

WANTAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015 - 2031



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FOREWORD



This Neighbourhood Plan for Wantage is the Town's plan for land use.

The residents said that the best things about Wantage are:

- The sense of community and friendliness of the town and the people
- The local facilities, shops, schools, market, library etc.
- Its rural nature with surrounding countryside
- Its history (including King Alfred), heritage and character
- The accessibility of and proximity to Oxford, London, Newbury and Swindon
- The small market town feel.

The residents said that over the next 20 years they wanted Wantage to maintain the good things and resolve the problems of:

- The lack of good infrastructure
- The scale of development with insufficient thought for facilities required
- The lack of school places now and in the future
- The limited range of shops and excess of charity shops
- The traffic congestion, poor roads and parking
- The poor bus service (with the exception of the Oxford service)
- The state of the pavements and streets.

There is a limit on what this Plan can achieve. It can only influence planning decisions but it also includes things that money from the developers can be spent on in the future. So the policies concentrate on:

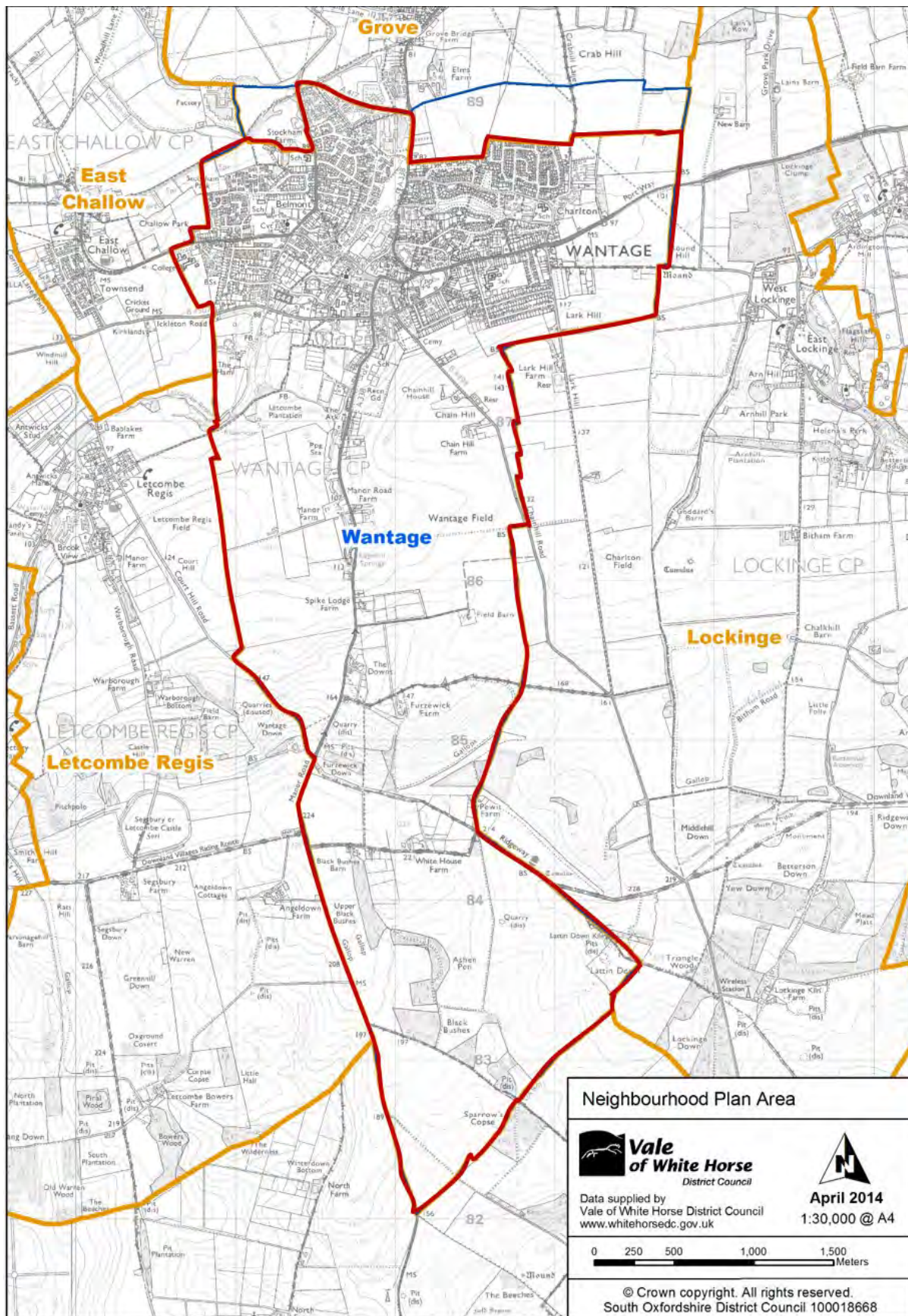
- Improving the Town Centre but creating more space for shops, cafes and restaurants
- Ensuring the design of any development creates enough parking and fits in with the character of the specific area of the town
- Improving and maintaining the green infrastructure of the town.

The residents wanted the development to take place sensitively, environmentally friendly and sustainably, with roads and other infrastructure keeping pace with housing and matched by places of employment and education. They want more cycle tracks and footpaths as well as roads improved and properties maintained and proper provision for the aged.

To achieve the things that they have asked for the Town Centre needs to be expanded to attract a greater variety of shops and restaurants. We need to look at ways of improving the Market Place for pedestrians and cyclists and improve connectivity by adding footpaths and cycleways. We also need to work with developers to enhance the green infrastructure and to build more bungalows, homes suitable for home workers and homes that fit with the character of our rural market town. Most importantly we need more parking including bus and coach parking, both in the Town Centre and on new developments.

The Wantage Neighbourhood Plan Team

Plan A: Wantage Neighbourhood Plan area



1. INTRODUCTION



- 1.1 The Wantage Town Council is preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for the area designated by Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Plan has been prepared by volunteers, local residents, and members of the Town Council, in line with the wishes of the residents expressed through the surveys carried out in 2014 and consultations carried out in 2015.
- 1.2 The designated area covered by the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) is shown in Plan A opposite. This includes all of Wantage Town (inside the red line) and extends around the perimeter of the additional new developments at Stockham Park Farm and Crab Hill (inside the blue line) which are in the parish of Grove.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to make planning policies that can be used to determine planning applications in the area. In some cases its policies will encourage development proposals for the benefit of the local community. In others its policies will aim to protect the special character of the Town.
- 1.4 Neighbourhood Plans provide local communities with the chance to shape the future development of their areas. Once approved at a referendum the Plan becomes a statutory part of the Development Plan for the area and will carry significant weight in how planning applications are decided.
- 1.5 Plans must meet four 'basic conditions'. These are:
 - Is the Plan consistent with national planning policy?
 - Is the Plan consistent with local planning policy?
 - Does the Plan promote the principles of sustainable development?
 - Has the process of making the Plan met the requirements of European environmental standards?
- 1.6 In addition, the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan must be able to show that it has properly consulted local people and other relevant organisations during the process of making the Plan and has followed the Regulations.
- 1.7 As part of our consultations we have included the entire area of OX12, which includes Grove and many of the villages around us, in the opportunities to comment. This is the major part of the catchment area of Wantage and the comments and feedback from people who use the facilities of Wantage has helped to inform our Plan.

2. WANTAGE - THE PLACE



- 2.1 Wantage is a beautiful medium sized traditional market town that won a Great British High Street Award in 2014. It has a population in the region of 11,000. The built up area of the town is concentrated in the northern part of the Plan area. Immediately to the south of the built up area is land which forms part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Letcombe Brook (a rare chalk stream) flows through the centre of the Town.



- 2.2 Over the years, the built up area of Wantage, outside the AONB, has grown to a point where there is little capacity for development on new sites within the Town itself, although some development could be accommodated through rebuild and change of use. Wantage, however, is viewed as the principal amenity provider for a large number of nearby villages, including Grove, bringing the population relying on its facilities and amenities closer to 30,000. The number of jobs locally available is insufficient to support this level of population and therefore a high proportion of the population is obliged to commute for employment. Those commuting mainly travel to the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Milton Business Park, Oxford and by train to London.



- 2.3 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the various working groups have actively engaged the local community in considering the scope of the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan. The working groups established are:
- Town Centre, businesses, economy and technology;
 - Heritage, environment, conservation and design;
 - Transport, infrastructure, education and health; and
 - Youth, leisure, sport and art.
- These groups identified a number of potential policy ideas which have been tested in a Residents' Survey, the summary outcome of which is included below. These policy areas may trigger further planning issues and/or spin off stand-alone projects.

- 2.4 The top ten strengths of Wantage which have been identified by the working groups are:
- An attractive place to live
 - The rich cultural heritage of the town
 - Good road access (despite capacity issues)
 - Easy access to attractive countryside
 - Breadth of skills, experience and expertise among local people
 - Good schools
 - Harmonious architecture and strong design character
 - Good range of clubs and societies
 - Regular markets and good independent shops
 - A high quality natural environment worthy of preservation/enhancement.



2.5 Based on the Survey carried out in 2014 the key reasons that attracted residents to come and live in Wantage were overwhelmingly the local countryside, the historic character of the town and the quiet, peaceful environment. This suggests that these are important qualities to retain in terms of future development. Family connections to Wantage also came out fairly strongly, mentioned by a third of respondents, as did the availability of local employment and housing at an affordable price. Easy access to Oxford was noted by many as a key strength of the town as well as the Science Vale and the Berkshire Downs. In addition the quality of the local schools was noted as a positive attribute.



2.6 The most common areas for improvement identified are as follows:

- car parking (availability, cost),
- lack of variety in shopping offer,
- poor condition of roads and congestion,
- lack of a railway station,
- ensuring sufficient school places,
- limited footpaths and cycleways,
- lack of, loss of and poor management of green spaces, and
- concerns about losing facilities/insufficient facilities for the expanding community.

2.7 Aspirations for the future centred on a vibrant, well-planned town with good community facilities and transport links, a thriving Town Centre and any new housing built sympathetically and in-keeping with the existing historic nature of Wantage. All of this also presumes the background of a continuing well-preserved rural setting that promotes interaction with the environment.

2.8 For a fuller summary of the outcome of these activities see the 'Wantage Neighbourhood Plan: First Report' of January 2015 in the evidence base on our website at www.wantageplan.org.

3. THE PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan must be in line with national and local planning policies. At the national level these are set by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of 2012, which is complemented by the Planning Practice Guidance of 2014. These documents set out the key planning principles that apply to preparing plans and managing development proposals across the country.
- 3.2 At the local level, the Development Plan currently comprises the policies of the 2011 Vale of White Horse Local Plan (VWHLP). See <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/existing-local-plan-2011> for details.

The strategic policies that are relevant are listed below:

- HE1: Preservation and enhancement of conservation areas (the Wantage and Charlton Conservation Areas are shown on the Proposals Map)
 - L2 and L3: Existing urban open space (a number of spaces are shown on the Proposals Map)
 - L3: Green Corridor (the Letcombe Brook area is shown on the Proposals Map)
 - NE10: Important Open Land (land to the west of the town is shown on the Proposals Map)
 - CF2: Community facilities
- 3.3 However, the strategic policies of this Plan are being replaced by the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1), which will be examined during 2015 for adoption in 2016. This new Plan will take forward many of those strategic policies from 2011. It will also provide an up-to-date housing supply strategy for the period from 2014 to 2031 see <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/new-local-plan-2031> for details.
- 3.4 Its key strategic policies are:
- CP3: Settlement Hierarchy - identifies Wantage as the market town in the South East Vale Sub-Area and describes it as a settlement which has the greatest long-term potential for development as it provides the town and the surrounding areas with shops and community facilities.
 - CP4: Strategic Housing Allocations - identifies 1,500 new homes at Crab Hill (North East of Wantage and South East of Grove and defines the development boundary of Wantage) within our plan area as well as two major developments in Grove (2,500 new homes on Grove Airfield and 750 new homes on Monks Farm).
 - CP6: Strategic Employment Land – identifies the strategic employment

site at Grove Road to be safeguarded for employment uses.

- CP17: Transport Delivery for the South East Vale Sub-Area – identifies a new link road at NE Wantage between the A338 and A417 ('the Eastern Link Road') and other route improvements to the A417 east of Wantage.
- CP18: Safeguarding Land for Transport Schemes – includes the Eastern Relief Road to support the Crab Hill strategic development area and West Wantage Link Road.
- CP19: Re-opening of Grove Railway Station – with connectivity for Wantage.
- CP28: New Employment Development – provides for new development on unallocated sites in town centres.
- CP29: Change of Use of Existing Employment Land – protects employment land from a loss to other uses.
- CP31: Visitor Economy – supports new development within the built up area boundary for conference facilities, hotels etc..
- CP32: Town Centre Policy Area and Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages - Wantage Town Centre identified on the Proposals Map to manage new retail and other town centre uses proposals.
- CP35: Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking - encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport and support measures that enable a shift to public transport, cycling and walking.
- CP37: Design and Local Distinctiveness - sets out a series of key principles for development in the District, which will be informed by the proposed Vale of White Horse Design Guide published for public consultation alongside the LPP1.
- CP39: Conservation Areas – recognises and supports the enhancement of the historic environment in the district including Wantage and Charlton Village conservation areas identified on the Proposals Map.
- CP44: Landscape – identifies the North Wessex Downs AONB and its setting for conservation and enhancement.

- 3.5 As a large part of the Neighbourhood Plan area is in the Area of Outstanding Beauty, the Plan must also have regard to the North Wessex Downs Management Plan 2014-2019 and any subsequent plan prepared for the North Wessex Downs.
- 3.6 The Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan LTP4 also contains strategies which are relevant to this plan.

4. VISION & OBJECTIVES



Vision

4.1 The vision for Wantage in 2031 is:

'Wantage will remain a thriving market town, with its retained historic and architectural character, busy town centre and attractive network of green spaces and links to the surrounding countryside and AONB. Emphasis will be placed on commercial and retail success to meet the demands of changing economic practices, greater accessibility and increased mix of housing and recreation whilst protecting the landscape setting, green infrastructure and community assets.'

Our view of what Wantage will be like in 2031



- The town has retained its special historic and architectural character by carefully managing change within its built up area and by protecting its setting and surrounding open countryside from development.
- The market square and shops are thriving and have experienced an increased footfall of customers. The Town Centre has become more accessible for all providing a safe pedestrian environment with public transport services.
- There is a well-connected network of green spaces throughout and around the town.
- Letcombe Brook is protected and the biodiversity and landscape along the Brook is enhanced.
- There is a mix of high quality housing, suitable for families and a diverse population, with adequate parking.
- It is a town where residents can move around easily with improved accessibility into the Town Centre by public transport, car, cycle and on foot. The cycling route network has been better integrated and now links up with green spaces, the Town Centre and public transport services.
- The transport and parking systems are sufficient to deal with the numbers of visitors to Wantage from the surrounding areas.
- Important views of local landmarks and landscape have been preserved within and around the town.
- Shopping, education, health, sports and leisure, entertainment, social, and cultural opportunities have been improved for the wellbeing of the community.
- It is a clean town with low levels of pollution.
- All residents have improved access both to community facilities and to green spaces and surrounding countryside.
- There is a vibrant and diverse economy from micro, small and start up businesses to medium and large businesses, and sustainable business and employment opportunities.

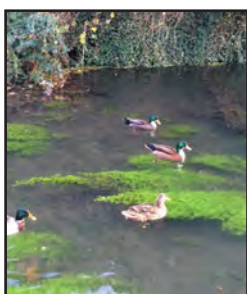


Objectives

- 4.2 For this vision to be realised, a number of strategic objectives need to be achieved by the Neighbourhood Plan over the next few years:

A Successful Town Centre

- To maintain the viability and vitality of the Town Centre serving a growing local population by resisting the loss of existing retail space in the key shopping frontages and by planning for new retail development, transport management and public car parks.



Green Infrastructure

- To conserve and improve the ecological, water management and recreational value of Letcombe Brook as an essential green infrastructure asset for the town.
- To create a viable green infrastructure network of other assets including green spaces, amenity areas, with enhanced connectivity through new and improved footpaths and cycleways.
- To conserve the special landscape and scenic beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB and its setting.

Maintaining Our Heritage

- To sustain and enhance the special significance of the variety of heritage assets in the town.
- To require high design standards in all future development that reflects the distinct character of the town.

Meeting Local Housing Need

- To provide housing types that focus on a wide range of requirements including affordability, first home buyers, downsizers, home workers and self-builders.

Viable Community Assets

- To protect and encourage the improvement of cherished community assets.

5. LAND USE PLANNING POLICIES

Introduction

- 5.0.1 Our vision and objectives can only realistically be delivered through the planning and development process. Land use planning policies are the means by which we can guide, influence, shape and help manage development proposals. The purpose of these policies is to either encourage planning applications to be made for things the local community wants to see happen or to discourage applications for developments that they do not want to happen. To be effective policies need to be clear and unambiguous so they can be easily applied when considering planning applications.
- 5.0.2 We have included fourteen policies. Our policies are:
1. A Spatial Plan for Wantage
 2. Town Centre Policy Area
 3. Town Centre Development
 4. Protection of Employment Sites
 5. Design – General Principles
 6. Design – Character Areas
 7. Design – Housing Types
 8. Green Infrastructure Network
 9. Green Infrastructure – Letcombe Brook
 10. Green Infrastructure – Chain Hill Special Landscape Area
 11. Green Infrastructure – Local Green Spaces
 12. Infrastructure Investment
 13. Community Facilities
 14. Community Assets
- 5.0.3 We feel that we now have the most important policies required to supplement the National and District planning policies to achieve the vision for Wantage.
- 5.0.4 This Neighbourhood Plan avoids repeating existing national or local planning policies. The policies therefore focus on a relatively small number of key development issues in the area. For all other planning matters, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 saved policies will continue to be used. Part 1 of the new Local Plan has been submitted for examination and once adopted will replace the strategic policies of the current Local Plan.
- 5.0.5 The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are detailed in the next pages. Each policy has a number and title and the policy itself is written in bold coloured text for ease of reference. There is also a short statement explaining the intention of the policy and any other relevant background information. At the end of this Plan are the Policies Maps (pages 47-49) – where a policy refers to a specific site or area then it is shown on the Map.



Policy 1: A Spatial Plan for Wantage

The growth of Wantage should be contained within its defined development boundary which includes the provisions for major development to the North West and North East of the town as defined in LPP1 Core Policy 4.

Proposals that will lead to any further coalescence between Wantage and its neighbouring settlements will be required to demonstrate that they:

- i. Do not lead to the coalescence of settlements or**
- ii. Maintain the separate identity of settlements and**
- iii. Do not undermine the character, setting or identity of a settlement.**

Proposals for development in or affecting the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or its setting will only be supported if they can demonstrate that they:

- iv. Will conserve and enhance the AONB landscape and in particular its special qualities, landscape character and scenic beauty, in accordance with the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan,**
- v. Support the rural economy, and/or**
- vi. Meet a specific need such as leisure or education, and**
- vii. Any negative landscape and ecological impacts will be fully mitigated.**



- 5.1.1 This policy restates the purpose and value of defining a development boundary around the urban area of the town to encourage high quality and appropriate development within the boundary and, by definition, to confine development beyond it to that which is appropriate to the countryside. This will ensure the town grows in sustainable ways in the future.
- 5.1.2 Wantage and the surrounding villages have individual characteristics and it is important that these are respected and maintained. A sense of leaving one settlement before arriving at the next should be retained. We recognise that the boundary of the area covered by our Neighbourhood Plan is very close to our development boundary in some parts but would support policies in other plans which maintain the separate identity of settlements.
- 5.1.3 Proposers of development on the edge of Wantage will be expected to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the local planning authority that their proposal does not conflict with the objectives of this policy.



5.1.4 The existing landscape of the Neighbourhood Plan area will be protected for the sake of its own intrinsic beauty, its benefit to the rural character of the Vale of the White Horse and for its biodiversity and geodiversity interest.

5.1.5 A large part of our Neighbourhood Plan area lies in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and paragraphs 115 and 116 of the NPPF are also relevant which confirm that:

“Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these [Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty] except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest...” and “that, great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.”



5.1.6 Transport is also an important part of our spatial plan and we would look favourably on developments which help to reduce the amount of traffic on roads in the Town Centre and which provide:

- alternative parking for those employed in or visiting the town by car or by coach; and
- enhance our connectivity through the town through improved and extended footpaths and/or cycle ways.



Policy 2: Town Centre Policy Area

The Neighbourhood Plan defines the Wantage Town Centre Policy Area, as shown on the Policies Maps on pages 47-49.

In addition to the development management policies of the Local Plan that will apply in this area, proposals for new retail (A1) and café/restaurant (A3) uses on ground and upper floors in the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages will be especially encouraged in the area. Proposals for retail development outside the Policy Area will be resisted unless they are for convenience food retail of no more than 300 sq.m. gross internal area.

Elsewhere in the area outside of the defined primary and secondary shopping frontages, proposals for employment uses will be encouraged provided they meet minimum car parking standards and any loss of existing car parking spaces is replaced.

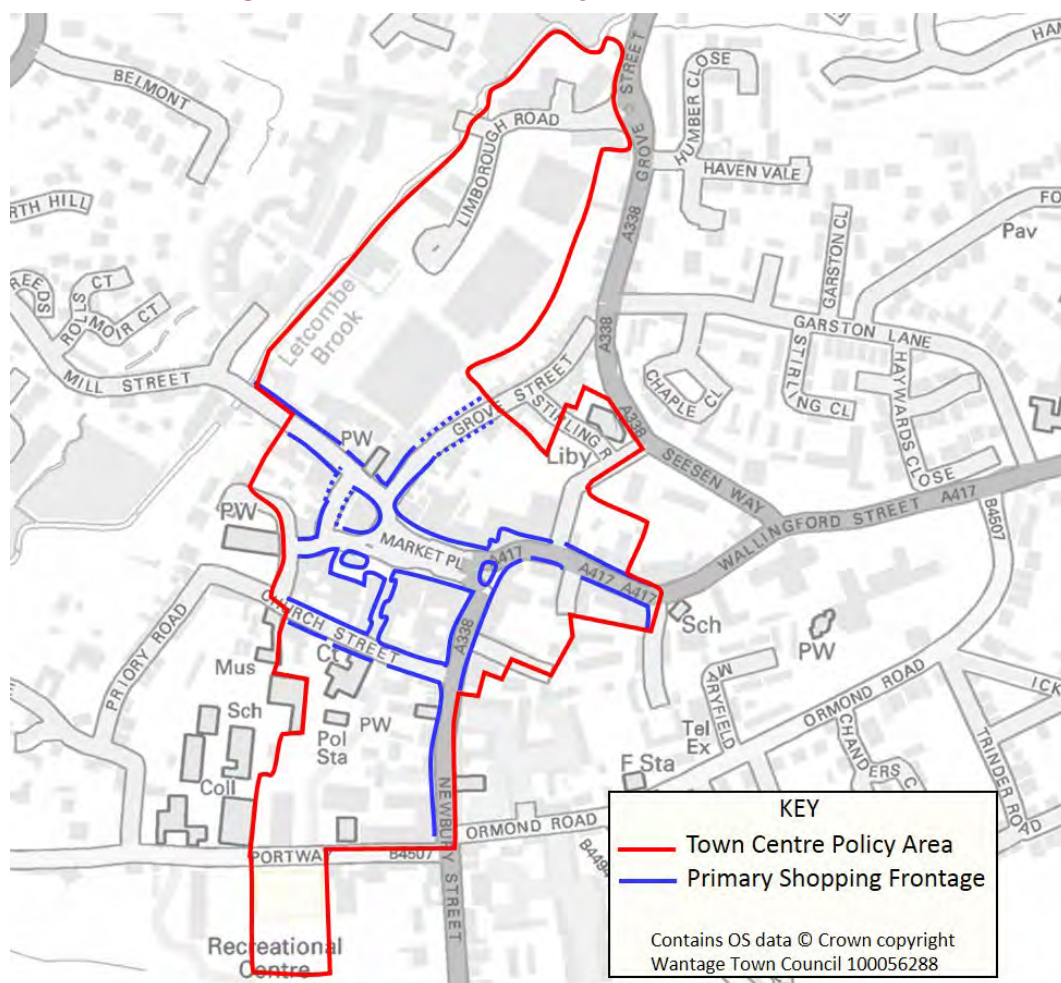
Proposals for change of use within or related to the Town Centre Policy Area will be required to demonstrate how they will complement or support the Town Centre's vitality and viability through a mix use scheme. In the case of redevelopment and/or change of use of sites in excess of 0.5 HA, proposals will be required to demonstrate why redevelopment for another land use is necessary and/or why a mixed use scheme is not viable.

Proposals for change of use to dwellings or for new housing development in the area will be required to demonstrate how they will retain employment in the Town Centre Policy Area and provide sufficient parking for both employees and residents.

- 5.2.1 This policy amends the Vale of White Horse Adopted Policies Map in respect of the application of Local Plan Policy CP32 for managing change in the Town Centre. It does so by proposing to extend the area along Church Street, Newbury Street and Wallingford Street, which are areas currently on the edge of the Town Centre but which should function as part of a larger town centre in future years. We did consider the potential advantages of making the area larger but were advised that this would be the optimum size for the town and provides easy access to all parts of the Town Centre.
- 5.2.2 To sustain and improve the retail and cultural value of the Town Centre the emphasis must be on not just resisting the loss of shops (which is already Vale Local Plan policy) but to positively encourage the reuse of existing floorspace and land in the area for retail and café/restaurant uses. Policy 3 below contains a specific proposal to help achieve this.



Plan B: Wantage Town Centre Policy Area



- 5.2.3 The emerging Local Plan Part 1 for the Vale of the White Horse assesses there is a requirement for around 4,200 sq. m net of additional convenience and comparison goods floorspace within Wantage/Grove over the Plan period to 2031, in addition to the new local centre at Grove Airfield. Responses to our survey and to our consultations have commented on the need for a greater variety of shops, cafes and restaurants in the town. This is important to the vitality of the town and should increase the footfall for existing retailers. Proposals for less than 300 sq.m. would not have a harmful impact on the Town Centre.
- 5.2.4 Our vision is to expand the shopping areas and pedestrianise part of the Market Place. Working with neighbouring parishes to find somewhere for long term parking will free up town centre parking for visitors. Also ensuring that buses have an interchange outside the Market Place so that the Market Place is simply a drop-off/pick-up point will free up space. Any developments which support these ideas will be considered favourably. Ideas for the pedestrianisation are included in the supporting documents.



Policy 3: Town Centre Development

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies 0.63Ha of land between Church Street and Portway, as shown on the Policies Maps on pages 47 to 49, for the purpose of redeveloping the public car park, the Post Office sorting office and the Police Station and Magistrates Court buildings to provide:

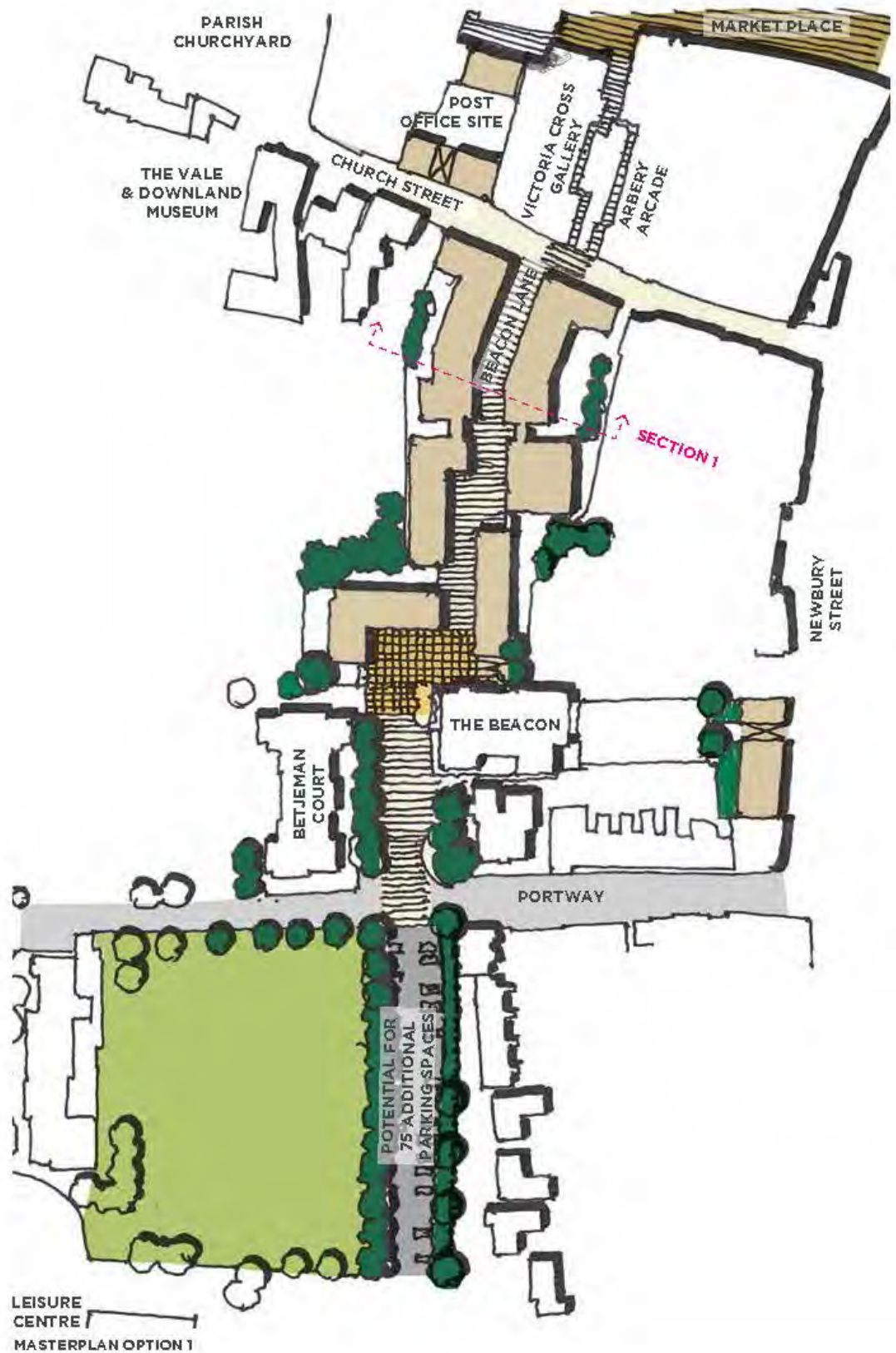
- i. a mix of 2,300 sq. m. of ground floor commercial (A1-A5) and leisure (D2) uses, including a 1,000 sq. m. store;**
- ii. approximately 72 dwellings on two upper floors; and**
- iii. a total of 259 car parking spaces, including 75 on a new car park to the south of Portway.**

Development proposals for the site will be supported provided:

- iv. they comprise the above mix of uses in a comprehensive scheme;**
- v. any existing public car parking spaces on the site are re-provided on-site or in a suitable location elsewhere prior to their loss;**
- vi. their design has regard to sustaining and improving the significance of the Wantage Conservation Area and other designated heritage assets in Church Street; and**
- vii. the scheme makes provision for traffic management on Church Street to encourage pedestrians to cross.**

- 5.3.1 The Retail and Town Centre Study: Addendum Study of October 2014 produced by the District Council and included in our evidence base, provides an up-to-date view of the future retail needs of the District. The report assesses there is a requirement for around 4,200 sq. m net of additional convenience and comparison goods floorspace within Wantage/Grove over the Plan period to 2031, in addition to the new local centre at Grove Airfield.
- 5.3.2 Many of the existing shops in the Town Centre are within the conservation area and can't easily be expanded to provide the amount of space required by modern retailers, so attracting the clothes and shoe shops wanted by our residents is difficult without finding additional space. Parking is also important for employees, customers and visitors, as is access to public transport.
- 5.3.3 The District Council working with Wantage Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Town Centre Working Group commissioned a Town Centre Masterplan in April 2015 to identify practical options to provide this scale of retail development in the Town Centre. This policy is the result of that work. We recognise that planning applications have been granted on some of the area covered by the Masterplan but our ambition stays the same.

Plan C: Wantage Masterplan





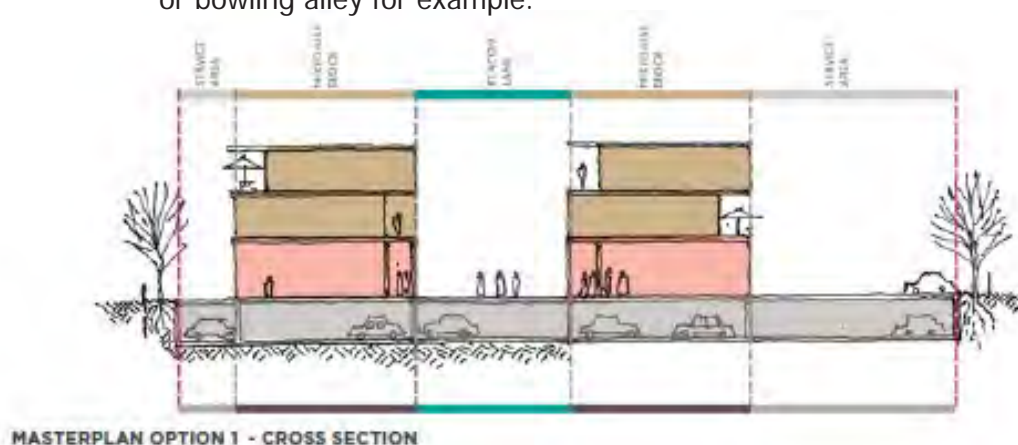
We need more retail space of appropriate sizes within easy walk of the Market Place and more access to parking space.

- 5.3.5 This land allocation comprises the current Post Office depot site, which could be redeveloped to take three-storey buildings fronting onto Market Place and Church Street. These contain commercial uses at ground level and 8 residential units above, with 16 parking spaces within an internal courtyard. Since the site is within the Conservation Area and opposite important groups of listed buildings, to the north and south, it will need very careful design.



- 5.3.6 Leaving the Market Place via the Victoria Cross Gallery, the regeneration corridor crosses Church Street as a raised speed table to enter a new street, which, for now, we have named Beacon Lane. This is a new 8-9 metre-wide shared surface space with pedestrian priority, but allowing vehicle servicing. It is lined by three storeys of development with ground floor uses including shops, small business units, food, drink and other leisure uses. Two storeys of residential uses are proposed above the ground floor mixed use. Should there not prove to be the market for such a mix of uses, the fall-back land use should be mainly residential with mixed use at corners and key nodes and the design should allow for changes of use to occur over time as demand for different uses varies. The public conveniences must remain as part of a new development or replacement facilities provided.

- 5.3.7 In this example, Beacon Lane ends in a small sunny square wrapped around the entrance to The Beacon. This area provides up to 2,280 sq.m. of ground floor commercial and leisure uses with 72 residential units (typically 1, 2 and 3 bed flats) above, and up to 163 basement parking spaces. The commercial uses are defined by Use Classes A1 – A5, i.e. shops, financial services, cafes/restaurants, drinking establishments and hot food takeaways, all of which are suited to the Town Centre in principle. Leisure uses, defined as Use Class D2, may comprise a cinema, concert hall or bowling alley for example.





5.3.8 Moving south from the square, we suggest that 22 surface parking spaces are retained around The Beacon and a further 60 spaces might be provided in a deck behind The Beacon on the former garage site which also delivers up to 12 residential units.

5.3.9 Further car parking will be required and we would look favourably at any proposals for how this could be achieved.



5.3.10 Moving further south across Portway, also by a raised speed table, we have shown the potential for more car parking. This open space is covenanted for educational use, but by taking a thin 22 metre strip along its eastern edge a dual education/town centre benefit can be achieved. All of the playing field can be retained and deliver 75 attractively landscaped parking spaces, using permeable surfaces, in such a way that they would be effectively invisible from the open space. These could run right down to the south of the playing fields and could link in to join the leisure centre access road. A drop-off for the school transport away from the road would be provided via the car-park and parking use by the school and leisure centre during the day would free up space for public access during evenings and weekends.



Policy 4: Protection of Employment Sites

Proposals for change of use from employment use (B1, B2, B8) will be required to demonstrate that retention of employment use is:

- i. no longer viable and**
- ii. employment use cannot be delivered as part of a mixed use scheme.**

5.4.1 This policy supports the need to ensure a balance between housing and employment and therefore to ensure that employment sites are not lost to alternative uses.

5.4.2 The town is heavily reliant on employment opportunities outside the town boundaries and any employment sites within the town should be encouraged and supported.

5.4.3 Policy 29 in the emerging Local Plan Part 1 lists criteria for applications for the change of use of land or premises that are currently, or were last, used for employment purposes and requires the applicant to demonstrate that at least one of the criteria in the policy is met. Our policy aims to strengthen that by adding the requirement to demonstrate that employment use cannot be delivered as part of a mixed use scheme.



Policy 5: Design – General Principles

Development proposals will be supported, provided their design has regard to the following principles:

- i. **views into and out of Town make a significant contribution to its overall character and must be both preserved and respected in the design and positioning of any new development;**
- ii. **at least two off street parking spaces, using permeable surfaces, (excluding garages) are provided per dwelling in all residential schemes with one additional space for each bedroom above 3 bedrooms, unless special circumstances can be demonstrated by way of the conditioned occupation of the dwelling, in which case a **planning obligation is made for a financial contribution towards the improvement of the Wantage Green Infrastructure Network;****
- iii. **improved provision for cycling throughout the Area. Contributions to improve cycling opportunities will be sought, where appropriate and may be in the form of financial and/or appropriate design measures or in-kind improvement for:**
 - a. Contributions to the improvement of existing bicycle lanes and paths;
 - b. Contributions to the provision of safe and well designated cycle routes, especially on the main roads through the Area;
 - c. Contributions to the provision of new bicycle lanes and paths;
 - d. Contributions to the provision of new bicycle stands in all parts of the Area - and particularly in town; and
 - e. The provision of appropriate bicycle storage.

It is important that any design measures meet the appropriate technical standard.

5.5.1 This policy complements saved and forthcoming Local Plan design policies by emphasising three especially important design principles.

5.5.2 Firstly, the town occupies a prominent location at the foot of the North Wessex Downs on the edge of the Vale of White Horse. There are many opportunities within the town to glimpse the surrounding countryside, which help define its special character. Conversely, the town's edges to the countryside allow views into the urban area that also contribute to its character. Whilst it is not practical for development to avoid closing every such view, it is expected that the layout and building form of proposals will realise opportunities to maintain and frame important views from and to the town from its edge.



5.5.3 Secondly, the town, and especially the Town Centre, are suffering from inadequate off street car parking provision made by development schemes of the last few years. Whilst there is already a shift from requiring maximum standards to minimum standards of provision in new schemes, the standards are not applied robustly or consistently. The policy therefore makes the standards for Wantage simple. It results in a slight increase in the number of car parking spaces in some schemes but this is considered crucial if past mistakes are not to be repeated. Where the nature of the occupation of a dwelling is restricted by design and condition to household types with lower car use then the scheme will be expected to make a financial contribution to improving connectivity to the Green Infrastructure Network linking to cycleways and footpaths for the direct benefit of the occupants.



- 5.5.4 Thirdly, that the cycling policies of the District Council and County Council are supported and enhanced in Wantage. With more and more journeys in the Area being made by bicycle, better facilities and infrastructure are needed to accommodate and ensure the safety of such journeys. Firstly, new developments often fail to make 'spatial' allowance for cycling in their design, and sometimes obliterate existing potential 'space' for cycling. Consideration should be given to 'permeability', ie wide gaps between properties in key locations (eg between cul-de-sacs, and around perimeter of development) to provide through cycling routes. No amount of CIL funding can deliver quality cycle infrastructure when the pre-requisite space is lost - forever.
- 5.5.5 All developments for more than 10 homes should provide a specific cycling plan which should must address connectivity, permeability, and technical compliance.



Policy 6: Design – Character Areas

Development proposals will be supported provided their design has regard to the principles of the Development Plan and which reflect the character of that part of the town within which the land is located, as shown on the Policies Maps on pages 47-49. Innovative design is encouraged provided that it positively responds to and enhances the local character of the surrounding area. Landscape schemes should seek to retain existing on-site mature trees and hedges and should include new fruit tree planting.

Town Centre Conservation Areas

- a. Any future development or redevelopment in the Conservation Area, including infill and back garden development, should be architecturally in keeping with adjacent buildings and appropriate in scale and massing; and
- b. Materials for buildings, shop fronts and boundary walls should reflect the historic character, for example brick, render, clay tile, slate, stone and lime-based mortars.



Charlton Village Conservation Area

- a. Any future development or redevelopment in the Conservation Area, including infill and back garden development, should be architecturally in keeping with adjacent buildings and appropriate in scale and massing;
- b. A housing scheme should be of no more than 20 dwellings per hectare density reflecting the character of the area;
- c. Materials for buildings and boundary walls should reflect the historic character, for example brick, render, clay tile, slate, stone and lime-based mortars; and
- d. Development should not impede views into the AONB land to the South.



Charlton, South East, North West and West Wantage Character Areas

- a. Any future developments should provide sufficient amenity open space to ameliorate the deficiencies in the existing estates and reduce their dependence on borrowed landscapes;
- b. Infill development should respect the character of the relevant area in its architectural style, scale, massing and materials;
- c. Housing schemes should be no more than 30 dwellings per hectare density reflecting the character of the area.



South West Wantage Character Area

Proposals for development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that;

- a. the open character of this important natural landscape will be maintained;
- b. it does not comprise the sub-division of plots for infill development in residential gardens;
- c. the development does not impede views into or out of the open green spaces or AONB land;
- d. **Housing schemes reflect the character of the area and are likely to be no more than 20 dwellings per hectare density.**

5.6.1 This policy complements the Vale of White Horse Design Guide by identifying six different character areas in the town and setting specific design parameters for each area. Further details of the characteristics of each area are included in the Neighbourhood Plan Local Character Assessment report in the evidence base.

5.6.2 It also refines forthcoming Local Plan Policy 32 on housing density by indicating the appropriate densities for each character area of the town, based on the existing common densities. It is recognised that in the Town Centre Conservation Area some proposals for new housing may not be able to meet the required density standard and accommodate sufficient off street car parking spaces. Where this is the case, the Town Council will advise the District Council of the appropriate weight to be attached to each policy objective on a case-by-case basis as part of its statutory consultee role.



Policy 7: Design – Housing Types

Proposals for housing development should be in accordance with the character of the areas and to meet the needs of current and future households in Wantage including home workers.

Proposals for housing development incorporating bungalows and opportunities for self-build schemes will be encouraged provided they accord with the design principles of the Development Plan.



5.7.1 This policy requires housing schemes to focus on delivering housing types that will meet the needs of the local community not just in terms of size to suit new entrants into the housing market but also downsizers. For example the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment proposes:

- 5.9% 1 bedroom,
- 21.7% 2 bedroom,
- 42.6% 3 bedroom and
- 29.8% 4+ bedrooms

for the Vale of the White Horse market housing from 2011-2031 and a larger number of 2 bedroom properties in the affordable sector (see Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) Tables 65 & 66).



5.7.2 It also requires housing development to fit the character of the areas, which in Wantage is mainly two, or two and a half storey, semi-detached homes. New homes must to be adaptable to enable home working in respect of the number and size of habitable rooms and to be able to access new broadband services infrastructure, notably fibre to the home technology.

5.7.3 In addition, the policy encourages housing schemes to make provision for bungalows within their mix of types. These types remain popular with older households. Development proposals for accessible and manageable homes specifically for older people will free up under-occupied local housing for other population groups.

5.7.3 The policy also encourages provision of plots for self-builders to help meet the growing demand for this form of housing delivery.

5.7.4 As stated in the District Council Design Guide:
 "People have differing requirements from their home, depending on cultural needs, economics, health requirements and age. The housing available should reflect this diversity. Buildings should be designed so that they can be altered internally over time without the need for demolition or rebuilding as needs change. By building flexible internal space, rooms can be adapted to different uses depending on family requirements."



Policy 8: Green Infrastructure Network

The Neighbourhood Plan proposes the establishment of the Wantage Green Infrastructure Network around and within the town of Wantage, as shown on the Policies Maps on pages 47-49.

The Network comprises a variety of green infrastructure assets, including Letcombe Brook and its tributaries, Betjeman Millennium Park, informal open space and Local Green Spaces, allotments, playing fields, landscaped noise attenuation buffers, assets of biodiversity value, children's play areas, canal corridors, footpaths, bridleways and cycleways.



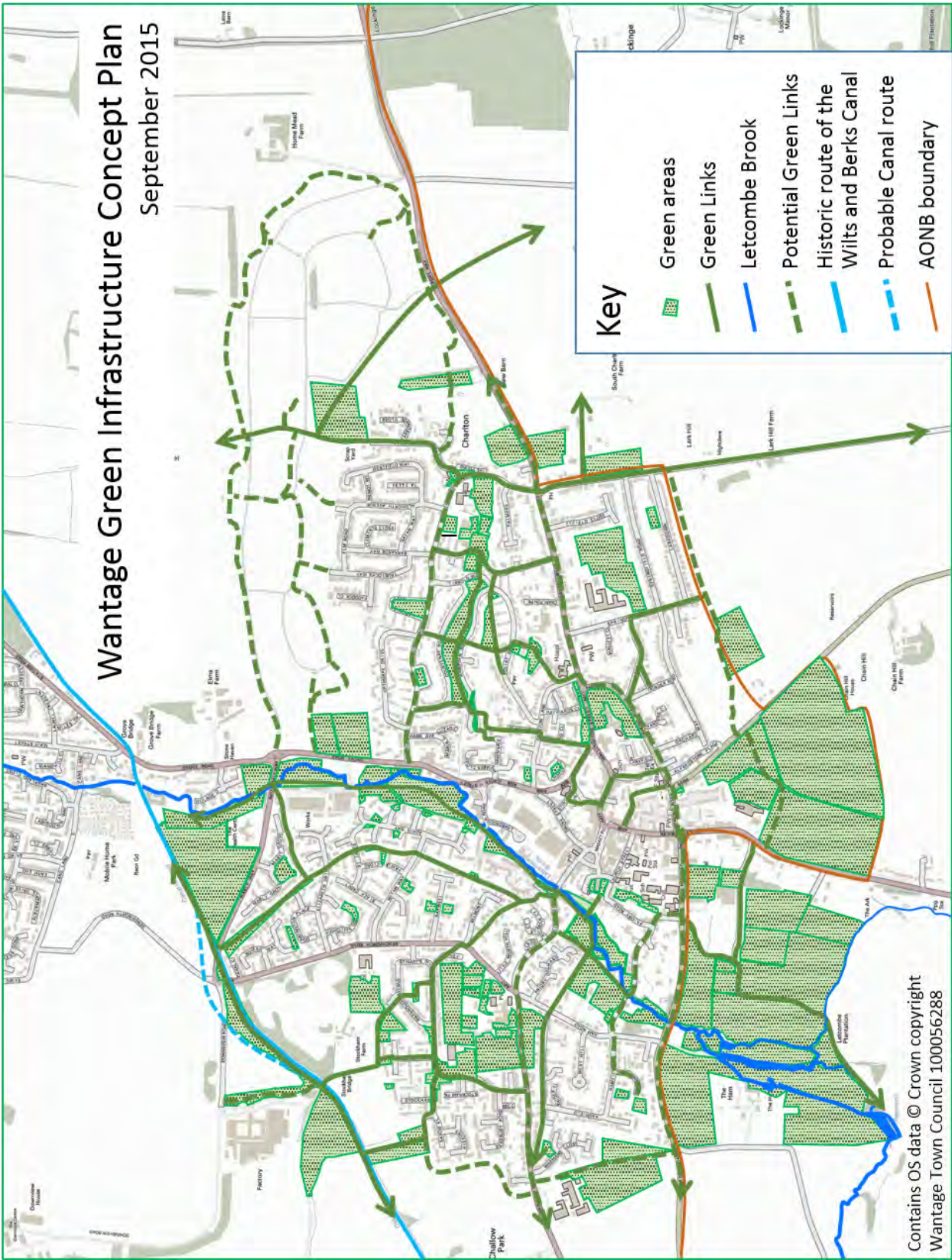
Development proposals on land that lies within or adjoining the Network will be required to demonstrate how they enhance the visual characteristics and biodiversity and to ensure their landscape schemes, layouts, access and public open space provision and other amenity requirements contribute to the connectivity, maintenance and improvement of the Network.

Development proposals on open land within or adjacent to the development boundary of Wantage will be required to demonstrate how they meet the ANGSt standards and what they can do to address any local deficiency in provision of green space.



- 5.8.1 The Purpose of the Network is to 'Conserve, enhance and improve both the green character of the town and its physical links for the benefit of residents, visitors and wildlife, in ways that are affordable'.
- 5.8.2 This policy proposes a Green Infrastructure Network is established to connect green spaces, Letcombe Brook and other watercourses, with the Town Centre and countryside using footpaths, cycleways and the Wilts and Berks Canal Towpath. Its purpose is to ensure that development proposals that may affect the Network are able to contribute to its improvement and do not undermine its connectivity, ecological or recreational value. The Green Infrastructure Plan on the following page and the subsequent Proposed Cycle Routes show the current green infrastructure of the town. It is recognised that this may change but it is also recognised that the Town does not currently have sufficient green space to meet the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt).

Plan D: Wantage Green Infrastructure Concept Map





- 5.8.3 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural green space:
- of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home;
 - at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres (km) of home;
 - one accessible 100 hectare site within five km of home; and
 - one accessible 500 hectare site within ten km of home; plus
 - a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.



- 5.8.4 Our Green Infrastructure Network seeks to serve the interests of three parties: Local Residents; Visitors and Tourists; and Wildlife. In the case of all three, we are seeking to attract increasing numbers. Our aim is to improve the quality and quantity of natural green space and avoid any further loss of both the ratio of Accessible Green Space to the population and the cultural, archaeological and scenic attributes of the Town.

- 5.8.5 The central location of Letcombe Brook means that it forms the 'spine' from which links can connect the Town to the Ridgeway, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and along the Old Canal. It will also aspire to connect with new development areas via footpaths and cycling routes.



- 5.8.6 All new development should retain existing on-site green infrastructure. Layouts and designs should be responsive to the location of existing on-site green infrastructure and ensure that the development supports the appropriate use of and the function of the green infrastructure. The policy further supports clear and continuous routes for children to cycle to and from schools, which are safe to use. This is also intended to be extended to walking routes, with particular reference to suitably located, safe crossings.
- 5.8.7 All natural green space on new developments must be accessible to all Local Residents; Visitors and Tourists and must be connected to the existing Green infrastructure Network. Open space, which includes all open space of public value, can take many forms, from formal sports pitches to open areas within a development, linear corridors and country parks. It can provide health and recreation benefits to people living and working nearby; have an ecological value and contribute to green infrastructure (see National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 114), as well as being an important part of the landscape and setting of built development, and an important component in the achievement of sustainable development.

Wantage Proposed Cycle Routes - Concept Plan

November 2015

The map displays various locations including Grove Tech Park, New Western Link Road, Crown Pkg, Medical Centre, Kings Park, Market Place, Leisure Centre, C of E Pri Sch, Park, KA Sec Sch (West), Challow, East Challow, Stockham Sch, Fitzwainn Sch, Autotype, New Leisure Centre?, KA Sec Sch (East), Crab Hill Pri Sch, and To Business Parks. It also shows major roads like New Eastern Link Road and Old Canal.

Key:

- Proposed Primary Routes (Red)
- Proposed Secondary Routes (Green)
- Proposed routes on quieter roads
- Proposed routes alongside busier roads (NOT on footways!)
- Proposed routes on existing lanes, tracks or paths
- Proposed routes – but NO existing right of way
- Busiest town centre roads - on which current volume of through-traffic MUST be addressed
- Other main roads

Additional notes on the map include "Three alternative options shown for main route from Wantage to Grove" and "New routes in Crab Hill to provide direct connections between key destinations."



Policy 9: Green Infrastructure - Letcombe Brook

Planning permission for development proposals that adjoin or are within the vicinity of Letcombe Brook as shown on the Policies Maps on pages 47-49, will only be granted if they can demonstrate that they would actively enhance the Brook's ecology, management and recreational value and not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of the Brook and its associated corridor.

Development proposals should:

- i. Conserve and enhance the biodiversity, landscape and recreational value of the Letcombe Brook and its tributaries including Manor Road Spring, Humber Ditch and its corridor through good design;**
- ii. Include a long term landscape and ecological management plan for the Brook, buffer strip and corridor;**
- iii. Provide or retain a minimum 10m natural green buffer between the top of the river bank and the development in urban areas adjacent to the Letcombe Brook; and**
- iv. Be in accordance with the landscape and design guidance set out in the 'Letcombe Brook – Planning Guidance for landowners and developers' in Appendix 1**



- 5.9.1 The 10m buffer should be maintained as a natural or semi-natural habitat free from built development, parking areas, private gardens and formal landscaping. A buffer should be provided on both sides of the Brook that runs through a development.
- 5.9.2 Provision of a 10m buffer may not be achievable in some situations, for example on some town centre sites where there is already significant built development infringing on the river corridor. Detailed design of the buffer zone will be determined on a site-by-site basis in consultation with the VWHDC, Letcombe Brook Project and the Environment Agency.
- 5.9.3 The Letcombe Brook and its tributaries are a key strategic asset flowing through the heart of Wantage and an important natural feature that has shaped the history and development of the town over many centuries and are of great importance to the character and landscape of the town.
- 5.9.4 The Brook and its corridor are of great importance to the character and landscape of the town. It is a vital element of the Green Infrastructure and has several important functions – as a landscape feature, for biodiversity especially as a green corridor to allow movement of species, flood alleviation, for recreation, as a water resource and to allow access for river maintenance.



5.9.5 The Letcombe Brook is a chalk stream, a globally rare habitat confined mainly to England and north west Europe. In recognition of their international importance, chalk streams have been designated as UKBAP priority habitats and NERC Habitat of Principal Importance. The Letcombe Brook is important for biodiversity, supporting a healthy wild brown trout population, Priority Species such as otter and the UK's most endangered species, the water vole.



5.9.6 The diversity and character of the Brook has been shaped and changed by centuries of human endeavour and changes in land use. Over time, habitats and the river corridor landscape have deteriorated and been faced with many environmental issues and development pressures. Few developments sited along the Letcombe Brook and its tributaries have made the most of the riverside setting, most tending to back onto the river rather than incorporate it as a design feature. Modern developments have been built very close to the river, ignoring its setting in their overall design. The close proximity of development to the river's edge also makes maintenance very difficult and public access impossible in areas.



5.9.7 In future, full advantage must be taken of a riverside setting with attractive designs, which visually enhance the area, contribute to creating a high-quality environment, offer refuge for wildlife and improve public access where this does not negatively impact on the Brook.

5.9.8 The Letcombe Brook Project aims to ensure that all future opportunities are taken to protect and enhance this river environment by:

- Careful design of development proposals which will serve to enhance the landscape, enhance biodiversity, protect water quality, the channel and corridor.
- Restoring the Brook and its corridor and incorporating natural features into the design of new development.
- Incorporating public access without causing disturbance to the Brook.

5.9.9 Further details on landscape and design and developers and landowners responsibilities, are set out in the 'Letcombe Brook – Planning Guidance for landowners and developers' in Appendix 1.

5.9.10 Developers and future landowners should be made aware that if the land boundary is next to a watercourse then it is assumed that you own the land up to the centre of the watercourse. Riparian owners have responsibilities towards the Brook including maintenance of the channel and banks. The design of the development needs to incorporate good access for maintenance. See Environment Agency's 'Living on the Edge Guide' on the web for further details.



Policy 10: Green Infrastructure – Chain Hill Special Landscape Area

The Neighbourhood Plan designates land at Chain Hill, Wantage, as shown on the Policies Maps on page 48, as a landscape of special character.

Proposals for development should demonstrate that they respect this special character. Proposals that adversely affect this special character will be resisted.



5.10.1 This policy designates land at Chain Hill, beyond the development boundary defined by Policy 1 of the Plan, as a landscape of special value. The land lies outside the North Wessex Downs AONB but has contiguous boundaries to this protected area to the south and east. This area positively contributes to views from higher ground to the north (Corallian Ridge) and the North Wessex Downs to the south and the rising, open downland character of the land plays a significant role in the setting of the AONB.

5.10.2 Proposals for development in this area will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that development will not adversely impact on the character of the land and the setting of the AONB.





Policy 11: Green Infrastructure – Local Green Spaces

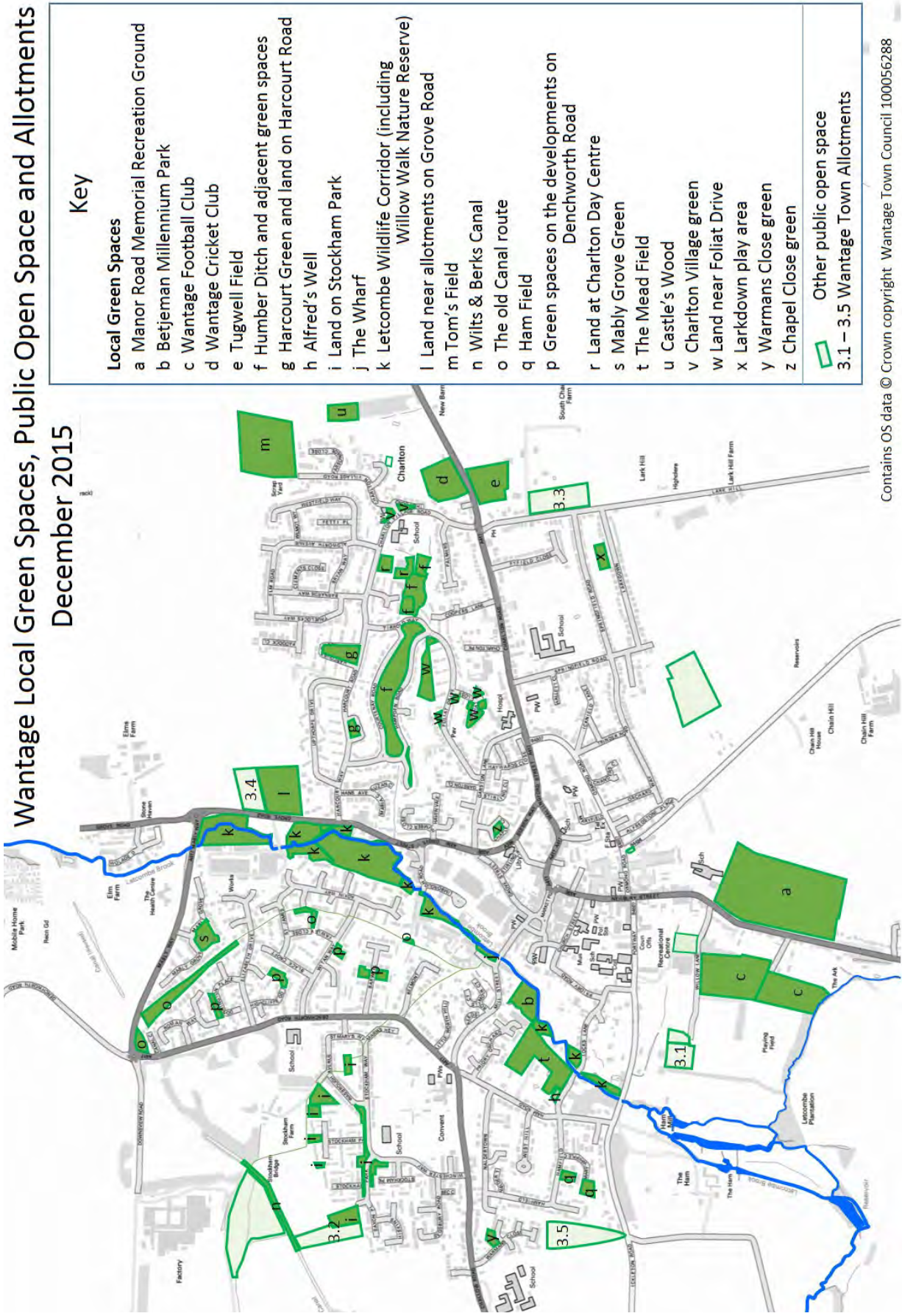
The Neighbourhood Plan designates Local Green Spaces in the following locations, as shown on the Policies Maps on pages 47-49:

- a. Manor Road Memorial Recreation Ground
- b. Betjeman Park
- c. Wantage Football Club
- d. Wantage Cricket Club
- e. Tugwell Field Football Pitch
- f. Humber Ditch and the adjacent green spaces
- g. Harcourt Green and land on Harcourt Road
- h. Alfred's Well
- i. Land on Stockham Park
- j. The Wharf
- k. Letcombe Wildlife Corridor (including Willow Walk Nature Reserve)
- l. Land near allotments on Grove Road
- m. Tom's Field
- n. Wilts & Berks Canal
- o. The old Canal route
- p. Ham Field
- q. Green spaces on the developments on Denchworth Road (including those on Barwell, Witan Way, Highclere Gardens and Roman Way)
- r. Land at Charlton Day Centre
- s. Mably Grove Green
- t. The Mead Field
- u. Castle's Wood
- v. Charlton Village green
- w. Land near Foliat Drive, including that on Foliat Close
- x. Larkdown play area
- y. Warmans Close green
- z. Chapel Close green

Where an area is designated as Local Green Space applications for planning permission will only be permitted where the proposed development is ancillary to the use of the land as Local Green Space and would enhance its use for that purpose.

5.11.1 This policy proposes a number of important green spaces in the town to be protected from development by their designation as Local Green Spaces in accordance with paragraphs 76-77 of the NPPF. Many of these small areas are the only green spaces within a street or development and are very special to the community surrounding them. Others are key parts of the wild life corridors through the town and are of significance to the whole town. These are shown on Plan F Wantage Local Green Spaces on the following page.

Plan F: Wantage Local Green Spaces





5.11.2 In each case, these green spaces are an integral part of the town. The Neighbourhood Plan Local Green Spaces study (in the evidence base) sets out the case for each site to be designated. Once designated, the spaces will have the equivalent planning policy status of the Green Belt and therefore all proposals for development will be resisted.

5.11.3 Allotments are shown on Plan F for information, the NPPF specifically excludes them from the designation. Other public open space is also shown on the Plan and our ambition is to protect these in the future as part of our Green Infrastructure Plan.

5.11.4 Government policy dictates that school property is considered differently to most other space and consideration must be given to ensuring good schooling. We are therefore excluding school property from the green space policies to ensure that the school can expand to meet the future educational requirements and to ensure that we can continue or improve the outstanding services that schools provide.





Policy 12: Infrastructure Investment

Development proposals of a scale that are likely to significantly increase the demand for local services and infrastructure will only be supported if they can demonstrate that:

- i. Either there is sufficient spare capacity in the existing services and infrastructure in the Wantage area; or**
- ii. It is feasible to increase the capacity of those services and infrastructure in the Wantage area in a timely manner to serve the development.**



- 5.12.1 The proposals set out in the draft Vale of White Horse Local Plan are supported in this Neighbourhood Plan because they can, on the whole with appropriate S106 contributions, be accommodated within the existing infrastructure of the Town. It is likely that any significant increase in the housing level proposed for Wantage will cross supply/capacity thresholds for water/sewerage/transport/health and other community facilities. In addition, it is likely that any large scale provision (within or near Wantage) will have wider impacts on the town and adjacent areas. In this case the Town Council will seek to work with adjacent Parish Councils, the District Council, County Council and or a potential developer to deliver enhanced facilities. This might include the provision of new cycling and walking facilities, town centre traffic management and sports facilities.
- 5.12.2 it is important the the environment impact of new developments consider the cumulative impact of the housing applications on overall capacity for all local services and infrastructure and ensure that sufficient water/sewerage/transport/health facilities will be available in a timely manner.
- 5.12.2 Prior to the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 Agreements between the District Council and Developers will remain an important source of infrastructure funding, albeit in a more limited way than in recent years. Once the CIL is adopted, it is expected that Agreements will only be used to manage the delivery of very specific development scheme requirements, e.g. affordable housing.

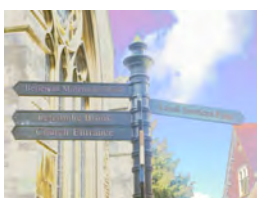


Policy 13: Community Facilities

Development proposals will be required to make proportionate financial contributions to key local services and infrastructure improvement projects through planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy as appropriate.

The following key projects are anticipated to be the main focus of this investment in the plan period:

- i. **Traffic Management proposals, including the Market Place pedestrianisation, pedestrian crossings and long stay car and coach parking;**
- ii. **Green infrastructure network including maintenance and enhancement of existing green spaces and improvements to pavements and footpaths;**
- iii. **Cycle ways within and linking Wantage to adjacent areas;**
- iv. **Provision of education from pre-school to secondary;**
- v. **Provision of healthcare and dental care facilities;**
- vi. **Community and/or other projects that may be deemed relevant at the time.**



5.13.1 This policy identifies the most important infrastructure projects to support the development proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan. Each project has been identified and described in the Neighbourhood Plan.

5.13.2 The intention is for the Town Council allocation of the forthcoming Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - of at least 25% of the Levy charged in the NP area - to provide an important source of funding for the listed projects. Other infrastructure projects in Wantage may be financed from the remaining element of the CIL that will invest in strategic projects.

5.13.2 This list in the Neighbourhood Plan is not exhaustive but provides the local community with an indication of how the Levy will be invested in local priority projects.



Policy 14: Community Assets

Development proposals that will result in either the loss of or significant harm to a designated Asset of Community Value will be resisted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the operation of the asset, or the ongoing delivery of the community value of the asset, is no longer financially viable.



Proposals to improve the viability of a designated Asset of Community Value, or of any other established community use by way of the extension or partial redevelopment of buildings and land will be supported, provided the design of the scheme and the resulting increase in use are appropriate in design terms and will not harm the amenities of adjoining residential properties.



5.14.1 This policy serves two purposes.

- First, it seeks to protect designated Assets of Community Value from unnecessary loss. For clarity, the policy does not seek to designate assets in the first instance (this can not be done through the Neighbourhood Plan but is being done through another legal process); it only applies to assets once they have been designated.
- Secondly, the policy is supportive of the improvement and extension of these Assets and of other community buildings and associated land in ways that are suitable to its location. This is to enable them to remain in viable use and to continue to meet the needs of the local community.

5.14.2 A building is an Asset of Community Value if its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future. The Localism Act states that “social interests” include cultural, recreational and sporting interests.

5.14.3 Once designated, the inclusion of a site on the register of Assets of Community Value will provide the Town Council or other community organisations within the parish with a six-month opportunity to bid to acquire on behalf of the local community the asset once placed for sale on the open market. In addition, the designation of an Asset will enable it to benefit from the protection of this policy.

5.14.4 However, the policy requires that proposals avoid increasing the use of community facilities to the extent that they may harm the amenities of adjoining residential properties, for example through traffic movements, on-street car parking and noise or light pollution.



5.14.5 The Town Council will be preparing a list of potential assets, based on the Neighbourhood Plan Residents Survey information, for discussion with the District Council in due course. Assets which could be included in the list based on the feedback from the survey performed in 2014 might be:

- Vale and Downland Museum
- The Beacon / Civic Centre
- The Butler Centre
- King Alfred's Head Pub
- Victoria Cross Gallery
- Arbery Arcade
- Blue Boar
- Letcombe Brook Corridor
- Manor Road Memorial Recreation Ground
- Mably Way Playing Fields
- Wantage Allotments
- Willow Walk Nature Reserve.

6. IMPLEMENTATION



- 6.1.1 The Neighbourhood Plan will be implemented through a combination of the District Council's consideration and determination of planning applications for development in the town, and steering public and private investment into a series of infrastructure proposals contained in the Plan.
- 6.1.2 Our vision as stated earlier in this document is for Wantage to remain a thriving market town, with its retained historic and architectural character, busy town centre and attractive network of green spaces and links to the surrounding countryside and AONB. This will enable it to remain an attractive place to live with a rich cultural heritage.



Development Management

- 6.2.1 Most of the policies contained in the Plan will be delivered by landowners and developers. In preparing the Plan, care has been taken to ensure, as far as possible, that the policies are achievable.
- 6.2.2 Whilst the District Council will be responsible for development management, the Town Council will use the Plan to frame its representations on submitted planning applications. It will also work with the District Council to monitor the progress of sites coming forward for development.
- 6.2.3 The Town Council is mindful of the number of development projects that either straddle its boundary with adjoining parishes or are just beyond its boundary but may have important impacts on the town. For example, the Western Relief Road, the Grove Station, the green corridors separating Wantage from surrounding villages, the continuation of Letcombe Brook and the Wilts & Berks Canal are all projects or existing assets that are important to Wantage. The Town Council will therefore want to work collaboratively with developers and the District and County Councils, as well as the neighbouring Parish Councils, to ensure that these important assets are protected and new projects are well designed to meet the needs of the town's residents, businesses and visitors.
- 6.2.4 Given the increase in population, the need for increased health care and dental care facilities in the area is also importance, but we are mindful that the medical centre is outside our boundary. The aspiration would be to have a minor injuries clinic or similar facility as part of the health services for the area in the future.



Infrastructure Projects

- 6.3.1 The Town Council aspires, finances allowing, to some or all of the following projects for investment of future Community Infrastructure Levy funding allocated by the local planning authority to the Town Council:
- Traffic Management proposals, including the Market Place pedestrianisation and long stay car and coach parking;
 - Green Infrastructure Network;
 - Cycle ways both within the town and linking Wantage to adjacent areas;
 - Community or other projects that may be deemed relevant at the time.
- 6.3.2 This series of local infrastructure projects will be prioritised for investment from the Vale of White Horse Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when adopted. The CIL will replace the pooling of more than four S106 agreement financial contributions towards a single infrastructure project during the Plan period. It will be charged on qualifying residential and commercial development. A minimum of 25% of the levy collected from development in the town will be passed to the Town Council for investment in the town. The policy provides the local community with an indication of the priorities for investing the fund to improve local infrastructure needed as a result of new development.
- 6.3.3 In addition, other policies of the Plan require some planning obligations to be entered into as part of planning consents to finance and deliver specific infrastructure projects relating to the development scheme in order to make the scheme satisfactory in line with paragraphs 173 and 204 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 6.3.4 Art, culture and leisure in the town are already supported by various funding bodies including the Town Council and we would expect this to continue and be included in the "Community or other projects" referred to in 6.3.1.



Town Centre Improvements

- 6.4.1 The Town Centre is an important focus for the Plan's land use policies. However, there are many complementary actions that the Town Council wishes to pursue with traders and other commercial interests in future years, funding permitting.
- 6.4.2 The provision of family friendly evening entertainment and activities (such as extended shopping hours, special markets and events) will continue to be promoted through pro-active management and an enhanced public



realm, including lighting, and support of events and activities appropriate to a town centre. The organisation of a series of seasonal events will be encouraged, for example focusing on local produce (e.g. bread, meat, eggs, cheese, wine, crafts), heritage, and promotion of sustainable travel, as well as strengthening the regular farmers' market.

- 6.4.3 Although pedestrianisation of the Market Place has been the subject of a long term debate in the town, the Town Council will continue to support creating more space for pedestrians in the Market Place and reduce the impact of traffic on its historic streets and buildings. Our ambition is to take this in a phased approach and perhaps to test ideas on certain days, weeks or times of year prior to gaining formal approval from the residents and users of the Town. We already close parts of the Market Place to traffic for Fairs and other events and parking areas are regularly closed for Wednesday and Saturday markets. Further information is included in our evidence papers.



- 6.4.4 Eventually we would aim to replace the surfaces on the roads in the Town Centre to slow traffic and improve road safety. This is, of course, dependent on rerouting through traffic around the Town and strongly supporting the development of the Western Relief Road, which with the Eastern Relief Road and Mably Way, creates an effective route around the Town Centre. As any resurfacing of pavements and roads within the town takes place, we will look at the need for further dropped kerbs to increase accessibility for those less mobile.



Transport Management

- 6.5.1 Wantage has grown from early beginnings where the Icknield Way running along the base of the Ridgeway (probably an ancient drovers road running from Avebury or Stonehenge to Icklingham in Suffolk) crossed Letcombe Brook). Now our location is defined by the intersection of the A417 and A338 trunk roads, surrounded by the larger conurbations of Oxford, Reading, Newbury, Hungerford and Swindon. We are close to the M4, A34 and M40. As our nearest rail station is almost 10 miles away at Didcot Parkway, most traffic through this area travels by road. The emerging Local Plan and planning approvals to date suggest that our residential area will grow by more than 65%, yet most employment is in the Science Vale (at Harwell, Milton Park or Culham), in one of the larger conurbations or further afield. This means that transport management is a key issue in this area.
- 6.5.2 Management of transport through the town requires investment in both the Western Relief Road and the Eastern Relief Road. Management of transport within the town requires sufficient provision of car and coach parking, good



public transport, good interchange facilities between modes of transport and a strong cycle and pedestrian infrastructure which provides safe routes throughout the town for residents and visitors.

- 6.5.3 Support is required to develop an overall transport strategy and business case for infrastructure funding to improve the transport network needed to connect the housing in Wantage and its adjacent villages with the employment centres in the Science Vale to ensure that Wantage remains an attractive place to live and work as defined in the emerging Local Plan.



Education Provision

- 6.6.1 Notwithstanding the special designation applied to land for schools by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), this Plan acknowledges the importance of outstanding educational institutions with a drive to improve outcomes for all children while managing public finances appropriately. Where possible a reasonable portion of CIL funding should be directed to help enhance capital projects for local schools from Pre-school, through Primary, on to Secondary and beyond. Applications to expand school premises should be considered in collaboration with educational institutions and the County Council, to ensure that high quality places for children are made available now and future provision keeps up with demand.



Cycleway and Pedestrian Infrastructure Investments

- 6.7.1 Funding from developer contributions, the District Council, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and other funding bodies will be required to support the development and implementation of an integrated cycle and pedestrian strategy. We wish to improve accessibility and connections to key locations such as the Town Centre, schools, leisure facilities, green spaces, the major employment centres, neighbouring villages and rail stations as shown in Plan E: Proposed Cycle Routes on page 30. This will include:
- Developing and improving the cycling network by creating more links segregated from heavy traffic, as well as safer and better facilities on the main roads within the town, through the development of a cycling action plan.
 - Developing and improving the walking network by creating more direct links and footways where these are missing, widening footways to a standard appropriate to the purpose and demand, and improving the quality of surface materials, landscaping and street furniture, both through the planning application process and through the development



of a walking action plan.

- Expanding and maintaining a network of waymarked recreational circular walks.

Green Infrastructure Improvements



6.8.1 Many of the most beautiful and economically successful settlements are strongly related to the landscape within which they have evolved. If Wantage is to retain the rural market town character which we all love, we have to ensure that the environmental heritage which surrounds us is linked firmly to the town, and the green infrastructure of the town and its environs is maintained and enhanced by the growth which we expect. We need a Green Infrastructure Strategy which extends and enhances connectivity between different parts of the town and the surrounding countryside and enhances the lives of all inhabitants.

6.8.2 The establishment of a Green Infrastructure Network to 'Conserve, enhance and improve both the green character of the town and its physical links for the benefit of residents, visitors and wildlife, in ways that are affordable' is a key part of our plan.



6.8.3 Green Infrastructure can provide many social, economic and environmental benefits close to where people live and work including:

- Space and habitat for wildlife with access to nature for people;
 - Places for outdoor relaxation and play;
 - Climate change adaptation - for example flood alleviation and cooling urban heat islands;
 - Environmental education;
 - Cultural, archaeological and scenic attributes;
 - Leisure facilities;
 - Improved health and well-being – lowering stress levels and providing opportunities for exercise, and
 - Local food production - in allotments, gardens and through agriculture.
- (MEBIE - the Micro-Economic Benefits of Investment in the Environment Review produced by Natural England in 2012 provides an evidence summary of the benefits of Green Infrastructure.)

6.8.4 Whilst most of the labour and professional skills required to complete the initial work will be volunteered, there will be some costs entailed: maps/plans, satellite imagery etc and meeting/consensus building/reporting costs. Funding from developer contributions and other sources will be required to create the infrastructure and co-ordinate and maintain the network over time.

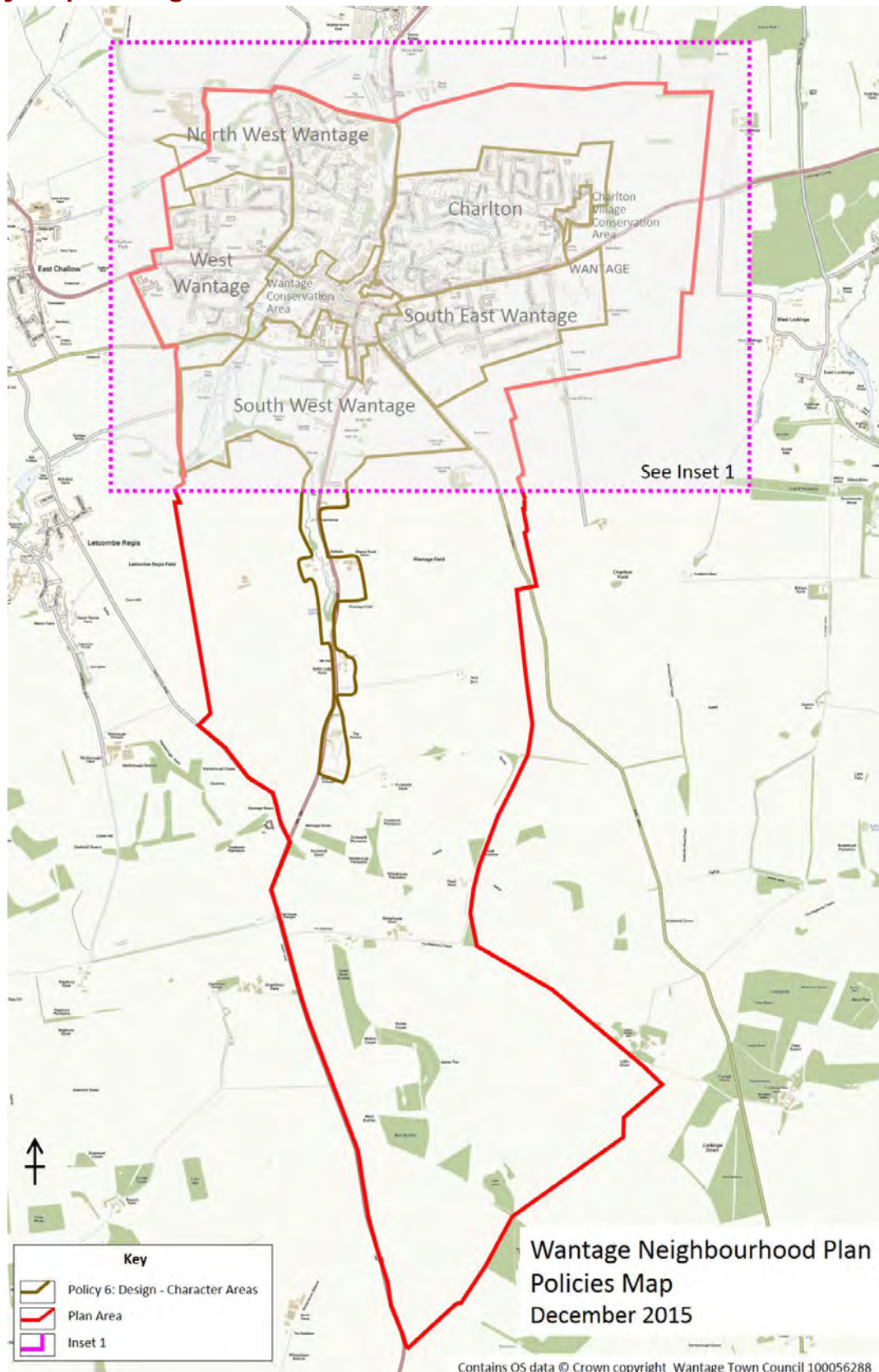


Community Assets

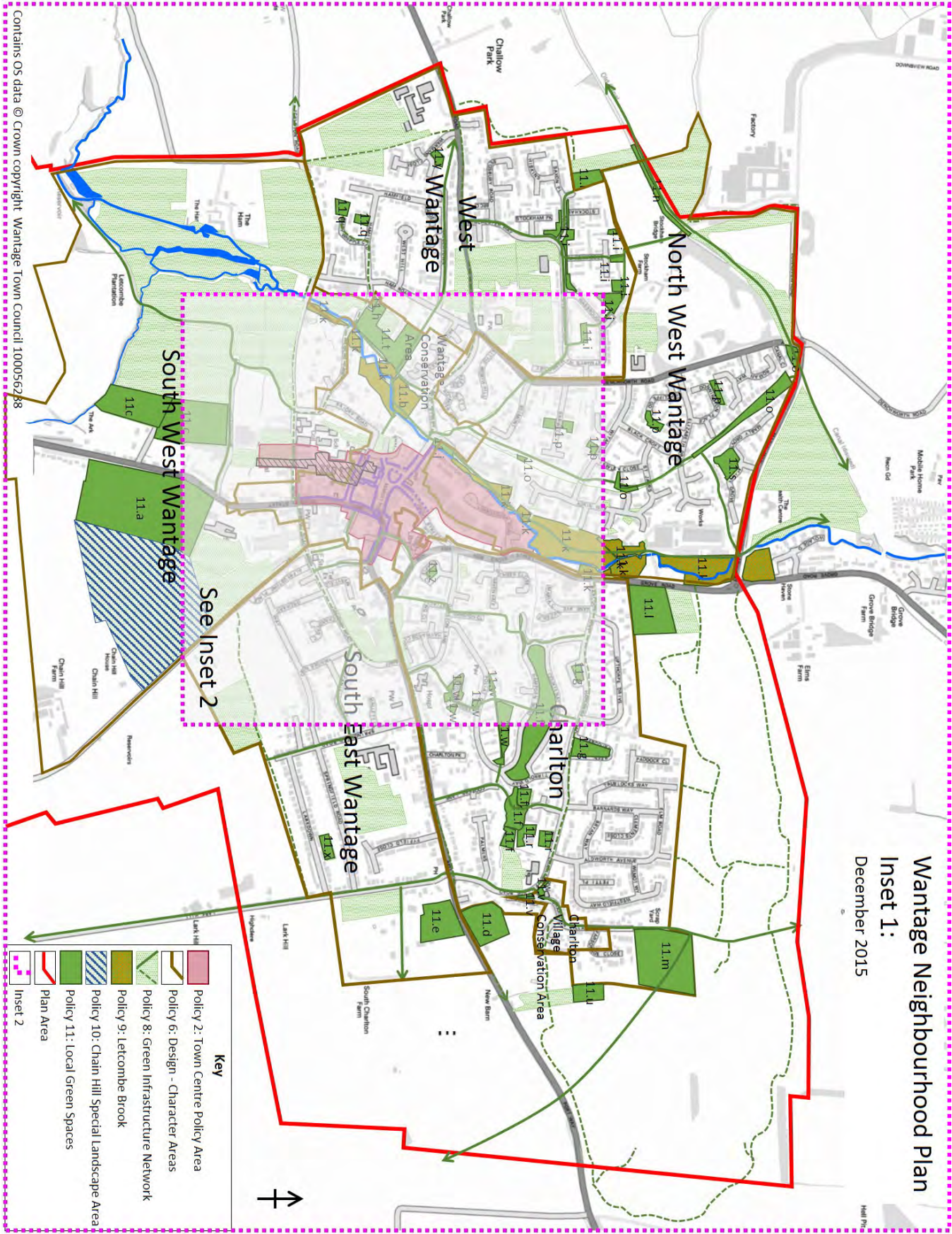
- 6.9.1 Community assets are land and buildings owned or managed by community organisations. These assets cover a wide spectrum and include town halls, community centres, sports facilities, affordable housing and libraries. Our ambition is that the land and buildings provided as community assets have clear restrictions such that ownership must remain within the community, and the assets must be used within the scope of the original founding purposes. We understand that, over decades, how that should be interpreted might need to change.
- 6.9.2 Depending on the ownership, we expect that the assets could be leased over a longer term (>99 years) to a Community Trust established for the purpose of overseeing them. This Community Trust will:
- i. Ensure that the facilities are used in line with their intended purposes.
 - ii. Manage the strategic development of the land and buildings.
 - iii. Set the ground rules for how the facility is run in practice, using the established guidelines as a framework.
 - iv. Ensure the landlord responsibilities of the land and buildings are fulfilled. This could well be contracted out to an appropriate community or charitable body.
 - v. Contract out tenant responsibilities and the day to day management. This contract, in particular, would have to be of sufficient duration (min 50 years) to ensure stability and long term development, but must include break points to allow robust oversight.
 - vi. Be run by a body comprising elected officials, local elected representatives and user groups. This should be structured so that none of those three groups can also control any of the other two groups' voting.

7. POLICIES MAPS

Policy Map 1: Neighbourhood Plan area

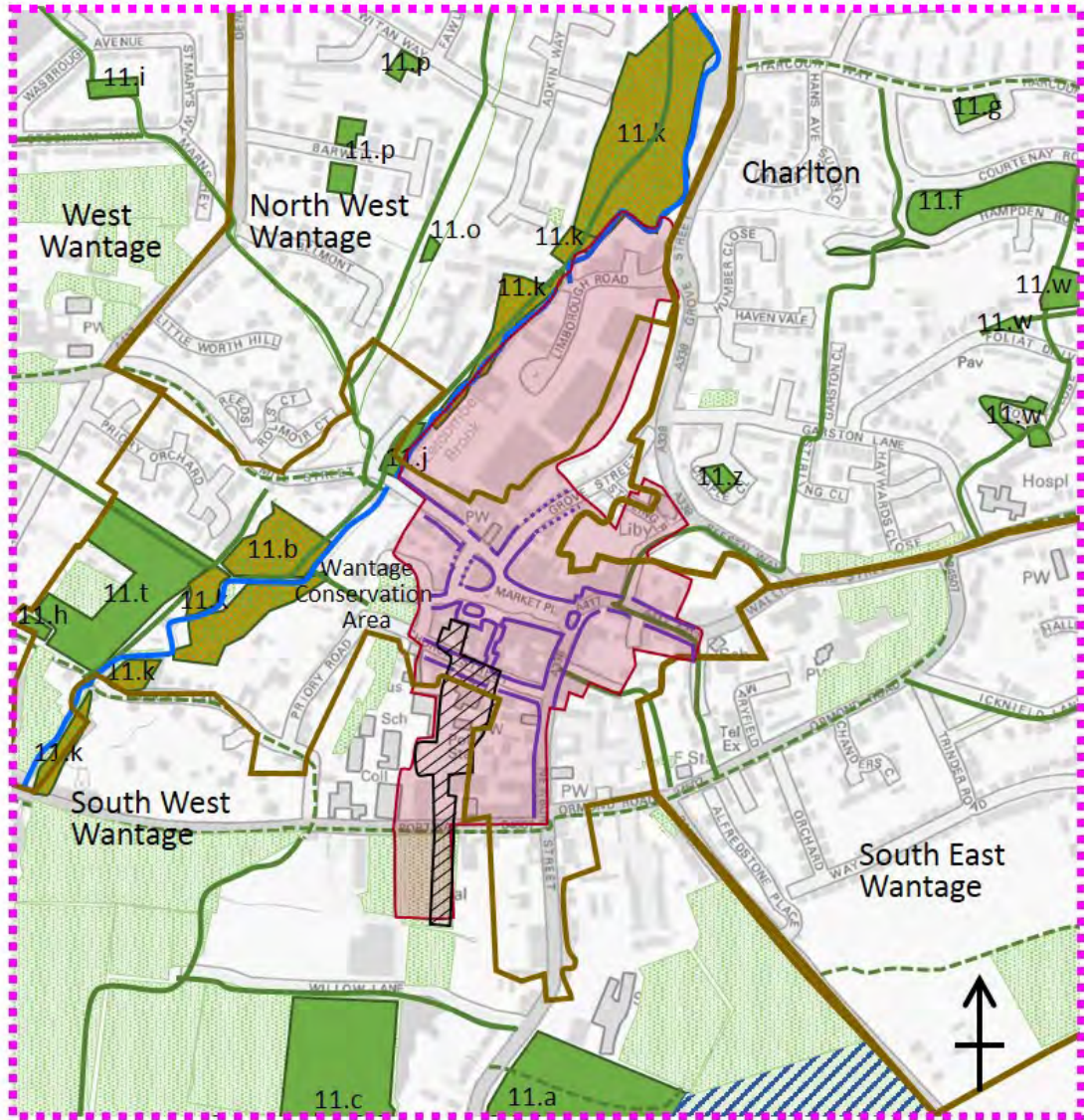


Policy Map 2: Inset 1











Policy Map 3: Inset 2

December 2015



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Key

| | |
|---|--|
|  | Policy 2: Town Centre Policy Area |
|  | Policy 2: Primary Shopping Frontage |
|  | Policy 3: Town centre Development Area |
|  | Policy 6: Design - Character Areas |
|  | Policy 8: Green Infrastructure Network |
|  | Policy 9: Letcombe Brook |
|  | Policy 10: Chain Hill Special Landscape Area |
|  | Policy 11: Local Green Spaces |

8. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

| Subject | Description |
|--|---|
| Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard | <p>Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) originally developed by English Nature, now part of Natural England. ANGSt recommends that everyone, wherever they live, should have accessible natural greenspace:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minutes walk) from home; • 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; plus • a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population. <p>ANGSt is a powerful tool in assessing current levels of accessible natural greenspace, and planning for better provision. The three underlying principles of ANGSt are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improving access to greenspaces, b) Improving naturalness of greenspaces, c) Improving connectivity with greenspaces. |
| Affordable Homes | Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. (NPPF) |
| ANGSt | Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (see above) |
| AONB | An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see below) |
| Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty | An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of countryside in England, Wales or Northern Ireland which has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value. |
| CIL | Community Infrastructure Levy (see below) |
| Community Infrastructure Levy | The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a new levy that local authorities can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development, by funding infrastructure that the council, local community and neighbourhoods want. |
| Conservation Area | <p>An area designated by the District Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historical interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.</p> <p>Designation gives control over the demolition of buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve or enhance all the aspects of character or appearance that define an area's special interest.</p> |
| Evidence Base | The Evidence Base is a collection of reports which have been used to inform the Neighbourhood Plan policies. The evidence can come from a wide range of sources including public consultation, research documents, other Strategies, National Policy, and monitoring. |
| Examination | An independent review of the Neighbourhood Plan carried out in public by an independent examiner. |

| Subject | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Green Infrastructure | Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of multi-functional green space which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens. |
| Historic Environment | All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora. |
| Independent Examiner | The role of the Independent Examiner is to evaluate the Neighbourhood Plan. It could be anyone with appropriate qualifications and skills who meets certain requirements set out in the Localism Act. This could be a planning consultant or other planning professional. The examiner will be appointed by Vale of the White Horse District Council as the local planning authority, but only with the agreement of Wantage Council. |
| Infrastructure | The basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, such as transportation and communications systems, water and power lines, and public and community buildings including schools, community centres, leisure services, health services etc. |
| LEP | Local Enterprise Partnership (see Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) |
| Listed Buildings | Buildings and structures which are listed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural and historic interest and whose protection and maintenance are the subject of special legislation. Listed building consent is required before any works are carried out on a listed building. |
| Local Green Spaces | It is a designation to provide special protection of a green area of particular importance to the local community, using the criteria of paragraphs 76-77 of the NPPF. |
| Localism Act | An Act of Parliament that became law in April 2012. The Act introduces a new right for local people to draw up 'Neighbourhood Development Plans' for their local area. |
| LPP1 | The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (see below) |
| National Planning Policy Framework | The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the government in March 2012. It sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied in development planning documents, including neighbourhood plans, and in decisions on planning applications. |
| Natural England | Natural England is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. It is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs |

| Subject | Description |
|--|---|
| Neighbourhood Plan | Neighbourhood Plans are a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work. The government has introduced the right to do neighbourhood planning through the Localism Act, which gained Royal Assent on 15th November 2011. |
| NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework (see above) |
| Open Market / Market Housing | Houses for sale or rent where prices are set in the open market. |
| Open Space | All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity. |
| Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) | The Authority of the County of Oxfordshire responsible for services such as education, transport, emergency services and waste disposal. |
| Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership | Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is the body, designated by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in Oxfordshire. |
| Plan Period | The period for which the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan will set policy for the Town. This will be from 2015 to 2031. |
| Planning Obligation | A legally enforceable obligation entered into under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal. |
| Primary and Secondary Frontages | Primary frontages are likely to include a high proportion of retail uses which may include food, drinks, clothing and household goods. Secondary frontages provide greater opportunities for a diversity of uses such as restaurants, cinemas and businesses. |
| Primary Shopping Area | Defined area where retail development is concentrated (generally comprising the primary and those secondary frontages which are adjoining and closely related to the primary shopping frontage). |
| Public Open Space | Open space which is open to the public and is normally owned or managed by a public organisation such as Wantage Council or the Vale of the White Horse District Council. |
| Referendum | A general vote by the electorate on a single political question that has been referred to it for a direct decision. With regard to the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan, a public referendum will decide whether to adopt the Plan. |
| Rural Exception Sites | Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example, where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding. |

| Subject | Description |
|--|---|
| Secured by Design (SBD) | SBD is an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) initiative, which has a proven track record in assisting with the creation of safer places by providing guidance on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), and by requiring a minimum set of standards on physical security measures. Independent academic research shows that it can reduce burglary by up to 75% and vehicle crime by 25%. The scheme comes in two parts; an SBD Award, which is achieved by whole developments that demonstrate conformity to design principles and security standards across the entire site, and Part Two compliance that is achieved when the physical features (windows, doors, locks etc) of the structures themselves meet specified, Police preferred standards. |
| SHLAA | Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (see below) |
| SHMA | Strategic Housing Market Assessment (see below) |
| Special Areas Of Conservation | Areas given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive, which is transposed into UK law by the Habitats and Conservation of Species Regulations 2010. |
| Strategic Gap | Area of largely open land between settlements, which helps to maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements and prevent them merging together. |
| Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment | The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) provides an informed estimate of land availability for housing at a given point in time, to inform plan making and to ensure that Vale of the White Horse District Council maintain a five year supply of housing land. The study provides a key element of the evidence base for the emerging Vale of the White Horse Local Plan. However, the Practice Guidance is very clear that "the Assessment is an important evidence source to inform plan making but does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for housing development". |
| Strategic Housing Market Assessment | The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) forms part of the evidence base for Local Plans and provides an assessment of needs for all types of housing, taking account of demographic projections and the needs of different groups in the community, as well as housing demand and the level of housing supply necessary to meet this demand. |
| Supplementary Planning Documents | Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan. |
| Sustainability | The creation or maintenance of conditions that fulfil current and future economic, environmental and social requirements. |
| Sustainability Appraisal (SA or SA/SEA) | A process of appraising draft planning policies for their social, economic and environmental effects. It incorporates the requirements of EU Directive 42/2001 on strategic environmental assessment. |

| Subject | Description |
|---|---|
| Sustainable Development | Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The National Planning Policy Framework places a requirement on local planning authorities to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and guide development to sustainable solutions. |
| Sustainable Transport Modes | Any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultralow emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport. |
| SUDS | Sustainable Urban Drainage System (see below) |
| Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) | <p>Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) are a sequence of water management practices(1) and facilities(2) designed to drain surface water in a manner that will provide a more sustainable approach than what has been the conventional practice of routing runoff through a pipe to a watercourse.</p> <p>1. Practices involved are what are termed 'good housekeeping' or 'best management practices'. Such practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation of accidents that may result in pollution incidents; • Reduction of polluting activities; • Reduction of polluting materials; • Bunding of oil tanks; • Water harvesting. <p>2. Facilities are generally constructed arrangements. Such facilities include: Permeable surfaces; Filter strips; Filter and infiltration trenches; Swales; Detention basins; Underground storage; Wetlands; Ponds.</p> |
| Town Centre Policy Area | Area defined on the local authority's proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. |
| Transport Assessment | A comprehensive and systematic process that sets out transport issues relating to a proposed development. It identifies what measures will be required to improve accessibility and safety for all modes of travel, particularly for alternatives to the car such as walking, cycling and public transport and what measures will need to be taken to deal with the anticipated transport impacts of the development. |
| Vale of the White Horse District Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) | <p>The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies provides a policy framework for the delivery of sustainable development across the district up to 2031.</p> <p>The plan sets out the Spatial Strategy and strategic policies for the district to deliver sustainable development. It identifies the number of new homes and jobs to be provided in the area and makes provision for retail, leisure and commercial development and the infrastructure needed to support them.</p> |
| Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC) | Vale of White Horse District Council (VoWHDC) is the Local Planning Authority for Wantage. |

| Subject | Description |
|--|---|
| Wantage Neighbourhood (Development) Plan (WNP) | The full title in the Localism Act is 'Neighbourhood Development Plan' but this is commonly shortened to Neighbourhood Plan. The WNP is a plan document for Wantage that is subject to examination in public and approval by referendum. |
| Wildlife Corridor | A wildlife corridor is a link of wildlife habitat, generally native vegetation, which joins two or more larger areas of similar wildlife habitat. |
| Windfall Sites | Sites including conversions which are not included as part of the housing land supply at the base date of the Plan but which subsequently become available for appropriate housing development, other than through the Local Plan allocation process. |

Appendix 1:

Letcombe Brook Planning Guidance



This guidance is for developers and landowners whose land adjoins the Letcombe Brook and its tributary, Manor Road Spring. It supports the policy and objectives set out in Wantage Neighbourhood Plan. Specific guidance on responsibilities, development and landscape design are found in sections 2, 4 and 5.

Wantage Neighbourhood Plan, Policy 9: Letcombe Brook

Planning permission for development proposals that adjoin or are within the vicinity of Letcombe Brook as shown on the Policies Map will only be granted if they can demonstrate that they would actively enhance the Brook's ecology, management and recreational value and not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of the Brook and its associated corridor.

Development proposals should:

- **conserve and enhance the biodiversity, landscape and recreational value of the Letcombe Brook and its tributaries including Manor Road Spring, Humber Ditch and its corridor through good design;**
- **include a long term landscape and ecological management plan for the Brook, buffer strip and corridor;**
- **provide or retain a minimum 10m natural green buffer between the top of the river bank and the development in urban areas adjacent to the Letcombe Brook;**
 - The 10m buffer should be maintained as a natural or semi-natural habitat free from built development, parking areas, private gardens and formal landscaping. A buffer should be provided on both sides of the Brook that runs through a development.
 - Provision of a 10m buffer may not be achievable in some situations, for example on some town centre sites where there is already significant built development infringing on the river corridor. Detailed design of the buffer zone will be determined on a site-by-site basis in consultation with the VWHDC, Letcombe Brook Project and the Environment Agency.
- **Proposals should be in accordance with the landscape and design guidance set out in the 'Letcombe Brook Planning Guidance for landowners and developers'.**
- With any riverside development you are advised to discuss your proposal with the VWHDC, the Letcombe Brook Project and Environment Agency at the earliest opportunity.

This Planning Guidance is intended to protect and enhance the Letcombe Brook and its corridor and is supported by Wantage Neighbourhood Plan and the VWHDC Local Plan 2031 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.



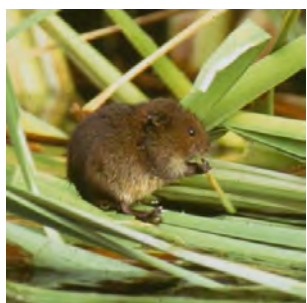
Bullhead

1. Introduction

River corridors are of great importance to biodiversity, water resources, water quality, fisheries and recreation. They make a significant contribution to landscape character and form green links between habitats which are crucial for the conservation of biodiversity and enhancement of wildlife habitats.

The Letcombe Brook Project therefore aims to ensure that all future opportunities are taken to protect and enhance this river environment by:

- Careful design of development proposals which will serve to protect water quality, the channel, corridor and its wider environment.
- Incorporating natural riverside settings into the design of new development.
- Incorporating public access without causing disturbance to the habitat and wildlife.



Water Vole

The Letcombe Brook is a chalk stream. Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat confined mainly to England and north west Europe. In recognition of their international importance, chalk streams have been designated as UK BAP priority habitats and NERC Habitat of Principal Importance.

The Letcombe Brook is important for biodiversity, supporting a healthy wild brown trout population, Priority Species such as otter and the UK's most endangered species, the water vole and birds on the RSPB's Amber List of conservational importance including kingfishers and little egrets.

Chalk streams are fed from 'groundwater' held in the underlying chalk bedrock. Chalk soaks up rainwater rather like a sponge, and a chalk stream is formed where the water emerges at ground level. Flow in chalk streams is stable and constant in temperature, providing ideal conditions to support a rich diversity of invertebrate and fish life.

Chalk streams are naturally narrow and fairly fast-flowing. They possess a clean gravel bed, vital for invertebrates like mayfly and caddis fly larvae that live amongst the gravel, and for fish like the bullhead and brown trout.

Plants also thrive in the clear, mineral-rich waters. Species such as starwort and water crowfoot grow in the main flow, whilst watercress and lesser water parsnip are found along the margins.

Chalk streams also support some of our rarest mammals and birds such as otter, water vole, and water rail and kingfishers.

Groundwater levels in the chalk can drop in summer and flow throughout the river reduces. Winter rainfall replenishes the groundwater store (aquifer) and the water table rises, re-starting springs higher up the valley. This seasonality of flow in chalk streams is an important factor to bear in mind when considering development



since flow in spring can be up to ten times that of flow in autumn.

It is for this reason that anyone considering new development close to the river should observe the requirements set out in this document.

Reinstatement of the buffer zone on previously developed land should also be considered so as to protect and improve this rare habitat. This advice note can also be used by those already living and working by the river who have an opportunity to create a better habitat at the edge of their land.

Letcombe Brook Project

The Letcombe Brook Project arose from public concern about pollution, low water levels and general neglect resulting from litter, erosion, poor bank treatments and unsympathetic development.

The Environment Agency's 'River Corridor Survey of 1999' noted that in places the Letcombe Brook was no longer a chalk stream in character, that there had been much realignment over the years to accommodate housing, industry, roads and the railway, and it had been over-widened and deepened. Aquatic and marginal vegetation was extremely sparse with some stretches devoid of any plants. They noted numerous negative changes including reinforced banks, numerous low weirs and impoundments. It was heavily silt-laden in places and over shaded with trees, with much rubbish in the Brook. Other problems included urbanisation of the environment along with over-tidying of banks and grass cutting in gardens and on amenity grassland immediately adjacent to the Brook.

The Letcombe Brook Project was established in April 2003 to enhance and protect the natural beauty of the Brook and to help people appreciate and enjoy the environment. By working in partnership with local people, riparian owners, the district, parish and town councils along with other organisations, the LBP has been able to bring about positive environmental benefits for both wildlife and the people that live and work along the Brook.

Letcombe Brook Project objectives:

- To conserve and enhance the biodiversity and landscape of Letcombe Brook.
- To promote environmentally responsible land management practices amongst landowners and land managers.
- To increase awareness of countryside and environmental issues through education and interpretation.
- To involve all sectors of the community in caring for and appreciating the Letcombe Brook.

2. Responsibilities

Environment Agency and Local Authority responsibility

The Environment Agency is the government's environmental regulator, and its role includes ensuring the proper management of rivers and streams by their riparian owners. It should be noted that the Environment Agency does not generally own watercourses. Normally, where a watercourse forms a boundary between adjacent landowners (riparian owners), such ownership extends to the centre line of the watercourse. Fence lines at the top of banks, even if shown on deeds, are not in themselves proof of actual boundary location. Ultimate responsibility for the upkeep of a watercourse rests with the riparian owner including clearing obstructions, repairing the banks, protecting vegetation/ trees and removing rubbish.

Flood Defence Consent

All rivers or streams are classified as either "main rivers" or "ordinary watercourses".

Main Rivers:

Main rivers are covered by the Water Resources Act 1991 and are defined on maps held by the Environment Agency and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In broad terms, main rivers include all watercourses of value for strategic arterial drainage, whereas ordinary watercourses may have more significance on a local scale.

Consent under the Water Resources Act 1991 is required from the Thames Region of the Environment Agency for any works in, over, under or within 8 metres of a main river. Footbridges, tree planting, fences, bank repair and restoration, or even digging a ditch all therefore need consent. Early consultation with the Environment Agency is recommended.

Ordinary watercourses:

In addition consent is also needed for the construction of any control structure, such as a culvert, or weir that would affect the flow of an ordinary watercourse. Planning permission may also be required. Land drainage consent may be required from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as the lead Local Flood Authority. Consent for certain other works may also be necessary within a designated floodplain. Early consultation with OCC is recommended.

The Letcombe Brook is ordinary watercourse from its source in Letcombe Bassett and Letcombe Regis and becomes main river at Locks Lane in Wantage.

Landowner responsibility

Developers and landowners should be made aware that if your land boundary is next to a watercourse then it is assumed that you own the land up to the centre of the watercourse.



Riparian owners have responsibilities towards the maintenance of the channel and the banks including clearing obstructions, repairing the banks, protecting vegetation/ trees and removing rubbish. The design of the development needs to incorporate good access for long term maintenance.

For further details about your rights and responsibilities of riverside ownership see the Environment Agency's 'Living on the Edge Guide' on the internet.

3. The Importance of River Corridors

Over the years there have been particular development pressures experienced within the urban areas of Wantage. This has resulted in the encroachment of development into the river corridor, resulting in their partial or complete loss. However it is now appreciated that river corridors represent an extremely rich resource deserving protection in their own right.

A careful balance must therefore be struck between allowing development to take place whilst conserving and enhancing river corridors. Ideally, river corridors should be as wide as possible, preferably at least 50 metres wide in rural areas to retain the character of the river corridor in the landscape. Clearly in urban areas this is rarely possible although even narrow corridors are much better than none at all.

The key is to protect, reinstate and enhance existing riparian habitat and other wetland features so that wildlife found naturally in these environments will be encouraged to use and live in these areas.

Why are River Corridors important?

Visual:

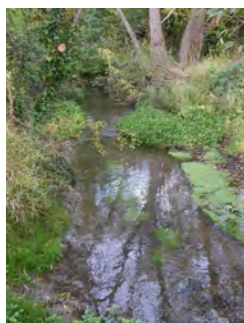
- Rivers and river corridors are attractive in themselves.

Recreation:

- Riverside walks reduce mistreatment (dumping, etc.) and encourage interest in the maintenance and enjoyment of a valuable community asset.
- In urban areas they also provide an important link between areas of open space and are interesting in their own right (simply for walking or observing wildlife).

River Ecology:

- There are important links between water and land ecology.
- Watercourses can provide a range of habitats for wildlife: within the water itself, on riverbanks and also associated areas such as reedbeds and wetlands.
- The preservation of river corridors allows the stability of channel banks and the protection of habitats created on/ in them.
- This provides a natural habitat for increased wildlife species.
- Appropriate bank side vegetation controls light penetration and so contributes to good water quality by controlling weed growth.
- Watercourses provide important links between animal and plant populations and habitats, which might otherwise be isolated and fragmented.



4. Design of new Riverside Development

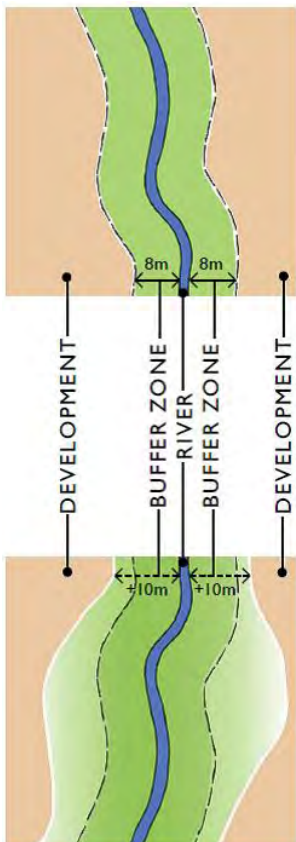
Few buildings sited along the Letcombe Brook, or its tributary Manor Road Spring have made the most of the riverside setting, most tending to back onto the river rather than incorporate it as a design feature. The close proximity of development to the river's edge also makes public access impossible in many areas.

Modern developments have been built very close to the river ignoring its setting in their overall design. In future, full advantage must be taken of a riverside setting to produce more attractive designs, which visually enhance the area, improve public access and offer refuge for wildlife. The construction or reconstruction of bridges must, wherever possible, take into account the importance of maintaining an obstruction-free bank for wildlife. Bridges should be designed so that there is ample room for the movement of wildlife along the edge of the watercourse.

In essence, development must focus around the river corridor rather than the river fitting around the development.

Buffer Zones

- Wider buffer zones are encouraged as they create more effective "green" corridors. Such areas are essential as research has proved how valuable these strips are to both the water environment and the conservation of riverside wildlife.
- The Environment Agency recommend that for ecological and conservation purposes, the requirement should be a minimum distance of 10 metres (measured from the top of the river bank to the development) for all new development (buildings, car parks, paths etc.) should be set back from a riverbank.
- The 10m buffer should be maintained as a natural or semi-natural habitat free from built development, parking areas, private gardens and formal landscaping. A buffer should be provided on both sides of a watercourse that runs through a development.
- This width of buffer provides the minimum width of habitat needed to provide for the functioning of wildlife habitats, while being able to facilitate informal access for enjoyment of the river. This width also ensures that the river is buffered from land-based activities, e.g. reducing the levels of diffuse pollution reaching the watercourse.
- Provision of a 10m buffer may not be achievable in some situations, for example on some town centre sites where there is already significant built development and infringement of the river corridor. Detailed design of the buffer zone will be determined on a site-by-site basis in consultation with the Environment Agency and Letcombe Brook Project.
- In terms of setting large buildings should not be closer to the river than their height, irrespective of the 10m buffer. In all circumstances Land Drainage Byelaws dictate that an 8 metre buffer zone is maintained, and the Environment Agency will oppose development within 8 metres of a main watercourse which compromises their ability to carry out their statutory duties of flood defence. This ensures adequate access for river maintenance and it is therefore the width within which Land Drainage Consent is required.



Planning Permission

Buildings or hard standing will not normally be permitted within 10 metres of the riverbank for the reasons given above.

Every watercourse should ideally have continuous habitat, in channel and along both banks.

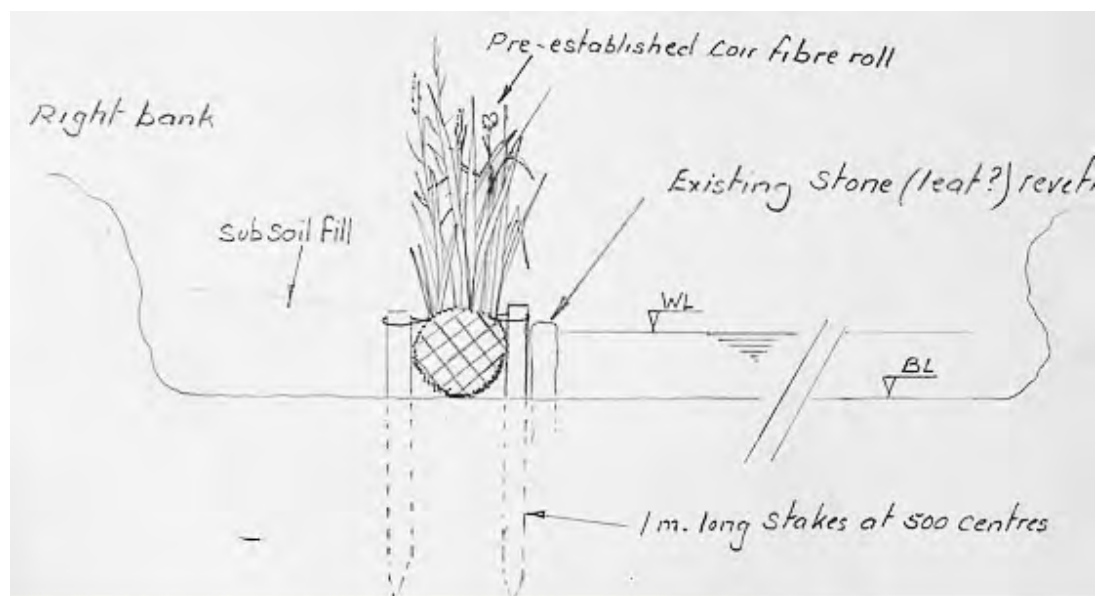
5. Landscape Design of the River Bank

The buffer zone between the riverbank and new development must be adequately landscaped, ideally using locally sourced native plants that are naturally found by rivers to maintain the riverside ecosystem. This can include the creation of ponds/ small wetland areas, use of herb rich riverside grassland and appropriate native tree planting (such as alder, ash, willow, hawthorn or blackthorn). Any ponds should not be connected to the watercourse and should be set back from the top of the bank.

Bank Improvements

Over the years, many riverbanks in urban areas have been straightened and canalised using artificial material such as breeze blocks, concrete or metal. This usually results in an unattractive appearance and a riverside habitat with little value to wildlife.

- Where property or statutory rights of way are threatened there will be occasions where bank protection works will be unavoidable to contain flood flows and to direct water away from built-up areas, particularly in urban areas.
- Such measures will only be considered as a last resort and even then, "soft" engineering techniques should be used, i.e. by encouraging plant growth, faggoting and where appropriate willow spilling.
- Where natural methods of protection are not possible, high quality materials in keeping with the character of that part of the river should be used.
- Where they do not exist, new areas of marginal vegetation can be created by the construction of gradual banks, beaches and shallows.
- In some stretches of the river it may be possible to screen unsightly areas of banking, which cannot be easily replaced, by planting suitable vegetation in the margins of the river or by the creation of a two stage channel.
- Wherever possible banks should be regraded to form gentle earth slopes which can then provide an area for planting and seeding of marginal vegetation which can give a more natural appearance to the river. Steep river banks are also difficult to access and manage.
- Small groynes can be used to encourage collection and stabilisation of silt along the edges of the river, which will then colonise with marginal plant species.
- Such planting will however require formal consent from the Environment Agency, because within urban areas such as Wantage and Grove channel capacity is crucial and the narrowing of the channel could cause flooding problems.
- The Environment Agency and the Letcombe Brook Project can provide further



advice on a site-specific basis (Flood Defence Consent will be required for works to main river).

In some cases tributaries of the Brook have been culverted and this has led to flooding problems and has destroyed the potential for wildlife. Where possible steps should be taken to reverse sections of these tributaries which have been culverted and return them to open streams or "ditches".

Hedges, Fences & Boundary Improvements

There are many examples where poor fencing or other boundary treatment can have an adverse impact on the riverside environment. To make the most of their riverside setting many properties will benefit by being left open to their river frontage without any boundary treatment.

- Properties which require some form of boundary for security or privacy reasons should consider natural landscape strips or hedging. If more secure treatment is necessary then fences or walls must be set back from the riverbank to allow for access for maintenance and for the establishment of screen planting.
- Where fence options are used, those with wide gaps/ spaces are encouraged to allow uninterrupted access to the watercourse and along the river corridor for wildlife.

6. Public Access

Opportunities for increasing public access to the Brook should be taken, providing that this would not result in conflicts with other key interests e.g. the conservation value of the riverside area. Public access and uncontrolled dogs can cause disturbance to areas providing habitats for Protected Species such as otters and water voles.

Some riverside areas are inaccessible to the public because they fall within private land ownership. However in many cases public access to riverside areas could be

made possible and such access may be able to link up with existing rights of way.

7. Improving Water Quality

In some reaches of the river it may be possible to improve the quality of the water by introducing additional oxygen to it. This can be done by creating small water features such as riffles (rough water).

Detailed consultation should however take place with the Environment Agency before any feature is introduced into the watercourse, as it may affect river flows and flood control.

Where barriers to fish movement are present in a watercourse adjacent to development proposals, the design should include measures to allow for the natural movement of fish within the watercourse, such as fish passes.

8. Surface Water Run-off and the Avoidance of Pollution

All development should be designed to minimise any possible pollution or escape of chemicals/ oil into the watercourse and further information is available from the Environment Agency.

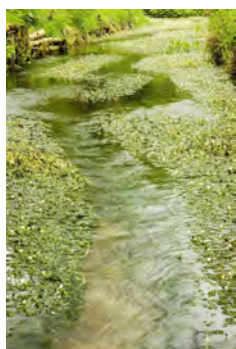
The following are examples of measures which can prevent river pollution and/ or avoid flooding:

- The bunding of oil tanks.
- Oil/ chemical storage away from the river.
- Oil traps and wetlands or reed beds on surface drainage systems.
- Soakaways and infiltration for clean surface water run off.
- Permeable surfaces to replace tarmac and concrete.
- Construction of surface water storage ponds separate from the watercourse; to reduce flooding and/ or allow additional treatment of run-off.

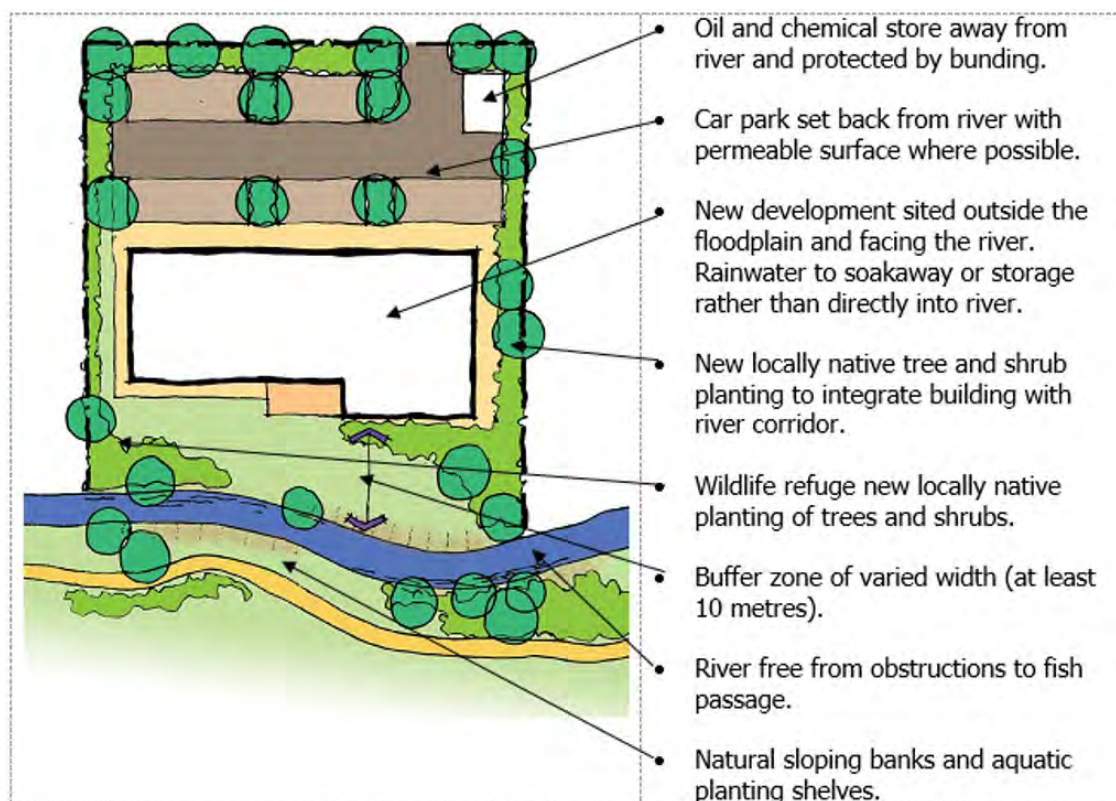
It should be noted that some of the sustainable drainage system options detailed may not be possible on some previously developed sites where there is contamination, unless remediation/ decontamination works are carried out beforehand. Further advice should be obtained from the Environment Agency.

Discharge consent is required from the Environment Agency for discharges either into the river, or into the ground. It is important that developers obtain the necessary consents prior to commencing any building work.

The Environment Agency should be consulted for advice; particularly on the measures necessary to prevent pollution of surface and groundwater. They also provide free pollution prevention advice at all stages of a project from design to construction in order to avert the likelihood of costly pollution incidents in the future.



9. Summary of Good Practice



10. For Further Information Contact:

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Wantage
Oxon
OX12 8BL

01235 771447
letcombebrook@hotmail.com

Environment Agency
West Area, Thames
Red Kite House
Howbery Park
Wallingford
Oxon
OX10 8BD

Conservation and Fisheries Tel: 01491 828344

Development Control & Flood Defence Consent Tel: 01491 828442

Pollution Control and Waste Matters Tel: 01491 828373