

3 OUR SPATIAL STRATEGY

Introduction

- 3.1 Our spatial strategy sets out how we will deliver the vision and objectives set out in Chapter 2. It identifies the roles that Science Vale, including Didcot Garden Town and Culham, the market towns, the villages and the countryside, including areas adjacent to Oxford City allocated for strategic development in this Plan will play in the future. It shows where new homes will be built, where opportunities to provide new jobs will be created, and where infrastructure and services will be required. It shows how we will work in partnership to deliver the strategy with those responsible for key services, including healthcare, education, transport, water supply and community safety and with others such as affordable housing providers.
- 3.2 Local planning authorities have a responsibility to plan positively and work collaboratively. We cannot plan in isolation, and South Oxfordshire has been working with, and continues to work with the other Oxfordshire authorities, supported by the Oxfordshire Growth Board, Local Enterprise Partnership, key stakeholders, our parish and town councils and infrastructure providers and with government. We have signed up to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal which commits the Oxfordshire authorities to delivering growth.
- 3.3 The Plan seeks to meet needs identified for South Oxfordshire as well as all the needs apportioned to the district arising from our neighbour Oxford City. A joint work programme with the other Oxfordshire authorities² identified the scale of Oxford City's unmet needs and how they can best be met.
- 3.4 All allocations made in the Core Strategy are retained and the Local Plan makes provision for housing to meet additional housing requirements identified in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014. The strategy has been updated to help address the key challenges facing the district now and to make best use of available opportunities.
- 3.5 Our strategy delivers sustainable development, supporting the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in national policy.

² Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council

The Strategy

3.6 Historically, growth in South Oxfordshire has been largely focused upon Didcot and the market towns of Thame, Wallingford and Henley-on-Thames. Other than Wallingford, these towns are located towards the boundary of our district and the historic focus of development to the periphery of the district has led to a reduction in development to support the investment in services and infrastructure in other areas.

3.7 The issues and options version of the Local Plan presented a series of potential options for the distribution of development within the district.

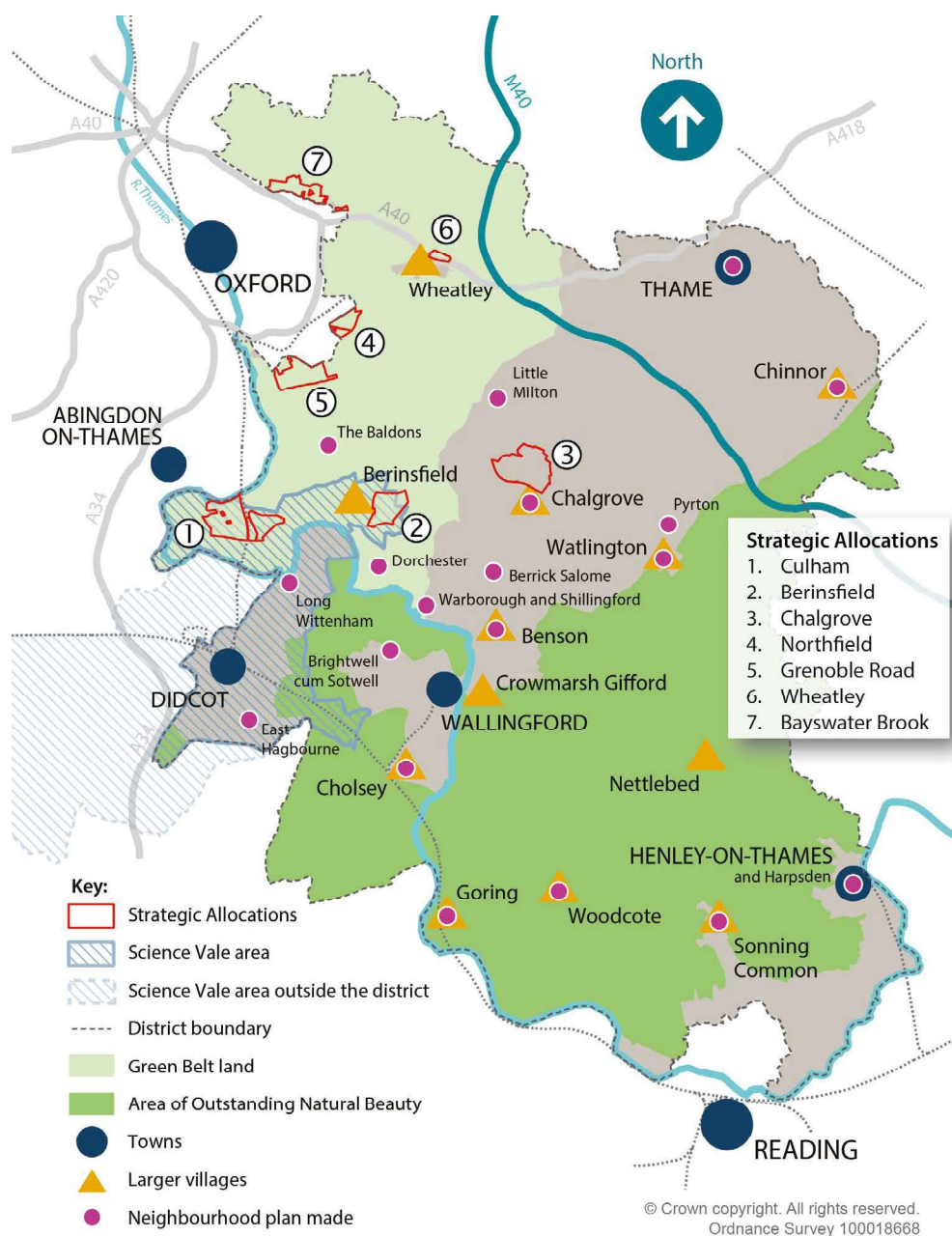
- a) Core Strategy approach
- b) Science Vale and 'sustainable settlements'
- c) All in Science Vale
- d) All in single new settlement
- e) Dispersal
- f) Next to neighbouring major urban areas (Reading/Oxford)
- g) Raising densities (from 25dph)
- h) Locating development in settlements where it could help fund projects.

Drawing on a combined approach to the distribution of new housing development enables a series of benefits to be delivered through the Local Plan

3.8 Each of these options was consulted upon and tested through the Sustainability Appraisal. The final strategy is to principally focus development at Science Vale and sustainable settlements (which include Towns and Larger Villages), where over 70% of housing will be located and to deliver elements of some of these options rather than favouring any one scenario in isolation. The strategy draws together the Core Strategy approach with development at Science Vale and next to the neighbouring major urban area of Oxford. It is also complemented by the location of development to fund regeneration and by the Local Plan raising densities. Drawing on a combined approach to the distribution of new housing development enables a series of benefits to be delivered through the Local Plan and this ensures that the housing needs of the district can be accommodated.

3.9 Our strategy supports the delivery of new housing and economic growth and translates our vision and objectives under inter-related spatial themes to:

- Support a strong network of vibrant settlements including the regeneration of town centres, making the whole district more sustainable, recognising the rural nature of South Oxfordshire and the effects generated by nearby major centres;
- Contribute to tackling climate change;



- Support a movement strategy that strengthens connections to key places, allows a choice of transport modes and manages traffic to improve environmental quality;
- Create a thriving economy in urban and rural areas with a range of work opportunities including more high value jobs and enable the up-skilling of our workforce to support existing and new businesses;
- Deliver sufficient new homes to meet the needs of the communities and economy supported by appropriate infrastructure, services and facilities;
- Maintain and enhance the built, historic and natural environment and ensure good quality developments and design.

- 3.10 The Local Plan seeks to build upon the existing settlement hierarchy and actively create a sustainable pattern of development throughout the district. It identifies strategic allocations at seven locations at Chalgrove, Culham, Berinsfield, Grenoble Road, Northfield, North of Bayswater Brook and Wheatley.
- 3.11 The spatial strategy supports growth in locations that help reduce the need to travel such as the focus at Science Vale, Towns and Larger Villages as well as allocations adjacent to the City of Oxford. Appendix 16 of the Local Plan highlights all elements of the Local Plan where the Plan helps to minimise carbon emissions, lower energy use and help to reduce the need to travel.

Policy STRAT1: The Overall Strategy

- 1. Proposals for development in South Oxfordshire will be assessed using national policy and guidance and the whole of the Development Plan* and should be consistent with the overall strategy of:**
 - i) focusing major new development in Science Vale including sustainable growth at Didcot Garden Town and Culham so that this area can play an enhanced role in providing homes, jobs and services with improved transport connectivity;**
 - ii) providing strategic allocations at Chalgrove, Culham, Berinsfield, Grenoble Road, Northfield, North of Bayswater Brook and Wheatley including necessary infrastructure and community facilities;**
 - iii) close working with partner agencies, neighbouring local authorities, communities and other stakeholders to ensure the timely delivery of our strategy, which will deliver a significant amount of growth beyond the end of the plan period;**
 - iv) supporting and enhancing the economic and social dependencies between our towns and villages;**
 - v) supporting the roles of Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford by maintaining and improving the attractiveness of their town centres through measures that include environmental improvements and mixed-use developments and by providing new homes, jobs, services and infrastructure;**
 - vi) meeting unmet housing needs of Oxford City on strategic allocations adjacent to the boundary of Oxford near to where that need arises;**
 - vii) supporting and enhancing the roles of the Larger Villages of Benson, Berinsfield, Chalgrove, Chinnor, Cholsey, Crowmarsh Gifford, Goring-on-Thames, Nettlebed, Sonning Common,**

- Watlington, Wheatley and Woodcote as local service centres;**
- viii) supporting Smaller and Other Villages by allowing for limited amounts of housing and employment to help secure the provision and retention of services;**
 - ix) protecting and enhancing the countryside and particularly those areas within the two AONBs and Oxford Green Belt by ensuring that outside of the towns and villages any change relates to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment;**
 - x) supporting and enhancing our historic environment; and**
 - xi) contributing to tackling climate change.**

*The Development Plan is outlined in paragraph 1.12

This policy contributes towards achieving objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 & 8.

- 3.12 Understanding the nature of our towns and villages and how they inter-relate and link with places outside the district is a vital part of our strategy. Movement patterns are complex and vary with the purpose of the journey. Some key services such as main hospitals and regional shopping centres will continue to be provided outside the district, particularly in Oxford and Reading.
- 3.13 The strategy can influence how services and employment are accessed and where new development is located within the district. It can support and influence where and how service providers deliver their services and encourage different and improved ways of delivery.
- 3.14 South Oxfordshire has around 140 settlements, although some are just isolated groups of houses with no community facilities. These vary considerably in size and character reflecting their natural setting and historical development. The settlements in the district have been categorised by the services and facilities they offer and a hierarchy of policies has been established on this basis. We looked at these against a range of criteria on employment opportunities, schools, health services, recreation and leisure opportunities and access to shops and public transport provision to prepare a settlement assessment and hierarchy³. Villages have been categorised as being either "Larger Villages", with a wide range of services and facilities in sustainable locations, or "Smaller Villages" that have a more limited range of services. There is a clear distinction between the villages in the settlement hierarchy but we will be promoting development through this Plan to the most sustainable locations. We are directing development to the Larger Villages to complement the spatial strategy and will support those Neighbourhood Development Plan groups who

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³ Settlement Assessment
Background Paper, South
Oxfordshire December 2018

wish to promote development in the Smaller Villages. In addition, there are “Other Villages” which lie at the bottom of the settlement hierarchy, being hamlets or very small settlements with very limited or no services. Our Local Plan reflects the status of settlements in this assessment.

- 3.15 Our vision and objectives for South Oxfordshire recognise the rural nature of our district and the importance of our rural settlements in contributing to what makes South Oxfordshire such a beautiful and prosperous place to live. Our strategy for the 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 development takes place within the more sustainable locations of the district.

Meeting our Housing and Employment Needs

- 3.16 National Planning Policy is clear that local planning authorities should, as a minimum, provide for the objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in their area. They should also provide for any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas where this has been agreed through a statement of common ground.
- 3.17 The NPPF⁴ and Planning Practice Guidance⁵ expects local planning authorities to use the “standard method” to establish the minimum local housing need figure. For South Oxfordshire this results in an annual housing need of 627 homes a year. This figure represents the minimum annual housing need for South Oxfordshire. It does not automatically translate into the housing requirement for the Local Plan, which has taken into account other factors when determining the homes to plan for.
- 3.18 The Planning Practice Guidance⁶ explains that the standard method for working out housing need is just the starting point for working out how many homes to plan for. It does not attempt to predict the impact that future government policies, changing economic circumstances or other factors, might have on demographic behaviour. The Guidance states that Councils should consider uplifting the housing requirement for the Local Plan above the results of the standard method. It gives the examples of where a housing or growth deal is in place, where strategic infrastructure improvements are planned to support new homes, where an authority has agreed to take on unmet need from a neighbour (based on that authority’s standard method results), and where a recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests higher levels of need.

⁴ Paragraph 60

^{5, 6} See Planning Practice Guidance - Housing Needs Assessment