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*West Oxfordshire  
Pre-Submission  
Local Plan*

Habitats      Regulations  
Assessment

March 2015

Prepared for:  
West Oxfordshire District  
Council

REVISION SCHEDULE					
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope and background of the project

URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Ltd was appointed by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to assist the Council in undertaking a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2015) following the publication of the Draft Local Plan (2012) the Local Plan Housing Consultation Paper (August 2014) and the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA – April 2014). The objective of the assessment is to identify any aspects of the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan that would have the potential to cause a likely significant effect on Natura 2000 or European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites), either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects, and to devise appropriate mitigation strategies where such effects are identified.

### 1.2 Legislation

The need for HRA is set out within Article 6 of the EC Habitats Directive 1992, and interpreted into British law by the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010. The ultimate aim of the Habitats Directive is to “*maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest*” (Habitats Directive, Article 2(2)). This aim relates to habitats and species, not the European sites themselves, although the sites have a significant role in delivering favourable conservation status. European sites (also called Natura 2000 sites) can be defined as actual or proposed/candidate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). It is also Government policy for sites designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) to be treated as having equivalent status to Natura 2000 sites.

The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to protected areas. Plans and projects can only be permitted having ascertained that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site(s) in question. This is in contrast to the SEA Directive which does not prescribe how plan or programme proponents should respond to the findings of an environmental assessment; merely that the assessment findings (as documented in the ‘environmental report’) should be ‘taken into account’ during preparation of the plan or programme. In the case of the Habitats Directive, plans and projects may still be permitted if there are no alternatives to them and there are Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation would be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.

All the European sites mentioned in this document are shown in Figure 1. In order to ascertain whether or not site integrity will be affected, a HRA should be undertaken of the plan or project in question:

**Box 1. The legislative basis for HRA**

**Habitats Directive 1992**

Article 6 (3) states that:

*“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.”*

**Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)**

The Regulations state that:

*“A competent authority, before deciding to ... give any consent for a plan or project which is likely to have a significant effect on a European site ... shall make an appropriate assessment of the implications for the site in view of that sites conservation objectives... The authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site”.*

**1.3 West Oxfordshire District**

There is no pre-defined guidance that dictates the physical scope of an HRA of a Local Plan. Therefore, in considering the physical scope of the assessment we were guided primarily by the identified impact pathways rather than by arbitrary ‘zones’. Current guidance suggests that the following European sites be included in the scope of assessment:

- All sites within the West Oxfordshire District boundary; and
- Other sites shown to be linked to development within the District boundary through a known ‘pathway’ (discussed below).

Briefly defined, pathways are routes by which a change in activity within the Local Plan area can lead to an effect upon a European site. In terms of the second category of European site listed above, CLG guidance states that the HRA should be ‘*proportionate to the geographical scope of the [plan policy]*’ and that ‘*an HRA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose*’ (CLG, 2006, p.6).

There is one European site partially within West Oxfordshire District – Oxford Meadows SAC. Five European designated sites lie within adjoining districts and the potential for longer range and indirect effects upon these sites has been considered (Table 1). Figure 1 shows the location of the European sites in relation to West Oxfordshire District.

**Table 1: European sites considered at the screening stage of the Habitats Regulations Assessment**

Site	Minimum Distance from West Oxfordshire District
Oxford Meadows SAC	Partially within the district
Cothill Fen SAC	3.2km south east of the District
North Meadow & Clattinger Farm SAC	13.8km south west of the District
Hackpen Hill SAC	14.4km south of the District
Little Wittenham SAC	16km south east of the district
River Lambourn SAC	19.5km south of the district

#### 1.4

#### Background

West Oxfordshire District Council is preparing a new Draft Local Plan (LP) to replace the existing plan (adopted in 2006).

In November 2012 a Draft LP was published. This included a housing target of 5,500 new dwellings during the lifetime of the draft LP (2011-2029) and the delivery of 60ha of employment land.

The Draft LP (2012) was supported by a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Position Statement which concluded that impact pathways exist between the proposed quantum and distribution of growth which could have an effect upon Oxford Meadows SAC (recreational pressure and air quality), and Cothill Fen SAC (recreational pressure). It was also considered that although impact pathways were present, their effects were not considered to be significant either alone or in-combination with other project and / or plans.

As such, it was determined that the proposals within the Draft LP (2012) (5,500 new dwellings) would not have a likely significant effect upon the European designated sites discussed.

Since 2012, the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has been published (April 2014) and concludes that in the period 2011 – 2031, a total of 13,200 new homes are needed in West Oxfordshire (660 per annum).

In response to the SHMA, West Oxfordshire District Council published a Local Plan Housing Consultation paper<sup>1</sup> which proposed an increase of the housing target to 9,450 homes in the period 2011-2029 (525 per annum).

The Council's pre-submission draft Local Plan proposes a housing target of 10,500 in the period 2011 – 2031 (525 per annum).

This current iteration of the HRA assesses the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan (2015) but based on a housing quantum of 13,200 homes as per the SHMA (2014). The purpose of this is to present a 'worst-case' scenario in terms of potential impact of future development on any European sites.

<sup>1</sup> [http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/consult.ti/Housing\\_Consultation/consultationHome](http://planningconsultation.westoxon.gov.uk/consult.ti/Housing_Consultation/consultationHome)

Previous iterations of the West Oxfordshire Draft Local Plan HRA<sup>2</sup>, screened out any realistic impact pathways between the Draft Local Plan and the following European designated sites as they are adequately far away from the district boundary:

- North Meadow & Clattinger Farm SAC
- Hackpen Hill SAC
- Little Wittenham SAC
- River Lambourn SAC

As such, these European designated sites are not discussed further within this document.

## **1.5 This report**

Chapter 2 of this report explains the process by which the HRA has been carried out.

Chapter 3 explores the relevant pathways of impact.

Chapter 4 provides a screening exercise on each of the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan policies.

Chapters 5-6 consider the individual European sites – their designation, condition and potential effects of the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan that could not be screened out following the initial short appraisal.

The key findings are summarised and concluded in Chapter 7.

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<sup>2</sup> West Oxfordshire District Council Core Strategy Habitats Regulations Assessment Stage 1 – Screening. Appendix 1  
<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/300102/HRA-2012-Appendix-1.pdf>

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Key Principles

This section sets out the basis of the methodology for the HRA. URS has adhered to several key principles in developing the methodology – see Table 2.

**Table 2 - Key principles underpinning the proposed methodology**

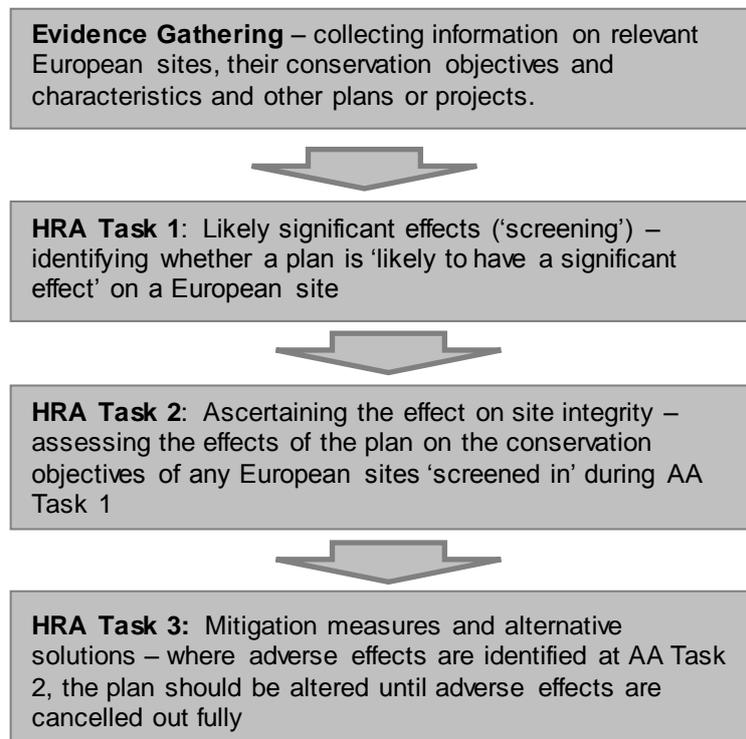
Principle	Rationale
Use existing information	We have made the best use of existing information to inform the assessment. This has included information gathered as part of the SA of the emerging Plan and information held by Natural England, the Environment Agency and others.
Consult with Natural England	We have consulted with Natural England for the duration of the assessment and have utilised information held by them and others and taken on board their comments on the assessment process and findings.
Ensure a proportionate assessment	We have ensured that the level of detail addressed in the assessment reflects the level of detail in the Plan (i.e. that the assessment is proportionate). With this in mind, the assessment has focused on information and impacts considered appropriate to the local level.
Keep the process as simple as possible	We have endeavoured to keep the process as simple as possible while ensuring an objective and rigorous assessment in compliance with the Habitats Directive and emerging best practice.
Ensure a clear audit trail	We have ensured that the HRA process and findings are clearly documented in order to ensure a clearly discernible audit trail.

### 2.2 Process

The HRA is being carried out in the absence of formal Government guidance. Communities and Local Government released a consultation paper on Appropriate Assessment of Plans in 2006<sup>3</sup>. As yet, no further formal guidance has emerged.

Figure 2 below outlines the stages of HRA according to current draft CLG guidance. The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information, recommendations and any relevant changes to the plan until no significant adverse effects remain.

<sup>3</sup> CLG (2006) Planning for the Protection of European Sites, Consultation Paper



**Figure 2 – Four-Stage Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment** (Source: CLG, 2006)

**2.3 Likely Significant Effects (LSE)**

The first stage of any Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA Task 1) is a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) test - essentially a risk assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as Appropriate Assessment is required. The essential question is:

*"Is the Plan, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon European sites?"*

The objective is to 'screen out' those plans and projects that are, without any detailed appraisal, unlikely to result in significant adverse effects upon European sites.

In evaluating significance, URS have relied on our professional judgment as well as stakeholder consultation.

The level of detail concerning developments that will be permitted under land use plans is rarely sufficient to make a detailed quantification of effects. Therefore, we have again taken a precautionary approach (in the absence of more precise data) assuming as the default position that if an adverse effect cannot be confidently ruled out, avoidance or mitigation measures must be provided. This is in line with draft CLG guidance that the level of detail of the assessment, whilst meeting the relevant requirements of the Habitats Regulations, should be 'appropriate' to the level of plan or project that it addresses (see Figure 2 for a summary of this 'tiering' of assessment).

## 2.4 Task Two & Three: Appropriate Assessment and Mitigation

With regard to those European sites where it was considered not possible to ‘screen out’ the Local Plan without detailed appraisal, it was necessary to progress to the later ‘Appropriate Assessment’ stage to explore the adverse effects and devise mitigation.

The steps involved are detailed in Box 2.

Box 2. The steps involved in the Appropriate Assessment exercise undertaken for the Local Plan

1. Explore the reasons for the European designation of these sites.
2. Explore the environmental conditions required to maintain the integrity of the selected sites and become familiar with the current trends in these environmental processes.
3. Gain a full understanding of the plan and its policies and consider each policy within the context of the environmental processes – would the policy lead to an impact on any identified process?
4. Decide if the identified impact will lead to an adverse effect.
5. Identify other plans and projects that might affect these sites in combination with the Plan and decide whether there any adverse effects that might not result from the Plan in isolation will do so “in combination”.
6. Develop measures to avoid the effect entirely, or if not possible, to mitigate the impact sufficiently that its effect on the European site is rendered effectively inconsequential.

In evaluating significance, URS has relied on the professional judgment of internal HRA specialists as well as stakeholder consultation.

The level of detail concerning developments that will be permitted under land use plans is highly unlikely to be sufficient to make a detailed quantification of adverse effects. Therefore, we have again taken a precautionary approach (in the absence of more precise data) assuming as the default position that if an adverse effect cannot be confidently ruled out, avoidance or mitigation measures must be provided.

This is in line with CLG guidance that the level of detail of the assessment, whilst meeting the relevant requirements of the Habitats Regulations, should be ‘appropriate’ to the level of plan or project that it addresses.

When undertaking this part of the assessment it is essential to bear in mind the principal intention behind the legislation i.e. to ensure that those policies which in themselves have minor impacts are not simply dismissed on that basis, but are evaluated for any cumulative contribution they may make to an overall significant effect. In practice, in combination

assessment is therefore of greatest relevance when the plan would otherwise be screened out because its individual contribution is inconsequential (i.e. not a Likely Significant Effect).

## 2.5 Confirming other plans and projects that may act ‘in combination’

It is clearly neither practical nor necessary to assess the ‘in combination’ effects of the Local Plan within the context of all other plans and projects within the South East. In practice therefore, in combination assessment is of greatest relevance when the plan would otherwise be screened out because its individual contribution is inconsequential. For the purposes of this assessment, we have determined that, due to the nature of the identified impacts, the key other plans and projects relate to the additional housing, transportation and commercial/industrial allocations proposed for other neighbouring authorities over the lifetime of the Local Plan.

**Table 3: Housing levels that are proposed to be delivered in authorities surrounding West Oxfordshire District.**

Local Authority	Planning DPD and Timescale	Total housing over the Local Plan period	Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Recommendations (Net 2011-2031)
South Oxfordshire District	Core Strategy (2012 – 2027)	10,940	14,500-16,500
Vale of the White Horse	Submission Local Plan (2012 – 2029)	20,560	Up to 20,560
Oxford City	Core Strategy (2011-2026)	9,132	24,000-32,000
Cherwell	Submitted Local Plan (2011-2031)	22, 800	21,800-23,800
Swindon Borough	Draft Local Plan (2011-2026)	22,000	Not relevant
Cotswold District	Draft Local Plan (2011-2031)	6,900	Not relevant
Wiltshire (Marlborough Area)	Submitted Core Strategy (2011-2026)	850	Not relevant
West Berkshire	Core Strategy (2006-2026)	10,500	Not relevant

West Oxfordshire is working with the other Oxfordshire authorities to assess how many homes are needed in the district up to 2031. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (April 2014) identified a housing need for up to 13,200 new homes in West Oxfordshire to 2031, and this is the number assessed in this HRA to take account of the ‘worst-case’ scenario. The Oxfordshire SHMA has also identified higher levels of housing need for the other Oxfordshire districts (South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse, Oxford City and Cherwell).

There are other plans and projects that are relevant to the ‘in combination’ assessment, most notably Thames Water’s Water Resource Management Plan (2015-40). This has been taken into account in this assessment.

Table 4 summarises documents that we have reviewed to inform our assessment:

**Table 4: Documents reviewed in order to inform this assessment**

Document		Relevant contents
Environment Agency (various)	Stage 3 and 4 Appropriate Assessments: Review of Consents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding of existing conditions at European sites</li> </ul>
Environment Agency (2006a)	Water Resources in the South East report to latest South East Plan housing provision and distribution received from SEERA. May 2006, for commentary to SEERA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water resources.</li> </ul>
Thames Water (July 2012)	Final Water Resource Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sets out the approach to providing water resources</li> </ul>
Environment Agency (2006b)	Creating a Better Place: Planning for Water Quality and Growth in the South East. Version 10.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sewage treatment capacity.</li> </ul>
Assessors Report by Peter Burley (2007)	Report to the Panel for the Draft South East Plan Examination in Public on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Natural England's Draft Delivery Plan. 19 February 2007.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments on Natural England's Draft Delivery Document.</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014)	Housing Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sets out the background to housing options contained within the Local Plan</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council (2011)	The Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan, 2011 – 2030.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transport schemes.</li> </ul>
Core Strategies and Local Plans for neighbouring local authorities	Spatial development policies for South Oxfordshire, Oxford, Cherwell, Vale of the White Horse, Swindon, West Berkshire and Wiltshire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides projected levels of housing for authorities surrounding West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>

In preparing this HRA we have utilised data held on the following sources in order to inform on the current ecological status of relevant European sites:

- The UK Air Pollution Information System ([www.apis.ac.uk](http://www.apis.ac.uk)); and
- Nature on the Map and its links to SSSI citations and the JNCC website ([www.natureonthemap.org.uk](http://www.natureonthemap.org.uk))

### 3 PATHWAYS OF IMPACT

#### 3.1 Introduction

In carrying out an HRA it is important to determine the various ways in which land use plans can impact on European sites by following the pathways along which development can be connected with European sites, in some cases many kilometres distant. Briefly defined, pathways are routes by which a change in activity associated with a development can lead to an effect upon a European site.

#### 3.2 Urbanisation

This impact is closely related to recreational pressure, in that they both result from increased populations within close proximity to sensitive sites. Urbanisation is considered separately as the detail of the impacts is distinct from the trampling, disturbance and dog-fouling that results specifically from recreational activity. The list of urbanisation impacts can be extensive, but core impacts can be singled out:

- Increased fly-tipping - Rubbish tipping is unsightly but the principle adverse ecological effect of tipping is the introduction of invasive alien species with garden waste. Garden waste results in the introduction of invasive aliens precisely because it is the 'troublesome and over-exuberant' garden plants that are typically thrown out<sup>4</sup>. Alien species may also be introduced deliberately or may be bird-sown from local gardens.
- Cat predation - A survey performed in 1997 indicated that nine million British cats brought home 92 million prey items over a five-month period<sup>5</sup>. A large proportion of domestic cats are found in urban situations, and increasing urbanisation is likely to lead to increased cat predation.

The most detailed consideration of the link between relative proximity of development to European sites and damage to interest features has been carried out with regard to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.

After extensive research, Natural England and its partners produced a 'Delivery Plan' which made recommendations for accommodating development while also protecting the interest features of the European site. This included the recommendation of implementing a series of zones within which varying constraints would be placed upon development. While the zones relating to recreational pressure expanded to 5km (as this was determined from visitor surveys to be the principal recreational catchment for this European site), that concerning other aspects of urbanisation (particularly predation of the chicks of ground-nesting birds by domestic cats, but also including recreational pressure, fly tipping, increased incidence of fires and general urbanisation) was determined at 400m from the SPA boundary. The delivery plan concluded that the adverse effects of any development located within 400m of the SPA boundary could not be mitigated, in part because this was the range within which cats could be expected to roam as a matter of routine and there was no realistic way of restricting their movements, and as such, no new housing should be located within this zone.

The West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan document does not outline any major strategic housing locations within 500m of any European sites and therefore impacts of urbanisation are not considered further within this HRA.

It should be noted that the Draft Local Plan's housing provision of 5,500 new dwelling in the period 2011 – 2029 (306 per year) has been increased to 10,500 homes in the period 2011 –

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, O. & Bevan, D. 1997. The effect of urbanisation on ancient woodlands. *British Wildlife* 8: 213-218.

<sup>5</sup> Woods, M. et al. 2003. Predation of wildlife by domestic cats *Felis catus* in Great Britain. *Mammal Review* 33, 2 174-188

2031 (525 per year). This is in response to the Oxfordshire SHMA which identified the need for 13,200 new homes in the period 2011 – 2031 (660 per year). **To avoid any likely significant effect upon Oxford Meadows SAC as a result of urbanisation, it is recommended that no strategic allocation is made within 500m of the SAC.**

### 3.3 Recreational pressure

Consultation for the HRA of the South East Plan revealed that potentially damaging levels of recreational pressure are already faced by many European sites. Recreational use of a site has the potential to:

- Cause disturbance to sensitive species, particularly ground-nesting birds such as woodlark and nightjar, and wintering wildfowl;
- Prevent appropriate management or exacerbate existing management difficulties;
- Cause damage through erosion; and
- Cause eutrophication as a result of dog fouling.

Different types of European sites (e.g. heathland, chalk grassland) are subject to different types of recreational pressures and have different vulnerabilities. Studies across a range of species have shown that the effects from recreation can be complex.

There have been several papers published that empirically demonstrate that damage to vegetation in woodlands and other habitats can be caused by vehicles, walkers, horses and cyclists:

- Wilson & Seney (1994)<sup>6</sup> examined the degree of track erosion caused by hikers, motorcycles, horses and cyclists from 108 plots along tracks in the Gallatin National Forest, Montana. Although the results proved difficult to interpret, it was concluded that horses and hikers disturbed more sediment on wet tracks, and therefore caused more erosion, than motorcycles and bicycles.
- Cole et al (1995a, b)<sup>7</sup> conducted experimental off-track trampling in 18 closed forest, dwarf scrub and meadow & grassland communities (each tramped between 0 – 500 times) over five mountain regions in the US. Vegetation cover was assessed two weeks and one year after trampling, and an inverse relationship with trampling intensity was discovered, although this relationship was weaker after one year than two weeks indicating some recovery of the vegetation. Differences in plant morphological characteristics were found to explain more variation in response between different vegetation types than soil and topographic factors. Low-growing, mat-forming grasses regained their cover best after two weeks and were considered most resistant to trampling, while tall forbs (non-woody vascular plants other than grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns) were considered least resistant. Cover of hemicryptophytes and geophytes (plants with buds below the soil surface) was heavily reduced after two weeks, but had recovered well after one year and as such these were considered most resilient to trampling. Chamaephytes (plants with buds above the soil surface) were least resilient to trampling. It was concluded that these would be the least tolerant of a regular cycle of disturbance.

<sup>6</sup> Wilson, J.P. & J.P. Seney. 1994. Erosional impact of hikers, horses, motorcycles and off road bicycles on mountain trails in Montana. *Mountain Research and Development* 14:77-88

<sup>7</sup> Cole, D.N. 1995a. Experimental trampling of vegetation. I. Relationship between trampling intensity and vegetation response. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 203-214

Cole, D.N. 1995b. Experimental trampling of vegetation. II. Predictors of resistance and resilience. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 215-224

- Cole (1995c)<sup>8</sup> conducted a follow-up study (in 4 vegetation types) in which shoe type (trainers or walking boots) and trampler weight were varied. Although immediate damage was greater with walking boots, there was no significant difference after one year. Heavier trampers caused a greater reduction in vegetation height than lighter trampers, but there was no difference in effect on cover.
- Cole & Spildie (1998)<sup>9</sup> experimentally compared the effects of off-track trampling by hiker and horse (at two intensities – 25 and 150 passes) in two woodland vegetation types (one with an erect forb understorey and one with a low shrub understorey). Horse traffic was found to cause the largest reduction in vegetation cover. The forb-dominated vegetation suffered greatest disturbance, but recovered rapidly. Higher trampling intensities caused more disturbance.

Dogs, rather than people, tend to be the cause of many management difficulties, notably by worrying grazing animals, and can cause eutrophication near paths. Nutrient-poor habitats such as heathland are particularly sensitive to the fertilising effect of inputs of phosphates, nitrogen and potassium from dog faeces<sup>10</sup>.

Underhill-Day (2005) summarises the results of visitor studies that have collected data on the use of semi-natural habitat by dogs. In surveys where 100 observations or more were reported, the mean percentage of visitors who were accompanied by dogs was 54.0%.

A survey undertaken during October 2011 by Oxford City Council to inform the Oxford Sites and Housing DPD identified that over 80% of visitors to the Oxford Meadows SAC live within 5km of the site. The majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they were residents of Oxford with only 4% being resident in other parts of Oxfordshire. Those settlements within West Oxfordshire from which visitors originated were Witney, Bampton, Carterton, Burford, Chipping Norton and Woodstock. Visitors to the Oxford Meadows SAC from settlements within West Oxfordshire equated to 1.9% of the visitors to the SAC.

It should be emphasised that recreational use is not inevitably a problem. Many European sites are also National Nature Reserves (e.g. Cothill Fen) or nature reserves managed by wildlife trusts or nature conservation charities. At these sites, access is encouraged and resources are available to ensure that recreational use is managed appropriately.

Where increased recreational use is predicted to cause adverse impacts on a site, avoidance and mitigation should be considered. Avoidance of recreational impacts at European sites involves location of new development away from such sites; Local Plans (and other strategic plans) provide the mechanism for this. Where avoidance is not possible, mitigation will usually involve a mix of access management, habitat management and provision of alternative recreational space:

- *Access management* – restricting access to some or all of a European site - is not usually within the remit of the Council and restriction of access may contravene a range of Government policies on access to open space, and Government objectives for increasing exercise, improving health etc. However, active management of access is possible, for example as practised on nature reserves.
- *Habitat management* is not within the direct remit of the Council. However the Council can help to set a framework for improved habitat management by promoting cross-authority collaboration and S106 funding of habitat management.

<sup>8</sup> Cole, D.N. 1995c. Recreational trampling experiments: effects of trampler weight and shoe type. Research Note INT-RN-425. U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station, Utah.

<sup>9</sup> Cole, D.N., Spildie, D.R. 1998. Hiker, horse and llama trampling effects on native vegetation in Montana, USA. *Journal of Environmental Management* 53: 61-71

<sup>10</sup> Shaw, P.J.A., K. Lankey and S.A. Hollingham (1995) – Impacts of trampling and dog fouling on vegetation and soil conditions on Headley Heath. *The London Naturalist*, 74, 77-82.

- *Provision of alternative recreational space* can help to attract recreational users away from sensitive European sites, and reduce additional pressure on them. Some species for which European sites have been designated are particularly sensitive to dogs, and many dog walkers may be happy to be diverted to other, less sensitive, sites. However the location and type of alternative space must be attractive for users to be effective. The timely delivery of this suitable habitat in advance of occupation of dwellings is also required.

### 3.4 Atmospheric pollution

Current levels of understanding of air quality effects on semi-natural habitats are not adequate to allow a rigorous assessment of the likelihood of significant effects on the integrity of key European sites.

**Table 5: Main sources and effects of air pollutants on habitats and species**

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
Acid deposition	SO <sub>2</sub> , NO <sub>x</sub> and ammonia all contribute to acid deposition. Although future trends in S emissions and subsequent deposition to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will continue to decline, it is likely that increased N emissions may cancel out any gains produced by reduced S levels.	Can affect habitats and species through both wet (acid rain) and dry deposition. Some sites will be more at risk than others depending on soil type, bed rock geology, weathering rate and buffering capacity.
Ammonia (NH <sub>3</sub> )	Ammonia is released following decomposition and volatilisation of animal wastes. It is a naturally occurring trace gas, but levels have increased considerably with expansion in numbers of agricultural livestock. Ammonia reacts with acid pollutants such as the products of SO <sub>2</sub> and NO <sub>x</sub> emissions to produce fine ammonium (NH <sub>4</sub> <sup>+</sup> )- containing aerosol which may be transferred much longer distances (can therefore be a significant trans-boundary issue.)	Adverse effects are as a result of nitrogen deposition leading to eutrophication. As emissions mostly occur at ground level in the rural environment and NH <sub>3</sub> is rapidly deposited, some of the most acute problems of NH <sub>3</sub> deposition are for small relict nature reserves located in intensive agricultural landscapes.
Nitrogen oxides NO <sub>x</sub>	Nitrogen oxides are mostly produced in combustion processes. About one quarter of the UK's emissions are from power stations, one-half from motor vehicles, and the rest from other industrial and domestic combustion processes.	Deposition of nitrogen compounds (nitrates (NO <sub>3</sub> ), nitrogen dioxide (NO <sub>2</sub> ) and nitric acid (HNO <sub>3</sub> )) can lead to both soil and freshwater acidification. In addition, NO <sub>x</sub> can cause eutrophication of soils and water. This alters the species composition of plant communities and can eliminate sensitive species.

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
Nitrogen (N) deposition	The pollutants that contribute to nitrogen deposition derive mainly from NO <sub>x</sub> and NH <sub>3</sub> emissions. These pollutants cause acidification (see also acid deposition) as well as eutrophication.	Species-rich plant communities with relatively high proportions of slow-growing perennial species and bryophytes are most at risk from N eutrophication, due to its promotion of competitive and invasive species which can respond readily to elevated levels of N. N deposition can also increase the risk of damage from abiotic factors, e.g. drought and frost.
Ozone (O <sub>3</sub> )	A secondary pollutant generated by photochemical reactions from NO <sub>x</sub> and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These are mainly released by the combustion of fossil fuels. The increase in combustion of fossil fuels in the UK has led to a large increase in background ozone concentration, leading to an increased number of days when levels across the region are above 40ppb. Reducing ozone pollution is believed to require action at international level to reduce levels of the precursors that form ozone.	Concentrations of O <sub>3</sub> above 40 ppb can be toxic to humans and wildlife, and can affect buildings. Increased ozone concentrations may lead to a reduction in growth of agricultural crops, decreased forest production and altered species composition in semi-natural plant communities.
Sulphur Dioxide SO <sub>2</sub>	Main sources of SO <sub>2</sub> emissions are electricity generation, industry and domestic fuel combustion. May also arise from shipping and increased atmospheric concentrations in busy ports. Total SO <sub>2</sub> emissions have decreased substantially in the UK since the 1980s.	Wet and dry deposition of SO <sub>2</sub> acidifies soils and freshwater, and alters the species composition of plant and associated animal communities. The significance of impacts depends on levels of deposition and the buffering capacity of soils.

The main pollutants of concern for European sites are oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) and sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). NO<sub>x</sub> can have a directly toxic effect upon vegetation. In addition, greater NO<sub>x</sub> or ammonia concentrations within the atmosphere will lead to greater rates of nitrogen deposition to soils. An increase in the deposition of nitrogen from the atmosphere to soils is generally regarded to lead to an increase in soil fertility, which can have a serious deleterious effect on the quality of semi-natural, nitrogen-limited terrestrial habitats.

Sulphur dioxide emissions are overwhelmingly influenced by the output of power stations and industrial processes that require the combustion of coal and oil. Ammonia emissions are dominated by agriculture, with some chemical processes also making notable contributions. As such, it is unlikely that material increases in SO<sub>2</sub> or NH<sub>3</sub> emissions will be associated with Local Plans. NO<sub>x</sub> emissions, however, are dominated by the output of vehicle exhausts (more than half of all emissions). Within a 'typical' housing development, by far the largest contribution to NO<sub>x</sub> (92%) will be made by the associated road traffic. Other sources, although relevant, are of minor importance (8%) in comparison<sup>11</sup>. Emissions of NO<sub>x</sub> could therefore be

<sup>11</sup> Proportions calculated based upon data presented in Dore CJ et al. 2005. UK Emissions of Air Pollutants 1970 – 2003. UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. <http://www.airquality.co.uk/archive/index.php>

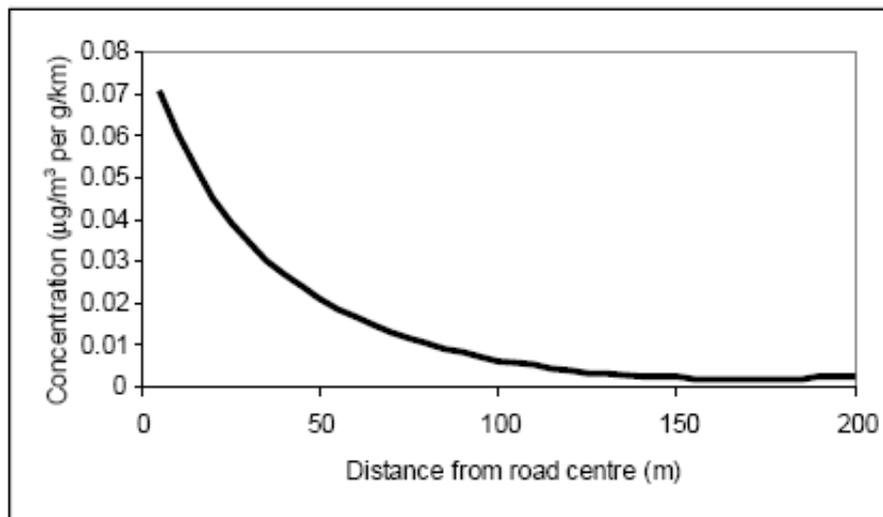
reasonably expected to increase as a result of greater vehicle use as an indirect effect of the Local Plan.

According to the World Health Organisation, the critical NO<sub>x</sub> concentration (critical threshold) for the protection of vegetation is 30 µgm<sup>-3</sup>; the threshold for sulphur dioxide is 20 µgm<sup>-3</sup>. In addition, ecological studies have determined ‘critical loads’<sup>12</sup> of atmospheric nitrogen deposition (that is, NO<sub>x</sub> combined with ammonia NH<sub>3</sub>) for key habitats within European sites.

**Local Air Pollution**

According to the Department of Transport’s Transport Analysis Guidance, “Beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels is not significant”<sup>13</sup>.

**Figure 3: Traffic contribution to concentrations of pollutants at different distances from a road (Source: DfT)**



This is therefore the distance that has been used throughout this HRA in order to determine whether European sites are likely to be significantly affected by development under the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan document. Given that sites detailed in Table 6 lie within 200m of roads that may be regularly used by vehicle journeys arising from West Oxfordshire as a result of the increased population, it was concluded that air quality should be included within the scope of this assessment. The location of these roads in relation to the European sites is shown in Figure 1.

<sup>12</sup> The critical load is the rate of deposition beyond which research indicates that adverse effects can reasonably be expected to occur

<sup>13</sup> [www.webtag.org.uk/archive/feb04/pdf/feb04-333.pdf](http://www.webtag.org.uk/archive/feb04/pdf/feb04-333.pdf)

**Table 6. Critical nitrogen loads, actual rates of nitrogen deposition and NOx concentrations<sup>14</sup> for the four European sites considered within this assessment (APIS data correct as of 04/08/14). Note that the data presented in this table are based on centroids for the European site; deposition rates and concentrations in different parts of each European site may vary**

Site	Grid reference	Key habitats	Minimum <sup>15</sup> critical loads (Kg N/ha/yr)	Actual nitrogen deposition <sup>16</sup>	Actual NOx concentration (µgm <sup>-3</sup> )	Actual SO <sub>2</sub> concentration (µgm <sup>-3</sup> )
Cothill Fen SAC	SU463999	Fen, marsh and swamp	15	20.2	14.2	1.2
Hackpen Hill SAC	SU352847	Calcareous grassland	15	21.4	8.7	0.9
Little Wittenham SAC	SU572929	Wood pastures and parklands	10	40.6	12.1	1.3
Oxford Meadows SAC	SP484099	Neutral grassland	20	17.1	15.2	1.4

**Diffuse air pollution**

In addition to the contribution to local air quality issues, development can also contribute cumulatively to an overall deterioration in background air quality across an entire region. In July 2006, when this issue was raised by Runnymede Borough Council in the South East, Natural England advised that their Local Development Framework ‘can only be concerned with locally emitted and short range locally acting pollutants’ as this is the only scale which falls within a local authority remit. It is understood that this guidance was not intended to set a precedent, but it inevitably does so since (as far as we are aware) it is the only formal guidance that has been issued to a Local Authority from any Natural England office on this issue.

In the light of this and our own knowledge and experience, it is considered reasonable to conclude that diffuse pan-authority air quality impacts are the responsibility of higher tier strategies or national government, both since they relate to the overall quantum of development within a region (over which individual districts have little control), and since this issue is best addressed at the highest pan-authority level. Diffuse air quality issues will not therefore be considered further within this HRA.

<sup>14</sup> As NO<sub>2</sub>

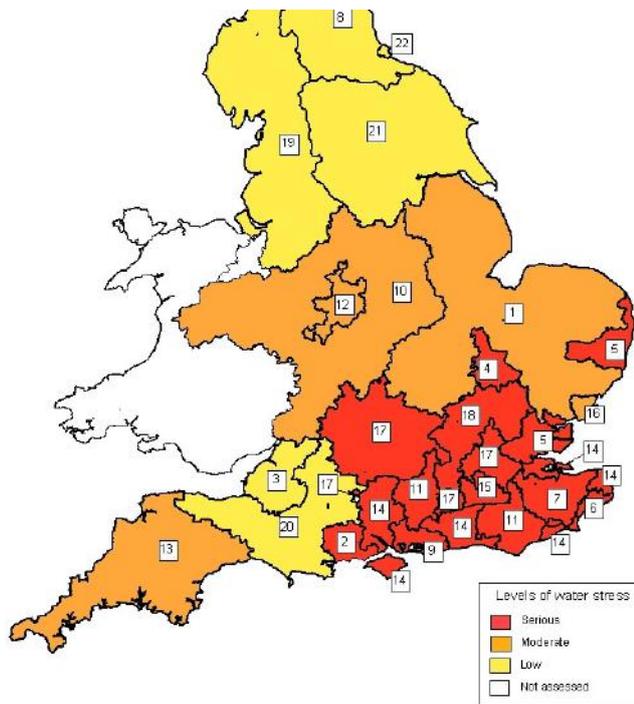
<sup>15</sup> APIS provides a critical load range – on a precautionary basis, this assessment uses the lowest figure in that range

<sup>16</sup> To a resolution of 5 km

**3.5 Water abstraction**

The South East is generally an area of high water stress (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Areas of water stress within England. It can be seen from this map that Oxfordshire is classified as being an area of serious water stress (coded red).<sup>17</sup>**



Development within West Oxfordshire District over the plan period will increase water demand.

The majority of West Oxfordshire district is supplied via the Cotswolds catchment<sup>18</sup>. There is a large amount of licensed abstraction taking place in the Cotswolds. The majority of abstraction licences are for non consumptive uses such as fish farming and mineral workings where the water is returned locally. The majority of consumptive abstraction, about 90% of its total, is used for public water supply and is abstracted from groundwater sources. *‘The rivers are fed by springs from the limestone of the Cotswold Hills and drop about 180m to the floodplain of the River Thames where they flow over clay overlain by sand and gravel deposits. The furthest west joining the Thames close to its headwaters are the River Coln, Ampney Brook and the River Churn. To the north-east are the River Leach, the River Windrush and the River Evenlode, then the River Windrush. The area is part of the Thames basin.’* The Cotswold Water Abstraction Licence Strategy identifies that there are concerns over low flows on several of the rivers in the Cotswolds, notably the Windrush, Churn, Coln and the Ampney Brook. These are located to the west of the CAMS and are not located within west Oxfordshire

<sup>17</sup> Figure adapted from Environment Agency. 2007. Identifying Areas of Water Stress. <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0107BLUT-e-e.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Environment Agency. 2012. Cotswolds Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/289898/LIT\\_3201\\_c09752.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/289898/LIT_3201_c09752.pdf) [accessed 17/12/14]

district. The catchment areas underlying west Oxfordshire district are regarded as having water available for abstraction.

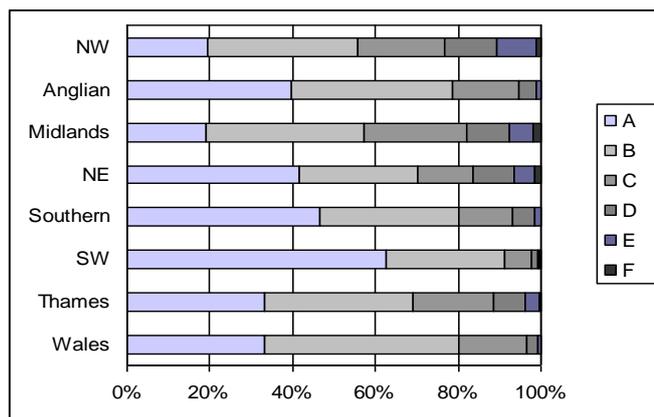
According to the draft Thames Water Resources Management Plan (2014), West Oxfordshire district is covered by Thames Water’s Swindon, Oxfordshire (SWOX) Water Resources Zone (WRZ). This WRZ is calculated to suffer an increasing deficit under peak demand, rising to - 33 MI/d by 2039/40. Whilst Thames Water Utilities Ltd intends to increase its metering programmes into the zone in order to conserve resources, it already has low levels of leakage.

**3.6 Water quality**

Increased amounts of housing or business development can lead to reduced water quality of rivers and estuarine environments. Sewage and industrial effluent discharges can contribute to increased nutrients on European sites leading to unfavourable conditions. In addition, diffuse pollution, partly from urban run-off has been identified during an Environment Agency Review of Consents process, as being a major factor in causing unfavourable condition of European sites.

Overall, water quality in England is improving, but there is still a considerable disparity between the various regions.

**Figure 5: Biological water quality of rivers and canals, 2005 (Defra, 2005)<sup>19</sup>**



The quality of the water that feeds European sites is an important determinant of the nature of their habitats and the species they support. Poor water quality can have a range of environmental impacts:

- At high levels, toxic chemicals and metals can result in immediate death of aquatic life, and can have detrimental effects even at lower levels, including increased vulnerability to disease and changes in wildlife behaviour.
- Eutrophication, the enrichment of plant nutrients in water, increases plant growth and consequently results in oxygen depletion. Algal blooms, which commonly result from eutrophication, increase turbidity and decrease light penetration. The decomposition of organic wastes that often accompanies eutrophication deoxygenates water further, augmenting the oxygen depleting effects of eutrophication. In the marine environment,

<sup>19</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2005) Biological water quality of rivers and canals: 1990, 1995, 200 to 2005, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Biological grading is based on the monitoring of invertebrates that live in, or on the bed of, rivers and canals. A and B = good; C and D = fair; E = poor; F = bad

nitrogen is the limiting plant nutrient and so eutrophication is associated with discharges containing available nitrogen.

Some pesticides, industrial chemicals, and components of sewage effluent are suspected to interfere with the functioning of the endocrine system, possibly having negative effects on the reproduction and development of aquatic life.

The watercourses in the Cotswold catchment have been monitored by the Environment Agency<sup>20</sup> (and river quality data is consequently available): the area assessed within West Oxfordshire is mostly 'moderate' ecological quality and good chemical quality (or 'does not require assessment').

A consequence of increased development within west Oxfordshire will be increased volume of waste water and sewage. For treatment works close to capacity, further development may increase the risk of effluent escape into aquatic environments. In many urban areas, sewage treatment and surface water drainage systems are combined, and therefore a predicted increase in flood and storm events could increase pollution risk.

Waste water within the district is dealt with by Thames Water Utilities Ltd. Research carried out by the Environment Agency in 2006 indicated that, based on housing projections at that time, future sewage treatment capacity for the sewage treatment works within the West Oxfordshire could be rendered adequate to deal with projected growth to 2026 without upgrades being required<sup>21</sup> and would therefore not have an adverse effect upon receiving waters. However, the Abingdon sewage treatment works would need to reduce the levels of phosphorous in discharged water.

In addition to water quality from treated effluent discharge, surface water quality can also be affected through runoff on hard standing or tarmac which can affect European sites if it occurs within the catchment of that European site.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk/wiyby/wiybyController?ep=maptopics&lang=e>

<sup>21</sup> Environment Agency. May 2006. Creating a Better Place: Planning for Water Quality and Growth in the South East

## 4 SCREENING OF FINAL VERSION PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

### 4.1 Introduction

The following table (Table 7) highlights the proposed Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan.

Where there is a conclusion of no likely significant effect on European sites, the final column is shaded green. Where this conclusion cannot be made, the shading is orange to indicate more detailed screening is required. The more detailed screening is presented in chapters 5- 6.

**Table 7: HRA Screening of Final Version Pre-Submission Local Plan Policies**

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
<b>Overall Strategy</b>		
<b>Policy OS1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development</b>	<p>Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in Neighbourhood Plans) will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.</p> <p>Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or</li> <li>• Specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.</li> </ul>	<p>No implications. The Presumption in Favour of Sustainable development set out in the NPPF specifically excludes European sites.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>
<b>Policy OS2 – Locating Development in the Right Places</b>	<p><u>Main Service Centres, Rural Service Centres and Villages</u></p> <p>New homes, jobs and supporting services will be primarily focused within and on the edge of the main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. This includes Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) at Witney, Carterton and Chipping</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>The location of development has a clear influence on whether likely significant effects will arise.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>Norton. Development elsewhere will be more limited and will focus on meeting locally identified community and business needs. The rural service centres of Bampton, Burford, Charlbury, Eynsham, Long Hanborough and Woodstock are suitable for development of an appropriate scale and type that would help to reinforce their existing service centre role. Sites may be specifically identified by the Council within or on the edge of some of these service centres, including through Neighbourhood Plans. The villages are suitable for limited development which respects the village character and local distinctiveness and would help to maintain the vitality of these communities. Sites may be specifically identified by the Council within or on the edge of some of these villages to help meet local needs, including through Neighbourhood Plans.</p> <p>Proposals for residential development will be considered in accordance with Policy H2 of this Local Plan.</p> <p><u>Small Villages, Hamlets and Open Countryside</u></p> <p>Development in the small villages, hamlets and open countryside will be limited to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location and which respects the intrinsic character of the area.</p> <p>Appropriate development will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-use of appropriate existing buildings which would lead to an enhancement of their immediate setting, with preference given to employment, tourism and community uses;</li> <li>• new accommodation proposed in accordance with policies specifically for travelling communities;</li> <li>• proposals to support the effectiveness of existing businesses and sustainable tourism;</li> <li>• development which will make a positive contribution to farm and country estate diversification; and</li> <li>• telecommunications development sited and designed to minimise impact upon the environment.</li> </ul>	<p>Potential pathways of impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> <li>• Urbanisation</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>Proposals for residential development will be considered in accordance with Policy H2 of this Local Plan.</p> <p><u>General Principles</u></p> <p>All development will be located where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•it forms a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development and/or the character of the area;</li> <li>•it would not have a harmful impact on the amenity of existing occupants;</li> <li>•it protects or enhances the local landscape and the setting of the settlement/s;</li> <li>•it makes use of previously developed land where available, provided it is not of high environmental value (e.g. ecology) and the loss of any existing use would not conflict with other policies of this plan;</li> <li>•it does not involve the loss of an area of open space or any other feature that makes an important contribution to the character or appearance of the area;</li> <li>•it can be provided with safe vehicular access and safe and convenient pedestrian access to supporting services and facilities;</li> <li>•it is not at risk of flooding or likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere;</li> <li>•it complies with policies for the protection of the natural environment and heritage assets;</li> <li>•it safeguards mineral resources;</li> <li>•in the Green Belt, it complies with national policies for the Green Belt; and</li> <li>•necessary supporting infrastructure can be provided.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Policy OS3 – Prudent Use of Natural Resources</b></p>	<p>All development proposals (including new buildings, conversions and the refurbishment of existing building stock) will be required to show consideration of the efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making the most efficient use of land and buildings, whilst having</li> </ul>	<p>No implications.</p> <p>This is a development management policy.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>regard to the character of the locality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivering development that seeks to minimise the need to travel</li> <li>• minimising use of non-renewable resources, including land and energy, and maximising opportunities for travel by sustainable means</li> <li>• minimising their impact on the soil resource*</li> <li>• minimising energy demands and energy loss through design, layout, orientation, landscaping, materials and the use of technology;</li> <li>• maximising passive solar heating, lighting, natural ventilation, energy and water efficiency and reuse of materials;</li> <li>• maximising resource efficiency, including water</li> <li>• minimising risk of flooding;</li> <li>• making use of appropriate sustainable drainage systems;</li> <li>• using recycled and energy efficient materials;</li> <li>• minimising waste and making adequate provision for the re-use and recycling of waste; and causing no deterioration and, where possible, achieving improvements in water or air quality.</li> </ul> <p>All development proposals will be required to achieve high standards of sustainable design and construction including achieving low carbon development in line with Government policy. * Guidance includes the 2011 DEFRA publication: Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites</p>	<p>This policy provides provision for minimising the risk of flooding and achieving improvements in water and air quality</p>
<p><b>Policy OS4 – High Quality Design</b></p>	<p>High design quality is central to the strategy for West Oxfordshire. New development should respect and contribute to local distinctiveness and, where possible, enhance the character and quality of the surroundings and should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- demonstrate high quality, inclusive and sustainable design with the provision of a safe, pleasant, convenient and interesting environment where the quality of the public realm is enhanced and the likelihood of crime and fear of crime is reduced; and</li> </ul>	<p>No implications.</p> <p>This outlines policy for design quality</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>- not harm the use or enjoyment of land and buildings nearby including living conditions in residential properties; and</p> <p>- demonstrate resilience to future climate change, particularly increasing temperatures and flood risk, and the use of water conservation and management measures; and</p> <p>- preserve or enhance areas, buildings and features of historic, architectural and environmental importance, including unlisted vernacular buildings and habitats of biodiversity value; and</p> <p>- enhance local green infrastructure and its biodiversity, including the provision of attractive, safe and convenient amenity open space commensurate with the scale and type of development, with play space where appropriate.</p> <p>Designers of new development will be expected to provide supporting evidence for their design approach. They should have regard to specific design advice contained in supplementary planning guidance covering the District. The West Oxfordshire Design Guide, Landscape Assessments, Conservation Area Appraisals and Cotswolds AONB guidance documents are key tools for interpreting local distinctiveness and informing high design quality.</p>	
<p><b>Policy OS5 – Supporting Infrastructure</b></p>	<p>Where necessary and viable, new development will be required to deliver, or contribute towards the provision of appropriate supporting infrastructure either directly as part of the development, or through an appropriate financial contribution towards off-site provision.</p> <p>This will include, where applicable the strategic infrastructure items identified within the Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and CIL Regulation 123 list as well as non-strategic infrastructure requirements including those associated with individual development proposals.</p> <p>Such provision will be secured through appropriate mechanisms</p>	<p>No implications.</p> <p>This is a development management policy</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome										
	<p>including the use of planning conditions, planning obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Favourable consideration will be given to development proposals that make appropriate provision for supporting infrastructure in a timely manner. Conversely, development proposals that fail to make adequate or timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure will be resisted.</p>											
<b>Providing New Homes</b>												
<p><b>Policy H1 – Amount and Distribution of Housing</b></p>	<p>West Oxfordshire will provide at least 10,500 new homes between 1st April 2011 and 31st March 2031 (525 per year). In accordance with the overall strategy, the majority of new homes will be provided in the Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton sub-areas with a particular focus on Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton.</p> <p>The proposed distribution of housing will be as follows:</p> <table border="0" data-bbox="645 794 1288 949"> <tr> <td>Witney sub-area</td> <td>3,700 homes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carterton sub-area</td> <td>2,600 homes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chipping Norton sub-area</td> <td>1,800 homes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eynsham – Woodstock sub-area</td> <td>1,600 homes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Burford – Charlbury sub-area</td> <td>800 homes</td> </tr> </table> <p>This is an indicative distribution and should not be taken as an absolute target for each sub-area or maximum ceiling to limit development. Development will be monitored annually to ensure that the overall strategy is being delivered. Sites for new housing will be identified through partnership working with local communities, landowners and self-build groups including the use of parish or neighbourhood plans.</p>	Witney sub-area	3,700 homes	Carterton sub-area	2,600 homes	Chipping Norton sub-area	1,800 homes	Eynsham – Woodstock sub-area	1,600 homes	Burford – Charlbury sub-area	800 homes	<p>Potential HRA implications.</p> <p>This policy outlines the provision of 10,500 new dwellings in and around: Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Eynsham - Woodstock, and Burford - Charlbury</p> <p>Potential pathways of impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> <li>• Urbanisation</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This HRA document actually considers housing provision as a 'worst-case' up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire in accordance with the Oxfordshire SHMA.</p>
Witney sub-area	3,700 homes											
Carterton sub-area	2,600 homes											
Chipping Norton sub-area	1,800 homes											
Eynsham – Woodstock sub-area	1,600 homes											
Burford – Charlbury sub-area	800 homes											
<p><b>Policy H2 – Delivery of New</b></p>	<p>The Council will deliver at least 10,500 new homes in the period 2011 – 2031. This will be achieved through a combination of</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications.</p>										

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
<p><b>Homes</b></p>	<p>homes already completed, existing commitments, allocated Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) sites identified as suitable and deliverable/developable in the Council's SHLAA and windfall development.</p> <p>In determining future proposals for housing the Council will apply the following criteria depending on location.</p> <p><u>Main Service Centres, Rural Service Centres and Villages</u></p> <p>1. New dwellings will be permitted at the main service centres, rural service centres and villages in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On sites that have been allocated for housing development within a Local Plan or relevant neighbourhood plan;</li> <li>- On previously developed land within the built up area provided it is not of high environmental value (e.g. ecology) and the loss of any existing use would not conflict with other plan policies;</li> <li>- On undeveloped land within or adjoining the built up area where the proposed development is necessary to meet identified housing needs and is consistent with the criteria in 3) below and other policies in this plan.</li> </ul> <p><u>Small Villages, Hamlets and Open Countryside</u></p> <p>2. New dwellings will be permitted in the small villages, hamlets and open countryside in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where there is an essential operational or other specific local need that cannot be met in any other way, including the use of existing buildings. Where appropriate, new homes provided (other than replacement dwellings) will be controlled by an occupancy condition linked to the operational need and/or to the 'rural exception site' approach for permanent affordable dwellings;</li> <li>- where residential development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of a heritage asset;</li> <li>- residential development of exceptional quality or innovative design;</li> </ul>	<p>This policy outlines the delivery of 10,500 new dwellings within and around the Main Service Centres, Rural Service Centres and Villages. The quantum and distribution of new dwellings has clear implications for potential impacts on European sites.</p> <p>Potential pathways of impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> <li>• Urbanisation</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new accommodation proposed in accordance with policies specifically for travelling communities;</li> <li>- accommodation which will remain ancillary to existing dwellings*;</li> <li>- replacement dwellings on a one for one basis; and</li> <li>- re-use of appropriate existing buildings which would lead to an enhancement of their immediate setting and where it has been demonstrated that the building is not capable of re-use for business, recreational or community uses, tourist accommodation or visitor facilities or where the proposal will address a specific local housing need which would otherwise not be met.</li> </ul> <p><u>General Principles</u></p> <p>3. Where acceptable in principle, all residential development will be expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be of a proportionate and appropriate scale to its context having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality;</li> <li>- Be of demonstrable benefit to the local community in which it is proposed;</li> <li>- Avoid the coalescence and loss of identity of separate settlements;</li> <li>- Not have a harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining occupants;</li> <li>- Where applicable, form a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development and/or the character of the area;</li> <li>- Protect and where possible enhance the local landscape and setting of the settlement;</li> <li>- Make use of previously developed land where available, provided it is not of high environmental value and the loss of any existing use would not conflict with other policies of this plan;</li> <li>- Not involve the loss of an area of open space or any other feature that makes an important contribution to the character or appearance of the area;</li> <li>- Be provided with safe vehicular access and safe and convenient</li> </ul>	

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>pedestrian access to supporting services and facilities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not be at risk of flooding or be likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere;</li> <li>- Comply with policies for the protection of the natural environment and heritage assets;</li> <li>- Ensure it does not lead to the sterilisation of a mineral resource;</li> <li>- Comply with national policies for Green Belt and AONB where applicable; and</li> <li>- Provide all necessary supporting infrastructure including access to superfast broadband.</li> </ul> <p>* Proposals for extensions or alterations to an existing dwelling to create a self-contained unit of accommodation may be subject to a condition ensuring the accommodation remains ancillary to the main dwelling.</p>	
<p><b>Policy H3 – Affordable Housing</b></p>	<p>In order to address identified affordable housing needs, the Council will require ‘qualifying’ market housing schemes to make an appropriate contribution towards the provision of affordable housing within the District.</p> <p>Small-scale developments of 1 – 5 units will not be required to contribute.</p> <p>Within the Cotswolds AONB, medium-scale housing schemes of 6-10 units and with a maximum gross floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or less will be required to make a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing off-site within the District. This commuted sum will be deferred until completion of the development to assist with viability.</p> <p>Outside of the Cotswolds AONB, medium-scale housing schemes of 6-10 units and with a maximum gross floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or less will not be required to make a financial contribution towards affordable housing.</p> <p>Across the District as a whole, larger-scale housing schemes of 11 or more units and/or with a gross floorspace of more than 1,000m<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>will be required to provide affordable housing on-site as a proportion of the market homes proposed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High value zone (50%)</li> <li>- Medium value zone (40%)</li> <li>- Low value zone (35%)</li> </ul> <p>In circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the level of affordable housing being sought would make a scheme unviable, a revised mix and type of housing will be considered before a lower level of affordable housing provision is accepted. Where external funding is available it may be applied to schemes to ensure affordability of rental levels or to increase the number or to change tenure or type of homes to meet priority needs.</p> <p>Affordable housing mix and tenure will be responsive to identified local needs and site specific opportunities. A financial contribution for the provision of affordable housing on other sites in West Oxfordshire in lieu of on-site provision may be appropriate if it can be demonstrated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is not physically possible or feasible to provide affordable housing on the application site; or</li> <li>- There is evidence that a separate site would more satisfactorily meet local housing need and contribute to the creation of mixed communities.</li> </ul> <p>In some instances, a combination of on-site provision and a financial contribution may be appropriate.</p> <p>West Oxfordshire District Council and its partners will work with Parish Councils, Registered Providers of affordable housing and local housing, community land and self-build trusts to identify additional suitable rural sites for small scale affordable housing schemes to meet specific local housing needs which cannot be met in any other way. All new homes on these sites will remain affordable in perpetuity to people in housing need who have a local connection with the parish or appropriate adjoining parishes. Sites</p>	

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>will be well-related to the existing built-up areas of towns and villages. Where family homes are proposed priority will be given to locations within a reasonable walking distance of a primary school.</p>	
<p><b>Policy H4 – Type and Mix of New Homes</b></p>	<p>All residential developments will be required to provide or contribute towards the provision of a good, balanced mix of property types and sizes.</p> <p>Developers will be required to demonstrate how their proposal would help create a more balanced housing stock within the District and meet the needs of a range of different groups having regard to specific local needs.</p> <p>Particular support will be given to proposals for specialist housing for older people including but not restricted to, extra-care housing. Opportunities for extra care will be sought in service centres and other locations with good access to services and facilities for older people.</p> <p>In recognition of the ageing population the Council will also require larger housing developments of 11 or more units to provide a percentage of market homes as accessible and adaptable housing (formerly lifetime homes). This will be a matter for negotiation but as a minimum the Council will seek the provision of at least 25% of market and affordable homes to this standard.</p> <p>To support the anticipated increase in the number of people with disabilities (linked to the ageing population) the Council will require larger housing developments of 11 or more homes to provide a percentage of market and affordable homes as wheelchair user dwellings (formerly wheelchair accessible homes). Again this will be a matter for negotiation but as a minimum the Council will seek the provision of at least 5% of homes to this standard (with a minimum of 1 unit).</p> <p>The provision of specialist housing for those with a disability will be supported in principle in accessible, sustainable locations subject to other policies in this plan. The District Council will work with the</p>	<p>No implications.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	County Council and other relevant partners to identify suitable sites and opportunities.	
<p><b>Policy H5 – Custom and Self-Build Housing</b></p>	<p>In order to address the need for custom and self-build housing, the Council will require all housing developments of 100 or more dwellings to include 5% of the residential plots to be serviced and made available for this purpose. This can include the partial completion of units to be made available for self-finish.</p> <p>As an alternative, the developer may provide serviced land for an equivalent number of custom and self-build plots in another suitable, sustainable location.</p> <p>If any of the serviced plots/units offered for custom/self-build/self-finish remain unsold after 12 months marketing, they may be built out by the developer.</p> <p>Only where it can be robustly demonstrated that the provision of on-site plots is unviable or cannot be achieved for some other reason and the developer is unable to make off-site provision will the Council waive the 5% requirement.</p> <p>All schemes will be considered in accordance with the custom/self-build checklist contained in the Council’s Design Guide.</p> <p>The Council will generally control access to custom/self-build housing schemes by establishing and maintaining a Register of Interest of those who wish to become custom builders and meet relevant criteria.</p> <p>Elsewhere, proposals for custom and self-build housing will be approved in suitable, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant policies of this plan including Policies OS2, H2 and E3.</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways.</p>
<p><b>Policy H6 – Existing Housing</b></p>	<p>Changes to existing housing will be managed to maintain sustainable communities and a high quality environment in accordance with the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the loss of existing dwellings to other uses will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated they are in an unsuitable location for</li> </ul>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy allows for the sub-division of dwellings resulting in a net increase in new dwellings.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>housing, do not provide satisfactory living accommodation, are not needed to meet an identified local housing need, or the proposed use will make a positive contribution to local services and facilities;</p> <p>- alterations, extensions or sub-division of existing dwellings will respect the character of the surrounding area and will not unacceptably affect the environment of people living in or visiting that area. Sub-division of existing dwellings in the open countryside and small villages will be limited to large properties where continued residential use cannot be secured in any other way;</p> <p>- proposals to replace an existing permanent dwelling which is not of historical or architectural value on a one-for-one basis, provided the character and appearance of the surrounding area is not eroded, there would be no harmful impact on ecology or protected species and the replacement dwelling is of a reasonable scale relative to the original building.</p> <p>The District Council, in appropriate circumstances, will work with relevant organisations and property owners to ensure the number of empty homes is kept to a minimum. Proposals to bring empty residential properties back into occupation will be favourably supported in principle.</p>	<p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>In reality, the amount of new dwellings created as a result of this policy is likely to be quite low. However, at this stage it has been screened in for further assessment.</p>
<p><b>Policy H7 – Travelling Communities</b></p>	<p>New pitches/plots/sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be provided in accordance with identified needs by:</p> <p>- safeguarding existing sites</p> <p>- extending existing sites where appropriate</p> <p>- bringing forward new sites if required, either through planning permission or through the development plan process.</p> <p>New sites should meet the following criteria:</p> <p>- be in or near existing settlements with safe and convenient access to local services and facilities, especially schools, shops</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	and healthcare; - be well located to the highway and public transport network, as well as having safe and convenient vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access; - be of an appropriate scale not to have an adverse impact on environmental or heritage assets and the character and appearance of the surrounding area; - not conflict with the objectives of Green Belt or AONB designation; - not be located in areas at flood risk; and - be designed in accordance with Government’s Good Practice guidance	
<b>Sustainable Economic Growth</b>		
<b>Policy E1 – Land for Employment</b>	<u>Provision of New Employment Land</u> Employment Development Land and Employment Sites are those which include predominantly office-based, industrial or storage and distribution activities (B class uses) or related sui generis uses. Including existing commitments, the following Employment Development Land provision is identified to meet employment needs: - Witney - 20ha to the west of Witney. - Carterton – 5ha at West Oxon Business Park and Land at Ventura Park with further consideration to be given to additional sites for employment use in appropriate locations as required with the overall objective of securing an additional 10 hectares of employment land in a suitable, sustainable location or locations. - Chipping Norton - at least 4.5 hectares and up to 7.3 hectares of employment land located on the eastern side of the town. - Other Towns Villages and Rural Areas – At least 5ha within existing commitments with 2ha at Lakeside Standlake (previous Local Plan allocation). The take up of land for employment will continue to be monitored	Potential HRA implications  The quantum and location of employment land has implications for the potential for likely significant effects on European sites.  Potential impact pathways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>and the need for further provision considered through Neighbourhood Plans and any future Local Plan review. Where justified, new employment allocations may be subject to an Article 4 Direction in the interests of safeguarding local employment opportunities. Proposals for new employment premises and sites may be subject to a condition limiting permitted development rights to protect the employment use.</p> <p><u>Existing Employment Sites</u></p> <p>Proposals to improve the effectiveness of employment operations on existing employment sites will be supported where commensurate with the scale of the town or village and the character of the area. This may include redevelopment, replacement buildings or the expansion of existing employment uses.</p> <p>Non-employment uses on employment sites will be resisted except in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- where it can be demonstrated that the site or premises are not reasonably capable of being used or redeveloped for employment purposes; or</li> <li>- where the site or premises are considered unsuitable on amenity, environmental or highway safety grounds for employment uses; or</li> <li>- where the proposed use includes community, leisure, or retail uses which are complementary and compatible to the functioning of the employment site and the local community, and conform with Policy E6 – Town Centres; or</li> <li>- where substantial community benefits would be achieved by allowing alternative forms of development.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Policy E2 - Supporting the Rural Economy</b></p>	<p>New small employment sites in or adjacent to Service Centres and Villages as listed in Table 4.1 will be supported where they are commensurate with the scale of the centre or village and the character of the area.</p> <p>Elsewhere new and replacement buildings will be allowed where</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy outline provision for new small business sites in or adjacent to towns and villages identified in Policy OS2 (Locating</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>required for diversification proposals which are fully integrated with an existing farm business or where they meet a specific business need which cannot otherwise be met in a more sustainable location.</p> <p>Development proposals which are necessary for agricultural production or which make a positive contribution to farm or country estate diversification will be supported where they: are supported by or operate as part of and will continue to add value to a viable core farm/estate business; and remain compatible and consistent in scale with the farm/estate operation and a countryside location; and re-use existing buildings where feasible in accordance with Policy E3.</p> <p>Farm shops will be permitted where they form part of a diversification scheme to sell produce from the farm or farms in the immediate vicinity and do not demonstrably undermine the viability and vitality of shopping provision in existing villages. Conditions will be imposed to limit the proportion of goods from other sources.</p> <p>Development proposals for new or replacement buildings may be subject to a condition to safeguard their use in the interests of the local economy.</p> <p>The Council will seek to secure access to superfast broadband and improved mobile telecommunications in rural areas and subject to compliance with other relevant policies, will adopt a positive approach to well-designed proposals to facilitate homeworking and flexible working practices (such as live-work units) which maintain the amenity of existing residents. All new development will be required to demonstrate that the necessary infrastructure is in place or will be provided to enable access to superfast broadband</p>	<p>Development in the Right Places). The quantum and location of employment land has implications for the potential for likely significant effects on European sites.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy E3 - Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings</b></p>	<p>The Council supports the re-use of traditional buildings for employment, tourism and community uses to support the rural economy where the following criteria are met:</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy outlines provision for the small scale</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>a) the existing form and design of the building(s) positively contribute to the character of the area, and;</p> <p>b) the building(s) are capable of conversion to the proposed use without necessitating alteration(s) or extension (s) which would harm the form of the original building and without removing features of architectural or nature conservation interest, and;</p> <p>c) the building(s) are suitably located for the scale and type of the proposed use, having regard to the level of accessibility to settlements, facilities and services and impact on the character and amenity of the area.</p> <p>The re-use of non-traditional buildings including modern farm buildings, for employment, tourism and community uses will be supported within or adjoining Service Centres or Villages, or where it forms part of an agricultural holding and the proposal is part of a farm diversification scheme under Policy E2 or where re-use would address a specific local need which cannot be met in an alternative way. This is provided that the following criteria are met:</p> <p>a) the general character and form of the building(s) are not harmful to the surroundings; and</p> <p>b) the scale and type of use is suitable to its location and will not result in excessive alteration(s) or extension(s) to the host building.</p>	<p>re-development of non-residential buildings. The quantum and location of tourism and employment land has implications for the potential for likely significant effects on European sites.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy E4 – Sustainable Tourism</b></p>	<p>Tourism and leisure development which utilises and enriches the natural and built environment and existing attractions of West Oxfordshire to the benefit of visitors and local communities will be supported.</p> <p>New tourist and visitor facilities should be located within or close to Service Centres and Villages and reuse appropriate existing buildings wherever possible. In small villages, hamlets and the open countryside, new tourism and visitor facilities may be justified in the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• where there is a functional linkage with a particular countryside attraction; or</li> </ul>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>Tourism can potentially lead to recreational pressure on European sites as can new resident populations.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to secure the diversification of a farm enterprise or country estate in accordance with Policy E2; or</li> <li>• the proposal will re-use an appropriate building in accordance with Policy E3</li> </ul> <p>Subject to specific locational or functional requirements, the town centre first approach will be applied to tourism and leisure development, including hotels.</p> <p>Proposals in the Cotswolds AONB should conserve the landscape quality and biodiversity of the area and support the objectives of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and Sustainable Tourism Strategy.</p> <p>In the Lower Windrush Valley the Council will continue to work with the Lower Windrush Valley Project and County Minerals Authority to identify appropriate opportunities for tourism and leisure development. Proposals which complement the rural character of the area and deliver comprehensive long term recreational access, community or nature conservation benefits will be supported.</p> <p>The Council, working in partnership with other organisations, will support tourism and leisure proposals which are sensitive to and where appropriate enhance the ecological, landscape and heritage value of the River Thames. The provision or extension of permanent base moorings and associated facilities will be allowed in suitable locations off the main river channel, provided these do not harm the ecological, landscape or heritage value of the river and provide an enhancement where possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy E5 - Local Services and Community Facilities</b></p>	<p>The Council will support the development and retention of local services and community facilities to meet local needs and to promote social wellbeing, interests, interaction and healthy inclusive communities.</p> <p>Proposals that would result in the loss of community facilities and services will only be supported where it can be clearly shown that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appropriate alternative provision of at least equivalent suitability</li> </ul>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>and accessibility, particularly by foot, will remain, or;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the case of pubs, shops and other commercially run services and facilities, the existing use is no longer viable and is incapable of being made viable or adapted to retain a viable service or facility including as a community run enterprise. A robust marketing exercise will be required to demonstrate that the use or premises is unviable in accordance with separate guidance published by the Council.</li> </ul> <p>In considering the loss of local services and community facilities, the Council will have regard to whether a site or facility is registered as an Asset of Community Value.</p>	
<p><b>Policy E6 - Town Centres</b></p>	<p>Town centres will be supported as the focus for shopping, leisure, community facilities and services. The Council will work with local businesses, residents, parish and town councils to ensure town, village and neighbourhood centres remain vibrant, accessible and meet local needs.</p> <p>The following town centres are defined on the proposals map: Principal town centre – Witney Primary town centres – Carterton, Chipping Norton Town centres with a significant tourist role – Burford, Woodstock</p> <p>The Council will apply the sequential and impact tests set out in the National Planning Policy Framework to new shopping and other town centre development proposals. Impact assessments will be required for significant proposals (over 500m<sup>2</sup> net sales floorspace) where they are not in a centre or in accordance with a local or neighbourhood development plan.</p> <p>Primary and secondary shopping frontages are defined on the proposals map in Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. Within primary shopping frontages the loss of shops (A1 use) will be resisted.</p> <p>Within secondary shopping frontages, shops and other town centre uses, such as restaurants or cafes, will be allowed where they</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>Redevelopment of town centres can result in changes in vehicle flows on roads in the district and in water consumption.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>would complement and enhance the shopping offer of the defined shopping frontage. The loss of town centre uses in these frontages will be resisted and excessive concentrations of single uses will not be allowed where this would be likely to cause issues of amenity or affect the vitality of the area.</p> <p>In the town centres of Burford and Woodstock the loss of shops and other town centre uses will be resisted.</p> <p>Where the loss of shops or town centre uses is proposed contrary to this policy it will need to be demonstrated through a robust marketing exercise that the site or premises are not reasonably capable of being used or redeveloped for these uses or that the alternative use will positively contribute to the function, vitality and viability of the town centre.</p> <p>The Council will work in partnership to promote and enhance the attractiveness of all town centres addressing where possible issues of publicity, security, parking and accessibility.</p> <p>Improvements to the public realm will be sought through high design standards which will apply to all town centre development. Development proposals which significantly increase car parking demand in our town centres will be expected to make appropriate public car parking provision or equivalent financial contributions.</p>	
<b>Transport and Movement</b>		
<p><b>Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport</b></p>	<p>Priority will be given to locating new development in areas with convenient access to a good range of services and facilities and where the need to travel by private car can be minimised, particularly where this would help to reduce traffic congestion on the routes around Oxford and the Air Quality Management Areas at Witney and Chipping Norton.</p> <p>In addition to this;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All new development will be designed to maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport, ensure the safe movement of vehicles and minimise the impact of parked and</li> </ul>	<p>No implications</p> <p>This policy is largely positive and aims to reduce reliance on private cars to reduce road congestion and reduce air pollution and encourages the use of walking, cycling and the use of public and community transport by giving priority to development within areas have convenient access to a range of services and facilities. It aims to secure traffic management</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>moving vehicles on local residents, business and the environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To promote increased home working and telecommuting, all new residential and commercial developments will be required to make provision for superfast broadband.</li> <li>- Mixed-use developments will be supported in principle in accessible, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant local plan policies.</li> </ul> <p>Proposals for new developments that have significant transport implications either in themselves or in combination with other proposals will be required to include a Transport Assessment (TA), and where necessary a travel plan, in accordance with County Council requirements.</p>	<p>and environmental improvement schemes to improve air quality.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways</p>
<p><b>Policy T2 – Highway Improvement Schemes</b></p>	<p>All development will be required to demonstrate safe access and an acceptable degree of impact on the local highway network. Development proposals that are likely to generate significant amounts of traffic, shall be supported by a will need to be demonstrated through a Transport Assessment (TA) and where appropriate, a Travel Plan.</p> <p>Where necessary to mitigate the impact of development and support planned growth, contributions will be sought from new development towards new and/or enhanced highway infrastructure either directly as part of the development or in the form of an appropriate financial contribution.</p> <p>The following strategic highway infrastructure schemes are proposed to be safeguarded and delivered as part of the committed and allocated urban extensions identified in this Local Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Downs Road junction, Witney</li> <li>- Shores Green Slip Roads, Witney</li> <li>- West End Link Road, Witney</li> <li>- Northern Distributor Road, Witney</li> </ul> <p>The Council will continue to support the provision of A-road access</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>This policy does not promote traffic growth, but mitigates the impact of development and support planned growth to enable increases in traffic flows as a result of the Local Plan.</p> <p>Whilst this policy does refer to highway improvement schemes. These are also identified within Policies WIT1 (East Witney Strategic Development Area), WIT2 (North Witney Strategic Development Area), WIT4 (Witney Sub-Area Strategy) and CA3 (Carterton Sub-Area Strategy), there is not sufficient detail to assess these within the local plan. These will need to be subject to project specific HRA assessment.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>to Carterton via the B4477 together with the provision of west facing slip roads at the junction of the A40 and B4477.</p> <p>Contributions will be sought from new development as appropriate. The Council will continue to work in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council in relation to securing improvements to the A40 between Eynsham and Oxford including the potential provision of a new park and ride site at Eynsham and associated bus priority measures. Contributions will be sought from new development and other potential sources of funding as appropriate.</p> <p>In addition, the Council will work in partnership with the County Council to deliver other 'non-strategic' highway improvements necessary to support the quantum and distribution of growth identified in the Local Plan with contributions to be sought from new development as appropriate.</p>	
<p><b>Policy T3 – Public Transport, Walking and Cycling</b></p>	<p>All new development will be located and designed to maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Where opportunities for walking, cycling and using public transport are more limited, other measures will be sought to help reduce car use as appropriate (e.g. measures to promote home working or the opportunity for linked trips e.g. through mixed-use development). New development will be expected to contribute towards the provision of new and/or enhanced public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure to help encourage modal shift and promote healthier lifestyles.</p> <p>Development that fails to make adequate provision of measures to encourage the use of non-car modes of transport will not be favourably considered.</p> <p>West Oxfordshire District Council will continue to work in partnership with the highway authority, developers, local councils, bus and rail operators and other voluntary and community sector organisations, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase the use of bus, rail and community transport through the</li> </ul>	<p>No implications</p> <p>This policy encourages the use of public transport, walking and cycling.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>provision of improved services, facilities and information including specific schemes identified in the Local Transport Plan, the IDP and the draft Rail and Bus Strategies for Oxfordshire; and</p> <p>- Provide safe and convenient travel within and between the network of towns and villages in West Oxfordshire, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users, users of public and community transport including specific schemes identified in the Local Transport Plan and IDP</p>	
<p><b>Policy T4 – Parking Provision</b></p>	<p>The Council will work with partners to provide, maintain and manage an appropriate amount of off-street public car parking, particularly to support our town and village centres and to address issues of congestion and air quality.</p> <p>Parking in new developments will be provided in accordance with the County Council’s adopted parking standards and should be sufficient to meet increasing levels of car ownership.</p> <p>Proposals for new off street public car parking areas will be supported in accessible locations where they would help to ensure the continued vitality and viability of town centres, where they would support visitor and tourist facilities and attractions or where the local environment is being seriously damaged by on-street parking and alternative parking provision is essential.</p> <p>Development proposals which significantly increase car parking demand will be expected to make appropriate public car parking provision or equivalent financial contributions.</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>
<p><b>Environmental and Heritage Assets</b></p>		
<p><b>Policy EH1 - Landscape Character</b></p>	<p>The quality, character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire’s natural environment, including its landscape, cultural and historic value, tranquillity, geology, countryside, soil and biodiversity, will be conserved and enhanced.</p> <p>New development should respect and, where possible, enhance the intrinsic character, quality and distinctive natural and man-made features of the local landscape, including individual or</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>groups of features and their settings, such as stone walls, trees, hedges, woodlands, rivers, streams and ponds. Conditions may be imposed on development proposals to ensure every opportunity is made to retain such features and ensure their long-term survival through appropriate management and restoration.</p> <p>Proposals which would result in the loss of features, important for their visual, amenity, or historic value will not be permitted unless the loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures which can be secured to the satisfaction of the Council.</p> <p>When determining development proposals within or impacting upon the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, great weight will be given to the conservation of the area's landscape and scenic beauty.</p> <p>Special attention and protection will be given to the landscape and biodiversity of the Lower Windrush Valley Project, the Windrush in Witney Project Area and the Wychwood Project Area.</p>	
<p><b>Policy EH2 - Biodiversity</b></p>	<p>The biodiversity of West Oxfordshire shall be protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- giving sites and species of international nature conservation importance and nationally important sites of special scientific interest the highest level of protection from any development that will have an adverse impact;</li> <li>- requiring a Habitats Regulation Assessment to be undertaken of any development proposal that is likely to have a significant adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on the Oxford Meadows SAC, particularly in relation to air quality and nitrogen oxide emissions and deposition;</li> <li>- protecting and mitigating for impacts on priority habitats and protected species and their importance individually and as part of a wider network;</li> </ul>	<p>No implications.</p> <p>This policy provides protection for internationally designated nature conservation sites, with the inclusion of project specific HRA if required. Of note are projects that could lead to a significant deterioration in nitrogen deposition at Oxford Meadows SAC.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- avoiding loss, deterioration or harm to locally important wildlife and geological sites and sites supporting irreplaceable habitats (including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees), UK priority habitats and priority species, except in exceptional circumstances where the importance of the development significantly and demonstrably outweighs the harm and the harm can be mitigated through appropriate measures and a net gain in biodiversity is secured;</li> <li>- ensuring development does not prevent the achievement of the aims of the Conservation Target Areas (CTAs);</li> <li>- promoting the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, particularly within the CTAs;</li> <li>- taking all opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the site or the locality, especially where this will help deliver networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure and UK priority habitats and species targets and meet the aims of Conservation Target Areas;</li> </ul> <p>All developments will be expected to provide towards the provision of necessary enhancements in areas of biodiversity importance.</p>	
<p><b>Policy EH3 – Public Realm and Green Infrastructure</b></p>	<p>The existing areas of public space and green infrastructure assets of West Oxfordshire will be protected and enhanced and new multi-functional areas of space will be created to achieve improvements to the network (through extending spaces and connections and/or better management), particularly in areas of new development and/or where stakeholder/partnership projects already exist or are emerging.</p> <p>Public realm and publicly accessible green infrastructure network considerations should be integral to the planning of new development. New development should not result in the loss of existing green infrastructure unless it can be demonstrated that replacement provision can be provided which will improve the green infrastructure network in terms of its quantity, quality,</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>This policy provides for the protection and enhancement of existing and new multi-functional areas of green space</p> <p>There are no impact pathways</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>accessibility and management arrangements.</p> <p>Development proposals will be expected to provide or contribute towards the provision of necessary improvements to the District's multi-functional network of green infrastructure (including Conservation Target Areas) and open space, providing opportunities for walking and cycling within the built-up areas and connecting settlements to the countryside through a network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes.</p> <p>New development should not result in the loss of open space, sports and recreational buildings and land unless up to date assessment shows the asset is surplus to requirements or the need for and benefits of the alternative land use clearly outweigh the loss and equivalent replacement provision is made. Where appropriate, development will be expected to provide or contribute towards the provision of necessary improvements to open space, sports and recreational buildings and land**.</p> <p>** Regard will be had to the Open Space Study (2013) and Playing Pitch Strategy (2014) for West Oxfordshire</p>	
<p><b>Policy EH4 - Decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy development</b></p>	<p>In principle, renewable and low-carbon energy developments, especially small-scale community-led initiatives for wind schemes, solar clubs and the use of biomass will be supported.</p> <p>Renewable or low-carbon energy development should be located and designed to minimise any adverse impacts, with particular regard to conserving the District's high valued landscape and historic environment. In assessing proposals, the following local issues will need to be considered and satisfactorily addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- impacts on landscape, biodiversity, historic environment, residential amenity, aviation activities, highway safety and fuel/energy security, including their cumulative and visual impacts;</li> <li>- opportunities for environmental enhancement;</li> <li>- potential benefits to host communities (including job creation and income generation).</li> </ul>	<p>No implications</p> <p>This policy sets out provision for renewable and low carbon energy development. This has potential to reduce Nitrogen oxide outputs.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>The use of decentralised energy systems, including Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and District Heating (DH), especially woody biomass fuelled, will be encouraged in all developments. An energy assessment or strategy which assesses viability for decentralised energy systems, including consideration of the use of local wood fuel biomass and other renewable energy initiatives will be required for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- proposals on strategic development areas (SDAs)</li> <li>- all residential developments in off-gas areas for 50 dwellings or more.</li> <li>- all non-domestic developments above 1000m2 floorspace</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Policy EH5 – Flood Risk</b></p>	<p>Flood risk will be managed using the sequential, risk-based approach, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, of avoiding flood risk to people and property where possible and managing any residual risk (taking account of the impacts of climate change).</p> <p>In assessing proposals for development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the Sequential Test and, if necessary, the Exception Test will be applied;</li> <li>- all sources of flooding (including sewer flooding and surface water flooding) will need to be addressed and measures to manage or reduce their impacts, onsite and elsewhere, incorporated into the development proposal;</li> <li>- appropriate flood resilient and resistant measures should be used;</li> <li>- sustainable drainage systems to manage run-off will be integrated into the site design, maximising their habitat value and ensuring their long term maintenance;</li> <li>- a site-specific flood risk assessment will be required for all proposals of 1ha or more and for any proposal in Flood Zone 2 and 3 and Critical Drainage Areas;</li> <li>- only water compatible uses and essential infrastructure will be</li> </ul>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy provides for flood risk management which could potentially alter hydrological inputs at sensitive European sites.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity (hydrological balance)</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>allowed in a functional flood plain (Flood Zone 3b); - land required for flood management will be safeguarded from development and, where applicable, managed as part of the green infrastructure network, including maximising its biodiversity value.</p>	
<p><b>Policy EH6 - Environmental Protection</b></p>	<p>Proposals which are likely to cause pollution or result in exposure to sources of pollution or risk to safety, will only be permitted if measures can be implemented to minimise pollution and risk to a level that provides a high standard of protection for health, environmental quality and amenity. The following issues require particular attention:</p> <p><u>Air quality</u> The air quality within West Oxfordshire will be managed and improved in line with National Air Quality Standards, the principles of best practice and the Air Quality Management Area Action Plans for Witney and Chipping Norton.</p> <p><u>Contaminated land</u> Proposals for development of land which may be contaminated must incorporate appropriate investigation into the quality of the land. Where there is evidence of contamination, remedial measures must be identified and satisfactorily implemented. Hazardous substances, installations and airfields Development should not adversely affect safety near notifiable installations and safeguarded airfields.</p> <p><u>Artificial light</u> The installation of external lighting and proposals for remote rural buildings will only be permitted where: i) the means of lighting is appropriate, unobtrusively sited and would not result in excessive levels of light; ii) the elevations of buildings, particularly roofs, are designed to limit light spill; ii) the proposal would not have a detrimental effect on local amenity, character of a settlement or wider countryside,</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>This policy is a control document from environmental pollutants.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>intrinsically dark landscapes or nature conservation</p> <p><u>Noise</u> Housing and other noise sensitive development should not take place in areas where the occupants would experience significant noise disturbance from existing or proposed development. New development should not take place in areas where it would cause unacceptable nuisance to the occupants of nearby land and buildings from noise or disturbance.</p> <p><u>Water resources</u> Proposals for development will only be acceptable provided there is no adverse impact on water bodies and groundwater resources, in terms of their quantity, quality and important ecological features.</p> <p><u>Waste</u> Planning permission will be granted for appropriately located development that makes provision for the management and treatment of waste and recycling, in accordance with the Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy and local waste management strategy.</p>	
<p><b>Policy EH7 – Historic Environment</b></p>	<p>All development proposals should conserve or enhance the special character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire’s historic environment, and preserve or enhance the District’s heritage assets, and their significance and settings. Proposals affecting non-designated heritage assets, such as locally listed buildings, will be assessed on the basis of the significance of the heritage asset and the scale of harm or loss to that heritage asset. The Council’s Conservation Area Appraisals should be used as a guide when assessing the significance of a heritage asset. Proposals that will lead to harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset or its setting will be resisted, unless a clear and convincing justification can be made to outweigh that harm.</p>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>Proposals that will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of a heritage asset or its setting, will be refused, unless the harm is outweighed by substantial, demonstrable public benefits or all the four tests set out in the NPPF are met*.</p> <p>* Paragraph 133 of the NPPF:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no viable use of the heritage asset that can be found in the medium term, including through marketing to find alternative owners</li> <li>2. The heritage asset is preventing all reasonable uses of the site</li> <li>3. Public support for or ownership of the asset is demonstrably not possible; and</li> <li>4. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefits of bringing the site back into use</li> </ol>	
<b>Strategy at the Local level</b>		
<p><b>Policy WIT1 – East Witney Strategic Development Area (400 homes)</b></p>	<p>Land to the east of Witney to accommodate a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Witney, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) about 400 homes with a balanced and appropriate mix of residential accommodation to meet identified needs, including affordable housing. This will include c.30 homes on land adjacent to Stanton Harcourt Road (subject to landscape impact and flood risk) and c.370 homes on land at Cogges Triangle (subject to landscape impact and surface water run-off).</li> <li>b) development to be phased in accordance with the timing of provision of supporting infrastructure and facilities with the necessary improvements to the Shore’s Green junction onto the A40 and related highway measures to be delivered prior to the completion of any housing on the Cogges Triangle part of the site.</li> <li>c) the provision of other supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development, and incorporating a comprehensive network for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport with links to adjoining</li> </ol>	<p>Potential HRA Implications</p> <p>This policy provides for development within the East Witney Strategic Development Area although at its closest, this is located 8.7km from Oxford Meadows SAC, residential development is to be located adjacent to the A40.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>areas, including a particular emphasis on improving the linkages across the Windrush Valley into the town centre consistent with the aims and objectives of the Windrush in Witney Project.</p> <p>d) the provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development and associated infrastructure.</p> <p>e) the provision of appropriate financial contributions towards primary and secondary education capacity enhancements.</p> <p>f) biodiversity enhancements including arrangements for future maintenance.</p> <p>g) provision of appropriate green infrastructure including allotments.</p> <p>h) appropriate measures to mitigate traffic noise.</p> <p>i) appropriate measures to mitigate flood risk including the use of sustainable drainage methods to ensure that post-development surface water run-off rates are attenuated to achieve a reduction in greenfield run-off rates. The sustainable drainage systems should be designed to provide a biodiversity enhancement.</p> <p>j) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements.</p> <p>k) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.</p> <p>l) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.</p>	<p>minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>
<p><b>Policy WIT2 – North Witney Strategic Development Area (1,000 homes)</b></p>	<p>Land to the north of Witney to accommodate a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Witney, including:</p> <p>a) about 1,000 homes with a balanced and appropriate mix of residential accommodation to meet identified needs, including affordable housing. This will include c.200 homes on land between New Yatt Road and Woodstock Road and c.800 homes on land</p>	<p>Potential HRA Implications</p> <p>This policy provides for development within the north Witney Strategic Development Area..</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure:</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>between Hailey Road and New Yatt Road</p> <p>b) development on the larger part of the site between New Yatt Road and Woodstock Road to be phased to come forward in the period post-2021 in accordance with the timing of supporting infrastructure and facilities including delivery of the West End Link and Northern Distributor Road;</p> <p>c) the provision of other supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development, and incorporating a comprehensive network for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport with links to adjoining areas including the town centre and other key destinations;</p> <p>d) the provision of a new primary school on-site (1.5FE (including foundation stage) with 2FE core facilities to enable future expansion of the school together with financial contributions towards secondary school capacity as appropriate;</p> <p>e) the provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development including a positive landscape framework to create a new town edge;</p> <p>f) retention of important on-site hedgerows and plantation woodland;</p> <p>g) biodiversity enhancements including arrangements for future maintenance;</p> <p>h) provision of appropriate green infrastructure including allotments;</p> <p>i) appropriate measures to mitigate flood risk including the use of sustainable drainage methods to ensure that post-development surface water run-off rates are attenuated to achieve a reduction in greenfield run-off rates. The sustainable drainage systems should be designed to provide a biodiversity enhancement.</p> <p>j) all development should be steered to areas at least flood risk within Flood Zone 1 and flood alleviation measures to reduce flood risk associated with the Hailey Road Drain should be incorporated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Air quality</li> <li>● Water quality</li> <li>● Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>where appropriate.</p> <p>k) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements.</p> <p>l) ensuring that the construction of the West End Link has no harmful impact on biodiversity and provides for enhancements to biodiversity where feasible;</p> <p>m) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.</p> <p>n) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.</p>	
<p><b>Policy WIT3 – Witney Town Centre Strategy</b></p>	<p>The overall objective is to maintain and enhance Witney Town Centre providing an accessible, attractive and diverse shopping, visitor and evening economy offer and the principal shopping and leisure destination for West Oxfordshire and the surrounding area. This will be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining a strong and diverse shopping core with a good mix of retailers, focused on the High Street as the main pedestrian route and connector between the Woolgate and Marriotts Walk shopping centres. A primary shopping frontage is defined between these shopping centres and along the High Street where the loss of shops will be resisted.</li> <li>- Promoting the Market Square and Corn Street areas as shopping, leisure and cultural quarters, whilst avoiding excessive concentrations of uses that could impact on amenity or vitality. Secondary shopping frontages are defined in these and other areas. The loss of town centre uses from secondary shopping frontages will be resisted.</li> <li>- Investigating opportunities for phased, organic extension of the Woolgate shopping centre and at Welch Way to meet retailer needs, well connected to and strengthening the High Street.</li> </ul>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>- Maintaining and enhancing the Market Square as an attractive public space which can be used for other purposes at other times.</p> <p>- Seeking to raise the profile of Witney as a visitor destination, investigating opportunities for additional accommodation and improved visitor facilities such as coach drop off/waiting areas.</p> <p>- Enhancing the historic market town character and public realm by seeking to ensure investment in paved areas, street furniture, signage and shop fronts and through the provision of appropriate servicing and waste collection arrangements.</p> <p>- Ensuring the town centre, as a key destination, remains accessible, through the provision and management of car parking and through enhancing public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure.</p> <p>Development proposals which significantly increase car parking demand will be expected to make appropriate public car parking provision or provide equivalent financial contributions.</p>	
<p><b>Policy WIT4 – Witney Sub-Area Strategy</b></p>	<p>The focus of new housing, supporting facilities and additional employment opportunities will be Witney. New development in the rest of the sub-area will be limited to meeting local community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages. Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:</p> <p>delivery of around 3,700 new homes to be focused on Witney and to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.</p> <p>a Strategic Development Area of around 400 dwellings on the eastern side of Witney (see Policy WIT1)</p> <p>a Strategic Development Area of around 1,000 dwellings to the north of Witney (see Policy WIT2)</p> <p>expansion of employment opportunities in the town through the retention and modernisation of existing sites, development of remaining available employment land (10ha) and the provision of</p>	<p>Potential HRA Implications</p> <p>This policy provides for development within the Witney Sub-Area. This policy outlines provision for new housing, expansion of employment opportunities, and some highway improvements including to junctions with the A40. It is noted that this policy does provide for enhancing public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>further employment land (at least 10ha) on the western edge of Witney to provide sufficient space for business expansion, relocation and inward investment</p> <p>continuing to work with Oxfordshire County Council and landowners/developers to deliver improvements to key highway infrastructure to reduce traffic and pollution in the historic core and to improve the general flow of traffic and access to primary transport routes, with priority on delivering the A40/Downs Road junction (all traffic movements), Shore's Green junction (west facing slip roads) the West End Link and Northern Distributor Road and other supporting highway improvement measures</p> <p>enhancing public transport, and pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure together with managing car parking to reduce car use for short journeys</p> <p>avoiding development which will be at risk of or increase the risk of flooding and working with landowners/developers and partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures</p> <p>protection and enhancement of the market town character and setting of Witney, neighbouring villages and the Windrush Valley, including the particularly vulnerable gap between Witney and Ducklington</p> <p>development on land within or where it would be visible from the Windrush in Witney Policy Area will be required to protect and enhance the intrinsic landscape, character, ecology and cultural value of the valley</p> <p>protection of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</p> <p>ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure, including new education, health, green infrastructure and other community facilities in accordance with the IDP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
<p><b>Policy CA1 – REEMA Central Strategic Development Area (SDA)</b></p>	<p>Land at REEMA Central to accommodate a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Carterton. Proposals for development should be consistent with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a net increase of about 200 homes with a range of residential accommodation to meet identified needs including affordable housing.</li> <li>b) provision of high quality pedestrian and cycle links to the Town Centre and other key destinations.</li> <li>c) contribution towards education and indoor and outdoor leisure provision in the local area.</li> <li>d) appropriate provision for green infrastructure.</li> <li>e) necessary supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development.</li> <li>f) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements.</li> <li>g) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.</li> <li>h) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.</li> </ul>	<p>Potential HRA Implications</p> <p>This policy provides for development within the REEMA Central SDA. This policy outlines provision for new housing. It is noted that this policy does provide for enhancing public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>
<p><b>Policy CA2 – Carterton Town Centre Strategy</b></p>	<p>Carterton Town Centre will become the local retail centre of choice for those living and working in the town and surrounding villages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Provide a wider range of well integrated shops, eating and drinking establishments, leisure opportunities, public spaces and ancillary town centre facilities including ancillary residential development.</li> <li>•Create distinctive and attractive shopping frontages through high quality traditional and contemporary design and landscaping, utilising high quality materials with some local references, and retaining and enhancing existing trees and planted areas where</li> </ul>	<p>No implications</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Retain and provide adequate car parking and provide for improved access, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, whilst not precluding the potential for pedestrianisation.</li> <li>•A primary shopping frontage is defined to the south side of Alvescot Road and Brize Norton Road to provide a focal point for shopping within the centre and within which the loss of shops will be resisted.</li> <li>•Secondary shopping frontages are defined along the northern side of Alvescot Road, Burford Road and the western side of Black Bourton Road. The loss of town centre uses from shopping frontages will be resisted and excessive concentrations of uses that could affect amenity or vitality will be avoided.</li> <li>•Potential redevelopment of a number of opportunity sites including land on the western side of Burford Road, the southern side of Alvescot Road and the western side of Black Bourton Road. To provide more active and vibrant frontages and efficient use of available space potentially through mixed-use development of complementary uses.</li> <li>•The main streets will be promoted as a distinctive tree-lined 'green avenue' with gateway features used to demarcate arrival into the Town Centre.</li> <li>•Improvements to the main crossroads to facilitate vehicular, pedestrian and cycle movement and improve the quality of the surrounding environs.</li> <li>•Improvements to the quality of the public realm including the provision of public art and street furniture.</li> </ul> <p>Developer contributions and funding from other potential sources will be sought towards these and other Town Centre improvements as appropriate.</p>	
<b>Policy CA3 –</b>	The focus of new housing, supporting facilities and additional	Potential HRA Implications

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
<p><b>Carterton Sub-Area Strategy</b></p>	<p>employment opportunities will be Carterton. New development in the rest of the sub-area will be limited to meeting local community and business needs and will be steered towards the rural service centre and larger villages.</p> <p>Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:</p> <p>delivery of around 2,600 new homes to be focused on Carterton and to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.</p> <p>redevelopment of existing sub-standard MOD housing including a Strategic Development Area of about 200 dwellings (net) at REEMA Central (see Policy CA1)</p> <p>satisfactorily accommodating the needs of RAF Brize Norton and of local communities and visitors and working with RAF Brize Norton to meet their needs and ensure their impacts are mitigated wherever possible</p> <p>retention of remaining land for businesses (5ha) at West Oxfordshire Business Park and Ventura Park. Working in partnership with the Town Council and landowners to identify further opportunities for business land provision within and adjoining Carterton with the aim of delivering at least 10 hectares of high quality business land over the period of the Local Plan</p> <p>a stronger and more attractive and well-connected town centre in accordance with the Carterton Town Centre development strategy (Policy CA2)</p> <p>working with the highway authority, the Town Council and other partners to improve connections between Carterton and the primary road network and deliver necessary strategic transport improvements including the upgrading of the B4477 Minster Lovell Road to A-road standard and supporting complementary measures plus the provision of west facing slip roads at the junction of the B4477 and A40. Developer contributions and other potential</p>	<p>This policy provides for development within the Carterton Sub-Area. This policy outlines provision for new housing, and employment opportunities, and highway improvements including to the B4477 and the B4477/ A40 junction. It is noted that this policy does provide for enhancing bus, pedestrian and cycle routes.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>sources of funding will be sought as appropriate.</p> <p>Enhancing the frequency and coverage of bus services to key destinations as well as the quality of waiting facilities and improving conditions throughout the town for pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>maintaining, enhancing and extending the green buffer on the northern edge of Carterton including between Carterton and Brize Norton village</p> <p>protection and enhancement of the biodiversity and leisure value of the Shill Brook Valley</p> <p>protection and enhancement of the character and setting of Carterton and the identity of neighbouring villages</p> <p>avoiding development which will be at risk of or increase the risk of flooding and working with landowners/developers and partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures</p> <p>ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure, including provision of new green infrastructure, community and leisure facilities</p> <p>working with the River Thames Alliance, support tourism and leisure proposals which are sensitive to and where appropriate enhance the ecological, landscape and heritage value of the River Thames.</p>	
<p><b>Policy CN1 – East Chipping Norton Strategic Development Area (600 homes)</b></p>	<p>Land to the east of Chipping Norton to accommodate a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to the town, including:</p> <p>a) about 600 homes with a balanced and appropriate mix of residential accommodation to meet identified needs, including affordable housing;</p> <p>b) provision for additional business floorspace of around 1.5 ha as part of the overall quantum and mix of development;</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy provides for new homes, additional business floorspace and supporting transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure:</li> </ul>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>c) the provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development;</p> <p>d) satisfactory vehicular access arrangements to be agreed in principle with the highway authority and demonstrated through a robust Transport Assessment (TA);</p> <p>e) the provision of a new primary school on-site (1.5FE (including foundation stage) with 2FE core facilities to enable future expansion of the school);</p> <p>g) provision of local convenience shopping, community and leisure facilities through the creation of a local centre, with due consideration given to any potential impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre;</p> <p>h) green space and biodiversity enhancements including arrangements for future maintenance;</p> <p>i) appropriate measures to mitigate flood risk including the use of sustainable drainage methods to ensure that post-development surface water run-off rates are attenuated to achieve a reduction in greenfield run-off rates. The sustainable drainage systems should be designed to provide a biodiversity enhancement.</p> <p>j) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements.</p> <p>k) mitigation measures to ensure there is no detrimental impact on groundwater quality</p> <p>l) supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development, and incorporating a comprehensive network for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport with links to adjoining areas;</p> <p>m) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings; and</p> <p>n) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Air quality</li> <li>● Water quality</li> <li>● Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
<p><b>Policy CN2 – Chipping Norton Sub-Area Strategy</b></p>	<p>developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.</p> <p>The focus of new housing, supporting facilities and additional employment opportunities will be Chipping Norton. New development in the rest of the sub-area will be limited to meeting local community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:</p> <p>Delivery of around 1,800 new homes to be focused on Chipping Norton to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.</p> <p>A strategic mixed-use development area of around 600 dwellings on the eastern side of Chipping Norton (see Policy CN1)</p> <p>Retention and where appropriate modernisation of existing business premises together with the provision of additional business land of at least 4.5 hectares and up to 7.3 hectares located on the eastern side of the town.</p> <p>conservation and enhancement of the town’s landscape setting and heritage assets.</p> <p>protection of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).</p> <p>working with the highway authority, the town council and other partners to reduce the impact of through traffic, especially lorries, upon the town centre and its air quality.</p> <p>improving the range, frequency and speed of bus services to key destinations.</p> <p>improving conditions throughout the town and surrounding areas for pedestrians and cyclists, including accessibility to bus and rail services.</p> <p>a stronger town centre with new opportunities for retail and community facilities on land between High Street and Albion Street</p> <p>A primary shopping frontage is defined at the High Street and</p>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy outlines new housing, supporting facilities and employment opportunities within the Chipping Norton Sub-Area.</p> <p>This policy does include provision for improving bus services, and improving facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including improvements to the accessibility to bus and rail services.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>Market Place. management of public car parking areas and the provision of adequate public car parking capacity to help support the town centre. ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure. provision of new education and community facilities. Redevelopment of suitable previously developed sites within the town provided they are not of high environmental value and the loss any existing use would not conflict with other relevant plan policies.</p>	
<p><b>Policy EW1 – Blenheim World Heritage Site</b></p>	<p>The exceptional cultural significance (Outstanding Universal Value) of the Blenheim World Heritage Site will be protected, promoted and conserved for current and future generations. Accordingly, proposals which conserve and enhance the attributes and components that comprise the Outstanding Universal Value of the Site, as identified in the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value Statement and in line with the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Management Plan, will be supported. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, development proposals that would lead to substantial harm to or loss of those attributes and components of the Site will be unacceptable, unless it can be demonstrated that any such harm or loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefit that outweigh that harm or loss. Such harm will be wholly exceptional. Where development proposals would lead to less than substantial harm to those attributes and components, that harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposals. When assessing the impact of a proposed development on the Outstanding Universal Value, great weight will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the Outstanding Universal Value and to the integrity and authenticity of the World Heritage</p>	<p>No implications</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>Site.</p> <p>Consideration of impact will be made of proposals within, or potentially affecting, the World Heritage Site and its setting, including areas identified as being of special importance for the preservation of long distance views to and/or from the Site (as shown on the Blenheim Palace Management Plan). Particular regard will be given to the design quality of the proposal (including scale, form and massing), its relationship to context (including topography, built form, views, vistas and effect on the skyline) and the implications of the cumulative effect of changes.</p> <p>By helping to sustain and enhance the significance of the World Heritage Site, the Blenheim Palace Management Plan is a material consideration in assessing development proposals. Proposals relating to the World Heritage Site should seek to support the aims and objectives of the Management Plan.</p>	
<p><b>Policy EW2 – Eynsham – Woodstock Sub-Area Strategy</b></p>	<p>The focus of new development will be Eynsham, Long Hanborough and Woodstock.</p> <p>Development in these rural service centres will be of an appropriate scale and type that would help to reinforce the existing service centre role. Development elsewhere will be limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery of about 1,600 new homes to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.</li> <li>provision of additional business land focused primarily on the rural service centres with a particular focus on Eynsham to help meet future requirements and capitalise on the proximity of this sub-area to Oxford and the Oxfordshire ‘knowledge spine’.</li> <li>support for rural employment opportunities including sustainable</li> </ul>	<p>Potential HRA implications.</p> <p>This policy provides for an increase in 1,600 new homes within this Sub-Area.</p> <p>This policy also provides for a traffic congestion alleviation scheme in the A40.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>tourism and rural diversification. seeking to alleviate traffic congestion issues on the A40 including through the provision of a new park and ride site at Eynsham and associated bus priority measures along the A40 as part of the Oxford Science Transit project.</p> <p>enhancing public transport and pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure together with managing car parking to reduce car use for short journeys.</p> <p>ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure, including education, leisure, green infrastructure and other community facilities.</p> <p>protection of the Oxford Green Belt and Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).</p> <p>protection of historic and community assets including in particular the safeguarding of the Blenheim World Heritage Site and its setting (see Policy EW1).</p> <p>working with the highway authority, the town council and other partners to reduce the impact of through traffic in local settlements including HGV movements through Woodstock.</p> <p>seeking the retention and development of local services and community facilities throughout the sub-area.</p> <p>ensuring Woodstock Town Centre remains vibrant through resisting the loss of shops and other town centre uses, and promoting an increase in the availability and efficient use of car parking provision in appropriate locations.</p> <p>avoiding development which will increase the risk of flooding and working with partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures.</p> <p>working with the River Thames Alliance, support tourism and leisure proposals which are sensitive to and where appropriate enhance the ecological, landscape and heritage value of the River</p>	<p>specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>Thames.</p> <p>In the Lower Windrush Valley the Council will continue to work with the Lower Windrush Valley Project and County Minerals Authority to identify appropriate opportunities for tourism and leisure development. Proposals which complement the rural character of the area will be supported and where possible deliver comprehensive long term recreational access, community or nature conservation benefits.</p>	
<p><b>Policy BC1 – Burford – Charlbury Sub-Area Strategy</b></p>	<p>The focus of new development will be Burford and Charlbury. Development in these rural service centres will be of an appropriate scale and type that would help to reinforce the existing service centre role. Development elsewhere will be limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages.</p> <p>Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery of about 800 new homes to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.</li> <li>protection of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)</li> <li>protection and enhancement of the historic environment and heritage assets</li> <li>protection and enhancement of the Upper Windrush Valley and Wychwood Project Area</li> <li>enhancing public transport and pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure together with managing car parking to reduce car use for short journeys</li> <li>avoiding development which will increase the risk of flooding and working with partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures</li> <li>support for additional small-scale employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Potential HRA implications</p> <p>This policy provides for new homes.</p> <p>It is noted that this policy provides for improvements to public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes to reduce the need for the use of cars for short journeys.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational pressure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ mechanical erosion</li> <li>○ nutrient enrichment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Air quality</li> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Water quantity</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted that the housing quantities specified within this policy are assumed to be a minimum. This document will assess housing provision up to 13,200 new dwellings within West Oxfordshire.</p>

Policy reference	Policy	HRA screening outcome
	<p>including sustainable tourism and rural diversification            Ensuring development has access to superfast broadband to facilitate home-working            seeking the retention and development of local services and community facilities throughout the sub-area and ensuring Burford Town Centre remains vibrant through resisting the loss of shops and other town centre uses, and promoting an increase in the availability and efficient use of parking provision in appropriate locations            ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for necessary supporting infrastructure, including education, leisure, green infrastructure and other community facilities            The Council will work in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to consider appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of HGV traffic on Burford.</p>	

The following policies cannot be screened out either alone or in-combination with other projects or plans without further consideration following an initial screening exercise of the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan (2015):

- Policy OS2 – Locating Development in the Right Places
- Policy H1 – Amount and Distribution of Housing
- Policy H2 – Delivery of New Homes
- Policy H6 – Existing Housing
- Policy H7 – Travelling Communities
- Policy E1 – Land for Employment
- Policy E2- Supporting the Rural Economy
- Policy E3 - Re-use of Non-Residential Buildings
- Policy E4 - Sustainable Tourism
- Policy E6 - Town Centres
- Policy EH5 – Flood Risk
- Policy WIT1 – East Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)
- Policy WIT2 – North Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)
- Policy WIT4 – Witney Sub-Area Strategy
- Policy CA1 – REEMA Central Strategic Development Area (SDA)
- Policy CA3 – Carterton Sub-Area Strategy
- Policy CN1 – East Chipping Norton Sub-Area Strategy
- Policy CN2 – Chipping Norton Sub-Area Strategy
- Policy EW2 – Eynsham – Woodstock Sub-Area Strategy
- Policy BC1 – Burford – Charlbury Sub-Area Strategy

The purpose of the following chapters of this report is to undertake a more detailed screening exercise of these policies

## 5 OXFORD MEADOWS SAC

### 5.1 Introduction

Oxford Meadows SAC contains unique vegetation communities. These reflect the long-term grazing and hay-cutting practices on lowland hay meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function.

Cassington Meadows are a cluster of neutral hay meadows and fen, which are surviving remnants of semi-natural vegetation in an area now characterised by intensive arable farming and gravel extraction. Cassington Meadows is located within West Oxfordshire District.

Port Meadow is a classic site for studying the effects of grazing on plant communities. The site consists of a series of neutral grasslands situated in the Thames floodplain. Despite the generally low species-diversity of Port Meadow compared with adjoining hay fields a total of 178 flowering plants have been recorded. These include the Red Data Book species creeping marshwort *Apium repens*, for which Port Meadow is now one of only two sites in Britain.

Wolvercote Meadows, bordering the River Thames consists of unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland that continues to be managed traditionally for hay and pasture and support a rich flora. Pixey and Yarnton Meads are unimproved floodplain meadows on alluvium over calcareous gravel on the first terrace bordering the River Thames and are internationally renowned. They are amongst the best remaining examples of neutral grassland in lowland England. Oxford Meadows SAC is within and adjacent to the eastern boundary of West Oxfordshire District.

In places, the SAC is located adjacent to the A34 and A40.

### 5.2 Features of European Interest

The site is designated as a SAC for the following 'Qualifying Features':

- Lowland hay meadows: for which the site is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
- Creeping marshwort *Apium repens*: for which the site is the only known outstanding locality in the United Kingdom. The plant is known from 15 or fewer 10 x 10 km squares in the United Kingdom.

### 5.3 Condition Assessment of SSSI Units

The following SSSI Units are located within the SAC: Cassington Meadows SSSI, Pixey and Yarnton Meads SSSI, Port Meadow with Wolvercote Common and Green SSSI, Wolvercote Meadows SSSI.

During the most recent Condition Assessment process (2010-2012), the site was in favourable condition.

From review of the UK Air Pollution System ([www.apis.ac.uk](http://www.apis.ac.uk)), the SAC is not currently suffering from poor air quality.

#### 5.4 Conservation Objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

#### 5.5 Key Environmental Conditions

The key conditions that support the features of European interest are:

- Maintenance of traditional hay cut.
- Maintenance of light aftermath grazing.
- Minimal air pollution.
- Absence of direct fertilisation.
- Balanced hydrological regime –alteration to adjacent rivers may alter flooding regime and reduce botanical diversity.
- Absence of excessive nutrient enrichment of floodwaters

#### 5.6 Potential Effects of the Plan

The following key environmental conditions for Oxford Meadows SAC have potential to be affected by the West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and housing required within this district:

- Recreational pressure - absence of direct fertilisation via dog fouling
- Minimal air pollution.
- Water quantity – a balanced hydrological regime: alteration to adjacent rivers may alter flooding regime and reduce botanical diversity.
- Absence of excessive nutrient enrichment of floodwaters

These are discussed further in the following sections.

##### 5.6.1 Recreational Pressure

Oxford Meadows SAC contains features that are susceptible to impacts resulting from increased recreational pressure through direct fertilisation (dog fouling) and possibly via trampling. According to the HRA of the Cherwell Core Strategy: *‘Oxford Meadows SAC is a popular place for walking, particularly for residents of and visitors to Oxford’*. A visitor survey

undertaken during October 2011 by Oxford City Council to inform the Oxford Sites and Housing DPD<sup>22</sup> identified that over 80% of visitors to the SAC live within 5km of the site. The majority of respondents (82%) indicated that they were residents of Oxford with only 4% being resident in other parts of Oxfordshire. Visitors to the Oxford Meadows SAC from settlements within West Oxfordshire equated to 1.9% of the visitors to the SAC. Those settlements within West Oxfordshire from which visitors originated were Witney (8.8km from the SAC), Bampton (15.5km from the SAC), Carterton (17.5km from the SAC), Burford (20.3km from the SAC), Chipping Norton (22.5km from the SAC) and Woodstock (7.8km from the SAC). Given the large distances involved it is unsurprising that West Oxfordshire makes a small contribution to visitors on the SAC. The Council have confirmed that the focus of new housing in the district will be on the settlements of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. Given that the closest of these is almost 9km from the SAC, well outside the core catchment, and the others are 18-22km distant it is likely that even a large increase in the population of those settlements would have a negligible impact on visitor activity within the SAC. It is clear that impacts on the SAC will be overwhelmingly dominated by new housing provision in Oxford and other settlements very close to the SAC.

No specific 'in combination assessment' is required since the visitor survey on which this analysis is based took account of all sources of visitor origin for the SAC and the preceding analysis does consider impacts from West Oxfordshire within the context of those from Oxford City.

It can therefore be concluded that the contribution of West Oxfordshire to any in combination impact on the SAC is essentially trivial and is likely to remain so.

#### 5.6.2 Air Quality

The increase in development proposed within the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is likely to result in increased car use on roads that pass within 200m of the SAC (namely the A34 and A40), notably as a consequence of housing and business development. It is reasonable to assume that the increased population (both residential and business), and an increase in tourism at Blenheim World Heritage Site (Policy EW1) will lead to increased vehicle movements. When coupled with the 93,560-106,560 new houses identified by the Oxfordshire Strategic Market Housing Assessment<sup>23</sup> within the local authorities surrounding West Oxfordshire, there is an even greater likelihood of an increase in traffic movements along the A34 and A40 which run adjacent to the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Department for Transport Guidance as expressed in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)<sup>24</sup> states that the first process in determining air quality impacts from road schemes is to determine whether the road in question is an 'affected road' which is defined as, among other criteria, if it will experience an increase in flows of more than 1,000 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) as a result of the planned development. It is noted within the Witney –Oxford Corridor Baseline Statement<sup>25</sup> approximately 1/3 of the eastbound am peak flow on the A40 consists of trips from Witney and Carterton to Oxford. This suggests that any increases in housing within these areas (as is proposed within the Final Version Pre-

<sup>22</sup> Oxford City Council (2011). DRAFT Sites and Housing DPD Habitats Regulations Assessment Appendix 1 – Visitor Survey information and results.

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Sites%20and%20Housing/Sites%20and%20Housing%20Habitats%20Regulation%20Assessment.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Oxfordshire Strategic Market housing Assessment (March 2014)

<http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Id=8577&Opt=0> [accessed 16/12/14]

<sup>24</sup> Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 11 Environmental Assessment, Section 3 Environmental Assessment Techniques, Part 1: Air Quality

<sup>25</sup> Oxfordshire County Council. Witney - Oxford Corridor. Baseline Statement Presentation (November 2014)

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/roadsandtransport/majorprojects/MajorTransportProjects/WitneyOxfordcorridorpresentation.pdf>

Submission Draft Local Plan) may have potential to increase air pollution (nitrogen oxide emissions from vehicular activity along the A40, and nitrogen deposition). However, the same study also shows that AADT flows on the A40 have remained relatively stable over the past decade despite large amounts of housing and economic development along the corridor. A possible reason for this may be that rather than overall flows increasing, in practice the 'rush hour' periods are lengthening.

At the time of writing (February 2015) no data on the increase in flows on the A40 due to development in West Oxfordshire are available. However, based on examination of flow calculations undertaken for Cherwell and Vale of White Horse it seems possible that flows on the A40 due to Local Plan development could increase by over 1000 AADT. It is noted that the air quality analyses undertaken in 2014 for the Cherwell Local Plan and Vale of White Horse Local Plan both identified that, although there would be a change in flows exceeding 1000 AADT as a result of the development in those plans there would nonetheless be an insignificant increase (defined as an increase equivalent to less than 1% of the critical load) in nitrogen deposition rate (nitrogen deposition being the principal pathway for air quality impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC). The SAC boundary does not lie immediately adjacent to the A34 but is separated from the road by the highway boundary/verge which is 20m wide on the north side of the A34 and 12m wide on the south side. Therefore the greatest increase in NOx concentrations will fall within the highway boundary rather than the SAC. As such, it is entirely possible that even with a change in flows exceeding AADT as a result of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan the impact due to the principal pathway may not be significant.

Housing numbers across Oxfordshire County are likely to be subject to some revision in the near future due to the outcome of the various SHMA processes, the fact that some authorities (such as West Oxfordshire) are still preparing their Local Plans and the fact that at least some of the housing need identified for Oxford City in the SHMA may need to be accommodated in surrounding districts. In light of this air quality effects as a result of new development on Oxford Meadows SAC is an issue that is now being considered as a wider, strategic, cross-boundary issue in an initiative being led by the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

As a precaution in the absence of the outcomes of the detailed strategic study it is considered appropriate at this stage to identify measures that would address an air quality issue if one was identified 'in combination' with other projects and plans (particularly the aforementioned Local Plans of surrounding authorities). To do this, the approach to addressing air quality in the Thames Basin Heaths area, as set out in the Local Authority Core Strategies/Local Plans and their HRAs (and which was agreed with Natural England) have been drawn upon.

In consultation on the Thames Basin Heaths Core Strategies/Local Plans Natural England referred to the West London Air Quality Best Practice Guide for Air Quality and Transport, as a source of appropriate mitigation measures that could be included in Core Strategies:

That report identifies four broad types of mitigation measure:

- Behavioural measures and modal shift - reducing the amount of traffic overall;
- Traffic management - modifying traffic behaviour to control where emissions are generated;
- Emissions reduction at source - reducing the emissions level per vehicle; and
- Roadside barriers - reducing the impact on the public of emissions.

The following policies of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan seek to ensure the protection of European designated sites and prevent further deterioration of air quality:

- Policy OS3 – Prudent Use of Natural Resources

*‘All development proposals (including new buildings, conversions and the refurbishment of existing building stock) will be required to show consideration of the efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources, including: ..... achieving improvements in water or air quality.’*

- Policy EH2 - Biodiversity

*‘The biodiversity of West Oxfordshire shall be protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity, including by:*

*- giving sites and species of international nature conservation importance and nationally important sites of special scientific interest the highest level of protection from any development that will have an adverse impact;*

*- requiring a Habitats Regulation Assessment to be undertaken of any development proposal that is likely to have a significant adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on the Oxford Meadows SAC, particularly in relation to air quality and nitrogen oxide emissions and deposition*

- Policy EH6 - Environmental Protection

*‘...Proposals which are likely to cause pollution or result in exposure to sources of pollution or risk to safety, will only be permitted if measures can be implemented to minimise pollution and risk to a level that provides a high standard of protection for health, environmental quality and amenity. The following issues require particular attention:*

*Air quality*

*The air quality within West Oxfordshire will be managed and improved in line with National Air Quality Standards, the principles of best practice and the Air Quality Management Area Action Plans for Witney and Chipping Norton.’*

- Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport

*‘Priority will be given to locating new development in areas with convenient access to a good range of services and facilities and where the need to travel by private car can be minimised, particularly where this would help to reduce traffic congestion on the routes around Oxford and the Air Quality Management Areas at Witney and Chipping Norton.*

*All new development will be designed to maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport, ensure the safe movement of vehicles and minimise the impact of parked and moving vehicles on local residents, business and the environment*

*- To promote increased home working and telecommuting, all new residential and commercial developments will be required to make provision for superfast broadband.*

*- Mixed-use developments will be supported in principle in accessible, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant local plan policies.*

*Proposals for new developments that have significant transport implications either in themselves or in combination with other proposals will be required to include a Transport Assessment (TA), and where necessary a travel plan, in accordance with County Council requirements.’ .*

For those sustainable transport measures which are available at the strategic planning level, it is not possible to predict in advance the precise quantum of improvement that can be delivered by a given mitigation measure due to both the novel nature of the mitigation tools available and the limitations of the science. Vegetative changes that theory identifies as being likely to result from changes (either negative or positive) in atmospheric nitrogen deposition can fail to appear in practice since they are relatively subtle and can be totally offset by management regime. Moreover, it is rarely possible to separate the effects of atmospheric nitrogen deposition and other causes, or to separate the effects of atmospheric nitrogen deposition arising from vehicle exhausts from those arising from other sources (e.g. agriculture). For example, a policy to ‘require developers to produce travel plans indicating that they have maximised opportunities for sustainable transport’ may prove effective in practice, but cannot be predictively linked to a specific scale of improvement of air quality.

It is therefore important that where air quality problems are identified there is also a mechanism established to monitor the effectiveness of the measures adopted (using the critical load/level as a monitoring target against which the success or failure of mitigation measures can be evaluated) and amend them as required. If a qualitative effect attributable to air quality was confirmed, then this would trigger the introduction of further mitigation measures proven to be effective in such situations. These could include management initiatives to improve the vegetative quality of other parts of the SAC further from the roadside or to counter any additional growth of vegetation close to the roadside, roadside barriers, reallocation of road space (high occupancy vehicle lanes), re-routing of heavy goods and older vehicles, traffic management and calming measures, or measures to change vehicle speeds on the A34 and/or A40 which would also affect emissions. Exactly which measures would be most appropriate would need to be determined at the time (if required at all) and therefore the Local Plan should not commit to specific initiatives at this stage.

This is in line with the precautionary principle as set out in EC Guidance<sup>26</sup> on its use:

*‘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 the protection normally afforded to these within the European Community, the Precautionary Principle is triggered.*

*Decision-makers then have to determine what action to take. They should take account of the potential consequences of taking no action, the uncertainties inherent in the scientific evaluation, and they should consult interested parties on the possible ways of managing the risk. Measures should be proportionate to the level of risk, and to the desired level of protection. They should be provisional in nature pending the availability of more reliable scientific data.*

*Action is then undertaken to obtain further information enabling a more objective assessment of the risk. The measures taken to manage the risk should be maintained so long as the scientific information remains inconclusive and the risk unacceptable’.*

#### Recommendation

**In order to ensure that the Council’s robust measures to improve air quality across the district are shown to be effective in terms of protection of the SAC, the Council should adopt a partnership approach to monitoring of air quality on the SAC. This would be in line with guidance provided to other Oxfordshire authorities such as Vale of White Horse.**

<sup>26</sup> European Commission (2000): Communication from the Commission on the use of the Precautionary Principle.

**Collaborative working to investigate air quality strategically has already commenced under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Council should supplement this via a plan commitment to working with other local authorities, land managers, and strategic highway authorities to develop a framework by which air quality measures can be linked to monitoring of the air quality in the Oxford Meadows SAC before and for a number of years after introduction of the measures, such that further measures can be devised if the air quality does not improve. In making these assessments the critical load for the relevant habitat should be used as the target for assessment. Commitment to this would be best included within Policy T1 or its supporting text.**

**While not mitigation in itself, monitoring is an essential factor when dealing with an issue such as air quality which has a high degree of uncertainty, since it will enable the effectiveness of air quality improvement measures to be evaluated and amended over the Local Plan period.**

Other Plans and Projects

There will be population increases in neighbouring districts (currently committed or projected to be up to 22,840 new dwellings in Cherwell, 9,132 in Oxford, 10,940 in South Oxfordshire, 20,560 in Vale of White Horse, 22,000 in Swindon, 6900 in the Cotswold District, 10,500 in West Berkshire, and 850 in the Marlborough Area of Wiltshire). Development of new housing in adjacent local authorities is likely to lead to increased road transport on the A34 and A40 that pass through, or within 200m of, Oxford Meadows SAC. The contribution of proposed development in West Oxfordshire district to any increase in deposition in combination with other development will be assessed and reported as part of a strategic study into effects of new development on air quality at Oxford Meadows SAC.

5.6.3

**Water Quantity**

The new homes and employment areas proposed within West Oxfordshire have the potential to lead to increased pressure upon water demand.

Following consultation on the West Oxfordshire Core Strategy: Preferred Options Approach in March 2010; Thames Water expressed concern regarding potential low water pressure issues at Chipping Norton as a result of increased water demand stemming from the new plan. Thames Water recommended that new residential development should meet the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 to ensure the efficient use of water, which will help meet the increase in demand for water. Level 3 requires that less than 105 litres of water is used per person per day, which is a 25% improvement on 2006 Building Regulations standards. In addition, a new reservoir scheme by Thames Water in Abingdon will help address long-term water supply issues.

This can be found within Policy OS3 (Prudent Use of Natural Resources):

*‘All development proposals (including new buildings, conversions and the refurbishment of existing building stock) will be required to show consideration of the efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources, including:...*

- *maximising passive solar heating, lighting, natural ventilation, energy and water efficiency and reuse of materials;*
- *maximising resource efficiency, including water*
- *minimising risk of flooding;*
- *making use of appropriate sustainable drainage systems;*

Additionally, correspondence with Natural England<sup>27</sup> identified that Oxford Meadows SAC is *'not currently adversely affected by water quantity. The potential sensitivity with respect to water quantity is to do with flooding, rather than typical water levels in the river that might be affected by abstraction. We advise that the proposals in the Core Strategy are very unlikely to affect flooding frequency and magnitude, given that runoff rates from new developments will be regulated by the Environment Agency such that they will be the same as would occur from a greenfield site'*.

Additionally Policy OS3 guards against flooding events as a result of the West Oxfordshire Draft Local Plan:

#### Policy OS3 – Prudent Use of Natural Resources

*'All development proposals (including new buildings, conversions and the refurbishment of existing building stock) will be required to show consideration of the efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources, including:...*

- minimising risk of flooding;*
- making use of appropriate sustainable drainage systems*

#### Core Policy 4 – High Quality Design

*'High design quality is central to the strategy for West Oxfordshire. New development should respect and contribute to local distinctiveness and, where possible, enhance the character and quality of the surroundings and should: ...*

- demonstrate resilience to future climate change, particularly increasing temperatures and flood risk, and the use of water conservation and management measures; and*
- preserve or enhance areas, buildings and features of historic, architectural and environmental importance, including unlisted vernacular buildings and habitats of biodiversity value; and*
- enhance local green infrastructure and its biodiversity, including the provision of attractive, safe and convenient amenity open space commensurate with the scale and type of development, with play space where appropriate.'*

#### Policy EH5 – Flood Risk

*'Flood risk will be managed using the sequential, risk-based approach, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, of avoiding flood risk to people and property where possible and managing any residual risk (taking account of the impacts of climate change).*

*In assessing proposals for development:*

- the Sequential Test and, if necessary, the Exception Test will be applied;*
- all sources of flooding (including sewer flooding and surface water flooding) will need to be addressed and measures to manage or reduce their impacts, onsite and elsewhere, incorporated into the development proposal;*
- appropriate flood resilient and resistant measures should be used;*

<sup>27</sup> Email from Natural England dated 08/12/2011

- *sustainable drainage systems to manage run-off will be integrated into the site design, maximising their habitat value and ensuring their long term maintenance;*
- *a site-specific flood risk assessment will be required for all proposals of 1ha or more and for any proposal in Flood Zone 2 and 3 and Critical Drainage Areas;*
- *only water compatible uses and essential infrastructure will be allowed in a functional flood plain (Flood Zone 3b);*
- *land required for flood management will be safeguarded from development and, where applicable, managed as part of the green infrastructure network, including maximising its biodiversity value.'*

Policies for Sub Area strategies at the Local level include text such as:

Proposals for development in the Sub Areas *'should be consistent with the strategy which includes:*

- *...avoiding development which will increase the risk of flooding and working with partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures.'*

Policy EH5 (Flood Risk) would have the potential to disrupt flows onto the Oxford Meadows SAC from the River Thames in theory but will not do so in practice as there is no realistic prospect of there being any need to introduce flood defences along the River Thames as it interacts with the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Natural England identified that Oxford Meadows SAC is currently not adversely affected by water quantity issues. It is considered that the West Oxfordshire Draft Local Plan provides for protection within the above mentioned policies, the Final Version Pre-Submissions Draft Local Plan will not impact on flooding events, or water quantity, and as such can be screened out.

#### 5.6.4 **Water Quality**

The new homes and employment areas proposed within West Oxfordshire have the potential to lead to decreased water quality from increases in effluent discharge.

Waste water treatment facilities and sewage treatment works will need to be able to cope with increased capacity as a result of new development. In terms of the protection of the SAC it is important to avoid pollution of the River Thames.

Waste water within the district is dealt with by Thames Water Utilities Ltd. Research carried out by the Environment Agency in 2006 indicated that, based on housing projections at that time, future sewage treatment capacity for the sewage treatment works within West Oxfordshire could be rendered adequate to deal with projected growth to 2026 without upgrades being required<sup>28</sup> and would therefore not have an adverse effect upon receiving waters. However, the Abingdon sewage treatment works would need to reduce the levels of phosphorous in discharged water.

It is understood that Natural England, the Environment Agency and Thames Water have not expressed any concerns over the potential for deterioration of water quality in the River Thames (which flows past the Oxford Meadows SAC) due to additional wastewater discharge as a result of housing development in Oxfordshire. Moreover, there is a statutory process already in place via the Environment Agency discharge consenting regime that would prevent deterioration of water quality in the river from this source.

<sup>28</sup> Environment Agency. May 2006. Creating a Better Place: Planning for Water Quality and Growth in the South East

Correspondence with Natural England<sup>29</sup> stated that Oxford Meadows SAC is '*not currently adversely affected by poor water quality*' as such this pathway can be screened out.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Issues of recreational pressure, air quality and water quantity and quality have all been considered in relation to impacts of the West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan on the Oxford Meadows SAC. It is possible to conclude that following recommendations (as outlined below) likely significant effects on the Oxford Meadows SAC as a result of development under the West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan will not occur as a result of pathways of impact from recreational pressure, either alone, or in combination with other plans and projects.

### Air quality recommendations

In order to ensure that the Council's robust measures to improve air quality across the district are shown to be effective in terms of protection of the SAC, the Council should adopt a partnership approach to monitoring of air quality on the SAC.

Collaborative working to investigate air quality strategically has already commenced under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Council should supplement this via a plan commitment to working with other local authorities, land managers, and strategic highway authorities to develop a framework by which air quality measures can be linked to monitoring of the air quality in the Oxford Meadows SAC before and for a number of years after introduction of the measures, such that further measures can be devised if the air quality does not improve. In making these assessments the critical load for the relevant habitat should be used as the target for assessment.

While not mitigation in itself, monitoring is an essential factor when dealing with an issue such as air quality which has a high degree of uncertainty, since it will enable the effectiveness of air quality improvement measures to be evaluated and amended over the Core Strategy period.

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<sup>29</sup> Email from Natural England dated 08/12/2011

## 6 COTHILL FEN SAC

### 6.1 Introduction

Cothill Fen supports outstanding examples of nationally rare calcareous fen and moss-rich mire communities together with associated wetland habitats. It is one of a number of nationally important sites where the vegetation of the area over the past ten millennia can be interpreted from peat samples. Cothill Fen exhibits succession from open water to fen, scrub and carr, together with an adjacent area of ancient woodland. Plant distribution varies in conjunction with differences in water table, canopy cover, peat depth, soils and historical factors such as peat cutting and attempts at drainage. Over 330 vascular plants have been recorded, including species which are uncommon in southern England, together with many uncommon invertebrates. The site is located approximately 3.3km east the West Oxfordshire boundary, 2.5km to the west of Wootton, west of Abingdon.

### 6.2 Features of European interest<sup>30</sup>

The site is designated as a SAC for the following 'Qualifying Features'

- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*)
- Alkaline fens; Calcium-rich springwater-fed fens
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*); Alder woodland on floodplains
- Southern Damselyfly *Coenagrion mercuriale*

### 6.3 Condition Assessment of SSSI Units

The following SSSI Units are located within the SAC: Cothill Fen SSSI

During the most recent Condition Assessment process (2009), the site was in favourable condition.

From examination of the UK Air Pollution System ([www.apis.ac.uk](http://www.apis.ac.uk)) the SAC is currently suffering from poor air quality. Cothill Fen SAC currently exceeds the minimum critical load for nitrogen deposition. However, since it lies over 200m from the nearest major road, local air quality impacts associated with the development-related transport do not require consideration in this HRA.

### 6.4 Conservation Objectives

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats, and

<sup>30</sup> Features of European Interest are the features for which a European site is selected. They include habitats listed on Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive, species listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive and populations of bird species for which a site is designated under the EC Birds Directive.

- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats rely

## 6.5 Key environmental conditions

The key environmental conditions that support the features of European interest are:

- High water table;
- Good water quality;
- Appropriate grazing regime; and
- Calcareous, base-rich water supply.

## 6.6 Potential effects of the plan

The following key environmental conditions for Cothill Fen SAC have potential to be effected by the West Oxfordshire District Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan:

- Recreational pressure
- Water quality
- Water quantity

These are discussed further in the following sections.

### 6.6.1 Recreational Pressure

The number of new houses outlined in West Oxfordshire by the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan has potential to lead to likely significant effects upon Cothill Fen SAC.

Correspondence with Natural England in 2011<sup>31</sup> stated that they do not consider Cothill Fen SAC vulnerable to recreational pressure as a result of the then Draft Local Plan (housing provision 5,500 new dwellings) due to the '*nature of the site and the distances from West Oxfordshire District*'. Even with an increase in housing numbers the substantial distances separating the key population centres of West Oxfordshire from Cothill Fen SAC would remain and this conclusion remains valid. As such, this impact pathway is screened out.

### 6.6.2 Other plans and projects

Although there will be population increases in neighbouring districts (currently committed or projected to be up between 93,560-106,560 within Oxfordshire, 22,000 in Swindon, 6900 in the Cotswold District, 10,500 in West Berkshire, and 850 in the Marlborough Area of Wiltshire) these all lie well outside the probable core recreational catchment of the SAC<sup>32</sup>.

### 6.6.3 Water Resources

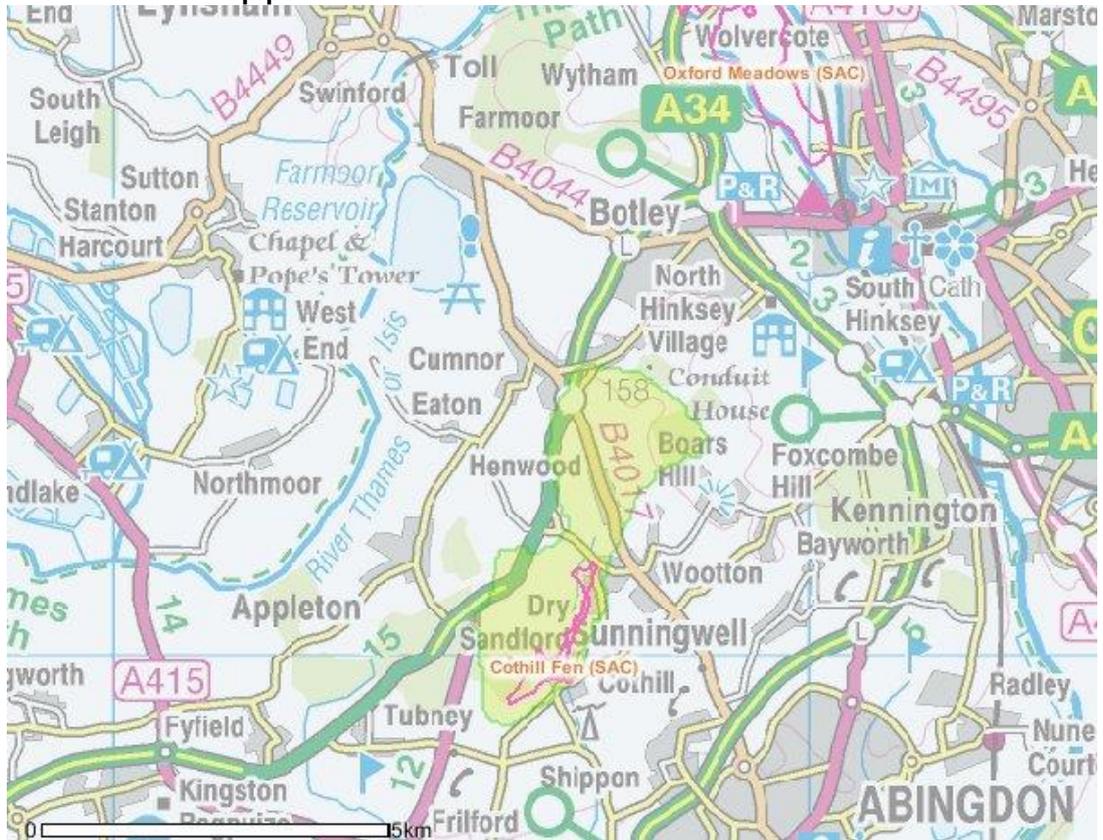
This site is particularly dependent on an adequate supply of high quality fresh water which is generally supplied from groundwater springs. The calcareous water from the springs ultimately drains through the SAC and into the Sandford Brook which is a southerly-flowing tributary of the River Ock.

Cothill Fen SAC is one of the few European sites for which a digital hydrological catchment is available via the Nature on the Map portal (see Figure 6 below).

<sup>31</sup> Email from Natural England dated 08/12/2011

<sup>32</sup> Figures subject to change based on emerging Local Plans/ Core Strategies, and emerging Oxfordshire SHMA.

**Figure 6– Approximate hydrological catchment for Cothill Fen SAC as displayed within the Nature on the Map portal**



The Catchment area for Cothill Fen SAC does not include West Oxfordshire district. Correspondence with Natural England<sup>33</sup> also identified that the site ‘does not appear to be hydrologically connected to West Oxfordshire District, and as such we advise there will be no likely significant effect arising from the plan due to water Quality or Quantity issues.’

As such, it can be concluded that no impact pathway exists between the West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Cothill Fen SAC. As such this site can be screened out.

**6.7 Conclusion**

No impact pathways exist between West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan and Cothill Fen SAC. As such this site can be screened out.

<sup>33</sup> Email from Natural England dated 08/12/2011

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that there is no prospect of a likely significant effect of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan on any European sites through any impact pathways except potentially air quality on the Oxford Meadows SAC.

It is considered likely that housing across Oxfordshire will result in an increase in nitrogen deposition and NOx concentration within a small part of the Oxford Meadows SAC as it lies adjacent to the A34 and A40. The Oxfordshire authorities are undertaking more detailed studies to investigate air quality within the SAC adjacent to the A34 and A40, which will in turn inform specific mitigation interventions. As a precaution, until that study is completed, it has been assumed in this analysis that an air quality effect may exist and appropriate plan-level measures to address the issue (as accepted for other local authorities) have been identified and are reflected in the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan which would enable a conclusion of no adverse effect to be reached (as has been the case in the Thames Basin Heaths area) and enable the West Oxfordshire Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan to be adopted.

As a precaution the following policies ensure for the protection of European designated sites and prevent further deterioration of air quality:

- Policy OS3 – Prudent Use of Natural Resources

*'All development proposals (including new buildings, conversions and the refurbishment of existing building stock) will be required to show consideration of the efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources, including: ..... achieving improvements in water or air quality.'*

- Policy EH2 - Biodiversity

*'The biodiversity of West Oxfordshire shall be protected and enhanced to achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity, including by:*

*- giving sites and species of international nature conservation importance and nationally important sites of special scientific interest the highest level of protection from any development that will have an adverse impact;*

*- requiring a Habitats Regulation Assessment to be undertaken of any development proposal that is likely to have a significant adverse effect, either alone or in combination, on the Oxford Meadows SAC, particularly in relation to air quality and nitrogen oxide emissions and deposition*

- Policy EH6 - Environmental Protection

*'...Proposals which are likely to cause pollution or result in exposure to sources of pollution or risk to safety, will only be permitted if measures can be implemented to minimise pollution and risk to a level that provides a high standard of protection for health, environmental quality and amenity. The following issues require particular attention:*

*...The air quality within West Oxfordshire will be managed and improved in line with National Air Quality Standards, the principles of best practice and the Air Quality Management Area Action Plans for Witney and Chipping Norton.'*

- Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport

*‘Priority will be given to locating new development in areas with convenient access to a good range of services and facilities and where the need to travel by private car can be minimised, particularly where this would help to reduce traffic congestion on the routes around Oxford and the Air Quality Management Areas at Witney and Chipping Norton.*

*All new development will be designed to maximise opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport, ensure the safe movement of vehicles and minimise the impact of parked and moving vehicles on local residents, business and the environment*

*- To promote increased home working and telecommuting, all new residential and commercial developments will be required to make provision for superfast broadband.*

*- Mixed-use developments will be supported in principle in accessible, sustainable locations subject to compliance with other relevant local plan policies.*

*Proposals for new developments that have significant transport implications either in themselves or in combination with other proposals will be required to include a Transport Assessment (TA), and where necessary a travel plan, in accordance with County Council requirements.’*

Further recommendations made to ensure no likely significant effects upon Oxford Meadows SAC are as follows:

- In order to ensure that the Council’s robust measures to improve air quality across the district are shown to be effective in terms of protection of the SAC, the Council should adopt a partnership approach to monitoring of air quality on the SAC.
- Collaborative working to investigate air quality strategically has already commenced under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Council should supplement this via a plan commitment to working with other local authorities, land managers, and strategic highway authorities to develop a framework by which air quality measures can be linked to monitoring of the air quality in the Oxford Meadows SAC before and for a number of years after introduction of the measures, such that further measures can be devised if the air quality does not improve. In making these assessments the critical load for the relevant habitat should be used as the target for assessment.

It is concluded that providing recommendations made within this document are included in the Final Version Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan, there will be no likely significant effect upon a European designated site.

