

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

Health and Equality Impact Assessment: Draft Preferred Policy Options

West Oxfordshire District Council

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EQUALITY IMPACT CONSULTING LTD



EqualityImpact



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Introduction

Purpose of this report

West Oxfordshire District Council (the Council) is currently in Plan Preparation stage (Regulation 18) of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. Consultation on preferred policy options for the Local Plan setting out the Council's preferred thinking on a range of policy topics is currently being undertaken. A second consultation on the preferred spatial options is planned for Autumn 2025.

The Preferred Policy Options Paper (June 2025) for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041¹ sets out the Council's emerging approach, including:

- A draft vision of West Oxfordshire in 2041 and revised objectives for the Local Plan; and
- Preferred policy options, including:
 - Core policies (CP1 – CP12).
 - Place-based policies (PL1 – PL6).
 - Settlement strategies.
 - Development management policies (DM1 – DM38).

The Council has commissioned Equality Impact Consulting (in collaboration with BirleyHIA) to prepare an integrated Health and Equality Impact Assessment (HEQIA) for the Local Plan 2041. An initial impact assessment is required to feed into the Regulation 18 stage. This identifies both gaps and opportunities to promote equality and achieve optimal health gain through ongoing option development and provides a high level assessment on health and equalities groups. Following consultation on the Regulation 18 preferred options, a detailed Health and Equality impact assessment will be prepared for the Regulation 19 pre-submission draft Local Plan.

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a tool used to identify the health impacts of a plan or scheme and to develop recommendations to maximise positive impacts and minimise negative impacts. The HIA process aims to influence the wider determinants of health, whilst maintaining a focus on addressing health inequalities.

As a public sector organisation, the Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to ensure that the emerging Local Plan does not lead to unlawful discrimination (direct and indirect), that it advances equality of opportunity and that it fosters good relations between those with a protected characteristic² and all others. An Equality Impact Assessment is a useful tool to demonstrate how due regard has been paid to the PSED.

¹ <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/>

² Protected characteristics are age, sex, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

Whilst a HEQIA is not required by law, it provides an important contribution to plan and policy development by identifying actions to enhance health, wellbeing and social equity. It forms part of a wider evidence base, which includes assessment and analysis of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the policies and proposals of the emerging Local Plan.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Present the findings of the initial gap analysis and impact assessment for the preferred policy options; and
- Provide a set of high level recommendations prior to the finalisation of policies and further development of the Local Plan 2041.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Local Plan 2041 Health and Equality Impact Assessment: Scoping Report which sets out the evidence base for the assessment and the approach based on the Oxfordshire HIA toolkit³. An initial assessment of the preferred policy options is presented in this report under the following HEQIA themes:

- Traffic and Transportation;
- Economy and Employment;
- Air quality;
- Noise;
- Healthy food environments;
- Physical activity;
- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Education and Skills;
- Local natural environment and access to green spaces;
- Housing; and
- Access to Services.

³ Oxfordshire HIA Toolkit

Theme 1: Traffic and Transportation

| Baseline |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural areas of the district have limited public transport options and infrastructure for active travel. As such, car dependency and car ownership rates are high with over 88.5% of households having at least one car. There are high congestion levels on key strategic roads including the A40. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable travel provides access to key services such as employment, education, healthcare, shopping and recreation, especially for those without access to a car. Groups who are more likely to rely on walking, cycling and public transport include women, children, young people, older people, disabled people, certain ethnic minority groups and those from low income households. Active travel infrastructure can contribute to positive health and wellbeing outcomes through increased physical activity and improvements in air quality, if the uptake in active travel is matched by a reduction in private vehicle use. Barriers to active travel include lack of accessible infrastructure for adapted cycles, wheelchairs and mobility scooters all of which are important for an ageing population. Safety and security issues may also be a barrier to travel among some groups who may feel unsafe walking and cycling in more remote, unlit areas or travelling in the dark. For example, women, older people and disabled people. Children and older people are more vulnerable to being a pedestrian casualty of a road traffic accident. |

| Health and Equality Effects - Traffic and Transportation | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Considerations | Status in Preferred Policy Options | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Introduction of sustainable transport options and incentives | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP10 (Sustainable Transport) and Policy DM24 (Active and Healthy Travel) require the creation of safe, direct and attractive active travel routes for new developments. Policy DM25 (Parking Standards) requires high-quality cycle parking including for e-bikes and adapted cycles. Policies DM20 and DM21 promote sustainable transport and public transport connectivity in town centres and previously developed land. Settlement Strategies promote active and sustainable modes of travel and provision of infrastructure, particularly in town centres and key employment areas. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased sustainable transport can benefit all groups, but especially those on lower incomes, women, children, young people and older people. Accessible design of active travel networks and public transport infrastructure is required for those with mobility impairments, mobility aids and pushchairs. ✓ Reducing transport-related carbon emissions has a potential positive impact on groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health impacts of air pollution. This includes children, older people, disabled people and pregnant women. |

| Health and Equality Effects - Traffic and Transportation | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Preferred Policy Options | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Speed reduction measures | Missing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 focuses on active travel routes but lacks specific detail on mechanisms for traffic calming or designing for lower speeds (e.g. 20mph limits). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Road safety and speeding impacts can disproportionately impact children, older people, and disabled people, who are more vulnerable to road danger. This creates both real and perceived barriers to active travel. |
| Reducing the need to travel, particularly by car | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP10 discourages reliance on private vehicles through site layout, infrastructure, and design measures. Policy DM23 (Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services) helps retain local services, reducing the need to travel. Policy DM25 supports car-free and low-car developments with access to public transport. This includes controlled parking zones to manage on-street parking. Policy DM38 (Digital Infrastructure) supports home-working. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Retaining community facilities is vital for those with mobility restrictions, including older and disabled people as well as those for whom affordability of transport is a barrier to travel and access services. ✓ Reducing the need for travel benefits lower-income households, especially where travel costs form a disproportionate amount of household budgets. ✗ Policies involving the reduction of parking may disproportionately impact those without a blue badge, including some carers and those making vital deliveries. |
| Provision or enhancement of the public transport network | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 requires active travel routes to connect to public transport hubs. Policies DM20 (Town Centres) and DM21 (Previously Developed Land and Development Densities) promote public transport connectivity in town centres and previously developed land. Settlement Strategies support improved public transport connections, particularly to town centres, key employment areas and rail stations. Policy PL5 (Carterton – Witney – Oxford Rail Corridor (CWORC)) safeguards a corridor of land for the delivery of a rail service to Oxford. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reliable public transport is important for reducing transport poverty and social isolation especially amongst older people, young people, disabled people, and those on low incomes. ✗ Public transport infrastructure and services may require developer funding and ongoing subsidies to be maintained in rural areas. Loss of services due to funding issues may have a negative impact on rural communities in the long-term. |
| Provision or enhancement of sustainable travel facilities | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 is dedicated to providing infrastructure for walking and cycling and protecting existing travel infrastructure including public rights of way. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The provision and protection of active travel infrastructure could result in the uptake of active travel, improving health and mental wellbeing outcomes. ✗ Safe, well-lit routes are particularly important for the safety of women, children, and people from minority ethnic or LGBTQ+ |

| Health and Equality Effects - Traffic and Transportation | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Preferred Policy Options | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM25 mandates secure cycle parking and EV charging points. Policies DM20 and DM21 promote sustainable transport and public transport connectivity in town centres and previously developed land. Settlement Strategies support proposals to enhance walking and cycling infrastructure including safe routes to schools. | groups. Accessible design of facilities is critical for disabled people. |
| Needs of people who are car dependant | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM25 requires accessible parking for Blue Badge holders, which is a key mitigation. However, the broader needs of those in isolated rural areas are less well covered. | <p>✗ In rural areas, older people and disabled people often have no alternative to the car for accessing essential services. Policies must ensure that reducing general car dependency does not inadvertently increase rural social isolation.</p> |
| Needs of people without access to a car | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM23 supports the delivery of new or enhanced community facilities where they are well located, within or adjacent to existing settlements and accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport Policy DM24 is dedicated to protecting existing infrastructure and providing new infrastructure for walking, cycling and other active travel modes. Policy PL5 safeguards a corridor of land for the delivery of a rail service to Oxford. | <p>✓ Protecting existing active travel infrastructure helps to maintain existing facilities for those who do not have access to a car. This includes protected characteristic groups such as children, young people, women, ethnic minority groups and older people</p> <p>✓ Policies to promote active travel infrastructure could potentially have a positive impact on groups with protected characteristics with regards to improving access to key services such as education, healthcare, employment, shopping and recreational activities.</p> |

| Summary and recommendations |
|--|
| <p>CP10 (Sustainable Transport) and DM24 are aimed at reducing car dependency and increasing sustainable travel infrastructure. These policies and other supporting policies above may contribute to a range of positive health and wellbeing outcomes including increased physical activity, cleaner air and improved access to essential services such as healthcare, education, employment and leisure.</p> <p>These outcomes are likely to have positive impacts on protected characteristics groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health impacts of air pollution, lack of physical activity and the affordability and accessibility of car ownership/usage. This includes children, young people, older people, disabled people, some ethnic minority groups and women.</p> |

However, positive health and equality outcomes will depend on the extent to which policies can be supported by wider Council and partner strategies. For example, behavioural change strategies, public transport investment and parking controls. In rural West Oxfordshire, where many rely on private cars, it's also essential to ensure that sustainable travel routes are accessible, well located and designed to address mobility, affordability or confidence-related barriers.

There is an opportunity to explicitly require the protection and enhancement of the Public Rights of Way network for functional, everyday active travel between and within settlements contained within the Placed-Based Policies.

Policy recommendations:

- Policies **DM24** and **DM25** should consider inclusive design standards for active travel infrastructure to address mobility issues experienced by groups such as disabled people and older people. Segregated infrastructure would benefit people who are more likely to lack confidence or are underrepresented amongst cyclists, such as women.
- It is recommended that an accredited Access Consultant⁴ forms part of the Design Review Panel (Policy **CP8**) to provide advice on access and inclusion.
- In response to the district's ageing demographic profile, Policies **DM24** and **DM25** could be strengthened to reference other 'wheeling' options beyond walking and cycling. This includes manual, self- or assistant-propelled wheelchairs, wheelchairs with power attachments or all-terrain attachments, powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters and e-scooters. This includes consideration of infrastructure, crossings, and secure and accessible storage, parking and charging facilities in new developments⁵.
- 20mph speed limits are currently in place across parts of the district. However, it is recommended that Policy **DM24** specifically mentions speed reduction measures as a means of improving the environment for active travel and public transport users.
- Policies should accommodate deliveries of goods and services as part of planning processes i.e. through safe, temporary parking provision of goods/service provider vehicles, internet infrastructure, design measures that enable door-step delivery, parcel lockers etc. (relevant policies may include policies **CP6**, **DM38** and **Settlement Strategies**).
- Policy **DM25** could include requirements for other vehicles that help to reduce dependency on car ownership. For example, short-term parking, drop off and pick up points and EV charging points for shared and community transport services and taxis.
- Policies currently do not explicitly require developer contributions towards the enhancement of public transport infrastructure or services. This should be considered in combination with future funding to support long-term viability of rural services.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan⁶

⁴ National Register of Access Consultants <https://www.nrac.org.uk/>

⁵ Active Travel Definitions: Walking/Wheeling, and Cycling <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/walking-wheeling-and-cycling-definitions/>

⁶ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/connecting-oxfordshire/ltcp>

Theme 2: Economy and Employment

| Baseline |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unemployment levels are low in West Oxfordshire (2%) in comparison to Oxfordshire and national rates. However, young people are more likely to be claiming benefits and be unemployed as are people from certain ethnic minority groups.• 97.8% of businesses in the district are classified as small or micro-sized, while only 0.2% are large enterprises.• The West Oxfordshire workforce is highly skilled with 25% of residents in professional occupations.• There are 47,000 jobs in the district with significant manufacturing, construction, retail, and tourism sectors. There is potential for growth in existing firms in engineering, motorsport and food production. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unemployed people have a greater risk of poor health than those in employment, contributing to health inequalities⁷. Those in more disadvantaged socioeconomic positions are more likely to be unemployed than those in more advantaged positions.• Approximately 20% of UK employees are in sectors such as energy, construction, and waste and resources management which will see the biggest changes from the net zero transition over the next decade. By 2030, between 135,000 and 725,000 new jobs could be created in these sectors. A further 20% of workers are in enabling sectors, such as teaching and finance⁸.• Barriers to employment include childcare, lack of skills and training and transport availability. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Economy and Employment | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Development Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Access to relevant and skills specific employment and training opportunities | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy DM36 (Learning, Skills and Training Opportunities) requires major developments to submit Community Employment Plans (CEPs) focusing on apprenticeships and training. | ✓ Policies to improve access to skills specific employment and training opportunities can help young people and those needing to reskill. This can include women returning to the workforce or disabled people seeking supported employment. |

⁷ The Marmot Review Team. Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010. London: Marmot Review Team, 2010.

<https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

⁸ P. Simmonds, C. Lally (2024) UK Parliament Research Briefing: Green skills for education and employment <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0711/>

| Health and Equality Effects – Economy and Employment | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Development Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Provision of a diversity of job opportunities | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP5 (Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity) provides an overarching framework for the amount of employment land and floorspace. Policy DM34 (Provision and Protection of Land for Employment) supports a range of employment types. Policy DM35 (Supporting the Rural Economy) encourages farm diversification. DM22 and DM38 support flexible and home-based enterprise. Settlement Strategies support proposals that strengthen the evening economy of settlements and support mixed use development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A diverse local economy provides more opportunities for all, particularly women (who are more likely to seek part-time or flexible work), and can reduce out-commuting. ✓ Policies support the creation of local employment opportunities to reduce reliance on commuting, particularly for younger working-age residents. This is important given that unemployment rates are highest amongst young people. ✗ Those working in agriculture, manufacturing, transport and construction may be more at risk of losing jobs as a result of net zero policies. Some groups such as young men and ethnic minority groups may be disproportionately represented in these sectors and at higher risk of losing employment or business without the right training and qualifications to support them through the transition to green jobs. |
| Provision of accessible employment opportunities appropriate to the skill sets present in local community | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM36 requires developers to produce CEPs to maximise local labour and engage with local schools and colleges to align opportunities with the community. Policy CA1 supports new developments that support enterprise sectors complementary to the skills base at RAF Brize Norton. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Directly tackles a key driver of health inequality by connecting local people to local jobs, benefiting young people and reducing economic disparities. ✓ Policies support the creation of local employment opportunities to reduce reliance on commuting, particularly for younger working-age residents. |
| Provision of childcare facilities and other employee support services | Missing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No DM policies explicitly requires the provision of childcare facilities alongside new employment or major residential development. DM23 focuses on protecting existing facilities but does not list childcare as a priority for <i>new</i> provision. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lack of affordable childcare is a primary barrier to employment, disproportionately affecting women, those with babies and young children, and single-parent households. This can create poverty and stress, with direct negative health consequences. |
| Supporting business start-up, development and survival | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM38 (co-working), DM22 (re-use of buildings), and DM35 (rural enterprise) all provide a framework that supports small businesses and start-ups. Settlement Strategies support provision of flexible space to support start-ups, creative industries and small businesses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supporting local start-ups can foster a more inclusive economy, creating opportunities for women, young people, and people from diverse ethnic backgrounds who are highly represented in the SME sector. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Economy and Employment | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Development Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Provision of a safe and pleasant biophilic working environment | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1 (Key Principles) establishes amenity standards. Policies DM2 (Green Infrastructure), DM8 (BNG), and DM11 (Trees) ensure green, biodiverse settings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A high-quality working environment has universal mental and physical health benefits and is crucial for the inclusion of disabled people. Biophilic design is proven to reduce stress. |
| Creating an attractive business location that encourages investment | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies covering design (DM10, DM14-19), environment (DM2, DM8, DM13), and infrastructure (DM36, DM38) work together to promote attractive business locations. Settlement Strategies support proposals that strengthen the evening economy, tourism industry, heritage and arts and enhance town centre public realm. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Policies benefit the whole community through a stronger, more resilient local economy. |
| Just transition for skills and employment | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM36 requires developers to produce CEPs. However, this does not specify a requirement for supporting development and training in green construction skills. Policy CA1 support new developments that support enterprise, including emerging low-carbon industries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Policies addressing climate change and zero-emissions developments are likely to result in a transition of jobs and skills across different sectors. The existing workforce will need to be reskilled to benefit from new opportunities. ✓ However, new job opportunities can be shared by underrepresented groups such as women and disabled people, if policies are supported by appropriate recruitment and training opportunities. |

| Summary and recommendations |
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| <p>The above policies are aimed at supporting the local economy and employment by diversifying business use, improving working environments, supporting small businesses and promoting jobs, skills and training for local people. This can create positive health and wellbeing outcomes through more diverse local job opportunities.</p> <p>Such benefits can be shared by groups who may be over-represented in unemployment figures or may find it difficult to commute due to cost, time or mobility barriers. This includes young people, women, disabled people and certain ethnic minority groups. However, policies should consider how economic growth and local prosperity align with objectives to tackle climate change and support the just transition of employment, skills and training opportunities. Additionally, there is a need to consider barriers to employment for those who rely on childcare facilities.</p> <p>Policy recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies supporting economic growth should consider transition principles in the move to a net zero society. Reference could be made on supporting those employed in carbon-intensive industries to re-skill/upskill for jobs in the green economy in Policy DM36. |

- Planning of childcare facilities within new developments is not currently mentioned within the policies. A new policy or amended Policy **DM23** to require that proposals for major residential or employment development would help assess and provide for the childcare needs arising from the scheme. This could be either through on-site provision or financial contributions.
- Policies **DM38** and **DM31** could consider the inclusion of shared workspaces within housing developments to provide more options to work from home.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 Economic Needs Assessment
- Town Centre Strategy and Needs Assessment Local Plan 2041 (currently being prepared).
- Development proposals will be required to produce a Community Employment Plan.

Theme 3: Air Quality

| Baseline |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are two AQMAs within West Oxfordshire: Chipping Norton AQMA and Witney AQMA. However, both areas have seen a reduction in emissions since 2020, and have been below the national objective for nitrogen dioxide concentrations. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor air quality is one of the main environmental risks to public health contributing to a range of health effects such as low birth weight, asthma, development problems, coronary heart disease, diabetes, lung development issues/lung cancer, dementia, strokes, heart attack and heart failure. Air quality related disease is unevenly distributed, often disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable and susceptible groups such as low income households and ethnic minority groups or those that are more susceptible such as older people, disabled people, children and pregnant women⁹. Air quality impacts can be created through construction of new developments (especially major developments) and traffic (including through emissions from construction traffic). |

| Health and Equality Effects – Air Quality | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Air pollution caused by traffic (during both construction and operation) | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 is dedicated to creating and enhancing active travel networks, which can help to reduce transport emissions. Policy DM13 (Air Quality and Pollution) is a comprehensive policy requiring Air Quality Impact Assessments (AQIAs) and mitigation for developments, with specific reference to AQMAs and the Oxford Meadows SAC. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reducing traffic related emissions has the greatest health benefit for groups who are more susceptible to poor air quality. These include children, older people, pregnant women and those with pre-existing conditions (disabled people). ✓ The requiring for AQIAs in areas with highest levels of air pollution and highest traffic increases is likely to focus benefits for the most vulnerable communities. |
| Provision of green infrastructure to protect sensitive receptors | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM2 (Green Infrastructure) and DM11 (Trees and Hedgerows) require the provision of green networks and planting, which function as natural barriers to pollution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Green barriers are most critical in protecting sensitive locations like schools (children) and care homes (older people, disabled people). |

⁹ World Health Organisation (2021) WHO Air Quality Guidelines <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/345329>

| Health and Equality Effects – Air Quality | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Construction impacts such as dust and odours | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM13 explicitly requires developers to submit Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) to control dust and other construction-phase emissions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This is important for protecting the respiratory health of nearby residents, particularly older people, children, and disabled people who are more sensitive to dust. However, CEMPs should specifically consider vulnerable groups or areas in the proximity of the proposed development. |
| Provision of parking spaces | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM25 manages parking provision to discourage excessive car use, thereby reducing associated emissions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reducing car-dependency benefits everyone's health. Care must be taken to ensure sufficient, conveniently located Blue Badge parking is provided for disabled people. |
| Opportunities to increase active travel | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 is dedicated to creating and enhancing active travel networks, which directly reduces transport emissions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Active travel can benefit all groups. Safe and accessible design is key to ensuring uptake among women, children, older people, and disabled people. |
| Proximity of residential units to industrial uses, or uses generating dust or other particulate matter | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1 (Key Principles) requires development to be compatible with adjoining uses and to provide a high standard of amenity. Policy DM13 requires AQIAs where new development could be impacted by existing pollution sources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This provides a mechanism to prevent environmental injustice, particularly as lower-cost housing is disproportionately located near polluting sources. Such housing is often occupied by people on lower incomes, from certain ethnic minority groups, or disabled people. |
| Domestic fuel sources | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM5 (Achieving Net-Zero Carbon Development) mandates that all new development must be fossil-fuel free, eliminating a key source of domestic air pollution (e.g., NOx from gas boilers). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This can have a significant positive impact on indoor and local air quality, benefiting all residents, particularly children and those with respiratory conditions (disability). |
| Agricultural development | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM13 is a general policy that could be applied to agricultural sources but does not explicitly mention this. Policy DM35 (Supporting the Rural Economy) focuses on economic but not environmental impacts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Agricultural emissions (e.g., ammonia, odours) can affect the health and amenity of those living in rural areas, who may include a higher proportion of older people. |

Summary and recommendations

Policies **CP10** (Sustainable transport) and development policies outlined above include a range of measures such as green infrastructure, construction environmental management plans, AQIAs and net zero carbon development to improve air quality and mitigate against development and traffic related emissions. Such measures may benefit groups such as disabled people, older people and children and pregnant women, who are most vulnerable to the adverse health effects of air pollution. The benefits of reducing traffic emissions are likely to be dispersed across the district and local to new developments. As a result, the extent to which wider benefits will be realised will depend on how areas with the highest levels of air pollution or vulnerable groups are affected.

New developments could also result in increased traffic levels in some areas/routes in the district which could have an adverse impact on health due to increased emissions. Policy **DM13** addresses this issue by requiring all major developments within or near an AQMA and those likely to result in a significant increase in traffic to produce an AQIA (which can include sustainable transport options). Further specifics on how developments can help to manage poor air quality in AQMAs or in areas where there are high proportions of vulnerable groups would help reduce health inequalities.

Policy recommendations:

- Policy **DM13** or **DM35** should be strengthened to explicitly state that proposals for new or significantly expanded agricultural operations (e.g., intensive livestock units) must be accompanied by an assessment of their potential impacts on air quality and local amenity.
- Consider the potential for Policy **DM13** to include requirements to support the reduction of vehicles travelling through the AQMAs through transport planning measures, additional sustainable and public transport measures, emissions zones, additional EV parking etc.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Oxfordshire County Council Air Quality Strategy 2023 -2030¹⁰

¹⁰ https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s65892/CAB_230523_Air_Quality_Strategy_Annex_1.pdf

Theme 4: Noise

| Baseline |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road traffic noise is greatest along strategic roads in the district including the A40. Rail noise impacts are minimal. RAF Brize Norton is a further source of significant noise disturbance. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise impacts on health include annoyance and sleep disturbance, cardiovascular disease, ischaemic heart disease and heart attacks. There is also some evidence on metabolic impacts, for example diabetes¹¹. Research suggests that in 2018, 130,000 healthy life years were lost in the UK due to noise pollution; and that 40% of the population were exposed to harmful levels of noise pollution from road traffic¹². Some groups are more susceptible to negative effects of noise pollution for example those that are at home more during the day such as older people, disabled people, carers, people working from home and people who work night shifts. Children are more susceptible to noise from traffic and construction related activities. |

| Health and Equality Effects - Noise | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Noise pollution caused by traffic (during both construction and operation) | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies aim to reduce traffic (DM24) and control construction impacts (DM13 could be interpreted to include noise), but there is no specific policy dedicated to mitigating operational traffic noise. DM1 (Amenity and Compatibility) refers to amenity generally. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Chronic noise disproportionately affects children, older people, and disabled people with sensory sensitivities. × New developments may result in construction or traffic related noise impacts. These are likely to have differential effects on groups who are more vulnerable to the adverse health effects or those that spend more time indoors. |
| Inclusion of design measures that minimise the impact of noise | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1 requires a "high standard of amenity," which implicitly includes protection from noise. However, this is not explicit and lacks the force of a dedicated policy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × A lack of adequate acoustic design in homes can lead to sleep disturbance and stress, affecting all residents but particularly families with children, shift workers, and those with mental health conditions (disability). |

¹¹ House of Lords Science and Technology Committee *The neglected pollutants: the effects of artificial light and noise on human health* (2nd Report, Session 2022-23, HL Paper 232). <https://policymogul.com/parliamentary-record/hansard-content/44453/artificial-light-and-noise-effects-on-human-health-science-and-technology-committee-report-?topic-id=none#contribution-EBB7F85F-17F7-4FF0-8099-6DB707E4DD9C>

¹² B Fenech and G Rodgers (2019) Proceedings of the International Congress on Acoustics, ISSN: 2415-1599, Vol: 2019-September, Page: 7137-7144

| Health and Equality Effects - Noise | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Proximity and location of Noise Action Important Areas (NIAs) and noise agglomerations | Missing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policies do not mention Noise Action Plan Important Areas or other designated noise hotspots. | <p>✗ Social housing and lower-cost homes are more likely to be located near major noise sources, which disproportionately impacts lower-income residents, often intersecting with race and disability.</p> |
| Proximity of development to major sources of noise | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1's principles on amenity and compatibility with adjoining uses cover this effectively at the site-specific level. | <p>✓ This benefits all residents by ensuring good acoustic design and separation from noise sources.</p> |
| Landscape design of development, tree cover and green infrastructure | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM2 (Green Infrastructure) and DM11 (Trees and Hedgerows) promote the use of planting and landscape features that can act as effective acoustic and visual buffers. | <p>✓ This benefits all residents by creating quieter, more pleasant environments.</p> |
| Proximity of residential units to industrial uses or uses generating late night noise can cause nuisance | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1 and DM20 (managing town centre uses, including evening economy) provide the necessary controls. | <p>✓ This is important for protecting the sleep and health of all residents, particularly children, older people, and those with existing health conditions (disability).</p> |

| Summary and recommendations |
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| <p>In contrast to the comprehensive policy on air quality (DM13), there is no equivalent dedicated policy for noise. While amenity is mentioned in Policy DM1, the lack of a specific policy means the impact of significant noise on stress, sleep, and cardiovascular health, and the need to consider designated Noise Action Plan Important Areas, are not sufficiently addressed. There is potential for noise to be included as part of CP9 with regard to Healthy Place Shaping (incorporated into HIA as part of the toolkit). New development is likely to result in construction-related noise and noise assessments are undertaken as part of statutory Environmental Impact Assessments for projects. However, assessment outcomes would need to consider the needs of different groups accordingly through closer alignment with the HIA work.</p> <p>Policy recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is potential to introduce a new, dedicated Development Management policy on Noise, similar in structure to DM13 on Air Quality. It should require noise impact assessments and set clear expectations for mitigation through layout, screening, and building design. A new Noise policy should require proposals to identify and |

assess impacts in relation to any designated Noise Action Plan Important Areas, preventing the siting of sensitive development in these locations without appropriate mitigation.

- Due to the nature of their accommodation, gypsy and traveller communities may be more vulnerable to noise associated with new development. Whilst policy **DM32** considers noise in relation to the selection of new traveller sites there is also a need to identify how noise from new developments may specifically affect existing authorised pitches and plots.
- Developments near to schools or care homes or areas with a high proportion of vulnerable groups may have more adverse noise effects on health. Wherever possible, significant noise should be kept away from residential properties and facilities that are sensitive to noise.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Health impact assessments (HIAs) are to be required for all major developments – this includes a requirement to assess noise impacts.
- Noise assessments are also a statutory requirement of the Environmental Impact Assessment process and include noise mitigation recommendations.

Theme 5: Healthy Food Environment

| Baseline |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, West Oxfordshire has lower than national rates of hot food takeaways. However, some areas such as Witney Central, Carterton South and Chipping Norton have a much higher than average number of takeaways per 1000 population than the national rate. Childhood obesity is a key issue and priority for West Oxfordshire. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of limited physical access and digital exclusion can result in challenges to accessing food in rural areas. Some groups may have more challenges around affordability of food including low income households, disabled people and older people. Foodbanks exist to support those struggling with food costs in Witney. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Healthy Food Environment | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Proximity of proposed development to fast food outlets/hot food takeaways | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM4 (A Healthy Food Environment) is a comprehensive policy that directly addresses this by restricting hot food takeaways near schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A strong policy for protecting the health of children and young people and tackling obesogenic environments, which often have a greater impact in more deprived areas. |
| Inclusion of fast food outlets/hot food takeaways within the proposed development and the proximity to local schools | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed by Policy DM4, as above. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As above. |
| Opportunities to grow and purchase local healthy food locally | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM4 requires community gardens or allotments in larger developments and encourages edible planting and access to local food retail. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This improves health outcomes for all, but particularly benefits low-income households, who are most affected by the cost and accessibility of fresh food. Allotments also provide social and mental health benefits for older people and those not in work. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Healthy Food Environment | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP9 (Healthy Place Shaping) supports access to healthy food options. | |
| Redevelopment or provision of local allotments, community growing projects, communal gardens or agricultural land | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM4 explicitly requires provision of allotments or community gardens for developments of 50+ units. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ As above, this creates opportunities for physical activity and access to affordable, healthy food, which is particularly beneficial for lower-income households and older people. ✓ Policies to support the growing of food locally can help those households in rural areas and those who have affordability issues. However, this will depend on availability and costs of food. |
| Promotion of diversity of shopping facilities | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM4 requires that larger developments ensure residents have access to grocery stores and healthy food outlets within a 10-minute walk. DM20 and Settlement Strategies support diverse town centres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prevents the creation of “food deserts”, which disproportionately affect those without cars (older people, disabled people, lower-income households) and can exacerbate diet-related health inequalities that are more prevalent in some ethnic minority communities. |
| Opportunities for “greening” the environment, through green infrastructure that contributes to food provision | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM4 directly supports this through requirements for allotments and edible planting in public spaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provides universal benefits for health, wellbeing, biodiversity, and community cohesion. |
| Online access and local delivery of healthy food | Missing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific reference to home delivery of healthy food is not mentioned in policies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lack of digital infrastructure and home-delivery options, may cause social isolation or increased dependency on driving. |

| Summary and recommendations |
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| <p>Policy DM4 provides a specific policy on health food environment which addresses the considerations of this theme. This policy can help provide benefits for those groups that experience higher rates of obesity or lack access to affordable healthy food shops, allotments and space to grow healthy food. The policy also aims to protect the health of children and young people by addressing the proximity of new development to hot food takeaways. The provision of local allotments and communal gardens can also help to improve physical activity and social cohesion amongst communities.</p> |

Policy recommendations:

- Food shopping delivery services can support those who do not have access to a car or for those who have a protected characteristic which means they are unable to drive (age or disability). This requires an understanding of barriers to online shopping and deliveries such as lack of digital skills, inaccessible websites and lack of services in rural areas. Policy **DM4** could include specific reference to how developers working with local groups may also encourage local home delivery services of healthy food by rural businesses. This could also align with **DM35** (Supporting the Rural Economy) and **DM38** (Supporting Digital Infrastructure for Home and Co-Working).

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Oxfordshire Food Strategy (2022)¹³

¹³ Good Food Oxfordshire (2022) Oxfordshire Food Strategy <https://res.cloudinary.com/ddcqlg6tr/image/upload/v1673346547/jia8wz0vzuzklnrluglj.pdf>

Theme 6: Physical Activity

| Baseline |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levels of active adults in West Oxfordshire are comparable to regional averages and 5% higher than national averages. However, only 48.5% of children and young people are achieving Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) recommended levels of activity, lower than regional and national averages¹⁴. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barriers identified by West Oxfordshire inactive residents to participating in physical activity include cost, accessibility, health conditions, convenient facilities, lack of confidence and time due to work. Those who experience most barriers to participation in physical activity include disabled people, women, certain ethnic minority and religious groups and trans people. Inactive residents would be more encouraged to partake in physical activity with cleaner, improved and accessible facilities, classes at different times of the day and a better range of facilities, car parking and activities at parks and open spaces. Active travel can contribute to increased physical activity. However, some groups face barriers to walking and cycling for a range of reasons from lack of infrastructure, training and confidence, costs of bikes and cycle equipment, safety and security. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Physical Activity | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Opportunities for physical activity | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM3 (Sport, Recreation and Play) provides a comprehensive framework for protecting and providing a wide range of formal and informal facilities. Policy CP9 (Healthy Place Shaping) encourages physical activity through the provision of accessible open spaces, active travel and recreational facilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By requiring facilities to be inclusive for all ages and abilities, policies support positive health outcomes across protected characteristic groups, from accessible play areas for disabled children to gentle exercise opportunities for older people. |
| Opportunities for active travel | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP10 (Sustainable Transport) and Policy DM24 (Active and Healthy Travel) are dedicated policies focused on creating and protecting safe and attractive active travel infrastructure and networks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The emphasis on high-quality, safe, and segregated design may encourage participation among women, children, older people, disabled people and ethnic minority groups. |

¹⁴ Sport England Active Lives Children & Young People Survey Academic Year 2018-2019/2021-22

| Health and Equality Effects – Physical Activity | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Facilitated access to open and natural space | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is addressed through the combined effect of DM2 (Green Infrastructure), DM3 (Sport, Recreation and Play), and DM24, which ensures the provision of spaces and the connections to them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Access to nature has important mental and physical health benefits. Ensuring access is inclusive for disabled people (e.g., accessible paths) and feels safe for all groups is vital for health equity. |
| Infrastructure (built and transport) that incentivises and supports physical activity | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the core purpose of Policy DM3 and Policy DM24. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This promotes intergenerational activity and can reduce social isolation for older people and other groups. |
| Opportunities for leisure activities including informal activities such as gardening or food growing | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed through DM3, DM4 (A Healthy Food Environment), and DM2 (Green Infrastructure). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Gardening is a popular and accessible form of activity for older people and can provide therapeutic benefits for people with mental health conditions (disability). |

| Summary and recommendations |
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| <p>The policies outlined above aim to enhance active travel and infrastructure for sports and recreation. This could positively impact protected groups that would benefit from increased opportunities to be physically active. These include children and older people, disabled people, women, pregnant women and ethnic minority groups where the prevalence of chronic disease such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease is higher.</p> <p>The requirement to undertake a HIA for each development will ensure that health determinants are considered and integrated into design and construction. By ensuring that new developments adhere to the agreed Oxfordshire-wide principles of healthy place shaping, there is the potential for positive health impacts through increased physical activity enabled by open space and active travel infrastructure.</p> <p>Policy recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focus on active travel infrastructure (Policy DM24) may help reduce affordability barriers to partaking in physical activity for low income households. However, there may be a need to combine infrastructure with other active travel policies to help with financial costs associated with cycling. Policy DM3 should address the specific challenges and needs of those who face barriers to participating in physical activity such as accessible active travel infrastructure, requirements for changing and sanitary facilities. It is recommended that Sport England Accessible and Inclusive Sports Facilities (AISF) is added to the best practice guidance within this policy¹⁵. |

¹⁵ Sport England (2024) sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/accessible-inclusive

- There are currently four Changing Places toilets across the district. There is the potential to include Changing Places toilets as a requirement for certain new leisure and recreational developments in Policy **DM3**.
- There is potential for enhancement of Public Rights of Way including integration of active travel networks to encourage physical activity – especially in rural areas.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- West Oxfordshire Strategic Outcomes Planning Model: Stage 1-3¹⁶
- West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan Report¹⁷
- Active Oxfordshire's Strategic Plan 2020-2040

¹⁶ West Oxfordshire (2024) Strategic Outcomes Planning Model : Stages 1-3

¹⁷ Knight, Kavannah & Page Ltd (Feb 2022) West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy & Action Plan Report

Theme 7: Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

| Baseline |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the year ending September 2024, there was a crime rate of 50.5 per 1,000 population in West Oxfordshire compared to the England and Wales average crime rate of 88 per 1,000 people. The highest crime rates in the district are for violence and sexual offences and anti-social behaviour. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some groups are more likely to be victims of crime including women, young people and ethnic minority groups. Fear and perceptions of crime can be a barrier to using public spaces and facilities. Groups protected by Hate Crime legislation include religion, race, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity. These groups may have greater safety and security concerns when travelling or using public spaces or facilities. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Crime and anti-social behaviour | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Designing out crime, including both the built and landscaped environments | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1 (Key Principles) requires safe access and consideration of vulnerable users. DM25 (Parking) references Secure by Design principles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A safe environment is a fundamental determinant of health. Fear of crime can limit activity and increase stress, with disproportionate impacts on women, older people, and those who may be targets of hate crime (race, religion, sexual orientation, gender reassignment). |
| Level of security and street surveillance | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM1 explicitly requires that risks to children and vulnerable users are mitigated through "secure boundaries, surveillance, and safe routes." | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The focus on positive design (safe routes) alongside surveillance, helps to create environments that feel safe. This also helps to alleviate negative perceptions of security and safety which can be a barrier for some groups. |
| Community engagement | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement is encouraged through DM31 (Community-Led Housing) and required for the loss of community assets under DM23. CEPs under DM36 also require community engagement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strong community cohesion is a protective factor for mental health and can reduce crime. This benefits everyone, particularly groups at risk of social isolation, such as older people and single-person households. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Crime and anti-social behaviour | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Major accidents and disasters | Missing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DM policies deal with site-specific amenity and design issues and do not address resilience to major non-climate related incidents. This is a strategic-level issue not delegated to the DM policies. | <p>✗ This has significant implications for disabled people, older people, and families with young children and pregnant women.</p> |
| Safety after dark | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM12 (Light Pollution and Dark Skies) requires lighting to be designed for safety while minimising environmental harm. Policy DM20 supports a safe evening economy as do the Town Centre policies for Witney (WIT2), Carterton (CA2), and Chipping Norton (CN2). | <p>✓ Creating places that are and <i>feel</i> safe after dark is important for the planning of inclusive environments. This is especially the case for women, young people, disabled people, certain ethnic minority and religious groups and those from the LGBTQ+ community.</p> |
| Creation of safe and inclusive environments, spaces and places | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a thread running through many DM policies, including DM1, DM3, DM24, and DM27. Policy DM4 seeks to discourage the provision of hot food takeaways and fast-food outlets within walking distance of schools and other locations where young people congregate which would help reduce anti-social behaviour. | <p>✓ An inclusive environment is one where all people, regardless of protected characteristic, feel they belong and can participate fully.</p> |

| Summary and recommendations |
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| <p>The policies make minimal reference to crime and anti-social behaviour, although safety and security are mentioned across many objectives and policies. Whilst crime rates are relatively low in the district, some groups may have barriers to using public spaces and facilities due to actual experiences and perception of crime and anti-social behaviour. Lack of specific measures to improve perception of public and open spaces may result in the under use of facilities by groups which in turn can lead to health and equality issues through social exclusion and exacerbated safety concerns</p> <p>Policy recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive Design Principles/standards should be set for new developments. This could include tools to help design out crime, for example engagement with vulnerable groups, women's safety audits/assessments, and the requirement for night and day design drawings. This should apply to both construction and operational phases of new developments. |

- Policy **DM1** could be adapted to address how developments can consider major accidents and incidents and the evacuation and care for disabled people, older people, and families with young children and pregnant women.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Health impact assessments (HIAs) are to be required for all major developments – this includes a requirement to assess crime and anti-social behaviour impacts.

Theme 8: Education and Skills

| Baseline |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the district there are 53 primary schools, 2 infant schools, 1 nursery, 1 special school and 7 secondary schools in the district • Educational achievement is relatively high in West Oxfordshire. West Oxfordshire is in the 80th percentile of local authorities for average qualification rank. • Abingdon and Witney College provides sixth form and college courses and adult education courses to local residents. Adult learning centres are situated in Carterton and Chipping Norton with provision in Burford, Charlbury, Eynsham and Witney. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a shortage of nursery places and school places in parts of West Oxfordshire and new housing developments may apply additional pressure to schools and students. • The IDP identifies a deficit of Adult Learning services in Witney and it is a high priority to have an Adult Learning Centre in the town. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Education and Skills | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Access to schools/higher education | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy DM23 (Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services) protects existing educational facilities from loss. Policy DM36 (Learning, Skills and Training Opportunities) supports the creation of new facilities and requires contributions from developers to ensure provision keeps pace with growth. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Good access to local schools is vital for children and their families. It reduces travel stress for parents (often women), and supports educational attainment, a key determinant of long-term health. |
| Local school capacity | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy DM36 states that major developments will be expected to make provision for education infrastructure on-site or through financial contributions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensuring sufficient capacity prevents overcrowding and the need for long journeys to school, benefiting children's wellbeing and educational outcomes. |
| Opportunities for people to learn in an alternative | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy DM36 refers broadly to "learning, skills and training opportunities" and does not specify that these are within an educational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This is important for promoting health equity. It supports older workers needing to reskill, women returning to the workforce, and disabled people who may require more flexible or vocational training environments. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Education and Skills | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| educational setting | | setting. Policy DM22 could allow for the creation of training centres in reused buildings. | |
| School performance | Partially addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning policy cannot directly influence school performance, which falls under the remit of education authorities. However, Policy DM36 supports learning and skills development opportunities accessible to schools. | ✓ School performance may be enhanced through the provision of additional learning, skills and training resources. |
| Skills and training for green economy | Partially addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM36 requires developers to produce CEPs. However, this does not specify a requirement for supporting development and training in green construction skills. There are no policies to support centres for green skills development. | ✓ This is important for promoting health equity, preparing the workforce for an increase in 'green' employment opportunities. It also supports older workers needing to reskill, women returning to the workforce, and disabled people who may require more flexible or vocational training environments. |
| Provision of adult education facilities | Partially addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM22 could allow for the creation of training centres in reused buildings. However, policies lack specific mention of adult education provision. | ✓ Adult learning centres are important to upskill local people while limiting time, affordability and mobility constraints associated with travelling to educational centres further afield. |

| Summary and recommendations |
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| <p>Policy DM23 which protects against the loss of existing education facilities and Policy CP6 and Policy DM36 supports the creation of new facilities and requires contributions from developers to ensure provision of skills and training keeps pace with growth. These policies help to provide opportunities for local children and young people. They also support those who are not in education, employment and training and those who may returning to work after a career break such as women or older people.</p> <p>However, there is no specific mention of adult education facilities, even though the West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies a deficit of adult learning centres in Witney. Adult learning centres are important to upskill local people and can complement the overall ambition and objectives of the Local Plan through education and training for skills such as healthy food preparation, green construction skills, cycle training and gardening etc. They can also benefit those who have time, cost and mobility barriers to accessing education. Policies need to consider new skills needed to addressed tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> |

Summary and recommendations

- Policies supporting education and skills (including the CEP requirement in Policy **DM36**) should consider just transition principles in the move to a net zero society. Reference could be made on training and re-skilling for jobs in the green economy including the potential to work with existing local delivery partners such as agri-tech at the Livestock Technology centre, and the Advanced Skills and Green Construction Centre in Abingdon.
- Policy **DM36** could prioritise schools in deprived areas or those that are underperforming to help support improved learning outcomes for children and young people in the areas of most need.
- Policies **DM22**, **DM23** and **WIT1** could contain a specific mention on the protection and creation of adult education centres (including in alternative settings).

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Oxfordshire Local Areas SEND Strategy¹⁸
- West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Pupil Place Plan.

¹⁸ Oxfordshire County Council (May 2022) Oxfordshire Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2022-2027 <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/children-and-families/oxfordshire-send-local-offer/send-strategy/local-area-send-strategy>

Theme 9: Natural Environment

| Baseline |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34% of the district located within the Cotswolds National Landscape. Sites identified for their biodiversity or geological importance, including 29 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation at Cassington Meadows, two National Nature Reserves (NNRs): Wychwood NNR and Chimney Meadows NNR. There is also 6,584 hectares of woodland, accounting for 9.22% of its total land area, including the Wychwood Forest, the least developed area in Oxfordshire The district contains Blenheim Palace World Heritage site, 16 parks and gardens of special historic interest and 146 scheduled ancient monuments. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The West Oxfordshire Open Space Study 2013-2029 which evaluated the quantity, quality and accessibility of open space and recreational provision in West Oxfordshire identified that the majority of wards had poor accessibility to greenspace. Public rights of way in the district do not always meet modern accessibility and recreational expectations due to terrain and the paths needing to allow for land use constraints. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Natural Environment | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Natural, ecologically functioning spaces, including water, grassland, woodland/trees | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is comprehensively covered by Policy CP12 as well as Policies DM2 (Green Infrastructure), DM8 (Biodiversity Net Gain and Nature Recovery), DM10 (Landscape Character), and DM11 (Trees and Hedgerows). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhancing biodiversity and improving access to high-quality natural environments has universal health benefits, improving both physical and mental wellbeing for people of all ages and backgrounds. |
| Accessibility to natural green and blue spaces and places | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies DM2 and DM3 require the provision of accessible green space and recreational facilities. Policy DM24 requires active travel links. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Policies to promote access to natural space can support positive health and wellbeing outcomes for all users. The design of these spaces must be inclusive for disabled people, older people and those with pushchairs and young children (e.g., accessible paths, toilets, seating). |
| Consideration of community barriers to access | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policies require provision and connections, but do not explicitly require an assessment of, or measures to overcome, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Barriers can prevent certain groups from benefiting from green space. Disabled people and older people may face physical barriers. Women and people from LGBTQ+ communities may have safety concerns. People from |

| Health and Equality Effects – Natural Environment | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| | | potential non-physical barriers (e.g., cost, safety, cultural inclusivity). | some ethnic minority backgrounds may feel spaces are not culturally inclusive. |
| Use/greening of existing built infrastructure | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM7 (Retrofitting) encourages sustainable upgrades, which can include green roofs/walls. Policy DM2 applies to all development. | ✓ Greening urban areas benefits all, particularly those living in denser housing with no private garden space, who often include people on lower incomes, young people and certain ethnic minority groups. |
| Design of existing environments including footpaths and cycle ways to maintained green spaces and places | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 requires new active travel routes to connect with existing networks and key destinations, including green spaces. | ✓ Safe and direct routes are essential for enabling children, older people, and disabled people to access green space independently. These must be accessible for benefits to be realised. |
| Support maintenance of open spaces, play spaces and sports facilities | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM2 and DM3 both require long-term management and maintenance plans to be secured. | ✓ Well-maintained spaces can feel safer and encourage use by those who have safety and security barriers to participating in outdoor activity. |
| Temporary or permanent diversion and/or closure of walking, cycling or horse riding routes | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM24 explicitly protects existing active travel routes from harm or severance. | ✓ Protection of these routes is important for maintaining existing activity levels and social connections for all groups. Enhancement may be needed in some areas to improve accessibility. |
| Agricultural development and associated localised environmental impacts (e.g. pollution/run off) | Partially Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DM policies focus on non-agricultural development, although DM13 (Air Quality) and DM1 (Key Principles) could apply. | ✗ Rural residents, who may include a higher proportion of older people, can be disproportionately affected by adverse agricultural impacts. |
| Flood management | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP1 requires major developments to undertake a Climate Impact Assessment. Policy CP7 (Water Environment) requires new developments to take into account flood risk. Settlement Strategies address flood risk at the local level, avoiding new | ✓ The policies aim to reduce the risk of flooding and promote the management of flooding in the district. The impacts of flooding may have a disproportionate impact on those from low income households due to insurance and recovery costs. Older people, disabled people and families with children could be more negatively impacted by temporary relocation due to flooding. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Natural Environment | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| | | developments in areas of high risk and incorporating SUDs mitigation . | |
| Inclusive heritage /historic environment | Partially addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies DM16, DM17, DM18 and DM19 include the need to undertake assessments to justify loss or harm to monuments or buildings. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some historic statues monuments may symbolise injustice based on associations with historical ethnic or religious discrimination. |

| Summary and recommendations |
|---|
| <p>Policy CP12 and supporting development policies offer strong protections for the natural environment. Together, they promote biodiversity and support access to green and blue spaces — benefiting mental and physical wellbeing for people of all ages. These policies encourage recreation, sport, play, and sustainable transport links to nature. However, health benefits will only be realised if green spaces are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed inclusively; Located within reach of diverse communities; and Adapted for safe and confident use by disabled people, older adults, and families with young children. <p>Policy recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies could include further detail on how the public may access and benefit from new natural environment whilst also protecting and safeguarding new habitat creation. For example, through community involvement in habitat creation and management. Policy DM24 should explicitly promote the integration of public rights of way with new active travel routes to increase the active travel network in rural areas. Consideration should be given to how planning policies can support Inclusive Heritage¹⁹ by increasing representation, connection, and participation at historic sites for diverse groups. This may include specific exemptions or adaptations to Policies DM16–DM19, where existing heritage assets or associated narratives may cause harm or offence to individuals based on a shared protected characteristic. |
| Supporting plans and mitigation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) |

¹⁹ Historic England (2020) A strategy for inclusion, Diversity and Equality <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/who-we-are/heritage-belongs-to-everyone/>

Theme 10: Housing

| Baseline |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Oxfordshire had a housing affordability ratio of 11.4 in 2023, with an average house price of 11.4 times the average annual earnings in the area. The average house price in West Oxfordshire (£411,000), is much higher than the UK average of £290,564 (provisional Jan 2025). For first time buyers in West Oxfordshire, the average house price as of December 2024 was £333,000²⁰. There are approximately 3,000 households currently on the Council's affordable housing waiting list. |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence shows that poor housing conditions (including damp, cold, mould, noise) are strongly associated with poor health, both physical and mental. Specific physical effects include respiratory conditions, cardiovascular disease and communicable disease transmission, and increased mortality. An ageing population in West Oxfordshire will require specialist accommodation for older people so that they can live independently. High house prices and rents can be a barrier to accessing housing, especially for young people and those on low incomes. West Oxfordshire has twice the national rate of Gypsy and Traveller communities and there is a need for further accommodation as set out in the West Oxfordshire Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment. |

| Health and Equality Effects - Housing | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Delivery of affordable housing | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM28 (Affordable Housing) is a comprehensive policy setting out requirements. It is well-supported by DM31 (Community-Led Housing) and DM30 (Custom and Self-Build) which includes affordable plots. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Secure, affordable housing is a primary determinant of health. This policy could have a significant positive impact on health, particularly for younger people, families on lower incomes, and can prevent homelessness. Tenure mix requirements in DM27 also promote inclusive communities. |
| Provision of accessible and adaptable dwellings | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM27 (Creating Mixed and Balanced Communities) is very strong, requiring all new homes to meet M4(2) standards and a proportion of homes on major sites to meet M4(3) for wheelchair users. DM29 (Specialist) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Policies promote the independence and wellbeing of disabled people and an ageing population. It is a cornerstone of creating inclusive housing, directly promoting health equity. |

²⁰ ONS (Feb 2025) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000181/>

| Health and Equality Effects - Housing | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| | | Housing for Older People) reinforces this for older people's housing. | |
| Housing density | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM21 (Previously Developed Land and Development Densities) directly addresses this, encouraging higher densities in appropriate, sustainable locations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Higher density living can support walkable neighbourhoods, benefiting all. The policy's link to high-quality design and amenity (DM1) is crucial for ensuring it does not negatively impact the mental health of residents in smaller homes. |
| Energy efficiency | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM5 (Achieving Net-Zero Carbon Development) and DM7 (Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency) are ambitious and comprehensive policies that set high standards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Highly energy-efficient homes can help to reduce fuel poverty, which has a disproportionately positive impact on the health of lower-income households, older people, and disabled people, who spend more time at home and are more vulnerable to cold weather conditions. |
| Social rented housing | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM28 (Affordable Housing) prioritises social rented housing and emphasises provision in line with the West Oxfordshire LHNA. Policy DM31 (Community-Led Housing) encourages Town and Parish Councils to identify potential sites to deliver new affordable homes, in particular social rented accommodation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prioritising social rented housing (including within Neighbourhood Plans) is likely to have positive health and equality impacts for low income households. |
| Gypsy Traveller community provision | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM32 provides for the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople in West Oxfordshire, in accordance with the most recent accommodation assessment of need and protects against loss of existing sites. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Integrate suitable provisions for travelling communities into the planning process, helps to foster social inclusion and community cohesion. ✓ The development supports new sites and the expansion of existing ones in locations that are accessible to essential services and facilities. |

Summary and recommendations

The Local Plan sets out a housing target that exceeds the district's assessed need. Policies **DM28** and **DM31** prioritise social housing, directly benefiting low-income households. In addition, policies **DM27** and **DM29** require homes to be accessible and adaptable — helping older and disabled residents live independently and safely.

Such areas of focus are likely to have positive impacts on health by increasing opportunities for secure rent and home ownership.

Major housing developments can pose risks for some protected groups. These include:

- Health impacts from construction (dust, noise, air quality),
- Access barriers caused by changes to footpaths and traffic routes,
- Pressure on local services such as GP surgeries and schools, especially if new infrastructure isn't provided upfront.

This may be more pronounced for existing communities experiencing cumulative impacts of new developments.

Policy recommendations:

- Policies **DM28** and **DM31** could include specific measures to support first-time buyers, particularly in sought after areas where local people may be outpriced from the market. For example, "local connection" or "principal residence" tests as part of the policy for development where there is a specific local need.
- Policies could support hybrid and home-working by supporting new developments aimed at young people with shared workspace areas and communal facilities.
- Ensure that required housing development-level HIAs (and other impact assessments) take into account cumulative impacts of development on local services.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Oxfordshire Specialist and Supported Housing Needs Assessment 2024
- West Oxfordshire District Council Gypsy and Traveller, Travelling Showperson and Boat Dweller Accommodation Assessment 2024

Theme 11: Access to Services

| Baseline |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 13 GP surgeries within the district and two community hospitals providing rehabilitation and palliative care (Witney Community Hospital) and outpatient and maternity services (Chipping Norton War Memorial Community Hospital). Primary Care services across West Oxfordshire score highly for GP and Pharmacy services |
| Evidence |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rural facilities and services in West Oxfordshire 2023 report by the Plunkett Foundation used the Co-op's wellbeing index to form community profiles for West Oxfordshire postcodes. This indicated consistently low scores related to "Equality" and "Health" across all service areas with recommendations that action taken by the Council, to protect and enhance rural facilities and services provision in West Oxfordshire should use these data areas as priorities for any businesses or groups supported. Some groups have higher demand for health services, for example, older people, disabled people and women than and this includes those without access to a car. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Access to services | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Provision of accessible healthcare services | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP6 (Delivering Infrastructure In-Step with New Development) addresses the need for adequate healthcare infrastructure in place prior to development. Policy DM23 protects existing healthcare facilities from loss and supports new ones. Policy WIT1 explores options for development of a new community hospital. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Access to healthcare facilities is important for all groups, but particularly for older people, disabled people and pregnant women. Good access to primary care is a cornerstone of a healthy population and can reduce health inequalities. |
| Access to existing local facilities and services (e.g. GP surgeries, pharmacists, shops, recreation etc.) | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM23 provides strong protection against the loss of valued community facilities, including shops, pubs and post offices. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This policy supports community health, particularly in rural areas. It benefits residents with mobility restrictions, including older people, disabled people, and those on lower incomes, supporting independent living. |

| Health and Equality Effects – Access to services | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Considerations | Status in Regulation 18 Draft Plan | Relevant Policies | Potential health and equality effects |
| Health and social care needs and demand for services | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM29 (Specialist Housing for Older People) directly addresses a key social care need. Policies CP6 and DM23 ensure other facilities can be provided to meet demand from new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This policy ensures the plan responds to the needs of an ageing population and the increasing prevalence of long-term health conditions and disability. |
| Capacity of existing local services and facilities | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy DM23 protects existing facilities from loss unless they are proven to be no longer viable or necessary. Policy DM36 ensures new development contributes to new capacity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This prevents the dilution of services for existing communities as new residents move in. It supports health and wellbeing for all and prevents resentment between new and existing communities. |
| Access and use of buildings by disabled people, older people and those suffering from dementia. | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed through Policy DM27's housing standards, Policy DM29's focus on older people, Policy DM24's inclusive travel infrastructure, and Policy DM1's general principles. No explicit mention of dementia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Policies demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive built environment for people with protected characteristics relating to age and disability. ✗ Policies do not consider dementia friendly planning or consideration for the requirements of the neurodiverse population |
| Access to services and facilities to improve health and wellbeing | Partially addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP6 addresses the need for adequate infrastructure for transport, education, healthcare, open spaces and community facilities in place prior to development. Policy DM3 (Sport, Recreation and Play) provides a comprehensive framework for protecting and providing a wide range of formal and informal facilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Policies protect existing community facilities as well as provide a framework for providing new facilities to improve health and wellbeing. ✗ There is no mention of the requirements for provision of new places of worship or protecting places of spiritual importance. This may adversely affect those from religious/belief groups. |
| The cumulative impact of new developments on services | Addressed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy CP6 addresses the need for adequate infrastructure in place prior to development. Policy DM23 protects existing facilities from loss unless they are proven to be no longer viable or necessary. Policy DM36 requires new development contribution to new education infrastructure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ New development may add additional pressure to water and sewage systems within the district which may result in health problems to local communities if not addressed. |

Summary and recommendations

Policy **CP6** addresses how new infrastructure and services will be delivered to support new development, whilst Policy **DM23** protects existing facilities. The protection of existing services is important for the health and wellbeing needs of local residents enabling them to continue to access to places of healthcare, education, employment and recreation. Some protected characteristics groups may rely more heavily on these services for example children, older people, women and disabled people.

However, there is limited mention on the provision of new places of worship or culturally significant developments – this could impact on the wellbeing of ethnic and religious groups.

New housing developments may apply additional pressure on local facilities and services if additional services are not adequately provided. This may be more pronounced for existing communities experiencing the cumulative impact of new developments.

While the topic of access to services cuts across a number of policies, there is limited promotion for services being provided digitally or at home. This will have further implications in terms of development planning, for example parking requirements for service providers and deliveries as well as digital infrastructure needed to access online services.

Policy recommendations:

- It is recommended that Policies **CP6** and **DM23** specifically includes access to cultural and religious developments/services that can help to support health and wellbeing for ethnic and religious groups.
- Ensure that required housing development-level HIAs (and other impact assessments) take into account the cumulative impact of new developments.
- Policies should consider how new developments can support access to goods and services from home, especially in rural areas. For example, short stay parking, parcel lockers, door step access and other measures.

Supporting plans and mitigation

- Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan

Conclusions and recommendations

Policy strengths and gaps

Overall, the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 Preferred Policy Options Paper supports positive health and equality outcomes particularly in relation to public health, inclusivity and sustainability.

The **Place-based Policies (PL1-PL6)** provide a strong foundation for protecting West Oxfordshire's most valuable natural and historic landscapes. Their primary focus on conservation may deliver significant benefits for public health, particularly in terms of mental well-being, physical activity through access to the countryside, and climate change mitigation via the strategic CWORC policy. The policies for the Windrush Valley (PL3) and CWORC (PL5) are addressing specific, known local health-related issues such as water quality, flood risk, and transport emissions. However, the assessment reveals several cross-cutting gaps where the link between place and health and equalities could be made more explicit and effective:

- **Rural Access to Services:** The policies do not provide detail on how to maintain or improve access to essential services (healthcare, childcare, healthy food) within the protected landscapes of the Cotswolds, Green Belt, and Wychwood Forest. Access to services is of particular importance for older people, families with young children, and those without access to a car.
- **Active Travel Networks:** While access to the countryside for leisure is well-supported, there is an opportunity to explicitly require the protection and enhancement of the Public Rights of Way network for functional, everyday active travel between and within settlements in these areas.
- **Integrating Local Needs within Protected Landscapes:** The policies could be strengthened by including carefully crafted clauses supporting small-scale, high-quality developments that meet identified local needs—such as affordable housing, specialist housing, or community facilities—without compromising the overarching objective of landscape protection.

The **Settlement Strategies** provide a comprehensive framework for guiding growth across West Oxfordshire. They embed key public health principles, demonstrating a strong commitment to creating sustainable, active, and socially inclusive communities. Key strengths include the consistent support for active travel, access to green space, protection of community identity, and the provision of affordable and diverse housing. The strategies for the main towns also link transport infrastructure to air quality improvements and address the need for core services such as healthcare and education. These policies benefit protected characteristic groups including children, older people, disabled people and women. Despite these strengths, the assessment identifies several cross-cutting areas where the policies could be enhanced to integrate health and equality outcomes:

- **Community Needs:** While community facilities are widely supported, there is a lack of consistent, specific reference to key services that have a direct impact on positive equality outcomes. This includes childcare facilities, dentists, and community food growing spaces (allotments).
- **Inclusive design:** The strategies are positive about creating safe environments but would benefit from more explicit requirements to use established inclusive design principles for increasing accessibility and inclusion and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. This is particularly important for protecting vulnerable groups, including children, women, older people and those protected by Hate Crime legislation.

- **Strengthening Rural Service Provision:** The Rural Area Strategy (RA1) could be strengthened to be more proactive in supporting facilities that combat rural isolation and improve access to healthcare, community-run health and wellbeing initiatives and home-delivery of services.

The **Core Policies (CP1- CP12)** and **Development Management Policies (DM1 – DM38)** provide a strong framework for translating the strategic health and sustainability objectives into tangible, on-the-ground requirements for new development and supporting infrastructure. The focus on health and equalities issues within policies such as CP9 (Healthy Place Shaping), DM27 (Accessible Homes), DM28 (Affordable Housing), and DM36 (Skills and Training) is particularly strong and will make a significant contribution to reducing health inequalities.

- **Reducing inequality:** The explicit focus on equalities issues within policies such as DM27 (Accessible Homes), DM28 (Affordable Housing), and DM36 (Learning, Skills and Training Opportunities) will contribute to reducing health inequalities, supporting young people and low income households and meet the requirements of an ageing population;
- **Environmental Health:** Policies on climate change (CP1), net-zero carbon (DM5), air quality (DM13), biodiversity (DM8), and green infrastructure (DM2) are well-developed and will help protect residents from environmental harms while enhancing the natural environment. There is potential to enhance policies by involving communities in the protection and safeguarding the natural environment. For example, through habitat creation and management.
- **Supporting low income households:** The use of renewable energy for new developments (DM6) may result in reduced energy costs and increased stability and resilience against changing energy demands. In particular, this will positively impact protected groups who are at higher risk of fuel poverty. Increased sustainable transport infrastructure (DM24) can benefit those who are less likely to have access to a car and affordable housing policy prioritising social rent help to address housing costs.
- **Healthy Behaviours:** Policies promoting healthy food environments (DM4) and physical activity (DM3, CP10, DM24) align with best practice in public health.
- **Housing and Health:** The policies on housing quality, affordability, and accessibility (DM27, DM28, DM29, DM31) directly address some of the most fundamental determinants of health and health equity.

The above policies are strengthened further by the requirements in CP9 for all new Major Developments to be subject to a **Health Impact Assessment** using the Oxfordshire HIA toolkit.

However, this assessment has revealed some gaps with regards to health and equality considerations including:

- Lack of specific inclusive design principles/standards.
- A lack of explicit requirement for new developments to provide or contribute to childcare facilities. This is an important consideration to enable economic participation, reduces stress, and support child development.
- No dedicated noise mitigation policy.

- Absence of specific speed reduction measures in transport policies. Speeding vehicles contribute a real and perceived barrier to independent mobility and active travel.
- Whilst support for home-working is clear in the policies, there is limited requirements for delivery of services and goods at home to support rural communities. This can help support access to shopping, employment, healthcare services and education for those without access to a car or for those who have a protected characteristic which means they are unable to drive (for example, age or disability). It also reduces the need to travel which contributes to policies to tackle climate change and reduce air pollution.
- Limited consideration is included within the policies to support Inclusive Heritage and increasing representation, connection and participation at historic sites for different groups²¹ nor is there specific policy inclusion for planning of new places of worship.
- A lack of specific adult education and green skills training provision to help support life long learning and a just transition to green skills development.

Recommendations

- **Health Impact Assessment:** It is recommended that a Council officer is nominated to undertake reviews of major development HIAs using the Oxfordshire HIA Toolkit Rapid Review Checklist. The Council should consider a requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment for major developments to support positive outcomes for protected characteristic groups. This could be incorporated into the HIA process.
- **Inclusive design principles:** Setting development-based inclusive design principles would help provide consistent guidance to deliver inclusive and accessible development and infrastructure. This could include engagement with specific groups, Accessibility Consultant reviews, undertaking safety audits, secure by design standards, preparing day and night design drawings and developing design codes for health and wellbeing²². This should include requirements for dementia-friendly planning and other requirements.
- **Childcare provision:** Consideration should be given to how policies **DM23** and **DM36** can be adapted to require major employment developments to assess and meet the demand for childcare.
- **Noise:** A new DM policy on Noise should be created, mirroring the structure of DM13 (Air Quality). This should require noise impact assessments for relevant proposals, mandate mitigation through design, and require specific consideration of designated noise hotspots.
- **Transport:** Policy **DM24** should be strengthened to require new developments to incorporate speed reduction measures, such as traffic calming, home zones, and default 20-mph limits in residential areas. This will help to improve safety and reduce barriers to active travel. It is also recommended that specific considerations for the infrastructure, parking and safe storage of 'wheeling' modes (mobility scooters, wheelchair users and other mobility aids) is included for new developments.

²¹ Historic England (2020) A strategy for inclusion, Diversity and Equality <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/who-we-are/heritage-belongs-to-everyone/>

²² Quality of Life Foundation (Mar 2025) Design Codes for Health and Wellbeing <https://www.qolf.org/wp-content/uploads/Design-codes-for-health-and-wellbeing.pdf>

- **Just transition:** Those working in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, transport and construction may be more at risk of losing jobs as result of net zero policies. Therefore, a Just Transition Plan for businesses and the local workforce would help to support policies around the economic growth and employment.
- **Home delivery of goods and services:** Policies should consider delivery of goods and services as part of planning processes i.e. through safe, temporary parking provision of goods/service provider vehicles, digital infrastructure etc.
- **Digital Access:** Policies associated with user technology (for example climate change technology and transport related initiatives) should require developers to identify those groups who may not be digitally confident (e.g. older people), have accessibility requirements (disabled people), may not speak English as a main language or may have challenges understanding.
- **Faith and cultural spaces:** Specific exemptions or adaptations should be included in policies **DM16 - DM19** for the loss of existing historical assets which cause harm or offence to a group associated with their shared protected characteristic, for example, associated with historic victimisation of ethnic or religious groups. Policies should also include planning for new places of worship and the provision of faith and cultural spaces alongside community facilities.
- **Community Stewardship:** The Council should consider embedding a principle of "Sustainable Community Stewardship" within the Place-based Policies section introduction. This principle would state that while the primary objective is conservation, the Council will also support development that is proven to reduce inequality and promote health, well-being, and resilience of local communities.

Impacts on protected characteristic groups

The HEQIA has demonstrated that the Council has largely paid due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the aims of the PSED in the development of the preferred policy options. The policies can help to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between groups by supporting access to affordable and accessible housing, promoting diverse employment and learning opportunities and access to affordable transport options. The draft policies avoid any direct discrimination on protected characteristic groups.

The following table summarises the potential impacts on protected characteristic groups along with recommendations to minimise negative impacts and enhance positive outcomes.

| Protected group | Positive | Negative | Recommendations |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| Children (age) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supports cleaner air through reduction in emissions. ✓ Encourages healthy behaviours through policies for active travel sports, play and recreation and healthy food environments. ✓ Prevents educational developments in close proximity to hot food takeaways. ✓ Supports developer based learning, education and skills opportunities. ✓ Protect existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ No specific childcare provision for new developments ✗ Lack of specific noise policies or detailed noise mitigation. ✗ No mention of specific speed reduction measures to support sustainable transport policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include requirements for childcare provision within relevant policies • Add speed reduction measure for new developments to DM24 • Prioritise underperforming schools or areas of higher deprivation /lower educational achievement in Policy DM36 • A new DM policy on Noise should be created. |
| Young People (age) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supports an increase and diversification of employment, learning, skills and training opportunities. ✓ Delivers affordable homes and prioritises homes for social rent. ✓ Promotes active and sustainable travel. ✓ Protect existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Policies to tackle climate change may result in loss of employment for those employed in more traditional/ carbon-reliant industries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand on requirements in DM36 for provision of green skills and training. • Expand housing policies to include co-working areas within residential developments etc |
| Older People (age) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supports cleaner air through reduction in emissions ✓ Supports the provision of specialist housing for older people ✓ Protection and provides new services such as health care, recreation and transport. ✓ Promotes accessible high streets and town centres. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ No mention of infrastructure, storage, parking for mobility aids, wheelchairs, mobility scooters. ✗ Lack of specific security or inclusive design principles. No mention of dementia friendly planning. ✗ No mention of specific speed reduction measures to support sustainable transport policies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in active and sustainable travel and developments for people with a wide range of impairments. • Add speed reduction measure for new developments to DM24 • Policy development for home delivery of goods and services • Ensure policies consider inclusive technology |

| Protected group | Positive | Negative | Recommendations |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encourages healthy behaviours through policies to improve access to open space and healthy food environment. ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Limited policy development on delivery of goods and services at home. ✗ Older people may have specific needs with regards to digital access and information. ✗ Lack of specific noise policies or detailed noise mitigation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community involvement in nature based solutions and healthy food policies to encourage social interaction • A new DM policy on Noise should be created |
| Disability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supports cleaner air through reduction in emissions ✓ Supports the provision of accessible and adaptable homes ✓ Encourages healthy behaviours through policies for active travel, sports, play and recreation and healthy food environments ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ No mention of infrastructure, storage, parking for mobility aids, wheelchairs, mobility scooters. ✗ Limited policy development on delivery of goods and services at home ✗ No mention of dementia friendly planning or consideration for the requirements of neurodiverse population ✗ Lack of specific noise policies or detailed noise mitigation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in active and sustainable travel and developments for people with a wide range of physical, sensory and mental impairments. • Policy development for home delivery of goods and services. |
| Gender Reassignment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lack of specific security or inclusive design principles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in physical activity and use of public areas (including accessibility, security and privacy concerns). |
| Race | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Policies to tackle climate change may result in loss of employment for those employed in more traditional/ carbon-reliant industries. ✗ Policies do not explicitly address racial or cultural discrimination in heritage policies. ✗ Lack of protection for Gypsy Traveller and Showpeople sites against noise impacts of new developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in physical activity and use of public areas (including accessibility, security and privacy concerns). |

| Protected group | Positive | Negative | Recommendations |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Religion/belief | ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lack of polices for new places of worship. ✗ Lack of specific security or inclusive design principles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in physical activity and use of public areas (including accessibility, security and privacy concerns). |
| Women (Sex) | ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ The absence of planning for childcare facilities may disproportionately impact women and families on lower incomes. ✗ Lack of specific security or inclusive design principles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in physical activity and use of public areas (including accessibility, security and privacy concerns). • Policy development for home delivery of goods and services |
| Men (Sex) | ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Policies to tackle climate change may result in loss of employment for those employed in more traditional industries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand on requirements in DM36 for provision of green skills and training. |
| LGBTQ+ (Sexual Orientation) | ✓ Protects existing services and community facilities and requires additional infrastructure in-step with new development. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Lack of specific security or inclusive design principles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles to remove barriers to participation in physical activity and use of public areas (including accessibility, security and privacy concerns). |

Next Steps

This report forms part of the supporting evidence for the preferred policy options (June 2025). During the consultation period in Summer 2025, Equality Impact Consulting will be seeking feedback from relevant stakeholders on the outcomes of the HEQIA. Following consultation, feedback from relevant stakeholders as well as wider feedback on the preferred policy options will be incorporated into the HEQIA evidence base and further assessment work.



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