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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 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

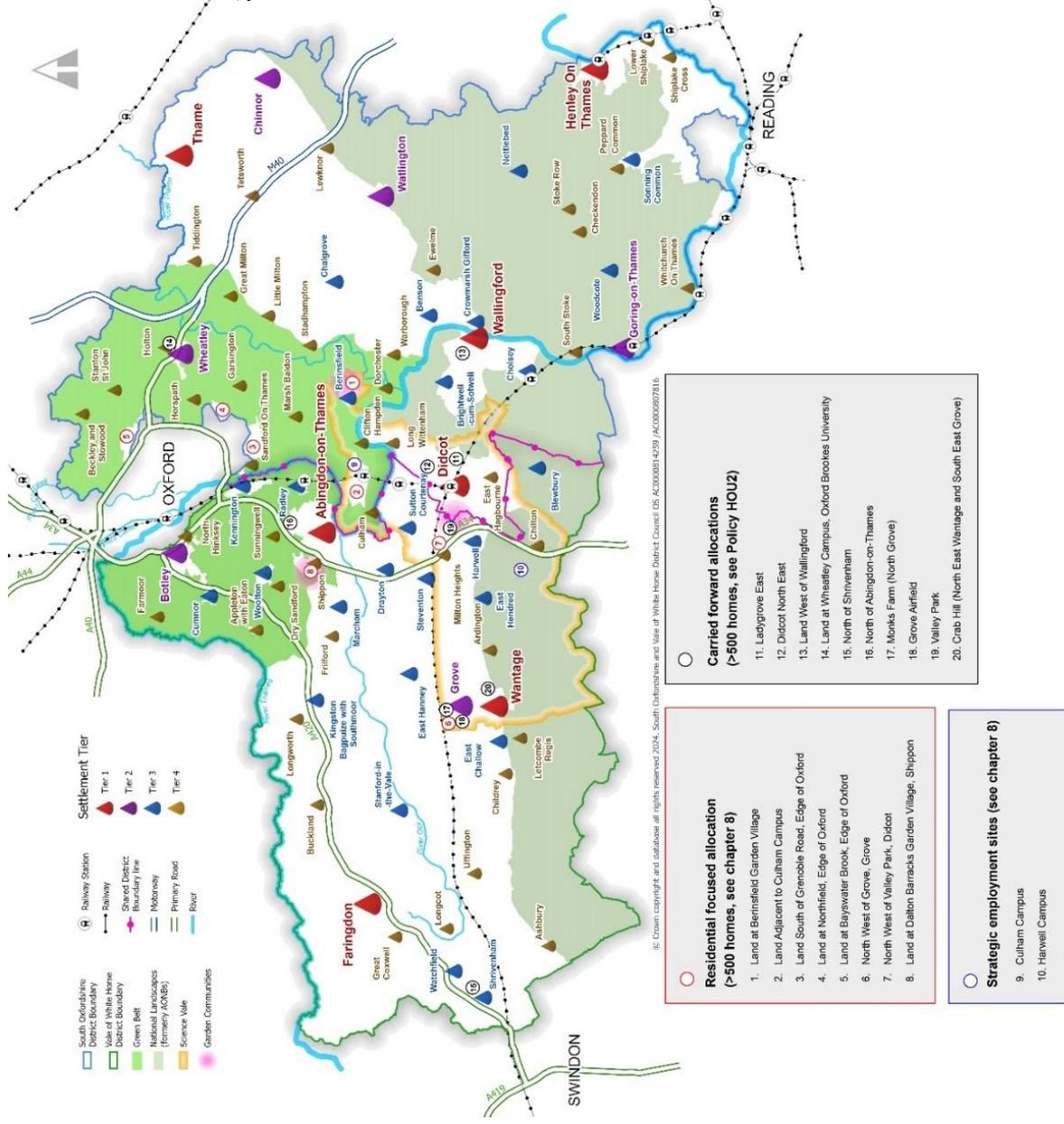
- 5.6 Our spatial strategy sets out how and where we will meet the need for homes, jobs and other types of development in the districts. It provides a plan-led and strategic approach, rooted in an understanding not just of the characteristics of our districts but of our location and importance in the 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 Plan²⁴ 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



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

	<p>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</p>	<p>Buckland Childrey Chilton Dry Sandford Farmoor Frilford Great Coxwell Letcombe Regis Longcot Longworth Milton Heights North Hinksey Shippon Sunningwell Uffington</p>
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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 boundaries²⁵ 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.