



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

West Oxfordshire Local Development Framework

Core Strategy So Far: interim position statement

This document sets out our likely approach on key issues facing West Oxfordshire, particularly on housing, the economy and climate change.

We would like your views on this emerging approach. All relevant documents are available via the Council's website.

There is now an opportunity to respond online to this consultation via www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDF

Please return your response to this consultation by Monday 6 April 2009.

1. Introduction	3
2. Shaping the future in West Oxfordshire: Our Vision	5
3. The Spatial Strategy	8
Core Strategy Objectives	8
Where we are now	8
Realistic and deliverable options for the future	9
Emerging strategy for the way forward	13
4. Meeting the specific housing needs of our communities	16
Core Strategy Objectives	16
Where we are now	16
Housing Needs	16
Accommodation for Travelling Communities	16
Realistic and deliverable options for the future provision of Affordable Housing	17
Emerging approach for delivery of affordable housing	17
5. Sustainable communities with access to services and facilities	18
Core Strategy Objectives	18
Infrastructure	18
Transport	18
Economy, Retail and Tourism	19
Where we are now	19
Realistic and Deliverable Options for the Future	20
Emerging approach	21
Leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities	21
6. Protecting our environment and reducing the impact from climate change	22
Core Strategy Objectives	22
Climate Change	22
Where we are now	22
National and regional policy framework/context	23
Local policy framework/context	23
What you have told us	24
Emerging approach	24
Conserving our built heritage, landscape and biodiversity	25
Where we are now	25
Regional policy framework/context	25
Local policy framework/context	27
What you have told us	27
Emerging approach	27
Appendix One: SE Plan Projected Housing Completions 2006-2026	28
Appendix Two: Settlement Hierarchy	29
Appendix Three: Witney Urban Expansion	30

Core Strategy

This will contain the spatial vision and strategic objectives for West Oxfordshire up to 2026 with a spatial strategy, core policies and a monitoring and implementation framework. More detailed site specific allocations and policies will be prepared in a future separate development plan document which must conform with the Core Strategy.

1.1 This document contains an overview of the Council's likely approach on key issues facing West Oxfordshire but particularly on housing and employment strategy and our response to climate change. The content will form the basis of the Core Strategy being prepared as part of the longer term planning framework for West Oxfordshire - to ultimately replace the adopted Local Plan strategy. Issues are not covered here in any depth and remain the subject of on-going work ready for incorporation into a draft Core Strategy. Please see supporting documents published by the Council if you require more detailed background material.

1.2 Responses received to this interim position statement will help inform the content of the Core Strategy, as will areas of work still being progressed including:

- The outcome of the South East Regional Plan (once approved by the Government the SE Plan will form part of the Development Plan alongside the West Oxfordshire Local Plan).
- Further discussions with key stakeholders.
- The outcome of the Cogges Link Road proposal crossing land to the east of Witney. A public inquiry is likely into compulsory acquisition of land if planning permission is granted for the current application.
- The likely delivery of alternative or additional transport infrastructure to the Cogges Link Road.
- Further flood risk assessment work, with particular reference to land north of Witney.
- The scale of redevelopment of MOD housing in Carterton.
- The need for and appropriateness of further significant development to be identified on the fringes of towns and villages outside Witney – to be considered in the context of continuing monitoring of the scale and type of small-scale housing sites (windfalls) emerging through the development control process.

1.3 This document has been prepared taking into account:

- National planning policy.
- The South East Regional Plan (and neighbouring South West Plan) as proposed to be approved by the Government.
- Progress in neighbouring local authorities on preparation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- The need to maintain a land bank of deliverable housing sites equal to at least the next five years' requirement.
- The Government's requirement that allowances for future windfalls should not be included in the first 10 years of land supply (PPS3) unless there is robust evidence of genuine local circumstances that prevent specific sites being identified.
- Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategies. The latter contains nine Priorities for Action (see right).
- Town and Parish Plans.
- Current evidence including documents specifically prepared for the LDF.
- Responses to consultation and engagement with stakeholders.
- Site submissions from landowners/developers.

Supporting documents are available on the Council's website - please see the LDF Sustainability Appraisal and Evidence Base page: www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal

West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy - Priorities for Action

To keep towns and villages economically prosperous and vibrant.

To tackle the specific challenges of accessing services and facilities in West Oxfordshire.

To help young people to move from childhood to adulthood.

To support individuals and young families who want to stay in the area where they grew up.

To maintain and improve the health and well-being of all residents in West Oxfordshire.

To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime across the district to improve the quality of life in our neighbourhoods.

To campaign to improve the transport infrastructure.

To support older people to maintain their independence and health.

To keep West Oxfordshire clean and beautiful while protecting the environment and trying to reduce the causes of and effects of climate change.

West Oxfordshire District Council and local communities wish this area to continue to be one of the best places to live, work and visit. There will be a network of safe, inclusive, vibrant and prosperous market towns and villages within a healthy and attractive environment where new development will respect and complement the distinctive character of the area whilst managing the impacts of climate change.

The needs of West Oxfordshire's communities will be accommodated without significant change to the intrinsic character of the locality. Those needs include:

- meeting the needs of an ageing population;
- helping young people and families to stay in the area;
- ensuring all residents can access services and facilities.

It is especially important to retain the District's rural qualities in view of proximity to areas of major urban growth (Oxford to the east and Swindon to the south-west) (see Figures 1.1 & 1.2). About one-third of West Oxfordshire lies within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there are extensive areas of both built and natural landscapes designated for their specific historic and environmental importance. A key feature of West Oxfordshire is the network of river valleys and their floodplains formed by the Upper Thames and its tributaries.

Over the next two decades Witney will strengthen its position as the main market town providing a wide range of services and facilities. The town will offer a choice of well-designed housing which meets lifetime needs together with a network of green spaces linking with the surrounding countryside. There will be a diverse range of local employment which will reduce the necessity for commuting to nearby cities. The town centre will be vibrant, attractive, convenient and safe for all users with a wide range of retail and leisure activities on offer and will be well served by parking facilities and frequent bus services.

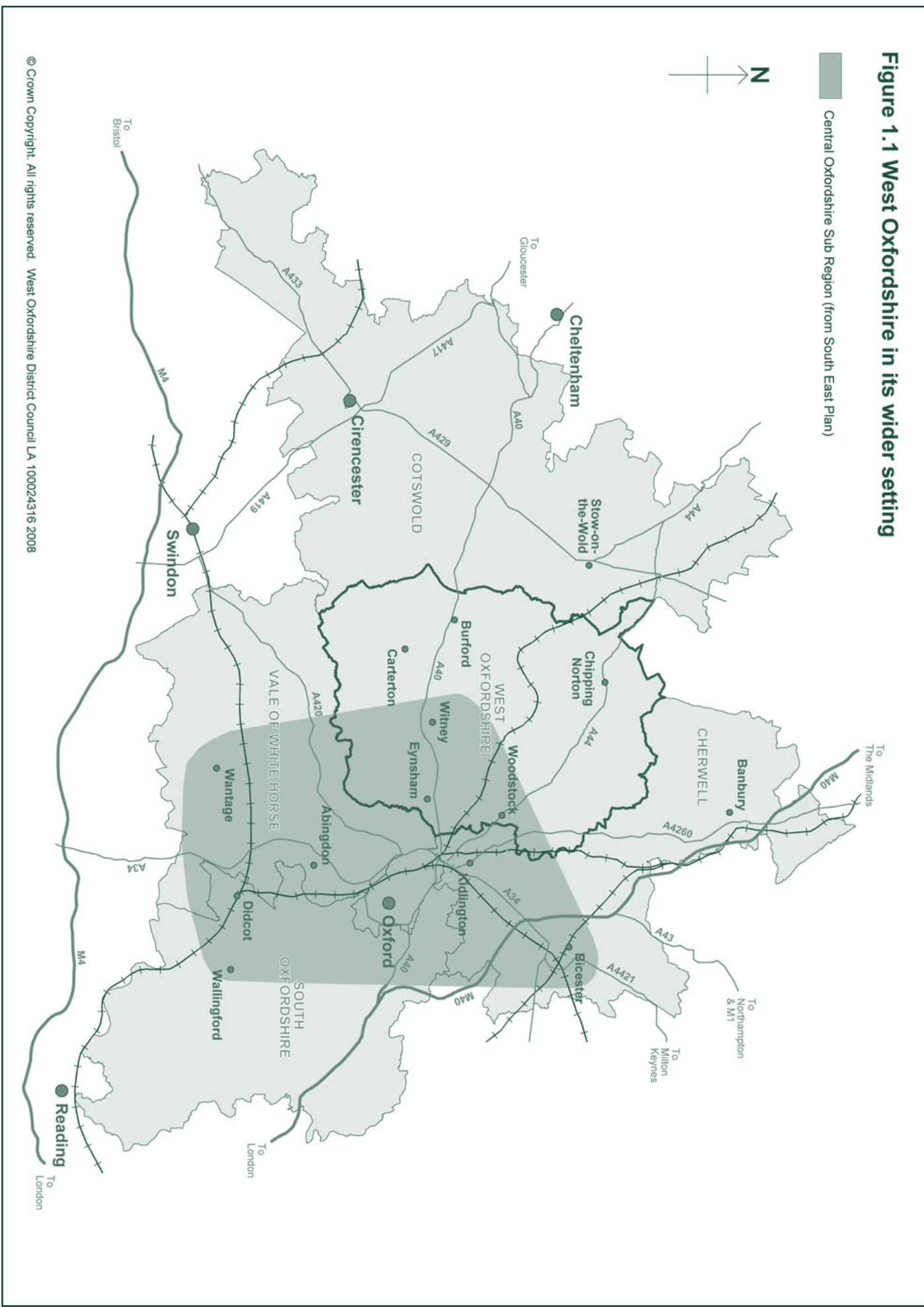
Carterton will consolidate its role as a relatively modern town meeting the daily needs of its residents and work force, including personnel at the country's premier military transport airbase, RAF Brize Norton. Much of the older MOD housing will be replaced with new urban development which will complement Carterton's enhanced role. The range of services and facilities in the town centre will expand, alongside further improvements in the quality of the built environment. Local employment opportunities will continue to increase.

Chipping Norton will strengthen its role as a centre of enterprise in the northern part of the district. It will be an economically and socially strong market town serving the needs of a large rural area. Its distinctive historic character and fine setting will be conserved at the same time as accommodating new development to meet identified needs.

The distinctive qualities of the smaller towns and villages will be protected. Services and facilities in these communities will be supported and strengthened through improved partnership working between the organisations involved and through more innovative practices. New affordable housing for local families and development specifically to meet the needs of the elderly will be delivered to help maintain the vibrancy of rural communities.

Figure 1.1 West Oxfordshire in its wider setting

Central Oxfordshire Sub Region (from South East Plan)



Core Strategy Objectives

- Accommodate new development in accordance with the broad strategy of the South East Regional Plan.
- Provide new development, services and facilities of an appropriate scale and type and in locations which will help improve the quality of life of local communities and where the need to travel, particularly by car, can be minimised.
- Locate new residential development where it will best help to meet local housing needs.

The consultation response in 2008 told us:

Concentration of development at Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton is preferred over a more dispersed development strategy.

For more information visit:
www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDF

Where we are now

3.1 During the last two years considerable background evidence for the LDF process has been gathered and consultation undertaken with stakeholders and the local community. Joint consultation with the West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy took place in early 2008. This Strategy 'Shaping Futures' was approved in October 2008. Consultation on Issues and Options for both the Core Strategy and future Site Allocations plan took place through 2008.

3.2 The South East Regional Plan is now nearing its final stage of approval by Government. It contains the broad strategy that the Council has to work within, including the level of housing for West Oxfordshire in the years up to 2026 that we must plan for.

www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/index.html

3.3 Within Oxfordshire the South East Plan identifies a Sub-Regional Strategy Area. This Central Oxfordshire area centred upon the city of Oxford extends in a westerly direction to include Witney and the south-eastern part of West Oxfordshire (see Figure 1.1). Specific sub-regional policies in the South East Plan covering the overall strategy, housing, economy, transport and the Green Belt apply to this area.

3.4 The following table reflects this sub-division of the District and sets out the minimum number of new homes to be provided during the 20 year period from 2006 to 2026. The future housing distribution is one of the key challenges to be addressed even though a significant number of homes have already been built in the first two and a half years of the plan period, primarily in the major development areas now drawing to a close at Witney and Carterton. There remains a need to identify the location of about 3,500 additional homes. How and where do we meet this requirement?

3.5 At present there is still sufficient residential building land identified for the short-term but new sites need to be specifically identified which are capable of providing new homes and supporting facilities from 2011 onwards.

South East Plan

Policy SP3: The prime focus for development in the South East should be urban areas, in order to foster accessibility to employment, housing, retail and other services, and avoid unnecessary travel...

Policy BE4: ...Local planning authorities, through their Local Development Documents and other means, should:

- support and reinforce the role of small rural towns as local hubs for employment, retailing and community facilities and services
- provide for sufficient housing development (especially for affordable housing) to meet identified needs in small rural towns where this would reinforce and develop the distinctive character and role of the town.

	Central Oxon (part)	Remainder of West Oxon	Total West Oxon
SE Plan (minimum housing figures for 2006-2026)	3,800	3,500	7,300
Completions April 06 - October 08	1,040	1,010	2,050
Total permitted dwellings still to be completed (Oct 08)	700	640	1,340
Total of Local Plan allocated sites remaining (excluding Newland & North Curbridge reserve site)	260	220 - 280	480 - 540
Shortfall in identified provision (minimum number of dwellings)	1,800	1,650	3,450

Realistic and deliverable options for the future

3.6 Work on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), a Government requirement, has sought to identify specific sites with housing potential of 10 or more dwellings in the towns and larger more sustainable villages. These are however technical assessments only; the conclusions are not site proposals. Smaller sites with less than 10 dwellings do not lend themselves to be specifically identified in advance but will still come forward in response to the Council's planning policies. The Council will identify broad locations only for this future supply of smaller windfall sites (conversion, changes of use and sub-division of existing buildings, and new build through infill and rounding-off existing built-up areas).

Supporting documents are available online:
www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal

3.7 The work to date alongside discussions with key stakeholders shows that the spatial options in West Oxfordshire for delivery of future sustainable residential development are relatively limited, being particularly constrained by the form of existing settlements and a wide range of environmental factors as well as limited infrastructure. Apart from replacement MOD housing, there are no large areas of previously developed land providing opportunities for sustainable development. The main option for making a sizeable contribution to the SE Plan strategy is at Witney through expansion of its existing built-up limits.

3.8 In Witney provision for about 1,500 dwellings is already identified (completions and commitments but excluding the local plan allocated reserve site at North Curbridge). The opportunities for further housing on larger sites within the existing built-up areas of Witney are few. Potential sites appropriate to accommodate 10 or more dwellings could result in a total of just over 100 further dwellings. There are however opportunities remaining for

intensification of existing residential areas through an additional house or sub-division of existing buildings. Any further major housing development at Witney must be on fields fringing the town. However should this be in the form of one or more than one large urban extension? What are the alternative strategic options outside Witney?

3.9 Elsewhere in the District the two largest towns of Carterton and Chipping Norton present the most development potential. Some 1,000 dwellings are already committed (including completions) at Carterton with just under 400 at Chipping Norton.

3.10 Within Carterton intensification of existing housing areas will continue, including through major redevelopment of MOD housing estates. In Chipping Norton new development potential will be created through vacated sites as existing health care facilities in the town move to the new site identified off London Road. Although both towns offer some potential for new sustainable development on land adjacent to the present built-up areas, the potential for major expansion is very constrained. However, Carterton Town Council and Carterton District Councillors have indicated their desire for a further 1,000 homes to be built within or on the edge of the town.

3.11 The following table sets out the broad spatial options for accommodating the required additional housing numbers over and above those already built or committed. As stated in the previous Issues and Options consultation document, a new village is not considered an appropriate or sustainable option for West Oxfordshire. The County Council has indicated opposition to a new settlement. Concentration of development in a new village is a high risk strategy and is likely to need significant expenditure to fund necessary supporting infrastructure, services and facilities, particularly at an early stage to ensure that new residents do not have to travel elsewhere to meet their daily needs. In addition such an option is unlikely to help address needs in other parts of the district.

Central Oxfordshire sub-region (part) - minimum shortfall of 1,800 homes

Options	Comments
<p>Witney - more than one urban extension?</p> <p>(see Appendix 3 for more detailed analysis of Witney fringe areas)</p>	<p>In order to meet the SE Plan minimum housing figures at least one major development site (of up to about 1000 dwellings in scale) will need to be identified on the fringe of Witney.</p> <p>Development to the west of Witney has been demonstrated to be the most deliverable of the options available for significant expansion of the town into the surrounding countryside. It has also received the most local support during public consultation: www.westoxon.gov.uk/issues This area could help provide more residential, employment and recreation opportunities and make a significant contribution to meeting local affordable housing need. Land in this area is allocated in the current Local Plan as a future reserve site for mixed use development. Detailed plans for a new junction linking Downs Road with the A40 are being prepared by the County Highways Authority.</p> <p>Suitability and deliverability of land elsewhere on the town fringes is more constrained (see SHLAA assessment of Witney and Appendix 3). Opportunities on the eastern side of Witney are constrained through the topography and landscape value of this area. Further potential for new housing in this part of the town is extremely limited. Land south of Oxford Hill is safeguarded for the proposed Cogges Link Road (the subject of a current planning application).</p> <p>Although there may be longer term development potential to the north of Witney there are major constraints to be overcome, in particular the resolution of severe flooding problems in the area and provision of a satisfactory transport network in order to avoid adding to the congestion and air quality problems in the Bridge Street area (designated an Air Quality Management Area). Development south of the A40 would result in unsustainable urban sprawl, be dependent on car travel, would create a poor level of residential amenity and lead to the coalescence of Witney with outlying villages.</p>
<p>Eynsham - a large site?</p>	<p>The only option at Eynsham (pop 5,000) is land to the west of the village – all other fringe areas being constrained by the highway network, Green Belt and flood risk. The Council has a long held policy (supported by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal and through the local plan process) to resist any large scale development proposals in this area because of adverse impact upon the rural character and countryside setting of the village, and unacceptable traffic impact upon this congested area in general but particularly upon the mediaeval village core. If a new distributor road to provide direct access to the A40 was feasible, this could lead to the opening up to development of an extensive area of agricultural land well outside Eynsham which could potentially accommodate major development of a scale likely to increase the size of the village by 50% or more. A development scheme involving a western bypass was promoted in the 1970's but was finally abandoned as being inappropriate and not deliverable. Existing vehicular access to land on the western fringe is very constrained, primarily limited to the cul-de-sac of Old Witney Road. Development on land between Chilbridge Road and Old Witney Road (200 - 300 dwellings?) would require relocation of the secondary school playing fields (see SHLAA assessment of Eynsham).</p>

Central Oxfordshire sub-region (part) - minimum shortfall of 1,800 homes

Options	Comments
Woodstock - a large site?	<p>The only possible area on the fringes of Woodstock (pop 3,000) is land to the south east of the town off the A44. These two large fields were suggested by the Council for a mixed use development (about 180 homes, employment and community facilities) during the previous local plan process. This proposal was strongly resisted locally. The Inspector recommended that this area be not included within the adopted Local Plan - “notwithstanding the existing and proposed landscaping, the Proposal would constitute a significant incursion into the open countryside to the east of the town. I also consider that the size of the proposed development is excessive when measured against the scale of this small, attractive market town”. These fields lie opposite Blenheim Park, a World Heritage Site (see SHLAA assessment of Woodstock).</p>
Reliance on a few smaller-scale site allocations and a significant contribution from small unidentified sites? (about 600 - 900 dwellings?)	<p>Work on the SHLAA is seeking to identify sites appropriate to accommodate 10 or more dwellings in the few more sustainable towns and villages in this area. There is very little potential remaining within existing built-up areas. New identified sites are likely to be mainly on Greenfield land. Sufficient smaller sites may be identified to accommodate some 200-400 new homes in total.</p> <p>In addition planning policies encourage suitable small housing sites such as infill or building conversions in many of the villages. This approach is expected to continue. Since 1 April 2001 an average of nearly 50 dwellings a year have been built on previously unidentified sites (excluding Greenfield sites) of less than 10 dwellings in the Central Oxon part of the District. About 30% of this supply was in Witney. An allowance of some 400-500 dwellings to be built on smaller sites, including in Witney, may be realistic (in addition to those small sites already with planning permission). For further information on small site trend rates please see the Housing Land Supply Position Statement at October 2008: www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal</p>

Remainder of West Oxfordshire – minimum shortfall of 1,650 homes

Options	Comments
Significant expansion of certain towns and/or villages?	<p>Much of this area is relatively remote and of high environmental value, especially in the Cotswolds AONB (covering nearly one half of this area). Regional policy and the AONB Management Plan place emphasis on small scale development to support the social and economic needs of local communities.</p> <p>There is some scope for limited expansion to the east of Chipping Norton (pop 6,000) outside the AONB but any proposal to accommodate a major urban extension of some 500 or more new homes would have an unacceptable impact upon the character and setting of this small market town. Development of such a scale would be prominent on this open plateau and could potentially necessitate a new north-south road linking the Burford and London Roads. However the traffic problems associated with the A44 running east-west through the town centre (part designated an Air Quality Management Area) would remain unalleviated.</p> <p>Further sizeable expansion of Carterton (pop 14,000) is constrained by its neighbour, RAF Brize Norton, and the need to protect the setting of (and avoid coalescence with) nearby villages. Prominent extensive open countryside lies to the north and west accessed by narrow country roads. A safeguarding zone is necessary around Burford Quarry to the north. Development in these areas would be difficult to integrate with existing infrastructure. Some 1,600 new homes were added to Carterton during the 20 years since 1986, mainly through expansion of the town's built-up area to the north and east (see SHLAA assessment of Chipping Norton and Carterton). (Carterton Town Council and Carterton District Councillors have indicated their desire for a further 1,000 houses to be built, the bulk to be provided in the north of the town).</p>
Small-scale site allocations in towns and villages?	<p>Work on the SHLAA is seeking to identify sites appropriate to accommodate 10 or more dwellings in the more sustainable settlements. There is very little potential remaining within existing built-up areas. New identified sites are likely to be mainly on Greenfield land. Sufficient sites may be identified to accommodate around 500-600 new homes in total. However towns and villages are generally of high environmental quality with extensive conservation areas.</p>
Reliance on a significant contribution from small unidentified sites?	<p>Planning policies encourage suitable small housing sites such as infill or building conversions in the relatively sustainable settlements within this larger part of West Oxfordshire. This approach is expected to remain appropriate for the future and will continue to provide a steady supply of such currently unidentified sites for new housing.</p> <p>In this part of the District an average of about 60 dwellings a year have been built since 1 April 2001 on previously unidentified sites (excluding Greenfield sites) of less than 10 dwellings. An allowance of some 500-600 dwellings to be built on such smaller sites may be realistic (in addition to those small sites already with planning permission). For further information on windfall trend rates please see the Housing Land Supply Position Statement at October 2008: www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal</p>
Accommodate some 10% - 15% of the SE Plan housing provision for this part of the district within the Central Oxon sub-region (some 350 - 500 dwellings)?	<p>This option is likely to broadly comply with the overall strategy in the SE Plan provided it does not constrain opportunities to meet local housing need within this remainder area. However this option is dependent upon the ability to identify additional capacity within the Witney- Eynsham-Woodstock areas.</p>

Emerging strategy for the way forward

3.12 Given current information and evidence, the following approach will form the basis of the new Plan, the Core Strategy, to be prepared during 2009.

Overall Strategy:

In order to achieve the scale of new housing identified in the South East Plan (a minimum of 7,300 new homes), the principal focus for new development during the period 2006-2026 will be Witney with the provision of at least 3,000 new homes, new employment and leisure opportunities and associated infrastructure, services and facilities. A minimum of 40% of the South East Plan housing allocation for West Oxfordshire 2006-2026 will be met in Witney.

A significant part of this provision will be met by development and redevelopment of land to the west of Deer Park Road, Witney including an area of undeveloped land reserved in the adopted Local Plan for a mixed use urban extension. This strategic area to the west of Witney is shown on Figure 2.

Elsewhere in West Oxfordshire most new housing and employment development will take place in towns and villages with a range of services and facilities, including on sites specifically identified by the Council through the LDF process. Housing will be provided broadly in accordance with the following distribution of the South East Plan housing allocation for the District:

- Carterton - about 20% (approx 1,500 dwellings)
- Chipping Norton - about 10% (approx 800 dwellings)
- Remainder of District - proportion of housing provision to be determined, including an allowance for the likely contribution from future small sites.

Witney strategic area for development/redevelopment:

This area comprises three sub-areas:

- a) land north of Range Road and east of Downs Road – primarily employment uses, including redevelopment/refurbishment of older buildings;
- b) land west of Downs Road - leisure/recreation and employment development/redevelopment appropriate for the town fringe;
- c) undeveloped land south of Range Road and east of Downs Road - to accommodate a comprehensive mixed use community to form a positive addition to Witney, including:
 - i. about 1,000 homes with a range of residential accommodation to meet identified needs, including homes specifically for the elderly and up to 50% affordable housing;
 - ii. new employment opportunities, including a minimum of 10 hectares of land primarily for business and general industrial uses;
 - iii. a primary school and local shopping, community, health and leisure facilities;
 - iv. provision for green space, including public playing fields and associated changing room facilities;
 - v. wider education and community needs generated by the development;
 - vi. supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development, and incorporating a comprehensive network for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport with links to adjoining areas;
 - vii. appropriate noise attenuation measures to mitigate traffic noise;
 - viii. measures to mitigate the impact of the development upon the environment, including the planting of new areas of woodland and the protection and enhancement of features of nature conservation and landscape value.

Proposals within this area will demonstrate use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings. Development will be phased in accordance with the timing of provision of supporting infrastructure and facilities. A new A40 junction at Downs Road will be either completed or under construction no later than commencement of the first phase of the comprehensive mixed use development south of Range Road.

Emerging Housing Strategy:

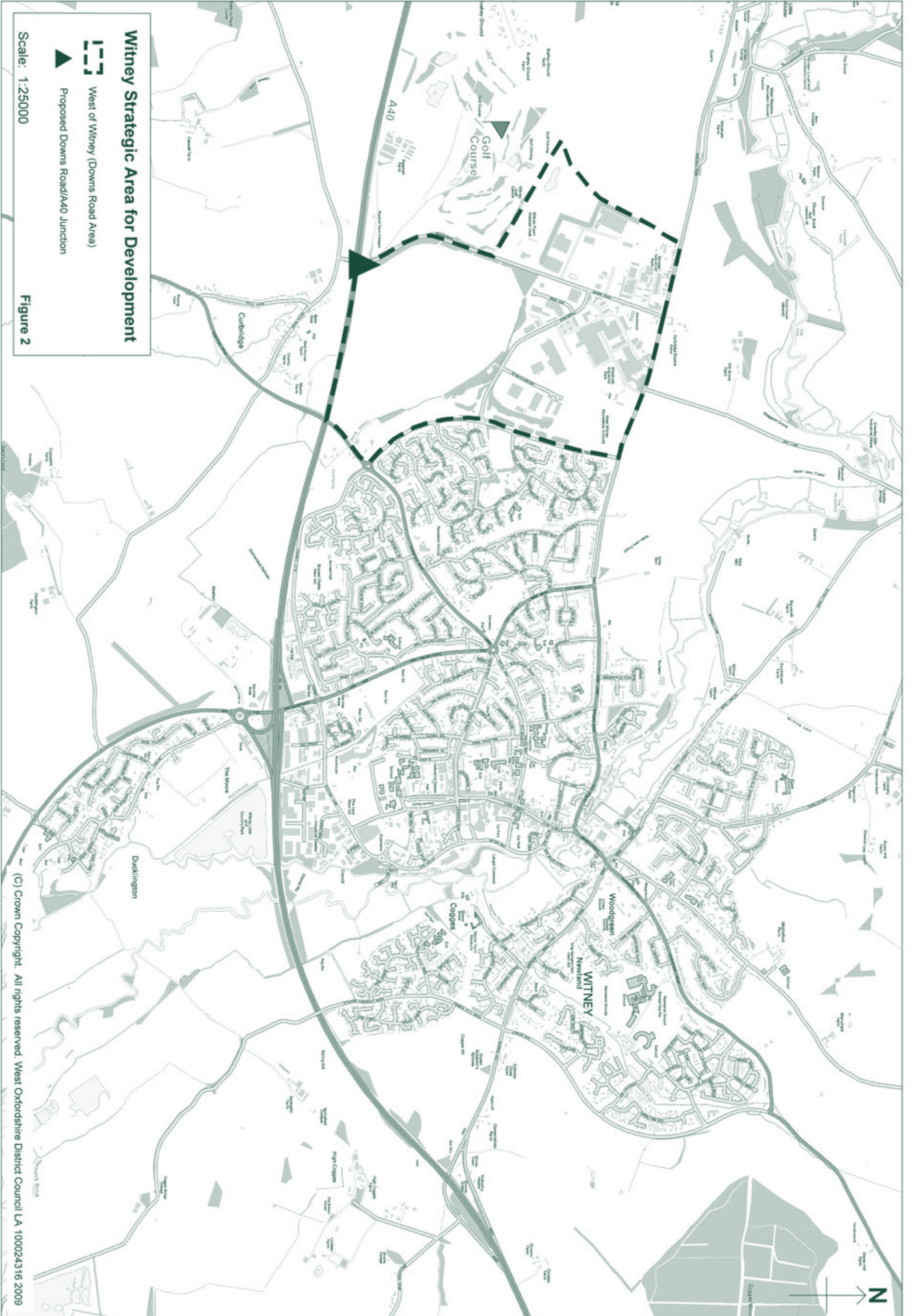
	Scale of new homes to be built 2006-2026 (commitments, allocations & small unidentified sites)	New homes built (1 Apr 06 to 1 Oct 08)	Existing commitments (at 1 Oct 08)
Witney	3,000 min	900	650
Carterton	1,500	550	430
Chipping Norton	800	200	200
Elsewhere? (about 1,000 homes still to be distributed)	2,000	400	600
West Oxon total (SE Plan min)	7,300	2,050	1,880

3.13 Taking into account the existing level of planning permissions and local plan allocated sites remaining to be built, as well as implementation after 2011 of the proposed mixed-use development area to the west of Witney, the overall level of future house-building in the District is illustrated in the housing trajectory included in Appendix 1. Variations in the years beyond 2011 will become more apparent as more specific sites are identified for longer term development.

3.14 Appendix 2 contains the current local plan grouping of more sustainable villages and towns in West Oxfordshire where new housing of an appropriate scale and character will be encouraged - on small sites within the existing built-up areas in accordance with the Council's overall policy approach and sites to be specifically identified for residential development, particularly to help meet local housing needs. The latter will generally be found on land adjoining the built-up area. However particular care will be needed within and around the Cotswolds AONB (about one-third of the district) and Conservation Areas as well as in and around the many villages subject to severe flood risk. Some 70% of the towns and villages listed in Appendix 2 are wholly or partially covered by conservation area designation. For further information please see the Settlement Sustainability Reports published in 2007/8.

3.15 New housing will not be encouraged in villages and hamlets excluded from Appendix 2; here normal countryside policies will apply where special justification must be demonstrated for new housing, whether through conversion of existing buildings or new build.

Supporting documents are available online:
www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal



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Core Strategy Objectives

Plan for an appropriate mix of new residential accommodation which provides a variety of sizes, types and affordability with special emphasis on the provision of homes for local people in housing need who cannot afford to buy or rent at market prices as well as homes to meet the varying needs of older people.

86% of the Issues and Options consultation responses on this issue in 2008 supported continuation of the current affordable housing planning policy approach in the Local Plan.

Supporting documents are available online - please see the LDF Sustainability Appraisal and Evidence Base page:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal

Where we are now

Housing Needs

- 4.1 The Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment 2007 states “The shortfall in social rented and other affordable housing is substantial”. It estimates that as many as half of first time buyers will require subsidised home ownership if they are to access property in the county. The shortfall of affordable housing to meet needs is expected to increase threefold by 2026 unless there are significant changes in the housing market. More information specific to West Oxfordshire is the subject of the 2008 Housing Needs Survey. This confirms an affordable housing need in excess of total housing targets in the SE Plan.
- 4.2 This situation should also be viewed within the context of an ageing population. Increasing numbers of elderly people will generate their own particular housing needs, including for Extra Care Housing. During the next 20 years Oxfordshire County Council estimates there will be a need for about 800 Extra Care dwellings in West Oxfordshire - see County Extra Care Housing Strategy.
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk
- 4.3 In the South East Plan the Government is proposing to accept an overall regional target of 35% affordable housing which is worded in Policy H3 as “25% of all new housing should be social rented accommodation and 10% other forms of affordable housing”. For the Central Oxfordshire sub-region the acute levels of housing need are recognised in Policy CO3: “at least 40% of all new housing in the sub-region should be affordable, including housing for key workers”.
- 4.4 Policy H11 in the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan contains the current policy approach to provision of affordable housing. However this is to be applied alongside the more recent policies in the SE Plan. The thresholds in Policy H11 will need to be reviewed in the light of the more challenging affordable housing targets to be achieved. Since 2001 less than 20% of all new homes built in West Oxfordshire have been affordable i.e. at rents or prices subsidised to levels below market value.

Accommodation for Travelling Communities

- 4.5. A partial review of the SE Plan currently underway will set the framework for providing accommodation for travelling communities. There is a need in West Oxfordshire for some additional pitches to accommodate gypsy families and travelling showpeople. Once the level of future provision is established this will be delivered through additional site identification and/or criteria based policies.

Realistic and deliverable options for the future provision of Affordable Housing

4.6 In addition to any future increase in the levels of public subsidy and purchase of existing homes to be used as affordable accommodation, the options for increasing the supply of affordable housing to meet the SE Plan requirements are set out in the following table.

Options for increasing affordable housing supply	Comments
Identification of further opportunities for redevelopment and intensification within existing housing estates owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)	RSLs are already being encouraged to undertake such a site search and several planning applications have been submitted, particularly on underused garage courts. However opportunities tend to be small in scale.
Secure additional rural exception sites in accordance with Local Plan Policy HI2.	The District Council, together with the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, is already proactive. Since 1992 some 200 new affordable homes have been provided on such greenfield sites – about 50 homes since 2001. New guidance has recently been issued by the Council to assist the site search: www.westoxon.gov.uk/implementation . However local landowners willing to contribute suitable land at an appropriate price to facilitate the provision of affordable housing are few and far between.
Identify as many sites as possible through the LDF process which can provide both market and affordable housing	The site search is underway.
Increase the proportion of affordable housing to be provided on market sites above current levels.	This is a possible option although is always subject to existing land values and overall viability of development. Local Plan allocated sites in Witney and Carterton are currently subject to 30% affordable housing provision whereas other sites in these towns and elsewhere in the District are subject to a target of 'up to 50%'.
Widen the range of sites where affordable housing is to be provided	The current site thresholds applied by the Council are set out in Local Plan Policy HI1 – eligible sites comprise 15 or more dwellings (or have an area of 0.5ha or greater) in the four largest settlements whereas a threshold of 2 or more dwellings applies in the remainder of the District. The national indicative minimum site size threshold is 15 dwellings. However PPS3 states: "Local Planning Authorities can set lower minimum thresholds, where viable and practicable, including in rural areas".
Seek financial contributions towards the provision of affordable housing from other development including non-residential.	This is a possible option which could include seeking contributions from new development that creates one or more new dwellings or places a demand upon the existing housing stock. Significant new employment/ retail development could also contribute although generally such development in West Oxfordshire is small in scale.

Emerging approach for delivery of affordable housing

4.7 In response to the pressing need for more affordable housing and given regional policy seeking an increase in supply, the following interim policy approach is proposed for West Oxfordshire:

Taking into account the housing needs of the area and subject to the economic viability of the proposed development, up to 50% of proposed dwellings on all qualifying sites will be affordable housing. Qualifying sites are defined in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and supporting supplementary planning guidance or in subsequent Development Plan Documents.

Developers will be expected to provide 50% affordable dwellings on sites with a low existing use value unless it can be demonstrated that the provision of essential infrastructure associated with delivery of the proposed development would make the overall scheme unviable.

Core Strategy Objectives

- Ensure that land is not released for new development until the appropriate level of supporting infrastructure and facilities is secured.
- Promote opportunities for local travel to be made on foot, by cycle and by public transport.
- Achieve sustainable economic growth which improves the balance between housing and local jobs, provides a diversity of local employment opportunities, and flexibility to adapt to changing economic needs.
- Achieve a prosperous and sustainable tourism economy.
- Promote safe, vibrant and prosperous town centres and resist proposals that would damage their vitality and viability or adversely affect measures to improve the centres.
- Maintain or improve where possible the health and wellbeing of West Oxfordshire's residents through increased choice and quality of shopping, leisure, recreation, arts, cultural and community facilities.
- Improve access to services and facilities without unacceptably impacting upon the character and resources of West Oxfordshire.

Infrastructure

5.1 The Council will continue to seek appropriate contributions to supporting infrastructure in accordance with national, regional and local policy. Such contributions may be used to provide facilities within the proposed development and/or pooled to improve infrastructure in the locality. The cumulative impact of individual applications may be considered when assessing infrastructure requirements with standard charges applied for the payment of financial contributions. The definition of infrastructure includes not only a wide range of public services such as transport, health, education and social facilities, but also networks of open space for recreation and biodiversity value.

Transport

5.2 Opportunities for increased walking, cycling and use of public transport will be provided wherever feasible. This will include safe, direct and attractive walking and cycling routes and good quality public transport interchanges. It will also include locating as

much new development as possible near to existing or proposed services and facilities so to reduce the need to travel by private car.

5.3 Improvements to the Cotswold railway line running through the district between Oxford and Worcester are due to be completed in 2010. A second track will be provided from east of Charlbury to Ascott-under-Wychwood. The planned increase in double track should significantly reduce current delays to trains.

5.4 Schemes to create additional highway space during the period post-2011 are under consideration by the County Highway Authority. Land associated with the following schemes is to be safeguarded from development through the Local Development Framework:

- Witney - Cogges Link (*planning application submitted in 2008*)
- Witney - West End Link (*river crossing*)
- Witney - A40/Shores Green junction (*west facing slip roads*)
- Witney - A40/Downs Road junction (*alternative designs of an at grade roundabout or grade separated junction with east and west facing slip roads*)
- Carterton/Brize Norton - section of A40 Access Road between Minster Road and Curbridge Road (*to bypass the northern part of Brize Norton village – requirement to be re-assessed in relation to traffic movements associated with new A40/Downs Road junction*)
- Eynsham - bus lane on toll bridge approach road
- Sutton - B4449 bypass (*associated with mineral working in the Lower Windrush Valley*)
- A415 Newbridge - replacement bridge and approach roads across River Thames.

5.5 In Witney the main need is to provide acceptable alternative routes for traffic to move around the town without passing through the central area and Bridge Street in particular. The proposed Cogges Link Road and new A40/Downs Road junction are of immediate priority. Complementary traffic management measures will be implemented in conjunction with the provision of increased highway capacity.

5.6 In addition to the above list of highway schemes under current consideration the County Council has requested that longer term improvements to the A40 (to tackle severe traffic congestion) and possible bypasses for Burford (A361) and Chipping Norton (A44) should not be prejudiced by development.

Economy, Retail and Tourism

Where we are now

- 5.7 West Oxfordshire typically has a relatively high performing economy, above average levels of entrepreneurial activity, low unemployment and a tight labour market. Recent years have seen significant take up of employment land more than replacing that lost through the decline of traditional industries such as blanket manufacturing. The District's main retail centres are vibrant and the quality of natural and built environment is a significant asset for the tourism economy. Unemployment has been consistently low in recent years but levels are now increasing in response to the downturn in the global economy. Although the health of the local economy is currently under pressure, the Core Strategy should provide opportunities for sustainable economic growth in the long term.
- 5.8 The West Oxfordshire Economy Study considered three strategic options for economic growth, each with differing land requirements. These were subject to consultation through the Issues and Options stage. The Steady Growth Scenario (involving an additional 30ha of employment land over and above existing commitments) was preferred.
- 5.9 The West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy (approved in October 2008) sets a mandate for a clear approach to sustainable economic growth through the LDF. Key relevant aims include: to encourage a wide range of businesses and employment, a range of commercial property that meets business needs, promote home based business and home working, support new business development in villages whilst maintaining their rural nature, maintain a wide range of shops in the main towns and villages and achieve a prosperous and sustainable tourism economy.
- 5.10 National and regional policy promotes sustainable economic development through the provision of a wide range of sites for employment, which are accessible to the labour supply, with a focus on urban areas but addressing the needs of rural areas through rural diversification which provides positive benefits. The emerging South East Plan also advocates actively seeking to enhance the competitiveness of the most economically successful parts of the region which includes Central Oxfordshire – one of the region's diamonds for growth. Emerging national and regional policy (Draft PPS4 and the Government's Proposed Changes to the South East Plan) also place emphasis on promoting long term competitiveness through a spatial context which facilitates adaptation to changing economic needs and Smart Growth through co-ordinating development and infrastructure provision.
- 5.11 The Core Strategy will set out the hierarchy and network of town centres and how they should develop to meet the needs of the District's population. The West Oxfordshire Retail Needs Assessment 2007 identifies limited need for further retail development within West Oxfordshire up to 2016. The main town centres of Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton are typically healthy with low shop vacancy rates and a variety of independent shops and national multiples, although the centres are also feeling the pressure of the economic downturn.
- 5.12 Witney's role as the principal town centre will be enhanced when the Marriott's Close scheme opens in Autumn 2009, improving the shopping and leisure offer of the town. Carterton has a reasonable range of convenience shops, complemented by a recent planning permission for a new Aldi store, but has a limited choice of shops selling comparison goods. Chipping Norton retains its character as a historic market town providing facilities and services for a rural hinterland.
- 5.13 Changing shopping patterns and in the provision of services have meant recent trends towards the loss of rural shops and services, often despite increases in the local population. Existing policy seeks to resist the loss of rural shops and community facilities.
- 5.14 Tourism in West Oxfordshire is a vital part of a diverse and sustainable local economy. It is estimated that in 2006 over 3½ million visitor trips were made to the district, the majority (87%) of which were day trips. Recent data has indicated that, directly and indirectly, tourism supports around 12% of West Oxfordshire's jobs (excluding the self-employed) and is estimated to be worth £225m to the local economy each year. This reflects the attractiveness of the built and natural environment along with specific attractions, such as Blenheim Palace. The strategy has been to encourage tourism development which respects or enhances these intrinsic assets. Comments in response to the issues and options consultation in general supported this approach.

Supporting documents are available online:
www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal

Realistic and Deliverable Options for the Future

5.15 The three scenarios developed in the Economy Study each have differing employment land requirements (see below). However, not all of these land requirements need to be identified and allocated. Some employment growth can occur through the redevelopment or intensification of existing sites and through rural diversification. Existing policies allow for this and monitoring data has indicated that since 2001 a third of employment floorspace has been completed on previously unidentified sites (an average of 7,900m² per year).

Options	Comments
<p>Indigenous growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provision of up to an additional 10ha of new employment land - focus on indigenous growth to broadly match new labour supply 	<p>This scenario involves no or very limited new land allocations particularly when considering that indigenous growth occurs organically through intensification or redevelopment of existing sites. There was some concern in response to consultation that lower growth would unnecessarily constrain the economy although this scenario puts less pressure on infrastructure.</p>
<p>Steady growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provision of an additional 30ha of new employment land - focus on supporting indigenous growth and business start ups whilst catering for a modest level of inward investment. 	<p>This approach reflects what has led to a reasonably successful economy to date but lower levels of growth than in recent years. It was the preferred scenario through consultation. This level of land provision will provide flexibility in the land supply and opportunities for investment when the economy picks up again. Although estimated job growth exceeds growth in the labour force, this can help to achieve a better balance between housing and jobs, reducing commuting.</p>
<p>Higher growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provision of an additional 50ha of new employment land - Support indigenous growth but more active encouragement of inward investment 	<p>Although this strategy offers some benefits in helping to attract new firms, it is less consistent with wider economic strategies, could lead to overheating of the local economy and unnecessarily increase congestion and commuting.</p>
<p>Allocate a strategic area for employment in the Core Strategy</p>	<p>Land to the west of Witney benefits from proximity to existing employment areas and will have improved access to the A40 through a new junction at Downs Road. It has potential to accommodate a range of employment premises, providing opportunities for indigenous growth and inward investment in the longer term. Employment provision in this area can be integrated with new housing provision, reducing the need to travel.</p>
<p>Continue and expand criteria based policies for new employment sites</p>	<p>Existing criteria based policies provide flexibility in the provision of new employment sites enabling businesses to respond to changing economic needs and working patterns. Such policies also support rural enterprise and diversification. There was general support through consultation for a flexible approach which allows the provision of small new employment sites in the smaller villages to support rural diversification but provided that rural character is not compromised.</p>

Emerging approach

In accordance with the broad spatial strategy and the concept of 'Smart Growth', most economic growth will be directed to the towns and larger villages where the need to travel by private car can be reduced.

A minimum of 10ha of employment land will be provided to the west of Witney as part of a mixed use urban extension. The need for further specific site provision elsewhere will be considered through the separate Site Allocations process, taking into account the implementation of criteria based policies.

Criteria based policies will encourage, where appropriate, the modernisation of existing employment sites, the adaptation and expansion of existing businesses, and also the provision of new sites through rural diversification. Visitor-related proposals will be encouraged which add to sustainable rural prosperity and respect and enhance the intrinsic qualities of the District.

Provision of further significant shopping development and other town centre uses will reflect the 'town centre first approach' when identifying additional sites and the Town Centre Hierarchy:

- Principal town centre: Witney
- Primary town centres: Carterton, Chipping Norton
- Secondary town centres: Burford, Woodstock

Land will continue to be identified in Carterton town centre to improve the range of facilities.

The Council will continue to resist the loss of local shops and community facilities and support new provision of shops serving local needs where appropriate.

Although some flexibility can be provided through criteria based policies, given the level of uncertainty in the current economic situation the emerging strategy as presented above will be kept under review.

Leisure, sport, recreation and cultural facilities

5.16 Protection and enhancement of current facilities will remain a key aspect of future strategy. More emphasis will be placed upon their improved and more flexible use to meet the needs of local communities, particularly the needs of the young and older people.

5.17 Opportunities will be created through new development, particularly in the towns, to improve the range of facilities on offer to the wider community.

Core Strategy Objectives

- Conserve and enhance the high environmental quality of West Oxfordshire with protection and promotion of its diverse landscape, wildlife and habitats, and its local cultural, heritage and environmental assets.
- Reduce the causes of and adverse impacts of climate change, especially flood risk.
- Improve the sustainable design and construction of new development, including improving energy, water efficiency and water management.
- Ensure that new developments are located and designed to protect and enhance the individual form, character and identity of our towns and villages as well as contributing to the quality of life in West Oxfordshire.

Sustainable natural resource management is a key theme of the South East Plan. This means ensuring mitigation of climate change impacts, greater efficiency in our use of natural resources, the reduction of pollution and waste, and ensuring that features of importance are protected and enhanced, including wildlife and landscapes.

Climate Change

- 6.1 Addressing climate change is Government’s key concern for sustainable development. Planning has an important role to play in helping to tackle climate change, both through mitigating the causes of climate change and adapting to the current and future impacts of these changes.
- 6.2 Here in the South East it is forecast that we will experience some of the most severe impacts of any of the English regions over the coming century. We are likely to have hotter drier summers, milder wetter winters, greater extremes in temperature and precipitation and increased storminess.

Where we are now

- 6.3 Achieving sustainable development is the main principle underpinning planning. Over the last 10 years or so the emphasis, nationally and locally, has been in getting development in the most sustainable locations. (Through the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, for example, new homes and jobs have been concentrated in or on the edge of the main service centres of the area where there is good access, by a choice of transport, to a wide range of services and facilities.)
- 6.4 There is increasing recognition that constructing buildings, using sustainable techniques, is also important in addressing climate change, through influencing resource use, especially energy, and carbon emissions. An essential part of this is the use of decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources (such as biomass, solar, wind and ground-source heat).

The Government has introduced new Performance Indicators to encourage Councils to address Climate Change related issues: NI 185 and NI 186 place requirements on Councils to lead on the carbon reduction agenda; and NI 188 requires local authorities to assess the consequences of extreme weather events on their services and residents and managing future risk.

Two of Shaping Futures' aims are:

Aim EC3: To take a more sustainable approach to managing resources across the district.

Aim EC4: To reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change.

More information available online:

Final Flood Report - 2007 Summer floods:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/floodreports

Climate Change Policy:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/climatechange

West Oxfordshire Design Guide:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/designguide

National and regional policy framework/context

- 6.5 The UK Government is developing a range of climate change related policy to support demanding national targets.
- 6.6 The South East Plan sets out regional planning policies. When adopted, it will form part of the Development Plan for West Oxfordshire. Sustainable development, including addressing climate change and resource use, underlies the South East Plan www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/index.html There are a wide range of policies on sustainable construction, renewable energy and measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The chapter on Natural Resource Management identifies how the careful use and creation of energy supplies is a key challenge for the region. Policy NRM11 specifically requires local authorities to set ambitious and deliverable targets for the use of decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy to supply new development.

Local policy framework/context

- 6.7 The Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy (produced by the Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership – a group of public sector, local businesses and voluntary and community organisations) sets out the strategy, aspirations and key issues for the future of the county. Environment and climate change is one of the main issues identified. Similarly, the West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy has identified one of the main challenges facing West Oxfordshire as 'encouraging new development while protecting and improving the environment and managing the impacts of climate change'. Addressing the causes and effects of climate change is one of nine priority themes for action that has emerged (see Introduction).
- 6.8 In acknowledging the challenge of climate change and the need to respond to it, particularly in light of the flooding experienced in West Oxfordshire in July 2007, the District Council has set a number of actions it intends to undertake in order to reduce local carbon emissions through a Climate Change Policy 2008-12 (approved October 2008).
- 6.9 Sustainable development is central to the overall planning strategy of the existing adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011. Policies advocate energy and resource conservation and generally encourage the development of alternative sources of renewable energy. The West Oxfordshire Design Guide supplements the Local Plan policies and provides sustainable building advice.

What you have told us

- 6.10 Climate change and the challenges of mitigation and adaptation need to be central to the Core Strategy for West Oxfordshire.
- 6.11 The Issues and Options consultation in Spring 2008 identified the main principles linked to climate change to be addressed:
- Reducing the need to travel and good accessibility – which will help reduce CO₂ emissions (See previous sections for further information about this principle.)
 - Sustainable design and construction, including improving energy and water efficiency and ensuring new development is designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change, especially flooding
 - Renewable/low-carbon energy generation
- 6.12 There appears to be general support for raising the standards of sustainable design and construction in new development, including setting a target for the generation of energy from on-site renewable sources. There is less clear-cut support for identifying specific areas for energy generation through the LDF, although the general principle of promoting renewable and low-carbon energy in West Oxfordshire seems to be favoured.
- 6.13 These responses, supporting action to address climate change, reflect the results of an environment survey that took place in the district in 2007, in which 79% of the respondents said that 'climate change is a real issue that we need to tackle now' and expressed concern about the impact of climate change on their local environment. The responses also link to the priority given to climate change in the West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy and the specific aims associated with this.

Emerging approach

The Core Strategy will expect all proposals for development in West Oxfordshire to incorporate a high standard of sustainable design and construction, optimising energy and resource efficiency and delivering a proportion of renewable or low-carbon energy on site.

New development will be designed and located to be resilient to future climate change.

The District Council will work with partners to promote, encourage and raise awareness of water, resource and energy-efficient measures and renewable energy, in both existing and new developments.

Proposals for renewable energy developments of a scale appropriate to the West Oxfordshire context will be considered favourably.

Standards for sustainable design and construction and targets for decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy (both District-wide and site specific/development area targets/standards) will be set. Opportunities will be sought to achieve high standards/targets, where these are viable and deliverable, for example on larger sites.

75% of those responding to the question on reducing the impact of climate change, wished to see higher standards of sustainable design and construction applied to new developments in West Oxfordshire. 68% of responses supported the setting of a target for the generation of on-site renewable energy in new development.

'... priority should be for decentralised, renewable, low carbon energy generation. BREEAM and Code for Sustainable Home contain appropriate principles of sustainable design.'
Oxfordshire County Council

'... requests any sites for renewable energy generation to be located away from areas which may prove controversial due to their amenity impacts ie not in the vicinity of residential/industrial areas.'
Witney Town Council

'Core Strategy should support the consideration of renewable energy in new development through the application of Code for Sustainable Homes, avoiding prescriptive targets on a site by site basis.'
Barton Wilmore (Planning Consultants)

More information available online:

Final Flood Report - 2007 Summer floods:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/floodreports

LDF Sustainability Appraisal and evidence base:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/LDFappraisal

6.14 Before any target or standard can be set, however, evidence is needed to justify its imposition and to ensure it is viable and feasible. The Government emphasises that the approach adopted must also be consistent with the delivery of the area's new housing and not inhibit the provision of affordable housing.

'...targets set should be accompanied by text/clause confirming that the percentage requirement will be subject to the tests of viability and suitability.'

6.15 The key policies on climate change, to be established through the Core Strategy, will, therefore, need to be evidenced; an analysis is required of a range of issues, including: opportunities to set local requirements for sustainable buildings; the area's vulnerability and adaptation to climate change; and the potential for accommodating renewable and low carbon technologies in West Oxfordshire.

'...the use and management of water should be a priority, particularly recycling of grey water.'
Black Bourton Parish Council

6.16 Work on these issues has begun. In December 2008 the District Council published a Flood Report, including an assessment of the implications of the 2007 Summer Floods. During 2008 a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken for West Oxfordshire and Cherwell Districts, looking at both current flood risks and also factoring in risks associated with future climate change. Oxfordshire County Council has produced a Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) which assesses the County's vulnerability to a wide range of severe weather events, not just flooding. A more detailed LCLIP is being undertaken for West Oxfordshire.

6.17 In the coming months it is planned to be investigate the potential for decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy in the area and possible targets/standards. An assessment will also be made as to whether there are suitable sites for allocation as energy generation sites in West Oxfordshire.

6.18 In the meantime, Oxfordshire County Council, on behalf of the Oxfordshire planning authorities, is producing interim, county-wide, Supplementary Planning Guidance on Climate Change, based on the approach and policies of the South East Plan. In addition, here in West Oxfordshire, further interim advice is being produced on sustainable construction, augmenting the West Oxfordshire Design Guide in light of recent Government

policy, including the introduction of the Code for Sustainable Homes and phased tightening of the Building Regulations. The Building for Life national standard (devised by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment and the Home Builders Federation) will also be introduced once further information has been received.

6.19 The experience gained from using these standards and interim approaches, together with the results of the studies that are to be undertaken locally this year, will help inform the approach that will be incorporated into the Core Strategy and supporting documents on the rapidly evolving issue of how to address climate change.

Conserving our built heritage, landscape and biodiversity

6.20 West Oxfordshire is a mainly rural district of high environmental quality, with a nationally important landscape and rich natural and built heritage. These assets make the District an attractive place in which to live and work, contributing significantly to our quality of life, to the area's distinctiveness and to the local economy.

Where we are now

6.21 An important national and local objective is to protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

Regional policy framework/context

6.22 The Core Strategy Issues and Options document (March 2008) briefly set out the policy context. Since then the Government has published proposed changes to the South East Plan which continues to have the protection of the region's historic, built and natural environment as a core objective.

- 6.23 A new regional policy (Policy CC8) is proposed, focusing on the provision of networks of multi-functional green space. Consideration of the planning and management of 'Green Infrastructure' will need to address a wide range of objectives, including:
- Preservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including the need to mitigate the potential impacts of new development
 - Creating a sense of place and opportunities for greater appreciation of valuable landscapes and cultural heritage
 - Improved water resource and flood management and sustainable design
 - Making a positive contribution to combating climate change through adaptation and mitigation of impacts
- 6.24 In December 2008 the Cotswolds Conservation Board approved a Position Statement on Biodiversity Planning. This statement provides some background to the biodiversity resource in the Cotswolds AONB, and provides guidance to the local planning authorities on the conservation and enhancement of that resource through the planning system. The Board considers it is important that the distinctive biodiversity of the AONB is conserved in a consistent manner. It advocates that West Oxfordshire and Cherwell Districts should include in their Core Strategies objectives and policies for the conservation and enhancement of Conservation Target Areas (see below), together with appropriate policies to help safeguard and enhance the overall biodiversity resource. See Publications on www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

Local policy framework/context

- 6.25 One of the aspirations of the Oxfordshire Sustainable Communities Strategy is to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment but it is recognised that balancing this against economic drivers and the impact of climate change will be a challenge. West Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership's Shaping Futures highlights people's aspiration for a future with beautiful countryside and an attractive built environment but people also expressed concerns about increased pressures on the local environment. A key priority for action of the Strategy approved in October 2008 is 'To keep West Oxfordshire clean and beautiful while protecting the environment and trying to reduce the causes of and effects of climate change.'
- 6.26 The District Council's Climate Change Policy 2008-12 (approved October 2008) has as an objective: the caring for natural resources. The importance of West Oxfordshire's biodiversity is highlighted and key actions to conserve and enhance these assets are identified.

The 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act places a duty on every public authority to promote and enhance biodiversity in all their duties.

South East Plan Policy CC6: Sustainable Communities and Character of the Environment Actions and decisions associated with development and the use of land will actively promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities. This will be achieved by developing and implementing a local shared vision which:

- i. Respects, and where appropriate enhances the character and distinctiveness of settlements and landscapes throughout the region
- ii. Uses innovative design processes to create a high quality built environment which promote a sense of place. This will include consideration of accessibility, social inclusion, the need for environmentally sensitive development and crime reduction

More information available online:

Climate Change Policy:

www.westoxon.gov.uk/climatechange

Two of Shaping Futures' aims are:

Aim ED1: To maintain and improve the natural environment across West Oxfordshire

Aim EC2: To maintain and improve the built (man-made) environment across West Oxfordshire

'...encouragement of community woodland ...for enjoyment and fuel... creation of continuous networks of accessible green infrastructure to support biodiversity, recreational, educational opportunities and economic development...'

Natural England

'...accessibility to greenspace, connected and permeable greenspace to ensure biodiversity value...'

Oxfordshire County Council

What you have told us

6.27 The Issues and Options consultation in Spring 2008 identified the main issues to be addressed in the Core Strategy. The main ones directly linked to the environment are:

- Protect the historic landscape and built heritage
- Conserve and enhance landscape quality and character
- Protect and enhance biodiversity

6.28 As reflected in the consultation response to the West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy, there was widespread support for the protection and enhancement of the area's natural and built environment. In specific response to a question on biodiversity, 80% of those replying agreed that funding should be sought from new development where possible and be targeted to secure improvements within identified biodiversity target areas.

Emerging approach

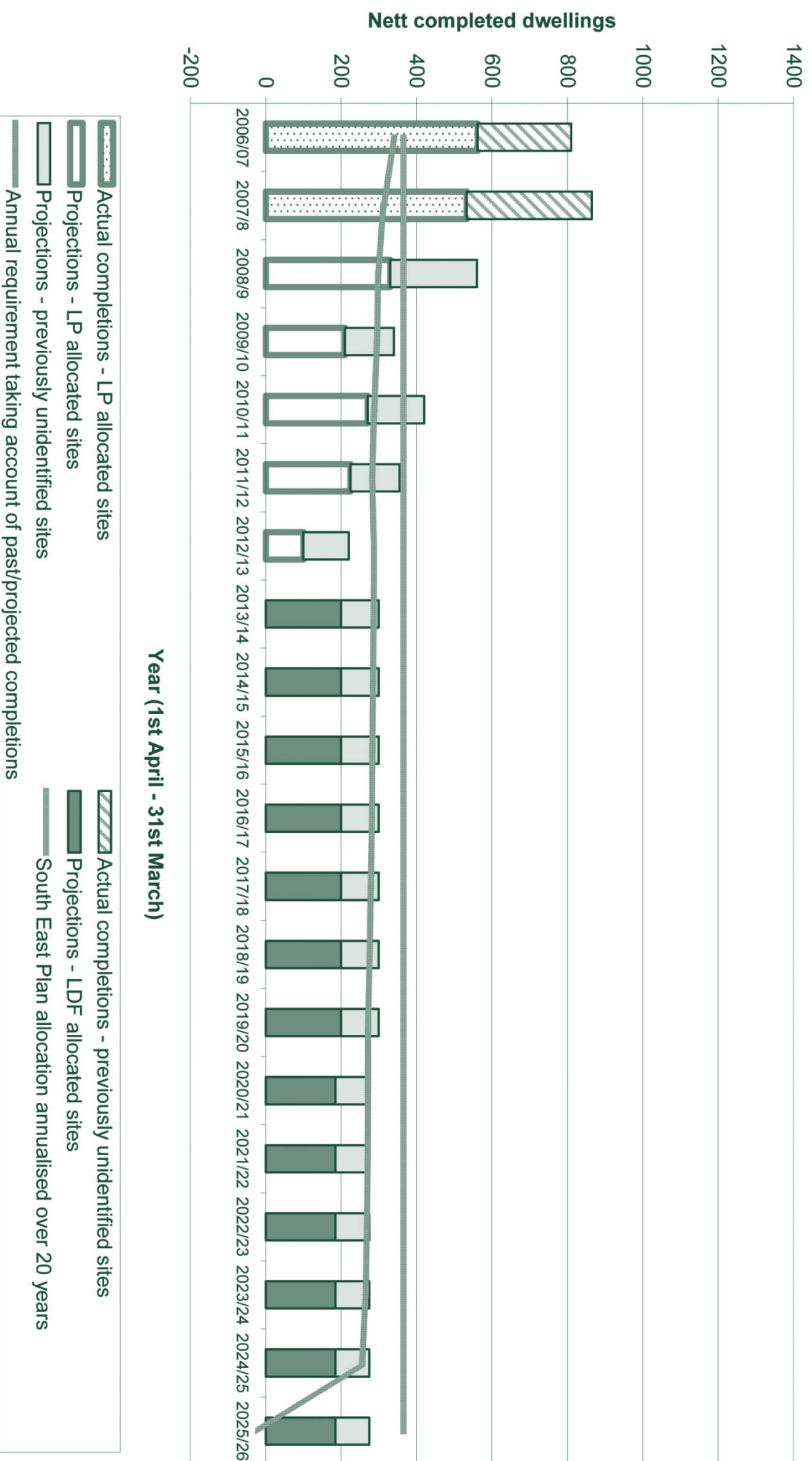
Core planning policies will set out the framework for conserving and enhancing the environmental assets of West Oxfordshire.

Expansion of our rich biodiversity resource will be concentrated in Biodiversity Conservation Target Areas (see Figure 3) where the restoration and enhancement of habitats would have the greatest benefit.



Figure 3: Biodiversity Conservation Target Areas

Appendix 1: SE Plan projected housing completions 2006-2026



Settlement hierarchy according to the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 – the more sustainable villages and towns

GROUP A:

Smaller Villages

Alvescot
Ascott-under-Wychwood
Bladon
Brize Norton
Cassington
Chadlington
Churchill
Clanfield
Combe
Curbridge
Filkins & Broughton Poggs
Finstock
Fulbrook
Great Rollright
Kingham
Langford
Leafield
Over Norton
Stanton Harcourt & Sutton
Tackley
Wootton

GROUP B:

Medium-Sized Villages

Aston
Ducklington
Enstone
Freeland
Hailey
Middle Barton
Milton-under-Wychwood
Minster Lovell (south of B4047)
North Leigh
Shipton-under-Wychwood
Standlake
Stonesfield

GROUP C:

Service Centres (Towns and Larger Villages)

Main Centres

Witney
Carterton
Chipping Norton

Other Centres

Bampton
Burford
Charlbury
Eynsham
Long Hanborough
Woodstock

Witney Urban Expansion

Assessment of Directions of Growth for Potential Urban Extensions

Directions of growth	Advantages	Disadvantages
North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would help deliver West End Link river crossing • Large potential development area which could accommodate mixed uses, including supporting facilities and renewable energy • Near to some existing facilities on Hailey Road, including primary school • Good access to town centre via use of Woodford Mill footpath/cycle way • Opportunity to improve circular bus routes within town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the absence of the Cogges Link and/or West End Link river crossings traffic levels from significant new development north of the River Windrush would have an unacceptable traffic impact on the local road network (congestion/air quality). • Tranquil and small-scale rural area, relatively undisturbed by development (other than land near Woodstock Road where the urban influence is strong). Part of ancient forest landscape. An area of high landscape importance and sensitivity. • Good structure and species diversity of hedgerows. • Some Grade 3A agricultural land • Area has a network of well-used rural paths. • Constraints re surface water run-off and flooding in Hailey Road – need identified for major storage ponds • Major aquifer which will limit means for disposal of surface water • Distant from sewage treatment works – for provision of new sewers • Development will reduce gap between Witney and Hailey • Poorly related to main east-west bus routes (town centre/A40) • Relatively distant from main employment estates. Area unlikely to be suitable/ attractive for significant new employment opportunities.

Directions of growth	Advantages	Disadvantages
North East (east of Jubilee Way)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially good pedestrian and cycle access to town centre once Jubilee Way is crossed • Well located to existing schools • Makes use of existing and proposed infrastructure on this side of town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe landscape impact – prominent rising land which provides an important setting to the town/eastern approach (see West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (WOLA) & Witney landscape assessments). Long open views above Madley Park to and from countryside to west and north. • Would undermine new edge of town designed as part of Madley Park • Encroaches upon setting to Cogges Wood (ancient woodland) • Proximity to Wychwood conservation target area (for biodiversity enhancement) • Land isolated and separated by Jubilee Way distributor road – difficult to integrate housing into the existing built-up areas • Not easy to access main bus routes • Limited area available for development • Limited capacity at closest primary schools
East (of Cogges)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially good pedestrian and cycle access to town centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe landscape impact – prominent rising land which provides an important setting to the town/eastern approach (see WOLA & Witney landscape assessments). An area of high landscape importance and sensitivity. • Good hedgerows • Land isolated and separated by proposed Cogges Link in a cutting – difficult to integrate housing into the existing built-up areas. Housing would be served by a separate cul-de-sac. • Limited area suitable for development • Not easy to access main bus routes • Limited capacity at closest primary schools • Existing A40 traffic noise • Development to east of Witney and close to A40 junction could encourage longer-distance commuting

Directions of growth	Advantages	Disadvantages
South	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat landscape with views of area generally screened by existing vegetation • Reasonable access to major employment areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land separated from Witney by A40 dual carriageway – likely to create unsustainable urban sprawl poorly integrated with existing communities. • Would encourage use of private car rather than more sustainable means of transport • Would add to congestion at Ducklington Lane/A40 junction • Could lead to coalescence of Witney, Curbridge and Ducklington with loss of countryside setting • Proximity to sewage treatment works and abattoir – potential odours impacting upon quality of life • Existing A40 traffic noise • Area near A40 interchange is part former waste disposal area and part at risk of flooding. • Area of Grade 3A agricultural land near A415 • Eastern area within Mineral Consultation Area.
West (North Curbridge)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good access to major expanding employment area • Some land in this area is likely to be required to meet future employment needs • Large enough area to accommodate a mixed use community using renewable energy • Provision of new primary school on western side of Witney would create more flexibility in capacity and catchment areas • Poor landscape quality and structure (large fields) • Opportunity to improve local biodiversity through new woodland planting • Outside the main areas of flood risk • Area physically contained in extent – would not necessarily lead to further expansion of urban boundaries • Not dependent upon construction of Cogges Link Road • Would help to secure new A40 junction if not built by Highway Authority as currently proposed • Potential for good connection with main bus services • Existing good cycle routes into town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively distant from town centre and secondary schools • Separate from existing residential areas • Prominent plateau but seen against already developed skyline – woodland planting required as mitigation • Development will reduce gap between Witney and Curbridge • Development unacceptable in absence of improvements to Downs Road and new A40/Downs Road junction • Proximity to new A40 junction could encourage longer distance commuting • Existing traffic noise • Light pollution from football club • Crossed by well-used east-west bridleway.

Directions of growth	Advantages	Disadvantages
North West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively close to town centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windrush valley flood plain and northwards sloping valley side • Area of biodiversity importance – conservation target area for biodiversity enhancement. Recent scheme to enhance biodiversity and public access. • Crossed by well-used bridleway to Crawley. • Mainly unspoilt open countryside with fine views towards the Cotswolds AONB. Development along Burford Road is prominent in views from AONB. Forms part of the generally unspoilt valley landscape between Witney and Burford. An area of high landscape importance and sensitivity. • Sloping land would present access difficulties. • Proximity to gas storage depot – health and safety issues (HSE protection area).

This leaflet can be made available in a larger print size, electronically or in other formats. Please contact us if this is required.

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