

Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan

Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options

Volume 1 of 2: Main SA Report

October 2025



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043

Volume 1 of 2: Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Option SA

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Oxfordshire Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation document and meets the requirements of the SEA Regulations. It is not intended to be a substitute for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Appropriate Assessment (AA).

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Acronyms & abbreviations

A&E	Accident and Emergency
ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
BMV	Best and Most Versatile
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CA	Conservation Areas
CNL	Cotswolds National Landscape
CO₂	Carbon dioxide
CWMP	Construction Waste Management Plan
DBEIS	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
dpa	Dwellings per Annum
EU	European Union
EV	Electric Vehicle
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GP	General Practitioner
Ha	Hectare
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
HMA	Housing Market Area
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
kg	Kilogram
LB	Listed Building
LCA	Landscape Character Area
LEAP	Local Equipped Areas for Play
LGS	Local Geological Site
LHNA	Local Housing Needs Assessment
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LNRN	Local Nature Recovery Network
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
LT	Landscape Type
LVA	Landscape and Visual Appraisal
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
MSA	Mineral Safeguarding Area
NaPTAN	National Public Transport Access Nodes
NEAP	Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play
NHS	National Health Service
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NO₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NRN	Nature Recovery Network
ONS	Office of National Statistics
OS	Ordnance Survey
OWMP	Operational Waste Management Plan
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PPP	Policies Plans and Programmes
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
RAF	Royal Air Force
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RPG	Registered Park and Garden
RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SDA	Strategic Development Area
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SM	Scheduled Monument
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPZ	Source Protection Zone
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
STW	Sewage Treatment Works
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
SWFR	Surface Water Flood Risk
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
TVERC	Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
UK	United Kingdom
WCS	Water Cycle Study
WFD	Water Framework Directive
WHS	World Heritage Site
WODC	West Oxfordshire District Council
WRMP	Water Resource Management Plan
ZOI	Zone of Influence
HELAA	Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment

Non-technical summary

About this report

- N1 Lepus Consulting is conducting an appraisal process for West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to help them prepare their Local Plan. The appraisal process is known as Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which incorporates the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and is prepared during a number of different stages to facilitate iteration between the Plan makers (WODC) and the appraisal team (Lepus Consulting).
- N2 SA is the process of informing and influencing the preparation of a development plan to optimise its sustainable development performance as the plan is prepared over several distinct stages including examination in public, and finally, adoption.
- N3 This report is an interim SA Report. Another SA report will be prepared at the next stage of plan making.

Context

- N4 The Plan area constitutes West Oxfordshire District, located in the south east of England, within Oxfordshire County, covering an area of approximately 71,444ha. The district is primarily rural in character, with roughly a third of the district in the north west falling within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).
- N5 The emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan will provide a new strategy for the district for the period up to 2043.
- N6 A local plan sets out the planning policies that local authorities will use to assess applications for development as well as identifying (allocating) sites for new development proposals to meet the future development needs in terms of housing and job growth.
- N7 To help local authorities ensure that their new local plan includes the most suitable planning policies and development allocations, the SA process identifies, describes and evaluates a number of different reasonable alternative policies and development locations.

Assessing the Preferred Spatial Options version of the Local Plan

- N8 The current plan making phase is called the 'Preferred Spatial Options' stage. This is the fourth stage in preparing the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, following the initial 'Scoping'

consultation¹ that took place in 2022, the high level 'Ideas and Objectives' consultation in 2023², and the 'Preferred Policy Options' consultation earlier in 2025³.

- N9 For the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, the SA process so far has involved the preparation of a Scoping Report (2024)⁴, and a Regulation 18 SA Report (2025)⁵. The SA Scoping Report identified the scope and level of detail to be included in the SA process going forward, including defining the SA Framework, which is used to inform the assessment of the likely effects of the Local Plan at this and future stages of plan making. The Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA Report was prepared to evaluate high-level reasonable alternatives for the amount and broad location of housing and employment growth, and the draft vision, objectives and policies for the Local Plan. Outputs were fed back to the Council to help inform the preferred approach for the Local Plan.
- N10 Building upon the evaluation of alternatives and policies set out in the previous stage of plan making, this Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options SA Report has been prepared to evaluate reasonable alternative development sites, including strategic and non-strategic options, to inform the Council's selection and rejection of sites to be included for allocation in the emerging Local Plan.

Identification and description of reasonable alternatives

- N11 The West Oxfordshire Preferred Spatial Options consultation document has been prepared by WODC and is being consulted on alongside this Regulation 18 SA Report, whereby the public will be asked to give their views on matters including:
- WODC's proposal to extend the 'end-date' of the new Local Plan to 2043.
 - A revised settlement hierarchy which responds to concerns raised through previous public consultation in June 2025.
 - An updated spatial strategy which provides greater clarity on the scale of development expected to come forward in different locations.
 - Areas of land that have been identified as having potential for development including housing and employment. This includes WODC's proposed approach towards existing Local Plan 2031 allocations that are yet to secure

¹ West Oxfordshire District Council (2022) Initial Scoping Consultation: Local Plan and Council Plan Consultation. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

² West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

³ West Oxfordshire District Council (2025) Preferred Policy Options Consultation. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

⁴ Lepus Consulting (2024) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Scoping Report, Final – August 2024. Available at <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/n2sfpi0/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-scoping-report-august-2024.pdf> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

⁵ Lepus Consulting (2025) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options. June 2025. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/q11puvnm/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-preferred-options-june-2025.pdf> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

planning permission as well as potential new areas of land that could be allocated through the new Local Plan.

N12 To inform WODC's indicative preferred options as presented in the consultation document, a range of reasonable alternatives have been identified for consideration:

- One additional spatial option, building upon the seven options evaluated at the previous plan making stage;
- 29 options for strategic development sites, capable of accommodating 300+ new homes and supporting infrastructure on-site; and
- 54 reasonable alternative non-strategic development sites.

N13 Following consideration of consultation comments, WODC has also prepared updates for two local plan policies compared to those presented at the previous stage:

- **Core Policy 2 (Settlement Hierarchy)** – This introduces an additional tier to the hierarchy, separating the previously defined villages into Tier 3 Larger Villages and Tier 4 Medium Villages; and
- **Core Policy 3 (Spatial Strategy)** – To provide clearer definitions of different scales of residential development and what is considered appropriate for each tier of settlement.

Evaluation of reasonable alternatives and policies

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

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

12. **Education:** Increase access to education and improve attainment to develop and maintain a skilled workforce.
13. **Economy and employment:** Ensure sufficient employment land and premises are available to develop and support innovative and sustainable economic growth.

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

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

N17 In the evaluation of reasonable alternative sites, a receptor-led methodology has been developed to ensure options are evaluated on a consistent basis. The site assessment methodology is presented in **Appendix C** and should be read in conjunction with the methodology information in **Chapter 2**.

Spatial options

N18 At the previous stage of plan-making, the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA assessed seven spatial options, which set out differing approaches to the broad spatial distribution for housing and employment growth in West Oxfordshire for the Plan period:

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

N19 At the current 'Preferred Spatial Options' stage, WODC has identified an eighth alternative, Option 8 – Hybrid Approach, which incorporates the most supported aspects of the previous options, based on SA findings and consultation feedback.

N20 The eight spatial options have been evaluated in **Appendix B**. All options have benefits and limitations associated with their approach, some of which are not known with certainty at this high level of assessment. All of the options will support the provision of housing and employment growth in West Oxfordshire to meet the identified needs for the Plan period up to 2043.

N21 Each of the eight options includes the delivery of c.8,000 new homes, alongside proportionate employment growth. The total of 8,000 homes is the 'residual' number of new homes which WODC identified as being needed to meet the overall planned supply of 16,000 homes once existing planning permissions, adopted local plan allocations and a reasonable windfall allowance have been taken into account. This has increased since the Preferred Policy Options consultation stage, where 6,500 homes was the calculated residual need, as a result of extending the Plan period by an additional two years to ensure that it covers a minimum of 15 years post-adoption.

N22 Overall, Option 6 (New Settlement) emerges consistently as the best performing option across the SA Objectives, although it should be acknowledged that this strategy would face significant challenges in terms of securing the necessary infrastructure, overcoming planning and land acquisition constraints, and delivering growth within the Plan period. Similarly well-performing options include Option 3 (Witney Focus) (although Option 3 has also been identified as worst performing for two SA Objectives), Option 7 (Public Transport Focus), and Option 8 (Hybrid Approach) that notably performs second-best or amongst the top performing options across the SA Framework. Whereas, Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) has been identified to perform the worst across the widest range of SA Objectives.

Reasonable alternative development sites

N23 WODC has identified a total of 29 reasonable alternative strategic sites, and 54 reasonable alternative non-strategic sites, following a review and filtering of site options submitted via 'call for sites' exercises and carried forward sites from the adopted Local Plan.

N24 Strategic sites are considered by WODC to comprise sites promoted for residential-led uses, with an indicative capacity of 300 or more homes and have more capability to deliver supporting infrastructure alongside residential growth. Non-strategic sites include all other smaller reasonable alternative sites promoted for residential or employment uses.

N25 The assessment includes identification of the overall best and worst performing strategic and non-strategic sites against each SA Objective. Any attempt to accurately predict a best performing non-strategic site is limited because of the high-level assessment carried out based on the information available at the time of assessment and without incorporation of detailed mitigation. The ranking reflects performance levels across the SA Objectives, which can only be interpreted loosely, as individual sustainability topics are not necessarily interchangeable.

N26 Strategic sites have been evaluated in full within **Appendix D**, taking into account a series of general assumptions regarding the supporting infrastructure that WODC expects to be provided alongside core development, including affordable homes, open spaces, landscaping, and community infrastructure. Sites SHIL003 and WOOD001 emerge as the overall best performing sites, performing well across multiple sustainability objectives in the high-level assessment. In contrast, Site BG001 is identified as the overall worst performing site, showing poor performance across several objectives.

- N27 Non-strategic sites have been evaluated in full in **Appendix E**, based only on the indicative red line boundaries and proposal information supplied by WODC. The assessment identified Sites CA1, CART001, WIT005, and WIT3 as the overall best performing non-strategic sites, performing well across multiple sustainability objectives. In contrast, Sites ENS001, MB001 and MB004 are the overall worst performing, each showing poor performance across two SA Objectives, though they perform well in some areas.

Policies

- N28 At the previous 'Preferred Policy Options' stage of plan making, WODC prepared a suite of 71 draft preferred policies, including 12 core policies, six place-based policies, 15 settlement strategies, and 38 development management (DM) policies. In the previous Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA (June 2024), the policies were evaluated to determine the extent to which the proposed draft vision, objectives and policies for the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan accord with the SA Framework and will help to guide sustainable development.
- N29 At the current 'Preferred Spatial Options' stage, following consideration of comments received during the Preferred Policy Options Consultation, WODC has prepared updates for two policies: Core Policy 2 (Settlement Hierarchy) and Core Policy 3 (Spatial Strategy).
- N30 The two updated policies have been reviewed against the SA Framework, with updated assessments of these two policies presented in **Appendix F**. The overall assessment findings are unchanged from those presented in Appendix C of the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA (June 2025).
- N31 The Core Policies in West Oxfordshire focus on strategic matters like climate change, development needs, infrastructure, and sustainable management of the district's natural, built, and historic environment. These policies support economic growth, conservation, and sustainable development, though the introduction of housing and employment may lead to increased emissions and uncertain impacts on transport. The Place-Based Policies target specific areas with sensitive landscapes, such as the CNL, aiming to protect and enhance biodiversity, maintain Green Belt, and promote sustainable travel initiatives. The Settlement Strategies offer tailored frameworks for towns and villages, promoting local economic vibrancy, low-carbon transport, and the conservation of heritage and wildlife. The 38 DM Policies guide development across various themes, ensuring energy-efficient designs, high-quality landscapes, and the provision of housing, employment, and community facilities. These policies aim to meet socio-economic needs while contributing to environmental sustainability, with mostly positive impacts identified across the SA Framework.

Policy mitigation

- N32 The SA of reasonable alternative sites against baseline sustainability information has identified a number of adverse effects associated with the SA Objectives as discussed above.

- N33 One way to reduce these adverse impacts identified against baseline receptors is to consider the potential mitigating effects of planning policies. The post-mitigation assessment of reasonable alternative sites as presented in **Appendix G** considers how the draft Local Plan policies (as assessed within **Appendix F** and the previous Preferred Policy Options SA Report), will help to avoid or reduce the impacts that were identified at the pre-mitigation stage.
- N34 The post-mitigation assessment identified that the Local Plan provides a strong framework to reduce adverse effects on climate, biodiversity, heritage, landscape, and community wellbeing, while supporting sustainable development and local economic opportunities. Residual effects and uncertainties remain, particularly at strategic, sensitive, or rural sites, where site-specific assessments may be needed. Certain pressures, such as for air quality, soil resources, waste, and access to secondary schools or public transport, may not be fully mitigated. Overall, the Plan is expected to deliver significant benefits, but careful implementation and targeted mitigation are needed to manage remaining risks.

Recommendations

- N35 Recommendations to further improve the sustainability performance of development sites, and general recommendations for the Council to consider, are presented in **Chapter 7**.

Next steps

- N36 This Regulation 18 SA Report will be subject to consultation with statutory consultees, stakeholders and the general public, alongside the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Preferred Spatial Options consultation document.
- N37 Any comments received regarding this SA Report will be used to inform the preparation of the next report.
- N38 Once WODC has reviewed the Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options Consultation comments and responses to the further, focused consultation on development locations, it will prepare the final draft version of the Local Plan (Regulation 19). Preparation of a Regulation 19 SA Report that meets the 'Environmental Report' requirements of the SEA Regulations will take place alongside. The Environmental Report will include all the legal requirements set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Lepus Consulting has been commissioned by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), to support the preparation of the new West Oxfordshire Local Plan.
- 1.1.2 The emerging Local Plan will provide an up-to-date vision and framework to guide decision making for how, where and when development can come forward in the district for the period up to 2043.
- 1.1.3 The purpose of SA/SEA is to help guide and influence the decision-making process of the Local Plan by identifying the likely sustainability effects of reasonable alternatives, options, and proposals.
- 1.1.4 At this stage of plan making, WODC has prepared the 'Preferred Spatial Options' version of the Local Plan⁶, the purpose of which is to seek views on the following issues:
- WODC's proposal to extend the 'end-date' of the new Local Plan to 2043.
 - A revised settlement hierarchy which responds to concerns raised through previous public consultation in June 2025.
 - An updated spatial strategy which provides greater clarity on the scale of development expected to come forward in different locations.
 - Areas of land that have been identified as having potential for development including housing and employment. This includes WODC's proposed approach towards existing Local Plan 2031 allocations that are yet to secure planning permission as well as potential new areas of land that could be allocated through the new Local Plan.
- 1.1.5 During the preparation of this iteration of the Local Plan, WODC identified a suite of reasonable alternative development sites for consideration. The purpose of this Regulation 18 SA Report is to evaluate the likely sustainability effects of these reasonable alternatives, to help the plan makers in their decision making as the Local Plan progresses. This document therefore includes the evaluation of one additional spatial option, 29 reasonable alternative strategic sites, 54 reasonable alternative non-strategic sites and two updated policies.
- 1.1.6 SA is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of local plans and spatial development strategies. The SA outputs throughout the plan making process will help to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging Local Plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

⁶ WODC (2025) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043: Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Paper. October 2025.

- 1.1.7 This SA/SEA document follows on from the SA Scoping Report prepared in April 2024, which was consulted on with the statutory bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) and subsequently updated in August 2024⁷, and the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA Report which was consulted on with the statutory bodies and general public alongside the Preferred Policy Options Consultation, held between June and August 2025⁸.

1.2 West Oxfordshire District

- 1.2.1 West Oxfordshire District lies in the south east of England, within Oxfordshire County, covering an area of approximately 71,444ha (see **Figure 1.1**). The district is primarily rural in character, with roughly a third of the district in the north west falling within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) (now known as the Cotswolds National Landscape).
- 1.2.2 The current adopted Local Plan 2031⁹ identifies a clear settlement hierarchy of three main towns (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton) and six rural service centres (Bampton, Burford, Charlbury, Eynsham, Long Hanborough and Woodstock), with a number of scattered villages and hamlets. The City of Oxford lies adjacent to the district in the east, with a small proportion of Oxford's Green Belt falling within the district. The latest population estimates record approximately 119,331 people living within West Oxfordshire¹⁰, the majority of whom live in the main towns.
- 1.2.3 The district has a strong and diverse economy, with a history of engineering and manufacturing. Notable features of the district's built environment include various heritage assets, including several historic market towns and villages, and Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS), which also play an important role in the visitor economy and strong rural tourism sector.
- 1.2.4 The River Thames follows the southern boundary of the district, with various tributaries including the Windrush and Evenlode flowing through the district. These rivers form important ecological corridors alongside the network of ancient woodland and other nature conservation designations, including a small section of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in the east of the district.

⁷ Lepus Consulting (2024) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Scoping Report, Final – August 2024. Available at <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/n2sfpi0/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-scoping-report-august-2024.pdf> [Date accessed: 26/09/25]

⁸ Lepus Consulting (2025) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options. June 2025. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/qi1puvnm/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-preferred-options-june-2025.pdf> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

⁹ West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/> [Date accessed: 26/09/25]

¹⁰ ONS (2024) Estimates of the population for England and Wales: Mid-2023 local authority population estimates. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/estimatesofthepopulationforenglandandwales> [Date accessed: 26/09/25]

1.3 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan

- 1.3.1 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 will set out a vision, objectives and framework for the future development of the district, enabling needs and opportunities to be identified and decisions made on key issues such as how much development takes place and where, what infrastructure is needed and how positive outcomes such as environmental enhancements can best be achieved.
- 1.3.2 To date, WODC have held three public consultations to help shape the emerging Local Plan:
- **‘Scoping’** (2022)¹¹ high-level consultation paper to seek early views on the potential scope for the new Local Plan with various open questions under six core themes;
 - **‘Ideas and Objectives’** (2023)¹² consultation paper presenting a series of initial draft plan objectives, potential policy topics to cover, eight potential scenarios for the overall spatial strategy, and inviting suggestions on potential land uses across the district via a ‘call for sites’ exercise; and
 - **‘Preferred Policy Options’** (2025)¹³ consultation paper set out the Council's emerging preferred approach, with a draft vision and objectives for the district at the end of the Plan period and a series of preferred policy approaches to address the challenges to be faced over the coming years.
- 1.3.3 Once adopted, the Local Plan will form part of the statutory development plan for the district covering the period up to 2043, replacing and updating the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 (adopted 2018)¹⁴.
- 1.3.4 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 Preferred Spatial Options Consultation Paper is being consulted on alongside this SA Report, whereby the public will be asked to give their views on the topics and issues the new plan should cover as it progresses.

¹¹ West Oxfordshire District Council (2022) Initial Scoping Consultation: Local Plan and Council Plan Consultation. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 26/09/25]

¹² West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 28/09/25]

¹³ West Oxfordshire District Council (2025) Preferred Policy Options Consultation. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

¹⁴ West Oxfordshire District Council (2018) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2031/> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

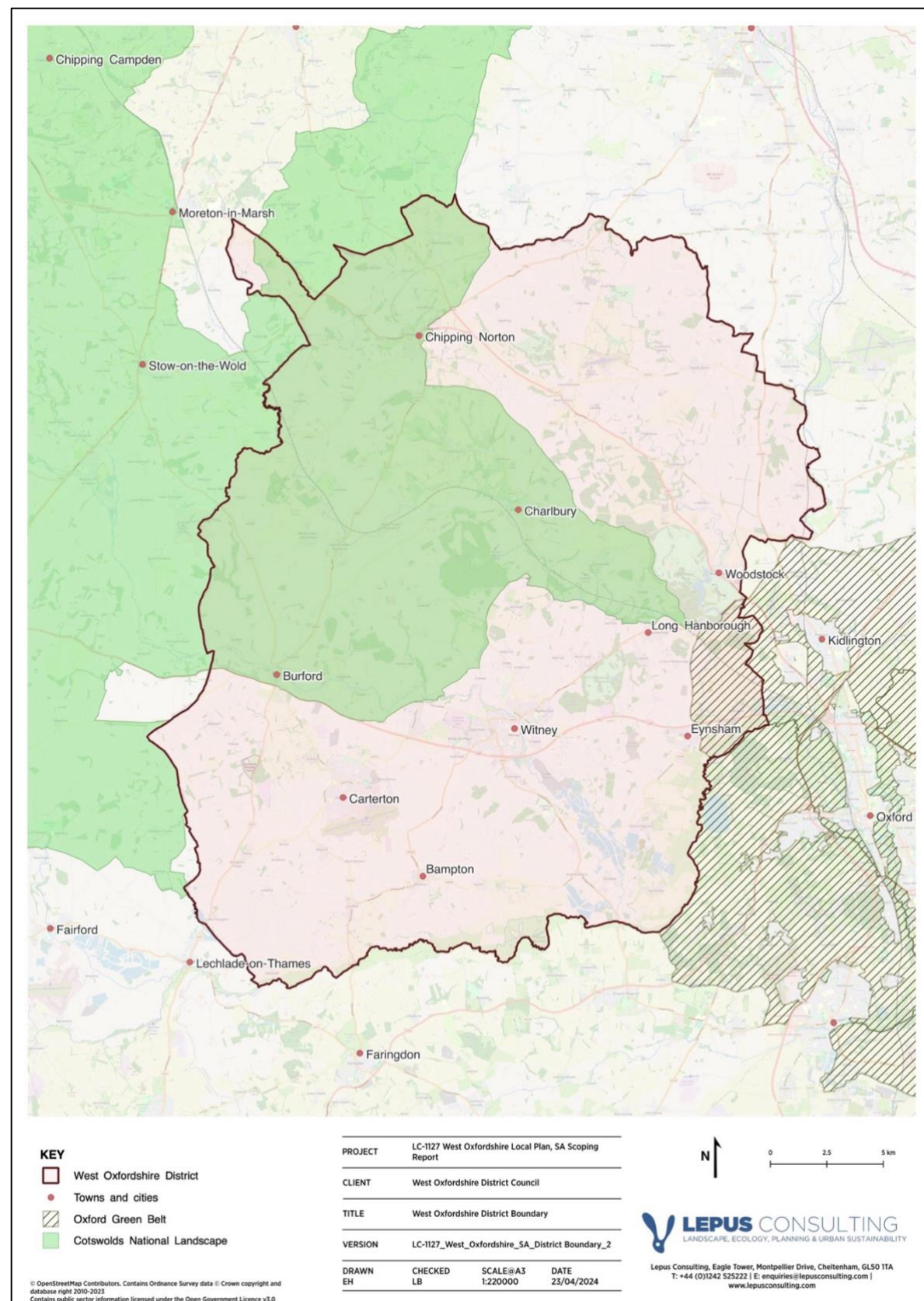


Figure 1.1: The West Oxfordshire Local Plan area

1.4 Integrated approach to SA and SEA

- 1.4.1 The requirements to carry out SA and SEA are distinct, although it is possible to satisfy both obligations using a single appraisal process.
- 1.4.2 The European Union Directive 2001/42/EC¹⁵ (SEA Directive) applies to a wide range of public plans and programmes on land use, energy, waste, agriculture, transport and more (see Article 3(2) of the Directive for other plan or programme types). The objective of the SEA procedure can be summarised as follows:
- 1.4.3 *“the objective of this Directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”.*
- 1.4.4 The SEA Directive has been transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004¹⁶ (SEA Regulations). Under the requirements of the SEA Directive and SEA Regulations, specific types of plans that set the framework for the future development consent of projects must be subject to an environmental assessment. Therefore, it is a legal requirement for the Local Plan to be subject to SEA throughout its preparation.
- 1.4.5 SA is a UK-specific procedure used to appraise the impacts and effects of development plans. It is a legal requirement as specified by S19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004¹⁷ and should be an appraisal of the economic, social and environmental sustainability of development plans. The present statutory requirement for SA lies in The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012¹⁸. SA is a systematic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of proposed plans or programmes to ensure environmental issues are fully integrated and addressed at the earliest appropriate stage of decision-making.
- 1.4.6 Public consultation is an important aspect of the integrated SA/SEA process.

1.5 Best Practice Guidance

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

¹⁵ Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (SEA Directive). Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042&from=EN> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

¹⁶ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

¹⁷ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

¹⁸ The Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/contents/made> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

- European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plan and programmes on the environment¹⁹.
- Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive²⁰.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (2024) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)²¹.
- MHCLG and DLUHC (2024) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)²².
- Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment: Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans²³.

1.6 Sustainability Appraisal

1.6.1 This document is a component of the SA of the Local Plan. It provides an assessment of the emerging Local Plan vision, Objectives and spatial options, which forms part of Stage B of **Figure 1.2**, according to PPG on SA²⁴.

¹⁹ European Commission (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plan and programmes on the environment. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

²⁰ Office of Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the SEA Directive. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

²¹ MHCLG & DLUHC (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework-2> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

²² MHCLG & DLUHC (2024) Planning practice guidance. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

²³ RTPI (2018) Strategic Environmental Assessment, Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of SEA/SA for land use plans. Available at: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1822/sea-sappracticeadvicefull2018c.pdf> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

²⁴ DLUHC & MHCLG (2020) Guidance: Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

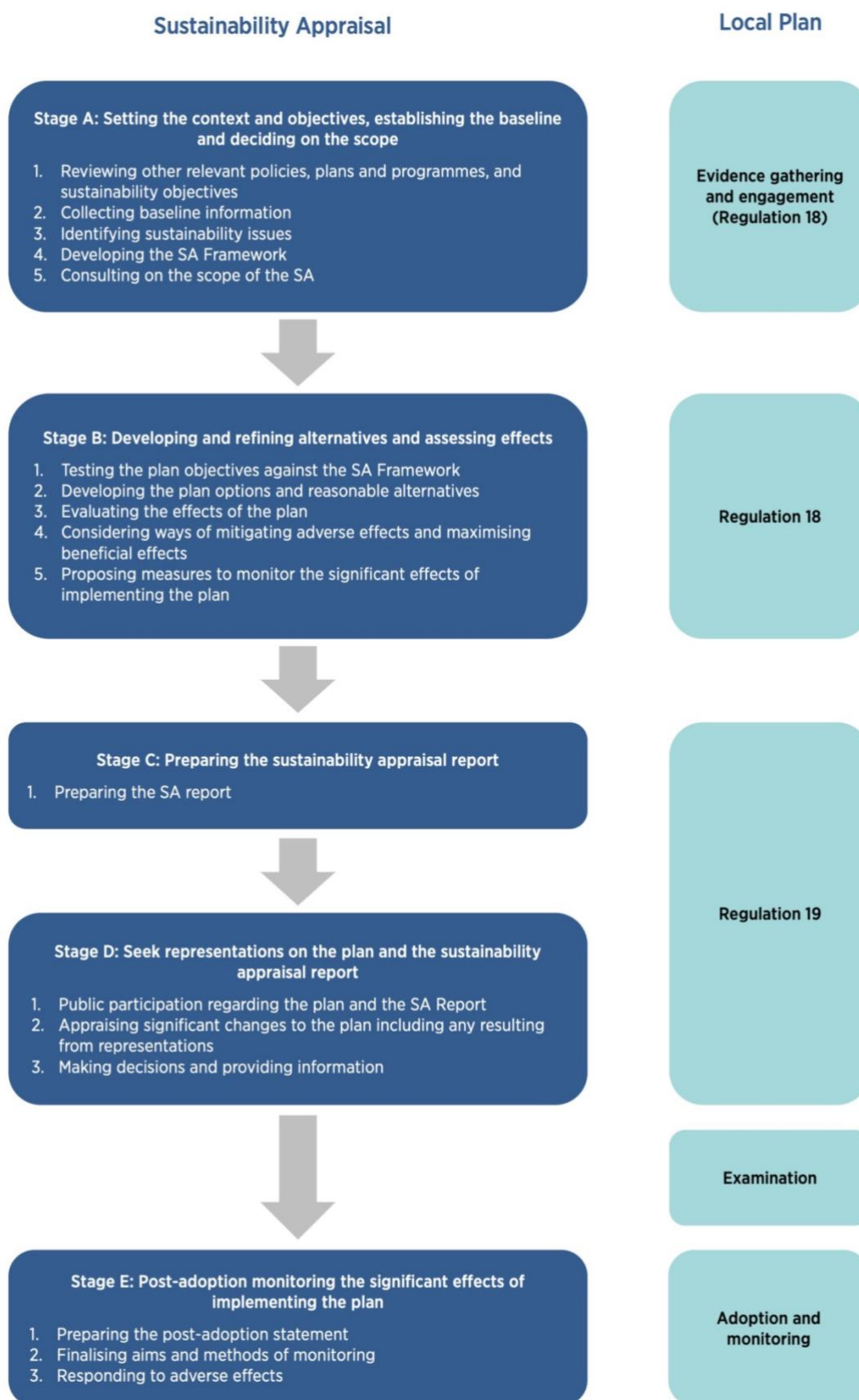


Figure 1.2: Sustainability appraisal process

1.7 The SA process so far

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

Table 1.1: The Local Plan and SA process so far

Date	Local Plan Stage	Sustainability Appraisal
August – October 2022	Regulation 18 Initial ‘Scoping’ Consultation²⁵ High-level consultation paper to seek early views on the potential scope of the new Local Plan with various open questions under six core themes.	No SA output.
August – October 2023	Regulation 18 Ideas and Objectives Consultation²⁶ Consultation paper presenting a series of initial draft plan objectives, potential policy topics to cover, eight potential scenarios for the overall spatial strategy, and inviting suggestions on potential land uses across the district via a ‘call for sites’ exercise.	No SA output.
April – June 2024	No formal Local Plan consultation paper.	SA Scoping Report The SA Scoping Report identified the scope and level of detail to be included in the SA, set out the key issues in relation to sustainability across West Oxfordshire, and presented the SA Framework and indicators to inform the assessments at later stages of the SA process. Subject to consultation with statutory bodies in accordance with legislative requirements.
June – August 2025	Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options The Preferred Policy Options consultation paper sets out the emerging approach for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, including a draft vision, objectives and policies (covering core policies, place-based policies, settlement strategies and development management policies).	Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA Report The Regulation 18 SA Report included an assessment of three housing options, four employment options, seven spatial options and 71 draft preferred policy options.
November – December 2025	Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options The Preferred Spatial Options consultation paper seeks views on extending the Local Plan period to 2043, updating the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy, and identifying potential new and existing sites for housing and employment development.	Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options SA Report (this report) This Regulation 18 SA Report includes an assessment of one additional spatial option, 29 strategic and 54 non-strategic reasonable alternative development sites, and two revised policies.

²⁵ West Oxfordshire District Council (2022) Initial Scoping Consultation: Local Plan and Council Plan Consultation. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

²⁶ West Oxfordshire District Council (2023) Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2041/> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

1.8 Scoping

- 1.8.1 In order to identify the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the SA process, an SA Scoping Report was prepared in April 2024.
- 1.8.2 The SA Scoping Report represents Stage A of the SA process (see **Figure 1.2**), and presents information in relation to:
- Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives;
 - Collecting baseline information;
 - Identifying sustainability problems and key issues;
 - Preparing the SA Framework; and
 - Consultation arrangements on the scope of SA with the consultation bodies.
- 1.8.3 This Regulation 18 SA Report does not replicate baseline and contextual information set out in the SA Scoping Report.
- 1.8.4 The Scoping Report was consulted on between 30th April and 4th June 2024 with the statutory bodies Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. The Scoping Report was updated in August 2024²⁷, taking into account the comments received during the consultation window from Natural England and Historic England.
- 1.8.5 Comments received during the consultation have also informed the preparation of this Regulation 18 SA Report, including from the Environment Agency, whose comments were received after the Scoping consultation had finished. **Table 1.2** summarises the responses received and how these comments have been incorporated into the SA process.

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

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
Natural England	Chapter 4 Biodiversity, flora and fauna SEA topic	<i>"We support the consideration of protecting designated features and assets of European and national nature conservation value and locally important sites designated for their nature conservation and geodiversity value. This could be strengthened by also considering expanding networks and increasing their inter-connectivity. Useful guidance for Nature networks is available here: Nature Networks Evidence Handbook - NERR081."</i>	Text added to Chapter 4 of the SA Scoping Report to reflect the need for improved connectivity for biodiversity assets.
Natural England	Chapter 5 Climatic factors SEA topic	<i>"This objective should include questions on enabling biodiversity to adapt to and be resilient to climate change. This should consider the restoration of natural processes and the avoidance of action that further degrades or constrains the natural environment's ability to respond to the effects of climate change."</i>	Resilience to climate change in the context of biodiversity is discussed within paragraph 5.2.9 of the SA Scoping Report, and forms a decision-making criterion within SA Objective 1 (see

²⁷ Lepus Consulting (2024) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Scoping Report, Final – August 2024. Available at <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/n2sjfpi0/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-scoping-report-august-2024.pdf> [Date accessed: 28/09/25]

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
			Appendix A of this report).
Natural England	Table 11.1 (SA Framework)	<i>"Bespoke indicators should be chosen relating to the outcomes of development management decisions. Whilst it is not Natural England's role to prescribe what indicators should be adopted, the following indicators may be appropriate:</i> <i>Biodiversity:</i> <i>Number of planning approvals that generated any adverse impacts on sites of acknowledged biodiversity importance.</i> <i>Percentage of developments generating overall biodiversity enhancement.</i> <i>Hectares of biodiversity habitat delivered through strategic site allocations.</i> <i>Landscape:</i> <i>Amount of new development in the Cotswolds AONB with commentary on likely impact.</i> <i>Green infrastructure:</i> <i>Percentage of the population having access to a natural greenspace within 400 metres of their home.</i> <i>Length of greenways constructed.</i> <i>Hectares of accessible open space per 1000 population."</i>	The SA Framework has been updated accordingly, as presented in Appendix A of this Regulation 18 SA. The green infrastructure indicators are included within SA Objective 10 (health and wellbeing).
Historic England	Table 1.2 (sustainability themes)	<i>"...suggest minor amendment in two of the bullets linked with the cultural heritage theme, to align more clearly with the terminology of the NPPF:</i> <i>Designated and non-designated heritage assets features</i> <i>Setting of cultural heritage assets</i> <i>Historic landscape character</i> <i>Archaeological assets"</i>	Text amended within Table 1.2 of the SA Scoping Report.
Historic England	Various sections	Recommend amendments to the Scoping Report to recognise relationships between the historic environment and other topics considered in the SA/SEA process, including: - Biodiversity – managing and planning for nature and landscapes to deliver sustainable nature recovery. - Green infrastructure – recognise reference to GI impacts on setting of heritage assets, opportunities for enhancement, as well as physical and chemical conditions of heritage assets. - Climate action – potential retrofitting of existing building stock. - Flooding – which has potential <i>"...to impact the fabric and significance of heritage assets; for example, assets in the historic core of Witney."</i> - Landscape – encourage more explicit consideration of the Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation project.	Text added to relevant sections of the SA Scoping Report. The points raised have been considered during the preparation of this Regulation 18 SA Report.

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
Historic England	Box 6.1 Key issues for cultural heritage	“...suggest alternative wording as follows: “Any Proposals for development will need to carefully consider potential impacts on the significance of the impact of the setting or character on any heritage assets (including their setting), in order to minimise threats from increased housing demand and maintain or where possible enhance local character.” <i>I would suggest aiming higher than avoiding further deterioration of assets on the heritage at risk register. How might the local plan support conservation or enhancement of such assets as part of a positive strategy for the historic environment? Aiming for avoiding further deterioration would lead either to no change in the number of assets on the national register, or worse (adding more assets)...”</i>	Text amended within Box 6.1 of the SA Scoping Report. The Regulation 19 SA will include an updated key issues table to indicate the full scope of issues considered throughout the SA process.
Historic England	Table 11.1 (SA Framework)	• Suggested wording “Conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets and support the effective management of manage the historic environment” • “Might “restore” be amended to “where appropriate, restore or repair” to avoid giving a false impression of the extent of restoration needed.” • “Conserve features of archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic interest and, where necessary, encourage their conservation and renewal?” I am not entirely certain what is meant by “renewal” in this context. Might this be clarified?” • “I am not sure how informative the “Number of applications granted within conservation areas” will be, with respect to the decision-making criteria, other than to give a sense of the extent to which conservation areas are changing.” • “...recommend referring to “heritage assets” on Historic England’s Heritage at Risk Register, rather than “historic assets”.	The SA Framework has been updated accordingly, as presented in Appendix A of this Regulation 18 SA.
Historic England	Appendix A (PPP Review)	• “Reference should be made to the Council’s local listing programme; section 6 on cultural heritage refers to 980 locally listed buildings. Also, does the District Council maintain a local heritage at risk register? This should be confirmed with the Council’s conservation team. • For completeness, it would be good to refer to the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), the national Heritage at Risk Register and the local Historic environment Record in the table of relevant policies, plans and programmes.” • “It would be good to refer to Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans in the baseline review and take stock of those which have up-to-date CAAMPs – perhaps by adding more detail to the relevant entry on page A21 in the Appendix. This is especially important in areas of development pressure, such as Chipping Norton and Witney & Cogges.”	These documents have been considered during the preparation of this Regulation 18 SA and will be further drawn on in the next SA output that includes evaluation of reasonable alternative sites. The Regulation 19 SA will include the full updated PPP Review including reference to all available evidence documents.
Environment Agency	PPP Review and Local Plan evidence base	• Recommend a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment is prepared and strongly advise	The Council has commissioned an update of both its

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
		the Water Cycle Study is updated to inform the Local Plan. - Suggest referring to guidance documents: - Planning Practice Guidance - Flood risk section - Environment Agency SFRA Guidance. - Flood and Water Management Act 2010 - Flood Risk Regulations 2009 - Strategic flood risk assessment good practice guide. - Water cycle studies guidance and planning practice guidance – Water supply, wastewater and water quality - The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection (publishing.service.gov.uk)	Level 1 SFRA and Phase 1 Water Cycle Study to inform the new Local Plan. The latest available evidence has been used to inform the assessments carried out at the Regulation 18 stage. The Regulation 19 SA will include the full updated PPP Review including reference to all available and relevant evidence documents.
Environment Agency	Key issues	<i>"...the Environment Agency would expect the WODC local plan to cover these range of topics including, but not limited to:</i> <i>Net Gain - an approach to managing the environment that leaves it in a measurably better state</i> <i>Flood risk management - ensuring development is steered towards areas of lowest flood risk, underpinned by a robust and up-to-date strategic flood risk assessment that follows our guidance. Securing contributions to flood risk management infrastructure to unlock development potential</i> <i>Climate change - ensuring policies, site allocations and design of development takes climate change into account</i> <i>Strategic water planning - quality, quantity and efficiency to support new development and safeguard the environment</i> <i>Drainage and infrastructure - ensuring new development has adequate infrastructure to manage wastewater and surface water disposal</i> <i>Green and blue infrastructure - for flood risk management, water quality management and biodiversity</i> <i>Contaminated land - bringing land back into beneficial use</i> <i>Water Framework Directive objectives - no deterioration and water body improvements</i> <i>Biodiversity - safeguarding protected species and habitats, highlighting opportunities for habitat creation and</i> <i>Waste management - advising on waste management strategies and providing advice that spans the planning and permitting interface."</i>	Recommendations have been made to WODC, including relating to further potential evidence gathering, in Chapter 7 of this report. The key issues noted have been considered during the preparation of the Regulation 18 SA. The Regulation 19 SA will include an updated key issues table to indicate the full scope of issues considered throughout the SA process.

Consultee	Section of Scoping Report	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
Environment Agency	Table 11.1 (SA Framework)	“Under SA topic – Biodiversity and geodiversity (Conserve, enhance and restore the district’s biodiversity and geodiversity), we suggest that one of the decision-making criteria should be – ‘avoid damage and deterioration’. - Under SA topic – Water and SA objective (Maintain and improve water quality and ensure efficient use of water resources), we suggest that additional decision-making criteria should be – ‘meet WFD/RBMP requirements’ and ‘change in water abstraction’.”	The SA Framework has been updated accordingly, as presented in Appendix A of the Regulation 18 SA.

1.9 Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options

1.9.1 The Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA Report was prepared to evaluate reasonable alternatives and draft policies identified by WODC in the preparation of their ‘Preferred Policy Options’ consultation document. This included an evaluation of:

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

1.9.2 The Preferred Policy Options Consultation was held between 26th June and 8th August. Comments received in relation to the accompanying Regulation 18 SA Report are summarised in **Table 1.3** below.

Table 1.3: Consultation responses from statutory consultees on the R18 Preferred Policy Options SA Report

Consultee	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
Natural England	“Natural England has no comments to make on this Preferred Policy Options Paper”.	N/A
Historic England	No specific comments on the SA, but recommendations made for WODC in terms of the draft policies set out in the Plan, and the need to prepare Heritage Impact Assessment(s) for proposed allocations.	Recommendations made by Historic England will be considered in the SA evaluation of revised policies and proposals where applicable.
Environment Agency	No response received.	N/A
The Oxford Bus Company	Question the credibility of public transport options, in the context of the spatial option assessments, noting: “...For Option 7, the SEA makes no statement at all as to what kind of public transport offer would be necessary to steer the strategy, in terms of frequency, reliability, speed relative to car use to key destinations and generalised cost ... Nor is there an acknowledgement that steering a high quantum of development to multiple sites on a single identifiable corridor serving multiple significant destinations, would be likely to catalyse a step change in the service level, and use...”	The assessment of spatial options has been reviewed and updated, to include an additional spatial option identified by WODC (see Appendix B and Chapter 3), and to take into

Consultee	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
	- Suggest that Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) strategy “can be expected to leverage much greater reductions in the energy and carbon intensity from existing development, since substantial improvements in public transport frequency and connectivity are likely to result from such a spatial strategy, substantially rebalancing the overall attractiveness of public transport over private car use.” - Suggest that the previously developed land opportunities associated with Options 1-4 are overstated in the SA “Continued redevelopment of industrial sites would no doubt necessitate the displacement of existing active businesses away from the major centres, creating a further mismatch between a growing population and the local economic base. This would merely fuel even higher levels of out-commuting.” - With regard to Option 6 (New Settlement) suggest “... new settlements offer a very powerful potential solution to meeting housing requirements in a sustainable way, but ONLY if they are located on high quality public transport corridors.” “...We would expect any transport-related goals to be directly reference the objectives of the Local Transport Plan, and the SA to look to support directly, specific LTP policy objectives. This includes alignment with specific schemes and interventions that are documented in it, and the wider Transport Evidence Base (“TEB”).”	consideration comments raised during the consultation and the latest available evidence. Oxfordshire’s Local Transport and Connectivity Plan is referred to in the assessments where relevant.
Oxfordshire County Council	“It is appreciated that SA Objective 3 considers a number of statutory and non-statutory designated wildlife sites. It is recommended that non-statutory designated wildlife sites including District Wildlife Sites and Road Verge Nature Reserves are also considered in this section. - It is welcomed that option 6 – new settlement has been recommended as the preferred overall option. However, as mentioned in the report careful planning and design will be required to ensure this option remains the option with the greatest positive impacts on biodiversity.”	The SA has assessed potential impacts on biodiversity using the most up-to-date information provided by the Council, covering key statutory and non-statutory designations (see Appendix C).
Filkins and Broughton Poggs Parish Council	“It is not considered that Filkins & Broughton Poggs meets the criteria for a Tier 3 settlement ... The Council’s own sustainability appraisal document (SA: Regulation 18 – June 2025) provides a broad assessment of the emerging plan options but contains no separate scoring to justify Filkins & Broughton Poggs being grouped alongside larger and better-served Tier 3 villages such as Enstone, Combe or Shipton under Wychwood. In absence of current and positive SA performance for the village, its inclusion in Tier 3 appears unjustified.” “...rural development must be sensitive to scale and the cumulative impact of growth. Although the SA provides a high-level assessment of the emerging spatial strategy, it does not provide robust justification for why all Tier 3 villages, regardless of function, should be considered suitable for broadly similar levels of growth. Without this finer differentiation, the Plan risks applying a one-size-fits-all approach to settlements with different characteristics.”	WODC has made revisions to Policy CP2, taking into account comments raised during the consultation, which has been evaluated in the SA (see Appendix F and Chapter 5).
Stantec on behalf of Lagan Homes	“...The hierarchical approach is summarised within table B.1.1 of the sustainability appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Regulation 18: Preferred Policy Options SA Report June 2025. When considering the approximate distribution of growth, this states 1x non-strategic allocation at each of the rural service centres, including Charlbury. ... The chosen strategy within the sustainability appraisal is therefore set out on the basis of development and growth within Charlbury. Growth in Charlbury is supported”.	Comments noted. WODC has identified indicative preferred areas for growth in the Preferred Spatial Options consultation document and is seeking further

Consultee	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
	“...The Charlbury Settlement Strategy confirms the settlement is expected to accommodate a proportionate level of growth, and this view is informed by the sustainability appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan Regulation 18: Preferred Policy Options SA Report June 2025. The concept of additional growth within Charlbury is supported given the existing facilities within the settlement. Further allocations in Charlbury allows the support to existing services and facilities, and the settlement is served by good public transport, and therefore would reduce reliance upon the car.”	views on this, in advance of the Regulation 19 stage.
CEG	- Comment in regard to Draft Policy CP2: “... support the reference made within the draft policy that each of the Tier 2 Service Centres will ‘...accommodate a proportionate level of growth appropriate to the size of each settlement and to support their local service function’. However, we note that it remains unclear what the Council considers a proportionate level of growth to comprise at this stage ... there appears to be some inconsistency with the Interim sustainability appraisal, which identifies that Option 1 – Hierarchical Approach provides for ‘...1x non-strategic allocation at each of the [sic.] rural service centres (250 x 7) ...’, indicating that an approximate capacity for 250 homes was identified for each of the Service Centres. This should be clarified as part of the next stage of the plan-making process. - For clarity, support is provided to the identification that [at least] medium-scale (11 – 300 homes, as defined at paragraph 5.35 of the Consultation document) developments would be appropriate at Long Hanborough specifically. Given its credentials, suitable strategic-scale (>300 homes) development opportunities would also be appropriate at Long Hanborough”.	WODC has made revisions to Policy CP2, taking into account comments raised during the consultation, which has been evaluated in the SA (see Appendix F and Chapter 5).
HarperCrewe Bloombridge Ltd	“...the sustainability appraisal (‘SA’) concludes that Scenario 7 (New Settlement) is the best performing option due to the potential for an effective layout and design to be implemented from an early stage. - HCB remains of the view that spatial strategy must focus development in the ‘most sustainable locations’, i.e., the Main Service Centres as identified in the WOLP31. Directing housing growth to new settlement(s) will present considerable challenges related to the provision of adequate infrastructure for new communities. Furthermore, the delivery of new settlements, like the Salt Cross Garden Village, take a significantly longer time to start on site and will certainly impact the housing land supply position of the district.”	The assessment of spatial options has been reviewed and updated, to include an additional spatial option identified by WODC (see Appendix B and Chapter 3). Although Option 7 remains the most frequently best performing site against the SA Objectives, the challenges of delivering a new settlement are highlighted.
Hallam Land	“...The policy approach of adopting a hierarchical approach to growth aligned with the settlement hierarchy is strongly supported. It is agreed that Witney in particular should be the primary focus for growth within West Oxfordshire ... Whilst it is recognised that the policy approach set out in the Preferred Policy Options Local Plan is not to follow the Witney Focus approach (but to instead continue to focus on the Tier 1 Principal Towns) it is argued that Witney should continue to be the primary focus for growth, supported by those other principal towns, reflecting the findings of the sustainability appraisal.”	Comments noted. WODC has identified indicative preferred areas for growth in the Preferred Spatial Options consultation document and is seeking further views on this, in advance of the

Consultee	Summary / extract of comment	Incorporation into the SA
	“...land to the west of Witney (shown as extending south from Bromag industrial estate and north of A40) was identified as an “area for long term development potential” in the submission draft of the Plan as part of policy WIT4 – “to include consideration of opportunities for new housing and employment to meet identified development needs beyond 2031”.”	Regulation 19 stage.
R & RW Homes	“The sustainability appraisal (supporting document to the Local Plan) outlines at Box 5.1 that Officers of West Oxfordshire District Council have some concerns that solely focusing a spatial strategy on growth to Main Service Centres could ‘harm the vitality of the District’s larger villages by failing to meet locally identified housing needs’. We completely agree. Allocating appropriate development in the larger of the villages, such as Shipton-under-Wychwood, would contribute to local needs and contribute towards local vitality and viability.”	Comments noted. See updated spatial options evaluated in Appendix B and Chapter 3 .
Bloor Homes Western	“The sustainability appraisal (June 2025) recommends that Policies CP2 and CP3 are combined to ensure the purpose and intention of the settlement hierarchy is clear. This could make the resultant policy unambiguous in its purpose and in its use by applicants and the decision maker.”	Comments noted. Recommendation has been reiterated to WODC (see Appendix F).
Elivia Homes	“...with regard to the proposed 6,500 new Local Plan allocations, we note that the accompanying sustainability appraisal of the Preferred Options (June 2025) suggests at Table 5.1 that the approach to the spatial strategy could include the following distribution of development: - 2 x strategic allocations at Carterton and Witney (1,500 each settlement) - 1 x strategic allocation at Chipping Norton which is partially in the AONB (750 dwellings) - 1 x non-strategic allocation at each of the rural service centres (250 x 7) - Balance of 1,000 homes at each of the larger villages (1,050 total) - We are concerned that this strategy still appears to be place a reliance on the larger strategic sites which have historically struggled to deliver over the current plan period. Questions clearly remain over the existing allocations potential to deliver within the first 5 years of the proposed plan period. It’s also unclear at this stage how these Site’s will potentially contribute to meeting Oxford City’s unmet needs.”	An additional spatial option has been identified by WODC and evaluated in the SA (see Appendix B and Chapter 3), taking into consideration comments raised during the consultation and the latest available evidence.
Standlake Parish Council Sara Reardon	“...Preferred Policy SP1 (Spatial Strategy) explicitly prioritises growth in well-connected towns and transport corridors. Standlake being in Tier 3 does not meet the preferred strategy. Preferred Policy ENV1 commits to protecting biodiversity, landscape character, and rural distinctiveness, which would be undermined by expansion into fields in and surrounding the village. The sustainability appraisal (2025) outlines objectives to “protect and enhance landscape character” and “avoid development in locations where infrastructure is constrained or where environmental harm may result.” - Taken together, these strategic documents reinforce that Standlake is not a suitable location for major development, especially in light of serious infrastructure limitations and transport barriers.”	WODC has made revisions to Policy CP2, taking into account comments raised during the consultation, which has been evaluated in the SA (see Appendix F and Chapter 5).

1.10 Signposting for this report

1.10.1 This document forms **Volume 1** of the Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options SA, which comprises the Main SA Report. It is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** (this chapter) sets out the purpose, context and introduction to the Local Plan and the accompanying SA process.
- **Chapter 2** sets out the assessment methodology and scope of the appraisal.
- **Chapter 3** summarises the assessment of spatial options, updated since the previous consultation stage.
- **Chapter 4** summarises the pre-mitigation assessment of the reasonable alternative strategic and non-strategic sites.
- **Chapter 5** summarises the assessment of draft Local Plan policies including revisions made by WODC at this stage of plan making.
- **Chapter 6** provides an overview of the mitigating influence of the draft Local Plan policies and how this may improve the performance of reasonable alternative sites.
- **Chapter 7** sets out a range of recommendations for WODC to consider as they develop the policies, options and proposals for the emerging Local Plan.
- **Chapter 8** sets out the conclusions and next steps for the SA.

1.10.2 **Volume 2** of the SA comprises the Appendices which set out the detailed assessments that have informed the SA, as follows:

- **Appendix A** presents the SA Framework.
- **Appendix B** contains the full assessment of spatial options including the newly identified option.
- **Appendix C** sets out the methodology and topic-specific assumptions applied in the assessment of reasonable alternative sites.
- **Appendix D** contains the full assessment of reasonable alternative strategic sites, pre-mitigation.
- **Appendix E** contains the full assessment of reasonable alternative non-strategic sites, pre-mitigation.
- **Appendix F** sets out the assessment of two updated Local Plan policies.
- **Appendix G** contains the assessment of reasonable alternative sites, post-mitigation.

2 Assessment methodology and scope of appraisal

2.1 Assessment of reasonable alternatives

2.1.1 Each of the elements of the Local Plan appraised in this report have been assessed for their likely impacts on each SA Objective of the SA Framework. The SA Framework, which is presented in its entirety in **Appendix A**, is comprised of 13 SA Objectives. **Table 2.1** summarises the SA Objectives and their relevance to the SEA themes as per Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations²⁸.

Table 2.1: Summary of SA Objectives

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

²⁸ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

- 2.1.2 The SA Framework is comprised of SA Objectives and decision-making criteria. Acting as yardsticks of sustainability performance, the SA Objectives are designed to represent the topics identified in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations²⁹. Including the SEA topics in the SA Objectives helps to ensure that all environmental criteria of the SEA Regulations are represented. Consequently, the SA Objectives reflect all subject areas to ensure that the assessment process is transparent, robust and thorough.
- 2.1.3 It is important to note that the order of SA Objectives in the SA Framework does not infer prioritisation. The SA Objectives are at a strategic level and can potentially be open-ended. In order to focus each objective, decision-making criteria are presented in the SA Framework to be used during the appraisal of policies and sites.
- 2.1.4 The purpose of this document is to provide an appraisal of the proposed reasonable alternative sites identified by WODC at the current Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options stage of plan making.
- 2.1.5 *“Where an environmental assessment is required by any provision of Part 2 of these Regulations, the responsible authority shall prepare, or secure the preparation of, an environmental report ... [which] shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme”.*
- 2.1.6 Where applicable, this document also provides information in relation to the likely characteristics of effects, as per the SEA Regulations (see **Box 2.1**). Subsequent stages of the Local Plan process and accompanying SA process are likely to involve further identification, description and evaluation of reasonable alternatives, including information on the likely characteristics of effects.

²⁹ Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations identifies the likely significant effects on the environment, including “issues such as (a) biodiversity, (b) population, (c) human health, (d) fauna, (e) flora, (f) soil, (g) water, (h) air, (i) climatic factors, (j) material assets, (k) cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, (l) landscape and (m) the interrelationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).”

Box 2.1: Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations³⁰

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

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

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

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

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

2.2 Impact assessment and determination of significance

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

Sensitivity

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

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

³⁰ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SEA Regulations). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made> [Date accessed: 28/09/25]

Table 2.2: Impact sensitivity

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

Magnitude

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

Table 2.3: Impact magnitude

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

2.3 Significant effects

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

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

Table 2.4: Guide to assessing significant effects

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

- 2.3.3 When selecting a single value to best represent the sustainability performance, and to understand the significance of effects of an option in terms of the relevant SA Objective, the precautionary principle³¹ has been used. This is a worst-case scenario approach. If a positive effect is identified in relation to one criterion within the SA Framework (see the decision-making criteria of the SA Framework in **Appendix A**) and a negative effect is identified in relation to another criterion within the same SA Objective, the overall impact has been assigned as negative for that objective. It is therefore essential to appreciate that the recorded impacts are indicative, and that the accompanying assessment text provides a fuller explanation of the sustainability performance of the option or proposal being considered.

³¹ The European Commission describes the precautionary principle as follows: “If a preliminary scientific evaluation shows that there are reasonable grounds for concern that a particular activity might lead to damaging effects on the environment, or on human, animal or plant health, which would be inconsistent with protection normally afforded to these within the European Community, the Precautionary Principle is triggered”.

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

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

2.4 Methodology for assessment of options and policies

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

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

Table 2.5: Presenting likely impacts

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

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

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

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

2.5 Methodology for assessment of reasonable alternative sites

2.5.1 A number of topic-specific methodologies and assumptions have been applied to the appraisal process for reasonable alternative sites against each of the SA Objectives, using available data (see **Appendix C**). While applying the same scoring system as presented in **Table 2.4**, to enable further transparency and to provide the reader with contextual information that is relevant to each SA Objective, the full site assessments presented in **Appendix D** and **E** have been set out per 'receptor'.

2.6 Limitations of predicting effects

- 2.6.1 SA/SEA is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. Predicting effects relies on an evidence-based approach and incorporates expert judgement. It is often not possible to state with absolute certainty whether effects will occur, as many impacts are influenced by a range of factors such as the design and the success of mitigation measures.
- 2.6.2 The assessments in this report are based on the best available information, including secondary data provided to Lepus by the Council and information that is publicly available. Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible.
- 2.6.3 SA operates at a strategic level which uses available secondary data for the relevant SA Objective. Throughout the SA process, all identified reasonable alternatives, options and proposals will be assessed in the same way using the same method. Sometimes, in the absence of more detailed information, forecasting the potential impacts can require making reasonable assumptions based on the best available data and trends. However, all options must be assessed in the same way, and any introduction of site-based detail should be made clear in the SA report as the new data could potentially introduce bias and skew the findings of the assessment process.

3 Spatial strategy options

3.1 Preface

3.1.1 At the previous stage of plan-making, the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA³² included an evaluation of seven spatial options, which set out differing approaches to the broad spatial distribution for housing and employment growth in West Oxfordshire for the Plan period:

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

3.1.2 Each of the seven options were expected to include the delivery of c. 6,500 new homes which will work to meet the need in the Plan area, alongside proportionate employment growth. The total of 6,500 homes is the 'residual' number of new homes which WODC identified in its Preferred Policy Options paper as being needed to meet the overall planned supply of 16,000 homes once existing planning permissions, adopted local plan allocations and a reasonable windfall allowance have been taken into account.

3.1.3 The Regulation 18 SA (June 2025) highlighted strengths and weaknesses of each approach against the achievement of the SA Objectives. Overall, the SA reported that Option 6 (New Settlement) emerged as the most frequent best performing option across six of the SA Objectives, including climate change adaptation, biodiversity and geodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage, air quality and water (SA Objectives 2-7), given the opportunity to incorporate an effective layout and design from the earliest stages of development. Option 3 (Witney Focus) was identified as the best performing option across four of the SA Objectives, including housing and equality, health and wellbeing, education and economy and employment (SA Objectives 9, 10, 12 and 13). Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) was identified as the best performing option across climate change mitigation and transport and accessibility (SA Objectives 1 and 11), with Option 4 (Carterton Focus) identified as the best performing option with regard to natural resources and waste.

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

³² Lepus Consulting (2025) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan. Regulation 18: Preferred Policy Options SA Report. June 2025. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/qi1puvnm/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-preferred-options-june-2025.pdf> [Date accessed: 15/10/25]

3.2 Updated spatial options at the Preferred Spatial Options stage

- 3.2.1 Drawing on the findings of the SA assessments, as well as comments received in response to the Preferred Policy Options consultation in summer 2025, WODC considered that a 'hybrid' approach may offer more sustainable outcomes than any one of the previous options alone. As such, WODC has identified an eighth reasonable alternative spatial option for consideration at the current Preferred Spatial Options consultation stage that takes on board the aspects of the other seven options that were most supported.
- 3.2.2 The assessment of spatial options has therefore been updated within this document, incorporating the new Option 8 'Hybrid Approach' and evaluating this alongside the previous seven option.
- 3.2.3 Taking into account past completions, commitments, adopted local plan allocations and windfall allowance, WODC identified the residual housing requirement to be identified in the new Local Plan is approximately 8,000 homes. This has increased since the Preferred Policy Options consultation stage, where 6,500 homes was the residual need, as a result of extending the Plan period by an additional two years to ensure that it covers a minimum of 15 years post-adoption.
- 3.2.4 The eight spatial strategy options as identified by WODC are presented in **Table 3.1**. Each option provides a different spatial configuration of housing and employment growth, to account for the residual housing need of c.8,000 homes that will be delivered in addition to the existing commitments. The approximate distribution of growth associated with the previously assessed Options 1-7 has been updated since the previous SA stage, to reflect latest calculated residual housing need.
- 3.2.5 The full assessment of spatial options is presented in **Appendix B**.

Table 3.1: Eight spatial options identified by WODC

Option	Description
Option 1 – Hierarchical Approach	2 x strategic allocations would be made at Carterton and Witney (1,800 each settlement) 1x strategic allocation at Chipping Norton which is partially in the AONB (900 dwellings) 1x non-strategic allocation at each of the rural service centres (300 x 7) - Balance of 1,400 homes at each of the larger villages
Option 2 – Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)	2 x strategic allocations at Witney and Carterton (5,000 dwellings total, 2,500 each) 2 x strategic allocations at Chipping Norton (1,800 dwellings total, 900 each) - Balance of 1,200 homes at each of the rural service centres
Option 3 – Witney Focus	The total residual housing requirement (8,000) would be met at Witney, maximising development of all promoted development sites around the town
Option 4 – Carterton Focus	The total residual housing requirement (8,000) would be met at Carterton, maximising development of all promoted development sites around the town (in neighbouring parishes of Brize Norton, Shilton and Alvescot)
Option 5 – Dispersed Growth	15% growth would be attributed to major service centres (c.4,800 dwellings) 10% (c.3,200) to rural service centres (c.1,100) and larger villages in West Oxfordshire (c.2,100)
Option 6 – New Settlement	A single new settlement of 8,000 homes somewhere in the district, or

Option	Description
	Two new settlements of c.4,000 homes each somewhere in the district
Option 7 – Public Transport Focus	6,200 homes along the A40 corridor including 2,500 at Carterton 2,500 at Witney and 1,200 'elsewhere' along the A40 corridor 1,800 homes along the Cotswold and Cherwell Valley rail lines focused at rural service centres and larger villages
Option 8 – Hybrid Approach	86% to main service centres (c.4,130 dwellings to Carterton as new settlement(s); c.2,200 to Witney; and c.550 to Chipping Norton) 8% to service centres (c.640) 6% to larger villages and those with rail connections (c.480)

3.2.6 **Table 3.2** summarises the likely impacts of each spatial option in relation to the 13 SA Objectives. **Table 3.3** details the best and worst performing options identified across each of the SA objectives. The text within **section 3.3** explains how each overall impact was identified, summarising the assessment that is presented in full within **Appendix B**.

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

3.3 Summary assessment of spatial options

SA Objective 1 – Climate change mitigation

3.3.1 Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) is identified as the best performing option for climate change mitigation, as it concentrates development along public transport corridors, encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport and reducing reliance on private cars. This focus will help reduce emissions associated with car travel. Option 6 (New Settlement) also performs well due to its potential for self-containment, and Option 8 (Hybrid Approach) for its focus on well-connected settlements, but all options still face some emissions due to the scale of development required.

SA Objective 2 – Climate change adaptation

3.3.2 Option 6 (New Settlement) is the best performing option for climate change adaptation, as it provides the opportunity to integrate climate-responsive design features such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Green Infrastructure (GI) that can help adapt to climate change impacts, such as flooding and heat stress. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) performs poorly, as it could lead to a loss of GI and previously developed land (PDL) in rural areas, exacerbating flood and heat risks.

SA Objective 3 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

3.3.3 Option 6 (New Settlement) potentially provides the best opportunities for biodiversity, as it allows for holistic planning and early consideration of biodiversity impacts. By integrating multi-functional GI and open spaces, Option 6 can enhance ecological networks and act as corridors for wildlife. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performing option, as it could lead to fragmentation of habitats and the gradual loss of biodiversity due to dispersed development across rural areas.

SA Objective 4 – Landscape

- 3.3.4 Option 6 (New Settlement) emerges as the best option for landscape, as it provides opportunities for strong placemaking, where the design of a new settlement can be tailored to integrate with the surrounding landscape. However, this requires careful site-specific appraisals to assess landscape sensitivity and capacity. In contrast, Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is likely to have more widespread and cumulative negative impacts on rural landscapes, as development would be spread across various rural locations, potentially eroding the character of these areas.

SA Objective 5 – Cultural heritage

- 3.3.5 Option 6 (New Settlement) is the best performer for cultural heritage, as it allows for carefully planned development that can avoid or mitigate impacts on heritage assets. Option 4 (Carterton Focus) also performs well by focussing growth in an area with relatively fewer sensitive heritage assets. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the likely worst option for cultural heritage, as it risks damaging a wider range of heritage assets across rural settlements due to its fragmented development approach.

SA Objective 6 – Air quality

- 3.3.6 Option 6 (New Settlement) is the best performer with regard to air quality, as it can be designed to reduce car dependency through the provision of sustainable transport and self-contained services. Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) also performs well, as it emphasizes the use of public transport, though it still faces emissions from vehicle use, particularly in higher-density areas affected by existing poor air quality. Option 3 is the worst option for air quality, as increased development and traffic in Witney are likely to exacerbate congestion and air pollution, particularly in the Witney AQMA.

SA Objective 7 – Water

- 3.3.7 Option 6 (New Settlement) is potentially the best performing option for water resources, as it can incorporate effective water management strategies such as SuDS and GI to protect water quality and manage water flow. In contrast, Option 3 and Option 4 place pressure on existing watercourses and wastewater treatment facilities, as they focus growth on established urban areas with limited capacity to accommodate additional demand.

SA Objective 8 – Natural resources and waste

- 3.3.8 Option 4 (Carterton Focus) is the best performer for natural resources, as it focuses growth in an area with lower-quality Grade 4 Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) land, which helps protect better quality agricultural land elsewhere. Option 8 (Hybrid Approach) also performs well in this regard, with a significant proportion of growth directed to Carterton. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performer for natural resources, as it could lead to widespread loss of undeveloped land, including 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land, throughout the district.

SA Objective 9 – Housing and equality

- 3.3.9 Option 3 (Witney Focus) is the best performer for housing and equality, as it directs growth to one of the district's most deprived areas, offering opportunities to address housing inequality by providing homes and services in areas with higher levels of need. Option 8 (Hybrid Approach) also performs well, offering a balanced approach that provides housing in well-connected areas, mitigating rural inequalities. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performer, as it risks exacerbating inequalities by locating development in rural areas with limited access to services, education, and employment.

SA Objective 10 – Health and wellbeing

- 3.3.10 Option 3 (Witney Focus) is the best option for health and wellbeing, as it provides access to a range of healthcare facilities, leisure amenities, and green spaces in an urban environment, supporting active lifestyles and social wellbeing. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performer, as its focus on rural locations with limited infrastructure will make it harder for residents to access healthcare and recreational facilities, potentially affecting their overall health and wellbeing.

SA Objective 11 – Transport and accessibility

- 3.3.11 Option 7 (Public Transport Focus) is the best performer for transport and accessibility, as it focuses development along key public transport corridors, increasing accessibility to sustainable and active transport options. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performer, as it locates development in rural areas with limited access to public transport, making it difficult for residents to use sustainable travel options.

SA Objective 12 – Education

- 3.3.12 Option 3 (Witney Focus) is the best performer for education, as it offers the best access to a variety of educational facilities within Witney, with good transport links to other areas. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performer for education, as it places development in rural areas with limited access to schools and other educational opportunities, potentially increasing travel times for students.

SA Objective 13 – Economy and employment

- 3.3.13 Option 3 (Witney Focus) is the best performer for economy and employment, as it focuses development in an area with strong access to existing employment opportunities and a range of local businesses. Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) is the worst performer, as rural development is likely to limit access to employment opportunities, requiring longer commutes for residents and reducing local economic activity.

3.4 Conclusions

- 3.4.1 **Table 3.2** presents the high-level summary assessment scores for the eight spatial options, as detailed within the narrative assessment.
- 3.4.2 All of the eight spatial options evaluated in this assessment have benefits and limitations associated with their approach, some of which are not known with certainty at this high level of assessment. All of the options will support the provision of housing and employment growth in West Oxfordshire to meet the identified needs for the Plan period up to 2043.

3.4.3 Overall, Option 6 (New Settlement) emerges as the most frequent best performing option across the SA Objectives, although it should be acknowledged that this strategy would face significant challenges in terms of securing the necessary infrastructure, overcoming planning and land acquisition constraints, and delivering growth within the Plan period. Similarly well-performing options include Option 3 (Witney Focus) (although Option 3 has also been identified as worst performing for two SA Objectives), Option 7 (Public Transport Focus), and Option 8 (Hybrid Approach) that notably performs second-best or amongst the top performing options across the SA Framework. Whereas, Option 5 (Dispersed Growth) has been identified to perform the worst across the widest range of SA Objectives.

Table 3.2: Overall impact matrix table of the eight spatial options

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

Table 3.3: Indicative best and worst performing spatial options

SA Objective	Best performing option	Worst performing option(s)
SA Objective 1: Climate change mitigation	Option 7 (Public Transport Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 2: Climate change adaptation	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 3: Biodiversity and geodiversity	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 4: Landscape	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 5: Cultural heritage	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 6: Air quality	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Option 3 (Witney Focus)

SA Objective	Best performing option	Worst performing option(s)
SA Objective 7: Water	Option 6 (New Settlement)	Options 3 (Witney Focus) and 4 (Carterton Focus)
SA Objective 8: Natural resources and waste	Option 4 (Carterton Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 9: Housing and equality	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 10: Health and wellbeing	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 11: Transport and accessibility	Option 7 (Public Transport Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 12: Education	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)
SA Objective 13: Economy and employment	Option 3 (Witney Focus)	Option 5 (Dispersed Growth)

3.5 Selection and rejection

3.5.1 Following consideration of the above SA assessment of spatial options, WODC's position in relation to each of the seven options that have been assessed is set out in **Box 3.1**.

Box 3.1: WODC commentary on spatial options and the preferred approach

- **Hierarchical Approach** – The Preferred Spatial Option includes a hierarchical approach to guiding development to the most sustainable settlements, primarily the Main Service Centres. Rather than focussing solely on urban extensions to existing settlements, the preferred spatial strategy includes proposals for standalone communities, designed to have a sufficient critical mass to support a range of services and facilities to meet day-to-day needs, while also being well connected to the nearest larger settlement for access to higher-order services and facilities.
- **Main service centre focus** – The preferred spatial option focuses to a significant extent on the Main service centres, but with distribution of strategic and non-strategic scale development to other service centres and larger villages.
- **Witney Focus** – The preferred spatial option identifies Witney as an area of focus, but distributes strategic scale development to the other principal settlements as well.
- **Carterton focus** – The preferred spatial option identifies Carterton as an area of focus, but distributes strategic scale development to the other principal settlements as well.
- **Dispersed Growth** – This spatial option is rejected as would result in an unsustainable pattern of development in the district with significant environmental impacts. It is the worst scoring of all spatial options.
- **New Settlement** – The preferred spatial option includes proposals for standalone communities, designed to have a sufficient critical mass to support a range of services and facilities to meet day-to-day needs, while also being well connected to the nearest larger settlement for access to higher-order services and facilities.
- **Public Transport focus** – The preferred spatial option focusses development at the most accessible locations for public transport.
- **Hybrid Approach** – This is the preferred spatial option and incorporates elements of individual options 1,2,3,4,6, and 7.

4 Reasonable alternative sites

4.1 Identification of reasonable alternative sites

4.1.1 A number of potential sites for development have been considered by WODC during the preparation of the Local Plan, including those submitted in response to the 'call for sites' during the 'focused consultation on ideas and objectives' between August and October 2023. These potential sites were then subject to a filtering process conducted by WODC, considering the following matters:

- Sites submitted to the Council for consideration through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA);
- Previous HELAA assessments as to whether sites were considered suitable for development;
- Whether a site had a close spatial relationship with a service centre or village;
- Proximity of sites to railway station; and
- Whether officers considered sites to be suitable for development.

4.1.2 Sites were ruled out where they were deemed inappropriate for development, for example, isolated sites in the open countryside, sites located in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) in areas deemed unsustainable (e.g., in settlements without railway stations), and sites with a history of planning refusals or where permission had been dismissed at appeal.

4.1.3 As a result of this filtering process, WODC has identified a total of 29 reasonable alternative strategic sites, and 54 reasonable alternative non-strategic sites.

4.1.4 Strategic sites are considered by WODC to comprise sites promoted for residential-led uses, with an indicative capacity of 300 or more homes and have more capability to deliver supporting infrastructure alongside residential growth. Non-strategic sites include all other smaller reasonable alternative sites promoted for residential or employment uses.

4.1.5 Reasonable alternative strategic sites are shown in **Figure 4.1** and listed in **Table 4.1**, and non-strategic sites in **Figure 4.2** and **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.1: Reasonable alternative strategic sites within West Oxfordshire

Site reference	Site name	Proposed site use	Gross area (ha)	Net area (ha)	Estimated housing capacity (30 dph)
ALV002	Land west of Carterton	Mixed use (residential and community)	125.30	75.18	2,255
BAM002	Land west of Station Road	Residential	33.20	19.92	598
BAM003	Land east of Station Road	Residential	34.10	20.46	614
BAM005	Land north of Aston Road	Residential	20.70	12.42	373
BG001	Land at Barnard Gate	Mixed use (residential and employment)	303.10	181.86	5,456
BN001	Kilkenny Farm - Upper Norton	Mixed use (residential and community)	114.50	68.70	2,061
BN001a	Kilney Farm (Phase 1) - Middle Norton	Residential	17.10	10.26	308
BN003	Land north of Brize Norton and Carterton - Foxbury Farm	Mixed use (residential and employment)	255.20	153.12	4,594
BN006	Land east of Brize Norton	Mixed use (residential and community)	391.70	235.02	7,051
BUR002	Land south of Sheep Street	Residential	20.50	12.30	369
CHAR005	Land south and west of Charlbury	Residential	21.40	12.84	385
CHIP006	Land adjacent to East Chipping Norton SDA	Residential	22.70	13.62	409
CN1	East Chipping Norton SDA	Residential	70.37	42.22	450-550
CUR001	Land at Curbridge	Residential	30.90	18.54	556
CUR003	Land at Curbridge Downs Farm	Residential	23.20	13.92	418
CUR008	Land west of Downs Road	Residential	33.20	19.92	598
EW1	Salt Cross (Oxfordshire Cotswolds) Garden Village	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	215.30	129.18	2,125
EW2	West Eynsham SDA	Residential	88.02	52.81	950
HAN001	Land at Hanborough Station	Residential	34.80	20.88	626
MIN002	Land west of Minster Lovell	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	70.00	42.00	1,260
MIN006	Land west of Witney, south of Downs Road	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	51.40	30.84	925
SHIL002	Land west of Shilton Road	Residential	25.20	15.12	454
SHIL003	Land north of Price Way	Residential	17.90	10.74	322
SL006	Land at Shores Green	Mixed use (residential and community)	45.50	27.30	819
WIT001	Land at South Witney	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	107.90	64.74	1,942
WIT002	Land East of Witney	Mixed use (residential and community)	66.92	66.92	1,204
WIT006	Land north of Burford Road	Residential	61.40	36.84	1,105
WIT2	North Witney SDA	Mixed use (residential and community)	59.80	35.88	1,250
WOOD001	Land north and east of Banbury Road	Residential	58.90	35.34	1,060

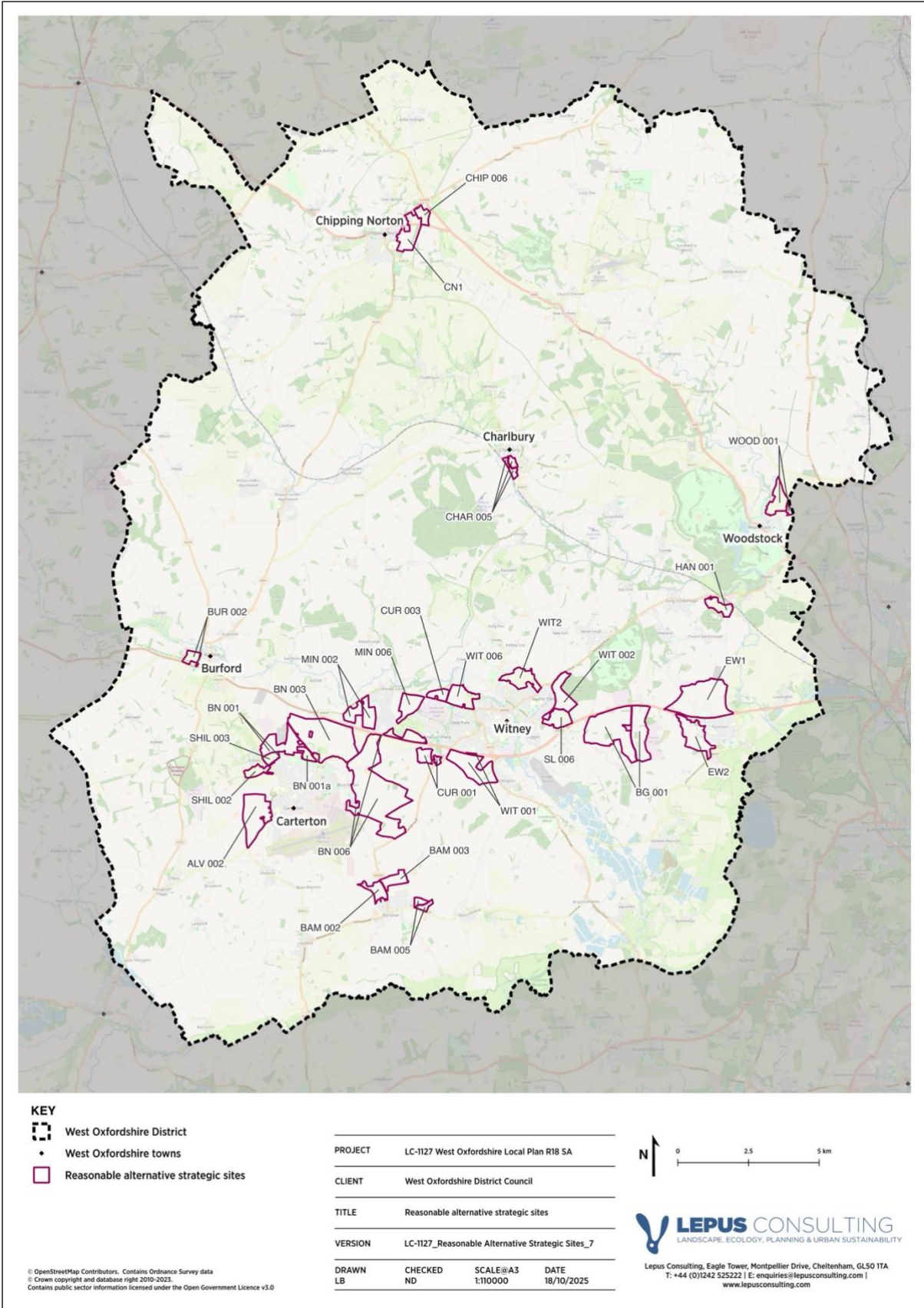


Figure 4.1: Location of the 29 reasonable alternative strategic sites within West Oxfordshire

Table 4.2: Reasonable alternative non-strategic sites within West Oxfordshire

Site reference	Site name	Proposed use	Gross area (ha)	Net area (ha)	Estimated housing capacity (30dph)	Estimated employment floorspace (sqm)
ALV006	Alvescot Lodge	Residential	3.01	1.81	54	0
AST001	South of Bampton Road	Residential	0.75	0.53	16	0
AST004	Land at North Street (Site C)	Residential	0.60	0.42	13	0
AST008	Land east of North Street	Residential	3.26	1.96	59	0
BAM001	Land west of Mount Owen Road, Bampton	Residential	14.79	8.87	266	0
BAM006	Land east of Mount Owen Road	Residential	5.95	3.57	107	0
BAM007	Land east of Mount Owen Road	Residential	7.99	4.79	144	0
BN002	Land north and east of Carterton	Employment	83.88	33.55	0	335,520
BUR001	Burford Laundry, Tannery Yard	Residential	0.31	0.31	9	0
BUR003	Burford Wysdom Caravan Park	Residential	0.47	0.33	10	0
BUR005	Westfield Recreation Ground	Residential	2.01	1.21	36	0
BUR008	Land west of Shilton Road	Residential	6.13	3.68	110	0
CA1	REEMA North and Central	Residential	28.47	17.08	219	0
CART001	Land at Sunset View, Upavon Way	Residential	0.62	0.43	13	0
CART004	Land at 23 Brize Norton Road	Residential	0.53	0.37	11	0
CART007	Land at Shilton Road	Residential	1.12	0.78	23	0
CHAR004	Land at Jefferson's Piece	Residential	2.05	1.23	37	0
CHAR006	Land east of Fawler Road	Residential	5.41	3.25	98	0
CHAR007	Hixet Wood	Residential	1.12	0.78	23	0
CHIP004	Highways Depot, Banbury Road	Residential	0.42	0.29	9	0
CHIP005	Land at Rockhill Farm	Residential	1.23	0.86	26	0
CHIP018	Rockhill Farm	Residential	2.76	1.66	50	0
CHIP019	Land west of Pine Trees	Residential	0.47	0.33	10	0
CHIP021	Former Chipping Norton FC	Residential	1.23	0.86	26	0
CLAN001	Land north of Mill Lane	Residential	2.51	1.51	45	0
CUR004	Land at Main Road	Residential	1.51	1.06	32	0
CUR007	Land south of Main Road	Residential	1.10	0.77	23	0
CUR008	Land west of Downs Road	Employment	33.20	13.28	0	132,800
DUCK002	Land to the south of Standlake Road	Residential	1.89	1.32	40	0
ENS001	Enstone Business Park	Employment	36.79	15.9	0	159,000
FREE002	Land south of Freeland	Mixed Use (residential and retained employment)	3.47	2.08	62	0
FREE004	Land east of Wroslyn Road	Residential	5.13	3.08	92	0

Site reference	Site name	Proposed use	Gross area (ha)	Net area (ha)	Estimated housing capacity (30dph)	Estimated employment floorspace (sqm)
KING002	Land at Lockwoods Orchard	Residential	1.07	0.75	23	0
KING005	Land adjacent to Kingham Station	Residential	3.97	2.38	71	0
LANG001	Land at the Elms	Residential	2.15	1.29	39	0
LEA002	Land at Fairspear Road	Residential	0.28	0.28	8	0
LEA004	Land at Greenwich Lane	Residential	0.80	0.56	17	0
MB001	Land north of Holliers Crescent	Residential	6.84	4.10	123	0
MB004	Land at Holliers Farm	Residential	29.91	17.95	Uncertain	0
NL005	Land west of Common Road	Residential	3.87	2.32	70	0
NL012	Rear of 75 Park Road	Residential	1.87	1.31	39	0
NL014	Park Road	Residential	0.81	0.57	17	0
STAN001	Land at the Downs	Mixed Use	29.00	17.40	Uncertain	0
STON005	Land east of Charity Farm	Residential	0.97	0.68	20	0
SUW001	Glebe Field, North of Ascott Road	Residential	0.93	0.65	20	0
TACK003	Land west of Rousham Road, Tackley	Residential	2.92	1.75	53	0
TACK004	Land at Rousham Road	Residential	7.40	4.44	133	0
TACK005	Land off Lower Hades Road	Residential	0.90	0.63	19	0
WIT004	Land north of Woodstock Road	Residential	7.49	4.49	135	0
WIT005	Land at Milking Lane	Residential	7.86	4.72	141	0
WIT007	Land at Dark Lane	Residential	0.14	0.14	4	0
WIT010	BT Depot and Clarkes Timber Yard	Mixed Use (Residential and community)	0.76	0.53	16	0
WIT011	Welch Way Civic Buildings	Mixed Use (Residential and community)	0.95	0.67	20	0
WIT3	Woodford Way Car Park	Residential	0.68	0.48	50	0

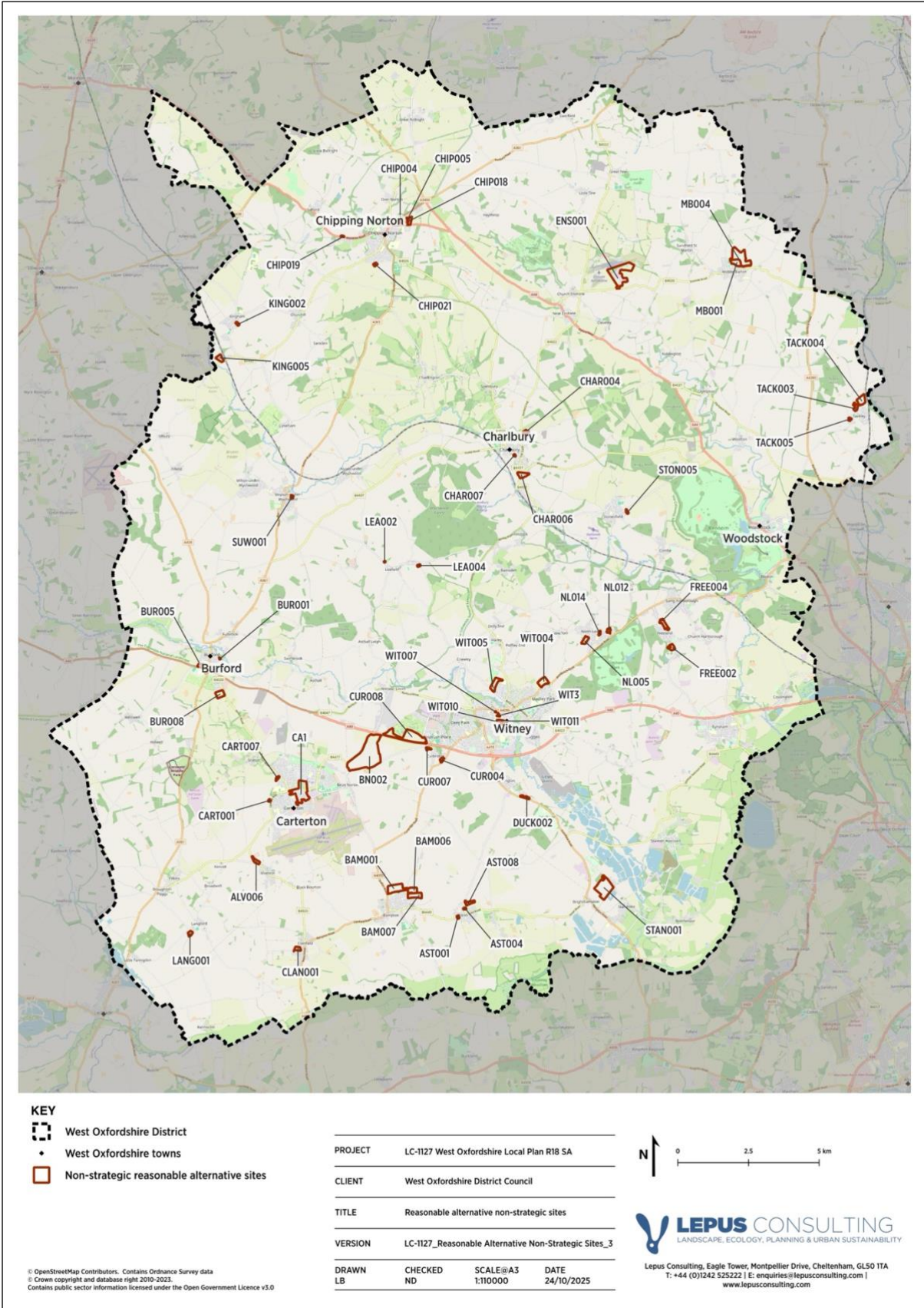


Figure 4.2: Location of the 54 reasonable alternative non-strategic sites within West Oxfordshire

4.2 Overview of assessment findings

4.2.1 **Chapter 2** sets out the over-arching SA methodology, and **Appendix C** sets out topic-specific methodology for the assessment of reasonable alternative sites in terms of how the likely impact per receptor has been identified in line with the local context and assumptions.

4.2.2 The assessment of the 29 strategic sites, including rationale for the recorded impacts, is presented in full in **Appendix D** and the 54 non-strategic sites in **Appendix E**.

4.2.3 A summary of the impact matrices for all reasonable alternative site assessments pre-mitigation is presented in **Tables 4.3** and **4.5**. These impacts should be read in conjunction with the assessment text narratives in the relevant appendix as well as the topic-specific methodologies and assumptions.

4.2.4 The overall impact symbol for each site for each SA Objective is represented by the lowest common denominator (as per the methodology in **Table 2.4**), whereas the assessment of strategic and non-strategic sites within **Appendix D** and **E** document likely impacts on receptors within each SA Objective, providing a finer grain evaluation.

Strategic sites

4.2.5 **Table 4.3** presents a summary of the assessment findings for the reasonable alternative strategic sites, pre-mitigation.

4.2.6 Due to their large scale and capacity, strategic sites are often capable of providing a range of supporting infrastructure alongside the core land use. Many are accompanied by masterplans that present a proposed layout and location of different land uses within the red line boundary, as well as evidence which underpins proposals at the site. The availability of site-specific information varies across the reasonable alternatives, and as such detailed evidence and mitigation has not been factored into the assessments that would bias the results. However, general assumptions have been provided by WODC to apply to each site, irrespective of any available supporting masterplan information to ensure sites are evaluated on a comparable basis. All strategic sites are assumed to provide:

- 40% affordable housing and 5% custom-build housing;
- Contribution towards healthcare, education and public transport;
- Provision of Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP);
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
- Landscaping; and
- 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG).

4.2.7 Sites with capacity for 700 or more homes will additionally provide:

- One-form primary school;
- Convenience retail;
- Sports pitch;
- Allotments; and
- Through-site public transport.

- 4.2.8 The ranking of the strategic sites against each individual SA Objective is explained in full within **Appendix D** and summarised within **Table 4.4** below. Any attempt to accurately predict a best performing strategic site is limited because of the high-level assessment carried out based on the information available at the time of assessment and without incorporation of detailed mitigation. The ranking reflects performance levels across the SA Objectives, which can only be interpreted loosely, as individual sustainability topics are not necessarily interchangeable.
- 4.2.9 Given the lack of currently available information and the uncertainty with regard to the impacts of all 29 sites on GHG emissions, the overall ranking does not factor climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1).
- 4.2.10 It is difficult to identify a single best performing option. Site ALV002 emerges as the most frequently best performing site, identified as among the best for cultural heritage, air quality, health and wellbeing, and education (SA Objectives 5, 6, 10, and 12). However, Site ALV002 is also identified as among the worst performing for water (SA Objective 7).
- 4.2.11 In contrast, the most frequently best performing sites that are not identified as worst performing for any SA Objective, and therefore **could be identified as the overall best performing**, are **Sites SHIL003 and WOOD001**, each performing well against three SA Objectives:
- Site SHIL003 performs well for: climate change adaptation, biodiversity and geodiversity, and air quality (SA Objectives 2, 3, and 6).
 - Site WOOD001 performs well for: climate change adaptation, air quality, and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 2, 6, and 10).
- 4.2.12 It is difficult to identify a single worst performing option. However, based on the relative performance of each strategic reasonable alternative site against the SA Objectives, Sites CHAR005, BG001 and BN006 each perform poorly against three SA Objectives:
- Site CHAR005 is the worst performing site for cultural heritage (SA Objective 5), and among the worst for landscape and economy (SA Objectives 4 and 13).
 - Site BG001 is among the worst performing sites for air quality, water, and health and wellbeing (SA Objectives 6, 7, and 10).
 - Site BN006 is the worst performing site for biodiversity (SA Objective 3), and among the worst for air quality and water (SA Objectives 6 and 7).
- 4.2.13 However, both CHAR005 and BN006 also perform well in some areas, with Site CHAR005 among the best performing sites for climate change adaptation, air quality, and transport (SA Objectives 2, 6, and 11) and Site BN006, with a proposed development of 7,051 dwellings (including affordable homes in an area with known housing barriers per the IMD), is the best performing site for housing (SA Objective 9). In contrast, **Site BG001** is among the worst performers for three SA Objectives, but is not identified as best performing for any objective and as such could be identified as the **overall worst performing site**.

Table 4.3: Impact matrix table of the 29 reasonable alternative strategic sites, pre-mitigation

Site reference	1 Climate change mitigation	2 Climate change adaptation	3 Biodiversity and geodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural heritage	6 Air quality	7 Water	8 Natural resources	9 Housing and equality	10 Health and wellbeing	11 Transport and accessibility	12 Education	13 Economy
ALV002	+/-	--	-	--	0	0	-	--	++	-	-	++	++
BAM002	+/-	--	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	-	-	-	++
BAM003	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	-	++
BAM005	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	++	-	-	-	+
BG001	+/-	--	-	-	--	-	-	--	++	-	-	-	++
BN001	+/-	+	-	--	-	0	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	++
BN001a	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	++	-	-	++	++
BN003	+/-	+	-	-	-	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	+/-
BN006	+/-	--	--	-	--	-	-	--	++	-	-	-	+/-
BUR002	+/-	+	-	--	-	-	+/-	-	++	-	-	++	+
CHAR005	+/-	+	-	--	--	0	+/-	-	++	-	++	-	+
CHIP006	+/-	+	-	--	-	-	-	-	++	-	-	++	+
CN1	+/-	+	-	--	--	-	-	--	++	-	-	++	+/-
CUR001	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	-	++
CUR003	+/-	+	-	--	-	0	+/-	-	++	-	-	-	++
CUR008	+/-	-	-	--	-	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	-	+/-
EW1	+/-	--	-	--	--	-	-	--	++	-	-	++	+/-
EW2	+/-	--	-	-	--	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	+/-
HAN001	+/-	--	-	-	-	-	+/-	--	++	-	++	-	++
MIN002	+/-	+	--	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	-	++
MIN006	+/-	--	+/-	--	-	0	+/-	--	++	-	-	-	++
SHIL002	+/-	--	+/-	--	-	0	-	-	++	-	-	-	++
SHIL003	+/-	+	+/-	--	-	0	+/-	-	++	-	-	-	++
SL006	+/-	-	-	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	++
WIT001	+/-	--	-	--	-	-	-	--	++	-	-	++	++
WIT002	+/-	--	-	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	++
WIT006	+/-	--	-	--	0	-	-	--	++	-	-	++	++
WIT2	+/-	--	-	--	-	-	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	++
WOOD001	+/-	+	-	-	--	0	+/-	--	++	-	-	++	++

Table 4.4: Indicative best and worst performing strategic sites

SA Objective	Best performing strategic site(s)	Worst performing strategic site(s)
SA Objective 1: Climate change mitigation	Uncertain	Uncertain
SA Objective 2: Climate change adaptation	Sites BUR002, CHAR005, CHIP006, MIN002, SHIL003 and WOOD001	Site BAM002
SA Objective 3: Biodiversity and geodiversity	Sites BAM003, BAM005, BN001a, CUR001, MIN006, SHIL002 and SHIL003	Site BN006
SA Objective 4: Landscape	Sites BAM002, BAM003, BAM005, BG001, and WOOD001	Sites BUR002 and CHAR005
SA Objective 5: Cultural heritage	Sites ALV002, BAM003, BAM005, BN001a, MIN002, SL006, WIT002 and WIT006	Site CHAR005
SA Objective 6: Air quality	Sites ALV002, BAM005, BN001, BN001a, CHAR005, CUR003, MIN006, SHIL002, SHIL003 and WOOD001	Sites BG001, BN003, BN006, BUR002, CUR008, EW1, EW2, MIN002, SL006 and WIT001
SA Objective 7: Water	Uncertain	Sites ALV002, BAM002, BG001, BN006, CHIP006, CN1, EW1, SHIL002, WIT001 and WIT006
SA Objective 8: Natural resources and waste	Site CUR001	Site BN003
SA Objective 9: Housing and equality	Site BN006	Site BN001a
SA Objective 10: Health and wellbeing	Sites ALV002, CHIP006, SL006, WIT006 and WOOD001	Sites BAM005, BG001, CUR008, HAN001, MIN002 and MIN006
SA Objective 11: Transport and accessibility	Sites CHAR005 and HAN001	Site BAM003
SA Objective 12: Education	Sites ALV002, BUR002, CN1, EW1, SL006, WIT002 and WIT2	Site BAM005
SA Objective 13: Economy and employment	Sites CUR003, MIN006 and WIT006	Sites CHAR005, CHIP006 and CN1

Non-strategic sites

- 4.2.14 **Table 4.5** presents a summary of the assessment findings for the reasonable alternative non-strategic sites, pre-mitigation. The impact matrix provides a high-level indication of the nature and magnitude of impacts pre-mitigation. All assessment information excludes consideration of detailed mitigation i.e. additional detail or modification to the reasonable alternative that has been introduced specifically to reduce identified environmental effects of that site. Presenting assessment findings 'pre-mitigation' facilitates transparency to the decision makers.
- 4.2.15 The ranking of the non-strategic sites against each individual SA Objective is explained in full within **Appendix E** and summarised within **Table 4.6** below. Any attempt to accurately predict a best performing non-strategic site is limited because of the high-level assessment carried out based on the information available at the time of assessment and without incorporation of detailed mitigation. The ranking reflects performance levels across the SA Objectives, which can only be interpreted loosely, as individual sustainability topics are not necessarily interchangeable.
- 4.2.16 Given the lack of currently available information and the uncertainty with regard to the impacts of all 54 sites on GHG emissions, the overall ranking does not factor climate change mitigation (SA Objective 1).
- 4.2.17 It is difficult to identify a single best performing site. **Sites CA1, CART001, WIT005 and WIT3 emerge as the most frequently best performing sites**, each identified as among the best for six SA Objectives, and do not feature among the worst performing sites for any SA Objectives.
- Site CA1 performs well for: biodiversity, cultural heritage, air quality, health and wellbeing, education and employment (SA Objectives 3, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 13).
 - Site CART001 performs well for: climate change adaptation, cultural heritage, air quality, health and wellbeing, education and employment (SA Objectives 2, 5, 6, 10, 12 and 13).
 - Site WIT005 performs well for: climate change adaptation, biodiversity, cultural heritage, air quality, housing and equality, and employment (SA Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6, 9 and 13).
 - Site WIT3 performs well for: biodiversity, landscape, natural resources and waste, health and wellbeing, education and economy (SA Objectives 3, 4, 8, 10, 12 and 13).
- 4.2.18 On the other hand, based on the relative performance of each non-strategic site with regard to the available evidence, **Sites ENS001, MB001 and MB004 emerge as potentially worst performing overall**. These three sites have each been found to be amongst the worst performing for two SA Objectives:
- Site ENS001 is the worst performing site for health and wellbeing, and transport and accessibility (SA Objectives 10 and 11).
 - Sites MB001 and MB004 are among the worst performing sites for biodiversity and employment (SA Objectives 3 and 13).

4.2.19 However, Sites ENS001, MB001 and MB004 also perform well in some areas, with Site ENS001 among the best performing sites for cultural heritage and air quality (SA Objectives 5 and 6) and Sites MB001 and MB004 among the best performing sites for climate change adaptation and air quality (SA Objectives 2 and 6).

Table 4.5: Impact matrix table of the 54 non-strategic reasonable alternative sites, pre-mitigation

Site reference	1 Climate change mitigation	2 Climate change adaptation	3 Biodiversity and geodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural heritage	6 Air quality	7 Water	8 Natural resources and waste	9 Housing and equality	10 Health and wellbeing	11 Transport and accessibility	12 Education	13 Economy and employment
ALV006	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
AST001	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
AST004	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
AST008	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
BAM001	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
BAM006	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
BAM007	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
BN002	+/-	+	-	-	-	-	-	--	+/-	-	-	0	++
BUR001	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	0	-	+/-	+/-	-	-	++	-
BUR003	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+
BUR005	+/-	+	+/-	--	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+
BUR008	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
CA1	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	++	++
CART001	+/-	+	-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	++
CART004	+/-	--	+/-	-	0	0	-	-	+/-	-	-	++	++
CART007	+/-	--	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	++
CHAR004	+/-	+	-	--	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	+
CHAR006	+/-	--	-	--	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+
CHAR007	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	+
CHIP004	+/-	--	+/-	0	-	-	-	+/-	+/-	-	-	++	+
CHIP005	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	-	-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+
CHIP018	+/-	+	+/-	--	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+
CHIP019	+/-	-	+/-	--	0	-	-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+
CHIP021	+/-	--	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+
CLAN001	+/-	-	+/-	-	0	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
CUR004	+/-	--	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
CUR007	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
CUR008	+/-	-	+/-	--	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	0	+/-
DUCK002	+/-	--	+/-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
ENS001	+/-	-	-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	0	+/-
FREE002	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
FREE004	+/-	-	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
KING002	+/-	--	-	--	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	-
KING005	+/-	--	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	-
LANG001	+/-	-	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+
LEA002	+/-	--	-	--	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	0
LEA004	+/-	+	+/-	--	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+
MB001	+/-	+	--	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	-
MB004	+/-	+	--	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	-

Site reference	1 Climate change mitigation	2 Climate change adaptation	3 Biodiversity and geodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural heritage	6 Air quality	7 Water	8 Natural resources and waste	9 Housing and equality	10 Health and wellbeing	11 Transport and accessibility	12 Education	13 Economy and employment
NL005	+/-	--	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	+
NL012	+/-	+	-	-	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
NL014	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
STAN001	+/-	-	-	-	-	0	+/-	--	+/-	-	-	-	+
STON005	+/-	+	-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	++
SUW001	+/-	+	-	--	-	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	-	-
TACK003	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	++
TACK004	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	+
TACK005	+/-	+	-	-	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	++
WIT004	+/-	+	-	-	0	-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	++
WIT005	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	++
WIT007	+/-	-	+/-	0	-	-	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	++	++
WIT010	+/-	--	+/-	0	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+/-
WIT011	+/-	--	+/-	0	-	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	-	++	+/-
WIT3	+/-	--	+/-	0	-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-	++	++

Table 4.6: Indicative best and worst performing non-strategic sites

SA Objective	Best performing non-strategic site(s)	Worst performing non-strategic site(s)
SA Objective 1: Climate change mitigation	Uncertain	Uncertain
SA Objective 2: Climate change adaptation	Sites ALV006, AST008, BAM001, BN002, BUR003, BUR005, CART001, CHAR004, CHAR007, CHIP005, CHIP018, CUR007, FREE002, LEA004, MB001, MB004, NL012, NL014, STON005, SUW001, TACK003, TACK004, TACK005, WIT004 and WIT005	Sites CUR004 and WIT011
SA Objective 3: Biodiversity and geodiversity	Sites AST001, AST004, AST008, BAM001, BAM006, BAM007, BUR001, BUR003, BUR005, BUR008, CA1, CART004, CART007, CHIP004, CHIP005, CHIP018, CHIP019, CHIP021, CLAN001, CUR004, CUR007, CUR008, DUCK002, KING005, LEA004, WIT005, WIT007, WIT010, WIT011 and WIT3	Sites CHAR006, CHAR007, FREE002, MB001 and MB004
SA Objective 4: Landscape	Sites CHIP004, WIT007, WIT010, WIT011 and WIT3	Site CHIP021
SA Objective 5: Cultural heritage	Sites BAM006, BAM007, BUR008, CA1, CART001, CART004, CART007, CHIP019, CHIP021, CLAN001, ENS001, KING005, STON005, WIT004 and WIT005	Site TACK005
SA Objective 6: Air quality	Sites ALV006, AST001, AST004, AST008, BAM006, BAM007, BUR001, BUR008, CA1, CART001, CART004, CART007, CHAR004, CHAR006,	Site CHIP004

SA Objective	Best performing non-strategic site(s)	Worst performing non-strategic site(s)
	CHAR007, CHIP021, ENS001, FREE002, FREE004, KING002, KING005, LANG001, LEA002, LEA004, MB001, MB004, NL005, NL014, STAN001, STON005, TACK003, TACK004, TACK005, WIT005, WIT010 and WIT011	
SA Objective 7: Water	Uncertain	Sites BN002, BUR001, CART004, CHIP004, CHIP005 and CHIP019
SA Objective 8: Natural resources and waste	Sites BUR001, WIT3 and CHIP004	Site STAN001
SA Objective 9: Housing and equality	Sites WIT004 and WIT005	Site WIT007
SA Objective 10: Health and wellbeing	Sites CA1, CART001, CHIP004, CHIP005, CHIP018, WIT007, WIT010, WIT011 and WIT3	Site ENS001
SA Objective 11: Transport and accessibility	Sites CHAR007 and KING002	Site ENS001
SA Objective 12: Education	Sites BUR001, BUR003, BUR005, CA1, CART001, CART004, CHIP004, CHIP005, CHIP018, CHIP021, WIT004, WIT007, WIT010, WIT011 and WIT3	Site KING005
SA Objective 13: Economy and employment	Sites CA1, CART001, CART004, WIT004, WIT005, WIT007 and WIT3	Sites BUR001, KING002, KING005, MB001, MB004 and SUW001, WIT010 and WIT011

5 Policies

5.1 Preface

5.1.1 At the previous stage of plan-making, the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA included an evaluation of the draft vision, objectives and each of the 71 draft policies as set out in the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options version of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan³³.

5.1.2 The policies, as listed in **Table 5.1**, comprise:

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

Table 5.1: Draft policies presented in the Preferred Policy Options consultation document

Policy Reference	Policy Name
CP1	Climate Change
CP2	Settlement Hierarchy
CP3	Spatial Strategy
CP4	Delivering New Homes
CP5	Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity
CP6	Delivering Infrastructure In-Step with New Development
CP7	Water Environment
CP8	High Quality and Sustainable Design
CP9	Healthy Place Shaping
CP10	Sustainable Transport
CP11	Historic Environment
CP12	Natural Environment
PL1	Cotswold National Landscape
PL2	Oxford Green Belt
PL3	Conservation and Management of Windrush Valley
PL4	Wychwood Forest
PL5	Carterton - Witney - Oxford Rail Corridor (CWORC)
PL6	Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (WHS)
WIT1	A Strategy for Witney
WIT2	Witney Town Centre
CA1	A Strategy for Carterton
CA2	Carterton Town Centre
CN1	A Strategy for Chipping Norton
CN2	Chipping Norton Town Centre
BAM1	Bampton Settlement Strategy
BUR1	Burford Settlement Strategy
BUR2	Burford Town Centre Strategy
CHA1	Charlbury Settlement Strategy
EYN1	A Strategy for Eynsham

³³ WODC (2025) West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. Draft Preferred Policy Options Paper. June 2025. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/qf3bnn0n/wodc-local-plan-preferred-policy-options-consultation-paper-june-2025.pdf> [Date accessed: 24/10/25]

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

5.2 Updated policies at the Preferred Spatial Options stage

5.2.1 Following consideration of consultation comments received during the Preferred Policy Options Consultation, WODC has prepared updates for two local plan policies at this stage:

- **Core Policy 2 (Settlement Hierarchy)** – This introduces an additional tier to the hierarchy, separating the previously defined villages into Tier 3 Larger Villages and Tier 4 Medium Villages; and
- **Core Policy 3 (Spatial Strategy)** – To provide clearer definitions of different scales of residential development and what is considered appropriate for each tier of settlement.

5.2.2 The two updated policies have been reviewed against the SA Framework, with updated assessments of these two policies presented in **Appendix F**.

5.3 Assessment of draft policies

5.3.1 **Table 5.2** provides a summary of the draft policy assessments, drawing on the policies assessed within the previous Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA (June 2025)³⁴ (see Appendix C of the June 2025 SA Report for the full assessment narrative), and the updates to Core Policies 2 and 3 as discussed in **Appendix F** of this document.

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

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

³⁴ Lepus Consulting (2025) Sustainability Appraisal of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041: Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options. June 2025. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/qj1puvnm/sustainability-appraisal-of-the-west-oxfordshire-local-plan-preferred-options-june-2025.pdf> [Date accessed: 29/09/25]

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

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

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

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

Table 5.2: Impact matrix table of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan draft policies

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
Vision	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	0	++	++	++	+	++
Objectives	++	+	++	++	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++
CP1	++	++	++	+	0	++	++	++	+	+	+	0	0
CP2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CP3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	++	+	+	+	++
CP4	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	++	0	+/-	0	0
CP5	-	0	0	0	0	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	++
CP6	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	+	+	0
CP7	0	++	+	+	0	0	++	0	0	+	0	0	0
CP8	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	+	++	0	0
CP9	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	+	++	+	0	0
CP10	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	0	+	++	+	+

Policy Ref	1 CC Mitigation	2 CC Adaptation	3 Biodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural Heritage	6 Air Quality	7 Water	8 Natural Resources	9 Housing	10 Health	11 Transport	12 Education	13 Economy
CP11	+	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
CP12	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
PL1	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
PL2	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PL3	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
PL4	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
PL5	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	++	0	+
PL6	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
WIT1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	+	++	+	++	++	++
WIT2	+	+	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++
CA1	++	+	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	++
CA2	+	+	+	++	+	+	0	+	+	+	++	0	++
CN1	++	+	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	0	+	++
CN2	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	+	++
BAM1	++	++	+	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
BUR1	+	+	+	++	++	+	0	+	++	+	++	+	++
BUR2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++
CHA1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	++	+	++	0	++
EYN1	++	++	+	++	++	+	+	0	+	+	++	+	++
LH1	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	+
WD1	++	++	++	++	++	+	++	+	+	++	++	++	++
WD2	+	0	0	++	++	+	0	+	0	+	++	0	++
RA1	++	++	0	++	++	+	0	0	++	+	++	+	++
DM1	0	0	+	++	+	0	0	+	0	+	+	0	0
DM2	++	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM3	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0
DM4	+	+	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	++	+	0	0
DM5	++	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM6	++	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
DM7	++	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM8	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM9	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+
DM10	+	+	+	++	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
DM11	+	+	++	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM12	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
DM13	++	+	+	0	0	++	+	0	0	++	+	0	0
DM14	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM15	0	0	+	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM16	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	0
DM17	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM18	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
DM19	0	0	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DM20	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	++	0	++
DM21	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	++	0	+	+	+	+

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Policy Ref	CC Mitigation	CC Adaptation	Biodiversity	Landscape	Cultural Heritage	Air Quality	Water	Natural Resources	Housing	Health	Transport	Education	Economy
DM22	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
DM23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	+	+
DM24	+	+	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0
DM25	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	++	0	0
DM26	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
DM27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0
DM28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	0	0	0
DM29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	0	0	0
DM30	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	+
DM31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0
DM32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	+	+	+	+
DM33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0
DM34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	++
DM35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	++
DM36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++
DM37	+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++
DM38	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	++

6 Mitigation

6.1 Overview

- 6.1.1 The process which has been used to appraise reasonable alternative sites is sequenced through two stages. Firstly, sites are assessed in terms of impacts on the baseline without consideration of mitigation (see **Chapter 4**). Secondly, the appraisal findings are further assessed in light of any relevant mitigation that is available through emerging Local Plan policies (see **Chapter 5**).
- 6.1.2 The pre-mitigation assessment provides a baseline assessment of each site and identifies any local constraints, and does not consider mitigating factors such as local plan policy. The purpose of this stage is to identify the impacts that will need to be overcome for development to optimise sustainability performance.
- 6.1.3 The post-mitigation assessment considers how mitigating factors, including emerging Local Plan policy, will help to avoid or reduce the impacts that were identified at the pre-mitigation stage.
- 6.1.4 It is important to demonstrate the amount of mitigation that may be required to ensure a site can optimise sustainability performance. The level of intervention that may be required to facilitate effective mitigation varies and can help determine the eventual choice of preferred option in the plan. Sites which require low levels of intervention are likely to be preferable to sites that require complex and potentially unviable strategies.

6.2 Post-mitigation site assessments

- 6.2.1 The post-mitigation assessments are presented in full in **Appendix G**, where adverse impacts identified through the assessment of sites pre-mitigation for each SA Objective (as explained in full within **Appendix D** for strategic sites and **Appendix E** for non-strategic sites, and summarised in **Chapter 4**) have been reviewed, indicating which of the emerging policies will be likely to mitigate or reduce these adverse effects.
- 6.2.2 The impact matrix for all reasonable alternative sites post-mitigation is presented in **Table 6.1** and **Table 6.2**. These impacts have been identified following consideration of the likely mitigation effects of the draft policies as discussed in **Appendix G**.
- 6.2.3 The draft Local Plan policies provide a generally strong and comprehensive framework to address potential adverse effects across environmental, social, and economic objectives. Policies are likely to reduce impacts on climate change, flood risk, biodiversity, heritage, landscape, and community wellbeing, while promoting sustainable development, access to services, and local economic opportunities. However, residual effects and uncertainties remain, particularly for strategic and rural sites, where site-specific assessments and targeted mitigation may be required to fully avoid or minimise impacts. Certain effects, such as reduction in air quality, loss of soil resource, waste generation, and sustainable access to secondary schools or railway stations, are unlikely to be fully mitigated in all locations. Overall, the Local Plan is expected to deliver significant benefits, but careful implementation and further evidence-based assessments will be essential to ensure that remaining risks are appropriately managed.
- 6.2.4 Recommendations to further improve the sustainability performance of development sites, and general recommendations for the Council to consider, are presented in **Chapter 7**.

Table 6.1: Impact matrix table of the reasonable alternative strategic sites, post-mitigation

Site reference	1 Climate change mitigation	2 Climate change adaptation	3 Biodiversity and geodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural heritage	6 Air quality	7 Water	8 Natural resources and waste	9 Housing and equality	10 Health and wellbeing	11 Transport and accessibility	12 Education	13 Economy and employment
ALV002	+/-	-	+/-	--	0	0	-	--	++	++	++	++	++
BAM002	+/-	--	+/-	+/-	0	-	-	-	++	++	+	-	++
BAM003	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	++	+	0	-	++
BAM005	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	++	-	-	-	+
BG001	+/-	-	-	+/-	--	-	-	--	++	-	++	-	++
BN001	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	--	++	-	++	++	++
BN001a	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	++	-	+	++	++
BN003	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	++	++	++
BN006	+/-	-	--	-	--	-	-	--	++	-	++	-	++
BUR002	+/-	+	-	--	0	-	+/-	-	++	++	++	++	+
CHAR005	+/-	+	+/-	--	--	0	+/-	-	++	++	++	-	+
CHIP006	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	++	++	+	++	+
CN1	+/-	+	+/-	--	-	-	+/-	--	++	++	++	++	+
CUR001	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	++	-	-	-	++
CUR003	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	++	++	-	-	++
CUR008	+/-	-	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	++	-	-	-	++
EW1	+/-	-	-	--	--	-	+/-	--	++	++	++	++	++
EW2	+/-	--	-	-	--	-	+/-	--	++	++	++	++	++
HAN001	+/-	+	-	-	-	-	-	--	++	-	++	-	++
MIN002	+/-	+	--	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	++	-	++
MIN006	+/-	+	+/-	--	-	0	+/-	--	++	-	++	-	++
SHIL002	+/-	--	+/-	--	-	0	-	-	++	-	-	++	++
SHIL003	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	++	-	-	++	++
SL006	+/-	+	-	--	0	-	-	--	++	++	++	++	++
WIT001	+/-	--	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	++	++	++
WIT002	+/-	-	-	--	0	-	-	--	++	++	++	++	++
WIT006	+/-	--	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	++	++	++	++
WIT2	+/-	-	-	--	0	-	+/-	--	++	-	++	++	++
WOOD001	+/-	+	-	+/-	-	0	+/-	--	++	++	++	++	++

Table 6.2: Impact matrix table of the reasonable alternative non-strategic sites, post-mitigation

Site reference	1 Climate change mitigation	2 Climate change adaptation	3 Biodiversity and geodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural heritage	6 Air quality	7 Water	8 Natural resources and waste	9 Housing and equality	10 Health and wellbeing	11 Transport and accessibility	12 Education	13 Economy and employment
ALV006	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
AST001	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
AST004	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
AST008	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
BAM001	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	0	++	-	-	++
BAM006	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	0	++	-	-	++
BAM007	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	0	++	-	-	++
BN002	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	-	-	--	0	-	-	0	++
BUR001	+/-	+	+/-	-	-	0	-	0	+	++	++	++	+
BUR003	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	-	-	+/-	-	+	++	++	++	+
BUR005	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	+	++	++	++	+
BUR008	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	0	-	-	-	++
CA1	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	+	0	++	++	++	++
CART001	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	++	-	++	++
CART004	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	0	-	-	+	++	++	++	++
CART007	+/-	-	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	++	++
CHAR004	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	++	++	-	+
CHAR006	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	+
CHAR007	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	+	++	++	-	+
CHIP004	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	-	+/-	0	+	++	++	++	+
CHIP005	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	-	+/-	-	+	++	++	++	+
CHIP018	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	+	++	++	++	+
CHIP019	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	+
CHIP021	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	++	+
CLAN001	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
CUR004	+/-	--	+/-	+/-	-	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
CUR007	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
CUR008	+/-	-	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	0	-	-	0	0
DUCK002	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
ENS001	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	0	-	-	0	0
FREE002	+/-	+	-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
FREE004	+/-	+	-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	++	-	-	++
KING002	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	++	-	0
KING005	+/-	--	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	0
LANG001	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	+
LEA002	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	0
LEA004	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	+
MB001	+/-	+	--	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	0	-	++	-	0
MB004	+/-	+	--	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+/-	-	++	-	0
NL005	+/-	+	-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	+
NL012	+/-	+	-	+/-	0	-	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++

Site reference	1 Climate change mitigation	2 Climate change adaptation	3 Biodiversity and geodiversity	4 Landscape	5 Cultural heritage	6 Air quality	7 Water	8 Natural resources and waste	9 Housing and equality	10 Health and wellbeing	11 Transport and accessibility	12 Education	13 Economy and employment
NL014	+/-	+	-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
STAN001	+/-	+	-	-	0	0	+/-	--	+/-	-	-	-	+
STON005	+/-	+	-	--	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	-	-	++
SUW001	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	-	+/-	-	+	++	-	-	0
TACK003	+/-	+	+/-	-	0	0	+/-	-	+	-	++	-	++
TACK004	+/-	+	+/-	+/-	0	0	+/-	-	0	-	++	-	+
TACK005	+/-	+	-	+/-	-	0	+/-	-	+	-	++	-	++
WIT004	+/-	+	-	-	0	-	+/-	-	0	-	++	++	++
WIT005	+/-	+	+/-	--	0	0	+/-	-	0	-	++	++	++
WIT007	+/-	+	+/-	0	0	-	+/-	+	+	++	++	++	++
WIT010	+/-	--	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	-	+	++	++	++	++
WIT011	+/-	--	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	-	+	++	++	++	++
WIT3	+/-	--	+/-	0	0	-	+/-	0	+	++	++	++	++

6.3 Selection and rejection

6.3.1 PPG on SEA states that the SA process should outline the reasons why alternatives were selected and the reasons the rejected options were not taken forward.

6.3.2 An overview of the reasons for site selection and rejection of each reasonable alternative sites has been provided by WODC, as summarised in **Table 6.3** for strategic sites and **Table 6.4** for non-strategic sites. WODC's preliminary reasons for selection and rejection of the sites proposed at this stage in the plan making process have been informed through consideration of the SA assessment findings as well as other evidence base information that has been available to WODC at this stage, including wider considerations of the suitability, availability and achievability of potential site allocations.

6.3.3 **Tables 6.3** and **6.4** are intended to provide an overview only. The decision making of the Council in relation to the sites taken forward reflects the findings of the evidence base documents prepared to support the preparation of the emerging Local Plan, including the findings of the SA, and this information may be reviewed and updated at later stages of the plan making process as more evidence information becomes available.

Table 6.3: Outline reasons for selection / rejection of reasonable alternative strategic sites at Regulation 18

Site reference	Site name	Proposed site use	Selected/rejected?	Outline reason for selection or rejection provided by WODC
ALV002	Land west of Carterton	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy
BAM002	Land west of Station Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and historic setting of Bampton.
BAM003	Land east of Station Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and historic setting of Bampton.
BAM005	Land north of Aston Road	Residential	Selected	This site is selected that it is developable in part. The north western section of the site is better contained within a landscape setting and relates better to the settlement.
BG001	Land at Barnard Gate	Mixed use (residential and employment)	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would not align with the preferred strategy. It would represent development of a new settlement resulting in significant impacts on cultural heritage and natural resources.
BN001	Kilkenny Farm - Upper Norton	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BN001a	Kilney Farm (Phase 1) - Middle Norton	Residential	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BN003	Land north of Brize Norton and Carterton - Foxbury Farm	Mixed use (residential and employment)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BN006	Land east of Brize Norton	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BUR002	Land south of Sheep Street	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Buford and the Cotswolds National Landscape
CHAR005	Land south and west of Charlbury	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Charlbury and the Cotswolds National Landscape
CHIP006	Land adjacent to East Chipping Norton SDA	Residential	Selected	Strategic scale development in this location would form a logical extension to Chipping Norton outside of the Cotswolds National Landscape. It would form part of a revised allocation for development in a less constrained area to the east of the town.
CN1	East Chipping Norton SDA	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development to the south of London Road would result in harmful cultural heritage impacts due to the proximity of the Scheduled Monument. A revised allocation should focus north of London Road.
CUR001	Land at Curbridge	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location is not considered appropriate for a medium village. Could represent a longer term strategic option
CUR003	Land at Curbridge Downs Farm	Residential	Selected	Strategic scale development in this location would form a logical extension to Witney in an

Site reference	Site name	Proposed site use	Selected/rejected?	Outline reason for selection or rejection provided by WODC
				accessible location close to existing employment provision and services.
CUR008	Land west of Downs Road	Residential	Selected	This is considered to be a suitable location for employment development. Strategic scale residential development is considered due to relative isolation and amenity impacts arising from A40 but represents a suitable location for employment development.
EW1	Salt Cross (Oxfordshire Cotswolds) Garden Village	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Selected	Refreshed allocation for new settlement to be included in Local plan 2043
EW2	West Eynsham SDA	Residential	Selected	Refreshed allocation for new settlement to be included in Local plan 2043
HAN001	Land at Hanborough Station	Residential	Selected	This is considered to be a suitable location for strategic scale growth due service centre location and proximity to public transport infrastructure
MIN002	Land west of Minster Lovell	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Rejected	Further strategic scale development to the west of Minster Lovell not sustainable at this time. There are existing approvals for large scale development yet to be implemented to the west of the village.
MIN006	Land west of Witney, south of Downs Road	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Selected	Development in this location would be broadly consistent with the spatial strategy as it is situated on the edge of Witney and is located in close proximity to existing employment opportunities to the west of the town.
SHIL002	Land west of Shilton Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Shilton with detrimental landscape impacts
SHIL003	Land north of Price Way	Residential	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
SL006	Land at Shores Green	Mixed use (residential and community)	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location does not relate well to Witney and would result in detrimental impacts to the setting of the town and natural resources in the area.
WIT001	Land at South Witney	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
WIT002	Land East of Witney	Mixed use (residential and community)	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location does not relate well to Witney and would result in detrimental impacts to the setting of the town and natural resources in the area.
WIT006	Land north of Burford Road	Residential	Selected	Strategic scale development in this location would form a logical extension to Witney in an accessible location close to existing employment provision and services.
WIT2	North Witney SDA	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Refreshed allocation for new settlement to be included in Local plan 2043.
WOOD001	Land north and east of Banbury Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location does not relate well to Woodstock and would result in detrimental impacts to cultural heritage, the setting of the town and natural resources in the area.

Table 6.4: Outline reasons for selection / rejection of reasonable alternative non-strategic sites at Regulation 18

Site reference	Site name	Proposed site use	Selected/rejected?	Outline reason for selection or rejection provided by WODC
ALV002	Land west of Carterton	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy
BAM002	Land west of Station Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and historic setting of Bampton.
BAM003	Land east of Station Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and historic setting of Bampton.
BAM005	Land north of Aston Road	Residential	Selected	This site is selected that it is developable in part. The north western section of the site is better contained within a landscape setting and relates better to the settlement.
BG001	Land at Barnard Gate	Mixed use (residential and employment)	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would not align with the preferred strategy. It would represent development of a new settlement resulting in significant impacts on cultural heritage and natural resources.
BN001	Kilkenny Farm - Upper Norton	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BN001a	Kilney Farm (Phase 1) - Middle Norton	Residential	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BN003	Land north of Brize Norton and Carterton - Foxbury Farm	Mixed use (residential and employment)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BN006	Land east of Brize Norton	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
BUR002	Land south of Sheep Street	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Buford and the Cotswolds National Landscape
CHAR005	Land south and west of Charlbury	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Charlbury and the Cotswolds National Landscape
CHIP006	Land adjacent to East Chipping Norton SDA	Residential	Selected	Strategic scale development in this location would form a logical extension to Chipping Norton outside of the Cotswolds National Landscape. It would form part of a revised allocation for development in a less constrained area to the east of the town.
CN1	East Chipping Norton SDA	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development to the south of London Road would result in harmful cultural heritage impacts due to the proximity of the Scheduled Monument. A revised allocation should focus north of London Road.
CUR001	Land at Curbridge	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location is not considered appropriate for a medium village. Could represent a longer term strategic option

Site reference	Site name	Proposed site use	Selected/rejected?	Outline reason for selection or rejection provided by WODC
CUR003	Land at Curbridge Downs Farm	Residential	Selected	Strategic scale development in this location would form a logical extension to Witney in an accessible location close to existing employment provision and services.
CUR008	Land west of Downs Road	Residential	Selected	This is considered to be a suitable location for employment development. Strategic scale residential development is considered due to relative isolation and amenity impacts arising from A40 but represents a suitable location for employment development.
EW1	Salt Cross (Oxfordshire Cotswolds) Garden Village	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Selected	Refreshed allocation for new settlement to be included in Local plan 2043
EW2	West Eynsham SDA	Residential	Selected	Refreshed allocation for new settlement to be included in Local plan 2043
HAN001	Land at Hanborough Station	Residential	Selected	This is considered to be a suitable location for strategic scale growth due service centre location and proximity to public transport infrastructure
MIN002	Land west of Minster Lovell	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Rejected	Further strategic scale development to the west of Minster Lovell not sustainable at this time. There are existing approvals for large scale development yet to be implemented to the west of the village.
MIN006	Land west of Witney, south of Downs Road	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Selected	Development in this location would be broadly consistent with the spatial strategy as it is situated on the edge of Witney and is located in close proximity to existing employment opportunities to the west of the town.
SHIL002	Land west of Shilton Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location would have a detrimental impact on the setting of Shilton with detrimental landscape impacts
SHIL003	Land north of Price Way	Residential	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
SL006	Land at Shores Green	Mixed use (residential and community)	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location does not relate well to Witney and would result in detrimental impacts to the setting of the town and natural resources in the area.
WIT001	Land at South Witney	Mixed use (residential, employment and community)	Selected	Selected as a location for strategic development to be planned as a standalone community in landscape setting with ecological enhancements. Aligns with preferred spatial strategy. Site is considered suitable in part
WIT002	Land East of Witney	Mixed use (residential and community)	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location does not relate well to Witney and would result in detrimental impacts to the setting of the town and natural resources in the area.
WIT006	Land north of Burford Road	Residential	Selected	Strategic scale development in this location would form a logical extension to Witney in an accessible location close to existing employment provision and services.
WIT2	North Witney SDA	Mixed use (residential and community)	Selected	Refreshed allocation for new settlement to be included in Local Plan 2043.
WOOD001	Land north and east of Banbury Road	Residential	Rejected	Strategic scale development in this location does not relate well to Woodstock and would result in detrimental impacts to cultural heritage, the

Site reference	Site name	Proposed site use	Selected/rejected?	Outline reason for selection or rejection provided by WODC
				setting of the town and natural resources in the area.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan

- 7.1.1 At the previous stage, the Regulation 18 Preferred Policy Options SA identified a range of recommendations to improve the sustainability of the emerging Local Plan, including recommendations for the draft policies, supporting evidence and general points for WODC to consider.
- 7.1.2 **Table 7.1** sets out further recommendations for WODC to consider in the preparation of the Local Plan, in relation to the potential development sites (see **Chapter 4**).
- 7.1.3 The recommendations set out are not exhaustive; further recommendations will be made throughout the SA process to help inform the Local Plan in its preparation.

Table 7.1: SA recommendations for the development sites

SA Objective	Recommendation
SA1: Climate Change Mitigation	- Opportunities should be sought to integrate renewable or low-carbon energy generation within proposed development sites, and encourage carbon neutral or net zero development where possible. - It is recommended more detailed assessments are provided which will allow for a more thorough analysis of climate change mitigation within the Local Plan. For instance, an assessment relating to renewable energy provision and decentralised energy opportunities could allow the SA to take into account the opportunities to draw from / aid the delivery of renewable energy as part of development specifications. A site-specific climate change impact assessment which incorporates climate change modelling and carbon footprint data could also allow for more precise reporting on climate change.
SA2: Climate Change Adaptation	- The retention of existing green infrastructure (GI) including trees, hedgerows, and other natural or semi-natural features within sites should be encouraged where possible. WODC should recognise the multifunctional benefits of green and blue infrastructure for flood risk mitigation, urban cooling/ shading and carbon storage, as well as for human health and place making. Relevant guidance, such as Natural England's Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide³⁵, should be referred to. - WODC should have regard to the recommendations of the Environment Agency including ensuring that policies, site allocations and design of development takes into account climate change, and that strategic water planning, drainage and infrastructure is adequate to serve new growth via early engagement with water companies (see Table 1.2).
SA3: Biodiversity and Geodiversity	- It is recommended that site-specific policies are prepared for preferred development sites with potential to adversely affect a biodiversity asset to provide details on the proposed development and how any biodiversity asset would be retained and/or enhanced. - Alongside development, every opportunity should be sought to aid the delivery of the emerging Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy³⁶. - The findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) process should be carefully considered when identifying preferred locations for growth and drafting policies. The Local Plan must ensure that where likely significant effects are identified, appropriate mitigation is secured. This should be achieved through robust policy wording that

³⁵ Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide. Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/downloads/Design%20Guide%20-%20Green%20Infrastructure%20Framework.pdf> [Date accessed: 24/09/25]

³⁶ Oxfordshire County Council (2025) Draft Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Available at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

SA Objective	Recommendation
	ensures the Plan does not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and programmes.
SA4: Landscape	- Where new development is located within or in proximity to the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), it is recommended that a full assessment of the potential impacts to the CNL and its setting are considered. The Local Plan should aid the delivery of the vision for sustainable development as set out in the CNL Management Plan 2023-2025³⁷ and protect characteristics identified in the CNL Landscape Strategy and Guidelines³⁸. - Development in sensitive locations, including but not limited to the CNL and its setting, should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) to consider any potential for adverse impacts and inform the proposed development design and layout. - Ensure development proposals are in-keeping with the local landscape character and the findings and recommendations of the West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment³⁹ or any subsequent evidence prepared. Updated landscape character, sensitivity and/or capacity assessments would aid the identification of suitable areas that could accommodate strategic growth without compromising West Oxfordshire's unique landscape character and qualities.
SA5: Cultural Heritage	- It is recommended that all development proposals that are likely to impact heritage assets, particularly strategic sites, should be accompanied by a Heritage Impact Assessment⁴⁰. - Development in proximity to Blenheim Palace should make use of the WHS Management Plan⁴¹ to consider ways in which growth as a result of the proposed development can alleviate existing pressures and support management objectives.
SA6: Air Quality	All development proposals should take into consideration recommendations within the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan⁴² and outputs of the latest Annual Status Report. Sites that are located in close proximity to AQMAs, or which could result in an increase in traffic travelling through AQMAs, should consider implementing measures to ease congestion within the surrounding area to reduce pressure on the AQMA.
SA7: Water	As highlighted in the Water Cycle Study (WCS) Scoping Report⁴³, once the location and size of site allocations are known, further liaison with Thames Water is recommended to ensure that required assessments can be carried out to understand where water supply / wastewater network upgrades will be required to manage future development. An updated WCS should be produced to inform the Regulation 19 stage of plan making.

³⁷ Cotswolds National Landscape (2023) Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2023 – 2025. Available at: https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CNL_Management-Plan-2023-25_final.pdf [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

³⁸ Cotswolds National Landscape (2016) Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. Available at: <https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/about-the-cotswolds-national-landscape/landscape-character-assessment/landscape-strategy-and-guidelines/> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

³⁹ Atlantic Consultants (1998) West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/cpgn2f0/west-oxfordshire-landscape-assessment-1998.pdf> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

⁴⁰ DLUHC (2014). Historic environment. Advises on enhancing and conserving the historic environment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conserving-and-enhancing-the-historic-environment> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

⁴¹ Historic Landscape Management Ltd (2017). Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site. Revised Management Plan 2017. Available at: <https://www.blenheimpalace.com/worldheritagesite/downloads/2017/Blenheim%20WHS%20Management%20Plan%202017.pdf> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

⁴² WODC (2024) West Oxfordshire District Council Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Action Plan 2023 – 2028. Available at: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/xpqflayh/witney-and-chipping-norton-air-quality-action-plan-november-2024.pdf> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

⁴³ WHS (2025) West Oxfordshire Water Cycle Study Scoping Report. July 2025. Available at: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/oxuf3hnd/whs10174-wodc-scoping-water-cycle-study_v2-0.pdf [Date accessed: 21/08/25]

SA Objective	Recommendation
SA8: Natural Resources and Waste	- Development on previously undeveloped land of ALC Grade 1, 2 or 3a should be avoided. Where this is not possible, developers should refer to DEFRA best practice guidance⁴⁴. GI or open spaces could be used to protect areas of BMV soil within a site boundary and/or encourage use of these areas for community allotments to promote local food production. - Development proposals should demonstrate measures to minimise waste generation during both construction and occupation. Development proposals should integrate well-designated waste storage space to facilitate effective waste storage, recycling and composting for site end users.
SA9: Housing and Equality	Development proposals should be designed to promote social interaction, including the establishment of strong neighbourhood centres.
SA10: Health and Wellbeing	Development sites should ensure provision of walkable neighbourhoods and integrated active travel routes that will encourage access to local services on foot, promoting healthy lifestyles.
SA11: Transport and Accessibility	- Ensure all development proposals and travel plans aim to reduce the reliance on private car use wherever possible and applicable, and aim to promote access to local facilities and services in a manner which minimises emissions and promotes active travel. - It is recommended that development proposals consider the recommendations of the National Cycling Strategy⁴⁵ and the National Design Guide⁴⁶ to create accessible spaces and promote active travel. - Electric vehicle charging networks should be supported including improved distribution and quantity of charging points and public transport options across the Plan area, in particular the rural areas, recognising the crucial role that local authorities play in enabling the transition to electric vehicles⁴⁷.
SA12: Education	- Ensure that wherever possible, walkable neighbourhoods and safe routes are created, especially to primary schools. - In West Oxfordshire's more rural areas, where it is less likely that walking to school is a viable option, travel plans or other transport assessments should be prepared to demonstrate how consideration has been given to prioritising sustainable travel options to schools over the use of private cars.
SA13: Economy and Employment	Ensure employment-led proposals are located in close proximity to high-frequency bus stops or other sustainable transport options for employees to reach employment opportunities, informed by the latest available accessibility information.

⁴⁴ DEFRA (2009) Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soils on Construction Sites. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716510/pb13298-code-of-practice-090910.pdf [Date accessed: 24/09/25]

⁴⁵ Highways England (2016) Cycling Strategy. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81965fed915d74e33ff04f/S150572_Cycling_Strategy.pdf [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

⁴⁶ MHCLG & DLUHC (2021). National design guide. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

⁴⁷ Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (2025) On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/grants-for-local-authorities-to-provide-residential-on-street-chargepoints/grants-to-provide-residential-on-street-chargepoints-for-plug-in-electric-vehicles-guidance-for-local-authorities> [Date accessed: 30/09/25]

8 Next steps

8.1 Conclusion

- 8.1.1 This Regulation 18 SA Report sets out an evaluation of reasonable alternative sites identified by WODC at the 'Preferred Spatial Options' stage of plan making. Best performing options have been identified where applicable. Draft outputs have been fed back to WODC on an iterative basis to inform the selection/rejection of reasonable alternatives and shaping of the emerging the West Oxfordshire Local Plan.
- 8.1.2 In addition to the evaluation of various reasonable alternatives to aid WODC's decision-making, a number of recommendations have been made for WODC to consider as the Local Plan progresses.

8.2 Consultation on the Regulation 18 SA Report

- 8.2.1 This Regulation 18 SA Report will be published by WODC for consultation with statutory consultees, stakeholders and the general public, alongside the Regulation 18 Preferred Spatial Options consultation document between 3rd November and 22nd December 2025.
- 8.2.2 Responses to this consultation should be made via WODC's online platform:
<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/local-plan-2043/>
- 8.2.3 Any comments received on this report during the consultation will be considered and used to inform subsequent stages of the SA process, where appropriate.
- 8.2.4 Further consultations and opportunities to comment on the emerging Local Plan and accompanying SA outputs will occur at each plan making stage.

8.3 Next steps

- 8.3.1 Once WODC has reviewed Regulation 18 consultation comments, the next stage of plan making will begin: Regulation 19.
- 8.3.2 At the Regulation 19 stage, preparation of an Environmental Report will begin, also known as a 'sustainability appraisal report' in PPG. The Environmental Report will include all the legal requirements set out in Regulation 12 and Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, enabling WODC to meet the legal requirements set out in sections 19 and 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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Habitats Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



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