Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan

Regulation 18: Preferred Policy Options SA Report

June 2025

LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

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Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

Regulation 18: Preferred Policy Options

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Client comments can be sent to Lepus using the following address.

Eagle Tower
Montpellier Drive
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 1TA
Telephone: 01242 525222
E-mail: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com
Website: www.lepusconsulting.com

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Acronyms & abbreviations

A&E	Accident and Emergency
ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
ASR	(Air Quality) Annual Status Report
BMV	Best and Most Versatile
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CA	Conservation Areas
CNL	Cotswolds National Landscape
CO_2	Carbon dioxide
CWORC	Carterton – Witney – Oxford Rail Corridor
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
dpa	Dwellings per Annum
ENA	Economic Needs Assessment
EV	Electric Vehicle
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GI	Green Infrastructure
GP	General Practitioner
Ha	Hectare
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LB	Listed Building
LHNA	Local Housing Needs Assessment
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
NHS	National Health Service
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NO_2	Nitrogen Dioxide
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PPP	Policies Plans and Programmes
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RAF	Royal Air Force
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RPG	Registered Park and Garden
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment

SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SM	Scheduled Monument
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPZ	Source Protection Zone
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
STW	Sewage Treatment Works
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
SWFR	Surface Water Flood Risk
WHS	World Heritage Site
WODC	West Oxfordshire District Council
WRMP	Water Resource Management Plan

Non-technical summary

About this report

N1 Lepus Consulting is conducting an appraisal process for West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to help them prepare their Local Plan. The appraisal process is known as Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which incorporates the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and is prepared during a number of different stages to facilitate iteration between the Plan makers (WODC) and the appraisal team (Lepus Consulting).

N2 SA is the process of informing and influencing the preparation of a development plan to optimise its sustainable development performance as the plan is prepared over several distinct stages including examination in public, and finally, adoption.

N3 This report is an interim SA Report. Another SA report will be prepared at the next stage of plan making.

Context

N4 The Plan area constitutes West Oxfordshire District, located in the south east of England, within Oxfordshire County, covering an area of approximately 71,444ha. The district is primarily rural in character, with roughly a third of the district in the north west falling within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).

N5 The emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan will provide a new strategy for the district for the period up to 2041.

N6 A local plan sets out the planning policies that local authorities will use to assess applications for development as well as identifying (allocating) sites for new development proposals to meet the future development needs including housing and job growth.

N7 To help local authorities ensure that their new local plan includes the most suitable planning policies and development allocations, the SA process identifies, describes and evaluates a number of different reasonable alternative policies and development locations.

Assessing the Preferred Policy Options version of the Local Plan

N8 The current plan making phase is called the ‘Preferred Policy Options’ stage. This is the third stage in preparing the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, following the initial ‘Scoping’

consultation[1] that took place in 2022 and the high level 'Ideas and Objectives' consultation in 2023[2].

N9 For the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, the SA process so far has involved the preparation of a Scoping Report (2024)[3]. The Scoping Report identified the scope and level of detail to be included in the SA process going forward, including defining the SA Framework, which is used to inform the assessment of the likely effects of the Local Plan at each stage.

N10 This Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA Report has been prepared to evaluate reasonable alternatives and draft policies with outputs fed back to the Council to help inform the preferred approach for the Local Plan at this stage and at subsequent stages beyond.

Identification and description of reasonable alternatives

N11 At this stage of plan making, WODC has identified a range of reasonable alternatives for consideration:

- Three housing growth options to explore the potential amount of new housing to deliver through the Local Plan;
- Four employment growth options to explore the potential amount of new employment floorspace to deliver through the Local Plan; and
- Seven spatial strategy options to consider differing approaches for the broad spatial distribution of future housing and employment growth.

N12 In addition, WODC has prepared a draft vision and objectives for the emerging Plan, alongside 71 draft policies outlining the preferred approach to guide future developments.

N13 The Preferred Policy Options consultation document has been prepared by WODC and is being consulted on alongside this Regulation 18 SA Report, whereby the public will be asked to give their views on the overall amount of future housing and employment growth to be planned for, the preferred spatial strategy for accommodating this and the draft policy options that are proposed to be put in place to guide future development.

Evaluation of reasonable alternatives

N14 The appraisal process has used a tool called the SA Framework to evaluate how the different reasonable alternatives perform against a series of defined objectives:

[1] West Oxfordshire District Council (2022) Initial Scoping Consultation: Local Plan and Council Plan Consultation. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[2] West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[3] Lepus Consulting (2024) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Scoping Report, Final – August 2024. Available at https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/n2sjfpi0/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-scoping-report-august-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

1. **Climate change mitigation:** Minimise West Oxfordshire District's contributions towards the causes of climate change.
2. **Climate change adaptation:** Adapt to the anticipated levels of climate change.
3. **Biodiversity and geodiversity:** Conserve, enhance and restore the district's biodiversity and geodiversity.
4. **Landscape:** Conserve, enhance and manage the quality and character of landscapes and townscapes.
5. **Cultural heritage:** Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and support the effective management of the historic environment.
6. **Air quality:** Protect and improve air quality, creating cleaner and healthier air.
7. **Water:** Maintain and improve water quality and ensure efficient use of water resources.
8. **Natural resources and waste:** Ensure efficient use of the district's soil and mineral resources and reduce waste.
9. **Housing and equality:** Provide affordable, high quality and environmentally sound housing for all, whilst reducing crime and social deprivation.
10. **Health and wellbeing:** Safeguard and improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in health.
11. **Transport and accessibility:** Improve accessibility, increase the proportion of travel by sustainable modes, and reduce the need to travel.
12. **Education:** Increase access to education and improve attainment to develop and maintain a skilled workforce.
13. **Economy and employment:** Ensure sufficient employment land and premises are available to develop and support innovative and sustainable economic growth.

N15 The SA Framework provides a way in which sustainability effects can be described, analysed and compared (see **Appendix A** for the full SA Framework). Objectives and indicators can be revised as further baseline information is collected and sustainability issues and challenges are identified, and can be used in monitoring the implementation of the Local Plan.

N16 Findings from the assessments are presented in a single-line matrix format. The high-level matrix is not a conclusive tool or model. Its main function is to identify at a strategic level whether or not the assessment requires a more detailed examination or whether satisfactory conclusions may be drawn from the high-level assessment without the need for further detailed analysis of a particular proposal.

Housing options

N17 High level options for the total amount of housing growth to be provided by the Local Plan have been identified by WODC and evaluated in the SA process in **Chapter 3**. These options have been identified drawing on the requirements as set out in the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[4] and planning practice guidance (PPG)[5] which includes the 'standard method' for calculating housing requirements:

- **Housing Option 1** – **8,784 dwellings** based on 549 dwellings per annum (dpa) using the 2023 standard method figure and applied to the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2041 (16 years).
- **Housing Option 2** – **14,480 dwellings** based on 905 dpa using the new (December 2024) standard method figure and applied to the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2041 (16 years).
- **Housing Option 3** – **16,000 dwellings** based on 905 dpa using the new (December 2024) standard method figure and applied to the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2041 (16 years) but with an additional 10% buffer to account for potential non-implementation of sites.

N18 The assessment of housing options is limited by the lack of detail on site size and location, with only the overall housing numbers and general land use (housing) provided. This restricts the analysis to a high-level evaluation. As a result, there is uncertainty in assessing the potential effects, especially in areas like climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2) and cultural heritage (SA Objective 5), which depend heavily on specific site characteristics such as location, layout, and design.

N19 As Option 1 proposes the smallest housing number (8,784 homes), it is likely to perform best against environmentally-focused objectives, such as biodiversity, landscape and natural resources (SA Objectives 3, 4 and 8), due to the likelihood of a reduced area of previously undeveloped land required to deliver this number of homes, and consequently reduced potential for adverse effects on ecological networks, sensitive landscapes and soil resources. Option 1 may also reduce adverse effects on climate change mitigation, air quality and water resources (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 7), due to likely lower levels of population growth, traffic and pollution. However, while the environmental impacts are likely to be lower, this option may not adequately meet the district's housing needs.

N20 Options 2 and 3, which propose higher housing numbers (14,480 and 16,000 respectively), present more environmental impacts. While the increased scale and possible increased density of development under these options could pose challenges for infrastructure capacity (such as healthcare, transport and schools – SA Objectives 10, 11 and 12), it might also make it more viable to deliver new or improved infrastructure through developer contributions. These options may offer broader socio-economic benefits by better meeting housing demand and supporting the local economy.

N21 Overall, Option 3 performs best against objectives related to housing provision and economic development (SA Objectives 9 and 13), as it provides a buffer against under-

[4] MHCLG (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. December 2024. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[5] MHCLG (2025) Planning Practice Guidance: Housing and economic needs. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

delivery and is likely to help address a wider range of housing needs. However, no option can be identified as the best overall based on housing numbers alone. The sustainability of any option depends on how well it is integrated with infrastructure planning, land use efficiency, and alignment with the wider evidence base.

Employment options

N22 High level options for the total amount of employment growth to be provided by the Local Plan have been identified by WODC and evaluated in the SA process in **Chapter 4**. WODC has commissioned an Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) to identify the required supply and mix of employment land and premises to be planned for. The ENA has explored three different indicative scenarios for office and industrial land. Based on the findings of the emerging ENA, and drawing on the requirements as set out in the NPPF and PPG, WODC has identified four options for the level of employment growth to be sought through the emerging Local Plan:

- **Employment Option 1** – **Labour Demand –** Based on the floorspace and land needed to accommodate expected employment growth in West Oxfordshire, as per the latest employment forecasts derived from Oxford Economics data (4.5ha of office and 3.5ha of industrial space);
- **Employment Option 2 – Labour Supply** – Based on the latest population and housing growth projections, as derived from Office for National Statistics data and the 2025 ORS Local Housing Needs Assessment (6.3ha of office and 5.4ha of industrial space); and
- **Employment Option 3 – Past Trends** – Based on the continuation of historical take-up rates, sourced from CoStar. This analyses take-up rates by use class over the last 15 years and extrapolates these trends over the assessment period. (0.9ha of office and 25ha of industrial space).
- **Employment Option 4 – Policy-Driven –** Based on employment levels that could be possible with an ambitious economic development strategy reflecting priority sectors as set out for Oxfordshire and/or the district in available plans and strategies. (6.4ha of office and 8.1ha of industrial space).

N23 The appraisal of the employment land options is limited by the absence of detailed information on the size and location of proposed development. With only the type of land use (employment) provided, and assessments focused solely on the overall quantity of land, the analysis remains high-level and cannot draw firm conclusions about site-specific sustainability impacts. This creates particular uncertainty in evaluating the effects of each option against objectives such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 1, 2 and 5), which depend heavily on the precise layout and context of the economic development.

N24 All four employment options are expected to generate a net gain in employment floorspace and are therefore likely to positively contribute to the local economy (SA Objective 13). Option 1 is expected to perform best in environmental terms as, given its smaller scale, it will require less previously undeveloped land, which means a lower risk of harm to biodiversity, landscape character, and natural resources (SA Objectives 3, 4 and 8). The

more modest scale also suggests lower associated emissions, better air and water quality outcomes, and reduced pressure on transport networks, leading to slightly stronger performance against SA Objectives 1, 6, 7 and 10. Furthermore, Option 1 accounts for out-commuting and economic activity patterns and targets high-growth industries, which supports its relative strength on objectives relating to health, wellbeing, and accessibility (SA Objectives 10 and 11).

N25 Options 2, 3 and 4 involve slightly higher levels of employment land provision and generally perform similarly across many sustainability criteria. Among them, Option 2 emerges as slightly better performing than Option 3 in terms of transport and economic alignment (SA Objectives 11 and 13), as it is based on housing and population projections from the Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA). This makes it more likely to deliver a better balance between job creation and residential needs, with less strain on infrastructure. Option 3, by contrast, is considered in the ENA to be the least feasible in terms of deliverability, especially when compared with current employment land availability across the district. Option 4, although more ambitious, has the greatest potential for supporting higher-value job growth in strategic sectors, thereby offering longer-term economic competitiveness and resilience (SA Objective 13). However, this option requires careful policy management to align with infrastructure needs and mitigate environmental sustainability risks.

Spatial options

N26 Seven options to determine the spatial strategy have been identified by WODC at this Regulation 18 stage of the Plan making process, drawing on previous 'scenarios' presented within the previous Regulation 18 'Ideas and Objectives' (2023)[6]. These spatial options relate to the potential approaches for housing and employment growth to meet identified needs, including the delivery of the residual housing need of c.6,500 homes.

- **Option 1** – Hierarchical approach;
- **Option 2** – Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton);
- **Option 3** – Witney Focus;
- **Option 4** – Carterton Focus;
- **Option 5** – Dispersed Growth;
- **Option 6** – New Settlement; and
- **Option 7** – Public Transport Focus.

N27 The seven spatial options have been evaluated in detail within **Appendix B**, with a summary of the assessment findings in **Chapter 4.**

N28 Whilst there are relative merits and shortfalls associated with the approach of each of the seven spatial strategy options identified, Option 6 (New Settlement) emerged most frequently as the best performing option, including against climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2), biodiversity and geodiversity (SA Objective 3), landscape (SA Objective 4),

[6] West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

cultural heritage (SA Objective 5), air quality (SA Objective 6) and water (SA Objective 7). This is due to the potential for an effective layout and design to be implemented from an early stage.

N29 Option 3 (Witney Focus) was identified as the best performing option across four SA Objectives: housing and equality (SA Objective 9), health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10), education (SA Objective 12) and economy and employment (SA Objective 13). This reflects the opportunities for a strategy that will provide access to a range of new and existing services including healthcare, schools and jobs. Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) is identified as the best performing option for climate change mitigation and transport and accessibility (SA Objectives 1 and 11), as it will be expected to provide access to sustainable and active modes of travel connecting them to local services and amenities, as well as education facilities and employment opportunities. Option 4 (Carterton Focus) identified as the best performing option with regard to conserving natural resources owing to its location away from higher-quality soils (SA Objective 8).

N30 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) was identified as the worst performing option across 11 of the SA Objectives including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity and geodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 1-5), natural resources and waste, housing and equality, health and wellbeing, transport and accessibility, education and economy and employment (SA Objectives 8-13). Option 3 (Witney Focus) was identified as the worst performing option under air quality (SA Objective 6) owing to the challenges of focusing growth within an existing Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Options 3 (Witney Focus) and 4 (Carterton Focus) were jointly identified as the worst performing options under water (SA Objective 7) owing to potential pressures placed on watercourses and treatment facilities in these areas.

Vision, objectives and policies

N31 WODC has prepared a draft vision and series of objectives for the Local Plan that sets out aspirations for West Oxfordshire District by 2041 and how this will be achieved. A suite of 71 draft preferred policies has also been established, including 12 core policies, six place-based policies, 15 settlement strategies, and 38 development management (DM) policies.

N32 The SA assessments (presented in full within **Appendix C**, and summarised in **Chapter 6**) have evaluated the extent to which the proposed draft vision, objectives and policies for the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan accord with the SA Framework and will help to guide sustainable development.

N33 Overall, the draft vision for West Oxfordshire aligns well with the SA Framework, showing major positive impacts on climate change, biodiversity, health, landscape, transport, economy, and housing. Similarly, the proposed objectives for the Local Plan have the potential for significant positive impacts across a number of SA Objectives. There are opportunities to strengthen the vision and objectives with clearer commitments to addressing flood risk, water and air quality, cultural heritage, healthcare capacity, education infrastructure, and digital connectivity.

N34 The Core Policies in West Oxfordshire focus on strategic matters like climate change, development needs, infrastructure, and sustainable management of the district's natural, built, and historic environment. These policies support economic growth, conservation, and sustainable development, though the introduction of housing and employment may lead to increased emissions and uncertain impacts on transport. The Place-Based Policies target specific areas with sensitive landscapes, such as the CNL, aiming to protect and enhance biodiversity, maintain Green Belt, and promote sustainable travel initiatives. The Settlement Strategies offer tailored frameworks for towns and villages, promoting local economic vibrancy, low-carbon transport, and the conservation of heritage and wildlife. The 38 DM Policies guide development across various themes, ensuring energy-efficient designs, high-quality landscapes, and the provision of housing, employment, and community facilities. These policies aim to meet socio-economic needs while contributing to environmental sustainability, with mostly positive impacts identified across the SA Framework.

N35 Recommendations to improve the sustainability performance of the draft vision, objectives and policies have been made throughout the assessment narrative in **Appendix C,** where relevant, and summarised in **Chapter 7** as explained below.

Recommendations

N36 **Chapter 7** of this SA Report sets out a range of recommendations for WODC to consider as the Local Plan is developed and refined, including recommendations to improve the proposed vision and objectives and draft policies, as well as consideration of the identification, description and evaluation of reasonable alternatives which will be an important aspect of the SA process going forward.

Next steps

N37 This Regulation 18 SA Report will be subject to consultation with statutory consultees, stakeholders and the general public, alongside the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Preferred Policy Options consultation document.

N38 Any comments received on this Regulation 18 SA Report will be used to inform the preparation of the next report.

N39 It is anticipated that the Council will undertake a further, focused Regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2025 outlining its preferred thinking on future potential development locations. A further Regulation 18 SA report will be published at that stage.

N40 Once WODC has reviewed the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options Consultation comments and responses to the further, focused consultation on development locations, it will prepare the final draft version of the Local Plan (Regulation 19). Preparation of a Regulation 19 SA Report that meets the 'Environmental Report' requirements of the SEA Regulations will take place alongside. The Environmental Report will include all the legal requirements set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Lepus Consulting has been commissioned by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), to support the preparation of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.

1.1.2 The emerging Local Plan will provide an up-to-date vision, objectives and framework to guide decision making for how, where and when development can come forward in the district for the Plan period up to 2041.

1.1.3 The purpose of SA/SEA is to help guide and influence the decision-making process of the Local Plan by identifying the likely sustainability effects of reasonable alternatives, options, and proposals.

1.1.4 At this stage of plan making, WODC has prepared the 'Preferred Policy Options' version of the Local Plan which includes a draft vision, objectives and a series of draft policies (i.e., preferred policy options), on which initial views are being sought through the consultation.

1.1.5 During the preparation of this iteration of the Local Plan, WODC identified a suite of reasonable alternatives for the amount and broad distribution of growth to be delivered up to 2041. The purpose of this Regulation 18 SA Report is to evaluate the likely sustainability effects of these reasonable alternatives and draft policies, to help the plan makers in their decision making as the Local Plan progresses. This document therefore includes the evaluation of three housing options, four employment options, seven spatial distribution options, the draft vision and objectives for the Plan, and 71 draft preferred policy options (including core policies, place-based policies, settlement strategies and development management (DM) policies).

1.1.6 SA is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of local plans and spatial development strategies. The SA outputs throughout the plan making process will help to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging Local Plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

1.1.7 This SA/SEA document follows on from the SA Scoping Report prepared in April 2024, which was consulted on with the statutory bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) and subsequently updated in August 2024[7].

[7] Lepus Consulting (2024) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Scoping Report, Final – August 2024. Available at https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/n2sjfpi0/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-scoping-report-august-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

1.2 West Oxfordshire District

1.2.1 West Oxfordshire District lies in the south east of England, within Oxfordshire County, covering an area of approximately 71,444ha (see **Figure 1.1**). The district is primarily rural in character, with roughly a third of the district in the north west falling within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (now known as the Cotswolds National Landscape).

1.2.2 The current Local Plan 2031[8] identifies a clear settlement hierarchy of three main towns (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton) and six rural service centres (Bampton, Burford, Charlbury, Eynsham, Long Hanborough and Woodstock), with a number of scattered villages and hamlets. The City of Oxford lies adjacent to the district in the east, with a small proportion of Oxford's Green Belt falling within the district. The latest population estimates record approximately 119,331 people living within West Oxfordshire[9], the majority of whom live in the main towns.

1.2.3 The district has a strong and diverse economy, with a history of engineering and manufacturing. Notable features of the district's built environment include various heritage assets, including several historic market towns and villages, and Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS), which also play an important role in the visitor economy and strong rural tourism sector.

1.2.4 The River Thames follows the southern boundary of the district, with various tributaries including the Windrush and Evenlode flowing through the district. These rivers form important ecological corridors alongside the network of ancient woodland and other nature conservation designations, including a small section of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in the east of the district.

1.3 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan

1.3.1 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 will set out a vision, objectives and framework for the future development of the district, enabling needs and opportunities to be identified and decisions made on key issues such as how much development takes place and where, what infrastructure is needed and how positive outcomes such as environmental enhancements can best be achieved.

1.3.2 To date, WODC has held two public consultations to help shape the emerging Local Plan:

- 'Scoping' (2022)[10] high-level consultation paper to seek early views on the potential scope of the new Local Plan with various open questions under six core themes; and

[8] West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[9] ONS (2024) Estimates of the population for England and Wales: Mid-2023 local authority population estimates. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[10] West Oxfordshire District Council (2022) Initial Scoping Consultation: Local Plan and Council Plan Consultation. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

- 'Ideas and Objectives' (2023)[11] consultation paper presenting a series of initial draft plan objectives, potential policy topics to cover, eight potential scenarios for the overall spatial strategy, and inviting suggestions on potential land uses across the district via a 'call for sites' exercise.

1.3.3 Once adopted, the new Local Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the district covering the period up to 2041, replacing and updating the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 (adopted 2018)[12].

1.3.4 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 Preferred Policy Options document is being consulted on alongside this SA Report, whereby the public will be asked to give their views on a draft vision, objectives and series of preferred policy options.

[11] West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[12] West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

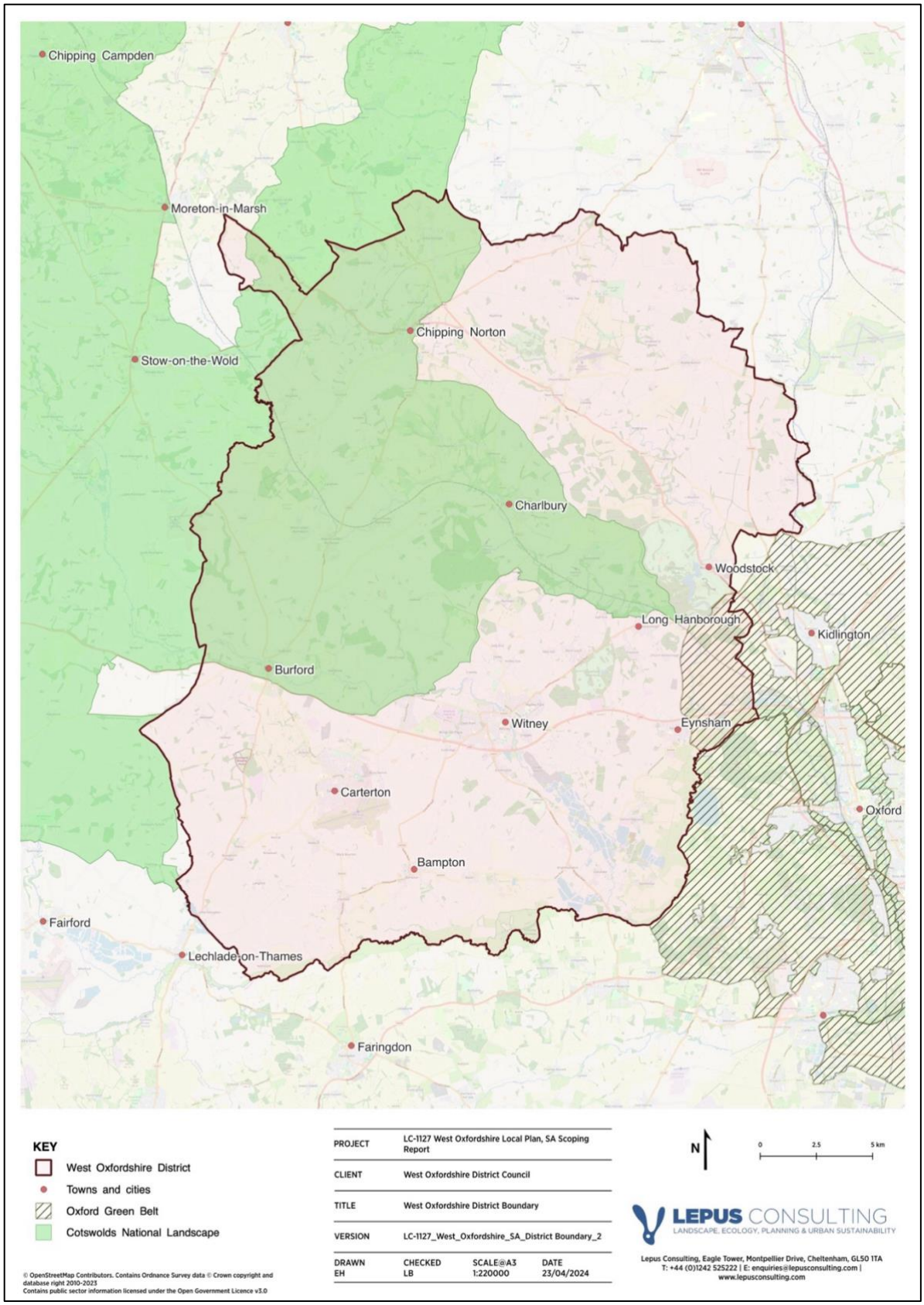

Figure 1.1: *The West Oxfordshire Local Plan area*

1.4 Integrated approach to SA and SEA

1.4.1 The requirements to carry out SA and SEA are distinct, although it is possible to satisfy both obligations using a single appraisal process.

1.4.2 The European Union Directive 2001/42/EC[13] (SEA Directive) applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes on land use, energy, waste, agriculture, transport and more (see Article 3(2) of the Directive for other plan or programme types). The objective of the SEA procedure can be summarised as follows:

1.4.3 *"the objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development"*.

1.4.4 The SEA Directive has been transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004[14] (SEA Regulations). Under the requirements of the SEA Directive and SEA Regulations, specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects must be subject to an environmental assessment. Therefore, it is a legal requirement for the Local Plan to be subject to SEA throughout its preparation.

1.4.5 SA is a UK-specific procedure used to appraise the impacts and effects of development plans. It is a legal requirement as specified by S19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004[15] and should be an appraisal of the economic, social and environmental sustainability of development plans. The present statutory requirement for SA lies in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012[16]. SA is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed plans or programmes to ensure environmental issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making.

1.4.6 Public consultation is an important aspect of the integrated SA/SEA process.

1.5 Best Practice Guidance

1.5.1 Government policy recommends that both SA and SEA are undertaken under a single sustainability appraisal process, which incorporates the requirements of the SEA Regulations. The approach for carrying out an integrated SA and SEA is based on best practice guidance, including the following:

[13] Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive). Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[14] The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[15] Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[16] The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents/made [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

- European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plan and programmes on the environment[17].
- Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive[18].
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2024) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[19].
- MHCLG and DLUHC (2024) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[20].
- Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment: Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans[21].

1.6 Sustainability Appraisal

1.6.1 This document is a component of the SA of the Local Plan. It provides an assessment of the emerging Local Plan vision, objectives, spatial strategy and preferred policy options, which forms part of Stage B of **Figure 1.2**, according to PPG on SA[22].

[17] European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plan and programmes on the environment. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[18] Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[19] MHCLG & DLUHC (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2 [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[20] MHCLG & DLUHC (2024) Planning practice guidance. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[21] RTPI (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment, Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans. Available at: https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1822/sea-sapracticeadvicefull2018c.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[22] DLUHC & MHCLG (2020) Guidance: Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

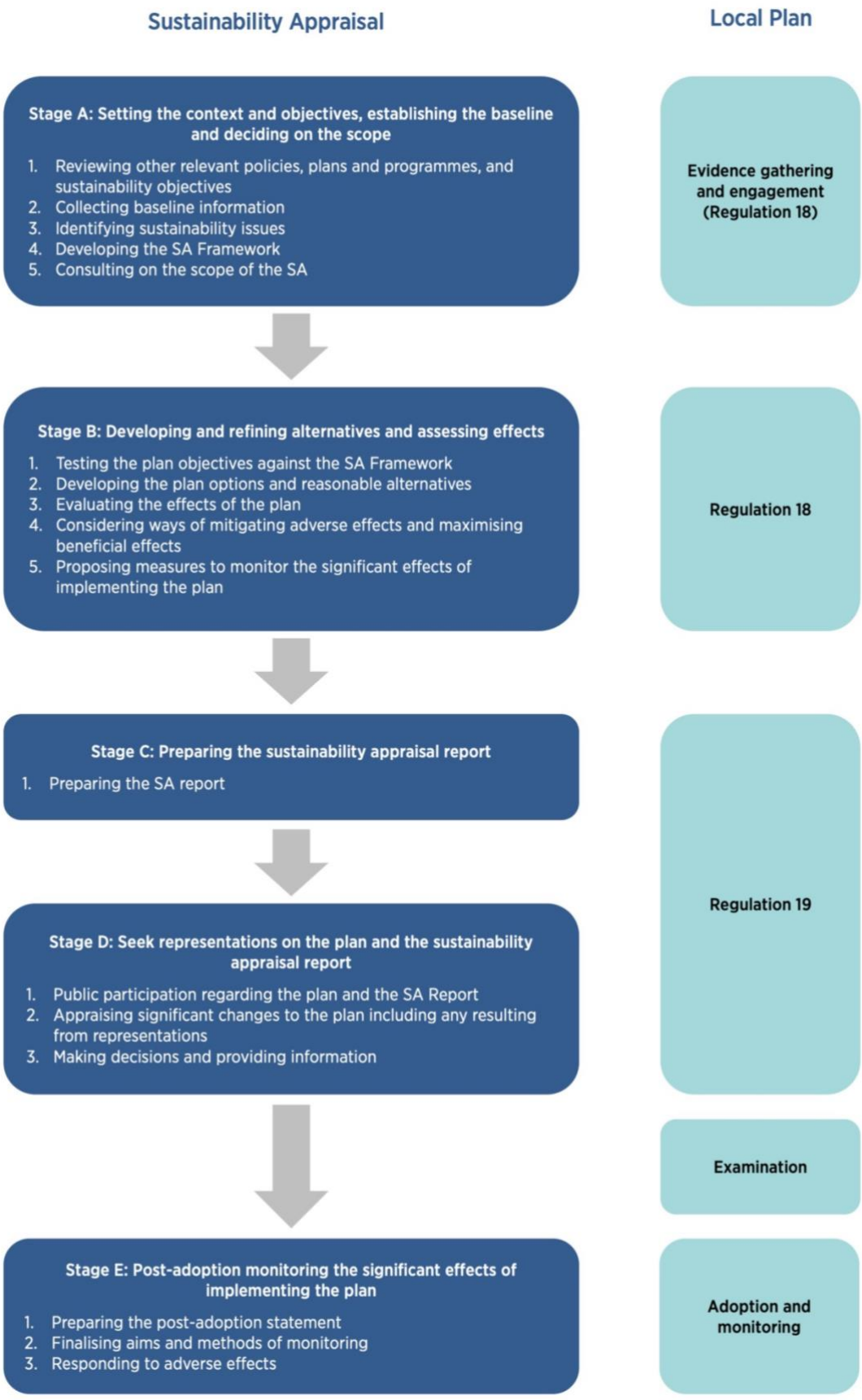

Figure 1.2: *Sustainability appraisal process*

1.7 The SA process so far

1.7.1 **Table 1.1** below presents a timeline of stages of the Local Plan and SA process so far. To date, this represents Stages A and B of **Figure 1.2**.

Table 1.1: *The Local Plan and SA process so far*

Date	Local Plan Stage	Sustainability Appraisal
August – October 2022	**Regulation 18 Initial 'Scoping' Consultation**[23] High-level consultation paper to seek early views on the potential scope of the new Local Plan with various open questions under six core themes.	No SA output.
August – October 2023	**Regulation 18 Ideas and Objectives Consultation**[24] Consultation paper presenting a series of initial draft plan objectives, potential policy topics to cover, eight potential scenarios for the overall spatial strategy, and inviting suggestions on potential land uses across the district via a 'call for sites' exercise.	No SA output.
April – June 2024	No formal Local Plan consultation paper.	**SA Scoping Report** The SA Scoping Report identified the scope and level of detail to be included in the SA, set out the key issues in relation to sustainability across West Oxfordshire, and presented the SA Framework and indicators to inform the assessments at later stages of the SA process. Subject to consultation with statutory bodies in accordance with legislative requirements.
June – August 2025	**Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options** The Preferred Policy Options consultation paper sets out the emerging approach for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, including a draft vision, objectives and policies (covering core policies, place-based policies, settlement strategies and development management policies).	**Regulation 18 SA Report (this report)** This SA Report includes an assessment of three housing options, four employment options, seven spatial options and 71 draft preferred policy options.

1.8 Scoping

1.8.1 In order to identify the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the SA process, an SA Scoping Report was prepared in April 2024.

1.8.2 The SA Scoping Report represents Stage A of the SA process (see **Figure 1.2**), and presents information in relation to:

[23] West Oxfordshire District Council (2022) Initial Scoping Consultation: Local Plan and Council Plan Consultation. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[24] West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

- Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives;
- Collecting baseline information;
- Identifying sustainability problems and key issues;
- Preparing the SA Framework; and
- Consultation arrangements on the scope of SA with the consultation bodies.

1.8.3 This Regulation 18 SA Report does not replicate baseline and contextual information set out in the SA Scoping Report.

1.8.4 The Scoping Report was consulted on between 30th April and 4th June 2024 with the statutory bodies Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The Scoping Report was updated in August 2024[25], taking into account the comments received during the consultation window from Natural England and Historic England.

1.8.5 Comments received during the consultation have also informed the preparation of this Regulation 18 SA Report, including from the Environment Agency, whose comments were received after the Scoping consultation had finished. **Table 1.2** summarises the responses received and how these comments have been incorporated into the SA process.

Table 1.2: *Consultation responses from statutory consultees on the SA Scoping Report*

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
Natural England	Chapter 4 Biodiversity, flora and fauna SEA topic	"*We support the consideration of protecting designated features and assets of European and national nature conservation value and locally important sites designated for their nature conservation and geodiversity value. This could be strengthened by also considering expanding networks and increasing their inter-connectivity. Useful guidance for Nature networks is available here: Nature Networks Evidence Handbook - NERR081.*"	Text added to Chapter 4 of the SA Scoping Report to reflect the need for improved connectivity for biodiversity assets.
Natural England	Chapter 5 Climatic factors SEA topic	*"This objective should include questions on enabling biodiversity to adapt to and be resilient to climate change. This should consider the restoration of natural processes and the avoidance of action that further degrades or constrains the natural environment's ability to respond to the effects of climate change."*	Resilience to climate change in the context of biodiversity is discussed within paragraph 5.2.9 of the SA Scoping Report, and forms a decision-making criterion within SA Objective 1 (see **Appendix A** of this report).
Natural England	Table 11.1 (SA Framework)	*"Bespoke indicators should be chosen relating to the outcomes of development management decisions. Whilst it is not Natural England's role to prescribe what indicators should be adopted, the following indicators may be appropriate: Biodiversity:*	The SA Framework has been updated accordingly, as presented in **Appendix A** of the Regulation 18 SA.

[25] Lepus Consulting (2024) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Scoping Report, Final – August 2024. Available at https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/n2sjfpi0/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-scoping-report-august-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
		• *Number of planning approvals that generated any adverse impacts on sites of acknowledged biodiversity importance.* • *Percentage of developments generating overall biodiversity enhancement.* • *Hectares of biodiversity habitat delivered through strategic site allocations.* *Landscape:* • *Amount of new development in the Cotswolds AONB with commentary on likely impact.* *Green infrastructure:* • *Percentage of the population having access to a natural greenspace within 400 metres of their home.* • *Length of greenways constructed.* • *Hectares of accessible open space per 1000 population."*	The green infrastructure indicators are included within SA Objective 10 (health and wellbeing).
Historic England	Table 1.2 (sustainability themes)	"*…suggest minor amendment in two of the bullets linked with the cultural heritage theme, to align more clearly with the terminology of the NPPF:* • *Designated and non-designated heritage assets ~~features~~* • *Setting of ~~cultural~~ heritage assets* • *Historic landscape character* • *Archaeological assets*"	Text amended within Table 1.2 of the SA Scoping Report.
Historic England	Various sections	Recommend amendments to the Scoping Report to recognise relationships between the historic environment and other topics considered in the SA/SEA process, including: • Biodiversity – managing and planning for nature and landscapes to deliver sustainable nature recovery. • Green infrastructure – recognise reference to GI impacts on setting of heritage assets, opportunities for enhancement, as well as physical and chemical conditions of heritage assets. • Climate action – potential retrofitting of existing building stock. • Flooding – which has potential "*…to impact the fabric and significance of heritage assets; for example, assets in the historic core of Witney."* • Landscape – encourage more explicit consideration of the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation project.	Text added to relevant sections of the SA Scoping Report. The points raised have been considered during the preparation of this Regulation 18 SA Report.
Historic England	Box 6.1 Key issues for cultural heritage	"*…suggest alternative wording as follows: "Any Proposals for development will need to carefully consider potential impacts on the significance of the impact of the setting or character on any heritage assets (including their setting), in order to minimise threats from increased housing demand and maintain or where possible enhance local character."* *I would suggest aiming higher than avoiding further deterioration of assets on the heritage at risk*	Text amended within Box 6.1 of the SA Scoping Report. The Regulation 19 SA will include an updated key issues table to indicate the full scope of issues

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
		register. How might the local plan support conservation or enhancement of such assets as part of a positive strategy for the historic environment? Aiming for avoiding further deterioration would lead either to no change in the number of assets on the national register, or worse (adding more assets)..."	considered throughout the SA process.
Historic England	Table 11.1 (SA Framework)	• Suggested wording "*Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and support the effective management of manage the historic environment*" • *"Might "restore" be amended to "where appropriate, restore or repair" to avoid giving a false impression of the extent of restoration needed."* • *"Conserve features of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest and, where necessary, encourage their conservation and renewal?" I am not entirely certain what is meant by "renewal" in this context. Might this be clarified?"* • *"I am not sure how informative the "Number of applications granted within conservation areas" will be, with respect to the decision-making criteria, other than to give a sense of the extent to which conservation areas are changing."* • *"…recommend referring to "heritage assets" on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, rather than "historic assets".*	The SA Framework has been updated accordingly, as presented in **Appendix A** of the Regulation 18 SA.
Historic England	Appendix A (PPP Review)	• *"Reference should be made to the Council's local listing programme; section 6 on cultural heritage refers to 980 locally listed buildings. Also, does the District Council maintain a local heritage at risk register? This should be confirmed with the Council's conservation team.* • *For completeness, it would be good to refer to the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), the national Heritage at Risk Register and the local Historic environment Record in the table of relevant policies, plans and programmes."* • *"It would be good to refer to Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in the baseline review and take stock of those which have up-to-date CAAMPs – perhaps by adding more detail to the relevant entry on page A21 in the Appendix. This is especially important in areas of development pressure, such as Chipping Norton and Witney & Cogges."*	These documents have been considered during the preparation of this Regulation 18 SA and will be further drawn on in the next SA output that includes evaluation of reasonable alternative sites. The Regulation 19 SA will include the full updated PPP Review including reference to all available evidence documents.

Environment Agency	PPP Review and Local Plan evidence base	• Recommend a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is prepared and strongly advise the Water Cycle Study is updated to inform the Local Plan.
		• Suggest referring to guidance documents:
		  ○ Planning Practice Guidance - Flood risk section
		  ○ Environment Agency SFRA Guidance.
			The Council has commissioned an update of both its Level 1 SFRA and Phase 1 Water Cycle Study to inform the new Local Plan 2041. The latest available evidence has been used to inform the assessments carried out at the

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
		○ Flood and Water Management Act 2010 ○ Flood Risk Regulations 2009 ○ Strategic flood risk assessment good practice guide. ○ Water cycle studies guidance and planning practice guidance – Water supply, wastewater and water quality ○ The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection (publishing.service.gov.uk)	Regulation 18 stage. The Regulation 19 SA will include the full updated PPP Review including reference to all available evidence documents.
Environment Agency	Key issues	"*…the Environment Agency would expect the WODC local plan to cover these range of topics including, but not limited to:* • *Net Gain - an approach to managing the environment that leaves it in a measurably better state* • *Flood risk management - ensuring development is steered towards areas of lowest flood risk, underpinned by a robust and up-to-date strategic flood risk assessment that follows our guidance. Securing contributions to flood risk management infrastructure to unlock development potential* • *Climate change - ensuring policies, site allocations and design of development takes climate change into account* • *Strategic water planning - quality, quantity and efficiency to support new development and safeguard the environment* • *Drainage and infrastructure - ensuring new development has adequate infrastructure to manage wastewater and surface water disposal* • *Green and blue infrastructure - for flood risk management, water quality management and biodiversity* • *Contaminated land - bringing land back into beneficial use* • *Water Framework Directive objectives - no deterioration and water body improvements* • *Biodiversity - safeguarding protected species and habitats, highlighting opportunities for habitat creation and* • *Waste management - advising on waste management strategies and providing advice that spans the planning and permitting interface*."	Recommendations have been made to WODC, including relating to further potential evidence gathering, in **Chapter 7** of this report. The key issues noted have been considered during the preparation of the Regulation 18 SA. The Regulation 19 SA will include an updated key issues table to indicate the full scope of issues considered throughout the SA process.
Environment Agency	Table 11.1 (SA Framework)	• "*Under SA topic – Biodiversity and geodiversity (Conserve, enhance and restore the district's biodiversity and geodiversity), we suggest that one of the decision-making criteria should be – 'avoid damage and deterioration'.* • *Under SA topic – Water and SA objective (Maintain and improve water quality and ensure efficient use of water resources), we suggest that additional decision-making criteria should*	The SA Framework has been updated accordingly, as presented in **Appendix A** of the Regulation 18 SA.

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
		be – 'meet WFD/RBMP requirements' and 'change in water abstraction'."	

1.9 Signposting for this report

1.9.1 The Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** (this chapter) sets out the purpose, context and introduction to the Local Plan and the accompanying SA process.
- **Chapter 2** sets out the assessment methodology and scope of the appraisal.
- **Chapter 3** presents the assessment of the housing number options.
- **Chapter 4** presents the assessment of the employment number options.
- **Chapter 5** summarises the assessment of the spatial strategy options.
- **Chapter 6** summarises the assessment of the draft Local Plan policies.
- **Chapter 7** sets out a range of recommendations for WODC to consider as they develop the policies, options and proposals for the emerging Local Plan.
- **Chapter 8** sets out the conclusions and next steps for the SA.
- **Appendix A** presents the SA Framework.
- **Appendix B** contains the full assessment of spatial strategy options.
- **Appendix C** contains the full assessment of draft local plan policies.

2 Assessment methodology and scope of appraisal

2.1 Assessment of reasonable alternatives

2.1.1 Each of the elements of the Local Plan appraised in this report have been assessed for their likely impacts on each SA Objective of the SA Framework. The SA Framework, which is presented in its entirety in **Appendix A**, is comprised of 13 SA Objectives. **Table 2.1** summarises the SA Objectives and their relevance to the SEA themes as per Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations[26].

Table 2.1: *Summary of SA Objectives*

	SA Objectives	Relevance to SEA Regulations – Schedule 2
1	**Climate change mitigation:** Minimise West Oxfordshire District's contributions towards the causes of climate change	Climatic factors
2	**Climate change adaptation:** Adapt to the anticipated levels of climate change	Climatic factors and water
3	**Biodiversity and geodiversity:** Conserve, enhance and restore the district's biodiversity and geodiversity	Biodiversity, flora and fauna
4	**Landscape:** Conserve, enhance and manage the quality and character of landscapes and townscapes	Landscape
5	**Cultural heritage:** Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and support the effective management of the historic environment	Cultural heritage
6	**Air quality:** Protect and improve air quality, creating cleaner and healthier air	Air
7	**Water:** Maintain and improve water quality and ensure efficient use of water resources	Water
8	**Natural resources and waste:** Ensure efficient use of the district's soil and mineral resources and reduce waste	Soil and material assets
9	**Housing and equality:** Provide affordable, high quality and environmentally sound housing for all, whilst reducing crime and social deprivation	Population, human health and material assets
10	**Health and wellbeing:** Safeguard and improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in health	Population and human health
11	**Transport and accessibility:** Improve accessibility, increase the proportion of travel by sustainable modes, and reduce the need to travel	Population and material assets
12	**Education:** Increase access to education and improve attainment to develop and maintain a skilled workforce	Population and material assets
12	**Economy and employment:** Ensure sufficient employment land and premises are available to develop and support innovative and sustainable economic growth	Population and material assets
13	**Climate change mitigation:** Minimise West Oxfordshire District's contributions towards the causes of climate change	Climatic factors

[26] The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

2.1.2 The SA Framework is comprised of SA Objectives and decision-making criteria. Acting as yardsticks of sustainability performance, the SA Objectives are designed to represent the topics identified in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations[27]. Including the SEA topics in the SA Objectives helps to ensure that all environmental criteria of the SEA Regulations are represented. Consequently, the SA Objectives reflect all subject areas to ensure that the assessment process is transparent, robust and thorough.

2.1.3 It is important to note that the order of SA Objectives in the SA Framework does not infer prioritisation. The SA Objectives are at a strategic level and can potentially be open-ended. In order to focus each objective, decision-making criteria are presented in the SA Framework to be used during the appraisal of policies, sites and reasonable alternatives during the SA process.

2.1.4 The purpose of this document is to provide an appraisal of the proposed reasonable alternatives and options identified by WODC at the current Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options stage of plan making.

2.1.5 *"Where an environmental assessment is required by any provision of Part 2 of these Regulations, the responsible authority shall prepare, or secure the preparation of, an environmental report … [which] shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme".*

2.1.6 Where applicable, this document also provides information in relation to the likely characteristics of effects, as per the SEA Regulations (see **Box 2.1**). Subsequent stages of the Local Plan process and accompanying SA process are likely to involve further identification, description and evaluation of reasonable alternatives, including information on the likely characteristics of effects.

[27] Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations identifies the likely significant effects on the environment, including "*issues such as (a) biodiversity, (b) population,(c) human health, (d) fauna, (e) flora, (f) soil, (g) water, (h) air, (i) climatic factors, (j) material assets, (k) cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, (l) landscape and (m) the interrelationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).*"

***Box 2.1:** Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations*[28]

Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects (Schedule 1 of SEA Regulations)

The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:

- the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources;
- the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy;
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development;
- environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and
- the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).

Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
- the cumulative nature of the effects;
- the transboundary nature of the effects;
- the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents);
- the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
- special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;
- exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;
- intensive land-use; and
- the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, community or international protection status.

2.2 Impact assessment and determination of significance

2.2.1 Significance of effect is a combination of the sensitivity of receptors and the magnitude of anticipated impacts. Sensitivity can be expressed in relative terms, based on the principle that the more sensitive the resource, the greater the magnitude of the change, and as compared with the do-nothing comparison, the greater will be the significance of effect.

Sensitivity

2.2.2 Sensitivity has been measured through consideration as to how the receiving environment will be impacted by a plan proposal. This includes assessment of the value and vulnerability of the receiving environment, whether or not environmental quality standards will be exceeded, and, for example, if impacts will affect designated areas or landscapes.

2.2.3 A guide to the range of scales used in determining sensitivity is presented in **Table 2.2**. For most receptors, sensitivity increases with geographic scale.

[28] The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

Table 2.2: Impact sensitivity

Scale	Typical criteria
International/ national	Designations that have an international aspect or consideration of transboundary effects beyond national boundaries. This applies to effects and designations/receptors that have a national or international dimension.
Regional	This includes the regional and sub-regional scale, including county-wide level and regional areas.
Local	This is the district and neighbourhood scale.

Magnitude

2.2.4 Magnitude relates to the degree of change the receptor will experience, including the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact. Impact magnitude has been determined based on the susceptibility of a receptor to the type of change that will arise, as well as the value of the affected receptor (see **Table 2.3**).

Table 2.3: Impact magnitude

Impact magnitude	Typical criteria
High	• Likely total loss of or major alteration to the receptor in question; • Provision of a new receptor/feature; or • The impact is permanent and frequent.
Medium	Partial loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features; or The impact is one of the following: • Frequent and short-term; • Frequent and reversible; • Long-term (and frequent) and reversible; • Long-term and occasional; or • Permanent and occasional.
Low	Minor loss/alteration/improvement to one or more key features of the receptor; or The impact is one of the following: • Reversible and short-term; • Reversible and occasional; or • Short-term and occasional.

2.3 Significant effects

2.3.1 In this SA Report, a single value from **Table 2.4** has been allocated to each SA Objective for each aspect of the Local Plan that has been assessed. Justification for the classification of the impact for each SA Objective is presented in an accompanying narrative assessment text. This approach will be used in the assessment of all aspects of the Local Plan including all reasonable alternatives, options and policies that will be assessed through the SA process going forward.

2.3.2 The assessment of impacts and subsequent evaluation of significant effects is in accordance with Schedule 2 (6) of the SEA Regulations, where feasible, which states that the effects should include: "*short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, cumulative and synergistic effects*".

***Table 2.4:** Guide to assessing significant effects*

Significance	Definition (not necessarily exhaustive)
Major Negative --	The size, nature and location of a development proposal would be likely to: • Permanently degrade, diminish or destroy the integrity of a quality receptor, such as a feature of international, national or regional importance; • Cause a very high-quality receptor to be permanently diminished; • Be unable to be entirely mitigated; • Be discordant with the existing setting; and/or • Contribute to a cumulative significant effect.
Minor Negative -	• The size, nature and location of development proposals would be likely to: • Not quite fit into the existing location or with existing receptor qualities; and/or • Affect undesignated yet recognised local receptors.
Negligible 0	Either no impacts are anticipated, or any impacts are anticipated to be negligible.
Uncertain ?	It is uncertain whether impacts would be positive or adverse, or insufficient information is available for an appraisal to be made.
Minor Positive +	The size, nature and location of a development proposal would be likely to: • Improve undesignated yet recognised receptor qualities at the local scale; • Fit into, or with, the existing location and existing receptor qualities; and/or • Enable the restoration of valued characteristic features.
Major Positive ++	The size, nature and location of a development proposal would be likely to: • Enhance and redefine the location in a positive manner, making a contribution at a national or international scale; • Restore valued receptors which were degraded through previous uses; and/or • Improve one or more key elements/features/characteristics of a receptor with recognised quality such as a specific international, national or regional designation.

2.3.3 When selecting a single value to best represent the sustainability performance, and to understand the significance of effects of an option in terms of the relevant SA Objective, the precautionary principle[29] has been used. This is a worst-case scenario approach. If a positive effect is identified in relation to one criterion within the SA Framework (see the decision-making criteria of the SA Framework in **Appendix A**) and a negative effect is identified in relation to another criterion within the same SA Objective, the overall impact has been assigned as negative for that objective. It is therefore essential to appreciate that the recorded impacts are indicative, and that the accompanying assessment text provides a fuller explanation of the sustainability performance of the option or proposal being considered.

[29] The European Commission describes the precautionary principle as follows: "*If a preliminary scientific evaluation shows that there are reasonable grounds for concern that a particular activity might lead to damaging effects on the environment, or on human, animal or plant health, which would be inconsistent with protection normally afforded to these within the European Community, the Precautionary Principle is triggered*".

2.3.4 The assessment considers, on a strategic basis, the degree to which a location can accommodate change without adverse effects on valued or important receptors (identified in the baseline).

2.3.5 The level of effect has been categorised as negligible, minor or major. The nature of the significant effect can be either positive or negative depending on the type of development and the design and mitigation measures proposed. Likely impacts are not intended to be summed.

2.4 Methodology for assessment of options and policies

2.4.1 The appraisal of the housing options, employment options, spatial options and policies aims to assess their likely significant effects, based on the criteria set out in the SEA Regulations (see **Box 2.1**).

2.4.2 **Table 2.5** sets out a guide to how likely impacts have been determined in the assessment of options and policies within this report.

***Table 2.5:** Presenting likely impacts*

Likely Impact	Description	Impact Symbol
Major Positive Impact	The proposed option/policy contributes to the achievement of the SA Objective to a significant extent.	++
Minor Positive Impact	The proposed option/policy contributes to the achievement of the SA Objective to some extent.	+
Negligible Impact	The proposed option/policy has no effect or an insignificant effect on the achievement of the SA Objective.	0
Uncertain Impact	The proposed option/policy has an uncertain relationship with the SA Objective or insufficient information is available for an appraisal to be made.	?
Minor Negative Impact	The proposed option/policy prevents the achievement of the SA Objective to some extent.	-
Major Negative Impact	The proposed option/policy prevents the achievement of the SA Objective to a significant extent.	--

2.4.3 The appraisal commentary provided should be read alongside the identified impact symbols, as it is often difficult to distil the wide-ranging effects into one overall impact.

2.4.4 The appraisal has been prepared with reference to the local context and baseline information as set out in the SA Scoping Report.

2.4.5 As the SA progresses it will use the latest and most available sources of information.

2.5 Limitations of predicting effects

2.5.1 SA/SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates expert judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures.

2.5.2 The assessments in this report are based on the best available information, including secondary data provided to Lepus by the Council and information that is publicly available. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.

2.5.3 SA operates at a strategic level which uses available secondary data for the relevant SA Objective. Throughout the SA process, all identified reasonable alternatives, options and proposals will be assessed in the same way using the same method. Sometimes, in the absence of more detailed information, forecasting the potential impacts can require making reasonable assumptions based on the best available data and trends. However, all options must be assessed in the same way and any introduction of site-based detail should be made clear in the SA report as the new data could potentially introduce bias and skew the findings of the assessment process.

3 Assessment of housing options

3.1 Preface

3.1.1 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF[30] states that the minimum number of homes needed in an area should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method outlined in PPG[31]. For West Oxfordshire, a new Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA)[32] has been carried out using the Government's standard method and identifies a need for 905 dwellings per annum (dpa) in the period 2025 – 2041, equating to a total of 14,480 homes.

3.1.2 Within this context, WODC has identified three reasonable alternative housing options (see **Table 3.1**).

3.1.3 The first option is based on the previous 2023 standard method figure for West Oxfordshire of 549 dpa, which applied over the period 2025 – 2041 would equate to a total of 8,784 homes. Whilst WODC recognises that this is based on a methodology which has now been superseded, it was identified as a reasonable alternative for the purposes of consideration through this SA report so that the potential sustainability effects of the new standard method introduced via the NPPF in December 2024 and applying to plan-making with effect from April 2025, can be better understood.

3.1.4 The second option is based on West Oxfordshire's latest LHNA which identifies a housing need of 905 dwellings per annum in the 16-year period 2025 – 2041, or 14,480 in total.

3.1.5 The third option relates to housing supply rather than need and assumes that WODC purposefully plans for around 10% above the level of housing need identified under Option 2, which equates to around 16,000 new homes in the period 2025 – 2041. The purpose of identifying a 10% buffer is to allow for the potential non-delivery of some sites and ensure that the minimum level of housing need is fully met.

Table 3.1: *Three housing options identified by WODC*

Option	Description
Housing Option 1	8,784 dwellings based on 549 dpa using the 2023 standard method figure and applied to the period 2025 - 2041.
Housing Option 2	14,480 dwellings based on 905 dpa using the new (December 2024) standard method figure and applied to the period 2025 - 2041.
Housing Option 3	16,000 dwellings based on 905 dpa using the new (December 2024) standard method figure with a 10% buffer to account for potential non-implementation of some sites. Also applied to the period 2025 – 2041.

[30] MHCLG (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. December 2024. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[31] DLUHC and MHCLG (2024) Planning Practice Guidance. Available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-supply-and-delivery [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[32] ORS (2025) West Oxfordshire District Council Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) 2025. Draft, May 2025.

3.1.6 **Table 3.2** summarises the likely impacts of each housing option in relation to the 13 SA Objectives. The text within **sections 3.2–3.14** sets out the accompanying assessment narrative which explains how each overall impact was identified.

3.1.7 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to predict effects accurately, the sustainability impacts have been assessed at a high level and are reliant upon the current understanding of the baseline. These assessments have been based on information provided by WODC, as well as expert judgement. The options do not specify information regarding location, density or design, meaning that there is some uncertainty in all the assessments.

3.2 SA Objective 1 – Climate change mitigation

3.2.1 As a result of rising concerns over the impacts climate change, WODC declared a climate emergency in 2019[33]. This reflects regional concerns with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), and each of the other three district councils and one city council within Oxfordshire also declaring a climate emergency. Anthropogenic climate change is predominantly the result of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and CO_2 accounts for approximately 76% of total GHGs[34]. GHGs are emitted from a variety of sources, predominantly transport and construction activities.

3.2.2 Large-scale housing growth will be expected to increase GHG emissions during both the construction and occupation of development, including through increased traffic on local road networks which may act as barriers to achieving the set targets within the Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (2024)[35] for the Chipping Norton AQMA and Witney AQMA. All three housing options will result in a large quantum of growth which will significantly increase the per capita carbon footprint of West Oxfordshire without careful planning and management. Overall, there is potential for a significant adverse effect on climate change mitigation. Option 1 proposes the lowest number of dwellings with 8,784 dwellings, and as such, this option will be likely to lead to the lowest impact with regard to GHG emissions. Option 2 proposes 14,480 dwellings followed closely by Option 3 which proposes the greatest quantum of growth with 16,000 dwellings, which will likely lead to the greatest impact with regard to GHG emissions.

[33] WODC (2025) Climate action and what we are doing. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-action-and-what-we-are-doing [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[34] Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (2019). Global emissions. Available at: https://www.c2es.org/content/international-emissions/#:~:text=CO2%20accounts%20for%20about%2076,6%20percent%20to%20global%20emissions. [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[35] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024) Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), June 2024. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/jrjdqdnf/air-quality-annual-report-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.2.3 The extent of emissions produced by housing growth in West Oxfordshire could be mitigated in part through continued implementation of decarbonisation measures in the district which includes four large scale renewable energy generating facilities[36], and local initiatives including 'Park and Charge Oxfordshire' and 'Electric vehicle car club pilot'[37] as well as other actions identified in the ASR. The Council should encourage low carbon and renewable technologies such as avoiding the use of gas boilers in homes and promoting decentralised heat and energy networks, reducing reliance on energy from fossil fuels and subsequently reducing associated GHG emissions. National and local design policy[38] and guidance should be followed to ensure development is considering approaches to mitigate climate change.

3.2.4 The assessments of the three housing options are based on quantum alone and mitigation measures are not factored into the assessments. It is assumed that all three housing options will have the equal opportunities to incorporate mitigation measures, which will be further considered through the assessment of policies within the Local Plan.

3.3 SA Objective 2 – Climate change adaptation

3.3.1 Climate change is anticipated to increase the risk of extreme weather events. A total of 18 significant flood events, 10 named storms, eight cold snaps, four major heatwaves and three periods of drought have been recorded in Oxfordshire since 2007[39]. The district is affected to varying degrees by fluvial (river) flooding and groundwater flooding. A small proportion of the district lies within flood zones 2 and 3, mostly prominent along the River Thames, and its tributaries, that comprises the southern border of the district. Small areas of surface water flood risk (SWFR) can be found within the district, primarily along watercourses in the south east and north of the district.

[36] LDA Design (2016) Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy Assessment and Strategy for West Oxfordshire, October 2016. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/ys2okqht/renewable-energy-and-low-carbon-energy-assessment-2016.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[37] OxonAir (2024). Local Initiatives. Available at: www.oxonair.uk/local-initiatives [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[38] TCPA and RTPI (2023). The Climate Crisis. A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change. Available at: www.tcpa.org.uk/resources/the-climate-crisis-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-planning-for-climate-change/ [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[39] AtkinsRealis (2024). Oxfordshire County Council – Climate resilience, Current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire. April 2024. Available at: https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/2024/12/CEQ15-Climate-Vulnerability-Assessment.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.3.2 West Oxfordshire is a largely rural district, and the large quantum of development proposed under each of the three housing options will increase the extent of impermeable surfaces and potentially result in loss of open spaces and green infrastructure (GI). Integration of open spaces and GI can aid adaptation to climate change, for example through providing protection from extreme weather such as hot summers[40], particularly important to the district in respect to the extreme temperatures recorded across Oxfordshire in July 2022, reaching highs of 38°C in Oxford[41]. Alongside frequent flooding which presents the most significant climate risk to the district, drought is another climate risk which threatens the district and wider county, where three periods of droughts have been recorded since 2007 in Oxfordshire. Without additional climate adaptation, Thames Water predicts that a shortfall of 376 million litres of water per day by 2035 could be expected[42].

3.3.3 Overall, as the location and site context of the proposed housing provision is unknown, the potential impacts of all three housing growth options on climate change adaptation is uncertain.

3.4 SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

3.4.1 Designated biodiversity assets within West Oxfordshire include Oxford Meadows SAC which is partially located within the east of the district, as well as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Large areas of the district's GI network are also likely to serve as important wildlife corridors, facilitating movement of species and linking to the wider countryside. Increasing habitat fragmentation across the district as a result of development and infrastructure has increased the isolation of habitats and the species which they support[43].

3.4.2 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process will identify and explore potential impact pathways of the Local Plan on the integrity of European sites including SACs designated under the Habitats Directive, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the Birds Directive, and Ramsar sites (as required under paragraph 194 of the NPPF). The initial HRA Screening[44] identified potential for adverse effects on European sites associated with habitat loss, air pollution, water quality/quantity, and/or recreational pressure, at Oxford Meadows SAC, Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC; these will be explored in greater detail in the Appropriate Assessment at later Local Plan stages.

[40] Environment Agency (2018) Climate change impacts and adaptation. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/758983/Climate_change_impacts_and_adaptation.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[41] AtkinsRealis (2024). Oxfordshire County Council – Climate resilience, Current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire. April 2024. Available at: https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/2024/12/CEQ15-Climate-Vulnerability-Assessment.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[42] Thames Water (2024). Thames Water Resources Management Plan 2024. Available at: https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/about-us/regulation/water-resources/wrmp24/overview.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[43] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024). Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030. Restoring and enhancing West Oxfordshire's natural environment. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/nvtbk0ob/nature-recovery-plan-2024-to-2030.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[44] LUC (2025) West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan (Regulation 18) HRA Screening Report. Draft, June 2025

3.4.3 Increased pressure on biodiversity is likely as a result of development under any of the three housing options (although potentially to the least extent under Option 1), with adverse impacts at the landscape scale despite any biodiversity net gain (BNG) provisions at the site level, owing to the large quanta of housing proposed. Overall, a minor negative impact on biodiversity is identified for all three housing options.

3.5 SA Objective 4 – Landscape

3.5.1 The Cotswolds National Landscape encompasses approximately one third of the district, in the north west. The Cotswolds is the largest National Landscape in England and is recognised by its rich, diverse and high-quality landscape encompassing flower-rich limestone grasslands and ancient broadleaved woodland[45].

3.5.2 Key features of the landscape in West Oxfordshire comprise rolling limestone uplands, pastoral river valleys, historic parkland, remnants of ancient forests, low-lying farmland and riverside meadows, according to the West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (1998)[46]. The district contains land parcels considered to be of high landscape value and high sensitivity to new development, as identified within area specific studies and Landscape and Visual reviews in Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton[47] [48].

3.5.3 Three special landscape policy areas were identified in the adopted Local Plan process[49]. These comprise the Lower Windrush Valley Project Area, Wychwood Project Area and Windrush in Witney Project Area. These are identified for special landscape protection, conservation and management. Landscape policy areas such as the three identified will expect to help protect sensitive landscapes from adverse impacts, such development proposed through the three housing options. However, given the high landscape value and high sensitivity of the landscape across the district, the delivery of large-scale housing as a result of development proposed through the three housing options is likely to result in a significant adverse impact on the landscape character, including on the special characteristics of the Cotswolds National Landscape, without careful planning.

3.5.4 Overall, there is potential for a significant adverse impact on the landscape for the three housing options. Although dependent on location, there is potential that Option 1 will allow for greater scope to avoid the most sensitive locations than Options 2 or 3.

[45] Cotswolds National Landscape (2025). Special qualities of the Cotswolds – A National Treasure. Available at: https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-landscape-2/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[46] Atlantic Consultants (1998) West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/cpqn2fj0/west-oxfordshire-landscape-assessment-1998.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[47] Amanda Hopwood Landscape Consultancy (2007, 2009, 2009) Witney Landscape Assessment; Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment; and Carterton Landscape Assessment. Each Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/local-plan-evidence-base/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[48] Kirkham Landscape Planning (2012, 2014, 2015) Landscape and Visual Review of Submissions for Carterton and Witney Strategic Development Options; Landscape and Visual Review of Chipping Norton Strategic Site Option; and Landscape and Visual Review of Two Additional Submissions for Witney Strategic Development Options. Each Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/local-plan-evidence-base/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[49] West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.6 SA Objective 5 – Cultural heritage

3.6.1 Historic assets are dispersed across the district. Within West Oxfordshire, there are 42 Grade I Listed Buildings (LBs), 214 Grade II* LBs, 2,950 Grade II LBs, 17 Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs), 139 Scheduled Monuments (SMs) and 53 Conservation Areas (CAs). The Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) also lies in the east of the district. Five heritage assets are listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, including four SMs and one Grade II* LB[50].

3.6.2 All three housing options propose to deliver a significant number of homes across the district. It is possible that a proportion of new development will be located in proximity to designated heritage assets, or interrupt views to and from historic landmarks, with potential for adverse effects on the historic significance of the assets and their settings, in particular the rural setting of heritage assets that are located in West Oxfordshire's open countryside.

3.6.3 Positive effects can also be secured for the historic environment as a result of new development, for example through heritage-led regeneration schemes, and appropriate use of materials and methods to repair and maintain historic assets[51]. Furthermore, following guidance from Historic England[52], development can also provide opportunities to enhance historic assets through improved energy efficiency, including through the insulation of roofs, walls and lofts and secondary glazing of windows.

3.6.4 Overall, as the location, site context, design principles and proximity of the proposed housing growth to heritage assets is unknown, the potential impacts of development of all three housing options on cultural heritage is uncertain.

3.7 SA Objective 6 – Air quality

3.7.1 There are two small Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within West Oxfordshire District, both declared in 2005 due to exceedances in nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)[53]. As stated in the most recent Air Quality ASR (2024)[54], air pollution in the district is primarily caused by road traffic. Development expected as a result of all three housing options will increase the number of road users across the district to some extent, and could also potentially exacerbate existing congestion issues. Congestion is particularly prevalent within existing street canyons as described in the ASR, with implications for air pollution through increased NO_2 and particulate matter, which are harmful to human and ecosystem heath.

[50] Historic England (2025). Heritage at Risk Register. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/results/?advsearch=1&Lpa=West%20Oxfordshire&searchtype=harsearch [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[51] Historic England (2025). Technical Guidance and Research. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[52] Historic England (2024). Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[53] DEFRA (2025). AQMAs Declared by West Oxfordshire District Council. Available at: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/local-authorities?la_id=309 [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[54] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024) Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), June 2024. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/jrjdqdnf/air-quality-annual-report-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.7.2 Furthermore, as discussed for SA Objective 2 (climate change adaptation) and SA Objective 3 (biodiversity), the large scale of development could result in the loss of some of the district's GI and open space and therefore prevent the ecosystem services that GI can offer in regard to filtration of air pollutants and improving air quality.

3.7.3 Overall, all three housing options will be expected to increase air pollution in the district to some extent, either through the construction and occupation of development or through transport related emission. The housing growth under any of the three options will have potential to lead to a significant adverse effect on air quality without careful planning and transport interventions. Option 1 may perform slightly better than Options 2 or 3, given that it will deliver a lower number of homes, which is likely to result in comparatively lower traffic generation.

3.8 SA Objective 7 – Water

3.8.1 The large-scale development under all three options will place additional pressure on existing water supply and infrastructure and it is possible that development in some areas may lead to exceedances in the capacity of available water supply and wastewater infrastructure. Development under all of the three housing options will need to be carefully planned given that West Oxfordshire is an area of 'water stress' and Thames Water's latest Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2024[55] forecasts potential shortages of water to 2041. A number of Sewage Treatment Works (STW) serving the area have been operating outside of their permits in recent years including Bampton, Carterton, Woodstock, Chipping Norton and Witney along with Church Hanborough STWs.

3.8.2 The main watercourses flowing through West Oxfordshire include the Evenlode, Windrush, Glyme, Shill Brook and their tributaries, and the River Thames. One small section of groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 3 is located within the district, to the east of Chipping Norton. Construction activities in or near a watercourse have potential to result in adverse impacts on the hydromorphology, quantity and flow of the watercourse. Furthermore, construction activities can also potentially increase the risk of groundwater contamination within an SPZ, impacting the quality or status of groundwater sources. Whilst water pollution impacts are dependent on the nature, scale and location of development, which is currently unknown, it is likely that the large scale of growth under either of the three housing options will have potential for impacts on water quality at both surface and groundwater level including downstream effects at greater distances.

3.8.3 Overall, a minor negative impact is identified for all three housing options on water quantity and quality. Option 1 will result in the lowest housing number and therefore could potentially perform slightly better than Options 2 or 3 in this regard.

[55] Thames Water (2024). Thames Water Resources Management Plan 2024. Available at: www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/about-us/regulation/water-resources/wrmp24/overview.pdf [Date accessed: 27/06/25]

3.9 SA Objective 8 – Natural resources and waste

3.9.1 West Oxfordshire is largely rural and therefore the large-scale growth expected as a result of all three housing options will be expected to result in the loss of undeveloped land. The district supports large areas of high-quality agricultural land, where approximately 84% of the district is classified as ALC Grade 1, 2 and 3, potentially representing BMV agricultural land, with Grade 1 as the highest and excellent quality agricultural land[56]. The majority of the district is classified as ALC Grade 3, with smaller sections in the south classified as ALC Grade 2 and small proportions of Grade 1 in the west.

3.9.2 It is likely that development associated with all three housing options will lead to significant loss of previously undeveloped land, including BMV agricultural land, and could potentially result in adverse impacts on soil stocks, such as by direct loss of soil (e.g. excavating), compaction, increased erosion, breakdown of structure and loss of nutrients and an increased risk of soil pollution and contamination during the construction phase. The loss of soil and the provision of ecosystem services provided which includes carbon sequestration and water filtration, is expected to be a permanent and irreversible impact. Given that Option 1 proposes the lowest number of homes, it is likely to require a comparatively lower amount of undeveloped land with lesser adverse effects.

3.9.3 The total household waste collected in 2023/2024 for West Oxfordshire was 43,160 tonnes, with 57% sent for reuse, recycling or composting[57]. It is assumed that new residents will have an annual waste production in line with the national average of 377kg per person. All three housing options will be likely to significantly increase household waste and place additional pressure on existing waste infrastructure and the Council's collective target with local authorities in Oxfordshire to reach 70% recycling and composting for household waste by 2030[58].

3.9.4 Overall, development at all three housing options has potential to result in a significant adverse effect on natural resources and waste.

3.10 SA Objective 9 – Housing and equality

3.10.1 The average house price in West Oxfordshire in April 2025 was £415,000, representing a 4.4% increase from April 2024 and was a higher rise than the surrounding South East region which recorded a 3% increase over the same period[59]. First-time buyers in the district have also paid a higher amount than the previous year.

[56] Natural England (2021). Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development/guide-to-assessing-development-proposals-on-agricultural-land [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[57] DEFRA (2025). Local authority collected waste generation annual results 2023/24. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[58] West Oxfordshire District Council. Requirements for refuse and recycling provision at new developments. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/gjyfjvyk/waste-and-recycling-criteria-for-new-developments.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[59] ONS (2025). Housing prices in West Oxfordshire. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000181/# [Date accessed: 19/06/25]

3.10.2 Housing Options 2 and 3 will provide the district with a significant supply of housing to meet the required housing need of at least 14,480 homes according to the latest standard method calculation. As a result of the large-scale housing growth, increased affordability and a greater mix of housing may be provided. Both options will result in a major positive impact on housing provision across the district; pursuing a higher housing number through Option 3 at 16,000 homes could potentially provide the most opportunities for the greatest range of housing types and cater for a wider range of needs and ensure flexibility in housing delivery timescales.

3.10.3 Option 1 will not satisfy the identified housing need based on the latest calculation, providing only 8,784 homes, and will therefore be less likely to cater to the needs of local residents. The consequent housing shortfall could lead to rising socio-economic challenges for residents, including worsening affordability of homes, increasing rents, and potentially leading to increased homelessness and overcrowding. A minor negative impact is identified.

3.11 SA Objective 10 – Health and wellbeing

3.11.1 There are no NHS hospitals providing an Accident and Emergency (A&E) service within West Oxfordshire, with the nearest being the John Radcliffe Hospital approximately 10km east of the district boundary, Horton General Hospital approximately 9km north of the district boundary and the Great Western Hospital approximately 17km south of the district boundary. According to data provided by WODC, the district includes 13 GP surgeries. There are also two community hospitals providing rehabilitation and palliative care (Witney Community Hospital) and outpatient and maternity services (Chipping Norton War Memorial Community Hospital). The expected population increase as a result of the large quantum of housing growth to be delivered as a result of all three housing options will place additional pressures on healthcare facilities.

3.11.2 There are eight leisure facilities located across the district which serve local communities and various open spaces which includes allotments, amenity greenspace, parks and recreation grounds, accessible and private natural greenspace and provision for children and young people. The expected population increase as a result of the large quantum of housing growth to be delivered under all three housing options will increase pressure on leisure facilities and open space, potentially preventing the overarching aims of the West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2022)[60] to 'protect', 'enhance' and 'provide' outdoor sports facilities, without careful planning.

3.11.3 New housing growth could potentially lead to greater opportunities for delivering infrastructure, such as healthcare facilities or provision of GI and open spaces, however, such details are unknown at this stage. There is potential that seeking a higher housing number under Option 2 or 3 may lead to higher density development, with reduced area of accessible greenspace per capita; this will however be dependent on policy provisions. Overall, without any locational information as to where new development will be delivered under the three housing options, the impacts on health and wellbeing are uncertain.

[60] West Oxfordshire District Council (2022). West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan Report, February 2022. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/va0jpoje/west-oxfordshire-playing-pitch-strategy-and-action-plan-2022.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.12 SA Objective 11 – Transport and accessibility

3.12.1 West Oxfordshire's strategic road network comprises the A40 which runs through the district east-west, alongside the A424, A4095, A415, A44 and A361. Networks of B roads and other minor roads connect the district's rural settlements. The road network presents challenges with congestion, particularly at peak travel times, which will need to be a key consideration when planning for new housing growth. West Oxfordshire is well served by the railway network, with eight stations along two main rail lines passing through the district. Owing to the rural nature of the district, access to bus services vary. The district is however well connected by high frequency bus services that link Witney and Carterton to Oxford City. Multiple National Cycle Network routes run through the west of the district, facilitating active modes of travel.

3.12.2 The location of new development under the three housing options is unknown, and therefore the ability of new residents to travel via sustainable and active transport methods is uncertain. New housing growth could potentially lead to greater opportunities for delivering transport infrastructure, such as provision of new bus routes or increased services and improvements to the Public Right of Way (PRoW) network and cycle network; these opportunities may arise under either of the housing options.

3.13 SA Objective 12 – Education

3.13.1 According to data provided by WODC, the district contains 51 primary schools and seven secondary schools, providing residents with access to a range of education opportunities. The district has generally high levels of qualifications, with 62% of the district having a higher degree level qualification or equivalent and 84% with two or more A levels or advanced qualifications[61].

3.13.2 Further education provision is limited in the district. Sixth form and college provision are met by The Witney Campus of Abingdon and Witney College. There are no universities within West Oxfordshire itself, however, the district is located within a commutable distance to Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University and the Royal Agricultural College.

3.13.3 The three housing options do not provide any geographic prescription in terms of where development will be located and therefore the proximity of new residents to educational facilities, or sustainable travel modes to reach schools, is uncertain. New housing growth could potentially lead to greater opportunities for the provision of education facilities, but this is likely to be proportionate to the increase in population and as such the three options are likely to perform similarly.

[61] ONS (2024) Labour Market Profile – West Oxfordshire. Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157327/report.aspx#tabquals [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.14 SA Objective 13 – Economy and employment

3.14.1 The West Oxfordshire District has a strong tourism industry which is primarily due to popular attractions such as Blenheim Palace, and market towns such as Witney and Burford. The district's location provides functional economic links to Oxford City, Cherwell District and Vale of White Horse District. Key areas for industry and employment include Oxford Science Park, RAF Brize Norton and Siemens and Abbot. However, out-commuters present a challenge to the district in attracting and maintaining large multinational businesses and large employment areas. It is estimated that 7,541 West Oxfordshire residents commute to Oxford, 3,321 residents commute to Cherwell and 3,051 residents commute to Vale of White Horse[62].

3.14.2 Dependent on the specific location of housing development, the increased housing development as a result of the three housing options could result in reduced travel times and proximity to work/employment locations for people living and working in the district. An increased number of residents will contribute to higher levels of spending in the district and contribute to boosting the local economy and creating new jobs. Furthermore, a growing population will inherently increase the number of skilled workers in the district and contribute to a more diverse workforce.

3.14.3 Due to the large number of out-commuters, the increased housing growth may not solely benefit the district's economy, however positive impacts are likely to an extent. The three housing options are identified to result in a minor positive impact on the economy. Option 3, which seeks the highest housing number, may perform the best in this regard.

3.15 Conclusions

3.15.1 In order for sustainability effects to be understood in relation to the environmental baseline, the assessments require details of the size, nature and location of the proposals. Housing options only provide 'nature', in this case housing. Without the size and location details, and owing to the focus of quanta alone in these assessments, only a high-level evaluation can take place. There is particular uncertainty in the appraisal of housing options against SA Objectives 2 (Climate Change Adaptation) and 5 (Cultural Heritage), as the potential for effects on these topics is more largely dependent on the site location, layout and design than other SA Objectives.

3.15.2 As Option 1 proposes the smallest housing number (8,784 homes) of the three options, it is likely to perform best against environmentally-focused objectives, such as SA Objectives 3 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), 4 (Landscape) and 8 (Natural Resources), due to the likelihood of a reduced area of previously undeveloped land required to deliver this number of homes, and consequently reduced potential for adverse effects on ecological networks, sensitive landscapes and soil resources. Option 1 may also lead to reduced potential for adverse effects on SA Objective 1 (Climate Change Mitigation), 6 (Air Quality) and 7 (Water), given that a lower housing number is likely to result in reduced population growth, traffic generation and pollution, although adverse effects are likely to some extent.

[62] Oxfordshire County Council. ONS 2011 Oxfordshire analysis. District based travel to work. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/travel [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

3.15.3 Depending on the location of growth, there is potential that the higher quantum of growth sought under Option 2 (14,480 homes) and Option 3 (16,000 homes) may require WODC to pursue higher density development compared to Option 1, thereby increasing the challenges faced with regard to the capacity of infrastructure, such as schools, healthcare and transport. On the other hand, there is also potential that a higher housing number, such as through Options 2 or 3, will aid the delivery of supporting infrastructure through developer contributions and other policy requirements that could combat this to a greater extent. The effect of all options against SA Objectives 10 (Health and Wellbeing), 11 (Transport and Accessibility) and 12 (Education) is uncertain.

3.15.4 Seeking to deliver a higher housing number under Options 2 and 3 may stimulate greater investment and spending in the district and boost the local economy. By meeting the identified housing need, and providing a buffer to allow for under-delivery, Option 3 is identified as the best performing option against SA Objectives 9 (Housing and Equality) and 13 (Economy and Employment). Option 3 is most likely to ensure that the varying housing needs of West Oxfordshire's residents can be met, in contrast to Option 1 that could lead to increased socio-economic challenges as a result of under-delivery of housing compared to the latest evidenced housing need.

3.15.5 It is difficult to identify an overall best performing option based on quantum alone. Any housing number will require careful planning and integration of supporting infrastructure, making effective use of land and ensuring compliance with other aspects of the evidence base to ensure that sustainable development can be achieved.

3.16 Selection and rejection

3.16.1 Following consideration of the above SA assessment of housing options, **Box 3.1** sets out WODC's commentary regarding the preferred approach.

Box 3.1: *WODC selection and rejection of housing options*

Option 1 has been tested for completeness and reflects the fact that when the preparation of the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 began, the standard method level of housing need for the district was around 549 dwellings per annum.

However, the new NPPF published in December 2024 has introduced an alternative standard method which applies to plan making from 12 March 2025 and has served to increase West Oxfordshire's housing need to around 905 dwellings per annum – according to the most recent LHNA. The NPPF is clear that the standard method determines the minimum number of homes needed and as such, Option 1 is not considered an appropriate approach to take forward through the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 because it has, in essence, been superseded.

Option 2 reflects the NPPF and the most recent assessment of housing need for West Oxfordshire. There is however a risk in setting a local plan housing requirement that aligns precisely with the identified level of need, insofar as there is always a possibility that some sites will not come forward as quickly as expected, or even at all. This is the case for a number of the sites that were allocated in the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

In providing for a c.10% 'buffer', Option 3 provides a degree of flexibility to account for this possibility and would help to ensure that the minimum level of housing need is met, even if some sites do not come forward as expected. It also provides a degree of flexibility in respect of Oxford City's unmet housing need – an issue which West Oxfordshire has previously agreed to address but that at the present time, is hard to quantify in the period up to 2041.

4 Assessment of employment options

4.1 Preface

4.1.1 The NPPF[63] and accompanying PPG[64] require Local Planning Authorities to set out an overall strategy for the provision of employment development to meet needs, based upon robust evidence. Paragraph 85 of the NPPF makes clear that "*significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development*".

4.1.2 WODC has commissioned an Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) to provide a detailed evidence base in order to allow for an appropriate supply and mix of employment land and premises to be planned for, and a strategy for balancing supply and demand.

4.1.3 According to the ENA (2025)[65], there is a net requirement for between approximately 9,084m^2 and 40,965m^2 office floorspace (use class E(g)(i) offices; and E(g)(ii) research and development) in West Oxfordshire up to 2041. This would translate to a land requirement for office uses of between 0.9ha and 6.4ha. Additionally, the analysis predicts a net requirement for between 24,086m^2 and 107,588m^2 of industrial floorspace (use class E(g)(iii) light industrial; B2 general industrial; and B8 storage and distribution). This would translate to a land requirement for industrial uses of between 3.5ha and 25.0ha.

4.1.4 Based on the findings of the emerging ENA, WODC has identified four options for the level of employment growth to be sought through the emerging Local Plan. These options, based upon different indicative scenarios, are presented in **Table 4.1**. Further details and assumptions relating to these scenarios can be found within the ENA.

Table 4.1: *Four employment options identified by WODC*

Option	Office space	Industrial space	Total
Scenario 1 – Labour Demand Based on the floorspace and land needed to accommodate expected employment growth in West Oxfordshire, as per the latest employment forecasts derived from Oxford Economics data.	4.5 ha	3.5 ha	8 ha
Scenario 2 – Labour Supply Based on the latest population and housing growth projections, as derived from Office for National Statistics data and the 2025 ORS Local Housing Needs Assessment.	6.3 ha	5.4 ha	11.7 ha
Scenario 3 – Past Trends Trend-based scenario based on the continuation of historical take-up rates, sourced from CoStar. This analyses take-up rates by use class over the last 15 years and extrapolates these trends over the assessment period.	0.9 ha	25 ha	25.9 ha

[63] MHCLG (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. December 2024. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 07/04/25]

[64] MHCLG (2025) Guidance: Housing and economic needs assessment. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments#economic-need [Date accessed: 07/04/25]

[65] AECOM (2025) Economic Needs Assessment: West Oxfordshire District Council. June 2025.

Option	Office space	Industrial space	Total
Scenario 4 – Policy Driven Based on employment levels that could be possible with an ambitious economic development strategy reflecting priority sectors as set out for Oxfordshire and/or the district in available plans and strategies.	6.4 ha	8.1 ha	14.5 ha

4.1.5 **Table 4.2** summarises the likely impacts of each employment option in relation to the 13 SA Objectives. The text within **sections 4.2–4.14** sets out the accompanying assessment narrative which explains how each overall impact was identified.

4.1.6 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to predict effects accurately, the sustainability impacts have been assessed at a high level and are reliant upon the current understanding of the baseline. These assessments have been based on information provided by WODC, as well as expert judgement. The options do not specify information regarding location, density or design, meaning that there is some uncertainty in all the assessments.

4.2 SA Objective 1 – Climate change mitigation

4.2.1 All four options propose to deliver new employment land, including a total of 8ha under Scenario 1, 11.7ha under Scenario 2, 25.9ha under Scenario 3 and 14.5ha under Scenario 4. All options have potential to result in increased GHG emissions during construction and occupation, potentially leading to additional heavy goods vehicle (HGV) journeys; Option 3 might therefore lead to the highest emissions in this respect owing to the greater proportion of industrial uses to be included under this scenario. Although, the emissions likely to be generated as a result of the development under any scenario would be dependent on the nature of the employment land proposed, and the potential for low- or zero-carbon and renewable energy schemes to be incorporated, which is unknown in this high-level assessment. The overall impact of all four employment options on climate change mitigation is uncertain.

4.2.2 The extent of emissions produced by employment growth could be mitigated to some extent through local initiatives including 'Park and Charge Oxfordshire' and 'Electric vehicle car club pilot'[66] as well as other actions identified in the ASR (2024)[67], reducing the emissions generated from additional workers in the district.

4.3 SA Objective 2 – Climate change adaptation

4.3.1 The district is affected to varying degrees by fluvial (river) flooding and groundwater flooding. A small proportion of the district lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3, predominantly along the River Thames, and its tributaries, that comprises the southern border of the district. Small areas of SWFR can be found within the district, primarily along watercourses in the south east and north of the district. Depending on the site-specific proposals and land use, employment development may be classed as 'less vulnerable' to fluvial flooding according to the NPPF.

[66] OxonAir (2024). Local Initiatives. Available at: www.oxonair.uk/local-initiatives [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[67] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024) Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), June 2024. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/jrjdqdnf/air-quality-annual-report-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

4.3.2 West Oxfordshire's rural character makes it vulnerable to large-scale development, including that proposed under the four employment options, which could increase impermeable surfaces and reduce GI coverage. GI can aid adaptation to climate change, helping to buffer extreme weather events such as the 38°C heatwave in July 2022[68]. The district faces significant flood risk, alongside increasing concerns about drought, with three recorded drought events since 2007. As the location and site context of the proposed employment options are unknown, the extent of climate change impacts of all options is uncertain.

4.4 SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

4.4.1 Designated biodiversity assets within West Oxfordshire include Oxford Meadows SAC which is partially located within the east of the district, as well as SSSIs, NNRs, LNRs and LWS. The HRA process will identify and explore potential impact pathways of the Local Plan on the integrity of European sites including SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites. The initial HRA Screening[69] identified potential for adverse effects on European sites associated with habitat loss, air pollution, water quality/quantity, and/or recreational pressure, at Oxford Meadows SAC, Cothill Fen SAC and Little Wittenham SAC; these will be explored in greater detail in the Appropriate Assessment at later Local Plan stages.

4.4.2 Significant employment growth, and anticipated increases in the number of workers anticipated in the district, may potentially lead to adverse impacts on European sites, including via additional traffic flows on the A40 as a major commuting route, in proximity to Oxford Meadows SAC.

4.4.3 Employment growth under any of the options is anticipated to increase pressure on biodiversity, primarily at the landscape scale. Development may lead to habitat fragmentation, disruption of wildlife corridors, and higher levels of human activity disturbing local species. Noise and light pollution from industrial and commercial use will also likely exacerbate these impacts. While each option would include site-level BNG measures in line with national policy, these are unlikely to fully offset broader ecological impacts, especially in areas of high ecological value.

4.4.4 Option 1, proposing the least employment floorspace, may have a slightly lower impact but still risks loss of green spaces, increased pollution, and changes to local hydrology. Overall, despite BNG provisions, a minor negative impact on local biodiversity is identified across all four employment options.

[68] AtkinsRealis (2024). Oxfordshire County Council – Climate resilience, Current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire. April 2024. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/ClimateVulnerabilityAssessmentOxfordshireApril24Final.pdf [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[69] LUC (2025) West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan (Regulation 18) HRA Screening Report. Draft, June 2025

4.5 SA Objective 4 – Landscape

4.5.1 Approximately one third of West Oxfordshire lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The district also contains 13 Character Areas and 24 Landscape Types[70], with numerous areas identified as highly sensitive to development through local landscape assessments[7172]. Three special landscape policy areas were identified in the adopted Local Plan process for special landscape protection, conservation and management: the Lower Windrush Valley Project Area, Wychwood Project Area and Windrush in Witney Project Area[73]. While the employment development proposed under each option is relatively small in overall scale, it has the potential to impact the local landscape by fragmenting the rural character of the district or introducing large buildings such as warehouses that disrupt long-distance views. This is particularly the case where development introduces urban features such as lighting, hardstanding, parking, access roads, and increased activity (including traffic, noise, and light) which may be especially disruptive in more tranquil areas of the district, including the Cotswolds National Landscape.

4.5.2 Overall, a precautionary minor negative impact on the local landscape is identified across all four employment options, with Option 1 potentially providing greater scope to avoid the most sensitive locations when compared to Options 2, 3 and 4.

4.6 SA Objective 5 – Cultural heritage

4.6.1 Historic assets are dispersed across the district. Within West Oxfordshire, there are 42 Grade I LBs, 214 Grade II* LBs, 2,950 Grade II LBs, 17 RPGs, 139 SMs and 53 CAs. The Blenheim Palace WHS also lies in the east of the district. Five heritage assets are listed on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, including four SMs and one Grade II* LB[74].

4.6.2 As outlined in **section 4.5**, employment growth associated with all four options could fragment the rural character of the district, thereby potentially impacting the setting or significance of many historic assets. However, with careful design, small-scale development can often be sensitively integrated into the surrounding landscape, offering opportunities to enhance the historic environment. This could include heritage-led regeneration schemes and the use of appropriate materials and methods to repair and maintain historic assets[75].

[70] Atlantic Consultants (1998) West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/cpqn2fj0/west-oxfordshire-landscape-assessment-1998.pdf [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[71] Amanda Hopwood Landscape Consultancy (2007, 2009, 2009) Witney Landscape Assessment; Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment; and Carterton Landscape Assessment. Each Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/local-plan-evidence-base/ [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[72] Kirkham Landscape Planning (2012, 2014, 2015) Landscape and Visual Review of Submissions for Carterton and Witney Strategic Development Options; Landscape and Visual Review of Chipping Norton Strategic Site Option; and Landscape and Visual Review of Two Additional Submissions for Witney Strategic Development Options. Each Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/local-plan-evidence-base/ [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[73] West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/ [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[74] Historic England (2024). Heritage at Risk Register. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/search-register/results/?advsearch=1&Lpa=West%20Oxfordshire&searchtype=harsearch [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[75] Historic England (2024). Technical Guidance and Research. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/ [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

4.6.3 Overall, as the location, site context, design principles and proximity of the proposed housing growth to heritage assets is unknown, the potential impacts of development of all four employment options on cultural heritage are uncertain. Option 1 is likely to provide greater scope to avoid significant impacts on historic assets when compared to the other options.

4.7 SA Objective 6 – Air quality

4.7.1 There are two small AQMAs within West Oxfordshire District, both declared in 2005 due to exceedances in NO_2[76]. As stated in the most recent Air Quality ASR (2024)[77], air pollution in the district is primarily caused by road traffic. While small in scale, development under all four employment options is likely to increase the number of road users and exacerbate existing congestion, particularly in street canyons as noted in the ASR. This could lead to higher levels of NO_2 and particulate matter, which have detrimental effects on both human health and local biodiversity.

4.7.2 Furthermore, as discussed for SA Objective 2 (climate change adaptation) and SA Objective 3 (biodiversity), small-scale losses of GI could weaken ecosystem services, such as air pollution filtration, which play a key role in improving air quality.

4.7.3 Overall, all four employment options are expected to result in small increases in air pollution within the district, from construction and operation of development, including transport-related emissions. A minor negative impact on air quality is identified for all options. Option 1 may perform slightly better than Options 2, 3 and 4, as it proposes the least employment floorspace, likely leading to lower traffic generation and potentially reduced construction and industrial activities. Option 3 is likely to perform the least favourably of the four employment options, as it proposes the highest quantum of employment floorspace, with a significantly larger proportion (25ha) allocated to industrial uses. This is likely to result in increased HGV movements and associated emissions.

4.8 SA Objective 7 – Water

4.8.1 The main watercourses flowing through West Oxfordshire include the Evenlode, Windrush, Glyme, Shill Brook, and the River Thames. A small section of groundwater SPZ 3 is located to the east of Chipping Norton. Increased development and industrial activities could lead to adverse effects on water resources. These activities have the potential to affect the hydromorphology, quantity, and flow of the watercourses. Additionally, construction activities may increase the risk of groundwater contamination within the SPZ. The extent of water pollution impacts will depend on the nature, scale, and location of the development, details of which do not form part of this high-level assessment. However, it is likely that all four options could impact water quality at both surface and groundwater levels, with potential downstream effects. Overall, a precautionary minor negative impact on water quality is identified for all options. Option 1, with the lowest employment floorspace, may perform slightly better than Options 2, 3 and 4 in this regard.

[76] DEFRA (2024). AQMAs Declared by West Oxfordshire District Council. Available at: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/local-authorities?la_id=309 [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[77] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024) Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), June 2024. Available at https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/jrjdqdnf/air-quality-annual-report-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

4.9 SA Objective 8 – Natural resources and waste

4.9.1 West Oxfordshire is predominantly rural, and while the growth expected under all four employment options is small in scale, it will still be likely to result in the loss of some undeveloped land. The district contains large areas of high-quality agricultural land, with approximately 84% classified as ALC Grade 1, 2 or 3, representing potential BMV agricultural land, with Grade 1 representing the highest quality[78]. Most of the district is ALC Grade 3, with smaller areas in the south classified as Grade 2, and some Grade 1 land in the west.

4.9.2 The proposed development under the four employment options could significantly affect soil quality, resulting in direct soil loss through excavation, compaction, increased erosion, nutrient depletion, and a heightened risk of contamination during the construction phase. The loss of soil, along with the valuable ecosystem services it provides (such as carbon sequestration and water filtration) is anticipated to be a permanent and irreversible impact. Option 1, which proposes the lowest employment floorspace, is likely to require the least amount of undeveloped land, leading to comparatively fewer adverse effects. The policy-driven approach under Option 4, which sets out more targeted sectoral economic growth, could potentially provide more opportunities to identify and prioritise specific areas for regeneration and re-use of previously developed land (PDL).

4.9.3 The total amount of waste generated from employment activities and construction associated with the four options is unknown, but will include both construction waste (such as materials from building and site preparation) and operational waste arising from the ongoing activities of the proposed developments. Without specific details on the scale and nature of the developments, the potential waste generation cannot be estimated accurately. However, it is anticipated that employment-related activities will contribute to an increased waste volume and a range of waste types, which could place additional pressure on local waste management systems and infrastructure.

4.9.4 Overall, the development proposed at all four employment options has potential to result in a minor negative impact on natural resources and waste through losses of undeveloped land and BMV agricultural soils and increased generation of waste.

[78] Natural England (2021). Guide to assessing development proposals on agricultural land. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-land-assess-proposals-for-development [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

4.10 SA Objective 9 – Housing and equality

4.10.1 One domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)[79] is 'barriers to housing and services', which assesses both the physical and financial accessibility of housing and essential services. In West Oxfordshire, a significant portion of the district falls within decile one of this domain (the 10% most deprived nationally), indicating severe access constraints. Directing employment growth towards existing deprived areas could support social inclusion by improving access to job opportunities. The provision of employment floorspace through any of the four employment options, although relatively small in scale, is likely to have a minor positive impact on social inclusion in this regard. While Option 3 proposes the largest amount of employment floorspace overall, the majority is industrial space (25ha) and only 0.9ha of office space. Although specific employment uses are not known, this may limit the diversity of employment types available to residents in contrast to Options 1, 2 or 4, which offer a more balanced mix of employment land.

4.11 SA Objective 10 – Health and wellbeing

4.11.1 The four employment options are not anticipated to directly affect the delivery of or accessibility to hospitals, GP surgeries, leisure facilities or open space within West Oxfordshire. However, the ENA (2025)[80] indicates that human health and social work activities will be one of the fastest-growing sectors. The floorspace planned under Option 1 is designed to support this growth, meaning that while overall employment demand is lower, there will still be increased demand for healthcare services, particularly in the growing health and social work sector. Option 4 is likely to result in a similar level of growth in the health and social care sector as Option 1, being based on the same forecasts but with uplifts in other noted sectors. Option 2, which focuses on population and housing growth projections, and Option 3, which relies on historical data and past trends in employment space, may not account for current health and social sector needs in the same way as Option 1 or 4.

4.11.2 Overall, none of the four employment options are expected to lead to either a loss or gain in healthcare facilities. While the small-scale development could increase health and social care related employment activities, the impact on health and wellbeing in the district is considered negligible.

4.12 SA Objective 11 – Transport and accessibility

4.12.1 West Oxfordshire's strategic road network includes the A40, which runs east to west through the district, as well as the A424, A4095, A415, A44, and A361. A network of B roads and other minor roads connects the district's rural settlements. The district is well-served by the railway network, with eight stations located along two main rail lines. Due to the rural character of the area, bus services vary, though the district is well connected by high-frequency bus routes linking Witney and Carterton to Oxford City. Additionally, several National Cycle Network routes pass through the western part of the district, promoting active travel options.

[79] MHCLG (2019) The English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Technical report. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8b387740f0b609909b5908/IoD2019_Technical_Report.pdf [Date accessed: 22/04/25]

[80] AECOM (2025) Economic Needs Assessment: West Oxfordshire District Council. June 2025.

4.12.2 The location of development proposed under the four employment options is unknown, and therefore the ability of workers to travel via sustainable and active transport methods is uncertain. The ENA (2025)[81] states that the economic forecasts under Option 1 are shaped by key factors such as migration and commuting patterns. These forecasts aim to provide the necessary employment floorspace to address issues including out-migration to Oxford and the Vale of White Horse[82]. By considering these factors, Option 1 is expected to help mitigate these ongoing challenges and potentially offer sustainable access to employment opportunities. The ENA indicates that Option 2 is based on population and housing need projections, including the West Oxfordshire LHNA[83]. As a result, Option 2 is expected to align employment growth with current population trends and future housing development, and assuming that new infrastructure will be provided alongside housing growth, this may also help to align with sustainable transport networks. Whilst Option 4 takes into account the same Oxford Economics forecasts as Option 1, it additionally applies uplifts to certain sectors including transportation and storage; without careful planning the scenario under Option 4 could lead to increased challenges with traffic flows and congestion on major routes. Option 3 would lead to the largest increase in industrial floorspace and could present similar challenges associated with HGV movements.

4.12.3 Overall, the specific location of new development under the four employment options is uncertain, as is the potential for growth under any option to present opportunities for enhancing transport infrastructure, including the provision of public transport services and improvements to the PRoW network and cycle networks.

4.13 SA Objective 12 – Education

4.13.1 The four employment options in this assessment are primarily focused on employment growth and are not anticipated to result in a loss or gain in schools. However, since all options aim to provide employment land, they could also create opportunities for skills development and training, such as apprenticeships. As a result, all four options may have an indirect, minor positive effect on SA Objective 12.

4.14 SA Objective 13 – Economy and employment

4.14.1 West Oxfordshire District possesses a robust tourism sector, supported by prominent attractions such as Blenheim Palace and the historic market towns of Witney and Burford. The district's strategic location facilitates strong economic linkages with neighbouring areas, including Oxford City, Cherwell District, and the Vale of White Horse District. Key centres of industry and employment within West Oxfordshire include Oxford Science Park, RAF Brize Norton, and major employers such as Siemens and Abbott.

[81] Ibid

[82] Oxfordshire County Council. ONS 2011 Oxfordshire analysis. District based travel to work. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/travel [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

[83] ORS (2025) West Oxfordshire District Council Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) 2025. Draft, May 2025.

4.14.2 Option 1 proposes the smallest amount of new employment land of the four options, 4.5ha of office space and 3.5ha of industrial space, totalling 8ha across the Plan period, based on projected economic forecasts using the Oxford Economics model. The ENA (2025)[84] states that these economic forecasts are also shaped by national and regional economic dynamics, sector-specific competitiveness and key factors such as employment changes, migration, commuting and economic activity rates. It is estimated that 7,541 West Oxfordshire residents commute to Oxford, 3,321 residents commute to Cherwell and 3,051 residents commute to Vale of White Horse[85]. The development proposed under Option 1 seeks to address ongoing challenges such as the high levels of out-commuting, which continue to undermine the district's ability to attract and retain large multinational businesses and support the growth of substantial employment areas. Furthermore, by reflecting national and regional economic dynamics and accounting for sector-specific competitiveness, the development under Option 1 will be likely to boost the district's economy in key areas that align with national and regional trends. There may however be missed opportunities for diversification.

4.14.3 Option 2 proposes 6.3ha of office space and 5.4ha of industrial space, totalling 11.7ha of employment land across the Plan period and is based on the latest working age population, housing growth projections and provides an indication of the minimum amount of employment land required to maintain a balance between population and economic growth. The option aligns with the district's housing provision targets through the incorporation of findings from the 2025 LHNA, ensuring that the provision of employment floorspace is well-matched to population growth. As a result, it is likely to support a sustainable balance between job creation and the needs of local residents. However, this option would not actively support competitive sectors and may miss opportunities to stimulate economic vitality.

4.14.4 Option 3 proposes the delivery of a higher quantum of employment land, 0.9ha of office space and 25ha of industrial space, totalling 25.9ha, which has the potential to make a greater contribution to economic growth. This additional capacity could also support a broader range of business types and employment opportunities, enhancing the diversity and resilience of the local economy. However, as explained in the ENA, this scenario is "*reflective of the projected future condition of the market based on a point in time extrapolation and is subject to limitation in its ability to appreciate potential for future events, influence or interventions to affect future employment needs"*. As such, Option 3 may not be realistic especially given the constrained employment land supply in the district, and additionally may not reflect emerging sector priorities.

[84] AECOM (2025) Economic Needs Assessment: West Oxfordshire District Council. June 2025.

[85] Oxfordshire County Council. ONS 2011 Oxfordshire analysis. District based travel to work. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/travel [Date accessed: 28/04/25]

4.14.5 Option 4 reflects a 'policy-driven' scenario, assigning uplifts to priority sectors compared to the Oxford Economics forecasts under the 'labour demand' scenario (Option 1), including: transportation and storage; information and communication; professional, scientific and technical activities; administrative and support services; and construction. Option 4 would result in the second-highest total employment floorspace of at 14.5ha (including 6.4ha office space and 8.1ha industrial space) that is targeted towards priority sectors, supporting high-value job creation and aligning with regional economic ambitions. This option presents an ambitious strategy that could significantly strengthen West Oxfordshire's economy. The success of this option would however depend on the level of influence that local policy can have on market-driven trends.

4.14.6 All four employment options are expected to result in a net gain in employment floorspace and are likely to have a positive impact on the local economy. While Options 1 and 2 propose a smaller quantum of employment floorspace compared to Option 3 and 4, as identified in the ENA, they are likely to offer the most realistic and deliverable employment land supply. As a result, a major positive impact on the economy is identified for both Options 1 and 2. Option 3 proposes a significantly larger quantum of employment floorspace that could realise more economic benefits; however, the feasibility of delivering this level of supply is uncertain. Option 4 proposes a moderately larger quantum of growth than Options 1 and 2 that is focused to strategic sectors and could result in the most significant benefits against SA Objective 13; however, there is some uncertainty in terms of the degree to which economic aspirations under this scenario could be achieved.

4.15 Conclusions

4.15.1 In order for sustainability effects to be understood in relation to the environmental baseline, the assessments require details of the size, nature and location of the proposals. Employment options only provide 'nature', in this case employment land. Without the size and location details and owing to the focus of quanta alone in these assessments, only a high-level evaluation can take place. There is particular uncertainty in the appraisal of employment options against SA Objectives 1 (Climate Change Mitigation), 2 (Climate Change Adaptation) and 5 (Cultural Heritage) as the potential for effects on these topics is more largely dependent on the site location, layout and design than other SA Objectives.

4.15.2 Overall, all four employment options are expected to result in a net gain in employment floorspace and are likely to have a positive impact on the local economy. Whilst the level of growth proposed under all options is relatively small-scale, Option 1 proposes the smallest amount of development and it is likely to perform the best against environmentally-focused objectives, such as SA Objectives 3 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), 4 (Landscape) and 8 (Natural Resources). This is due to the likelihood of a reduced area of previously undeveloped land required to deliver employment growth, and consequently reduced potential for adverse effects on ecological networks, sensitive landscapes and soil resources. Option 1 is also likely to perform slightly better with regard to SA Objective 1 (Climate Change Mitigation), 6 (Air Quality) and 7 (Water), given the lower employment floorspace required, although adverse effects are likely to some extent. Employment land forecasts under Option 1 also accounts for factors such as out-commuting and economic activity, as well as recognising which industries are growing at the fastest rates and is identified to perform slightly better with regard to SA Objectives 10 (Health and Wellbeing) and 11 (Transport and Accessibility).

4.15.3 Options 2, 3 and 4 provide slightly greater proportions of employment land than Option 1 and perform similarly in many respects in the high-level assessment. Option 2 is identified to perform slightly better than Option 3 with regard to SA Objectives 11 (Transport and Accessibility) and 13 (Economy), due to the employment land provision being based on current population trends and future housing development from the LHNA. As a result, with the expectation that planned housing growth will be supported by necessary infrastructure, Option 2 is less likely to place additional pressures on transport infrastructure and offers a more sustainable balance between job creation and the needs of local residents. Additionally, as explained in **paragraph 4.14.4** and according to the ENA, Option 3 is likely to be the least feasible in terms of delivering employment land, particularly when compared to the current availability of employment land across the district. Whereas, Option 4 has the potential to drive higher-value job growth in key sectors and offers long-term economic sustainability and competitiveness compared to the more conservative approach under Options 1, 2 or 3, though it requires careful policy management to align with infrastructure needs and ensure environmental sustainability.

4.16 Selection and rejection

4.16.1 Following consideration of the above SA assessment of employment options, **Box 4.1** sets out WODC's commentary regarding the preferred approach.

***Box 4.1:** WODC selection and rejection of employment options*

The four options which have been identified as reasonable alternatives for the quantum of employment land to be provided through the new Local Plan are rooted in an updated Economic Needs Assessment (ENA) prepared for the District Council by independent consultants.

In line with established guidance and best practice, the four options comprise a number of different scenarios based on different variables including forecast employment growth (labour demand) forecast population and housing growth (labour supply) historical take-up rates (past trends) as well as a policy driven scenario, reflecting the potential offered by high priority growth sectors.

The ENA itself identifies a 'preferred' scenario which is effectively a hybrid of scenario/option 1 (labour demand) for office uses (4.5 hectares) and scenario/option 3 (past-trends) for industrial uses (25 hectares).

To cater for this, in its preferred policy option (Core Policy 5 – Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity) the Council has purposefully specified a 'lower' and 'upper' range for both E-class offices and R&D as well as B2/B8 industrial uses.

The range for offices/R&D is from 0.9 ha (lower) to 6.4 ha (upper) and for industrial uses is from 3.5 ha (lower) to 25 ha (upper).

The figures are stated as being indicative and providing flexibility for economic development, without being considered an absolute requirement or maximum cap. They reflect the evolving nature of economic demand and the need for flexibility in planning.

As such, none of the four options considered through the SA process has been 'rejected' as such, rather the range of quantum options that they cover has been included in the Council's preferred policy option (Core Policy 5) through the use of an indicative range with potential lower and upper levels of provision provided to ensure flexibility.

5 Summary assessment of spatial strategy options

5.1 Preface

5.1.1 WODC has identified seven spatial options to determine the spatial strategy at this Regulation 18 stage of the plan making process: Options 1 – 7, as detailed in **Table 5.1** below.

5.1.2 At the previous Regulation 18 stage of the Plan making process, 'Ideas and Objectives' (2023)[86], a further spatial option had been identified, 'Village Clusters', which, similar to Option 5, sought to disperse development with rural villages being treated collectively as a 'cluster' dependent on the services they could cumulatively offer. However, following comments received during the consultation at that stage, it was deemed that this option is too similar to Option 5 and also presents a potential risk of undermining individual settlement identities. As such, it is not considered to represent a reasonable alternative spatial option.

5.1.3 The seven spatial options include more detail regarding differing approaches which could be chosen to determine the broad spatial distribution for housing and employment growth in West Oxfordshire for the Plan period up to 2041. For the purposes of this SA report, under each of the seven options, there is expected to be the delivery of c. 6,500 new homes which will work to meet the need in the Plan area, alongside proportionate employment growth. The total of 6,500 homes is the 'residual' number of new homes which WODC has identified in its Preferred Policy Options paper as being needed to meet the overall planned supply of 16,000 homes once existing planning permissions, adopted local plan allocations and a reasonable windfall allowance have been taken into account.

Table 5.1: *Seven spatial options identified by WODC*

Option	Description
Option 1 – Hierarchical Approach	• 2 x strategic allocations would be made at Carterton and Witney (1,500 each settlement) • 1x strategic allocation at Chipping Norton which is partially in the AONB (750 dwellings) • 1x non-strategic allocation at each of the rural service centres (250 x 7) • Balance of 1,000 homes at each of the larger villages (1,050 total)
Option 2 – Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)	• 2 x strategic allocations at Witney and Carterton (4,000 dwellings total, 2,000 each) • 2 x strategic allocations at Chipping Norton (1,500 dwellings total, 750 each) • Balance of 1,000 homes at each of the Rural Service centres (1,226 total)
Option 3 – Witney Focus	• The total residual housing requirement (6,500) would be met at Witney, maximising development of all promoted development sites around the town.
Option 4 – Carterton Focus	• The total residual housing requirement (6,500) would be met at Carterton, maximising development of all promoted development sites around the town (in neighbouring parishes of Brize Norton, Shilton and Alvescot)

[86] West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

Option	Description
Option 5 – Dispersed Growth	• 15% growth would be attributed to major service centres (c.3,700 dwellings) • 10% to rural service centres (c.1,000) and larger villages in West Oxfordshire (c.1,800)
Option 6 – New Settlement	• A single new settlement of 6,500 homes somewhere in the district • Two new settlements of c.3,250 homes each somewhere in the district
Option 7 – Public Transport Focus	• 5,000 homes along the A40 corridor including 2,000 at Carterton 2,000 at Witney and 1,000 'elsewhere' along the A40 corridor • 1,500 homes along the Cotswold and Cherwell Valley rail lines focused at rural service centres and larger villages.

5.1.4 **Table 5.2** summarises the likely impacts of each spatial option in relation to the 13 SA Objectives. **Table 5.3** also details the best and worst performing options identified across each of the SA objectives. The text within **sections 5.2–5.14** sets out the accompanying assessment narrative which explains how each overall impact was identified.

5.1.5 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to predict effects accurately, the sustainability impacts have been assessed at a high level and are reliant upon the current understanding of the baseline. These assessments have been based on information provided by WODC, as well as expert judgement. The options do not specify information regarding location, density or design, meaning that there is some uncertainty in all the assessments.

5.2 SA Objective 1 – Climate change mitigation

5.2.1 With regards to climate change mitigation the best performing option is identified as Option 7 (Public Transport Focus), where supporting development in public transport corridors will encourage greater uptake in the use of sustainable and active modes of transport. This is closely followed by Option 6 (New Settlement) this is likely to provide the best opportunities for self-containment with careful planning.

5.2.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) was identified as the worst performing option under climate change mitigation given the increased likelihood of losing GI and PDL, along with their associated ecosystem service functions. Option 5 will also be expected to increase reliance on the use of private vehicles to access everyday services and amenities, including education facilities and employment opportunities, which will also result in higher levels of transport related emissions.

5.3 SA Objective 2 – Climate change adaptation

5.3.1 The best performing option under climate change adaptation is identified as Option 6 (New Settlement), whereby the creation of one large, or two smaller new settlements will provide opportunities to incorporate climate adaptive design into the layout of the site, such as through the incorporation of SuDs, GI and green buffers, making a community more resilient to future pressures.

5.3.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) was identified as the worst performing option under climate change adaptation given the increased likelihood of losing GI and PDL, along with their associated ecosystem service functions which will be expected to reduce the long-term resilience of these developments, and West Oxfordshire as a whole, to the pressures of climate change.

5.4 SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

5.4.1 The development of c. 6,500 homes will have potential to result in direct or indirect adverse effects on biodiversity designations in some form under any option. However, Option 6 (New Settlement) is identified as the best performing option as focussing development in a new settlement will provide the opportunity to consider impacts on biodiversity at the earliest stages of development, including accordance with the emerging nature recovery network, and can incorporate multi-functional GI and open spaces which can act as stepping stones for wildlife.

5.4.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option for biodiversity and geodiversity as it will disperse development placing a variety of impacts across the widest possible range of habitats.

5.5 SA Objective 4 – Landscape

5.5.1 With regards to landscape the best performing option is identified as Option 6 (New Settlement), as this option will likely provide the opportunity to incorporate effective and appropriate design, such as soft landscaping techniques, in order to integrate the new settlement into the setting and prevent adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape. This would however need to be informed by site-specific appraisals to evaluate the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape if/when potential locations for a new settlement were identified.

5.5.2 The worst performing option for landscape is identified as Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) which is likely to have the most widespread and potentially cumulative adverse impacts on rural settlements, and their distinctive landscape character, across West Oxfordshire.

5.6 SA Objective 5 – Cultural heritage

5.6.1 With regards to cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5) the best performing option is identified as Option 6 (New Settlement), given the likely opportunity to incorporate effective and appropriate design in order to integrate the new settlement into the surrounding environment and prevent adverse impacts on the historic character of the district.

5.6.2 The worst performing option for cultural heritage is identified as Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) which is likely to have the most widespread and potentially cumulative adverse impacts on rural settlements, and their heritage assets, across West Oxfordshire.

5.7 SA Objective 6 – Air quality

5.7.1 Option 6 (New Settlement) is also identified as the best performing option with regard to air quality. The potential to co-locate residential growth with employment opportunities, services and facilities as well as incorporating sustainable and active modes of travel will support lower levels of air pollutants which will be expected to limit adverse impacts to air quality, as well as not placing further pressure on either the Witney or Chipping Norton AQMA.

5.7.2 The worst performing option is identified as Option 3, as a result of the increased pressure which would be placed on the Witney AQMA should development for the Plan period be solely located at Witney.

5.8 SA Objective 7 – Water

5.8.1 Option 6 (New Settlement) is also identified as the best performing option with regard to water. The development of a new settlement will allow for the establishment of appropriate water treatment and holding facilities to meet the needs of this level of development, as well as incorporating GI, open space and GI which will support various ecosystem service functions, such as infiltration and water filtration, and limit adverse impacts on surrounding watercourses.

5.8.2 For water, the worst performing options are identified as both Options 3 (Witney Focus) and 4 (Carterton Focus), as a result of increased pressures placed on watercourses, treatment facilities at the two main service settlements in West Oxfordshire.

5.9 SA Objective 8 – Natural resources and waste

5.9.1 With regards to natural resources, Option 4 (Carterton Focus) is identified as the best performing option as it is the most likely to protect BMV land through locating development on non-agricultural and lower quality Grade 4 ALC land.

5.9.2 The worst performing option identified was Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) as this is most likely to result in the greatest loss to previously undeveloped land and BMV land. Although, with regard to waste it was not possible to determine a worst performing option given the similar proposed volume of growth under all seven of the options.

5.10 SA Objective 9 – Housing and equality

5.10.1 Under housing and equality, the best performing option is identified as Option 3 (Witney Focus), as it will encourage development and investment within the district's most deprived areas, thus potentially helping to reduce inequalities.

5.10.2 Conversely, Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) has been identified as the worst performing option with regards to housing and equality as it has potential to exacerbate inequalities through promoting development in areas with more limited access to key services and facilities.

5.11 SA Objective 10 – Health and wellbeing

5.11.1 Option 3 (Witney Focus) has been identified as the best performing option with regards to health and wellbeing. Option 3's approach will provide residents with access to a range of healthcare and wellbeing facilities which will support healthy and active members of the community.

5.11.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option under health and wellbeing given that this approach will disperse development, making it more difficult to easily and sustainably access health facilities.

5.12 SA Objective 11 – Transport and accessibility

5.12.1 For transport and accessibility, the best performing option is identified as Option 7 (Public Transport Focus), which will be expected to provide access to sustainable and active modes of travel connecting them to local services and amenities, as well as education facilities and employment opportunities.

5.12.2 The worst performing option is identified as Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) as dispersing development throughout West Oxfordshire will be less likely to situate new development within sustainable access to public and active modes of transport in order to access everyday services and amenities, including education and employment opportunities.

5.13 SA Objective 12 – Education

5.13.1 Option 3 (Witney Focus) has been identified as the best performing option with regard to education. Option 3's approach will provide access to a range of education facilities within Witney itself, as well as beyond in Oxford which is accessible via bus and an emerging new rail link.

5.13.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option under education given that this approach will disperse development, making it more difficult to easily and sustainably access education facilities.

5.14 SA Objective 13 – Economy and employment

5.14.1 Option 3 (Witney Focus) has been identified as the best performing option with regard to the economy and employment. Option 3's approach will provide access to a range of new and existing employment opportunities within Witney itself, as well as beyond in Oxford which is accessible via bus and an emerging new rail link. New residents will also likely help boost Witney's economy with a greater number of people spending money locally.

5.14.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option under economy and employment given that this approach will disperse development, making it more difficult for residents to easily and sustainably access employment opportunities. Additionally, new employment provision is unlikely to be as diverse in any one location than the other options.

5.15 Conclusions

Table 5.2: *Overall impact matrix table of the seven spatial options identified by WODC*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Spatial strategy option	Climate change mitigation	Climate change adaptation	Biodiversity and geodiversity	Landscape	Cultural heritage	Air quality	Water	Natural resources and waste	Housing and equality	Health and wellbeing	Transport and accessibility	Education	Economy and employment
1 – Hierarchical Approach	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	++	0	+	++
2 – Main Service Centre Focus	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	++	+	+	++
3 – Witney Focus	+	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	++	++	+	+	++
4 – Carterton Focus	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	++	+	+	++
5 – Dispersed Growth	--	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	-	-	0	+
6 – New Settlement	++	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	++	++	++	+	++
7 – Public Transport Focus	++	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	++	++	+	++

Table 5.3: *Indicative best and worst performing spatial options*

SA Objective	Best performing option	Worst performing option(s)
SA Objective 1: Climate change mitigation	Option 7 (Public Transport Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 2: Climate change adaptation	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 3: Biodiversity and geodiversity	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 4: Landscape	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 5: Cultural heritage	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 6: Air quality	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 3 (Witney Focus)
SA Objective 7: Water	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Options 3 (Witney Focus) and 4 (Carterton Focus)
SA Objective 8: Natural resources and waste	Option 4 (Carterton Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 9: Housing and equality	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 10: Health and wellbeing	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)

SA Objective	Best performing option	Worst performing option(s)
SA Objective 11: Transport and accessibility	Option 7 (Public Transport Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 12: Education	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 13: Economy and employment	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)

5.15.1 Overall, Option 6 (New Settlement) emerges as the most frequent best performing option across six of the SA Objectives, including climate change adaptation, biodiversity and geodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage, air quality and water (SA Objectives 2-7), given the opportunity to incorporate an effective layout and design from the earliest stages of development. Option 3 (Witney Focus) is identified as the best performing option across four of the SA Objectives, including housing and equality, health and wellbeing, education and economy and employment (SA Objectives 9, 10, 12 and 13). Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) is identified as the best performing option across climate change mitigation and transport and accessibility (SA Objectives 1 and 11), with Option 4 (Carterton Focus) identified as the best performing option with regard to natural resources and waste.

5.15.2 Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option across 11 of the SA Objectives due to its potential to lead adverse impacts across the widest area. Option 3 (Witney Focus) is identified as the worst performing option with regards to air quality (SA Objective 6), with Options 3 (Witney Focus) and 4 (Carterton Focus) jointly identified as the worst performing options with regards to water (SA Objective 7).

5.16 Selection and rejection

5.16.1 Following consideration of the above SA assessment of spatial options, WODC's position in relation to each of the seven options that have been assessed is set out in **Box 5.1**.

Box 5.1: *WODC commentary on spatial options and the preferred approach*

Option 1 – Hierarchal Approach

This option effectively represents a continuation of the spatial strategy of the adopted Local Plan 2031. It performs well in SA terms and has received a strong degree of support during earlier stages of consultation. Officers consider that there is a strong case for carrying this approach forward into the new Local Plan 2041 – albeit combined with aspects of some of the other options considered – in particular Options 4 and 7 (see below).

Option 2 – Main Service Centre Focus

Like Option 1, Option 2 performs well in SA terms, however, Officers have some concerns that it could lead to a disproportionate amount of growth taking place at the three main towns and service centres - Chipping Norton in particular, given its location within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). This approach could also harm the vitality of the District's larger villages by failing to meet locally identified housing needs.

Option 3 – Witney Focus

Option 3 performs less well in SA terms than Options 1 and 2, specifically in relation to potential air quality concerns. Furthermore, Officers do not consider that focusing the entire residual housing requirement (c. 6,500 homes) at Witney would represent an appropriate and sustainable strategy – not least because it would fail to meet identified housing needs in other locations and would inevitably place the town's existing infrastructure under greater strain than a more even distribution of growth.

As the District's principal town, Witney clearly has an important role to play in accommodating future growth, but Officers consider that this must comprise part of a broader overall spatial strategy that considers the needs of other, sustainable locations for future growth.

Option 4 – Carterton Focus

Option 4 performs the same as Options 1 and 2 in SA terms and, with the exception of air quality, the same as Option 3. Like Option 3, Officers do not consider that focusing the entire residual housing requirement (c. 6,500 homes) in one location would represent an appropriate and sustainable strategy. Like Witney, Carterton clearly has an important role to play in terms of accommodating future growth but as part of a broader strategy that would enable growth to come forward in other sustainable locations as well.

Option 5 – Dispersed Growth

It is evident that a completely dispersed pattern of future growth does not perform well in SA terms and there has been little support expressed for such an approach in earlier stages of consultation on the emerging local plan. Whilst the District's larger villages clearly have an important role to play – not least in terms of accommodating small and medium-scale development opportunities, again this needs to be seen within the context of the majority of future growth coming forward predominantly at the principal towns and service centres and in locations that are well served or capable of being well-served by public transport (see Option 7 below).

Option 6 – New Settlement

The assessment demonstrates that Option 6 performs well against the SA framework, particularly in relation to objectives 2 – 7. It is however notable that during earlier stages of consultation, relatively little public support was expressed for such an approach.

There is also the fact that large, new communities often have significant 'lead-in' times to new homes being built – Salt Cross Garden Village – being a good case in point with construction not likely to start until 2028 despite the site having been formally allocated for development in 2018.

Whilst two smaller settlements of c. 3,250 homes could potentially assist in this regard, Officers are mindful that a strategy to meet the residual housing requirement of c. 6,500 new homes via planned new settlements could present difficulties in terms of maintaining the requisite 5-year housing land supply as well as meeting the development needs of other parts of the district.

Option 7 – Public Transport Focus

Option 7 is identified as the best performing option across climate change mitigation and transport and accessibility (SA Objectives 1 and 11). It performs less well in relation to SA Objective 8.

During earlier stages of public consultation on the emerging Local Plan, a strong degree of support was expressed for accommodating growth in locations that are well served, or capable of being well-served, by public transport.

It is the case that the District's three main towns and service centres are generally well-served by public transport, with further improvements already planned in a number of locations such as the Park and Ride at Eynsham and ongoing feasibility work relating to the potential re-instatement of a rail link from Carterton to Oxford via Witney and Eynsham.

Officers therefore view Option 7 as playing a complementary role alongside a number of the other options identified – in particular Options 1 – 4.

Summary

The options that have been identified by Officers as reasonable alternatives for the purpose of public consultation on the local plan and assessment through SA are not mutually exclusive. A number of them are complementary as outlined above and the spatial strategy which underpins the preferred policy options consultation is effectively a combination of Options 1, 4 6 and 7.

6 Summary assessment of draft vision, objectives and policies

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 The sustainability performance of the draft vision, objectives and each draft policy as set out in the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options version of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan has been evaluated using the SA Framework (**Appendix A**) in accordance with the methodology as set out in **Chapter 2**. The full evaluation of the vision, objectives and policies can be found in **Appendix C**.

6.1.2 Recommendations to improve the sustainability performance of the vision, objectives and policies are set out where relevant in the assessment narrative in **Appendix C**, and summarised alongside other recommendations in **Chapter 7**.

6.2 Local Plan vision and objectives

6.2.1 Local plans should set out a clear vision for the local authority area, which is positive and aspirational but also deliverable. Stemming from the vision, a series of objectives should be established which set out how key issues for the area will be dealt with. Together, the vision and objectives of a local plan should be clear, realistic, locally distinctive and spatial in planning terms, and be based on a sound understanding of the form and function of the Plan area[87].

6.2.2 The SA assessments have evaluated the extent to which the proposed draft objectives and vision for the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan accord with the SA Framework and will help to guide sustainable development.

6.2.3 A summary of the assessment of the draft Local Plan vision and objectives is provided in **Table 7.1**, with full explanation set out in the assessment narrative in **Appendix C**.

6.2.4 Overall, the draft vision for West Oxfordshire performs well against the SA Framework, with major positive impacts identified across several objectives including climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, health, landscape, transport, economy, and housing. While largely comprehensive, the vision could be further strengthened through clearer references to air and water quality, natural capital, and educational access.

6.2.5 The proposed objectives for the Local Plan have potential to deliver major positive impacts on climate change mitigation, biodiversity, landscape, health, transport, housing, and the economy. Clearer commitments to addressing flood risk, water and air quality, cultural heritage, natural capital, healthcare capacity, education infrastructure, and digital connectivity would further strengthen the objectives.

[87] PAS (2014) Good Plan Making Guide, Principle 1: Define a locally relevant spatial vision and objectives for the area. Available at: https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/entire-guide-4c0.pdf [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

Table 6.1: *Impact matrix table of the draft vision and objectives of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
Vision	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	0	++	++	++	+	++
Objectives	++	+	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++

6.3 Local Plan policies

6.3.1 The Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options version of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan sets out a total of 71 draft policies, as listed in **Table 6.2**, to guide development across the plan period to 2041. This includes:

- 12 core (strategic) policies;
- Six place-based policies;
- 15 settlement strategy policies; and
- 38 development management (DM) policies.

Table 6.2: *Draft policies presented in the Preferred Policy Options consultation document*

Policy Reference	Policy Name
CP1	Climate Change
CP2	Settlement Hierarchy
CP3	Spatial Strategy
CP4	Delivering New Homes
CP5	Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity
CP6	Delivering Infrastructure In-Step with New Development
CP7	Water Environment
CP8	High Quality and Sustainable Design
CP9	Healthy Place Shaping
CP10	Sustainable Transport
CP11	Historic Environment
CP12	Natural Environment
PL1	Cotswold National Landscape
PL2	Oxford Green Belt
PL3	Conservation and Management of Windrush Valley
PL4	Wychwood Forest
PL5	Carterton - Witney - Oxford Rail Corridor (CWORC)
PL6	Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS)
WIT1	A Strategy for Witney
WIT2	Witney Town Centre
CA1	A Strategy for Carterton
CA2	Carterton Town Centre
CN1	A Strategy for Chipping Norton
CN2	Chipping Norton Town Centre
BAM1	Bampton Settlement Strategy
BUR1	Burford Settlement Strategy
BUR2	Burford Town Centre Strategy
CHA1	Charlbury Settlement Strategy

Policy Reference	Policy Name
EYN1	A Strategy for Eynsham
LH1	Long Hanborough Settlement Strategy
WD1	Woodstock Settlement Strategy
WD2	Woodstock Town Centre Strategy
RA1	Rural Areas Strategy
DM1	Key Principles for New Development
DM2	Green Infrastructure
DM3	Sport, Recreation and Play
DM4	A Healthy Food Environment
DM5	Achieving Net Zero Carbon Development
DM6	Renewable And Low Carbon Energy Development
DM7	Retrofitting For Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience
DM8	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
DM9	Waste and Circular Economy
DM10	Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character Through New Development
DM11	Trees and Hedgerows
DM12	Light Pollution and Dark Skies
DM13	Air Quality and Pollution
DM14	Listed Buildings
DM15	Conservation Area
DM16	Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments
DM17	Registered Historic Parks and Gardens
DM18	Conversion, Extension and Alteration of Traditional Buildings
DM19	Non-Designated Heritage Assets
DM20	Town Centres
DM21	Previously Developed Land and Development Densities
DM22	Re-Use of Non Residential Buildings
DM23	Protection And Provision of Community Facilities and Services
DM24	Active And Healthy Travel
DM25	Parking Standards for New Development (Car and Cycle Parking)
DM26	Windfall Housing
DM27	Creating Mixed and Balanced Communities
DM28	Affordable Housing
DM29	Specialist Housing for Older People
DM30	Custom and Self-Build Housing
DM31	Community-Led Housing
DM32	Travelling Communities
DM33	Loss, Replacement and Sub-Division of Existing Dwellings
DM34	Provision and Protection of Land for Employment
DM35	Supporting the Rural Economy
DM36	Learning, Skills and Training
DM37	Sustainable Tourism
DM38	Digital Connectivity and Home/Co-Working Space

6.3.2 **Table 6.2** provides a summary of the draft policy assessments. Full explanation behind each overall 'score' are set out in the assessment narrative in **Appendix C**.

6.3.3 The Core Policies cover strategic matters across the whole district. These 12 policies set out WODC's commitment to tackling climate change, setting out the amount and broad location of development required, infrastructure considerations and promoting sustainable management of the district's natural, built and historic environment. Major and minor positive impacts have been identified across several SA Objectives where these policies will make significant contributions to the conservation and enhancement of West Oxfordshire's distinctive landscapes, cultural heritage and natural assets, as well as supporting economic growth and sustainable place-making. Minor adverse effects have been identified for the policies that will lead to the introduction of new housing and employment development (CP4 and CP5) with potential to lead to increased emission of GHGs, air pollutants, and waste. The implications for the transport network as a result of proposed housing growth (CP4) is uncertain at this stage of the assessment process. Negligible scores are recorded either where the policies will not directly affect, or where the overall effect is deemed to be neutral for, a particular SA Objective.

6.3.4 The six Place-Based Policies apply to geographically specific areas of the district including sensitive landscape and cultural heritage features, such as the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and Blenheim Palace WHS, as well as wider GI assets that support distinctive habitats and rich biodiversity like the Windrush Valley and Wychwood Forest. By seeking to protect, conserve and enhance these aspects of the district, as well as maintain openness of the Green Belt (PL2) and safeguard land for future sustainable travel initiatives (PL5), a range of major positive, minor positive and negligible effects are identified across the SA Framework.

6.3.5 The Settlement Strategies will provide a tailored policy framework to guide development within specific towns and villages in West Oxfordshire, ensuring that the unique characteristics, opportunities and challenges within each settlement are addressed and help delivery of the Local Plan vision and objectives. These 15 policies perform well against the SA Framework, with many anticipated to lead to major positive effects, recognising the benefits that can be secured with specific policy provisions to conserve and enhance specific aspects of each settlement. This includes promotion of vibrant local economies, low-carbon transport, and enhanced GI networks that will be designed to benefit local character, heritage assets, wildlife, and human health and wellbeing.

6.3.6 The 38 DM Policies cover specific matters that will be used to guide development decisions relating to various themes:

- healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities;
- tackling the climate and ecological emergency;
- an enhanced natural, historic and built environment;
- attractive, accessible and thriving places;
- meeting the housing needs of all; and
- vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy.

6.3.7 Together, these DM policies will help to ensure that new development positively contributes to high-quality and energy efficient designs that conserve and enhance the surrounding landscape, cultural heritage and biodiversity assets, whilst promoting delivery of multi-functional GI, community and leisure facilities, sustainable waste management and contribute to achieving clean air. The policies seek to meet the socio-economic needs of the population by providing a range of housing types and tenures, including accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, and a mix of employment premises. A range of major positive and minor positive effects have been identified for the policies highlighting the direct and secondary benefits across the SA Objectives, and negligible effects where the policies are unlikely to affect certain aspects.

Table 6.3: *Impact matrix table of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan draft policies*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
Vision	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	0	++	++	++	+	++
Objectives	++	+	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++
CP1	++	++	++	+	0	++	++	++	+	+	+	0	0
CP2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CP3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	++	+	+	+	++
CP4	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	++	0	+/-	0	0
CP5	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	++
CP6	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	0
CP7	0	++	+	+	0	0	++	0	0	+	0	0	0
CP8	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	+	++	0	0
CP9	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	+	++	+	0	0
CP10	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	++	+	+
CP11	+	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
CP12	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
PL1	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
PL2	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PL3	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
PL4	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
PL5	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	0	+
PL6	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
WIT1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	++
WIT2	+	+	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++
CA1	++	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	++
CA2	+	+	+	++	+	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++
CN1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	0	+	++
CN2	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	+	++
BAM1	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
BUR1	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	++	+	++	+	++
BUR2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++
CHA1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	++	+	++	0	++
EYN1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	++	+	++
LH1	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
WD1	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	++	++	++
WD2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++
RA1	++	++	0	++	++	+	0	0	++	+	++	+	++
DM1	0	0	+	++	+	0	0	+	0	+	+	0	0
DM2	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0
DM4	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	++	+	0	0
DM5	++	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM6	++	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
DM7	++	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM8	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM9	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+
DM10	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
DM11	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM12	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
DM13	++	+	+	0	0	++	+	0	0	++	+	0	0
DM14	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM15	0	0	+	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM16	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	0
DM17	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM18	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
DM19	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM20	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	++	0	++
DM21	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	++	0	+	+	+	+
DM22	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+
DM24	+	+	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0
DM25	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0
DM26	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
DM27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0
DM28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0
DM29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0
DM30	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	+
DM31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
DM32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	+	+	+
DM33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
DM34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	++
DM35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	++
DM36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++
DM37	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++
DM38	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	++

7 Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan

7.1.1 **Table 7.1** sets out commentary and a range of recommendations for WODC to consider in the preparation of the Local Plan.

7.1.2 The recommendations cover suggestions for policy provisions, supporting evidence, as well as general points for consideration. These recommendations are not exhaustive, nor are they all essential.

7.1.3 The recommendations presented in **Table 7.1** includes those made in draft iterations of the SA provided to WODC during the preparation of the Preferred Policy Options version of the Plan, some of which have been actioned including:

- Additional wording integrated into the proposed Local Plan objectives and policy wording to reference aiding the delivery of the Oxfordshire LNRS, including Policy DM8 (Biodiversity Net Gain) and PL3 (Conservation and Management of the Windrush Valley), and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan within Policy PL1 (Cotswolds National Landscape).
- Local Plan Objective 3 has been revised to include reference to minimising impacts on soil resources.

7.1.4 Other recommendations included in the table, and future recommendations that will be made in the next stages of the SA process, will be considered by WODC in the preparation of the publication version of the Local Plan.

Table 7.1: *SA commentary and recommendations for the Local Plan*

SA Objective	Recommendation
SA Objective 1: Climate change mitigation	• Policy CP9 could support secondary positive effects in relation to climate change through specific reference to GI and the multifunctional benefits it can provide. • Policy DM32 could benefit from specific reference to GI which would support a wider range of positive effects in relation to climate change mitigation. • Policy DM14 would benefit from including specific wording regarding the energy efficiency of listed buildings and how these can be redeveloped or designed for longevity, possibly linking with or making reference to Policy DM7 'Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience. • Regeneration strategies should address issues associated with urbanisation, including resilience to climate change. The Local Plan should promote innovative re-use of existing building stocks, including developments which would improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings and take into account their embodied carbon value when considering their retention and re-use, versus their replacement. • As part of additional supporting evidence for the Local Plan, WODC could consider commissioning a climate change study and calculating / reporting on greenhouse gas emissions in greater detail. This could include use of the Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool[88]. More detailed carbon footprint data for the Plan area would enable the SA process to evaluate changes to carbon emissions as a consequence of the Plan in terms of (a) evolution of the baseline without the plan, and (b) effect on climate change through increased or decreased emissions, with the Plan.

[88] Local Partnerships (2023) Greenhouse Gas Accounting Tool and Waste Emissions Calculator. Available at: https://localpartnerships.org.uk/greenhouse-gas-accounting-tool/ [Date accessed: 27/06/25]

SA Objective	Recommendation
SA Objective 2: Climate change adaptation	• The draft Local Plan Objectives could be strengthened by making direct reference to flood risk, heat risk and energy efficiency, which would strengthen the performance of the objectives against climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2). • Policy DM7 could be strengthened by expanding on the specifics of climate adaptation measures. For example, including more detailed strategies for increasing flood resilience, such as the use of water-resistant materials, raising structures above flood levels, or incorporating effective drainage systems to manage stormwater. • Policy DM32 could benefit from specific reference to GI which would support a wider range of positive effects in relation to climate change adaptation. • Policy CP6 could be strengthened through specific reference to green space and/ or GI to ensure developments provide a wide range of infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and secure multi-functional benefits. • WODC should have regard to the recommendations of the Environment Agency including ensuring that policies, site allocations and design of development takes into account climate change, and that strategic water planning, drainage and infrastructure is adequate to serve new growth via early engagement with water companies (see **Table 1.2**).
SA Objective 3: Biodiversity and geodiversity	• Policy CP9 could support secondary positive effects in relation to biodiversity through specific reference to GI and the multifunctional benefits it can provide. • Policy DM3 could be strengthened by specifying biodiversity enhancements, such as native planting and including wildlife habitats. The policy could provide further wording to encourage the design of facilities to be multifunctional, such as play areas with green roofs or sports fields that incorporate flood mitigation features like permeable surfaces or swales. • Policy DM32 could benefit from specific reference to GI which would support a wider range of positive effects in relation to biodiversity. • The Local Plan policies would be strengthened through more specific reference to the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy[89] ensuring that enhancements and protection is aligned with identified recovery areas opportunity areas and that GI associated with development sites contributes to this wherever possible. • Developers, residents, landowners and managers of open spaces should be encouraged to adopt a cooperative approach that connects buildings, gardens and public spaces to create a vibrant and diverse network of interconnected species and habitats. Such a network would provide benefits to flora and fauna in the Plan area. • The findings and recommendations of the emerging Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan should be taken into account and incorporated into the Local Plan policies.
SA Objective 4: Landscape	• Changing land uses can help to rejuvenate and modernise landscapes and townscapes and should be supported so long as the design, layout and architecture embraces the existing public realm, especially when this includes iconic post-industrial landmarks and distinctive buildings. • Updated landscape character, sensitivity and/or capacity assessments would aid the identification of suitable areas that could accommodate strategic growth without compromising West Oxfordshire's unique landscape character and qualities.
SA Objective 5: Cultural heritage	• There is opportunity to strengthen the performance of the Local Plan objectives with regard to cultural heritage. The objectives would benefit from including reference to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets to align with the NPPF[90]. • Policy DM14 would benefit from including specific wording regarding the energy efficiency of listed buildings and how these can be redeveloped or designed for

[89] Oxfordshire County Council (2024). Draft Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Available at: https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/lnrs-phase3-consultation [Date accessed: 25/04/25]

[90] MHCLG (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf [Date accessed: 27/02/25]

SA Objective	Recommendation
	longevity, making reference to specific guidance from Historic England[91] as well as possibly linking with or making reference to Policy DM7 'Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience. • Policy DM15 will benefit from including wording regarding the energy efficiency of historic buildings within CAs and how materials used can increase longevity, making reference to specific guidance from Historic England[92]. • Regeneration strategies should address issues associated with urbanisation. The Local Plan should promote innovative re-use of existing building stocks, including developments which would improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings. The District Council should refer to Historic England's guidance on keeping historic buildings in good repair[93]. • WODC should have regard to the recommendations of Historic England including ensuring that the historic environment and cultural heritage assets are considered in wider nature recovery, GI and climate change initiatives (see **Table 1.2**).
SA Objective 6: Air quality	• More direct reference to protecting and improving air quality would further strengthen the performance of the draft Local Plan Vision against SA Objective 6.
SA Objective 7: Water	• More direct reference to protecting and improving water quality would further strengthen the performance of the Local Plan vision against SA Objective 7. • Direct reference to protecting and enhancing water quality would strengthen the performance of the Local Plan objectives.
SA Objective 8: Natural resources and waste	• Expanding the wording of Policy DM15 regarding the reuse of historic structures will strengthen the policy with regard to the sustainable use of natural resources. By prioritising the adaptive reuse of existing historic structures, the policy reduces the demand for new construction materials, thereby lowering resource consumption, energy use, and carbon emissions associated with demolition. • Waste strategies and policies will need to account for managing an increased volume and potentially more diverse waste outputs associated with a range of industrial, commercial and technological growth.
SA Objective 9: Housing and equality	• Policy CP6 could be strengthened through specific reference to green space and/ or GI to ensure developments provide a wide range of infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and secure multi-functional benefits. • Residential uses in town centres such as above retail areas should be promoted where appropriate, to help reduce the quantity of new land required to meet housing demands and make more efficient use of space. • The Local Plan should ensure development proposals, particularly in dense areas such as town centres, promote a safe and accessible neighbourhood, helping to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Consider supporting the use of the 'Secured by Design'[94] scheme in relation to crime prevention. • WODC should help to establish better management and maintenance of green spaces and support local involvement, where possible through Local Plan policies, to reduce anti-social behaviour which may discourage use of open spaces by the local community.

[91] Historic England (2024). Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/ [Date accessed: 25/04/25]

[92] Historic England (2024). Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/ [Date accessed: 25/04/25]

[93] Historic England (2023) Stopping the Rot: A guide to enforcement action to save historic buildings. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/stoppingtherot/ [Date accessed: 25/01/23]

[94] Secured by Design. Available at: https://www.securedbydesign.com/ [Date accessed: 20/01/23]

SA Objective	Recommendation
SA Objective 10: Health and wellbeing	• The Local Plan objectives would benefit from further wording on healthcare facilities, particularly outlining what healthcare infrastructure could be provided and addressing potential capacity issues arising from the limited emergency healthcare services currently available in the district. • Developers, residents, landowners and managers of open spaces should be encouraged to adopt a cooperative approach that connects buildings, gardens and public spaces to create a vibrant and diverse network of interconnected species and habitats. Such a network would enhance the quality of life for local residents. • The Local Plan should further emphasise the health implications of air pollution and strive to minimise the exposure of residents, and particularly vulnerable groups, to existing sources of air pollution through careful consideration of the location, design and configuration of new developments and particularly those close to roads[95].
SA Objective 11: Transport and accessibility	• The Local Plan should ensure proposed sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople seek to provide suitable access to local services, healthcare and schools to facilitate sustainable development and integration with the community. This could include measures such as developing travel plans to improve public transport connections. The layout and design of new sites should be carefully considered with reference to good practice guidance[96]. • Residential uses in town centres such as above retail areas should be promoted where appropriate, to help ensure that residential development is situated in closer proximity to existing services and facilities to meet day to day needs, reducing the need to travel. • Where new active travel links are to be provided, these should be well designed so vulnerable groups can travel in confidence; this could include consideration of lighting schemes, overlooking and appropriate vegetation to avoid concealed spaces. • The Local Plan should explicitly support the 20-minute neighbourhood concept when designing and implementing active travel routes, or when considering growth located in strategic development sites or new settlements.
SA Objective 12: Education	• More direct reference to education, such as supporting sustainable access to schools and training opportunities to maintain high skill levels would strengthen the performance of the Local Plan vision. Furthermore, a clearer definition of what is meant by 'smart technologies' would prevent any misinterpretations, ensuring the term is used in the right context. • The Local Plan objectives would benefit from including stronger wording regarding technological provisions to address existing problems such as poor digital connectivity across the district. Furthermore, it is recommended that the objectives include wording on educational facilities, ensuring that population growth does not place pressure on existing schools.
SA Objective 13: Economy and employment	• Opportunities should be explored in the Local Plan policies to achieve smart economic growth. This could be encouraged through the use of technology and innovative ways of working to increase productivity without damaging people's quality of life or the environment.
General points	• Policy CP2 (Settlement Hierarchy) could be merged with Policy CP3 (Spatial Strategy) to ensure clarity in the purpose and intention of defining a settlement hierarchy, for example in ensuring that appropriate types and scales of new development are directed to each type of settlement. • Reasonable alternative sites of strategic and smaller scales should be identified, described and evaluated in the next SA and Local Plan stage to ensure more specific locations for development are considered.

[95] National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2017) Air pollution: outdoor air quality and health. Available at: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng70/chapter/recommendations [Date accessed: 25/01/23]

[96] Communities and Local Government (2008) Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites: Good Practice Guide. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/11439/designinggypsysites.pdf [Date accessed: 25/01/23]

8 Next steps

8.1 Conclusion

8.1.1 This Regulation 18 SA Report sets out an evaluation of housing, employment and spatial options and draft policies identified by WODC at the Preferred Policy Options stage of plan making. Best performing options have been identified where applicable. Draft outputs have been fed back to WODC on an iterative basis to inform the selection/rejection of reasonable alternatives and shaping of the Preferred Policy Options version of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.

8.1.2 In addition to the evaluation of various reasonable alternatives to aid WODC's decision-making, a number of recommendations have been made for WODC to consider as the Local Plan progresses.

8.2 Consultation on the Regulation 18 SA Report

8.2.1 This Regulation 18 SA Report will be published by WODC for consultation with statutory consultees, stakeholders and the general public, alongside the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options consultation document.

8.2.2 Responses to this consultation should be made via WODC's online platform: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/

8.2.3 Any comments received on this report during the consultation will be considered and used to inform subsequent stages of the SA process, where appropriate.

8.2.4 Further consultations and opportunities to comment on the emerging Local Plan and accompanying SA outputs will occur at each plan making stage.

8.3 Further SA stages

8.3.1 Once WODC has reviewed Regulation 18 consultation comments, the next stage of plan making will begin.

8.3.2 This is anticipated to include a further Regulation 18 'focused' consultation on specific development locations which will be accompanied by a further SA report.

8.3.3 Beyond this, preparation of a Regulation 19 SA Report will begin, also known as a 'sustainability appraisal report' in PPG. The Regulation 19 SA will include all the legal requirements of an 'Environmental Report' set out in Regulation 12 and Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, enabling WODC to meet the legal requirements set out in sections 19 and 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Appendix A: SA Framework

#	SA Objective	Relevant SEA topic(s)	Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal…	Indicators include (but are not limited to)
1	**Climate change mitigation:** Minimise West Oxfordshire District's contributions towards the causes of climate change	Climatic factors	• Help to reduce the per capita carbon footprint of West Oxfordshire? • Encourage renewable energy generation or the use of energy from renewable or low-carbon sources? • Promote sustainable construction principles? • Increase energy efficiency? • Support a low carbon economy?	• Carbon emissions from domestic, industrial and commercial sources in the district • Percentage of energy generated from renewable sources • Energy consumption
2	**Climate change adaptation:** Adapt to the anticipated levels of climate change	Climatic factors and water	• Avoid development in areas at high risk of flooding and seek to reduce flood risk? • Take into account the likely impacts of climate change and use sustainable drainage solutions? • Increase the coverage and connectivity of green infrastructure? • Promote the use of technologies and techniques to adapt to the impacts of climate change? • Ensure new development is resilient to the effects of extreme weather events?	• Number of properties at risk of flooding • Area and connectivity of green infrastructure • Implementation of adaptive techniques such as SuDS and passive heating/cooling systems • Number of developments given planning permission on floodplains contrary to EA advice

#	SA Objective	Relevant SEA topic(s)	Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal…	Indicators include (but are not limited to)
3	**Biodiversity and geodiversity:** Conserve, enhance and restore the district's biodiversity and geodiversity	Biodiversity, flora and fauna	• Conserve and enhance designated features and assets of European and national nature conservation value? • Support the positive management of locally important sites designated for their nature conservation and geodiversity value? • Contribute towards wider green infrastructure and/or nature recovery networks and promote habitat connectivity? • Deliver biodiversity net gain and seek to maximise wider environmental net gain? • Enable biodiversity to adapt to and be resilient to climate change? • Avoid damage and deterioration of habitats?	• Number and diversity of protected species present in the local area • Quality and extent of priority habitats (habitats of principal importance) • Area and condition of sites designated for biological or geological interest • Uplift in biodiversity units provided in new developments measured using the DEFRA BNG Metric • Nitrogen deposition levels and critical load exceedances at Oxford Meadows SAC • Hectares of biodiversity habitat delivered through strategic site allocations
4	**Landscape:** Conserve, enhance and manage the quality and character of landscapes and townscapes	Landscape	• Conserve and enhance local character and distinctiveness, and strengthen sense of place? • Protect and enhance visual amenity? • Conserve and enhance the special character of the Cotswolds AONB (National Landscape) and its setting, seeking opportunities to further the purpose of the landscape? • Align with the purposes of the Green Belt i.e. prevent coalescence of settlements and urban sprawl? • Safeguard local identity of settlements and preserve openness of the countryside?	• Number of planning applications granted within the Cotswolds AONB • Identified local landscape characteristics and sensitivities within the published Landscape Assessment for the district and for the main towns • Landscape sensitivity and capacity • Development within the Green Belt • Tranquillity rating of the local area

#	SA Objective	Relevant SEA topic(s)	Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal…	Indicators include (but are not limited to)
5	**Cultural heritage:** Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and support the effective management of the historic environment	Cultural heritage	• Conserve, enhance and where appropriate, restore and repair West Oxfordshire's internationally, nationally or locally designated heritage assets and their settings? • Respect, maintain and strengthen local historic character and distinctiveness? • Conserve features of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest and, where necessary, encourage their conservation and restoration? • Improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings?	• Number of applications granted within conservation areas • Heritage assets on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register • Statutory and non-statutory sites in the Historic Environment Record (HER) and identified in the Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)
6	**Air quality:** Protect and improve air quality, creating cleaner and healthier air	Air	• Improve air quality and avoid generating further air pollution? • Minimise exposure to poor air quality? • Protect and enhance the quantity and connectivity of green infrastructure assets that deliver air quality benefits?	• Development with potential to generate a significant increase in road traffic emissions or other air pollutants • Proximity to AQMAs and current AQMA status • Number of people living in areas of poor air quality e.g. within 200m of a main road • Areas of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) annual mean objective exceedance
7	**Water:** Maintain and improve water quality and ensure efficient use of water resources	Water	• Protect and improve water quality of the district's rivers and inland waterbodies? • Ensure adequate capacity in water resources and wastewater infrastructure to serve new development? • Maximise water efficiency of buildings to reduce the demand on water resources? • Protect and enhance the quantity and connectivity of green and blue infrastructure assets that deliver water quality benefits? • Meet the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and River Basin Management Plan?	• Quality of water bodies (rivers and inland water) in or adjacent to sites. • Number of developments adopting the optional requirement for water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day. • Number of developments given planning permission contrary to EA advice relating to river water quality or the protection of groundwater. • Ecological and chemical status of waterbodies.

#	SA Objective	Relevant SEA topic(s)	Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal…	Indicators include (but are not limited to)
8	**Natural resources and waste:** Ensure efficient use of the district's soil and mineral resources and reduce waste	Soil and material assets	• Maximise the use of previously developed or under-used land? • Minimise the loss of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land? • Seek to bring contaminated land back to beneficial use through remediation? • Protect and maintain natural capital assets, including soil resources? • Protect mineral resources from sterilisation? • Minimise waste disposal, and encourage recycling, re-use or composting of waste? • Promote the adoption of sustainable design and the use of locally and sustainably sourced, and recycled materials in construction?	• Re-use of previously developed or brownfield land • Re-use of contaminated land • Area of potential BMV agricultural land lost to development • Number of developments within Mineral Consultation Areas • Use of locally sourced materials • Percentage of the district's waste that is recycled or composted
9	**Housing and equality:** Provide affordable, high quality and environmentally sound housing for all, whilst reducing crime and social deprivation	Population, human health and material assets	• Provide a suitable mix of housing to meet the needs of the current and future populations, including those with specialist housing needs? • Seek to increase the provision of affordable housing and homes suitable for first-time buyers? • Provide high quality sustainably constructed housing? • Ensure that the best use is made of existing housing stock? • Create safe neighbourhoods and support community cohesion? • Reduce crime and the fear of crime?	• Varied housing mix • Percentage of dwellings delivered as affordable housing • Number of extra care homes, and accessible and adaptable homes to meet the needs of the population • Provision of pitches and plots for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople • Indices of Multiple Deprivation • Rates of crime

#	SA Objective	Relevant SEA topic(s)	Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal…	Indicators include (but are not limited to)
10	**Health and wellbeing:** Safeguard and improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in health	Population and human health	• Improve access to healthcare and leisure facilities, particularly in rural areas? • Support healthy and active lifestyles? • Improve accessibility to the countryside and other recreational resources? • Improve the quality and extent of existing recreational assets and the green infrastructure network? • Consider the needs of the growing elderly population?	• Proximity and travel time to healthcare and leisure facilities • Provision and accessibility of open greenspace and green infrastructure • Accessibility to sports facilities • Hectares of accessible open space per 1,000 population • Percentage of the population having access to a natural greenspace within 400m of their home
11	**Transport and accessibility:** Improve accessibility, increase the proportion of travel by sustainable modes, and reduce the need to travel	Population and material assets	• Promote sustainable transport patterns and reduce the need to travel, particularly in areas of high congestion? • Help to reduce reliance on private car use by providing good access via more sustainable transport modes including public transport, walking and cycling? • Improve the provision, connectivity and safety of active travel routes to encourage their use? • Tackle social exclusion?	• Distance and accessibility to public transport options • Proximity and connectivity of walking and cycling links • Frequency of bus services • Distance and travel times to key services and amenities • Sustainability of existing routes of access into sites, considering anticipated increases in usage • Local increases in road traffic congestion and journey times, particularly on the A40

#	SA Objective	Relevant SEA topic(s)	Decision making criteria: Will the option/proposal…	Indicators include (but are not limited to)
12	**Education:** Increase access to education and improve attainment to develop and maintain a skilled workforce	Population and material assets	• Seek to provide infrastructure to improve education and skills? • Provide or improve sustainable access to education and training opportunities? • Support opportunities for community enterprises and the voluntary sector? • Support the provision of an appropriately skilled workforce?	• CIL contributions for education from new development • Proximity and travel time to primary and secondary schools • Capacity of primary and secondary schools • Qualification levels e.g. National Vocational Qualifications • Access to higher education opportunities • Number of Adult Education Opportunities including apprenticeships likely to be generated through new development
13	**Economy and employment:** Ensure sufficient employment land and premises are available to develop and support innovative and sustainable economic growth	Population and material assets	• Provide or improve sustainable access to a range of employment opportunities? • Support vibrant market towns and a sustainable rural economy? • Support, develop and attract competitive business sectors? • Promote rural diversification? • Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of existing employment and retail areas?	• Proximity and travel time to employment opportunities • Unemployment rates • Number of vacant business units • Total area of new employment floorspace • Number of new business start-ups as a result of new development

Appendix B: Spatial Option Assessments

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B.1 Introduction

B.1.1 Overview

B.1.1.1 During the previous Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, as presented within the 'Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives' document (August 2023)[1], West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) identified eight 'scenarios' for the location of new housing and employment development across the district:

- Scenario 1 – Hierarchal approach;
- Scenario 2 – Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton);
- Scenario 3 – Witney Focus;
- Scenario 4 – Carterton Focus;
- Scenario 5 – Dispersed Growth;
- Scenario 6 – Village 'Clusters';
- Scenario 7 – New Settlement; and
- Scenario 8 – Public Transport Focus.

B.1.1.2 The purpose of exploring the eight scenarios was to seek general stakeholder feedback on the relative merits of each approach.

B.1.1.3 Following consideration of the consultation comments received, WODC has determined that 'Scenario 6 – Village Clusters' is not a reasonable alternative as it is indiscernible from 'Scenario 5 – Dispersed Growth' and was poorly supported by consultees.

B.1.1.4 Building upon the remaining seven scenarios, WODC has confirmed the associated distribution of housing growth associated with each, to be supported by proportionate economic growth, which now represent spatial strategy options that have been evaluated within this document.

B.1.1.5 Taking into account past completions, commitments, adopted local plan allocations and windfall allowance, WODC have identified the residual housing requirement to be identified in the new Local Plan is approximately 6,500 homes.

B.1.1.6 The seven spatial strategy options as identified by WODC are presented in **Table B.1.1**. Each option provides a different spatial configuration of housing and employment growth, to account for the residual housing need of c.6,500 homes that will be delivered in addition to the existing commitments.

[1] West Oxfordshire District Council (2023). West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/xiof3u0r/local-plan-focused-consultation-ideas-and-objectives-august-2023.pdf [Date accessed: 10/12/24]

Table B.1.1: *Seven spatial strategy options identified by WODC*

Option	WODC description (as per growth scenarios in previous R18 consultation document)	Approximate distribution of growth
1 – Hierarchal approach	Roll forward the strategy of the current Local Plan which is based on a 'hierarchal' approach as follows: • A significant proportion of new homes, jobs and supporting services focused at the 3 main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton; • Additional growth at the rural service centres, with Eynsham having a particularly important role (including a new village – Salt Cross – to the north) and Woodstock being identified as suitable for a reasonable scale of development. More modest levels of development at the other rural service centres of Burford, Charlbury, Bampton and Long Hanborough to help reinforce their existing roles; • Limited development in villages; and • Development in small villages, hamlets and open countryside restricted to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location.	• 2 x strategic allocations would be made at Carterton and Witney (1,500 each settlement) • 1x strategic allocation at Chipping Norton which is partially in the AONB (750 dwellings) • 1x non-strategic allocation at each of the rural service centres (250 x 7) • Balance of 1,000 homes at each of the larger villages (1,050 total)
2 – Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)	Focusing the vast majority of future development (beyond existing commitments) more specifically at the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton.	• 2 x strategic allocations at Witney and Carterton (4,000 dwellings total, 2,000 each) • 2 x strategic allocations at Chipping Norton (1,500 dwellings total, 750 each) • Balance of 1,000 homes at each of the rural service centres (1,226 total)
3 – Witney Focus	Most future development (beyond existing commitments) focused narrowly at Witney as the District's largest settlement and main service centre.	• The total residual housing requirement (6,500) would be met at Witney, maximising development of all promoted development sites around the town
4 – Carterton Focus	Most future development (beyond existing commitments) would be focused narrowly at Carterton as the District's second largest town and service centre.	• The total residual housing requirement (6,500) would be met at Carterton, maximising development of all promoted development sites around the town (in neighbouring parishes of Brize Norton, Shilton and Alvescot)
5 – Dispersed Growth	A more 'dispersed' approach to the future pattern of development so that instead of growth being steered mainly towards the district's larger settlements, it would be more evenly distributed across West Oxfordshire.	• 15% growth would be attributed to major service centres (c.3,700 dwellings) • 10% to rural service centres (c.1,000) and larger villages in West Oxfordshire (c.1,800)

Option	WODC description (as per growth scenarios in previous R18 consultation document)	Approximate distribution of growth
6 – New Settlement	Future growth focused primarily at a large, purpose-built new settlement somewhere in the district.	• A single new settlement of 6,500 homes somewhere in the district • Two new settlements of c.3,250 homes each somewhere in the district
7 – Public Transport Focus	Focus growth (beyond existing commitments) along key public transport corridors and around public transport hubs e.g. rail stations. In a recent rail study commissioned by the County Council, the consultants stated that by 2031, car journeys along the A40 will take up to 30 minutes longer.	• 5,000 homes along the A40 corridor including 2,000 at Carterton 2,000 at Witney and 1,000 'elsewhere' along the A40 corridor • 1,500 homes along the Cotswold and Cherwell Valley rail lines focused at rural service centres and larger villages

B.1.1.7 Each of the seven spatial strategy option has been assessed for its likely sustainability impacts, a summary of which is presented in **Tables B.2.1 – B.2.13** and overall findings discussed in **Chapter B.3**. Full explanations and reasonings behind each overall 'score' are set out for each of the 13 SA Objectives in **Chapter B.2**.

B.1.1.8 The options have been evaluated relative to each other, with best and worst performing options identified within each SA Objective. It should be noted that the performance of options is indicative at this stage and based on the available information, when considered at a strategic level.

B.2 Evaluation of spatial strategy options

B.2.1 SA Objective 1 - Climate change mitigation

B.2.1.1 The majority of West Oxfordshire's carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions are attributed to domestic and transport sources[2]. All seven spatial strategy options will deliver a similar amount of growth within the district and therefore have potential to significantly increase CO_2 emissions and other greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions during the construction and occupation of development, including via increased traffic on local road networks.

B.2.1.2 Option 6 would focus growth at one new settlement of 6,500 homes, or two smaller new settlements of 3,250 homes. A new settlement will provide the opportunity to create well-designed places with co-located homes and services that support the 20-minute neighbourhood concept[3] and facilitate walkable neighbourhoods that are safe and highly accessible to all members of the community. Planning a new settlement to include high-quality connections to local services will encourage residents to travel by foot or other active modes of travel which will help to minimise congestion and reduce GHG emissions such as carbon dioxide. Indeed, the comparative modelling of the growth scenarios[4] indicated that a scenario based on new settlements would perform the strongest in terms of both transport and operational emissions. Whilst the new settlement is likely to be isolated in respect to existing infrastructure and services, there is a great opportunity to design the new settlement to be energy efficient and incorporate low-carbon and renewable technologies. National and local design policy and guidance should be followed to ensure any development considers approaches to mitigate climate change[5]. Overall, although the development will still likely lead to GHG emissions to some extent, there are likely to be greater opportunities to incorporate climate mitigation measures at early stages of development and pursue sustainable design concepts. A major positive impact on climate change mitigation could be achieved for Option 6.

B.2.1.3 Option 7 looks to focus growth along key public transport corridors and hubs which will help to encourage the uptake of public transport and consequently reduce reliance on private car use and associated emissions. Through locating development in areas with good access to sustainable travel, such as through access to frequent bus services along the A40 and A44, Option 7 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to climate change mitigation, although the large scale of development will still likely lead to

[2] Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2024). UK local authority greenhouse gas emissions estimates 2022. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics-2005-to-2022 [Date accessed: 06/12/24]

[3] TCPA (2021). 20-minute Neighbourhoods. Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities an Introduction for Council Planners in England. Available at: https://www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf [Date accessed: 09/12/24]

[4] Bioregional (2025) Net-Zero Spatial Planning Support. Task 3. Comparative modelling of nine growth scenarios. West Oxfordshire District Council. *[Note: this modelling was undertaken with reference to the nine scenarios presented in the previous Regulation 18 WODC consultation]*

[5] TCPA and RTPI (2023). The Climate Crisis. A Guide for Local Authorities on Planning for Climate Change. Available at: https://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources/the-climate-crisis-a-guide-for-local-authorities-on-planning-for-climate-change/ [Date accessed: 05/11/24]

GHG emissions, to some extent. Comparative modelling of the growth scenarios[6] indicated that the public transport focus will however result in further emissions than a strategy based on new settlements. On balance, a major positive impact could be achieved.

B.2.1.4 Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will focus development within or surrounding existing urban areas and the main centres in the district, likely to locate development in closer proximity to a range of services including sustainable transport, employment opportunities and shops. These four spatial strategy options will be likely to facilitate reduced reliance on private car use and associated emissions, encouraging uptake in sustainable modes of travel including active travel for local journeys. Furthermore, it is likely that Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will provide greater opportunities for the re-use of previously developed land (PDL) in comparison to rurally focused development through Option 5, although losses of undeveloped land will be likely to some extent. Development through Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 could therefore result in lower GHG emissions as a result of construction if existing buildings are repurposed. Furthermore, through the use of PDL, development will likely result in a reduced loss of green infrastructure (GI) and open space which provide ecosystem services such as air filtration and carbon sequestration. These benefits are likely to be most pronounced under Option 3 (Witney), followed by Option 2 (main service centres), Option 4 (Carterton) and then Option 1 (hierarchical approach), reflecting the relative emissions predicted in the comparative modelling of growth scenarios[7]. On balance, although the large scale of development will still likely lead to an increase in GHG emissions to some extent, the opportunities for greater use of sustainable transport and opportunities to re-use PDL, a minor positive impact is identified for Options 2, 3 and 4 on climate change mitigation, and an overall negligible impact for Option 1.

B.2.1.5 Option 5 will adopt a dispersed approach to growth across the district, including development in rural areas, potentially introducing barriers to the access and uptake of sustainable travel. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to climate change mitigation. Through locating development in areas which are generally poorly served by public transport, it is expected that there will be greater reliance on private car use which will result higher levels of transport related emissions. Comparative modelling of the growth scenarios[8] indicated Option 5 as the consistently worst-ranked for total, operational and cumulative carbon emissions. Overall, a major negative impact is identified for Option 5 on climate change mitigation as a result of the likely high use of private vehicles and associated GHG emissions released due to the rural nature of development.

B.2.1.6 It is recommended that the Council secure any new supporting sustainable travel infrastructure prior to development to ensure that sustainable travel choices become the norm, specifically for Option 7 and Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 which present opportunities for the greatest uptake in sustainable travel. Development at all seven options should consider potential impacts associated with embodied carbon, pursuing the quantification of embodied carbon and reduction in embodied carbon, for example through ensuring a

[6] Bioregional (2025) Net-Zero Spatial Planning Support. Task 3. Comparative modelling of nine growth scenarios. West Oxfordshire District Council. *[Note: this modelling was undertaken with reference to the nine scenarios presented in the previous Regulation 18 WODC consultation]*

[7] Ibid

[8] Ibid

fabric first approach[9] is taken at the conception of development, ensuring development uses low carbon materials and pursues Passivhaus standards[10]. It is recommended that climate tools are used to understand the extent of carbon emissions as a result of development, including the 'THERMOS' tool[11] to optimise local district energy network planning processes to facilitate low-carbon heating and cooling systems and the 'SCATTER' tool[12] to measure and model emissions.

Table B.2.1: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 1 – Climate change mitigation*

SA1 – Climate change mitigation	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	0	+	+	+	--	++	++

B.2.1.7 **Option 7 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to climate change mitigation. The focus of growth along key public transport corridors and hubs under Option 7 will help to encourage the uptake of public transport and consequently reduce reliance on private car use and associated emissions. This is closely followed by Option 6 (New Settlement) this is likely to provide the best opportunities for self-containment with careful planning.

B.2.1.8 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to climate change mitigation. Through locating development in areas which are generally poorly served by public transport, it is expected that reliance on private car use will be greater, which will result higher levels of transport related emissions.

B.2.2 SA Objective 2 – Climate change adaptation

B.2.2.1 The district is affected to varying degrees by fluvial (river) flooding and groundwater flooding. A small proportion of the district lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3, predominantly along the River Thames that comprises the southern border of the district, and its tributaries. Small areas of surface water flood risk (SWFR) can be found within the district, primarily along watercourses in the south east and north of the district. Climate change impacts will be expected to increase the risk of flooding throughout the district alongside heat risk and drought which are other known climate threats to the district and wider Oxfordshire County[13].

B.2.2.2 Soils and vegetation play vital roles in in attenuating flood risk, by intercepting surface water flooding and storing water that could otherwise lead to flooding, causing harm to people and property. Therefore, spatial strategy options which are likely to lead to the loss of undeveloped land or areas of GI are likely to increase flood risk in the area.

[9] Roofspace Solutions. What is a Fabric First Approach? Available at: https://roofspacesolutions.co.uk/the-fabric-first-approach/ [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

[10] Passivhaus Trust (2025) Standards & Policy. Available at: https://www.passivhaustrust.org.uk [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

[11] THERMOS (2024). THERMOS tool. Available at: www.thermos-project.eu/thermos-tool/tool-access/ [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[12] SCATTER (2024). SCATTER tool. Available at: https://scattercities.com [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[13] AtkinsRealis (2024). Oxfordshire County Council – Climate resilience, Current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire. April 2024. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/ClimateVulnerabilityAssessmentOxfordshireApril24Final.pdf [Date accessed: 11/12/24]

Furthermore, spatial strategy options which will increase the density or extent of development within existing urban areas will also contribute to the urban heat island (UHI) effect.

B.2.2.3 Option 6 could result in large-scale loss of undeveloped land due to the proposed development of a new settlement. However, the development of a new settlement provides the opportunity to incorporate climate adaptation measures such as resilient housing designs, and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) which can replicate greenfield runoff rates and reduce flood risk. Development should make use of relevant SuDS guidance[14] to ensure effective implementation and explore multi-functional schemes. Furthermore, development of a new settlement as advocated under Option 6 provides an opportunity to utilise nature-based solutions from the early stages of development, such as conserving and enhancing waterbodies, planting trees and hedges or improving soil cover[15]. On balance, a negligible impact is identified for Option 6 due to the potential for climate adaptation opportunities. Option 6 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to climate change adaptation as it has the greatest potential for implementing climate adaptative design and layout and can also ensure built development will not be located in areas at risk of fluvial or surface water flooding.

B.2.2.4 Due to the rural nature of Option 5, it is more likely that development will result in cumulative large-scale losses of undeveloped land or GI which play vital roles in attenuating flood risk and reducing threats from heat risk. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to climate change adaptation as it is more likely development will be located in rural locations and could result in larger losses of undeveloped land and GI. A minor negative impact on climate change adaptation is identified for Option 5.

B.2.2.5 Development associated with Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 is likely to be located within and around existing urban areas. Development under Option 7 will be located alongside key public transport corridors, which includes some of these same urban areas. Urban areas within the district are affected by large extents of flood risk, especially areas such as Witney which is prone to both fluvial flood risk from the River Windrush[16] and SWFR. Increased development within existing urban areas may put pressure on existing open spaces to be converted to residential or employment use, reducing GI coverage, which can otherwise help to adapt to climate change impacts such as flooding and help to alleviate UHI effect. Increased urban development and thereby an increase in the extent of impermeable surfaces is likely to decrease rates of infiltration and increase the UHI effect and contribute to wider issues such as drought, which areas such as Carterton, which suffered from water disruption to homes due to the July-August heatwave in 2022[17], are vulnerable to. Overall, development at all five options is likely to have a minor negative impact on climate adaptation.

[14] Ciria (2015). The SuDS Manual. Available at: https://www.ciria.org/ItemDetail?iProductCode=C753& [Date accessed: 11/12/24]

[15] Environment Agency (2021). Use nature-based solutions to reduce flooding in your area. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-nature-based-solutions-to-reduce-flooding-in-your-area [Date accessed: 11/12/24]

[16] AtkinsRealis (2024). Oxfordshire County Council – Climate resilience, Current and future climate risk and vulnerability and health impacts assessments in Oxfordshire. April 2024. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/ClimateVulnerabilityAssessmentOxfordshireApril24Final.pdf [Date accessed: 11/12/24]

[17] Ibid.

Table B.2.2: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 2 – Climate change adaptation*

SA2 – Climate change adaptation	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	-	-	-	-	-	0	-

B.2.2.6 **Option 6 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to climate change adaptation as it has the greatest potential for implementing climate adaptative design and layout, and is also likely to have the greatest scope to ensure built development will not be located in areas at risk of flooding now or in the future.

B.2.2.7 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to climate change adaptation as it is more likely development will be located in rural locations and could result in larger losses of undeveloped land and GI, which plays a vital role in attenuating flood risk and reducing threats from heat risk.

B.2.3 SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

B.2.3.1 Biodiversity assets within West Oxfordshire include Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is partially located within the east of the district, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) including Wychwood Forest and Blenheim Park, as well as other National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Local Wildlife Site (LWS). Components of the district's GI network are also likely to serve as important wildlife corridors, facilitating the movement of species and linking to the wider countryside including ancient woodlands, river corridors and the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) which covers around a third of the district. Habitats across the district primarily consist of arable land with large areas of improved grassland alongside rarer habitats such as semi-natural and unimproved grassland[18]. As a result of the large quanta of housing and employment growth proposed within all seven options, it is likely that pressure on biodiversity assets will increase and adverse impacts at the landscape scale are likely.

B.2.3.2 The development of a new settlement, as for Option 6, provides an opportunity to avoid significant impacts on biodiversity features through appropriate location, design and layout and incorporation of multi-functional GI, as well as opportunities to apply Building with Nature Standards[19] to ensure that development incorporates wildlife into placemaking. Option 6 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to biodiversity as it provides the greatest opportunity to consider the impacts of development on biodiversity at the earliest stages of development and as such incorporating multi-functional open spaces and habitats. However, whilst it is expected that development at the new settlement (and all development under each spatial option) will provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), the large-scale development anticipated could still result in direct loss of habitats, however this is expected to be localised habitat loss in comparison

[18] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024). Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030. Restoring and enhancing West Oxfordshire's natural environment. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/nvtbk0ob/nature-recovery-plan-2024-to-2030.pdf [Date accessed: 12/12/24]

[19] Building with Nature Standards. Building with Nature. Standards Framework (BwN 2.0) Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c45e569c3c16a9eac56d244/t/6351513d1afee236d4cf6ce8/1666273600232/Building_with_Nature_Standards_Framework_2.0_Oct22_Download_Version.pdf [Date accessed: 05/11/24]

to widespread impacts seen through development at the alternative six options. Overall, a minor negative impact on biodiversity is identified for Option 6.

B.2.3.3 Development through Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 is likely to be located within and around existing urban areas. Development under Option 7 will be located alongside key public transport corridors, including within existing urban areas. Although potentially to a lesser extent than countryside locations, the district's urban areas support some distinctive habitats, species and ecological linkages. The Oxford Meadows SAC, designated for rare habitats such as lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)[20], is located adjacent to the A40 and is sensitive changes in air quality, water quality and quantity. Options 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 are likely to increase road users along the A40 and result in further impacts on the SAC from vehicular emissions. Whilst development at all five options may include greater opportunities for use of PDL within the urban areas than the remaining two options, and Option 7 in particular may help to increase public transport uptake and reduce per capita emissions to some extent, there is still potential for increased pressures on local biodiversity and impacts to less sensitive biodiversity features. Overall, minor negative impacts on biodiversity are identified for Options 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7.

B.2.3.4 Option 5 looks to disperse development in rural locations and could result in greater losses of undeveloped land and disruption to the ecological network. Development associated with Option 5 will be likely to increase habitat fragmentation across the district and increase pressures on biodiversity assets including rurally located statutory biodiversity sites such as Wychwood NNR, Chimney Meadows NNR, Crecy Hill LNR, Saltway LNR and non-statutory LWS that are spread across the district[21]. Overall, development through Option 5 is likely to have a minor negative impact on biodiversity within the district. Whilst the extent and severity of impacts will depend on site-specifics, there is potential for Option 5 to be the worst performing option with regard to biodiversity as it will disperse development across the district, largely in rural locations on undeveloped land and therefore likely to lead to widely felt biodiversity impacts.

Table B.2.3: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity*

SA3 – Biodiversity	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

B.2.3.5 **Option 6 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to biodiversity as it provides the greatest opportunity to plan holistically and consider the impacts of development on biodiversity at the earliest stages of development, incorporating multi-functional GI and open spaces which can act as stepping stones for wildlife.

B.2.3.6 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to biodiversity as it will disperse development across the district, largely in rural locations on undeveloped land and therefore likely to lead to widely felt biodiversity impacts and incremental loss of the ecological network.

[20] JNCC. Oxford Meadows SAC. Available at: https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/site/UK0012845 [Date accessed: 12/12/24]

[21] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024). Nature Recovery Plan 2024-2030. Restoring and enhancing West Oxfordshire's natural environment. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/nvtbk0ob/nature-recovery-plan-2024-to-2030.pdf [Date accessed: 12/12/24]

B.2.4 SA Objective 4 – Landscape

B.2.4.1 The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) encompasses a large proportion of the north west of the district. The Cotswolds is the largest National Landscape in England and is recognised by its rich, diverse and high-quality landscape encompassing flower-rich limestone grasslands and ancient broadleaved woodland[22]. West Oxfordshire contains a small portion of the Oxford Green Belt in the east of the district, which prevents urban sprawl from Oxford and aims to avoid coalescence with nearby settlements such as Eynsham, Cassington and Bladon[23]. Green belt is not a statutory landscape designation; however, it plays a vital role in preserving the setting, character and openness of the countryside.

B.2.4.2 Options 1 and 2 are likely to include some development in and around Chipping Norton, with potential for urban sprawl into the sensitive surrounding landscape. The majority of Chipping Norton is located within the CNL and as such development through Options 1 and 2 will have potential to result in adverse impacts on the special qualities[24] of the landscape. Noise associated with development along the A44 is already identified as a disturbance to the landscape, as detailed in the Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment[25], and could be worsened through increased growth in these locations. However, some of the development through Options 1 and 2 has the potential to be located in and around existing built-up areas and therefore adverse impacts on sensitive landscape features will be reduced to some extent. Overall, a minor negative impact on the landscape character is identified for Options 1 and 2.

B.2.4.3 Pursuing Options 3 or 4 will see development focussed solely at Witney or Carterton and as such will minimise development at more rural locations. Development at these locations will primarily be focused on undeveloped greenfield sites, but will be more concentrated at the edge of the urban areas compared to a more dispersed strategy. Focussing all development for the Plan period at either of these two towns will be expected to alter the character of the townscapes and the surrounding landscape, such as through disrupting the countryside views to and from the towns, and changing the landscape character from rural agricultural to suburban residential. The large-scale development proposed within and around Witney and Carterton through Options 3 and 4 has potential to increase noise and light pollution in combination with existing infrastructure such as the A40 and flying associated with RAF Brize Norton as detailed in their respective landscape assessments[2627], which could result in wider adverse effects on the character and

[22] Cotswold National Landscape (2024). Special qualities of the Cotswolds – A National Treasure. Available at: https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-landscape-2/ [Date accessed: 09/12/24]

[23] LUC (2015) Oxford Green Belt Study (2015). Available at: www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/communityandliving/partnerships/GrowthBoard/OxfordGreenBeltStudySummary.pdf [Date accessed: 12/12/24]

[24] Cotswold National Landscape (2024). Special qualities of the Cotswolds – A National Treasure. Available at: https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-landscape-2/ [Date accessed: 09/12/24]

[25] AHLC (2009) West Oxfordshire Local Development Framework: Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/qwrkoffm/chipping-norton-landscape-assessment-2009-full-report.pdf [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

[26] AHLC (2007) West Oxfordshire Local Development Framework: Witney Landscape Assessment. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/2mdjjkg4/witney-landscape-assessment-2007-full-report.pdf [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

[27] AHLC (2009) West Oxfordshire Local Development Framework: Carterton Landscape Assessment. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/gykgnexu/carterton-landscape-assessment-2009-full-report.pdf [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

tranquillity. Options 3 and 4 may include some opportunities for development on PDL and brownfield sites, although it is recognised that most development will be focused at the settlement edge. On balance, a minor negative impact on landscape is identified for Options 3 and 4 where they have the potential to alter the surrounding landscape character of Witney and Carterton.

B.2.4.4 Development through Option 5 will be dispersed across the district which has potential to alter the rural landscape character and wider setting. Distributing development could potentially help to avoid significant adverse effects focused in particular locations, however it is more likely to result in widespread and potentially cumulative adverse impacts on rural settlements across West Oxfordshire. As a result, Option 5 has the potential to be the worst performing option. Dispersed development through Option 5 could result in disturbance to the quality, integrity and tranquillity of the rural landscape. Option 5 could locate development in villages within the CNL, which is likely to result in an adverse impact on the rich character of these rural settlements, as well as adversely affecting views to and from the villages, such as those experienced by users of the Public Right of Way (PRoW) network. Overall, a minor negative impact is anticipated for landscape under Option 5.

B.2.4.5 Option 6 seeks to pursue development at one or two new settlements. Focussing growth primarily in one location will avoid the widespread adverse effects associated with dispersal but would be expected to completely alter the landscape character of the development area. The development of a new settlement also provides an opportunity to create a new sense of place and identity, using landscape-led site design practices, including buffers and high-quality design such as appropriate height and building materials to avoid or reduce harm to sensitive landscape features. Furthermore, implementing soft landscaping at the new settlement will help to ease the transition between rural and urban areas. The new settlement provides an opportunity to incorporate GI into development and therefore impacts on the landscape can be mitigated, if not avoided, through appropriate design and layout. Landscape-led development will ensure that the potential large-scale loss of undeveloped land can provide the opportunity to create a new coherent neighbourhood that is well designed and complements the wider landscape setting. Development of a new settlement through Option 6 should make use of the National Design Guide[28] which provides recommendations on how design at all levels can shape the character of a new place. As a result, Option 6 can be identified as the best performing option where incorporating effective and appropriate design will help to prevent adverse impacts on the landscape. Overall, a negligible impact on the landscape is identified.

B.2.4.6 Option 7 seeks to focus development in areas along key public transport corridors. Development is likely to be dispersed throughout settlements along the A40 and the Cotswold and Cherwell Valley railway lines. Whilst reducing private car use is beneficial in many respects, locating development within public transport corridors, such as near to Hanborough Station along the Cotswold railway line, is likely to result in adverse impacts on the distinctive landscape and townscape character of the small rural settlements, many of which are located within the CNL. Locating development along the A40 corridor is also more likely to result in coalescence due not only to new development, but also as a result of associated infrastructure, such as new roads, road junctions and increased parking areas. This will also have the potential to contribute to greater noise and light pollution

[28] DLUHC (2021). National Design Guide. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602cef1d8fa8f5038595091b/National_design_guide.pdf [Date accessed: 05/11/24]

along the A40[29], near Witney particularly, which is likely to disturb the surrounding landscape setting. Overall, a minor negative impact on landscape is anticipated for Option 7.

Table B.2.4: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 4 – Landscape*

SA 4 – Landscape	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	-	-	-	-	-	0	-

B.2.4.7 Based on the limited available data in terms of landscape sensitivity and capacity, **Option 6 could be identified as the best performing option** with regard to landscape where there are likely to be the best opportunities for strong place making and incorporating effective and appropriate design into a new settlement to ensure integration into the wider landscape. This would however need to be informed by site-specific appraisals to evaluate the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape if/when potential locations for a new settlement were identified.

B.2.4.8 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to landscape where a dispersed approach to development is more likely to result in widespread and potentially cumulative adverse impacts on rural settlements across West Oxfordshire.

B.2.5 SA Objective 5 – Cultural heritage

B.2.5.1 West Oxfordshire has a rich history with a plethora of historical assets located within the district. One notable historic asset found within West Oxfordshire is Blenheim Palace, including the surrounding parklands and gardens, a designated World Heritage Site[30]. There are multiple listed buildings (LB) and scheduled monuments (SM) located within the Blenheim Estate. West Oxfordshire is predominantly rural, with market towns and villages set within an attractive rural landscape. Historic settlements are characterised by the distinctive vernacular design and use of local building materials including Cotswold limestone and Stonesfield slate and the relationship of settlements with the surrounding countryside. Large country estates are also characteristic of West Oxfordshire and a key element of the district's cultural heritage including those at Cornbury, Great Tew and Ditchley.

B.2.5.2 Through Options 1 (hierarchical approach) and 2 (main service centres), developments will primarily be focussed within the main centres, and through Option 1 this then defaults to rural centres, villages and the rest of the district. Focussing the majority of development within the main centres will be likely to result in a lesser impact on the setting of heritage assets than more rural spatial strategies, given the level of existing development already present within the main centres. Despite this, the main service settlements in West Oxfordshire consist of small market towns with conservation areas (CAs) located at their centres, such as 'Witney and Cogges' CA. The Witney and Cogges CA includes eight character areas with specific features contributing to the CAs distinctiveness and are

[29] AHLC (2007) West Oxfordshire Local Development Framework: Witney Landscape Assessment. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/2mdjjkg4/witney-landscape-assessment-2007-full-report.pdf [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

[30] UNESCO World Heritage Convention (2025) Blenheim Palace. Available at: https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/425/ [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

recognised to be under threat from various vulnerabilities including poorly maintained properties, traffic and noise pollution[31]. Extensive development in or around such CAs has the potential to dilute the historic character for which they have been identified. A minor negative impact on cultural heritage is likely for Options 1 and 2.

B.2.5.3 Options 3 and 4 seek to focus development in Witney and Carterton respectively. Focussing development primarily in either of these two towns will be expected to reduce the extremity of adverse impacts where existing development already acts as a buffer to heritage assets or already forms part of the setting to the asset. This said, as discussed within **paragraph B.2.5.2** above, Witney is a historic market town and new development through Option 3 has potential to adversely impact the features and setting of assets including the Witney and Cogges CA. However, this is not the case for Carterton, where there is no CA designated at its centre, although the features and settings of the few listed buildings located in Carterton could be impacted as a result of development through Option 4. Overall, a minor negative impact on cultural heritage is anticipated for Options 3 and 4.

B.2.5.4 Option 5 seeks to disperse growth more widely throughout the district. This approach to the spatial development in West Oxfordshire will relieve the burden from one particular location, which will be more likely to contribute to changes in the setting of heritage assets. Development in rural locations, however, is anticipated to more significantly affect heritage assets, such as listed buildings. For example, any development at larger villages is likely to result in a more profound impact on the features and settings of heritage assets in these settlements. Given the potential to have an impact on a wider range of heritage assets, Option 5 can be identified as the worst performing option. Overall, a minor negative impact on cultural heritage is identified for Option 5.

B.2.5.5 Whilst the creation of a whole new settlement under Option 6 could significantly alter the setting and character of heritage assets in the local area, through the careful location and design of the settlement, significant effects could be avoided. It is expected that through incorporating sensitive design of buildings, as well as use of GI and green buffers, impacts on the setting or features of heritage assets could be avoided or significant harm reduced. Where designated or locally important historic buildings fall within the developable area of the new settlement, appropriate use of materials and methods can be used to repair and maintain the historic asset, using Historic England's Technical Guidance and Research[32]. Furthermore, following guidance from Historic England[33], development should seek opportunities to enhance historic assets through improved energy efficiency, maintenance and repair to contribute to a greener future and adapt to climate change. As such, there is potential for Option 6 to be the best performing as development at a new settlement will allow for cohesive development with sensitive design which compliments West Oxfordshire's historic environment. Overall, a negligible impact on cultural heritage is identified for Option 6.

[31] West Oxfordshire District Council (2013). Witney and Cogges. Conservation Area Character Appraisal Preservation and Enhancement. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/snadiyuv/witney-and-cogges-conservation-area-character-appraisal.pdf [Date accessed: 02/01/24]

[32] Historic England (2024). Technical Guidance and Research. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/advice/technical-conservation-guidance-and-research-brochure-pdf/ [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

[33] Historic England (2024). Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/ [Date accessed: 02/01/25]

B.2.5.6 Option 7 would see development located in proximity to key public transport networks for the district. For the most part, this is expected to result in development in and around the main settlements in West Oxfordshire, such as Witney, Carterton, Burford and Chipping Norton. Urban locations may be more capable of accommodating further development without significantly affecting heritage assets. However, development with access to the Cotswold and Cherwell railway lines are likely to be located in more rural locations where any development would be expected to have a more prominent impact on heritage assets. Therefore overall, a minor negative impact on cultural heritage is anticipated for the approach under Option 7.

Table B.2.5: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 5 – Cultural heritage*

SA 5 – Cultural heritage	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	-	-	-	-	-	0	-

B.2.5.7 **Option 6 could be identified as the best performing option** with regard to cultural heritage as development at a new settlement will allow for cohesive development with sensitive design which compliments West Oxfordshire's historic environment, and avoids the most sensitive locations.

B.2.5.8 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to cultural heritage as under this approach there is potential for adverse effects on a wider range of heritage assets.

B.2.6 SA Objective 6 – Air quality

B.2.6.1 Poor air quality is a leading contributor to poor human health as well as environmental risks. Contributors to poor air quality in West Oxfordshire include air pollutants and emissions released from road traffic, which is likely to increase further through the provision of c.6,500 homes and employment land during the Plan period to 2041. There are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within West Oxfordshire including 'Chipping Norton' AQMA and 'Witney' AQMA both of which were designated in 2005 for exceedances in nitrogen dioxide (NO_2)[34]. WODC's latest Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) (2024)[35] states that levels of NO_2 are continuing to fall across the district.

B.2.6.2 Options 1 and 2 seek to locate the majority of new development within the main service centres. Whilst this is likely to prevent the worsening of air quality more widely across the district, it is likely to result in higher concentrations of harmful air pollutants, such as NO_2, in the built-up areas, and particularly in Chipping Norton and Witney which already contain AQMAs. Low emission and electric vehicles, as well as public transport access, are likely to become more widely used which will support lower levels of air pollutants, however overall, a minor negative impact for air quality is anticipated under Options 1 and 2.

[34] DEFRA (2024) UK Air: AQMAs Declared by West Oxfordshire District Council. Available at: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/local-authorities?la_id=309 [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[35] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024) Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), June 2024. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/jrjdqdnf/air-quality-annual-report-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

B.2.6.3 Through Option 3 development will be focussed in and around Witney, with potential to result in significant increases to the throughflow of traffic from private vehicles. As a result, this will be expected to worsen air quality within Witney, putting pressure on the existing AQMA which may not then be in a position to meet its NO_2 targets. As such, Option 3 could be identified as the worst performing option as increased development will bring a greater number of vehicles and associated emissions expected to put pressure on the existing Witney AQMA. However, existing transport infrastructure will provide access to sustainable transport choices and potentially reduce reliance on private car use. Overall, a major negative impact for air quality is most likely under Option 3.

B.2.6.4 Option 4 seeks to locate development in and around Carterton. Whilst concentrating all development to meet the residual housing need and associated employment growth in and around one centre will increase the volumes of traffic passing through Carterton, as well as on the nearby A40 and through surrounding settlements such as Shilton, Carterton does not contain a designated AQMA. Furthermore, existing transport infrastructure within Carterton will provide residents with access to sustainable transport choices and could reduce the reliance on private car use. As a result, this is less likely to exacerbate existing poor air quality than Option 3. On balance, a minor negative impact for air quality is anticipated under Option 4.

B.2.6.5 Option 5 seeks to disperse growth more evenly throughout West Oxfordshire including at rural service centres and larger villages, as well as at major service centres. Option 5 is likely to locate residents in areas with limited access to sustainable transport (see **section B.2.11** – SA Objective 11 Transport and Accessibility). Poor access to sustainable transport options is likely to increase the reliance on private vehicles, which will be expected to result in adverse effects associated with higher emissions levels. Overall, a minor negative impact for air quality is anticipated under Option 5.

B.2.6.6 The development of a new settlement through Option 6 could provide opportunities to reduce some of the impacts of air pollution caused by development, through locating and designing main roads within the new settlement away from proposed residential development to avoid exposure to pollutants. The new settlement should also be planned to avoid congestion that would prevent pollution hotspots. Adopting principles of the 20-minute neighbourhood will also encourage integrated active travel and sustainable modes of travel, which will reduce the need for private car use and potentially reduce transport related pollutants. Furthermore, through providing electric vehicle (EV) charging points and associated infrastructure to support the uptake in EVs, air quality could be further enhanced through reducing emissions of harmful pollutants such as NO_2 and particulate matter. Option 6 could be identified as the best performing option for air quality as it will likely incorporate sustainable and active travel routes, minimising the use of private vehicles through the potential to co-locate key services and facilities within a sustainable distance. Overall, a negligible impact on air quality is identified.

B.2.6.7 Option 7 seeks to focus development within public transport corridors, predominantly along the A40, Cotswold and Cherwell railway lines. As noted within **paragraph B.2.11.3** the A40 is undergoing significant improvements, including improved public transport services and links to the emerging West Oxfordshire railway corridor. Focussing development on these locations will be expected to result in an uptake in public transport use with bus routes into main service centres, such as Witney, Carterton and Burford, as well as accessible train services into Oxford and beyond. Whilst this is expected to increase the use of public transport and reduce emissions, it will not eliminate the use of private cars

and associated air pollutants and has the potential to contribute to additional traffic along the A40. Overall, a minor negative impact for air quality is anticipated under Option 7.

Table B.2.6: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 6 – Air quality*

SA 6 – Air quality	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	-	-	--	-	-	0	-

B.2.6.8 **Option 6 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to air quality, assuming that this can become a self-sustaining settlement that will incorporate sustainable and active travel routes, minimising the use of private vehicles through the potential to co-locate residential growth with employment opportunities, key services and facilities within a sustainable distance. It would be closely followed by **Option 7** given the focus of development in public transport corridors with likely lower per capita emissions.

B.2.6.9 **Option 3 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to air quality as increased development will bring a greater number of vehicles and associated emissions expected to put pressure on the existing Witney AQMA.

B.2.7 SA Objective 7 – Water

B.2.7.1 There are several watercourses running though West Oxfordshire including the Rivers Evenlode, Windrush, Glyme, Shill Brook and their tributaries, as well as the River Thames flowing along the southern border of the plan area. Increased development has the potential to impact on the bed and banks of watercourses, as well as cause pollution to waterbodies and groundwater resources. New development will also result in the production of wastewater and as such it is necessary to ensure there is capacity for treating and holding wastewater.

B.2.7.2 West Oxfordshire is an area of 'water stress' and Thames Water's latest Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2024[36] forecasts potential shortages of water to 2041. In terms of environmental capacity, the Environment Agency's catchment data explorer[37] suggests that most of the watercourses in the study area have 'poor' ecological status and 'fail' with regard to chemical status. In terms of the Sewage Treatment Works serving the area, a number have been operating outside of their permits in recent years. Thames Water has acknowledged that Bampton, Carterton, Woodstock, Chipping Norton and Witney along with Church Hanborough STWs all fall into this category.

B.2.7.3 Through Options 1 and 2, the majority of development will be concentrated at the main service centres within West Oxfordshire. The main service centres, including Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, are more likely to already have relevant water-related infrastructure in place, such as for wastewater treatment, although expansions may be needed to accommodate growth. Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton all have watercourses running through or around the settlements and as such the watercourses

[36] Thames Water (2024). Thames Water Resources Management Plan 2024. Available at: www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/about-us/regulation/water-resources/wrmp24/overview.pdf [Date accessed: 03/01/25]

[37] Environment Agency (2025) Catchment Data Explorer: Thames River Basin District. Available at: https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/6 [Date accessed: 26/06/25]

are likely to experience higher volumes of pollutants from the construction and tenure of development. In the WODC area there is a section of SPZ3 which lies to the east of Chipping Norton. Development in and around the SPZ3 in Chipping Norton has the potential to pollute the groundwater at this location. Therefore, a minor negative impact on water resources and water quality is anticipated for Options 1 and 2.

B.2.7.4 Under Options 3 and 4 developments will be focussed on Witney and Carterton respectively. The River Windrush and several of its tributaries run through and around Witney, with the Shill, Kencot and Highmoor Brook running around Carterton. Development at these two locations respectively will likely result in increased levels of pollutants being released into the watercourses. Additionally, concentrating this volume of development at one place will also be expected to place pressure on existing wastewater treatment and holding facilities, which is indicated at Witney where the sewage treatment works are undergoing upgrades to accommodate increases in flow[38]. Options 3 and 4 can therefore be identified as the worst performing where development will be expected to worsen the quality of existing watercourses as well as placing pressure on wastewater treatment and holding facilities. As such, a minor negative impact on water resources and water quality will be anticipated for Options 3 and 4.

B.2.7.5 Option 5 sets out a dispersed pattern of development. This will involve some development being located in major service settlements, rural service centres and larger villages. Dispersing development across different settlements of varying sizes alleviates pressure on any single settlement and surrounding watercourses, as well as spreading the demand on wastewater infrastructure. This said, with a dispersed development pattern it will be more likely for a greater number of watercourses to be affected with potential for adverse impacts in relation to the bed, banks and quality of the watercourse. As such, a minor negative impact on watercourses and water quality will be expected for Option 5.

B.2.7.6 Option 6 provides opportunities to mitigate impacts on water quality through the early design phases of the new settlement. Mitigation measures to avoid water pollution could be achieved through appropriate management of construction and incorporation of sustainable drainage and GI to reduce impacts during the operation of the development. However, the large scale of development in one area is more likely to result in the requirement for further and separate wastewater treatment and holding facilities to accommodate the capacity needed to support the anticipated large-scale growth. Option 6 could be identified as the best performing option where a new settlement can be located in areas of low flood risk as well as incorporating key design elements which will support natural water flows and functions, including effective drainage and increased rates of infiltration through the use of SuDs and GI. Overall, a minor negative impact for water quality and water resources is anticipated for Option 6.

B.2.7.7 Option 7 seeks to place development in public transport corridors. There are several watercourses which intersect or run near to the A40, such as the River Windrush and its tributaries, as well as Chill, Limb, Shill and Kencot Brooks. Development in these locations is likely to result in adverse effects on watercourses where pollution, such as from emissions associated with traffic on the A40, is likely to worsen the quality of these watercourses. Despite this, distributing development across a greater number of locations is less likely to place pressure on a finite number of wastewater treatment and holding

[38] Thames Water (2023) West Oxfordshire District Council's Waterways Day. Available at: https://westoxon.gov.uk/media/55bbavqm/thames-water-presentation-1.pdf [Date accessed: 03/01/25]

facilities and as such is less likely to cause further issues, such as overflow at peak times. Overall, a minor negative impact on water quality and water resources is likely under Option 7.

Table B.2.7: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 7 – Water*

SA 7 – Water	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

B.2.7.8 Based on the limited available information, **Option 6 could be identified as the best performing** with regard to water option where a new settlement can incorporate key design elements which will support natural water flows and functions, including effective drainage and increased rates of infiltration through the use of SuDs and GI.

B.2.7.9 **Options 3 and 4 emerge as the worst performing options** with regard to water where development will be expected to worsen the quality of existing watercourses as well as placing pressure on wastewater treatment and holding facilities.

B.2.8 SA Objective 8 – Natural resources and waste

B.2.8.1 West Oxfordshire is predominantly rural, meaning the large-scale development at any of the seven options will likely result in the loss of undeveloped land to some extent. The district encompasses extensive areas of high-quality agricultural land, with approximately 84% classified as Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) Grades 1, 2, and 3. Grades 1, 2 and potentially 3 (if found to be sub-grade 3a) represent the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Grade 1 represents the highest and most excellent quality. While most of the district falls under Grade 3, there are smaller portions of Grade 2 in the south, and a small portion of Grade 1 within the west.

B.2.8.2 Development associated with any of the seven options has potential to lead to a significant loss of undeveloped land, including BMV agricultural land. This may have significant adverse effects on soil resources, such as direct soil loss from excavation, compaction, increased erosion, structural degradation, nutrient depletion, and heightened risks of pollution or contamination during construction. The resulting loss of soil and its ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and water filtration, is considered permanent and irreversible.

B.2.8.3 Options 2, 3 and 4 are likely to result in a relatively lesser impact on soil resources across the district due to the urban focus of development and therefore greater likelihood for higher density development, and potentially more opportunities than the other options for use of PDL. Furthermore, areas such as Witney and Carterton both contain pockets of lower quality Grade 4 ALC land and Carterton also includes areas of non-agricultural land, which could be developed, protecting BMV agricultural land. Option 4 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to natural resources as it could develop on non-agricultural land and lower quality Grade 4 ALC land, protecting BMV agricultural land. Option 6 could provide opportunity to incorporate GI into the new settlement. Preserving areas of undeveloped land and establishing robust GI networks which are critical for effective surface water drainage and preventing soil erosion. These measures also play a key role in maintaining ecological networks, which are integral to supporting essential soil functions.

B.2.8.4 Options 1 and 7 could lead to similar effects as Options 2, 3 and 4, however the loss of undeveloped land is likely to be more pronounced owing to the relatively higher proportion of growth directed towards smaller and more rural settlements. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to natural resources. Option 5 will look to disperse development across the district's rural areas. Losses of soil will be widespread rather than concentrated in specific areas as expected through the alternative six options, which could result in cumulative impacts on ecosystem services and ecological networks throughout the district. Overall, due to the large-scale growth anticipated at all seven options and the large extent of Grade 3 ALC and Grade 2 ALC land across the district, significant losses of undeveloped land and BMV agricultural land are anticipated.

B.2.8.5 On balance, due to the potential for greater use of PDL through development under Options 2, 3 and 4 and potential GI provision through Option 6, these four options have potential for a minor negative impact on BMV soil and natural resources within the district. A major negative impact on BMV soil and natural resources is likely for Options 1, 5 and 7.

B.2.8.6 It is recommended that soil surveys are conducted to identify the presence of Grade 3a and 3b land under the ALC system. These subgrades distinguish between good quality agricultural land (3a) and moderate quality agricultural land (3b). The insights from soil surveys support evaluating development impacts on soil health, ecosystem services, and natural capital. Additionally, soil surveys can guide site layouts, ensuring the retention and optimal use of higher-grade soils. For instance, these soils could be retained for community purposes, such as allotments, to preserve and promote long-term soil productivity.

B.2.8.7 In 2023/2024, a total of 43,160 tonnes of household waste was collected in West Oxfordshire[39], with 57% diverted for reuse, recycling, or composting. It is assumed that new residents will have an annual waste production in line with the national average of 377kg per person. Development through any of the seven options is expected to result in a significant increase in household waste, and potentially more diverse waste products associated with employment growth, placing greater strain on existing waste management infrastructure. This will also challenge the Council's collaborative target with Oxfordshire local authorities to achieve a 70% recycling and composting rate for household waste by 2030[40].

B.2.8.8 Options 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 will locate development in areas with good links to transport infrastructure and will therefore be likely to provide better sustainable access to waste infrastructure. The development of a new settlement through Option 6 is also likely to include the provision of appropriate waste management infrastructure and adopt design principles that locate development within a sustainable distance to local services, which could include waste infrastructure, such as different recycling points. Option 5 will look to disperse development rurally and therefore locate development in areas with poor transport links and therefore more limited opportunities to access waste infrastructure and

[39] DEFRA (2025). Local authority collected waste generation annual results 2023/24. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results [Date accessed: 30/04/25]

[40] West Oxfordshire District Council. Requirements for refuse and recycling provision at new developments. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/gjyfjvyk/waste-and-recycling-criteria-for-new-developments.pdf [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

recycling facilities. There is little separating the performance of the options in terms of waste alone, for the purpose of this high-level assessment.

Table B.2.8: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 8 – Natural resources and waste*

SA8 – Natural resources and waste	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	--	-	-	-	--	-	--

B.2.8.9 **Option 4 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to natural resources as it could develop on non-agricultural land and lower quality Grade 4 ALC land, protecting BMV agricultural land.

B.2.8.10 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to natural resources. Option 5 will look to disperse development across the district's rural areas. Losses of soil will be widespread rather than concentrated in specific areas as expected through the alternative six options, which could result in cumulative impacts on ecosystem services and ecological networks throughout the district.

B.2.8.11 There is little separating the seven options in terms of waste alone, for the purpose of this high-level assessment.

B.2.9 SA Objective 9 – Housing and equality

B.2.9.1 In April 2025, the average house price in West Oxfordshire was £415,000, reflecting a 4.4% increase from April 2024. This rise surpassed the South East region's average increase of 3% over the same period[41]. Additionally, first-time buyers in the district faced higher costs compared to the previous year. National and sub-regional housing objectives emphasise improving housing affordability, ensuring high-quality housing, fostering market stability, enhancing choice, and aligning housing supply locations with accessibility and economic development patterns.

B.2.9.2 According to the latest standard method figure, the housing need for the district is at least 905 dwellings per annum (14,480 homes for the 16-year period 2025-2041). All seven options will significantly contribute to the identified housing need, with each being capable of delivering the entire residual housing need of 6,500 homes (accounting for existing planning permissions, adopted local plan allocations and windfall allowance). As a result of the development at any of the seven options, increased affordability and a greater mix of housing may be provided.

B.2.9.3 Development at Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will locate development within urban areas. Development within urban areas will help to provide residents and particularly younger people with access to the housing market and facilitate the co-location of housing and jobs and potentially preventing out commuting which (as discussed further in **paragraph B.2.13.2**) is an ongoing issue within the district. Although West Oxfordshire is among the least deprived districts in the country, significant areas of the district face challenges with the 'barriers to housing and services' domain according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation

[41] ONS (2025). Housing prices in West Oxfordshire. Available at: www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E07000181/# [Date accessed: 19/06/25]

(IMD)[42], including challenges with housing affordability. This includes areas surrounding Carterton, Witney and Chipping Norton. Development within these more deprived areas will increase the affordability of homes and could result in residents staying in areas longer, fostering a sense of community and improving social cohesion. Option 3 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to housing and equality as development will be focused within the district's most deprived areas, of which Witney contains more than Carterton and Chipping Norton. Overall, a major positive impact on housing provision and equality is identified for all four options.

B.2.9.4 Development at Option 7 will locate housing along the A40 and other public transport corridors. Broadly, this approach will provide potential to position development close to essential services and job opportunities which are accessible via public transport. Overall, a major positive impact on housing provision is identified for Option 7.

B.2.9.5 Option 6 presents an opportunity to design the new settlement to meet the varied needs of residents, offering high-quality and appropriately sized homes. The new settlement should also ensure affordable housing, supported living arrangements, single and multiple occupancy residences that address accessibility requirements are also considered. The new settlement should aim to provide a range of benefits to all community members to meet the requirements of the local population. Furthermore, delivering high-quality placemaking will be crucial, therefore development should make use of the National Design Guide[43] which sets out ways to plan for a well-designed connected network and also the Oxfordshire County Council Street Design Guide[44] to make sure development contributes to social cohesion. However, delivering development in one location, could result in adverse impacts through a lack of affordable housing in other areas of the district, furthering social inequalities. Overall, a major positive impact on housing provision and equality is identified for Option 6.

B.2.9.6 Option 5 looks to disperse development across rural locations within West Oxfordshire. Locating development too thinly across rural areas could have implications in terms of the coordination and delivery of key infrastructure. Furthermore, the most deprived areas within the district are within urban areas (see **paragraph B.2.9.4**) and therefore developing in rural areas could exacerbate existing social inequalities. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to housing and equality as dispersed development across rural locations could result in implications on the delivery of key infrastructure and direct development away from the most deprived areas. Overall, a major positive impact on housing provision is identified for Option 5.

[42] MHCLG (2019) The English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Technical report. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d8b387740f0b609909b5908/IoD2019_Technical_Report.pdf [Date accessed 14/01/25]

43 DLUHC (2021). National Design Guide. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602cef1d8fa8f5038595091b/National_design_guide.pdf [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

[44] Oxfordshire County Council (2021). Street Design Guide. Available at: https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s66322/Street%20Design%20Guide.pdf [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

Table B.2.9: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 9 – Housing and equality*

SA9 – Housing and equality	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	++	++	++	++	++	++	++

B.2.9.7 Although all options will deliver a similar number of homes, **Option 3 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to housing and equality as development will be focused within the district's most deprived areas where the greatest benefits for delivering a range of housing and addressing inequalities could be achieved.

B.2.9.8 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to housing and equality as dispersed development across rural locations could result in implications on the delivery of key infrastructure and direct development away from the most deprived areas.

B.2.10 SA Objective 10 – Health and wellbeing

B.2.10.1 The nearest A&E facilities to West Oxfordshire are located at the John Radcliffe Hospital approximately 10km east of the district, Horton General Hospital approximately 9 km north of the district, and the Great Western Hospital approximately 17 km south of the district. According to data provided by WODC, there are 13 GP surgeries within the district. Additionally, the district hosts two community hospitals: Witney Community Hospital, which offers rehabilitation and palliative care, and Chipping Norton War Memorial Community Hospital, which provides outpatient and maternity services. Development at any of the seven options could place additional pressure on existing healthcare facilities.

B.2.10.2 Eight leisure facilities serve local communities within the district, alongside various open spaces, including allotments, amenity greenspaces, parks, recreation grounds, natural greenspaces (both accessible and private), and areas designed for children and young people. The anticipated population growth resulting from any of the seven options will place additional strain on these leisure facilities and open spaces. Without careful planning, this could hinder the objectives outlined in the West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2022)[45] to protect, enhance, and provide outdoor sports facilities.

B.2.10.3 Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will locate residents in urban areas centred around Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. Option 3 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to health and wellbeing owing to the number of healthcare facilities, leisure facilities and variety of open spaces which could be more likely to meet the demands of residents and future development. Witney includes various healthcare facilities such as 'Deer Park Medical Centre' to the west and 'Windrush Medical Practice' within the centre of Witney. Carterton includes two healthcare centres, 'Carterton Health Centre' and 'Broadshires Health Centre'. Chipping Norton contains 'Chipping Norton Health Centre' to the east. Leisure facilities are largely located within urban areas, including two in Witney, three in Carterton and one within Chipping Norton. Development associated with Options 1, 2, 3

[45] West Oxfordshire District Council (2022). West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan Report, February 2022. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/ [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

or 4 will be expected to locate residents in areas that are well served by healthcare facilities and leisure facilities.

B.2.10.4 The four options (Options 1, 2, 3 and 4) will also provide residents with sustainable access to open space which is known to have physical and mental health benefits and can encourage uptake in nature-based activities such as walking, cycling, community gardening and food-growing projects[46]. Witney includes various playing fields and parks, including the Witney Lake and Country Park, and other recreation grounds. Carterton includes sports pitches at Monahan Way and the Kilkenny Lane Country Park located to the north of the town. Chipping Norton provides some playing fields and recreational grounds. The West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2022)[47] sets out action plans for open space sites including those identified within Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton and aims to protect and enhance these sites through improvements to pitch quality, maintenance works and increased capacity at the sites to reduce overplay and pressures on existing sites. Overall, through providing residents with sustainable access to healthcare, leisure facilities and open space, a major positive impact on health and wellbeing is identified for Options 1, 2, 3 and 4.

B.2.10.5 Option 7 will focus growth along the A40 corridor. Healthcare facilities located within close proximity to the A40 include 'Cogges Surgery' in Witney and 'Broadshires Health Centre' in Carterton. The A40 will provide sustainable travel options to access surrounding healthcare facilities. Development at Option 7 will also locate development in areas that are served by leisure centres at Witney and Carterton which are relatively accessible through public transport links. Development through Option 7 will locate residents in areas with a variety of open space. As stated in **paragraph B.2.10.3** Carterton and Witney include various areas of open space that will meet the demands of residents. Overall, a major positive impact is identified for Option 7 as development will be located in areas with sustainable access to healthcare facilities, leisure facilities and open space.

B.2.10.6 Option 6 provides opportunities to deliver healthcare facilities, leisure facilities and open space within a new settlement alongside housing. Increasing pressures on healthcare services within the district are expected to be largely alleviated through the provision of new infrastructure, including facilities such as GP surgeries, as part of the development of a new settlement. Furthermore, the design of the new settlement as a well-planned neighbourhood aligned with the 20-minute neighbourhood concept[48] is anticipated to improve access to local services, including healthcare facilities and leisure facilities. Designing the new settlement to incorporate various GI such as natural and semi-natural greenspaces, play areas, and recreational spaces will provide residents with sustainable access to a wide range of open spaces. It is recommended that healthcare facilities, leisure facilities, open space and appropriate transport infrastructure are established prior to the commencement of development to guarantee residents can access local services through the most sustainable means available. Overall, through potential infrastructure

[46] Natural England (2023). Green Infrastructure Framework. Available at: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Principles/WhyPrinciples.aspx [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

[47] Ibid.

[48] TCPA (2021). 20-minute Neighbourhoods. Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities an Introduction for Council Planners in England. Available at: www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

provision and co-locating local services, a major positive impact on health and wellbeing is identified for Option 7.

B.2.10.7 Option 5 looks to disperse development across rural locations within West Oxfordshire. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to health and wellbeing. Rural areas across the have relatively limited access to healthcare and leisure facilities, which are predominantly concentrated in urban centres. Consequently, development through Option 5 is likely to locate residents in areas with restricted access to these essential services. However, rural locations offer excellent access to the surrounding countryside and a variety of open spaces, including historically significant RPGs such as 'Ditchley Park', 'Cornbury Park' and 'Blenheim Palace'. On balance, despite providing sustainable access to open spaces, a minor negative impact is identified for Option 5 on health and wellbeing due to poor access to healthcare and leisure facilities.

Table B.2.10: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 10 – Health and wellbeing*

SA10 – Health and wellbeing	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	++	++	++	++	-	++	++

B.2.10.8 Without detail on capacity of healthcare infrastructure, **Option 3 could potentially be the best performing option** with regard to health and wellbeing owing to the number of healthcare facilities, leisure facilities and variety of open spaces within Witney which could be more likely to meet the demands of future development.

B.2.10.9 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to health and wellbeing owing to the rural nature of development proposed under Option 5 and the limited sustainable access to healthcare and leisure facilities.

B.2.11 SA Objective 11 – Transport and accessibility

B.2.11.1 West Oxfordshire's strategic road network includes the A40, which passes through the district from east to west, complemented by routes such as the A424, A4095, A415, A44, and A361. A network of B roads and smaller roads ensures connectivity among the district's rural communities. The district benefits from excellent rail links, with eight stations situated along two major railway lines, the Cotswold and Cherwell railway lines. Due to the area's predominantly rural character, access to bus services is variable. Nonetheless, frequent bus routes efficiently connect Witney and Carterton to Oxford City. Additionally, the western part of the district features several National Cycle Network routes, facilitating active travel options.

B.2.11.2 Development at any of the seven options could potentially enhance opportunities to deliver transport infrastructure. This might include establishing new bus routes, increasing service frequency, and upgrading the PRoW and cycle networks.

B.2.11.3 Option 7 will focus growth along the A40 corridor. Option 7 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to transport and accessibility. The A40 corridor serves as a vital connection to Oxford and is undergoing significant upgrades, including improved junctions to streamline travel between Witney and the A40, although it is currently severely congested, particularly at peak travel times. Oxfordshire County Council is also continuing with further improvements to the A40 to support dedicated bus lanes between Eynsham

Park-and-Ride and Wolvercote. A40 enhancements also incorporates controlled pedestrian crossings and enhanced shared-use pathways, aiming to improve safety for walkers and cyclists along the traditionally congested stretch of the A40 between Witney and Oxford[49]. As part of its Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options consultation, WODC is also seeking views on the potential safeguarding of land along the A40 corridor to enable the reinstatement of a rail connection from Carterton to Oxford via Witney and Eynsham. Should the rail project, or a more general 'multi-modal transport corridor' proposition be realised in this location, development here would benefit from additional sustainable transport options. Short and potential longer-term improvements along the A40 corridor will provide a multitude of benefits including reduced emissions of harmful pollutants by alleviating congestion (see **paragraph B.2.6.7**), increased sustainable travel options and increased access to employment opportunities (see **paragraph B.2.13.5**). Development at Option 7 will locate residents at the centre of an interconnected transport network offering diverse sustainable travel options. Overall, a major positive impact on transport and accessibility is identified for Option 7; although, this will need careful monitoring to ensure effectiveness of sustainable transport schemes in alleviating congestion along the A40 corridor.

B.2.11.4 Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will locate the majority of development within urban areas, largely centred around Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton which are well served by existing transport infrastructure, including the A40 at Witney and Carterton and the A44 at Chipping Norton. Furthermore, development through the four options will provide access to public transport services, which are widely accessible within the urban centres of the district. All four options will benefit from the proposed enhancements to the A40 (see **paragraph B.2.11.3** above). The A44 is also to be developed as part of the countywide Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050[50], which will provide increased sustainable transport options for residents within Chipping Norton, including new park and ride sites. The Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050 also outlines movement and place strategies for Chipping Norton, Witney and Carterton, including enhancements to PRoW and cycle networks, new slip roads and junction upgrades to improve traffic flow and increase the uptake in active modes of travel[51]. On balance, a minor positive impact on transport and accessibility is identified for Options 2, 3 and 4, assuming that public transport interventions will help to overcome road capacity challenges. An overall negligible impact is identified for Option 1 that will include a proportion of growth in villages that may have fewer connections.

B.2.11.5 Option 6 can increase the uptake in sustainable transport choices of residents by incorporating effective transport-related design into the early development phases of a new settlement. Designing new settlements with the 20-minute neighbourhood concept[52]

[49] Oxfordshire County Council (2024). Future transport projects. A40 improvements. Available at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/future-transport-projects/a40-improvements#:~:text=The%20new%20scheme%20connects%20the,A40%20between%20Witney%20and%20Oxford. [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

50 Oxfordshire County Council (2022). Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022-2050. July 2022. Available at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

[51] Ibid.

[52] TCPA (2021). 20-minute Neighbourhoods. Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities an Introduction for Council Planners in England. Available at: www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

in mind promotes walkable communities that are safe and easily accessible for everyone. This approach encourages active travel modes like cycling, supported by segregated cycle lanes. Creating neighbourhoods with high-quality links to local services encourages travel on foot or use of other active modes of transport and will further encourage healthy lifestyles. Development should make use of the National Design Guide[53] which sets out ways to plan for a well-designed connected network which provides residents with choice in how to make their journeys and highlights the importance of active travel and sustainable transport infrastructure. It is recommended that transport infrastructure is established prior to the commencement of development to guarantee access to local services through the most sustainable means available. Overall, a major positive impact on transport and accessibility is identified for Option 6, which through the appropriate design and layout of a new settlement can locate development in areas that are well served by sustainable transport and highly accessible to meet all the needs of the community.

B.2.11.6 Option 5 focuses development in rural areas, where there is likely to be limited access to existing transport infrastructure. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to transport and accessibility. West Oxfordshire is a highly rural district reflected with a low population density of 160 people per square kilometre[54]. Option 5 will locate development in rural areas with limited access to local services and public transport infrastructure which will result in greater reliance on private car use. Overall, a minor negative impact on transport and accessibility is identified for Option 5.

Table B.2.11: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 11 – Transport and accessibility*

SA11 – Transport and accessibility	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	0	+	+	+	-	++	++

B.2.11.7 **Option 7 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to transport and accessibility. Development at Option 7 will locate development at the centre of an interconnected transport network offering diverse sustainable travel options.

B.2.11.8 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to transport and accessibility. Option 5 will focus development in rural areas with likely limited access to existing transport infrastructure.

B.2.12 SA Objective 12 – Education

B.2.12.1 West Oxfordshire accommodates 58 primary schools and nine secondary schools, offering residents a variety of education facilities and opportunities. Educational attainment in the district is high, with 40% of residents holding a degree-level qualification or higher and 59% possessing two or more A-levels or equivalent advanced qualifications[55].

53 DLUHC (2021). National Design Guide. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602cef1d8fa8f5038595091b/National_design_guide.pdf [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

54 ONS (2021). Population density. Census Maps. Available at www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/population-density/population-density/persons-per-square-kilometre [Date accessed: 31/12/24]

55 ONS (2021) Labour Market Profile – West Oxfordshire. Available at: www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157327/report.aspx#tabquals [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

B.2.12.2 Further education options within the district are limited. Sixth form provision is available at secondary schools throughout the district, while college needs are addressed by the Witney Campus of Abingdon and Witney College. While there are no universities in West Oxfordshire itself, the district benefits from being within commuting distance of Oxford University, Oxford Brookes University, and the Royal Agricultural College.

B.2.12.3 Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will locate development in areas well served by existing transport infrastructure and education facilities. These four options are likely to locate development in the areas with the greatest access to a wide range of existing education opportunities. Option 3 could be identified as the best performing option with regard to education as Witney provides the greatest range of education, including primary schools such as 'Tower Hill Community Primary School' and 'Queen Emma's Primary School', secondary schools such as 'Henry Box School' and 'Woodgreen Comprehensive School' and schools that meet specific needs such as 'Springfield School'. Witney is also well served by existing transport infrastructure, with the A40 providing links to wider education opportunities including higher education opportunities within Oxford such as Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. Urban areas within the district provide a wide range of education opportunities and therefore development at all four options is likely to be located in areas with sustainable access. However, the large quantum of growth anticipated through all four options is likely to increase pressures on educational facilities within urban areas. Current pressures on existing educational facilities include Carterton Community College which is facing pressures to meet forecasted housing growth and pressures on schools within Witney are also expected to increase as a result of over-subscribed schools in Burford and Eynsham[56]. On balance, minor positive impacts are identified for all four options on education.

B.2.12.4 Option 7 will focus development along the A40 corridor, the primary bus route in West Oxfordshire. The south of Witney is located adjacent to the A40, and Carterton is located south of the A40 which both accommodate a large proportion of West Oxfordshire's education facilities. Furthermore, development along the A40 corridor will also provide links to primary, secondary and higher education facilities in Oxford such as Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. This will be likely to provide sustainable transport choices to access a range of educational facilities. Overall, a minor positive impact on education is identified for Option 7.

B.2.12.5 Development under any of the seven options offers the potential to incorporate new infrastructure, including educational facilities. However, Option 6 presents a particularly significant opportunity through development of a new educational facility within the new settlement, which could ensure sustainable access for residents. The most feasible way to ensure sufficient access to schools is by developing in areas that are located within a sustainable distance to current educational facilities. However, through liaison with the education authority (Oxfordshire County Council), the expansion of existing schools and development of new schools should be explored to ensure that development does not increase pressure at existing schools. Development of a new school could provide modern facilities and access to the most up to date technology, promoting digital literacy and innovative learning methods. Planning new settlements to integrate principles of the 20-

[56] Oxfordshire County Council (2023). Pupil Place Plan. 2023/24 – 2027/28. Available at: https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/DRAFT_Pupil_Place_Plan2023_DATA_SECTIONS.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

minute neighbourhood concept[57] will facilitate walkable neighbourhoods that are safe and highly accessible to all members of the community, improving access to local services such as educational facilities. Overall, a minor positive impact on education is identified at Option 6 due to the increased opportunity to provide educational facilities at a new settlement and locate residents within sustainable distances to schools.

B.2.12.6 Option 5 will direct development to rural locations, locating residents in areas poorly served by existing transport infrastructure and educational facilities. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to education. The majority of secondary and further educational facilities are located within and around existing urban areas, therefore rural areas are without access to a variety of educational opportunities. However, dispersed development under Option 5 may reduce pressures on smaller settlements that include primary schools, which are likely to have limited capacity. Furthermore, there are over 4,600 homes and businesses within rural areas of the district that are without superfast broadband. Poor access to digital infrastructure can limit the ability to access online courses, educational videos and act as a research barrier. The ongoing partnership between WODC and Gigaclear[58] is currently working to address these issues and The Digital Infrastructure Programme[59] deployed by Oxfordshire County Council aims to improve digital infrastructure across the county, particularly connecting remote locations and could therefore reduce technology gaps and lessen inequalities. On balance, a negligible impact on education is identified for Option 5.

Table B.2.12: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 12 - Education*

SA12 – Education	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	+	+	+	+	0	+	+

B.2.12.7 **Option 3 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to education as Witney provides the greatest range of education through existing infrastructure.

B.2.12.8 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to education. The majority of educational facilities are located within and around existing urban areas, therefore rural areas are without access to a variety of educational opportunities.

B.2.13 SA Objective 13 – Economy and employment

B.2.13.1 West Oxfordshire District boasts a strong tourism industry, driven by renowned attractions including Blenheim Palace and historic market towns like Witney and Burford. The strategic location of the district offers valuable economic connections to Oxford City, Cherwell District, and the Vale of White Horse District. Key employment areas which drive the local industry include Oxford Science Park, RAF Brize Norton, Siemens, and Abbott.

[57] TCPA (2021). 20-minute Neighbourhoods. Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities an Introduction for Council Planners in England. Available at: www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[58] Gigaclear (2024). West Oxfordshire. Available at: https://gigaclear.com/west-oxfordshire [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[59] Oxfordshire County Council (2024). Digital Infrastructure Programme. Available at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/community-and-living/digital-infrastructure [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

B.2.13.2 However, a significant challenge to the district's economic growth is the high number of out-commuters, which hampers efforts to attract and retain large multinational businesses and expand employment opportunities. It is estimated that 7,541 West Oxfordshire residents commute to Oxford, 3,321 commute to Cherwell, and 3,051 commute to the Vale of White Horse[60].

B.2.13.3 An increased population as a result of development under any of the seven options is expected to drive higher levels of spending within the district, thereby boosting the local economy and creating new job opportunities. Furthermore, a growing population will naturally lead to a larger pool of skilled workers, enhancing workforce diversity. While the large number of out-commuters means that the economic benefits of housing growth may not be fully retained within the district, some positive impacts are still anticipated.

B.2.13.4 Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will locate new development in areas well served by existing transport infrastructure, local services and employment areas. These four options are likely to locate residents in the areas with the greatest access to existing employment opportunities, as well as new employment floorspace. Carterton accounts for 24% of the district's economically active population, however only 13% of the district's total employment provision. In contrast, Witney represents 29% of the economically active population but holds 35% of the available jobs[61]. Therefore, Option 3 (Witney Focus) could perform slightly better in regard to access to employment opportunities when compared to Option 4 (Carterton Focus). Option 1 will direct a proportion of development to rural service centres and a proportion of growth to larger villages, and Option 2 will direct a proportion of development to rural service centres; some residents will likely be located in areas with less sustainable access to employment opportunities due to rural development under both options. Although, directing a proportion of growth to rural locations will help to maintain the economic vitality of smaller settlements and not just within larger centres. Overall, the growth expected as a result of development at Options 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be likely to boost the local economy and result in a major positive impact on the economy.

B.2.13.5 Option 7 will focus development along the A40 corridor, the primary bus route in West Oxfordshire. Witney is located adjacent to the A40, and accounts for 35% of the district's employment provision, accounting for 47% of the district's employment in the retail sector[62]. Residents located along the A40 will be located in areas well served by existing transport infrastructure, and existing employment locations at Carterton, Witney and Eynsham. The A40 is also expecting major improvements between Eynsham and Oxford including infrastructure for bus travel, safe walking and cycling routes[63]. In addition to existing employment areas surrounding the A40, transport linkages will enable residents to pursue employment opportunities in Oxford. Oxford includes approximately 4,950 business, including major employers such as BMW, University of Oxford, Oxford University

[60] Oxfordshire County Council. ONS 2011 Oxfordshire analysis. District based travel to work. Available at: https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/travel [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[61] CAG Consultants (2015). West Oxfordshire Economic Snapshot. Available at: www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/svvbpu22/west-oxfordshire-economic-snapshot-jan-2015.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[62] Ibid.

[63] Oxfordshire County Council (2024). News. Funding agreed for major A40 improvements between Eynsham and Oxford. Available at: https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/funding-agreed-for-major-a40-improvements-between-eynsham-and-oxford/ [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

Press and Unipart Group of Companies[64]. Overall, Option 7 is likely to have a major positive impact on the economy and is identified as the best performing option for SA Objective 13.

B.2.13.6 Option 6 provides opportunities to boost the local economy and improve sustainable access to employment through the design and layout of a new settlement. Planning new settlements to support the 20-minute concept[65] will provide residents with sustainable access to employment opportunities. By co-locating residents with local services such as shops, it is likely that residents will shop locally and therefore help local businesses thrive. Furthermore, local businesses will be more likely to source their products from other local businesses, resulting in a multiplier effect, where locally spent money circulates. Development should also include provision of high-speed fibre internet to allow for home working and improved efficiency for local businesses. Employing the 20-minute neighbourhood concept will locate workers in areas that are walkable, and this could enhance quality of life and result in a better work-life balance and boost productivity levels. Overall, development at Option 6 provides opportunity to increase sustainable access to employment and boost the local economy through adopting the principles of the 20-minute neighbourhood concept. A major positive impact on the economy is identified.

B.2.13.7 Option 5 will direct development to rural locations where employment opportunities will be limited. Although there is potential for new employment growth to offset this to some extent, dispersal of residential and economic growth may lead to a mismatch between the skills of the workforce and the types of employment opportunities available in the local area. Option 5 could be identified as the worst performing option with regard to the economy. Residents will be reliant on the existing transport infrastructure to access further employment opportunities. It is recommended that improvements to existing transport infrastructure are secured prior to development to ensure residents have access to a wide range of employment opportunities. Development at Option 5 could reduce outmigration to urban centres and boost the rural economy through the creation of additional jobs as a result of the large-scale development. Development within rural areas will also help support smaller settlements, keeping local commercial and retail services viable to residents. On balance, a minor positive impact is identified for Option 5 on the economy.

Table B.2.13: *Impact matrix of spatial options under SA Objective 13 – Economy and employment*

SA13 – Economy and employment	1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 – Main Service Centre Focus	3 – Witney Focus	4 – Carterton Focus	5 – Dispersed Growth	6 – New Settlement	7 – Public Transport Focus
SA Score	++	++	++	++	+	++	++

B.2.13.8 **Option 3 is identified as the best performing option** with regard to the economy and employment opportunities. Development through Option 3 is likely to locate residents in the areas with the greatest access to existing employment opportunities.

B.2.13.9 **Option 5 is identified as the worst performing option** with regard to the economy and employment opportunities. Residents will be reliant on the existing transport infrastructure

[64] Oxford City Council (2024). Economic statistics. Available at: www.oxford.gov.uk/statistics-oxford/economic-statistics [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

[65] TCPA (2021). 20-minute Neighbourhoods. Creating Healthier, Active, Prosperous Communities an Introduction for Council Planners in England. Available at: www.tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/final_20mnguide-compressed.pdf [Date accessed: 30/12/24]

to access further employment opportunities, and new local employment provision is unlikely to be as diverse in any one location than the other options.

B.3 Conclusions

B.3.1 Overview

B.3.1.1 **Table B.3.1** presents the high-level summary assessment scores for the seven spatial options, as detailed within the narrative assessment.

B.3.1.2 All of the seven spatial options evaluated in this assessment have benefits and limitations associated with their approach, some of which are not known with certainty at this high level of assessment. All of the options will support the provision of housing and employment growth in West Oxfordshire to meet the identified needs for the Plan period up to 2041.

B.3.1.3 For climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1) the best performing option is identified as Option 7 (Public Transport Focus), where supporting development in public transport corridors will encourage greater uptake in the use of sustainable and active modes of transport, closely followed by Option 6 (New Settlement) where self-containment can be maximised. The best performing option under climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2) is identified as Option 6 (New Settlement), whereby the creation of one large, or two smaller new settlements will provide opportunities to incorporate climate adaptive design into the layout of the site, such as through the incorporation of SuDs, GI and green buffers, making a community more resilient to future pressures. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) was identified as the worst performing option under both climate change mitigation and adaptation given the increased likelihood of losing GI and PDL, along with their associated ecosystem service functions.

B.3.1.4 Option 6 (New Settlement) is also identified as the best performing option with regard to air quality and water (SA Objectives 6 and 7). The potential to co-locate services and facilities as well as incorporating sustainable and active modes of travel will support lower levels of air pollutants which will be expected to limit adverse impacts to air and water quality. For air quality, the worst performing option is identified as Option 3, and for water the worst performing options were both Options 3 and 4, as a result of increased pressures placed on watercourses, treatment facilities and the Witney AQMA.

B.3.1.5 The delivery of the residual housing requirement of c.6,500 homes will have potential to result in direct or indirect adverse effects on biodiversity designations in some form under any option. However, Option 6 (New Settlement) is identified as the best performing option as focussing development in a new settlement will provide the opportunity to consider impacts on biodiversity at the earliest stages of development, including accordance with the emerging nature recovery network, and can incorporate multi-functional GI and open spaces which can act as stepping stones for wildlife. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option for biodiversity and geodiversity as it will disperse development placing a variety of impacts across the widest possible range of habitats.

B.3.1.6 With regards to landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5) the best performing option is identified as Option 6 (New Settlement), given the likely opportunity to incorporate effective and appropriate design in order to integrate the new settlement into the surrounding environment and prevent adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape and historic character. This would however need to be informed by site-specific appraisals to evaluate the sensitivity and capacity of the landscape. The worst performing

option for landscape and cultural heritage is identified as Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) which is likely to have the most widespread and potentially cumulative adverse impacts on rural settlements, and their heritage assets, across West Oxfordshire.

B.3.1.7 With regards to natural resources (SA Objective 8), Option 4 (Carterton Focus) is identified as the best performing option as it is the most likely to protect BMV land through locating development on non-agricultural and lower quality Grade 4 ALC land. The worst performing option identified was Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) as this is most likely to result in the greatest loss of previously undeveloped land and BMV land. Although, with regard to waste it was not possible to determine a worst performing option given the similar proposed volume of growth under all seven of the options.

B.3.1.8 Under housing and equality, the best performing option is identified as Option 3 (Witney Focus), as it will encourage development and investment within the district's most deprived areas, thus potentially helping to reduce inequalities. Conversely, Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) has been identified as the worst performing option as it has potential to exacerbate inequalities through placing residents in areas which have more limited access to key services and facilities.

B.3.1.9 For transport and accessibility (SA Objective 11), the best performing option is identified as Option 7 (Public Transport Focus), which will be expected to provide access to sustainable and active modes of travel connecting to local services and amenities, as well as education facilities and employment opportunities. The worst performing option is identified as Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) as dispersing development will be less likely to place residents within sustainable access to public and active modes of transport.

B.3.1.10 Option 3 (Witney Focus) has been identified as the best performing option with regards to health and wellbeing, education, and economy and employment (SA Objectives 10, 12 and 13). Option 3's approach will provide access to a range of education facilities and employment opportunities within Witney itself, as well as beyond in Oxford which is accessible via bus and an emerging new rail link. Development within Witney is also anticipated to provide access to a range of healthcare and wellbeing facilities which will support healthy and active members of the community. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is identified as the worst performing option under health and wellbeing, education and economy and employment given that this approach will disperse development, making it more difficult for residents to easily and sustainably access healthcare, education and jobs.

B.3.1.11 Overall, Option 6 (New Settlement) emerges as the most frequent best performing option across the SA Objectives, followed by Option 3 (Witney Focus) (although Option 3 has also been identified as worst performing for two SA Objectives), and Option 7 (Public Transport Focus). Whereas, Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) has been identified to perform the worst across the widest range of SA Objectives.

***Table B.3.1:** Overall impact matrix table of the seven spatial strategy options*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Spatial strategy option	Climate change mitigation	Climate change adaptation	Biodiversity and geodiversity	Landscape	Cultural heritage	Air quality	Water	Natural resources and waste	Housing and equality	Health and wellbeing	Transport and accessibility	Education	Economy and employment
1 – Hierarchical Approach	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	++	0	+	++
2 – Main Service Centre Focus	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	++	+	+	++
3 – Witney Focus	+	-	-	-	-	--	-	-	++	++	+	+	++
4 – Carterton Focus	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	++	++	+	+	++
5 – Dispersed Growth	--	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	-	-	0	+
6 – New Settlement	++	0	-	0	0	0	-	-	++	++	++	+	++
7 – Public Transport Focus	++	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	++	++	+	++

Appendix C: Policy Assessments

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C.1 Overview

C.1.1 Introduction

C.1.1.1 This appendix provides an assessment of the draft vision, objectives and policies (i.e., preferred policy options), as set out within the Regulation 18 Preferred Options version of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. This comprises a total of 71 policies, including:

- 12 core (strategic) policies;
- Six place-based policies;
- 15 settlement strategy policies; and
- 38 development management (DM) policies.

C.1.1.2 The SA Framework (see **Appendix A**) has been used to evaluate the sustainability performance of each policy, in accordance with the methodology as set out in **Chapter 2** of the main Regulation 18 Report. For ease of reference the scoring system is summarised in **Table C.1.1**.

***Table C.1.1:** Presenting likely impacts*

Likely impact	Description	Impact symbol
Major Positive Impact	The proposed policy contributes to the achievement of the SA Objective to a significant extent.	++
Minor Positive Impact	The proposed policy contributes to the achievement of the SA Objective to some extent.	+
Negligible/ Neutral Impact	The proposed policy has no effect or an insignificant effect on the achievement of the SA Objective.	0
Uncertain Impact	The proposed policy has an uncertain relationship with the SA Objective or insufficient information is available for an appraisal to be made.	+/-
Minor Negative Impact	The proposed policy prevents the achievement of the SA Objective to some extent.	-
Major Negative Impact	The proposed policy prevents the achievement of the SA Objective to a significant extent.	--

C.1.1.3 Each appraisal in the following sections of this report includes an SA impact matrix that provides an indication of the nature and magnitude of effects. All impact matrices are accompanied by an assessment narrative which describes the findings of the appraisal and provides a rationale for the recorded impact values.

C.1.2 Overview of policy assessments

C.1.2.1 The impact matrices for all draft policy assessments are presented in **Table C.1.2** below. These impacts should be read in conjunction with the assessment text narratives which follow in subsequent sections of this appendix.

C.1.2.2 Where relevant, recommendations have been made within the policy assessment text in this appendix. Further information regarding recommendations made to WODC throughout the plan making process can be found within **Chapter 7** of the main Regulation 18 SA Report.

Table C.1.2: *Summary of policy assessments*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
Vision	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	0	++	++	++	+	++
Objectives	++	+	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++
CP1	++	++	++	+	0	++	++	++	+	+	+	0	0
CP2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CP3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	++	+	+	+	++
CP4	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	++	0	+/-	0	0
CP5	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	++
CP6	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	0
CP7	0	++	+	+	0	0	++	0	0	+	0	0	0
CP8	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	+	++	0	0
CP9	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	+	++	+	0	0
CP10	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	++	+	+
CP11	+	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
CP12	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
PL1	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
PL2	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PL3	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
PL4	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
PL5	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	0	+
PL6	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
WIT1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	++
WIT2	+	+	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++
CA1	++	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	++
CA2	+	+	+	++	+	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++
CN1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	0	+	++
CN2	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	+	++
BAM1	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
BUR1	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	++	+	++	+	++
BUR2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++
CHA1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	++	+	++	0	++
EYN1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	++	+	++
LH1	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
WD1	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	++	++	++
WD2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++
RA1	++	++	0	++	++	+	0	0	++	+	++	+	++
DM1	0	0	+	++	+	0	0	+	0	+	+	0	0
DM2	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0
DM4	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	++	+	0	0
DM5	++	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM6	++	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM7	++	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM8	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM9	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+
DM10	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
DM11	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM12	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
DM13	++	+	+	0	0	++	+	0	0	++	+	0	0
DM14	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM15	0	0	+	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM16	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	0
DM17	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM18	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
DM19	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM20	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	++	0	++
DM21	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	++	0	+	+	+	+
DM22	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+
DM24	+	+	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0
DM25	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0
DM26	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
DM27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0
DM28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0
DM29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0
DM30	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	+
DM31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
DM32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	+	+	+
DM33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
DM34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	++
DM35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	++
DM36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++
DM37	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++
DM38	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	++

C.2 Vision and Objectives

C.2.1 Local Plan vision

West Oxfordshire in 2041 – Our Vision

In 2041, West Oxfordshire stands as a beacon of sustainable development and community well-being. Our District has embraced a transformative vision, shaping a future that balances environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and social equity. We not only meet the needs of our residents but inspire others to follow our lead in creating a sustainable and inclusive future.

The District is powered entirely by renewable energy sources and innovative green technologies. Energy-efficient buildings, both residential and commercial have become the norm, with retrofitted historic structures showcasing advanced insulation and energy systems. Public transport is carbon-neutral, including electric buses, bike-sharing schemes, and extensive pedestrian zones. Green roofs and vertical gardens are commonplace, contributing to urban cooling and biodiversity.

Communities are thriving, inclusive, and resilient. Health and well-being are prioritised through extensive green spaces, recreational facilities, and community gardens. Access to high-quality healthcare and mental health services is seamless, with integrated community health hubs providing comprehensive care. Social inclusivity is strengthened by community centres that offer programs for all ages, fostering intergenerational connections and support networks. Streets and public spaces are designed for safety and accessibility, ensuring everyone can participate in community life.

Our natural landscapes and historic buildings are meticulously preserved and enhanced. Conservation efforts ensure that biodiversity is restored, protected and thrives in rural and urban areas, with urban spaces integrating nature through parks, green corridors, and wildlife-friendly initiatives. Historic buildings are not only preserved but also adapted for modern use, blending heritage with innovation and carbon neutrality. This harmonious integration of the old and new attracts tourists and enriches the cultural fabric of the District.

Urban and rural areas are vibrant and welcoming. Town centres are pedestrian-friendly, featuring a mix of local shops, cafes, cultural venues, and public art. Smart technologies ensure efficient public services, supported by digital infrastructure. Public transport is efficient, affordable, and well-connected, making it easy for residents to move around the District and beyond.

West Oxfordshire's housing market is inclusive and dynamic. A mix of housing types, from single-family homes to co-housing communities offers a diverse range of options and ensures that everyone from young professionals to retirees can find suitable accommodation. New affordable housing mean that all residents have access to safe and comfortable homes. New developments adhere to the highest standards of sustainability, with green building practices ensuring minimal environmental impact.

The economy is robust and diverse, characterised by innovation and sustainability. Local businesses thrive alongside global enterprises, with a strong emphasis on green industries, technology, and creative sectors. The District is a hub for green technology startups, research, and development, supported by partnerships with local universities and research institutions. A focus on skills development and lifelong learning ensures the workforce is adaptable and prepared for the future. Farmers markets, artisanal shops, and local producers are integral to the economy, promoting local produce and craftsmanship.

In 2041, West Oxfordshire is not just a place to live, but a thriving, interconnected community where people enjoy a high quality of life, economic opportunities abound, and the natural and historic environment is cherished and protected. Together, we have created a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and inspiring for generations to come.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
Vision	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	0	++	++	++	+	++

C.2.1.1 The proposed vision for West Oxfordshire sets out WODC's aim to create a thriving community that meets the needs of its residents, while preserving the natural and built environment to ensure a sustainable future.

C.2.1.2 The vision seeks to drive sustainable growth through use of renewable energy sources, ensuring that West Oxfordshire is tackling contemporary climate issues. Support is also provided to implement energy efficient buildings, green technologies and carbon-neutral public transport. Therefore, a major positive impact could be achieved regarding climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1).

C.2.1.3 The support for green technologies, for example green roofs and through promoting the extent of green infrastructure (GI) across the district, as well as the intention to support energy efficient buildings and insulation/energy systems, will help both rural and urban areas across West Oxfordshire adapt to the effects of climate change, for example through alleviating the 'heat island effect', reducing surface water flows and infiltration rates to help reduce flood risk across the district and improving water quality. In combination, these measures have the potential to lead to a major positive impact on climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2) and minor positive impacts on water quality (SA Objective 7). Strengthening of the GI network across the district will also support local biodiversity and ecological networks. Through the expansion of the GI network and wildlife-friendly initiatives, there is potential for a major positive impact on biodiversity (SA Objective 3). **Recommendation:** The vision could be strengthened by including reference to delivering the initiatives of the emerging Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy.

C.2.1.4 Through ensuring residents are provided with access to open spaces and a variety of parks, positive effects are likely on human health. Access to a range of open spaces and green spaces is known to provide benefits to both mental and physical wellbeing, providing areas for exercise, recreation and reflection. Furthermore, the inclusion of GI in neighbourhoods is likely to encourage residents to pursue active lifestyles. The vision also highlights the intention to ensure strong healthcare infrastructure within the district, accessible to all residents and including integrated community health hubs and mental health services. The design and layout of neighbourhoods through accessibility and safety will also ensure that social cohesion is promoted, inclusive of all residents' needs. Overall, these measures have the potential to lead to a major positive impact on health (SA Objective 10)

C.2.1.5 Through ensuring that urban and rural areas are vibrant, increasing GI coverage and ensuring both the natural landscape and historic assets are preserved and enhanced, the vision is likely to lead to improvements to the local landscape and townscape character. The integration of green technologies such as green roofs, along with the inclusion of parks and GI, will enhance the appearance of urban areas by utilising soft landscaping to create attractive places. These measures have the potential for a major positive impact on the overall landscape across the district (SA Objective 4). Furthermore, through preserving and enhancing historic features and ensuring that historic buildings are adapted to be energy efficient and of modern use, there is potential for a major positive impact on cultural heritage (SA Objective 5). **Recommendation:** The vision would benefit from reference to the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds National Landscape, recognising that West Oxfordshire contains some of the country's most important and distinctive landscapes.

C.2.1.6 Through improving access to public transport that is well-connected and promoting active travel, residents will be less likely to rely on private car use to access local services, amenities, and employment. Additionally, by supporting carbon-neutral public transport and reducing reliance on private car use, a reduction in air pollution is likely. Overall, there is potential for a major positive impact on transport and accessibility (SA Objective 11) and

potential for a minor positive impact on air quality (SA Objective 6). **Recommendation:** More direct reference to protecting and improving both air and water quality would further strengthen the performance of the vision against SA Objectives 6 and 7.

C.2.1.7 The vision will support digital infrastructure and smart technologies, which will ensure residents are digitally connected, increasing access to employment and education. Furthermore, supporting business start-ups and increasing innovation and sustainability will help to diversify the workforce and increase employment opportunities across the Plan area, boosting the overall economy. The vision also recognises the role of local businesses such as local producers and farmers markets, supporting the rural economy. There is potential for a major positive impact on the economy (SA Objective 13) and through supporting digital infrastructure and supporting relationships with university institutions a minor positive impact is identified on education (SA Objective 12). **Recommendation:** More direct reference to education, such as supporting sustainable access to schools and training opportunities to maintain high skill levels would strengthen the performance of the vision. Furthermore, a clearer definition of what is meant by 'smart technologies' would prevent any misinterpretations, ensuring the term is used in the right context.

C.2.1.8 The vision aims to ensure that residents are provided with a range of housing types to meet the needs of the population, including for young professionals, the elderly population, single-family homes and co-housing communities. Therefore, there is potential for a major positive impact on housing provision (SA Objective 9).

C.2.1.9 The vision is not anticipated to result in adverse impacts on natural resources (SA Objective 8) and therefore a negligible impact has been identified. **Recommendation:** The vision could be enhanced by including wording to recognise the need to conserve natural capital including the district's best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, and soil resources that provide a range of ecosystem services.

C.2.2 Local Plan objectives

Draft Local Plan Objectives

Objective 1 – To take local action and tackle the climate and ecological emergency 'head-on' for the benefit of current and future generations by:

- Significantly reducing West Oxfordshire's carbon emissions across all sectors, with a particular focus on carbon intensive activities including transport, housing and industry.
- Enabling the deployment of new and retrospective renewable and low-carbon energy solutions at various scales, maximising the potential benefits, whilst minimising the impacts.
- Building resilience to, and reversing the impacts of climate change, supporting adaptation and nature's recovery.
- Maximising the efficient use of land and buildings, favouring their retention where possible and adaptive re-use and making prudent use of natural resources, ensuring that waste is treated as a resource through the adoption of 'circular economy' principles.

Objective 2 – To foster healthier and happier communities across West Oxfordshire, by:

- Creating well-designed, safe, inclusive, and accessible environments that encourage community integration and promote strong mental and physical health.
- Enabling the adoption of healthier lifestyles by promoting physical activity through walking, cycling and public transport and the provision of convenient access to high quality green space, sports and leisure.
- Establishing a healthier food environment by enabling better food choices and encouraging local growth, distribution and consumption of healthy food.

Draft Local Plan Objectives

- Ensuring that timely investment is made in the infrastructure needed to support development and that it is managed and maintained effectively over the longer-term.

Objective 3 - To protect, support and enhance the quality and resilience of West Oxfordshire's built and natural environments by:

- Conserving and enhancing the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the historic and cultural environment, recognizing their contributions to quality of life, social and economic well-being, and enabling sensitive adaptation to climate change.
- Promoting Nature Recovery by supporting resilient and connected habitats and ecosystems, investing in natural capital, and achieving measurable net gains in biodiversity in accordance with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Oxfordshire.
- Adopting an integrated, holistic approach to the management of all aspects of the water environment.
- Protecting the District's environmental assets by preventing pollution and minimising its impacts on local amenity, health, landscape character, soil resources and biodiversity.

Objective 4 – To allow West Oxfordshire's resident communities and businesses to thrive within a network of attractive, vibrant, and well-connected market towns and villages by:

- Ensuring that all new developments adhere to high-quality, innovative, and inclusive design standards.
- Creating safe, welcoming, and accessible town and village centres that are able to effectively adapt to changing trends and remain destinations of choice.
- Ensuring that everyone can access the essential services and facilities that they need, in turn, helping to achieve greater equality and inclusivity.
- Empowering local communities to actively shape and influence the future of their area from the grassroots level.

Objective 5 – To make sure that all of our residents are able to meet their housing needs by:

- Maximising the efficient use of the District's existing housing stock including empty homes and leveraging the opportunities presented by the re-use of previously developed land and buildings. Enabling the delivery of a continuous supply of high quality and sustainable new homes to meet identified housing needs over the period 2025 – 2041.
- Meeting the needs of those who are not able to access market housing by providing new homes that are genuinely affordable in the context of West Oxfordshire both in the short and long-term.
- Ensuring that the right type, size and tenure of new accommodation comes forward to meet a variety of other housing needs and engendering a greater sense of community cohesion and well-being.

Objective 6 – To foster a thriving, diverse, and resilient economy in West Oxfordshire, leveraging its strengths and future growth potential by:

- Providing a balanced portfolio of high-quality employment land to meet diverse needs including large and smaller businesses and to ensure flexibility.
- Supporting existing and future economic assets with the necessary infrastructure, land, and premises, while protecting important economic, social, and environmental roles.
- Adapting to future trends and technological changes to support evolving working practices, including remote, hybrid, and co-working models.
- Ensuring all residents benefit from improved education, training, and skills opportunities, enhancing economic and social well-being and supporting small and start-up businesses.
- Celebrating and sustainably growing the rural economy, supporting farmers, rural businesses, and the visitor economy.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
Objectives	++	+	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++

C.2.2.1 Objective 1 aims to reduce carbon emissions across the Plan area, support nature recovery and build resilience to the effects of climate change by increasing the use of low-carbon energy, adopting circular economy practices, and addressing carbon emissions from key sectors, particularly transport, housing, and industry. Objective 2 focuses on promoting active lifestyles by providing recreational and sports areas, access to green spaces, and supporting walking, cycling routes, and public transport; these measures will reduce the reliance on private car use to access local services and consequently contribute to reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Through implementing these measures, a major positive impact on climate change mitigation is identified (SA Objective 1). GI can provide a range of ecosystem services, including adaptation to climate change, for example through providing protection from extreme weather events, and helping to alleviate the 'urban heat island' effect and therefore increased GI coverage could lead to a minor positive impact on climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2). **Recommendation:** Objective 1 could be strengthened by making direct reference to flood risk, heat risk and energy efficiency, which would strengthen the performance of the objectives against climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2).

C.2.2.2 Increased GI connectivity across the Plan area, as set out in Objective 2, will improve habitat connectivity and increase habitat creation. Benefits to biodiversity are also anticipated through support for nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement, investment in natural capital and management of the water environment through Objective 3 and nature recovery aims through Objective 1. Overall, these measures are likely to result in major positive impacts on biodiversity (SA Objective 3). Furthermore, management of the water environment will be expected to result in minor positive effects on water quality (SA Objective 7). **Recommendation:** Direct reference to protecting and enhancing water quality would strengthen the performance of the objectives with regard to SA Objective 7.

C.2.2.3 Maximising opportunities to make efficient use of land and buildings through Objectives 1 and 5 will ensure that the district's undeveloped land is protected, conserving landscape character. Objective 1 also aims to implement principles of the circular economy, which could include the reuse of building materials and making efficient use of natural resources and land. These measures will be expected to conserve land-use and the district's natural resources. Objective 3 aims to conserve and enhance the character and beauty of the countryside and the historic environment. High-quality design standards promoted through Objective 4 will also ensure that future development within both urban areas and rural areas compliments the surrounding character and ensures that local identity is protected. Furthermore, provision of GI across the district through Objective 2 is likely to create more attractive places, safeguard the wider landscape and improve the visual appeal of urban areas, benefiting the landscape and townscape character. Overall, a major positive impact on the landscape and townscape is likely (SA Objective 4), as well as a minor positive impact on cultural heritage and natural resources (SA Objectives 5 and 8). **Recommendation:** There is opportunity to strengthen the performance of the objectives with regard to natural resources and cultural heritage. The objectives would

benefit from including wording that highlights the need to conserve natural capital. Furthermore, the objectives would benefit from including reference to the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets to align with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)[1].

C.2.2.4 The promotion of active travel such as walking and cycling and improving access to public transport through Objective 2 is likely to reduce the reliance on private car use across the Plan area, and consequently reduce transport-associated emissions. Furthermore, through Objective 4, increased uptake of active travel modes can be achieved through creating well-connected market towns and villages that support access to local services. Additionally, improvements in air quality are likely with greater adoption of sustainable travel and increased GI coverage that provides air filtration benefits, as outlined in Objectives 2 and 4. Overall air quality benefits are also anticipated from aims to use low-emission technologies and foster circular economy principles, advocated through Objective 1. Overall, a major positive impact on transport and accessibility is identified (SA Objective 11), with a secondary minor positive impact identified for air quality (SA Objective 6).

C.2.2.5 Ensuring access to a variety of green spaces and areas for sport and leisure, as outlined within Objective 2 and supported through the conservation of the countryside within Objective 3, will provide physical and mental health benefits to residents. Furthermore, ensuring that residents have access to essential services, including healthcare facilities as outlined in Objective 4, will help to ensure equal access to healthcare across the district. Access to healthcare facilities is vital, particularly due to the ageing population in the district and the limited access to emergency care, as there are no NHS hospitals providing Accident and Emergency (A&E) services within West Oxfordshire. Overall, a major positive impact on health is identified (SA Objective 10). **Recommendation:** The objectives would benefit from further wording on healthcare facilities, particularly outlining what healthcare infrastructure could be provided and addressing potential capacity issues arising from the limited emergency healthcare services currently available in the district.

C.2.2.6 Objective 5 will aim to ensure that residents are provided with a range of housing types to meet the needs of the population over the Plan period, including the provision of affordable housing and housing of the right type, size and tenure. Housing development will also maximise opportunities to use existing housing stock, focusing development on previously developed land in accordance with the NPPF. As such, a major positive impact on housing provision is identified (SA Objective 9).

C.2.2.7 Technological provisions advocated within Objective 6 will enable residents to work remotely and could provide wider employment opportunities. Furthermore, Objective 6 will aim to deliver high-quality employment land, supported by necessary infrastructure and will support improved education and training, providing a diversified workforce and increasing employment opportunities. Additionally, supporting rural businesses and the visitor economy will ensure that economic benefits are widespread across the Plan area, enhancing the rural economy and increasing employment opportunities to more isolated areas. Objective 2 aims to provide access to public transport and promote active modes of travel, further improving sustainable access to employment and education opportunities.

[1] MHCLG (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf [Date accessed: 27/02/25]

Overall, a major positive impact on the economy is identified (SA Objective 13), as well as a secondary minor positive impact on education (SA Objective 12). **Recommendation:** The objectives would benefit from including stronger wording regarding technological provisions to address existing problems such as poor digital connectivity across the district. Furthermore, it is recommended that the objectives include wording on educational facilities, ensuring that population growth does not place pressure on existing schools.

C.3 Core Policies

C.3.1 Core Policy 1 – Climate Change

Core Policy 1 – Climate Change

Supporting the Transition to Net Zero

All new development will be expected to contribute to the UK's legally binding net zero target by:

- Reducing operational and embodied carbon emissions.
- Promoting low-carbon construction methods and materials.
- Integrating energy-efficient technologies and designs.

Compliance with the Energy Hierarchy

New development must adhere to the energy hierarchy:

- **Lean:** Prioritise energy efficiency and reduce energy demand in the first instance.
- **Clean:** Enhance building efficiency through low-carbon energy solutions.
- **Green:** Maximise the use of renewable energy generation on-site.

Re-use and Resource Efficiency

To reduce environmental impact, new development must:

- Prioritise the reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings where possible.
- Adopt circular economy principles in construction and material sourcing.

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

New developments should support and facilitate:

- On-site renewable energy generation such as solar panels, heat pumps, and district heating schemes.
- Integration of low carbon energy infrastructure to future-proof developments against changing energy demands.

Climate-Responsive Design and Layout

All new development must consider:

- Landform and site-specific environmental conditions to maximise energy efficiency.
- Building orientation, massing, and landscaping to minimise energy consumption and enhance microclimate benefits.
- Sustainable transport links and active travel infrastructure to reduce reliance on fossil fuel-based transport.
- Designing for future climate conditions, ensuring long-term adaptability and resilience.

Adaptation Measures

New development must be designed to be resilient to the anticipated impacts of climate change including flood resilience, climate resilient landscaping, heat mitigation and water efficiency measures.

Nature Based Solutions

New development should prioritise nature-based solutions to address climate change by enhancing biodiversity, improving water management, and increasing carbon sequestration.

Climate Impact Assessment (CIA)

Major developments must be accompanied by a climate impact assessment (CIA) that:

- Demonstrates consideration of the full range of climate impacts, including:
  - Thermal comfort and overheating risk reduction.
  - Sustainable water management to address water scarcity.
  - Adaptation strategies for extreme weather events, including flooding and storms.

Core Policy 1 – Climate Change

- Identifies the potential climate risks associated with the proposed development, including the risks of flooding, heatwaves, drought, and other extreme weather events.
- Assesses the effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation measures proposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase climate resilience.
- Assesses the long-term implications of climate change on the development and its surrounding environment, including the potential impacts on infrastructure, natural resources, and local communities.
- Demonstrates how the development aligns with the Council's climate action plan and broader regional and national climate targets.
- Aligns with the Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain proposals by incorporating nature-based solutions and enhancing the development's biodiversity value in a practical and achievable way.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP1	++	++	++	+	0	++	++	++	+	+	+	0	0

C.3.1.1 Policy CP1 aims to create sustainable, climate-resilient developments that reduce carbon emissions, promote energy efficiency, and integrate renewable energy, as well as ensuring adaptability to the effects of climate change. These measures will be expected to reduce dependency on energy generated from unsustainable sources, such as fossil fuels. A decrease in fossil fuel consumption would lower GHG emissions, thereby minimising the Plan area's impact on climate change.

C.3.1.2 The policy requires Climate Impact Assessments (CIA) to accompany major developments. The CIAs will ensure that climate impacts are considered including adaptation strategies for extreme weather events, water management and how the development will align with West Oxfordshire's Climate Action Plan[2]. Major developments will also be required to monitor and report energy performance, carbon emissions and water consumption, reporting on climate adaptation measures implemented. The policy requires development to be fitted with adaptation measures to address issues such as flood risk, drought and heat risk. New developments are further encouraged to incorporate on-site low-carbon and renewable energy technologies. Overall, the measures and requirements included within the policy are likely to result in a major positive impact on climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, water quality and water resources (SA Objectives 1, 2 and 7).

C.3.1.3 Resource efficiency, as well as the reuse of land and refurbishment of existing buildings, will support the sustainable management of the district's natural resources. Additionally, the policy requires new developments to implement circular economy principles, reducing environmental impact by ensuring construction materials are reused and sourced locally.

[2] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024). Carbon Action Plan 2024-2030. March 2024. Available at: https://meetings.westoxon.gov.uk/documents/s10086/Annex%20A%20-%20Carbon%20Action%20Plan%2023.02.24.pdf [Date accessed: 20/02/25]

Therefore, a major positive impact has been identified in relation to natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.3.1.4 The policy will require new development to prioritise nature-based solutions to climate change, which will be expected to include enhancements that support biodiversity and ecosystem services. The policy seeks to protect and restore natural habitats, and requires development proposals to incorporate GI to create new habitats, enhance connectivity and strengthen wildlife corridors, promoting these measures in both rural and urban areas. Therefore, a major positive impact on biodiversity is identified (SA Objective 3). Integrating nature-based solutions and GI into development will also result in secondary minor positive effects on landscape character, such as through incorporating trees and hedgerows which will protect and enhance the surrounding landscape (SA Objective 4).

C.3.1.5 Incorporating GI into new developments will improve the health and wellbeing of residents by offering greenspaces that support both physical and mental health. GI also provides ecosystem services, such as air filtration, which is expected to improve local air quality. The policy further requires new developments to include sustainable transport links and active travel infrastructure, promoting the use of sustainable travel options and reducing reliance on private cars to access local services. Overall, a major positive impact is identified for air quality (SA Objective 6), as well as minor positive impacts on health and transport (SA Objectives 10 and 11).

C.3.1.6 Through sustainable construction practices in new developments, which are likely to ensure high quality and energy efficient homes, a minor positive impact on housing is identified (SA Objective 9).

C.3.2 Core Policy 2 – Settlement Hierarchy

Core Policy 2 – Settlement Hierarchy

The proposed settlement hierarchy for West Oxfordshire is as follows:

Tier 1 – Principal Towns

Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton

Tier 2 – Service Centres

Bampton, Burford, Charlbury Eynsham, Long Hanborough, Woodstock, Salt Cross Garden Village (new)

Tier 3 – Villages

Alvescot, Ascott under Wychwood, Aston, Bladon, Brize Norton, Cassington, Chadlington, Churchill, Clanfield, Combe, Curbridge, Ducklington, Enstone, Filkins & Broughton Poggs, Finstock, Freeland, Fulbrook, Great Rollright, Hailey, Kingham, Langford, Leafield, Middle Barton, Milton under Wychwood, Minster Lovell (South of Burford Road), North Leigh, Over Norton, Shipton under Wychwood, Standlake, Stanton Harcourt, Stonesfield, Tackley, Wootton

Tier 4 – Small Villages, Hamlets and Open Countryside

All other villages and settlements not listed above plus open countryside.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.3.2.1 Core Policy 2 defines the Settlement Hierarchy in West Oxfordshire based on the size and nature of the different settlements in the district, ranging from the three principal towns through to smaller villages and hamlets.

C.3.2.2 In its current form, the draft policy will not directly affect any of the SA Objectives. Defining a hierarchy of settlements can help to ensure that appropriate types and scales of new development is directed to each type of settlement, as set out in Core Policy 3. **Recommendation:** Policy CP2 could be merged with CP3 to ensure clarity on the purpose and intention of defining a settlement hierarchy.

C.3.3 Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy

Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy

The spatial strategy for West Oxfordshire to 2041 is underpinned by a commitment to delivering a sustainable pattern of development that:

- Meets identified housing, economic and community needs;
- Aligns growth with existing and planned infrastructure;
- Supports climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Enhances the environment and recovers nature;
- Sustains the vitality of local communities;
- Protects the unique identity and character of West Oxfordshire's towns, villages and countryside.

To achieve this, the strategy will:

1. **Adopt a hierarchical approach to growth aligned with the settlement hierarchy:**

a) Principal Towns (Tier 1) – Witney, Carterton and, to a lesser extent, Chipping Norton will be the primary focus for growth, reflecting their existing roles, services and infrastructure. In relation to future residential development, this is anticipated to include a combination of small, medium and strategic-scale sites.

Growth in these locations will support regeneration, make best use of previously developed land and under-used sites, and deliver transformational opportunities, particularly in Carterton, where scalable new communities within the rural fringe will complement investment in the town and unlock its economic and social potential including its relationship with RAF Brize Norton.

b) Service Centres (Tier 2) – Bampton, Burford, Charlbury, Eynsham, Long Hanborough, and Woodstock will accommodate a proportionate level of growth appropriate to the size of each settlement and to support their local service function. A particular focus will be placed on ensuring good public transport accessibility and active travel opportunities (both existing and proposed).

In relation to future residential development, this is anticipated to include a combination of small and medium-scale sites, with additional strategic-scale development (beyond that which is already committed through existing permissions and allocations) only taking place by exception and where necessary to meet identified development needs.

Due to their location within the Cotswolds National Landscape, the scale and extent of development at Burford and Charlbury will be limited in accordance with national policy.

Development at Salt Cross Garden Village will be guided by the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) and other relevant Local Plan policies.

c) Villages (Tier 3) – A smaller scale of growth will be supported in villages that have a reasonable level of services and facilities, helping to sustain local communities and support local needs.

In relation to future residential development, this is anticipated to include a combination of small and medium-scale sites only and will be more limited in scale than at Tier 2 – Service Centres, guided by the existing size and relative sustainability of each settlement in terms of their available service and facilities.

As with Tier 2 – Service Centres, there will be a particular focus on locations which benefit from existing or proposed public transport and active travel opportunities and the scale and extent of development within the Cotswolds National Landscape will be limited in accordance with national policy.

d) Small Villages, Hamlets and Open Countryside (Tier 4) – A more restrictive approach will apply, with development limited to that which requires a rural location.

Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy

Any residential proposals will be expected to be small-scale (minor) development and will only be permitted in limited circumstances as set out in Policy DM26.

2. Focus growth along key strategic corridors, notably:

a) The A40 Corridor – A central growth area, particularly around Eynsham, Witney and Carterton, facilitating existing commitments and enabling new sustainable communities through strategic-scale growth. This includes supporting the aspiration for a rail connection from Carterton to Oxford via Witney and Eynsham, helping reduce car dependency and improve regional connectivity.

b) A44 Corridor – Strategic-scale growth at Chipping Norton and medium-scale growth at Woodstock, enabling the delivery of committed development and supporting local infrastructure and services.

3. Prioritise sustainable travel and infrastructure alignment:

a) Reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car, by focusing growth in accessible locations;

b) Encourage a modal shift toward walking, cycling, and public transport;

c) Maximise use of existing public transport infrastructure, including but not limited to, Hanborough and Tackley rail stations;

d) Align growth with existing and planned infrastructure, including transport, schools and utilities.

e) Make effective use of land and address climate change:

f) Prioritise the re-use of brownfield and under-utilised land;

g) Promote compact, walkable communities;

h) Avoid areas of flood risk, taking full account of climate change projections.

4. Protect environmental and landscape assets:

a) Conserve and enhance the Cotswolds National Landscape, with great weight given to landscape and scenic beauty, and a limit on the scale and extent of development;

b) Protect the Oxford Green Belt in accordance with national policy;

c) Support the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy, embedding opportunities to protect, restore, create and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks as part of development proposals.

d) Support the integrated management of the natural and historic environment where practicable, and recognise the positive contribution heritage can make in effective place-shaping.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	++	+	+	+	++

C.3.3.1 Core Policy 3 sets out the proposed distribution of housing and employment development across the district. A settlement hierarchy has been identified and is set out within the policy and Core Policy CP2. Development will be primarily focused within and around the 'Principal towns' (tier 1) of Carterton, Witney and Chipping Norton to a lesser extent. Policy CP3 aims to meet the identified housing need of 14,480 dwellings over the Plan period (delivering 16,000 dwellings as set out within Policy CP4). As such, Policy CP3 is likely to result in a major positive impact on housing (SA Objective 9).

C.3.3.2 The policy sets out measures that will help increase the adoption of sustainable modes of transport. The policy encourages a shift away from private car use by focusing new development in locations that are already well served by public transport networks. In addition, the policy supports the enhancement of public transport infrastructure, including

improvements to rail services. These enhancements aim to reduce journey times and make public transport a more attractive and viable choice. The policy promotes the creation of compact communities where essential services, amenities, and employment opportunities are located within walking distance. These measures not only support public health and wellbeing through encouraging active lifestyles but also contribute to reduced congestion and lower GHG emissions. Policy CP3 aims to ensure development supports climate change mitigation and adaptation. Overall, a minor positive impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation, health and wellbeing and transport and accessibility (SA Objective 1, 2, 10 and 11) have been identified. Population growth projected over the Plan period is likely to increase congestion, with the latest Air Quality ASR (2024)[3] identifying road traffic as the primary source of pollution in the district. However, the policy incorporates measures to encourage a shift away from private car use and reduce associated emissions. Therefore, on balance a negligible impact has been identified for air quality (SA Objective 6).

C.3.3.3 Policy CP3 requires that new development protects and enhances the district's landscape and biodiversity. The policy ensures that development proposals are appropriately designed to respect the surrounding landscape, with particular attention given to the Cotswolds National Landscape and requires the scale of development to be in keeping with the character of the area. Additionally, the policy prioritises the use of brownfield and under-utilised land, thereby helping to preserve the district's rural character. This approach helps protect and enhance the district's GI network, which is essential for maintaining habitat connectivity and supporting biodiversity. By preserving and improving these natural corridors, the policy ensures that wildlife can move freely between habitats, supporting healthier ecosystems and contributing to the overall resilience of local flora and fauna. The policy also acknowledges the importance of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), requiring development to identify and pursue opportunities to protect, restore, create and enhance ecological networks as part of planning proposals. Overall, minor positive impacts are identified for biodiversity, landscape and natural resources (SA Objectives 3, 4 and 8).

C.3.3.4 The spatial strategy promotes enhanced public transport infrastructure and co-location of residents with essential services, such as schools (as outlined in **paragraph C.3.3.2**), ensuring that communities are situated in highly accessible locations. This strategic approach will enable access to both educational and employment opportunities. In particular, focusing development along key strategic transport corridors and within principal towns such as Witney, Carterton, and Chipping Norton, supports local economies by encouraging residents to live, work, and spend locally. Furthermore, revitalising brownfield land in these areas may help to unlock investment potential and enhance the visual and functional appeal of town centres. The creation of walkable, mixed-use communities and the strategic location of housing near employment hubs will also help retain a younger, skilled workforce, contributing to a more dynamic and resilient local labour market. While the policy prioritises development in principal towns, proportionate growth in Tier 2 and 3 settlements will continue to support rural economies, sustaining smaller businesses and improving access for rural populations. Overall, a major positive impact on the economy (SA Objective 13) is identified, as well as a minor positive impact on education (SA Objective 12).

[3] West Oxfordshire District Council (2024) Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), June 2024. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/jrjdqdnf/air-quality-annual-report-2024.pdf [Date accessed: 26/06/24]

C.3.3.5 The policy emphasises the importance of directing development towards areas with a low risk of flooding and includes provisions to retain GI, which plays a key role in natural flood management by helping to reduce surface water runoff and mitigate flood risks at development sites. On balance, the policy is considered to have a negligible impact on climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2).

C.3.3.6 New development has the potential to increase surface water runoff during both the construction phase and subsequent occupation, which has potential to negatively affect the quality of both surface and groundwater bodies. Policy CP3 seeks to "*Align growth with existing infrastructure, including transport, schools and utilities*" and in doing so should refer to the most recent Water Cycle Study, along with relevant Water Resource Management Plans to identify where there may be capacity constraints and infrastructure upgrades may be required. As such Policy CP3 will be expected to support development in West Oxfordshire whilst minimising potential risks to water quality. As such, a negligible impact has been identified with regard to water quality (SA Objective 7).

C.3.3.7 The policy ensures the protection and, where possible, enhancement of the landscape, with potential benefits to the settings of historic assets, and supports the integrated management of the natural and historic environment where practicable. On balance, considering the large-scale development anticipated through the Local Plan and spatial strategy, a negligible impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5).

C.3.4 Core Policy 4 – Delivering New Homes

Core Policy 4 – Delivering New Homes

Housing Requirement

Based on the level of identified housing need for West Oxfordshire in the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2041, the overall local plan housing requirement will be 14,480 new homes, equating to an annual delivery of 905 dwellings.

This figure will be used to calculate the Council's five-year housing land supply position and forms the baseline for future housing provision.

Subject to further discussions and quantification on any unmet need arising from Oxford City, the housing requirement may be adjusted accordingly. Any additional requirement included for Oxford City will be treated separately for the purposes of calculating the Council's 5-year housing land supply position.

Housing Supply and Buffer

To ensure the housing requirement for West Oxfordshire is not only met but exceeded where possible, the planned level of housing supply in the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2041 will include a 10% buffer. Total planned supply over this period will therefore be 16,000 homes[4].

This buffer allows for flexibility and contingencies, ensuring a robust response to any unforeseen shortfalls in delivery. The additional supply seeks to ensure that the District can meet its growth needs while maintaining resilience.

Subject to further discussions and quantification on any unmet need arising from Oxford City, the overall housing supply assumptions may be further adjusted upwards.

Sources of Housing Supply

The overall housing requirement will be met through a combination of existing commitments, site allocations and a reasonable windfall allowance. The current working assumption is as follows:

Large existing planning permissions (>10 dwellings) at 1st April 2025 2,036[5]
Small existing planning permissions (<10 dwellings) 294[6]

[4] 15,980 homes rounded up to 16,000

[5] Applies a 10% discount for potential lapses

[6] Applies a 10% discount for potential lapses

Core Policy 4 – Delivering New Homes

Allocated sites[7] 11,700
Windfall allowance (150 per year from 2028 – 2041) 1,950
Total 16,000

Exceeding the Minimum Requirement

While the housing requirement represents the minimum number of homes to be delivered, this policy ensures a proactive approach by planning for more than the baseline need, with a total planned supply of 16,000 homes - above the required figure, providing capacity to support future growth and ensure flexibility in delivery.

Allocated sites

Site allocations will ensure that development is strategically focused on key growth locations in accordance with the overall spatial strategy set out in Core Policy 3 – Spatial Strategy.

Windfall Allowance

A windfall allowance of 150 homes per year from 2028 to 2041 is also factored in, providing for housing development on sites not specifically allocated in the Local Plan. This allows for flexibility and acknowledges the potential for smaller, unplanned sites to contribute to the overall housing supply.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP4	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	++	0	+/-	0	0

C.3.4.1 Policy CP4 sets out the housing need and supply figures for West Oxfordshire over the Plan period to 2041. The policy sets out that the overall housing requirements for the Plan period 2025 to 2041 is 14,480 new homes, based on a housing needs assessment for West Oxfordshire using the new Standard Method. Through the inclusion of a 10% buffer, the Council will deliver 16,000 new homes, exceeding the Standard Method figure, which also allows for potential contribution to support Oxford City's unmet housing need. The proactive approach could provide opportunities to deliver a greater mix of housing types. The delivery of 16,000 new homes over the Plan period would be expected to ensure West Oxfordshire's residents have access to accommodation which meets their needs and therefore a major positive impact on housing provision is identified (SA Objective 9).

C.3.4.2 While it is essential for the Local Plan to support housing growth to meet local needs, it will lead to an increase in the district's population. Consequently, there will likely be a rise in waste generated by new households, as well as from the construction and development process. Additionally, an increase in private vehicle use is expected, which will contribute to higher transport-related emissions. As a result, minor negative impacts have been identified in relation to climate change mitigation, air quality, and waste (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 8). The full extent of impacts arising from allocated housing will be evaluated via the assessment of sites, and considered in more detail at the Regulation 19 stage of Plan making.

C.3.4.3 Policy CP4 will encourage new housing to be strategically focused on key growth locations, which are expected to be in areas with good access to a range of transport options,

[7] Assumes a delivery of 5,200 homes from remaining Local Plan 2031 allocations and 6,500 homes from new Local Plan 2041 allocations

including sustainable and active travel choices. However, the increase in the local population is expected to place some pressure on transport infrastructure and the strategic road network. At this stage, the impact on transport and accessibility (SA Objective 9) is uncertain.

C.3.5 Core Policy 5 – Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity

Core Policy 5 – Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity

Employment and Floorspace Provision (2024 – 2041)

The Council will make provision for the necessary employment land and floorspace to support economic growth, ensuring a diverse range of job opportunities across Planning Use Classes E (Office, Research & Development, and Light Industrial), B2 (General Industrial), and B8 (Storage and Distribution).

These figures are indicative and provide flexibility for economic development, without being considered an absolute requirement or maximum cap. They reflect the evolving nature of economic demand and the need for flexibility in planning.

Use Class	Lower Range	Upper Range
E – Office & R&D	0.9ha	6.4ha
Industrial – B2 & B8	3.5ha	25ha

Sources of Employment Provision

These indicative employment floorspace and land requirements will be sourced from:

- Existing planning permissions, contributing to both current and future employment opportunities.
- Site allocations, focusing on delivering new employment opportunities in accordance with the overall spatial strategy outlined in Core Policy 3 and in response to evolving market demands and technological advancements.

Flexibility and Adaptability in Employment Provision

The employment land and floorspace figures are indicative and will be treated with a degree of flexibility to respond to changing economic circumstances, market conditions, and emerging growth sectors. The Council will actively monitor this policy to ensure that West Oxfordshire remains responsive to new opportunities and challenges in employment and economic development.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP5	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	++

C.3.5.1 Through Policy CP5, the Council will provide the necessary employment land and floorspace to foster economic growth, ensuring a broad range of job opportunities across Planning Use Classes E (Office, Research & Development, and Light Industrial), B2 (General Industrial), and B8 (Storage and Distribution). The policy also sets out how the required employment floorspace will be met. Therefore, a major positive impact on the economy (SA Objective 13) is expected by securing employment land to support economic growth and diversify West Oxfordshire's economy.

C.3.5.2 The development of new employment land is expected to lead to higher vehicle usage, including private cars for employees and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) for industrial and storage/distribution activities. This will likely result in increased transport-related GHG emissions, as well as potentially additional operational GHG emissions, depending on the

specific uses proposed. Furthermore, the increase in employment land within the district, along with the associated industries and workforce, is likely to result in an increase in waste generated from employment sites, employees, and byproducts from industrial processes. As a result, minor negative impacts can be anticipated in terms of climate change mitigation, waste and air quality (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 8). The full extent of impacts arising from allocated employment land will be evaluated via the assessment of sites, and considered in more detail at the Regulation 19 stage of Plan making.

C.3.6 Core Policy 6 – Delivering Infrastructure In-Step with New Development

Core Policy 6 – Delivering Infrastructure In-Step with New Development

Infrastructure Investment Requirement

All new development proposals must be supported by timely and effective investment in new or enhanced infrastructure to meet the needs arising from the development. This includes, but is not limited to, transport, utilities, education, healthcare, open spaces, and community facilities. The delivery of infrastructure must be aligned with the development's progression to ensure it is in place when required by future occupants or users.

Infrastructure Delivery Plans for Major Developments

All major developments, including those on allocated sites, must be accompanied by a comprehensive, site-specific Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP should complement and draw information from the Council's district-wide IDP, clearly identify the range of infrastructure necessary to support the development and must:

- Detail the phasing of infrastructure delivery in alignment with the development's implementation.
- Provide a full and robust assessment of long-term management and maintenance arrangements for on-site infrastructure.
- Identify responsible parties for management and maintenance, ensuring cost-effective and sustainable arrangements that benefit both developers and future residents.

Ensuring Infrastructure Delivery through Planning Controls

To ensure that development is adequately supported by necessary infrastructure, the Council will use planning mechanisms such as Grampian conditions or planning obligations. These mechanisms will ensure that:

- Development does not commence or, where appropriate, is not occupied until required infrastructure improvements have been identified, secured, and scheduled for delivery.
- Infrastructure provision is phased and delivered in a timely manner to avoid undue pressure on existing local services or amenities.
- Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is acceptable wastewater capacity and surface drainage both on and off the site to protect new and existing residents.

The Council will closely monitor compliance with this policy and work with developers, infrastructure providers, and other stakeholders to ensure that infrastructure delivery aligns with local needs and statutory requirements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP6	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	0

C.3.6.1 Policy CP6 sets out the requirement of new developments to be supported by necessary infrastructure, including transport, utilities, education, healthcare, and community facilities. The policy also requires major developments to submit an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) outlining the required infrastructure and timetable for completion. Infrastructure

provision outlined in the policy will be expected to result in minor positive impacts on water, health, transport and education (SA Objectives 7, 10, 11 and 12).

C.3.6.2 Supporting infrastructure identified within the policy also includes open space, which could provide minor positive impacts on climate change adaptation, biodiversity, landscape and air quality (SA Objectives 2, 3, 4 and 6), achieved through the ecosystem services provided by GI. **Recommendation:** Policy CP6 could be strengthened through specific reference to green space and/or GI to ensure developments provide a wide range of infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and secure multi-functional benefits.

C.3.7 Core Policy 7 – Water Environment

Core Policy 7 – Water Environment

Integrated Water Management

All new development proposals must adopt a sustainable and integrated approach to water management. This includes the management of flood risk from all sources, the provision of blue infrastructure, water-sensitive design, and the implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Developments must be designed to mitigate water-related risks, including relevant consideration of the height of the water table, enhance water quality, and promote water conservation in line with the environmental objectives of the District.

Flood Risk and Water-Sensitive Design

Development must actively manage flood risk, taking into account the latest flood risk assessments and climate change predictions. Proposals must:

- Address flood risk from all potential sources, including surface water, groundwater, fluvial, and sewer flooding.
- Incorporate water-sensitive design principles, ensuring that water is treated as a valuable resource within the landscape. This may include permeable surfaces, rainwater harvesting, green roofs, and other innovative design solutions.
- Demonstrate how blue infrastructure—such as rivers, ponds, wetlands, and other water features—has been integrated into the design to enhance biodiversity, water storage, and recreational opportunities.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

SuDS must be incorporated into all developments to manage surface water runoff in a sustainable manner. Systems should:

- Mimic natural hydrological processes, providing multiple benefits such as reducing flood risk, improving water quality, and supporting biodiversity.
- Be designed to be multifunctional, creating aesthetically pleasing and ecologically rich landscapes while also providing recreational and educational value where appropriate.
- Be accompanied by robust long-term maintenance plans to ensure their continued function and effectiveness.
- Consider any off-site enhancements that may be necessary.

Water Supply and Efficiency

All new developments must incorporate suitable measures that address both water supply and demand to increase efficiency and build resilience for future demand. Proposals for new dwellings must meet a target of no more than 90 litres per person per day of water use. This can be achieved through:

- The installation of water-efficient fixtures and fittings, such as low-flow taps, dual-flush toilets, and efficient showerheads.
- The inclusion of water recycling systems, such as greywater reuse and rainwater harvesting.
- Demonstrate compliance with a water efficiency assessment.

Wastewater and Water Quality

All proposals must demonstrate full consideration of wastewater management and water quality, ensuring that development does not adversely impact water bodies or aquatic ecosystems. A focused local strategy must be submitted with major development applications, outlining:

Core Policy 7 – Water Environment

- How wastewater will be managed, including the treatment and discharge process.
- Measures to ensure compliance with water quality standards set out by local and national regulations.
- Any necessary infrastructure improvements to accommodate increased demand on wastewater treatment facilities.
- Strategies to prevent water pollution during and after construction, safeguarding local rivers, streams, and groundwater.

Local Water Management Strategy

Major developments must be accompanied by a site-specific water management strategy that outlines the integrated measures being taken to address water use, flood risk, water efficiency, and water quality. This strategy should also detail how long-term maintenance and monitoring of water infrastructure, including impacts on the water table will be managed, ensuring its resilience and effectiveness.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP7	0	++	+	+	0	0	++	0	0	+	0	0	0

C.3.7.1 Policy CP7 requires new developments to adopt a sustainable, integrated approach to water management, focusing on flood risk management, water conservation, and water quality.

C.3.7.2 The policy requires new developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage surface water runoff. SuDS will help reduce flood risk, improve water quality, and support biodiversity. Policy CP7 also requires developments to meet water efficiency targets through water-saving fixtures and fittings such as low-flow taps, and recycling systems such as greywater reuse. Wastewater management must be carefully considered to comply with water quality standards, and major developments must submit a water management strategy that addresses flood risk, water use, and long-term maintenance of water infrastructure. Overall, the measures outlined in Policy CP7 are expected to have a major positive impact on climate change adaptation, water quality, and quantity (SA Objectives 2 and 7).

C.3.7.3 Additionally, the policy encourages the inclusion of blue infrastructure (BI) to enhance biodiversity and associated ecosystem service functions, which is expected to benefit the local landscape and improve residents' health and wellbeing. This includes encouraging active lifestyles through access to blue spaces and improving mental wellbeing by providing proximity to water features. Therefore, minor positive impacts are identified for biodiversity, health, and landscape (SA Objectives 3, 4 and 10).

C.3.8 Core Policy 8 – High Quality and Sustainable Design

Core Policy 8 – High Quality and Sustainable Design

Design Excellence and Sustainability

All development proposals in West Oxfordshire must deliver high-quality, sustainable design that enhances the character and distinctiveness of the district. Development should be guided by the principles outlined in the West Oxfordshire Design Guide and the National Design Guide, ensuring that it is responsive to both local context and national design standards.

Core Policy 8 – High Quality and Sustainable Design

Proposals should demonstrate how they contribute positively to the built and natural environment, prioritising sustainability, inclusivity, and long-term resilience.

Key Design Principles for West Oxfordshire

To ensure development respects and enhances the unique character of West Oxfordshire, the following design principles must be incorporated into all proposals:

- Sustainability and Climate Responsiveness: All designs must prioritise energy efficiency, low-carbon building methods, and climate resilience. Developments should incorporate renewable energy technologies, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and provisions for sustainable transport, such as walking and cycling and electric vehicle infrastructure.
- Inclusive Design: Buildings and spaces must be accessible and inclusive to all users, creating environments that promote health, well-being, and social interaction. Public spaces should be well-connected, safe, and functional for diverse community needs.
- Contextual Sensitivity: New development must reflect and respect the local character, heritage, and landscape of West Oxfordshire, considering the scale, form, and materials of surrounding buildings and natural features.
- Landscape and Views: Development should protect and enhance the area's natural beauty, integrating landscaping that reflects local biodiversity and preserves important views, particularly in the Cotswolds National Landscape and in the area surrounding the Blenheim World Heritage Site.
- Design Quality: Proposals must achieve high architectural quality and craftsmanship, using materials and detailing appropriate to the local vernacular while encouraging contemporary innovation that complements the area's identity.
- Long-Term Durability: Design should consider the longevity of materials and the adaptability of spaces to future needs, promoting robust, low-maintenance solutions.

Alignment with Design Guidance

Proposals must demonstrate alignment with both the West Oxfordshire Design Guide and the National Design Guide. Applicants must provide design and access statements that clearly explain how their proposal reflects these guides and complies with the specific design principles set out for West Oxfordshire.

Design Review Process

Where appropriate, development proposals, particularly for major sites, may be subject to design review panels to ensure adherence to the highest standards of design quality and sustainability. The Council will expect applicants to engage early in the planning process to refine designs in line with these expectations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP8	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	+	++	0	0

C.3.8.1 Policy CP8 requires all development proposals in West Oxfordshire to deliver high-quality, sustainable design that enhances the district's character. The policy requires development

proposals to adhere to the West Oxfordshire Design Guide[8] and the National Design[9] Guide, ensuring designs are sensitive to local context, landscape, and heritage.

C.3.8.2 The policy requires development proposals to protect and enhance the local landscape, safeguarding key views, especially within the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) and around Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS). The policy also requires new developments to respect the local character and heritage, considering the scale, form, and materials used. Additionally, the policy acknowledges the importance of the landscape for biodiversity and requires that new developments incorporate landscaping that reflects and supports local biodiversity. Overall, a major positive impact is identified on the landscape (SA Objective 4), as well as minor positive impacts on biodiversity and cultural heritage (SA Objective 3 and 5).

C.3.8.3 Policy CP7 requires new developments to incorporate energy efficiency, low-carbon construction methods, and climate resilience in their design. The policy also highlights the importance of material longevity, promoting a resource-efficient approach. Additionally, developments are expected to include renewable energy solutions and SuDS, which help enhance water quality and reduce flood risks by managing surface water runoff. As a result, the policy is anticipated to have a major positive impact on climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2), as well as minor positive impacts on air pollution (SA Objective 6) by reducing construction-related pollutants and improving water quality (SA Objective 7) through the use of SuDS.

C.3.8.4 The policy requires the inclusion of infrastructure for sustainable transportation, such as cycling facilities and electric vehicle (EV) charging points, to support the adoption of sustainable transport options and promote active lifestyles. Additionally, the design must be inclusive and accessible to all users. Public spaces should be well-connected and safe, catering to the diverse needs of the community. As a result, the policy is likely to result in a major positive impact on transport (SA Objective 11) and a minor positive impact on health (SA Objective 10).

C.3.9 Core Policy 9 – Healthy Place Shaping

Core Policy 9 – Healthy Place Shaping

Healthy Place Shaping Principles

All development proposals in West Oxfordshire must adhere to the agreed Oxfordshire-wide principles of healthy place shaping. These principles aim to create environments that support health and well-being by:

- Encouraging physical activity through the provision of accessible open spaces, active travel infrastructure, and recreational facilities.
- Promoting social interaction by designing inclusive public spaces that foster community cohesion and engagement.
- Supporting access to healthy food options, the provision of new and enhanced healthcare, and essential services.
- Ensuring the development enhances mental well-being through the creation of safe environments, natural green spaces and biophilic design.

[8] West Oxfordshire District Council (2016). West Oxfordshire Design Guide. April 2016. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-documents/ [Date accessed: 20/02/25]

[9] MCHLG (2019) National Design Guide. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide [Date accessed: 20/02/25]

Core Policy 9 – Healthy Place Shaping

- Reducing health inequalities by ensuring equitable access to healthy, safe, and sustainable environments for all residents, particularly vulnerable groups.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

All major development proposals must be accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The HIA will assess the likely health impacts of the development on the local population, identifying both positive contributions to health and any potential negative impacts. The assessment should address issues such as air quality, active travel, access to services, green infrastructure, social inclusion, and housing quality.

Health Impact Assessment Toolkit

The HIA must be prepared in accordance with the Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit, which outlines a comprehensive approach to identifying, assessing, and mitigating health impacts. The toolkit provides a structured framework for developers to ensure that their proposals contribute positively to public health goals, while identifying areas where improvements can be made.

Implementation and Monitoring

To ensure the effective implementation of this policy, the following measures will be put in place:

- Implementation Plan: For major developments, the HIA must include an implementation plan detailing how health-promoting features will be integrated into the design, construction, and management phases of the development.
- Post-Development Review: A post-development review may be required, particularly for large-scale developments, to assess the actual health impacts compared to those predicted in the HIA. This review will help refine future planning policies and improve health outcomes across the district.

Engagement with Health and Well-being Stakeholders

Developers must engage early in the planning process with health and well-being stakeholders, including the local public health team, healthcare providers, and community representatives, to ensure that health considerations are fully integrated into the design and delivery of the development.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP9	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	+	++	+	0	0

C.3.9.1 Policy CP9 sets out the requirements of all new developments in West Oxfordshire to be designed and planned with the health and wellbeing of residents in mind. The policy promotes environments that encourage physical activity, social interaction, access to services, and mental wellbeing.

C.3.9.2 Policy CP9 requires major developments to include a Health Impact Assessment, following the Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit[10], to evaluate potential health impacts. The Health Impact Assessment is required to address issues such as air quality, active travel, access to services, GI, social inclusion, and housing quality. Additionally, the policy prioritises mental wellbeing through provision of natural green spaces and safe areas, and aims to reduce health inequalities by ensuring equitable access to sustainable environments for all residents, particularly for the district's most vulnerable population.

[10] WSP (2021). Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit. Available at: https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/64bfc2696e3a5a80360d3c60/64fba0200a3ae14953ff6b3b_210126-Oxon-HIA-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf [Date accessed: 20/02/25]

Overall, a major positive impact on health is identified (SA Objective 10), as well as minor positive impacts on air quality, housing and transport (SA Objectives 6, 9 and 11). A minor positive impact on biodiversity (SA Objective 3) could also be achieved via the policy's recognition of the importance of incorporating nature into design. **Recommendation:** Policy CP9 could support secondary positive effects in relation to climate change and biodiversity (SA Objectives 1 and 3) through specific reference to GI and the multifunctional benefits it can provide.

C.3.10 Core Policy 10 – Sustainable Transport

Core Policy 10 – Sustainable Transport

Prioritising Sustainable Transport Modes

New developments must be designed to:

- Give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and in connecting to neighbouring areas.
- Facilitate high-quality public transport access as the secondary priority.
- Discourage reliance on private vehicles through site layout, infrastructure, and design measures.
- Support a shift towards active and low-carbon travel modes and align with any relevant Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs).

A Vision-Led Approach

The transport strategy for each development must reflect the site's vision, location, and scale, prioritising sustainability. Safe and suitable access must be provided for all users, integrating sustainable transport solutions from the outset.

Any significant impacts on the transport network must be cost-effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.

Integration of Transport Planning in Development Proposals

All developments generating significant movement must be accompanied by a travel plan and a vision-led transport statement or transport assessment.

Transport considerations must be an integral part of early community engagement and master planning.

Development proposals must demonstrate how they minimise the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes including the integration of multi-modes of travel.

Accessibility and Inclusive Transport

All development proposals must provide for the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility. Designs must adhere to inclusive transport principles, ensuring barrier-free access for all users.

Supporting Low-Carbon Transport Infrastructure

Developments must provide green mobility solutions including safe, accessible, and convenient locations for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.

Parking strategies must align with sustainable travel priorities, ensuring car parking does not dominate site layouts.

High-Quality Design for Streets and Public Spaces

Streets, parking areas, and transport elements must be designed in accordance with the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code.

Public spaces must integrate pedestrian-friendly layouts, secure cycle parking, and active travel infrastructure.

Development layouts should incorporate green infrastructure to enhance air quality, biodiversity and provide wider environmental benefits.

Transport Network Impact and Mitigation

Developments must assess and address potential impacts on existing transport networks, including congestion, capacity, and highway safety.

Proposals should identify opportunities to enhance existing or proposed transport infrastructure and respond to evolving transport technologies.

Core Policy 10 – Sustainable Transport

Promoting Environmental and Public Health Benefits

Transport infrastructure should be designed to minimise environmental impacts, including noise, air pollution, and ecological disruption. Developments should include appropriate mitigation measures for any adverse effects and aim for net environmental gains.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP10	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	++	+	+

C.3.10.1 Policy CP10 focuses on promoting sustainable, accessible, and low-carbon transportation solutions in new developments. The policy encourages active travel options, such as walking and cycling, supports public transport, and aims to reduce dependence on private car use.

C.3.10.2 Policy CP10 prioritises pedestrian and cycling access in new developments, with public transport access as the secondary priority. This approach aims to reduce private car dependency and promote active lifestyles. The policy also sets out a vision-led strategy to ensure that developments are located near essential services, which is expected to include employment and educational facilities. Additionally, developments must incorporate low-carbon transport infrastructure, such as charging stations for ultra-low emission vehicles, contributing to the district's broader climate objectives. Overall, a major positive impact is identified for transport (SA Objective 11), as well as minor positive impacts for climate change mitigation, health, education and the economy (SA Objectives 1, 10, 12 and 13).

C.3.10.3 The policy requires the incorporation of GI in development designs, delivering a range of benefits including air filtration, enhanced habitat connectivity and creation, health improvements, water filtration, management of surface water, and landscape enhancement. As a result, minor positive impacts are anticipated for climate change adaptation, biodiversity, landscape, air quality, and water quality (SA Objectives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7).

C.3.11 Core Policy 11 – Historic Environment

Core Policy 11 – Historic Environment

In addition to fulfilling its statutory obligations, West Oxfordshire District Council will:

a) Prepare, update and adopt conservation area appraisals and management plans, prioritising those areas at greatest risk from development pressure or where the conservation area is most sensitive to change;

b) Pursue opportunities for heritage-led regeneration where appropriate;

c) Preserve, enhance and promote appreciation of the District's archaeological resources; and

d) Develop a positive strategy towards assets that are considered to be 'at risk', including the creation of a local register.

All development proposals in West Oxfordshire should seek to conserve and/or enhance the special character, appearance, and distinctiveness of the District's historic environment. This includes the significance of heritage assets, their historic

Core Policy 11 – Historic Environment

character, and their viability for sustainable uses consistent with their conservation. Development must adhere to national legislation, policies, and guidance for the historic environment.

In determining planning applications, great weight will be placed on conserving and/or enhancing the significance of designated heritage assets (the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This includes:

- The Outstanding Universal Value and significance of Blenheim Palace and Park, designated as a World Heritage Site (WHS), in accordance with its WHS Management Plan.
- The architectural and historic interest of Listed Buildings, particularly their character, fabric, and settings.
- The character and/or appearance of the District's Conservation Areas and their settings, considering the contribution of their surroundings to their historical and visual significance.
- The archaeological and historic interest of nationally important monuments (whether Scheduled or not), with emphasis on their fabric and settings.
- The cultural, architectural, and historic interest of Registered Parks and Gardens, taking into account the contribution of their surroundings to their significance.

In addition, significant weight will be given to the value of non-designated heritage assets, including vernacular buildings (e.g., traditional agricultural buildings, chapels, mills) and archaeological remains (above and below ground) that contribute meaningfully to the District's historic environment.

For all development proposals that affect, or have the potential to affect, heritage assets, the following requirements apply:

Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA): Applications must provide a detailed assessment of the heritage asset's significance, its setting, and historic landscape context, using appropriate expertise and recognised methodologies. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the asset and the potential impact of the proposal. This assessment should be sufficient to understand the effect of the proposal on the asset's historic, architectural, artistic and archaeological interests.

Minimising Impact: Proposals must demonstrate, in order of preference:

- Avoidance of adverse impacts on the significance of the heritage asset(s) (including those arising from changes to their settings), and where possible, enhancements that reveal or better reveal the asset's significance.
- Minimisation of unavoidable harm, where justified by public benefits (including heritage benefits), through appropriate mitigation strategies in line with the significance of the asset and the nature of the impact. Any changes to or loss of physical fabric, features, or remains should be investigated, recorded, and the results made publicly available to support heritage education and conservation efforts.

Record and Advance Understanding: Where development results in substantial harm or loss to the significance of a heritage asset, developers will be required to record and advance understanding of that asset's significance.

This should be done in a manner suitable to the asset's importance and the impact of the development. The results of such studies must be published and made publicly accessible in order to enhance awareness and understanding. The ability to mitigate the loss of significance through investigation and recording will not contribute to the balancing judgment of whether such a loss is justifiable under this policy.

In cases where the loss of part or all of a heritage asset is unavoidable and justified, a reasonable and agreed timetable must be established to ensure necessary safeguarding and recording of fabric and remains, with contingencies for unexpected discoveries.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP11	+	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+

C.3.11.1 Policy CP11 requires development in West Oxfordshire to protect, conserve and enhance the special character, appearance and distinctiveness of the district's historic environment.

The policy requires a Heritage Impact Assessment for any development that may cause harm to heritage assets, which must evaluate the asset's significance, setting, and historical context, with the level of detail depending on the importance of the asset and potential impact. Historic assets often contribute to the wider landscape character and sense of place and will therefore protect local distinctiveness. Overall, a major positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5), as well as a minor positive impact on landscape (SA Objective 4).

C.3.11.2 Conserving and enhancing the fabric of heritage assets is likely not only to preserve their historical and architectural significance but also ensure that any associated construction uses appropriate materials, is sustainable, and energy efficient. As such, there is potential for a minor positive impact on climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1).

C.3.11.3 Conserving and/or enhancing the significance of heritage assets, particularly designated assets like Blenheim Palace WHS, will be likely to bring additional benefits to the district's tourism industry by improving access and encouraging visitors. There is potential for a minor positive impact on the local economy (SA Objective 13).

C.3.12 Core Policy 12 – Natural Environment

Core Policy 12 – Natural Environment

In line with the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the District's commitment to sustainability, climate resilience, biodiversity and nature recovery, all new development in West Oxfordshire will be required to contribute to the protection, enhancement, and recovery of the natural environment.

Proposals are encouraged to take an integrated approach to the management of the natural and historic environment, where practicable.

Requirements for new development

All major development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they:

- Prevent harm to important habitats, species, and ecological networks, including those identified as part of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Enhance biodiversity by incorporating measures such as habitat creation and restoration and the inclusion of native landscaping and biophilic design that support local wildlife in the local context.
- Establish ecological corridors and/or networks that re-connect fragmented habitats, allowing wildlife to move freely between important sites and habitats, both within the development and extending beyond to the surrounding landscape.
- Support nature recovery by implementing specific measures to restore biodiversity in areas of ecological decline, including but not limited to planting native wildflower meadows, establishing woodlands and hedgerows and creating wetlands.
- Implement sustainable management practices for continuous natural areas, such as ongoing maintenance, monitoring, and adaptive management, to ensure long-term benefits for biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Integration with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

In order to align with the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), development proposals should:

- Support the LNRS to ensure that projects are aligned with the District's priority areas for nature recovery.
- Expand and develop existing and new ecological networks by creating and restoring natural habitats and improving connectivity for species listed in the LNRS.
- Where appropriate, reflect the results of collaboration with local conservation groups, landowners, and stakeholders to support nature-based solutions.

Protection of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

- Development will avoid loss, deterioration or harm to locally important wildlife and geological sites.

Core Policy 12 – Natural Environment

Ecological Impact Assessment and Mitigation

All major developments must be accompanied by a comprehensive Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) that evaluates the potential impacts of the development on local biodiversity and ecosystems. The EcIA must clearly confirm how negative impacts will be mitigated or compensated and how the natural environment will be enhanced.

In cases where significant impacts on biodiversity cannot be avoided, the development must implement an effective mitigation or compensation strategy consistent with the best practice guidelines and the principles of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Monitoring and Reporting

All major developments will be required to submit a post-development management and monitoring plan detailing how biodiversity enhancements will be monitored and maintained over time. Developers will be expected to submit progress reports on the success of their ecological mitigation, compensation and enhancements and any necessary short-term remediation measures and long-term adjustments to the management plan based on findings from regular monitoring.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CP12	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.3.12.1 Policy CP12 requires new developments in West Oxfordshire to protect and enhance the natural environment, align with the Oxfordshire LNRS, and improve biodiversity.

C.3.12.2 The policy requires all new major development in West Oxfordshire to contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment, in line with the Oxfordshire LNRS. Development proposals must avoid harm to important habitats and species, enhance biodiversity, create ecological corridors, and support nature recovery through measures such as planting wildflower meadows and restoring ecosystems. The policy also requires the integration of nature recovery networks and collaboration with local stakeholders. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) must accompany major developments, detailing potential impacts and mitigation strategies. Overall, these measures are anticipated to result in a major positive impact for biodiversity (SA Objective 3).

C.3.12.3 Through habitat creation, restoration of degraded habitats and supporting the LNRS within the district, Policy CP12 is expected to lead to secondary minor positive impacts on climate change mitigation and adaptation, air quality and water quality (SA Objectives 1, 2, 6 and 7) where the multifunctional ecosystems services associated with biodiversity assets will support carbon sequestration, air filtration and flood alleviation.

C.3.12.4 Supporting the LNRS is anticipated to benefit the local landscape by integrating GI across both urban and rural areas, alongside the policy's emphasis on "*biophilic design*", leading to a minor positive impact on the landscape (SA Objective 4).

C.4 Place-Based Policies

C.4.1 Policy PL1 – Cotswolds National Landscape

Policy PL1 – Cotswolds National Landscape

Development proposals within the Cotswolds National Landscape and its setting will be required to:

Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape, including its special qualities, landscape and scenic beauty, cultural heritage (including the historic environment), natural heritage (including biodiversity), and relative tranquillity.

Be sensitively located and designed to:

1. Avoid adverse impacts on the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

2. Minimise and mitigate any unavoidable impacts.

Demonstrate proactive conservation and enhancement, showing that all reasonably practicable steps have been taken to go beyond mere avoidance and mitigation of harm, actively contributing to the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Align with the objectives and policies of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and Nature Recovery Plan and contribute to their delivery.

Development proposals within the Cotswolds National Landscape must also:

Assess whether the development constitutes major development under paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework. If it is deemed major, in line with national policy, applicants must demonstrate that exceptional circumstances exist, and that the development is in the public interest.

Limit the scale and extent of development, ensuring it remains proportionate to the settlement in which it is proposed.

Contribute to relevant targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, as they apply to the Cotswolds National Landscape.

In determining proposals, great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape. This will include consideration of development outside the National Landscape where such development may harm its natural beauty, for instance, through impacts on views from within the National Landscape.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
PL1	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0

C.4.1.1 Policy PL1 requires development proposed within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and its setting must protect its beauty, heritage, and tranquillity. The policy also sets out that development proposals should enhance the landscape and follow the objectives and policies of the CNL Management Plan. The policy is likely to have a major positive impact on the landscape (SA Objective 4).

C.4.1.2 In safeguarding the natural beauty and special qualities of the CNL, the policy is likely to protect green and blue infrastructure (such as woodlands, hedgerows, grasslands, and watercourses), along with habitats and geological features. The policy also requires development to conserve and enhance biodiversity contributing to the CNL, aligning with the objectives of the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan[11]. Overall, this is expected to have

[11] Cotswolds National Landscape (2024) Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. Available at: https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery/cotswolds-nature-recovery-plan/ [Date accessed: 26/06/25]

a minor positive impact on biodiversity (SA Objective 3). GI and soils may also act as carbon stores, filter air pollutants and support natural water management, resulting in a minor positive impact on climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, air quality and water quality (SA Objectives 1 and 2, 6 and 7).

C.4.1.3 The Cotswolds National Landscape is home to various public rights of way (PRoW), including the Cotswold Way National Trail. Focusing on conserving and enhancing the NL can help protect beautiful areas near communities, encourage outdoor recreation, and provide health benefits. This is likely to have a minor positive impact on health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10).

C.4.1.4 Through protecting and enhancing the key characteristics of the NL, which the policy also identifies to include historic features, a minor positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5).

C.4.2 Policy PL2 – Oxford Green Belt

Policy PL2 – Oxford Green Belt

The Oxford Green Belt is a vital environmental and planning designation that seeks to protect the openness, character, and purposes of the Green Belt while supporting sustainable development where appropriate.

Development proposals within the Oxford Green Belt will be assessed in accordance with the following principles:

1. Sequential Approach to Development

Development within the Green Belt must follow a sequential approach:

Priority 1: Previously Developed (Brownfield) Land – Proposals must, wherever possible, prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land.

Priority 2: Grey Belt Land – Development may occur on Grey Belt land, defined as land within the Green Belt that comprises previously developed land and/or other land that does not strongly contribute to any of the following Green Belt purposes:
- Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- Preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
- Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

Priority 3: Other Green Belt Locations – Proposals for other locations in the Green Belt will only be considered after opportunities for development on brownfield and grey belt land have been fully explored and justified and subject to the considerations outlined below.

2. Beneficial Use of the Green Belt

Development proposals that positively contribute to the beneficial use of the Green Belt will be supported, provided they do not conflict with its purposes or harm its openness. Such benefits may include:

- Enhancing public access to the Green Belt.
- Providing opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation.
- Retaining and improving landscapes, visual amenity, and biodiversity.
- Addressing and improving damaged or derelict land.

3. Assessment of Harm and Very Special Circumstances

Substantial weight will be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development, as defined by national policy, will not be approved except in very special circumstances, where the potential benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

4. Definition of Appropriate Development

Appropriate development will be defined in accordance with paragraphs 154 and 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or subsequent updates. This includes specified exceptions such as limited infilling, affordable housing in identified areas, and certain forms of infrastructure where they preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

5. Major Development Contributions

Policy PL2 – Oxford Green Belt

Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, it must comply with the 'Golden Rules' set out in paragraph 156 of the NPPF, including:

- The provision of new affordable homes.
- Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure.
- The creation or enhancement of green spaces accessible to the public.

6. Weight for Compliance with the Golden Rules

In line with national policy, development proposals that comply with the Golden Rules will be given significant weight in favour of the grant of planning permission.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
PL2	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.4.2.1 Policy PL2 aims to protect the purposes of the Green Belt as defined in the NPPF, while allowing for sustainable development in line with national planning guidance. Development that is considered 'inappropriate' will only be permitted in very special circumstances where benefits outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

C.4.2.2 The Green Belt designation does not directly reflect the environmental quality or value of land. However, by maintaining openness, it indirectly helps protect the countryside, including features such as trees, hedgerows, and associated biodiversity and various ecosystem service functions and amenity value. As such, a minor positive impact on biodiversity and landscape character is identified (SA Objectives 3 and 4).

C.4.3 Policy PL3 – Conservation and Management of the Windrush Valley

Policy PL3 – Conservation and Management of the Windrush Valley

Upper Windrush Valley

Development and land management proposals in the Upper Windrush Valley must:

a. Incorporate natural flood management techniques, such as rewilding, wetland creation, and re-meandering of watercourses, and the restoration of floodplain meadows to reduce flood risk downstream.

b. Maintain and restore natural hydrological processes, ensuring that interventions enhance water quality, reduce surface water runoff, and protect the ecological health of watercourses, including the River Windrush and its tributaries.

c. Prioritise projects that align with catchment-wide flood mitigation strategies and provide multiple environmental benefits, including biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration, and alignment with the aims and objectives of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Windrush in Witney Project Area

Proposals within the Windrush in Witney Project Area must:

d. Conserve and enhance the area's unique landscape character, incorporating natural processes to restore and manage historic water meadows, hedgerows, and riparian habitats.

e. Protect and integrate heritage features, including mills, bridges, and archaeological assets, ensuring they are preserved within their natural and historic context.

f. Support community-driven conservation efforts and green infrastructure improvements, including access enhancements that promote sustainable enjoyment of the area.

Policy PL3 – Conservation and Management of the Windrush Valley

g. Demonstrate alignment with the aims and objectives of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Lower Windrush Valley

Proposals for development in the Lower Windrush Valley must:

h. Deliver comprehensive ecological enhancements that prioritise the creation of a mosaic of ponds, reedbeds, and grasslands and other habitats to benefit local species.

j. Enhance public access and recreational opportunities where appropriate, balancing ecological sensitivity with community needs through an appropriate green infrastructure approach, including the creation of new access routes.

k. Ensure that new habitats and species enhancements are managed and monitored in the long-term, ensuring ecological outcomes are sustained and adapted to evolving environmental conditions.

l. Demonstrate alignment with the aims and objectives of the Lower Windrush Valley Project Strategy and the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy,

An Integrated Approach

All proposals across the Windrush Valley must:

m. Demonstrate how they contribute to the strategic objectives of natural flood management, heritage conservation, biodiversity enhancement, and the aims and objectives of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy,

n. Avoid harm to the valley's ecological and visual integrity, incorporating mitigation measures where necessary to safeguard the quality of watercourses, including the River Windrush and its tributaries.

o. Engage with stakeholders, including local communities, conservation organizations, and water management authorities, to ensure alignment with local priorities, including access.

p. Address the cumulative impact of development or land-use changes, ensuring the valley's environmental and cultural assets are enhanced in perpetuity.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
PL3	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0

C.4.3.1 Policy PL3 sets out the requirements of development to respect and enhance the natural, cultural and social value of the Windrush Valley, including Upper Windrush Valley, Windrush in Witney and Lower Windrush Valley.

C.4.3.2 The policy sets out measures to manage flood risk, including through natural flood management techniques such as rewilding, creating wetlands and re-meandering watercourses. The policy also requires development to maintain and restore natural hydrological processes, helping to improve water retention and groundwater recharge, reducing surface water runoff and also providing benefits to water quality. Furthermore, the policy promotes projects that align with catchment-wide flood mitigation strategies, ensuring that flood management efforts are coordinated across the entire valley. Overall, these measures are likely to result in a major positive impact on climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2), and a minor positive impact on water (SA Objective 7). A major positive impact is also identified for biodiversity (SA Objective 3) owing to the focus of the policy on delivering comprehensive ecological enhancements, supporting nature recovery in line with the LNRS, and promoting responsible monitoring of new habitats and species.

C.4.3.3 Plans delivering enhancements such as restoration of wetlands, reedbeds and grasslands, the policy will support the functioning of various ecosystem services such as increasing the capacity for carbon sequestration and air filtration. As such, a minor positive impact on climate change mitigation and air quality is identified (SA Objective 1 and 6).

C.4.3.4 Development proposals are required to conserve and enhance the unique landscape character of the Windrush Valley. The policy requires development to incorporate natural processes to restore historic water meadows and hedgerows as well as protecting and integrating historic features including mills, bridges and archaeological assets. Additionally, the landscape will benefit from measures outlined in the policy that promote biodiversity improvements and enhancements to GI offering protection to its overall setting. As such, a minor positive impact on landscape character and cultural heritage is identified (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.4.3.5 Furthermore, through supporting the protection of key features distinctive to the Windrush Valley and encouraging incorporation of GI, Policy PL3 is expected to have a minor positive impact on health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10). Greater access to GI is known to improve both physical and mental health through encouraging outdoor activities and providing residents opportunity to connect with nature.

C.4.4 Policy PL4 – Wychwood Forest

Policy PL4 – Wychwood Forest

Protection and Enhancement of Habitats

Development within or adjacent to the Wychwood Forest area must prioritise the protection, restoration, and enhancement of key habitats, including ancient woodlands, heathlands, grasslands, and wetlands.

Proposals should:

a. Conserve existing habitats and protect them from fragmentation or degradation.
b. Create new and restored habitats that increase ecological connectivity, with a particular emphasis on the recovery of semi-natural habitats and the aims and objectives of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
c. Implement measures to prevent pollution or disturbance to sensitive habitats, particularly ancient woodlands and ecologically valuable areas.
d. Contribute, where appropriate, to the protection and enhancement of existing nature reserves within the Wychwood Forest area, ensuring they remain vital hotspots for biodiversity.

Landscape and Ecological Assessment

Development proposals must be supported by comprehensive ecological and landscape impact assessments, demonstrating:

a. The potential impacts of the development on local biodiversity, key habitats, and species.
b. Mitigation measures to address any negative effects on biodiversity and the wider landscape.
c. How the proposal integrates with broader conservation strategies, including the emerging Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network and the management objectives of local nature reserves.

Integration with Green Infrastructure

Proposals for new development must:

a. Contribute to the enhancement and expansion of green infrastructure, including the creation of wildlife corridors and ecological linkages to support movement of species across the landscape.
b. Integrate natural habitats and features such as ponds, woodlands, scrub and hedgerows, green spaces and native planting within the development to improve biodiversity outcomes.
c. Ensure sustainable water management, including measures to protect water quality and promote wetland creation and restoration where appropriate.
d. Support the ecological integrity of nearby nature reserves by maintaining buffer zones and minimising potential impacts such as light, noise, and pollution.

Sustainable Land Management

Policy PL4 – Wychwood Forest

Proposals must support sustainable land management practices that:

a. Protect soil health, reduce herbicide and pesticide use, and promote regenerative agricultural practices where applicable.
b. Support local wildlife through sensitive management of farmland, woodlands, and other natural habitats in the Wychwood Forest area.
c. Enhance the role of nature reserves as centres for habitat restoration and nature recovery by ensuring surrounding land management practices are compatible with their objectives.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
PL4	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0

C.4.4.1 Policy PL4 requires development within the Wychwood Forest area to prioritise the protection and enhancement of local ecosystems, ensuring biodiversity is maintained and improved. The policy supports sustainable farming and development practices, habitat restoration, and the integration of GI to support wildlife and natural habitats. Development should contribute positively to the environment, protect sensitive areas, and ensure long-term ecological health, all while balancing the needs of both nature and people.

C.4.4.2 The policy requires development proposals to *"conserve existing habitats and protect them from fragmentation or degradation"*, and also create new and restored habitats that increase ecological connectivity and help to deliver the aims of the LNRS. The policy also requires development to enhance the surrounding landscapes of nature reserves to support their role as biodiversity hotspots. Furthermore, development proposals within the Wychwood Forest are required to be accompanied by ecological and landscape impact assessments. Overall, a major positive impact for biodiversity is identified (SA Objective 3), as well as a minor positive impact on landscape (SA Objective 4) where conserving, restoring and creating habitat will support the preservation and enhancement of the wider landscape setting.

C.4.4.3 The policy promotes sustainable water management and supports wetland restoration, improving water quality. It also requires the incorporation of sustainable land management practices, with an emphasis on protecting soil health. Additionally, through *"enhancement and expansion of green infrastructure"*, the policy will help to mitigate climate change by protecting and boosting key ecosystem service functions such as carbon sinks. GI also provides benefits in terms of flood risk reduction, water quality, soil retention, air quality, and increased access to open spaces which will support the physical and mental wellbeing of residents. Overall, minor positive impacts are identified for climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, air quality, water quality and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7 and 10).

C.4.4.4 Policy PL4 also seeks to ensure development supports sustainable land practices which "*protect soil health, reduce herbicide and pesticide use, and promote regenerative agricultural practices*". This will support and improve soil quality for future generations and as such result in a minor positive impact on natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.4.5 Policy PL5 – Carterton – Witney – Oxford Rail Corridor (CWORC)

Policy PL5 – Carterton – Witney – Oxford Rail Corridor (CWORC)

Purpose of the Corridor
A corridor of land is identified extending from Carterton to Yarnton to safeguard the future delivery of a long-term rail solution for West Oxfordshire. This corridor is intended to support sustainable transport infrastructure and improve connectivity across the region.

Safeguarding the Corridor
Within the identified corridor, proposals for new development must demonstrate that they will not hinder or prejudice the delivery of the rail solution, including associated infrastructure.

Development Contributions
Development within the identified corridor will be required to make proportionate financial and/or in-kind contributions towards the delivery of the rail solution, including but not limited to feasibility studies, infrastructure works, and station facilities.

Potential Station Locations
Subject to further detailed site analysis, the plan identifies the potential for new railway stations to be located in broad locational terms at:

- **Carterton**, serving the town and surrounding areas.
- **Witney**, as a central hub for residents and businesses.
- **Eynsham**, to enhance connectivity and reduce reliance on car-based travel.

Monitoring and Review

The identified corridor and potential station locations will be reviewed periodically to account for changes in transport needs, technological advancements, and the results of detailed feasibility assessments.

Supporting Evidence and Engagement
The Council will work with key stakeholders, including Network Rail, transport authorities, developers, and local communities, to refine the alignment of the corridor and station locations as part of the ongoing planning process.

This policy seeks to balance strategic transport aspirations with sustainable development, ensuring that future growth supports and aligns with infrastructure objectives.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
PL5	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	0	+

C.4.5.1 Policy PL5 safeguards a land corridor from Carterton to Yarnton for a future rail solution in West Oxfordshire. The policy seeks to ensure developments within the corridor do not obstruct the rail project and require contributions to its delivery, as well as identifying potential sites for mobility hubs at Carterton, Witney, and Eynsham.

C.4.5.2 The proposed new railway line will enhance regional connectivity, making travel within West Oxfordshire and to larger nearby settlements like Oxford more efficient. By focusing on rail infrastructure, the policy encourages sustainable, low-carbon transport options, reducing the dependence on cars. Introducing rail services will also help to ease road congestion, especially in areas like Carterton, Witney, and Eynsham, where the A40 is a key commuter route which if often congested. The development of mobility hubs at strategic locations will improve public transport access, benefiting both residents and businesses. Overall, a major positive impact on transport is identified (SA Objective 11), as well as a minor positive impact on climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1) and air

quality (SA Objective 6), through reduced reliance on private car use, reducing the district's carbon footprint and the emission of air pollutants associated with road-based transport.

C.4.5.3 The policy is also expected to support the local economy by generating job opportunities through the construction and operation of the rail infrastructure and mobility hubs. The railway line could enhance business connectivity, making it easier for local businesses to access markets and attract new investment. Improved transport links will also increase residents' access to job opportunities both locally and regionally, contributing to a more mobile and skilled workforce. As such, a minor positive impact on the economy (SA Objective 13) is identified.

C.4.6 Policy PL6 – Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS)

Policy PL6 – Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS)

1. Strategic Objective

The exceptional cultural significance and Outstanding Universal Value of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS) shall be protected, conserved, and enhanced for current and future generations. Development proposals must demonstrate a clear commitment to sustaining the WHS's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), including its authenticity, integrity, architectural grandeur, historic significance, and designed landscape.

2. Protection of Outstanding Universal Value

a. All proposals within or affecting the WHS must conserve and, where possible, enhance the attributes that contribute to its OUV as defined in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value and the WHS Management Plan.

b. Great weight will be given to the conservation of the WHS and the avoidance of harm. Any harm to its significance must be clearly and convincingly justified, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

c. Development leading to substantial harm or total loss of attributes of OUV will only be permitted in wholly exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that significantly outweigh that harm.

d. Where proposals would cause less than substantial harm, such harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the development and only accepted where mitigation and enhancement measures are clearly demonstrated.

3. Protection of the Setting

a. Development within and affecting the setting of the WHS must preserve and enhance the landscape character, key views, vistas, skylines, and the spatial and visual relationships that contribute to the WHS's OUV and significance. Proposals must demonstrate a detailed understanding of the contribution made by the site to the setting of the WHS.

b. Proposals must avoid visual intrusion, inappropriate scale or form, cumulative landscape harm, noise, and light pollution that could erode the experience or understanding of the WHS.

c. Development proposals must give special consideration to the areas identified in the WHS Management Plan as having heightened sensitivity or value for long-distance views to and from the Site.

d. The design, materials, layout, and scale of development must be fully sympathetic to the historic and natural character of the WHS and its setting.

4. Assessment Requirements

a. Development proposals that could impact the WHS or its setting must be accompanied by a robust Heritage Impact Assessment and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, prepared in accordance with international best practice and in consultation with relevant heritage bodies.

b. Assessments must clearly identify the specific attributes of OUV affected, potential direct and indirect impacts, and propose mitigation and enhancement measures.

c. Where appropriate, proposals should contribute positively to the conservation of the WHS, including through improved access, interpretation, and landscape restoration.

5. Major and Cumulative Development

a. Proposals for major development within or affecting the setting of the WHS (including large-scale residential schemes or infrastructure such as solar farms) will only be supported in exceptional circumstances, where:

Policy PL6 – Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS)

b. The development is demonstrably necessary and cannot reasonably be located elsewhere;

c. The public benefits clearly and substantially outweigh the harm to the WHS or its setting;

d. All practicable steps have been taken to minimise, mitigate, and offset harm; and

e. Proposals include a clear strategy to deliver long-term enhancements to the WHS or its setting.

f. The cumulative impacts of existing, committed, and proposed development will be carefully considered, particularly where there is a risk of incremental degradation of the WHS setting.

6. Stakeholder Engagement

Developers must engage early and proactively with the District Council, Historic England, the WHS Management Committee and local communities to ensure alignment with the WHS's protection objectives, and to inform the design, scale, and layout of proposals.

7. Blenheim Palace WHS Management Plan

The Blenheim Palace WHS Management Plan is a material planning consideration. Development proposals should support its aims and objectives and demonstrate clear consistency with its policies and guidance.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
PL6	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+

C.4.6.1 Policy PL6 sets out the requirements of development to protect, conserve and enhance the cultural significance of the Blenheim Palace WHS. All development proposals are required to support the aims and objectives of the WHS Management Plan[12]. The WHS contains 37 listed buildings associated with the palace, its formal gardens, and the wider parkland[13]. By maintaining the integrity of the historic landscape and reinforcing heritage-led planning principles, the policy helps safeguard these listed structures and their settings. Additionally, the policy establishes clear requirements to protect and enhance the setting of the WHS. Any development that could impact the setting of the WHS is required to be accompanied by a *"robust"* Heritage Impact Assessment and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, ensuring that any potential impacts of a development are thoroughly assessed, understood, and mitigated. Through safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the WHS and its wider setting, the policy is anticipated to result in a major positive impact on cultural heritage (SA Objective 5). The policy could also result in secondary minor positive impacts on the local landscape, through the implementation of measures designed to conserve and enhance the broader landscape character and setting in which the WHS is situated.

C.4.6.2 Through safeguarding the OUV of Blenheim Palace WHS the policy will ensure that the WHS remains a world-class visitor attraction. Supporting the aims of the Blenheim Palace WHS Management Plan will support the continuation of high visitor numbers, contributing to the local economy through an emphasis on heritage-related tourism. The WHS also creates jobs locally and nationally, providing employment for 4,912 people, with 307 jobs

[12] Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (2017). Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Revised Management Plan 2017. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/b0rbyz1g/blenheim-whs-management-plan-2017.pdf [Date accessed: 23/04/25]

[13] Ibid.

directly employed by the WHS[14]. As such, the policy could result in a minor positive impact on the local economy.

[14] Oxford Brookes University (2017). Blenheim. Our Economic Impact 2016/17. Available at: https://www.blenheimpalace.com/assets/files/images/downloads/blenheim/blenheim-economic-impact-report.pdf [Date accessed: 23/04/25]

C.5 Settlement Strategies

C.5.1 Policy WIT1 – A Strategy for Witney

Policy WIT1 – A Strategy for Witney

1. Witney will continue to fulfil its role as West Oxfordshire's principal service centre, providing a focus for housing, employment, retail, leisure, health, education, and cultural activities. Development will be directed to locations that promote sustainable patterns of growth, enhance the town's character and setting, and contribute positively to addressing climate change and improving quality of life for all residents.

In managing future change, the Council will support development proposals that contribute to the following overarching aims:

a) Delivering sustainable patterns of development by:
i. Prioritising the re-use of previously developed and under-utilised land within the built-up area;
ii. Supporting well-designed urban extensions and new communities where required, integrating effectively with the existing town and its infrastructure, and respecting the landscape setting and identity of neighbouring villages.

b) Protecting and enhancing the town's heritage and natural assets, including:
i. The conservation and sensitive adaptation of designated and non-designated heritage assets, including the historic core of the town;
ii. The setting of the River Windrush and associated green infrastructure corridors;
iii. Avoiding the coalescence of Witney with surrounding settlements and preserving local distinctiveness.

c) Addressing climate change and air quality through:
i. Supporting proposals that contribute to improved air quality and reduced emissions;
ii. Enabling the delivery of strategic infrastructure, including the West End Link and enhanced east–west connectivity;
iii. Promoting a shift away from private car use through the integration of active and sustainable transport infrastructure.

d) Enhancing sustainable transport connectivity by:
i. Aligning with the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP) and Witney's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP);
ii. Facilitating the delivery of strategic walking and cycling routes, mobility hubs, and secure cycle parking;
iii. Supporting enhancements to public transport, including the provision of zero-emission buses and improved links to Oxford and key destinations and re-building the railway line to Oxford;
iv. Enabling the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and support for shared mobility solutions.

e) Meeting housing needs through:
i. Delivering a range of housing types, tenures, and sizes to support a diverse and inclusive community;
ii. Providing a significant proportion of genuinely affordable homes, including social rented homes;
iii. Supporting specialist and supported accommodation, particularly for older people and those with care needs;
iv. Promoting the regeneration and intensification of underused housing land, where appropriate.

f) Enhancing infrastructure, health and community services by:
i. Ensuring new development is supported by proportionate investment in health, education, leisure, youth facilities, cultural and food growing opportunities;
ii. Facilitating the delivery of integrated health and community hubs, exploring the development of the community hospital; on Welch Way to widen services available;
iii. Supporting public realm improvements that promote accessibility, inclusivity, and well-being.

iv. Restoring the railway line to Oxford

g) Supporting the local economy and employment opportunities by:
i. Encouraging the intensification, renewal, or diversification of existing employment areas;
ii. Promoting green technologies, low-carbon business sectors, and artisan or knowledge-based industries;
iii. Enabling modern working practices through the delivery of digital infrastructure and co-working environments.

h) Protecting and enhancing green and blue infrastructure by:
i. Retaining and enhancing existing green spaces, parks, and rights of way;
ii. Strengthening ecological corridors, particularly along the Windrush Valley and through the urban fabric;
iii. Delivering biodiversity net gain and climate adaptation through nature-based solutions, urban greening, and flood mitigation.

Policy WIT1 – A Strategy for Witney

i) Celebrating local identity and town character by:

i. Conserving key views, gateways, and the landscape setting of the town;

ii. Maintaining the relationship between the historic town centre and its surrounding countryside;

iii. Supporting placemaking initiatives, including public art and cultural programming that reinforce Witney's distinct and evolving identity.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
WIT1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	++

C.5.1.1 Policy WIT1 sets out the intention of the Local Plan to upkeep Witney's role as West Oxfordshire's main town and principal service centre, providing a focus for housing, employment, retail, leisure, health, education, and cultural activities. Development proposals will be supported where they promote sustainable growth patterns, enhance Witney's townscape character and setting, contribute positively to addressing climate change, and help to improve residents' quality of life.

C.5.1.2 The policy is expected to deliver significant benefits for the townscape/landscape and cultural heritage of Witney, promoting development proposals which will contribute to the conservation and sensitive adaptation of the town's heritage assets, including the historic town centre, and maintenance of the town's existing character and identity, including prevention of coalescence with surrounding settlements and upkeeping the landscape setting of the town. Hence, a major positive impact is identified in regard to landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.1.3 Maximising provision of sustainable and active travel options is a focus of the policy, including restoration of the railway line to Oxford, providing zero-emission buses, encouraging use of EVs and increasing provision of supporting infrastructure, and enhancing walking and cycling routes (in line with Witney's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan). The policy is expected to have a major positive impact on transport (SA Objective 11) with likely knock-on benefits for climate change mitigation, air quality and health, through reducing transport-related emissions and encouraging more frequent physical activity. A minor positive impact is anticipated for air quality (SA Objective 4). **Recommendation:** The policy stipulates that developments which focus on reducing emissions from other sources will be supported; however, there is limited reference to specific air quality targets and strategies, and no mention of potential benefits for achieving the objectives of the Witney AQMA. The positive impact anticipated in regard to air quality may be enhanced through addition of policy wording to address this.

C.5.1.4 A major positive impact is also anticipated for climate change mitigation, (SA Objective 1), with the policy outlining that developments will be promoted which provide other mitigative benefits, including providing green and blue infrastructure assets and including low-carbon businesses/employment sectors. A minor positive impact is expected for health (SA Objective 10), with the policy committing to proportionate investments in health. **Recommendation:** the positive impact anticipated in regard to health could be

strengthened through stronger policy wording around the intended health investments to accompany development and the pursuit of a community hospital.

C.5.1.5 The policy is expected to have a minor positive impact upon climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2), promoting developments with adaptive features, as well as the wider promotion of GI that can have multi-functional benefits including for climate resilience.

C.5.1.6 A minor positive impact is anticipated for natural resources (SA Objective 8), as the policy states that developments which utilise previously developed land (PDL) will be prioritised.

C.5.1.7 The policy is expected to have a minor positive impact upon biodiversity and water (SA Objectives 3 and 5), as it is stated that developments which strengthen ecological corridors, maintain and enhance GI and blue infrastructure, and deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG) will be supported; however, upkeeping biodiversity and water quality may conflict with the policy's strong commitment to promoting developments which help fulfil Witney's housing and employment needs. A major positive impact is anticipated for housing and economy (SA Objectives 9 and 13). The policy is also likely to have a significant positive impact upon education (SA Objective 12), through committing to providing proportionate educational facilities and the scope for specialist apprenticeships and training schemes to be provided through new employment opportunities.

C.5.2 Policy WIT2 – Witney Town Centre

Policy WIT2 – Witney Town Centre

Witney Town Centre will be maintained and enhanced as the principal retail, leisure, cultural and visitor destination in West Oxfordshire. Development will support a diverse and resilient town centre economy, promote high-quality placemaking, and enhance accessibility and the appreciation of heritage significance.

Proposals will be expected to:

1. Support a strong and diverse retail and service offer, with an emphasis on the High Street as the primary pedestrian spine linking the Woolgate Centre and Marriotts Walk, including protection of the defined *Primary Shopping Area* for active town centre uses. Loss of retail in these areas will be resisted unless fully justified in accordance with Policy DM20.

2. Promote the vitality of secondary areas such as Market Square, Corn Street and Welch Way by supporting a broad mix of retail, leisure, hospitality, community and cultural uses. Proposals leading to harmful concentrations of single uses or loss of active ground floor frontages will be resisted.

3. Encourage flexible and adaptive reuse of vacant units to respond to market trends and changing consumer behaviours, including the potential for mixed-use schemes (e.g., co-working, community, healthcare, residential, pop-ups, youth facilities or cultural uses) where consistent with town centre function and amenity.

4. Enhance Market Square as a multi-functional civic space and cultural heart of the town, supporting regular markets, seasonal events, performance and community activities and reflecting the diversity of the community.

5. Support sensitive and appropriately scaled redevelopment opportunities, including development along Welch Way, provided they maintain or improve pedestrian permeability, reinforce key frontages, and respect historic context.

6. Conserve and enhance Witney's historic character, particularly the Witney Conservation Area and listed buildings, through high-quality design, materials, and heritage-led placemaking.

7. Invest in the public realm, including decluttering of signage, improvements to surfacing, seating, greenery and lighting, and enhanced pedestrian/cycle accessibility, particularly in and around the High Street, Market Square and Corn Street.

8. Promote active and sustainable travel, including public transport, supported by public realm investment and the implementation of the Oxfordshire County Council-funded High Street and Market Square improvement scheme.

9. Ensure accessible town centre infrastructure, including safe walking and cycling routes, car parking provision, electric vehicle charging, improved bus interchange and visitor facilities such as a coach drop-off and a future visitor centre.

10. Support a vibrant and inclusive evening economy, including initiatives that improve safety, diversity of uses and extended hours of operation, in pursuit of Purple Flag accreditation.

Policy WIT2 – Witney Town Centre

11. Protect the distinct historic character of the Buttercross/Church Green area. Proposals for intensified commercial or retail activity in this area will be resisted unless incidental to the main permitted use.

12. Enable climate resilience and sustainability, including the incorporation of greening, sustainable drainage, and low-carbon development measures into town centre schemes.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
WIT2	+	+	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++

C.5.2.1 Policy WIT2 sets out the intention of the Local Plan to maintain and enhance Witney Town Centre as West Oxfordshire's principal retail, leisure and cultural destination.

C.5.2.2 The policy is largely focused around upkeeping and diversifying the economy of the town centre, including supporting the growth of a "*vibrant and inclusive evening economy*". All development proposals are expected to "*support a strong and diverse retail and service offer*". Both the Primary Shopping Area and secondary areas (including Market Square, Corn Street and Welch Way) are highlighted for particular consideration. Overall, the policy is anticipated to have a major positive impact upon the economy (SA Objective 13).

C.5.2.3 The policy also focuses heavily upon the need for increasing appreciation of the heritage significance of the town centre. Development proposals are expected to "*conserve and enhance*" the historic character of Witney (with specific consideration for the Buttercross/Church Green area), including through heritage-led placemaking and protection of designated heritage assets. All development proposals involving redevelopment are also required to be ensure that respect for historic context is maintained. Hence, a major positive impact is anticipated in regard to cultural heritage (SA Objective 5). As these heritage-focused aspects of the policy will help to ensure the character of the historic town centre is being upkept, a minor positive impact is also anticipated for landscape (SA Objective 4). The encouragement of redevelopment and use of vacant lots may also result in a minor positive impact upon natural resources (SA Objective 8), through maximising use of PDL and promoting an efficient use of land.

C.5.2.4 The policy outlines the need for development proposals to facilitate an increase in accessible, sustainable and active forms of travel in and around the town centre, through measures such as provision of public transport services and establishment of safe walking and cycling routes. Therefore, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11). The policy also refers to the need for development proposals to "*enable climate resilience and sustainability*", through measures such as incorporating greening and sustainable drainage, and implementing low-carbon strategies. Hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2). There is potential for these measures to provide indirect minor benefits in regard to health, air quality and biodiversity. **Recommendation:** more specific policy wording on which measures could be incorporated to increase the extent of the policy's anticipated positive impacts across the SA Framework.

C.5.2.5 Policy WIT2 supports mixed-use schemes including residential uses in the town. A minor positive impact on housing provision (SA Objective 9) could therefore be achieved.

C.5.2.6 There is minimal reference to aspirations for Witney Town Centre regarding water and education, leading to negligible effects recorded under SA Objectives 7 and 12.

C.5.3 Policy CA1 – A Strategy for Carterton

Policy CA1 – A Strategy for Carterton

1. Carterton will continue to play a vital role in supporting the economic and social wellbeing of West Oxfordshire, including its strategic association with RAF Brize Norton. The Council will support proposals which reinforce Carterton's role as a service and employment centre, promote sustainable patterns of development, and deliver high-quality, inclusive places in line with the settlement vision and objectives.

2. Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Reinforce Carterton's role as a key service and employment centre by:

- Enhancing the vitality, viability and diversity of the town centre through a broader retail, leisure and cultural offer, with particular support for proposals that strengthen the evening economy and encourage mixed-use development;

- Providing new and upgraded employment land and premises to support enterprise, including in sectors complementary to RAF Brize Norton and emerging low-carbon, digital and agro-ecological food production and distribution industries;

- Enabling the continued operation and long-term future of RAF Brize Norton, celebrating its military heritage and recognising its national importance and integral role within the local economy and community.

- Linking to the national rail system through the restoration of a Carterton-Oxford railway.

b) Deliver sustainable and well-managed growth through:

- New development within the existing built-up area, including the re-use of previously developed land infill development,

- Facilitating the comprehensive redevelopment of poor-quality or underutilised MOD housing stock at appropriate densities and design standards;

- Strategic-scale development on the urban fringe of the town through scalable new communities that complement and support the town and adjoining villages whilst protecting their distinct identities;

- Providing a balanced mix of housing types and tenures, including affordable and adaptable homes to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population.

c) Protect and enhance the town's landscape setting and green infrastructure by:

- Safeguarding the identity and separate character of Carterton and surrounding villages;

- Delivering new and enhanced green infrastructure within and around the town, linking neighbourhoods to each other, the town centre, and the wider countryside;

- Supporting the provision of high-quality public open space, biodiversity enhancements, community growing spaces and accessible natural green space in conjunction with new development.

d) Support the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient settlement by:

- Requiring high standards of sustainable design and construction in new development, including energy and water efficiency, integrated renewable energy, and climate-resilient landscaping;

- Promoting active and sustainable modes of travel, including improved provision for walking, cycling and public transport, particularly in relation to the town centre, employment areas and RAF Brize Norton;

- Supporting strategic transport improvements, including enhanced access to the A40 and re-building the rail connection towards Oxford, to unlock economic potential, improve connectivity, and reduce unsustainable commuting patterns.

e) Deliver inclusive and connected communities by:

Ensuring that new development is supported by timely provision of infrastructure, including education, healthcare, open space, and leisure facilities, in accordance with identified needs;

Facilitating high-quality, well-connected neighbourhoods that promote social interaction, safety and wellbeing;

Policy CA1 – A Strategy for Carterton

Supporting the revitalisation of the town centre and underutilised areas through comprehensive and design-led regeneration.

3. The Council will work proactively with landowners, the Ministry of Defence, Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), and other partners to deliver coordinated and sustainable growth in Carterton in accordance with this strategy.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CA1	++	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	++

C.5.3.1 Policy CA1 sets out the intention for Carterton, West Oxfordshire's second largest town, to continue its "*vital role in supporting the economic and social wellbeing*" of the district.

C.5.3.2 The policy largely focuses upon enhancing and diversifying Carterton's role as an employment centre and provider of key community services. Development proposals which provide a range of employment opportunities, including in low-carbon sectors and sectors that compliment and provide links RAF Brize Norton, are supported. Hence, a major positive impact is anticipated for economy (SA Objective 13). The benefit of better connecting the town for helping to fulfil its economic potential is recognised, with particular reference to transport links to key employment areas such as RAF Brize Norton, Carterton Town Centre, Oxford and Witney. These links include improving access to the A40. The policy also recognises the importance of promoting active and sustainable modes of travel, such as cycling and walking routes. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11). Greater use of sustainable and active transport also has the potential to have a secondary minor positive impact upon air quality (SA Objective 6).

C.5.3.3 The policy also focuses upon supporting developments which will contribute to the protection and enhancement of Carterton's townscape and the surrounding landscape, through careful planning and design. The importance of safeguarding Carterton's unique character and identity is recognised, including its rich military heritage through its longstanding ties to RAF Brize Norton. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape (SA Objective 4) and a minor positive impact for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5). **Recommendation:** Greater emphasis on conserving and enhancing Carterton's cultural heritage assets could secure further benefits in this regard.

C.5.3.4 Developments are supported which contribute to meeting the district's housing needs, including a mix of housing types and tenures that fit local demand. A minor positive impact is expected for housing (SA Objective 9).

C.5.3.5 The policy references prioritising developments which utilise PDL, as well as developments which provide educational and health benefits and include water efficiency measures. Therefore, a minor positive impact is anticipated for water, natural resources, health and education (SA Objectives 7, 8, 10 and 12).

C.5.3.6 The policy provides extensive reference to considering climate change mitigation in guiding support for developments; for instance, through supporting developments which include energy efficiency measures, integrated renewable energy and climate-resilient

landscaping. Therefore, a major positive impact is anticipated for climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1). A minor positive impact upon climate change adaptation and biodiversity (SA Objectives 2 and 3) may also occur due to benefits associated with promotion of GI, such as increased habitat provision and shading effects from green corridors.

C.5.4 Policy CA2 – Carterton Town Centre

Policy CA2 – Carterton Town Centre

1.The Council will support development proposals that contribute to the regeneration, diversification and enhancement of Carterton Town Centre, including proposals that:

a) Strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centre, including:

i) diversifying the retail, leisure, cultural, and food and beverage offer to broaden the town centre's appeal;

ii) supporting mixed-use development, including upper-floor workspace and ancillary residential use;

iii) encouraging the establishment of community hubs and youth facilities.

b) Promote sustainable patterns of development, making effective use of key redevelopment and infill sites including land along Burford Road, Black Bourton Road, and Alvescot Road to deliver active frontages and a more coherent urban grain.

c) Enhance the quality of the public realm and green infrastructure, including:

i) creating attractive, safe, and uncluttered streetscapes with high-quality materials and street furniture;

ii) introducing street trees, urban greening and 'green avenue' planting along main thoroughfares;

iii) improving links between the town centre and the Recreation Ground and other key public spaces.

d) Improve accessibility and connectivity, including:

i) enhancing pedestrian and cycle movement within and to/from the town centre;

ii) supporting the implementation of a local mobility hub with integrated public transport and active travel facilities;

iii) delivering secure cycle parking, electric vehicle charging points, and appropriate levels of car parking.

e) Support a vibrant and inclusive town centre economy, including:

i) flexible and temporary space to support start-ups, creative industries and small businesses;

ii) provision of premises suitable for cafés, restaurants, and evening economy uses;

iii) animation of key public spaces through festivals, markets, events, public art and performance areas.

f) Protect and reinforce the character and identity of the town centre, including:

i) maintaining continuity of built frontages to create a strong sense of place;

ii) celebrating Carterton's civic and military heritage through interpretation, signage and public realm features;

iii) ensuring new development responds positively to local context and contributes to a cohesive townscape.

2. The Council will work in partnership with Carterton Town Council and other stakeholders to deliver town centre improvements, including:

i) improvement works to the central crossroads for all modes of travel;

ii) place-marketing initiatives and a coordinated branding strategy;

iii) delivery of new wayfinding and orientation features.

3. Development proposals within Carterton Town Centre will be expected to contribute towards delivery of public realm and infrastructure enhancements, through developer contributions and other appropriate mechanisms.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CA2	+	+	+	++	+	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++

C.5.4.1 Policy CA2 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to upkeep Carterton Town Centre's role as a primary town centre in the district, which provides key services and acts as a *"hub for shopping, community, leisure and day-to-day needs"*. The Council aspire to regenerate, diversify and enhance the centre, so that it serves as a *"more resilient and inclusive focal point"* that is able to cater for the needs of the growing local population, minimising the need for residents to travel to other towns.

C.5.4.2 The policy is largely focused around upkeeping and diversifying the economy of the town centre, broadening the *"retail, leisure, cultural, and food and beverage offer"* to better meet a range of local needs. There is recognition of the importance of supporting an economy which is inclusive and suitable for start-ups, creative industries and small businesses. Overall, the policy is anticipated to have a major positive impact upon the economy (SA Objective 13).

C.5.4.3 The policy also focuses upon the need to maintain and further the unique character and identity of the townscape, prioritising actions such as maintaining existing built frontages and making use of *"signage and public realm features"* to celebrate Carterton's heritage (particularly its military heritage and historic ties to RAF Brize Norton). As such, a major positive impact is anticipated in regard to landscape (SA Objective 4) and a minor positive impact for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5). By prioritising regeneration and adaptive reuse, which will reduce the need to use previously undeveloped land, there is potential for a minor positive impact upon natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.5.4.4 Development proposals are supported which improve key transport links (such as the central crossroads) and facilitate greater levels of sustainable and active travel (such as through delivery of secure cycle parking facilities and EV charging points). Therefore, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11). There is potential for a knock-on minor positive impact upon climate change mitigation, air quality and health (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 10), through a reduction in transport-related emissions and encouraging more physical activity. Furthermore, the promotion of development proposals which include GI features (such as street trees) is likely to have benefits in regard to these objectives, as well as SA Objectives 2 and 3 (climate change adaptation and biodiversity) via introducing green corridors with shading effects.

C.5.4.5 Policy CA2 supports mixed-use schemes including residential uses in the town. A minor positive impact on housing provision (SA Objective 9) could therefore be achieved.

C.5.4.6 There is minimal reference to aspirations for Carterton Town Centre regarding water and education, leading to negligible effects recorded under SA Objectives 7 and 12.

C.5.5 Policy CN1 – A Strategy for Chipping Norton

Policy CN1 – A Strategy for Chipping Norton

1. Chipping Norton will continue to serve as a key service centre for northern West Oxfordshire and the wider rural hinterland, providing a sustainable and inclusive hub for housing, employment, retail, education, healthcare, culture, and community life. Development will be directed to locations that reinforce the town's distinct character and compact form, promote social and environmental wellbeing, and contribute to addressing the climate and ecological emergency.

In managing future change, the Council will support development proposals that contribute to the following overarching aims:

a) Delivering sustainable patterns of growth by:

i. Prioritising the re-use of previously developed land and appropriate infill sites within or adjacent to the built-up area, especially where this supports regeneration and better use of under-utilised assets;

ii. Supporting modest, well-integrated extensions to the town where needed, ensuring they are landscape-led, respect the setting of the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) and protect the separate identity of nearby villages;

iii. Requiring all development to be climate-resilient, resource-efficient, and of high design quality, with a mix of housing that reflects identified needs across tenures, sizes, and ages.

b) Strengthening local infrastructure and services by:

i. Coordinating investment in physical, social, and green infrastructure to support sustainable growth, including improved healthcare, education, utilities, digital connectivity, and community facilities;

ii. Working with partners to improve access to health and wellbeing services, expand youth provision, and strengthen early years and lifelong learning opportunities;

iii. Securing developer contributions and funding to deliver infrastructure upgrades and active travel improvements in step with new development.

c) Supporting a diverse, future-facing economy by:

i. Retaining and enhancing key employment areas such as Worcester Road and Station Road, while encouraging sensitive intensification and diversification of uses;

ii. Facilitating the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises, creative and cultural industries, green tech businesses, and remote working opportunities through provision of flexible, modern workspace and new residential properties designed with home and hybrid working in mind;;

iii. Promoting tourism and the visitor economy by conserving the historic core, celebrating local heritage, and enhancing access to the surrounding countryside and cultural assets.

d) Protecting and enhancing landscape, heritage and natural capital by:

i. Ensuring that all development respects the town's landscape setting, key views, dark skies, and the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB)

ii. Conserving the town's historic environment, including its distinctive streetscape, Conservation Area, and significant heritage assets, through sensitive and context-led design and, where possible, promoting access and appreciation of their significance;

iii. Enhancing the town's network of green and blue infrastructure to support biodiversity, access to nature, health, and recreation, while managing flood risk through integrated water management.

The Council will work proactively with the Town Council, landowners and other partners to deliver coordinated and sustainable growth in Chipping Norton in accordance with this strategy.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CN1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	0	+	++

C.5.5.1 Policy CN1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to maintain Chipping Norton's role as a *"key service centre for northern West Oxfordshire"*, in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

C.5.5.2 The policy is anticipated to deliver benefits for natural resources by supporting development proposals that prioritise reuse of PDL. However, provision of additional housing and employment developments to meet local needs will likely result in *"extensions of the town where needed"* and loss of some previously undeveloped land. On balance, a negligible impact is identified regarding natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.5.5.3 Development proposals that are "*landscape-led*", helping to maintain the setting and character of the existing landscape/townscape, and preventing coalescence of Chipping Norton and its surrounding settlements, are supported. The policy specifically references the importance of considering the CNL. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape (SA Objective 4). A major positive impact is also expected for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5), as the importance of conserving Chipping Norton's historic core and celebrating its local heritage is recognised.

C.5.5.4 The policy focuses upon ensuring the sustainability of Chipping Norton, with mention of various climate change mitigative measures, including *"requiring all development to be climate-resilient"* and investing in GI. As such, a major positive impact is expected in regard to climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1). Supporting developments which enhance Chipping Norton's GI and blue infrastructure networks is also expected to have a minor positive impact upon the town's biodiversity, as well as air local air and water quality, due to the likely enhancement of associated ecosystem services. Therefore, a minor positive impact is anticipated for biodiversity, air quality and water (SA Objectives 3, 6 and 7). Benefits are also anticipated regarding climate change adaptation, with reference to *"managing flood risk through integrated water management"*, in addition to the GI enhancements; hence, a minor positive impact upon SA Objective 2 is likely.

C.5.5.5 The policy also focuses upon maintaining and enhancing the town's economy moving forward, including through efforts to bolster key employment areas and diversify employment opportunities (including in creative, cultural, green and tourism industries). There is also emphasis on facilitation of more flexible and hybrid working, through greater digital connectivity and careful design of housing and employment spaces. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for economy (SA Objective 13) and a minor positive impact is anticipated for housing (SA Objective 9).

C.5.5.6 Minimal reference is made to intentions to improve provision and accessibility of healthcare and educational services/facilities (SA Objectives 10 and 12). **Recommendation:** the positive impact associated with these objectives could be enhanced through inclusion of further, more specific policy wording on how health and education in the town will be bettered.

C.5.5.7 Despite the Council's Vision for Chipping Norton referring to the need for greater connectivity and provision of infrastructure which supports sustainable and active travel, such as improved public transport links and walking and cycling routes, transport is not a focus of this policy. **Recommendation:** inclusion of reference to these goals in this policy could result in a positive impact upon transport (SA Objective 11).

C.5.6 Policy CN2 – Chipping Norton Town Centre

Policy CN2 – Chipping Norton Town Centre

1. Chipping Norton Town Centre will continue to serve as a key service, retail, leisure, and cultural hub for northern West Oxfordshire, building on its historic character, strong independent retail offer, and vibrant cultural scene.

The Council will support development that enhances the vitality, viability, and resilience of the town centre while promoting its role as a visitor destination and rural economic hub.

2. In managing change, development proposals will be supported where they contribute to the following overarching aims:

a) Enhancing vitality and viability by:

i. Protecting and promoting a balanced mix of independent and national retailers and resisting the loss of retail uses within the Primary Shopping Area to preserve the market town character and core retail function.

ii. Supporting the re-use of vacant or under-utilised buildings for flexible uses including pop-ups, co-working spaces, studios, healthcare, and education.

iii. Upgrading and promoting the weekly market as a distinctive and high-quality feature of the town centre offer.

iv. Encouraging family-friendly evening economy uses and activities that support safe, vibrant, and inclusive nightlife.

v. Enabling temporary and adaptable spaces to support entrepreneurs, start-ups, creatives, and small businesses.

b) Improving accessibility, safety, and movement by:

i. Enhancing pedestrian safety and accessibility through upgraded crossing points, traffic calming measures, and improved connectivity across the A44 corridor and wider town centre.

ii. Improving cycling infrastructure and secure cycle parking to promote active travel.

iii. Supporting public transport accessibility and wayfinding for better navigation to and around the town centre.

c) Enhancing the public realm and historic environment by:

i. Delivering high-quality public realm improvements including greening, tree planting, new seating, street furniture, and attractive spaces to dwell and socialise.

ii. Creating a central public space as a focal point for community gathering, events, and cultural activity.

iii. Respecting and enhancing the historic character of the town, including the preservation of burgage plots and sensitive treatment of heritage assets and shopfronts.

iv. Supporting the preparation and promotion of heritage trails and guides as part of the visitor offer.

d) Supporting tourism and cultural identity by:

i. Promoting Chipping Norton as a historic and cultural visitor destination, anchored by its heritage, theatre, cinema, and independent shopping experience.

ii. Coordinating tourism activity and promotion across West Oxfordshire's town centres to deliver a more coherent and compelling district-wide offer.

iii. Supporting cultural venues such as The Theatre Chipping Norton and The Living Room Cinema to expand and diversify programming that attracts residents and visitors alike.

iv. Enhancing the town's cultural calendar through events, festivals, and seasonal programming, supported by improved branding and promotion.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CN2	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	+	++

C.5.6.1 Policy CN2 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help ensure Chipping Norton Town Centre continues to act as a *"key service, retail, leisure and cultural hub for northern West Oxfordshire",* which is in-keeping with the town's historic character.

C.5.6.2 The policy focuses upon maintaining the town centre's role as a *"rural economic hub"*. This includes a commitment to supporting developments that contribute to the establishment of a thriving family-friendly and inclusive evening and nighttime economy; contribute to the protection of the Primary Shopping Area as a key retail space; and facilitate the inclusion of entrepreneurial ventures, start-ups, and creative and small-businesses in the employment mix. A major positive impact is anticipated for economy (SA Objective 13).

C.5.6.3 The policy also focuses upon respecting and enhancing the historic character of the Chipping Norton, including through marketing a cultural visitor experience and ensuring that developments in the town centre respect cultural heritage assets and are in-keeping with the existing townscape character. Hence, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.6.4 Developments proposals that "*re-use vacant or under-utilised buildings*" are supported; hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for natural resources (SA Objective 8). As there is mention of utilising these spaces for healthcare and educational purposes, a minor positive impact is also expected for SA Objectives 10 and 12.

C.5.6.5 The policy also prioritises transport, supporting development proposals that facilitate greater ease of movement for all, particularly in safe, sustainable and active ways. Developments proposals are supported that incorporate traffic calming measures, upgraded crossing points, efforts to improve connectivity across the A44 corridor and wider town centre, and infrastructure to facilitate greater levels of sustainable and active travel. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11). There is potential for knock-on minor positive impacts for climate change adaptation, air quality and biodiversity, due to likely reduced transport-related emission and the promotion of urban greening including tree planting (SA Objectives 2, 3 and 6). **Recommendation:** the positive impact anticipated for air quality and biodiversity could be furthered by inclusion of policy wording which supports specific beneficial measures for these objectives, such as running green corridors through the town centre for BNG and air quality regulatory ecosystem service purposes.

C.5.6.6 There is minimal reference to aspirations for Chipping Norton Town Centre regarding water and housing, leading to negligible effects recorded under SA Objectives 7 and 9.

C.5.7 Policy BAM1 – A Strategy for Bampton

Policy BAM1 – A Strategy for Bampton

1. Bampton must continue to function as a sustainable rural service centre, valued for its historic character, community spirit, and natural setting. The Council will support proposals that help the village adapt to future challenges while respecting its identity and environmental constraints.

2. Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Support Bampton's role as a distinctive rural community by:

- Maintaining and enhancing the village's network of community facilities and services;

- Promoting Bampton's cultural life and traditions in a way that enriches resident experience and attracts responsible tourism;

- Supporting local events, arts, and heritage initiatives that reinforce village identity and economic vitality.

Policy BAM1 – A Strategy for Bampton

b) Enable well-integrated, proportionate growth that meets local needs by:

- Delivering a mix of housing types with a focus on affordability and accessibility for local people;

- Prioritising the sensitive reuse of land and buildings within the existing built area;

- Ensuring all development demonstrates high design quality and is appropriate to the village's historic and rural character, particularly within or adjacent to the Conservation Area.

c) Strengthen resilience and environmental sustainability by:

- Avoiding new development in areas at highest flood risk and incorporating SuDS and flood mitigation in all new proposals;

- Supporting biodiversity, tree planting, and green infrastructure within and around the village;

- Promoting the energy-efficient design of new buildings and, where appropriate, the sensitive retrofitting of older properties.

d) Improve transport and digital connectivity by:

- Enhancing provision for walking and cycling, including safe routes to school, community facilities, and neighbouring villages;

- Supporting improved public and community transport services, especially to nearby towns and railway connections;

- Strengthening digital infrastructure to support remote working and access to online services.

e) Promote inclusivity, well-being, and quality of life by:

- Ensuring new development contributes to improved health, education, and recreational infrastructure;

- Encouraging use of public spaces and community venues for intergenerational and inclusive activities;

- Supporting initiatives that address social isolation, especially among older residents and young families.

3. The Council will work in partnership with Bampton Parish Council, the local community, infrastructure providers, and stakeholders to guide future change in a way that is balanced, inclusive, and resilient, including through the potential preparation of any future Neighbourhood Plan.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
BAM1	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+

C.5.7.1 Policy BAM1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain Bampton's role as a historic village and Tier 2 Service Centre with meets the needs of the growing local population.

C.5.7.2 The policy includes support for development proposals that meet housing needs in line with population growth, including the provision of housing of a range of types and tenures. Hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for housing (SA Objective 9). The policy focuses on maintaining the unique character and setting of the historic village of Bampton, ensuring that future development does not compromise this. Reference is made to the importance of high-quality design that is in line with the character of the landscape, particularly in and around the Conservation Area. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape (SA Objective 4) and a minor positive impact for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5). The policy also supports developments that partake in sensitive reuse and focus growth in the most built-up locations. This will help to reduce use of previously undeveloped land and, as such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.5.7.3 The policy includes support for developments that improve transport connectivity, particularly through increased provision of sustainable and active transport infrastructure. A major positive impact is expected for transport (SA Objective 11). The importance of strengthening digital infrastructure in the village where remote and hybrid employment is most common, as most residents are employed in businesses based outside of Bampton, is also recognised. There is also emphasis on maintaining and furthering the local employment opportunities that are available, particularly in the service and tourism sectors. Hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for economy (SA Objective 13).

C.5.7.4 The policy also places emphasis on the need for climate change mitigative and adaptive action. Support is provided for development proposals that incorporate measures intended to *"strengthen resilience and environmental sustainability"*, such as implementation of SuDS and flood mitigation, tree planting and GI, energy-efficient building design, and sustainable transport systems. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2). Associated minor positive impacts are expected for biodiversity, air quality and water (SA Objectives 3, 6 and 7).

C.5.7.5 Brief mention is given to the fact that developments which contribute to *"improved health, education, and recreational infrastructure"* are supported. Hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for health and education (SA Objectives 10 and 12). **Recommendation:** further policy wording which sets out specific intentions regarding health and education improvements, such as plans to increase capacity of existing facilities, may be valuable in furthering the likely positive impact upon these objectives.

C.5.8 Policy BUR1 – A Strategy for Burford

Policy BUR1 – A Strategy for Burford

1. Burford will continue to serve as a distinctive service centre and key visitor destination within West Oxfordshire, valued for its exceptional historic character, cultural heritage, and setting within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The Council will support proposals that sustain and enhance Burford's social, economic, and environmental well-being, in accordance with the town's vision and strategic objectives.

2. Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Strengthen Burford's role as a sustainable rural service and tourism centre by:

- Supporting the vitality and diversity of the town centre through the retention and enhancement of independent retail, hospitality, and cultural uses;

- Promoting tourism that respects the town's character, improves the year-round visitor experience, and contributes to the local economy;

- Encouraging initiatives that enhance the evening economy and support local arts, events, and creative industries.

b) Support sensitive, well-integrated development that meets local needs by:

- Prioritising the reuse of existing buildings and limited development within the built-up area;

- Delivering a balanced mix of housing, with an emphasis on affordable and smaller homes suited to local people, including younger households and essential workers;

- Promoting high-quality design that responds to the historic environment and landscape context, including the Conservation Area and Cotswolds National Landscape.

c) Enhance local infrastructure and sustainable transport by:

- Improving provision for walking and cycling, including safe links between residential areas, the town centre, and local attractions;

- Supporting low-carbon transport solutions, such as community transport, electric vehicle infrastructure, and better visitor wayfinding;

Policy BUR1 – A Strategy for Burford

- Managing traffic impacts and congestion, particularly on the A361 and at the Windrush bridge, to improve safety and quality of place for residents and visitors.

- Improving the public transport infrastructure (bus shelters, real time information, coach parking) and car parking provision.

d) Protect and enhance the town's environmental and heritage assets by:

- Conserving and sensitively adapting historic buildings and public spaces to support sustainability and continued use;

- Delivering biodiversity enhancements and green infrastructure within and around the town, including tree planting, pollinator corridors, and climate-resilient landscaping;

- Promoting high standards of environmental design, including retrofitting of historic buildings with energy-efficient technologies where appropriate.

e) Foster community well-being and inclusivity by:

- Supporting improvements to health, leisure, education, and social care infrastructure to meet the needs of all age groups;

- Encouraging the use of community facilities and public spaces to strengthen social cohesion and reduce isolation;

- Ensuring that development contributes positively to local character, identity, and quality of life for residents.

3. The Council will work collaboratively with the local community, town and parish councils, statutory bodies, highway authority and tourism organisations to ensure that Burford evolves in a way that is inclusive, resilient, and aligned with its long-term role as a historic market town and rural hub within the District.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
BUR1	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	++	+	++	+	++

C.5.8.1 Policy BUR1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain Burford's role as a historic market town and Tier 2 Service Centre which meets the needs of the growing local population, in a manner which does not compromise the integrity of the CNL within which it is situated.

C.5.8.2 The policy recognises the centrality of the tourism sector for Burford's economy. Developments are supported which promote year-round tourism that is respectful of the historic environment. Furthermore, developments are supported which bolster other aspects of Burford's economy, including maintenance and enhancement of retail and hospital establishments, and encouragement of creative and events-based industries that may be particularly beneficial for the town's evening economy. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for the economy (SA Objective 13).

C.5.8.3 The policy includes support for development proposals that help upkeep the historic character of the market town, particularly the High Street with its conglomeration of buildings from the medieval, Tudor and Georgian periods. Conserving, retrofitting and sensitively adapting historic buildings and space for continued use; promoting high-quality design which is in-keeping with the local environment; and ensuring new development positively contributes to the character and identity of the local area, are among the actions encouraged. It is also recognised that design must help to upkeep the integrity of the Conservation Area and the CNL within which Burford lies. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.8.4 Developments are encouraged which help to tackle local traffic-related issues, including high levels of congestion *("particularly at the River Windrush crossing and along the A361"*), concerningly high HGV traffic flows, limited public transport availability, and limited car parking facilities. This includes promotion of measures that facilitate greater levels of sustainable and active travel, such as improvements to public transport infrastructure and walking and cycling routes. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11) and knock-on minor positive impacts are possible for climate change mitigation, air quality and health (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 10). Developments that incorporate *"climate-resilient landscaping"* are also supported. As such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2). **Recommendations:** there is scope for inclusion of further policy wording on specific climate change mitigative and adaptive strategies that could be pursued during future development, which could better the anticipated impact upon SA Objectives 1 and 2.

C.5.8.5 The policy includes support for development proposals that help to meet the local housing need. As housing affordability is a particular issue for Burford, there is specific reference to the need to provide *"affordable and smaller homes suited to local people"*. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for housing (SA Objective 9). The policy also stipulates that developments will be supported that reuse existing buildings and focus development upon existing built-up areas of the town. Hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.5.8.6 The policy also includes support for development proposals that deliver biodiversity enhancements and GI, with suggested measures including tree planting and pollinator corridors. As such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for biodiversity (SA Objective 3). **Recommendation:** there is scope here for reference to delivery of blue infrastructure enhancements, as the market town sits along the River Windrush; this could result in a positive anticipated impact for water (SA Objective 7).

C.5.8.7 Brief mention is given to the fact that developments which help to improve *"health, education, and social care infrastructure"* are supported. Hence, a minor positive impact is anticipated for health and education (SA Objectives 10 and 12). **Recommendation:** further policy wording which sets out specific intentions regarding health and education improvements, such as plans to increase capacity of existing facilities, may be valuable in furthering the likely positive impact upon these objectives.

C.5.9 Policy BUR2 – Burford Town Centre

Policy BUR2 – Burford Town Centre

1. Burford Town Centre will continue to play a key role in serving local communities and supporting West Oxfordshire's visitor economy, building on its distinctive historic character, strong independent retail offer, and gateway location within the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB).

The Council will support development that enhances the vitality, sustainability, and resilience of the town centre, while protecting its unique identity, addressing environmental pressures, and promoting inclusive access for residents and visitors alike.

2. In managing change, development proposals will be supported where they contribute to the following overarching aims:

a) Enhancing vitality, viability, and flexibility by:

i. Maintaining a balanced mix of town centre uses, with a particular emphasis on protecting and promoting independent shops, cafes, and visitor-related services that reflect Burford's market town character.

ii. Resisting the loss of active ground-floor uses within the Primary Shopping Area unless it can be demonstrated that the change would not undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Policy BUR2 – Burford Town Centre

iii. Supporting the re-use of under-used or vacant buildings for flexible, temporary, and mixed uses, including creative workspace, pop-ups, local maker studios, education, and health services.

iv. Encouraging activity throughout the day and evening by supporting family-friendly food, cultural, and leisure uses that contribute to a safe and inclusive environment.

v. Facilitating opportunities for small-scale, sustainable business growth, including community enterprise, craft production, and digital start-ups aligned with the town's character.

b) Improving accessibility, movement, and environmental quality by:

i. Supporting measures to reduce the dominance and environmental impact of through-traffic on the A361, including traffic calming, air quality improvements, and strategic transport interventions.

ii. Enhancing pedestrian and cycle connectivity throughout the town centre, particularly between the High Street, Church Green, the car parks, and the River Windrush corridor.

iii. Improving wayfinding, signage, and accessibility for all users, including older people and those with mobility impairments.

iv. Promoting sustainable travel options, including public transport links, bike parking, and access to regional walking and cycling routes.

c) Enhancing the historic environment and public realm by:

i. Ensuring that all development within the Conservation Area and Cotswolds National Landscape respects and enhances local character, scale, materials, and historic plot patterns.

ii. Delivering sensitive public realm enhancements that include appropriate lighting, seating, greenery, and high-quality surfacing to improve pedestrian comfort and townscape quality.

iii. Conserving and celebrating heritage assets through initiatives such as interpretation panels, heritage trails, and digital guides.

iv. Promoting the adaptive reuse of historic buildings to support sustainable economic activity and community use, while retaining key architectural features.

d) Supporting sustainable tourism and cultural identity by:

i. Promoting Burford as a high-quality visitor destination that celebrates its history, landscape setting, and independent character while actively managing pressures related to over-tourism and traffic.

ii. Supporting the coordination of visitor information, digital promotion, and sustainable travel advice to enhance the experience for day-trippers and longer-stay tourists.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
BUR2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++

C.5.9.1 Policy BUR1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help support the *"vitality, sustainability and resilience"* of Burford Town Centre, a key hub for West Oxfordshire's visitor economy, largely due to its historic character and position within the CNL, and the independent retail establishments on offer.

C.5.9.2 The policy recognises the centrality of the tourism sector for Burford's economy, but developments proposals are supported which will help to maintain a *"balanced mix of town centre uses"* and, where possible, help to resist *"loss of active ground-floor uses within the Primary Shopping Area"*. As such, a major positive impact is expected for economy (SA Objective 13) and a minor positive impact is expected for natural resources (SA Objective 8), through supporting re-use of vacant and under-used buildings. There is particular

emphasis upon supporting the independent businesses, which are a key component of Burford's unique character. Furthermore, support is given to developments that help to protect and enhance the local historic environment. There is specific reference to the need for all developments built within the Conservation Area and CNL to respect these designations through their design. As such, a major positive impact is identified for landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5). The policy includes promotion of celebrating cultural heritage assets through measures such as *"interpretation panels, heritage trails, and digital guides"*.

C.5.9.3 The policy focuses upon increasing the connectivity and accessibility of transport infrastructure in and around the town centre. This includes traffic calming measures, improved signage and wayfinding, measures to help improve accessibility for all individuals (including those with impaired mobility), and promotion of sustainable and active travel options. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11) and minor knock-on positive impacts are anticipated for climate change mitigation, air quality and health (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 10), due to the expected reduction in transport-related emissions and increase in levels of physical activity.

C.5.9.4 There is minimal reference to aspirations for the town centre regarding climate change adaptation, biodiversity, water, housing and education and so negligible effects are recorded for these objectives (SA Objectives 2, 3, 7, 9 and 12).

C.5.10 Policy CHA1 – A Strategy for Charlbury

Policy CHA1 – A Strategy for Charlbury

1. Charlbury will continue to play an important role as a sustainable service centre, recognised for its strong community spirit, historic character, and setting within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The Council will support proposals that help Charlbury meet local needs, enhance community well-being, and respond to the climate and nature emergencies, while ensuring that growth remains sensitive to its valued landscape and heritage.

2. Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Reinforce Charlbury's role as a distinctive and inclusive rural town by:

- Maintaining and strengthening the town's network of local services, businesses, and community facilities;

- Supporting opportunities for sustainable tourism and active recreation, reflecting Charlbury's status as a Walkers are Welcome and Cotswold Gateway town;

- Enabling inclusive and intergenerational access to services and public spaces, including through improvements to local mobility for older people and those with disabilities.

b) Deliver well-integrated, sustainable growth that meets local needs by:

- Providing a mix of housing types and tenures, with a particular emphasis on affordability for households on or below median incomes, essential workers, first-time buyers, and downsizers;

- Prioritising development on previously developed land or sites well-related to the existing built-up area, avoiding sprawl into sensitive landscapes;

- Ensuring high standards of design that reflect Charlbury's historic context, character, and setting within the Cotswolds National Landscape and Conservation Area.

c) Tackle the climate and ecological emergencies by:

- Supporting low and zero-carbon development and energy-efficient buildings that go beyond minimum regulatory standards;

- Ensuring new development is well-located to reduce the need for car travel, and promotes sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling and public transport;

- Delivering biodiversity net gain, enhancing existing green and blue infrastructure, and incorporating robust Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage flood risk.

Policy CHA1 – A Strategy for Charlbury

d) Improve connectivity and local infrastructure by:

- Enhancing safe, inclusive walking and cycling access across the town, including to the town centre, schools, station, and countryside;

- Strengthening digital infrastructure to support remote working and access to services.

- Supporting reliable and frequent public transport services, maintaining access to the railway station as a key regional connection, and encouraging increased use through integrated transport services

e) Protect and enhance the town's heritage and landscape setting by:

- Safeguarding the special character of Charlbury's Conservation Area, historic buildings, archaeological features, and distinctive streetscapes;

- Respecting important views into and out of the town, particularly across the Evenlode Valley and surrounding countryside;

- Conserving and enhancing trees, green spaces, and features important for biodiversity and visual amenity.

3. The Council will work proactively with Charlbury Town Council, the local community, infrastructure providers, and stakeholders to guide future change in a way that is locally distinctive, inclusive, and resilient. Together, these efforts will ensure Charlbury continues to thrive as a welcoming, well-connected, and environmentally responsible rural town at the heart of West Oxfordshire.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
CHA1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	++	+	++	0	++

C.5.10.1 Policy CHAR1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain Charlbury's role as a historic market town and Tier 2 Service Centre which meets the needs of the growing local population, in a manner which does not compromise the integrity of the CNL within which it is situated.

C.5.10.2 The policy includes support for development proposals that deliver *"well-integrated, sustainable growth that meets local needs"*, including provision of a range of housing types and tenures. Due to the ongoing issues of housing unaffordability, there is particular emphasis upon the need to provide affordable, moderate-sized housing. As such, a major positive impact upon housing (SA Objective 9) is anticipated. The policy also includes support for development proposals that help to maintain and strengthen the town's local services and employment opportunities. Although, the population of Charlbury is ageing and most of the working age population are either self-employed or mainly work from home, so development proposals which strengthen digital infrastructure are also supported. As such, a major positive impact upon the economy (SA Objective 13) is anticipated.

C.5.10.3 The policy supports development proposals that ensure respect for the historic quality of the market town, with its town centre of 18th and 19th Century local stone buildings arranged in a *"medieval street layout"* designated as a Conservation Area. It is encouraged that high standards of design are adhered to, which are in-keeping with the historic character of Charlbury and its setting within the CNL. Therefore, a major positive impact upon landscape and cultural heritage is anticipated (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.10.4 Development proposals that help to tackle Charlbury's issue of high car use are encouraged, including those that promote sustainable and active transport options (such use of public transport, and walking and cycling). As such, a major positive impact upon transport is encouraged (SA Objective 11). There is also potential for minor positive knock-on impacts upon air quality and health (SA Objectives 6 and 10). **Recommendation:** the positive impact anticipated for air quality and health could be furthered by inclusion of policy wording which supports additional specified measures, such as plans to increase healthcare facilities serving the town.

C.5.10.5 The policy supports development proposals that incorporate climate change mitigative and adaptive features, such as energy-efficiency measures and flood management strategies (e.g. SuDS) as Charlbury has experienced surface water flooding and the River Evenlode and associated tributaries mean areas to west of town fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2). Due to associated referral to delivering BNG and enhancing GI and blue infrastructure, a minor positive impact is also anticipated for biodiversity and water (SA Objectives 3 and 7).

C.5.10.6 There is minimal reference to aspirations for Charlbury regarding natural resources and education, leading to negligible effects recorded under SA Objectives 8 and 12.

C.5.11 Policy EYN1 – A Strategy for Eynsham

Policy EYN1 – A Strategy for Eynsham

Eynsham will continue to play a central role in the district as a Tier 2 service centre, providing homes, services, and infrastructure to meet local and strategic needs while retaining its historic village character and strong sense of community.

The Council will support proposals that contribute to a high-quality, sustainable, and inclusive future for the parish of Eynsham, in line with the objectives of the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.

Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Support Eynsham's role as a key service centre by:

- Maintaining and enhancing community facilities including education, healthcare, cultural venues, and open spaces;

- Improving access to local services and ensuring that new development is integrated into and well connected with the wider village structure;

- Encouraging community uses and small-scale retail that enhance village life and local identity.

b) Enable infrastructure-led, sustainable growth that meets local and strategic needs by:

- Delivering a balanced mix of housing types and tenures, with a strong emphasis on affordability and lifetime adaptability;

- Ensuring that new development is of high design quality and responds positively to local heritage, setting, and landscape character;

- Coordinating infrastructure delivery, including schools, health services, and utilities, in parallel with housing growth.

c) Ensure Salt Cross Garden Village complements rather than competes with Eynsham by:

- Providing shared infrastructure, green space, and services where mutually beneficial;

- Ensuring new development avoids harm to the distinct identity and setting of Eynsham village.

d) Strengthen climate resilience and environmental sustainability by:

- Promoting energy-efficient and zero and low-carbon building standards in line with national climate objectives and the Eynsham CAPZero Community Action Plan;

- Incorporating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), water-sensitive design, and nature-based solutions;

- Enhancing biodiversity, tree cover, and habitat connectivity across the parish.

e) Improve transport and digital connectivity by:

Policy EYN1 – A Strategy for Eynsham

- Supporting delivery of current proposed and potential future A40 improvements, re-building the railway line and active travel links;

- Creating safe, direct routes for walking, cycling, and mobility users across Eynsham including effective integration with the West Eynsham SDA and to Salt Cross and Oxford;

- Expanding digital infrastructure to support remote working, education, and innovation.

f) Promote economic vitality and inclusive access to employment by:

- Encouraging a diverse local economy including innovation, light industry, and home-based enterprises;

- Supporting the continued vitality of Eynsham's shops, markets, and hospitality sector;

- Enabling flexible and accessible employment space suited to local skills, education and enterprise needs.

g) Enhance quality of life, green infrastructure and access to nature by:

- Protecting and enhancing Eynsham's network of green spaces, footpaths, and countryside access;

- Providing inclusive and accessible play, leisure, and recreational facilities in line with population growth;

- Supporting cultural, community and wellbeing initiatives that bring people together and reinforce a strong village identity.

The Council will work in partnership with Eynsham Parish Council, local communities, developers and infrastructure providers to ensure that growth is coordinated, sustainable, and reflective of Eynsham's unique qualities.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
EYN1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	++	+	++

C.5.11.1 Policy EYN1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain Eynsham's role as a *"thriving and historically rich"* village and Tier 2 Service Centre, located in a *"strategically important"* position between Oxford and Witney, which meets the needs of the growing local population.

C.5.11.2 This policy includes support for development proposals that contribute to the delivery of a *"balanced mix of housing types and tenures"*, with particular emphasis on the provision of housing which is affordable and adaptable. This will help to meet local housing needs and, as such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for housing (SA Objective 9).

C.5.11.3 The policy includes support for development proposals that contribute to the establishment of a diverse, thriving local economy. There is recognition that alongside key local employers (such as Siemens and the Oakfield Industrial Estate on the edge of the village), there are high levels of hybrid and remote working and, therefore, development proposals that help to improve digital connectivity are supported. As such, a major positive impact is expected for the economy (SA Objective 13).

C.5.11.4 The policy includes support for development proposals that *"strengthen climate resilience and environmental sustainability"*. Mitigative and adaptive measures are encouraged, including promotion of energy-efficient and zero/low-carbon building standards, and use of SuDS and nature-based solutions. The policy explicitly references to plans and policies that this policy intends to align with, such as the Eynsham CAPZero Community Action Plan. As such, a major positive impact is identified for climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2). Advocating for use of nature-based solutions and

support for developments that enhance biodiversity and habitat connectivity, through measures such as increasing tree cover, means that a minor positive impact upon biodiversity (SA Objective 3) is also likely. Supporting development proposals that incorporate *"water-sensitive design"* could also lead to a minor positive impact upon water (SA Objective 7).

C.5.11.5 Development proposals are supported that help to tackle transport-related issues, such as congestion problems on the A40 to its north and the Swinford Toll Bridge (on the B4044). This includes proposals that help to facilitate greater levels of sustainable and active travel, rather than private car use. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11) and a minor positive impact for upon air quality (SA Objective 6) is possible, due to a likely reduction in transport-related emissions.

C.5.11.6 Due to its rich history as a *"Saxon settlement and monastic centre",* Eynsham has many heritage assets (such as the Church of St Leonard). The policy supports developments that are of high design quality and maintain and enhance the local landscape character and cultural heritage. Specific mention is given to the nearby proposed development of Salt Cross Garden Village, which should complement the existing landscape character and not negatively affect the setting of Eynsham. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for both landscape and cultural (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.11.7 The policy includes support for developments proposals that help to maintain and enhance community services, including education and healthcare services. As such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for health and education (SA Objectives 10 and 12). **Recommendation:** inclusion of further policy wording on specific actions encouraged in regard to enhancing education and healthcare, such as action plans for improving capacity or accessibility of these healthcare and education facilities, could help to further the anticipated positive impact upon these objectives.

C.5.11.8 There is minimal reference to aspirations for Eynsham regarding natural resources, so the anticipated impact upon SA Objective 8 is negligible.

C.5.12 Policy LH1 – A Strategy for Long Hanborough

Policy LH1 – A Strategy for Long Hanborough

Long Hanborough will continue to play a key role as a Tier 2 Service Centre, providing homes, services, and connections for West Oxfordshire while retaining its rural character and strong community identity.

Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Support Long Hanborough's role as a well-connected rural service centre by:

- Maintaining and enhancing community facilities, including the primary school, GP services, and public open spaces;

- Encouraging new or expanded local services in accessible, walkable locations;

- Supporting small-scale retail and community uses that contribute to local vitality.

b) Enable infrastructure-led, proportionate growth that meets local needs by:

- Delivering a mix of housing types and tenures, with a particular focus on affordability and accessibility for local people;

- Prioritising previously developed land or infill sites, while ensuring any edge-of-village development is well integrated and landscape-led;

- Ensuring all new development demonstrates high design quality and responds to the local vernacular and historic context.

c) Strengthen climate resilience and environmental quality by:

- Avoiding areas of highest flood risk and incorporating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and water-sensitive design;

Policy LH1 – A Strategy for Long Hanborough

- Promoting biodiversity net gain, habitat connectivity, and tree planting across new and existing neighbourhoods;

- Ensuring energy-efficient, low-carbon building design and encouraging renewable energy use where appropriate.

d) Improve transport and digital connectivity by:

- Enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure, including safe routes to school, the station, and village services;

- Supporting improved public transport connections, particularly bus services and sustainable access to Hanborough Station;

- Upgrading digital infrastructure to enable remote working, online services, and business development.

e) Promote inclusivity, well-being, and quality of life by:

- Delivering new or enhanced healthcare, education, and recreational infrastructure in step with growth;

- Supporting inter-generational living through inclusive design and housing options for older people and young families;

- Promoting cultural, leisure, and environmental initiatives that foster community cohesion and reduce social isolation.

The Council will work in partnership with Hanborough Parish Council, local residents, service providers, and developers to guide change in a way that is balanced, forward-looking, and sensitive to Long Hanborough's distinct sense of place

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
LH1	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+

C.5.12.1 Policy LH1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain Long Hanborough's role as a *"large and historically rich"* village and Tier 2 Service Centre situated on the edge of the CNL, which meets the needs of the growing local population.

C.5.12.2 This policy includes support for development proposals that contribute to the delivery of a *"mix of housing types and tenures"*, with particular emphasis on the provision of housing which is affordable and accessible to all local people. There is also emphasis on utilising PDL for new development where possible. As such, a minor positive impact upon housing (SA Objective 9) and natural resources (SA Objective 8) is anticipated.

C.5.12.3 Long Hanborough is well connected by road and well served by public transport, but there are some infrastructure issues, such as insufficient car parking availability at the station and high levels of congestion on the A4095. The policy supports developments that improve public transport connections, including bettering *"sustainable access to Hanborough Station"*. Levels of active travel are low; hence, the policy also supports developments that enhance walking and cycling infrastructure. A major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11) and minor knock-on positive impacts are anticipated for air quality (SA Objective 6) and health (SA Objective 10), as reduced transport-related emissions and increased physical activity are likely.

C.5.12.4 Encouraging enhancement of community service establishments and digital connectivity to facilitate easier hybrid and remote working may result in a minor positive impact upon the economy (SA Objective 13). The policy includes support for developments proposals that help to maintain and enhance community services, including education and healthcare services. As such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for health and education (SA Objectives 10 and 12). **Recommendation:** inclusion of further policy wording on specific

actions encouraged in regard to enhancing education and healthcare, such as action plans for improving capacity or accessibility of these healthcare and education facilities, could help to further the anticipated positive impact upon these objectives.

C.5.12.5 The policy includes support for development proposals that are of high-quality design and landscape-led, remaining in keeping with the local landscape character and historic context. As such, a minor positive impact is anticipated for landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5). **Recommendation:** inclusion of further policy wording on conserving and enhancing cultural heritage, including specific designations and heritage assets, such as the Hanborough Conservation Area and the Methodist and Christ Church churches, could increase the extent of the anticipated positive impact upon these landscape and cultural heritage.

C.5.12.6 Development proposals are supported where they incorporate mitigative and adaptive measures, such as SuDS, water-sensitive design, use of renewable energy and low-carbon building design. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2), and a minor positive impact is anticipated for water (SA Objective 7). There is also reference to promoting BNG, through efforts such as tree planting. Therefore, a minor positive impact is anticipated for biodiversity (SA Objective 3).

C.5.13 Policy WD1 – A Strategy for Woodstock

Policy WD1 – A Strategy for Woodstock

Woodstock will continue to serve as a key rural service centre in eastern West Oxfordshire, playing a dual role as a vibrant local community and a destination of national and international significance. Development will be directed to locations that respect the town's exceptional historic environment, enhance local infrastructure and green space, and support inclusive, sustainable growth. Future change will be managed to protect Woodstock's unique setting, especially in relation to Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site and its surrounding landscape.

In managing future change, the Council will support development proposals that contribute to the following overarching aims:

a) Delivering sustainable patterns of growth by:

i. Prioritising previously developed land and well-located infill sites within or adjacent to the existing built-up area, where they can enhance townscape character, heritage value, and community infrastructure;

ii. Ensuring new development is carefully scaled and landscape-led, integrating seamlessly with the town's historic fabric and respecting the setting of Blenheim Palace and surrounding rural views;

iii. Providing a balanced mix of housing, including genuinely affordable homes and diverse tenures, to meet local needs and support a multi-generational community;

iv. Requiring high-quality, low-carbon design and sustainable construction in all new development, with integration of green infrastructure and active travel routes.

b) Strengthening local infrastructure and services by:

i. Coordinating investment in health, education, transport, and digital infrastructure to support a growing population, including delivery of a new GP facility and expanded school capacity;

ii. Enhancing green space provision, particularly accessible public open space and play facilities, to address existing deficits and meet future demand;

iii. Securing developer contributions and strategic funding to ensure infrastructure delivery is aligned with new development, including sustainable transport upgrades and climate resilience measures.

c) Supporting a vibrant and diverse economy by:

i. Protecting and enhancing existing employment sites and encouraging sensitive intensification where appropriate;

Policy WD1 – A Strategy for Woodstock

ii. Supporting tourism and the visitor economy, including sustainable access to Blenheim Palace, the conservation of the town centre, and promotion of cultural events and independent businesses;

iii. Enabling local enterprise, home-working, and the creative and green economies through flexible workspace, strong digital connectivity, and mixed-use development opportunities.

d) Protecting and enhancing heritage, landscape and natural capital by:

i. Ensuring all development preserves and enhances the historic character of Woodstock, including the conservation area, listed buildings, and key public spaces such as the Market Place and High Street;

ii. Safeguarding the setting of Blenheim Palace and Park, maintaining a clear distinction between town and countryside, and avoiding visual or functional encroachment on designated landscapes and heritage assets;

iii. Improving green and blue infrastructure, including the River Glyme, Watermeadows, and local biodiversity networks, while integrating sustainable drainage and flood risk management.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
WD1	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	++	++	++

C.5.13.1 Policy WD1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain Woodstock's role as a *"historic market town"* and Tier 2 Service Centre, which meets the needs of the growing local population.

C.5.13.2 The policy includes support for development proposals that help to provide a *"balanced mix of housing"*, including affordable homes that are appropriate for residents of a range of ages. There is also emphasis on utilising PDL for new development where possible. As such, a minor positive impact upon housing (SA Objective 9) and natural resources (SA Objective 8) is anticipated.

C.5.13.3 The policy includes support for development proposals that help to support a *"vibrant and diverse economy"*. Recognition is given to the importance of tourism (particularly to the Blenheim Palace WHS) for the town's economy, but a range of other industries are also encouraged, including creative and green industries. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for the economy (SA Objective 13). Development proposals that help to coordinate investment in health and education services are also supported. Specifically, support is given to development proposals that help to facilitate the delivery of a *"new GP facility and expanded school capacity"*, more green space, and accessible *"public open space and play facilities"*. As such, a major positive impact is also anticipated for health and education (SA Objectives 10 and 12).

C.5.13.4 All development proposals are expected to protect and enhance Woodstock's historic character and cultural assets, including its Conservation Area, listed buildings, and historic High Street and Market Place. Consideration is also given to the need to safeguard the setting of the nearby Blenheim Palace WHS. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.13.5 The policy includes support for development proposals that help to upkeep and enhance GI and blue infrastructure, including the River Glyme, Watermeadows and local biodiversity networks. Maintaining the connectivity of local habitats will be particularly

crucial to upkeeping the status of the SSSI at Blenheim Park. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated is anticipated for biodiversity and water (SA Objectives 3 and 7). Such measures, paired with the mitigative and adaptive measures also encouraged through the policy, including *"low-carbon design and sustainable construction in all new development"* and incorporation of sustainable drainage and flood risk management strategies, are likely to have a major positive impact upon climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2).

C.5.13.6 Woodstock is situated along the A44, within close proximity of Oxford, and has regular bus services to and from the city. The town is also within nearby to the rail stations in Long Hanborough and Charlbury, as well as being connected to Oxford through cycle routes. However, congestion on the A40 and A44 remain an issue; hence, development proposals that help to facilitate greater levels of sustainable and active travel are supported. As such, a major positive impact upon transport (SA Objective 11) is anticipated and a minor knock-on positive impact upon air quality (SA Objective 6), due to reduced transport-related emissions, is also possible.

C.5.14 Policy WD2 – Woodstock Town Centre

Policy WD2 – Woodstock Town Centre

1. Woodstock Town Centre will continue to play a distinctive role as a historic market town and gateway to Blenheim Palace, with a strong emphasis on tourism, independent retail, leisure, and heritage-led cultural activity. The Council will support development that enhances the vitality, viability, and resilience of the centre while reinforcing its unique historic character and contribution to the wider visitor economy of West Oxfordshire.

2. In managing change, development proposals will be supported where they contribute to the following overarching aims:

a) Enhancing vitality and viability by:

i. Maintaining and promoting a strong independent retail and leisure offer, particularly within the Primary Shopping Area, to preserve Woodstock's character and strengthen its function as a tourist destination.

ii. Supporting the re-use of vacant or underused premises for flexible and creative uses such as pop-ups, co-working, small-scale galleries, or artisan retail.
iii. Encouraging initiatives that enhance the quality and appeal of the town's market and seasonal street events.
iv. Promoting family-friendly, early-evening and evening economy activities to increase footfall and vibrancy throughout the day.
v. Supporting small businesses, creative industries, and start-ups through provision of adaptable commercial space and event programming.

b) Improving accessibility, safety, and movement by:

i. Enhancing pedestrian and cycle access through improved footways, signage, and active travel links to nearby transport nodes, including Blenheim Palace and Hanborough Station.
ii. Improving car and cycle parking provision and wayfinding to accommodate visitors and reduce congestion in key areas.
iii. Supporting public transport access to the town centre and promoting sustainable transport connections to surrounding settlements.

c) Enhancing the public realm and historic environment by:

i. Delivering high-quality improvements to Woodstock's Market Place and High Street including seating, planting, lighting, and street furniture that enhance the centre's setting and usability.
ii. Preserving and sensitively enhancing the historic architecture, shopfronts, and built environment that underpin the town's special character.
iii. Supporting a coordinated approach to shopfront improvements, building maintenance, and greening of public spaces.
iv. Promoting the development and implementation of heritage trails, interpretation signage, and digital guides to enrich the visitor experience.

d) Supporting tourism and cultural identity by:

i. Promoting Woodstock as a key cultural and heritage destination within the District, linked to Blenheim Palace, the Oxfordshire Museum, and the town's calendar of events.

Policy WD2 – Woodstock Town Centre

ii. Supporting local cultural initiatives and events including those led by the Wake Up To Woodstock (WUTW) partnership and other community groups.
iii. Encouraging collaboration with nearby centres and tourism partners to deliver a coherent and compelling visitor offer.
iv. Facilitating opportunities for temporary and pop-up cultural venues such as open-air cinemas, exhibitions, and performances to enhance the year-round appeal of the town.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
WD2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++

C.5.14.1 Policy WD2 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to help maintain the position of Woodstock Town Centre as a key aspect of the heritage-rich market town and a *"gateway to Blenheim Palace"*.

C.5.14.2 The policy includes support for development proposals that contribute to the upkeep and enhancement of the retail and leisure on offer in Woodstock Town Centre, particularly within the Primary Shopping Area, so that it continues to serve as a hub for tourism. A diverse range of industries are encouraged, to support high footfall during the day and a thriving "*family-friendly, early-evening and evening economy*". Particular support is given to development proposals that seek to reuse vacant or underused premises, reducing the need to use previously undeveloped land. As such, a major positive impact upon the economy (SA Objective 13) is anticipated and a minor positive impact in regard to natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.5.14.3 The policy includes support for development proposals that help to enhance how sustainable, accessible and active travel is to and from Woodstock. There is also support for proposals that help to increase parking provision and wayfinding to reduce congestion within the town. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for transport (SA Objective 11) and a minor knock-on positive impact upon climate change mitigation, air quality and health is also likely (SA Objectives 1, 6 and 10), due to potential reduced transport-related emissions and increased levels of physical activity.

C.5.14.4 Developments are supported that are in-keeping with the character of the town and help to preserve and sensitively enhance the centre's built heritage. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5). There is also reference to the potential for marketing Woodstock's historic environment and cultural heritage assets, for instance through heritage trails and digital guides.

C.5.14.5 There is minimal reference to aspirations for Woodstock Town Centre regarding climate change adaptation, biodiversity, water, housing, and education, leading to negligible effects recorded under SA Objectives 2, 3, 7, 9 and 12.

C.5.15 Policy RA1 – Rural Area Strategy

Policy RA1 – Rural Area Strategy

The rural areas of West Oxfordshire, comprising Tier 3 Villages and Tier 4 Small Villages, Hamlets, and Open Countryside, will be supported to evolve in a way that prioritises local need, environmental sustainability, and protects community integrity.

Development will reflect the varying size, function, and capacity of each settlement while safeguarding the intrinsic value of the rural environment.

Development in the rural areas will be supported where it:

a) Meets demonstrable local needs, including:

- Affordable and appropriately sized homes for local people, prioritising young households and older residents wishing to downsize;

- Housing that supports rural workers or enables long-standing residents to remain in their community;

- Small-scale employment, community, or tourism-related development that maintains or enhances rural vitality.

b) Reflects the scale, character, and function of the settlement, by:

- Being proportionate in size and scale and sensitively located relative to the existing built form;

- Respecting key landscape features, views, settlement edges, and historic or environmental designations;

- Ensuring high-quality, locally distinctive design that complements the rural setting.

c) Enhances sustainability and resilience, through:

- Avoiding Zone 2 and 3 areas of flood risk and integrating sustainable drainage and climate-resilient infrastructure;

- Securing biodiversity net gain and contributing to local and strategic nature recovery efforts;

- Incorporating energy-efficient, zero and low-carbon construction and supporting renewable energy where appropriate.

d) Supports the vitality of rural communities, by:

- Maintaining and enhancing valued local services such as schools, shops, pubs, and community facilities;

- Encouraging small-scale rural enterprise, homeworking, and flexible business space in appropriate locations;

- Strengthening digital connectivity and access to services, including through improved broadband and mobile coverage.

e) Improves rural accessibility and mobility, by:

- Supporting active travel through the delivery of safe and attractive walking and cycling links within and between settlements;

- Enhancing access to public and community transport, particularly connections to larger service centres and towns;

- Minimising reliance on private car use wherever possible and reducing rural transport isolation.

- Makes use of existing or future potential railway connections.

The Council will work in close partnership with local communities, Parish Councils, neighbourhood plan groups, and other stakeholders to ensure that rural change is guided by local knowledge, reflects community aspirations, and contributes positively to the long-term sustainability of West Oxfordshire's rural areas.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
RA1	++	++	0	++	++	+	0	0	++	+	++	+	++

C.5.15.1 Policy RA1 sets out the intention for the Local Plan to ensure local needs are met and environmental sustainability is upkept as development occurs in the rural areas of West Oxfordshire.

C.5.15.2 The policy includes support for development in rural areas that meets local housing and employment needs, including the provision of affordable and appropriately sized homes for locals (with housing unaffordability being a key issue in multiple rural settlements in West Oxfordshire), and employment establishments for small-scale, community or tourism-related ventures. As such, a major positive impact is anticipated for housing and economy (SA Objectives 9 and 13).

C.5.15.3 The policy includes support for development proposals of a size, scale and design that is in keeping with the local landscape character and respectful of heritage assets, complementing the rural setting and securing high-quality design. There is potential for a major positive impact in relation to landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.5.15.4 Development proposals that enhance sustainability and climate resilience through incorporation of mitigative and adaptive measures, such as building in areas of low flood risk and utilising low-carbon construction methods, are supported. As such, a major positive impact is likely for climate change mitigation and adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2).

C.5.15.5 Brief reference is made to the need for future development to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of local services such as schools. Therefore, a minor positive impact upon education (SA Objective 12) is expected. **Recommendation:** there is scope here to include policy wording on the importance of supporting the upkeep of local healthcare services, which could elicit a greater positive impact upon health (SA Objective 10). As a result of the encouragement of active travel, a minor positive impact upon health is anticipated at this stage, in terms of supporting active lifestyles. The policy also advocates for the enhancement of sustainable transport options, in order to reduce rural transport isolation and reliance on private cars. As such, a major positive impact upon transport (SA Objective 11) is anticipated.

C.5.15.6 There is minimal reference to aspirations for West Oxfordshire's rural areas regarding biodiversity, water, and natural resources, leading to negligible effects recorded under SA Objectives 3, 7 and 8. **Recommendation:** the policy would benefit from inclusion of support for developments that prioritise the upkeep and enhancement of local biodiversity, GI and blue infrastructure networks. Inclusion of wording on these topics could lead to a positive impact upon biodiversity and water (SA Objectives 3 and 7).

C.6 Development Management Policies

C.6.1 Policy DM1 – Key Principles for New Development

Policy DM1 – Key Principles for New Development

All new development proposals will be required to adhere to the following key principles to ensure that they contribute positively to the sustainability, character, and quality of the local area:

1. Proportionate and Contextually Appropriate Development

Development must be proportionate and appropriate in scale, form, and character to its location, taking into account the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality.

2. Integration with the Built Form and Local Character

Development proposals must relate well to the existing built form, respecting the architectural styles, materials, and layouts that define local character and vernacular. Design should respond innovatively and sensitively to the distinctiveness of the area and maintain its identity; this is especially important in historic places such as Conservation Areas.

3. Preservation of Settlement Identity

Development should not lead to the coalescence of settlements. Proposals must demonstrate how they will protect the separate identity of settlements by maintaining appropriate physical and visual gaps between them.

4. Compatibility with Existing and Adjoining Uses

Proposals must ensure that development is compatible with existing and adjoining land uses. Development that is likely to cause harm or conflict with neighbouring uses will not be supported unless such impacts can be effectively mitigated.

5. High Standard of Amenity

Development must provide a high standard of amenity for both existing and future occupants. Proposals should avoid adverse impacts from noise, pollution, overshadowing, or overlooking and should ensure adequate levels of privacy, natural light, and usable outdoor space.

6. Protection and Enhancement of the Local Landscape

As far as is reasonably possible, development must protect and, where possible, enhance the local landscape and the setting of settlements. Proposals should demonstrate how they contribute to maintaining the scenic quality and biodiversity of the area while avoiding adverse visual impacts.

7. Protection of Important Open Spaces

Existing open spaces, including designated Local Green Spaces, must be protected from development unless there are exceptional circumstances. Proposals should avoid the loss of open spaces that contribute to the community's recreational, ecological, or visual needs.

8. Safe Vehicular and Pedestrian Access

Development must ensure the provision of safe, convenient, and inclusive access for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Proposals should demonstrate how they integrate with and relate to the existing local transport network and avoid adverse impacts on road safety or traffic congestion.

9. Safety of Children and Vulnerable Users

Where relevant, new development will be required to demonstrate how any risks to children and other vulnerable users have been identified and mitigated through the site layout, design, and safeguarding measures such as secure boundaries, surveillance, and safe routes.

Implementation and Monitoring

To ensure compliance with this policy, all development proposals must be accompanied by appropriate assessments and plans, including, design and access statements, transport assessments, landscape and visual impact appraisals, and, where necessary, amenity impact assessments.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM1	0	0	+	++	+	0	0	+	0	+	+	0	0

C.6.1.1 Policy DM1 sets out the requirements for new development to positively contribute to the sustainability, character, and overall quality of the local area. It requires that all development proposals be supported by appropriate assessments, including design and access statements, transport assessments, landscape and visual impact appraisals, and amenity impact assessments.

C.6.1.2 The policy is expected to deliver significant benefits to the local landscape by ensuring that new development is sensitively integrated into its surroundings. By requiring landscape and visual impact appraisals as part of the planning process, it promotes a design-led approach that takes into account the character, features, and sensitivities of the existing landscape. This approach helps to minimise visual intrusion, protect scenic views, and encourage enhancements such as the introduction of GI and its associated ecosystem service functions, conservation and retention of natural features, and restoration of degraded areas. Additionally, the policy supports the preservation of settlement identity by preventing the coalescence of neighbouring communities and emphasises the importance of sensitive design with respect to heritage assets including Conservation Areas. Overall, the policy contributes to the protection and enhancement of the landscape's visual quality, ecological value, and role in defining local identity. Policy DM1 is likely to have a major positive impact on the landscape (SA Objective 4), as well as a minor positive impact on local biodiversity, cultural heritage and natural resources (SA Objectives 3, 5 and 8)

C.6.1.3 The retention of GI and open spaces will not only be expected to support habitat connectivity, but also provide accessible open spaces for recreation, contributing to improved mental and physical wellbeing by encouraging active lifestyles. As such, a minor positive impact has been identified for health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10).

C.6.1.4 The policy is expected to deliver benefits to transport and accessibility by requiring development proposals to demonstrate how they integrate with the existing transport network and promote safe, inclusive movement for all users. Through the requirement for transport assessments and design and access statements the policy ensures that developments consider the impacts on traffic flow, road safety, and connectivity. The policy supports improved access for pedestrians and cyclist users, helping to reduce reliance on private vehicles and encouraging more active lifestyles and the use of sustainable modes of travel. Overall, a minor positive impact on transport and accessibility is identified (SA Objective 11).

C.6.2 Policy DM2 – Green Infrastructure

Policy DM2 – Green Infrastructure
Protection and Enhancement of the Green Infrastructure Network

Policy DM2 – Green Infrastructure

Development proposals will be expected to protect and enhance features/assets that form part of West Oxfordshire's green infrastructure network. Proposals should seek to improve integration and connectivity wherever possible to deliver a cohesive and high-quality green infrastructure network that benefits both people and nature and where possible, heritage.

Green Infrastructure Strategy for Major Development

All major development proposals must be accompanied by a Green Infrastructure Strategy. This strategy should:

a) Identify and map the existing green infrastructure network within and surrounding the development site and the proposed enhancements.

b) Set out clear plans for the creation, integration, and long-term management of all green infrastructure features (or assets).

c) Include detailed ongoing management, maintenance and stewardship arrangements to ensure the network remains functional, accessible, and high quality for people and nature.

Green Infrastructure in Strategic Sites

For strategic development sites of more than 300 homes, around 50% of the site area should contribute to the overall green infrastructure network. This includes communal open spaces, parks, green corridors, water features, and other multi-functional green and blue spaces. For smaller, non-strategic proposals, an appropriate proportion of green infrastructure will be required having regard to the overall site size and the extent of the developable area.

Long-Term Management and Maintenance

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they will address the long-term management, maintenance and stewardship of green infrastructure, including funding mechanisms and governance arrangements.

Multi-Purpose Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure should be demonstrably multi-functional, providing a range of benefits such as:

a) Avoiding or reducing vulnerability to climate change impacts, including flood management and heat island mitigation.

b) Enhancing biodiversity and providing habitat and species connectivity and contributing towards the aims and objectives of the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

c) Contributing to improved health and wellbeing by providing opportunities for recreation, exercise, and mental health support.

d) Supporting air quality improvements and carbon sequestration.

National Standards and Best Practices

Development proposals must have regard to Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework, including the Green Infrastructure Standards and the 15 Green Infrastructure Principles, ensuring they contribute meaningfully to the wider network.

Support for Nationally Recognised Accreditation

Development proposals that demonstrate exemplary green infrastructure provision by striving to achieve nationally recognised accreditation schemes such as 'Building with Nature' will be supported and encouraged.

Implementation and Monitoring

This policy will be implemented through the submission of Green Infrastructure Strategies, design and access statements, Ecological Impact Assessments, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) reports and monitoring of green infrastructure delivery on strategic and major development sites.

Collaboration with stakeholders such as Natural England, local communities, and landowners will be encouraged to achieve the policy's objectives.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM2	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0

C.6.2.1 Policy DM2 promotes the protection, enhancement, and expansion of West Oxfordshire's GI network, aiming to create a cohesive, high-quality system that delivers environmental and social benefits.

C.6.2.2 By requiring major developments to include a comprehensive GI Strategy, the policy ensures that new green spaces are well-integrated, multi-functional, and sustainably managed. Strategic sites are required to dedicate approximately 50% of the site area to GI. The policy also encourages adherence to national standards, such as Natural England's GI Framework[15], and supports accreditation through schemes like 'Building with Nature'[16].

C.6.2.3 GI provides essential ecosystem services that benefit both the environment and residents' wellbeing. Well-planned GI can help to regulate flooding, improve air and water quality, and cool urban areas, and additionally support biodiversity by providing a network of inter-connected habitats. GI also offers opportunities for recreation and supporting improved mental and physical wellbeing. Furthermore, GI enhances the local landscape by preserving natural features, improving aesthetic value, and creating green spaces that integrate with the surrounding environment, including potentially the historic environment and cultural heritage assets. Through reducing the urban heat island effect, managing flood risk, promoting carbon sequestration, GI plays a vital role in both adapting to and mitigating climate change. Overall, a major positive impact is identified for climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation (SA Objectives 1 and 2), as well as secondary minor positive impacts on biodiversity, landscape character, cultural heritage, air quality, water quality, natural resources and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10).

C.6.3 Policy DM3 – Sport, Recreation and Play

Policy DM3 – Sport, Recreation and Play

1. Protection of Existing Facilities

Existing open spaces, playing pitches, sports, recreation, and play facilities – including formal and informal spaces, leisure centres, parks, playgrounds, and allotments – will be safeguarded against loss or degradation.

Development proposals that would result in the loss or deterioration of such facilities will only be supported where:

a. An up-to-date and robust assessment (such as the West Oxfordshire Strategic Outcomes Planning Model or Playing Pitch Strategy) demonstrates the facility is surplus to current and future requirements; or

b. Equivalent or improved replacement provision is secured, in terms of quantity, quality, functionality, and accessibility, in a suitable and convenient location; or

[15] Natural England (2023). Green Infrastructure Framework. Available at: https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx [Date accessed: 24/04/25]

[16] Building with Nature (2023). The building with Nature Standards Framework. Available at: https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/standards-form [Date accessed: 24/04/25]

Policy DM3 – Sport, Recreation and Play

c. The proposal provides alternative sports or recreational facilities, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss.

2. Provision in New Developments

New residential and mixed-use developments must make appropriate provision for sport, recreation and play to meet the needs arising from the development.

This should include:

a. On-site provision of play areas, open spaces, and sport/recreation facilities in line with national and local standards, the West Oxfordshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan and other relevant evidence;

b. Off-site contributions where on-site provision is not appropriate, secured through planning obligations; and

c. Early engagement with Town and Parish Councils, Sport England, and local communities to ensure that provision is tailored to local needs.

3. Supporting New Facilities

The Council will support proposals for new or expanded sport, recreation, and play facilities where they:

a. Address identified needs and gaps in provision as set out in the latest Playing Pitch Strategy, Strategic Outcomes Planning Model, other relevant evidence or local consultation;

b. Are located in accessible and sustainable locations, well-connected by walking, cycling, and public transport;

c. Are inclusive, safe, and designed to accommodate all ages and abilities;

d. Include long-term management and maintenance arrangements to ensure continued public benefit; and

e. Are designed in accordance with best practice such as Sport England's Active Design principles and Play England's Design Principles for Successful Play.

4. Design and Multi-Functionality

All new and upgraded sport, recreation and play facilities should:

a. Be designed to support a range of activities and enhance the overall environment, including biodiversity where possible;

b. Be integrated into the wider network of green and blue infrastructure;

c. Incorporate sustainable features such as SuDS and climate resilience measures;

d. Ensure inclusivity for people with disabilities and all age groups.

5. Maximising Shared and Community Use

The Council will support and encourage shared use of school and private sport/recreation facilities, including through secured community access agreements, to increase public access and value where the delivery of standalone facilities is unviable or would not represent the optimum use of existing assets.

6. Evidence Base

Proposals will be assessed with reference to the most up-to-date evidence, including the West Oxfordshire Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (2024), Playing Pitch Strategy (2022), and Sport England facility calculators. These will be used to determine needs, guide provision, and secure appropriate developer contributions.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0

C.6.3.1 Policy DM3 sets out how spaces for sport, recreation and play will be protected and enhanced throughout the district. The policy ensures that any loss or deterioration is only permitted in exceptional circumstances, including requiring a robust and up-to-date assessment to demonstrate that a facility is no longer needed, or securing a replacement

that is equal or better in terms of quality, quantity, accessibility, and functionality. Furthermore, the policy encourages early engagement with local councils, Sport England, Play England and communities to ensure facilities reflect local needs. The policy also supports proposals for new or expanded facilities where they address identified gaps, are accessible and inclusive, and are designed to high standards with long-term management in place. Overall, through encouraging the retention and provision of spaces for sport, recreation and play, the policy will help to facilitate exercise and recreation for local residents, as such a major positive impact is identified in relation to health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10).

C.6.3.2 Through integrating new sport, recreation, and play facilities into the wider green and blue infrastructure network, the policy supports natural flood management, enhances urban cooling, and strengthens overall climate resilience. The policy promotes the use of sustainable design features, such as SuDS, to help reduce environmental impacts and adapt to the effects of climate change. Furthermore, the policy encourages the creation of multifunctional spaces that support biodiversity, while also respecting and enhancing the local landscape character, contributing positively to both its visual appeal and ecological value. Overall, minor positive impacts are identified with regard to climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, biodiversity and landscape (SA Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4).

C.6.3.3 **Recommendation**: The policy could be strengthened by specifying biodiversity enhancements, such as native planting and including wildlife habitats. The policy could provide further wording to encourage the design of facilities to be multifunctional, such as play areas with green roofs or sports fields that incorporate flood mitigation features like permeable surfaces or swales.

C.6.4 Policy DM4 – A Healthy Food Environment

Policy DM4 – A Healthy Food Environment

Food Growing Opportunities

Allotments and Community Gardens: All new residential developments of 50 or more units must include dedicated spaces for community gardens or allotments. The design of these spaces should be integrated into the development's layout, ensuring easy access for all residents, including those with mobility issues. These spaces should support sustainable food production, use healthy, uncontaminated soil, promote biodiversity, and be adaptable to different types of growing (e.g., vegetable patches, fruit trees, communal gardening spaces).

Private Garden Space: Where private gardens are provided, developers should aim to include space for residents to grow food, such as designated areas for vegetable gardens or raised beds. This provision should be appropriate for the size and scale of the development.

Access to Healthier Food Options

Food Retail: Strategic-scale developments should include, where feasible, spaces for local food retail outlets that offer fresh, healthy food options such as fruits, vegetables, and other minimally processed products. These can include local markets, grocery stores, or food cooperatives within walking distance of residential areas.

Proximity to Food Outlets: Developments should be designed to ensure that residents have easy access to grocery stores and other healthy food outlets within a 10-minute walk, supporting both physical and food accessibility.

Hot Food Takeaways and Fast Food Outlets: Other than in defined town centre locations, planning permission will only be granted for hot food takeaways and fast food outlets where it can be demonstrated that there are no schools or other places where young people gather within walking distance. In all locations, proposals will also be required to demonstrate that they would not lead to an unacceptable and harmful concentration of such uses.

Opportunities within the Public Realm

Policy DM4 – A Healthy Food Environment

Edible Planting in Public Spaces: Public realm areas, such as parks, streets, and squares, should incorporate edible planting, such as fruit trees, herb gardens, or edible shrubs, where appropriate. These areas should be designed with public access and food-growing opportunities in mind, providing a sustainable source of fresh produce and creating opportunities for community engagement and food education. Soil quality, water availability and potential contamination should be considered when selecting sites for edible planting and they should be designed with biodiversity in mind, incorporating habitats and/or features for wildlife such as orchards, hedgerows, wildflowers, companion planting and shelter for pollinators.

Public Education and Engagement: Developments should encourage community participation in the care of food-growing spaces, through initiatives such as community gardening programs, edible food walks, or food workshops. These programs should promote awareness of the benefits of growing food, sustainability, and healthy eating.

Encouraging Sustainable and Local Food Production

Developments should encourage the use of sustainable and locally sourced food production methods and the use of climate-responsive designs that support sustainable food production, including green roofs or walls for growing food, and passive design techniques that support year-round food growing.

Community Engagement and Governance

Community involvement in the planning, design, and ongoing management of food-growing spaces and initiatives will be encouraged. Developers should work with local food groups, urban farming networks, and community organisations to ensure that food-growing spaces are accessible, inclusive, and meet the needs of local residents.

A management plan for communal food-growing spaces, including their long-term sustainability and maintenance, should be developed and agreed upon before planning approval. This plan should also detail how the spaces will be accessible and inclusive for all members of the community, including vulnerable groups.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM4	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	++	+	0	0

C.6.4.1 Policy DM4 aims to promote food security, sustainability, and healthier lifestyles through a range of initiatives related to food growing and accessibility to healthier food choices.

C.6.4.2 The policy requires that new developments of 50 or more dwellings include accessible community gardens or allotments. These spaces must be designed to accommodate all residents, including those with mobility issues, and will also promote biodiversity. Additionally, developments should ensure that residents have convenient access to grocery stores and other healthy food outlets within a 10-minute walk, supporting healthier lifestyles and encouraging active travel to essential services. Community gardens and shared growing spaces not only contribute to sustainable food access but also serve as valuable social hubs that foster community interaction, inclusion, and cooperation. These spaces can help strengthen social cohesion by bringing together residents from diverse backgrounds through shared activities and goals. Furthermore, engagement in gardening and outdoor communal activities has been shown to improve mental wellbeing by reducing stress, enhancing mood, and providing a sense of purpose and connection to nature. Overall, by promoting sustainable access to healthy food, providing biodiverse and inclusive community spaces, the policy is anticipated to have a major positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents (SA Objective 10) and a minor positive impact on biodiversity, natural resources and accessibility (SA Objectives 3, 8 and 11).

C.6.4.3 The policy promotes the integration of green roofs, green walls, and rainwater harvesting in new developments, offering benefits for both climate change mitigation and adaptation. These features help regulate building temperatures, reduce energy use and emissions, improve air quality, and support urban biodiversity. These features can also manage rainfall, reduce runoff, and mitigate the urban heat island effect. Rainwater harvesting systems capture and store rainwater, reducing flood risk and easing pressures on water supplies. Overall, minor positive impacts are identified for climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation and both water quantity and quality (SA Objectives 1, 2 and 7).

C.6.5 Policy DM5 – Achieving Net-Zero Carbon Development

Policy DM5 – Achieving Net-Zero Carbon Development

All new development must be designed to achieve net-zero operational carbon, reduce embodied carbon, and demonstrate a clear pathway to climate resilience.

This will be achieved through ultra-low energy building fabric, high energy efficiency, fossil fuel-free systems, and on-site renewable energy generation, supported by predictive modelling, verification and post-occupancy monitoring.

1. Net-Zero Operational Carbon Requirements

a) All new development must achieve net-zero operational carbon on-site as the default requirement, with energy demand met through a combination of:

i) Ultra-low energy fabric performance
ii) High-efficiency building systems
iii) On-site renewable energy generation (e.g. solar PV, heat pumps)

b) Where full on-site renewable energy provision is not technically feasible, the following hierarchy must be applied:

iv) Maximise renewable generation on-site (including building-mounted and ground-mounted)
v) Consider connection to a local zero-carbon energy network
vi) As a last resort, consider off-site renewable provision or carbon offsetting, in line with local offsetting mechanisms or funds to be set by the Council

2. Building Fabric and Energy Demand Standards

a) New buildings must be designed to meet a space heating demand of <15–20 kWh/m².yr, verified via predictive energy modelling (e.g. PHPP or CIBSE TM54) at the detailed planning stage and subject to post-completion monitoring.

b) Fabric performance must prioritise insulation, airtightness, thermal bridging minimisation and passive solar design.

3. Energy Efficiency – Sector-Specific Energy Use Intensity (EUI) Targets

All buildings must be designed to meet the following energy use intensity (EUI) targets:

i) Residential: <35 kWh/m².yr
ii) Offices: <55–70 kWh/m².yr (dependent on occupancy patterns)
iii) Schools: <65 kWh/m².yr

For other building types (e.g. retail, leisure, healthcare, industrial), targets should be discussed with the Council at the pre-application stage, referencing industry standards such as the Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard.

A validated energy modelling approach must be agreed with the Council and applied consistently across building types and proposals.

4. Overheating and Thermal Comfort

a) Development must address overheating risk through passive design first, including orientation, massing, shading, natural ventilation, and thermal mass.

b) At the outline stage, proposals must consider solar orientation and form. At the detailed stage, compliance with the following standards must be demonstrated through dynamic modelling:

i) Part O of Building Regulations (residential)
ii) CIBSE TM52 or equivalent (non-residential)

5. Fossil Fuel-Free Development

All new development must be fossil fuel free, meaning:

Policy DM5 – Achieving Net-Zero Carbon Development

i) No connection to mains gas for space heating, hot water or cooking
ii) No use of oil, LPG or diesel-based systems for permanent heating or power

Low carbon, renewable-compatible alternatives (e.g. electric heat pumps, induction hobs) must be used.

6. Embodied Carbon Reduction

a) Proposals must demonstrate how embodied carbon has been assessed and minimised, with reference to lifecycle stages A1–A5 (including substructure, superstructure, MEP, façade, and finishes but excluding renewables).

b) All major development must undertake embodied carbon assessments at the outline and detailed stages, using nationally recognised tools (e.g. OneClick LCA, eTool).

c) Where possible, full lifecycle analysis (stages A–C) is encouraged.

7. Energy Strategy, Monitoring and Verification

All major development must submit a comprehensive Energy Strategy, including:

i) Predicted total energy demand (kWh/yr)
ii) Predicted on-site renewable generation (kWh/yr)
iii) Modelling tools and methodology used
iv) Monitoring and metering plan

Post-occupancy energy monitoring must occur annually for five years, with findings shared via a district-wide data platform managed or endorsed by the Council.

8. Implementation and Transitional Arrangements

a) The Council will publish guidance to support developers with compliance pathways, verification procedures, and updated performance benchmarks.

b) A phased approach may be permitted for smaller schemes to account for technical or financial viability constraints, with a clear trajectory toward net-zero compliance.

c) All proposals will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to continuous performance improvement, with innovation, monitoring and best practice sharing encouraged across the District.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM5	++	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.5.1 Policy DM5 aims to promote sustainable development by ensuring that all new buildings achieve net-zero operational carbon, reduce embodied carbon, and are designed for climate resilience. This is achieved through a combination of ultra-low energy building fabrics, high-efficiency systems, renewable energy generation, and fossil fuel-free alternatives. Through eliminating the use of fossil fuels for heating, hot water, and cooking requiring heat pumps and induction hobs as alternatives, the policy directly reduces reliance on carbon-intensive energy sources. Furthermore, the focus on reducing embodied carbon through careful material selection and lifecycle analysis minimises emissions associated with construction. These measures collectively help lower GHG emissions, reduce the carbon footprint of the built environment within the district, and accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future. The policy also promotes passive design techniques to reduce overheating, such as optimal building orientation, shading, and natural ventilation. Overall, a major positive impact on climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1) is identified, as well as a minor positive impact on climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2).

C.6.5.2 The policy could enhance air quality by reducing dependence on fossil fuels, which are key contributors to air pollution. By requiring fossil fuel-free developments and encouraging the use of energy-efficient systems, the policy will help lower emissions from heating and power generation, providing residents and wildlife in the surrounding areas with cleaner air. The policy is therefore anticipated to have a minor positive impact on air quality (SA Objective 6).

C.6.6 Policy DM6 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

Policy DM6 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

1. Strategic Approach

West Oxfordshire District Council will support the transition to a net zero carbon future by proactively encouraging the generation and supply of renewable and low carbon energy, including heat and electricity.

Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Maximise the potential for the deployment, re-powering and life extension of renewable and low carbon energy technologies in appropriate locations;

b) Avoid unacceptable adverse impacts on the intrinsic character and beauty of the District, its biodiversity, the significance of its heritage assets and the special qualities of its towns, villages and countryside;

c) Contribute positively to the decentralisation and diversification of energy supply; and

d) Facilitate co-location of energy generation with potential heat customers and suppliers where viable; and

e) Explore opportunities for dual land use strategies, such as combining renewable energy with food production, biodiversity enhancement, or community access where feasible.

2. Suitable Locations and Technology Types

The Council will have particular regard to the findings of the 2016 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment and Strategy for West Oxfordshire' and associated landscape capacity assessments. Development proposals should refer to these documents and relevant maps of suitability.

The following principles apply:

a) **Solar Energy:**

Commercial-scale solar developments will be supported in 'more suitable' areas, subject to the protection of high-grade agricultural land and biodiversity. In relation to Grade 3 agricultural land, applicants will be expected to confirm whether the land is Grade 3a or 3b. Proposals that incorporate dual land use – such as agrovoltaics or pollinator-friendly planting – will be particularly encouraged.

Proposals in areas identified as 'less suitable' will need to be robustly justified, including with reference to the criteria used to identify the 'more suitable' areas.

b) **Wind Energy:**

Due to airspace and landscape constraints, the potential for medium and large-scale wind turbines is limited. However, small-scale wind developments may be appropriate within areas identified as 'more suitable' and are encouraged, particularly where visual and cumulative impacts can be acceptably mitigated.

c) **Hydropower:**

Run-of-river hydro schemes will be supported in locations where technical and ecological feasibility has been demonstrated and where there is no significant adverse impact on water quality, biodiversity, or flood risk.

d) **Biomass and Renewable Heat:**

Small-scale biomass schemes, especially those that incorporate sustainable woodland management, will be supported. Opportunities for renewable heating (e.g. ground- source and air-source heat pumps) must be integrated into development proposals in accordance with Policy DM5.

e) **Battery Energy Storage:**

Battery storage facilities will be supported, particularly where they enhance the efficiency and resilience of the renewable energy system, provided that site-specific impacts (e.g., landscape, noise, and grid connection) are appropriately managed in accordance with relevant policies of this plan.

Policy DM6 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

f) **District Heating and Heat Networks:**

District heating will be supported for new developments or large existing sites where sufficient heat demand exists to justify the investment.

3. **Cotswolds National Landscape**

Within the Cotswolds National Landscape, renewable and low carbon energy proposals will be subject to particularly careful scrutiny to ensure consistency with the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

Proposals will generally be expected to be small-scale and must demonstrate how they have addressed the relevant considerations set out in the Cotswolds National Landscape Board's Position Statement on Renewable Energy.

Large-scale proposals will only be supported in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there is no significant harm to the landscape and that the development is in the public interest.

4. **Green Belt Considerations**

In accordance with national policy, within the Green Belt, proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development will be considered inappropriate development and very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated. Such circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits of renewable energy generation, provided that harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed.

5. **Community-Led and Local Benefit Schemes**

West Oxfordshire District Council places particular value on community-led renewable energy developments. Proposals that are initiated by, or demonstrably benefit, local communities (including through an agreed financial payment or equivalent) will be strongly supported, including those which contribute to local energy resilience, affordability, dual land use and democratic ownership.

6. **Development Management Criteria**

All proposals for renewable and low carbon energy development must:

a) Give significant weight to the environmental, social, economic and community benefits of renewable and low carbon energy generation;

b) Avoid significant adverse cumulative landscape and visual impacts, particularly in areas of high landscape sensitivity;

c) Protect biodiversity and habitats, and demonstrate net gains where possible;

d) Assess impacts on heritage assets and their settings through the provision of a heritage impact assessment and avoid or mitigate any harm to the significance of affected assets;

e) Address amenity impacts (e.g. noise, shadow flicker, glint and glare) in relation to nearby residents and sensitive uses;

f) Include robust site-specific assessments of technical feasibility, grid connectivity, and land quality (including agricultural land classification where relevant).

7. **Monitoring and Review**

The Council will monitor the deployment of renewable and low carbon energy developments across the district and review the policy in light of technological advances, market trends, and national policy updates.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM6	++	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.6.1 Policy DM6 outlines the Council's strategic approach to promoting the transition to a net-zero carbon future through the encouragement of renewable and low-carbon energy generation, including heat and electricity.

C.6.6.2 The policy promotes renewable energy technologies such as solar, wind, hydroelectricity, biomass, and renewable heat, supporting the transition to a net-zero carbon future. The policy encourages the decentralisation of energy supply and the co-location of energy generation with heat customers, which helps to further reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, by valuing small-scale, community-led projects, the policy strengthens local energy resilience and contributes to wider climate efforts of the Council to become a carbon-neutral council by 2030[17]. Overall, a major positive impact on climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1) is identified for Policy DM6. Furthermore, through reducing the reliance on fossil fuels for energy generation, which are significant sources of air pollutants, a minor positive impact on air quality (SA Objective 6) is identified.

C.6.6.3 The policy will be expected to support the preservation of West Oxfordshire's distinctive landscape by ensuring renewable energy developments are strategically located to minimise visual and landscape impacts. Policy DM6 encourages projects that respect the intrinsic character and beauty of the district, particularly in sensitive areas like the CNL. Small-scale renewable energy projects are prioritised, with large-scale developments only supported in exceptional cases where they do not harm the landscape. The policy also protects heritage assets by requiring assessments and mitigation of impacts on their settings, while ensuring the protection of local biodiversity and habitats, and encouraging net gains where possible. Overall, this policy will be expected to ensure there are no significant adverse impacts associated with landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objective 4 and 5) and as such a negligible impact has been identified for these three SA Objectives. The promotion of dual land use strategies, including opportunities for biodiversity enhancement, pollinator planting and food production, could lead to a minor positive effect in terms of climate resilience (SA Objective 2) and biodiversity (SA Objective 3).

C.6.6.4 The policy is expected to provide significant benefits to agricultural land retention and protection by prioritising the preservation of high-grade agricultural land in renewable energy developments. The policy encourages careful location of projects, particularly solar energy developments, to avoid using high-grade agricultural land whenever possible. For Grade 3 agricultural land, developers must confirm whether the land is Grade 3a or 3b and demonstrate that its use for energy generation does not result in the permanent loss of valuable farming land. As a result, the policy is anticipated to have a minor positive impact on the district's natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.6.6.5 The policy supports various schemes for low-carbon and renewable energy generation, including solar, wind, biomass, hydro-electric and battery storage, each of which would need to be evaluated in more detail on a case-by-case basis to determine the potential for positive or adverse effects on sustainability.

C.6.7 Policy DM7 – Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience

Policy DM7 – Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience

West Oxfordshire District Council will support and encourage the sustainable retrofitting of existing buildings to significantly improve their energy performance, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance resilience to climate change. This policy applies to all development proposals that involve existing buildings, including extensions, conversions, and major redevelopment.

[17] WODC (2025). Climate action and what we are doing. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/climate-action-and-what-we-are-doing/#:~:text=In%20June%202019%2C%20West%20Oxfordshire,and%20restoration%20of%20natural%20ecosystems. [Date accessed: 24/04/25]

Policy DM7 – Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience

General Principles

a) Development proposals that incorporate retrofitting measures to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, enhance climate resilience, or enable renewable energy generation will be supported.

b) Interventions should follow the energy hierarchy:

i. Reduce energy demand through energy efficiency improvements (e.g. insulation, air tightness, efficient heating/cooling systems)
ii. Use energy efficiently, through smart controls, storage, and peak demand reduction measures
iii. Supply energy renewably using on-site renewable energy technologies

c) Proposals that result in measurable improvements to a building's long-term performance, usability, condition and environmental sustainability will be given significant positive weight.

Site-Wide Approach

a) For sites with multiple buildings or major developments (10+ dwellings or 1,000m² floorspace), a site-wide retrofit strategy must be submitted. This should include:

i. An Energy and Carbon Statement identifying all retrofit opportunities explored, including quantified performance gains
ii. A pre-development audit (e.g. BRE-compliant) identifying opportunities for reuse, retention, or retrofitting of existing buildings, materials, and structures
iii. A clear rationale for how climate adaptation measures have been incorporated

Heritage and Traditional Buildings

a) For traditional or heritage buildings, a sensitive and informed retrofit approach is required. Proposals must demonstrate:

i. A whole building assessment that considers heritage significance, current energy performance, climate risks, and long-term use
ii. Measures to minimise harm to heritage value through careful material selection, design, and sequencing of works
iii. Input from appropriate professionals, including heritage, conservation, and energy experts where needed
iv. Compliance with necessary consents (e.g. Listed Building Consent, works affecting TPOs)

v. For non-designated buildings within Conservation Areas, proposals must demonstrate an approach that respects the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole, while still maximising energy performance improvements where possible.

b) Where harm to heritage significance occurs, it must be outweighed by clear and demonstrable public benefits.

Natural Resource Protection and Climate Adaptation

a) Retrofit proposals should also consider their impact on natural resources including air, water, and soil, and take opportunities to mitigate environmental harm and provide compensation for protected species, particularly nesting birds and roosting bats.

b) Measures to enhance building resilience to future climate conditions (e.g. overheating risk reduction, improved ventilation, flood resilience) should be incorporated where relevant.

Implementation

The Council may request post-completion monitoring of retrofit outcomes for major schemes to support continuous learning and district-wide performance improvements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM7	++	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.7.1 Policy DM7 promotes the retrofitting of existing buildings with the aim of improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions, and increasing resilience to climate change. The policy encourages development projects to incorporate energy-saving measures,

renewable energy technologies, and strategies for adapting to climate challenges. Through improving the energy efficiency of buildings and incorporating on-site renewable energy technologies, overall energy consumption will be reduced. Overall, a major positive impact is identified for climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1). Furthermore, by utilising renewable energy technologies and moving away from fossil fuels, which are significant sources of air pollutants and particulate matter, the policy supports a transition to cleaner energy. This shift will potentially lead to a minor positive impact on air quality (SA Objective 6).

C.6.7.2 The policy helps protect heritage assets by requiring development to follow a careful approach to retrofitting that preserves their historical significance while enhancing energy efficiency and resilience to climate change. The policy ensures that any changes are respectful of the building's heritage, comply with legal requirements, and are informed by expert advice. These measures allow historic assets to be modernised to meet sustainability standards, improving their long-term performance and elongating their lifespan without impacting their cultural significance. Overall, a minor positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5).

C.6.7.3 The policy also sets out that development proposals should incorporate measures to adapt to future climate conditions, including through overheating risk reduction, improved ventilation and flood resilience. Harm to the environment, including protected species, must be avoided. As such, a minor positive impact on climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2) is anticipated, and a negligible impact on biodiversity (SA Objective 3). **Recommendation:** the policy could be strengthened by expanding on the specifics of climate adaptation measures. For example, including more detailed strategies for increasing flood resilience, such as the use of water-resistant materials, raising structures above flood levels, or incorporating effective drainage systems to manage stormwater.

C.6.8 Policy DM8 – Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Policy DM8 – Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

All development in West Oxfordshire will be expected to deliver a measurable and lasting positive contribution to biodiversity and nature recovery, which is ecologically meaningful, realistic and achievable. This will be achieved through statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) or through bespoke biodiversity enhancements, including adherence to the mitigation hierarchy.

The Mitigation Hierarchy

All development proposals must follow the mitigation hierarchy to address biodiversity impacts and clearly demonstrate how the following steps have been considered and assessed as part of the Ecological Impact Assessment and BNG approach:

1) Avoid: Identify and avoid impacts on biodiversity where possible during the planning and design stages.

2) Minimise: Where impacts cannot be avoided, reduce them to the lowest possible level through design changes or operational measures, including sensitive site layout.

3) Mitigate: Provide on-site mitigation to offset any residual impacts after avoidance and minimisation. This may include habitat creation, restoration, or enhancement within the development site.

4) Compensate: As a last resort, provide compensation for any residual loss of biodiversity. This compensation should be through financial contributions toward off- site biodiversity initiatives, only when on site mitigation and enhancement are not feasible or sufficient. As part of the statutory BNG process, off-site units must be located within the District (where appropriate units are available) or as close as possible to the District and these must actively contribute towards the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

BNG

Major Development: Must deliver a minimum of 20% biodiversity net gain.

Policy DM8 – Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Minor Development: Must deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain.

Exempted Developments: Must incorporate biodiversity enhancements to provide for appropriate types of habitat and features for species that are in-keeping with and proportionate to the type of development.

All development proposals must comply with the BNG good practice principles and associated guidance and demonstrate how the best outcome for biodiversity has been achieved as part of the Ecological Impact Assessment process and (where appropriate) green infrastructure strategy. This means that a high-quality design-led approach is required that takes account of local habitats and species and contributes towards the opportunities identified in the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The BNG proposals must demonstrate that they will result in ecologically meaningful, realistic and achievable outcomes.

All developments must provide details of the management and monitoring of the BNG proposals, including the regular submission of monitoring reports with full details of remedial measures that will be implemented if necessary, for approval by the local planning authority. This would usually be in the form of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) using the Defra template.

Biodiversity Enhancement

The design of new developments must be informed by an Ecological Impact Assessment to ensure that adequate impact assessment and mitigation, compensation and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement are incorporated. Development proposals should avoid fragmentation of habitats and, where possible, integrate enhancements for species into the built environment (e.g., bird and bat boxes, hedgehog highways, swift and bee bricks, pollinator-planting and green walls).

Habitat improvements must be functionally linked to the wider ecological network, contributing to coherent and resilient ecological corridors, particularly as part of a green infrastructure strategy.

Householder and brownfield site proposals are encouraged to deliver biodiversity enhancements wherever practical.

For all development proposals providing biodiversity enhancements, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) must be provided including detailed specifications for all enhancement features and information on how these will be maintained and monitored for the lifetime of the development.

<u>Nature Recovery</u>

In addition to statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, all qualifying developments must contribute towards high-quality, locally relevant nature-recovery projects, including, but not limited to, the restoration of degraded priority habitats and Local Wildlife Sites, the creation of high or very high distinctiveness habitats, support for the restoration of priority species populations and funding for small, high-value sites such as springhead mires.

These contributions could be delivered through a variety of ways such as:

- A higher percentage of BNG onsite or offsite that is focussed on high or very high distinctiveness habitats (where appropriate and agreed) (above the minimum statutory 10%);

- Direct agreements with trusted local delivery partners (e.g. Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment);

- Participation in a local nature fund that targets the implementation of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy so that developers can contribute financially to pre-approved projects aligned with local ecological needs; or

- Off-site works, provided they are supported by ecological evidence and aligned with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, e.g. developer-led habitat creation projects or habitat banks that can demonstrate a high-quality approach.

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will set out how this policy operates in practice, including eligibility criteria, governance and delivery mechanisms.

<u>District Licensing for Great Crested Newts</u>

All major developments will be required to join the District Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts via NatureSpace where ponds within 500 metres of the site will be affected either directly or indirectly as a result of the proposal in any of the impact risk zones.

All developments within the Red Impact Risk Zone will be required to apply to join the District Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts through NatureSpace Partnership unless the Ecological Impact Assessment submitted with the planning application provides an acceptable justification for not doing so.

All developments within the Amber Risk Zone will be required to investigate the option of joining the District Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts through NatureSpace and the reasons for not taking this route clearly explained and justified in the Ecological Impact Assessment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM8	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0

C.6.8.1 Policy DM8 requires all new development within the district to contribute to the protection, enhancement and long-term improvement of biodiversity. In addition to the national requirement of a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) uplift, the policy establishes a higher local requirement of 20% BNG uplift for major development proposals. The policy also sets out a clear mitigation hierarchy to ensure biodiversity is protected throughout the development process. The policy requires the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for major development proposals and prioritises on-site protection and enhancement measures, such as the creation of wildlife corridors. These measures are anticipated to have a major positive impact on biodiversity (SA Objective 3).

C.6.8.2 The protection of biodiversity assets and the enhancement of biodiversity through BNG are also expected to deliver secondary benefits across several SA Objectives. In particular, improved access to a diverse range of natural habitats is known to have benefits for mental health and wellbeing, and may encourage more active, outdoor lifestyles among residents. Additionally, the integration of BNG measures, associated GI, SuDS and greening interventions such as green roofs and walls within development sites is likely to contribute to broader environmental goals, including the mitigation of climate change impacts, improvements in air quality, improvements in water quality and enhanced flood resilience. As such, minor positive impacts are identified for climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, air quality, water quality, protection of natural capital, and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7, 8 and 10).

C.6.8.3 The policy has the potential to enhance landscape character and maintain local identity through the integration of GI and wildlife corridors. The policy will help to ensure that new developments are sensitively incorporated into the existing environment, thereby safeguarding the distinctive character of West Oxfordshire. As such, a minor positive impact on landscape character is identified (SA Objective 4).

C.6.9 Policy DM9 – Waste and the Circular Economy

Policy DM9 – Waste and the Circular Economy

Waste Minimisation During Construction

Design for Waste Reduction: Developers must design buildings and infrastructure with waste minimisation in mind. This includes considering the efficient use of materials, reducing the need for hazardous substances, and adopting modular or prefabricated components where possible to reduce construction waste.

Construction Waste Management Plans:

A Construction Waste Management Plan (CWMP) must be submitted with all planning applications for major development. This should outline strategies to minimise waste during construction, including:

1) Reduction of packaging and off-cuts through efficient design and ordering.

2) On-site separation of materials for reuse, recycling, and disposal.

3) Measures to reduce the use of single-use materials and minimise construction waste requiring disposal.

Policy DM9 – Waste and the Circular Economy

4) Targeted diversion rates for recycling and reuse of construction and demolition waste.

Waste Management During Operation

Operational Waste Management Plans: All major developments must include and Operational Waste Management Plan (OWMP) explaining how waste will be managed once the development is operational. This plan must:

1) Provide facilities for the storage and collection of recyclable and non-recyclable waste, with clear separation of materials.

2) Encourage the use of composting, where feasible, for organic waste.

3) Promote strategies to reduce waste generation, such as providing residents, tenants, or businesses with information on waste reduction, reusing items, and recycling.

4) Provide space for segregated bins and storage areas for recyclable and reusable materials in residential, commercial, and communal areas.

Waste Hierarchy and Circular Economy Principles

Applying the Waste Hierarchy: All development proposals must adhere to the waste hierarchy to minimise the environmental impact of waste.

1) Prevention: Developments should focus on designing out waste from the outset, using fewer resources and producing less waste.

2) Reusing: Where possible, materials should be reused on-site or within the development, particularly through the use of reclaimed materials and components. Building reuse (and where necessary, sensitive adaptation) will be favoured above demolition and rebuilding.

3) Recycling: Promote the recycling of materials on-site and ensure that the infrastructure for recycling is easily accessible to users of the development.

4) Recovery: Encourage energy recovery from waste materials that cannot be reused or recycled.

5) Disposal: Waste requiring final disposal should be minimised to the greatest extent possible with preference given to energy recovery where appropriate.

Support for the Circular Economy: Developers are encouraged to design buildings and developments that contribute to a circular economy by:

1) Using recycled and sustainably sourced materials during construction and fit-out, where feasible.

2) Designing buildings with flexible layouts and easily adaptable spaces to extend the life of materials and reduce the need for future demolition.

3) Encouraging the repurposing or upcycling of waste materials.

4) Ensuring buildings are designed with future reuse or adaptation in mind, promoting long-term sustainability.

5) Partnering with local recycling or waste management initiatives, businesses, and organisations that promote the reuse and recycling of materials, contributing to the local circular economy.

Construction Materials and Resources

Sustainable Materials: Developers should prioritise the use of sustainably sourced, durable, and recyclable materials in the construction phase. Where possible, reclaimed or recycled materials should be used to reduce environmental impact.

Minimising Packaging Waste: Developers should ensure that construction materials arrive on-site with minimal packaging and use packaging that can be easily recycled or reused.

Waste Management Infrastructure

Adequate Provision for Waste Storage: New developments, particularly large-scale residential or mixed-use developments, must provide adequate infrastructure for waste segregation, storage, and collection. This includes space for the storage of recyclables and general waste, as well as appropriate signage to encourage proper waste separation.

Design for Reuse and Recycling: The design of new buildings should incorporate infrastructure to facilitate the reuse and recycling of materials, such as recycling bins, composting facilities, and storage areas for reusable items.

Strategic Developments and Advanced Systems: Developers of strategic residential developments of 300 or more homes will be strongly encouraged to embed advanced waste collection systems, such as underground refuse storage (URS) or similarly innovative solutions technologies, to reduce visual clutter, improve hygiene, minimise odour and vermin issues, and enhance the efficiency of waste collection.

Policy DM9 – Waste and the Circular Economy

The inclusion of such systems will be afforded significant weight in the decision-making process, recognising their contribution to environmental quality, public realm enhancement, and operational efficiency.

Where such provision is not proposed, applicants must provide clear and robust evidence demonstrating why it is not practical, feasible, or financially viable to do so within the context of the development.

Monitoring and Implementation

To support the successful delivery of this policy, developers of major proposals must demonstrate how waste will be minimised, managed and monitored during both construction and operation.

As a condition of planning permission, applicants will be required to submit a Construction Waste Management Plan (CWMP) and an Operational Waste Management Plan (OWMP), setting out how waste will be reduced, segregated, reused, or recycled in line with the waste hierarchy and circular economy principles.

During construction, developers should undertake periodic waste audits to track progress and update their waste management approach as necessary. Once developments are occupied, the effectiveness of operational waste strategies should be kept under regular review, with a brief summary report submitted annually to the Council for major developments.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM9	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+

C.6.9.1 Policy DM9 requires developers to reduce waste during both construction and operation by using efficient design, reducing hazardous substances, and incorporating modular components. Major development proposals are required to submit a Construction Waste Management Plan and an Operational Waste Management Plan, detailing strategies for recycling, composting, and waste reduction. The policy also requires adherence to the waste hierarchy, prioritises locally sourced sustainable materials, and provision of adequate waste management infrastructure, especially for large-scale or mixed-use developments. Through reducing waste during construction and operation, and promoting re-use of buildings, the policy decreases the demand for raw materials, thereby lowering energy consumption and emissions linked to material extraction, production, and transportation. Additionally, prioritising recycled and locally sourced materials further decreases the development's carbon footprint. Overall, the policy is anticipated to have a minor positive impact on climate change mitigation and the natural resources of the district (SA Objectives 1 and 8).

C.6.9.2 Policy DM9 could have positive impacts on the economy in its alignment with circular economy principles. Through adopting circular economy principles, the policy could boost the local economy by promoting resource efficiency, reducing raw material costs, and lowering waste disposal expenses and can help stimulate job creation in waste management, recycling, and green construction. Additionally, the policy supports local economies by encouraging the use of locally sourced materials. As such, a minor positive impact on the economy is identified (SA Objective 13).

C.6.10 Policy DM10 – Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape Character through New Development

Policy DM10 – Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape Character through New Development

1.1 Understanding and Assessing Landscape Character

Landscape Character Assessments: New development proposals must be informed by an understanding of the landscape character of the site and its surroundings. A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) or a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment should be submitted for major developments to identify key features of the landscape, including topography, views and cultural heritage.

Landscape Sensitivity: Development proposals must assess the sensitivity of the landscape in which they are located. This includes evaluating the impact of the proposed development on the local landscape character, scenic views, and any protected or valued landscapes including the Cotswolds National Landscape.

1.2 Design Integration and Landscape Context

Contextual Design: Development must be designed to integrate with the surrounding landscape, respecting its scale, form, and character. The design should take account of the existing landform, local building materials, landscape elements (such as trees, hedgerows, and water features), and traditional settlement patterns.

Height, Massing, and Layout: The height, massing, and layout of new buildings should be designed to respect and reflect the landscape character. For example, buildings should avoid dominating or disrupting important views, skylines, or natural features, and should blend into the existing topography and built environment.

Landscaping and Planting: High-quality landscaping should be integrated into the design of new developments to enhance the local character, mitigate the impact of built structures, and create a harmonious transition between the built and natural environment. This will include planting native species, retaining existing trees and hedgerows where relevant, and providing green infrastructure to enhance biodiversity.

1.3 Protecting and Enhancing Landscape Features

Retention of Key Landscape Features: Development proposals must retain, protect, and enhance important landscape features, such as mature trees, hedgerows, watercourses, and historic boundaries, where possible.

Minimising Visual Impact: Proposals should aim to minimise any adverse visual impact on the landscape. This includes the appearance of the development in the context of long-range and local views including public viewpoints.

3.4 Mitigating Negative Impacts

Landscape Mitigation Measures: Where development may cause harm to the landscape character, appropriate mitigation measures should be proposed. Where necessary, visual screening or buffering should be provided to mitigate the impact of development on surrounding landscapes.

3.5 Promoting Local Identity and Heritage

Respecting Local Distinctiveness: New development should celebrate and reflect local landscape character and identity, ensuring that it complements the distinct characteristics of the area.

Conservation of Historic Landscapes: Development should conserve and enhance historic landscapes, including agricultural landscapes, parks, gardens, and other cultural landscapes. Development must be designed to respect the heritage value of the landscape and contribute to its continued preservation.

3.7 Long-Term Landscape Management and Maintenance

Landscape Management Plans: For major developments, a Landscape Management Plan (LMP) must be provided to ensure that the landscape elements of the development are properly managed and maintained over time.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM10	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0

C.6.10.1 Policy DM10 aims to ensure that new development is carefully integrated into the surrounding landscape, preserving and enhancing its character and key features. The policy emphasises the importance of protecting the landscape's natural, cultural, and scenic value.

C.6.10.2 The policy will protect and enhance the landscape within the district by ensuring that new developments are carefully considered in relation to the surrounding environment. Major developments are required to conduct Landscape Character Assessments (LCAs) or landscape and visual impact assessments to identify key features such as topography, views, and cultural heritage, which must be preserved and integrated into the design. The policy also requires an evaluation of the sensitivity of the local landscape, including protected areas like the Cotswolds CNL. Emphasising contextual design, Policy DM10 ensures that developments respect the local landscape's scale, form, and natural elements, including trees, hedgerows, and watercourses. Additionally, the policy fosters the conservation of historic landscapes and local identity, promoting designs that complement and celebrate the area's unique characteristics. Overall, a major positive impact on the landscape is identified (SA Objective 4). A minor positive impact is identified for biodiversity (SA Objective 3) through the protection of natural features such as trees and hedgerows, which serve as important habitats and ecological corridors. Additionally, the policy supports cultural heritage by conserving the historic environment and protecting the landscape, which serves as the setting for various historic assets throughout the district. As a result, a minor positive impact is also identified for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5).

C.6.10.3 Measures included within the policy to retain open spaces and incorporate screening or buffering will be expected to improve access to a diverse range of natural habitats, which is known to have benefits for mental health and wellbeing, and may encourage more active, outdoor lifestyles among residents. Additionally, the retention and integration of natural features and associated GI is likely to contribute to broader environmental goals, including the mitigation of climate change impacts, improvements in air quality, improvements in water quality and enhanced flood resilience. As such, minor positive impacts are identified for climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, air quality, water quality and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7 and 10).

C.6.11 Policy DM11 – Trees and Hedgerows

Policy DM11 – Trees and Hedgerows

1.1 Protection of Existing Trees and Hedgerows

Retention of Existing Trees and Hedgerows: Where possible, existing trees and hedgerows should be retained and incorporated into development proposals. The loss of mature trees and hedgerows should be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary due to site constraints or health and safety concerns. Proposals should demonstrate how the development respects and integrates existing tree and hedgerow features into the site layout and design.

Tree and Hedgerow Protection During Development: Where development is proposed in close proximity of an existing tree or hedgerow, a Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and/or Hedgerow Protection Plan (HPP) must be submitted as part of the planning application demonstrating how trees and hedgerows will be safeguarded during the construction phase.

Survey and Assessment: A tree survey and hedgerow assessment should be submitted as part of the planning application for any major development, identifying the location, condition, and species of all trees and hedgerows on or near the site. Where it is necessary to remove trees or hedgerows, the reasons for removal must be clearly set out along with any compensatory planting proposals.

Replacement Planting: Where trees or hedgerows are lost as a result of development, developers will be required to provide replacement planting at a ratio of at least 2:1 for trees and 3:1 for hedgerows, unless this is not feasible due to site

Policy DM11 – Trees and Hedgerows

constraints. Replacement planting should be located on-site wherever possible and be of equivalent or greater biodiversity value.

1.2 Provision of New Trees and Hedgerows

Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity: The provision of new trees and hedgerows must be considered as part of the broader green infrastructure strategy for the development.

This includes ensuring that planting schemes:

- Increase connectivity between habitats, creating wildlife corridors and linking with existing natural features and

- Enhance biodiversity by planting a variety of native species that support local wildlife.

- Do not inhibit pedestrian and cycle connectivity in development

Landscape Design: New tree planting and hedgerow creation should be designed with careful consideration of their long-term growth and environmental impact. Species selection should prioritize native or locally adapted species, taking into account soil conditions, water availability, and climate resilience. Planting arrangements should allow for the full growth of trees and hedgerows and should be located in areas where they will not obstruct future development or create safety hazards.

Maintenance and Establishment: Developers must commit to the establishment and maintenance of new trees and hedgerows for a minimum period of five years following planting. This includes ensuring proper watering, pruning, and protection from damage during the establishment phase. The developer must also submit a long-term management plan for the ongoing care of trees and hedgerows beyond the initial five years.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM11	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0

C.6.11.1 Policy DM11 aims to protect, enhance, and integrate trees and hedgerows within new developments by prioritising their retention, securing their protection during construction, requiring appropriate compensation where loss is unavoidable, and encouraging the planting of new, biodiverse vegetation as part of a comprehensive GI strategy.

C.6.11.2 The policy requires new developments to contribute to habitat creation by incorporating tree and hedgerow planting as a key component of green infrastructure. Where the removal of trees or hedgerows is unavoidable, the policy requires developers to provide compensatory planting at a minimum ratio of 2:1 for trees and 3:1 for hedgerows. Planting schemes must also enhance biodiversity by using a diverse mix of native or locally appropriate species that support local ecosystems. Developers are required to ensure planting locations allow for full maturation without causing future conflicts and consider soil conditions, water availability, and climate resilience. All new planting must be maintained for a minimum of five years post-installation, with a long-term management plan required to secure the ongoing health and ecological value of the planting. Overall, Policy DM11 is likely to have a major positive impact on biodiversity (SA Objective 3).

C.6.11.3 Trees serve an important role in protecting soil from erosion as a result of rainfall and surface water runoff, due to the stabilisation provided by roots and interception of rainfall by foliage. Through conserving and enhancing tree coverage across the Plan area, this policy will be likely to help preserve soils and have a minor positive impact on natural resources (SA Objective 8). By reducing water runoff rates this will also be expected to

enhance natural water storage and help to reduce the risk of fluvial and surface water flooding. As such, a minor positive impact is identified for climate change adaptation and water quality (SA Objective 2 and 7).

C.6.11.4 The retention and integration of trees and hedgerows into the GI network not only supports biodiversity but also delivers measurable benefits to residents' health and wellbeing by providing access to natural spaces that encourage physical activity and support mental wellbeing. Additionally, such integration contributes to broader environmental objectives, including increased mitigation of climate change impacts and improved air quality. As a result, the policy is expected to have minor positive impacts on climate change mitigation, air quality, and health (SA Objective 1, 6 and 10).

C.6.11.5 Furthermore, trees and hedgerows can be a useful tool to help integrate new development into the existing landscape character, for example, in terms of protecting or enhancing views, or providing visual interest. As such, a minor positive impact on landscape character is identified (SA Objective 4).

C.6.12 Policy DM12 – Light Pollution and Dark Skies

Policy DM12 – Light Pollution and Dark Skies

1.1 Protection of Dark Skies

Dark Sky Areas: Development proposals within or near designated dark sky areas must demonstrate that they will not cause harm to the quality of the night sky. Any development within these areas should prioritise the preservation and enhancement of dark skies, following best practice in outdoor lighting design.

Minimising Light Spill: Development proposals must ensure that external lighting is designed and installed in a way that prevents light spill beyond the development site. Lighting should be directed downwards, shielded, and controlled to avoid upward light spill, glare, and light pollution.

1.2 Lighting Design and Specification

Use of Appropriate Lighting: External lighting should be appropriate to the nature and use of the development and should minimise light levels in areas that do not require illumination. All lighting should be designed to prevent skyglow (the brightening of the night sky over urban areas) and to limit spill into adjacent areas.

Energy-Efficient and Low-Impact Lighting: Developers should use energy-efficient lighting solutions and consideration should be given to the use of automatic controls to enable lighting to be switched off or dimmed when it is not needed, particularly in sensitive areas with low human activity at night (e.g., in rural or residential areas).

Colour Temperature: All external lighting should use lamps with a correlated colour temperature (CCT) of 3000 Kelvin or lower, particularly in or near designated dark sky areas, wildlife-sensitive zones, and rural locations. Warmer light sources reduce skyglow and are less disruptive to wildlife and human circadian rhythms.

1.3 Specific Lighting Types

Residential Lighting: Residential developments should ensure that lighting is sensitive to the surrounding environment, providing adequate illumination for safety without compromising dark skies.

Commercial and Public Lighting: Non-essential commercial or public lighting should be minimised and lighting should be directed and controlled to avoid impacting dark skies and wildlife.

Road and Pathway Lighting: Lighting of roads, paths, and pedestrian areas should be designed to ensure safety without excessive brightness. Where feasible, new developments should incorporate designs that integrate with the natural environment, utilising low-level, downcast lighting.

Sports Lighting: Proposals involving sports facilities requiring floodlighting must demonstrate that lighting design minimises glare, skyglow, and light spill to surrounding areas, especially near residential properties, wildlife habitats, or designated dark sky areas. Lighting should only be used during operational hours and should incorporate time controls to ensure it is switched off when not in use.

1.3 Minimising Impact on Biodiversity

Policy DM12 – Light Pollution and Dark Skies

Wildlife Considerations: New development must consider the potential impact of lighting on wildlife habitats, especially where these areas are known to support protected species. Developers should incorporate design features that minimise the effects of lighting on sensitive species, such as low-light zones, lighting shields, and light-curtaining techniques.

Lighting Buffer Zones: Where new development is proposed near sensitive habitats (such as wetlands, woodlands, or wildlife corridors), a buffer zone should be maintained that limits the use of lighting and reduces its impact on biodiversity.

1.4 Integration with the Surrounding Environment

Context-Sensitive Lighting: Development proposals must ensure that lighting solutions are sensitive to the local context. Rural developments should avoid intrusive lighting that contrasts with the natural, low-light character of the area.

Visual Impact of Lighting: The visual impact of lighting on the surrounding area must be considered as part of the design process. This includes avoiding overly bright or obtrusive lighting features that dominate the landscape or obscure important natural or cultural features.

1.5 Lighting Assessment and Management

Lighting Impact Assessment: For developments likely to generate significant light pollution, a lighting impact assessment should be submitted as part of the planning application. The assessment must demonstrate how the proposed lighting scheme will prevent adverse impacts on dark skies, sensitive habitats, and local amenity and incorporate appropriate mitigation.

Long-Term Lighting Management: Developers must commit to the long-term management and maintenance of lighting systems to ensure that they continue to comply with this policy.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM12	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0

C.6.12.1 Policy DM12 aims to guide new developments in minimising their impact on the natural environment, focusing particularly on preserving dark skies and reducing light pollution.

C.6.12.2 The policy encourages the use of context-sensitive lighting that reduces light pollution, safeguards wildlife habitats, and maintains the visual quality and tranquillity of surrounding areas. This ensures that lighting contributes positively to the built environment without harming the night sky or local ecosystems. The policy sets out that development proposals must incorporate lighting solutions that align with the character of the area and requires lighting impact assessments for development proposals that are likely to cause significant light pollution, illustrating how the development will affect dark skies, sensitive habitats, and local amenities. Lighting is required to be energy-efficient, which will help reduce overall energy consumption and contribute to climate change mitigation by lowering carbon emissions associated with energy use. Furthermore, the policy ensures that lighting is designed to enhance safety in public spaces like roads, paths, and pedestrian areas. Overall, Policy DM12 is likely to have minor positive impacts on climate change mitigation, biodiversity, landscape and accessibility (SA Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 11).

C.6.13 Policy DM13 – Air Quality and Pollution

Policy DM13 – Air Quality and Pollution

All new development in West Oxfordshire must be designed and located to ensure it does not cause or contribute to poor air quality and is not at risk from existing sources of air pollution. Development should support the district's broader

Policy DM13 – Air Quality and Pollution

environmental and public health objectives, contributing to the improvement of air quality and minimising human and ecological exposure to harmful pollutants.

1. Air Quality Impact on Sensitive Locations

Development proposals that individually or cumulatively could lead to a deterioration in air quality, particularly in or near the following sensitive areas, will be subject to stricter scrutiny and mitigation requirements:

a) Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Witney and Chipping Norton, where pollution levels have historically exceeded national air quality objectives.

b) The Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is sensitive to nitrogen deposition and other air pollution effects due to its internationally designated habitats.

2. Requirement for Air Quality Impact Assessments (AQIA)

An Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) will be required for:

a) All major developments

b) Any development likely to result in a significant increase in vehicle traffic or emissions (e.g. from heating, industrial uses).

c) Any development located within or near an AQMA or the Oxford Meadows SAC.

d) Proposals that form part of a larger cumulative development likely to impact local or strategic air quality levels.

The AQIA must assess the potential impacts on local air quality during both construction and operation, taking into account cumulative effects with other planned or existing developments. It should model pollutant levels where appropriate and evaluate impacts on human health and ecological receptors.

3. Mitigation Measures

Where an AQIA identifies likely significant adverse impacts on air quality, appropriate and proportionate mitigation must be secured through the planning process. Measures may include, but are not limited to:

a) Sustainable transport infrastructure (e.g. walking, cycling, EV charging).

b) Reduced car dependency and traffic management schemes.

c) Low-emission building design, heating systems and energy sources.

d) Landscaping and green infrastructure to support pollutant absorption.

e) Off-site mitigation contributions, where on-site measures are insufficient.

In or near the Oxford Meadows SAC, developments must demonstrate compliance with the Habitat Regulations and ensure no adverse effect on the integrity of the protected site from air pollution, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

4. Construction Phase Control

All major developments must incorporate Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP) that include:

a) Dust suppression and control measures.

b) Monitoring of particulate matter where appropriate.

c) Limiting construction vehicle emissions and on-site machinery impacts.

d) Protocols for responding to air quality breaches during works.

Particular care must be taken in or near the AQMAs and the Oxford Meadows SAC, where enhanced construction-phase controls may be required due to increased sensitivity.

5. Monitoring and Management

In sensitive areas (Witney AQMA, Chipping Norton AQMA, and near Oxford Meadows SAC), developments may be required to contribute to:

a) Air quality monitoring during and post-construction.

b) The preparation of Air Quality Management Plans.

c) Ongoing compliance reviews and adaptive mitigation where thresholds are at risk of being exceeded.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM13	++	+	+	0	0	++	+	0	0	++	+	0	0

C.6.13.1 Policy DM13 aims to protect air quality and public health in West Oxfordshire by requiring Air Quality Impact Assessments (AQIA) for major or traffic-heavy developments, especially near sensitive areas like Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The policy is anticipated to improve air quality by identifying and mitigating pollution sources through AQIAs. Policy DM13 also sets out measures to reduce harmful emissions from traffic and construction such as the incorporation of Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP), promotes low-emission design, and protects sensitive areas like AQMAs and the Oxford Meadows SAC, safeguarding both ecological and public health. As such, a major positive impact on air quality is identified (SA Objective 6).

C.6.13.2 The policy encourages low-emission building designs, energy-efficient systems, and sustainable transport infrastructure such as provision of EV charging, which collectively reduce carbon emissions. Through reducing car dependency and promoting GI, the policy helps lower overall carbon emissions and transport-associated pollutants such as nitrogen oxide (NO_2) and particulate matter (PM), while encouraging active modes of travel like walking and cycling. This will help to reduce environmental impacts as well as improve public health and wellbeing through increased physical activity and improved air quality. Additionally, the policy places priority on protecting the Oxford Meadows SAC which is sensitive to nitrogen deposition[18]. Overall, a major positive impact on climate change mitigation and public health is identified (SA Objectives 1 and 10), as well as minor positive impacts on biodiversity and transport (SA Objectives 3 and 11).

C.6.13.3 The integration of GI is likely to contribute to broader environmental goals, including improvements in water quality and enhanced flood resilience through the capture and storage of surface water. As such, minor positive impacts are identified for climate change adaptation and water quality (SA Objectives 2 and 7).

C.6.14 Policy DM14 – Listed Buildings

Policy DM14 – Listed Buildings

Development proposals involving alterations, additions to, or change of use of a Listed Building (including partial demolition), or for development within its curtilage or affecting its setting, will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that:

1. Conservation and Enhancement of Significance

The proposal conserves or enhances the special architectural or historic interest of the Listed Building, including its fabric, detailed features, character, appearance, and setting.

Development should better reveal or reinforce those elements which contribute to the building's heritage significance.

[18] Natural England (2014). Oxford Meadows SAC Site Improvement Plan. Available at: https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4942743310696448 [Date accessed: 25/04/25]

Policy DM14 – Listed Buildings

Proposals must respect the integrity and authenticity of the Listed Building and retain the special interest that justifies its designation.

2. Respect for Historic Context and Setting

The development respects and reinforces the building's historic curtilage, surrounding context, and its value as part of a group of heritage assets.

Historic landscape or townscape relationships, such as burgage plots, parklands, street frontages, designed landscapes, or historic farmyards, must be preserved or enhanced.

Key views, vistas, and the wider setting of the Listed Building should not be harmed.

3. High-Quality, Sympathetic Design

Proposals must demonstrate design that is sympathetic to the Listed Building and its setting, including any adjacent heritage assets.

Appropriate design includes careful consideration of siting, size, scale, height, alignment, materials and finishes (including colour and texture), architectural form, and detailing.

New works must not dominate or detract from the Listed Building, but should complement and harmonise with its character and setting.

4. Managing Harm and Loss

Substantial harm to or total loss of significance to Listed Buildings or Registered Parks will be wholly exceptional (for Grade I and II*) and exceptional (for Grade II).

Proposals resulting in substantial harm or total loss of the significance of a Listed Building will be refused unless it is clearly demonstrated that:

a) The harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm, or

b) All reasonable use options have been exhausted, including marketing, and conservation through charitable, public, or grant-funded means is not possible.

Where proposals result in less than substantial harm, this harm must be minimised and clearly justified, with any adverse impacts outweighed by demonstrable public benefits or securing the optimum viable use of the building.

5. Change of Use and Evidence Requirements

Change of use will be supported where the new use can be accommodated without adverse impact on the Listed Building's significance, fabric, appearance, character, or setting.

Where relevant, proposals should include proportionate investigation, documentation, and public dissemination of any changes, loss of historic fabric, or previously unknown features.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM14	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.14.1 Policy DM14 sets out the requirements of development proposals for the protection of listed buildings within the district and ensures that any development preserves or enhances their historic and architectural significance.

C.6.14.2 Through the use of high-quality, sympathetic design with regard to *"siting, size, scale, height, alignment, materials and finishes"* and protecting the setting of listed buildings, the policy helps maintain the integrity of heritage assets and prevents inappropriate alterations that could diminish their significance. Additionally, the policy promotes the conservation of the surrounding landscape, safeguarding important views, historic features, and the

overall character of the area. Overall, a major positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5), as well as a minor positive impact on the landscape character (SA Objective 4) through the protection and enhancement of listed buildings and their settings.

C.6.14.3 **Recommendation:** the policy would benefit from including specific wording regarding the energy efficiency of listed buildings and how these can be redeveloped or designed for longevity, making reference to specific guidance from Historic England[19] as well as possibly linking with or making reference to Policy DM7 'Retrofitting for Energy Efficiency, Carbon Reduction and Climate Resilience.

C.6.15 Policy DM15 – Conservation Areas

Policy DM15 – Conservation Areas

1. General Principles

Development proposals within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that they:

Conserve or enhance the area's character and appearance, including consideration of the development's location, form, scale, massing, density, height, layout, landscaping, alignment, use, and external appearance.

Respect the setting of the Conservation Area, including the impact on views and vistas within, into, and out of the area, and preserve or enhance those that contribute positively to its significance.

Respond to local distinctiveness and reflect the architectural and historic qualities identified in Conservation Area Character Appraisals and the West Oxfordshire Design Guide.

Retain and respect the historic street pattern, original plot boundaries, and significant spaces such as paddocks, greens, gardens, and gaps between buildings which contribute to the area's spatial character.

Preserve features of special interest, such as traditional shopfronts, walls, trees, hedgerows, farmyards, and other elements that define the special qualities of the Conservation Area.

Demonstrate compatibility with wider social, environmental, and historic context, contributing to the vitality and sustainable future of the area without undermining its special interest or appearance.

Incorporate sensitive lighting and signage, where applicable, ensuring that it does not detract from the area's historic character.

2. Demolition within Conservation Areas

Applications for the demolition of buildings or structures in a Conservation Area will only be permitted where it can be clearly demonstrated that:

a) The building does not make a positive contribution to the special interest, character, or appearance of the Conservation Area; or

b) The building is of no historic or architectural interest, is beyond repair, and is incapable of viable reuse; and

c) Any replacement building proposed makes an equal or greater contribution to the character and appearance of the area through high-quality, context-sensitive design.

3. Restoration, Reuse, and Adaptive Use

Wherever possible, the **sympathetic restoration and adaptive reuse** of buildings and structures that contribute positively to the Conservation Area will be supported.

Development should seek to:

a) Retain and repair original features and materials, wherever feasible, and use appropriate conservation techniques.

b) Minimise harm to heritage significance by avoiding unnecessary alterations or loss of historic fabric.

[19] Historic England (2024). Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/ [Date accessed: 25/04/25]

Policy DM15 – Conservation Areas

c) Ensure that any reuse or adaptation of historic buildings is sensitive to their character while allowing for modern functionality and viability.

4. Assessing Harm and Public Benefit

Proposals resulting in less than substantial harm to the significance of a Conservation Area must provide a clear and proportionate justification, including identification of any public benefits that outweigh the harm.

Proposals that would result in substantial harm or total loss of a Conservation Area's significance will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where it is demonstrated that the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that cannot be otherwise delivered.

5. Enhancing Significance

Development that would better reveal, reinforce, or enhance the significance of a Conservation Area and its setting through sensitive design, public realm improvements, or repair of historic fabric will be strongly supported.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM15	0	0	+	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.15.1 Policy DM15 outlines guidelines for development within or affecting the setting of a conservation area (CA), emphasising the need to conserve or enhance its character, appearance, and historic significance.

C.6.15.2 The policy requires proposals to respect the CAs setting, local distinctiveness, and architectural qualities, while preserving key spatial features and historic elements. Demolition of buildings or structures within a CA is only allowed if the building does not contribute positively to the area's character, and restoration or adaptive reuse of historic structures is encouraged. Development that enhances or reveals the significance of a CA will be strongly supported. Overall, a major positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5), as well as a minor positive impact on landscape character (SA Objective 4) through conserving and enhancing historic assets and their settings.

C.6.15.3 The policy also supports biodiversity by preserving features of special interest to CAs including green spaces, trees, hedgerows and natural features. Therefore, a minor positive impact on biodiversity is identified (SA Objective 3).

C.6.15.4 **Recommendation:** the policy will benefit from including wording regarding the energy efficiency of historic buildings within CAs and how materials used can increase longevity, making reference to specific guidance from Historic England[20]. Furthermore, expanding the wording regarding the reuse of historic structures will strengthen the policy with regard to the sustainable use of natural resources. By prioritising the adaptive reuse of existing historic structures, the policy reduces the demand for new construction materials, thereby lowering resource consumption, energy use, and carbon emissions associated with demolition.

[20] Historic England (2024). Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/adapting-historic-buildings-energy-carbon-efficiency-advice-note-18/ [Date accessed: 25/04/25]

C.6.16 Policy DM16 – Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments

Policy DM16 – Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments

1. Protection of Significance

Development proposals affecting archaeological remains must conserve or enhance their significance and take full account of the contribution made by their setting. Scheduled Monuments and non-designated remains of national significance should be preserved in situ wherever possible.

2. Assessment and Investigation

Applicants must undertake an appropriately detailed archaeological assessment to determine the presence or potential of archaeological remains on site. Proposals should demonstrate engagement with the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER) and relevant guidance. This should include:

a) A desk-based assessment where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest.

b) A field evaluation, where necessary, conducted by a suitably qualified archaeological organisation.

The scope and methodology for all assessments must be agreed in advance with Oxfordshire County Council's archaeological team, and with Historic England in cases involving Scheduled Monuments, through a Written Scheme of Investigation. Early engagement with Historic England is recommended for development that is likely to affect a Scheduled Monument.

3. Harm and Justification

Substantial harm to or total loss of significance to a Scheduled Monument will be wholly exceptional. Where development would result in harm to, or total loss of, the significance of archaeological remains:

a) Substantial harm will only be permitted where it is clearly justified by substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm, and no reasonable alternative exists.

b) Less than substantial harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

For non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, a presumption in favour of avoidance of harm applies, due to their irreplaceable nature. Any harm must be proportionate to the asset's significance and clearly justified.

4. Mitigation and Publication

Where the loss of archaeological significance is unavoidable and justified:

a) Harm must be minimised through careful design, including changes to building footprints, construction techniques, and landscaping.

b) A programme of archaeological investigation, recording, and analysis will be required before development begins. This must be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.

c) The results of investigations must be published and made publicly accessible.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM16	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	0

C.6.16.1 Policy DM16 aims to protect the significance of archaeological remains, including Scheduled Monuments (SMs), by preserving them in their original state whenever possible.

C.6.16.2 Development proposals impacting archaeological remains are required to undergo two key assessments: a desk-based assessment and a field evaluation. The desk-based assessment reviews historical records, maps, and prior archaeological work to evaluate

the site's potential, while the field evaluation, conducted by a qualified archaeological organisation, involves on-site investigations to assess the presence and significance of archaeological features. Both assessments must be approved by Oxfordshire County Council's archaeological team, with consultation from Historic England through a Written Scheme of Investigation. Through requiring these assessments, the policy identifies and mitigates risks to heritage assets early in the development process, encourages careful design to minimise harm, and ensures any unavoidable impact is justified by benefit to the wider public. Additionally, the policy promotes the documentation and public sharing of archaeological findings to educate and preserve heritage for future generations. Overall, a major positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5), as well as a minor positive impact on education (SA Objective 12).

C.6.16.3 The policy also provides benefits to the landscape, natural resources, and soil by requiring thorough archaeological assessments that help identify and mitigate potential impacts on historical landscapes and natural features linked to archaeological remains. The policy encourages careful design and planning to minimise disturbance to soil and natural resources, by promoting sustainable construction practices. Additionally, by preserving heritage assets, the policy helps maintain the natural context and setting of these areas, offering protection of the wider landscape and its important features. Overall, there is potential for minor positive impacts on the landscape, natural resources and soil (SA Objectives 4 and 8).

C.6.17 Policy DM17 – Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

Policy DM17 – Registered Parks and Gardens

1. Conservation and Enhancement Requirements

Development proposals will be supported where they:

a) Conserve or enhance the special historic interest, layout, design, character, appearance, and setting of the Registered Park or Garden;

b) Protect and respect key views into, from, and within the landscape, including any visual or experiential qualities that contribute to its significance;

c) Avoid the loss of or harm to historic features, such as boundary walls, water features, tree avenues, planting schemes, ornamental buildings, or historic circulation patterns;

d) Are informed by thorough historical research and a clear understanding of the asset's development, function, and contribution to the wider historic environment;

e) Incorporate appropriate landscape or built interventions to reinstate lost features or remove modern intrusions that detract from the asset's significance, where evidence supports this approach.

2. Restoration and Interpretation

Proposals that would enable the restoration or interpretation of original landscape designs or features will be actively encouraged. Such projects should enhance public appreciation and enjoyment of the Registered Park or Garden.

3. Harm and Justification

Substantial harm to or total loss of significance to Registered Parks and Gardens will be wholly exceptional (for Grade I and II*) and exceptional (for Grade II).

Any level of harm must be justified by clear and convincing evidence. Where harm is unavoidable, proposals must demonstrate that:

a) The public benefits decisively outweigh the harm;

b) All reasonable alternatives have been considered;

c) The scheme includes appropriate mitigation and archival recording, where relevant.

4. Assessment and Evidence Requirements

Policy DM17 – Registered Parks and Gardens

Applicants must:

a) Describe the significance of the heritage asset and its setting, proportionate to the nature and scale of development;

b) Demonstrate how the proposal has been informed by the Historic Environment Record (HER), relevant Conservation Area Appraisals, and the Historic England Register entry;

c) Provide desk-based assessments or fieldwork where required, including historical research, landscape assessments, or visual impact studies.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM17	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.17.1 Policy DM17 aims to protect and enhance the historic, aesthetic, and environmental significance of Registered Parks and Gardens (RPG).

C.6.17.2 Development proposals will be supported where they *"conserve or enhance the special historic interest, layout, design, character, appearance, and setting of the Registered Park or Garden"*. The policy supports development proposals that restore and interpret original landscape designs or features, aiming to improve public appreciation and enjoyment of RPGs. The policy also requires thorough assessments, including desk-based assessments, fieldwork, historical research, landscape assessments, and visual impact studies, to ensure that development proposals are informed by a clear understanding of the asset's significance. These assessments must demonstrate how the proposal aligns with the Historic Environment Record, relevant Conservation Area Appraisals, and the Historic England Register entry. Overall, these measures are anticipated to have a major positive impact on cultural heritage (SA Objective 5), as well as a minor positive impact on the wider landscape setting (SA Objective 4).

C.6.18 Policy DM18 – Conservation, Extension and Alteration of Traditional Buildings

Policy DM18 – Conservation, Extension and Alteration of Traditional Buildings

In order to safeguard the distinctive architectural, historic, and landscape character of West Oxfordshire, proposals involving the conversion, extension, or alteration of traditional buildings will only be supported where they are informed by a clear understanding of the building's historic significance, architectural qualities, and relationship to its setting.

Proposals must demonstrate high-quality, sensitive design and construction which responds to the character, appearance, materials, and craftsmanship of the original structure.

Development proposals will not be permitted where they would:

a) Involve extensive or unjustified alterations to the existing structure or result in the loss of historic fabric, features of architectural or vernacular interest (such as traditional roof structures, fireplaces, openings, internal layouts, or decorative detailing);

b) Introduce extensions, dormers, or new openings that would unbalance, obscure or compromise the original scale, form, massing or proportions of the building;

c) Use inappropriate or unsympathetic materials or detailing that detract from the traditional character or integrity of the building;

Policy DM18 – Conservation, Extension and Alteration of Traditional Buildings

d) Harm the setting or curtilage of the building, including traditional outbuildings, walls, boundary treatments or landscaping features associated with its historic use.

In assessing proposals, regard must be had to:

a) The building's age, construction techniques, architectural form, and original or historic function;

b) The contribution it makes to local character, distinctiveness, and landscape setting;

c) Any evidence from the Historic Environment Record (HER), Conservation Area Appraisals, or local heritage list.

Where appropriate, proposals should:

a) Re-use and repair existing features and materials rather than replace them;

b) Minimise the need for substantial structural intervention;

c) Seek to maintain or reinstate traditional layouts, uses, or construction methods where this contributes positively to heritage significance;

d) Incorporate traditional sustainable design principles, provided these are compatible with the historic fabric.

Applications must be supported by a Heritage Statement setting out the building's historic and architectural significance, assessing the impact of proposed changes, and explaining how the design responds to this understanding. Where harm is proposed, this must be clearly justified and, where possible, mitigated through careful design and appropriate detailing.

Proposals that secure the long-term viable use of a traditional building in a manner that sustains and enhances its significance will be supported in principle, provided they comply with the above criteria.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM18	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.18.1 Policy DM18 outlines the criteria for the conversion, extension, or alteration of traditional buildings within West Oxfordshire, with the aim of preserving their architectural, historical, and landscape value.

C.6.18.2 Through safeguarding the architectural integrity of traditional buildings through sensitive design and restoration, the policy provides benefits to the local landscape and heritage assets. The policy encourages minimising intrusive alterations and using materials that complement the building's historic fabric. Additionally, proposals are required to respect the building's setting, ensuring that surrounding landscape features, such as outbuildings, boundary walls, and traditional landscaping, are protected. Development proposals are required to include a Heritage Statement, assessing the building's historic and architectural significance. Furthermore, the policy prioritises reusing original materials which supports sustainability by conserving the district's natural resources. Overall, a major positive impact is identified for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5) minor positive impacts are identified for the landscape and natural resources (SA Objectives 4 and 8).

C.6.19 Policy DM19 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Policy DM19 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Development proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets - including historic buildings, locally valued structures, archaeological remains of local interest, and unregistered historic parks and gardens - will be assessed with careful consideration of their heritage significance, contribution to local character, and community value.

Policy DM19 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets

As non-designated heritage assets are also irreplaceable components of the historic environment, there will be a general presumption in favour of their conservation, and in particular, the avoidance of harm or loss.

Where harm is unavoidable, a balanced and proportionate judgement will be applied, taking into account:

a) The asset's degree of significance, including architectural, archaeological, historic, or artistic interest;

b) The scale and nature of harm or loss;

c) The extent to which the proposal sustains or enhances the asset's heritage value or setting;

d) The public benefits of the proposal, including opportunities for enhancement, reuse, or long-term viability.

Proposals must demonstrate that the significance of the non-designated asset has been clearly understood and assessed, including through use of the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record (HER), local listing or other sources of evidence. Where necessary, applications should be supported by a heritage statement, including an appropriate level of historical research, analysis, or archaeological investigation.

Design approaches should reflect the principles applied to designated assets, such as respecting the asset's historic form, setting, and materials, while promoting sympathetic and sustainable re-use or adaptation.

Proposals that secure the future of non-designated heritage assets, including through repair, conservation-led design, or community-led restoration, will be strongly supported.

Where development would result in the total loss of a non-designated heritage asset, the applicant must provide clear justification, including evidence that all reasonable alternatives have been considered and that appropriate recording and archiving of the asset will be undertaken in line with Historic England guidance.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM19	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.6.19.1 Policy DM19 sets out the requirements of development to conserve non-designated heritage assets, such as historic buildings and local archaeological sites.

C.6.19.2 The policy requires a design approach for non-designated heritage assets which aligns with the principles applied to designated assets, ensuring the preservation of their historic form, setting, and materials. Support is given to development proposals that secure the long-term future of non-designated heritage assets through repair, conservation-led design, or community-led restoration. Where total loss of an asset is unavoidable, clear justification must be provided, demonstrating that all alternatives have been explored. Overall, a major positive impact on cultural heritage is identified (SA Objective 5).

C.6.19.3 Through promoting sustainable reuse, adaptation, and conservation of non-designated heritage assets, the policy helps to prevent insensitive development that could alter the surrounding landscape. Therefore, a minor positive impact on the landscape is identified (SA Objective 4).

C.6.20 Policy DM20 – Town Centres

Policy DM20 – Town Centres

West Oxfordshire's town centres play a vital role in supporting the economy, fostering community cohesion, and providing access to key goods and services. The Council will promote and protect the long-term vitality, viability, and resilience of the following five defined town centres:

Policy DM20 – Town Centres

- Principal Town Centre: Witney

- Primary Town Centres: Carterton, Chipping Norton

- Town Centres with a Significant Tourist Role: Burford, Woodstock

Town centres will be the preferred location for new retail, leisure, community, and commercial activity, with a focus on ensuring they remain vibrant, adaptable, and inclusive places that reflect the unique character of each settlement.

1. Supporting Growth, Diversification and Resilience

The Council will support investment in town centres that:

a) Enables diversification into leisure, cultural, residential, workspaces, and community uses;

b) Enhances the evening and night-time economy;

c) Supports active travel and public transport connectivity;

d) Improves the public realm, accessibility, and safety for all users;

e) Strengthens the unique character and offer of each centre.

Development proposals must reflect the dynamic nature of town centre environments and seek to respond positively to changing consumer behaviour and economic trends.

2. Primary Shopping Areas (PSAs)

Primary Shopping Areas (PSAs) are defined for each of the defined Town Centres. These areas remain the commercial core and will be the preferred location for a range of town centre uses, including retail, food and drink, leisure, entertainment, and civic functions.

Proposals that support the vitality and active use of ground floor premises within these areas will generally be supported, provided they do not result in concentrations of a single use that would adversely affect footfall, diversity, or amenity.

3. Sequential and Impact Assessments

The Council will apply the sequential test and impact test in accordance with national policy to proposals for main town centre uses that are not located within defined town centres and are not in accordance with the Local Plan or an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

An impact assessment will be required for any proposed retail or leisure development exceeding 280 sq.m gross floorspace outside of defined town centres.

The assessment must consider:

a) Impact on town centre investment;

b) Impact on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade.

4. Loss of Town Centre Uses

Proposals resulting in the loss of town centre uses within the defined town centres will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that:

a) Following a robust and proportionate marketing exercise, the premises are not reasonably capable of continued use or redevelopment for a viable town centre use; or

b) The proposed alternative use would make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability, or diversity of the town centre.

Concentrations of single uses (e.g., betting shops, takeaways, or cafes) will not be permitted where this would undermine the area's function, character, or amenity.

5. Outdoor Markets

Proposals for new off-street permanent and temporary street markets will be supported, provided that:

a) The scale, nature, and location would not harm existing shopping facilities or markets located within town centres;

b) There would not be an unacceptable impact on local amenity or the general environment;

c) Adequate provision is made for traders' parking, deliveries and servicing, set-up and storage of stalls, power supply, and waste storage and disposal;

d) There would not be an unacceptable impact on traffic flow or contribute to traffic congestion in the area; and

Policy DM20 – Town Centres

e) Appropriate public protection and health and safety measures are in place.

The Council will seek to maintain and enhance existing outdoor markets across the District, recognising their contribution to local distinctiveness and community activity.

Development proposals that would have a detrimental impact on existing outdoor markets will not be permitted. Where construction or redevelopment proposals may temporarily or permanently affect the operation of a market, applicants will be required to assess the potential impact and demonstrate appropriate mitigation to ensure continuity of market activity.

6. Public Realm, Accessibility, and Parking

All development within town centres must contribute positively to the character, quality, and accessibility of the public realm.

Where development proposals generate significant additional car parking demand, developers will be required to provide on-site parking or make appropriate contributions to public parking provision.

7. Partnership Working

The Council will continue to work proactively with local communities, businesses, and stakeholders to support the vitality of each town centre. Initiatives may include:

- Public realm improvements;
- Events and cultural programming;
- Active travel infrastructure;
- Digital connectivity and promotion.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM20	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	++	0	++

C.6.20.1 Policy DM20 aims to promote the long-term vitality, viability, and resilience of town centres in West Oxfordshire by encouraging a diverse mix of uses, including retail, leisure, cultural, residential, and community spaces.

C.6.20.2 The policy will help boost the district's economy by promoting a mix of development uses including retail, leisure, cultural, residential, and commercial, creating opportunities for new businesses while supporting the growth of existing ones, enhancing employment and overall economic activity. The policy also prioritises towns with significant tourist roles, such as Burford and Woodstock, which will help to attract more visitors and increase local spending. The policy also prioritises the protection of Primary Shopping Areas (PSAs), ensuring vibrant commercial hubs that maintain strong footfall and retail diversity and supports development that will enhance the nighttime economy. Additionally, the policy sets out the importance of accessibility within town centres, alongside improvements to the public realm and public transport connections, making these areas more appealing and easier to access. The policy supports local markets, offering valuable opportunities for small businesses and encouraging local entrepreneurs. Overall, by focusing development within defined town centres (particularly Witney, Carterton, and Chipping Norton, in line with the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy CP2) the policy will help to retain spending within the district. Therefore, the policy is expected to have a major positive impact on transport and accessibility and the economy (SA Objectives 11 and 13).

C.6.20.3 The policy supports the protection and enhancement of West Oxfordshire's distinctive landscapes, local character, and historic environments by promoting development that is

sensitive to the unique identity of each town centre. Through encouraging investment in the public realm and ensuring the delivery of high-quality, well-designed spaces, the policy enhances the overall amenity and visual appeal of town centres for residents, visitors, and businesses. These improvements also support healthier, more active lifestyles by making public spaces more attractive and accessible for walking and cycling. Furthermore, preserving local character and identity helps to foster a sense of place, strengthen community pride, and improve social cohesion by bringing people together in shared, meaningful environments. As such, minor positive impacts are identified for landscape, cultural heritage and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 4, 5 and 10).

C.6.21 Policy DM21 – Previously Developed Land and Development Densities

Policy DM21 – Previously Developed Land and Development Densities

1. Re-Use of Previously Developed Land

The re-use of previously developed land (brownfield land) will be strongly encouraged as a priority for new development, in order to make efficient use of available land, support regeneration, and reduce the need for development on greenfield sites.

Development proposals on previously developed land will be supported provided that they:

a) Do not result in significant environmental harm or the loss of important natural features.

b) Contribute positively to the regeneration of the area and the creation of sustainable communities.

c) Are designed to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the local area.

2. Efficient Land Use and Density

New development should make the most efficient use of land, with an emphasis on achieving appropriate and sustainable density levels.

Higher-density development will be supported in urban areas and locations with good access to public transport, key services, and employment opportunities, particularly around transport hubs, such as railway stations and bus interchanges.

Proposals for development should:

a) Achieve a density that reflects the surrounding urban context, maximises land use efficiency, and supports the sustainability of local infrastructure.

b) Ensure that higher-density developments do not compromise the quality of life for residents or the character of the area. This includes providing appropriate amenities, open spaces, and green infrastructure within the development.

c) Promote a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, and community uses, where appropriate, to create vibrant, sustainable neighbourhoods.

3. Urban Areas and Key Transport Hubs

In urban areas and around key transport hubs, higher-density development will be supported where it contributes to the vitality and sustainability of the area, and where it is consistent with the character and scale of surrounding development.

Key transport hubs include those with high public transport accessibility, such as mainline train stations and major bus interchanges.

Development near such hubs should:

a) Be designed to integrate with existing transport infrastructure and promote sustainable travel options, including walking, cycling, and public transport.

b) Maximise the use of available land while ensuring high standards of design and quality of living.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM21	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	++	0	+	+	+	+

C.6.21.1 Policy DM21 encourages the re-use of previously developed land and efficient use of land. Higher densities are supported in urban areas around key transport hubs, where they will contribute to the vitality and sustainability of an area and will be consistent with the character and scale of surrounding development.

C.6.21.2 Through supporting the re-use of previously developed land and encouraging higher-density development where appropriate, Policy DM21 will support the most effective and efficient use of available land for development. Development will also only be permitted where it is designed to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the local area, and contributes to regeneration with likely benefits for the appearance of the local area. As such, a major positive impact is identified for natural resources (SA Objective 8) and a minor positive impact is identified for landscape (SA Objective 4).

C.6.21.3 Policy DM21 supports higher density development around key transport hubs, which will ensure that areas of high transport demand coincide with areas providing the greatest transport supply and will encourage a greater uptake in the use of sustainable transport options such as trains and buses. An increased uptake in use of sustainable transport will be likely to reduce private car use, reducing levels of emissions and pollutants released. Consequently, there is the potential for a minor positive impact with regard to climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1) and air quality (SA Objective 6). Policy DM21 also sets out that development near transport hubs should be designed to integrate with the existing transport network, which will be expected to provide residents with a range of transport options for accessing services, amenities, education and employment opportunities. The policy also promotes active means of travel such as walking and cycling, which is encouraging active lifestyles. As such, a minor positive impact is identified for transport (SA Objective 11) and, assuming that infrastructure capacity is aligned with growth, secondary minor positive impacts are identified for health, education and economy (SA Objectives 10, 12 and 13).

C.6.22 Policy DM22 – Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings

Policy DM22 – Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings

The Council strongly supports the sensitive and sustainable re-use of both traditional and non-traditional buildings for employment, tourism and community uses, particularly where this contributes to the vitality of the rural economy, supports farm diversification, and meets identified local needs.

1. Re-Use of Traditional Buildings

The re-use or conversion of traditional non-residential buildings will be supported where all of the following criteria are met:

a) Positive Contribution to Local Character: The existing form, scale and architectural character of the building make a positive contribution to the rural or settlement context.

b) Respect for Heritage and Design Integrity: The building is structurally capable of conversion without the need for substantial rebuilding, extension, or alteration that would compromise its original form or result in the loss of features of architectural, artistic, historic or ecological value.

Policy DM22 – Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings

c) Appropriate Location and Use: The proposed use is of a type and scale appropriate to the building's location, having regard to accessibility to nearby settlements, services, and facilities, and ensuring there is no undue harm to the character, landscape or amenity of the surrounding area.

Sensitive design and the incorporation of energy efficiency improvements will be encouraged where they respect the heritage and appearance of the original structure.

1. Re-Use of Non-Traditional Buildings

The re-use of non-traditional buildings (including modern agricultural or industrial buildings) for employment, tourism, and community uses will be supported where the proposal:

a) Is located within or adjoining a Tier 1-3 settlement; or

b) Forms part of a Farm Diversification Scheme in accordance with Policy DM36; or

c) Responds to a demonstrable local need that cannot reasonably be met elsewhere through the use of existing or allocated buildings or land.

In all cases, the following additional criteria must be met:

a) Local Character: The design, scale, and siting of the building do not detract from the character or appearance of the surrounding area, including landscape setting.

b) Proportionate scale and sensitivity of use: The proposed use is appropriate to the building's context and can be accommodated without substantial alteration or extension of the host building, and without generating unacceptable impacts in terms of traffic, noise, or amenity.

c) Design quality and sustainability: Proposals should incorporate high standards of design, environmental performance, and landscape integration, including measures to enhance biodiversity where feasible.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM22	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0

C.6.22.1 Policy DM22 encourages the sensitive and sustainable re-use of traditional and non-traditional buildings for a range of purposes including employment, tourism, and community uses, especially where this will contribute to the vitality of the rural economy, support farm diversification and meets identified local needs.

C.6.22.2 This policy will be expected to support an efficient use of land through repurposing existing buildings and structures, reducing the likelihood and need to build on undeveloped land/ greenfield sites. As such, a minor positive impact is identified for natural resources (SA Objective 8).

C.6.22.3 With regard to non-traditional buildings, the policy will ensure proposals are of high design standards, are appropriate to the building's context with regard to scale and sensitivity, and do not detract from the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Re-use of traditional buildings will be expected to make a positive contribution to the surrounding rural context, be re-used for appropriate purposes, and ensure respect for heritage and design integrity. As such, a minor positive impact is identified for cultural heritage and landscape (SA Objectives 4 and 5).

C.6.22.4 Policy DM22 also seeks to ensure the re-use of non-traditional buildings includes measures to enhance biodiversity, which will contribute to habitat creation, supporting a

more interconnected habitat network. This will also be expected to support health and wellbeing, as access to nature for recreational purposes has been shown to enhance physical and mental wellbeing. The multifunctional ecosystem services associated with biodiversity improvements will contribute to further natural processes such as air filtration, carbon sequestration and reducing surface water runoff. The policy additionally encourages energy efficiency improvements to be incorporated. As such, minor positive impacts have also been identified with regard to climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, biodiversity, air quality and health (SA Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6 and 10).

C.6.23 Policy DM23 – Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services

Policy DM23 – Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services

1. Protection of Existing Community Facilities and Services

The Council will safeguard existing community facilities and services, including but not limited to public houses, schools, healthcare facilities, village halls, libraries, post offices, places of worship, recreational spaces, and local shops from development that would result in their unjustified loss or significant harm.

Development proposals involving the loss, change of use, or redevelopment of a community facility, including public houses, will only be permitted where it is clearly demonstrated that:

a) The facility is no longer viable, necessary, or in active use, and that all reasonable alternative efforts have been made to retain or repurpose it for community use, including a robust and active marketing campaign for at least 12 months at a realistic and competitive price;

b) A viability assessment has been submitted, including trading accounts (where relevant) and an independent expert evaluation;

c) The proposal includes mitigation measures or makes provision for an equivalent or improved replacement facility that is accessible to the same community and is delivered and operational prior to the loss of the existing facility.

2. Sequential Approach to Alternative Uses

Where the loss of a community facility is justified under the above criteria, applicants must demonstrate the application of a sequential approach to the consideration of alternative uses. The following order of preference will apply:

a) Employment-generating uses that provide local job opportunities;

b) Community-based uses (e.g co-working spaces, local enterprise hubs, cultural or educational uses);

c) Affordable housing, particularly social or genuinely affordable rented homes;

d) Open marking housing or other commercial uses only where options (a) to (c) have been shown to be unfeasible.

3. Community Value Considerations

Where a facility, particularly a public house, has been designated or nominated as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), additional weight will be given to its retention. In such cases, applicants must demonstrate that the community has been given adequate and realistic opportunity to bid for or take on operation of the facility, and that local groups have been fully engaged as part of the marketing process.

4. Provision of New Community Facilities and Services

The Council strongly supports the delivery of new or enhanced community facilities where they:

a) Address identified gaps in provision, supported by the community consultation or strategic assessments;

b) Are designed to be accessible, inclusive, flexible, and environmentally sustainable;

c) Are well located, within or adjacent to existing settlements and accessible by walking, cycling and public transport;

d) Contribute to the creation of vibrant, healthy, and resilient communities, promoting opportunities for social interaction and wellbeing.

5. Community Facilities in New Developments

Larger strategic-scale developments, particularly residential or mixed-use schemes, must include appropriate provision for community infrastructure. Proposals must be accompanied by a Community Infrastructure Statement outlining:

Policy DM23 – Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services

a) What facilities will be delivered, when, and by whom;

b) How facilities will be managed and maintained over time;

c) How proposals respond to the needs of both existing and future populations.

Multi-functional community spaces that combine a variety of uses (e.g., meeting, sports, cultural activities) will be particularly supported to maximise social value and long-term sustainability.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+

C.6.23.1 Policy DM23 seeks to safeguard existing community facilities and services and ensure development proposals do not result in unjustified loss of, or significant harm to, such facilities. The policy details that where such loss is justified, a sequential approach to its alternative uses should be demonstrably considered by applications. Where community facilities are designated as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), extra weight will be given to their retention. The policy supports the delivery of new/enhanced community facilities and sets out the requirement for major developments to incorporate an appropriate provision of community infrastructure with a Community Infrastructure Statement detailing the type of facility, who will delivering it, when it will be delivered, and whether or not it meets the needs of future and existing populations.

C.6.23.2 By safeguarding existing community facilities, supporting the development of new facilities and ensuring all major developments incorporate appropriate facilities, Policy DM23 will ensure existing and future residents are able to access the facilities required to meet their needs with regard to health, faith and the provision of groceries. Ensuring the retention of community facilities and services where possible will also be expected to foster positive relations and tolerance, encouraging community cohesion. As such, a minor positive impact is identified for health (SA Objective 10). Maintaining community facilities will also be expected to encourage people to spend locally, supporting businesses through continued stimulation of the local economy. A minor positive impact is identified for economy (SA Objective 13).

C.6.23.3 The retention of schools and libraries, as well as their incorporation into major developments, will support the provision of education and development of skills, preventing unnecessary oversubscription of schools and overcrowding of classrooms. Therefore, a minor positive impact has been identified for education (SA Objective 12).

C.6.24 Policy DM24 – Active and Healthy Travel

Policy DM24 – Active and Healthy Travel

1. Protecting Existing Active Travel Networks

Existing active travel routes, including public rights of way, footpaths, bridleways, and cycle paths, will be protected and safeguarded from development that would cause harm to their connectivity, accessibility, or character.

Proposals that affect these networks must:

Policy DM24 – Active and Healthy Travel

a) Demonstrate how the integrity and usability of existing routes will be maintained or enhanced.

b) Avoid severance of active travel routes and mitigate impacts where harm cannot be avoided, such as through diversions or improvements to alternative routes.

c) Retain green corridors and features that enhance the user experience of active travel routes, such as tree cover, biodiversity and natural landscaping.

2. Integrating New and Enhanced Active Travel Networks

New development proposals must:

a) Prioritise the creation of safe, direct, and attractive active travel routes that connect with existing networks and key local destinations, including schools, workplaces, shops, healthcare facilities, and public transport hubs.

b) Ensure that active travel infrastructure is designed to a high standard, following national and local guidance such as Local Transport Note 1/20 (Cycling Infrastructure Design) and any relevant local standards including the Oxfordshire Walking and Cycle Design Standards.

c) Incorporate segregated walking and cycling paths, where appropriate, to ensure the safety and comfort of all users, including children, older people, and those with disabilities.

d) Provide sufficient amenities to support active travel, such as secure cycle parking, storage, and charging facilities for e-bikes.

e) Contribute to the establishment of strategic, district-wide active travel networks that link rural and urban areas, ensuring routes are future-proofed for increased usage and changing mobility needs.

3. Active Travel as a Core Design Principle

Active Travel must be embedded as a fundamental component of the design and layout of all new developments, including:

a) Residential developments, which should integrate active travel routes into their internal design and link to nearby communities and services.

b) Employment and mixed-use developments, which must include dedicated infrastructure to facilitate commuting by walking and cycling.

c) Public realm improvements, ensuring pedestrian and cyclist safety is prioritised through measures such as traffic calming, pedestrianised zones, and crossings.

4. Supporting Active Travel with Green Infrastructure

Active travel networks should be designed to integrate with green infrastructure, enhancing biodiversity and creating attractive, multi-functional corridors that encourage their use. Proposals should:

a) Align active travel routes with green spaces and natural features, creating pleasant and shaded pathways.

b) Incorporate planting, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and wildlife-friendly measures alongside active travel infrastructure.

5. Promoting Active Travel in the Wider Community

The Council will work with developers, local communities, and stakeholders to:

a) Identify opportunities to enhance and extend the existing active travel network as part of new developments or infrastructure improvements.

b) Encourage initiatives that promote active travel, such as safe cycling campaigns, community walking groups, and partnerships with schools and employers.

c) Ensure active travel plays a central role in delivering net-zero carbon objectives by reducing reliance on car travel.

6. Monitoring and Compliance

All major developments must include an Active Travel Plan, demonstrating how the proposal aligns with this policy and promotes active travel.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM24	+	+	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0

C.6.24.1 Policy DM24 seeks to ensure existing active travel networks are protected and safeguarded. The policy also seeks to ensure new development proposals are designed to a high standard and integrate new and enhanced travel networks, including active travel networks, to connect residents to sufficient amenities and services.

C.6.24.2 The policy aims to support active travel routes which are well integrated with GI networks and enhance biodiversity. The creation of multifunctional networks and corridors will be expected to not only provide improved and sustainable transport options for residents, but also increase opportunities for nature, particularly in urban areas, and enhance habitat connectivity. As such, major positive impacts are identified for transport and biodiversity (SA Objectives 11 and 3).

C.6.24.3 Promoting and incorporating active travel routes in new developments will be expected to reduce private car use and, as a result, reduce the level of emissions produced. Designing active travel networks to be integrated with GI will also support the functioning of ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and air filtration. As such, a minor positive impact is identified with regard to climate change mitigation and air quality (SA Objectives 1 and 6). The incorporation of planting and SuDS will help to reduce levels of surface runoff and increase rates of infiltration, allowing developments to be resilient and have capacity to adapt to climate change (specifically, anticipated increases in the intensity and magnitude of flood events). Therefore, a minor positive impact is also identified for climate change adaptation (SA Objective 2).

C.6.24.4 Ensuring developments incorporate active travel routes and GI will also be expected to support healthier lifestyles and opportunities for connecting with nature for recreation, which has been shown to have benefits for both physical and mental health. A minor positive impact is identified in relation to health (SA Objective 10).

C.6.24.5 Supporting active travel and GI within new developments will also be expected to reduce the possibility for adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape character and setting. Reducing the prominence and domination of private vehicles in developments, as well as incorporating GI networks and corridors, will support more attractive and visually pleasing developments which integrate well with surrounding urban and rural settlements. As a result, an indirect minor positive impact on landscape (SA Objective 4) is identified.

C.6.25 Policy DM25 – Parking Standards for New Development

Policy DM25 – Parking Standards for New Development

1. Applications of Standards

Development proposals across West Oxfordshire must comply with the most up-to-date version of Oxfordshire County Council's Parking Standards for New Developments. This applies to all residential and non-residential schemes and must be tailored to reflect the location, accessibility, and context of each site, including proximity to Oxford, existing and planned sustainable transport networks and the ambition to promote active and low-carbon travel choices.

Policy DM25 – Parking Standards for New Development

2. Residential and Non-Residential Development

Parking provision for residential developments should be determined based on site location, dwelling size and tenure, allocation strategy (allocated/unallocated spaces), and the presence of parking controls or enforcement.

In town locations where high-quality public transport, walking, and cycling infrastructure exists or is proposed, reduced levels of on-site parking or car-free development will be supported where justified. In more rural locations, parking provision must strike a balance between supporting active travel and preventing inappropriate on-street or highway safety issues.

Non-residential proposals must align with Oxfordshire County Council's 'Decide and Provide' approach, ensuring that parking levels reflect the ambition to reduce car trips by 25% by 2030 and by 33% by 2040. Development proposals must provide robust, site-specific transport assessments and justify any deviation from the recommended standards, including evidence of operational requirements and sustainable travel alternatives.

3. Cycle Parking

All new developments must provide high-quality, secure, and accessible cycle parking in line with minimum standards. Cycle parking must be conveniently located, well-lit, covered, and integrated into the design of the site. Proposals must support the continued growth of cycling for commuting and leisure purposes, and provision should be made for larger cycles, e-bikes and adapted cycles where appropriate.

4. Design and integration

Parking must be designed to avoid adverse impacts on the character and quality of place, ensuring that it is useable, safe, and does not compromise pedestrian or cyclist safety. The design of parking must be consistent with Oxfordshire County Council's Street Design Guide and Secure by Design principles.

5. Car-Free and Low-Car Developments

Car-free and low-car developments will be supported in locations with excellent access to public transport (within 400m of frequent services), good walking and cycling infrastructure, and a range of local amenities within 800m. In such cases, Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) may be required to manage on-street parking. Adequate provision must still be made for people with limited mobility, operational requirements, and car club spaces.

6. Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure

All developments must provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure in accordance with Policy 29 of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP). Residential development must include active EV charging for each dwelling with off-street parking, and passive provision elsewhere as appropriate.

7. Parking for People with Impaired Mobility

Provision must be made for accessible parking spaces for Blue Badge holders. These spaces should be within the curtilage of the property and provide level access to entrances. Where this is not feasible, they must be located within 50m of the principal building entrance.

8. Visitor Parking and Strategic Sites

Visitor parking should be provided based on the level of unallocated parking within the development, with a maximum guideline of 1 space per 5 dwellings where needed. For large or strategic sites, visitor parking should be unallocated, located in clusters, and integrated with any proposed mobility hubs or shared mobility services.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM25	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0

C.6.25.1 Policy DM25 sets out the Council's provision for parking standards for car and cycle parking for new developments in West Oxfordshire. The policy supports a general shift towards increased provision and use of active and sustainable travel infrastructure.

C.6.25.2 For residential and non-residential developments located in areas with high-quality public transport, as well as walking and cycling infrastructure there will be reduced on-site car parking, with car-free developments supported in areas with excellent public transport connectivity. Policy DM25 seeks to ensure the provision of parking spaces which are accessible for Blue Badge holders and people with impaired mobility. Cycle parking which is of "*high-quality, secure and accessible*" must be incorporated into all new developments which will support cycling for commuting and leisure purposes. Improving cycle-related infrastructure will provide a safer user experience, attracting more residents to opt for active modes of travel. The policy will be expected to lead to a major positive impact in relation to transport and accessibility (SA Objective 11), through ensuring residents have access to parking infrastructure and active modes of transport, and ensuring there is appropriate infrastructure to meet different needs of people in West Oxfordshire.

C.6.25.3 The policy states that non-residential development proposals must align with Oxfordshire County Council's 'Decide and Provide' approach to reflect the ambition to reduce car trips by 25% by 2030 and 33% by 2040. The policy also requires all developments to provide EV infrastructure; combined with the provision of cycle infrastructure, this will support a modal shift towards low-emissions vehicles and means of travel. By reducing West Oxfordshire's reliance on private vehicles, there will be a reduction in levels of transport-related carbon emissions and air pollutants, such NO_2 and PM. This will be expected to help mitigate West Oxfordshire's impact on climate change and support improvements in air quality. Hence, secondary minor positive impacts are anticipated for climate change mitigation and air quality (SA Objectives 1 and 6).

C.6.25.4 Through encouraging a modal shift towards more active methods of travel, such as cycling, Policy DM25 will be expected to indirectly support more active and healthy lifestyles, providing means of exercise for commuting and leisure purposes. Therefore, an indirect minor positive impact on health (SA Objective 10) is also identified.

C.6.26 Policy DM26 – Windfall Housing Development on Unallocated Sites

Policy DM26 – Windfall Housing Development on Unallocated Sites

Overview

Windfall housing developments on unallocated sites will be positively supported, provided they are consistent with the overall spatial strategy of the Local Plan and other relevant policies, including the general development principles outlined in Policy DM1 and any made Neighbourhood Development Plans.

In accordance with the proposed spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy, the primary focus for windfall developments will be the Tier 1 Principal Towns, followed by Tier 2 Service Centres and then Tier 3 Villages. A more restrictive approach will apply to developments in Tier 4 Small Villages, Hamlets, and Open Countryside.

Priority will be given to the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land in preference to the use of undeveloped greenfield land.

Windfall Development at Tier 1 Principal Towns, Tier 2 Service Centres, and Tier 3 Villages

New windfall housing proposals will be permitted at Tier 1, 2, and 3 settlements in the following circumstances:

- Previously Developed (Brownfield) Land: The site is within or adjoining the built area and the proposal complies with the general development principles in Policy DM1 and other relevant development plan policies.
- Undeveloped (Greenfield) Land Within the Built Area: The proposal complies with Policy DM1 and other relevant development plan policies.

Policy DM26 – Windfall Housing Development on Unallocated Sites

- Undeveloped (Greenfield) Land Adjoining the Built Area: Proposals must demonstrate that they are necessary to meet identified housing needs, align with the overall spatial strategy outlined in Policy CP3, and comply with Policy DM1 and other relevant development plan policies.

Within the Cotswolds National Landscape and Tier 3 Villages, evidence of specific local housing need will be required, such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a settlement.

Elsewhere, evidence may be presented on a District-wide basis and/or as identified in an adopted neighbourhood plan.

Where proposals involve undeveloped land that cannot reasonably be considered to adjoin the built area of a Tier 1, 2, or 3 settlement, the site will be treated as open countryside, and the Tier 4 policy provisions below will apply.

Windfall Development in Tier 4 Small Villages, Hamlets, and Open Countryside

A more restrictive approach will apply to windfall developments in Tier 4 areas, in line with the overall spatial strategy (Policy CP3). In these areas, new dwellings will only be permitted in the following circumstances:

- There is an essential operational or specific local need that cannot be met in any other way, including the re-use of existing buildings.
- The proposal represents the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or is appropriate enabling development to secure the future of a heritage asset.
- The proposal involves residential development of exceptional quality or innovative design.
- New accommodation is proposed in accordance with Policy DM32 – Travelling Communities.
- Accommodation will remain ancillary to existing dwellings, secured as appropriate through a planning condition.
- It involves the replacement of a dwelling on a one-for-one basis.
- The proposal involves the re-use of an appropriate existing building that enhances its immediate setting and demonstrates that the building is unsuitable for other uses, such as business, recreation, community use, tourist accommodation, or visitor facilities, unless the proposal addresses a specific local housing need that would otherwise not be met.
- The site is allocated for housing within an adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM26	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0

C.6.26.1 Policy DM26 sets out the provision for windfall housing in West Oxfordshire. Windfall development will be considered in line with the settlement hierarchy set out in Policy CP2 with windfall development being focused within Tier 1 Principal Towns, Tier 2 Service Centres, and Tier 3 Villages, before being permitted in Tier 4 Small Villages, Hamlets, and Open Countryside.

C.6.26.2 Windfall development will support the provision of housing, ensuring there is an appropriate provision of accommodation of the type and tenure to meet the local need. A minor positive impact is identified with regard to housing and equality (SA Objective 9).

C.6.26.3 Policy DM26 ensures priority will be given to the re-use of previously developed land, ahead of undeveloped land/greenfield sites. This will promote the most efficient use of land, ensuring greenfield sites are not unnecessarily developed on and are protected where possible. Where windfall development falls within Tier 4 locations, new developments will be permitted where they involve the re-use of existing buildings.

Therefore, a minor positive impact is identified with regard to natural resources (SA Objective 8). New development may also be permitted within a Tier 4 location if it will help to secure the future of a heritage asset. Consequently, a minor positive impact has also been identified with regard to cultural heritage (SA Objective 5).

C.6.26.4 Where development is permitted within a Tier 4 location, Policy DM26 seeks to ensure any residential development is of high-quality design and enhances the immediate setting of any re-used existing buildings. The policy also gives particular consideration to the CNL and Tier 3 villages, stipulating that windfall development will only be permitted in these locations if there is evidence of a specific local housing need. By helping to protect important landscapes, a negligible impact on SA Objective 4 is likely.

C.6.27 Policy DM27 – Creating Mixed and Balanced Communities

Policy DM27 – Creating Mixed and Balanced Communities

Overview

All new residential development will be expected to contribute towards the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities by providing an appropriate mix of housing types, sizes, and tenures to meet identified local housing needs.

Development proposals that demonstrate an appropriate mix of housing will be given favourable consideration, particularly where they address specific local housing requirements and contribute to a more balanced housing stock within West Oxfordshire.

Indicative Dwelling Size Requirements

Major residential developments (10 or more dwellings) will be expected to accord with the following indicative dwelling size requirements for market and affordable housing:

Market Housing

1-bed 4%

2-bed 16%

3-bed 49%

4+bed 27%

Affordable Housing

1-bed 21%

2-bed 55%

3-bed 19%

4+bed 5%

These are indicative requirements only and provide a start point for agreeing an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes. The precise mix will be subject to site-specific factors and up-to-date evidence on local housing needs including the Council's housing register in relation to affordable housing.

Demonstrating a Balanced Housing Stock

Mixed-tenure developments that provide a combination of market and affordable housing, helping to foster inclusive and sustainable communities will be positively supported.

Developers will be required to provide a clear justification of how their proposals contribute towards a more balanced housing stock. This should include an assessment of how the development meets the needs of different groups, including but not limited to families, older people, first-time buyers, people with disabilities, and those requiring affordable housing.

Accessible and Adaptable Homes

All new homes must be built to Part M4(2) (Category 2: Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings) standards, or any equivalent replacement standards, to ensure homes are flexible and capable of adaptation to meet changing needs over time.

Wheelchair Adaptable Homes

Policy DM27 – Creating Mixed and Balanced Communities

To support the anticipated increase in the number of people with disabilities, linked to the ageing population, the Council will require major residential developments to provide a percentage of market and affordable homes as wheelchair adaptable dwellings designed to meet Building Regulation Requirement M4(3).

The proportion of M4(3) homes will be subject to negotiation based on site-specific circumstances, but as a minimum, at least 5% of homes should meet this standard.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Council will monitor the delivery of housing mix through its Annual Monitoring Report to ensure that the objectives of this policy are effectively achieved.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0

C.6.27.1 Policy DM27 details the need for the development to contribute to providing a wide-ranging mix of housing types, tenures and sizes to meet the identified local housing need and support the creation of well balanced and mixed communities. Major developments will be expected to provide housing in accordance with the indicative dwelling size requirements set out in this policy for both market and affordable housing.

C.6.27.2 Providing a mix of housing types, tenures and sizes will ensure the local identified need in West Oxfordshire is met and there is opportunity to access housing which meets different needs. The policy seeks to ensure all new homes are built in accordance with the appropriate standard for accessible and adaptable homes (Part M4 (2)- Category 2: Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings) and are capable of adapting to different needs over their lifetime. Major developments will also be required to provide a percentage (at least 5%) of market and affordable homes which are designed to be wheelchair accessible in line with Building Regulation Requirement M4 (3). As such, a major positive impact is identified in relation to housing and equality (SA Objective 9). By providing accessible and adaptable dwellings to meet the varying needs of residents, a minor positive impact on human health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10) is also likely.

C.6.28 Policy DM28 – Affordable Housing

Policy DM28 – Affordable Housing

Overview

This policy supports the provision of affordable housing in West Oxfordshire to address local housing needs, promote mixed and balanced communities, and ensure that a range of housing options are available across the District.

Development proposals that improve housing affordability and/or increase the supply of affordable homes to buy or rent will be supported in principle, subject to the specific considerations outlined below and compliance with other relevant local plan policies.

'Qualifying' Market Housing Developments

Affordable housing will be sought as part of market housing-led schemes in the following circumstances:

- Major developments resulting in a net gain of 10 or more dwellings or involving a site of 0.5 hectares or more.

Policy DM28 – Affordable Housing

- Within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) a lower threshold of 5 or more dwellings will apply.

The requirement to provide affordable housing will apply to market-led specialist older persons' housing (e.g. sheltered housing and extra-care housing) where self-contained units of accommodation are proposed.

On-Site Provision

A general presumption applies in favour of on-site affordable housing provision. Alternative delivery through off-site contributions or financial payments will only be considered where robust justification is provided, demonstrating that on-site provision is unfeasible or that off-site alternatives would better meet local housing needs.

Affordable Housing Requirement

Subject to viability, an overall District-wide requirement of 40% affordable housing will apply on market-led housing schemes.

Proposals exceeding the 40% requirement will be positively considered in the planning balance, provided they deliver an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures.

Where major development is brought forward within the Oxford Green Belt under the 'Golden Rules,' set out in national policy, the level of affordable housing provision sought will be increased to at least 50%, subject to viability.

Developments that involve the re-use or redevelopment of vacant domestic buildings will benefit from a reduced affordable housing contribution, equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of the buildings.

Type and Mix of Affordable Homes

Affordable housing will be required to meet identified local housing needs, with a particular emphasis on the provision of social rented homes[21].

For build to rent schemes, affordable private rent will be the expected form of affordable housing provision and will generally be set at 20% in line with national policy.

Design and Layout

Affordable homes should be tenure blind and well-integrated across developments. On larger schemes, affordable housing should be arranged in small clusters, proportionate to the overall scale of the development.

Rural Exception Sites (RES)

Small-scale rural exception sites will be supported where robust evidence demonstrates a specific local need for affordable housing. Proposals must be well-related to existing built-up areas. Where family homes are proposed as part of the proposed mix of house types, the site should be within walking distance of a primary school.

Affordable homes on rural exception sites will be secured as affordable in perpetuity through legal agreements. A limited proportion of market homes may be permitted where essential to support site viability.

First Home Exception Sites

First Home Exception Sites will be supported where the following criteria are met:

- The site is adjacent to an existing settlement.
- The proposal addresses an identified local housing need.
- The proposal is proportionate to the scale of the settlement, considering the existing number of households and the relative increase.

In line with national policy, First Home Exception Sites will not be supported within the Oxford Green Belt or the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Priority will be given to applicants with a local connection to the village, parish, or neighbouring parishes. A small proportion of market homes (generally no more than 20% of the total) may be permitted where necessary to ensure the site's viability.

Consideration may also be given to other affordable housing tenures as part of the mix, subject to evidence of local need.

[21] In line with the identified requirements of the West Oxfordshire LHNA (2025)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0

C.6.28.1 Policy DM28 aims to ensure there is an appropriate provision of affordable housing to meet the local housing need, a range of housing options are available to residents across the district, and well balanced and mixed communities are supported.

C.6.28.2 The policy sets out the requirement for 40% affordable housing district-wide for market-led schemes. Developments which demonstrate they will exceed the 40% threshold will be considered favourably. This percentage increases to 50% where the development site is located within the Oxford Green Belt. A lower percentage is also identified for developments which involve the re-use of vacant buildings. The policy places emphasis on the need for social rented homes, with dwellings of affordable private rent being set at 20% in line with national policy. Rural exception sites (RES) and first home exception sites will also be permitted in certain cases. This will be expected to ensure there are opportunities for all residents in West Oxfordshire to access housing to meet their needs. As such, a major positive impact is identified with regard to housing and equality (SA Objective 9).

C.6.29 Policy DM29 – Specialist Housing for Older People

Policy DM29– Specialist Housing for Older People

Overview

The Council supports the provision of specialist housing for older people, including but not limited to extra-care housing, sheltered housing, and other forms of supported living.

Proposals for such housing will be encouraged in appropriate, sustainable locations that are well-related to existing services, facilities, and public transport connections.

Integration and Social Inclusion

Developments should be designed to encourage social integration and inclusion, fostering a sense of community and enabling older residents to remain active and engaged.

Provision on Larger Strategic Sites

On larger strategic housing sites of 300 or more dwellings, there is an expectation that specialist provision for older persons' housing will be made as part of the overall housing mix. This may include extra-care housing, sheltered housing, or age-restricted housing schemes subject to evidence of local housing need.

Strategic housing proposals that do not include specialist older persons' housing will only be considered acceptable where it can be robustly demonstrated that:

The site and/or location is not suitable for such uses; or

There are other valid reasons why such provision cannot be made as part of the scheme.

Design and Accessibility

All specialist housing must be designed to meet the needs of older people, incorporating high-quality design standards, including accessibility, safety, and adaptability in accordance with Building Regulation Requirements M4(2) and M4(3) and the requirements set out in Policy DM27.

Affordable and Mixed-Tenure Options

Policy DM29– Specialist Housing for Older People

Proposals for specialist housing should provide a range of tenures, including affordable housing, to ensure choice and accessibility for all income groups.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Council will monitor the delivery of specialist housing through its Annual Monitoring Report and ensure that the needs of older people are effectively met as part of the overall housing strategy for West Oxfordshire.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0

C.6.29.1 Policy DM29 aims to support the provision of specialist housing to ensure older people in West Oxfordshire have the opportunity to access accommodation which meets their needs, including affordable housing and housing of a range of types and tenures, such as extra-care housing, sheltered housing and other forms of supported living. Proposals for this housing will be encouraged in sustainable locations with public transport connections and access to existing services and facilities. The policy sets out means to ensure specialist housing is well integrated into developments (to foster social inclusion) and is designed to meet the needs of West Oxfordshire's older residents.

C.6.29.2 This will be expected to ensure older residents in West Oxfordshire, who are more likely to be vulnerable to social isolation and suffer from issues relating to mobility and accessibility, are able to access housing which caters to their specialist needs and is of appropriate size, type and tenure. As such, a major positive impact is identified for housing and equality (SA Objective 9).

C.6.29.3 Providing specialist housing which will meet the needs of the ageing population has the potential to result in a minor positive impact for health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10), with opportunities for varying levels of support and assistance in the home, dependant on personal needs.

C.6.30 Policy DM30 – Custom and Self-Build Housing

Policy DM30 – Custom and Self-Build Housing

Overview

This policy supports the delivery of custom and self-build housing in West Oxfordshire to diversify the housing market, increase housing choice, and meet identified needs.

Proposals will be approved in suitable, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant policies of this Plan. Where development is proposed on greenfield land, particular regard should be given to the quality of agricultural land, with avoidance of the best and most versatile land (Grades 1–3a) wherever possible.

Provision on Major Developments

Minimum Requirement:

All housing developments of 100 or more dwellings are required to provide at least 5% of the residential plots as serviced plots for custom and self-build housing. This can include partially completed units for self-finish.

Alternative Provision:

Policy DM30 – Custom and Self-Build Housing

Where it is demonstrated that on-site provision is not feasible, the Council may accept the provision of serviced plots in a suitable, sustainable off-site location.

Marketing and Release:

- Serviced plots must be actively marketed for an agreed period (typically 12 months), including direct promotion to those on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Register.
- If the plots remain unsold after this period, they may be developed by the applicant for market housing, subject to evidence demonstrating a lack of interest.

Affordable Custom and Self-Build Housing

For major custom and self-build developments (10 or more plots, or 5 or more in the Cotswolds National Landscape), affordable self-build or custom-build plots will be required in accordance with Policy DM28.

Design and Integration

Custom and self-build homes should adhere to the West Oxfordshire Design Guide as well as the National Design Guide and Design Code to ensure high-quality design and sustainability.

On large developments, plots should be integrated into the site's masterplan and contribute to creating a balanced community.

All homes should be tenure blind and complement the character of the wider development.

Monitoring and Review

The requirement for serviced plots will be monitored through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM30	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	+

C.6.30.1 Policy DM30 supports the delivery of custom and self-build housing in West Oxfordshire, with the aim of diversifying the housing market, increasing the opportunity for a choice of housing and contributing to meeting the identified need. All residential developments of 100 dwellings or more will be required to provide at least 5% of the plots as serviced plots for custom and self-build housing. The policy also seeks to ensure that custom and self-build homes are sustainable and of high-quality design, in line with the West Oxfordshire Design Code and the National Design Guide and Design Code. By encouraging such developments to "*complement the character*", a minor positive impact on the local landscape could be secured (SA Objective 4).

C.6.30.2 As such, Policy DM30 will support the provision of a range of housing types, including affordable custom and self-build housing, to ensure West Oxfordshire's residents are able to access accommodation that meets their needs. Therefore, a minor positive impact is identified for housing and equality (SA Objective 9).

C.6.30.3 Encouraging a proportion of self-build homes can also lead to benefits for the local economy, where individuals are likely to employ local businesses. A minor positive impact on the economy (SA Objective 13) could therefore be seen.

C.6.30.4 Policy DM30 emphasises the need for new development to avoid BMV agricultural land wherever possible. A minor positive impact on the conservation of natural resources is therefore identified (SA Objective 8).

C.6.31 Policy DM31 – Community-Led Housing

Policy DM31 – Community-Led Housing

Overview

This policy provides positive support for the delivery of community-led housing schemes across West Oxfordshire to meet local housing needs, promote inclusive development, and empower communities.

Community-led housing developments will be supported in principle in appropriate, sustainable locations, subject to compliance with other relevant Local Plan policies.

Support for Community-Led Housing

Proposals for small-scale community-led housing schemes will be encouraged where they contribute to meeting identified local housing needs and demonstrate meaningful community involvement.

Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to identify suitable sites for community-led housing through their Neighbourhood Plans, reflecting local priorities and aspirations.

Community-Led Exception Sites

Community-led exception sites will be supported on land that would not otherwise be considered suitable for rural exception sites, provided the site is adjacent to an existing settlement and proportionate in scale (typically not exceeding 1 hectare or 5% of the settlement size).

The predominant form of housing on community-led exception sites must be affordable housing, with a strong emphasis on social rented homes.

A limited proportion of market housing (up to 20%) may be permitted where necessary to ensure the scheme's financial viability and deliverability.

Definition of Community-Led Development

For the purposes of this policy, community-led development is defined as:

- A project initiated and driven by a not-for-profit organisation for the primary purpose of meeting local housing needs rather than pursuing commercial gain.
- Developed by or in partnership with a legally constituted organisation, which may include a co-operative society, community benefit society, or company limited by guarantee.
- Democratically controlled by its members, with open membership available to beneficiaries and prospective beneficiaries.
- Managed or stewarded by the community-led organisation, potentially in collaboration with a Registered Provider of Social Housing, to ensure long-term benefits for the community.
- Designed to provide clearly defined community benefits, with appropriate measures in place to secure these benefits over time, including in cases where the organisation ceases to operate.

This policy will be applied alongside other relevant policies of the Local Plan to ensure that community-led housing schemes contribute to creating well-balanced, sustainable communities across West Oxfordshire.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

C.6.31.1 Policy DM31 aims to ensure the provision of community-led housing in West Oxfordshire, supporting the deliverance of the local housing need in a manner that both promotes inclusive development and helps to empower local communities by giving them the opportunity to contribute.

C.6.31.2 By supporting community-led housing which has a primary focus on affordable housing and social rented homes, Policy DM31 will contribute to the provision of a range of housing opportunities to meet the needs of local people. Community-led housing will also be expected to foster positive relations within the local community and reflect local priorities and aspirations. As a result, a major positive impact is identified for housing and equality (SA Objective 9), where Policy DM31 will support the local housing need.

C.6.32 Policy DM32 –Travelling Communities

Policy DM32 –Travelling Communities

Overview

This policy provides for the accommodation needs of Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople in West Oxfordshire, in accordance with the most recent accommodation assessment of need.

The Council will make provision for additional pitches and plots throughout the plan period, through a combination of extant planning permissions, the expansion or intensification of existing sites, and, where appropriate, new sites.

All development proposals for Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople accommodation will be assessed in line with other relevant policies of the Local Plan.

Strategic Site Provision

All strategic sites (i.e., those with 300 or more homes), including site allocations and windfall proposals, will be required to assess the potential for including accommodation for travelling communities as part of the overall development mix. Comprehensive evidence must be provided to demonstrate that appropriate consideration has been given to this requirement.

Strategic sites that do not include such provision will only be permitted if clear evidence shows that there is no identified need, or if a well-reasoned rationale demonstrates that the site is unsuitable for this purpose. In such cases, consideration may be given to meeting the need through an off-site proposal, provided it delivers equivalent benefit, meets the identified need in full, and is secured through appropriate mechanisms such as planning obligations. Proposals that actively incorporate accommodation for travelling communities will be viewed favourably in the overall planning balance.

Criteria for Site Selection

Proposals for new sites or the expansion and intensification of existing sites will be supported where they meet the following criteria:

- Accessibility: Proximity to settlements with a range of services and facilities, particularly healthcare and education. Sites should generally be located within 3 – 5km of the built area of Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements to ensure access to essential services and facilities.
- Environmental Considerations: The site must avoid areas at risk of flooding, harm to the historic and natural environment, and significant noise or disturbance.
- Transport and Infrastructure: The site should have safe access to the highway network, with the potential to provide necessary utilities (electricity, drinking water, sewage treatment, and waste disposal) without significant impact.
- Living Conditions: The site must offer a satisfactory living environment, including safe access to outdoor amenity space or provisions for such space on-site, especially child-friendly areas.
- Community Integration: Proposals must include arrangements for proper site management to promote community cohesion between settled and traveller communities.
- Deliverability: Sites must be capable of being developed efficiently, with clear demarcation of pitch or plot boundaries and appropriate landscaping in keeping with the local context.

Proposals will also need to demonstrate compliance with the general principles set out in Policy DM1.

Policy DM32 –Travelling Communities

Development in the Cotswolds National Landscape or Oxford Green Belt will not be supported unless there is an overriding need or exceptional justification.

Loss of Existing Sites

The loss of authorised pitches or plots for Gypsies, Travellers, or Travelling Showpeople will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that:

- The site is no longer suitable for its intended use, and suitable alternative provision is made available on a site of equal or better quality, with access to comparable services.
- There is no longer a need for such provision in the District. Any alternative provision must be secured through planning conditions and legal agreements, with replacement pitches made available before the original site is lost.

Community-Led Sites

The Council will support community-led proposals for Gypsy, Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople sites, where the development is led by, or with, a not-for-profit organisation, and serves the needs of the local travelling community. Such developments should be in line with other relevant plan policies.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	+	+	+

C.6.32.1 Policy DM32 aims to ensure the provision of accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in West Oxfordshire, which adequately meets their accommodation needs. The policy details that proposals are required to include arrangements for proper site management and to encourage community cohesion between the settled and traveller community. As such, a major positive impact is identified with regard to housing and equality (SA Objective 9).

C.6.32.2 By incorporating outdoor amenity space on site, or being within safe access of such a site, residents will have opportunities for recreation and exercise, which will be expected to support positive mental and physical wellbeing. Being proximate to settlements will offer residents access to key local services and amenities necessary to meet their needs, such as a GP surgery, pharmacy and supermarket. As such, a minor positive impact is identified for health and wellbeing (SA Objective 10). The policy sets out that proposals should incorporate appropriate landscaping in keeping with the local context which will be expected to ensure there are no adverse impacts on the surrounding landscape character and setting, a negligible impact for landscape (SA Objective 4) is therefore identified.

C.6.32.3 Policy DM32 also seeks to avoid adverse impacts in relation to the historic and natural environment, as well as avoiding developing sites which could be at risk of flooding. As such negligible impacts have been identified in relation to climate change adaptation, biodiversity and cultural heritage. **Recommendation:** The policy could benefit from specific reference to GI which would support a wider range of positive effects in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity (SA Objectives 1, 2 and 3).

C.6.32.4 The policy also sets out the need for sites to have safe access to the highway network. This will ensure sites are accessible to a range of opportunities, such as for education or

employment. Overall, a minor positive impact is identified for transport, education and economy (SA Objectives 11, 12 and 13).

C.6.33 Policy DM33 – Loss, Replacement and Sub-Division of Existing Dwellings

Policy DM33 – Loss, Replacement and Sub-Division of Existing Dwellings

The Council recognises the importance of alterations, extensions, and sub-division of existing dwellings as an important source of new homes. Such proposals will therefore be positively and favourably considered, subject to the key considerations and requirements outlined below.

Alterations, Extensions, and Sub-division of Existing Dwellings

Proposals to alter, extend, or sub-divide existing dwellings will be supported where they:

- Respect the character, appearance, and architectural integrity of the existing building and the surrounding area.
- Do not cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties, residents, or visitors.
- Provide satisfactory internal and external living conditions.
- Include appropriate levels of private outdoor space, parking provision, and refuse storage.
- In Tier 4 areas, favourable support will be given to the sub-division of larger dwellings, provided it can be robustly demonstrated that continued use as a single residential unit is not viable, and sub-division is the most effective way to secure its ongoing residential use.

Replacement of Existing Dwellings

Proposals for the 'one-for-one' replacement of existing permanent dwellings will be supported where they:

- Do not involve the loss of a building of historical, architectural, or local significance.
- Are of a scale and design that is proportionate to the original dwelling and in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- Avoid any harmful ecological impacts and provide appropriate mitigation where necessary.
- Do not result in a net loss of residential accommodation.

Loss of Existing Dwellings to Non-Residential Uses

The loss of existing dwellings will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where one or more of the following criteria are satisfied:

- The dwelling is located in a demonstrably unsuitable location for residential use.
- The property fails to provide satisfactory living accommodation that cannot reasonably be improved.
- The dwelling is not needed to meet identified local housing needs, as evidenced through an up-to-date local housing need assessment.
- The proposed use would deliver a demonstrable benefit to the local community, such as enhancing local services, facilities, or amenities. In such cases, a 'statement of community benefit' or equivalent will be required in support of any planning application to provide the necessary evidence.

Encouragement of Active Use of Empty Homes

Proposals that would bring long-term empty homes into active use or occupation will be strongly supported, particularly where they contribute to meeting identified housing needs and enhancing the vitality of the local area.

Supporting Information

Applicants will be required to provide clear evidence to justify any proposed loss, subdivision, or replacement of existing dwellings, including viability assessments, structural reports, and statements of community benefit where applicable.

The Council will apply this policy in conjunction with other relevant policies within the Local Plan to ensure that development supports sustainable growth and maintains a balanced housing stock across the District.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0

C.6.33.1 To contribute towards meeting the identified local housing need, Policy DM33 supports the alteration, extension and sub-division of dwellings; the replacement of existing dwellings on a 'one-for-one' basis; and the active use of empty homes. This will be expected to encourage the most efficient use of existing dwelling stock and contribute to an increase in overall housing supply. As such, a minor positive impact has been identified for Policy DM33 with regard to housing and equality (SA Objective 9). By encouraging efficient use of housing stock, a minor positive effect in terms of the efficient use of land will also be likely (SA Objective 8).

C.6.34 Policy DM34 – Provision and Protection of Land for Employment

Policy DM34 – Provision and Protection of Land for Employment

Proposals for employment development will be supported where they are demonstrably aligned with the Council's economic vision and objectives to 2041 and support other local, regional and national economic priorities.

Significant weight will be afforded to proposals which contribute to the advancement of key growth sectors including green technologies, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, knowledge-based industries, logistics, and digital innovation.

Allocated and Windfall Employment Sites

Allocated Sites

Employment development will be permitted on land identified for such uses in the Local Plan or a made Neighbourhood Plan, subject to site-specific policies and other relevant policy requirements of this Plan.

Windfall Sites in Tier 1 - 3 Settlements

Employment development will also be supported on windfall sites within the built-up areas of Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements, provided that:

a) The scale and nature of the development is appropriate to the location and the settlement hierarchy;

b) The site is well connected to local infrastructure, services, and sustainable transport options;

c) The proposal makes efficient use of land, with a preference for the re-use or redevelopment of previously developed (brownfield) land over the use of greenfield sites.

Rural and Tier 4 Locations

Proposals for employment development beyond the built areas of Tier 1–3 settlements or within Tier 4 locations will be considered under the provisions of Policy DM35 – Supporting the Rural Economy.

Expansion or Intensification of Existing Employment Sites

Proposals for the expansion, intensification, or upgrading of existing employment sites will be supported where they:

a) Are compatible with the surrounding land uses and do not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby occupiers or the environment;

b) Demonstrate that the scale and type of use can be accommodated by existing or improved infrastructure, particularly in terms of access, parking and servicing;

c) Maximise the efficient use of land and buildings, including upward extension or infill where appropriate;

Loss of Employment Land and Premises

Proposals involving the partial or complete loss of employment land or premises to non-employment uses, whether through change of use or redevelopment, will only be permitted where:

Policy DM34 – Provision and Protection of Land for Employment

a) The site is no longer economically viable or fit for continued employment use and there is no reasonable prospect of its continued use for employment purposes, demonstrated through active and realistic marketing for at least 12 months;

b) The loss would not harm the overall supply of employment land in that locality and would not undermine the Council's economic objectives;

c) The proposal would provide significant wider public benefits, such as delivering affordable housing, community infrastructure or environmental enhancements, which outweigh the loss of employment space.

In considering such proposals, the Council will have regard to the nature, condition, and location of the site, market demand, and the strategic importance of the employment use in the local context.

Implementation and Monitoring

The Council will work with public and private sector partners to ensure a sufficient supply of high-quality employment land and premises is available across the district. The provision, take-up, and loss of employment land will be monitored annually and reviewed to ensure continued alignment with the district's economic vision and spatial priorities.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	++

C.6.34.1 Policy DM34 aims to ensure employment development proposals are supported where they align with the Council's economic vision and objective up to 2041, and other local, regional and national economic priorities. The policy draws out particular sectors which will be weighted more significantly should proposals of these types arise, including green technologies, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, knowledge-based industries, logistics and digital innovation.

C.6.34.2 Through supporting the expansion and intensification of existing employment opportunities and only allowing the loss of employment land and premises under certain conditions, it is expected that employment opportunities in West Oxfordshire will be safeguarded and expanded. Furthermore, supporting opportunities in the diverse and emerging sectors listed above has the potential to attract and train skilled workers from the surrounding areas, bolstering West Oxfordshire as a key economic driver in the region. As such, a major positive impact is identified for economy (SA Objective 13).

C.6.34.3 Whilst the policy supports allocated employment development sites, and employment development in Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements, it also supports employment development in rural and Tier 4 locations, in line with Policy DM35 (Supporting the Rural Economy). This will be expected to increase the provision of employment opportunities in rural locations, supporting a more diverse and prosperous rural economy. Furthermore, this will be likely to increase the provision of employment training opportunities, such as apprenticeships, supporting career progression and encouraging young people to pursue learning opportunities outside of the school environment. As such, a minor positive impact has been identified in relation to education (SA Objective 12).

C.6.35 Policy DM35 – Supporting the Rural Economy

Policy DM35 – Supporting the Rural Economy

Development proposals that support the sustainable growth, diversification and resilience of the rural economy in West Oxfordshire will be supported, provided they are appropriately located, sensitively designed, and consistent with the character and function of the countryside.

Employment Development in Rural Areas

Small-scale employment development, including new businesses, will be supported within or adjacent to the built area of Tier 1 – 3 settlements where:

a) The scale and nature of the proposal is commensurate with the size and character of the settlement;

b) It does not detract from residential amenity or landscape character;

c) Safe and suitable access is available and traffic impacts are acceptable;

d) Opportunities for sustainable transport access are maximised.

In Tier 4 locations, new or replacement buildings for employment use will be supported where:

a) The proposal is required for a specific rural business need or land-based enterprise that cannot be reasonably accommodated in a more sustainable location;

b) The scale, design and siting of the development is compatible with a countryside location;

c) Existing buildings are re-used where feasible;

d) The development is physically well-related to existing settlements where possible and uses previously developed land in preference to greenfield sites.

Farm Diversification and Land-Based Enterprises

Proposals for rural diversification will be supported where they:

a) Form part of a viable farm or rural estate business and will contribute to its ongoing viability;

b) Remain secondary to the primary agricultural function and do not prejudice future agricultural activity;

c) Are compatible with rural character and landscape setting;

d) Re-use existing buildings wherever practicable;

c) Demonstrate no significant adverse impacts on local amenity, highways or public rights of way;

d) Include a business plan demonstrating long-term viability, where new buildings are proposed.

Farm Shops and Local Produce Outlets

Farm shops and outlets selling local produce will be supported where they:

a) Are part of a genuine farm diversification scheme;

b) Primarily sell produce from the host farm or those in the immediate vicinity;

c) Do not harm the viability and vitality of nearby town or village centres;

d) Are of an appropriate scale and design for their setting;

e) Are subject to planning conditions limiting the sale of non-local goods where necessary.

Sustainable Location and Accessibility

Recognising the dispersed nature of rural communities, proposals may be supported in locations not well served by public transport where:

a) There is no unacceptable impact on the local road network;

b) Development is designed to reduce car dependency and supports access by walking, cycling or community transport;

c) Opportunities to enhance local sustainability (e.g. improving footpath or cycle links) are incorporated.

Rural Worker Dwellings

Where essential to the functioning of a rural business, proposals for rural workers' dwellings will be supported in accordance with Policy DM26 – Windfall Housing where it can be demonstrated that there is an essential operational or specific local need that cannot be met in any other way, including through the re-use of existing buildings.

Policy DM35 – Supporting the Rural Economy

In such cases, rural worker dwellings must be proportionate in scale, location, and occupancy to the demonstrated need and will remain tied to the enterprise via condition or legal agreement.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	++

C.6.35.1 Policy DM35 aims to support sustainable growth, diversification and the resilience of the rural economy in West Oxfordshire. The implications and uncertainties facing many rural enterprises, particularly farming, as a result of climate change are only likely to worsen over the coming years and so the importance of supporting different land-based enterprises and farm diversification, as set out in Policy DM35, is growing stronger. Through the development of farm shops/local produce outlets, a range of job opportunities will be supported, providing individuals and communities with multiple and varied streams of income. As such, a major positive impact on the local economy (SA Objective 13) is identified.

C.6.35.2 Moreover, in supporting small-scale employment areas in Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements, Policy DM35 will not only be expected to increase opportunities for employment, but also opportunities for professional training and development. This may offer young people a greater variety of opportunities for learning and career progression outside of the school environment, for example through apprenticeship schemes. Therefore, a minor positive impact is identified for education (SA Objective 12).

C.6.35.3 Policy DM35 also has the potential to result in a minor positive impact on housing (SA Objective 9), as rural worker dwellings will be supported where this is "*essential to the functioning of a rural business*". This would be expected to support the provision of housing in rural areas and contribute to meeting the local housing need.

C.6.36 Policy DM36 – Learning, Skills and Training Opportunities

Policy DM36 – Learning, Skills, and Training Opportunities

The Council will take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to supporting the development of learning, skills and training opportunities across West Oxfordshire, recognising their essential role in enabling inclusive growth, social mobility, and community resilience.

Education Provision

Where appropriate and supported by evidence, major developments will be expected to make provision for education infrastructure on-site or through appropriate financial contributions, secured via a Section 106 legal agreement or other appropriate mechanism.

Significant weight will be given in the decision-making process to the creation, expansion or alteration of educational facilities, particularly where these directly support planned or committed growth.

Learning, Skills and Employment Integration

Larger development proposals will be encouraged to embed opportunities for skills development, local employment, and training as part of a place-based approach to inclusive growth.

Policy DM36 – Learning, Skills, and Training Opportunities

Major developments (defined as 10 or more dwellings or 1,000 sqm non-residential floorspace) will be encouraged to submit a Community Employment Plan (CEP).

Strategic-scale developments (300 or more dwellings or 4,000 sqm or more non-residential floorspace) will be required to submit a CEP as part of any planning application.

The scope and detail of each CEP should be proportionate to the scale of development but will typically include the following elements:

1) Provision of apprenticeships and vocational technical training pathways;

2) Delivery of employment and training initiatives across all age groups;

3) Traineeships for young people, particularly those not in employment, education, or training (NEET);

4) Use of best endeavours to maximise local labour, including pre-employment training programmes and opportunities for local businesses to participate in procurement processes;

5) Support for local and regional skills and training events;

6) Engagement initiatives with schools, colleges, and universities.

7) Promotion of inclusive economic development, including partnerships with social enterprises, volunteering opportunities, charitable contributions, and community outreach projects related to learning, skills, and employment.

Monitoring and Collaboration

The Council will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of CEPs and will work collaboratively with delivery partners to identify areas of need, track local outcomes, and continuously improve opportunities for education, employment, and skills development across the District.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++

C.6.36.1 Policy DM36 sets out support for the development of learning, skills and training opportunities across West Oxfordshire, recognising how these opportunities facilitate inclusive growth, social mobility and community resilience.

C.6.36.2 As set out in the policy, major developments will be expected to make provision for education infrastructure on-site where appropriate, as well as the creation, expansion or alteration of educational facilities. This will be expected to ensure local schools and spaces of learning do not become oversubscribed. The policy also sets out details to ensure that larger developments and strategic-scale developments embed opportunities for skills development and training, which will support the professional development and career progression of residents. As such, a major positive impact is expected in relation to education (SA Objective 12).

C.6.36.3 Strategic-scale developments will be required to submit a Community Employment Plan (CEP) to ensure these developments incorporate opportunities for the provision of apprenticeships and technical training pathways, employment and training initiatives, traineeships, and pre-employment training programs. The CEP should also help to promote inclusive economic development, volunteering, and community and outreach opportunities. This will be expected to increase opportunities for employment, as well as supporting local businesses and organisations through volunteering and charitable work.

As a result, a major positive impact has been identified in relation to the local economy (SA Objective 13).

C.6.37 Policy DM37 – Sustainable Tourism

Policy DM37 – Sustainable Tourism

West Oxfordshire's tourism sector will be supported and developed in a sustainable, inclusive, and place-sensitive manner, capitalising on the district's unique natural, cultural, and heritage assets for the benefit of visitors, residents, and the local economy.

Tourism and leisure proposals that positively contribute to the local economy and enhance the distinct character, landscape, and built environment of West Oxfordshire will be supported, particularly where they:

1) Promote year-round tourism to reduce seasonal pressures.

2) Encourage low-carbon and sustainable forms of travel and accommodation.

3) Engage local communities and support local supply chains.

Locational Strategy

The primary focus for new and expanded tourism and visitor proposals will be within the built-up area of Tier 1, 2, and 3 settlements, as defined in Core Policy 2 – Settlement Hierarchy.

Proposals in these locations must:

1) Be commensurate in scale with the character, infrastructure, and role of the settlement.

2) Accord with the general development principles set out in Policy DM1.

3) Prioritise the reuse of previously developed land and existing buildings wherever possible.

4) Ensure accessibility by sustainable modes of transport and contribute to reducing the need for car travel.

A 'town centre first' approach will apply to tourism and leisure uses such as hotels, conference facilities, and cultural venues, unless strong justification is provided for alternative locations based on functional or locational needs.

Outside the built-up area of Tier 1–3 settlements, including in Tier 4 settlements and the open countryside, new and expanded tourism and visitor proposals will be supported where they are appropriate to their rural context and meet one or more of the following criteria:

1) Are functionally linked to a specific rural, historic, or environmental attraction.

2) Are of a type and scale that cannot reasonably be accommodated within the built area of a Tier 1–3 settlement.

3) Support the diversification of an existing farm enterprise or rural estate.

4) Involve the sensitive re-use of an existing building that is appropriate in scale, design, and location.

Such proposals must demonstrate compatibility with their countryside setting, avoid adverse impacts on landscape character, biodiversity, and local amenity, and deliver clear economic or community benefits.

Environmental and Design Considerations

All tourism development proposals must:

1) Conserve and, where possible, enhance the natural environment, historic assets, and landscape character, particularly within designated areas such as the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB).

2) Incorporate high-quality design that reflects local character and vernacular.

3) Be designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, minimise environmental impacts, and support zero or low-carbon operations and infrastructure.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM37	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++

C.6.37.1 Policy DM37 will support the tourism industry in West Oxfordshire, with a particular focus on the district's unique natural, cultural and heritage assets. The policy states that tourism and visitor proposals will be supported where they contribute to the local economy; enhance the district's character, landscape and built environment; and (particularly) where they aim to reduce seasonal pressure, and encourage low carbon and sustainable forms of travel and accommodation.

C.6.37.2 By supporting sustainable tourism, Policy DM37 will continue to bolster the local economy. Through primarily focusing new and expanded tourism and visitor proposals in Tier 1, 2 and 3 settlements, visitors will be within walkable distances of local services and amenities (such as shops and restaurants) which will encourage local spending and support local businesses. Proposals in settlements such as Charlbury will also be highly accessible via sustainable modes of transport, with direct rail links to London Paddington, as well as links to northbound services heading to Birmingham and beyond. These proposals will be expected to attract tourists given the area's high connectivity. As such, a major positive impact is identified in relation to the local economy (SA Objective 13).

C.6.37.3 Centring tourism around West Oxfordshire's unique natural, cultural and heritage assets will be expected to promote their importance, educating visitors about key aspects of history (for instance, events occurring in relation to Blenheim Palace or RAF Brize Norton). Tourism and visitor proposals will be expected to "*conserve and, where possible enhance the natural environment, historic assets, and landscape character*", as well as ensuring high quality design where proposals are in rural and Tier 4 locations. This will be expected to continue to at least support and maintain, and ideally improve, the condition of the key features which attract visitors to West Oxfordshire. As such, minor positive impacts are identified in relation to landscape and cultural heritage (SA Objectives 4 and 5). There is also potential for a minor positive impact in relation to biodiversity (SA Objective 3), where enhancements to the natural environment will be expected to support expansion of the habitat network.

C.6.37.4 The policy details that all tourism development proposals be designed to mitigate and adapt to climate change and support low carbon operations and infrastructure. This will be likely to increase provisions of, and connection to, sustainable and active modes of transport (such as local bus routes), ensuring they are accessible to tourists. By encouraging a shift towards low-carbon energy provision, it is anticipated that there will be a reduction in carbon emissions and air pollutants, such as NO_2 and PM, which will mitigate West Oxfordshire's impacts on climate change. As such, minor positive impacts are identified in relation to climate change mitigation, adaptation and air quality (SA Objectives 1, 2 and 6).

C.6.38 Policy DM38 – Supporting Digital Infrastructure for Home and Co-Working

Policy DM38 – Supporting Digital Infrastructure for Home and Co-Working

The provision of new and upgraded digital infrastructure will be supported where it:

a. Delivers fast, reliable, and future-proof connectivity, such as full-fibre broadband and 5G networks, to all parts of the district, including rural and underserved areas.

b. Facilitates flexible and sustainable working practices, including remote working and the development of co-working hubs.

c. Contributes to the district's economic resilience and competitiveness by supporting home-based businesses, start-ups, and innovation.

Integration with New Development

All new development proposals must:

a. Be designed to incorporate the highest standard of digital connectivity, including full-fibre broadband infrastructure, from the outset.

b. Ensure that new residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments provide sufficient capacity to meet current and future digital connectivity needs.

c. Include digital connectivity as a key consideration in the master planning and design stages.

Enhancing Existing Areas

Proposals for the enhancement of digital infrastructure in existing residential and employment areas will be supported where they:

a. Minimise visual and environmental impacts, including the sensitive siting and design of telecommunications equipment and supporting infrastructure.

b. Improve connectivity for underserved or poorly connected areas, ensuring that rural communities are not left behind.

Supporting Co-Working Spaces

The development of co-working spaces will be supported where proposals:

a. Are located within existing settlements, making use of accessible and sustainable transport options where available.

b. Provide high-quality digital connectivity, alongside other facilities and services that support collaboration and productivity.

c. Enhance opportunities for local residents to work closer to home, reducing the need for commuting and contributing to reduced carbon emissions.

Minimising Environmental Impacts

Proposals for digital infrastructure must:

a. Be designed and sited to minimise visual intrusion, particularly in sensitive locations such as the Cotswolds National Landscape or Conservation Areas.

b. Avoid harm to the natural environment, including protected habitats and species, and incorporate mitigation measures where necessary.

c. Use shared infrastructure, such as mast-sharing or co-location, to reduce unnecessary proliferation of equipment.

Collaborative Delivery

The Council will work in partnership with developers, telecommunications providers, and local communities to:

a. Facilitate the roll-out of digital infrastructure in line with national and local priorities.

b. Address barriers to delivery, such as access to funding or permissions for infrastructure deployment.

c. Encourage the integration of digital connectivity improvements into wider regeneration or development projects.

Evidence and Compliance

All planning applications involving digital infrastructure or major new development must:

a. Include a Digital Infrastructure Statement demonstrating how the proposal meets this policy's requirements and providing evidence of consultation with relevant stakeholders, including telecommunications providers and the local community, where applicable.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM38	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	++

C.6.38.1 Policy DM38 aims to ensure the provision of new and upgraded digital infrastructure to ensure fast connectivity to full-fibre broadband and 5G networks throughout the district, flexible and sustainable working practices, and greater district-wide economic resilience and competitiveness.

C.6.38.2 The incorporation and enhancement of fast and modern digital infrastructure will bolster West Oxfordshire's economy through supporting home-based businesses, start-ups and innovation. Co-working spaces and increased digital connectivity will also support a sustainable pattern of working, allowing residents to work from home or close to home, thereby reducing transport-related carbon emissions and air pollutants, such as NO_2 and PM. As such, a major positive impact is identified in relation to the economy (SA Objective 13) and minor positive impacts are identified in relation to climate change mitigation and air quality (SA Objectives 1 and 6).

C.6.38.3 A strong network of digital infrastructure will also be expected to have a minor positive impact on education (SA Objective 9), where it will be expected to improve access to online educational resources and programs.

C.6.38.4 Minimising environmental impacts, including avoiding harm to the natural environment and sensitive landscape locations, will be expected to avoid any adverse impacts on local biodiversity and the local landscape character. As such, negligible impacts have been identified in relation to biodiversity and landscape (SA Objectives 3 and 4).

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Habitats Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys

LEPUS CONSULTING

LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

© Lepus Consulting Ltd

Eagle Tower

Montpellier Drive

Cheltenham

GL50 1TA

T: 01242 525222

E: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com

www.lepusconsulting.com

CHELTENHAM

Lepus Consulting
Eagle Tower
Montpellier Drive
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL50 1TA

t: 01242 525222
w: www.lepusconsulting.com
e: enquiries@lepusconsulting.com