

6

District Wide Policies



Overview

The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 establishes a strategic policy framework to guide development in the Vale up to 2031.

This chapter sets out those strategic policies necessary to complement the Spatial Strategy (**Chapter 4**) and sub-area strategies (**Chapter 5**) to ensure planned growth is sustainable. The policies will apply across the Vale and provide greater detail to ensure a balance is met between addressing local housing needs, supporting economic growth and protecting the Vale's high quality natural and built environment, and the quality of life in existing settlements.

The policies in this chapter have been developed where national guidance alone is not sufficient to deliver the Council's vision. The policies therefore build on, rather than duplicate, national guidance.

Some of the policies set out in the Vale Local Plan 2011 will continue to be saved and relied upon (and used alongside new Local Plan policies) for day-to-day decision making on planning applications until they are reviewed as part of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2. The Council has published an assessment of the consistency of Saved Local Plan 2011 policies when compared with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This will be used to help ensure that the saved policies are applied appropriately alongside the NPPF.

The policies are structured into the four thematic areas, which are common throughout the plan:

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

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» Building healthy and sustainable communities

Introduction

6.1. The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 has a key role in helping to build sustainable communities in the Vale and helping to meet the diverse needs of the people living there. This will be achieved in part through the Spatial Strategy (set out in **Chapter 4**) that seeks to direct new development to the most sustainable locations and in communities with the best range of services and facilities. Furthermore, the Sub-Area Strategies (set out in **Chapter 5**), are focused on addressing more location specific issues and the needs of different parts of the District.

6.2. **Chapter 2** of this plan identified a number of key challenges and opportunities facing this thematic area for achieving sustainable communities and these include the high cost of housing and the disparity between income levels and housing costs

in the district. It showed the long term demographic trends towards an ageing population and a higher number of smaller sized households. For these reasons, our vision and objectives (**Chapter 3**) seek to increase the supply of new housing and ensure that the right size, type and tenure of housing is delivered to address the needs of existing and future residents. They also seek to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups (such as the elderly and those with disabilities).

6.3. We have set out a number of site specific proposals and policies relating to housing in our Sub-Area Strategies included within **Chapter 5**. This section includes policies that apply across the whole district, these are:

- **Core Policy 22: Housing Mix** – which seeks to ensure that the right mix of housing sizes, types and tenures are provided on all residential development sites

- **Core Policy 23: Housing Density** – which seeks to ensure that residential dwellings are provided at an appropriate density to reflect the need to use land efficiently whilst also taking account of local circumstances

- **Core Policy 24: Affordable Housing** – which sets out the Council's approach to the provision of affordable housing as part of new residential development

- **Core Policy 25: Rural Exception Sites** – which identifies the circumstances in which affordable housing can be provided on 'exception sites' in the rural areas, where residential development would not normally be permitted

- **Core Policy 26: Accommodating Current and Future Needs of An Ageing Population** – which sets out measures to ensure new homes are well designed and easily adapted to the changing needs of residents throughout their lives

- **Core Policy 27: Meeting the Housing Needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople** – which seeks to provide for the needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople.

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Housing mix

6.4. It is important that housing provision across the district reflects the needs of an ageing population and a growth in smaller households. Our Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) provides details of the recommended mix of housing type and size. The assessment identifies that there is most need in the Open Market sector for 3-bed units with the lowest need for 1-bed units. For affordable housing, there is a greater need for 2-bed units with the lowest need for 4-bed units⁷³. It is important that new housing addresses any imbalance within the existing stock and the impact of demographic and household change. It is also important to provide the type

of housing needed to attract people to live and work locally and built to a size and standard that supports a good quality of life.

6.5. The SHMA acknowledges the longer-term objective to deliver a more balanced stock, which reflects the identified needs of the area, but this objective must be seen in the context of viability. As a result, **Core Policy 22** adopts a flexible approach to the implementation of housing mix.

6.6. Additional policy detail will be set out in the emerging Science Vale Area Action Plan to determine the specific needs of housing types and sizes on strategic housing development sites within the Science Vale area.



Core Policy 22: Housing Mix

A mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households will be required on all new residential developments. This should be in accordance with the Council's current Strategic Housing Market Assessment unless an alternative approach can be demonstrated to be more appropriate through the Housing Register or where proven to be necessary due to viability constraints*.

*Viability should be set out in an independent viability assessment on terms agreed by the relevant parties including the Council and funded by the developer. This will involve an open book approach.

⁷³ Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) Tables 65 & 66

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Housing density

6.7. New housing should provide good quality, attractive and acceptable living environments. Density is an important consideration in delivering these high quality environments. Historically, some of the most successful settlements included high density development, such as medieval villages and town centres and Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian terraces. This is often the case in many of the District's market towns and village centres.

6.8. Land is a finite resource and should be used efficiently. Consideration is needed for local context of proposed development sites and new development should seek to achieve a target net⁷⁴ density of at least 30 dwellings per hectare. Higher or lower densities may be acceptable and the approach to density should be justified in the Design and Access Statement and relate to urban structure, legibility, landscape and townscape context and creating enclosure to streets and spaces.



Core Policy 23: Housing Density

On all new housing developments a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare (net) will be required unless specific local circumstances indicate that this would have an adverse effect on the character of the area, highway safety or the amenity of neighbours. Higher densities will be encouraged in locations where it will result in the optimum use of land, where there is good access to services and public transport routes, and where it would contribute to enhancing the character and legibility of a place.



⁷⁴ Net Density excludes major elements of supporting uses such as open space, community facilities, infrastructure etc.

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Affordable housing

6.9. Affordable housing is provided for rent or purchase on a subsidised basis to eligible households who cannot meet their needs on the open market⁷⁵. There are three main types of affordable housing tenures; social rented, affordable rented and intermediate⁷⁶.

6.10. Securing new affordable housing on-site as part of new developments is the most effective way to provide new supply. The on-site provision of completed units by a developer is the Council's preferred approach and it is expected that the vast majority of residential developments will be capable of delivering affordable housing on the same site.

6.11. When a new application is submitted on a site with extant or lapsed planning permission for housing that did not need to contribute to affordable housing under previous policy requirements,

affordable housing contributions will be sought in accordance with the policies within the up-to-date Development Plan.

6.12. The Council's affordable housing policy gives consideration for how viability can affect the successful delivery of development and has been informed by a Viability Study. The Study demonstrates that a 35% target for affordable housing brings more sites into viability than that with a higher rate. However, this matter should be considered on a case by case and give consideration to wider infrastructure requirements, as set out in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. A Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is also being prepared alongside the Local Plan 2031 to support the delivery of necessary infrastructure (see also **Core Policy 7**).

6.13. Additional details on the Council's approach to delivering affordable housing will be set in out in the Affordable Housing SPD. Furthermore, policy detail relating



to the specific need for affordable housing on strategic housing development sites in the Science Vale area will be set out in the emerging Science Vale Area Action Plan.

⁷⁵ Eligibility for affordable housing is determined with regard to local incomes and house prices

⁷⁶ This is a form of affordable housing that can include shared equity. For further details refer to glossary in the **Appendix**

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Core Policy 24: Affordable Housing

The Council will seek 35% affordable housing on all sites capable of a net gain of three or more dwellings (sites of at least 0.1 hectare). There should be a 75:25 split for rented (either social or affordable) and intermediate housing respectively. In circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the level of affordable housing being sought would be unviable, alternative tenure mixes and levels of affordable housing provision, may be considered. Any difference in tenure mix or percentage of affordable housing to be delivered will need to be supported by a viability assessment*.

Any affordable housing provided should:

- i. be of a size and type which meets the requirements of those in housing need, and
- ii. be indistinguishable in appearance from the market housing on site and distributed evenly across the site.

The Council's preference is for on-site affordable housing provision (with the exception of part units). Only in exceptional circumstances will any other scenario be considered. In such cases the following delivery hierarchy will be considered:

- iii. mix of on-and off-site delivery with the level of affordable housing to be achieved to be 'broadly equivalent' to that which would have been delivered on-site
- iv. full off-site delivery
- v. part off-site delivery and part commuted sum
- vi. commuted sum which shall be based on the open market value of units to be delivered on site in lieu of full-on or off-site delivery.

In cases where the 35% calculation provides a part unit, a financial contribution will be sought, equivalent to that part unit.

Off-site contributions and/or financial contributions for the provision of affordable housing in lieu of on-site provision will not be appropriate, unless it can be robustly justified that:

- vii. it is not physically possible or feasible to provide affordable housing on the application site, or
- viii. there is evidence that a separate site would more satisfactorily meet local housing need and contribute to the creation of sustainable mixed communities.

Planning permission will be refused for development proposals where it appears that a larger site has been sub-divided into smaller development parcels in order to avoid the requirements of the affordable housing policy.

*Viability should be set out in an independent viability assessment on terms agreed by the relevant parties including the Council and funded by the developer. This will involve an open book approach.

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Rural exception sites

6.14. The 'rural exception site' policy is aimed at providing homes for local people, who are unable to rent or buy a property on the open market in rural locations.

6.15. Schemes should be supported in principle by the local community, as represented by the relevant parish council. To facilitate this approach a detailed housing needs assessment must be carried out following a methodology agreed with the District and local parish councils before a planning application is made. The housing needs assessment must include the following information:

- the present housing circumstances and income levels of those considered to be in need, related to local house prices and rent levels
- the connection of the likely occupants with the village or nearby village, and
- the type and size of dwellings that would meet their requirements.

6.16. Housing schemes approved under the Rural Exceptions Policy must be genuinely designed to meet a specific local need. The homes will be allocated in accordance with the Council's allocations policy with priority given to those households with the required local connection which is clearly set out in the policy. The Council's housing team may be able to give a preliminary indication of whether there is sufficient need in the village to pursue a scheme.

6.17. Early discussion with the Council will be essential to establish whether a particular site is likely to be suitable for a rural exception housing scheme.

6.18. Secure arrangements must be made to ensure that the scheme meets the local needs that have been identified and remains affordable, both initially and in respect of successive occupiers. The precise nature of these arrangements may vary but will most often be achieved through a legal agreement or planning



conditions. It will also be important to involve a registered provider or housing trust who can retain a long-term interest in the housing and thus control subsequent changes of ownership and occupation in accordance with the agreed criteria.

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Core Policy 25: Rural Exception Sites

Affordable housing schemes will be permitted on sites that would not otherwise be acceptable for housing development, providing the scheme would satisfy the following:

- i. it meets a clearly established local need identified through a robust housing needs assessment in accordance with a methodology agreed with the district and parish council
- ii. it is designed to meet the established need of a village (or its neighbouring village) in terms of dwelling numbers, types, sizes and affordability
- iii. it includes secure arrangements to ensure that all the houses will be occupied by local people in need of affordable housing and that the benefits of the low cost provision will remain available to local people in the long term
- iv. it is located within or on the edge of a village and would not harm the character or setting of settlements, particularly in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The design, layout and materials of new housing complements and enhances its surrounding natural and built environment
- v. it would not undermine the purposes or visual amenities of the Oxford Green Belt
- vi. it includes secure arrangements to ensure that all the houses will be occupied by local people in need of affordable housing and that the benefits of the low cost provision will remain available to local people in the long term
- vii. it will not adversely impact upon designated heritage assets or their setting (i.e. Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Parks and Gardens etc)
- viii. it is located in a sustainable location with good access to public transport, employment and local services/facilities, and
- ix. is consistent with **Core Policy 42: Flood Risk**.

Where robust evidence establishes that viability issues* would prevent the delivery of an exception site, the minimum level of market housing required to make the development viable will be favourably considered where it would ensure the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs.

Any market housing included in a scheme (where considered necessary for reasons of viability) should be constructed to reflect the character of the affordable units and be sympathetic to the rural location.

*Viability should be set out in an independent viability assessment on terms agreed by the relevant parties including the Council and funded by the developer. This will involve an open book approach.

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Accommodating current and future needs of the ageing population

6.19. The district has an ageing population. Over the plan period the 65+ age group is projected to increase by 58% between 2010 and 2030 to represent 26% of the district's total population by 2030⁷⁷. The high level of growth in this age group is a key demographic driver and should be adequately addressed in the Local Plan 2031 to ensure that housing supply addresses the current and future needs of older people.

6.20. As the population of the district increases and ages, the level of disabilities and health issues amongst the older population is likely to increase significantly, along with the specialist housing to address their needs.

6.21. In delivering homes that will meet the current and future needs of the ageing population, it is important that new homes are adaptable to the changing needs of residents over time. To achieve this we have

incorporated a requirement for all new homes designed for older people to achieve the current Lifetime Homes Standards or its replacement. The Lifetime Homes Standards provide a set of 16 design criteria that provide a model for building accessible and adaptable homes.

6.22. There are a range of models that can play a part in providing specialist accommodation for the elderly. These include sheltered and enhanced sheltered housing, Extra Care housing, retirement villages, continuing care retirement communities and registered care homes both with and without nursing care. The Council's preference is for Extra Care housing or schemes which include an element of Extra Care provision within them, in accordance with the County Council's Extra Care Housing Strategy⁷⁸.

6.23. Specialist accommodation for the elderly should be provided on a mixed-tenure basis wherever possible. Where the accommodation

Core Policy 26: Accommodating Current and Future Needs of the Ageing Population

In order to meet the needs of current and future households in the context of an ageing population the following requirements will be sought subject to the viability* of provision on each site:

- i. all new homes designed for older people shall be built to current Lifetime Homes standards as a minimum**
- ii. residential dwelling houses designed for older people (with or without Extra Care) should be provided in the strategic site allocations in the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and other suitable locations
- iii. where possible residential dwellings designed for older people should be located within close proximity to public transport routes, retail and other local facilities, including for health care
- iv. where residential dwelling houses for older people (with or without Extra Care) are provided, wherever possible it should be on a mixed-tenure basis in accordance with the requirements of **Core Policy 24: Affordable Housing**
- v. where standards that would apply to general housing have been relaxed in response to the special needs of the occupiers of the scheme, the occupancy will be limited to accord with the nature of the scheme.

*Viability should be set out in an independent viability assessment on terms agreed by the relevant parties including the Council and funded by the developer. This will involve an open book approach

**or its replacements as set out by changes to national government policy

caters for mobile residents, it should be located on sites in or adjacent to the towns or within the larger villages⁷⁹. Where any scheme providing specialist accommodation for the elderly (with or without care) includes an affordable housing component, this can count towards the overall 35% affordable housing requirement if part of a wider development.

⁷⁷ 2010- based sub national population projections available at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/districtdataservice>.

⁷⁹ A Framework for an Oxfordshire Extra Care Housing Strategy, Oxfordshire County Council, January 2008.

⁷⁸ Oxfordshire County Council Extra Care Housing Strategy, January 2008.

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Meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People

6.24. The needs of the Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People communities are important to us to ensure we develop a fair and effective strategy to meet these needs, particularly through the identification of land for pitches.

6.25. The Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People Accommodation Needs Assessment (2013)⁸⁰, prepared jointly with Oxford City Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, assessed the housing needs for the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People communities within these area.

6.26. For the Vale of White Horse District, the identified need is for 13 additional permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches to be delivered during the plan period. For the Travelling Show People community, the assessment identified that no plots are needed within the district during this plan period.



Core Policy 27: Meeting the housing needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

The Council will enable or provide for at least 13 pitches for gypsies and travellers during the plan period to 2031. Existing sites will be safeguarded.

The identified need will be met by a combination of the following:

- i. implementation of extant planning permissions
- ii. extending existing sites where possible to meet the needs of existing residents and their families, and
- iii. allocating specific deliverable sites through Local Plan 2031 Part 2 to meet any remaining identified need.

Proposals to meet the identified need will be permitted where it has been demonstrated that the following criteria have been met:

- iv. the site is not located within the Oxford Green Belt
- v. the development will not harm the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, areas of high landscape or ecological value or heritage assets and their setting
- vi. the development will not have an adverse impact on the character of the area, highway safety or the amenities of neighbouring properties
- vii. the site is located within a reasonable walking distance of key local services including a primary school, a local shop and a public transport service, and
- viii. the site can be provided with safe vehicular and pedestrian access, electricity, mains drinking water, sewage connections and waste disposal facilities.

⁸⁰ Oxford City, South Oxfordshire District and Vale of White Horse District Councils Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People Accommodation Needs Assessment. Opinion Research Services 2013 available at <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence>

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› Supporting economic prosperity

6.27. The Spatial Strategy set out in **Chapter 4** seeks to support economic prosperity in the Vale by focusing sustainable growth in the Science Vale area. The Spatial Strategy also seeks to reinforce the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district, including by directing new shops and facilities towards these settlements, and to promote thriving villages and rural communities.

6.28. The policies in this section complement the policies included in **Chapters 4 and 5** by setting out policies that will apply across the whole district to assist decision making and to support the delivery of our Strategic Objectives. They will help to support a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale's towns and rural areas and to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Vale's town centres and local shopping centres to strengthen their service centre roles.

6.29. Any site or area specific policies are included in our Sub-Area Strategies (**Chapter 5**). This section

sets out policies that apply across the district, these are:

- **Core Policy 28: New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites** – which sets out the Council's approach to assessing proposals for employment on sites not already allocated
- **Core Policy 29: Change of Use of Existing Employment Land and Premises** – which sets out the Council's approach to assessing proposals for change of use
- **Core Policy 30: Further and Higher Education** – which seeks to support enhanced provision to enhance access to skills across the district
- **Core Policy 31: Development to Support the Visitor Economy** – which seeks to support the visitor and tourism sector across the district
- **Core Policy 32: Retail Development and other Main Town Centre Uses** – which sets out the Council's approach to determining proposals for retail and town centre uses.



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New employment development on Unallocated Sites

6.30. The Local Plan 2031 sets out employment allocations within **Core Policy 6** and these have a strong focus on the Science Vale area, with a total of 157 hectares allocated to Milton Park and Harwell Campus, and 29 hectares to be provided at the Didcot A Power Station site.

Core Policy 28 complements these allocations by supporting appropriate B-Class employment development on unallocated sites across the district.

6.31. In the rural areas, outside the Market Towns, Local Service Centres and Larger and Smaller Villages, new employment activities can be accommodated with least impact on the landscape through the re-use, conversion or adaptation of suitable existing buildings. However, there is some flexibility for new employment buildings to come forward in the rural areas if there are no suitable existing buildings available for re-use, providing that the proposals meet the other criteria set out in the policy.



Core Policy 28: New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites

Proposals for new employment development (use classes B1, B2 or B8) will be supported on unallocated sites in town centres and larger villages provided that:

- i. the proposals will not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby residents and occupiers
- ii. safe site access can be provided for pedestrians and cyclists and for all types of vehicles likely to visit the sites and the proposals include measures to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport where possible
- iii. the scale nature and appearance of the employment development does not harm the character of the area and respects the local townscape and landscape character

In the rural areas the re-use, conversion or adaptation of suitable existing buildings for employment will also be supported subject to criteria (i)-(iii) where applicable. Other rural proposals will be supported provided that, in addition to criteria (i)-(iii) where applicable:

- iv. the proposal cannot reasonably be accommodated on employment land identified as vacant or developable
- v. it can be demonstrated that the proposal will benefit the local economy and will not undermine the delivery of the strategic employment allocations.

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Change of use of existing employment land and premises

6.32. In addition to supporting appropriate new employment development, there is also a need to protect important existing employment sites in the Vale. This will help ensure the overall employment provision is increased over the Local Plan 2031 period. The Government has introduced new permitted development rights that impact upon existing employment uses in the district⁸¹. The Vale of White Horse District Council will continue to monitor the impacts of these rights on the district. Should we consider them to potentially conflict with our Spatial Strategy, we will seek an Article 4 direction to maintain control of our strategic employment sites. **Core Policy 29** will apply to all proposals for changes of use of existing employment land and premises that are not covered by the new permitted development rights.

6.33. There are a number of key existing strategic employment sites, at the main settlements and in the Science Vale area, where retention of the existing employment uses will be particularly important to help deliver our overall Spatial Strategy. These strategic employment sites are listed in the Sub-Area Strategies in **Chapter 5. Core Policy 29** sets out the Council's intention to safeguard land and premises on these existing sites and on sites allocated for new employment development (also listed in the Sub-Area Strategies in **Chapter 5**), for employment uses.

6.34. There is an adopted Local Development Order (LDO) that covers the Milton Park site⁸² for a period of 15 years from December 2012. The LDO permits an element of non-B class employment generating uses (specifically car dealership and private healthcare uses) and also allows for some other uses that will

help support the sustainability and viability of the business park, such as small-scale shops and recreation facilities. **Core Policy 29** will apply to any applications for non B-class uses at Milton Park which are not permitted by the LDO.

6.35. There are also a number of rural employment sites that make an important contribution to the local economy and provide employment opportunities in rural locations across the district. These rural multi-user sites and large campus style sites (listed in **Appendix D**) are identified in the Local Plan 2011 and will be reviewed through the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

6.36. Proposals for alternative uses on these rural employment sites and other employment land and premises in the district will need to demonstrate that at least one of the criteria set out in **Core Policy 29** will be met.

6.37. In seeking to demonstrate that a site has no reasonable prospect of being used for employment purposes, applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the site is no longer viable for its present, or any other realistic and suitable, employment use. They must demonstrate that the site has remained un-sold or un-let for at least 12 months. In addition, applicants will need to provide evidence relating to the marketing of the site for its present use for a minimum period of 12 months up to the date at which the planning application was lodged. This should demonstrate that despite genuine and sustained attempts to sell or let a site on reasonable terms for employment use, they have failed to do so.

⁸¹ <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/commonprojects/changeofuse/>

⁸² Milton Park Local Development Order, December 2012, available at: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/milton-park-local-development-order>

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6.38. The site's potential contribution to the local and wider economy must be considered, both currently and in the long term, taking proper account of the economic cycle and the likely future needs of the economy. The Council will need to be satisfied that the change of use of the employment site would not jeopardise the provision of sufficient employment land across the district to meet the identified need.

6.39. Policy E13 of the Local Plan 2011 sets out the circumstances in which ancillary uses will be permitted on employment sites. This policy will be reviewed through the Local Plan 2031 Part 2, and will continue to be used alongside the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 until such time as it is replaced.



Core Policy 29: Change of Use of Existing Employment Land and Premises

The strategic employment sites, as listed in the sub-area strategies, form part of the District's reserve for employment land to meet objectively assessed employment needs and will be safeguarded for employment uses. Alternative uses will be considered if they provide ancillary supporting services or meet a need identified through the Local Plan 2031 review process, or exceptionally where a reassessment of the district wide 2013 Employment Land Review demonstrates that these sites are no longer needed over the full plan period.

Elsewhere in the District, applications for the change of use of land or premises that are currently, or were last, used for employment purposes will need to demonstrate that at least one of the following criteria is met:

- i. there is no reasonable prospect of the land or premises being used for employment purposes
- ii. the land or premises is unsuitable for business use on grounds of amenity, environmental or highway safety issues
- iii. the land or premises has no long term or strategic requirement to remain in employment use, or
- iv. the proposed use will be ancillary to the use of the land or premises for employment purposes.

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Further and higher education provision

6.40. Growth in the Science Vale area is expected to lead to an increase in the number of jobs in high tech and science based industries in the Vale. **Core Policy 30** supports improvements to further and higher education facilities to help ensure local people have opportunities to gain the skills needed to access the jobs available and local employers have access to a suitably skilled local labour force.

6.41. **Core Policy 30** identifies the most appropriate locations for further and higher education facilities. Improvements to the Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill Campus are specifically supported by **Core Policy 9** within the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area Strategy. In addition to this, the Council will support, where appropriate, the development and expansion of higher education facilities at Cranfield University (Defence Academy) at Watchfield.



Core Policy 30: Further and Higher Education

The Council will support the development and enhancement of further and higher education facilities to help support the local economy and to ensure the local labour force is equipped to take advantage of the opportunities likely to arise in the future. The most appropriate locations for further and higher education provision are:

- i. by the extension or more intensive use of existing education or other suitable community facilities
- ii. within identified strategic employment locations, provided that the training offered is clearly relevant to meet the needs of businesses in that strategic employment location, and
- iii. in the main settlements and other locations with good pedestrian and cycle access and well served by public transport connections between the proposed facility and its likely student catchment.

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Development to support the visitor economy

6.42. The benefits of the visitor economy can include indirect impacts such as acting as a positive force for protecting and improving the environment, as well as the direct economic gains arising from visitor economy related expenditure. The Vale is well-placed to take advantage of this, being close to the visitor attractions of the city of Oxford and the River Thames, and with the Ridgeway National Trail passing through the south of the district.

6.43. A joint Hotel Needs Assessment has been prepared with South Oxfordshire District Council⁸³ and confirms the need for a significant increase in hotel supply in the Science Vale area. It has also identified the potential need for hotels in the market towns of Abingdon-on-Thames and Wantage and on the fringe of the city of Oxford at Botley.

6.44. **Core Policy 31** supports new development in the visitor economy, including hotels and guest houses. Development should be of an appropriate scale and character in relation to the location. Proposals for development relating to the visitor economy within the Oxford Green Belt or the North Wessex Downs AONB will need to be in accordance with the relevant Local Plan 2031 policies for these areas.



Core Policy 31: Development to Support the Visitor Economy

The Council encourages new development to advance the visitor economy for leisure and business purposes. Proposals will be supported as follows:

- i. within the built-up areas of the Market Towns and Local Service Centres - larger scale developments including conference facilities, museums, heritage centres, hotels, guest houses and associated facilities for visitors
- ii. within the built-up areas of the Larger and Smaller Villages - smaller and proportionately scaled developments that are in keeping with the character of the settlement, including museums, heritage centres, hotels, guest houses, self-catering accommodation and associated facilities for visitors
- iii. at Milton Park and Harwell Campus - ancillary business hotel and conference facilities, and
- iv. at service areas on the main transport corridors - hotel accommodation.

Outside the above locations, small-scale development to support the visitor economy, including farm diversification and equine development, will be supported provided that proposals are in keeping with the scale and character of the locality. Larger developments will only be supported in exceptional circumstances, for example to re-use a historic building, or to proportionally support or enhance enjoyment of a significant and established visitor attraction where this cannot reasonably be achieved from a town or village location.

⁸³ www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence

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Retail development and main town centre uses

6.45. The Vale has good local shopping provision in the Market Towns and Local Service Centres. One of the Strategic Objectives of this Local Plan 2031 is to maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the existing centres in these settlements.

6.46. It is important that existing centres remain active and vibrant in light of changing trends. Retail growth suffered nationally during the economic downturn between 2008 and 2012 and a number of important national operators failed during that period. In addition, shopping from home has grown rapidly since the late 1990s and with the continued expansion of superfast broadband to the more rural and remote areas of the District, it is predicted that this form of retail offering will continue to grow.

6.47. The focus for future retail development and other town centre uses⁸⁴ will continue to centre on the primary and secondary retail frontages and town centre policy areas as defined in the Local Plan 2011. Local shopping centres, also identified through the Adopted Policies Map, will maintain a healthy level of shopping facilities that serves the surrounding residential areas.

6.48. Consequently, we have saved a number of policies from the Local Plan 2011 and will review these as part of our Local Plan 2031 Part 2 or where amended through a Neighbourhood Development Plan. These saved policies are identified in **Appendix G**.

6.49. Specific proposals for the redevelopment of the Charter Area in Abingdon-on-Thames and the Botley Central Area are supported by **Core Policies 10 and 11** respectively in the Oxford Fringe and Abingdon-on-Thames Sub-Area Strategy.

6.50. The main retail warehouse provision in the Vale is at Fairacres Retail Park in Abingdon-on-Thames, the Limborough Road/Kings Park area in Wantage, and Seacourt Retail Park in Botley. The Fairacres Retail Park accommodates a high proportion of the total comparison retail floorspace in the district. Any proposals for retail warehouse development or redevelopment will need to follow the approach set out in **Core Policy 32**.

6.51. As well as the shopping centres at the Market Towns and Local Service Centres, there are also smaller shopping centres in the Larger Villages of Kennington, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, Shrivenham, Watchfield, and Wootton, and at Harwell Campus. **Core Policy 32** supports the provision of retail development at these settlements, and also other Larger and Smaller Villages, where this meets the needs of the local community.

6.52. Local plan policies that support main town centre uses in other locations include **Core Policy 11: Botley Central Area**, **Core Policy 28: New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites** and **Core Policy 31: Development to support the Visitor Economy**.

6.53. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets a default threshold of 2,500 square metres gross floorspace, above which all proposals for retail, leisure and office development outside town centres that are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan, should be accompanied by an impact assessment⁸⁵. The NPPF indicates that this default will apply where there is no threshold set locally. We consider that a 2,500 square metres gross threshold is inappropriate in the Vale, as this scale of development would represent a significant proportion of the overall retail need in the area. Development smaller than 2,500 square metres

⁸⁴ As defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. Main town centre uses: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities). ⁸⁵ CLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), para 26.

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gross could have a significant adverse impact on the smaller town centres. **Core Policy 32** therefore sets local floorspace thresholds, based on recommendations in the 2013 Retail and Town Centre Study. Any proposals that exceed the local floorspace thresholds will need to be accompanied by an impact assessment based on a methodology and assumptions that have been agreed with the Council in advance.

6.54. In addition to supporting appropriate proposals for new retail and other main town centres uses, it will also be important to protect the Vale's existing local facilities and services. The Local Plan 2011 includes policies CF1: Protection of Existing Services and Facilities, CF5: Public Houses Outside the Five Main Towns and S14: Loss of Village and Other Local Shops. These policies will continue to be saved and will be used alongside the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 until such time as they are replaced or updated in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 or a Neighbourhood Development Plan (**Appendix G**).



Core Policy 32: Retail Development and other Main Town Centre Uses

The Market Towns and Local Service Centres defined in the settlement hierarchy (**Core Policy 3**) are the preferred locations for larger scale development or redevelopment for retailing and other main town centre uses.

For new retail proposals (Use Class A), first consideration should be given to areas designated as primary and secondary shopping frontages as defined by the Adopted Policies Map and the redevelopment sites at the Charter area of Abingdon-on-Thames and the Botley Central Area.

For other town centre uses, first consideration should be given to opportunities within the designated town centre areas that are well linked to the retail core by foot, including identified redevelopment sites, before more peripheral locations are considered.

Proposals for new retail development or changes of use to retail or other main town centre uses will be supported elsewhere as follows:

- i. for development primarily intended to serve the day-to-day needs of the local community, within the Larger and Smaller Villages, and in the local shopping centres located within Abingdon-on-Thames, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, as defined in the 2011 Local Plan
 - ii. ancillary and proportionate food, drink and convenience retailing within and primarily servicing the users of designated employment areas, and
 - iii. offices in employment locations where office use is identified elsewhere in this plan to be appropriate.
- Proposals for retail or other main town centre uses that are on the edge of or outside the town or local shopping centres, and are not supported by Local Plan policies, will only be supported if it is demonstrated that the proposal satisfies the sequential approach to site selection, and, where the proposal exceeds the local floorspace thresholds set out below, an impact assessment confirms that there are no likely significant adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of nearby centres. The impact assessment methodology and assumptions are to be agreed with the Council in advance.
- The local floorspace thresholds for impact assessment are as follows:
- iv. 1,000 square metres gross retail floorspace for development likely to have an impact on Abingdon-on-Thames or Wantage town centres, and
 - v. 500 square metres gross retail floorspace elsewhere in the district.

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› Supporting sustainable transport and accessibility

Introduction

6.55. Our approach seeks to encourage sustainable modes of transport and a reduction in the need to travel and these are key features of our vision and objectives set out in **Chapter 3**.

6.56. The Local Plan 2031 has been informed by national policy as well as the principles within Oxfordshire County Council's adopted and emerging Local Transport Plans (LTP)⁸⁶.

6.57. The main requirements of national policy relating to transport are to reduce the need to travel, promote more sustainable modes of travel and improve accessibility. The location of all forms of development is therefore very important and these principles have helped to inform our Spatial Strategy set out in **Chapter 4**.

6.58. The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 3 (2011-2030)⁸⁷ sets out transport policies and area transport strategies for the county up to 2030. It aims to deliver four local transport goals:

- to support the local economy and the growth and competitiveness of the county
- to make it easier to travel around the county and improve access to jobs and services for all by offering real choice
- to reduce the impact of transport on the environment and help tackle climate change, and
- to promote healthy, safe and sustainable travel.

6.59. We have set out a number of site specific proposals and policies relating to transport in our Sub-Area Strategies included within **Chapter 5**. This section includes policies that apply across the whole district, these are:

- **Core Policy 33: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility** – which seeks to support key improvements to the transport network
- **Core Policy 34: A34 Strategy** – which sets out the Council's support to the long-term strategic planning of the A34
- **Core Policy 35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking** – which seeks to support the provision of sustainable transport measures to promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking
- **Core Policy 36: Electronic Communications** – which promotes electronic communications to help reduce the need to travel.

The local and strategic transport network

6.60. We have conducted a district wide assessment of how our strategy may impact on the transport network⁸⁸. This has been prepared in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and independent consultants. The work concludes that the impact of the proposed growth is acceptable, subject to the implementation of comprehensive highway infrastructure and public transport improvements, which are outlined in this plan.

6.61. The assessment does acknowledge that the proposed housing growth set out in the plan will place increased pressure on the road network at certain locations within the district. However, where congestion is expected to worsen, the level is forecast to be within acceptable tolerances in relation to the NPPF test⁸⁹. For this reason, a number of measures are proposed to

⁸⁶ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/local-transport-plan>

⁸⁷ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-2011-2030> Work has started to prepare the LTP4. For more information please visit: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-ltp4>

⁸⁸ www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence ⁸⁹ CLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), para 14.

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help minimise the identified impacts. Where infrastructure is funded by development, we will seek the timely provision of infrastructure to ensure any short term impacts are within acceptable limits before they improve. The proposals include:

- the delivery of a comprehensive package of new highway infrastructure
- significant improvements to public transport and measures to encourage sustainable travel choices, and
- requiring Transport Assessments and Travel Plans to accompany planning applications for any major development⁹⁰ to ensure any local impacts are successfully mitigated.

6.62. Our main proposals for improving the transport network are located within the Science Vale area because this is where around 75% of our strategic housing growth is located. This is explained in more

detail in the South East Vale Sub-Area Strategy (see also **Figure 5.6a**).

6.63. However, the plan also proposes improvements to the highway network across the other parts of the Vale to ensure development in our other sub-areas is sustainable and to minimise any impacts on the highway network. These are set out in the Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area and Western Vale Sub-Area Strategies.

6.64. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) published alongside this strategy sets out all the strategic transport measures that are planned or required to accommodate proposed development in the plan⁹¹. The IDP is a live document that will be updated as further requirements emerge and where additional resources are secured through the Local Plan 2031 and Local Transport Plan processes.



Core Policy 33: Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

The Council will work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to:

- actively seek to ensure that the impacts of new development on the strategic and local road network are minimised
- ensure that developments are designed in a way to promote sustainable transport access both within new sites, and linking with surrounding facilities and employment
- support measures identified in the Local Transport Plan for the district including within the relevant local area strategies
- support improvements for accessing Oxford
- ensure that transport improvements are designed to minimise any effects on the amenities of the surrounding area, and
- promote and support improvements to the transport network that increase safety, improve air quality and/or make our towns and villages more attractive.

6.65. The Vale of White Horse District Council, working with Oxfordshire County Council, has had some success in securing significant external funding towards strategic highway infrastructure (£26.1 Million as at Sept 2014). The funds include monies contributed from the Oxfordshire and Oxford City Deal and Local Growth Fund, in addition to a commitment from the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to

contribute £40 million Enterprise Zone Business Rate income towards critical new highway infrastructure.

6.66. **Core Policy 33** sets out the Council's commitment to continue working with Oxfordshire County Council to promote sustainable transport and accessibility for example by supporting measures identified in the up-to-date Local Transport Plan.

⁹⁰ Refer to Oxfordshire County Council Guidance for New Developments: Transport Assessments and Travel Plans (March 2014). <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/transport-new-developments>

⁹¹ www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence

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A34 Strategy

6.67. The A34 has a dual role as a nationally important strategic route as well as being a vital part of the local road network in Oxfordshire linking Didcot and Abingdon-on-Thames with Oxford and Bicester.

6.68. The Highways Agency is currently preparing a Route Based Strategy for the A34 as part of the wider proposals for movement between the Midlands and the Solent. As part of this work, a Baseline Statement was prepared by Oxfordshire County Council to assess the capacity and capability of the A34 in terms of its physical characteristics, traffic flow patterns, network performance and conditions.

6.69. The Baseline Statement examined a number of possible improvements to the A34 and its immediate feeder routes. It also identified that it was likely that by 2030, congestion along the route would take place more frequently, and that instances of network congestion outside of peak hours would increase

and that they may occur at anytime of the day including weekends. The Statement suggested that congestion may occur through most weekdays and at weekend peak periods.

6.70. To ensure the A34 successfully functions as a major strategic route without impacting local routes, a number of traffic management options are under consideration and may form part of the Route Based Strategy. These include ramp metering, speed control, rationalisation of laybys and lorry services, measures to promote bus lanes for shorter journeys, widening of the current route and constructing alternative alignments for some of the route. The Solent to Midlands Route Based Strategy, which includes the A34, is due to be finalised in March 2015.

6.71. **Core Policy 34** includes a commitment to monitor air quality to ensure we continue to have an up-to-date understanding of potential impacts on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is important to inform joint working to ensure this SAC continues to be safeguarded.

6.72. The Council will continue to support the development and implementation of the A34 Route Based Strategy in accordance with **Core Policy 34**.



Core Policy 34: A34 Strategy

The Council will continue to work with the Highways Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to develop and implement a Route Based Strategy for the A34, which enables it to function as a major strategic route thereby reducing consequential congestion on the local road network.

The Council will continue to work with the Highways Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and other partners to develop an air quality monitoring framework associated with the A34 within the Vale of White Horse District to monitor any impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Public transport, cycling and walking

6.73. New development should be designed to positively promote the use of public transport, walking, cycling and efficient car use and the location of development is therefore essential to encourage their use. However, this approach should also be complemented with the provision of new services and facilities.

6.74. For this reason, a package of improvements is proposed to upgrade existing public transport services, particularly between key routes, and to introduce new services to ensure the proposed housing growth is connected by public transport. **Figure 5.6c** shows the proposed new bus routes within the district.

6.75. However, the rural nature of the district does mean that some residents will continue to be dependent on car travel, for some or all of their journeys, and so we will also support improvements to travel choices in rural areas.

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6.76. Transport Assessments are required to support any planning application for major development⁹². These will help us to determine the precise nature of local impacts associated with individual proposals and identify appropriate mitigation measures to compensate for such impacts. Where off-site mitigation is identified, the developments that result in the need for the mitigation will be required to make financial contributions through the appropriate mechanism. These include, for example, Section 106 and Section 278 agreements. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulation 123 list will contain some highway infrastructure projects to be funded by use of the levy.

6.77. Travel Plans will also be required for major development to encourage the use of sustainable forms of travel⁹³. These plans should set out a package of measures and initiatives with the aim of reducing the number of car journeys made by

people travelling to and from the site by providing greater choice.

6.78. Cycling and walking can provide a healthier alternative to private modes of transport especially for short trips. They may also form part of a more sustainable way of travel when combined with public transport.

6.79. Therefore, we will seek to promote cycling and walking by improving the existing network, in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and other stakeholders. This will include the provision of new routes both generally and in association with new development and making available information on the routes and other measures to promote these forms of travel in accordance with **Core Policy 35**. An example includes improving provision for cycling along the A417 corridor, particularly between Wantage and Grove and Harwell Campus and Didcot.



Core Policy 35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking

The Council will work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to:

- i. encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and support measures that enable a modal shift to public transport, cycling and walking in the district
- ii. ensure new development is located close to, or along, existing strategic public transport corridors, where bus services can then be strengthened in response to increases in demand for travel
- iii. ensure that new development is designed to encourage walking as the preferred means of transport, not only within the development, but also to nearby facilities and transport hubs
- iv. ensure that new development encourages and enables cycling not only through the internal design of the site, but also through the provision of cycle friendly infrastructure to link the new residents with nearby services, employment areas, educational facilities and public transport hubs where interchange can be provided for longer distance travel
- v. seek to support the provision of new cycling routes where the proposals are consistent with the other policies of this plan
- vi. ensure proposals for major development* are supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council guidance**, and
- vii. ensure adequate parking is delivered on new developments in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's published standards.***

* as defined by Development Management Procedure Order 2010 ** Transport for new developments (Oxfordshire County Council) *** Parking standards for new developments (Oxfordshire County Council)

⁹² as defined by Development Management Procedure Order 2010

⁹³ Refer to Oxfordshire County Council Guidance for New Developments: Transport Assessments and Travel Plan (March 2014). <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/transport-new-developments>

6 District Wide Policies

Electronic communications

6.80. The Internet provides an opportunity to reduce the need to travel. It means that location is increasingly less important for businesses and enables greater possibilities for home-working. The Local Plan 2031 therefore recognises the role of the Internet and seeks to promote it as a means of reducing the need to travel and supporting the economy.

6.81. **Core Policy 36** seeks to ensure the provision of superfast broadband connectivity to all new developments, and supports network enhancements including supporting infrastructure, to provide superfast broadband to all existing homes and businesses in the district. It is essential that the strategic site allocations set out in this plan provide appropriate infrastructure to ensure all properties can be connected to superfast broadband⁹⁴ without any further works post development.



Core Policy 36: Electronic Communications

The Council will work with Oxfordshire County Council and others to promote faster, more reliable and more comprehensive coverage of electronic communications and allow businesses and residents to access services and information more effectively, thereby helping to reduce the need to travel.

Proposals for all new development should ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided during development, sufficient to enable all properties to be connected to superfast broadband without any post development works.



⁹⁴ Better Broadband for Oxfordshire, available at: <http://www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk/home>

6 District Wide Policies

➤ Protecting the environment and responding to climate change

6.82. Protecting the environment and responding to climate change are important themes that form a key part of our vision and objectives as set out in **Chapter 3** and have informed our Spatial Strategy as set out in **Chapter 4**. Our approach ensures that protecting the environment and responding to climate change have also influenced the location of strategic growth (**Core Policy 4**).

6.83. This section of the plan includes strategic policies that help to maintain and achieve a high quality environment across the district. The policies set out how we will seek to respond to climate change and protect the Vale's historic, built, and natural environment.

6.84. Any site or area specific policies are set out in our Sub-Area Strategies (**Chapter 5**). This section sets out policies that apply across the district, these are:

- **Core Policy 37: Design and Local Distinctiveness** – which seeks to ensure that all development achieves high quality design standards
- **Core Policy 38: Design Strategies for Strategic and Major Development Sites** – which sets out the requirement for Masterplans and Design and Access Statements to accompany strategic and major development proposals
- **Core Policy 39: The Historic Environment** – which sets out the Council's approach to conserving historic assets across the district
- **Core Policy 40: Sustainable Design and Construction** – which sets out the requirement for new development to incorporate climate change adaptation measures to ensure resilience to climate change
- **Core Policy 41: Renewable Energy** – which sets out the Council's approach to supporting proposals for renewable energy
- **Core Policy 42: Flood Risk** – which defines how flood risk should be addressed to support new development proposals
- **Core Policy 43: Natural Resources** – which sets out the Council's approach to minimising environmental impacts associated with development proposals
- **Core Policy 44: Landscape** – which sets out the Council's approach to protecting the important landscape setting of the Vale
- **Core Policy 45: Green Infrastructure** – which seeks to ensure the appropriate provision of Green Infrastructure through new development
- **Core Policy 46: Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity** – which seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity across the district.

6 District Wide Policies

Design

6.85. The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment⁹⁵. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making better places to live and work. New development should create a sense of place and distinct character where people will feel safe and be proud to live and work. Design quality and the historic environment are linked because the historic environment often includes characteristics we associate with high standards of design quality.

6.86. The Council is preparing a comprehensive design guide to support the design policies set out in the Local Plan 2031 (**Core Policies 37 and 38**). The design guide will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to ensure new development is provided to the high quality standards that are appropriate for the Vale. **Core Policy**

37 and the SPD will apply to all development in the district, although not all of the requirements will apply in every case.

6.87. The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 makes provision for significant strategic growth, including a number of major urban extensions to our existing towns and villages. It is important the new developments are places where people will want to live in, and that new buildings also make a positive contribution to established settlements and the local environment.

6.88. The demonstration of good urban design principles through a masterplan approach for strategic and major applications⁹⁶ is required by **Core Policy 38**. The masterplan should set out the strategy for new development to help clarify site expectations and improve collaboration between stakeholders and should be prepared in accordance with the Development Site Templates (**Appendix A**). This

approach should also optimise the potential of the site to:

- create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including open and other public spaces as part of developments),
- support existing services and amenities and facilitate delivery of housing, and
- tie the design process into the planning process by setting an overarching framework to achieve a cohesive development that integrates with the existing settlement.

6.89. The masterplans should be produced in consultation between the Vale of White Horse District Council, the community and other stakeholders where appropriate (for example Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council) and may be subject to design review. The information provided should be proportionate to the scale, complexity and location of the application⁹⁷. Applicants are

recommended to contact the Local Planning Authority at an early stage to determine the extent of information required.

⁹⁵ CLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), para 56

⁹⁶ as defined by the Development Management Procedure Order 2010

⁹⁷ Additional design policies may be set out within the Science Vale Area Action Plan for sites within this area.

6 District Wide Policies



Core Policy 37: Design and Local Distinctiveness

All proposals for new development will be expected to be of high quality design that:

- i. responds positively to the site and its surroundings, cultural diversity and history and reinforces local identity or establishes a distinct identity whilst not preventing innovative responses to context
- ii. creates a distinctive sense of place through high quality townscape and landscaping that physically and visually integrates with its surroundings
- iii. provides a clear and permeable structure of streets, routes and spaces that are legible and easy to navigate through because of the use of street typology, views, landmarks, public art and focal points
- iv. is well connected to provide safe and convenient ease of movement by all users, ensuring that the needs of vehicular traffic does not dominate at the expense of other modes of transport including pedestrians and cyclists, or undermine the resulting quality of places
- v. incorporates and/or links to high quality Green Infrastructure and landscaping to enhance biodiversity and meet recreational needs including Public Rights of Way
- vi. is built to last, functions well and is flexible to changing requirements of occupants and other circumstances
- vii. addresses the needs of all in society by incorporating mixed uses and facilities as appropriate with good access to public transport and a wide range of house types and tenures
- viii. is visually attractive and the scale, height, density, grain, massing, type, details and materials are appropriate for the site and surrounding area
- ix. creates safe communities and reduces the likelihood and fear of crime
- x. secures a high quality public realm with well managed and maintained public areas that are overlooked to promote greater community safety, with clearly defined private spaces
- xi. ensures a sufficient level of well-integrated car and bicycle parking and external storage, and
- xii. is sustainable and resilient to climate change by taking into account landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption and mitigate water run-off and flood risks.

6 District Wide Policies



Core Policy 38: Design Strategies for Strategic and Major Development Sites

Proposals for housing allocations and major development* sites must be accompanied by a site-wide design strategy that includes the following:

1. a Masterplan which should:

- identify the Vision for the development setting out a clear description of the type of place that could be created whilst building on the overall aims for the district
- demonstrate a coherent and robust framework for development that clearly sets out: land uses proposed including amount, scale and density, movement and access arrangements and Green Infrastructure provision
- show how the design requirements of the scheme work within the Vision and demonstrate how the Vision will be achieved
- integrate with the surrounding built, historic and natural environments, in particular maximising existing and potential movement connections and accessibility to encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport
- provide community facilities and other amenities to meet the needs of all the community, including access to education and training facilities, health care, community leisure and recreation facilities as appropriate
- define a hierarchy of routes and the integration of suitable infrastructure, including for example SUDS within the public realm
- contain a Green Infrastructure framework to ensure that public and private open space standards are met, relate well to each other and to existing areas and that the new spaces are safe, convenient and functional, and
- contain an indicative layout which illustrates a legible urban structure based on strategic urban design principles and identifies key elements of townscape such as main frontages, edges, landmark buildings and key building groups and character areas.

2. an accompanying Design and Access Statement, which should explain:

- the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account to create or reinforce local distinctiveness to achieve a positive sense of place and identity
- the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development and how these principles will be used to inform subsequent phases or development parcels within the overall site
- the mechanism for delivering the Vision at more detailed stages, for example through design coding
- how sustainability and environmental matters will be addressed including the efficient use of resources both during construction and when the development is complete
- the delivery phasing and implementation strategies to be in place to ensure the timely delivery of infrastructure and services to the development when they are needed by new residents, and that new developments are built out in a logical manner
- how the mix of housing types and tenures is integrated and supports a range of household sizes, ages and incomes to meet identified housing need, and
- how consultation with the existing community has been incorporated.

* As defined by Development Management Procedure Order 2010

6 District Wide Policies

The Historic Environment

6.90. One of the greatest assets of the Vale is its rich and varied built heritage, which contributes greatly to the distinctive character and cherished identity of its towns, villages and countryside. The district displays a subtle range of building types and materials reflecting the underlying geology of the area. The historic landscape also plays an important role in shaping the varied character of the district as a heritage asset in itself. This is further explored through Oxfordshire County Council's Historic Landscape Characterisation (funded by English Heritage), which is due to be completed in 2015. Some of this work has already been undertaken for the Vale district to inform the selection of the strategic sites. The importance of the heritage across the district is recognised by the designation of 52 Conservation Areas, over 2000 Listed Buildings, 8 Registered Parks and Gardens and 68 Scheduled Monuments.

6.91. The numerous features of architectural or historic interest mean that heritage is a key reason that draws people to want to live in the district's towns and villages and so it is important their character and heritage assets are retained, particularly in areas that face pressure from development. New development can often be informed by principles of good urban design through studying historic towns and villages and it is important these heritage assets are not lost.

6.92. The most effective protection for historic buildings is to maintain them in active use. In many cases the most appropriate use for a historic building is that for which it was originally constructed and this should, where possible, be retained. However, in many cases this use will no longer be practical or viable and a new use will have to be found. In such circumstances, the Council will consider appropriate alternative uses for historic buildings and structures or,

if necessary, enabling development to ensure that buildings and structures are conserved for the future. In particular, this will apply for buildings and structures on the Heritage at Risk Register⁹⁸, maintained by English Heritage. However, the heritage asset most at risk of being lost has often been archaeology, through neglect, decay, or inappropriate development.

6.93. Proposals for new uses of historic assets should avoid the need to remove architectural or historic features, respect the integrity of the built form and quality of spaces within the buildings and avoid or minimise the introduction of new structural features. Any enabling development will be assessed in accordance with English Heritage guidance⁹⁹, which recognises that such proposals should secure the future conservation of a heritage asset and that the benefits of

such schemes should outweigh the disbenefits of departing from the national and local policies.

6.94. The Council will improve its understanding of the historic environment in the district by continuing to produce Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans and through producing a list of non-designated heritage assets. All of these will be produced with the help of the local community, who often have a deep knowledge of, and passion for, their local heritage. The Council will support communities who would like to gather evidence about their Conservation Area to help them produce Character Appraisals and Management Plans.

6.95. The Historic Environment Record (HER), which is currently maintained by Oxfordshire County Council, shows where there are known archaeological sites and monuments within the county.

⁹⁸ English Heritage, Heritage at Risk Register (2013), available at: <http://risk.english-heritage.org.uk/register.aspx>

⁹⁹ <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/enabling-development-and-the-conservation-of-significant-places/>

6 District Wide Policies

The HER will be used to guide the application of national policy in relation to heritage assets of archaeological interest.

6.96. Applications relating to heritage assets should describe the significance of the asset, including any contribution made by their setting, with a proportionate level of detail relating to the likely impact the proposal could have on the asset's cultural, historic, architectural and archaeological interest.

6.97. Development proposals that would harm the significance of designated assets, such as Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Park & Gardens and Scheduled Monuments, and their settings will be strongly resisted in accordance with national guidance

and **Core Policy 39**. Non-designated heritage assets, such as important archaeology, will be conserved taking into account the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

6.98. New development in Conservation Areas should make a positive contribution to, or better reveal, the significance of the setting within the Conservation Area, using an up-to-date Conservation Area Character Appraisal, where one is available.



Core Policy 39: The Historic Environment

The Council will work with landowners, developers, the community, English Heritage and other stakeholders to:

- i. ensure that new development conserves, and where possible enhances, heritage assets and their setting in accordance with national guidance
- ii. ensure that vacant historic buildings are appropriately re-used as soon as possible to prevent deterioration of condition
- iii. seek to reduce the number of buildings on the “Heritage at Risk” Register
- iv. encourage better understanding of the significance of scheduled monuments on the “Heritage at Risk” Register and to aid in their protection
- v. better understand the significance of Conservation Areas in the district through producing Conservation Area Character Appraisals and Management Plans
- vi. identify criteria for assessing non designated heritage assets and maintaining a list of such assets as Locally Listed Buildings, and
- vii. encourage Heritage Partnership Agreements, particularly for Listed Buildings on any ‘at risk’ register.

6 District Wide Policies

Responding to climate change

6.99. Responding to climate change is one of our Strategic Objectives and has informed our Spatial Strategy, the location of our strategic site allocations and many of the Local Plan policies. Through the planning process the Council is seeking to achieve a low carbon Vale by:

- locating housing development close to jobs and services to minimise the need to travel
- providing good access by public transport, cycling and walking to reduce the need to travel by car
- improving the energy efficiency of new and existing buildings
- promoting the development and use of decentralised renewable and low carbon energy, and
- promoting superfast broadband coverage to reduce the need to travel (**Core Policy 36**).

6.100. As well as seeking to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, the Council also recognises that climate change is already happening and so it is important that new development is designed to be resilient to its effects. It is anticipated that the UK will experience warmer, wetter winters, hotter, drier summers and see an increased incidence of extreme weather¹⁰⁰.

6.101. The Housing Standards Review¹⁰¹ has indicated that the Government will put less emphasis on the Code for Sustainable Homes and will instead set equivalent standards through Building Regulations. Therefore, the Council does not set policy standards for the Code for Sustainable Homes. However, Government policy does still allow councils to choose to apply a local standard for water efficiency in advance of national standards. As the Vale is in an area of water stress¹⁰², the Council will apply a higher standard for this matter in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

¹⁰⁰ <http://ukclimateprojections.defra.gov.uk/>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-consultation>

¹⁰² Thames Water (2014): Water Resources Management Plan 2015-2040 (July 2014)

Core Policy 40: Sustainable Design and Construction

All new development, including building conversions, refurbishments and extensions, should seek to incorporate climate change adaptation and design measures to combat the effects of changing weather patterns. Wherever practicable, measures to provide resilience against higher temperatures and intense rainfall should be used and their application to the development outlined in the Design and Access Statement. This could include measures such as:

- i. planting, shading and advanced glazing systems to reduce solar heat gain during the summer
- ii. using materials to prevent penetration of heat, including use of cool building materials and green roofs and walls and using flood resilient materials
- iii. increasing natural ventilation and removing heat by using fresh air
- iv. orientating windows of habitable rooms within 30 degrees of south and utilising southern slopes
- v. locating windows at heights that maximise heating from lower sun angles during the winter, and
- vi. incorporating flood resilient measures such as raising floor levels, electrical fittings and rain-proofing and overhangs to prevent infiltration of heavy rain around doors and windows.

The Council will expect the policy requirements to be met unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be viable* or appropriate to do so or where historic assets would be affected. A sensitive approach will need to be taken to safeguard the special character of the heritage assets e.g. in a Conservation Area.

*Viability should be set out in an independent viability assessment on terms agreed by the relevant parties including the Council and funded by the developer. This will involve an open book approach.

6 District Wide Policies

Renewable energy

6.102. The Government has set a target of 15 per cent of the UK's energy to come from renewable sources by 2020¹⁰³. To enable the Vale to contribute towards the government's target, the Council will support schemes for renewable energy where they are suitable in all other respects.



Core Policy 41: Renewable Energy

The Council encourages schemes for renewable and low carbon energy generation. Planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy generation will be supported provided that they do not cause a significantly adverse affect to:

- i. landscape, both designated AONB and locally valued
- ii. biodiversity, including protected habitats and species and Conservation Target Areas
- iii. the historic environment, both designated and non designated assets, including by development within their settings
- iv. the visual amenity and openness of the Green Belt
- v. local residential amenity, and
- vi. the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians.



¹⁰³ Directive 2009/28/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32009L0028&from=EN>

6 District Wide Policies

Flood Risk

6.103. **Core Policy 42** seeks to ensure that development provides appropriate measures for the management of surface water as an essential element of reducing future flood risk to both the site and its surroundings. Sustainable drainage methods, such as green roofs, ponds and permeable surfaces, will be encouraged, where technically possible. The drainage elements of new development must be designed to the principles set out in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010¹⁰⁴ and associated relevant design standards. Further information on sustainable drainage systems can be found in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)¹⁰⁵ and from Oxfordshire County Council, who are the lead flood authority for Oxfordshire. Sustainable drainage systems should seek to enhance water quality and biodiversity in line with Water Framework Directive (WFD)¹⁰⁶.



Core Policy 42: Flood Risk

The risk and impact of flooding will be minimised through:

- directing new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding
- ensuring that all new development addresses the effective management of all sources of flood risk
- ensuring that development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, and
- ensuring wider environmental benefits of development in relation to flood risk.

The suitability of development proposed in flood zones will be strictly assessed using the Sequential Test, and, where necessary, the Exceptions Test. A sequential approach should be used at site level.

A site specific flood risk assessment will be required for all developments of 1 hectare and greater in Flood Zone 1 and for all proposals for new development, including minor development and change of use in Flood Zone 2 and 3 and in Critical Drainage Areas, and also where proposed development or a change of use to a more vulnerable class that may be subject to other forms of flooding. Appropriate mitigation and management measures will be required to be implemented.

All development proposals must be assessed against the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Oxfordshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to address locally significant flooding. Appropriate mitigation and management measures must be implemented.

All development will be required to provide a drainage strategy. Developments will be expected to incorporate sustainable drainage systems and ensure that run-off rates are attenuated to greenfield run-off rates. Higher rates would need to be justified and the risks quantified. Developers should strive to reduce run-off rates for existing developed sites.

Sustainable drainage systems should seek to enhance water quality and biodiversity in line with the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents>

¹⁰⁵ www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/3242/contents/made>

6 District Wide Policies

Efficient Use of Natural Resources

6.104. National Planning Policy underlines the importance of prudent use of natural resources from using land effectively to encouraging the use of renewable resources. **Core Policy 43** incorporates all elements of natural resources including land, water and air quality to ensure they are protected from decline.

6.105. There are two Air Quality Management Areas designated in the Vale. These are:

- Those parts of Botley closest to the A34 have been declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) due to the pollution generated by the heavy volume of traffic. The Council will continue to monitor levels of nitrogen dioxide in this area, and
- Central Abingdon-on-Thames was designated as an AQMA for nitrogen dioxide in 2006 and an action plan was approved in 2009. Abingdon's Integrated Transport Strategy (AbITS)

was subsequently put in place to alter the flow of traffic within the town centre. Pollution levels in the town will continue to be monitored.

6.106. The Water Framework Directive¹⁰⁷ requires that there is no deterioration in the status of water bodies and that they all achieve good ecological status by 2027. The Thames River Basin Management Plan¹⁰⁸ sets out actions to help meet this obligation. Policies on Green Infrastructure, biodiversity and sustainable construction will also assist in achieving this objective by ensuring that surface water run-off is appropriately controlled.

6.107. Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for determining planning applications for minerals and waste development and producing the Waste and Minerals Core Strategy¹⁰⁹, which will safeguard mineral resources, aggregates, rail depots and sites for waste management. These areas will be marked on the Adopted Policies Map for reference. Should the district



Core Policy 43: Natural Resources

All development proposals will be required to make provision for the effective use of natural resources where applicable, including:

- i. minimising waste and making adequate provision for the recycling of waste on site
- ii. using recycled and energy efficient materials
- iii. maximising passive solar heating, lighting, natural ventilation, energy and water efficiency and re-use of materials
- iv. making efficient use of water, for example through rainwater harvesting and grey water
- v. causing no deterioration in, and where possible, achieving improvements in water quality
- vi. having regard to air quality and any Air Quality Management Areas
- vii. ensuring that the land is of a suitable quality for development and that remediation of contaminated land is undertaken where necessary
- viii. avoiding the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless it is demonstrated to be the most sustainable choice from reasonable alternatives, by first using areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality, and
- ix. re-using previously developed land provided it is not of high environmental value.

receive a planning application in any of these areas, the County Council will be consulted on the development.

Applicants are advised to review the Waste and Minerals Core Strategy prior to making a planning application.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2003/3242/contents/made>

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/planning/125035.aspx>

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/minerals-and-waste-core-strategy>

6 District Wide Policies

Landscape

6.108. The Vale of White Horse occupies an attractive part of the Upper Thames Valley. From south to north the landscape features range from the rolling sweep of the chalk downs (designated as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)), across the wide vistas of the lowland clay vale, then rising to the limestone Corallian ridge, before dropping to the floodplain of the River Thames.

6.109. The distinctive landscapes within the district have been classified by Natural England as falling within three distinct National Character Areas:

- NCA 108 Upper Thames Clay Vales
- NCA 109 Midvale Ridge
- NCA Berkshire and Marlborough Downs.

6.110. Within these national areas there are a number of smaller and more detailed landscapes that add

to and enhance the local landscape character of the district.

6.111. The conservation of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside is a core planning principle of the NPPF stating that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

6.112. Landscape encompasses all outdoor space. There are pressures on these landscapes as a result of changes in agricultural practice and the impact of new development for housing and employment.

The distinctive landscape of the Vale needs to be enhanced and protected for the future. There will be opportunities to enhance the landscape particularly in growth areas around Science Vale and elsewhere in the district and the Green Infrastructure Strategy¹¹⁰ will identify further opportunities for landscape enhancement within the district.

6.113. **Core Policy 44** will be applied using the most up-to-date landscape studies available from Natural England, the District and County Council, and from the North Wessex Downs AONB Board. These include: National Character Areas, Vale of White Horse Landscape Strategy 2006; the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study; Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation, and; documents produced by the North Wessex Downs AONB Board such as the AONB Landscape Character Assessment. Reference should also be made to the Council's Design Guide SPD.

6.114. Other studies may be forthcoming to support more detailed landscape policies in the Local Plan 2031 Part 2, such as a Views Study produced by Oxford City Council along with Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxford Preservation Trust. The Council will also examine the necessity for an update to the district wide Landscape Character Assessment to support the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

¹¹⁰ this is discussed in more detail on page 125

6 District Wide Policies



Core Policy 44: Landscape

The key features that contribute to the nature and quality of the Vale of White Horse District's landscape will be protected from harmful development and where possible enhanced, in particular:

- i. features such as trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, watercourses and water bodies
- ii. important landscape settings of settlements
- iii. topographical features
- iv. areas or features of cultural and historic value
- v. important views and visually sensitive skylines, and
- vi. tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.

Where development is acceptable in principle, measures will be sought to integrate it into the landscape character and/or the townscape of the area. Proposals will need to demonstrate how they have responded to the above aspects of landscape character and will be expected to:

- vi. incorporate appropriate landscape proposals that reflect the character of the area through appropriate design and management;
- viii. preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity and, where practical, enhance damaged landscape areas.

High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB and planning decisions will have regard to its setting. Proposals that support the economy and social well being of communities located in the AONB, including affordable housing schemes, will be encouraged provided they do not conflict with the aims of conservation and enhancement.

6 District Wide Policies

Green Infrastructure

6.115. Green Infrastructure relates to the active planning and management of substantial networks of multi-functional open space. Such networks need to be planned and managed to deliver the widest range of linked environmental and social benefits including conserving and enhancing biodiversity as well as landscape, recreation, water management, and social and cultural benefits to underpin community health and well being.

6.116. The Council has produced a Green Infrastructure Audit that identifies the main Green Infrastructure assets within the Vale and assesses the provision of Green Infrastructure against an adapted version of nationally accepted standards. The Green Infrastructure Audit recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace:

- at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home
- one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home, and
- one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home.

6.117. The Council has commissioned a joint Green Infrastructure Strategy with South Oxfordshire District Council. This strategy will set out the main priorities, policies and standards for the delivery of new Green Infrastructure to meet the identified needs.

6.118. When assessing planning applications, the Council will take into account the findings of the Green Infrastructure Audit, Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) to define what new Green Infrastructure will be required and how it should be delivered. Where there are justifiable reasons why Green Infrastructure cannot be delivered on site the Council will

seek a financial contribution, which will focus on improvements in Conservation Target Areas¹¹¹ and areas of deficit as outlined in the Green Infrastructure Audit. Where new Green Infrastructure is identified

as a mitigation requirement within the Habitats Regulations Assessment this will have to be delivered by the developer to meet the requirements of the HRA.



Core Policy 45: Green Infrastructure

A net gain in Green Infrastructure, including biodiversity, will be sought either through on site provision or off-site contributions and the targeted use of other funding sources. A net loss of Green Infrastructure, including biodiversity, through development proposals will be resisted.

Proposals for new development must provide adequate Green Infrastructure in line with the Green Infrastructure Strategy. All major applications must be accompanied by a statement demonstrating that they have taken into account the relationship of the proposed development to existing Green Infrastructure and how this will be retained and enhanced. Proposals will be required to contribute to the delivery of new Green Infrastructure and/or the improvement of existing assets including Conservation Target Areas in accordance with the standards in the Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Habitats Regulations Assessment.

¹¹¹ Conservation Target Areas are ecological networks that promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats and the protection and recovery of populations of priority species. They represent the main components of the ecological networks across Oxfordshire.

6 District Wide Policies

Biodiversity

6.119. The district contains a rich variety of semi-natural habitats including woodlands, hedgerows, rivers, streams, and meadows. Together they help secure the survival of many species. There are a number of important nature conservation sites, which are protected at international, national and local level. These include:

- **International:**
 - Two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- **National:**
 - One National Nature Reserve
 - 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- **Local:**
 - 84 Local Wildlife Sites*
 - Five Local Nature Reserves
 - Nine Geologically Important Sites.

* A current list of Local Wildlife Sites is available on the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre website¹¹². The list is updated periodically so should be referred to for the most up to date list of conservation sites.

6.120. In addition to these sites there are numerous important natural habitats, including ancient woodlands and habitats of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity (under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act)¹¹³. Waterways and River corridors are also an important feature in the district, making a significant contribution to the character, biodiversity and landscape quality. There are also a wide variety of legally protected and priority species resident throughout the Vale.

6.121. Distinctions will be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks.

6.122. Opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments will be encouraged. The Vale was the first council in the

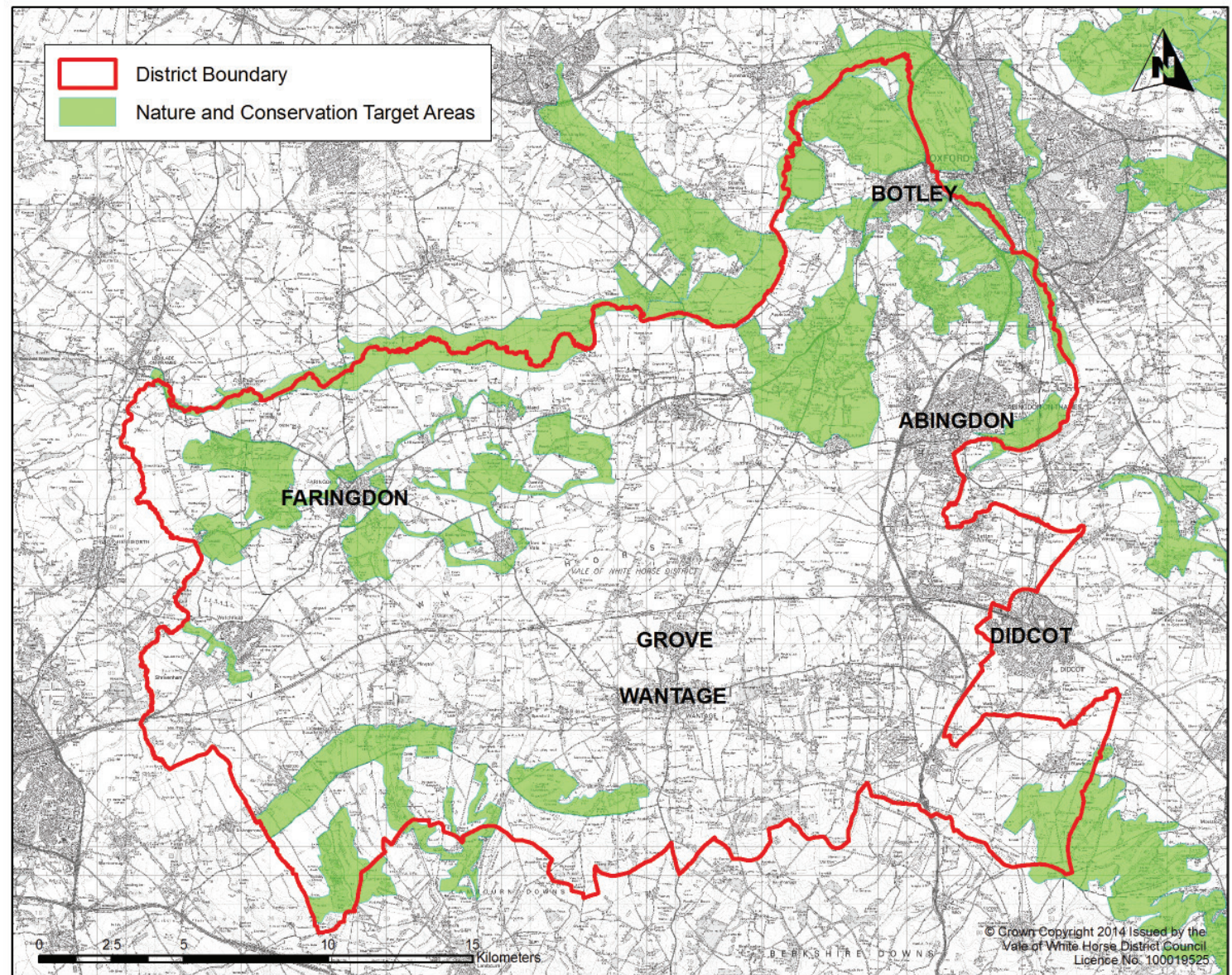
UK to use biodiversity offsetting to provide compensation for the impacts of development. Biodiversity offsetting is a mechanism used to secure compensation for the impacts of development for the creation or restoration of important habitats elsewhere. Offsetting is used to ensure that development schemes do not result in a net loss in biodiversity, particularly where it is not possible to avoid or mitigate the impacts of a development proposal on-site. Biodiversity offsetting will be considered as a means of compensating for loss of biodiversity through **Core Policy 46**, but only where avoidance and on-site mitigation have been discounted as options.

¹¹² <http://www.tverc.org/cms/>

¹¹³ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

6 District Wide Policies

Figure 6.3: Nature and Conservation Target Areas.



6 District Wide Policies



Core Policy 46: Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity

Development that will conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity in the district will be permitted. Opportunities for biodiversity gain, including the connection of sites, large-scale habitat restoration, enhancement and habitat re-creation will be actively sought, with a primary focus on delivery in the Conservation Target Areas. A net loss of biodiversity will be avoided.

The highest level of protection will be given to sites and species of international nature conservation importance (Special Areas of Conservation and European Protected Species). Development that is likely to result in a significant effect, either alone or in combination, on such sites and species will need to satisfy the requirements of the Habitat Regulations*.

*Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992

Development likely to result in the loss, deterioration or harm to habitats or species of importance to biodiversity or of importance for geological conservation interests, either directly or indirectly, will not be permitted unless:

- i. the need for, and benefits of, the development in the proposed location outweighs the adverse effect on the relevant biodiversity interest;
- ii. it can be demonstrated that it could not reasonably be located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm to the biodiversity interests; and
- iii. measures can be provided (and secured through planning conditions or legal agreements), that would avoid, mitigate against or, as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects likely to result from development.

The habitats and species of importance to biodiversity and sites of geological interest considered in relation to points i. to iii. comprise:

- Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Local Nature Reserves
- Priority Habitats and species listed in the national and local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Ancient Woodland and veteran trees
- Legally Protected Species
- Locally Important Geological Sites.

The level of protection and mitigation should be proportionate to the status of the habitat or species and its importance individually and as part of a wider network.

It is recognised that habitats/ areas not considered above (i.e. Nationally or Locally designated and not priority habitats) can still have a significant biodiversity value within their local context, particularly where they are situated within a Conservation Target Area and/or they have good potential to be restored to priority habitat status or form/have good potential to form links between priority habitats or act as corridors for priority species. These habitats will be given due weight in the consideration of planning applications. If significant harm to these sites cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) it will be expected that mitigation will be provided to avoid a net loss in biodiversity or, as a last resort, compensation will be required to offset the impacts and achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

6 District Wide Policies

Wilts and Berks Canal

6.123. The Wilts & Berks canal route extends from Melksham in Wiltshire, through Swindon and on towards Abingdon-on-Thames where it meets with the River Thames. There is a branch (the North Wiltshire Canal) from Swindon to the Thames & Severn Canal near Cricklade. The canal was formally abandoned by Act of Parliament in 1914. Unlike many other canals in the country where the towpath and canal itself remained in public ownership, the Act of Parliament returned the Wilts and Berks Canal to the adjacent landowners and Local Authorities. Much of the route of the canal is in private ownership so the Wilts and Berks Canal Partnership will have to work closely with landowners if plans for its restoration are to go ahead.

6.124. The restoration of the Wilts and Berks Canal is currently focused on the sections in Wiltshire and Swindon, with only a few projects in the Vale. Further

evidence is needed to understand the work required to restore the canal in the Vale before the Council can safeguard the route. Saved Local Plan 2011 policies L14 and L15 will continue to be saved and will apply to any planning applications relating to the canal. The Local Plan 2031 Part 2 will provide the opportunity to update the policy relating to the Wilts and Berks Canal, which should be informed by the work that the partnership and the Trust undertake in the meantime. This work should include:

- an overall viability study of the scheme to show that it is deliverable, including taking into account all infrastructure implications for the existing road and rail network
- investigating issues relating to the existing ecology and natural environment, and identifying steps to mitigate these accordingly, and
- ensuring that all landowners affected by the proposals are consulted as part of the process.

Leisure

6.125. In planning for development, regard must be had to the Council's Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy¹¹⁴ and the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Future Provision SPD¹¹⁵. In doing so, development will be expected to make appropriate provision for open space and recreational facilities as outlined in these documents in accordance with **Core Policy 7** and inline with the Council's up-to-date Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This will ensure that communities have access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation, which makes an important contribution to their health and well-being. These documents will be reviewed and updated when appropriate.

6.126. Existing leisure facilities will be protected in line with saved policies in the Local Plan 2011, until such time as they are replaced by Local Plan 2031 Part 2. Existing leisure facilities

includes Public Rights of Way, as shown on the Oxfordshire County Council definitive map¹¹⁶, and long-distance recreational paths such as The Ridgeway, the Thames Path and the d'Arcy Dalton Way.

¹¹⁴ www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/evidence ¹¹⁵ Vale of White Horse District Council (2008) Supplementary Planning Document: Open Space, Sport and Recreation, adopted July 2008, available at: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-development-framework/supplementary-> Add note about the new contributions SPD that will replace this

¹¹⁶ <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/definitive-map-and-statement-online>

7 Implementing the Plan



Overview

This chapter sets out a detailed monitoring framework to ensure the plan policies are delivered. It sets out:

- what will be delivered by each policy
- targets to monitor progress towards achieving our strategic objectives, and
- what action we will take if the policies do not deliver in accordance with the targets.

The implementation of the plan will be reported against the targets through the Authorities Monitoring Report.

7 Implementing the Plan

Introduction

7.1. Monitoring the Local Plan 2031 policies is important to ensure they are effectively being delivered, that they continue to be relevant to the local area, and meet the requirements of National Planning Policy.

7.2. This chapter sets out how we will implement the strategy and includes clear arrangements for the delivery, monitoring and review of the plan and its policies.

Delivery and Contingency

7.3. We will continue to work jointly with stakeholders to deliver Local Plan 2031 objectives. This will include partnership working with both public agencies and the private sector and is necessary to ensure development progresses in a manner consistent with the strategy identified in this plan.

7.4. To deliver the visions and objectives in this plan, the Council will work collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders involved, this

includes (and not limited to) the Local Enterprise Partnership, neighbouring authorities, developers, infrastructure providers, local communities and interest groups and other organisations relating to the 'duty-to-cooperate'.

7.5. The Council will publish information at least annually to show progress with Local Plan implementation and report any activities relating to the 'duty-to-cooperate'. The Council will use the Authority Monitoring Report to provide up-to-date information on the implementation of any neighbourhood plans that have been made, and contribute to decisions whether there is a need to undertake a partial or full review of the Local Plan 2031.

7.6. To monitor the effects of the Local Plan 2031, including both its intended and unintended effects and its effectiveness towards meeting the objectives set out in the plan, a monitoring framework has been prepared to accompany this plan. Attached at **Appendix G** is the plan's

"Monitoring Framework" setting out how each core policy will be monitored and the indicators that will be used to measure progress and possible actions if targets are not being met. Significant Effect Indicators (identified by the Sustainability Appraisal) will be measured alongside this framework.

7.7. The Local Plan 2031 needs to be resilient to changing circumstances and so we have also included a delivery and contingency policy to explain the steps to be taken if parts of the plan do not deliver in accordance with the targets outlined in the monitoring framework. In particular, if an allocated site does not come forward as expected.



Core Policy 47: Delivery and Contingency

If the Local Plan 2031 policies are not delivered in accordance with the monitoring framework set out in **Appendix G** the contingency measures identified in the monitoring framework will apply.

If the Authority's Monitoring Report shows that allocated development sites and/or development to be brought forward through neighbourhood plans are not coming forward in a timely manner, the Council will consider:

- i. seeking alternative sources of funding if a lack of infrastructure is delaying development, to bring delivery back on track
- ii. investigate mechanisms to accelerate delivery on other permitted or allocated sites
- iii. identifying alternative deliverable site(s) that are in general accordance with the Spatial Strategy of this plan, through the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 or another appropriate mechanism; and if required
- iv. through a full or partial review of the Local Plan 2031.

Appendices



APPENDIX A: Strategic site development templates

APPENDIX B: Existing strategic employment sites

APPENDIX C: Site maps for Milton Park and Harwell Oxford

APPENDIX D: List of rural multi-user sites and large campus style sites as identified in the Local Plan 2011

APPENDIX E: Land for safeguarding for future transport schemes - maps

APPENDIX F: Land for safeguarding for proposed reservoir

APPENDIX G: List of saved policies (Local Plan 2011)

APPENDIX H: Monitoring and implementation framework

GLOSSARY

The appendices are available under separate cover at:
<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/new-local-plan-2031>

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