Core Strategy
Preferred Approach

Sustainability Appraisal

January 2010
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INTRODUCTION

1. Sustainability Appraisal is a mandatory process whereby planning policies and development options are tested to assess how sustainable they are to help inform which options are best for West Oxfordshire.

2. This report summarises the development and appraisal of Core Strategy options. It has been prepared by the Council’s Planning Policy Team and is published alongside the Core Strategy preferred options to assist in the consultation and further development/refinement of the options. Following the consultation this appraisal will be reviewed and a full Sustainability Appraisal report will be prepared during 2010 and published alongside the full draft of the Core Strategy (expected Autumn 2010).

3. The Core Strategy options are appraised against the Sustainability Objectives identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (available separately). The Scoping Report identifies how the Sustainability Objectives for West Oxfordshire were developed following a detailed review of wider national, regional and local plans and programmes and also a detailed review of the social, economic and environmental issues within the District. The Scoping Report also sets out further detail on the Sustainability Appraisal process and how it meets the requirements of European law on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).
The Context for the Core Strategy Preferred Options

4. The Core Strategy should set out the key elements of the planning framework for the District to guide public and private sector investment and development; it must make clear spatial choices about where development should go in broad terms. The Core Strategy is the key document in the Local Development Framework, the development planning system introduced by the Government in 2004 to replace the previous process of structure and local plans. It is a statutory process, required by law.

5. The Core Strategy should cover at least 15 years from the date of adoption (up to 2026/7). It should seek to address the challenges apparent in the District, now and in the future. These challenges include global issues such as climate change and fluctuations in the economy as well as addressing local housing and transport needs for example. Planning has a key role to play but is only part of the way forward. Successful delivery of the strategy can only be achieved through working in partnership with the many organisations that have a responsibility or interest in some aspect of West Oxfordshire, particularly local communities and landowners.

6. The Core Strategy Preferred Approach builds upon and expands the Council’s interim position statement (The Core Strategy So Far) published for consultation in February 2009. It also has its foundations in the strategy of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan adopted in June 2006. It has been informed by on-going discussion since 2007 with local communities and various organisations such as Oxfordshire County Council (key responsibilities for transport, education, social care, and minerals and waste planning), the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (health), and Thames Water and the Environment Agency (sewerage, water supply, flooding and the water environment in general). This is covered in more detail in the 2009 Consultation Statement.

7. Other key influences are:
   - Oxfordshire and West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategies. Public consultation on the district document was undertaken in conjunction with early consultation on the LDF.
   - District Council Strategies such as Housing and Tourism.
   - Town and parish plans.
   - LDF documents in neighbouring local authorities.
   - Cotswolds AONB Management Plan and planning guidance.
   - The South East Regional Plan issued by the Government in May 2009.
   - National planning policy – the Core Strategy must comply with this unless special local circumstances demonstrate an alternative approach is sound.
   - Information, including site suggestions for development, provided by parish councils, landowners, developers and their agents
   - Specific LDF studies such as town and village services and facilities, various aspects of housing provision and need, the economy, retail needs, transport, landscape, flood risk, renewable energy and sustainable construction.

8. The documents prepared as part of the supporting evidence base are available via the Council’s website (www.westoxon.gov.uk/ldf).
KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

9. This section summarises the key issues and challenges relevant to the Core Strategy. A detailed review of issues and trends in the District and relevant plans and programmes is presented in the Scoping Report.

Location and connections

10. West Oxfordshire is a largely rural district to the west of Oxford and adjoining Gloucestershire, and Warwickshire. With a population of just over 100,000 and area of 71,500 hectares (276 square miles), this is one of the least densely populated areas in the South East. Dispersed across West Oxfordshire are around 130 separate towns, villages and hamlets. 40% of people live in the two largest towns of Witney (26,000) and Carterton (15,000). Nearly 60% of the 81 parishes contain less than 500 residents.

11. Oxford to the east is the regional hub, and a designated growth point, and the focus for the District’s main transport connections. Major housing and employment growth is also planned for Bicester, Didcot, and Swindon a regional hub to the south west. To the west is Cotswold District, primarily a rural area, and similar in character to West Oxfordshire.
12. Main transport connections reflect the focus on Oxford and London. Rail services connecting to Birmingham and London pass through a small part of the eastern fringe of the District. The Cotswold line passes through the largely rural central part of the District, connecting several small towns and villages with Hereford in the west and Oxford and London in the east. Witney and Carterton, the two largest settlements, are connected to Oxford by high frequency bus services. Other bus services operate throughout the rural area with varying frequencies but many require ongoing public subsidy.

13. A large number of people commute out of West Oxfordshire to work, particularly to Oxford and the employment locations in the Abingdon and Didcot area. Many journeys continue to be made by private car and the number of people and distance people travel to work by car increased between the 1991 and 2001 Censuses. Commuting creates congestion on major routes, particularly the A44, A40 and A415 as well as within towns. As a result of traffic congestion, central areas of Chipping Norton and Witney have been identified as failing national air quality standards. Air Quality Management Areas have been designated in these towns and the reduction and re-routing of traffic has been identified as the appropriate actions.

14. The rural nature of West Oxfordshire and proximity of regional and subregional growth centres presents significant challenges for achieving sustainable development. The Core Strategy must locate housing and employment development in a way which reduces the need to travel by private car and unnecessary long distance commuting. As a mainly rural area with limited public transport provision the strategy must recognise that many journeys will continue to be made by private car.

15. Many of the smaller villages lack a shop and school and are linked mainly by a network of country lanes. There are only three towns of any appreciable size and population - Witney (26,000) and Carterton (15,000) in the south and Chipping Norton (6,500) in the north. Opportunities to use previously developed land to accommodate the development needs of the District are limited with most allocated growth having taken place in the past on greenfield sites. This is expected to continue in the future.

Climate change

16. The UK Climate Projections scenarios confirm that the South East will be one of the most severely affected regions by climate change. Greater extremes in temperature, more storms and extreme weather events (eg torrential rainfall, heatwaves) are predicted. Planning has a significant role in mitigating the effects of and adapting to the inevitable impacts of climate change. In the past this has focussed on reducing the need to travel but in the future buildings will need to be more energy efficient, use decentralised, low carbon or renewable energy sources and be designed and located to be resilient to more extreme weather events and increased risk of flooding. This has considerable implications for the design and location of new development and addressing climate change must underpin the Core Strategy as a whole.
Population and household changes

17. The population of West Oxfordshire is expected to grow by about 14,000 people between 2006 and 2026\(^1\), an increase of 14%. The District has a high proportion of older people at present and this is expected to increase significantly; the proportion of people over 65 years is expected to increase by about 60%. The ageing of the population is also a key factor resulting in a reduction in household size, with more homes being occupied by fewer people in the future.

18. As the population ages, this will have implications for housing provision, healthcare, the economy and transport.

Housing needs

19. There is considerable need for more affordable housing. Over the last ten years house prices have increased faster than the increase in wages. The cheapest (lower quartile) housing in the District is now 10 times the lowest earnings. Although house prices have declined slightly recently, the recession has increased demand for affordable housing and housing support. Whilst there are over 5000 affordable homes within West Oxfordshire, managed by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), there are currently some 2,000 households on the waiting list for affordable housing. The Housing Market Assessment found both affordable housing and properties available to rent are limited, particularly in rural areas. Significant levels of housing to meet the specific needs of the elderly are also required.

20. The South East Plan requires 7,300 new homes to be built in West Oxfordshire between 2006 and 2026. There are no large previously developed sites remaining in the District, such as derelict factory sites, where significant numbers of homes can be built. The majority of future development will need to be on greenfield sites. About 2,500 homes have recently been developed on former agricultural land on the edge of Witney and Carterton, the two larger towns.

\(^1\) OCC Population Forecasts 2009
21. On national measures of multiple deprivation the area appears to score favourably, reflecting a generally high level of affluence. However, on issues such as access to housing and services, some areas of the District are highlighted as amongst the most deprived in the country. 38% of areas in rural West Oxfordshire are ranked in the worst 10% in England for accessibility to services\(^2\). The lack of access to services is of particular relevance for those living in relative poverty and in West Oxfordshire the majority of people claiming pension credit live in rural areas. Where public transport is limited, those without access to a car are particularly at risk of social exclusion.

22. There is a continuing trend towards the loss of rural services, shops and pubs as many face economic problems which can lead to closure. This reflects changing shopping habits, and new ways of providing services such as through the internet. Village shops and pubs however represent an important part of community life and are an essential service for some residents. There is a need to support rural communities to maintain their vibrancy, and several have undertaken parish and town plans to identify priorities for development.

23. The main towns and larger villages provide a focus for the provision of services (schools, health services, shopping and leisure facilities)\(^3\). Previous housing

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\(^1\) CLG IMD 2007
\(^2\) See Settlement sustainability reports
growth has put pressure on the capacity of their services and facilities. In Witney there is little capacity in existing primary and secondary schools to accommodate further growth. How to meet future post-11 education needs, in particular, is a key challenge for the town. Primary schools elsewhere are also generally lacking capacity to take any significant increase in pupil numbers. New development will need to make provision for new/improved services and facilities as well as address transport problems.

The Local Economy

24. The local economy is diverse and performs relatively well, even in the current recession. Around three quarters of people work in the service sector. Manufacturing retains a significant presence and there are several manufacturing and engineering firms linked to the biotechnology, healthcare and automotive sectors, and characteristic of the Oxfordshire high technology economy. Some businesses have links to RAF Brize Norton which is strengthening its role as the major air transport military base and makes an important contribution to the economy of the Carterton area.

25. The main retail centres are generally vibrant and the quality of the natural and built environment and attractions such as Blenheim Palace are a significant draw for the tourist economy. There are high rates of new business formation and self employment reflecting entrepreneurial activity. Employment in agriculture has continued to decline. The land based sector will face further challenges through changing subsidies and climate change, indicating the likely need to continue to diversify the rural economy.

26. Economic activity rates are high at 88%\(^4\) indicating little potential to expand the resident labour force although the 2001 Census identified a significant outflow of 18,000 workers from the District. The proportion of people claiming unemployment benefit (Job Seekers Allowance) is now around 1.7%, a significant increase compared to a year ago, but significantly lower than regional (3.0%) and national (4.2%) averages\(^5\). West Oxfordshire has a relatively skilled workforce with no major skills gaps identified. Wages for workers in the District are lower than for those living here, highlighting the outflow of managers and professionals to higher paid jobs elsewhere.

27. Employment is focussed in the main towns, in large employment areas, but there are many small businesses, often in converted farm buildings, throughout the towns, villages and in the open countryside. The West Oxfordshire Economy Study identified no major gaps in the range of business property types available, although some shortage of small managed office and small industrial units. The stock of industrial premises was also identified as soon to become dated in relation to modern needs. A need for further employment land was identified to provide flexibility in the land supply, to enable modernisation of the existing building stock, provide opportunities for investment and seek to reduce out-commuting. Reflecting the recession and an ageing population the amount of

\(^4\) Source: NOMIS Local Authority Profile
\(^5\) Source: NOMIS Local Authority Profile
additional land needed for employment is however considered to be less than in the past.

**A high quality environment** (see Maps below)

28. West Oxfordshire has a rich archaeological and architectural heritage. There are 3,200 listed buildings (including Blenheim Palace a World Heritage Site), 50 conservation areas and 16 parks and gardens of special historic interest. One third of the countryside is also recognised nationally for its landscape quality falling within the Cotswolds AONB. Land on the eastern edge of the District is within the Oxford Green Belt. Opportunities to accommodate major development without a significant adverse impact on the special character of West Oxfordshire are limited.

29. West Oxfordshire has a rich variety of habitats supporting a range of wildlife. There are numerous important conservation sites - Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient Woodland, Local Wildlife Sites. About 4% of the District falls within sites designated for their nature conservation or geological importance. However, much of our wildlife lives outside the network of somewhat isolated nature reserves and protected areas. There is a need to enhance and extend habitats to develop networks. A series of Biodiversity Target Areas have been identified where the restoration and enhancement of habitats would have the greatest benefit.

30. There are several rivers which flow through West Oxfordshire including the Thames on the southern boundary and its tributaries the Windrush and Evenlode rivers which flow through the western and central parts of the District. These rivers and their floodplains are also important corridors for biodiversity, provide opportunities for recreation and form part of the setting of many towns and villages.

31. Flooding is a key issue with severe flooding events affecting many communities in 2007 from several sources including fluvial flooding and surface water run off. Large parts of West Oxfordshire are within natural and functional floodplains.

32. West Oxfordshire contains some extensive sand and gravel and limestone resources, the extraction of which needs to be managed to protect environmental quality and help ameliorate flood risk. Significant extraction of sand and gravel has already occurred and continues in the Lower Windrush Valley with after uses presenting opportunities for leisure and tourism as well as creating opportunities for nature reserves. This is however an area with a rural road network and where extraction can significantly impact on local communities.
33. The options for future development and overall settlement strategy have been informed by national and regional planning guidance, local community strategies and responses to consultation but most particularly by the existing character of West Oxfordshire.
SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

34. The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report provides further analysis of sustainability issues and background evidence. This informed the development of sustainability objectives against which the Core Strategy options are considered. The headline sustainability objectives are set out below:

- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home
- Improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities
- Promote thriving and inclusive communities
- Improve education and training
- Maintain a low level of crime and fear of crime
- Improve accessibility to all services and facilities
- Improve the efficiency of land use
- Reduce waste generation and disposal
- Reduce air pollution and improve air quality
- Address the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and be prepared for its impacts.
- Protect and improve soil and water resources
- Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity
- Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment
- Maintain high and stable levels of employment
- Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness
35. The spatial vision for the Core Strategy has evolved through consultation with local communities and partner organisations. Initial consultation on the strengths of the District and future challenges took place as part of the West Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy – Shaping Futures. That document contains nine priorities for action:

- To keep towns and villages economically prosperous and vibrant
- To tackle the specific challenges of accessing services and facilities
- 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 support older people to maintain their independence and health
- 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 keep West Oxfordshire clean and beautiful while protecting the environment and trying to reduce the causes of and effects of climate change
- To campaign to improve the transport infrastructure.

Our vision for the future is to meet the needs of West Oxfordshire’s communities without significant change to the intrinsic character of the District. We wish this area to continue to be one of the best places in which to live, work, play 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.

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 and strengthen 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.

Our Objectives

The settlement strategy

- 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.

36. West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district with its population dispersed to market towns and villages. It is vital that its distinctive rural characteristics are maintained while meeting the needs of local communities. Although it is a relatively affluent area there are pockets of deprivation.

Meeting the specific housing needs of our communities

- 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.

37. There needs to be a greater choice within the local housing market to help balance the preponderance of family housing. Two key housing challenges will be to help address as much local housing need as is feasible and sustainable, and to better meet the needs of older people.

Sustainable communities with access to services and facilities

- 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 the District’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.

38. In a rural area it is important to achieve a sensible balance between delivering services direct to local residents and expecting people to travel elsewhere to particular services. In many parts of the District there is little choice other than to travel by private transport. However new development should not lead to more people being isolated from services and facilities which they need on a regular basis. New development must provide the necessary infrastructure to meet the needs of its residents and/or users.

39. These objectives seek to deliver a high quality of life with a prosperous and sustainable economy whilst improving opportunities wherever possible or appropriate for travel by means other than the car.

**Protecting our environment and reducing the impact from climate change**

- 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.
40. These objectives seek to meet the challenge of climate change and to improve the sustainability of new development within the context of an area of high environmental quality.

**Summary of appraisal of plan objectives against SA objectives**

41. The Core Strategy objectives as set out above have been appraised against the Sustainability Objectives (see Appendix). The Core Strategy objectives generally have a positive impact, particularly in relation to social and economic objectives relating to the provision of housing, thriving communities, employment and economic growth. The objectives also generally score positively against objectives relating to accessibility to services and facilities, particularly by sustainable modes and the positive impacts this can have in relation to air quality and climate change.

42. No significant negative impacts are noted. The impact on many environmental objectives is uncertain as it is dependent on location/site specific impacts not explicit in the Core Strategy objectives. Further detail on locational/site specific impacts is considered further in the appraisal of the strategic options which follows.

**OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

43. The following sections reflect the chapters of the Core Strategy Preferred Approach and summarise the appraisal of the strategic options identified in developing the preferred approach. Detailed appraisal tables comparing the options identified to Sustainability Objectives are presented in the Appendix.
SETTLEMENT STRATEGY

44. The following options have been evaluated taking into account the Issues and Options consultation stage (March 2008) and the responses to consultation.

- Focus on Witney (with at least one strategic urban extension and possibly two)
- Focus on Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton with limited development elsewhere
- More dispersed development amongst towns and villages
- New village
- Focus on main public transport routes of A40, A44 and/or Cotswold railway line

Focus on Witney (with at least one strategic urban extension and possibly two)

45. Witney (pop 26,000) is the largest settlement in the District with the widest range of services and facilities. The town also has the best transport connections although there is significant traffic congestion within the town and on major interconnecting routes. Witney is served by high frequency bus services connecting to Oxford and Carterton although these services also use congested routes. Opportunities for development are limited and significant expansion would be on Greenfield land on the fringe of existing built-up areas, as has occurred in the past. The options for development on the fringe of the town are appraised in the Witney chapter (see p38).

Opportunities/Positive impacts

- Most sustainable town in the District with services and facilities to meet daily needs
- Could help to protect other towns and villages from major development
- Most frequent bus services to a variety of destinations
- Provides opportunities to secure significant developer funding to improve local infrastructure
- Location of highest need for affordable housing

Challenges/Negative impacts

- Less opportunity to help sustain other communities in the District
- May limit opportunities to provide affordable housing elsewhere
- Market town character may be eroded
- Risk of coalescence with nearby villages
- Further urban extensions likely to be distant from town centre facilities
- Major infrastructure constraints especially transport, congestion and pollution
- Much of the surrounding land of high landscape value/sensitivity
- Land availability constrained by flood risk
- Concentration into a limited number of new sites reduces flexibility. Large scale development takes many years to get off the ground.
Focus on Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton with limited development elsewhere

46. Carterton (pop 15,000) is the second largest town in the District and has seen significant recent expansion to the north and east. RAF Brize Norton to the south of the town is an important part of the community, and a major employer. Carterton has a good range of services and facilities and high frequency bus services to Witney and Oxford. Further sizeable expansion of the town is constrained by the air base and the need to protect the setting (and avoid coalescence with) nearby villages. Carterton Town Council is promoting the continued expansion of the town to reach a population of about 20,000. Through the LDF process a desire has been expressed by local councillors for a further 1,000 houses to be built to enable improvements in the town’s infrastructure and services.

47. Chipping Norton (pop 6,500) is the main service centre in the north of West Oxfordshire and serves a rural hinterland. The majority of the town and land to the west is within the Cotswolds AONB. There is scope for limited expansion to the east of Chipping Norton, outside the AONB, but a major urban extension of some 500 or more new homes is likely to have an unacceptable impact on the character and setting of this small market town.

48. Further appraisal of options for the expansion of Carterton and Chipping Norton are presented in their respective chapters (p50 onwards).

Opportunities/Positive impacts
- These three service centres are the most sustainable with services and facilities to meet daily needs
- New development will help to reinforce their role
- Could help to protect smaller settlements from larger scale development
- Provides opportunities to secure significant developer funding to improve local infrastructure
- Helps to provide development opportunities in both the north and south of the District
- Housing need is concentrated in these towns

Challenges/Negative impacts
- Chipping Norton lies partly within nationally important landscape (AONB)
- Carterton is constrained by close proximity to RAF Brize Norton. The town has seen major expansion – further major growth may result in coalescence with nearby villages.
- May limit opportunities to meet affordable housing needs elsewhere.
49. Outside of the three main settlements there are over a hundred smaller towns and villages. Many have no services and facilities at all and are connected by a network of small country lanes; public transport services are limited throughout the rural area. Many are within a sensitive landscape setting within the Cotswolds AONB and/or within conservation areas.

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<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
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<td>• May help to secure a wider distribution of affordable housing for people in need who wish to remain living locally</td>
<td>• May result in increased urbanisation of many villages and increase the risk of coalescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May help to sustain healthy rural economies</td>
<td>• Many villages are within the AONB and include conservation areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development in villages near towns which provide the main services may help to reduce development pressure on the edge of those towns</td>
<td>• May be difficult to find enough suitable development sites outside the main service centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Greater flexibility as potentially a greater choice of sites</td>
<td>• Some smaller towns and villages are relatively remote with a lower level of services and facilities to meet daily needs. This option may lead to more people having only limited access to services</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Smaller sites (up to 100 homes) are normally easier to deliver</td>
<td>• May result in increased car travel with deteriorating conditions on rural roads as well as placing greater demands on supporting social and emergency services</td>
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<td>• Less scope to provide affordable housing in the main towns where need is concentrated</td>
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<td>• Widespread dispersal to very small villages and hamlets is unlikely to comply with national planning policies</td>
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50. The level of services and facilities within the larger towns and villages is set out in the settlement sustainability reports. Potential for further housing in the larger towns and villages is considered in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). This work was undertaken without a housing ceiling derived from the South East Plan housing figure for the District.

51. Outside Witney, the two largest settlements in the West Oxfordshire part of the Central Oxfordshire sub-region are Eynsham and Woodstock. Significant expansion of Eynsham is constrained by the highway network, Green Belt, mineral reserves and flood risk. Land to the south east of Woodstock off the A44 was suggested by the Council during the previous local plan process for a mixed use development (including 180 homes, employment and community facilities). The proposal was strongly resisted locally and the Local Plan Inspector recommended this land not be included in the adopted plan because its scale was inappropriate for Woodstock.
52. Elsewhere the SHLAA has sought to identify sites appropriate to accommodate 10 or more dwellings in the few more sustainable towns and villages. The SHLAA assessment has identified very little potential remaining within the built up areas and as such new identified sites are likely to be mainly on Greenfield land. Sufficient smaller sites were identified to accommodate 200-400 homes in the part of the District within Central Oxfordshire and 500-600 homes in the remainder of West Oxfordshire. The evidence (SHLAA) therefore highlights that the options for the dispersal of development to towns and villages are limited and a dispersed strategy will also need to consider options in Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, to be able to meet minimum housing numbers in the South East Plan.

53. Two further options were presented at the Issues and Options stage which the Council did not consider appropriate or likely to conform to national policy:

- **A new village** – the amount of development likely to be accommodated in a new settlement may not create a sustainable community within a reasonable timescale when considered within the West Oxfordshire context. The number of residents without access to a satisfactory range of services and facilities would increase and extra car travel would result. A new settlement is a high risk strategy and is likely to need significant expenditure to fund new infrastructure. Concentration of new housing and employment in a new settlement will not address needs in other parts of the District.

- **Concentration along transport corridors.** This option was raised through consultation and is particularly linked to improvements underway to the Cotswold line, including dualling of track. The strategy would need to facilitate sustainable travel to centres of employment and services (particularly Oxford) to meet sustainability objectives. The improvements to the Cotswold line are primarily to deliver better reliability of rail services rather than increased frequency. The majority of the line as it runs through West Oxfordshire is in the Cotswolds AONB. Utilising this corridor for significant strategic levels of development or a new village is therefore contrary to national policy. The larger towns and villages (Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Woodstock, Eynsham) are located on the main road network which is focussed towards Oxford. Access to Oxford is congested where main roads such as the A44 and A40 reach the edge of the City. The A40 corridor, also the primary bus service corridor, is already constrained by congestion. Significant improvements to public transport in the District, including the re-opening of the railway between Witney and Oxford, are not a viable prospect. Many bus services in West Oxfordshire do not operate commercially and require ongoing public subsidy. Levels of public funding are always at risk. This option is more appropriate for higher density urban areas with frequent bus and rail services. Focussing development on the towns and villages on the main transport routes is in any event part of other options assessed.


### Appraisal Summary

54. The following table summarises the appraisal of the identified options against the most relevant sustainability objectives (detailed appraisal tables are presented in the appendix).

#### Settlement Strategy Options Appraisal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Objective</th>
<th>Witney focus</th>
<th>Three towns</th>
<th>Dispersal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote thriving and inclusive communities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve education and training</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve accessibility to all services and facilities</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce air pollution and improve air quality</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address the causes of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and be prepared for its impacts</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and improve soil and water resources</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment, biodiversity and geodiversity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain high and stable levels of employment Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**  ++ Major positive, + Positive, +/- Neutral, - Minor negative, --Major Negative, ? Uncertain
55. Responses to the Issues and Options consultation in 2008 revealed a general preference for concentration of development at Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, particularly by those organisations involved in the provision of services and facilities. This must not, however, preclude development in other towns and villages where it would help maintain their viability. The Town Councils of Witney and Chipping Norton expressed a preference for dispersal of growth to other locations in view of concerns that these historic towns could become over-developed. Carterton Town Council sought further growth alongside improved infrastructure for the town. The Highway Agency expressed a preference for development in the Witney area as this is likely to have least impact upon the strategic road network (particularly the congested A34) when compared to development north of Oxford in the vicinity of the A44.

56. The appraisal shows the more sustainable settlement strategy would be to focus most development in the main towns but with some development of an appropriate scale continuing in the rural areas to help meet local needs.

57. Infrastructure is generally limited but a dispersed strategy or a new village is likely to necessitate significant expenditure on new or improved infrastructure (which could prove extremely difficult to secure within a reasonable timescale). Many schools in the rural area are at capacity but the levels of housing development necessary to support a new school would be inappropriate and out of scale for many communities. A dispersed strategy provides the least potential for travel by sustainable modes and is likely to have the most adverse affect on rural roads and the character of the landscape, with many settlements within the Cotswolds AONB and Conservation Areas.

58. Focussing on the main three towns is preferred over focussing on Witney alone as this will better meet affordable housing needs across the District and provides the potential for the other main towns to address infrastructure needs.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

59. The Core Strategy is being prepared within the context of high affordable housing need across West Oxfordshire and South East Plan policies that seek at least 35-40% of all new housing to be affordable. Subject to viability, maximising delivery of affordable housing will have a positive effect on the following sustainability objectives:

- Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home
- Improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities
- Promote thriving and inclusive communities
- Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness

60. The objectives of promoting sustainable communities and general health and well being is supported by maintaining a choice of housing and assisting local families and key workers to find suitable accommodation. Lack of affordable housing can contribute to households moving away from their family connections and can
also increase commuting levels. Lack of housing for key workers can inhibit the local economy. These factors were taken into account in the sustainability appraisal of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (adopted April 2007). The construction of new affordable housing will have the same negative environmental impacts as for all housing and is largely dependent on specific site impacts.

61. Implementation of existing local plan policy over the last 3-4 years has delivered a higher proportion of affordable homes as part of overall housing proposals (40% or more on individual sites) and has secured some affordable housing, primarily discount market, in the villages in addition to rural exception sites. Through consultation and monitoring of the current policy, the following trends have been revealed:

- The current site threshold of 15 dwellings in the four largest settlements, particularly in the market town of Chipping Norton, has fettered delivery of affordable housing as very few sites come forward above the threshold size.
- The site threshold of 2 dwellings elsewhere has delivered some additional affordable housing (where there would have been none previously from this source) but landowners and developers of small sites have shown a general reluctance to bring forward development if it means on-site affordable housing. Discussions have revealed a willingness to make appropriate financial contributions to affordable housing on another site in the locality but this approach to affordable housing delivery is very much dependent upon suitable sites coming forward through the rural exception site policy.

62. Reducing thresholds and increasing proportions may raise concern that this will reduce the delivery of housing - impacting negatively on the above objectives. However, this scenario has been tested through the Viability Study which shows that an overall target of at least 40% for affordable housing delivery, with provision even through small sites, is likely to be generally viable. However, the proposed approach must operate with flexibility, reflecting assessment of individual site circumstances.

63. The Council proposes a target of at least 40% of all new housing to be affordable subject to assessment of individual site circumstances. All new housing proposals will in principle be eligible to make a contribution towards meeting local housing needs.
ECONOMY

64. The LDF should seek to assist businesses to survive the economic situation in the short term whilst developing the capacity of the area to respond to the eventual upturn. Economic growth is recognised as a key to achieving social and environmental objectives.

65. The key part of the evidence base is the West Oxfordshire Economy Study June 2007 and subsequent 2009 update. The key strategic issues apparent from this evidence base and through consultation are set out below and followed by the assessment of identified options:

**Key issues**

**Improving the balance between homes and jobs to reduce commuting and congestion**

Evidence indicates limited growth in the labour force to 2026, although there is scope to provide additional jobs to claw back out-commuters from West Oxfordshire. The Census 2001 identified high levels of out-commuting from the District to employment centres elsewhere (18,000 gross, 8000 net out commuters). This contributes to congestion on the main interurban routes. Employment centres such as Oxford, Didcot (and surrounds) and Swindon are also growth centres which may further attract commuters from the District. Whilst recognising that West Oxfordshire exists within the wider sub-regional economy, seeking an increase in the amount of employment related development relative to expected changes in the labour force can seek to reduce out-commuting.

**Improving infrastructure**

Transport infrastructure is seen as a key issue and constraint with regard to the future growth of the local economy – as much to do with commuting as commercial traffic. Construction of the A40/Downs Road junction in Witney in particular is considered necessary to enable further growth and investment in this area.

**Promoting diversity**

One of the key strengths of the West Oxfordshire economy is its economic diversity apparent both in terms of the types of businesses but also the location and type of premises available. Diversity provides resilience during economic down turns and also provides a range of employment opportunities at different skills levels.

**A sustainable tourism economy**

Tourism remains an important and growing economic sector, estimated in 2007 to be worth £225m to the local economy. This reflects the attractive countryside, historic Cotswold market towns and villages and a range of visitor attractions such as Blenheim Palace and Cotswold Wildlife Park. The strategy for tourism development has been to capitalise on these inherent assets and promote tourism development which complements them. The Council’s tourism strategy aims to get visitors staying longer and spending more rather than increasing visitor numbers.
| **Contributing to the competitiveness of the region** | The Oxfordshire economy has been highlighted as one of the best performing regions – identified within the Regional Economic Strategy as a 'Diamond for Growth'. Although not a centre of research, West Oxfordshire contributes to the Oxfordshire high tech economy and has particular strengths in high technology manufacturing and engineering. Supporting growth sectors, such as those above and tourism, and the small business sector as a source of innovation and entrepreneurship is also important to achieving economic growth. |
| **Enabling flexibility to adapt to changing economic circumstances** | Flexibility within planning policies is necessary to support businesses to adapt to changing economic circumstances. The Economy Study identified that little undeveloped land remains and much of the stock of business premises will soon be dated to meet modern needs. Flexibility is provided in current planning policies enabling the provision of new sites for employment development or through the expansion of existing businesses. |
| **Sustainable Rural Economy** | The rural area of West Oxfordshire has been identified as a significant economic asset – containing three quarters of businesses in the District and a significant asset for the tourism economy. The types of businesses in rural areas are similar to those in urban areas with a high proportion in service based activities. However, businesses tend to be smaller and there is a high proportion of homeworking. Rural wages are lower than urban wages and impacts on the ability for rural workers to access local housing. The land based sector will face challenges through changes to funding regimes and through climate change. Further diversification of the rural economy can help improve rural wages, support sustainable farming and estate management and also help to support rural services through an increased day time population. For diversification to be sustainable, however, it must respect the existing high quality environment. |
| **Skills** | The District has a reasonably skilled labour force at present. A recent survey of Oxfordshire employers did not highlight significant skills gaps in West Oxfordshire. There is need however to continue to work in partnership with skills providers and business development organisations to ensure that skills development meets business needs. |
Economy - Context Map

- Cotswolds Area of Outstanding National Beauty
- Oxford Green Belt
- Central Oxfordshire Subregion (from South East Plan)
- Growth point
- Main employment sites
- High technology employment site
- Available employment land
- Main tourist attraction
- Main commuting flows

January 2010
Options Identified
66. The Economy Study 2007 identified three strategic options (Steady Growth, Indigenous Growth and Higher Growth) which were subject to consultation during the Issues and Options Consultation (March 2008). These options are summarised below and primarily involve making provision for differing amounts of additional employment land (directed towards the main towns) whilst continuing existing policy approaches allowing the small scale provision of employment and tourism development in rural areas to support rural diversification.

Steady growth
- focus on supporting indigenous growth and business start ups whilst catering for a modest level of inward investment
- provision of an additional 30ha (60ha total) of new employment land, mostly in Witney and the larger towns
- provision for around 8,500 jobs in the business, general industry and storage (B) land use classes (potential for around 10,500 jobs overall)
- continue criteria based policies allowing for small employment and tourism development in larger villages

Opportunities/Positive impacts
- Reflects the approach which has lead to a reasonably successful economy to date
- Broadly consistent with regional and sub-regional planning and economic strategies
- Potential to clawback out-commuters
- Modest level of inward investment catered for
- Ability to support manufacturing and high technology sectors through land available for expansion and relocation
- Provides flexibility to enable modernisation of ageing employment estates
- Support for small business start-ups in towns and rural areas
- Likely to increase the range and diversity of employment opportunities in the long term

Challenges/Negative impacts
- Exceeds employment needs arising from labour supply growth
- May result in increased commuting trips and increased congestion unless new jobs attract residents currently working outside the District
- Need for improved road infrastructure

Indigenous growth
- focus on indigenous growth primarily through criteria based policies allowing for small employment sites and tourism development next to larger villages
- utilise remaining land allocations and permissions (approx 30ha) mostly in Witney and the larger towns
- provision of an additional 10ha to help reduce out-commuting
- provision for approx 3,000-5,000 B Class jobs (potential for around 5,000-7,000 jobs overall)

**Opportunities/Positive impacts**
- Reduces pressures on the labour supply and infrastructure and minimises new land requirements
- Broadly consistent with regional and sub-regional planning and economic strategies
- Modest level of inward investment, business expansion or relocations catered for
- Greater emphasis placed on growth in small businesses, retail and tourism.

**Challenges/Negative impacts**
- Limits land available for inward investment or the expansion or upgrading of existing firms
- Limited new land may inhibit the regeneration of older employment sites through declining demand and limiting potential relocations
- Limits potential to add to business diversity
- Limits potential contribution to competitiveness of Oxfordshire/regional economy

**Higher growth**
- Support indigenous growth but more active encouragement of inward investment and relocation of firms from elsewhere, both industrial firms and knowledge based activities – aiming to capitalise on the proximity to Oxford’s growth
- provision of an additional 50ha of new employment land (80ha in total)
- 10,500 new B class jobs (potential for around 12,500 jobs overall)
- continue criteria based policies allowing for small employment and tourism development in larger villages

**Opportunities/Positive impacts**
- Active encouragement of inward investment
- Potential to capitalise more on proximity to Oxford
- Potential to increase business diversity, attract emerging sectors
- Potential to clawback out-commuters
- Support for small business start-ups in towns and rural areas

**Challenges/Negative impacts**
- Less consistent with wider economic strategies
- Significantly exceeds employment needs arising from labour supply growth
- Likely to result in increased commuting trips and increased congestion
- Need for improved road infrastructure
- Larger land requirement likely to have greater environmental impact through development of additional Greenfield land

67. The Steady Growth scenario was most preferred through the Issues and Options consultation, followed by the Indigenous growth option. Achieving a better balance between jobs and labour supply was raised as a key issue by many respondents. The need to improve infrastructure, particularly road infrastructure, was cited as a key reason to pursue lower growth. The ability to
be able to respond to the market and enable flexibility was also noted with concerns that lower growth would unnecessarily constrain the economy.

**Large scale dispersal of employment development**

68. The above options seek to focus new employment development on the main towns which reflects the preferred spatial strategy. Strategic options for the location of development are considered in the Settlement Strategy appraisal section and included consideration of more dispersed development, focussing development along transport corridors and a new village.

69. The economic strategy and the approach to the provision of employment land should reflect the overall strategy for development. This is because employment development will be most sustainable where it is accessible to the labour supply, reducing the need to travel. The infrastructure and environmental constraints applicable to dispersal under the overall spatial strategy are equally applicable to the dispersal of employment.

70. The large scale dispersal of employment development would not meet national or regional objectives seeking to reduce the need to travel. The option of larger scale dispersal was not considered to warrant further appraisal.

**Small scale dispersal to smaller villages (Local Plan Group A villages)**

71. The Issues and Options consultation also included an option for a more flexible approach to small new employment sites in a wider range of smaller villages to support rural diversification. Under existing Local Plan policies, new sites with new build employment development are limited to towns and larger villages (Local Plan Groups B and C) unless relating to farm diversification or homeworking. However there is no such constraint on reuse of existing buildings.

**Opportunities/Positive impacts**

- Potential to improve the self sufficiency, resilience and vitality of smaller communities through sustaining existing rural services
- Add to the diversity of the rural economy, offsetting declines in employment sectors such as agriculture
- Support for the small business sector as a source of entrepreneurship and innovation
- Potential to provide jobs closer to where people live and away from congestion spots

**Challenges/Negative impacts**

- Public transport is limited in rural areas, access would be mostly car based causing an increase in traffic on local roads
- Excessive dispersal of employment could threaten rural character and tranquillity unless controlled
- Providing more new build opportunities may reduce demand for reuse of existing buildings for employment use
- Concern through consultation that rural businesses do not employ local people
72. The importance of the rural economy for rural sustainability was highlighted in the Taylor Review⁶ and many of the recommendations have been reflected in the new national Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth. The policy statement recognises that most new development should be located in or on the edge of local service centres as this facilitates the best use of existing infrastructure and delivers sustainable development. The statement also supports small scale economic development where it provides the most sustainable option in villages, or other locations, recognising that a site may not be readily accessible by public transport.

73. Consultation through the Core Strategy process revealed general support for a more flexible approach although there was some concern that the excessive dispersal of employment development could adversely affect the character and tranquillity of the rural area, noting that many villages are served by country lanes unsuitable for high numbers of vehicle movements. There is however potential to mitigate some of the potential disadvantages of small scale dispersal impact through a criteria based approach to control inappropriate development.

74. Criteria could include:
- limit on the size of new units allowed
- prioritising existing premises/buildings before consideration of new build
- proximity to villages with some services and facilities

Appraisal Summary
75. The following table summarises the appraisal of the identified options against the most relevant sustainability objectives (detail in the appendix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability objective</th>
<th>Steady growth</th>
<th>Indigenous growth</th>
<th>Higher growth</th>
<th>Small scale dispersal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote thriving and inclusive communities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve accessibility to all services and facilities</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve the efficiency of land use</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and enhance biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape character and the historic environment</td>
<td>- ?</td>
<td>+/- ?</td>
<td>- ?</td>
<td>- ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain high and stable levels of employment</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote sustainable economic growth and competitiveness</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ++ Major positive, + Positive, +/- Neutral, - Minor negative, --Major Negative, ? Uncertain

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⁶ Living Working Countryside - Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing, July 2008
76. The Steady Growth scenario provides the most positive impacts with fewer negative impacts. The option of providing more flexibility for small scale dispersal also scores positively if safeguards are included to limit the impact of excessive dispersal of employment development on the rural character of the area. This was reflected through the issues and options consultation where there was general support for pursuing the Steady Growth scenario and also support for expanding the policy approach allowing provision of small employment sites in smaller villages to further promote rural diversification.

77. A combination of the Steady Growth and Small Scale Dispersal options therefore appears the most sustainable option.

78. Since the scenarios of the Economy Study were developed the economic downturn has occurred which suggests that future economic performance may be lower than in the recent past. Revised population forecasts also suggest lower levels of growth in the labour force.

79. Not all of the additional land required under the scenarios will need to be allocated as strategic sites in the Core Strategy, as some will come forward through criteria based policies, such as through promoting rural diversification. Sites may also be considered through the Site Allocations process.

80. Reflecting these considerations the Core Strategy So Far consultation put forward an emerging strategy which reflects Steady Growth and incorporates the Small Scale Dispersal option.

**Core Strategy So Far - 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 …

81. This approach was broadly supported with a number of detailed comments. It forms the basis for the preferred approach.
VIBRANT TOWN CENTRES

82. Shopping and other town centre development is an important part of the economic strategy. The Core Strategy should set out the hierarchy and network of town centres and how they should develop to meet the needs of the District’s population. The main town centres of Witney, Chipping Norton and Carterton appear to have fared relatively well during the economic downturn and continue to appear healthy with low shop vacancy rates and a variety of independent shops and national multiples. Marriotts Walk, an extension to Witney town centre, has recently opened successfully despite the economic climate. The scheme involves a variety of retailers, a cinema and restaurants, improving the retail offer of the town.

83. National policy for shopping and other town centre development (now PPS4) strongly advocates the town centre first approach. This underpins the Core Strategy preferred approach.

84. The West Oxfordshire Retail Needs Assessment 2007 identified limited need for further retail development within the District up to 2016, taking into account existing commitments. Longer term needs will need to be kept under review. The study confirms the town centre hierarchy as in the existing Local Plan remains applicable and this is carried forward into the Core Strategy preferred approach.

85. Existing Local Plan proposals to improve the retail offer of Carterton through a comprehensive town centre redevelopment/refurbishment continue to remain appropriate. No other feasible option was identified.

86. Longer term potential sites for further town centre development have been identified on the edge of the existing town centres of Witney and Chipping Norton. No alternative, sequentially preferable options have been identified to warrant a comparative appraisal.

TRANSPORT AND MOVEMENT

87. The District Council has very limited transport powers, primarily confined to car parking provision and its management. Close working with the County Highway Authority and Oxfordshire Rural Community Council remains essential. However, the District Council, as local planning authority, does have a key input to improving accessibility through control over the location of new development which in turn influences the need to travel and how people may travel. The settlement strategy, economic strategy and strategic site options appraised in this document are therefore the main strategic options influencing transport and movement in the Core Strategy. The availability of services and facilities and the scope for improvement, including public transport, is a major influence upon the settlement strategy and the location of future development. The negative impacts of traffic congestion and related air quality issues particularly in Witney and Chipping Norton are considered in their respective chapters.
INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION

88. The provision of adequate and timely infrastructure is a key requirement of the South East Plan (Policy CC7 refers). It is an essential part of the delivery of sustainable development. The definition of infrastructure covers a wide range of physical, social and green supporting services and facilities including transport, health, education, utilities such as water and sewerage, and space for flood control, recreation, amenity and biodiversity.

89. The District Council is not a major landowner and in 2001 transferred its housing stock to Cottsway Housing. It has a very small capital budget. Delivery of new infrastructure has always been a partnership approach with other organisations and developers. Through the Core Strategy preferred approach, the Council will continue to seek appropriate contributions from new development to help deliver new infrastructure.

90. The availability of infrastructure, and potential to improve it through delivering new infrastructure, has informed the consideration of the main strategic options. Further detail on new infrastructure needs is set out in the individual sections covering the main service centres.

OUR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

91. The Core Strategy sets out the planning responses to the short and long term challenges of climate change, including reducing carbon emissions (how we affect the climate) and adapting to inevitable changes (how climate affects us).

92. The UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) scenarios confirm that the South East will be one of the most severely affected regions by climate change. Under 'medium emission scenario' it is suggested there will be increases in winter mean temperature of 3°C and in summer mean temperatures of 3.9°C by the 2080s. Greater extremes in temperature, more storms and extreme weather events (eg torrential rainfall, heatwaves) are predicted.

93. Over the last 10 years or so the emphasis, nationally and locally, has been in getting development in the most sustainable locations. This approach continues to be advocated through the Core Strategy. There is increasing recognition, however, that constructing buildings using sustainable techniques, is also important in addressing climate change, through influencing resource use, especially energy, carbon emissions. To help in the understanding of climate change and, in particular, the specific issues for consideration in West Oxfordshire, a study was commissioned to inform the LDF and the possible approaches to renewable energy and sustainable construction in West Oxfordshire. The study is referred to as the CAG Study.

Local targets

94. New and higher targets have been announced in the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan and Renewable Energy Strategy 2009 which gives even greater impetus for the delivery of significantly higher levels of decentralised, renewable and low carbon energy. The SE Plan encourages the development of district-specific
targets in LDFs to help achieve these national targets. The CAG Study concluded that robust district-specific targets would be difficult to justify. None are proposed in the preferred approach.

**Stand-alone renewable energy development – strategic opportunities**

95. The Core Strategy: Issues and Options Consultation in March 2008 asked whether specific areas should be identified in West Oxfordshire for renewable and low-carbon energy generation. Although the principle of promoting such local energy generation was favoured, there was less clear-cut support for identifying specific locations.

96. The CAG Study investigated the possible strategic opportunities in the District, focusing on the development of commercial wind farms. Large wind turbines, however, are likely to be inappropriate within much of the sensitive landscape of the Cotswolds AONB. Due to environmental constraints, the relatively scattered settlement pattern and the aviation issues, there is no obvious spatial pattern of clusters or groupings of sites that would lend themselves to identification in the Core Strategy. A criteria-based policy to assess applications is the preferred approach in the Core Strategy. The provision of renewable energy should not be to the detriment of landscape character, biodiversity or the historic environment.

97. The rural nature of West Oxfordshire and, in particular, its extensive network of woodlands, means that wood fuel biomass is considered an appropriate renewable fuel source for the District. The CAG Study concludes that it is a good, viable option for new build development, especially as this type of technology can be incorporated into developments at a range of different scales, from individual dwellings to site-wide CHP/DH systems.

98. The CAG Study states that biomass will play a critical role in achieving significant levels of renewable energy generation in the District. However, further work is needed to both establish local wood fuel supply chains and to stimulate demand. Using local wood fuel will reduce CO₂ emissions and stimulate woodland management, which in turn will increase their biodiversity and landscape value. The commercial value of woodlands will also increase, providing economic and social benefits directly through local job creation in woodland management and the revitalising of the local forestry economy and also indirectly eg through potential tourism and the diversification of farms and country estates. In the longer term, if new planting for woodland or other biofuels (eg miscanthus) takes place to satisfy demand, there is the potential that other valuable habitats could be lost, eg heathland, with adverse biodiversity and landscape impacts. Where possible, valuable habitats will need to be protected.

**Achieving sustainable design and construction**

99. As the potential for large stand-alone renewable energy schemes are limited in West Oxfordshire, the need to incorporate decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy sources on-site in new development is even more important. In response to the Issues and Options consultation in 2008, 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. The following options have been considered following the CAG Study:

**Merton style policy**

100. PPS1 Supplement and Policy NRM11 of the South East Plan call for inclusion of Merton-style policies in LDFs i.e. a requirement for a percentage of the energy demand for development (typically of more than 10 dwellings or 1000m$^2$ of non-residential floorspace) to be met through on-site or near-site renewables.

101. More recently, however, there has been a movement away from such a policy as it does not allow flexibility for the developer in reducing the carbon footprint of development – renewable energy generation is not always the best or most cost-effective means of reducing carbon emissions. Given the preponderance of small-scale sites in West Oxfordshire, many developments would fall below the threshold. There are likely to be implementation issues as the onus is on local authority planners having to assess applications for conformity with the requirements. Merton style policies focus specifically on decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy, rather than wider sustainability criteria. As Building Regulation requirements tighten overtime, a Merton-style policy will become redundant.

**Lean, Clean, Green**

102. The CAG study recommends that before renewables are considered, the energy efficiency of a building should be maximised. Often improving the energy efficiency of a building is simpler to incorporate, more cost effective and achieves greater carbon emission reductions. The use of an energy hierarchy is advocated: lean, clean, green. This hierarchy forms the basis for the overall preferred approach to climate change and sustainable design and construction.

103. The CAG Study recommends that the national systems for measuring the sustainability performance of buildings are used to achieve renewables within new development: the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM requirements (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method for non-domestic buildings). The use of the Code and BREEAM has the advantage that there is independent external verification of proposals. This should make implementation and monitoring of the approach more straight-forward for both developers and the Council.

104. The requirements also allow flexibility in what, if any, renewable energy technologies are used, ensuring due consideration is given to the specific site location and building design and context, which is especially important in West Oxfordshire where there will be, for example, historic or particularly sensitive settings.

105. A further advantage of using the Code/BREEAM standards is that they cover wider sustainability issues than just energy efficiency/generation. The requirements are wide-ranging and cross-cutting, affecting many of the sustainability objectives. In addition to the positive climate change impacts, there are benefits in terms of, for instance, biodiversity, flooding, water usage, pollution
and recycling. The Code specifically deals with health and well-being eg Lifetime Homes and sound insulation.

106. There is, however, concern that the requirement for higher energy efficiency and renewables will add to the costs of development and affect the delivery and/or affordability of new housing and provision of other facilities. The CAG Study includes an assessment of possible costs and impacts on viability of both the Code and BREEAM. It shows the need to include ‘viability’ in the consideration of development proposals; this is incorporated into the preferred approach on sustainable design and construction. As the requirement for higher energy efficiency/renewables becomes a national standard/practice, and meeting energy demand from decentralised renewable sources comes through the ramping up of the Building Regulations, the costs of the technologies are predicted to fall. Viability issues need to be kept under review.

Require a higher level of the Code

107. National policy guidance allows planning authorities to require new development to meet a higher level of the Code for Sustainable Homes than set out in the national timetable for tightening of the Building Regulations. The emphasis is on an evidence-based justification. The use of a more systematic approach to sustainability assessment of development is new to West Oxfordshire. There is not yet well-established experience and practice of the use of the Code by planners or local developers. The introduction of higher requirements would be a big step-change and may not be achievable in the short-term. At higher levels of the Code, cost/viability issues become even more critical, with possible adverse implications for development delivery, especially new homes.

Strategic development sites

108. The need to address climate change is particularly pertinent on larger development sites, both because of the size and significance of the potential impact and because of the opportunities for economies of scale and cost savings. The CAG Study assessed the applicability of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) or District Heating (DH) in West Oxfordshire and concluded that such schemes will become increasingly important in delivering renewable and low carbon energy in the District and in reducing CO₂ emissions. There are possible limitations in their use. The cost of installation depends heavily on site location, development density and achieving a good balance of heat load (eg residential mixed with leisure, schools, businesses).

109. In general, higher standards of sustainable design and construction will be expected on the strategic development sites, particularly those where CHP/DH is feasible. Detailed site assessments will need to be carried out to determine whether the technology is technically and economically viable within each development. Developers will be expected to provide robust, ‘open-book’ accountancy evidence to demonstrate a lack of viability.

The preferred approach

110. Addressing climate change permeates throughout the Core Strategy; climate change issues and requirements are extensive, wide-ranging and cross-cutting and
range from reducing carbon emissions through the location of development, to designing buildings with climate change in mind. The preferred approach focuses on the ‘Lean, Clean, Green’ hierarchy approach, maximising energy efficiency before the use of renewables. By the very nature of the issues, the preferred approach on climate change should have very positive impacts on sustainability.

111. The options for large scale stand alone renewable energy development are considered to be limited and reflecting the Lean, Clean, Green hierarchy, the preferred approach promotes the use of national standards for sustainable design and construction (The Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM). This will enable wider sustainability objectives to be addressed, in particular water management and ecology. The approach will enable both the mitigation and adaptation to climate change to be addressed through sustainable design and construction.

112. A common theme running through the local community strategies and the consultation responses so far is the importance of the quality and characteristics that make West Oxfordshire special and distinctive – its landscape, countryside, historic environment, pattern of settlements, buildings and green spaces. The consistent overall preferred approach is one of ‘respecting, conserving and enhancing’ the special elements of the District’s character. This is a well-established approach advocated by national and regional policy guidance. A detailed appraisal is not, therefore, considered necessary at this strategic stage.

113. Part of the preferred approach is also the identification of specific areas in West Oxfordshire where improvements can be made, e.g. the Lower Windrush Valley, Biodiversity Conservation Target Areas and the strategic development sites. These areas have been selected as areas of greatest potential change and/or where existing projects are already underway or emerging. The advantage of focusing on these areas is that effort and resources can be maximised, often increasing benefits by working with partners, with the potential for real improvements to a variety of sustainability issues, for example, local biodiversity, landscape, climate change and health. It is important to ensure that focussing on these areas should not be at the expense of the wider environment of West Oxfordshire; general, district-wide, protective policies also need to be in place.
WITNEY

114. Witney is a historic market town and the largest in West Oxfordshire with a population of about 26,000. As the main service centre it has been the location for much of the District’s past housing and employment growth. The population of the town has doubled in the last 30 years. As the main service centre, with the best transport connections, the town is likely to be the most sustainable location for further development but background evidence and consultation has identified several issues which must be addressed.

Traffic congestion and related air quality impacts

Traffic congestion in the central area of the town is a key issue. At present there is a single road crossing of the River Windrush, Bridge Street which experiences very high traffic flows and congestion. The resulting impact on air quality has led to the area being declared an Air Quality Management Area. The achievement of a second river crossing has been a long term objective to help relieve congestion at Bridge Street. The County Council has identified the Cogges Link Road as the favoured scheme. Planning permission for this road was granted in 2009 and it is due to be constructed by 2011/2012. In addition proposals for a new junction between the A40 and Downs Road are at an advanced stage with developer funding committed to the scheme.

The Witney Transport Study identifies that the potential to drastically reduce traffic congestion in the town is limited by the historic nature of the streets and roads which limits potential for road widening for example. Any significant new development will therefore need to provide good pedestrian, cycle and public transport links.

Flooding and water quality

The River Windrush flows through the centre of the town and much of the functional floodplain remains as open areas to the North West and South East. Several smaller tributaries run through the town to join the main river. There have been several flood instances in the town and severe flooding occurred in July 2007. This was attributed to several causes but included over land flow and drainage issues as well as flooding from the main river. In considering sustainable drainage, impacts on water quality are also a key consideration as much of West Oxfordshire lies above a highly vulnerable aquifer.

Market town character and setting of the town

Witney grew up as a valley settlement near crossing points of the river Windrush. The river and its valley is a significant part of the character of the settlement. Much of the central area of the town is within an extensive Conservation Area where there are many listed buildings lining the historic streets. The Conservation Area also includes Newland and the area surrounding Cogges Manor Farm, a Scheduled Ancient...
West Oxfordshire Core Strategy Preferred Approach Sustainability Appraisal

Monument.

The landscape characteristics of land surrounding the town has been assessed in the *Witney Landscape Assessment (2007)* and is of high sensitivity being a mix of open ridge, valley side and valley floor. There are several villages in relative close proximity to the edge of the town, including Hailey, Ducklington and Curbridge whose separate identity should be protected.

**Green Infrastructure**

The Windrush valley through Witney is also a significant ecological resource and is identified as a biodiversity target area. There are also several rights of way running through this area, common land and a Country Park. Within the town there are many important open spaces such as Church Green and Woodgreen which contribute to the character of the settlement. A particular need remains for the provision of further allotments as there is a shortage of plots to meet demand and a 2 year waiting list. Any strategic development in the town will need to make adequate provision of open space, play space and pitch provision to serve new residents. Land to the north and east of the town has identified remnants of the Wychwood Forest and many of the fields on the fringe of the town have a strong network of hedgerows and groups of mature trees. Cogges Wood, an area of ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site, lies a top the ridge to the east of the town.

**Education - Schools Capacity**

Oxfordshire County Council as the education authority has indicated that existing primary schools are nearing or at capacity and that further strategic development sites in the town will require further primary school provision.

In addition the County Council have indicated that a further 3000 or more dwellings in the town will require additional secondary school provision.

**Business and employment**

Witney is the main economic centre and its location and fame as a centre for blanket manufacturing was significant in the establishment of the settlement. Today the economy is diverse with a vibrant town centre, several small employment sites throughout the town and large employment estates on the southern and western edges of the town. Approximately 10 ha of land to the west of the town remains allocated or with permission, split over several plots. The *West Oxfordshire Economy Study 2007* identified the need to provide additional employment land to meet longer term needs.

**Affordable housing**

The need for affordable housing is still very high with about 900 households on the waiting list. Any strategic development to be located in Witney will need to make the maximum

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contribution to the provision of affordable housing subject to viability and will be a significant proportion of the affordable housing to be provided through the Core Strategy.

**Other Infrastructure – Water/Sewerage**

Thames Water has identified the need for further investment in the water and sewerage infrastructure to support the growth of the town. Thames Water’s business plan for the period 2010-2015 includes project proposals to provide capacity at the sewage treatment works. If such proposals are implemented capacity at the sewage treatment works is unlikely to be an issue. Providing the necessary connections to the sewage treatment works from any of the strategic site options will require additional works to be funded by the developer.

**Strategic Development Options Appraisal**

115. In order to meet the South East Plan minimum housing figures at least one major development site (of up to 1000 dwellings in scale) will need to be identified on the fringe of Witney. Several strategic site submissions have been received surrounding the town. These strategic sites are shown on the following map and an appraisal of the sites follows.
North

Land to the North of Witney has been promoted for development. The land lies between the Hailey Road and Woodstock Roads and is divided into the western part (49ha) and eastern part (7ha) by New Yatt Road and Woodstock Road. The larger western parcel of land is currently agricultural land with a minor valley and stream flowing through the centre. The site abuts the existing built up edge of the town and lies largely between the 90m and 100m contour. The smaller eastern parcel of land comprises relatively flat agricultural land which adjoins the existing built up edge of the town and is adjacent to the recent Madley Park development. The areas are being promoted for up to 1400 dwellings (200 of which on the smaller parcel of land) and to provide sports pitches, a primary school, local retail and community facilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Would deliver a northern link road and would help deliver West End Link river crossing</td>
<td>• In the absence of the Cogges Link and/or West End Link river crossings traffic levels from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Large potential development area which could accommodate mixed uses, including supporting facilities</td>
<td>significant new development north of the River Windrush would have an unacceptable traffic impact on the local road network (congestion/air quality).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Near to some existing facilities on Hailey Road, including primary school</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good access to town centre via use of Woodford Mill footpath/cycle way</td>
<td>• Good structure and species diversity of hedgerows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to improve circular bus routes within town</td>
<td>• Some Grade 3A agricultural land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to reduce wider flood risk if identified need for major storage ponds can be accommodated.</td>
<td>• Area has a network of well-used rural paths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Need identified for major storage ponds within the site to mitigate surface water run-off and flooding in Hailey Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Above a major aquifer which will limit means for disposal of surface water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distant from sewage treatment works – for provision of new sewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development will reduce gap between Witney and Hailey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poorly related to main east-west bus routes (town centre/A40)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
North East (East of Jubilee Way)

117. Land comprising 23ha of agricultural land has been suggested for development by the landowner. The land is beyond the Jubilee Way distributor road and landscape corridor built to serve the north east development area (Madley Park).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Potentially good pedestrian and cycle access to town centre once Jubilee Way is crossed</td>
<td>• Severe landscape impact – prominent rising land which provides an important setting to the town/eastern approach. Long open views above Madley Park to and from countryside to west and north.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Well located to existing schools</td>
<td>• Would undermine new edge of town designed as part of Madley Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Makes use of existing and proposed infrastructure on this side of town</td>
<td>• Encroaches upon setting to Cogges Wood (ancient woodland) and in proximity to the Wychwood biodiversity target area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to be served by an extended local bus service</td>
<td>• Land isolated and separated by Jubilee Way distributor road – difficult to integrate housing into the existing built-up areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not easy to access main bus routes along Oxford Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited area available for development, limits potential to deliver community facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited capacity at closest primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area unlikely to be suitable/attractive for significant new employment opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Without the Cogges Link, increases demand on the most sensitive areas of the highway network (Bridge Street and AQMA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### East of Cogges

118. Land (32ha) to the east of the town has been suggested by the landowners for development. The land, known as the Cogges Triangle, adjoins the existing Cogges residential estate and is between the A40, Oxford Hill and the Shores Green junction. The area is primarily in agricultural use. The new town cemetery juts into the site in the northern part. This site is being promoted in conjunction with an area of agricultural land (6ha) off Stanton Harcourt Road to the west between the A40 and the Cogges estate. Together these sites are being promoted to provide 450 dwellings, a primary school facility, community woodland, allotments, an upgrade to the Shores Green Junction and potential for a park and ride. The line of the proposed Cogges Link Road cuts through this site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Potentially good pedestrian and cycle access to town centre</td>
<td>• Severe landscape impact – prominent rising land which provides an important setting to the town/eastern approach. An area of high landscape importance and sensitivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to deliver the Shores Green Upgrade</td>
<td>• Good hedgerows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Well located to existing schools</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to improve local biodiversity through new woodland planting</td>
<td>• Limited area suitable for development, limits potential to deliver community facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to be served by an extended local bus service, relative proximity to high frequency bus services</td>
<td>• Limited capacity at closest primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Existing A40 traffic noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development to east of Witney and close to A40 junction could encourage longer-distance commuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area unlikely to be suitable/attractive for significant new employment opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Without the Cogges Link, increases demand on the most sensitive areas of the highway network (Bridge Street and AQMA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
South

119. Land (107ha) to the south of Witney, beyond the A40 and between the villages of Curbridge and Ducklington has been suggested by the landowners for development including 1,750 dwellings, a primary school, community facilities and employment development. The land is currently in agricultural use and surrounds the town sewage treatment works and abattoir which jut into the site at its north eastern edge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Large potential development area which could accommodate mixed uses, including supporting facilities</td>
<td>• Land separated from Witney by A40 dual carriageway – likely to create unsustainable urban sprawl poorly integrated with existing communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flat landscape with views of area generally screened by existing vegetation</td>
<td>• Would encourage use of private car rather than more sustainable means of transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reasonable access to major employment areas</td>
<td>• Would add to congestion at Ducklington Lane/A40 junction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to accommodate significant new employment opportunities.</td>
<td>• Could lead to coalescence of Witney, Curbridge and Ducklington with loss of countryside setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to be served by a local bus service</td>
<td>• Proximity to sewage treatment works and abattoir – potential odours impacting upon quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Existing A40 traffic noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area near A40 interchange is part former waste disposal area and part at risk of flooding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area of Grade 3A agricultural land near A415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Eastern area within Mineral Consultation Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Development close to A40 junction could encourage longer-distance commuting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
West Oxfordshire Core Strategy Preferred Approach Sustainability Appraisal

West (North Curbridge)

120. Land to the west of Witney (67ha) is currently allocated in the Local Plan as a reserve site for comprehensive mixed use development. The site lies between Downs Road and Deer Park Road; the A40 forms the southern boundary. The site lies between the 90m and 105m contours below the highest part of this ridge to the west of the town. The West Witney employment area lies to the north. This land continues to be promoted by the landowner as a possible urban extension to the town for about 1000 dwellings, employment, a primary school, local centre and community facilities including playing pitch provision.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Good access to major expanding employment area</td>
<td>• Relatively distant from town centre and secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suitable/attractive for significant new employment opportunities</td>
<td>• Separate from existing residential areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Large enough area to accommodate a mixed use community</td>
<td>• Prominent plateau but seen against already developed skyline – woodland planting required as mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provision of new primary school and secondary school facility on western side of Witney would create more flexibility in capacity and catchment areas</td>
<td>• Development will reduce gap between Witney and Curbridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Poor landscape quality and structure (large fields)</td>
<td>• Development unacceptable in absence of improvements to Downs Road and new A40/Downs Road junction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunity to improve local biodiversity through new woodland planting</td>
<td>• Proximity to new A40 junction could encourage longer distance commuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Area physically contained in extent – would not necessarily lead to further expansion of urban boundaries</td>
<td>• Existing traffic noise from A40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limits further pressure on most congested areas of the highway network</td>
<td>• Light pollution from football club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not dependent upon construction of Cogges Link Road</td>
<td>• Crossed by well-used east-west bridleway, although potential to retain within new development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would help to secure new A40 junction if not built by Highway Authority</td>
<td>• Above a minor aquifer which will limit means for disposal of surface water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to integrate with existing high frequency bus services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
North West

121. This site has not been suggested for development but is included in this assessment for completeness. This area forms part of the Upper Windrush Valley a sensitive valley landscape with natural floodplain at lower levels. Given these significant environmental constraints to development the site has not been included in the comparative assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Relatively close to town centre</td>
<td>• Windrush valley flood plain and northwards sloping valley side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area of biodiversity importance – conservation target area for biodiversity enhancement. Recent scheme to enhance biodiversity and public access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Crossed by well-used bridleway to Crawley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sloping land would present access difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Proximity to gas storage depot – health and safety issues (HSE protection area).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appraisal Summary

122. The following table summarises the appraisal of the identified options against the most relevant sustainability objectives (detail in the appendix). The appraisal reveals there are significant differences between the sites when compared against most of the sustainability objectives. Comparatively sites do not have significantly different impacts when considering biodiversity and soil and water objectives.

123. Land to the west has fewer negative impacts. It is a large site able to accommodate a mix of uses, including a range of housing, education and community facilities, employment and leisure development. Delivery of a secondary school facility west of the town is a particular positive impact for education and accessibility objectives. Development to the west of the town is not dependent on construction of the Cogges Link Road, puts less pressure on the most sensitive areas of the highway network (Bridge Street and the AQMA),
and has less overall landscape impact. Construction of the A40/Downs junction is a prerequisite of further significant development in this area. Existing pedestrian and cycle routes and high frequency bus services serving the town centre and Oxford can be linked to new development in this area. Employment land on the western edge has proven attractiveness to businesses and is a good location to meet the longer term employment needs of the town.

124. Land to the north of Witney has some positive impacts but more negative impacts than the west option. It is also a potentially large development site which could accommodate a mix of uses including community facilities and is relatively accessible to the town centre. However, in the absence of the Cogges Link Road and/or the West End Link river crossing, development on the site would add an unacceptable level of traffic to the east of the town worsening congestion and air quality in the Bridge Street area and the AQMA. Any development must also address the severe flooding problems in this area, although there is potential to deliver a flood attenuation scheme to reduce flood risk in the Hailey Road corridor. The site is an area of high landscape quality and forms part of the physical gap between Witney and Hailey, but is less prominent in wider views compared to land to the east. This more localised landscape impact would need to be addressed as part of any new development through provision of a positive landscape framework to create a new town edge.

125. Land to the east and north east have significant adverse landscape impacts. Land to the east is closely associated with implementation of the Cogges Link Road. Construction of this new distributor road would isolate much of the land on the eastern edge. Development here would also add pressure to the most congested areas of the highway network and AQMA with or without the Cogges Link and/or Shores Green junction upgrade. The smaller size of these sites limits the potential to support community facilities although these sites are relatively accessible to the town centre and existing facilities.

126. Land to the south of the town has the fewest positive impacts. The segregation caused by the A40 and proximity to the town’s sewage treatment works is a major negative impact. Development here would result in unsustainable urban sprawl, dependent on car travel and would create a poor level of residential amenity. It is not considered a sustainable option.

127. Land to the west is the most sustainable and deliverable option to meet housing and other needs during the next 10 years and received the most support through public consultation. It is the preferred option for a strategic development site in Witney. The need for a further strategic development site to the north of Witney will be kept under review.
## Witney Strategic Options Appraisal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>North East</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
<th>West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve health and well being and reduce inequalities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote thriving and inclusive communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve education and training</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve accessibility to all services and facilities</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce air pollution and improve air quality</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and improve soil and water resources</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain high and stable levels of employment</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:  ++ Major positive, + Positive, +/- Neutral, - Minor negative, --Major Negative
CARTERTON

128. This relatively modern town closely associated with RAF Brize Norton is the second largest town in West Oxfordshire with a population of about 15,000. Extensive areas of residential development, including housing to accommodate RAF families, have been built during the last 50 years. This century has seen the new community of Shilton Park, about 1,500 homes, built on the north-eastern edge of the town along with a new distributor road which provides an alternative to the route through Brize Norton village towards the A40 to the north.

129. Carterton Town Council is keen to see further expansion of the town’s population and additional improvements in local infrastructure. In relation to the future development strategy for the town, the following issues have been identified from background evidence and through consultation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transport connections</th>
<th>The town is relatively isolated from the primary road network but benefits from a good bus service linking with the A40 towards Oxford.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proximity and setting of nearby villages</td>
<td>Carterton with RAF Brize Norton occupies much of the original countryside between four villages (Shilton, Brize Norton, Alvescot and Black Bourton) and affects the rural setting of these communities. The landscape character of land surrounding the town has been assessed in the <a href="#">Carterton Landscape Assessment</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of RAF Brize Norton</td>
<td>RAF Brize Norton is an integral part of the local community; its future has been secured through an agreement to deliver a modern air to air refuelling and strategic air transport service. About 6,000-7,000 military and civilian personnel will be based at RAF Brize Norton and its expansion is viewed as a positive reinforcement of the local economy. The redevelopment of large areas of substandard MOD housing is planned. Aircraft noise affects a wide area (see maps below) although the extent of severe noise is expected to be reduced as quieter aircraft (to replace the VC10 and Tristar) are introduced to the base over the years 2011-2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flooding</td>
<td>Surface water run-off from the Carterton area has contributed to severe flooding in nearby villages in recent years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diversifying the local economy

Local jobs in Carterton have been traditionally linked with RAF Brize Norton or associated with businesses on the Carterton South Industrial Estate. New job opportunities have been created via the West Oxfordshire Business Park and more recently Ventura Park alongside Monahan Way. There is sufficient provision identified for the foreseeable future (West Oxfordshire Economy Study) but additional land may be required in the longer term, taking into account opportunities associated with the airbase and potential to redevelop and/or refurbish parts of the Carterton South Industrial Estate.

Town centre vitality

Environmental improvements and the addition of the modern Co-op foodstore in recent years have improved town centre, which will be further complemented by proposals for an Aldi supermarket. Carterton, however, has a limited shopping offer and it has been a long term aim to continue to improve the town centre facilities. An area of land within the centre is allocated for refurbishment/redevelopment to improve the retail offer of the town.

Education and community infrastructure

Carterton has some spare capacity in its primary schools but fluctuating needs of the RAF necessitate some flexibility. There is a very active secondary school but it lacks sixth form facilities. There is a general need for facilities to interest younger people. Leisure opportunities have received a major boost with the new country park and playground, the indoor swimming pool and gym as well as the recently opened Shilton Park Community Centre, however the second phase of the Leisure Centre to provide additional facilities remains unfunded. Despite its size Carterton lacks its own fire and ambulance facilities – relying on stations in the surrounding towns and villages, as well as the occasional use of RAF services. The town also lacks its own cemetery. The Town Council has been looking for additional burial space for many years, as well as land to accommodate additional allotments.

There is no capacity at the Brize Norton sewage pumping station (SPS) – upgrades required to support new development (new additions or upsize existing sewers). SPSs are overwhelmed in wet weather. Upgrade to the Sewage Treatment Works required to support significant new development.

Minerals constraint

Burford Limestone Quarry lies just to the north of the town where several phases of extraction remain with planning permission. Oxfordshire County Council has identified a mineral consultation area around the quarry and applies an exclusion zone of 350m between active quarries and towns.
**West Oxfordshire Core Strategy Preferred Approach Sustainability Appraisal**

Present Noise Footprint for RAF Brize Norton

Expected Future Noise Footprint for RAF Brize Norton
(older aircraft replaced by quieter aircraft)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise contour</th>
<th>PPG24 Noise Exposure Category</th>
<th>Summary of advice for residential development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57dB LA eq</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Noise should be taken into account, ensure an adequate level of protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66dB LA eq</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Planning permission should not normally be granted unless no alternatives available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72dB LA eq</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Planning permission should normally be refused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development Options

130. Four options have been assessed for future development of a strategic scale. The first is to consolidate the existing built-up area of Carterton, together with the completion of outstanding local plan allocations for housing and employment. A key priority is the planned redevelopment of large areas of MOD property. Three options consider the potential for significant outward expansion of the town (each with about 1,000 homes and supporting facilities including new primary school). These options would develop surrounding farmland to the north, east and west. RAF Brize Norton lies to the south. Carterton Town Council has expressed a wish to see further significant expansion of the town alongside further improvement of local infrastructure.

131. Several published documents have informed this sustainability appraisal including flood reports and landscape and transport studies of the Carterton area – these are available on the Council’s website.

Option 1 – Development primarily within existing built-up areas and on remaining local plan allocated sites

132. Two areas of poor quality MOD housing (about 600 homes) are due to be redeveloped to provide new RAF family accommodation but the final number of homes is as yet unknown. Elsewhere in the town the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has identified a possible additional housing potential of about 450-500 new homes on sites of 10 or more dwellings. This includes land off Milestone Road where residential development is currently constrained by high levels of aircraft noise, although quieter aircraft are expected to be introduced between 2011-16. It also includes the remaining local plan allocation on the northern edge of Carterton. New homes will also continue to be built on smaller sites throughout the town although the potential for further residential intensification within the modern housing areas is limited. Unless site thresholds are reduced under affordable housing policy only larger sites will continue to help meet local affordable housing needs. There is sufficient available employment land identified to meet short-medium term needs. Addition provision may be required in the years beyond 2016.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities remain for new housing and employment development</td>
<td>• Limited ability to improve infrastructure through developer funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maximises the use of previously developed land and focus on redevelopment of MOD housing</td>
<td>• Unless site thresholds reduced, limited further potential for affordable housing provision in the town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limits pressure on existing infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limits impact on the landscape setting of the town, and setting of nearby villages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

January 2010
Option 2 – Greenfield expansion to the north

133. The area of search lies within the parishes of Shilton and Brize Norton between the Shilton Road to the west and Burford Road to the east and to the north of the Kilkenny Lane Country Park and proposed link road to connect Shilton Road with the North East Development Area (Shilton Park). The adopted Local Plan envisages that this road proposal and associated woodland planting together with the area of new housing remaining to be built to the south (about 200 homes) would ‘complete’ the northern edge of the town in the Swinbrook Road area. The new country park to the east is an integral part of the ‘green buffer’ between town, countryside and nearby villages. To the north of Kilkenny Lane is an active limestone quarry with significant permitted reserves and life remaining. Much of this area is covered by a minerals consultation area and buffer policy around the quarry. The County Minerals Authority has indicated a possible objection to town expansion north of Kilkenny Lane on mineral sterilisation grounds. Various landowners in this area have suggested development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Large potential development area to deliver a wide choice of housing and significant supply of affordable housing</td>
<td>• Western part prominent open limestone wolds landscape with extensive views and part of the setting of Shilton Village and its Conservation Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Large potential development area to support on site community facilities, employment development and wider infrastructure improvements</td>
<td>• Accessed by narrow country roads only although potential for access from new link road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to link to pedestrian/cycle infrastructure in Shilton Park and opportunity to improve cycle/pedestrian link along Swinbrook and Burford Roads</td>
<td>• Largely within a minerals consultation area and buffer zone for active limestone quarry. Concern about mineral sterilisation development in this area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eastern part within a shallow minor valley north of Kilkenny Lane and is less visually exposed and not part of a settlement gap/setting</td>
<td>• Remote from Carterton’s infrastructure and bus services and is the furthest of the three options from the town centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beyond new country park planned to provide a setting for and soften Shilton Park development, and provides a barrier to integration with the rest of the town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Need for sustainable urban drainage scheme to avoid increased surface water run-off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sewage treatment works and sewer network likely to need upgrading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Well used bridleways cross the site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Option 3 – Greenfield expansion to the east

134. The area of search lies between Burford Road (part of Brize Norton village) to the north and Carterton Road to the south with existing operational MOD buildings to the east. The western boundary is the recently built Monahan Way distributor road and associated woodland planting. Playing fields and a pavilion occupy the south west corner of this area. Land within this area has been promoted by the landowner for mixed use development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to deliver a wide choice of housing and significant</td>
<td>• Open and highly visible landscape which forms part of the setting of Brize Norton village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supply of affordable housing</td>
<td>• Land slopes down towards Brize Norton village. New buildings would be prominent and difficult to screen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to support some on site facilities and wider</td>
<td>• Residents would need to cross Monahan Way to reach existing facilities – this could discourage walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infrastructure improvements</td>
<td>• Additional facilities such as neighbourhood centre unlikely to be viable in this location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Proximity to new employment areas, health and leisure facilities,</td>
<td>• Proximity to operational areas of RAF Brize Norton – noise assessment required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and neighbourhood centre in Shilton Park</td>
<td>• Significant flooding problems have arisen due to surface water run-off in this area. Need for sustainable urban drainage scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good access to local and strategic highway network and main</td>
<td>• Potential contaminated land in south-east corner needs investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bus services</td>
<td>• Area crossed by rural public footpath well used by local people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Proximity to existing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure</td>
<td>• Sewage treatment works and sewer network likely to need upgrading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towards town centre</td>
<td>• The recent major development area of Shilton Park and A40 Link Road was planned and designed to provide a clear edge to this side of Carterton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Additional balancing ponds in this area could help to mitigate</td>
<td>• Potential to increase traffic flows through Brize Norton village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flooding in downstream villages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Option 4 – Greenfield expansion to the west**

An extensive area of agricultural land within Alvescot parish lies to the west of Carterton and the Shill Brook valley. The area of search lies between Alvescot Road in the south and Alvescot Downs Farm in the north with a narrow country lane linking Shilton and Alvescot villages to the west.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Potential to deliver a wide choice of housing and significant supply of affordable housing</td>
<td>• Prominent open limestone wolds landscape physically separated from Carterton by Shill Brook valley. The town is well screened from this direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Large potential development area to support on site community facilities, employment development and wider infrastructure improvements</td>
<td>• The Shill Brook valley and its sides have been identified as a Biodiversity Target Area for limestone grassland restoration and management. The valley forms a barrier to integration with the town unless breached.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relatively close to the town centre, and opportunity to improve access to secondary school and town centre if through new crossing of Shill Brook valley</td>
<td>• Significant flooding problems have arisen due to surface water run-off via the Shill Brook. Need for sustainable urban drainage scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Possible opportunity to enhance the biodiversity value of Shill Brook valley</td>
<td>• Proximity to RAF Brize Norton runway – noise assessment required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Weak landscape structure, potential to create a new strong landscape structure within which development could be acceptable</td>
<td>• Area in the north forms part of the setting to Shilton Conservation Area,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bounded by a rural road network – improvements to Alvescot Road likely to be needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Witney &amp; Oxford bound traffic would need to pass through Carterton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poor pedestrian/cycle access at present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Area crossed by rural public footpath well used by local people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sewage treatment works and sewer network likely to need upgrading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appraisal Summary

136. The following table summarises the appraisal of the identified options against the most relevant sustainability objectives (detail in the appendix).

#### Carterton Strategic Options Appraisal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Objectives</th>
<th>Option 1 - no new major expansion</th>
<th>Option 2 - northern extension</th>
<th>Option 3 - eastern extension</th>
<th>Option 4 - western extension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thriving and inclusive communities</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve accessibility to all services and facilities</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve efficiency of land use</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect and improve soil and water resources</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce the risk from all sources of flooding</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserve and enhance landscape character and the historic environment</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High and stable levels of employment</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable economic growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: ++ Major positive, + Positive, +/- Neutral, - Minor negative, --Major Negative, ? Uncertain
137. Focussing future development on sites within the town and existing local plan allocations has the least adverse impact when considering environmental objectives such as the impact on the character of the landscape and setting of nearby villages. It may also provide a focus enabling the redevelopment of existing sites within the town, particularly substandard MOD housing, and thus deliver environmental improvements. However, the disadvantage of this option is that it may limit the long term potential of the town to deliver significant levels of new housing, including affordable housing or make significant contributions to improvements in infrastructure.

138. Of the options for a town extension the eastern option is the most accessible to all destinations by sustainable modes, has good highway access and the best potential for integration with the town. Additional balancing ponds may provide wider flood mitigation for downstream villages. The main disadvantages of this option are the physical constraints to the land available and particularly the adverse impact on the setting of Brize Norton village.

139. Land to the west has the advantage of a large potential development area, capable of supporting a mixed use community, and could provide enhancements to the Shill Brook Valley. Although in relative proximity to the town centre, it is not in proximity to the main bus services and the Shill Brook valley isolates this area from the rest of the town. Accessibility could be improved through an additional crossing of the Shill Brook Valley. This is a prominent plateau and highly visible, with land to the north sloping down towards and forming part of the setting of the Shilton Conservation Area. Development could be acceptable within a strong new landscape structure which minimises impact on the setting of Shilton village.

140. Land to the north of the town has the potential for a large development area but is the most constrained of the options. Development here is the most distant from services and facilities within the town and would have the largest impact on the rural road network. Much of the site is segregated from the rest of the town by the new country park limiting the potential for integration. Land in the western part of this site is highly prominent and part of the setting of Shilton Conservation Area although land to the east within a minor valley is less visible. Much of the site is within the minerals consultation area and buffer around Burford Quarry immediately to the north. Several phases of extraction remain with planning permission at the Quarry.

141. Public consultation on these options will help inform this appraisal before the preferred approach is confirmed for Carterton.
CHIPPING NORTON

142. The Cotswold market town of Chipping Norton is the third largest town in West Oxfordshire with a population of about 6,500 people. It occupies a hilltop position on the eastern edge of the Cotswolds AONB within which most of the town is situated. It acts as an important service centre for an extensive rural area. The following issues relevant to the strategic options for the town have been identified through consultation and from the evidence base:

**The special character and setting of the town**

Chipping Norton is a historic market town which gained prosperity and importance as a centre of wool and tweed industries. A conservation area covers most of the central, northern and eastern parts of the town within which there are many listed buildings. A separate conservation area extends over open land to the south west of the town providing a setting for Bliss Mill, a landmark Grade 2* listed former tweed mill. Land surrounding the town is generally sensitive to development. The plateau to the east of the town is the only land on the fringes of the town which lies outside the AONB. A landscape appraisal of land surrounding the town has been carried out – [Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment](#).

**Affordable housing**

There are some 200 people on the waiting list for affordable accommodation. Provision of additional affordable homes has proved difficult – the size of the town precludes the rural exception site approach used in villages and a 15 dwelling site threshold makes most new residential sites which come forward ineligible.

**Additional employment**

At the beginning of this century, the Parker Knoll factory to the east of the town closed with a loss of about 400 jobs. Two hectares of the former factory site were reserved for new businesses but implementation of the planning permission is awaited. Elsewhere land is available for employment adjacent the Cromwell business park and the Local Plan allocation in this area is also identified to meet employment needs. Alongside the refurbishment of existing employment sites, there is a need for further small business premises (particularly industrial/workshop units).

**Transport**

Chipping Norton sits astride the A44 and A361, a heavily used lorry route passing through the town centre. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been designated along town centre roads. An Action Plan (approved in 2008) contains a range of measures aimed at reducing HGV movements through the centre.

**Education and community facilities**

The two existing primary schools (both church schools) are currently either full (Catholic Holy Trinity) or are forecast to have limited capacity in future years (St Mary’s).

A new residential care home and community hospital are under construction on the local plan allocated site to the north of London Road. The County Council is also seeking the provision of extra...
care housing to meet the housing needs of older people. This will lead to new development opportunities within the town as premises owned by the County Council and healthcare organisations are vacated. There is a particular need to improve library facilities and provide meeting places for both younger and older residents.
Development Options

143. The settlement strategy options considered earlier included the appraisal of whether Chipping Norton should be a focus for development through the Core Strategy. This appraisal concluded that focussing development on the three main towns is the most sustainable as it best meets affordable housing needs which are also focussed on the three main towns. It is not therefore considered necessary to re-appraise an option which does not include significant further development in the town.

144. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has identified that there is some potential for further housing within the town on previously developed sites and small windfall sites. The previously developed sites also provide an opportunity to meet community needs.

145. The options for a significant expansion of the town are limited. Land to the north, south or west of the town lies within the Cotswolds AONB where any significant development is likely to be prominent and adversely impact upon existing character. National policy combined with guidance in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan requires great weight to be given to the conservation of the natural beauty of the area. The SHLAA identifies limited potential for a small extension to the south of the town.

146. Land on the eastern fringe, to the north and south of London Road, lies outside the AONB and has been the subject of recent development. New healthcare facilities are under construction on land north of London Road allocated for mixed used development in the adopted Local Plan. The capacity of this general area to accommodate new development is, however, constrained by:

- the character and prominence of the plateau in views from the wider countryside and along the tree-lined avenue of London Road, particularly the south and south-east facing fields closer to Burford Road. Landscape impact is addressed in the Chipping Norton Landscape Assessment.

- the ability to achieve satisfactory vehicular access without adversely impacting upon the avenue of London Road trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order. Access is available to serve some 200 dwellings via the now redeveloped Parker Knoll site (subject to detailed traffic assessment). The provision of a new road access to the south to link with Burford Road would not only be unacceptably prominent in the open countryside but would impact upon the well-used town allotments and/or conflict with use of the secondary school coach and car park.

147. The following table sets out the main advantages and disadvantages of an expansion of the town to the east. An appraisal of this option against the most relevant sustainability objectives is set out in the appendix.
### Expansion to the east of Chipping Norton

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities/Positive impacts</th>
<th>Challenges/Negative impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Third largest town with wide range of supporting services &amp; facilities (but only 6,500 population)</td>
<td>• Town relatively remote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Land outside Cotswolds AONB</td>
<td>• Extensive limestone wolds plateau where buildings and structures are prominent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General location on eastern side supported in transport terms by County Highway Authority</td>
<td>• Part of area designated as a Biodiversity Target Area for limestone grassland restoration and management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential good pedestrian/cycle routes to town centre and schools</td>
<td>• Could increase traffic levels through the central Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Existing primary schools are full/limited capacity so any significant growth could necessitate the provision of extra school capacity.
- Within water source protection zone 3 where pollution of ground water is to be avoided by waste water being connected to mains drainage. May affect use of soakaways.
- Existing sewers serving this area are at the head of the catchment area (draining from east to west) and have limited capacity. Modelling study required.
- Tank Farm water reservoir to be retained within area (significant investment planned by Thames Water 2010-15).
- Well used allotments in southern part of area.
- Some high quality (Grade 3a) agricultural land.

148. An extension to the east of Chipping Norton is part of the basis of the preferred approach for the Core Strategy. Here a Strategic Development Area is proposed, confined to the least prominent parts of the eastern plateau adjoining the eastern town edge and incorporating the existing local plan allocation. Expansion of Chipping Norton in this area will help accommodate new and relocated facilities, alongside provision of new market and affordable housing and employment opportunities. Being on the Oxford side of the town should help minimise the amount of through traffic generated from new development in this area and its consequential impact upon the town centre and AQMA.