue to rely on the saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 (adopted 2006) listed at Appendix F. Is there anything else that should be included in Part 1 of the Local Plan?

Local Plan Questions

Question 4

The Sustainability Appraisal accompanies the plan and will be published on 28th March. It appraises options for a number of policies and alternative strategic site options. Do you have any comments on the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal? Are there any other alternative options that should be subject to Sustainability Appraisal?

Our interactive website where you can answer these questions on-line can be found at: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/localplanpartone

Chapter 1: Introduction

This consultation document will inform the preparation of the first part of the new Local Plan for the Vale of White Horse District, to be referred to as the Local Plan 2029 Part 1, previously known as the Core Strategy.

The Local Plan 2029 Part 1 will set out the Strategic Objectives for the area and include proposed strategic policies and development site allocations to enable those objectives to be delivered.

The plan will be focused on delivering sustainable growth by building on the strengths of the district through:

Focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale UK area – a world-class location for science and technology-based enterprise and innovation:

- this will include the redevelopment and intensification of land in the Science Vale UK area, principally at the Enterprise Zone sites of Milton Park and Harwell Oxford;
- to improve the self-containment of the area by allocating land for strategic housing at Grove, Wantage, Harwell Campus and in Harwell parish east of the A34; and
- by delivering a comprehensive package of strategic and local infrastructure (such as new roads and community facilities) to ensure the delivery of balanced and sustainable development.

Reinforcing the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district:

- by concentrating new facilities over the plan period at the Market Towns of Abingdon on Thames, Faringdon and Wantage and the Local Service Centres of Botley and Grove;
- delivering strategic housing growth at Faringdon, and
- delivering strategic employment growth at Faringdon, Grove and Wantage to complement the SVUK growth and to provide jobs close to where people live.

Promoting thriving village and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character:

- by identifying an appropriate level of growth across the rural areas,
- by focusing development in the rural areas to the Larger Villages to help maintain their services, and
- by supporting modest growth in the smaller villages to help meet local needs and improve their sustainability.

Question 5

Do you have any comments on Chapter 1?

Our interactive website where you can answer these questions on-line can be found at: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/localplanpartone

Chapter 1: Introduction

The structure of this document

1.1 This consultation document is organised into a number of chapters which address the following:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to the overall document and the local plan process.

Chapter 2 – The Vale of White Horse Today and Key challenges

A brief overview of the Vale, including the identification of key issues across four thematic areas:

- building healthy and sustainable communities
- supporting economic prosperity
- supporting sustainable transport and accessibility, and
- protecting the environment and responding to climate change.

Chapter 3 – Vision and Objectives

Outlines the Spatial Vision for the Vale and Strategic Objectives for each of the thematic areas listed above, which when delivered together, will help to ensure the vision can be achieved.

Chapter 4 – The Spatial Strategy

This chapter sets high-level strategic policies identifying the number of dwellings and amount of employment land to be provided and how they will be delivered.

Chapter 5 – Sub-Area Strategies

This chapter identifies three policy sub-areas, which have different issues and characteristics, and sets out any policies for individual locations, including for example setting out the details of the strategic site allocations. The three sub-areas are:

- Abingdon on Thames and Oxford Fringe
- South East Vale, and
- Western Vale

Chapter 6 – District Wide Policies

This chapter sets out any strategic policies which apply across the Vale as a whole for the four thematic areas outlined above.

Chapter 7 – Implementing the Plan

Describes how a monitoring framework will be developed for inclusion in the completed Local Plan 2029 Part 1.

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is the Local Plan?

1.2   The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029 will provide a framework for how future development across the district will be planned and delivered in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It will replace the Local Plan 2011 and is made up of a number of separate parts. The most significant include:

- **Local Plan 2029 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies.** The Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) 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 2029. It will also make appropriate provision for retail, leisure and commercial development and for the infrastructure needed to support them. The LPP1 will set out the Spatial Strategy for the appropriate location of development across the district, and will allocate large scale (referred to as strategic) development sites. It will include district-wide policies to ensure that development contributes to meeting the Strategic Objectives of the plan, such as policies relating to sustainable construction and protection of the built, historic and natural environment.

- **Local Plan 2029 Part 2: – Detailed Policies and Local Sites**. The Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) will contain detailed planning policies to guide day-to-day decisions on planning applications. The document can also add detail to policies in Part 1 of the local plan, and identify and allocate supplementary and predominantly smaller (referred to as non-strategic) development sites. Allocations could include housing sites if this is necessary to help ensure the district housing target is met.

- **Adopted Policies Map.** This shows the sites identified for development and areas where particular policies apply. It will be updated as each part of the Local Plan is adopted.

1.3   The Local Plan prepared by the Vale of White Horse District Council, together with any Development Planning Documents (DPDs) relating to minerals and waste, prepared by Oxfordshire County Council, and any neighbourhood plans prepared by the community, will make up the 'development plan' for the district (Figure 1.1).The South East Plan also currently forms part of the development plan for the Vale. However, the government have signalled their intention to delete this tier of planning policy, and it is expected that this decision will come into force during 2013. All planning applications will be determined in accordance with the development plan, taken as a whole, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.4   Where neighbourhood plans are prepared, by either town or parish councils or neighbourhood forums, they will need to be in general conformity with the policies set out in the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 and any other strategic policies set out in future planning documents.

1.5   The council has published a Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is available on the council's web site[2]. This sets out a timetable for preparing the planning documents, which make up the development plan for the Vale.

1.6   This consultation document will inform the preparation of the first part of the Local Plan (LPP1). It is intended that the LPP1 will be adopted in 2014 and that preparation will then commence on the second part of the plan (LPP2) for adoption by the end of 2016.

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2   http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/lds

Chapter 1: Introduction
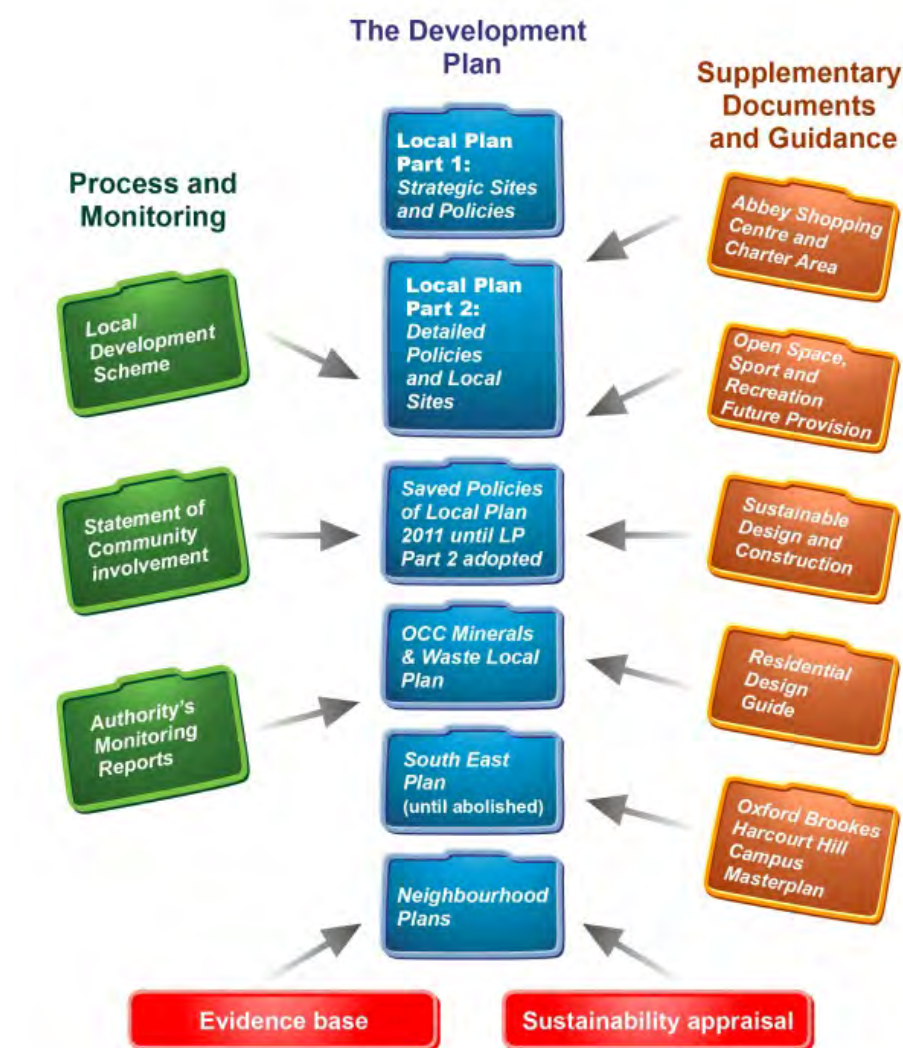
**Figure 1.1 :The planning documents that make up the policy framework for
the Vale of White Horse District.**

Our approach to preparing the Local Plan

1.7 The LPP1 is being informed by, and building upon, the previous consultation exercises. In particular, the Preferred Options Consultation published in January 2009, and the Additional Consultation, published in January 2010. Figure 1.2 summarises the key stages to preparing the LPP1 including the previous stages of consultation. Further details of each of these stages, along with a summary of the consultation responses, can be found on the council's web site:

http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/
planning-policy/local-development-framework/core-strateg-3

Figure 1.2 : A summary of the stages for preparing the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1.

An evidence-based plan

1.8 To help understand the issues facing the district, the council has gathered a range of background information, which is summarised in a series of topic papers. These topic papers are available on the council's web site and cover the following issues:

- the duty to cooperate
- spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy
- strategic sites selection
- housing
- economic prosperity
- sustainable transport and accessibility
- the natural environment
- responding to climate change, and
- heritage and landscape

1.9 In preparing the LPP1, we have taken account of national policies, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which the LPP1 has applied to develop locally distinctive policies.

1.10 The council has also taken account of the plans and strategies of other organisations and those produced at the local level, including the Sustainable Community Strategies for the council and for Oxfordshire, the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP), and the strategies and programmes of the district council, town and parish councils, neighbouring authorities and other organisations. Furthermore, the LPP1 will help to facilitate the delivery of many of the aspirations and objectives set out in these other plans and strategies.

A collaborative plan

1.11 The approach to preparing the LPP1 is fully consistent with the Localism Act 2012. In accordance with the duty to cooperate we are working collaboratively with local communities and stakeholders and consulted widely to ensure, as far as possible, the LPP1 will reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area. Where communities

Chapter 1: Introduction

are working to develop neighbourhood plans, these are also helping to inform the preparation of the LPP1.

1.12   The council has established Local Plan Working Groups in areas of planned strategic growth: Wantage and Grove; Harwell and Didcot. Through the Local Plan Working Groups we have sought to facilitate closer working with the town and parish councils for the areas most directly affected. For Faringdon, representatives of the neighbourhood plan steering group are participating in the officer group relating to the proposed strategic development site in the town. A Smaller Villages Alliance has also been established to enable the more rural parishes to directly influence the preparation of the plan.

An effective plan

1.13   It is important the LPP1 forms a realistic, deliverable and viable plan. We have worked closely with landowners and developers to ensure the proposed strategic development sites meet these objectives and a Local Plan Viability Study is being prepared alongside this consultation document [3]

1.14   Under our 'duty to cooperate' we have worked closely with organisations such as the Environment Agency, Thames Water and Oxfordshire County Council who are responsible for providing or managing key services including water resources, education and transport.

A sustainable plan

1.15   The LPP1 has been informed by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The SA considers the social, economic and environmental effects of the plan and is helping to shape the LPP1 and ensure that its policies and site proposals contribute to achieving sustainable development. The Spatial Strategy, the strategic site allocations and all LPP1 policies are being developed, refined and assessed against sustainability criteria throughout the preparation of the plan.

1.16   A Sustainability Appraisal Report[4] is being published on the 28th March 2013 to support this document; this will set out in detail how the SA has been carried out and how it has influenced the preparation of the plan. The SA report concludes that the proposals made within this plan will help to deliver sustainable development across the Vale. The report also outlines a range of mitigation measures that will help to ensure the proposals minimise any adverse environmental, social or economic impacts associated with the proposed policies.

1.17   The Council has also carried out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ensure the policies in the LPP1 do not harm sites designated as being of European importance for biodiversity. The HRA concludes that the policies and proposals in the Vale LPP1 do not have an adverse impact on any European nature conservation sites alone or in combination with other plans and programmes. A HRA Report[5] is being published on the 28th March 2013 to support this document, which will set out in detail how the HRA process was carried out and how it has influenced the LPP1.

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3   www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence
4   http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence
5   http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

This chapter looks at the characteristics of the Vale of White Horse today and identifies some of the key challenges and opportunities it faces, which the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 should address.

The Vale is a predominantly rural area located in south-west Oxfordshire and is bounded to the north and the east by the River Thames and to the south by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is an attractive and popular place to live and contains parts of the Oxford Green Belt.

The Vale is located between the larger centres of Swindon, to the south-west, Oxford, to the north-east, and Didcot, to the south-east. These centres are expected to continue to grow in the future and we need to plan effectively so we can benefit from this change.

The district includes the majority of the Science Vale UK area, an internationally significant location for innovation and science-based research and business. Within the Vale, this area includes the two Enterprise Zone sites at Harwell Oxford and Milton Park. These sites are expanding and will offer new jobs for local people, but also present challenges for which the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 should plan.

This chapter is arranged into four thematic areas:

- building healthy and sustainable communities
- supporting economic prosperity
- supporting sustainable transport and accessibility, and
- protecting the environment and responding to climate change.

Question 6

Do you agree with the key challenges and opportunities we have identified? Yes/No - if no what have we missed?

Our interactive website where you can answer these questions on-line can be found at: http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/localplanpartone

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Introduction

2.1   The district takes its name from the 3,000-year-old figure cut into the chalk downs near Uffington. It is a predominately rural district and covers an area of some 580 square kilometres (224 square miles; Figure 2.1).

2.2   The main settlements within the Vale are the three historic market towns of Abingdon on Thames, Faringdon and Wantage, which provide essential services for the surrounding rural areas. Botley[6], a mainly residential area on the outskirts of the City of Oxford, is located in the north-east of the district, and functions as a local service centre. There are more than seventy villages across the Vale, ranging from small hamlets, to large villages, which include the village of Grove that also functions as a local service centre. Beyond these, in the wider countryside, there are many isolated farmsteads and small groups of dwellings.

2.3   The Vale falls between the sub-regional centres of Oxford, located to the north-east, and Swindon, located to the south-west. Didcot lies to the south-east boundary of the Vale in neighbouring South Oxfordshire. All three centres are expected to accommodate major growth in the next decade and beyond. Although the town of Didcot mainly falls within South Oxfordshire, its associated development to the west of the town, extends into Harwell parish in the Vale.

2.4   We need to plan effectively for the Vale in partnership with our neighbours and have a 'duty to cooperate' on key cross boundary issues. Examples include:[7]

- planning effectively for housing, employment and infrastructure delivery for Didcot and the wider SVUK area in cooperation with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council

- providing a robust approach to meeting the longer term growth needs of the wider Oxfordshire area

- working with the Science Vale UK steering group and other partners to facilitate the delivery of increased skills and knowledge

- continuing to work with the Highways Agency to identify long-term solutions to help address congestion on the A34, and

- working positively with Swindon Borough Council to help ensure the proposed development to the east of Swindon does not adversely affect the west of the Vale and its rural villages.

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6   Botley consists of those parts of North Hinksey and Cumnor parishes south and east of the A420 not designated Green Belt and including the Cumnor Hill and Chawley locations.

7   Further information on cross boundary and duty to cooperate issues is set out within the Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence .

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Figure 2.1 :Vale of White Horse District and its wider setting

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Building healthy and sustainable communities

2.5   The Vale population in 2011 was 121,000, a rise of 4.6 per cent since 2001[8]. Projections for future rises in population, prepared by Oxfordshire County Council, show the total population for the Vale is expected to reach 138,743 by 2026[9].

2.6   In common with national trends, the Vale is expected to see an increasingly ageing population. In 2011, people aged over 65 in the Vale accounted for 18 % of the population and by 2026, this is expected to rise to 22 per cent[10].

2.7   People in the district generally enjoy a high standard of life and there are relatively low levels of deprivation. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 prepared by Central Government, the Vale scored very well and ranked 306 out of 326, with 326 as the least deprived local authority. There was only one area within the Vale, Abingdon Caldecott, that ranked within the 20 per cent[11] most deprived areas.

2.8   There were about 50,000 homes in the district in 2011. Average household size fell from 2.46 persons per dwelling in 2001 to 2.42 in 2011.

2.9   About 13 per cent of the housing stock (6,429 as at 31 March 2011[12]) is affordable housing. This is housing which is available either for rent or shared ownership below open market rates, either from housing associations or other registered providers of social housing. In 2012, there were still 3,333 households on the waiting list for affordable homes, albeit this includes aspirational changes, and only 1,202 of these households are in the categories who require housing[13].

2.10   Most of the Vale's community facilities and services, such as libraries, secondary schools, health centres and indoor leisure centres are located in Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Faringdon and Wantage. There are small hospitals in Abingdon on Thames and Wantage, and further and higher education at Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Kennington and Watchfield.

2.11   In common with national trends, some villages in the district have seen a decline in the number of shops and services. It is therefore important that some development is supported across the rural areas to help ensure local facilities, and the self-sufficiency of the rural communities, can be maintained.

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8   Census 2011 and 2001, ONS.
9   OCC GLA Household Projections, 2012 (these are interim projections that will be re based using 2011 Census data when available)
10   OCC GLA Household Projections, 2012 (these are interim projections that will be re based using 2011 Census data when available).
11   The IMD is calculated by dividing each district into Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), each of which has a population of roughly 1,500
12   DCLG Live Table 115: RSL stock by district as at 31 March 2011
13   Vale of White Horse Housing Register, Oct 2012

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Building healthy and sustainable communities- key challenges and opportunities

- providing sufficient new homes of appropriate type and size to meet the objectively assessed housing need

- providing affordable homes in towns and villages

- catering appropriately for the needs of an ageing population

- meeting the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling show people

- providing high quality and accessible services and facilities as part of new development when they are needed, so existing and new residents can enjoy a good quality of life, and

- helping to retain existing, and where appropriate, promote enhanced services in villages, and to facilitate the delivery of new services, to help improve the vitality and sustainability of rural communities.

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Supporting economic prosperity

2.12   The Vale benefits from a very strong knowledge-based economy and has almost 5,400 businesses located in the district[14]. The Vale's workforce is highly skilled with a higher than average proportion of managers, professionals and associate professionals[15]. Levels of unemployment in the Vale are also relatively low at less than half the national average.[16]. Furthermore, the Vale is consistently ranked within the top 10 per cent of districts in the UK Competitiveness Index.[17].

2.13   The strategic focus for economic and employment growth in the district is the Science Vale UK (SVUK) area, which extends east-west from Culham and Didcot to Wantage and Grove (Figure 2.2). Science Vale UK is an internationally significant location for innovation and science based research and business. It is home to around 13 per cent of research and development jobs within the south-east[18]. The two key Science Vale UK business sites within the Vale are the science and innovation campus at Harwell Oxford and the prestigious business area at Milton Park, which were awarded Enterprise Zone status in 2011.

2.14   Harwell Oxford and Milton Park are expected to grow substantially during the plan period and offer the potential to deliver new jobs over the next 15 years[19]. The Enterprise Zone designation provides a significant boost to these areas and will provide a combination of financial incentives and other support, including access to super-fast broadband, to encourage new business growth. A Local Development Order (LDO) has been adopted for the Milton Park site, and one may be developed for the Harwell Oxford site. The LDO's will provide a simplified planning framework to help make it easier to deliver new development at these sites more quickly.

2.15   The Vale's labour force is highly skilled with a higher than average proportion of residents qualified to NVQ level 4 or above. The ratio of jobs in the district to residents in employment is 88 per cent, compared to the national average of 78 per cent[20]. This increases the opportunity for Vale residents to work close to where they live.

2.16   Oxfordshire County Council is leading work to help support businesses and improve the skills base within the county. The Oxfordshire Skills Needs Analysis has identified a number of priorities, including providing more opportunities for apprentices. The Science Vale UK Skills Strategy is also designed to help address this issue and involves partnership working with businesses and education providers across the Science Vale UK area.

2.17   Balancing housing and employment growth can help to ensure that the future labour force matches the requirements of businesses, reduces the need for in-commuting and provides a more sustainable pattern of development. However, calculations of the size of the labour force up to 2029 must take into account the expected changes in age characteristics. For example, from 2001 to 2016, the total population in the Vale is expected to increase by 9.8 per cent, whereas the workforce population is forecast to increase by the slower rate of 7.2 per cent,[21] albeit retirement ages are expected to rise.

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14   ONS Business Demography 2010 dataset.
15   Labour Market Profile: VWHDC (www.nomisweb.co.uk)
16   Based on Job Seekers Allowance data
17   http://www.cforic.org/downloads.php
18   http://www.sciencevale.com
19   URS (2012) Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review Update
20   URS (2012) Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review Update
21   URS (2012). Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review Update.

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

2.18   Access to superfast broadband has become increasingly important in recent years and approximately 65 per cent of addresses in Oxfordshire are currently within the coverage of superfast (over 24 Mbit/s) broadband networks[22]. The broadband for Oxfordshire project aims to bring these higher speeds to Oxfordshire by 2015, with work focusing on areas with poor connectivity[23].The Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan identifies the provision of high speed broadband access as a strategic infrastructure project to support growth in the Science Vale UK area.[24]

2.19   In addition to the strategically important Enterprise Zone sites, there are a number of other notable employers and employment locations in the district. These are mostly located in and around the district's main towns and service centres, including Williams F1 at Grove, and the Abingdon Science Park. Significant additional land suitable for business and employment will become available from 2017/18 as the Didcot A Power Station is decommissioned. More locally based employment needs are also met by a number of smaller employment centres located throughout the district, which help to maintain the sustainability of the area.

2.20   The tourism industry generated approximately £202 million worth of income for local businesses in the Vale in 2011, representing a marginal increase of 0.7 per cent in total tourism value since 2010[25].This tourism-related expenditure is estimated to have supported 2,420 full time equivalent jobs spread across a wide range of sectors from catering and retail to public service jobs such as in local government. Once part-time and seasonal employment is added, the total number of jobs supported by tourism-related expenditure rises to 3,346 actual jobs, approximately 5 per cent of the total jobs in the district in 2011[26]. There is anecdotal evidence that there is a shortage of hotel accommodation across southern Oxfordshire, and it is anticipated that growth in the Enterprise Zone will stimulate demand for conferencing and business tourism.

2.21   The district's market towns and other service centres provide very good facilities for local shopping. They complement, but also face competition from, the higher order regional centres of Oxford, Swindon and Reading, which many people visit for their main comparison shopping. The higher order centres also offer a vibrant evening economy, providing a diverse range of facilities such as cinemas and theatres and therefore the comparatively smaller settlements in the Vale find it difficult to compete for these commercial leisure uses.

2.22   Furthermore, some shopping centres built in the Vale in the late 1960s and early 1970s have been no longer able to meet the expectations of today's retailers and shoppers. Plans to re-vitalise the Vale's retail offer have already been completed in Wantage Limborough Road and the Abbey Shopping Centre in Abingdon on Thames. There are plans to redevelop the Charter in Abingdon on Thames and also the West Way shopping centre in Botley which would significantly extend the retail offer in both of these settlements.

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22   UK Fixed Broadband Data 2012, available online at: http://maps.ofcom.org.uk/broadband/broadband-data/
23   Further information about the Broadband for Oxfordshire project is available online at:
      http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/better-broadband-plan-oxfordshire
24   Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan (2010); available online at: http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Direct/OxfordshireLocalInvestmentPlan.pdf Oxfordshire Local Investment Plan (2010)
25   The Economic Impact of Tourism on Vale of White Horse (2011), available online at:
      http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Vale%20Tourism%20Economic%20Impact%20Estimates%202011_1.pdf The Economic Impact of Tourism on the Vale of White Horse (2011)
26   The Economic Impact of Tourism on Vale of Horse (2011); available from the link above.

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges
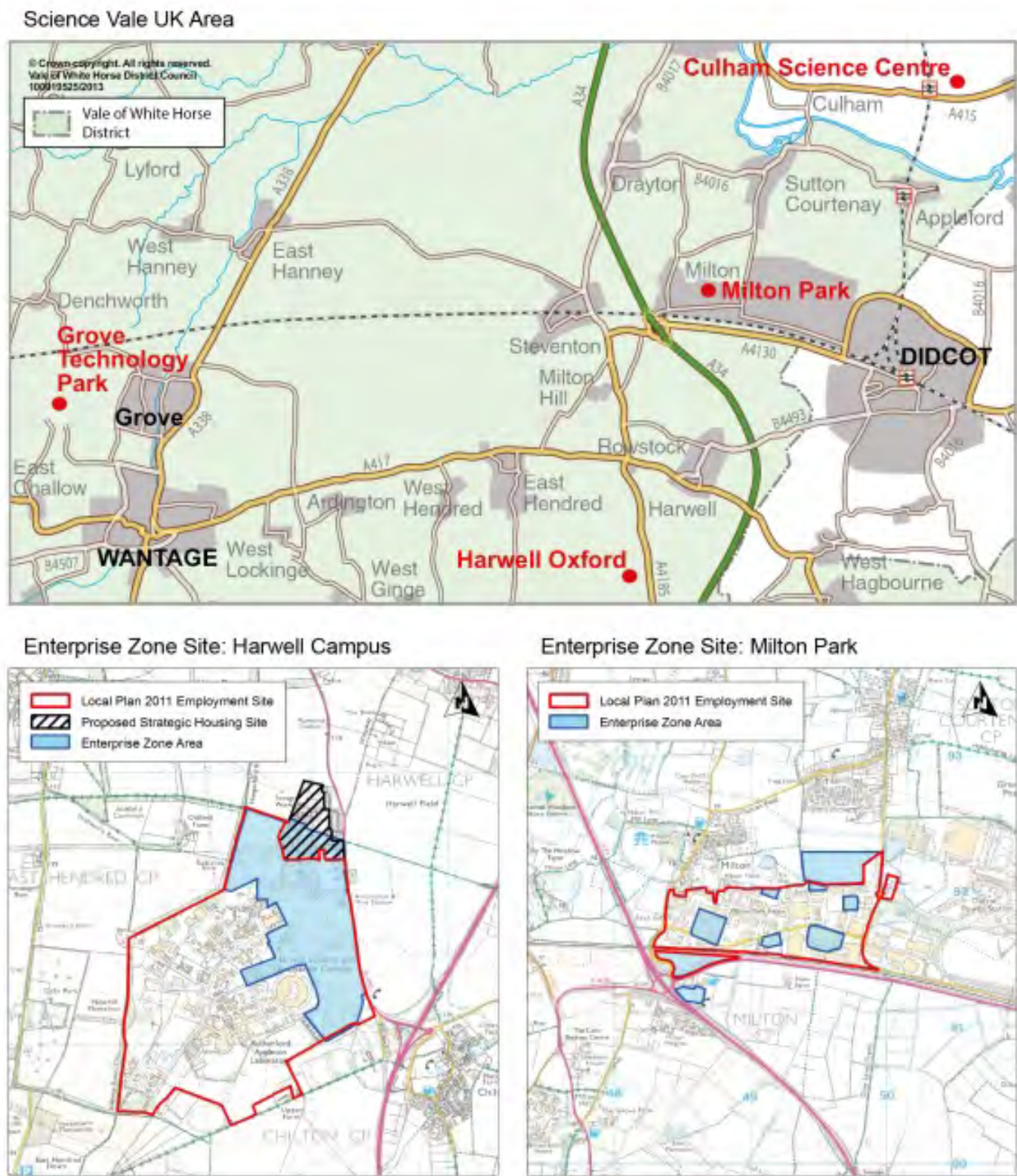
Figure 2.2 Science Vale UK Area

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Supporting economic prosperity- Key challenges and opportunities

- providing an appropriate amount of employment land across the Vale and ensuring that suitable sites are available
- continuing to support the development of Milton Park and Harwell Oxford as centres for innovation and enterprise so they can make a major contribution to both the Oxfordshire and UK economy
- nurturing science, research and innovation throughout the district and attracting new high value businesses
- supporting the economy of the towns and rural areas and providing a range of employment opportunities close to where people live. This is particularly relevant at Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, as the general focus of employment opportunities within the Vale are at the Enterprise Zone sites close to the eastern boundary of the district
- increasing high speed broadband coverage across the district
- making best use of the opportunity presented for re-development at the Didcot A Power Station site for further economic growth with the Vale
- taking steps to ensure skills provision meets business requirements, for example by supporting further and higher education provision so a greater proportion of the local population can share the benefits of economic success
- retaining existing employment sites which make a significant contribution to the overall employment offer, to ensure that the overall quantum for employment is increased
- supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of rural businesses
- supporting the agricultural economy including appropriate farm diversification schemes
- continuing to maintain the vitality and viability of the retail offer in Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage and strengthen their service centre roles
- identifying and supporting suitable roles for the Market Towns and Local Service Centres in the face of competition from larger nearby centres outside the Vale
- creating attractive town centre environments, which appeal to visitors and shoppers alike and incorporate vibrant evening economies
- supporting provision of appropriate local community-focused enterprises such as village shops and public houses
- increasing the economic impact and value of tourism and take steps to convert day visitors to visitors staying overnight, in particular by addressing the shortage of hotel accommodation, and
- responding to increases in demand for business tourism and conferencing associated with growth across Science Vale UK and at the Enterprise Zone as and when it arises.

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility

2.23   The Vale of White Horse is well situated in relation to the strategic transport network. The A34 trunk road runs through the district close to its eastern edge. This provides access between the M4 to the south, and the M40 to the north, and to Oxford. The A420 and A417 roads also run across the district, providing links to Swindon in the west and Didcot in the east. The district has good access to Oxford airport (30 kilometres) and London Heathrow (60 kilometres).

2.24   There are some good bus services in the Vale between the main settlements, such as from Abingdon on Thames to Oxford, Abingdon on Thames, Wantage and Grove to Didcot, and Faringdon to Swindon and Oxford. However, in the more rural parts of the Vale, away from main transport corridors, bus services are not sufficient to provide a meaningful alternative to the car.

2.25   The main London to Bristol/ South Wales railway line runs through the Vale. There are no intermediate stations along this line, with Didcot being the nearest station, close to the District's eastern boundary. The London/ Oxford railway line also runs through the eastern edge of the district, but the Vale's only stations are at the small villages of Radley and Appleford on Thames. There remains a long-term ambition for a station to be re-opened at Grove to provide easier access for rail travel towards London to the east, and Swindon and Bristol to the west.

2.26   Partly for the reasons outlined above, car ownership within the district is relatively high and is likely to continue to form the main form of transport. Road traffic has grown rapidly, especially through the 1990s, however it has shown a slight decrease since 2007. Traffic levels are predicted to increase in the coming decades[27].

2.27   Congestion on the A34 truck road and its interchanges presents challenges. It is important the road network operates safely and efficiently for the economic success of the district to be maximised and the quality of life of residents to be maintained. The plan should therefore consider the impacts of growth on this strategic trunk road. The settlements within the Vale with the most potential impact on the A34 are Abingdon on Thames and Botley, which are immediately adjacent to this road. Both Abingdon on Thames and Botley are also congested internally. As a result, any strategic growth in either of these settlements should address these constraints.

2.28   It is important that growth across the district, including within the Science Vale UK area, the Enterprise Zone sites and at Wantage and Grove, within Harwell Parish east of the A34, and elsewhere, should address the constraints presented by the existing road network.

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27   Information from OCC and Department for Transport- see VOWH SA Scoping Report 2012 for more detailed statistics.

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility- Key challenges and opportunities

- ensuring there are improvements to public transport, cycling and walking to provide attractive alternatives to travel by car and to help minimise traffic congestion

- continuing to work with partners to help address the current capacity constraints to ensure new development can be accommodated whilst addressing congestion and safety on the road network

- helping to facilitate the implementation of the Science Vale UK Integrated Transport Package to help maintain a safe and efficient transport network, particularly in the Science Vale UK area

- balancing the delivery of major investment in new roads and public transport with the wider needs for other improved infrastructure arising from proposed development

- using the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 to locate employment and housing growth in a way which reduces the need to travel by car and encourages more sustainable modes of travel

- supporting viable measures to help people in rural areas without a car to access the services available in the Market Towns and Local Service Centres

- providing support for the long term ambition to open a new railway station at Grove, and

- improving transport infrastructure to support employment growth.

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Protecting the environment and responding to climate change

2.29   The Vale benefits from an extremely attractive and highly valued landscape and this is one of the reasons it is such a popular place for people to live and visit. Of special note are the chalk downlands in the south of the district, which are designated as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The wooded Corallian Ridge crosses north of the district, its scarp facing north towards the Cotswolds across the upper Thames Valley. This area is afforded local protection[28] and at its eastern end forms an important part of the landscape setting of the City of Oxford, and is designated as part of the Oxford Green Belt. The Vale also contains 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), two of which, at Cothill Fen and Hackpen Hill, are also designated European Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

2.30   The Vale has a rich and varied built heritage. Abingdon on Thames has prehistoric origins and is recognised as one of the oldest continually inhabited towns in the country. Archaeology forms another distinguishing feature of the Vale including the Ridgeway across the North Downs, one of England's oldest roads. There are currently 52 designated Conservation Areas, including 46 within villages, over 2,000 Listed Buildings, including 1788 within villages, eight historic parks and gardens, and 68 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within around Vale.

2.31   The Vale has a long frontage to the River Thames and contains the River Ock and its tributaries including the Letcombe Brook. It also contains a significant proportion of the route of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal, the subject of an ambitious restoration project. The waterways add diversity and interest to the locality, enhancing open spaces and providing corridors for recreation, tourism and wildlife.

2.32   The flood plains of the rivers and their tributaries cover extensive areas of the district, with some 4,200 homes located within the 1 in 100 or 1 in 1000 year flood zones[29]. Owing to the length of its river frontages and topography, the Vale is less well buffered against flooding than neighbouring districts, and over 1,000 properties flooded in 2007[30]. The future effects of climate change are predicted to result in more frequent extremes of temperature and rainfall, along with warmer, drier summers and milder, wetter winters[31]. Flooding is predicted to become more frequent and cover larger areas. Estimates indicate that peak river flows will increase by 10% by 2025[32].

2.33   Thames Water has proposed a large reservoir is constructed in the Vale, south-west of Abingdon on Thames to address water shortages across the South East[33]. This could have a major impact on the landscape and traffic generation in the district, but could offer opportunities for recreation and wildlife. Although there are no plans to develop this reservoir in the short term, it remains one of Thames Water's options for maintaining future water supply. This option will be further assessed in the next Thames Water five year plan, due to be published in 2014.

2.34   The Government has set targets for reducing Greenhouse Gas emissions by 2050 and for delivering an increase in energy produced by renewable sources by 2020. Emissions in the Vale are currently higher than the regional and county average with the highest total per capita emissions in Oxfordshire [34] The Vale currently produces 8.8 % of its energy from renewables.

28   Vale of White Horse (2011) Local Plan 2011 – Policy NE7
29   Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2009, JBA Consulting.
30   Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2009, JBA Consulting.
31   http://ukclimateprojections.defra.gov.uk/
32   Communities and Local Government, 'Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework', p11.
33   Thames Water, Water Resources Management Plan 2010 to 2015
34   Local Authority Emissions Estimates, Department of Energy and Climate Change

Chapter 2: The Vale of White Horse Today and Key Challenges

Protecting the environment and responding to climate change- Key challenges and opportunities

- the need to maintain and enhance the rural character of the Vale and its landscape qualities, including the AONB
- ensuring the Oxford Green Belt and the landscape setting of Oxford are protected
- ensuring the natural, built and historic environment of the Vale are protected
- enhancing, restoring, expanding and linking key wildlife habitats and species populations
- helping to address the causes of climate change by increasing the use of decentralised, low carbon and renewable energy, heat and transport fuels
- promoting more efficient use of materials and natural resources to reduce the impact on carbon emissions
- identifying ways to build greater resilience to the unavoidable effects of climate change, including the issues of flooding and an increased incidence of extreme weather
- ensuring proposals for a new reservoir are properly assessed, should it be needed to address water shortages across the South East, and minimise any detrimental impacts on the Vale, and
- continuing to protect the historic route of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal and safeguard a new route south of Abingdon on Thames.

Chapter 3: Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives

The Vale of White Horse district consists of a network of historic market towns and other settlements set in a diverse and attractive rural landscape. The district benefits from excellent connectivity to nearby urban centres and beyond, and houses an internationally significant cluster of research and innovation businesses.

The district benefits from many opportunities, particularly associated with the potential for growth and job creation. However, the district also faces a series of challenges to realise this potential.

This chapter sets out the Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives for the plan period up to 2029. The Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives will help us plan effectively for the future and ensure we strike an appropriate balance between meeting the needs of existing communities and ensuring the necessary growth is sustainably accommodated.

The Spatial Vision sets out what the area should be like in 2029 and has been informed by local, regional and national priorities and the visions of the Oxfordshire and Vale community strategies.

The Strategic Objectives will help us to deliver the Spatial Vision and ensure the plan is focused on the key challenges and opportunities facing the area.

Question 7

Do you support our Spatial Vision for the District set out in para 3.5 ? Yes/No -if no what would you change?

Question 8

Do you support the Strategic Objectives for our plan? Yes/No - if no what have we missed?

Question 9

Our vision and Strategic Objectives aim to promote opportunities for all across the district. Do you agree? Yes/No- if no please tell us more.

Our interactive website where you can answer these questions on-line can be found at: http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/localplanpartone

Chapter 3: Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives

Introduction

3.1   The Local Plan 2029 Part 1 (LPP1) focuses on how places function and how they should develop, particularly through the use of land. So in planning for the future, we need a clear vision of what we want the Vale of White Horse to be like in 2029.

3.2   The Spatial Vision sets out how the LPP1 will help to deliver the wider visions of the Oxfordshire and Vale community strategies and the aspirations of local people and organisations. The Spatial Vision reflects national and regional priorities and the challenges and opportunities facing the Vale. It establishes the direction of travel for future development and investment in the district.

3.3   To help us deliver the Spatial Vision, a number of Strategic Objectives have been developed. These are focused around the key challenges and opportunities faced by the area and the four overarching themes outlined in Chapter 2:

- building healthy and sustainable communities
- supporting economic prosperity
- supporting sustainable transport and accessibility, and
- protecting the environment and responding to climate change.

Spatial vision

3.4   The Spatial Vision for the Vale is shaped by the aspirations contained in the community strategies:

- The vision of the Oxfordshire Partnership is[35]

    'By 2030 we want Oxfordshire to be recognised for its economic success, outstanding environment and quality of life; to be a place where everyone can realise their potential, contribute to and benefit from economic prosperity and where people are actively involved in their local communities'.

- The vision of the Vale Partnership is[36]

    'A sustainable Vale:

    With prosperous inclusive and thriving communities that have good access to a range of housing, jobs and services;

    Where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life; and

    Where our needs can be met without compromising the natural and built heritage or the ability of future generations to meet their needs.'

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35   http://www.oxfordshirepartnership.org.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/OxfordshirePartnership/Oxfordshire+2030/2030+strategy+in+full/
36   http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/partnerships/vale-community-strategy

Chapter 3: Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives

3.5 The Spatial Vision developed for the Vale Local Plan 2029 Part 1 is:

By 2029 the Vale of White Horse will have thriving and prosperous communities that have benefited from economic growth and where our strength in science and innovation continues to be recognised internationally. The Science Vale UK area will have become a first choice location for high value added business and research. New residential and economic growth will have been focused on the Science Vale UK area and will have delivered balanced and sustainable growth that has made a significant contribution to delivering important infrastructure. Strategic road improvements will have been implemented at Harwell, west of Didcot and at Wantage.

The Vale's main settlements will provide healthy and sustainable communities where everyone has a decent place to live and work with good access to leisure and community services and facilities. The service centre roles of Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage for the surrounding rural catchment areas will have been maintained and enhanced. The Vale's villages will continue to provide thriving rural communities where appropriate growth has supported local services.

New development will have respected the local character of the Vale, protecting its outstanding and distinctive natural and built environment and continued to preserve its important heritage. High environmental standards will have been achieved through new development, which will also be more resilient to the likely impacts of climate change.

Strategic objectives

3.6 A series of Strategic Objectives have been developed to help us deliver the Spatial Vision for the Vale of White Horse. The Strategic Objectives are focused around the four overarching themes identified in Chapter 2 and the key challenges and opportunities faced by the area. Information about the monitoring of these objectives is set out in Chapter 7: Implementing the Plan

Building healthy and sustainable communities

Strategic Objective 1: Provide for a range of homes across the district to deliver choice and competition in the housing market.

Strategic Objective 2: Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, ensuring that an appropriate and sustainable proportion of new housing falls within the definition of affordable.

Strategic Objective 3: Direct growth to the more sustainable locations in the district and ensure that development is integrated with existing communities, reflects the built and natural heritage, and is supported by a sufficient range of services and facilities.

Strategic Objective 4: Improve the health and well-being of Vale residents and reduce inequality, poverty and social exclusion.

Key outcomes

1. provide 13,294 new homes with a mix of house types, sizes and tenures to meet local needs, including specialist housing for older residents and people with disabilities

2. wherever possible to secure on-site provision of 'affordable' homes on housing sites that are developed throughout the district

3. enable the delivery of high quality sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people to meet actual identified need

4. support housing at settlements with high quality services and facilities to help ensure that the level of services within these communities are maintained for future residents

5. coordinate new growth with the timely provision of appropriate infrastructure to ensure the delivery of development in a sustainable and balanced way

6. maintain and improve the range of services and facilities for culture, health, leisure and sport to help improve quality of life

7. promote design that enables access by everyone, helps reduce crime and the fear of crime, and encourages community identity, involvement and pride

8. protect and provide public open spaces, provide facilities for children and young people, and promote access to the countryside for leisure pursuits

9. support appropriate small scale housing, including the delivery of affordable homes, in the smaller villages to allow local people to continue to live in their local communities and improve sustainability and vitality, and

10. provide specialist accommodation and services of appropriate scale for the elderly.

Chapter 3: Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives

Supporting economic prosperity

Strategic Objective 5: Support a strong and sustainable economy within the District, including the tourism sector.

Strategic Objective 6: Support the continued development of the Science Vale UK area as an internationally significant centre for innovation and science based
research and business.

Strategic Objective 7: Maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Vale's town centres and local shopping centres in order to strengthen their service
centre roles.

Key outcomes

1. continue to support job growth and creation across the Vale including at the Enterprise Zone sites and the Didcot A Power Station site

2. ensure appropriate investment in infrastructure that supports the economy, including the delivery of infrastructure necessary to maximise opportunities for growth within the Science Vale UK area

3. support the expansion of science, innovation and research enterprises across the Science Vale UK sites, including the Enterprise Zone sites

4. maintain and where needed supplement or enhance the provision of local employment sites to support business development in the Market Towns and Local Service Centres of Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage to provide jobs close to where people live

5. support appropriate and sustainable rural employment especially where this provides jobs for local residents

6. work with Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to help provide excellent education and training opportunities that ensure local people have the skills to benefit from our world class economy

7. help to facilitate the redevelopment and appropriate expansion of the Oxford Brookes University at Harcourt Hill Campus in a manner sensitive to its local context

8. continue to support sustainable tourism and maximise opportunities to benefit from the inherent natural and cultural qualities of the Vale

9. help to deliver high speed broadband across the district

10. retain key existing employment sites, which make a meaningful contribution to the overall employment offer

11. direct appropriate retail development to the Vale's Market Towns and Local Service Centres, in order to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of these centres

12. support the redevelopment of the Bury Street and Charter Areas in Abingdon on Thames in line with the adopted SPD,[37] and

13. support the comprehensive redevelopment and improvement of the West Way shopping centre and Elms Parade in Botley.

Sustainable transport and accessibility

Strategic Objective 8: Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable modes of transport.

Strategic Objective 9: Ensure new development is accompanied by appropriate and timely infrastructure delivery to secure effective, and wherever possible, sustainable transport choices for new residents and businesses.

Key outcomes

1. prioritise development to where the need to travel by car can be minimised

2. secure contributions from new developments towards improving services and facilities for more sustainable forms of transport, including bus, rail, cycling and walking

3. help to promote car sharing and support community sustainable transport initiatives

4. continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council to better understand existing, and identify likely future constraints to the road network, to develop solutions and seek funding to help address them

5. continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council and the Highways Agency to secure improvements to help reduce congestion on the A34 and at its interchanges with the local road network

6. safeguard land for road schemes required as a result of new development allocated in the Local Plan, or identified in the Local Transport Plan

7. continue to promote the long-term aim of providing a new railway station at Grove

8. help to facilitate adequate and safe parking for cars and cycles, and

9. support investment in technologies to enable home working.

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37   Vale of White Horse District Council (2011) Abbey Shopping Centre and Charter Area Supplementary Planning Document.
      http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/supplementar-0

Chapter 3: Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives

Protecting the environment and responding to climate change

Strategic Objective 10: Improve and protect the natural environment including biodiversity.

Strategic Objective 11: Ensure all new development achieves high quality design standards and to protect and enhance the natural, historic, cultural and landscape assets of the Vale.

Strategic Objective 12: Minimise greenhouse gas emissions across the district and increase our resilience to likely climate change impacts, especially flooding.

Key outcomes

1. achieve a sustainable balance between housing and job growth

2. avoid development in flood zones 2 and 3, ensure new developments do not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and promote the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

3. minimise and if possible reduce our carbon footprint by reducing the need to travel, promoting more sustainable forms of transport and promoting opportunities to meet energy efficiency standards for buildings and encouraging decentralised, low carbon or renewable energy

4. support the appropriate reuse of previously developed sites

5. promote the design of buildings and spaces that are more resilient to climate change and extreme weather patterns

6. focus on improving the quality and availability of water through Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, rainwater harvesting, using water more efficiently and safeguarding land for a new reservoir, should this prove to be required, to ensure long-term reliable and safe water supplies

7. minimise pollution associated with development and where possible, use planning policy to help improve air quality, particularly in Abingdon on Thames town centre and close to the A34 at Botley

8. encourage the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and ensure space is available for recycling and composting in all new developments

9. ensure new development makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area

10. preserve or enhance the district's designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings

11. protect the character and quality of the North Wessex Downs AONB and the Oxford Green Belt, and recognise the importance of locally valued landscapes

12. achieve a net gain in biodiversity focusing primarily on improvements on the Conservation Target Areas and within development sites

13. ensure new developments provide adequate green infrastructure of sufficient quality to meet the identified needs of the local community, and

14. support informal recreation in the countryside, including boating on the River Thames, The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails, the public rights of way and access land network, and the restoration of the Wiltshire and Berkshire canal.

Chapter 4: Spatial Strategy

The Spatial Strategy will set out how the vision and objectives will be delivered and how change will be managed. It will show where new homes will be built, where opportunities to provide new jobs will be created, and where new infrastructure and services (such as new roads, schools, shops and leisure facilities) will be required.

The Spatial Strategy makes provision for growth of around 14,300 new jobs, including 143 hectares of employment land, and at least 13,294 new homes during the plan period from 2006 to 2029.

The Spatial Strategy is made up of five core policies:

- presumption in favour of sustainable development
- settlement hierarchy
- housing delivery
- meeting business and employment needs, and
- providing supporting infrastructure and services.

Question 10

Do you support the Spatial Strategy for the location of development , including the Settlement Hierarchy, set out in para 4.8. If no, what would you change?

Question 11

We are consulting on housing provision based on the South East Plan target of 578 homes per annum, as this remains part of our development plan until it is formally abolished. What are your views on this level of housing provision ? (You can also comment on the other housing provision options we have tested set out in the Housing Topic Paper that will be published on 28 March 2013)

Question 12

Do you agree with the five strategic housing allocations proposed in the plan? If you disagree, where should we allocate land for the 5,150 additional homes required by 2029?   (You may wish to review the alternative sites we have considered, set out in the Strategic Sites Selection Topic paper that will be published on 28 March 2013)

Question 13

Do you agree with the approach to employment land proposed in the plan? If no, what would you change?

Question 14

Our approach to infrastructure delivery and funding is still in development. To help us complete this work, what are your views on the approach set out in Core Policy 5 and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan?

Our interactive website where you can answer these questions on-line can be found at: http://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/localplanpartone

Chapter 4: Spatial Strategy

'Building on our strengths' - a sustainable strategy for the Vale of White Horse

The strategy will support the delivery of sustainable growth through three key strands:

Focusing sustainable growth within the Science Vale UK area by:

- promoting, in partnership, central Oxfordshire as a world-class location for science and technology-based enterprise and innovation primarily through the redevelopment and intensification of land in the Science Vale UK area, especially the Enterprise Zone sites at Milton Park and Harwell Oxford Campus
- allocating appropriate land for strategic housing growth to help improve the self-containment of the area. New homes will be delivered at three key locations: Wantage and Grove, in Harwell parish east of the A34, and at Harwell Oxford Campus
- providing a flexible framework for the medium to longer term redevelopment of surplus land at Didcot A Power Station for predominantly employment uses, and
- delivering a comprehensive package of strategic and local infrastructure and services alongside the housing and employment growth to ensure a balanced and sustainable mix of development. This will include significant investment in new roads and public transport to enable good access between Wantage and Grove, Harwell Oxford, Milton Park and Didcot.

Reinforcing the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district by:

- establishing a policy framework which concentrates larger shopping, tourism and community facilities in the Market Towns and Local Service Centres of Abingdon on Thames, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, to improve their vitality and ensure facilities are widely accessible including by alternatives to the private car
- establishing a settlement hierarchy which focuses housing growth at the Market Towns; Local Service Centres and Larger Villages
- allocating strategic housing growth at Faringdon, in addition to the growth at the other settlements described above, to strengthen its service centre role, and
- allocating land for strategic employment growth at Faringdon and Grove, to complement the Science Vale UK sites and to provide jobs close to where people live.

Promote thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character by:

- identifying appropriate housing requirements for the rural areas to inform community-led neighbourhood planning or site allocations in the Local Plan 2029 Part 2
- ensuring the settlement hierarchy focuses development within the rural areas to the larger villages thus helping to maintain their vitality and the sustainability of local services, and
- supporting appropriate development in the smaller villages to help meet the local needs of rural communities.

The approach

4.2   The Spatial Strategy is made up of five core policies:

- **Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** – which provides support for appropriate and sustainable growth

- **Settlement Hierarchy** – which classifies the settlements in the Vale according to their role and function

- **HousingDelivery** – which specifies the scale and location of new housing to guide how development should come forward to ensure development is built in the most appropriate locations

- **Meeting Business and Employment Needs** – which specifies the scale and location of opportunities for economic growth to ensure that sufficient new jobs are provided across the Vale in appropriate locations, and

- **Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services** – to ensure new services and facilities are delivered alongside new housing and employment.

4.3   Chapter 5 sets out three **Sub-Area Strategies**, which show how the Spatial Strategy will be delivered in each part of the Vale. They give spatial expression to the strategy and ensure that it is locally distinctive and focused on each part of the district (see also Figure 4.1). The three sub-areas are:

- **Abingdon on Thames and Oxford Fringe** – which covers the northern and north eastern part of the Vale characterised by the strong functional relationship with Oxford. It contains the Market Town of Abingdon on Thames, the Local Service Centre of Botley and several Larger Villages including Kingston Bagpuize, Marcham and Drayton. A large part of this sub-area is located within the Oxford Green Belt and the flood plains of the Rivers Thames and Ock

- **South East Vale** – which covers most of the Science Vale UK area and contains the Market Town of Wantage, the Local Service Centre of Grove as well as a number of significant employment sites including the Enterprise Zone Sites of Milton Park and Harwell Oxford Campus, and

- **Western Vale** – a more rural area stretching from the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the River Thames containing the Market Town of Faringdon and several Larger Villages including Shrivenham and Watchfield.

4.4   Chapter 6 sets out district wide policies, which apply across the Vale for specific issues. These policies are needed to complement the Spatial Strategy and Sub-Area Strategies to help ensure the Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives can be delivered. They build on, rather than duplicate, national guidance and are important to enable the determination of development proposals in a consistent manner.

Chapter 4: Spatial Strategy
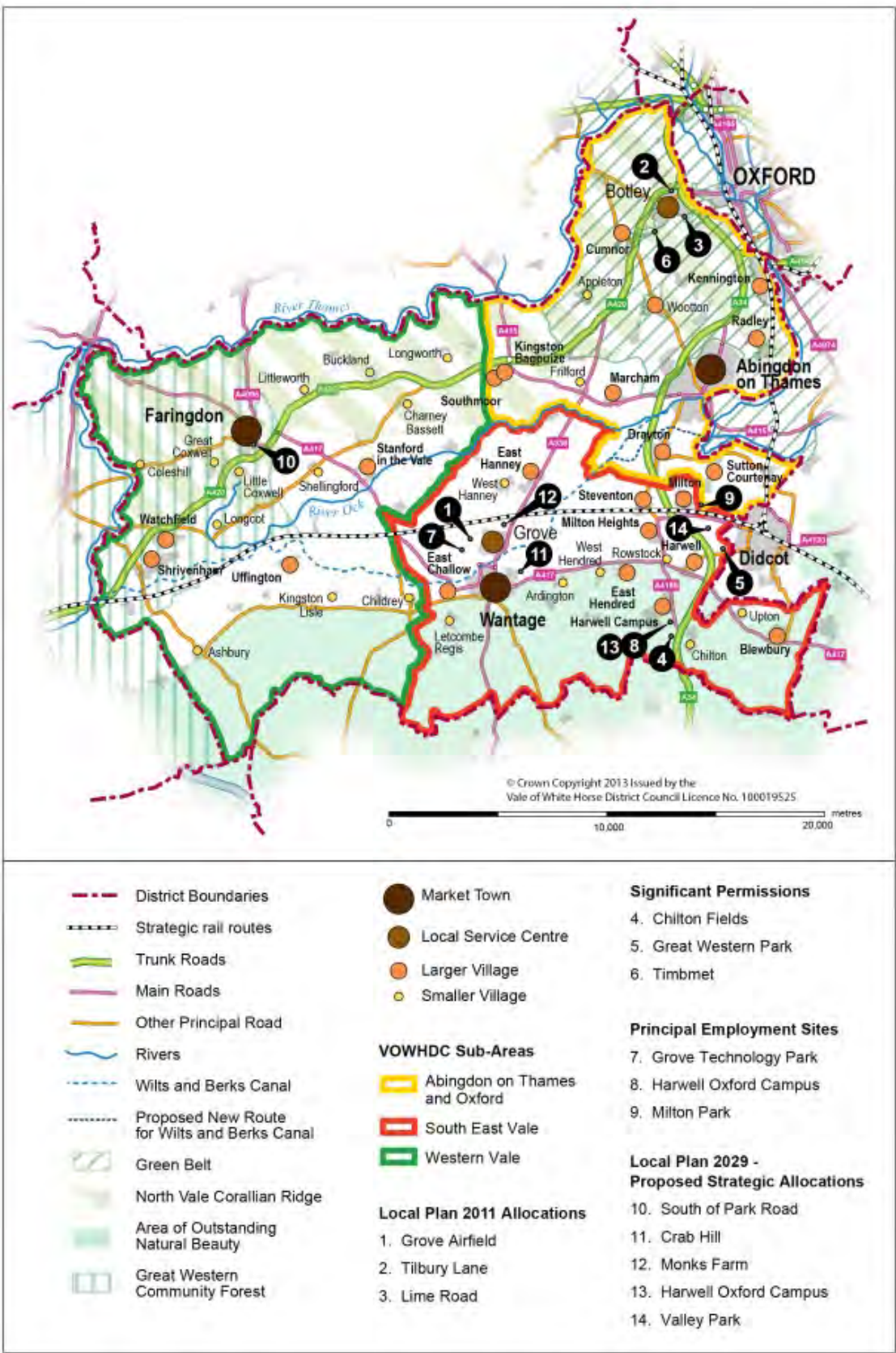
Figure 4.1 The Vale of White Horse Key Diagram

Legend:

- — · — · — District Boundaries
- · · · · · · Strategic rail routes
- ▬▬▬ Trunk Roads
- ▬▬▬ Main Roads
- ▬▬▬ Other Principal Road
- ～～～ Rivers
- - - - - - Wilts and Berks Canal
- · · · · · · Proposed New Route for Wilts and Berks Canal
- ▨ Green Belt
- North Vale Corallian Ridge
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Great Western Community Forest

● Market Town
● Local Service Centre
● Larger Village
○ Smaller Village

VOWHDC Sub-Areas

▭ Abingdon on Thames and Oxford
▭ South East Vale
▭ Western Vale

Local Plan 2011 Allocations

1. Grove Airfield
2. Tilbury Lane
3. Lime Road

Significant Permissions

4. Chilton Fields
5. Great Western Park
6. Timbmet

Principal Employment Sites

7. Grove Technology Park
8. Harwell Oxford Campus
9. Milton Park

Local Plan 2029 - Proposed Strategic Allocations

10. South of Park Road
11. Crab Hill
12. Monks Farm
13. Harwell Oxford Campus
14. Valley Park

Presumption in favour of sustainable development

4.5　Sustainable development is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs[38]. This means that the long-term consequences of development should be considered alongside short-term priorities.

4.6　The National Planning Policy Framework provides the Government's view of what sustainable development in England means in practice for the planning system. Broadly, there are three dimensions to sustainable development, which need to be considered together. These are:

- **an economic role –** contributing to building a resilient, responsive and competitive economy through the timely delivery of sufficient land in the right locations to support growth and by coordinating development requirements such as the provision of infrastructure
- **a social role –** supporting vibrant and healthy communities through the provision of housing, the creation of high quality living and working environments and accessible local services, and
- **an environmental role –** protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, using resources prudently and supporting the move to a low-carbon economy. [39]

4.7　When considering development proposals the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. The council will work proactively with applicants to ensure that wherever possible development is sustainable and can be approved, and to secure development that improves economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Core Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Planning applications that accord with this Local Plan (and where relevant, with any subsequent Development Plan Documents or Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, and unless:

i.　any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole, or

ii.　specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

38　NPPF, p2.
39　NPPF, p2.

Chapter 4: Spatial Strategy

Settlement hierarchy

4.8 The Settlement Hierarchy identifies four tiers of settlements based on an assessment of their facilities, characteristics and functional relationships with their surrounding areas. Each tier of settlement has a different strategic role.

4.9 The Local Plan will seek to protect and enhance the services and facilities provided by the Market Towns and Local Service Centres and ensure that any new facilities, homes and jobs are mostly focused on these settlements. This will help to ensure the delivery of sustainable development because:

- these settlements provide the best range of services and facilities and new development will help to support and enhance them

- locating new homes in the communities with the best services and facilities will enable the residents in the new homes to access them by walking, cycling and public transport, so reducing the need to travel by car

- it will enable more affordable homes to be built where there is most need, and

- the main service providers including the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, the County Council as highway authority and the emergency services, prefer this approach as it will help them to deliver their services more efficiently.

4.10 The settlement boundaries defined by the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011) for Market Towns and Local Service Centres[40] (defined as the 'main settlements') will be updated in the final version of the LPP1 to reflect the proposed allocations and carried forward into this strategy. These boundaries may be reviewed and updated in the future, either through the Local Plan 2029 Part 2, or neighbourhood plans.

4.11 There are 20 larger villages, shown in Figure 4.1, which have a reasonable range of services and facilities to meet day-to-day needs and are not located within the Green Belt. All of these villages currently have a primary school, a place of worship, a village hall, a mobile or permanent library service and some recreation facilities. Most have at least one shop and/or post office and at least an hourly bus service to two or more main centres. In the context of a rural district these villages are comparatively sustainable locations. They should continue to provide local services and sustainable development will be supported in accordance with the policies set out in the local plan.

4.12 There are 23 smaller villages, shown in Figure 4.1, which have a more limited range of services and facilities. Limited development will be supported in accordance with the policies set out in the local plan, particularly where it supports the sustainability and vitality of these communities [41]

4.13 Those villages, small hamlets and groups of dwellings not included within the categories described above (larger or smaller villages) are considered to form part of the open countryside where development will not be appropriate, unless consistent with the exceptions policies set out in the local plan.

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40 There is no settlement boundary defined for Botley as the Oxford Green Belt provides a policy limit on development around the settlement.

41 http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence

Core Policy 2: Settlement Hierarchy

The Settlement Hierarchy identifies and classifies settlements within the Vale and provides a guide to where development may be sustainable according to the role and function of the settlement.

Market Towns

Market Towns are defined as settlements that have the ability to support the most sustainable patterns of living within the Vale through their current levels of facilities, services and employment opportunities.

Market Towns have the greatest long-term potential for development, to provide the jobs and homes to help sustain, and where appropriate, enhance their services and facilities to support viable and sustainable communities in a proportionate manner.

The Market Towns are: Abingdon on Thames, Faringdon, and Wantage.

Local Service Centres

Local Service Centres are defined as larger villages or neighbourhoods to larger settlements with a level of facilities and services and local employment to provide the next best opportunities for sustainable development outside the Market Towns.

The Local Service Centres are: Botley and Grove.

Larger Villages

Larger villages are defined as settlements with a more limited range of employment, services and facilities, where development will be limited to providing for local needs and to support employment, services and facilities within local communities.

The Larger Villages are: Blewbury, Cumnor, Drayton, East Challow, East Hanney, East Hendred, Harwell, Kennington, Kingston Bagpuize, Marcham, Milton, Radley, Shrivenham, Southmoor, Stanford in the Vale, Steventon, Sutton Courtenay, Uffington, Watchfield and Wootton.

Smaller Villages

The Smaller Villages have a low level of services and facilities, where any development should be modest in scale and primarily be to meet local needs.

The Smaller Villages are: Appleton, Ardington, Ashbury, Buckland, Charney Bassett, Chilton, Childrey, Coleshill, Frilford, Fyfield, Great Coxwell, Kingston Lisle, Letcombe Regis, Little Coxwell, Littleworth, Longcot, Longworth, Milton Heights, Rowstock, Shellingford, Upton, West Hanney and West Hendred.

Those villages not included within the categories described above are considered to form part of the open countryside where development will not be appropriate, unless consistent with the exceptions policies set out in the Local Plan.