
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

Botley Centre SPD

June 2015

BDP.

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Appendix A - Policies, Plans and Programmes	Part 1, Section 5 of the <i>Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – SA Report</i> (October 2014)	
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1.0 BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 1.1. This document is a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report for the Botley Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This section describes the background to the SPD and the legislative requirements for SA.
- 1.2. SA is a process for considering and communicating the likely environmental and sustainability effects of a draft plan, and reasonable alternatives, with a particular emphasis on preventing, reducing and as fully as possible offsetting any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan.
- 1.3. It is a requirement that SA is undertaken in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which were prepared in order to transpose into national law the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and guidance within the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG). While there is no requirement for an SA to be prepared for an SPD, SPD's may require Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Given the existing and potential for environmental effects related to transport, air quality and noise it is considered appropriate to undertake an SA incorporating SEA for Botley.

SA Methodology

- 1.4. The NPPG provides guidance on the content of the scoping stage for SA. This report covers the following Stage A of the SA process, which is detailed as follows:

Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

- Identify other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives
- Collect baseline information
- Identify sustainability issues and problems
- Develop the sustainability appraisal framework
- Consult the consultation bodies on the scope of the sustainability appraisal report

Relationship to SA for the Emerging Local Plan

- 1.5. This report relies on baseline information and the SA Framework already defined in the '*Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – SA Report*' for the emerging Local Plan 2031. It also provides specific baseline information on Botley where appropriate, and identifies a tailored SA Framework based on the key issues for Botley.

Botley Centre SPD

- 1.6. The Botley Centre SPD is intended to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the existing Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 (adopted in July 2006). The draft SPD will set out an approach for the future development of an area of central Botley, guiding the formulation of future planning applications for the site. In essence the SPD will:
 - Guide the development of high quality, prestigious mixed use development that increases the amount of floorspace available for future retailers without compromising the provision for existing independent retailers and businesses; and
 - Make provision for additional town centre uses in line with the needs of existing and future populations for the area and wider district as appropriate.

- 1.7. In order to achieve this, the SPD will contain an overall strategy and objectives for development in line with specific proposals and it will also include details on how the proposals can be implemented and the principles that will have to be followed in order to ensure development proceeds as desired, in the most sustainable manner.

Study Area Boundary

- 1.8. The Botley Centre study area lies in the centre of Botley. To the south and west of the site are two storey residential properties set within medium sized gardens. The north west of the site is bordered by the West Way; and Westminster Way and the raised A34 is to the east.
- 1.9. The three hectare site comprises a range of uses and facilities, these include the West Way shopping centre, offices, a community hall, a library, Botley Baptist Church, the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, the vicarage to the church, Elms Parade (13 retail units and 7 flats), Field House (age restricted accommodation comprising 62 flats and 5 bungalows), Vale House (6 Flats), and three public car parks (Chapel Way, Church Way and Elms Parade).

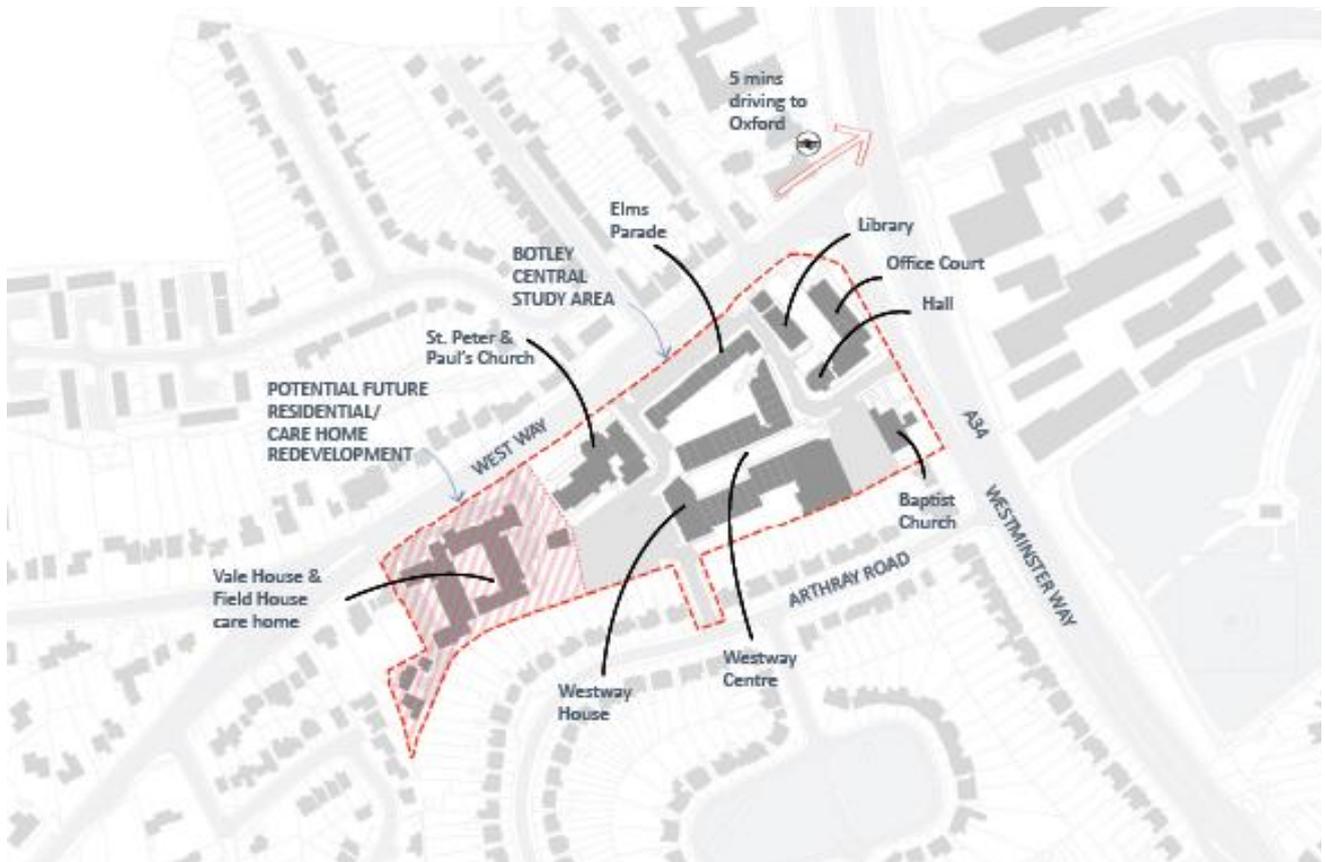


Figure 1 – Site Area Plan with Redline Boundary

2.0 RELEVANT POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

Introduction

- 2.1. The SPD will supplement policies within the adopted Local Plan specific to Botley. A full review of the relevant policies, plans and programmes (PPP's) is provided in Part 1, Section 5 of the 'Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – SA Report' (October 2014) and these are considered relevant to the Botley Centre SPD (see Appendix A).
- 2.2. All of the PPPs influence the emerging SPD to some degree. However the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 (July, 2006) (Saved Policies) where they are consistent to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March, 2012) and the emerging Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 are of particular relevance. The emerging Local Plan will be subject to public consultation in September 2015. The objectives contained within these provide the local planning framework for the Vale of White Horse District.

Adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 (July, 2006) (Saved Policies)

- 2.3. Local Plan Policies GS1 Development in Existing Settlements, H10 Development in the Five Main Settlements, S1 New Retail Provision and S12 Policies for Local Shopping Centres specifically relate to Botley Centre and the priorities for the area. Policy GS1 establishes the general spatial strategy for the location of development, which underpins and provides the context for other key policies, and states:

Policy GS1 – Development in Existing Settlements
'The General Locational Strategy is to:

- i) Concentrate development at the five main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, which are designated as Local Service Centres and are defined by the development boundaries on the proposals map. Important open land within these settlements will be protected from development. ...*

Development which accords with this strategy will be permitted provided there is no conflict with other policies in this plan.

- 2.4. *Policy H10 – Development in the Five Main Settlements*
 Local Plan Policy H10 provides the strategy for delivering housing across the district, which will be a focus of the Botley Centre SPD:
'Within the built-up areas of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage, as defined by the development boundaries on the proposals map, new housing development will be permitted provided:

- i) It would not result in the loss of facilities important to the local community, including areas of informal public open space; and*
- ii) It makes efficient use of the land, and the layout, mass and design of the dwellings would not harm the character of the area.*

2.5. Policy S1 New Retail Provision

A key consideration for the SPD is the provision of retail and its relationship to surrounding areas of retail. The policy for the location of new retail development is included in Policy S1 and sets out a hierarchy of shopping provision.

‘Proposals for new retail development or changes of use to retail will be permitted in the following locations provided they are in keeping with the scale and character of the centre or area concerned and would not create unacceptable traffic or environmental problems:

...

- i) *Within the local shopping centres at Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage as defined on the proposals map subject to policies S12 and TR6 (The retention of public car parking spaces) ...’*

2.6. Policy S12 Local Shopping Centres

Policy S12 recognises the valuable shopping facilities provided within Local Shopping Centres and seeks to maintain the role of these centres. The Botley Centre area is identified as Local Shopping Centre on the adopted proposals map.

‘Within the existing Local Shopping Centres at Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage as defined on the proposals map, changes of use from class A1 (retail) to classes A2 and A3 will only be permitted if:

- i) *The proposal would not individually, or cumulatively with other existing non-retail uses, cause demonstrable harm to the function, character or appearance of the shopping centre concerned;*
- ii) *The proposal would add to the range and variety of goods and services available to the local residents; and*
- iii) *There would be no demonstrable harm caused to the living conditions of any neighbouring residents in terms of noise, cooking smells, or general disturbance.*

Changes of use to residential (class C3) or office (class B1) uses will not be permitted at ground floor level. Such uses will be permitted on upper floors subject to criteria (i) and (iii) above being met.’

The Emerging Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031

- 2.7. The SPD will also consider the emerging Local Plan policies on Botley. Core Policy 11: Botley Central Area sets the policy framework, which once adopted, all planning applications will be determined against, and states:

‘Proposals for a comprehensive retail-led redevelopment and upgrading of Botley central area, as defined on the Adopted Policies Map, will be supported provided that:

- i. *taken as a whole, the proposals support the role and function of Botley as a local service centre, providing a well-integrated mix of shops and services to meet day-to-day shopping needs of the local area*

- ii. *effective use is made of development potential above ground level and on more peripheral parts of the site for a mix of uses that may include, but are not limited to, office, community, residential, hotel and leisure activities*
- iii. *existing community facilities, including the community hall, library and Baptist Church are replaced with facilities of an appropriate size and quality to meet current and likely future local needs*
- iv. *it can be demonstrated that proposals will not harm the character or appearance of the local area, particularly West Way, Arthray Way and Westminster Way*
- v. *proposals for the site are prepared through a comprehensive masterplanning process providing an integrated solution to site access, traffic management, air quality management, servicing and sufficient car parking whilst prioritising the pedestrian customer environment, and*

proposals that seek to demolish Elms Parade should demonstrate that its successor is of at least equal architectural merit and particular attention should be given to provide at least the same level of active frontage.'

3.0 THE BASELINE ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

- 3.1 This section of the SA provides information about the Botley baseline environment so as to provide essential background to the appraisal. This provides the basis for predicting and monitoring effects and aids the identification of sustainability issues and possible methods for dealing with those issues.
- 3.2 The aim has been to present sufficient information to provide an overall understanding of the general situation in Botley. The baseline analyses contained in Part 1, Section 6 of the '*Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – SA Report*' (October 2014) (please see Appendix B) has been used as the primary source of information for this SA scoping report and the layout of the chapter follows that of the topics identified in these documents.
- 3.3 However given that the Botley Centre SPD covers a smaller area, more site specific information has been provided where relevant and available. This includes initial urban design site analysis and a review of census data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the sustainability baseline, including information on the Botley Core area (i.e. North Hinksey and Wytham ward and the Appleton and Cumnor ward), and also due to the proximity of Oxford, the wider context area (or Botley Catchment area) which also includes the Jericho and Osney ward from the Oxford district, which is within the administrative boundary of Oxford City Council.

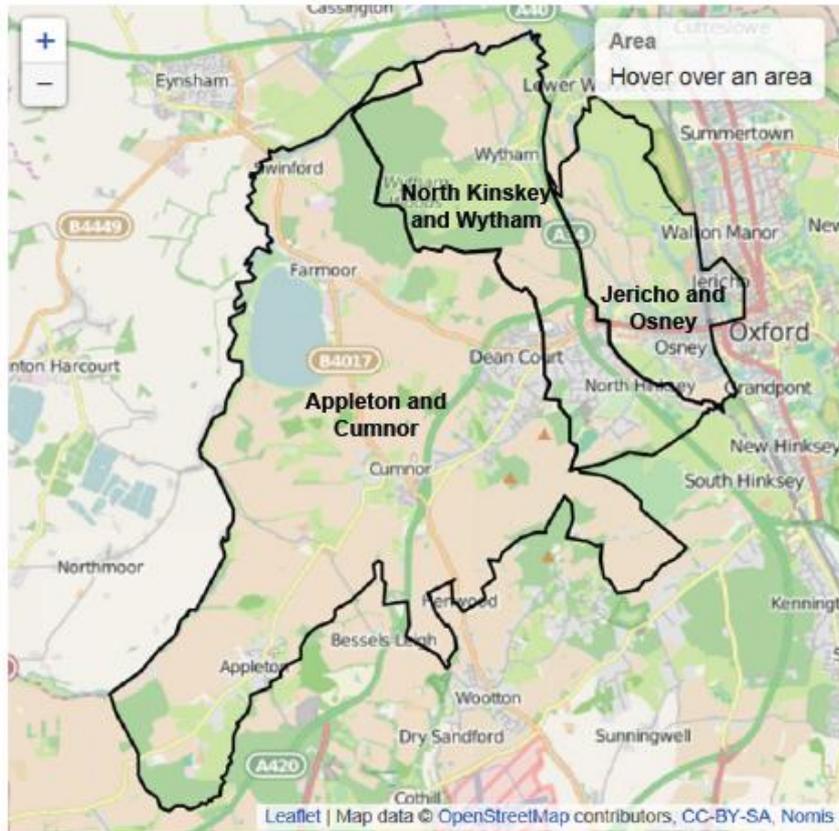


Figure 2 – Map of Botley Catchment showing the Appleton and Cumnor ward to the west, North Kinksey and Wytham ward in the centre and the Jericho and Osney ward to the west.

3.4 The following section presents a summary of the key findings and should be read in conjunction with Appendices B and C.

Population

3.5 Analysis of census data from 2011 and 2001 shows a general trend of population increase in the Botley Core Area which is generally in line with the level of increase seen across the wider Vale of White Horse area. A significantly larger increase in population is seen within the Oxford ward of Jericho and Osney, which is within the Botley Catchment Area. This suggests the need for provision of sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes within the Botley area and appropriate local services for the growing community.

3.6 This information is illustrated on the table below.

Area	Census 2011	Census 2001	% Difference (+/-)
Vale of White Horse			
All Wards	121,000	115,627	+ 4.6%
Botley Core Area			
North Hinksey and Wytham	4,671	4,442	+ 5.2%
Appleton and Cumnor	6,670	6,407	+ 4.1%
Total	11,341	10,849	+ 4.5%
Botley Catchment Area (Plus Jericho and Osney)			
Jericho and Osney	6,820	5,868	+ 16.2%
Total	18,161	16,717	+ 8.6%

Table 1 – Population Analysis from Census 2011 and Census 2001 Data

Deprivation

- 3.7 With regard to deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2010) ranks the Vale 306th out of 326 local authorities, with the 326th being the least deprived. In general the level of deprivation within the Botley Catchment Area varies significantly across the spectrum as illustrated in Figure 6.1 (extract shown below) of the ‘*Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One*’. The site lies within an area of low deprivation and therefore deprivation is not considered to be a significant issue for Botley.

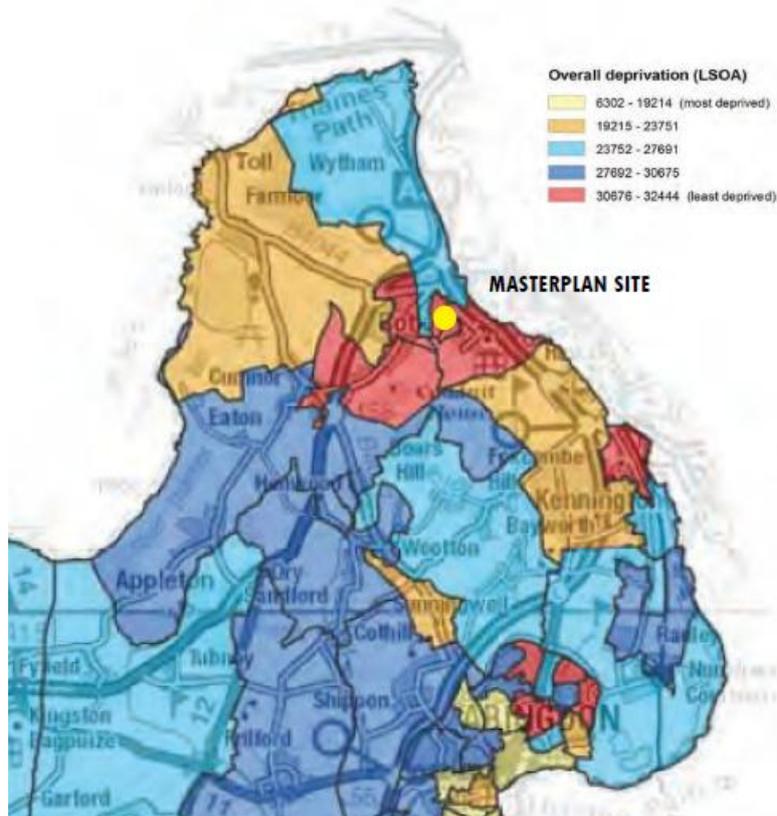


Figure 3 – Location of the Masterplan Site within the Deprivation Map

Housing

- 3.8 Information on the housing including the number of housing completions, average house price to income ratio, number of affordable homes completed and average household size across the Vale can be found in Part 1, Section 6 of the ‘*Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One*’ and is relatable to the Botley situation.
- 3.9 There is no strategic allocation made for housing development in Botley in the Local Plan 2031 however as Botley is designated as a Local Service Centre, offering a variety of mixed uses and services to the local community, it is expected that housing will be delivered as part of the future development of the central area and therefore is an issue which will need to be considered in the Botley.

Economic Activity

- 3.10 Details of the economic baseline for the wider Vale are contained in Part 1, Section 6 of the ‘*Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One*’ and in general these are relatable to the Botley area.
- 3.11 The Botley workforce is highly skilled with a higher than average proportion of managers and professionals than the Vale, as shown in the first two categories of Figure 4.

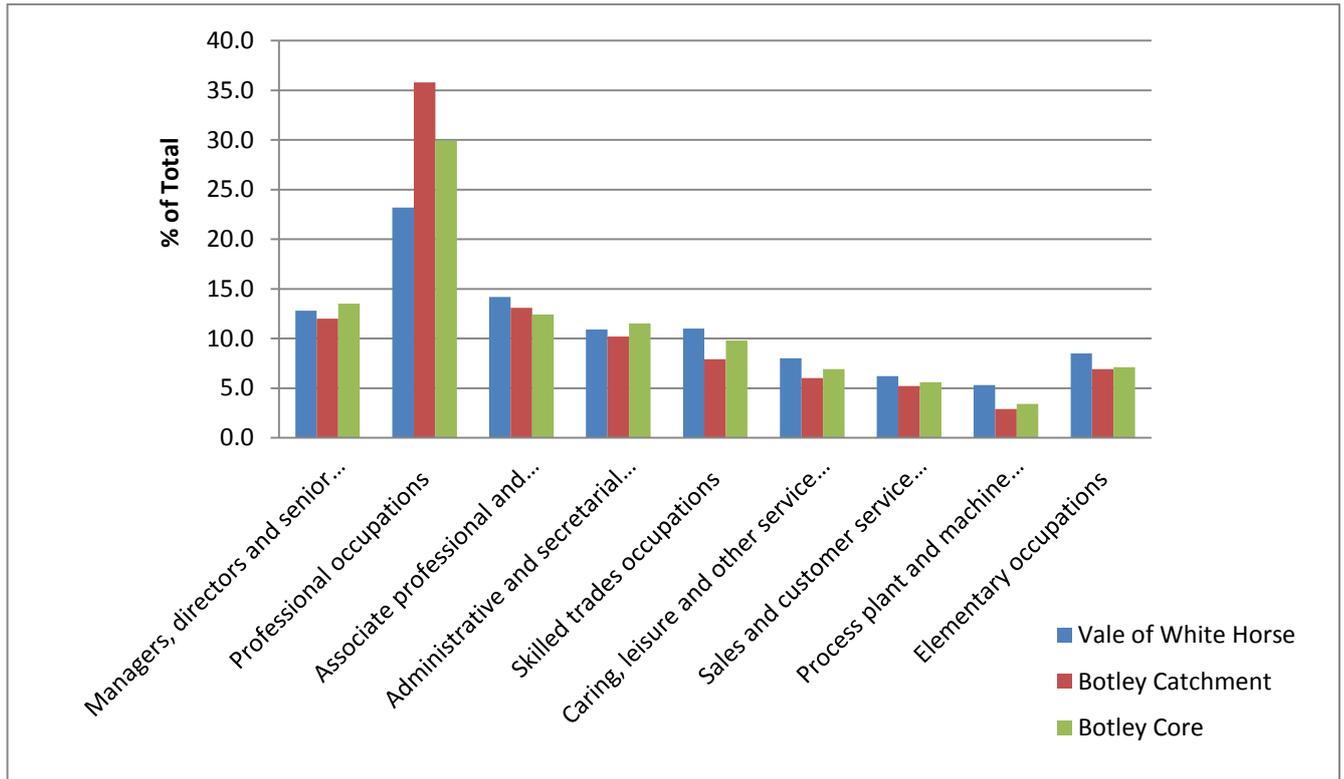


Figure 4 – Occupation Profile

3.12 Information from the 2011 census also denotes a slightly lower level of unemployment when compared with the percentage for the Vale and the wider South East region, as indicated in the following table. This indicates that Botley’s population are economically active, contributing to the Vale’s ranking within the top 10% in the country in the UK Competitiveness Index.

Area	Total Population Economically Active	Total Population Unemployed	% Unemployed
South East Region	6,274,341	216,231	3.4%
Vale of White Horse	87,477	2,190	2.5%
Botley Catchment	14,029	279	2.0%
Botley Core	8,243	158	1.9%

Table 2 – Level of Unemployment

3.13 With regard to the number of businesses in the Botley Core Area (based on the census super output layers – mid layer which is roughly based on the ward boundaries of the Botley Core area), the level of active businesses has remained stable, consisting mostly of micro businesses with 0 to 9 employees, as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

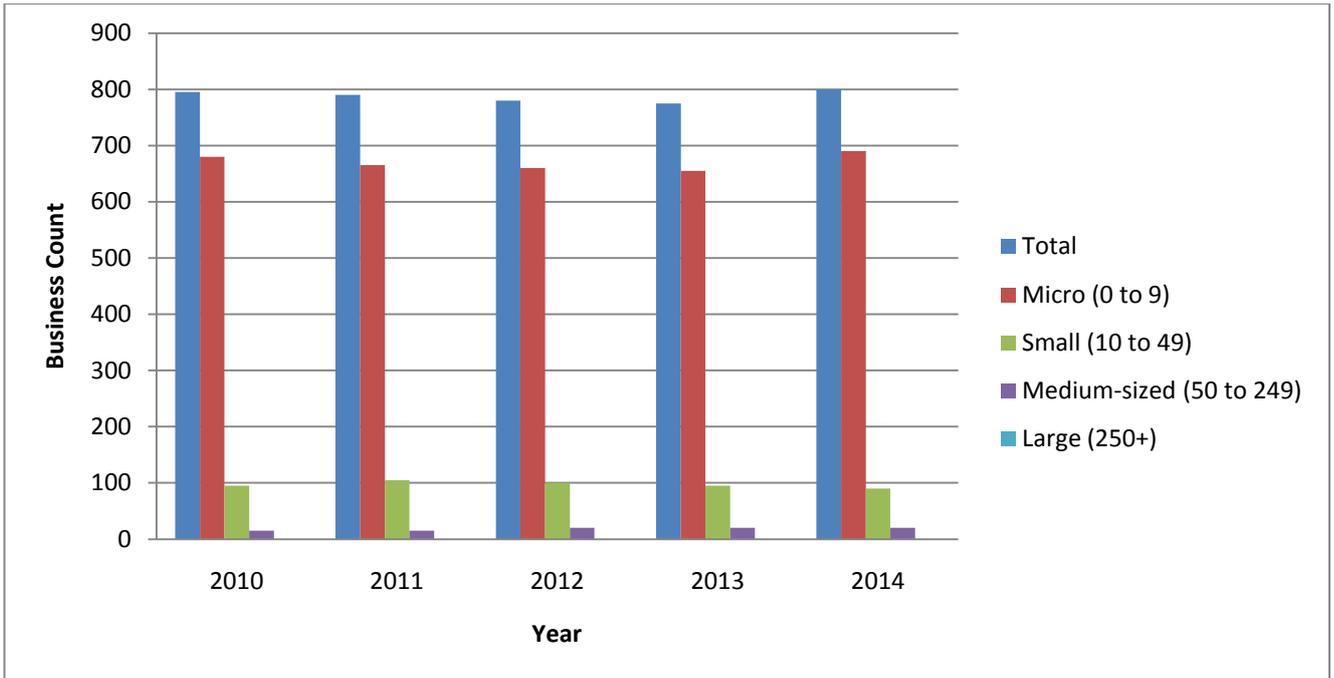


Figure 5 – Business Count (Local Units)

3.14 The largest industry sector in the Botley Core area is the ‘professional, scientific and technical’ category with 21% of the total followed by ‘construction’ with 14% and ‘information and communication’ at 9%. This information, illustrated below in Figure 6 illustrates that industry in the Botley Core area is diverse with a skilled workforce. Maintaining and contributing to this economic stability will likely be an issue in Botley.

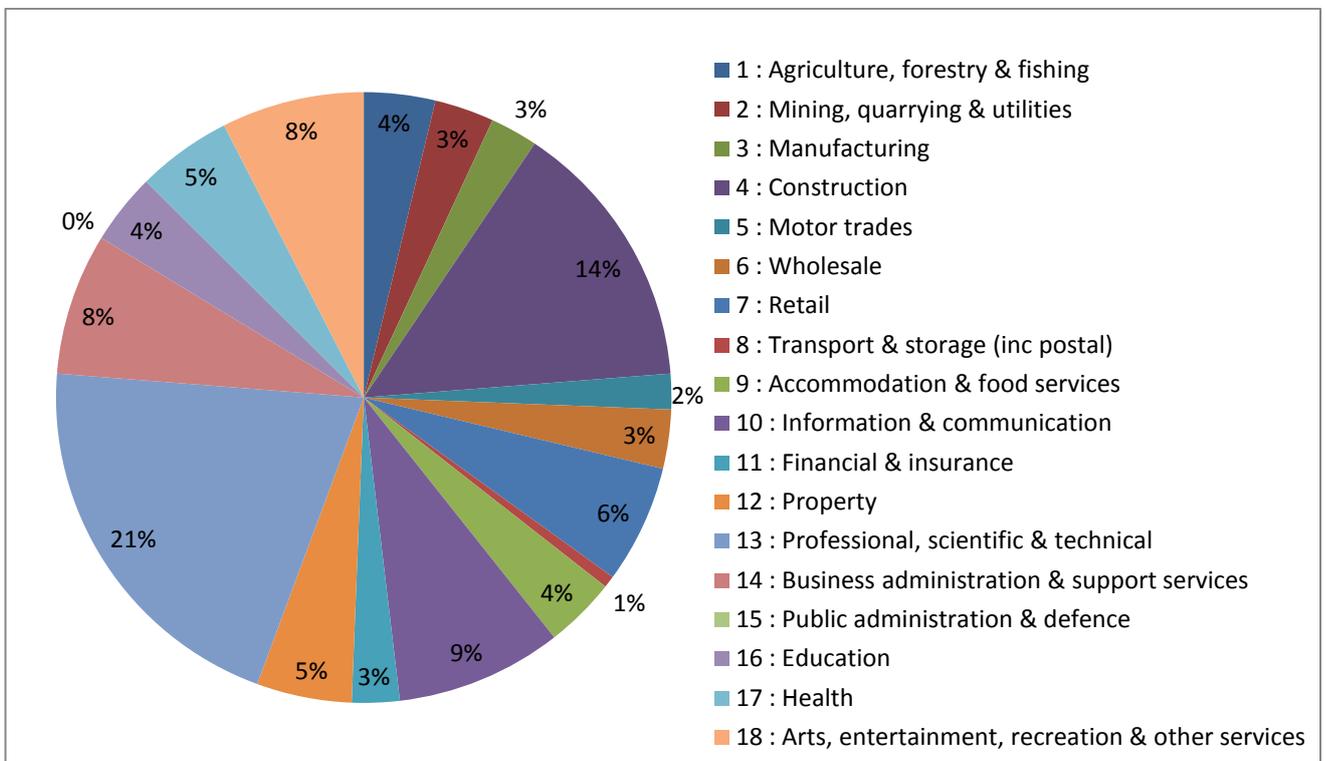


Figure 6 – Botley Core Industry 2014

Educational Attainment

3.15 The level of educational attainment in Botley is greater than the Vale with 51% in the Botley Catchment with a *level 4 qualification and above* when compared to 37.2% in the Vale. This includes ordinary and higher degrees, higher diplomas and professional qualifications. This implies a high level of educational achievement and skills in the Botley area.

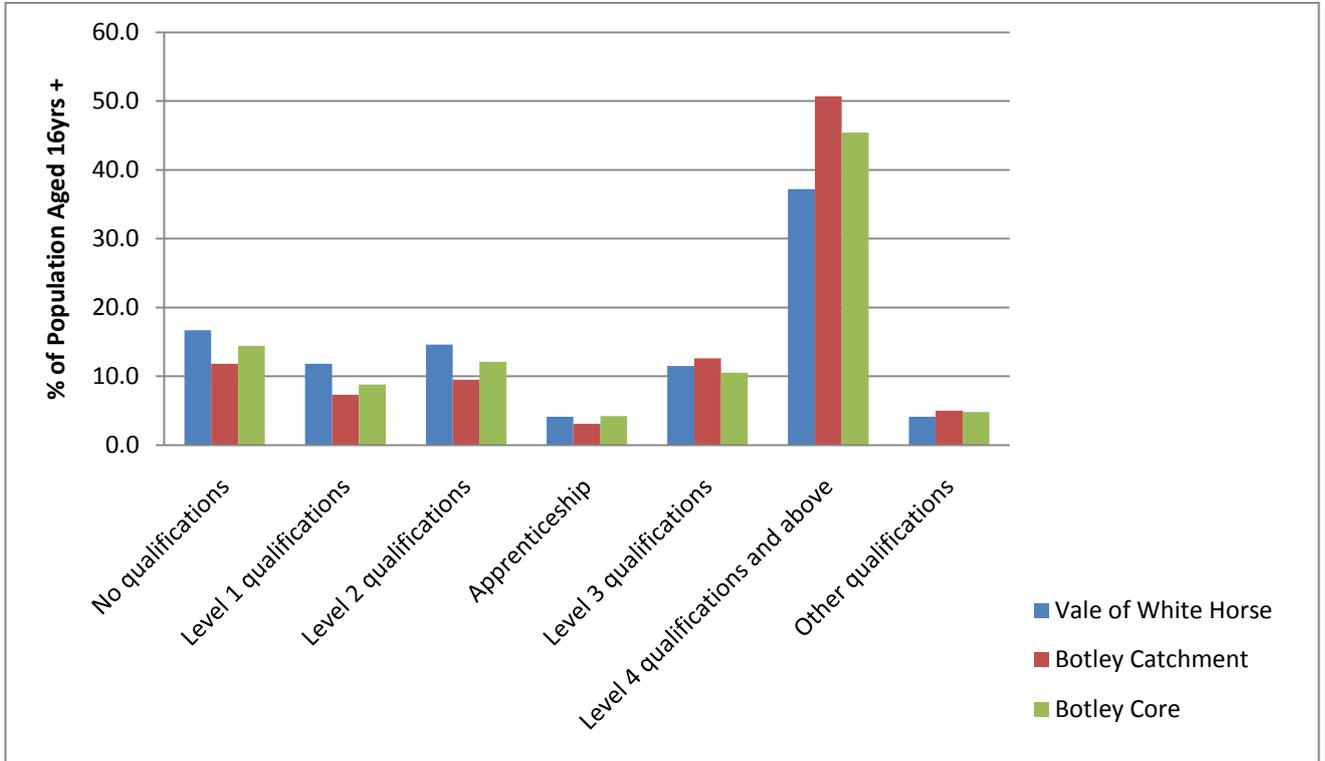


Figure 7 – Highest Level of Qualification

Transport

3.16 The Botley Centre SPD site is easily accessible from other parts of the UK, with the A34 trunk road to the east providing good access between the M4 to the south and the M40 to the north. The B4044 also acts as a primary vehicular route, offering connections to the wider area, including Oxford City Centre which is a 5 minute drive away.

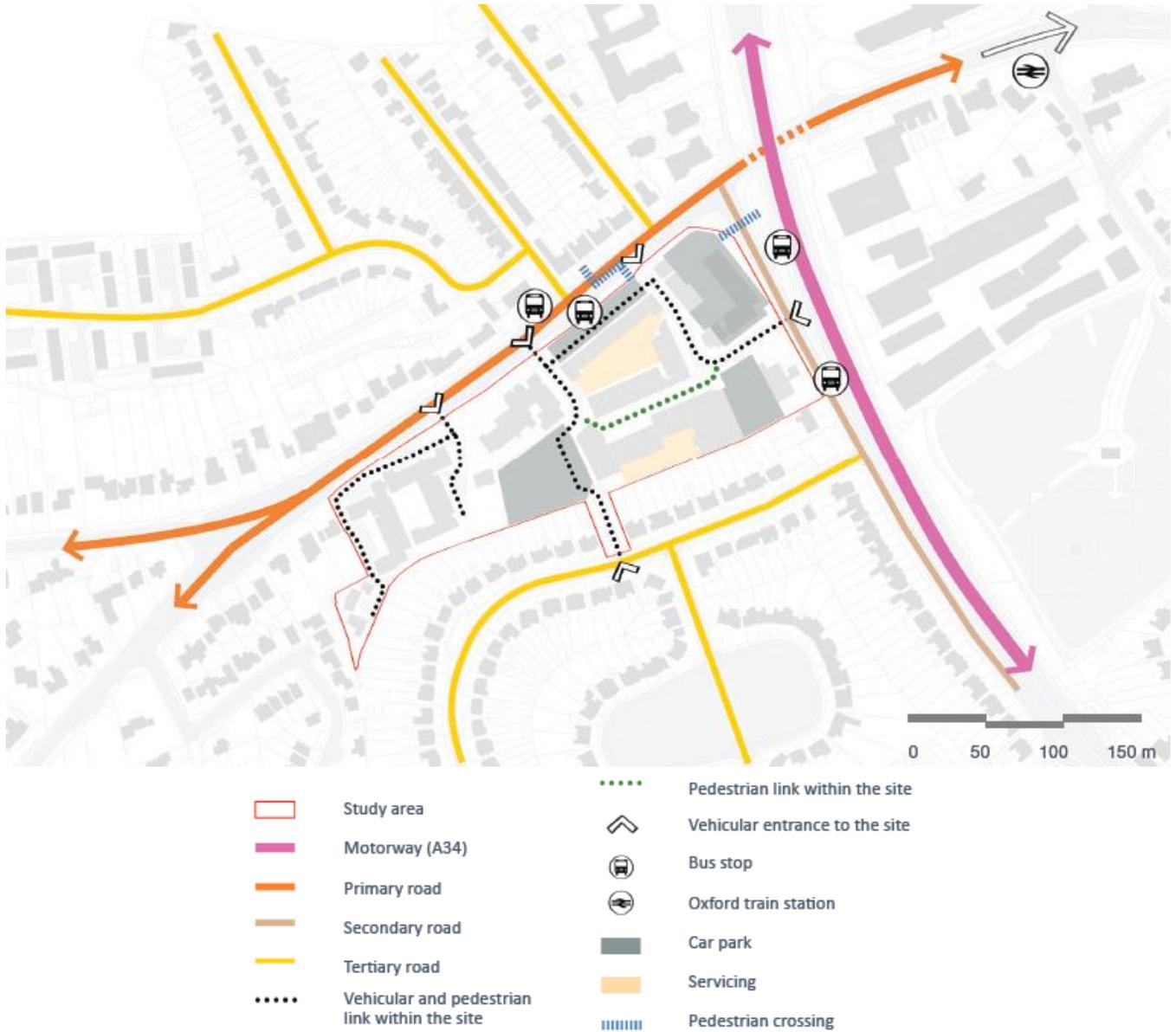


Figure 8 – Access and Movement

- 3.17 There is no railway station in the Botley area however Oxford Station is a 25 minute walk from the site, offering national rail and regional connections. The site also benefits from good bus connections with numerous bus stops located along the perimeter of the site. However routes through the site often lack natural surveillance and are not well used beyond working hours, leading to a perception of crime and attracting anti social behaviour.

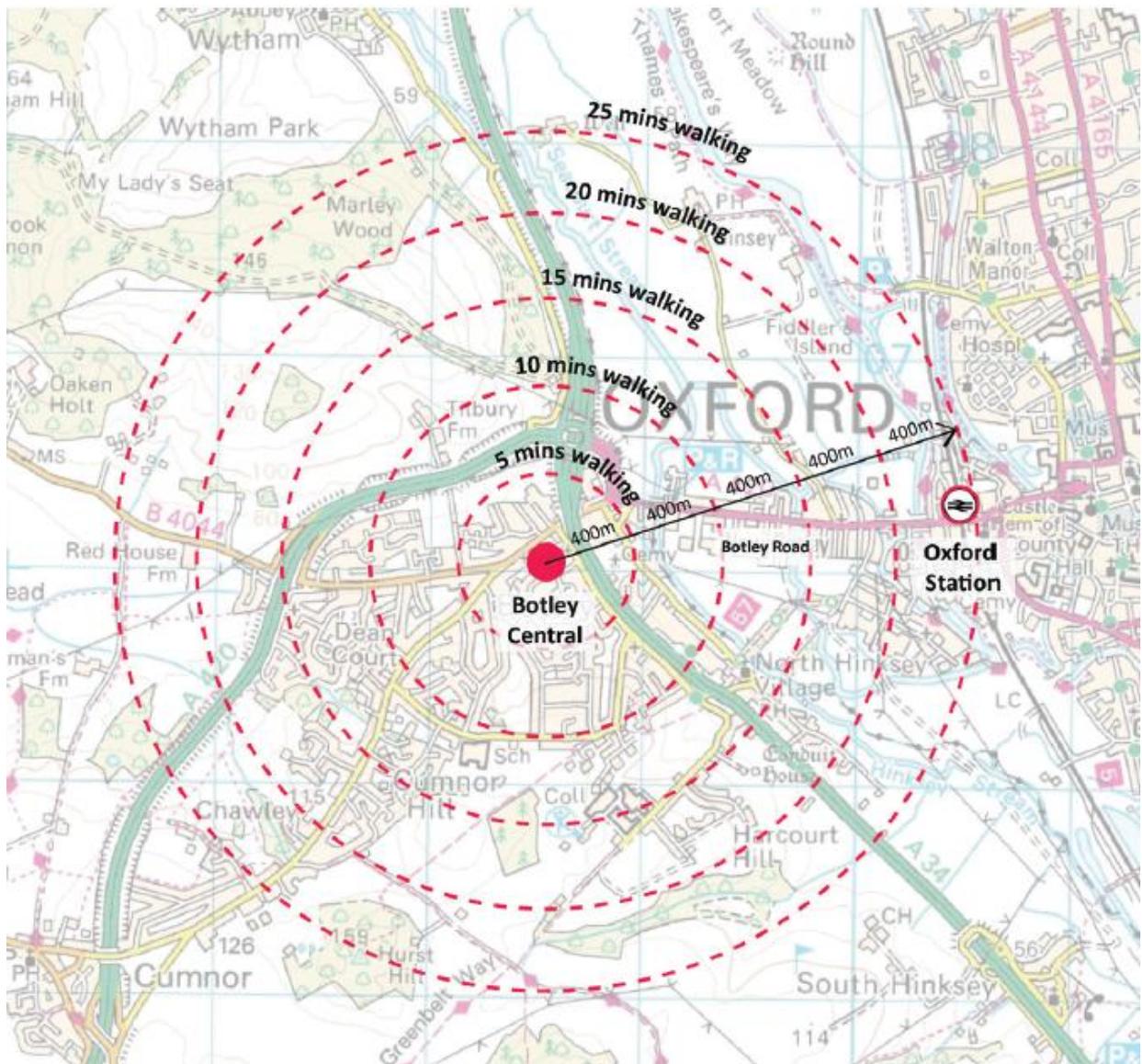


Figure 9 – Map showing proximity of the site to Oxford Railway Station

- 3.18 Despite the study area being quite well connected to the surrounding area the population of the Botley Core are still quite reliant on the car with 35% of households having 1 car/van and 55% of households owning 2 or more cars. Car ownership in the Botley Catchment does not provide a representative view of car ownership as the population in the Jericho and Osney ward of Oxford has significantly lower car ownership which is likely to be due to the proximity of this ward to Oxford train station and the city centre.

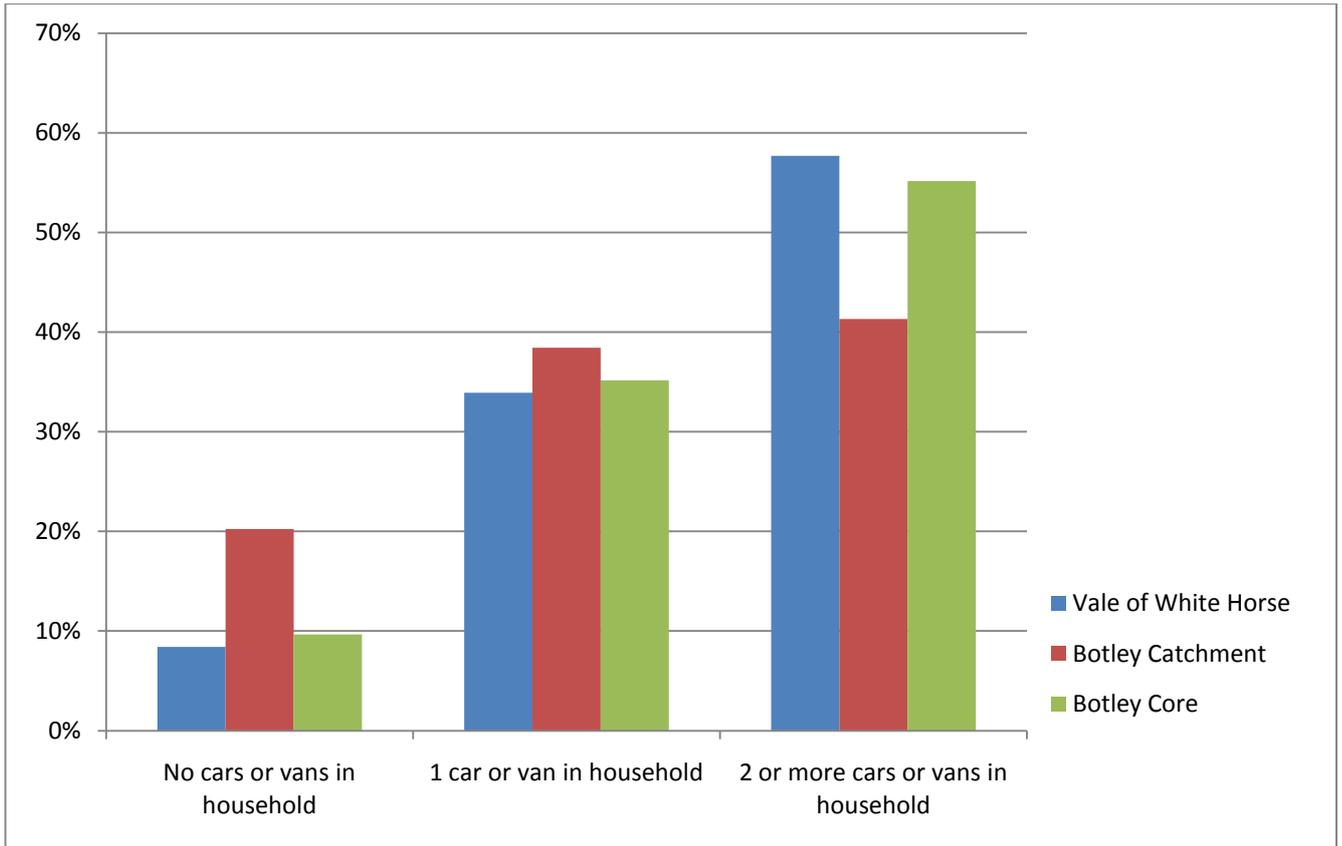


Figure 10 – Car Ownership

- 3.19 As a result the area surrounding the site is vehicle dominated and does not promote a pedestrian friendly environment to the wide carriageways, large car parks, fenced footpaths and elevated A34 road which is in close proximity to the site. These are also significant issues with congestion at busier times of the day.
- 3.20 Further information on travel across the Vale is given in Part 1, Section 6 of the ‘Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One’ however, the previous analysis would suggest that transport, access and the creation of a pedestrian/cyclist friendly environment are likely to be an important consideration in the future of Botley.

Historic Environment

- 3.21 Part 1, Section 6 of the ‘Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One’ gives a comprehensive description of the general historic environment throughout the Vale.
- 3.22 With specific regard to the site, there are no listed buildings, scheduled monuments of historic parks and gardens within the study area. The site also does not lie within a designated conservation area and therefore heritage issues are unlikely to be an issue for consideration in the Botley redevelopment.
- 3.23 Notwithstanding this, Elms Parade and St. Peter and Pauls Church are considered to contribute to the built heritage and Character of Botley.

Natural Environment

- 3.24 The Vale has a rich and diverse natural environment and this can also be said for the study area and its surrounding context.

Flood Risk

- 3.25 The study area does not lie within flood zone 2 or 3, however the area has experienced surface flooding in the past in extreme weather conditions. It is therefore considered that flooding is an issue for the study area.

Landscape Quality

- 3.26 Botley is surrounded by the Oxford Green Belt land and there are areas of ancient woodland including Madey Wood, Cammoor Copse and Higgins's Copse to the north and north-west of the Botley. These features contribute significantly to the surrounding landscape environment and therefore are an important issue for the Botley SPD.

Nature

- 3.27 The study area is located in close proximity to several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) including two of the Vales eight; Whtham Woods SSSI located approximately 650m north and Hurst Hill SSSI located approximately 1.6km to the south east. The Oxford Meadows SSSI which is within Oxford City Councils boundary is also located 1.7km to the north east. The Hutchcombe Copse Local Wildlife Site is also located 450m away from the southern boundary of the study area. These designated areas are rich in biodiversity and because of this ecological importance; they are likely to be important considerations in Botley.

Air Quality

- 3.28 There are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in close proximity to the study site. The first is near the A34 due to the exceedance of the annual-mean objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), attributed to road traffic emissions. The study area is located 260m north-west of this AQMA. The second AQMA covers the entire Oxford City area and lies 300m east of the site. The site does not lie directly within an AQMA. The proximity of the site to the AQMA's as well as the location of the site within an urban location prone to traffic congestion, air quality is likely to be an issue in Botley.
- 3.29 The Vale ceased continuous automatic monitoring of air pollution in 2009, however the closest automatic monitoring of air quality to the site is carried out by Oxford City Council in an urban background location (i.e. away from local influence of emission sources and therefore broadly representative of residential areas within large conurbations) 2.7km away at St. Ebbes in Oxford.
- 3.30 There are also two closer locations where both the Vale and Oxford City Council passively monitor NO₂ concentrations at urban background locations using diffusion tubes. These are located at Hutchcomb Road 0.9km from the study area and at Pike Terrace 2.7km from the site boundary. These will likely be a consideration in any future development in the Botley area.

Noise

- 3.31 With regard to noise, the conditions the closest noise sensitive receptors to the site are the residential areas surrounding the site; Arthray Road to the south and West Way adjoining the site to the West and opposite the northern boundary. These receptors are currently exposed to existing noise from the surround streets, roads, service areas and car parks.
- 3.32 Noise monitoring undertaken as part of a previous planning application for the site (Reference No. P13/V2733/FUL) illustrated a moderately high baseline noise level in the study area, specifically in the areas proximate to the A34 and along West Way. It is therefore likely that noise will likely be an issue in Botley.

Health

- 3.33 The census 2011 states that 10% of the Vales population are living with a long term health problem or disability. The percentages for Botley Catchment and Botley Core are consistent with the Vale at 9.6% and 11.6% respectively. Regardless health and welfare of the Botley community is likely to be a consideration in Botley.
- 3.34 Further information on the natural environment can be found in Part 1, Section 6 of the ‘Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One’.

Urban Design Analysis – Issues and Opportunities

- 3.35 A visual analysis of the site has identified the following issues and opportunities related specifically to the study area. These are as follows:

Issues

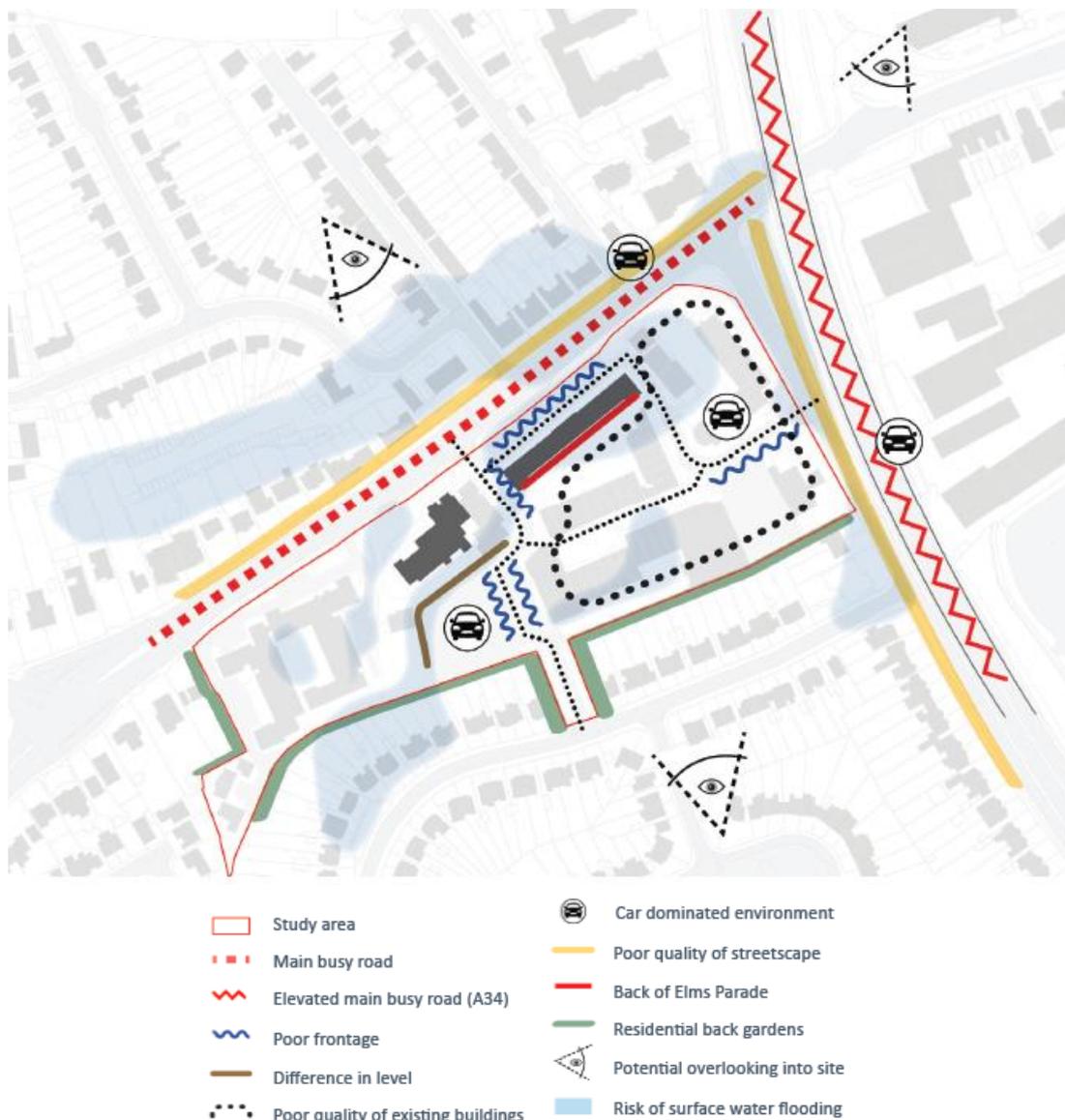


Figure 11 – Issues for the Study Area

- The piecemeal development of the site has created a poor quality urban environment dominated by car parks, a lack of active frontages and poor pedestrian routes.
- The low rise scale of the existing surrounding residences will have to be considered with regard to the scale and massing of any proposed development as well as overlooking.

- The site can be viewed from hills surrounding the site and therefore any future development will break down the massing of the blocks through the site so as to not negatively impact the surrounding context.
- The elevated nature of the A34 road which runs past the site on its eastern border acts as a barrier and source of noise and pollution.
- West Way to the north is a wide, busy vehicular carriage way and inhibits the ability of pedestrians to cross to road safely and easily.
- The servicing area to the rear of Elms Parade effectively backs onto the site, offering no active facade into the site.
- The level difference between St. Peter and St Pauls Church and the existing surface car park acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement through this area of the site.
- The access from Arthray Road into the site is bordered by the residential back gardens of the surrounding houses and lacks activity and surveillance.
- The existing buildings on site generally lack architectural quality and interest, while many have a poor relationship with their surroundings, lacking active and engaging building frontages.

Opportunities



Figure 12 – Opportunities for the Study Area

- The study area lies a short 5 minute drive from Oxford town centre which offers a wide variety of services and transport links.
- Existing buildings on site, specifically Elms Parade, St. Peter and St. Pauls Church and the vicarage contribute positively to the identity and character of Botley.
- There is an existing mix of uses on site including valuable community services and businesses which actively benefit the community.
- There is an opportunity to create a positive and attractive retail frontage along West Way which fronts the northern boundary of the study area.
- The existing mature trees surrounding the church and vicarage, and also on the corner of West Way and Westminster Way are an asset to the site, increasing the attractiveness of the area and improving the setting of the surrounding buildings.
- There is an opportunity to develop taller buildings on the site, with increasing building heights towards the north-west corner of the site towards a landmark building at the junction of the wider roads, West Way and Westminster Way.
- The study area offers a potentially large development site with potential for a comprehensive scheme for a local service centre to be delivered.
- There are existing pedestrian links running through the car parks which are well used locally but could be improved to provide a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment.
- Future development also has the potential to create better permeability through the site, allowing pedestrians and cyclists to follow desire lines.
- There is the potential to create active and engaging building frontages along the existing streets as well as the new pedestrian links through the site.
- There is also an opportunity to create public spaces and improve public realm throughout the site, creating a more usable and attractive environment for the community to use and visit.

4.0 KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES AND SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

4.1 The identification of sustainability problems during the course of the SA provides an opportunity to define key issues for consideration in the Botley Centre SPD that will lead to the development of objectives and options that are sustainable. The following section outlines these key issues which have originated from the SA Framework within the '*Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One*'.

4.2 This wider SA Framework for the Vale has been used as the basis for identifying key sustainability issues and objectives, which cover a wide variety of themes from environmental, economic and social topic areas. Where relevant, some of these issues have been discounted, some have been added to, and others incorporated, to create a SA Framework which is specific to the Botley Central area.

SA Framework

4.3 The following SA Framework contains draws on the SA Framework for the SA for the emerging Local Plan (Table 8.1, *Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part One*). and identifies issues and objectives which are relevant to the Botley Central area. Where the text is **bold**, these have are relevant to the SA Framework for the Botley SPD. Where text has been ~~struck through~~ it is deemed not directly relevant to the Botley SPD. The text in *italics* represents additional information which relates specifically to the Botley SPD.

Sustainability Objectives for the Vale	Sustainability Issues	Botley Specific Objectives	SA
1. Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortage of housing, including affordable, market and supported living • Need to preserve and enhance the quality of built environments • Pressure for development, particularly housing 	1. Provide sufficient suitable homes including affordable homes in Botley	
2. Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in the Vale's towns and rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural isolation and limited access to services • Deprivation in some parts of the Vale • Protection and provision of recreational facilities including natural greenspace • Need to improve the quality and range of recreational facilities and services in Botley 	2. Ensure the availability of high quality services and facilities in Botley	
3. Reduce the need to travel and Improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion on strategic and local road network • Lack of alternatives to the private car • Rural isolation and limited access to services • Need to mitigate/reduce effects of noise, air and light pollution • Reduce car dominated environment and provide attractive pedestrian and cycle routes in Botley 	3. Reduce the need to travel and Improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion in Botley	
4. Improve the health and well-being of Vale residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health of Vale residents • Deprivation in some parts of the Vale • Lack of high quality overlooked pedestrian routes and activity in the evening, contributing to fear of crime within the study area 	4. Improve the health and well-being of Botley residents.	
5. Reduce inequality, poverty and social exclusion in the Vale, and raise educational achievement and skills levels.*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low levels of educational achievement • Poor quality local service centre environment which does not provide for all of the Botley community and is in need of improvement 	5. Provide high quality placemaking which creates an inclusive environment for the local Botley community	
6. Support a strong and Sustainable economy within the Vale's towns and rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of employment opportunities for residents • Declining proportion of economically active population • Low levels of educational achievement • Opportunity for small/medium sized offices and flexible work spaces 	6. Support a strong and Sustainable economy within Botley	
7. Improve and protect the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection and improvement of 	7. Improve and protect the	

Sustainability Objectives for the Vale	Sustainability Issues	Botley Specific Objectives	SA
<p>natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality</p>	<p>biodiversity, particularly Special Areas of Conservation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated nature conservation sites in the study area Several SSSI's and Wildlife sites surrounding the site Lack of biodiversity within the study area including planting and street trees 	<p><i>natural environment including biodiversity, water and soil quality in Botley</i></p>	
<p>8. Protect the cultural heritage and provide a high quality townscape and landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of valued landscapes Need to preserve and enhance the quality of built environments Protection and provision of recreational facilities including natural greenspace No designated heritage assets within the study site however Elms Parade and St. Peter and St. Pauls Church contribute to the built identity and character of Botley The town is surrounded by designated greenbelt land and ancient woodland which contributes to the character of the surrounding landscape 	<p><i>8. Enhance the character and identity of Botley and protect the local townscape and landscape</i></p>	
<p>9. Reduce air, noise and light pollution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to mitigate/reduce effects of noise, air and light pollution Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage development of renewables 	<p><i>9. Reduce air, noise and light pollution in Botley</i></p>	
<p>10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage development of renewables Action to mitigate the causes and adapt to the effects of climate change 	<p><i>10. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the use of resources and improve resource efficiency in Botley</i></p>	
<p>11. Increase resilience to climate change and flooding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction and prevention of flooding Action to mitigate the causes and adapt to the effects of climate change The study site is not in a flood zone but is prone to surface flooding in extreme weather conditions Reducing the urban heat island effect Reducing the need to travel by providing for local needs locally 	<p><i>11. Increase resilience to climate change in Botley</i></p>	

*Not of direct relevance to the Botley Centre SPD

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 These Botley specific sustainability objectives will be consulted upon and amended in light of any comments received. The SA Scoping Report will be sent to the consultation bodies, namely the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England who will comment on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included within the report. These responses should be made within five weeks of receipt of request in accordance with regulation 12(5) and 12(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 5.2 The Botley Centre SPD is currently being prepared and a supporting SA is currently being undertaken. The draft SPD is likely to be published for public consultation in August 2015.

Appendix A – Policies, Plans and Programmes

Part 1, Section 5 of the *Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – SA Report* (October 2014)

5 WHAT'S THE SUSTAINABILITY 'CONTEXT'?

The SA Report must include...

- The relevant sustainability objectives, established at international / national level
- Any existing sustainability problems / issues which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas / populations etc. of particular importance

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 An important step when seeking to establish the appropriate 'scope' of an SA involves reviewing 'sustainability context' messages (e.g. issues, objectives or aspirations) set out within relevant plans, policies, strategies and initiatives (PPSIs). Sustainability context messages are important, as they aid the identification of the 'key sustainability issues' that should be a focus of the SA. Key messages from this review, with specific emphasis on the National Planning Policy Framework⁶, are summarised below. A comprehensive review can be found in Appendix 2 of the Scoping Report.

5.1.2 The following is an updated summary of the context review presented within the LPP1 SA Scoping Report (2012)⁶, updated to take into account new information that has emerged since 2012.

5.2 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework⁷

Community: Population, Health, Crime and Social Equity

5.2.1 The social role of the planning system is defined as 'supporting vibrant and healthy communities', with a 'core planning principle' being to 'take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all'.

5.2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework advises that planning policies should promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. The National Planning Policy Framework states that ensuring that there is a 'sufficient choice of school places' is of 'great importance'. To this end, local authorities are called upon to take a 'proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to bringing forward 'development that will widen choice in education'.

5.2.3 Specific protection and promotion of town centres is encouraged. Specifically, local planning authorities should 'define the extent of town centres' and set policies that 'make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations', and 'promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres'.

Housing

5.2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should meet the 'full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing' in their area. With a view to creating 'sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities' authorities should ensure provision of affordable housing onsite or externally where robustly justified. Plans for housing mix should be based upon 'current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community'. Larger developments are suggested as sometimes being the best means of achieving a supply of new homes, with these to be developed in

⁶ Vale of White Horse District Local Plan Part 1 Scoping Report (2012) [online] Available at: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SA%20Scoping%20Report%20FINAL.pdf?bcsi_scan_AB11CAA0E2721250=0&bcsi_scan_filename=SA%20Scoping%20Report%20FINAL.pdf (accessed 10/2014)

⁷ CLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2116950.pdf> (accessed 08/2014)

accordance with the 'principles of Garden Cities'.

5.2.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) sets out that local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan 2031 meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area . They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where appropriate

5.2.6 The NPPF also establishes that local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing and employment are integrated and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals.

Economy

5.2.7 The contribution the planning system can make to building a strong, responsive economy is highlighted. This should include 'identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure'. There is a need to support new and emerging business sectors, including positively planning for 'clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries'. In addition, local plans should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas.

5.2.8 The National Planning Policy Framework promotes competitive town centre environments and encourages positive planning policies to support them. It seeks resilient decisions that will anticipate economic changes, as well as promoting customer choice and a diverse retail offering. The need to enhance and retain markets is outlined within the National Planning Policy Framework, ensuring they remain attractive and competitive. There is the provision to only consider edge of town developments if they have good access with flexibility demonstrated in format and scale. This should be followed with an impact assessment to ensure the town centre remains viable and does not prejudice future growth.

Travel

5.2.9 In terms of transport and travel policies, the National Planning Policy Framework notes that these will have an important role in 'contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives'. It calls for the transport system to be balanced 'in favour of sustainable transport', with developments to be located and designed to facilitate these modes of travel. In order to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure and other activities, the National Planning Policy Framework calls for planning policies that aim for 'a balance of land uses'. Wherever practical, key facilities should be located within walking distance of most properties.

Historic Environment

5.2.10 Heritage assets should be recognised as an 'irreplaceable resource' that should be conserved in a 'manner appropriate to their significance', taking account of 'the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits' of conservation, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness.

Natural Environment

5.2.11 Impacts on biodiversity should be minimised, with net gains in biodiversity to be provided wherever possible. To contribute to national and local targets on biodiversity, planning should promote the 'preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks' and the 'protection and recovery of priority species'. High quality open spaces should be protected or their loss mitigated, unless a lack of need is established.

5.2.12 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the planning system should protect and enhance valued landscapes. Particular weight is given to 'conserving landscape and scenic beauty'. According to the National Planning Policy Framework, 'great weight' should be given to the conservation of the landscape and scenic beauty of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which have the 'highest level of protection' in this regard. The conservation

of cultural heritage and wildlife in these areas is also an ‘important consideration’

- 5.2.13 The National Planning Policy Framework aims to protect Green Belt land, the aim of which is to ‘prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open’. The National Planning Policy Framework calls on local planning authorities to ‘plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt’ to improve access, provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land’.
- 5.2.14 The National Planning Policy Framework calls for planning policies and decisions to ‘encourage the effective use of land’ through the reuse of land which has been previously developed, ‘provided that this is not of high environmental value’. Whilst there is no longer a national requirement to build at a minimum density, the National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to ‘set out their own approach to housing density to reflect local circumstances’. The value of best and most versatile agricultural land should also be taken into account.
- 5.2.15 The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that planning policies should be compliant with and contribute towards EU limit values and national objectives for pollutants; and states that new and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution. This includes taking into account Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and cumulative impacts on air quality.
- 5.2.16 The planning system prevent new or existing development from being ‘adversely affected’ by the presence of ‘unacceptable levels’ of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate ‘despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land’ wherever appropriate.
- Planning policies and decisions should ‘encourage effective use of land’ through the reuse of land which is previously developed, ‘provided that this is not of high environmental value’.
 - Planning authorities should take account of the long term effects of climate change and ‘adopt proactive strategies’ to adaptation, with new developments planned to avoid increased vulnerability to climate change impacts.
- 5.2.17 In terms of flooding, development should be directed away from areas highest at risk and should not be allocated if there are ‘reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding’. The National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should avoid ‘inappropriate development in vulnerable areas or adding to the impacts of physical changes to the coast’ in order to reduce the risk posed from coastal change.

Resources

- 5.2.18 The National Planning Policy Framework identifies as a ‘core planning principle’ the need to ‘support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate’. A key role for planning in securing radical reductions in GHG emissions is envisioned, with specific reference made to meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008⁸. Specifically, planning policy should support the move to a low carbon future through:
- a. planning for new development in locations and ways which reduce GHG emissions;
 - b. actively supporting energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings;
 - c. setting local requirements for building’s sustainability in a way that is consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy;
 - d. positively promoting renewable energy technologies and considering identifying suitable

⁸ The Climate Change Act 2008 sets targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions through action in the UK of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO2 emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline.

- areas for their construction; and
- e. encouraging those transport solutions that support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion.

5.2.19 The National Planning Policy Framework does not contain any specific waste policies⁹. Nonetheless, local authorities who are preparing waste related plans should have regard to the policies within the framework so far as they are relevant.

5.2.20 In relation to water resources, the National Planning Policy Framework states that local planning authorities should produce strategic policies to deliver the provision of a variety of infrastructure, including that necessary for water supply.

5.3 Supplementing the National Planning Policy Framework

5.3.1 In addition to reviewing relevant contextual messages set out within the National Planning Policy Framework, it is also important to 'cast the net wider' and consider contextual messages established through other plans, policies, strategies and initiatives. The PPPSIs reviewed can be found in Appendix 2 of the Scoping Report.

National Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)¹⁰

5.3.2 The Government published national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in March 2014. This is intended to complement and support the National Planning Policy Framework and provide advice on how to deliver its policies.

5.3.3 The PPG contains a number of sections that cover a range of topic areas. The main factors that need to be taken into account in relation to housing are outlined below:

Housing and economic development needs assessments

- The PPG emphasises the importance of objectively assessing both the economic and housing needs (both market and affordable) of an area, within a functional housing market area or economic area; to promote more balanced spatial patterns of sustainable development;
- The assessment should identify the future quantity of housing needed including a breakdown by type, tenure and size;
- Constraints to development are not considered as part of the assessment but would need to be considered as part of the plan making process;
- Local planning authorities should demonstrate their development needs working with other local authorities in the relevant housing market area in line with the duty to cooperate;
- The national household projections are the starting point for establishing the housing needs. However, they are trend based and would need to be adjusted for changing circumstances such as local demography and household formation rates which are not captured in past trends;
- Housing need suggested by household projection should take into account of market signals such as house prices, affordability, rates of development, etc. A worsening trend in any of these indicators will require upward adjustment to planned housing numbers compared to ones based solely on household projections;
- An assessment of the likely level of job growth based upon past trends and /or future economic forecasts would be required, taking into account factors such as the growth of working age population and cross boundary migration.

⁹ National waste planning policy will be published as part of the National Waste Management Plan for England

¹⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government (2014) National Planning Practice Guidance [online] available at: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/> (accessed 10/14)

Housing and economic land availability assessment

- This includes a Strategic housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to identify a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable to help meet future housing growth.
- Identify and demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable sites, including windfall allowance, if justified by a robust evidence base. Also to identify developable sites (or broad locations) for years 6-15 of the Local Plan 2031.
- The PPG states that “Local planning authorities should aim to deal with any undersupply [or past shortfalls] within the first 5 years of the plan period where possible. Where this cannot be met in the first 5 years, local planning authorities will need to work with neighbouring authorities under the ‘Duty to Cooperate’”.

Housing Standards Review

5.3.4 The Government completed a Housing Standards Review in October 2013. A Technical Consultation was launched in September 2014¹¹. It is intended that standards relating to water efficiency, access (including Lifetime Homes) and security will be consolidated into the building regulations. The relevant legislative requirements are currently going through Parliament. It is expected that transitional arrangements for local authorities will be introduced in early 2015.

5.3.5 The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 has been prepared in compliance with national policy. In particular, the NPPF states that for a local plan to be considered sound, it must comply with the legal and procedural requirements of plan making, such as the duty-to-cooperate and demonstrate that it is positively prepared; justified; effective and consistent with national policy.

Duty to Cooperate and the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment

5.3.6 The Duty to Cooperate set out in the Localism Act is both a legal duty and test of effective plan-making. It requires cooperation on issues of common concern in order to develop sound local plans.

5.3.7 Within Oxfordshire co-operative working is managed through the Oxfordshire Growth Board (superseding the former Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership Board, SPIP). The board comprises the leaders of all Oxfordshire councils supported by an executive committee and officer working groups. Vale of White Horse also works directly with authorities within and outside the county area where that is necessary to plan effectively on matters of strategic and sub-regional significance or cross border interest that are not Oxfordshire-wide.

5.3.8 As part of implementing the duty to cooperate the leaders of all Oxfordshire authorities including Vale of White Horse have agreed a joint Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation. This sets out that all the Oxfordshire councils agree to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis in any process that involves the following. The parties also agree to act expediently when undertaking joint working to avoid unreasonable delay.

- The preparation of development plan documents.
- The preparation of other local planning documents.
- The planning and prioritisation of infrastructure and investment in Oxfordshire to support economic growth of the area.
- Activities that support any of the above so far as they relate to sustainable development or use of land that has or would impact on more than one of the Parties.

¹¹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2014) Housing Standards Review – Technical Consultation [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/354154/140911_HSR_CONSULTATION_DOCUMENT_-_FINAL.pdf (accessed 10/14)

- 5.3.9 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)¹² provides up-to-date evidence on the level of housing need in the District over the period up to 2031. The Housing Topic Paper November 2014¹³ discusses the final housing targets and the associated evidence base in more detail. The SHMA proposed a new housing target for the District, and also identified additional strategic sites for housing development, so that the new housing target can be delivered.
- 5.3.10 The Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation sets out how the outcomes of the SHMA would be managed, should any of the Local Planning Authorities in Oxfordshire not be able to meet their full objectively assessed housing need. The Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper November 2014 discusses this in more detail.¹⁴

¹² GL Hearn (2014) Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Summary – Key Findings on Housing Need [online] available at: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/node/13109> (accessed 10/14)

¹³ Vale of White Horse District Council Housing Topic Paper November 2014

¹⁴ Vale of White Horse District Council Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper November 2014

Appendix B - Baseline

Part 1, Section 6 of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Vale of White Horse District Local Plan 2031 Part 1 – SA Report (October 2014)

6 WHAT'S THE SUSTAINABILITY 'BASELINE'?

The SA Report must include...

- The relevant aspects of the current state of the sustainability baseline and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan'
- The characteristics of areas / populations etc. likely to be significantly affected.
- Any existing sustainability problems / issues which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas / populations etc. of particular importance

6.1 Consultation on the scope

6.1.1 Another important step when seeking to establish the appropriate 'scope' of an SA involves reviewing *the situation now* for a range of sustainability issues. Doing so helps to enable identification of those key sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of the appraisal, and also helps to provide 'benchmarks' for the appraisal of significant effects.

6.1.2 A review of the sustainability baseline is presented within the 2012 SA Scoping Report. This section presents a summary, updated as necessary.

Population

6.1.3 The 2011 census lists the population of the Vale as 121,000, a rise of 4.6% (from 115,627) in the 2001 census¹⁵. In 2001 the population of which live in rural areas constituted just over 51%, however it is projected that that the majority of the population are now likely to live within the urban areas of the Vale as development has been focussed on these areas.

6.1.4 The population of the Vale is predicted to be 131,300 in 2035, an increase of 10,400 from 2010¹⁶. The figures suggest that the Vale has an increasing ageing population and that the number of working age population (16-64 males/59 females) is estimated to remain fairly static which, in terms of a growing population, has implications for the ability of the working population to support those who are not working.

6.1.5 Oxfordshire County Council commissioned their own population forecasts that took into account planned development in the area and housing targets in the South East Plan¹⁷.

6.1.6 Using this information it was predicted that from 2001 to 2026 the total population would increase from 115,770 to 138,150; that the economically active population would increase from 61,340 to 68,860; the number of households increase from 45,380 to 59,880; and the average household size would decrease from 2.46 to 2.25.

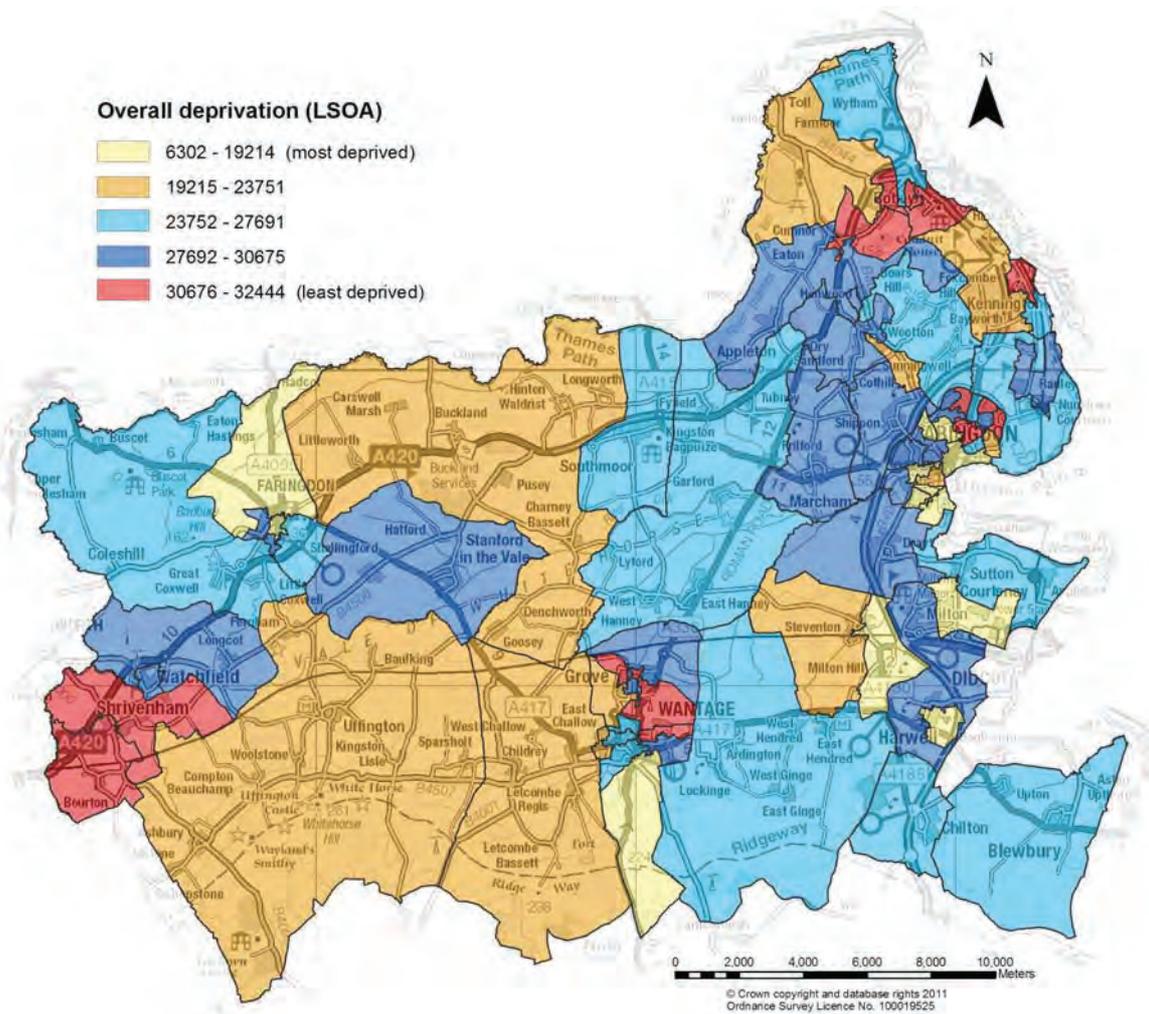
6.1.7 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2010) ranks the Vale 306th out of 326 local authorities, with the 326th being the least deprived. There is however one Lower Super Output Area (LSOA), located in Abingdon, that is in the bottom 20% nationally. **Figure 6.1** shows the spatial distribution of the IMD results.

¹⁵Office for National Statistics (ONS) / Census 2011

¹⁶ONS Neighbourhood Statistics (2012)

¹⁷The South East Plan was officially abolished in February 2014.

Figure 6.1: Overall Deprivation in the Vale (IMD, 2010)



Housing

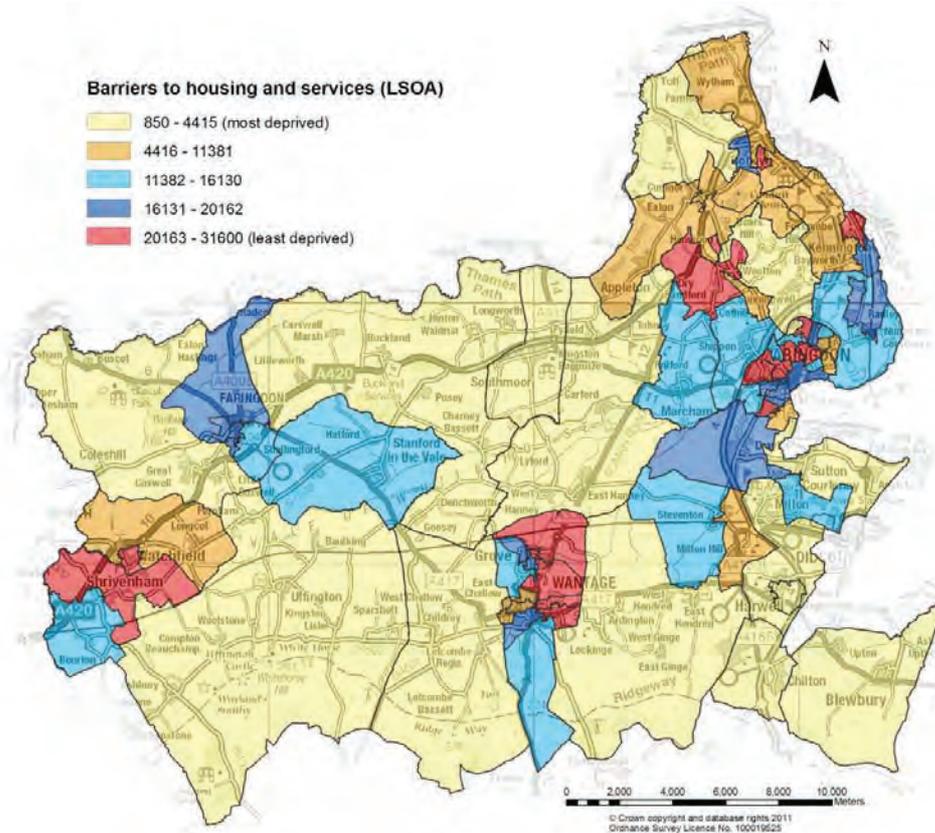
- 6.1.8 The total number of dwellings in the District at 31st March 2010 was 50,650 of which Council Tax records indicate that some 1,263 were vacant (an increase of almost 30% on 2004 levels).
- 6.1.9 The key features of the existing housing stock as reported in the council's Housing Needs Assessment¹⁸ (HNA) are that:
- The property type profile is skewed towards semi-detached and detached houses and bungalows, 71.0% of the current stock which is higher than the national level of 55%.
 - Based on a calculation of occupants to bedroom numbers, under-occupation affects approximately 49.0% of all households, higher than the average found in recent HNA surveys (around 40%). Over-occupation affects just 0.7% of all existing households, well

¹⁸ DCA UK (2011) Housing Needs Assessment Update [online] available at: <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/HNA%20Vale%20of%20White%20Horse%20Final%20Report%20Published.pdf> (accessed 10/14)

below the average UK level indicated by the Survey of English Housing 2001/2 (3%). This is in line with the high proportion of larger properties as mentioned above.

- 6.1.10 There has been an increase in the number of households, and a trend towards smaller and rapidly changing households. Average household size is predicted to drop from 2.46 to 2.26 (2001 to 2026) which means that even if the Vale's population had remained static at 115,627 in 2001 there would be about 5,500 extra households in the Vale by 2026.
- 6.1.11 The lack of affordable housing is an issue in the Vale. The average house price to earnings ratio for the Vale is lower than the average for Oxfordshire (8.6) although it has increased from 7.2 to 8.2 from 2009 to 2010. Both market and affordable housing completions are below the previous Local Plan 2011 targets.
- 6.1.12 One of the components of the IMD (2010) deprivation calculation is access to housing including the level of household overcrowding, homelessness rates and the proportion of households aged under 35 whose income means they are unable to own a home. The results show that rural areas suffer the most in this regard, as shown in **Figure 6.2**

Figure 6.2: Barriers to Housing and Services in the Vale (IMD, 2010)



Economy

- 6.1.13 The Vale benefits from a very strong knowledge-based economy and has almost 5,500 businesses located within the District¹⁹. The Vale's workforce is highly skilled with a higher

¹⁹ ONS Business Demography 2012 dataset [online] available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-329345> (accessed 10/14)

than average proportion of managers, professionals and associate professionals²⁰. Furthermore, the Vale is consistently ranked within the top 20 % of Districts in the UK Competitiveness Index.²¹

- 6.1.14 The strategic focus for economic and employment growth in the District is the Science Vale area, which extends east-west from Culham and Didcot to Wantage and Grove. Science Vale is an internationally significant location for innovation and science based research and business. It is home to around 13 % of research and development jobs within the south-east of England²². The two key Science Vale employment sites within the District are the science technology and business campus at Harwell Campus and the prestigious business area at Milton Park, both of which were awarded Enterprise Zone status in 2011.
- 6.1.15 A Growth Strategy is being prepared to maximise the world class assets of the Science Vale area and this has been boosted by the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal . Part of the City Deal programme, and its £95 million of local and national public sector investment, will be directed towards Science Vale. This includes delivering the Oxford Science Transit; a fully integrated public transport system that connects the area's centres of innovation with Didcot and Oxford including a high frequency bus and rail service using 'smart' ticketing.
- 6.1.16 The tourism industry in the Vale generated approximately £202 million worth of income for local businesses in 2011. However, a significant proportion of this was generated by day visitors. This presents an opportunity to increase the economic impact and value of tourism by taking steps to convert day visitors to overnight visitors, in particular by addressing the shortage of hotel accommodation.
- 6.1.17 The recent recession has had an impact on the Vale's economy. Unemployment (demonstrated as the number of people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance) has increased from 0.7% to 1.6% (2006-2011), although this is lower than the South East (2.5%) and UK (3.8%) as a whole. The rate of claimants is highest around Abingdon and Wantage. In spite of the recession the Vale's economy is still performing considerably better than elsewhere in the country and south east. This is highlighted by the findings of the UK Competitiveness Index²³ which has consistently ranked the Vale within the top 10% in the country.
- 6.1.18 The percentage of working age population with an NVQ4 qualification or above is substantially higher than the national and regional figures²⁴. This seems to suggest that residents are well suited to take up the level of high-tech jobs available in the District.
- Travel*
- 6.1.19 The Vale of White Horse is easily accessible from other parts of the UK, particularly the south west and east, and the midlands. The A34 trunk road provides good access between the M4 to the south, and the M40 to the north. The A420 and A417 roads cross the District and provide links to Swindon in the west and Didcot in the east. Whilst there are two railway main lines (Bristol to London and Oxford to London) running through the District, there are only two stations on the Oxford line and none on the Bristol line within the Vale, although there is a station at Didcot just to the east of the District. The Vale benefits from some very good bus services, particularly between the main settlements. However, in the more rural parts of the District, buses cannot viably provide an attractive alternative to the car.
- 6.1.20 Census 2011 results show home working and use of public transport have increased in Oxfordshire Just over 43,000 people worked mainly at or entirely from home across

²⁰ NOMIS (2014) Vale of White Horse District Labour Market Profile [online] available at: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157326/report.aspx> (accessed 10/14)

²¹ Centre for International Competitiveness (2013) UK Competitiveness Index [online] available at: <http://www.cforic.org/downloads.php> (accessed 10/14)

²² Science Vale UK (2014) [online] available at: <http://www.sciencevale.com/> (accessed 10/14)

²³ Centre for International Competitiveness (2013) UK Competitiveness Index [online] available at: <http://www.cforic.org/downloads.php> (accessed 10/14)

²⁴ NOMIS (2014) Vale of White Horse District Labour Market Profile [online] available at: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157326/report.aspx> (accessed 10/14)

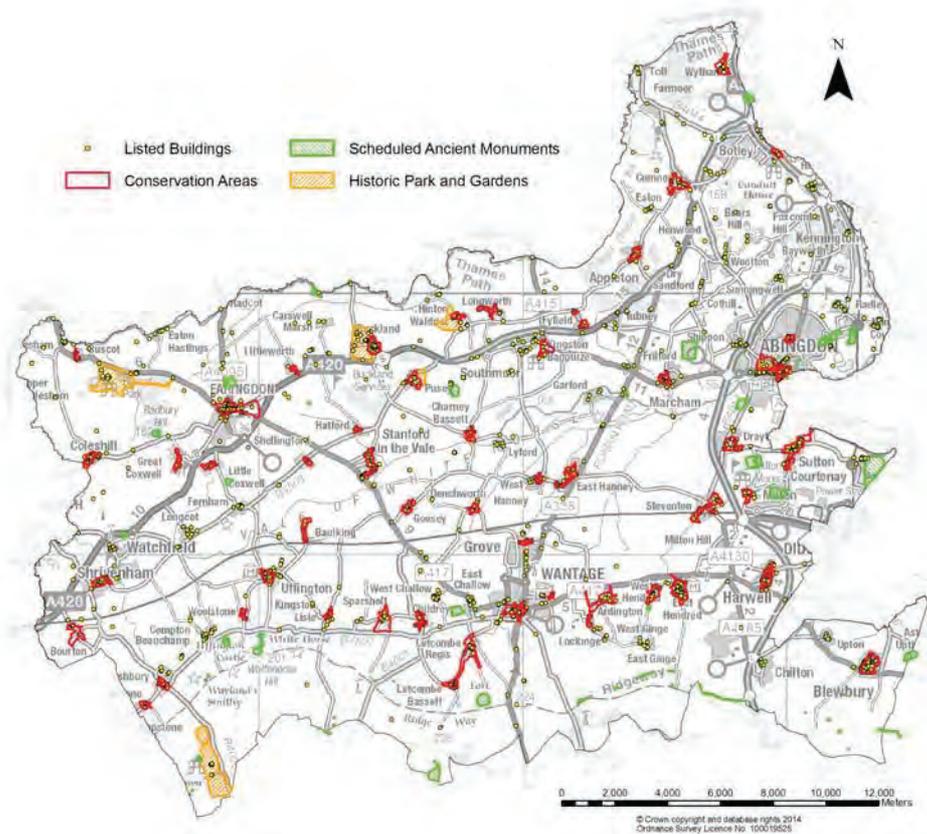
Oxfordshire in 2011. Rural parts of the district continue to have an above average proportion of workers who are based mainly at or from home. The Vale of White Horse District has above average of home workers at 15% of those in employment. The rate in all areas has increased since 2001.

- 6.1.21 32,700 people used public transport (train or bus) to travel to work in Oxfordshire in 2011. The percentage of public transport users has increased in all districts; however the percentage of people using public transport out of those employed is below average at 9%.
- 6.1.22 Average traffic flow in Oxfordshire as reported by Oxfordshire County Council has fallen by 0.3% on all roads between 2009 and 2010. Oxfordshire has experienced a smaller reduction in traffic flow when compared to the national picture (a 2% reduction in traffic flow). This decline may reflect increasing fuel prices, but also suggests a resilient local economy. Trunk roads in the county experienced the greatest reduction in traffic flows (-1.2%), in contrast traffic flows on the M40 in Oxfordshire increased by 0.7%.
- 6.1.23 The rate of traffic flow on Oxfordshire's roads over the last 10 years (2000 to 2010) increased by 2%. Traffic on Oxfordshire's non-strategic roads, i.e. those roads for which Oxfordshire County Council are responsible, was 3% over ten years. Over the past five years (2005 to 2010) there has been a reduction in average traffic flow of more than 3% for all roads in the county (-3.18%). For the non-strategic roads there has been a decrease of -2.1%. Traffic growth generally across the South East has been forecast to rise by 24% between 2003 and 2015, and by 35% by 2025.
- 6.1.24 There are a number of roads within the District that suffer from congestion including the A34 trunk road. Abingdon-on-Thames and Botley are also congested internally and the road network around Science Vale suffers from peak time congestion. It is important the road network operates safely and efficiently for the economic success of the District to be maximised.

Historic environment

- 6.1.25 The area covered by the Vale has supported human habitation for thousands of years and it therefore has a rich and varied historic environment. Ancient remains dot the Downs to the south and the Vale's three market towns grew to prosperity in the middle ages. The Vale currently has 52 designated Conservation Areas within which there are certain limitations on development. There are also over 2,000 Listed Buildings in the Vale where changes to their structure or setting are strictly controlled. The Vale also has eight historic parks and gardens that are included in the English Heritage National Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.
- 6.1.26 The Vale also has a significant number of important archaeological sites. At present there are 68 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the District. These recognised monuments include significant sites such as the Neolithic long barrow called Wayland Smithy and the Roman temple at Frilford. New archaeological sites are also constantly being found and assessed in the District and development is likely to lead to the discovery of further sites and artefacts. **Figure 6.3** shows the spatial distribution of designated heritage and archaeological assets in the Vale.

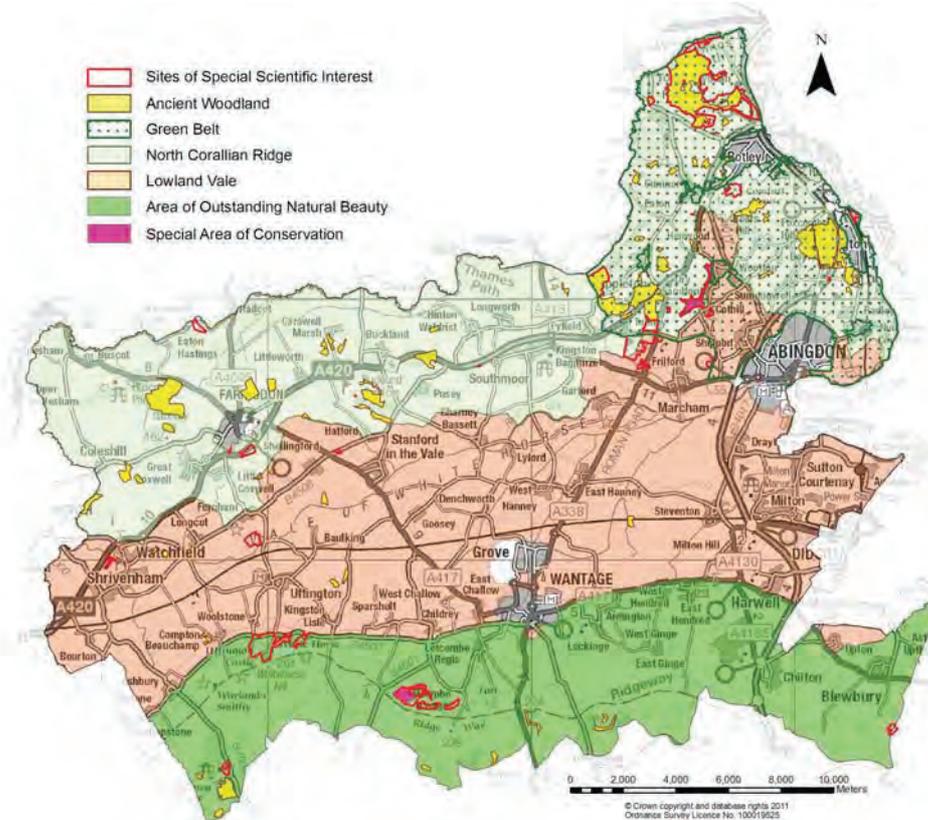
Figure 6.3: Designated Historic Environment Assets in the Vale of White Horse District



Natural environment

- 6.1.27 The Vale also has a rich and diverse natural environment. Among the diverse habitats are a broken band of Ancient Woodland on the north Corallian Ridge, the Chalk Downs, which are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), fenland, chalk streams, and heathland forming some of Oxfordshire's rarest habitats and some traditional hay meadows in the floodplains of the Thames and Ock rivers. The area of the Vale within the AONB is 23.4% or 135 sq km of its total land area.
- 6.1.28 There are 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that cover some 908 hectares. Of these sites 98.97% are in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. Two SSSIs are also European Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) at Cothill Fen, which consists of calcium-rich springwater-fed fens, and Hackpen Down, which is unimproved chalk grassland. The SSSI component of Hackpen Down SAC is in favourable condition. The SSSI component of Cothill Fen is in favourable recovering condition.
- 6.1.29 Among the diverse habitats in the Vale are a broken band of Ancient Woodland on the North Corallian Ridge. **Figure 6.4** shows the spatial distribution of these designations throughout the Vale. In addition to these designations are two Local Nature Reserves and a number of Local Geological Sites and Local Wildlife Sites.

Figure 6.4: Nature and Landscape Designations in the Vale



Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

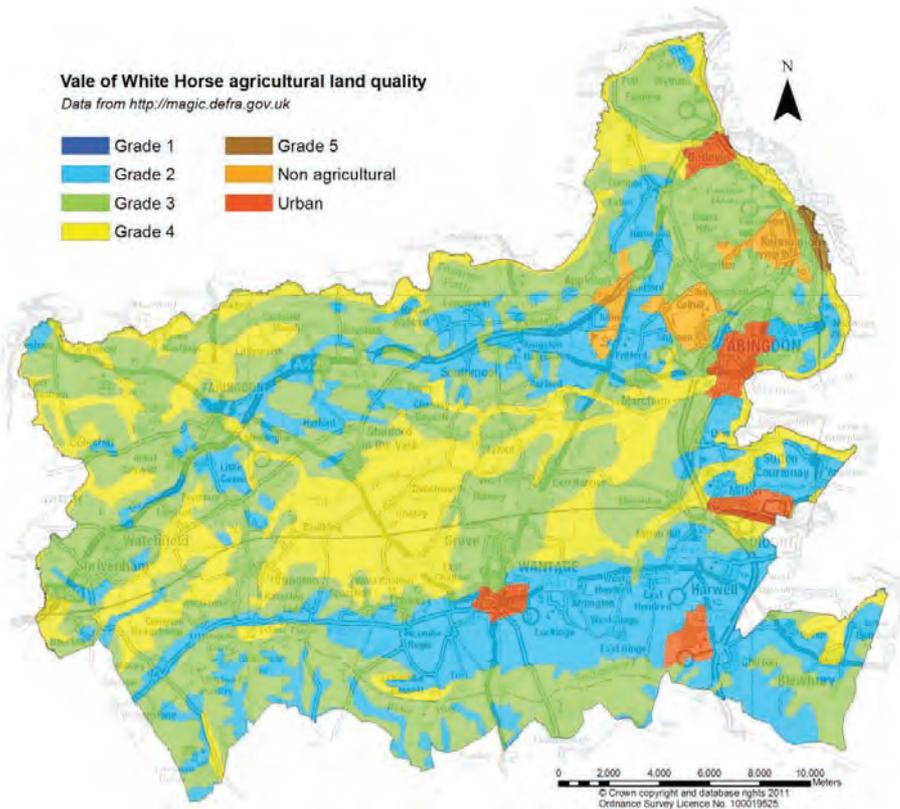
- 6.1.30 The need for HRA is set out within Article 6 of the European Community's Habitats Directive 1992, and interpreted into British law by the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010. The ultimate aim of the Habitats Directive is to "maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest" (Habitats Directive, Article 2(2)). This aim relates to habitats and species, not the European sites themselves, although the sites have a significant role in delivering favourable conservation status. European sites (also called Natura 2000 sites) can be defined as actual or proposed/candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). It is also Government policy for sites designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) to be treated as having equivalent status to Natura 2000 sites.
- 6.1.31 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the emerging Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (LPP1) has been undertaken. The objective of the assessment was to identify any aspects of the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 (LPP1) that would have the potential to cause a likely significant effect on Natura 2000 or European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites), either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects, and to devise appropriate mitigation strategies where such effects were identified. The Local Plan 2029 Part 1 was previously referred to as the Core Strategy, and URS has already undertaken HRA work on a previous iteration of the Preferred Approach Core Strategy in 2010.

- 6.1.32 Following publication of a Local Plan Part 1 consultation document in February 2013, VoWH drafted an Additional Consultation document (January 2014) that set out new proposed housing numbers and additional preferred locations for housing to be delivered during the lifetime of the Local Plan (to 2031).
- 6.1.33 A HRA was undertaken to update the original consultation document. Following this, further revisions to housing numbers and locations have been made, along with further revisions to some Local Plan policies – this has resulted in the Final Draft (Publication Version) Local Plan 2031 version. Conclusions of the HRA process are set out in a separate HRA Report, but are summarised in Part 3 of this SA Report.

Agriculture

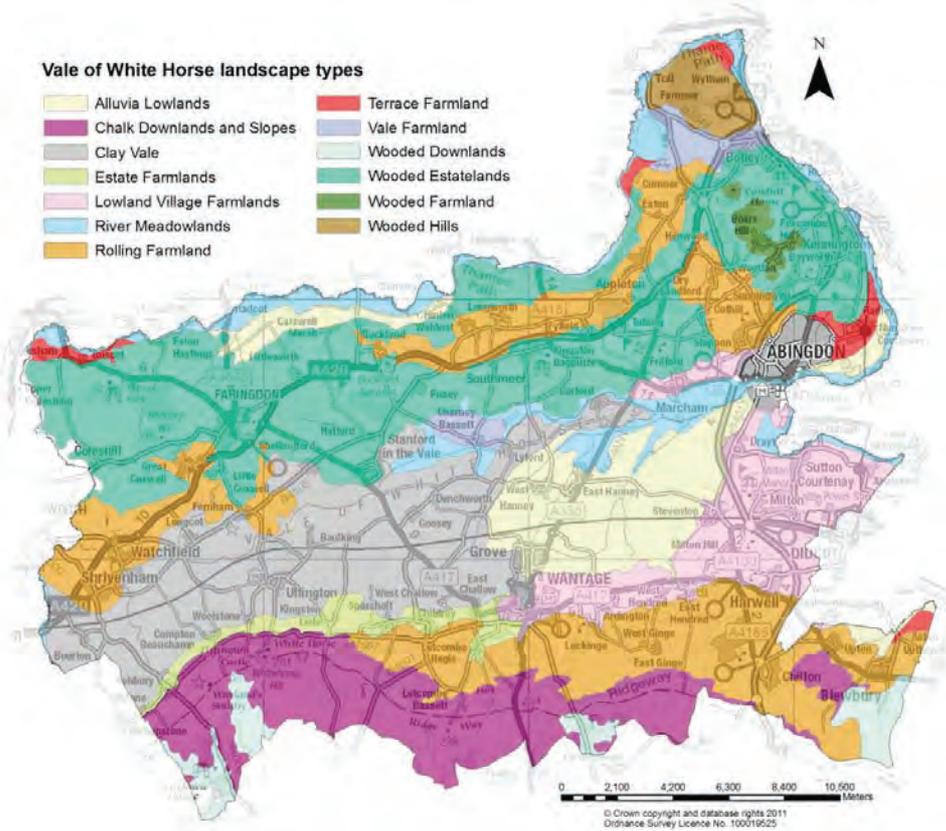
- 6.1.34 The Vale is predominantly rural with a significant part of its land under cultivation for farming. The quality of the farmland ranges from Grade 4 up to Grade 2 in a number of locations (Grade 1 is the best quality). The Agricultural Census from DEFRA indicates that in 2007 there were 565 holdings covering 47,162 ha in the Vale. A map showing agricultural land quality is shown at Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5: Agricultural land quality across the District



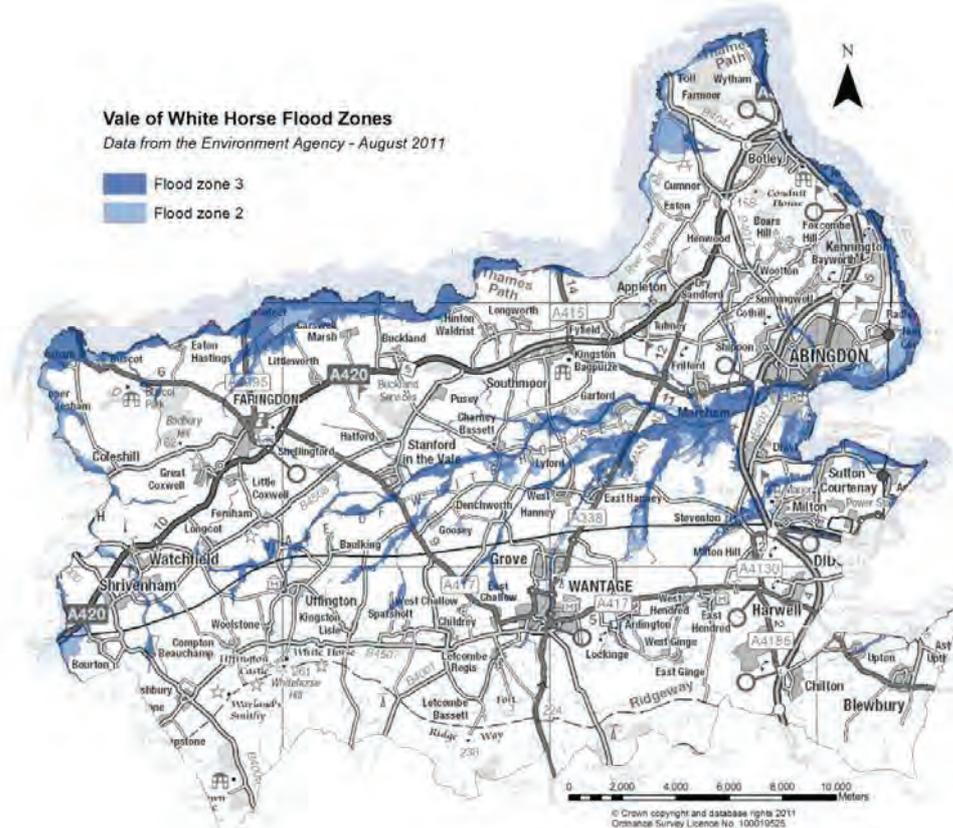
- 6.1.35 As stated earlier, a substantial part of the Vale (23.4%) lies within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and consists of extensive areas of chalk downland. Much of the remaining part of the Vale is also made up of attractive landscapes. The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) compiled in 2004 also identified a range of other landscape types in the rest of the Vale (see **Figure 6.6**). These include significant areas of wooded estate lands and rolling farmland to the north and south with alluvial lowland, clay Vale and lowland village farmland landscapes in the centre, all running generally east west. There are also river meadowlands in close association with the rivers which cross the District.

Figure 6.6: Vale of White Horse Landscape Types



- 6.1.36 The Vale is included within the Thames River Basin District and is covered by the Vale of White Horse catchment although this also includes Didcot and Swindon. The main watercourses are the Rivers Ray, Cole, Ock and Ginge Letcombe and Mill Brooks. This catchment contains 33 river water bodies and one lake, three of which are artificial or heavily modified. Twenty four per cent of rivers currently achieve good or better ecological status/potential including the Cole and Dorcan brook. Forty six per cent of rivers assessed for biology are at good or high biological status now, with 29 per cent at poor biological status, and no assessed river water bodies at bad status. Surface water quality in the catchment is generally good, with the Rivers Ock, Key and Ginge Brook having the poorest water quality in the catchment. It is expected that the other chemicals monitored under the Water Framework Directive will achieve good status by 2015, with an overall good ecological status by 2027.
- 6.1.37 There are a number of water-dependent Sites of Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the area, designated in the main for their fen and meadow communities. These areas are characterised by a variety of vegetation types that are found on groundwater-fed peaty or mineral soils. These may be permanently, seasonally or periodically waterlogged.
- 6.1.38 The District has a number of areas which are at risk from flooding. **Figure 6.7** provides an overview of Flood Zone 2 and 3a and the effects that climate change is expected to have on flood zone 3. Flood zones 2 and 3 both have restrictions in terms of the types of development that are allowed according to the National Planning Policy Framework. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment highlights that the risk of flooding to properties is an issue in Abingdon, Grove, Kennington, Shrivensham, Steventon, Sutton Courtenay and Wantage.

Figure 6.7: Areas across the District covered by flood zones 2 and 3



6.1.39 There are currently two Air Quality Management Areas in the Vale, one in central Abingdon and the other along the A34 in Botley as a result of high levels of NO₂ and PM₁₀. There are also Air Quality 'hot spots' in Didcot along Station Road. These areas experience high levels of Nitrogen Dioxide and PM10 (Particulate Matter 10) which is primarily associated with car traffic and construction work. High levels can cause respiratory problems such as coughing, asthma and wheezing. In serious cases it can lead to long term lung damage.

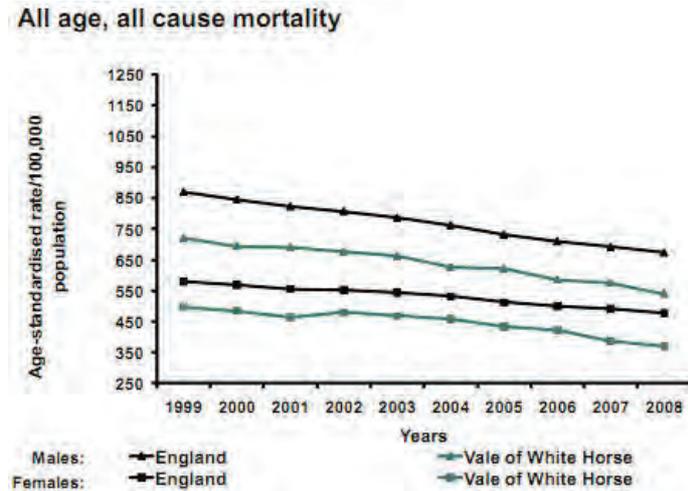
6.1.40 Government guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning authorities should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed or brownfield land. The trend in recent years has been towards increasing levels of development on greenfield land as brownfield sites gradually get built out. Due to the predominantly rural nature of the District and, given the level of housing that is required, it is inevitable that a substantial proportion of future development will need to be located on greenfield land. Given this, it is vital that all sites are allocated are sustainably located and cause the least amount of environmental harm. The Vale is a predominately rural area, with a substantial part (23.4%) lying within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is particularly sensitive to noise, air, and light pollution.

Living environment

6.1.41 Data showing the rate of domestic burglaries per 1,000 households indicates that the Vale is an extremely safe place to live and is one of the safest across the county. This can largely be attributed to its rural nature. Of crime recorded the majority of cases are to do with either 'violence against a person' or 'criminal damage'. The prevalence of these types of crimes is in line with trends across the region and England

6.1.42 The health of the Vale’s residents was found to be generally better than the average for England. **Figure 6.8** shows that all-cause mortality rates have fallen over the last 10 years. Early death rates from cancer and from heart disease and stroke have also fallen and are better than the England average.

Figure 6.8: All cause mortality rate per 100,000

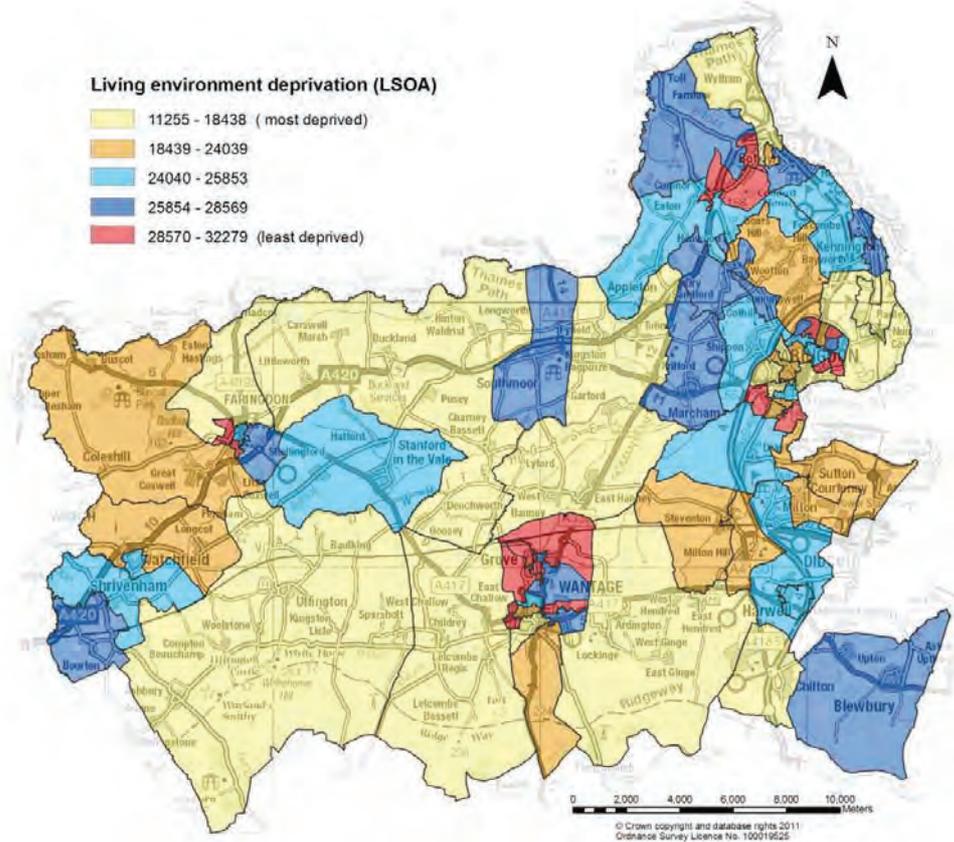


6.1.43 Another contextual health indicator which can be used to assess the relative health of residents in the Vale is the number of residents seeking Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Although this trend appears to be worsening, it is probably being exacerbated by the effects of the economic downturn. Nevertheless in spite of the worsening trend the Vale has one of the lowest figures of all the Oxfordshire authorities. Generally the areas around the main settlements are worst affected.

6.1.44 Natural England has developed a model which sets out the standards that are needed to ensure that all people have access to a variety of different types and sizes of open space, called the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt). This can help local authorities in drawing up their Greenspace Strategies and will show the areas which are particularly deficient. It has been assessed (2005) that 0% of households meet all of the ANGSt standards and 51% meet none of the standards.

6.1.45 Another factor assessed by the IMD is that of deprivation of the living environment, which takes into account the quality of housing, quality of the air and number of road accidents. The findings (**Figure 6.9**) show that deprivation is found across rural and urban environments.

Figure 6.9: Living environment deprivation (IMD, 2010)



Resources

- 6.1.46 OFWAT's report Security of Supply: 2006-07 report contains estimates of household consumption. Residents within the Thames Water region used on average 154 litres/head/day of water, down from 164 in 2005-06. Although consumption has decreased in the region, it is still higher than the industry average in England and Wales of 148 litres/head/day.
- 6.1.47 The Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) produce statistics on CO2 emissions per capita and it is clear from the data that the Vale of White Horse is performing considerably worse than all other Oxfordshire Districts. This discrepancy is caused predominantly by the 'road transport' component of the figure which was between 1.0 and 2.6 tonnes of CO2 per capita more than the others Districts, which can most probably be attributed to the heavily congested stretch of A34.
- 6.1.48 The figures suggest that the Vale of White Horse uses more gas and electricity per capita than the South East average. This is most probably due to its rural nature and may also be caused in part by the higher than average proportion of higher earners in the Vale of White Horse.
- 6.1.49 The 2009 EU Renewables Directive includes a target that by 2020 15% of all energy consumption should be from renewable resources. Further work carried out by Thames Valley (TV) Energy shows that the Vale is performing extremely well in this indicator and is already producing some 11.5% of its energy needs through renewables. A total of 22.256 MW was produced within the Vale in 2011 of which 6.521 were from onshore wind and 14.893 MW were from landfill gas. The latter displaced some 84,544 tonnes of carbon each year.
- 6.1.50 The District runs a joint waste service with South Oxfordshire. Household Recycling rates are

extremely high and both councils are amongst the top performing in the country. The District also performs well in terms of the amount of waste it produces per household. In 2010/11 this figure was 355.35 kg when the year-end target was 404.00 kg.