South Oxfordshire District Council

Listening Learning Leading

Vale of White Horse District Council

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041

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South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils

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Flood risk

Policy CE6 – Flood risk

1) The risk and impact of flooding must be minimised by:

   a) directing development to areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source, taking into account current and future impacts of climate change;

   b) ensuring development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere;

   c) ensuring development is safe for its lifetime; and

   d) taking opportunities provided by development and improvements in green and other infrastructure to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding, making as much use as possible of natural flood management techniques that also deliver wider environmental benefits.

2) Development in areas at risk of flooding must pass the Sequential Test and where necessary the Exception Test, where they are required by national planning policy and guidance. Regard should be had to the Joint Local Plan Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (or any future update) in applying the tests.

3) A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) must be provided for all development in Flood Zones 2 and 3. In Flood Zone 1 a FRA must accompany all proposals involving:

   a) sites of 1 hectare or more;

   b) land identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment as being at increased flood risk in future; or

   c) land that may be subject to other sources of flooding, where its development would introduce a more vulnerable use.

   FRAs must consider all sources of flood risk and the impacts of climate change. FRAs must also consider the cumulative impact of development on flood risk as set out in the Joint Local Plan Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (or

any future update). It should be demonstrated that flood risk downstream will not be made worse by development. Measures that contribute to a reduction in flood risk downstream are encouraged.

4) Where flood risk is a consideration and relevant tests have been passed, development must:

   a) firstly, seek to minimise flood risk through design, with site layouts that locate the most vulnerable elements of development in areas of lowest flood risk (or on upper storeys) as far as possible and by raising finished floor and/or ground levels where appropriate.

   b) then, where appropriate, investigate opportunities to control the risk of flooding in discussion with the council, Environment Agency and Oxfordshire County Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority). Consideration should be given to natural flood management techniques.

   c) then use flood resistance and resilience measures to address any residual risk. Passive measures should be prioritised over active measures.

   d) then consider any further flood management measures required. Safe access and escape routes must be provided. Consideration must also be given to whether adequate flood warning will be available to people using the development.

5) Planning permission will not be granted for development in the functional flood plain (Flood Zone 3b) except where it is for water-compatible uses or essential infrastructure (as defined in national planning policy and guidance) or where it is on brownfield land and includes a high standard of flood resistance and resilience measures designed to decrease risk compared with the existing situation. All of the following criteria must also be met:

   a) development will not lead to a net increase in the built footprint and where possible will reduce the built footprint;

   b) development will not result in a reduction in flood storage and where possible will increase flood storage;

   c) development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; and

   d) any future occupants of the development will not be put at risk and safe access and escape routes will be provided.

4.40 Policy CE6 (Flood risk) will help to protect communities from all sources of flood risk, both now and in the future. This includes flood risk from rivers, rainfall on ground surfaces, rising groundwater, reservoirs and overwhelmed sewers and drainage systems.

4.41 This policy aligns with the sequential approach set out in national planning policy and guidance by directing development to areas at little or no risk of flooding in preference to areas at higher risk. This is the most effective way of addressing flood risk, as it places the least reliance on measures like flood defences, flood warnings and property level resilience features. In applying the sequential approach, including the sequential and exception tests (where required), other forms of flood risk (e.g. surface water) need to be treated consistently with river (fluvial) flood risk. Where neighbourhood planning groups are considering development in areas at risk of flooding, they must apply the sequential test to the whole neighbourhood area.

4.42 It is important to consider future flood risk as climate change is altering weather patterns and increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, meaning that flood risk is likely to increase over time. It is crucial that development is safe for its whole lifetime. National planning practice guidance provides advice on the use of climate change allowances and how development 'lifetimes' should be calculated.

4.43 The Joint Local Plan Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (or any future update) should be the starting point in considering flood risk in the districts, along with the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning[14].

Water efficiency

Policy CE7 – Water efficiency

1) It must be demonstrated that development has been designed to be water efficient and to minimise water consumption.

2) All new homes must be designed to high water efficiency standards, with water use not exceeding 100 litres per person per day, or any future tighter standard that may replace this.

3) Every new home with a garden must be fitted with at least one water butt (unless an alternative rainwater harvesting scheme is implemented that would make this redundant).

[14] Environment Agency (2021) Flood Map for Planning, available at: https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/

Water quality, wastewater infrastructure and drainage

Policy CE8 – Water quality, wastewater infrastructure and drainage

Protecting and enhancing water quality

1) Development must protect and enhance water quality, including through:

   a) the use of green infrastructure, including sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);

   b) utilising natural means of water quality improvements where possible, with mechanical water quality improvement devices only being used in situations where insufficient water quality improvement can be achieved through natural means;

   c) maximising water efficiency; and

   d) identifying and implementing opportunities to remedy historical water contamination issues, where appropriate.

2) Where a development includes the creation or extension of roads, the potential water quality issues associated with road runoff must be considered and appropriate mitigation provided to address impacts.

3) Where development may have an adverse impact on water quality, evidence must be provided that identifies potential impacts (including for human health, the natural environment and amenity) and suitable mitigation. Engagement should be undertaken with the Environment Agency to agree the scope and content of the evidence required. Mitigation must be in place before any environmental effects occur. Where appropriate, water quality monitoring should be undertaken and submitted to the council to ensure that mitigation is effective.

Meeting legal requirements

4) Development, individually or cumulatively, must not prevent the future attainment of "good" status under the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017[a].

5) Where there are impact pathways on habitats of national or international importance, development must not prevent a protected waterbody achieving the objectives set out in the Common Standards Monitoring Guidance[b] (or any future standards/guidance that may supersede this).

Wastewater infrastructure

6) There must be adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve development.

7) Applications for major development must be supported by a Sewage Capacity Assessment.

8) Where wastewater infrastructure capacity constraints are identified, development must not commence until the delivery of sufficient new and/or upgraded wastewater infrastructure has been agreed and programmed (between the developer and Thames Water or other utility provider). Development must not be occupied until the necessary wastewater treatment infrastructure upgrades have been completed. A phased approach may be required to ensure alignment between development and infrastructure delivery. The council will apply Grampian conditions, where appropriate, to ensure that adequate sewerage capacity is in place before new homes are occupied in order to protect water quality.

Drainage

9) All development will be required to provide a Drainage Strategy.

10) Development will be expected to incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) that:

a) are well designed;

b) are appropriate to their location (for example, infiltration SuDS are unlikely to be appropriate in areas of contamination, even following remediation);

c) are multifunctional, providing a range of benefits for people and nature, including protecting and enhancing water quality (including groundwater quality), managing flood risk and supporting biodiversity;

d) attenuate run-off rates to greenfield run-off rates. Higher rates would need to be justified and the risks quantified. Development on brownfield land should reduce run-off rates to as close to greenfield rates as possible; and

e) reduce the amount of water discharging to the wider wastewater infrastructure network at source, with opportunities taken to disconnect flows where possible. (For example, by using features such as water butts, swales and rain gardens, rather than direct network connections from gullies and rainwater pipes.)

11) Major development must comply with the latest local standards and guidance for surface water drainage produced by the Lead Local Flood Authority (Oxfordshire County Council)[c].

12) No new surface water connections are to be connected to a foul sewer. For brownfield sites, where existing connections are proven, the drainage strategy should seek to either remove these if feasible or attenuate existing flows to as close to the QBar greenfield rate as feasible or to a rate acceptable to Thames Water whichever is the lower.

13) In the case of extensions to buildings, changes of use and refurbishments, developments are encouraged to take the opportunity to upgrade the drainage of the existing building as well as the extension, by disconnecting roof drainage from the surface water sewer network and incorporating soakaways, water butts and greywater recycling schemes.

14) All development will be required to demonstrate suitable arrangements for future maintenance and management of drainage schemes. All below ground drainage serving more than one property should be designed to adoptable standards and offered to an OFWAT approved statutory water authority for adoption.

15) In areas where high groundwater could potentially affect the drainage system, specific measures should be incorporated in any new network provided to reduce the risk of groundwater affecting the drainage system.

[a] The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017, available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/407/contents

[b] Joint Nature Conservation Committee (various dates) Common Standards Monitoring Guidance, available at: www.jncc.gov.uk/our-work/common-standards-monitoring-guidance/

[c] Current local standards can be found at Oxfordshire County Council (2021) Local Standards and Guidance for Surface Water Drainage on Major Development in Oxfordshire (Version 1.2), available at: www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/LOCAL-STANDARDS-AND-GUIDANCE-FOR-SURFACE-WATER-DRAINAGE-ON-MAJOR-DEVELOPMENT-IN-OXFORDSHIRE-Jan-22-2.pdf

4.47 Waterbodies in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse include the River Thames, globally rare chalk streams and groundwater aquifers. These waterbodies provide a range of social, environmental and economic services, such as providing water supplies for homes and businesses, supporting a diverse range of habitats and wildlife, contributing to the districts' special character, heritage and identity, and providing opportunities for sports, leisure and recreation. However, the Joint Local

Plan Water Cycle Study Scoping Report[17] shows that of the 45 surface waterbodies wholly or partially in the districts that are monitored by the Environment Agency (EA), four are classed as being of 'bad' ecological status, 18 are classed as 'poor', 22 are classed as 'moderate', and only one is classed as 'good'. All these waterbodies fail in their chemical status. It is therefore important that the Joint Local Plan helps to protect our waterbodies from further decline and supports their enhancement wherever possible.

4.48 The quality of watercourses can be affected by a range of factors including pollution and changes to water levels and flows. Climate change will also have an impact on water quality as drier summers and wetter winters alter water levels and flows. Warmer weather will also change water temperatures, which can affect delicate ecosystems. Development can negatively impact water quality in a range of different ways, for example:

- development can increase demand for water. As more water is taken from waterbodies, water levels and flows may change and the concentration of pollutants may increase.
- development can result in more rainwater draining from hard surfaces such as roads, pavements, car parks and driveways. This water can carry pollutants such as silt, grit, bacteria from animal faeces and oil that may enter surface water sewers that discharge directly into our rivers and streams.
- some development, for example industrial uses, can cause specific concerns (for example in relation to chemicals used).
- development can also result in more wastewater going to treatment works. This means that more treated wastewater may be released back into the environment, which still carries some pollutants. If wastewater infrastructure capacity is overwhelmed, there is also the risk that untreated wastewater may be released directly into rivers and streams, causing significant health and environmental risks.

4.49 Therefore, it is essential that there is sufficient wastewater infrastructure capacity available to serve development. Policy CE8 (Water quality, wastewater infrastructure and drainage) seeks to ensure that wastewater infrastructure capacity is appropriately assessed and, where capacity issues are identified, seeks to ensure alignment of development and infrastructure upgrades. The Water Cycle Study updated to inform the Joint Local Plan assesses wastewater infrastructure capacity and environmental impacts. It identifies that a number of wastewater infrastructure upgrades are required to support development in the districts,

[17] South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (2024) Water Cycle Study (WCS) Scoping Report (prepared by Wallingford HydroSolutions), available at: www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLPEvidence

and this is also set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan[18]. Developers should engage with Thames Water, the wastewater service provider for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, at a very early stage of their proposals.

4.50 This policy also sets out drainage requirements for developments. Ensuring developments are supported by appropriate drainage solutions is important in helping to manage flood risk, protecting and enhancing water quality, and avoiding additional pressure on wastewater infrastructure. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) can also provide a wide range of additional benefits for people and nature and should be considered as part of a comprehensive approach to green infrastructure.

Air quality

Policy CE9 – Air quality

Protecting and enhancing air quality

1) Development must protect and enhance air quality through:

   a) design that seeks to avoid negative impacts on air quality and/or exposure to poor air quality, both during construction and over the lifetime of development;

   b) where it is not possible to entirely avoid negative impacts on air quality and/or exposure to poor air quality, design measures should be used to minimise negative impacts/exposure as far as possible, both during construction and over the lifetime of development;

   c) provision of appropriate green infrastructure; and

   d) regard to the councils' latest air quality developer guidance[a].

2) Development, on its own or cumulatively[b], should not result in the creation of any new areas that exceed national air quality objective levels or delay the date at which compliance will be achieved in areas that are currently in exceedance of national air quality objective levels[c].

[18] South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (2024) Infrastructure Delivery Plan, available at: www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLPEvidence

Pollution sources and receptors

Policy CE10 – Pollution sources and receptors

Impact of existing pollution on new development

1) Development proposals should be appropriate to their location and should be designed to ensure that the occupiers of a new development will not be subject to individual and/or cumulative adverse affect(s) of pollution.

2) Proposals will need to avoid or provide details of proposed mitigation methods to protect occupiers of a new development from the adverse impact(s) of pollution.

3) Unless there is a realistic potential for appropriate mitigation, development will not be permitted if it is likely to be adversely affected by pollution. Factors can include, but are not limited to:

   a) noise or vibration;

   b) smell, dust, odour, gases and other emissions;

   c) air pollution, contamination of the site or its surroundings (see Policy CE12 (Soils and contaminated land)) and hazardous substances nearby;

   d) artificial light (see Policy CE11 (Light pollution and dark skies));

   e) land instability; and

   f) any other relevant types of pollution.

Impact of new development on health, nature and neighbouring environments

4) Development proposals must be designed to ensure that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on human health, the natural or historic environment and/or the amenity of neighbouring uses. Both individual and cumulative impacts of development will be considered when assessing development proposals. The merits of development

proposals will be balanced against the adverse impact on human health, the natural and historic environment and/or local amenity, including the following sources of pollution:

a) noise or vibration;

b) smell, dust, odour, gases and other emissions;

c) air pollution, contamination of the site or its surroundings (see Policy CE12 (Soils and contaminated land)) and hazardous substances nearby;

d) artificial light (see Policy CE11 (Light pollution and dark skies));

e) land instability; and

f) any other relevant types of pollution.

Agent of Change

5) Planning proposals must acknowledge the agent of change principle and ensure new development is designed to mitigate any potential adverse impacts from established noise and other nuisance-generating uses. Proposals must ensure these uses are able to continue to operate and grow without restriction.

Hazardous Substances

6) Proposals for development which involves the use, movement or storage of hazardous substances will be referred to the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Environment Agency.

7) Proposals for development within the vicinity of an installation or pipeline involving hazardous substances or activities will be referred to the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Environment Agency.

8) In the case of either 6 or 7, development will only be permitted if the impact on health and safety of occupants of that development is acceptable.

9) The council will seek to reduce the potential for conflicting land uses and promote safety of people and protection of the environment.

Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) Harwell

10) All development proposals within the boundary of the NRS Harwell nuclear licensed site will be referred to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR). The following proposals for development within the Outer Consultation Zone (OCZ) for NRS Harwell (as shown on the Policies Map) will also be referred to ONR:

a) any new residential development of 200 dwellings or greater;

b) any re-use or re-classification of an existing development that will lead to a material increase in the size of an existing development (greater than 500 persons);

c) any new non-residential development that could introduce vulnerable groups to the OCZ; and

d) any new development, re-use or re-classification of an existing development that could pose an external hazard to the site.

4.56 New development should be designed and located appropriately so that no adverse impacts arise from either existing or potential pollution sources. Policy CE10 (Pollution sources and receptors) will ensure that new development considers any potential adverse impacts from sources of pollution and mitigates these where appropriate.

4.57 “Pollution” is a common adverse impact of development, and includes anything that affects the quality of land, air, water or soils, which might lead to an adverse impact on human health, the natural environment or general amenity. The term “pollution” covers a variety of potential sources listed in this policy, including noise, vibration, odour and dust, as well as other relevant pollutants such as light and air pollution which are covered in more detail by their own polices.

4.58 Planning applicants for development within 800m of an existing sewage treatment works or within 15m of a sewage pumping station, should liaise with Thames Water to establish if an odour impact assessment is required, completed with the input of Thames Water. The odour impact assessment should confirm that:

a) there is no adverse amenity impact on future occupiers of the proposed development; or

b) the development can be mitigated to ensure that any potential for adverse amenity impact is avoided.

4.59 This policy also includes a requirement relating to the agent of change principle, which applies where the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse affect on new development in its vicinity (including changes of use). The applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed. This helps to ensure that the responsibility of mitigating existing noise and other nuisance-generating uses is placed on the new development, rather than existing businesses or facilities.

4.60 Green infrastructure can be utilised to mitigate the impacts of pollution, particularly to mitigate noise and air quality impacts. The integration of greening interventions, if implemented correctly, can have significant noise abatement benefits which should be considered. Green infrastructure can also help to improve air quality where it is provided along key transport corridors to reduce impacts from vehicle emissions.

4.61 This policy also ensures that the health and safety of occupants is prioritised when applications involving hazardous substances are considered. It sets out when applications will need to be referred to the Health and Safety Executive and/or the Environment Agency where relevant, or in circumstances relating to Nuclear Restoration Services (NRS) Harwell, when a referral to the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) is needed.

Light pollution and dark skies

Policy CE11 – Light pollution and dark skies

1) All proposals for development should be designed to minimise light pollution, both external lighting and as a consequence of light leakage from the interior of buildings. Proposals should be accompanied by a lighting design proportionate to the scale of the development.

2) Proposals for external lighting schemes will be permitted if they meet the following criteria:

   a) the lighting shows a clear need and justification;

b) the lighting proposed is the minimum appropriate for its purpose;

c) they satisfy requirements set out in the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Lighting Design Guidance. This should be in accordance with their Environmental Zone (where relevant) as shown on the Policies Map or equivalent up to date document);

d) where appropriate, that the lowest possible illuminance is achieved for the task and it has considered appropriate professional standards;

e) it is demonstrated that the number, luminous flux, intensity and height and timing of lighting is necessary to achieve its locationally appropriate purpose is proposed;

f) suitable timing and control systems are in place to ensure light is only on when needed;

g) it has been designed to minimise light glare, light trespass and spillage into neighbouring properties and would not dazzle or distract drivers or pedestrians using nearby highways;

h) it has been designed to minimise sky glow by the appropriate use of luminaires with zero upward light;

i) the lighting uses the best available technology and solutions to minimise light pollution and conserve energy;

j) the lighting achieves the lowest appropriate colour temperature for its location and biodiversity;

k) the lighting scheme would not be visually detrimental to its immediate or wider setting or to landscape character, particularly intrinsically dark landscapes;

l) it is not a nuisance and does not adversely impact living conditions;

m) it does not have an adverse impact on attractive and/or sensitive views or from vantage points;

n) it is designed to minimise disturbance to wildlife, biodiversity and their food sources; and

o) any development affecting protected species or habitats or in close proximity, follows relevant specific guidance on lighting.

3) Proposals for external lighting within areas of the dark light environmental zone (E1) will only be permitted where they adhere to the above requirements and where they can demonstrate that there will be no significant[a] adverse effects on the visibility of the night sky or its intrinsically dark landscapes.

4) Within National Landscapes (formerly AONBs), proposals for development should reflect the guidance set out in the North Wessex Downs Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light[b] and supporting guidance found in Dark Skies of North Wessex Downs AONB: A Guide to Good External Lighting[c], as well as lighting guidance set out in the Chilterns AONB Management Plan[d] (or any future equivalent guidance of those listed).

5) In addition to other requirements set out in this policy, proposals within areas of the dark light environmental zone (E1) will be required to meet the following principles to reduce internal light spill through glazing:

   a) glazing should not exceed 25% of the wall area;

   b) avoid single continuous areas of glazing such as multi-floor to eaves glazing;

   c) glazing should not be on roofs or ceilings without sufficient mitigation;

   d) a maximum target upper visible light transmission (VLT) limit of 0.65 +/-0.05 should be applied in all glazing applications; and

   e) high impact commercial greenhouses or equivalent buildings or structures should be avoided.

6) Where possible, development proposals are encouraged to support the restoration and improvement of areas to enhance and or extend dark skies, and/or upgrade existing sources of light pollution on, and/or in, the vicinity of the development to reduce light pollution in the area.

[a] The level of significant adverse impacts depends on the design, extent and surrounding environment. Plans should provide an assessment of adverse impact.

[b] North Wessex Downs AONB (2021) Position Statement on Dark Skies and Artificial Light, available at: www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Position-Statement-on-Dark-Skies-and-Artificial-Light-Final.pdf

[c] North Wessex Downs AONB (2021) A Guide to Good External Lighting, available at: www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Lighting_Guide_07-05_MEDRES.pdf

[d] Chilterns Conservation Board (2019) Chilterns AONB Management Plan, available at: www.chilternsaonb.org/what-we-do/future-proofing-the-chilterns/management-plan/

4.62 Light pollution is known to have a significant impact on both wildlife and humans. Our districts are predominately rural, so it is important to minimise light pollution to reduce the impact on our environment, nature, people and landscapes. The darkest areas of our districts are those areas with little to no light pollution, often known as “dark skies” areas. Their darkness is an important element of landscape character and tranquillity, and as a result they are particularly vulnerable to light pollution.

4.63 Policy CE11 (Light pollution and dark skies) will help to minimise light pollution across our districts and protect our darkest skies from the impacts of light pollution. Where possible, this policy will also support the restoration and improvement of areas to enhance and or extend the districts' dark skies.

4.64 To protect the dark skies in our districts, we commissioned a Dark Skies Assessment. This identifies the darkest areas of our districts which need the strongest protection from light pollution, and it also identifies how polluted the other areas of our districts are from light, so we can prevent light pollution worsening in all areas.

4.65 The Dark Skies Assessment used satellite data to measure and map the sky quality of the districts. This can be found on the Policies Map, which shows that there are areas of good sky quality across South and Vale where the milky way is visible, but that there is also light pollution present. This assessment also established ambient lighting environment zones (E-zones) based upon the satellite data (also found on the Policies Map), which reflect the environmental zones already defined by the ILP (Institute of Lighting Professionals)[21]. These zones help to inform the recommended lighting appropriate for these areas. The environmental zones are as follows, from darkest to brightest:

- Natural dark zone (E1)
- Rural low district brightness zone (E2)
- Suburban medium district brightness (E3)
- Urban high district brightness zone (E4)

4.66 The districts mostly have areas of E1 zones with E2 and E3 zones in and around urban areas. However, whilst this mapping establishes general zones, it does not always reflect the level of lighting development and control of light pollution is needed in these areas. Applicants should always aim to reduce light pollution as much as possible whichever zone the development falls within, only using the minimum lighting necessary for the purpose of the scheme, and only where needed and justified. The

[21] Institution of Lighting Professionals (2021) Guidance Note 1 for the reduction of obtrusive light, available at: https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-1-for-the-reduction-of-obtrusive-light-2021/

councils may also determine that the development needs to be designed to a zone lower than the one it is situated in, in order to adequately address light pollution. This policy has been shaped using the five principals of responsible outdoor lighting at night (ROLAN)[22] which should be taken into account when considering lighting for new developments.

4.67 The councils also have a comprehensive Lighting Design Guidance to support this policy and provide information about what applicants should include in their applications. The Lighting Design Guidance sets out industry best practice requirements to reduce light pollution district wide and foster a positive behavioural change that does not negatively impact dark skies. This means applicants should be addressing the impacts of light pollution beyond the immediate areas to be lit and ensuring that relevant standards, other professional guides set out in the Lighting Design Guidance are followed. This policy also requires applicants to submit a lighting design at a scale proportionate to the development. This design should be informed by the Lighting Design Guidance and should follow the relevant structure for a lighting design as set out in the guidance, including being accompanied with relevant checklists where appropriate.

Soils and contaminated land

Policy CE12 – Soils and contaminated land

Protecting and enhancing soils

1) Development should be directed to suitable brownfield land wherever possible. Where development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land (Agricultural Land Classification grades 3b, 4 and 5) should be preferred to those of a higher quality (grades 1, 2 and 3a). Proposals for development on the best and most versatile agricultural land[a] must include a soil handling plan and sustainable soil management strategy based on detailed soil surveys.

2) Development must recognise and seek to protect the many benefits provided by soils (including for ecological connectivity, carbon storage and drainage). Harm to soils of high environmental value (such as wetland and peatland) must be avoided.

[22] DarkSky (2022) Responsible Outdoor Lighting at Night (ROLAN) manifesto for lighting, available at: https://darksky.org/news/responsible-outdoor-lighting-at-night-rolan-manifesto-for-lighting/

3) Development in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse must protect and enhance soils and the ecosystem services they provide by:

a) minimising soil disturbance;

b) taking opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict or contaminated land;

c) taking opportunities to reuse soil on site wherever possible, to avoid the need to manage waste off site;

d) maximising permeable surfaces that allow water to infiltrate and soil to respire;

e) minimising soil compaction, the addition of low-quality fill dirt, burying waste on site and the erosion of unprotected topsoil, particularly on areas identified for the provision of green infrastructure; and

f) protecting, separating, and preserving the topsoil during construction by avoiding mixing, inverting or burying it, and where topsoil is to be stored, the size of the bunds should be limited to avoid anoxic conditions in the centre of large bunds which degrade soils.

Assessing land contamination

4) Where land is known or suspected of being contaminated, any planning application will require at least a Phase One Contaminated Land Preliminary Risk Assessment prepared in accordance with the councils' latest guidance[b].

5) Where there is currently no information to suggest that contaminated land may be present, any planning application proposing uses that are particularly vulnerable to contamination[c] must be accompanied by a Contaminated Land Questionnaire[d].

6) Development should be designed to ensure that it will not contribute to land contamination. The individual and cumulative impacts of development on human health, groundwater and surface water, and the wider natural environment will be considered when assessing development proposals.

Addressing land contamination

7) If a proposal would otherwise result in an unacceptable level of risk to human health, groundwater and surface water and/or the wider natural environment from land contamination, applicants must provide proportionate remediation or mitigation to reduce risk to an acceptable level.

Land Stability

8) Development should not contribute to, or be put at unacceptable risk from, land instability. Where it applies, consideration should be given to South Oxfordshire District Council's Karst Susceptibility Hazard Map, available to view as part of the Policies Map.

[a] *The best and most versatile agricultural land is land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.*

[b] *The councils' current guidance is The Oxfordshire Contaminated Land Group Consortium (2020) Oxfordshire Planning advice note, Dealing with contamination during development: A guide for developers (Version 4), available at: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/07/Oxfordshire-Planning-Advice-Note-Revision-Dec20-v2.pdf*

[c] *Uses classed as particularly vulnerable to land contamination include residential housing, nursing homes, allotments, schools, nurseries and crèches, children's playing areas and playing fields.*

[d] *Oxfordshire City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council Contaminated Land Questionnaire, available at: https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/environment-and-neighbourhood-issues/environmental-advice/contaminated-land/ and www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/07/2020-Contaminated-Land-Questionnaire.pdf.*

4.68 South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are predominantly rural districts, with large amounts of land in agricultural use. Protecting our best and most versatile agricultural land is an important part of ensuring food security and reducing food miles. It is important that appropriate weight is given to the possible loss of this finite resource in planning decisions, particularly as mitigation is often not possible.

4.69 More widely, it is also important to recognise soil as a valuable natural resource. Soil performs several important ecosystem services including supporting the districts' biodiversity, food growing, carbon sequestration and water storage. It is important to protect land with the best quality soils from development and, in places where development is permitted, to avoid harm to soils (such as loss and compaction).

4.70 The quality of our soils and land can be harmed by contamination. This includes legacy contamination from previous land uses. It is important that our communities and natural environment (including groundwater) and are protected from land contamination risks.

4.71 Where a site is affected by contamination or land stability issues, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner. Proposals should avoid or provide assessments of and mitigation for all significant adverse impacts. Further information on requirements and standards is available from the councils' Environmental Protection Team.

Minerals safeguarding areas

Policy CE13 – Minerals safeguarding areas

1) Development in a Minerals Safeguarding Area that would prevent or otherwise hinder the possible future working of the mineral will only be permitted where it can be shown that:

   a) the site has been allocated for development in the Joint Local Plan or a made neighbourhood plan; or

   b) the need for the development outweighs the economic and sustainability considerations relating to the mineral resource; or

   c) the mineral will be extracted prior to the development taking place, where it is proportionate, practical and environmentally feasible to so.

2) Consideration will be given to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan[a] in determining planning applications for non-minerals development in Minerals Safeguarding Areas.

3) The minerals planning authority, Oxfordshire County Council, will be consulted on all planning applications for development within a Minerals Consultation Area.

[a] *Oxfordshire County Council (2017) Minerals and Waste Local Plan, available at https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-policy*

List of policies in this chapter

- Policy SP1: Spatial strategy
- Policy SP2: Settlement hierarchy
- Policy SP3: The strategy for Didcot Garden Town
- Policy SP4: A strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames
- Policy SP5: A strategy for Faringdon
- Policy SP6: A strategy for Henley-on-Thames
- Policy SP7: A strategy for Thame
- Policy SP8: A strategy for Wallingford
- Policy SP9: A strategy for Wantage

Spatial strategy

Policy SP1 – Spatial strategy

1) We will conserve and enhance the special qualities of our nationally protected landscapes, the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes.

2) We will maintain the openness of the Oxford Green Belt. Development in the Green Belt will be considered in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Development on Green Belt land will be restricted to ensure it continues to fulfil the five purposes of the Green Belt. Substantial weight will be given to any harm to the Green Belt when assessing planning applications.

3) Within Science Vale, we will continue to deliver development, through housing at the sites allocated in this plan and sustainable economic development at Culham Campus, Harwell Campus and Milton Park.

4) At the Garden Communities of Didcot, Berinsfield and Dalton Barracks we will support housing and some economic development to achieve holistically planned new or regenerated settlements which enhance the natural environment, tackles climate change and provide high quality affordable housing and locally accessible jobs in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities.

5) We will support new development on well-located brownfield sites, and identify a new brownfield site allocation at Dalton Barracks.

6) For windfall housing developments, we will support sustainable locations that maximise brownfield land redevelopment opportunities and are appropriate to the site's location within the settlement hierarchy defined in Policy SP2 (Settlement hierarchy). Development of the types described in Policy SP2 will be supported within the built-up area of highest tiered settlements of Tiers 1, 2, 3, with Tier 4 limited to brownfield sites, replacement dwellings or subdivision.

7) On brownfield land at Tiers 1 to 4 of the settlement hierarchy we will encourage employment proposals where they will secure the redevelopment of existing employment sites.

8) Development in the countryside, including areas outside of existing built-up areas, will not be appropriate unless specifically supported by other relevant policies as set out in the development plan or national policy, for example we will support rural exceptions site housing and rural workers' dwellings to come forward.

9) We will support the delivery of viable and developable existing site allocations and commitments in the local plans and neighbourhood plans that haven't been completed yet. All housing and employment sites are listed within chapter 8 and Policy JT1 (Meeting employment needs).

10) We will allocate sufficient sites to meet the existing agreed unmet housing needs of Oxford.

11) We will support our communities with the preparation of neighbourhood plans that will reinforce the achievement of this spatial strategy, and we will support ambitious neighbourhood plans that may want to achieve something specific. Thame has an outstanding identified housing requirement of at least 143 homes[a]. All other designated neighbourhood areas have a zero outstanding requirement, although communities can choose to exceed this when preparing neighbourhood development plans and neighbourhood development orders.

12) We will take a positive approach when considering development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

[a] *Correct as of 1 April 2023*

5.6 Our spatial strategy sets out how and where we will meet the need for homes, jobs and other types of development in the districts. It provides a plan-led and strategic approach, rooted in an understanding not just of the characteristics of our districts but of our location and importance in the wider geography.

5.7 Our spatial strategy protects National Landscapes and Green Belt recognising they are among our top assets. The spatial strategy guides new development to the Science Vale area, to our Garden Communities and to locations in the highest tiers of the settlement hierarchy (Tiers 1, 2 and 3 as set out in Policy SP2 (Settlement hierarchy)) and therefore supports homes and jobs where there are existing jobs, services and well-connected facilities. In smaller settlements (Tier 4), some more specific brownfield development is also appropriate within the built-up area. In places below that tier, our strategy restricts most types of development to protect the countryside, reduce the need to travel and help people shift towards more sustainable travel patterns. This strategy supports the approach taken in the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan[24] to promote development where there are the best chances of reducing the need to travel by private car. We want the Joint Local Plan to contribute towards the delivery of a net zero transport system.

5.8 We have also given the strategy a brownfield focus, supporting the redevelopment of well-located brownfield land to encourage renewal and regeneration where it helps to reduce the need to travel. The preferred strategy also encourages development for employment uses at existing allocated sites where viable and deliverable, other employment sites, and employment on brownfield land, where services and facilities already exist or are already planned (Tiers 1 to 4 of the proposed settlement hierarchy).

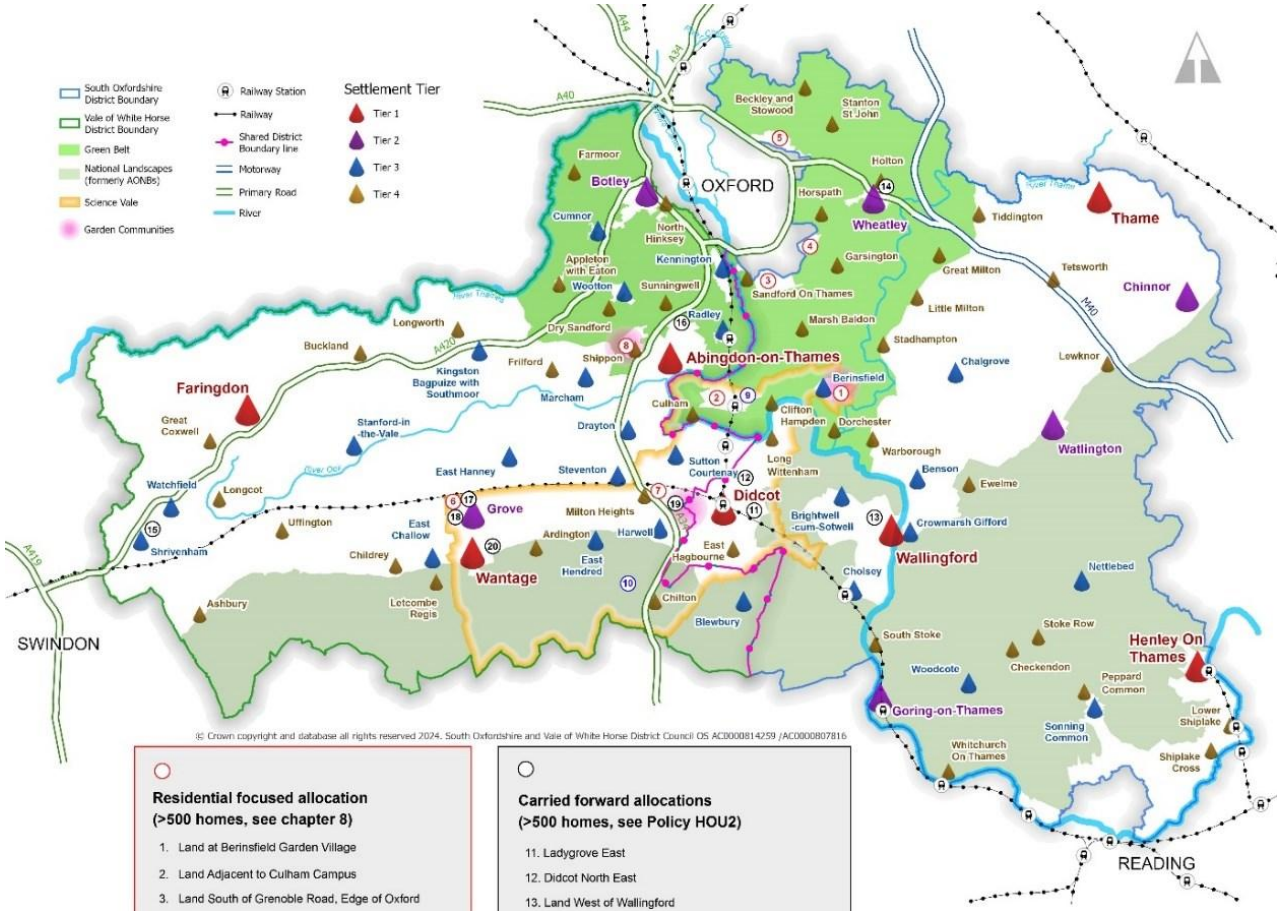
5.9 Our plan covers the period from 2021 to 2041 and our strategy builds on the difficult decisions taken to allocate large sites for development in our previous local plans, including releasing some large areas of land from the Green Belt. Some of our large strategic sites and new Garden Communities will keep delivering homes and jobs well after the end of the last plan periods, and we will see these plans through to completion where they remain viable and developable. Each site is different, but broadly they are well located close to Tier 1, 2 or 3 settlements, with established opportunities to support good quality connectivity, or offer a chance for brownfield redevelopment near to a higher tier settlement in the settlement hierarchy. Some of the sites have opportunities for links to Oxford or other towns or larger villages or they are near key routes. We agreed to meet a proportion of Oxford's unmet housing need in our previous local plans for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, and our spatial

[24] Oxfordshire County Council (2022) Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf

strategy maintains our commitment to that agreement. Beyond that we do not propose to amend the spatial strategy's expectations for growth related to the unmet needs of other authorities unless it is fully evidenced and justified to do so.

5.10 Since neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act in 2011, our communities have been at the forefront of successful local decision-making through neighbourhood plans, and we are proud to continue supporting this into the future. In the South Oxfordshire Local Plan adopted in 2020, some towns and villages were given development targets for neighbourhood plans to achieve, so that communities could make their own decisions about which sites should be developed. That last round of neighbourhood plans addressing the targets have mostly been completed, with just Thame to finish its neighbourhood plan review, which is now well advanced at the examination stage. We want to support neighbourhood plans to bring forward any outstanding planned development. Our spatial strategy encourages new neighbourhood plan production and gives communities flexibility to justify going further than the spatial strategy to support ambitious ideas to deliver something specific in their local communities where they want to. For example, Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan in 2022 allocated housing where none was required in order to deliver a much-wanted community hub.

Key Diagram


South Oxfordshire District Boundary
Vale of White Horse District Boundary
Green Belt
National Landscapes (formerly AONBs)
Science Vale
Garden Communities
Railway Station
Railway
Shared District Boundary line
Motorway
Primary Road
River
Settlement Tier
Tier 1
Tier 2
Tier 3
Tier 4
OXFORD
Abingdon-on-Thames
Wantage
Grove
Faringdon
Didcot
Wallingford
Wheatley
Thame
Chinnor
Watlington
Henley On Thames
Goring-on-Thames
Berinsfield
Botley
Kennington
Sandford On Thames
Radley
Marsh Baldon
Stadhampton
Chalgrove
Lewknor
Tetsworth
Great Milton
Little Milton
Garsington
Tiddington
Holton
Horspath
Beckley and Stowood
Stanton St John
Farmoor
Cumnor
North Hinksey
Appleton with Eaton
Wootton
Sunningwell
Longworth
Buckland
Dry Sandford
Shippon
Frilford
Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor
Marcham
Culham
Drayton
Clifton Hampden
Dorchester
Warborough
Benson
Ewelme
Long Wittenham
Sutton Courtenay
Brightwell -cum-Sotwell
Crowmarsh Gifford
Cholsey
Nettlebed
Stoke Row
Checkendon
Woodcote
Peppard Common
Sonning Common
Lower Shiplake
Shiplake Cross
Whitchurch On Thames
South Stoke
Great Coxwell
Stanford-in the-Vale
Watchfield
Longcot
Shrivenham
Uffington
East Hanney
Steventon
East Challow
Childrey
Ardington
Harwell
Milton Heights
East Hagbourne
East Hendred
Chilton
Blewbury
Ashbury
Letcombe Regis
SWINDON
READING
A40
A420
A34
M40
A419
River Thames
River Ock
© Crown copyright and database all rights reserved 2024. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Council OS AC0000814759 /AC0000807816
Residential focused allocation (>500 homes, see chapter 8)
1. Land at Berinsfield Garden Village
2. Land Adjacent to Culham Campus
3. Land South of Grenoble Road, Edge of Oxford
4. Land at Northfield, Edge of Oxford
5. Land at Bayswater Brook, Edge of Oxford
6. North West of Grove, Grove
7. North West of Valley Park, Didcot
8. Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village, Shippon
Strategic employment sites (see chapter 8)
9. Culham Campus
10. Harwell Campus
Carried forward allocations (>500 homes, see Policy HOU2)
11. Ladygrove East
12. Didcot North East
13. Land West of Wallingford
14. Land at Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University
15. North of Shrivenham
16. North of Abingdon-on-Thames
17. Monks Farm (North Grove)
18. Grove Airfield
19. Valley Park
20. Crab Hill (North East Wantage and South East Grove)

Settlement hierarchy

Policy SP2 – Settlement hierarchy

Development will be required to comply with the spatial strategy set out in Policy SP1 (Spatial strategy).

In addition to the kinds of development shown for each tier below, development may be supported by other relevant policies set out in the development plan or by national policy, for example through allocations (in this plan or neighbourhood development plans), on rural exceptions sites and rural workers' dwellings.

The settlement hierarchy is split into 4 tiers as shown in the settlement hierarchy table. Each tier of settlement has a different strategic role as follows:

Tier 1 Settlements

Settlements which have the ability to support the most sustainable patterns of living through their current levels of facilities, services and employment opportunities. These settlements have a full range of services and a good level of accessibility by public transport.

There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development within the built-up area[a] of Tier 1 settlements.

Tier 2 Settlements

Larger settlements or neighbourhoods to larger settlements with a broad range and level of access to facilities, services and local employment. These settlements provide opportunities for sustainable development for their own populations and a wider rural catchment area.

Within the built-up area[a] of these settlements: brownfield development, infill development, backland development, replacement dwellings or subdivision[b] is appropriate in principle.

Tier 3 Settlements

Large settlements with a level of access to facilities, services and local employment to provide the next best opportunities for sustainable development outside of Tier 1 and 2 settlements.

Within the built-up area of these settlements: brownfield development, infill development, replacement dwellings or subdivision is appropriate in principle.

Tier 4 Settlements

Settlements with a more limited range of employment, services and facilities.

Within the built-up area of these settlements: development is limited to brownfield sites, replacement dwellings or subdivision.

The Countryside

Anywhere not included within the table below forms part of the countryside, as does land outside of the existing built-up areas of Tier 1-4 settlements.

Development in the countryside will not be appropriate unless specifically supported by other relevant policies as set out in the development plan or national policy, or comprising a replacement dwelling consistent with its location in the countryside.

[a] *For Tier 1 and Tier 2 settlements in Vale; the built-up area is defined by the Settlement Boundaries shown on the Policies Map. There is no settlement boundary defined for Botley, as the Oxford Green Belt provides a policy limit on development around the settlement.*

[b] *Subdivision of a building rather than a plot*

Settlement hierarchy table

Tier in Hierarchy	South Oxfordshire settlements	Vale of White Horse settlements
1	Didcot Henley-on-Thames Thame Wallingford	Abingdon-on-Thames Faringdon Wantage
2	Chinnor Goring-on-Thames Watlington Wheatley	Botley Grove
3	Benson Berinsfield Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Chalgrove Cholsey Crowmarsh Gifford Nettlebed Sonning Common Woodcote	Blewbury Cumnor Drayton East Challow East Hanney East Hendred Harwell Kennington Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor Marcham Radley Shrivenham Stanford-in-the-Vale Steventon Sutton Courtenay Watchfield Wootton
4	Beckley And Stowood Checkendon Clifton Hampden	Appleton with Eaton Ardington Ashbury

	Culham Dorchester-on-Thames East Hagbourne Ewelme Garsington Great Milton Holton Horspath Lewknor Little Milton Long Wittenham Lower Shiplake Marsh Baldon Peppard Common Sandford-on-Thames Shiplake Cross South Stoke Stadhampton Stanton St John Stoke Row Tetsworth Tiddington Warborough Whitchurch-on-Thames	Buckland Childrey Chilton Dry Sandford Farmoor Frilford Great Coxwell Letcombe Regis Longcot Longworth Milton Heights North Hinksey Shippon Sunningwell Uffington

5.11 Our vision and objectives recognise the rural nature of our districts and the importance of our rural settlements in contributing to what makes our districts such a beautiful and prosperous place to live. Our strategy for the Joint Local Plan is to continue to ensure that all our communities thrive and that everyone has access to services within a short distance. This is achieved through our network of settlements and the settlement hierarchy, which ensures new facilities, homes and jobs are focused on the more sustainable locations of the districts.

5.12 The settlement hierarchy categorises the settlements within South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse based on their access to services and facilities at a point in time. The settlement hierarchy defines settlements into four tiers based on an assessment of the range and scale of services and facilities within each of the settlements, while also considering the proximity and connectivity between settlements through cycling, walking and public transport; to support the aims of the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.

5.13 Settlements with similar characteristics are grouped together within a tier. The more sustainable settlements with close links between housing, jobs and services are categorised as higher tiered settlements, and the settlements with less access to services and facilities are classified as being lower tiered settlements in the hierarchy.

5.14 Each tier of settlement has a different strategic role which is identified within the spatial strategy.

5.15 We want to support a shift to more sustainable modes of transport including active travel like walking and cycling, so we are focusing new development within the most sustainable settlements through allowing the broadest range of growth options within these settlements.

5.16 The Tier 1 and 2 settlements in Vale of White Horse retain their existing settlement boundaries[25] which are shown by the Policies Map. The Joint Local Plan does not propose to introduce additional settlement boundaries, although boundaries could be reviewed and updated in the future through neighbourhood plans.

5.17 There is no requirement for neighbourhood plans to allocate development, however the preparation of a neighbourhood plan is supported within all settlement tiers, including the countryside, provided that they have an evidenced local need and the levels of growth are commensurate to the size of the settlement. Proposals in a neighbourhood plan must be in conformity with the strategic policies in this Plan, and policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

[25] There is no settlement boundary defined for Botley as the Oxford Green Belt provides a policy limit on development around the settlement.

6.57 Proposals must be of an appropriate size and internal layout, to avoid negative implications on the health and wellbeing of occupants. Proposals will be required to comply with Policy IN5 (Cycle and car parking standards), and Oxfordshire County Council Parking Standards[39].

6.58 The sub-division of dwellings relates to the creation of separate units, usually flats, with their own facilities and living spaces. This is different from Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which will have separate bedrooms but shared facilities. Our approach to determining applications for HMOs is set out in Policy HOU15 (Houses in Multiple Occupation).

Meeting the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Policy HOU10 – Meeting the needs of Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople

1) The plan provides for the identified need[a] for traveller pitches and travelling showpeople's plots during the plan period to 2041 through a combination of the following:

   a) implementation of extant planning permissions;

   b) extending or intensifying existing authorised sites or yards where possible to meet the needs of existing residents and their families;

   c) through the regularisation of unauthorised sites / pitches or sites / pitches with temporary permissions where there would be no unacceptable harm in doing so; and

   d) requiring provision of between 6 to 10 pitches on each of the following housing allocations within this plan:

      i) Land adjacent to Culham Campus

      ii) Land at Berinsfield Garden Village

[39] Oxfordshire County Council (2022) Parking Standards for New Developments, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/PARKINGS.PDF

iii) Land South of Grenoble Road, Edge of Oxford

iv) Land at Northfield, Edge of Oxford

v) Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village, Shippon

vi) North West of Valley Park, Didcot

2) Proposals for pitches / plots for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople will be permitted where:

a) the proposed development is in an appropriate location adjacent to a settlement where there is a range of services and facilities, especially health and educational facilities;

b) there would be no adverse impact on the amenity of future occupiers or existing neighbouring uses;

c) the scale and type of development is appropriate to its location considering character, local services, and facilities;

d) the site can be provided with safe electricity, drinking water, sewage treatment and waste disposal facilities;

e) nearby existing outdoor amenity space, including child-friendly spaces to play can be safely accessed or where this is not possible provision is made on site;

f) arrangements are put in place to ensure the proper management of the site to seek to ensure community cohesion between the settled and traveller communities; and

g) there is clear demarcation of the site and pitch / plot boundaries using appropriate boundary treatments and landscaping which is characteristic of the local context.

[a] *The identified need as set out within the councils' latest Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment.*

6.59 The councils have a responsibility to address the needs for pitches for gypsies and travellers and plots for travelling showpeople. The Joint Local Plan develops a fair and effective strategy to meet the accommodation needs of gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.

6.60 Part 1 of Policy HOU10 (Meeting the needs of Gypsies, Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople) identifies the supply of pitches and plots within the plan period:

a) implementing extant or new planning permissions. Where the councils or the planning inspectorate grant planning permission for pitches or plots, the councils will count this within its supply of pitches or plots.

b) extending or intensifying existing authorised sites or yards. The councils will grant planning permissions to increase the number of pitches or plots on existing sites or yards, where this is appropriate and guided by the criteria in part 2 of this policy. This will be to meet the needs from those already living on site but are in unsuitable accommodation. Households in unsuitable accommodation may be a result of overcrowding or new household formation as children become adults and require a pitch/plot of their own.

c) through the regularisation of unauthorised sites/pitches or sites/pitches with temporary permissions, where there would be no unacceptable harm in do so. Across the districts there are a number of sites that do not benefit from full planning permission. Some of these sites are long established and are effectively tolerated or have been subject to rolling temporary permissions. Where applications are brought forward to formalise the status of these sites, the councils will support these where the applicant can demonstrate compliance with the criteria in part 2 of this policy.

d) requiring provision of between 6 to 10 pitches on each of the following housing-led allocations within this plan:

- Land adjacent to Culham Campus
- Land at Berinsfield Garden Village
- Land South of Grenoble Road, Edge of Oxford
- Land at Northfield, Edge of Oxford
- Land at Dalton Barracks Garden Village, Shippon
- North West of Valley Park, Didcot.

6.61 Allocating pitches on the housing allocations within the plan allows us to consider the needs of travellers at the outset of the design process and properly integrate the pitches into the design of the development. This approach also supports the key objective of government's planning policy for traveller sites (PPTS)[40], ensuring sites are sustainable. The allocations offer the

[40] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Housing and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) Planning policy for traveller sites, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-policy-for-traveller-sites

opportunity to provide a settled base where households can access appropriate health services and ensure that children can attend school either within the allocation or the settlement they adjoin.

6.62 Part 2 of this policy sets out the criteria that the councils will use to determine planning applications for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation. The councils will use these criteria to assess all proposals that come forward on the types of sites identified within part 1 of this policy, and to determine all other speculative applications.

6.63 Permission for pitches or plots granted under this policy will be conditioned to ensure they are occupied by households meeting the planning definition for either gypsies and travellers or travelling showpeople, as set out in the PPTS (or replacement document). In some instances, the councils may also grant planning permission for additional pitches at authorised sites that will not be lived in by travellers who meet the planning definition. This will only be appropriate where this would allow travellers to remain on the site and continue to live near their family.

6.64 Proposals for new residential caravan and mobile home sites to accommodate people who do not meet the planning definition for gypsies and travellers will be considered in accordance with Policy SP1 (Spatial strategy).

Safeguarding existing Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's sites

Policy HOU11 – Safeguarding existing Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's sites

1) Proposals that result in the loss of authorised and permanent pitches or plots for residential use by gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople will not be permitted unless the applicant can clearly demonstrate that:

   a) the site is no longer suitable for such use and suitable alternative provision is made for pitches / plots on a site of equal or better quality with equal access to services. Such alternative sites will be secured through planning conditions and legal obligations. Any replacement pitches should be available before the original site is lost; or

   b) there is no need for pitches / plots in the district and their loss would not generate a need.

High quality design

Policy DE1 – High quality design

Place and setting

1) All development must achieve high quality design that:

   a) responds positively to the site and its surroundings, and reinforces local identity or establishes a distinct identity whilst not preventing innovative responses to context, demonstrated by a constraints and opportunities plan;

   b) responds positively to the history of a site and its surroundings, and conserves and enhances historic character;

   c) creates a distinctive sense of place through high quality townscape and landscaping that physically connects and visually integrates with its surroundings whilst avoiding coalescence with neighbouring settlements;

   d) retain or create any attractive and/or sensitive views and skyline (both of and from built and natural features) into, out of and within the site; and

   e) is designed to ensure that it would have no impact on the operation or capability of defence sites or assets.

Natural environment

2) All development must achieve high quality design that:

   a) is landscape led, by retaining and strengthening the site's landscape features and character;

   b) retains and enhances biodiversity and delivers biodiversity net gain in accordance with Policy NH2 (Nature recovery);

   c) incorporates a well-defined network of green infrastructure and links to and improves access to existing green infrastructure in and within the vicinity of the development, in accordance with Policy HP6 (Green infrastructure on new developments);

d) provides a range of high-quality green open spaces (providing for a variety of wildlife rich natural and designed landscapes and functions) that meet the needs of all users, and are safe, attractive, and accessible;

e) avoids the use of artificial grass in residential development;

f) uses planting to help development integrate into the landscape and to develop character and sense of place;

g) takes opportunities to incorporate new trees in development, ensuring that new streets are tree lined and that the right trees are planted in the right places; and

h) uses trees and soft landscaping to create character and distinction between street types and to provide traffic calming.

Movement and connectivity

3) All development must achieve high quality design that:

a) has a network of streets, paths and integrated cycleways that are safe, direct and legible, and connect with each other and the surrounding area (including to existing streets and cycle and walking paths); creating an attractive choice of routes for all users, with priority given to active travel and sustainable modes of transport utilising filtered permeability where appropriate;

b) provides direct pedestrian and cycle links to local services and facilities that are convenient, legible, visually attractive and follow natural desire lines;

c) limits the impacts of car use and encourages movement by active travel by prioritising the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users (especially those with disabilities), over the needs of motorists within the design of streets, utilising traffic calming measures where car use is present (except on roads that function as bus corridors where traffic calming measures are not suitable);

d) provides a clear and permeable hierarchy of streets, routes and spaces to create safe and convenient ease of movement by all users;

e) includes accessible wayfinding / signposting to be installed to promote movement by pedestrians, cyclists and other active travel; and

f) co-locates local services and facilities as appropriate within higher tier settlements (Tier 1 and 2) as set out in the settlement hierarchy, with good access to public transport and pedestrian and cycle links.

Space and layout

4) All development must achieve high quality design that:

a) secures a high-quality public realm that is interesting and aesthetically pleasing, and designed to support an active life for everyone with well managed and maintained public areas;

b) creates cohesive and walkable communities with incorporated and designed social spaces within the public realm, providing places for people to shade and shelter, rest, gather, interact, and spectate;

c) ensures that streets and spaces are well overlooked, incorporate active frontages and create a positive relationship between the fronts and backs of buildings;

d) has streets where buildings and landscaping are more visually prominent than the highway (including parking);

e) provides a wide range of house types and tenures that meet local and district needs;

f) clearly defines public and private spaces;

g) ensures a sufficient level of well-integrated, innovative and contemporary solutions for street furniture, car and bicycle parking (including EV charging) and external storage, including bins;

h) creates safe and secure communities and reduces the likelihood of crime and antisocial behaviour as well as the fear of crime itself, ensuring sufficient natural surveillance; and

i) incorporates public art into, and/or within the vicinity of, major developments or sites of 0.5ha or more to enhance their visual quality of the scheme and/or character of the area, and to help create or enhance a sense of identity.

Built form

5) All development must achieve high quality design that:

a) respects the local context working with and complementing the scale, height, density, grain, massing and detailing of the surrounding area;

b) chooses materials and detailing for the development inspired by the local context and local vernacular;

c) uses land efficiently while respecting the existing landscape and/or townscape character;

d) ensures the building line maintains or establishes a good street scene;

e) does not differentiate between the design quality of market and affordable housing or the adjacent public realm;

f) is designed to take account of possible future development in the local area, including providing links to neighbouring land where they may be needed in future;

g) understands and addresses the needs of all potential users by ensuring that buildings and their surroundings can be accessed and used by everyone through universally accessible and inclusive design;

h) ensures that shopfronts are in keeping with the character of the building and street scene, reflect the scale and proportion of the building in which it is set, and preserve and restore surviving historic shopfronts in a sensitive manner; and

i) ensures that any advertisements are safe, attractive and well designed, by ensuring their location is suitable, they complement local character, use appropriate high quality materials, and avoid flashing internal or external illumination.

Climate and sustainability

6) All development must achieve high quality design that:

a) is sustainable and resilient to climate change impacts (including increasing temperatures, wind speeds, droughts, heavy rainfall and snowfall events) in accordance with Policy CE1 (Sustainable design and construction), taking into account location, building orientation, landscaping and planting;

b) minimises energy consumption and carbon emissions (utilising a "fabric first" design approach in accordance with Policy CE1 (Sustainable design and construction)), and achieves an on site net zero energy balance for new buildings in accordance with Policy CE2 (Net zero carbon buildings);

c) demonstrates design choices have been made to reduce embodied carbon emissions in accordance with Policy CE3 (Reducing embodied carbon), including using sustainable, locally and/or ethically sourced and accredited low embodied carbon materials and/or carbon negative materials that are robust and weather well;

d) minimises vulnerability and improves resilience to flood risk from all sources, in accordance with Policy CE6 (Flood risk) and Policy HP6 (Green infrastructure on new developments); and

7) Development must also satisfy requirements of the Joint Design Guide as well as any adopted local design guides or codes (such as those within neighbourhood plans) where relevant.

10.4 Good design is a fundamental element of successful placemaking and creating sustainable development. The way we design buildings and new development has wide ranging impacts on how we feel, our sense of identity and community, as well as how we live our everyday lives. A well-designed place is somewhere that is not only attractive, but a place that can make us feel safe, where we can live, work and socialise at ease, and it can also enhance our health and well-being.

10.5 Policy DE1 (High quality design) sets out the key design objectives that we consider critical in delivering high quality, sustainable and well-designed development. These must be considered at the outset and throughout the design process, and the councils will support development that meets these objectives.

10.6 The councils have prepared a Joint Design Guide to support and add further detail to this overarching design policy, as well as other design policies set out in the Joint Local Plan. The Joint Design Guide ensures new development secures the highest design standards within the districts. New development is required to satisfy requirements of set out in the Joint Design Guide. This policy provides key design requirements under six headings that reflect the chapters of the Joint Design Guide:

- Place and Setting
- Natural Environment
- Movement and Connectivity
- Space and Layout
- Built form
- Climate and sustainability

10.7 Neighbourhood plans can also create design guides and codes for their local areas, and many across the districts have taken up this opportunity. This policy requires development to satisfy the requirements of neighbourhood plan design guides or codes where they exist.

10.8 New development should take account of all relevant guidance, including the Government's priorities for well-designed places set out in the National Design Guide[61], the National Model Design Code Part 1: The Coding Process and the National Design Code Part 2: Guidance Notes[62]. It should also consider Oxfordshire County Council's Cycling Design Standards[63], Walking Design Standards[64] and the Street Design Guide[65]. New development within the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) should meet the principles set out in the Chilterns Building Design Guide[66]. Other relevant guidance that should be considered includes Home's England's Building for a Healthy Life Design Code[67], and Sport England's Active Design guidance[68]. Where updated versions of these documents are published, these should be taken into account.

10.9 Securing high quality design is about more than just aesthetics, but also considers how a place functions, how it lasts and adapts, and how it makes us feel. Good design creates a high-quality public realm and considers the space between buildings

[61] MHCLG and DLUHC (2021) National Design Guide, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide
[62] MHCLG and DLUHC (2021) National Model Design Code, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide
[63] Oxfordshire County Council (2017) Cycling Design Standards, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/cyclingstandards.pdf
[64] Oxfordshire County Council (2017) Walking Design Standards, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/walkingstandards.pdf
[65] Oxfordshire County Council (2021) Street Design Guide, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/DesignGuidePublication.pdf
[66] Chilterns National Landscape (2010) Chilterns Building Design Guide, available at: https://www.chilterns.org.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-development/published-advice-guidance/
[67] Homes England (2020) Building for a Healthy Life, available at: https://www.udg.org.uk/publications/othermanuals/building-healthy-life
[68] Sport England (2023) Active Design Guidance, available at: https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design

as well as the buildings themselves. It should include areas allocated to different users for different purposes, including movement, hard and soft surfaces, street furniture, lighting, signage and public art. Well-designed new development should encourage us to live more active lifestyles by creating opportunities for movement by walking and cycling. New development should also be universally accessible and designed to meet the needs of all users, including the young and elderly, disabled, parents and carers.

10.10 In the right locations, public art can play an important part in the design and place making of new developments and can make a contribution to the creation of a high quality public realm. It can make places more interesting, exciting and aesthetically pleasing. The councils will encourage and promote quality art within new developments by encouraging partnership working between professional artists and craftspeople and encouraging local participation to help establish an identity for an area. The councils will particularly support proposals that use public art to make a positive contribution to the character of an area and that is of benefit to the local community by establishing civic or corporate pride and identity, encouraging public enjoyment and engagement and/or promoting the renewal of social skills. Applicants should have regard to local public art plans where relevant.

Local character and identity

Policy DE2 – Local character and identity

1) All new development must be designed to reflect the positive features that make up the character and identity of the local area and should both physically and visually enhance and complement the surroundings. Contemporary and innovative proposals that will make a positive contribution to the future character of an area will be supported in appropriate locations.

2) All proposals for new development should be informed by a contextual analysis that demonstrates how the design:

   a) has been informed by and responds positively to the site and its surroundings; and

   b) reinforces place-identity by enhancing local character.

3) In the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly AONB), proposals for development should reflect the advice in the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide[a] and associated technical notes on brick, flint and roofing materials.

4) In the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly AONB), proposals for development should reflect the advice in the North Wessex Downs Colour Guide[b].

5) Development within or affecting a valued landscape must have regard to the Joint Local Plan Valued Landscape Assessment (or subsequent update) in accordance with Policy NH5 (District-valued landscapes);

6) Where a Character Assessment has been prepared as part of a made neighbourhood plan, a proposal must demonstrate that the positive features identified in the Assessment have been incorporated into the design of the development.

7) Proposals that have the potential to impact upon a Conservation Area or the setting of a Conservation Area should also take account of the relevant Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan or Character Study and demonstrate that the important features identified have been incorporated into the design of the development.

[a] *Chilterns Buildings Design Guide, available at: https://www.chilterns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CBDGChilternsBuildingsDesignGuide2010.pdf*

[b] *North Wessex Downs Colour Guide, available at: https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/our-work/planning/colour-study/*

10.11 Local character makes a unique and important contribution to the towns, villages and countryside that make up our districts. Character provides us with a sense of place, identity as well as an insight into history, and therefore it is crucial that new development responds sympathetically to existing character, as well as enhance it where appropriate.

10.12 When protecting local character, appropriate and sympathetic change or innovation may be acceptable, as this is often what makes future places and buildings distinctive and contributes to the continual developing character of local areas. Policy DE2 (Local character and identity) recognises this, whilst ensuring that new development in the districts responds positively to its surroundings. ‘Standard’ house types or the repetition of layouts and development densities should be avoided, as these most often do not reflect local character and therefore will seldom be acceptable.

10.13 Features such as tranquillity and very low levels of light pollution (also known as dark skies) can also contribute to the character of an area. Therefore, this policy should be read alongside Policy NH7 (Tranquillity) and Policy CE11 (Light pollution and dark skies), when considering features that contribute to local character and identity.

Delivering well-designed new development

Policy DE3 – Delivering well-designed new development

Masterplans

1) Proposals for sites allocated in the Development Plan, including sites allocated within neighbourhood plans, and major development must be accompanied by a masterplan. For outline applications, an illustrative masterplan should be submitted. In all cases, the masterplan should:

Land use

a) identify the vision for the development, setting out a clear description of the type of place that could be created whilst building on the overall aims for the district;

b) clearly set out the character areas and land uses proposed including the amount, scale, height and density of development, the movement and access arrangements and green infrastructure provision (including amount and position of open space), demonstrated with parameter plans;

c) illustrate how the proposal integrates with the surrounding built, historic and natural environments, in particular maximising existing and potential movement connections and accessibility to prioritise walking, cycling and use of public transport;

d) define a hierarchy of routes and the integration of suitable infrastructure, including for example sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), within the public realm;

e) demonstrate a legible structure and identify key elements of townscape such as main frontages, edges, landmark buildings, key building groups and character areas;

Neighbouring amenity

Policy DE5 – Neighbouring amenity

1) Development proposals must demonstrate that they will not result in significant adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring uses, when considering both individual and cumulative impacts, in relation to the following factors:

   a) loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight;

   b) dominance or visual intrusion;

   c) noise or vibration;

   d) smell, dust, heat, odour, gases or other emissions;

   e) pollution, contamination or the use / storage of hazardous substances; and

   f) external lighting.

2) Development should also have regard to the advice within the Joint Design Guide on neighbouring amenity.

10.23 Amenity can cover a variety of impacts, including a neighbour's privacy, sunlight / daylight and any noise and disruption likely to arise directly or indirectly from the development. It is important to check for impacts on neighbours, whether a development is a new building, an extension or a new use. Policy DE5 (Neighbouring amenity) will help to ensure that new development does not result in unacceptable adverse impacts to the amenity of both existing and future occupants of nearby buildings and land.

10.24 The careful siting of properties can achieve sufficient levels of privacy by ensuring that there are adequate distances between properties and through the erection of screen walls and fencing. Developments should also be designed to avoid overshadowing of any adjoining dwelling or dwellings, although it is recognised that in high density housing schemes overlooking distances may not be so readily achievable. Innovative design approaches will therefore be sought to provide acceptable standards of privacy. The Joint Design Guide contains further guidance on neighbouring amenity that should be taken into account when designing new developments.

Outdoor amenity space

Policy DE6 – Outdoor amenity space

1) A high quality, usable private outdoor garden or outdoor amenity space, or alternatively a shared outdoor amenity area should be provided for all new dwellings. The amount of land that should be provided for the garden or amenity space will be determined by the size of the dwelling proposed and by the character of surrounding development. Private outdoor sitting areas should not be subject to direct, harmful / adverse overlooking by adjacent habitable rooms. They should also not be compromised by significant shading from buildings or from existing established significant trees and hedges and their associated leaf litter, that would lead to future pressure to prune or remove these landscape features.

2) Proposals for new development should demonstrate that the size, location and character of gardens and outdoor amenity spaces have been considered as an integral part of the design and not as an afterthought. These spaces should not be compromised by parking areas or garages. They should also satisfy relevant requirements on outdoor amenity space set out in the Joint Design Guide.

10.25 Access to outdoor amenity spaces such as private and communal gardens have an important role in contributing positively to our health and wellbeing. These spaces play a functional role in providing opportunities for food / plant growing as well as clothes drying. They also have a recreational role by providing access to daylight and fresh air, and space to play in, socialise and enjoy wildlife.

10.26 Policy DE6 (Outdoor amenity space) as well as the Joint Design Guide, seek to ensure that reasonable standards of private or communal outdoor amenity space are provided in new developments. This policy requires the character of the site and the surrounding development to be considered in determining the appropriate garden area, as well as the type of dwelling that is being provided. It also requires that private garden and outdoor sitting areas are designed to provide a reasonable degree of privacy and sunlight. Importantly, it ensures that outdoor amenity space should be an integral part of the design of a development considered at the beginning of the design process and throughout, and not an afterthought.

10.27 The Joint Design Guide contains more detailed design principals on private amenity space that should also be reflected in new developments in the districts. It sets guidelines in respect of the recommended minimum size of private amenity space that

should be provided for different types of dwellings, and also sets out that awkwardly shaped or impractical garden areas should be avoided, amongst other detailed design requirements.

10.28 Outdoor amenity space can promote health and well-being and provide a high standard of amenity in accordance with national policy. This policy ensures that all new dwellings are provided with private or communal outdoor amenity space, which will result in a high standard of amenity for future residents and will also contribute to the quality of life of the users of the outdoor space.

Waste collection and recycling

Policy DE7 – Waste collection and recycling

1) Development proposals for residential use must ensure:

   a) adequate facilities are provided for the sorting, storage and collection of recycling and waste;

   b) sufficient space is provided for the storage and collection of individual or communal recycling and refuse containers;

   c) access is provided that is safe for existing users / residents and for refuse and recycling collection vehicles;

   d) the location and design of recycling and refuse provision should be integral to the design of the proposed development; and

   e) all refuse and recycling storage and collection facilities comply with the councils' waste collection and recycling guidance for planning applications.

2) Development proposals for non-residential use must ensure:

   a) sufficient space is provided for the storage of communal recycling and refuse containers;

   b) provision is made that is adequate for the proposed use;

c) the location and design of recycling and refuse provision should be integral to the design of the proposed development; and

d) all refuse and recycling storage and collection facilities comply with the councils' waste collection and recycling guidance for planning applications.

3) The following factors will be material in assessing whether adequate recycling and refuse provision has been provided:

a) the level and type of provision, having regard to the above requirements and relevant space standards;

b) the location of the provision, having regard to the need to provide and maintain safe and convenient access for occupants, while also providing satisfactory access for collection vehicles;

c) the impact of the provision on visual amenity, having regard to the need to minimise the prominence of the facilities and screen any external provision;

d) the impact of the provision on health and amenity of neighbouring development and the proposed development; and

e) the security of the provision against scavenging pests, vandalism and unauthorised use.

4) Recycling and refuse storage should be separate from cycle storage, car parking and key circulation areas.

5) Innovative new ways to collect and manage household recycling and waste are encouraged. Any innovative recycling and waste collection and management proposals must be agreed in consultation with the councils' waste team and Oxfordshire County Council's waste and circular economy team at an early stage.

6) Development will not be permitted if recycling and refuse provision that meets the above requirements cannot feasibly or practicably be provided.

10.29 The councils have a duty to collect waste and recycling from all households, and to fulfil this duty there must be space to sort and store waste in new developments, with appropriate access to ensure that waste and recycling can be safely collected. However, waste and recycling facilities in new developments are sometimes an "afterthought" in new development proposals.

This can lead to inadequate waste provision in new development and our streets and spaces being cluttered or made unattractive by bins. This can also have health and safety implications. Policy DE7 (Waste collection and recycling) will ensure that on all new developments there are adequate facilities for the sorting, storage and collection of waste and recycling.

10.30 These facilities serve an important role, and when thoroughly considered as an important element of the design of new buildings and spaces they can blend in with their surroundings, or even become a complementary design feature. There are some innovative solutions such as underground refuse systems (URS) which offer an alternative to the normal mode of waste storage on housing developments.

10.31 Therefore, in promoting good design and encouraging sustainable waste management initiatives, it is important to ensure that proper provision is made for waste and recycling, storage and collection, and that opportunities are taken for incorporating re-use and recycling facilities in all new developments. When designing provision for sustainable refuge and recycling storage and collection facilities, proposals must be compliant with the councils' waste collection and recycling guidance for planning applications (or future updated document).

- Policy NH9: Listed Buildings
- Policy NH10: Conservation Areas
- Policy NH11: Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments
- Policy NH12: Historic Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens and Historic Landscapes
- Policy NH13: Historic environment and climate change

Biodiversity designations

Policy NH1 – Biodiversity designations

1) The highest level of protection will be given to sites of international nature conservation importance (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)). Development that is likely to result in a significant effect, either alone or in combination, on such sites will need to satisfy the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)[a].

2) Development within the River Lambourn SAC nutrient neutrality catchment area that would result in additional overnight accommodation[b], and any other development that could result in the input of additional nutrients within the identified catchment, must demonstrate nutrient neutrality in relation to phosphorus.

3) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are of national importance. Development that is likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either on its own or in combination with other developments) will not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSI. In such circumstances, measures must be provided (and secured through planning conditions or legal agreements) that would fully mitigate or, as a last resort, fully compensate for the adverse effects resulting from development.

4) The approach to sites of international and/or national importance should be applied in line with any future changes to those designations that may be introduced.

5) Development likely to result directly or indirectly in the loss, deterioration or harm of Important or Ancient Hedgerows, Legally Protected Species, Local Geological Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, or Priority Habitats and Species will only be permitted if:

a) the need for and benefits of the development in the proposed location outweigh the adverse effect on the interests;

b) the applicant effectively demonstrates that the development could not reasonably be located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm to the interests;

c) the applicant effectively demonstrates that there is no alternative design that would result in less or no harm to the interests; and

d) measures will be provided (and secured through planning conditions or legal agreements) that would avoid, mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects resulting from development.

6) Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of Irreplaceable Habitats (such as ancient woodland, ancient or veteran trees and lowland fen) will be refused planning permission unless there are wholly exceptional reasons justifying the granting of planning permission and a suitable compensation strategy exists. Where development is proposed within the mapped hydrological catchment of a lowland fen (as identified in the Joint Local Plan Lowland Fen Evidence) the applicant must effectively demonstrate that it will not result in harmful changes to the water quality, water chemistry or supporting hydrological regime.

7) Where development has the potential to affect a proposed Local Wildlife Site[c], the developer must undertake surveys and assessments to determine whether the site likely meets the criteria for Local Wildlife Site status. Where likely, the development shall be determined on the basis that the site is a designated Local Wildlife Site.

8) Measures proposed to mitigate adverse ecological affects (to meet requirements 1 - 7 above) will be given weight proportionate to their likelihood of success. Where reasonable doubt exists as to the effectiveness of any such measures, weight afforded to those measures must be significantly reduced.

[a] The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents

[b] This includes, but is not limited to, new homes, student accommodation, care homes, hotels, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, self-catering holiday chalets, static caravan sites, tourism attractions and tourism accommodation and permitted development which gives rise to new overnight accommodation.

[c] Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre maintains a live list of Local Wildlife Sites, proposed Local Wildlife Sites and proposed extensions to existing Local Wildlife Sites in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, which are available at: (www.tverc.org/cms/LWSLivingLists)

12.6 Policy NH1 (Biodiversity designations) protects the districts' most important habitats and species, applying a hierarchy so that the level of protection and mitigation in planning decisions is commensurate to their status and importance. This includes both their individual importance and importance as part of a wider network.

12.7 The districts are home to a rich variety of habitats and species, many of which are identified as being of not just local significance but of national or international importance as well:

	South Oxfordshire	Vale of White Horse
International significance	4 Special Areas of Conservation	2 Special Areas of Conservation
National significance	38 Sites of Special Scientific Interest 1 National Nature Reserve	22 Sites of Special Scientific Interest 1 National Nature Reserve
Local significance	126 Local Wildlife Sites 4 Local Nature Reserves 5 Local Geological Sites	84 Local Wildlife Sites 2 Local Nature Reserves 6 Local Geological Sites

12.8 All National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in the districts are legally protected as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The districts also support numerous other important habitats and species, including Priority Habitats and Species, Irreplaceable Habitats, Legally Protected Species, Important or Ancient Hedgerows, Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees. Many of these habitats and species have specific legal protections.

12.9 Development in the districts may also have impacts on designated sites, habitats and species outside the districts in adjoining local authority areas, and these impacts need to be appropriately considered. Part of Vale of White Horse falls within the hydrological catchment of the River Lambourn SAC. This is one of Southern England's longest and finest examples of a chalk river, supporting rich aquatic plant and invertebrate diversity. However, the River Lambourn is under significant stress due to excess inflow of dissolved nutrients from agriculture and domestic sewage. In 2022, Natural England issued advice that confirmed the River Lambourn is in an unfavourable condition (specifically due to levels of phosphorus pollution). Natural England set out that any development delivering a net increase in overnight accommodation, plus certain other types of development, will contribute to an in-combination effect on the SAC and will require assessment under the Habitats Regulations Assessment process. Proposals which generate and discharge phosphorus into the River Lambourn SAC nutrient catchment

must demonstrate that, as a minimum, the same amount of phosphorus can be removed from the catchment through mitigation[79].

12.10 Local authorities are required to identify, designate and protect Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) through the planning system. In Oxfordshire, the identification and designation of LWS is administered by the Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre (TVERC). A selection panel meets each year and includes representatives from TVERC, local authorities, Natural England, the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), and local wildlife recorders. TVERC maintain a living list of LWS[80] in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, which is updated every year in May.

12.11 Where there is Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees or Veteran Trees on or near a proposed development site, regard will be had to Natural England and the Forestry Commission's guidance 'Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions'[81].

12.12 All development will be expected to manage impacts on biodiversity designations (designated sites, habitats and species) in line with the mitigation hierarchy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In reducing order of preference:

1) impacts on biodiversity designations should be avoided (e.g. by selecting sites which do not cause impacts, or by designing developments to avoid impacts);
2) where it is not possible to entirely avoid impacts, impacts should be mitigated (e.g. by designing developments in ways that reduce the impacts); and
3) as a last resort, any remaining impacts that cannot be entirely avoided or mitigated should be compensated (e.g. designing measures on site or off site to replace lost habitats populations of species).

[79] The River Lambourn SAC and nutrient neutrality, available at: https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/wildlife-trees-and-landscape/protecting-wildlife-in-planning-applications/nutrient-neutrality/
[80] Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre maintains a "living list" of the Local Wildlife Sites in each local authority area in Berkshire and Oxfordshire, which is updated annually each May for the previous year, available at: www.tverc.org/cms/LWSLivingLists.
[81] Guidance on Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees and Veteran Trees, available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions

Policy NH2 – Nature recovery

Biodiversity net gain

1) Development in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse must deliver at least a 20% biodiversity net gain, unless the development is not subject to the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain.

2) Where development is not subject to the statutory framework, a net loss of biodiversity must be avoided and opportunities to achieve biodiversity gains are encouraged.

3) Biodiversity net gains should be delivered on site where possible. Where the full biodiversity net gain requirement cannot be delivered on site, the following sequential approach must be used to direct the creation and enhancement of habitats off site:

   a) deliver off site biodiversity net gains where it would enhance habitat connectivity within ecological networks within the same district as development.

   b) if (a) is not possible, deliver off site biodiversity net gains within the same district as development, outside of ecological networks.

   c) if (b) is not possible, deliver off site biodiversity net gains where it would enhance habitat connectivity within ecological networks within the Joint Local Plan area.

   d) if (c) is not possible, deliver off site biodiversity net gains within the Joint Local Plan area, outside of ecological networks.

   e) if (d) is not possible, deliver biodiversity gains elsewhere.

   f) as a last resort, purchase statutory biodiversity credits.

Ecological Networks

4) Development must conserve and protect habitat connectivity within the districts' ecological networks and, where possible, restore or enhance it. These include:

   a) Conservation Target Areas;

   b) areas identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy[a] as being, or having potential to become, important for biodiversity;

   c) local ecological networks identified in made neighbourhood plans; and

   d) other areas that contribute to wider ecological networks (including networks that extend beyond the districts' boundaries) or which are likely to be of value for ecological connectivity.

5) Where development may result in harm to an ecological network, the mitigation hierarchy must be followed.

6) Development likely to result in significant harm to an ecological network, that cannot be effectively mitigated, will not be supported.

Features to support wildlife

7) Development must include appropriately designed and located features to support wildlife[b] in accordance with the requirements below:

Development Type	Requirement
Householder development	The inclusion of features to support wildlife is encouraged.
Residential development	Developments of two or more units must deliver features to support wildlife at a ratio of one feature per two units (i.e. 50%).
Non-residential development	Minor non-residential development – the inclusion of features to support wildlife is encouraged, where appropriate. Major non-residential development – proportionate and appropriate features to support wildlife must be provided.

Features should be integrated into the fabric of buildings wherever possible and should be suitable for species of conservation concern.

8) Development proposing new boundary treatments (such as fencing and walls) must include appropriately designed access holes for wildlife, positioned to help facilitate connectivity (for example hedgehog highways).

[a] Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/local-nature-recovery-strategy

[b] Features to support wildlife include, but are not limited to, features such as bird boxes, water sources, swift bricks, bat boxes, bee bricks, and insect hotels.

12.13 The districts are home to a rich variety of habitats and species. The natural history of the districts has developed over centuries of farming and land management. From the beech woods of the Chilterns to the chalk grasslands of the North Wessex Downs and the floodplain meadows of the River Thames, nature is essential for the local distinctiveness, character and heritage of the area. However, continued fragmentation and loss of connectivity across the districts' landscapes, caused by issues such as agricultural intensification, built development, hydrological changes and insufficient management, is affecting the future viability of habitats and species[82].

12.14 A June 2023 study carried out by the Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre (TVERC)[83] for the councils emphasised the decline of nature in the districts. For instance, proportionally more grassland has been lost to built-up areas here than across Oxfordshire and England as a whole. This is concerning because grassland is an important habitat for many species that inhabit our districts and is an important tool to tackle climate change. Grassland butterflies and farmland bird species have declined accordingly. There has been a slight increase in woodland land cover, however the districts only contain a fraction of the woodland we used to have historically, and woodland species are not doing as well as these gains might suggest. The increase in woodland has not benefited populations of bird and butterfly species. It takes time for newly planted woodland to reach high levels of biodiversity, and if the right trees are not planted in suitable locations, they will not benefit many species.

12.15 At a national level, the Environment Act 2021 introduced a mandatory requirement for development to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain. Setting a higher biodiversity net gain requirement through the Joint Local Plan is an important way we can

[82] Wild Oxfordshire (2017) State of Nature in Oxfordshire, available at: www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/oxfordshires-nature/oxfordshires-state-of-nature
[83] Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (June 2023) South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Local Plan 2041 Habitat and Species Trends, available at: www.southandvale.gov.uk/JLPEvidence

do more to support nature recovery. Government reports state that 10% biodiversity net gain is the bare minimum necessary to ensure that biodiversity is still not being lost through the planning system, rather than resulting in a positive gain. Our policy requirement for 20% biodiversity net gain will help to reverse the decline and make up for past losses, as well as delivering multiple benefits for people and nature. Focussing biodiversity net gain on site on developments will bring direct benefits, while our sequential approach to focussing any off site net gains helps focus these gains in coherent local ecological networks.

12.16 Protecting and planning for stronger ecological networks is an important element of strategic planning. A series of Conservation Target Areas (CTA) have been identified across Oxfordshire, which form the current ecological network for the county. The CTAs provide the best opportunities for targeted conservation action. They protect and buffer important habitats and species and have been designed to provide resilience to climate change. The CTA are well established and have been used to inform our previous local plans, as well as other local plans in Oxfordshire, providing consistency across the county and over time. The CTAs are informing the forthcoming Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) which will expand upon them and supplant them. The Oxfordshire LNRS will set out biodiversity priorities for an area and will map designated sites, areas that are or could become important for biodiversity and areas where biodiversity recovery / enhancement could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits. This work is well underway, with the strategy and map expected to be finalised in 2025.

12.17 Designing wildlife features like bird boxes, garden ponds and swift bricks into developments can help better integrate nature into built environments and contribute to nature recovery. For example, insect hotels can provide a safe space for insects to shelter, lay eggs, raise their young and seek refuge from predators. Hedgehog highways increase hedgehogs' access to private gardens, which increases their access to food and provides a safer alternative to crossing roads. Features can (and often should) be clustered: multiple features such as swift boxes and bat boxes can be aggregated to create colonies within a building. The specific policy requirement on wildlife features is included because these features to help species are not considered in the metric used to calculate biodiversity net gain (which relates to habitats) and otherwise may not be provided in development. The Joint Design Guide[84] provides further advice on incorporating features to support wildlife.

12.18 Most smaller developments are exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain (e.g. householder developments and those under the minimum impact threshold), however these planning applications are often the most numerous processed by Local Planning Authorities and in combination, could have a notable role to play in achieving nature recovery. This policy requires schemes to make proportionate and appropriate contributions to nature recovery. In many cases, there will be limited scope for Local Planning Authorities to secure the delivery and long-term management of habitats within smaller development sites (private

[84] South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse (2022) Joint Design Guide, available at: https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/SAV/JDG.html#gsc.tab=0

gardens). As such, the provision of wildlife features into the built environment (e.g. integrated bat and bird boxes) is an appropriate way to achieve ecological benefit on smaller development sites. These features could be delivered at a prescribed ratio, but have flexibility to respond to the context of the site and relevant formal strategies (e.g. local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, etc). It is important that we harness the potential for smaller developments to contribute positively to nature recovery, in a piecemeal but cumulative way.

Trees and hedgerows in the landscape

Policy NH3 – Trees and hedgerows in the landscape

1) Development should make every effort to retain, protect and enhance existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows. Where retention is not possible, and a proposal seeks their removal; compensatory planting should provide a net gain in canopy cover. The planting must include a wide variety of tree species, suited to the sites growing conditions and include long lived, large canopied species. New hedgerow planting must be suited to the sites growing conditions and include a mixture of locally native hedgerow species when suitable.

2) Developments must secure the long-term maintenance of landscaping elements on site, including trees and hedgerows, through a management and maintenance plan.

3) The design of developments must allow sufficient space for the future growth of all proposed trees and all retained existing trees, taking into consideration the tree species growth habits and characteristics. Developments must prevent poor relationships with retained or new trees by allowing sufficient space for their long-term retention without residents finding the tree overbearing, or a cause of nuisance, such as shading or leaf litter.

12.19 Trees and hedgerows, individually and collectively, play an invaluable role in terms of the natural environment, biodiversity, air quality, adapting to and mitigating climate change, and contributing to the landscape and heritage quality and character of the districts.

12.20 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that: “Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and

community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users"[85].

12.21 Opportunities for introducing treescapes[86] have been identified in the Oxfordshire Treescape project[87], and consideration can be given to this mapping to help guide what type of treescape might be appropriate to maximise the multifunctional benefits of trees and hedgerows.

12.22 The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 prohibit the removal of countryside hedgerows, or parts of them, without first seeking approval from the Local Planning Authority. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 prohibits the killing, injuring or taking of wild birds, or taking or damaging their eggs and nests. In addition, the Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 have been laid in both Houses of Parliament. If approved by Parliament, the Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024 will put baseline hedgerow management practices into law, providing a consistent approach across all people operating on agricultural land. The proposed regulations will include a two metre 'buffer strip' from the centre of hedgerows with no cultivation or application of pesticides or fertilisers, and a hedge cutting ban between 1 March and 31 August to protect nesting birds.

12.23 Where possible, existing trees and hedgerows should be retained in new development. All tree data should be collected in accordance with the current edition of BS5837 – Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction[88], at the beginning of the development design. Development should plan the site design and the placement of hedges and trees using a holistic approach, with consideration given to how the trees and hedgerows will interact with other spaces and functions. Site designs should consider the species growth habits and characteristics (for both existing and new) so that a wide range of species can be incorporated, to maintain resilience to climate change and ensure that the trees and hedges are retained in the long-term. There is a need for both native and non-native planting to ensure we have a climate resilient and robust tree population resistant to pests and disease. Designs should allow for enough space to facilitate the future growth of both tree roots and crown, but not shade out wildflowers in species rich grassland. Layouts should be planned so that new and existing trees are

[85] NPPF, Paragraph 136
[86] Woodlands, hedgerows, agroforestry, community orchards, street trees and natural grassland which can have some woody elements
[87] Oxfordshire Treescape Opportunity Map, available at: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4cc798aefd5a4a4e976806ea92812d87
[88] Full copies of BS 5837 are available to purchase from the British Standards Institution at: https://www.bsigroup.com/

not only a significant feature of open spaces, but they are also incorporated into streets, gardens, parking courts and other publicly accessible areas.

12.24 Wooded areas[89] amount to some 9,392ha in South Oxfordshire and 4,723ha in Vale of White Horse[90]. Canopy cover within urban areas provides a range of ecosystem services, including biodiversity and climate change benefits such as more wildlife habitat, increased rainwater control, and improved air quality. Trees also improve the quality, amenity value, and sense of place of an area. In most cases trees will be the optimum solution for increasing canopy cover, but alternatives such as green roofs and green walls will have an important role to play in more constrained sites, especially in town centre locations. Development proposals should provide a net increase in tree canopy cover where this is possible, having regard to other considerations including site size, heritage protection, landscape character, habitat protection, residential amenity, and the need to make the best use of land.

12.25 The councils will protect trees of significant amenity value which are worthy of retention and considered to be at risk, through Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas and planning conditions as appropriate, except in woodland subject to a Forestry Commission management agreement. When considering applications to carry out work to trees protected by an Order or Conservation Area, the councils will take account of good arboricultural practice, the effect of the trees on nearby properties, and the contribution they make to the visual quality of the area.

Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes (formerly AONBs)

Policy NH4 – Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes

1) Great weight will be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes.

2) Major development[a] will only be permitted in the National Landscapes in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest, that alternative locations (outside of the National

[89] Areas of woodland of over 0.5ha with a minimum 20% canopy cover in 2020 based on National Forest Inventory (NFI) Woodland maps
[90] TVERC (2023) Habitats and Species trends

12.36 Neighbourhood plans may seek to designate further valued landscapes at a neighbourhood scale, which are not identified at the district scale. Neighbourhood plans are encouraged to use similar criteria to those set out in this assessment to identify valued landscapes at a neighbourhood scale.

Landscape

Policy NH6 – Landscape

1) South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse's landscapes, countryside and rural areas will be protected from harmful development. Proposals should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or a Landscape and Visual Appraisal which is proportionate to the level of landscape sensitivity and scale of development.

2) Development must appropriately respond to its setting by:

   a) responding to landscape character (as defined in a Joint South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Landscape Character Assessment, National Character Areas and associated profiles and other relevant Landscape Character Assessments in neighbourhood plans);

   b) being physically sensitive to and visually integrated into the landscape;

   c) preserving settlement character and setting; and

   d) maintaining the physical and visual separation between settlements, with consideration given to cumulative impacts with other existing or proposed development.

3) Development will only be permitted where it protects and, where possible, enhances the features and functions that contribute to the nature and quality of the landscape, in particular:

   a) trees (including individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands), hedgerows and field boundaries;

   b) irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland;

   c) the landscapes, waterscapes, cultural heritage and user enjoyment of the River Thames, its tributaries and flood plains;

d) other watercourses and waterbodies, including globally rare chalk streams;

e) topographical features;

f) areas or features of cultural and historic value, including historic landscape patterns;

g) good quality views and visually sensitive skylines, including the Oxford View Cones[a] and their backdrops / settings; and

h) aesthetic and perceptual factors such as tranquillity, wildness, intactness, rarity and enclosure.

4) Where appropriate, development should consider opportunities to enhance and restore damaged and/or poor-quality landscapes, features and functions.

[a] *Oxford City Council (2015) Assessment of the Oxford View Cones, available at: www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20064/conservation/876/oxford_views_study*

12.37 Landscapes have multifaceted benefits, impacting the environment and society through, among other things, providing views, contributing to biodiversity and providing the opportunity to get out from built up areas into nature through the Public Rights of Way network. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse are mainly rural districts. The quality and character of the countryside, and its relationship with settlements, is a key part of what makes the districts such desirable places to live, work and visit.

12.38 Policy NH6 (Landscape) manages development in a way that protects and enhances what makes our districts special. This includes identifying specific landscape functions and features that should be protected and enhanced, protecting the setting of settlements and separation between settlements, and encouraging enhancement of damaged and/or poor quality landscapes. To assess and determine whether a development responds appropriately to its setting, the councils will use the evidence base on the districts' landscape which includes the Landscape Character Assessment[96], National Character Areas and associated profiles and other relevant Landscape Character Assessments in neighbourhood plans. We would expect development proposals to be accompanied by discussion of the impacts on landscape through a proportionate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or Landscape and Visual Appraisal.

[96] The Landscape Character Assessment (September 2024) splits the districts into distinct Landscape Character Areas which are shown on our Policies Map.

Tranquillity

Policy NH7 – Tranquillity

1) Development proposals should conserve and enhance tranquillity, protecting areas which are prized as relatively most tranquil (zone 1 in the Tranquillity Assessment), through demonstrating consideration of impacts on tranquillity[a] as appropriate to the zone. Development proposals within all tranquillity zones should protect and enhance features which are referenced as contributing positively to tranquillity at their location, as well as incorporating features to reduce negative factors; as shown within the Tranquillity Assessment.

2) In determining planning applications, the following factors will be considered:

   a) visual and aural impacts;

   b) direct and indirect impacts; and

   c) impacts on users of the Public Right of Way network and other publicly accessible locations.

3) Proposals that are likely to negatively impact on tranquillity, with reference to the factors that increase or detract from tranquillity, should demonstrate the ways in which tranquillity has been designed into the development by seeking to (a) avoid and (b) minimise impacts through appropriate mitigation.

4) Development in areas with lower levels of relative tranquillity should take opportunities to enhance tranquillity where these exist (for example through high quality design and the provision of green infrastructure).

[a] *Making use of the User Guidance within the Tranquillity Assessment*

12.39 Tranquillity is related to the feeling of calm and connection to nature experienced in places with lots of natural features and few disturbances from manmade features. For example, places where natural sounds such as birdsong or flowing water are more prominent than background noise from traffic. Tranquillity adds to sense of place and landscape character, as well as having benefits for human health and for nature. For many people, the Covid-19 pandemic emphasised the importance of local access to tranquil places, including within the urban environment.

13.11 New development needs to make best use of existing infrastructure where capacity exists to accommodate needs, and the infrastructure is of an appropriate attractiveness and quality. Requirements arising from the needs of a development can be met through improvements to, or provision of new, infrastructure and services.

13.12 New development may also need to take into account existing infrastructure constraints, such as the presence of overhead powerlines or gas pipelines. It will be important for developers to engage early in the planning process with the organisations responsible for these distribution networks, including National Grid or Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks, to see how these can best be accommodated within new development.

13.13 The provision or improvement of infrastructure needed to support development will usually be secured through the use of planning conditions attached to a planning permission, or through contributions from, or direct delivery by, developers through legal agreements. Alternatively, we can attach planning conditions or secure funding via the Community Infrastructure Levy to deliver this infrastructure. Where local facilities, open space, play areas and community infrastructure are delivered by new developments, the councils' preference is for these to be transferred to town and parish councils, or other local community groups or organisations, rather than to a privately run management company.

13.14 To maintain and provide infrastructure and other community services effectively, it is essential that there is a partnership working approach between the public, private and voluntary sector agencies involved. The councils will continue to work closely with a wide range of infrastructure providers and stakeholders. Key organisations include Oxfordshire County Council, National Highways, the NHS Integrated Care Board, town and parish councils, Thames Water and the Environment Agency.

Sustainable transport and accessibility

Policy IN2 – Sustainable transport and accessibility

1) Development proposals must demonstrate that:

a) the location and proposed layout will maximise active and sustainable travel opportunities, minimising the need to travel by car, with sustainable travel opportunities integrated into the design;

b) viable active and sustainable travel choices have been assessed for suitability where currently available or will be delivered where levels are insufficient for users of the development to access day-to-day amenities. Any identified improvements to active and sustainable travel choices required by a development (on and off site) must be delivered ahead of occupation; and

c) access to the development is safe and convenient for all highway users, and in line with Oxfordshire County Council's Transport User Hierarchy[a].

2) All major development proposals must demonstrate that:

a) the application is consistent with the guiding principles of the Oxfordshire's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and supporting documents[b], Planning Practice Guidance on Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements[c] and guidance from National Highways[d];

b) the Active Travel England Planning Application Assessment Toolkit[e] has been used, where appropriate,

c) provision of infrastructure and services has been prioritised in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Transport User Hierarchy, as set out in Policy 1 of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan;

d) they address any road safety issues in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Vision Zero Approach;

e) they do not worsen air quality issues and provide air quality mitigation measures where suitable;

f) they contribute to and enhance the provision of active and sustainable transport infrastructure (both on and off site) and, where feasible, implement new travel and transportation technology and services necessary to support that development, either through direct delivery or developer contributions;

g) the methodology in Oxfordshire County Council's Implementing Decide and Provide: Requirements for Transport Assessments document[f] has been used to assess the need for infrastructure and provision of transport services;

h) they have made reasonable provision of car club and lift sharing opportunities for users of the development. Provision of community transport and innovative transport projects, as well as projects that develop the use of new technologies, will be encouraged to promote greater travel choice; and

i) they align with and help to deliver planned transport infrastructure (as set out in Policy IN3 (Transport infrastructure and safeguarding)) where future users of the development are likely to utilise the infrastructure.

Transport documents to support planning applications

3) Transport Statements, Transport Assessments and Travel Plans must be provided to support planning applications in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's thresholds for developments of different sizes / types. These should apply the principles set out in county guidance documents and should also follow the latest relevant national guidance.

4) Travel Plans, where required, must set out measures that seek to promote and support modal shift to walking, cycling and wheeling, and public transport use for a range of trip purposes through agreed targets and monitoring arrangements. Travel Plan initiatives must seek to reduce demand for travel by private cars. Initiatives and infrastructure provision should facilitate electric, or other fuelled vehicle use, in line with Oxfordshire County Council's Parking Standards for New Developments[g]. Mitigation strategies will be used to address anticipated impacts, these should initially relate to active and sustainable travel. Mitigation strategies must be monitored to ensure the anticipated outcomes are achieved, if they are not achieved, further mitigation measures may be required.

[a] *See Policy 1 of the Oxfordshire County Council (2022) Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-connecting-oxfordshire/LocalTransportandConnectivityPlan.pdf*

[b] *Oxfordshire County Council (2022) Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan – supporting documents, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/ltcp*

[c] *MHCLG (2014) Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements, available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-plans-transport-assessments-and-statements*

[d] *National Highways (2023) Planning for the future, available at: https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/imvluu5w/final-cre23_0370-nh-planning-guide-2023.pdf*

[e] *Active Travel England (2023) Planning application assessment toolkit, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-england-planning-application-assessment-toolkit*

[f] *Oxfordshire County Council (2022) Implementing 'Decide & Provide': Requirements for Transport Assessments, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport/ImplementingDecideandProvideTARequirements.pdf*

[g] *Oxfordshire County Council (2022) Parking Standards for New Developments, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/PARKINGS.PDF*

13.15 Policy IN2 (Sustainable transport and accessibility) supports the improvement of transport infrastructure, prioritising active and sustainable travel, and aims to improve access for all, health benefits and place making.

13.16 The councils prioritise active travel to meet the travel needs of development. Development proposals will need to adhere to the transport user hierarchy and assess future transport needs using the Decide and Provide (or 'Vision and Validate') approach. This considers the needs of all users, for an entirely inclusive transport network. This prioritises reducing the need to travel, then the requirements to shift travel mode to walking and wheeling[105], then cycling, then public transport, and then motorised vehicle travel. As such, developers should not consider highway upgrades and capacity increases for private vehicles as their first mitigation strategy to offset the travel impact of the development. These should only be considered after all other options have been exhausted. On larger developments which are being delivered in phases, the councils will expect that active and sustainable travel infrastructure is delivered at the earliest stage to influence travel behaviours from the outset.

13.17 These active travel measures will enable residents to access as many essential day-to-day amenities as possible. Amenities include, but are not limited to, primary schools, secondary schools, supermarkets or local grocery shops (selling fresh food), general practice surgeries (plus other healthcare facilities), places of employment (such as a town centres, science parks, business parks, industrial estates, or other employment sites of a similar scale, e.g. major hospitals, universities, etc.), convenience stores, post offices, and pharmacies. The councils will require that active travel routes are safe and attractive and, wherever possible, extend beyond the site boundary to connect to appropriate destinations or the existing active travel network and Public Rights of Way network.

13.18 To support developers in developing active travel proposals, the councils expect applicants to use Active Travel England's (ATE) toolkit for planning applications that surpass ATE's thresholds: 150 dwellings, 7,500sqm of non-residential uses, or sites of 5 hectares. Applicants will need to have regard to transport and travel guidelines and design principles set out at national, county and district level. The councils and Oxfordshire County Council also encourage applicants to seek pre-application advice for how to apply the new approach to transport planning.

13.19 In addition to active transport measures, developers will need to demonstrate that safe access can be achieved through compliance with the Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/20 and Inclusive Mobility documents[106] at the planning application stage. Additionally, planning applications should support the Oxfordshire Vision Zero, aiming to eliminate all road fatalities and severe injuries on Oxfordshire's roads.

13.20 Developers will be expected to submit and agree a Travel Plan to monitor the effectiveness of transport mitigation measures, though other monitoring strategies may be appropriate if agreed with the councils and Oxfordshire County Council.

[105] Wheeling is an alternative to pedestrian-based mobility which includes both self-propelled wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and rollators
[106] Department for Transport (2020) Cycle infrastructure design (LTN 1/20), available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-120

13.21 When applying this policy, it is relevant to acknowledge that different considerations apply to roads managed by National Highways (the A34 and M40) compared with those managed by Oxfordshire County Council. National Highways roads are designed to operate for longer distance journeys whilst the majority of the county managed roads should facilitate local journeys by all modes.

Transport infrastructure and safeguarding

Policy IN3 – Transport infrastructure and safeguarding

Pipeline transport schemes and transport priorities

1) The council, working with Oxfordshire County Council and relevant stakeholders, will support the following infrastructure schemes and transport priorities. Development should contribute to the delivery of these schemes and priorities where appropriate:

   a) Maintaining, improving and adding to walking and cycling infrastructure, including, for example, through development of further Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and delivery of schemes included in existing LCWIPs as well as delivering schemes included in the Strategic Active Travel Network (SATN)[a] and, where appropriate, the Science Vale Area Strategy;

   b) Protecting, enhancing and adding to the Public Right of Way (PROW) network, National Cycle Network routes, National Trails, recreational routes, and Open Access Areas (OAAs);

   c) protecting former rail facilities and lines for re-use as public transport corridors or for the purpose of active travel;

   d) delivery of mobility hubs to support transport interchanges;

   e) maintaining, improving and adding to rail services and associated facilities;

   f) a new Wantage and Grove Railway Station and associated railway tracks;

   g) improvements to Culham Railway Station;

13.35 Proposals for the restoration of the canal must consider the status and objectives of relevant existing waterbodies in the area, as set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan[107], prepared under the Water Framework Directive. The proposals will need to identify where the source of water will be obtained from to ensure that it will not have a detrimental impact on existing waterbodies, or aquatic and semiaquatic habitats. The preparation of masterplans and supporting documents will assist the consideration of the likely overall impacts of the canal restoration scheme and how to minimise or mitigate any likely negative effects. The councils may require an Environmental Assessment as part of an application to understand any impacts to wildlife and the natural environment.

Cycle and car parking standards

Policy IN5 – Cycle and car parking standards

1) New development must provide cycle and car parking in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's adopted parking standards.

2) Where development provides parking provision, facilities must provide cycle parking that is Local Transport Note 1/20 compliant and has:

   a) where provided, a minimum door width of 1 metre wide for doorways used to access cycling parking;

   b) safe and convenient access for manoeuvring with a bike between cycle parking and the public highway for the whole journey to and from the public highway, this may include wheeling ramps available in convenient locations to prevent the need for lifting a bike;

   c) an air pump and multi-tool facility where cycle parking spaces are clustered together; and

   d) where new developments seek to provide internal cycle parking, the cycle parking must be convenient, with no more than 2 doors required to access internal cycle facilities.

[107] Environment Agency (2022) Thames river basin district river basin management plan: updated 2022, available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/thames-river-basin-district-river-basin-management-plan-updated-2022

3) Major developments providing employment and education must provide active travel (walking, running, wheeling and cycling) welfare facilities. The requirement will be identified on a case-by-case basis during pre-application discussions with Oxfordshire County Council. Active travel welfare facilities include (list is not exhaustive) the following:

a) lockers;

i) device charging can be supplied within lockers to allow e-bike batteries and bike lights to be charged securely.

ii) when a drying room is not provided, lockers can be heated / well-ventilated to allow wet equipment to dry.

b) changing rooms;

c) showers; and

d) drying room.

13.36 Policy IN5 (Cycle and car parking standards) identifies the need to apply Oxfordshire County Council parking standards for cycles and cars and provides design requirements for cycle parking, car parking and electric vehicle charging for all types of development. This policy also promotes the provision of welfare facilities to support the uptake of active travel.

13.37 Oxfordshire County Council's cycle and car parking standards can be found via the county's website[108]. This currently includes three different standards across Oxfordshire: within Oxford City, sites on the edge of Oxford City, and the rest of Oxfordshire. Most developments in our districts will fall into the last category, but three sites allocated in the Joint Local Plan fall into the "edge of Oxford City" category: Land south of Grenoble Road, Land at Northfield, and Land at Bayswater Brook. Where a development requires parking bays, these must be marked in accordance with the Manual for Streets (or superseding version) standards.

[108] Oxfordshire County Council Transport Development Management, available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/transport-policies-and-plans/transport-new-developments/transport-development

13.38 This policy requires cycle parking on new developments to be convenient. This refers to the ease of access for all users, and should follow the same principles applied to disabled car parking, whereby:

a) the locking mechanisms are located as close to entrances as possible;

b) gradients do not hinder use (such as the cycle rolling while attempting to lock the bike); and

c) journeys to and from locking mechanisms do not require the bike to be lifted or transported along convoluted routes.

13.39 This policy also sets out requirements for developments to provide cycle maintenance stations. This will allow cyclists to undertake minor maintenance tasks to their bicycle to ensure it is in full working order, such as inflating tyres. Where significant cycle parking is provided the need will arise for a cycle pump and tool station. Where appropriate, the councils will use legal agreements to ensure ongoing maintenance arrangements are in place for cycle infrastructure provision, including any cycle maintenance stations provided. Cycle parking facilities should be safe and secure, and the councils encourage indoor long stay provision where possible. Coded and/or fob system doors can be provided where security concerns arise from electric assist door opening.

13.40 Alongside provision of cycle parking, providing welfare facilities in the right locations is important for supporting the uptake of active travel. Education and employment places are key locations where welfare facilities, such as showers, lockers, drying rooms and cycle maintenance stations enable employees and students to travel further via active modes in all weather conditions.

13.41 Oxfordshire County Council's parking standards also require electric vehicle charging points. These are also in nationally applied Building Standards. The transition from petrol and diesel cars to electric and other sustainable fuel types will need car parking with electric vehicle charging and other sustainable fuelling infrastructure. Some of the proposed electric vehicle charging provision will be passive, where developers install channels but not the cables and charge points. This will allow EV charging to be activated when there is demand, and avoid the need to retrofit, whilst also preventing charging devices being installed that may not be used or become obsolete. Developments should ensure that electric charging for vehicles does not create trip hazards for pedestrians and cyclists.