

Cabinet Agenda



Contact: Steve Culliford, Democratic Services Officer
Telephone 01235 540307
Email: steve.culliford@southandvale.gov.uk
Date: 25 September 2014
Website: www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

A meeting of the

Cabinet

will be held on Friday 3 October 2014 at 2.00pm
Meeting Room 1, The Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Cabinet Members:

Councillors

Matthew Barber (Chairman)
Roger Cox (Vice-Chairman)
Mike Murray
Reg Waite
Elaine Ware

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Reed'.

Margaret Reed
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Agenda

Open to the Public including the Press

Council's vision

The council's vision is to take care of your interests across the Vale with enterprise, energy and efficiency.

1. Apologies for absence

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 May 2014 (previously published).

3. Declarations of interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Urgent business and chairman's announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chairman determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chairman.

5. Statements, petitions, and questions relating to matters affecting the Cabinet

Any statements, petitions, and questions from the public under standing order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

6. Draft Local Plan To 2031

(Pages 3 - 43)

To consider the head of planning's report.

7. Treasury management outturn 2013/14

(Pages 44 - 58)

To consider the head of finance's report.

8. Future delivery of corporate services

(Pages 59 - 67)

To consider the strategic director's report.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

Cabinet



Report of Head of Planning

Author: Mark Williams, Planning Policy

Telephone: Ext 7308

E-mail: mark.williams@southandvale.gov.uk

Cabinet member responsible: Mike Murray

Tel: 01235 834125

E-mail: mike.murray@causewayland.com

To: Cabinet on 3 October 2014

DRAFT LOCAL PLAN TO 2031

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is requested to

- (a) consider the views aired at the Scrutiny committee h on 25 September 2014 and, subject to any agreed changes,

Recommend to Council

- (b) that the Pre-submission draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies, associated documents (submission Policies Map, Sustainability Appraisal, Appropriate Assessment, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Consultation Statements) and supporting evidence base studies and topic papers be published for Pre-Submission public consultation for a period of six weeks under Regulations 19 and 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012, and thereafter
- (c) to authorise the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning to submit the Submission Local Plan 2031 and all associated documents together with the summarised Pre-Submission public consultation responses to the Secretary of State for independent examination under Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012
- (d) to authorise the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, to make minor changes and corrections to the Local Plan.

Purpose of Report

1. To present to Cabinet an overview of the main changes to the local plan 2031. Full Council will be asked to agree the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies for publication for the purposes of pre-submission (Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012) public consultation, and thereafter for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination (together with supporting evidence base studies, topic papers and summaries of the consultation responses received, Regulation 22).

Strategic Objectives

2. The local plan is central to the achievement of the following strategic objectives in the 2012-2016 Corporate Plan
 - a strong local economy
 - housing for people who need it.
3. The extensive public consultation carried out on the emerging local plan in accordance with our Statement of Community Involvement is part of how the council meets the following corporate objectives
 - positive and constructive work with community groups
 - communities involved in decisions about development and other things affecting their local area.

Introduction

STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT AND APPENDICES

4. The report sections are
 - Introduction and background
 - Current stage and next steps
 - Recent public consultation feedback
 - Summary of the local plan document and main changes to previous versions
 - How the local plan meets National Planning Policy Framework requirements
 - Local Plan Options
 - Financial and legal implications
 - Concluding recommendations
5. The appendices are
 - appendix 1: a list of local plan evidence base studies

- appendix 2: a list of forthcoming topic papers that more fully document the work undertaken
 - appendix 3: a summary of the Housing Delivery update consultation
 - appendix 4: Cherwell Local Plan Examination Inspector's Note 9 June 2014
 - appendix 5: List of key infrastructure to support the local plan
 - appendix 6: Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.
 - appendix 7: Strategic housing site selection, arriving at the recommended site package
6. The full local plan document in 'committee version' formatting is annexed to the report. Editorial improvements are continuing. The draft plan has been reviewed by a planning barrister and changes incorporated.
 7. The local plan has been informed by the findings and conclusions of an extensive range of technical studies listed at appendix 1. These studies are in the process of final editing and will be available in October 2014.
 8. During September and October officers are producing the Topic Papers listed at appendix 2 to more fully document how the evidence base, consultation feedback and sustainability appraisal informed the preparation of the plan policies and the selection of sites for development. These will be available to support the pre-submission consultation.

BACKGROUND

9. To date there have been five main public consultation stages that have informed the Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies
 - Issues and Options (2007)
 - Preferred Options (2009)
 - Additional Consultation (Dec 2009 - Jan 2010)
 - Local Plan Part 1 Consultation Draft (2013)
 - Housing Delivery Update (2014).
10. From inception the core strategy, now local plan, has been prepared as a strategic document. The local plan includes a strategic housing site threshold of at least 200 homes. It will be followed by the Local Plan Part 2 which will

replace the more detailed development management policies currently set out in Local Plan 2011, and identify smaller sites for development. The Local Development Scheme sets out the timetable. Until the Local Plan Part 2 is adopted the council will save and continue to rely upon for development management purposes a number of policies from the adopted Local Plan 2011. These saved policies are identified in the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1.

Current stage and next steps

11. Pre-submission 'regulation 19' public consultation is the first stage in the process of examining the local plan. It differs from previous consultations in that it is part of the local plan examination and the comments made are considered by the examining inspector rather than the council. The council does not need to formally consider or respond to them directly, although they will clearly be of interest and reviewed for information.
12. The council cannot make substantive changes to the local plan at this stage unless it chooses to withdraw the plan from examination, modify, re-consult and re-submit. This might happen if a significant unforeseen matter arose through or during pre-submission consultation. It can make minor clarification or corrections, which is suggested to be delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning
13. Following pre-submission consultation the council would submit the local plan in its current form to the Secretary of State for independent examination, together with the supporting evidence base studies and reports. The supporting material would include a summary of the representations made to the pre-submission consultation.
14. We intend to submit the local plan for examination at the end of February 2015. As set out in the Local Development Scheme we anticipate that the local plan would be examined in May-June 2015 and adopted in October 2015.
15. Following the examination the inspector may recommend changes to the local plan, which the council would then consider (and usually accept unless there was a good planning reason not to). A 'Modifications' version of the local plan would then be published for consultation, incorporating any recommended changes the council agrees. The local plan would then be finalised and adopted

Recent public consultation feedback

16. The latest Housing Supply Update consultation February – April 2014 generated 2,717 responses from 1,093 participants. Appendix 3 provides an initial summary. A full consultation statement will be published alongside the

pre-submission consultation. The main response themes were similar to the 2013 consultation, selected key points of detail are also noted

- calls for the provision of infrastructure before development and concerns about the lack of infrastructure to support new development- schools, health care facilities, sewage and water treatment works upgrading, flooding issues
 - traffic and congestion from the new development, and cumulative impact on the existing road network
 - loss of Green Belt land in the Abingdon / Oxford Fringe Sub Area, and opposition to development in the AONB at Harwell Oxford campus, including from statutory consultees Natural England, and by the AONB Management Board
 - concerns about harm to the identity and character of existing settlements including coalescence
 - Oxfordshire County Council expressed concerns about the number of homes proposed on the Milton Heights site on highway capacity and safety grounds, and raised site access issues to land East of Sutton Courtenay
 - Oxford City Council objected that the local plan has not addressed Oxford City's un-met housing need from the SHMA
 - English Heritage raised various concerns about heritage and conservation matters including protection for the setting of designated heritage assets
17. We also received 81 alternative site proposals, of which three have been incorporated into the local plan, discussed below.

Summary of the local plan document and main changes to previous versions

18. This section is best read alongside the executive summary overview in the local plan document. The key points and changes are noted below.
19. The spatial strategy of 'building on our strengths', policy treatment of the district in three sub-areas broad structure of the local plan are retained from the 2013 draft, as are the four organising themes
- building healthy and sustainable communities
 - supporting economic prosperity
 - supporting sustainable transport and accessibility
 - protecting the environment and responding to climate change.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

20. Two key strategic policies have been moved to the front of the document to give them greater prominence:
 - **CP1: The presumption in favour of sustainable development**
 - **CP2: Cooperation on unmet housing need for Oxfordshire**
21. The supporting text to CP2: The Duty to Cooperate includes reference to the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation and the process agreed by council leaders to establish and address any agreed unmet housing need. We have included an indicative 12-18 month timeframe based on advice to SPIP (now the Growth Board) by a prominent former planning inspector and our counsel. The supporting text also includes reference to the possibility of a strategic Green Belt review as part of this process, and that the local plan may require early review if it falls to this district to meet needs than cannot be met elsewhere.
22. This statement is important to demonstrate our commitment to helping to meet any unmet need, and responds as positively as we reasonably can do at present to the objection from Oxford City Council about their expected unmet need.
23. There are risks in seeking to first meet our own housing needs in relation to meeting the effectiveness test of the Duty to Cooperate. These can be reduced but not avoided by committing to active and timely joint working, in parallel with work to meet our own needs. Without this commitment the local plan would proceed at a much higher risk of failure.

CHAPTERS 2-3, KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES, SPATIAL VISION, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

24. These contextual chapters have been significantly shortened to prevent repetition and focus on key messages.

CHAPTER 4 SPATIAL STRATEGY

25. **CP3 Settlement hierarchy.** The settlement hierarchy is unchanged other than to de-classify Charney Bassett as a small village (it would be treated as open countryside for development purposes), and to clarify that an enhanced Botley is intended to have a district centre role in the Oxford city context.
26. **CP4 Meeting our housing needs.** The full objectively assessed need (OAN) target of 1,028 homes per annum is retained. The Oxfordshire SHMA identifies objectively assessed need (OAN) for 1,028 homes per annum 2011-2031 in the Vale of White Horse, or 20,560 homes in this 20-year period. This must be our starting point in considering a plan target, and there would have

to be compelling planning reasons to justify anything less. The most recent and contextually relevant confirmation of this is set out in the note of the planning inspector who suspended the Cherwell local plan examination stating as follows (emphasis added, full note attached as appendix 4)

“This is to enable the Council to put forward proposed modifications to the plan involving increased new housing delivery over the plan **period to meet the full, up to date, objectively assessed, needs of the district, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and based on the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (SHMA).

27. Paragraphs 68-71 provide further reasons why a lower housing target is not a reasonable option.
28. Since the Housing Supply Update we have recorded another monitoring year of completions plus additional planning commitments, reducing the residual homes we need to plan for. The strategic housing site allocations have been updated to reflect this together with feedback from consultation and further evidence base testing. The proposed housing site allocation package is shown below as figure 1. Fuller details and reasons for the site changes made are provided at appendix 7.
29. The following sites are no longer proposed for inclusion as strategic housing sites in the Local Plan 2031 Part 1
 - South Cumnor
 - North Radley
 - East Wootton
 - South Marcham
 - South Drayton
 - East Challow
 - East Hanney (replaced by South East Hanney), and
 - South Shrivenham.
30. The revised local plan includes three alternative housing sites suggested through the consultation
 - a new site east of Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor
 - the reinstatement and enlargement of a site at the north of Harwell campus, and
 - land south of East Hanney, proposed by the parish as an alternative to land east of East Hanney.
31. Oxford Garden City was also submitted as an alternative site for consideration. Paragraphs 74-78 set out why this is not a reasonable alternative housing supply option for this local plan.

Figure 1: Total housing supply and proposed strategic housing site allocations

Category	Number of
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		Dwellings
Housing requirement for the full plan period (Apr 2011 to Mar 2031)		20,560
Housing Completions (Apr 2011 to Mar 2015)	Known Completions (Apr 2011 to Mar 2014)	1,250
	Estimated Completions (Apr 2014 to Mar 2015)	781
Housing Supply (Apr 2015 to Mar 2031)	Known Commitments	2,769
	Local Plan 2031 Part 1 allocations	13,960
	Local Plan 2031 Part 2 allocations	Up to 1,000 ^a
	Windfalls	900

^a Neighbourhood Plan housing allocations could contribute to some of this figure which also incorporates a small buffer

Figure 1 continued

Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area:

Settlement/ Type	Settlement	Site Name	Number of Dwellings
Market Town	Abingdon-on-Thames (including land in the parishes of Abingdon, Radley, St. Helens Without and Sunningwell)	North of Abingdon-on- Thames (increased)	800
		North-West of Abingdon-on- Thames	200
Larger Village	East Hanney	South of East Hanney	200
	Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor	East of Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor (new site)	280
	Radley	North-West of Radley	240
		South of Kennington	270
Sub total			1,990

South East Vale Sub-Area:

Settlement/ Type	Settlement	Site Name	Number of Dwellings
Market Town	Wantage (including land in Grove and Lockinge parishes)	Crab Hill (North East Wantage and South East Grove)	1,500
Local Service Centre	Grove	Grove Airfield	2,500
		Monks Farm (North Grove)	750
Didcot Town	Didcot (within Harwell and Milton parishes east of the A34)	Valley Park	At least 2,550
		North-West of Valley Park	800
Larger Village	Harwell Campus (Harwell parish including small land areas in Chilton and East Hendred parishes)	East of Harwell Campus (reduced)	850
		North-West of Harwell Campus (reinstated and enlarged)	550
	Harwell	West of Harwell	200
	Sutton Courtenay	East of Sutton Courtenay	220
Smaller Village ^b	Milton parish west of the A34	Milton Heights (reduced)	400
Sub total			10,320

^b With facilities equivalent to those of larger villages in walking distance

Western Vale Sub-Area

Settlement/ Type	Settlement	Site Name	Number of Dwellings
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Type			Dwellings
Market Town	Faringdon	Land South of Park Road, Faringdon	350
	(including land in Great Coxwell parish)	South-West of Faringdon	200
		East of Coxwell Road Faringdon	200
		South of Faringdon	200
Larger Village	Shrivenham	North of Shrivenham	500
	Stanford-in-the-Vale	West of Stanford-in-the-Vale (reduced)	200
Sub total			1,650

32. The housing delivery trajectory from the site package together with planning commitments will provide a deliverable five year housing land supply plus a 20% buffer. The local plan makes up all previous housing supply backlog in full over the remainder of the plan period to 2031. The government would prefer backlog to be made up in the first five years from adoption ie 2015/16-2020/21. However, based on the our housing land supply position and the delivery trajectories of the site options available it is not possible to identify a deliverable and sustainable package of sites that could make up all housing backlog in this shorter time frame. This is a change to the position consulted on in the Housing Supply Update, but one that is supported by our evidence base.
33. **CP5 Housing supply ring fence:** This is a new policy to help ensure that jobs, homes and infrastructure are provided together in the key development locations within the Science Vale area, a main consultation issue. Key settlements, housing sites and business locations around Wantage, Grove, Harwell and Milton are grouped as a separate zone for housing land supply monitoring purposes, specifically excluding more rural part of the South East Vale. The ring fence complements a ring fence approach for Didcot in the adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy, and supports both the joint Science Vale Area Action Plan and joint Infrastructure Delivery Plan. Five year land supply in the rest of the Vale would be monitored separately.

CHAPTER 5 SUB-AREA STRATEGIES

34. We have rationalised the South East Vale sub area boundary to better align with the Science Vale area. Sutton Courtenay has been added to South East Vale. Areas north of the railway and west of the A34 now form part of the Abingdon and Oxford Fringe sub area. East Challow now forms part of the Western Vale sub area.
35. The housing sections of the sub area spatial strategies are updated to reflect changes made to policies CP4 and CP5 (policies CP8, CP15, CP20).
36. The sub-area policies safeguarding land for transport schemes have been updated (policies CP12, CP18, CP21). Reflecting our transport and infrastructure work, further to safeguarding at appendix E of the 2013 draft local plan is additionally safeguarded land from development that would

prejudice the future provision of the key transport infrastructure identified at annex 5, including

- a diamond A34 interchange at Lodge Hill
 - dualling of the A4130
 - a public transport link between Harwell Campus and Harwell village (with onward routing to Didcot that does not require safeguarding). This replaces the former Harwell Field Link Road proposal
 - a Thames crossing near Appleford
 - a Science bridge over the A4130 and railway connecting the Valley Park site to the former Didcot A site
 - A420 junction enhancement at Faringdon and Shrivenham, and
 - a relief road west of Wantage (alignment being confirmed).
37. **CP 9 Oxford Brookes Harcourt Hill campus:** the policy remains supportive of education led modernisation of this site subject to the satisfactory resolution of local development constraints. An evidence-based masterplan would be supported through the development management process rather than as a supplementary planning document.
38. **CP13 The Oxford Green Belt:** policy refined but no further changes to proposed areas of Green Belt release which remain in accordance with the Green Belt review and as set out in the Housing Supply Update.
39. The South East Vale area section includes supporting and enabling references to the Science Vale Area Action Plan, which will in due course add delivery, implementation and masterplanning detail.

CHAPTER 6 DISTRICT WIDE POLICIES

40. **CP24 Affordable housing:** the policy sets a lower 35% affordable housing target as this is sufficient to meet our affordable housing needs in full. Together with committed affordable housing supply a 35% rate is also sufficient to provide a good margin of supply above the level of provision currently needed¹, a useful buffer against any fluctuations in future delivery.
41. A 40% affordable housing target was appropriate under the former South East Plan target, to get as close as we reasonably could to meeting affordable

¹ The Oxfordshire SHMA identifies a need to provide 273 net additional affordable homes in the 18 year period 2013-2031 (para 6.51) or 4914 total affordable homes. Table 1 of this report shows we have 15760 homes still to provide after deducting completions and commitments (20560-1250-781-2769). Assuming cautiously that none of the 900 projected windfalls would be provided on sites above the affordable housing size threshold, we would need to secure 4,914 affordable homes from the provision of 14,860 homes on eligible sites (15760-900=14860). This is a rate of 33% (4914/14860). A target rate of 35% will be sufficient to achieve this requirement, allowing for some sites where the full 35% might not be viable, together with the 1300 affordable homes already secured within the known housing commitments on sites that are under construction or with planning permission.

housing need². It is no longer necessary with a much higher plan target based on the SHMA where need is driven by economic and labour market needs in excess of affordability.

² We consulted on a 40% affordable housing target in 2013 based on the now abolished South East Plan housing supply target of 578 homes per annum. At that point in time 40% was the highest rate we could justify on viability grounds, but it would not have meet needs in full (40% of 578 is 231 homes per annum).

42. Reducing the affordable housing rate from the previous 40% would have the benefit of significantly increasing the viability of development and thus the ability of sites to contribute to infrastructure provision whether by CIL or 106. The CIL rate to be set is highly dependent on the affordable housing target set due to the impact that affordable housing requirements have on viability. A high affordable housing rate across the board could have the effect of making some sites undeliverable, potentially jeopardising the soundness of the plan, and would also require the setting of a lower CIL rate, potentially jeopardising infrastructure delivery.
43. For the most part the remaining 2013 draft policies have undergone evolutionary refinement rather than major change. More notable changes include responses to representations from statutory consultees and the more general enhancement of infrastructure and transport policies
- **CP34 A34 Strategy:** a new policy supporting route based enhancement with delivery partners
 - **CP35 promoting public transport, cycling and walking** by working with the County Council, a new policy
 - **CP37 Design and local distinctiveness, CP38 Design briefs for strategic and major development sites** are incorporated following consultation in the Housing Supply Update, and supported by our emerging Design Guide SPD
 - **CP39 The Historic environment** is significantly strengthened including a commitment to produce conservation area appraisals, in response to objections from English Heritage, a statutory consultee
 - **CP40 Responding to climate change** has been amended to reflect the Government's Housing Standards Review in progress, whereby enhanced environmental standards for building are proposed to be secured through changes to Building Regulations, except where there is a clear local case to raise them further. We do so for water efficiency as the Environment Agency classify the Thames Water company area as an 'area of serious water stress', and it is a recommendation from the sustainability appraisal
 - **CP42 Flood risk** now uses wording recommended by the Environment Agency
 - **CP46 Conservation and improvement of biodiversity** has been enhanced to identify the main site designations of key biodiversity interest, and to introduce the concept of offsetting improvements to help restore priority Conservation Target Areas off-site, if harm to biodiversity on-site cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated. This is a new policy initiative first successfully applied in the Vale.
 - **Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal** – we will rely on Local plan 2011 saved policy and review through the Local Plan Part 2.

How the local plan meets National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requirements

44. This section sets out how the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 has been prepared in compliance with national policy. Paragraph 182 of the Framework requires that a local planning authority should submit a plan for examination which it considers to be in a form suitable for adoption, sound and fit for examination. The requirements for a sound plan are that it is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. We believe our draft local plan meets these requirements, as set out in turn below.

(A) A POSITIVELY PREPARED PLAN

“the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development” (Framework para 182)

45. The first policy of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of the Framework’s positive approach to meet development needs and to support growth when it is sustainable.
46. The local plan is clearly focused on and supportive of economic growth. The spatial strategy of Building on our Strengths sets out the organising principle for locating development to support the economic dynamic of the Science Vale growth area.
47. Policies including site designations and allocations identify and protect a sufficient quantum of business sites (including 189 hectares available for development) to meet needs identified in our Employment Land Review, which in turn fully reflects and will accommodate the significant growth in employment identified in the economic forecasting work that informed the SHMA³.
48. The strategic site templates in the local plan and forthcoming Infrastructure Delivery Plan set out the facilities and infrastructure required to support sustainable development based on evidence testing and consultation with providers and affected communities. The requirements have been developed in partnership with the County Council in particular, and tested for viability. As noted at paragraph 36 draft local plan policies safeguard the land required or likely to be needed for future transport network enhancements (see also appendix 5).

³ Economic Forecasting to Inform the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2014), Cambridge Econometrics....

49. Local plan policies including site allocations identify housing supply to meet in full our objectively assessed need to provide for 20,560 homes 2011-2031 including 273 net additional affordable homes per annum as identified in the up-to-date Oxfordshire SHMA (2014). The local plan would restore a five year housing land supply with 20% buffer.
50. The housing target does not currently include any unmet need for housing that may be identified in the future. This arises if other authorities are unable to meet, in full, their own Objectively Assessed Need, as is likely to be the case for Oxford City Council. It is a risk to progress the local plan to meet district needs first. But we consider that it would cause unreasonable delay to the Vale local plan – and the timely meeting of Vale’s own housing needs including restoring a five year land supply – to wait until any unmet need is quantified and all the options to accommodate it in the housing market area are tested. We cannot do this work alone.
51. To minimise this risk the plan sets out a positive approach to dealing with any unmet need in a timely manner, should it arise, and reinforces our commitment to timely and effective working on this issue in accordance with the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation. This work can be twin tracked with the local plan, and may necessitate an early local plan review which is acknowledged in Core Policy 2: Duty-to-Cooperate including un-met housing need for Oxfordshire.

(B) A JUSTIFIED PLAN

“the plan should be the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence (Framework para 182)

52. To help understand the issues facing the district, the council has consulted widely in five stages and developed a very comprehensive evidence base to inform policy development, listed at appendix 2.
53. The local plan growth focus on Science Vale reflects the priorities of the district as well as those of the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan. The spatial strategy of building on our strengths emerged from testing through sustainability appraisal and consultation on a wide range of options to accommodate growth in the context of the former South East Plan. It has proved resilient and flexible enough to subsequently meet the full objectively assessed need for housing and economic growth in the district arising from the 2014 Oxfordshire SHMA. We consider it remains the most appropriate strategy for accommodating development.
54. Housing is allocated in a diverse range of sustainable locations in accordance with our spatial strategy, with different sizes and types of site to help maintain housing supply. Housing provision in both Science Vale and the rest of the district is balanced in relation to projected employment growth and its likely location.

55. Around sixty reasonable alternative strategic housing sites have been comprehensively tested including by sustainability appraisal to arrive at the 21 preferred strategic sites allocated for development (plus the saved Grove Airfield site). Public consultation has positively influenced site selection, identifying alternative sites that we have incorporated in preference to less sustainable alternatives, and identifying issues we have been able to respond to positively. For example, we have reduced the housing site allocations at Milton Heights and east of Harwell Campus to reflect updated evidence and advice.

(C) AN EFFECTIVE PLAN

“the plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities

(Framework para 182)

56. We have worked closely with landowners and developers to ensure the proposed strategic development sites are available and deliverable. A Local Plan Viability Study demonstrates that the allocated development sites are viable in relation to plan policy and essential infrastructure requirements.
57. We have identified preferred housing sites that will restore and sustain a five year housing land supply, specifically including a range of site sizes and locations to provide a flexible and resilient housing delivery trajectory.
58. Under the duty-to-cooperate we have worked closely with organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, Highways Authority, Thames Water and Oxfordshire County Council who are responsible for providing or managing key services including water resources, education and transport.
59. The council has also taken account of its other plans and strategies and those of other organisations and those produced at the local level, including the Sustainable Community Strategies for the council, the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan (LTP)⁴, Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)⁵, and the strategies and programmes of the district council, town and parish councils, neighbouring authorities and other organisations. The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 will help to facilitate the delivery of many of the aspirations and objectives set out in these other plans and strategies.
60. Our commitment to working with our partners ensures that proper sustainable planning can be achieved across administrative boundaries, with examples including
- the Oxfordshire Statement of Cooperation (SHMA)

⁴ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-2011-2030>

⁵ Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) (2014) *Strategic Economic Plan*-
<http://www.oxfordshirelep.org.uk/>

- a statement of common ground between Vale of White Horse, Swindon Borough Council, Oxfordshire County Council and Western Vale Villages to ensure a cross boundary approach to the A420
- working jointly with South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to prepare the Science Vale Area Action Plan (AAP) and to identify the Science Vale transport infrastructure package, including those that span the district boundaries.

61. We have also significantly progressed our planning for infrastructure and service provision. We have published a Delivering Infrastructure Strategy⁶ setting out how we are looking to secure funding for infrastructure from developers and other sources by use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements. We will be consulting on our CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule alongside the local plan, and aim to adopt them at the same time. For the pre-submission local plan consultation we will also publish a significantly updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The key items of new infrastructure are listed at appendix 5.

(D) A PLAN THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY

“the plan should enable the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework (Framework para 182)

62. In preparing the Local Plan 2031 Part 1, we have taken account of national policies, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the guidance within the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which have informed the preparation of locally distinctive policies. As previously noted the first policy of the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and in accordance with it the local plan seeks to meet in full identified needs.

63. The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 has been informed by Sustainability Appraisal (SA) that incorporates Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) throughout its production to shape its policies with the object of ensuring that its policies and site proposals contribute to achieving sustainable development.

A Sustainability Appraisal Report is being finalised for publication alongside the local plan and will set out in detail how the SA has been carried out and how it has influenced the preparation of the plan. For commentary on Oxford Garden Cite see paragraph 78. Appendix 6 summarises the other main sustainability issues from the latest consultation and how we have responded to them, the main points being

- the reduced Harwell campus east site in AONB whilst still harmful is no longer significantly so, with further scope for landscape mitigation

⁶ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2014-08-28%20Vale%20Infrastructure%20Stategy.pdf>

- more generally, the potential for some minerals sterilisation (minerals could be extracted first), and the loss of higher quality agricultural land which needs to be justified (and can be, to meet housing and economic needs in the most sustainable locations).
64. The SA report also outlines a range of mitigation measures that will help to ensure the proposals minimise any adverse environmental, social or economic impacts associated with the proposed policies. Where mitigation measures are recommended these are being incorporated into the policies or site schedules where appropriate. We have also set aside the unacceptably harmful sites that we previously consulted on in favour of more sustainable alternatives.
65. The council has also carried out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)⁷ to ensure the policies in the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 do not harm sites designated as being of European importance for biodiversity. The HRA concludes that the policies and proposals in the Vale Local Plan 2031 Part 1 do not have a significant adverse impact on any European nature conservation sites alone or in combination with other plans and programmes.

Local Plan Options considered and not recommended

66. The local plan development process has tested a wide range of reasonable alternative policies including the housing target and site allocations. The options tested are being summarised in the Sustainability Appraisal. The process of identifying, testing and selection preferred options is being fully documented in our topic papers that will also be published alongside the local plan.
67. The main alternative strategic options considered and not recommended are
- setting a target lower than objectively assessed need
 - seeking to make up our housing supply backlog in the first five years, and
 - alternative housing site allocations including Oxford Garden City.

SETTING A TARGET LOWER THAN OBJECTIVELY ASSESSED NEED.

68. For plan-making and planning for housing the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs in full unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, assessed against the Framework as a whole (Framework paras 14, 47).

⁷ EU Habitats Directive (1992)
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm

69. There is simply no credible path to opt for a lower local plan housing target. It is a fact that we have sufficient land available to physically meet our housing needs, based on either or both of the Housing Supply Update consultation and the published Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that informed it.
70. Given the emphasis placed in the Framework on meeting housing needs in full, setting a lower target would dramatically increase the risk of failure at local plan examination, or early suspension of the examination process (the recent Cherwell experience, see appendix 4). Any attempt to hold back suitable and deliverable sites we are already aware of would quickly unravel at local plan examination.
71. Our evidence base also shows that we can accommodate our full need in a sustainable manner, when the three dimensions of sustainable development are considered – social, economic and environmental. The pre-submission version of the local plan improves on previous drafts in that harmful effects are removed where possible or reduced to acceptable levels through a combination of refined site allocations and mitigation including requirements to provide new infrastructure and facilities (critical infrastructure requirements summarised at appendix 5).

SEEKING TO MAKE UP HOUSING SUPPLY BACKLOG IN FIVE YEARS.

72. We have not been able to identify a site package that could both achieve five years housing land supply and make up housing supply backlog in the first five years, based on a realistic housing sites delivery trajectory. To get close requires – as demonstrated by the Housing Supply Update consultation - the inclusion of sites that go beyond what we consider acceptable in terms of harm to the landscape and other considerations, sacrificing sustainability to attempt to achieve front-loaded delivery of development. The site package required would bring very significant risks at examination in trying to demonstrate that the local plan was sustainable or deliverable. A plan that cannot deliver its stated target and spatial strategy is not an 'effective' plan, and therefore would be at serious risk of being ruled unsound at examination. Our approach is instead to make up the supply backlog over the whole of remainder of the plan period.

ALTERNATIVE HOUSING SITE ALLOCATIONS.

73. We no longer recommend a number of sites previously proposed for the purposes of public consultation. We have also tested and not selected a wide range of alternatives including sites proposed during public consultation. The Oxford Garden City proposal is addressed below. Appendix 7 provides a summary of the testing process, other alternative site options and reasons for not including them.

Oxford Garden City

74. We do not consider the Garden City proposal to be a realistic alternative approach to meet our current housing needs. The council has met the promoters to discuss the scheme and explore whether it is deliverable. To date we have seen no technical evidence that advances the scheme any further than an illustrative concept. There is no information on whether or how the suggested new rail station or alternative light rail link could actually be provided. It has not yet been established that a new A34 junction can be provided in a manner that meets the requirements of the Highways Agency, let alone a solution to additional A34 traffic load from 12-15,000 homes in this location.
75. County Council comments include that the A34 Trunk Road, on sections both around and to the south of Oxford, is already at or above operational capacity during certain periods and would not be able to carry the expected additional traffic from a Garden city. Questions were raised about whether the scheme could support frequent public transport services, without which the resulting urban form would be low-density and car-dependant.
76. We therefore have no confidence that the Garden City can actually be delivered at this point in time. Even if it could be, the lead in time would be significant and the scheme would make little, probably no contribution towards meeting our housing need in the first five years of the local plan period.
77. The local plan also safeguards large parts of the proposed Garden City sites for the potential future provision of a reservoir. This is an important option for future water supply in the Thames Valley, identified to be in serious water stress by the Environment Agency⁸. Thames Water wishes the site to be safeguarded for review through their next Water Management Plan.
78. Sustainability appraisal of the Oxford Garden City site indicates that the scale of development proposed is not likely to be able to be mitigated satisfactorily due to effects on the setting of Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and views from the North Wessex Downs AONB. The Oxford Garden City could also reduce resilience to flood risk by affecting the proposed flood risk storage area in the Ock catchment.

Financial Implications

79. The development proposed in this local plan could generate additional New Homes Bonus subject to the lifespan and continuation of this scheme.
80. A Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule is being prepared in parallel to the local plan, and once both are adopted will generate receipts for infrastructure funding.

Legal Implications

81. It is a legal requirement for local planning authorities to produce a local plan and keep it up to date. Once adopted the local plan would replace (except for

⁸ Water stressed areas – final classification, Environment Agency 2013

saved policies) the Local Plan 2011 as the basis for development management decision-making in the district.

82. The duty to cooperate on cross-boundary matters relevant to plan-making is a legal test that must be passed before a plan can proceed to examination.

Risks

83. It is a risk under the duty to cooperate to progress the local plan to meet district needs first. But we consider it unreasonable to delay the Vale local plan – and the timely meeting of Vale housing needs – to wait until any unmet need is quantified and all the options to accommodate it in the housing market area are tested. These risks can be reduced but not avoided by committing to active and timely joint working, in parallel to work to meet our own needs. Without this commitment the local plan is would proceed at much higher risk of failure.
84. There is some risk in adopting a housing supply approach that does not make up backlog in the first five years, but the approach can be justified based on our housing trajectory and because the alternatives are higher risk.

Concluding recommendations

85. Cabinet is requested to recommend to full council that the Pre-submission draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic sites and Policies, together with supporting and evidence base documents, be published for Pre-Submission public consultation for a period of six weeks under Regulations 19 and 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012, and thereafter submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination.

Background Papers

86. The Pre-submission draft *Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies* document.

APPENDIX 1: LOCAL PLAN EVIDENCE BASE STUDIES

Employment

- Employment Land Review (2008); Update (March 2013); Addendum (August 2014)
- Updated Assessment of Convenience Goods Capacity in Faringdon and Abingdon (March 2010)
- Retail and Town Centre Study (March 2013); Addendum (2014 pending)
- South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Hotel Needs Assessment (2014 pending)
- Economic Forecasting to Inform the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2014) and Summary

Housing

- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs Assessment (February 2013); Update (2014 pending)
- Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (April 2014)
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (February 2014) Update (2014 pending)
- Housing Needs Assessment 2008 and Updated Assessment 2011
- Affordable Housing Viability Study 2010 and Addendum Report following introduction of 'Affordable Rent' tenure (October 2011)

Transport

- Results of the Initial Stress Testing and Consideration of Model Validation (February 2013)
- Evaluation of Transport Impacts (2014 full update pending)
- Didcot - Harwell Public Transport Study (2014 pending)
- Harwell – Didcot Bus Route Landscape Assessment (2014 pending)

Infrastructure

- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (March 2013 & February 2014) Update (2014 pending)
- Joint Didcot Infrastructure Delivery Plan (March 2013)

Viability

- Local Plan 2029 Part 1 Viability Study – Strategic Sites Interim Report (March 2013)
- Local Plan Viability Study final report (incorporating CIL viability study) (2014 update pending)

Social & Community

- Equalities Impact Assessment (2014 pending)
- A study of village facilities in the Vale (July 2009)
- Town and Village Facilities Study Update (February 2014)
- Parish Portraits (April 2009)
- Villages Hierarchy (March 2013)
- Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2013-2029 (March 2013); Update (2014 pending)
- Leisure Study Addendum – Joint Didcot Study (August 2014)
- Recreational Space, Local Leisure Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy (due early 2015)
- Population Projections (various)
- Oxfordshire Pupil Placement Plan 2014-2018

Environment

- Landscape assessment of land on the edge of the Vale's main towns (December 2008)
- Landscape capacity study (February 2014)
- Historic Landscape Character Assessment (2012)
- East of Harwell Landscape & Visual Assessment (July 2014)
- North Abingdon Landscape & Visual Assessment (August 2014)
- Green Belt Review (February 2014)
- Green Infrastructure Audit (February 2013)
- Water Cycle Study (2014 pending)
- Sequential and Exception Test for Bury Street and the Charter Area, Abingdon Town Centre (May 2010)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (July 2013)
- Green Infrastructure Strategy (due for completion early 2015)

Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment

- Core Strategy Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal (February 2009)
- Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report & non-technical summary (September 2012)
- Sustainability Appraisal of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2029 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies (March 2013)
- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Additional Consultation (February 2014)
- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1, Pre-submission version (pending 2014)

- Habitat Regulations Assessment of the Vale of the White Horse LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options; Screening Report Final (November 2008)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (March 2013 & February 2014)

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF FORTHCOMING TOPIC PAPERS

1. The Duty to Cooperate
2. Spatial Strategy
3. Strategic site selection
4. Housing
5. Supporting economic prosperity
6. Transport and accessibility
7. Responding to climate change
8. The built and historic environment
9. The natural environment
10. The strategic case for housing development by Harwell campus

APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF THE LOCAL PLAN 2031 PART 1: HOUSING DELIVERY UPDATE CONSULTATION (FEBRUARY – APRIL 2014)

Introduction

1. This appendix provides a brief overview of the main responses to the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Housing Delivery update. This consultation sought views on use of the SHMA figure for objectively assessed need (1,028 homes per annum) as a housing target and 21 proposed new strategic housing sites in addition to the strategic site allocations proposed in the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 (consulted on in February 2013).
2. The Housing Supply Update also consulted upon some policy changes arising from the SHMA or responding to the significant increase in housing supply proposed, including a new Duty to Cooperate policy and enhanced urban design requirements.
3. A full consultation statement and summary for the local plan as a whole will be published alongside the Local Plan 2031 Part 1 for the pre-submission public consultation.
4. We have already published a consultation statement and summary for the 2013 local plan consultation). To briefly recap a total of 2,340 representations were made to the council by 511 different participants. The main issues included:
 - concern about the scale of development proposed
 - concern about the stress new development would place on existing roads and infrastructure
 - concern about the impact new development would place on other infrastructure areas, such as schools, healthcare etc;
 - a perceived disconnect between housing proposed at Wantage and Grove and places of employment
 - concern that new development might result in an increased risk of flooding to new and existing properties
 - objection to the proposed strategic site allocations due to the perceived impact development could have on the character of existing settlements.

Who was consulted and how?

5. The Housing Supply Update consultation was well publicised and open to all in accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The main method to make the Housing Supply Update available was the council's website and publication in the online consultation system

(Objective). Copies were also distributed to libraries and to parish councils, and made available in the council's office or to purchase.

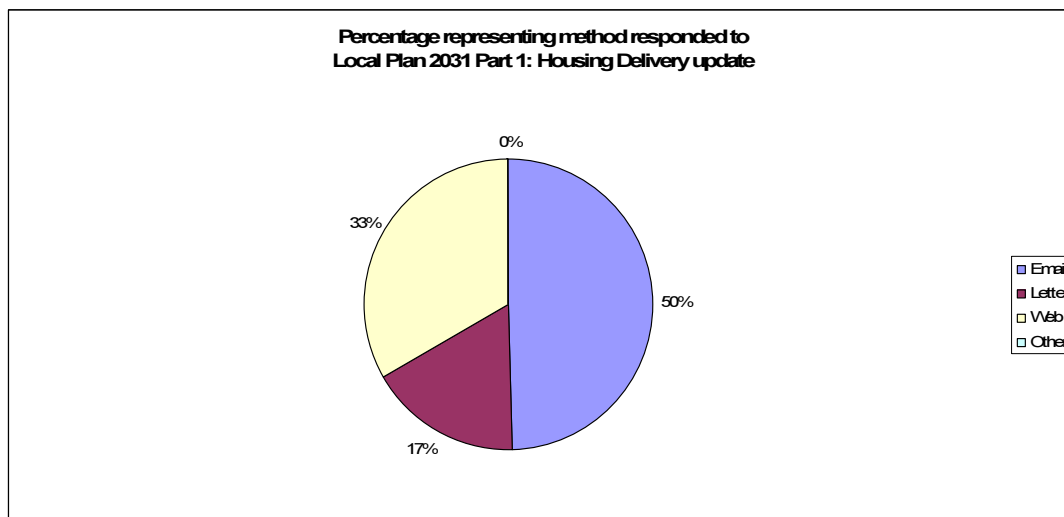
6. The consultation and its key messages were to the general public using a variety of methods:

- statutory press notices
- website and press releases
- posters
- consultation leaflet distribution
- a number of public meetings and exhibitions district wide
- email alerts

7. Statutory and non statutory consultees who had registered contact details (1,110 in total) were sent e-mail notifications from the consultation system. Consultees who were invited to comment included:

- Towns and Parish Councils
- Agents/site promoters
- Landowners
- Local Interest Groups
- Statutory bodies

How did they respond?



'Other' = nil. Letters include response forms

Who responded and what did they comment on?

8. The consultation generated 2,717 duly made responses from 1,093 individuals, statutory and non-statutory organisations, local interest and action groups, businesses promoters and agents. We received 2 petitions, from the

Save Radley Village campaign group and the residents of Chilton Village (in the 2,717 total these are recorded as one representation).

9. It is the nature of planning consultations that objections predominate. Of the 2,717 responses 77 were in support, 1,467 objections and 1,174 were either comments or not clearly specified to be in support or objecting (but comments also tended to be more critical than supportive).
10. The main issues raised were
 - 139 respondents objected to the proposed draft Core Policy 9: Oxford Green Belt
 - the majority of respondents within the Abingdon/Oxford Fringe Sub Area were objecting to the proposed new site allocations especially South of Cumnor, South of Kennington, East Wootton and North and North-West Radley (including the Save Radley Village petition)
 - significant number of objections were made to the East of Harwell Campus site (including a residents of Chilton Village petition)
 - statutory bodies Natural England, North Wessex Downs AONB Board, English Heritage objected to East Harwell Campus site
 - a significant number of objections were made to the South of Shrivenham proposed allocation
 - a significant number of objections to the West Way Centre, Botley with some blurring of local plan and planning application consultation issues. In particular comments on the inconsistency of the planning application scheme with draft design core policies (Core Policy 37).
11. Other key consultation themes included
 - calls for the provision of infrastructure before development and concerns about the lack of infrastructure to support new development- schools, health care facilities
 - sewage and water treatment works need upgrading
 - traffic and congestion from the new development, and cumulative impact on the existing road network
 - loss of Green Belt land in the Abingdon / Oxford Fringe Sub Area
 - opposition to development in AONB at Harwell campus, including from statutory consultees Natural England, and by the AONB management Board
 - flooding issues or perceived risks
 - harm to the identity and character of existing settlements
 - coalescence between settlements.
12. A number of these themes were also raised in the 2013 consultation.

STATUTORY CONSULTEE RESPONSES

13. Natural England:
 - concerns over impact on proposed allocation East of Harwell Campus on North Wessex Downs AONB
14. Thames Water:
 - recommends the Local Plan makes reference to water and wastewater infrastructure
 - upgrades to Faringdon STW has been factored into their business plan
15. North Wessex Downs AONB Management Board:
 - objection to East Harwell Campus proposed allocation commissioned a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment confirming the unsuitability of this proposed allocation and the serious landscape impact it will result in on the North Wessex Downs AONB:
16. Oxfordshire County Council:
 - Concerns about Milton Heights on highways capacity and safety grounds
 - Access issues at East of Sutton Courtenay
17. Oxford City Council:
 - Local Plan has not addressed Oxford City's un-met need through the SHMA process
18. English Heritage:
 - The Interim Sustainability Appraisal is flawed because the Appraisal Criteria for Sustainability Objective 8 fails to include the setting of designated heritage assets
19. Proposed plan amendments in response to consultation and evidence testing are summarised in the main report and appendices for Site Selection and Sustainability Appraisal

Annex A to Appendix 3: Housing Supply Update response summary

Consultation response to	Supporting	Objecting	Commenting	Unspecified	Total
Foreword	1	0	1	2	4
Core Policy 3: Housing Delivery	3	34	24	30	91
Core Policy 3a: Duty to Cooperate - Oxfordshire Un-Met Housing Need	1	12	7	6	26
Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area					
Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area	0	16	6	9	31
Core Policy 6: Spatial Strategy for Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area	4	47	13	20	84
Core Policy 9: The Oxford Green Belt	3	139	15	30	187
South East Vale Sub-Area Strategy					
South East Vale Sub-Area	0	11	5	22	38
Core Policy 12: Spatial Strategy for South East Vale	2	29	15	26	72
Science Vale Area Action Plan	0	1	0	0	1
Core Policy 13: Didcot A Power Station	0	3	3	2	8
Western Vale Sub-Area Strategy					
Western Vale Sub-Area	0	9	5	13	27
Core Policy 17: Spatial Strategy for Western Vale Sub-Area	1	21	12	24	58
District Wide Policies					
District Wide policies	1	100	12	28	141
Core Policy 37: Design and Local Distinctiveness	3	46	15	16	80
Core Policy 37a: Design Briefs for strategic and Major Sites	1	0	0	0	1
Policies Subtotal	20	468	133	228	849
	2%	55%	16%	27%	100%

Appendix A: Site allocations					
Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe Sub-Area					
North Abingdon-on-Thames	0	12	8	3	23
North-West Abingdon-on-Thames	1	4	7	5	17
South Cumnor	1	123	9	16	149
South Drayton	0	13	10	3	26
South Kennington	0	38	9	5	52
South Marcham	2	2	4	0	8
North Radley	0	31	9	0	40
North-West Radley	1	29	12	3	45
East Sutton Courtenay	1	9	5	9	24
East Wootton	5	2	30	3	40
South East Vale Sub-Area					
Land North-West of East Challow	1	8	9	9	27
East of East Hanney	1	4	17	8	30
Valley Park	1	15	3	6	25
East Harwell Oxford Campus	0	62	15	26	103
West of Harwell	0	19	4	2	25
Milton Heights	1	8	9	2	20
Western Vale Sub-Area					
South-West of Faringdon	1	3	4	1	9
South Faringdon	0	2	4	0	6
North Shrivenham	2	25	9	4	40
South Shrivenham	0	24	8	4	36
West Stanford-in-the-Vale	1	8	9	3	21
Sites Subtotal	19	441	194	112	766
	2%	57%	25%	14%	98%

More general comments to text that cannot readily be attributed to particular sites or policies	41	637	122	302	1,102
	4%	58%	11%	28%	

Grand total	80	1,546	449	642	2,717
	3%	57%	17%	24%	

APPENDIX 4: CHERWELL LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION 2014

Inspectors Note – 09.06.14

The examination hearings were suspended on 4 June 2014 for six months. This is to enable the Council to put forward proposed modifications to the plan involving increased new housing delivery over the plan period to meet the full, up to date, objectively assessed, needs of the district, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and based on the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (SHMA). Notwithstanding the above, the tests of legal compliance and in relation to the “duty to co-operate” are considered to have been met by the Council, to date, with no compelling evidence to indicate otherwise.

The proposed modifications, including consequential modifications arising from the increase in new housing, will be subject to a full, six week, period of public consultation, together with an appropriate Sustainability Appraisal (SA)/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), likely to be based on the draft timetable attached, with the hearings currently expected to resume on 9 December 2014.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Council has indicated that it considers the increase in new housing needed to be achievable without significant changes to the strategy, vision or objectives of the submitted plan. There are considered to be reasonable prospects of delivery over the plan period.

This includes that there is no necessity for an immediate strategic review of the extent/boundaries of the Oxford Green Belt in the district for new housing, albeit the plan is likely to require an early review once the established process for considering the full strategic planning implications of the 2014 SHMA, including for any unmet needs in Oxford City, has been fully considered jointly by all the Oxfordshire Councils.

Further information regarding the proposed modifications and the next stages of the examination process will be sent to all representors and published on the examination website as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 5: KEY INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

1. This appendix summarises the ‘critical’ infrastructure requirements essential to enable the local plan to be delivered and planned growth to be accommodated in a sustainable manner. Without the provision of these items at the appropriate time the development could not come forward.
2. Our local plan policies also require the provision of a range of ‘sustainable communities’ infrastructure such as open space, leisure, community and health facilities and public art required to make successful communities that are good places to live. Infrastructure requirements both critical and for sustainable communities will be set out in more detail in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) document being finalised for publication alongside the local plan for pre-submission public consultation. Sustainable communities’ requirements are not listed in this appendix in the interests of succinctness, but are summarised in the Site Development Templates included as annex A within the draft local plan document.
3. We have also published a Delivering Infrastructure Strategy¹ explaining how we will secure funding for infrastructure from developers and other sources. Sources include use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 and Section 278 legal agreements to secure infrastructure provision through development. We will be consulting on our CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule alongside the local plan, and aim to adopt them at the same time. We are also preparing a Supplementary Planning Document for the use of Section 106 and Section 278 legal agreements alongside CIL.
4. The main critical infrastructure requirements by local plan sub area are as follows. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is a live document that will be updated when required. Additional requirements may be identified for example through the Science Vale Area Action Plan.
5. The list is not exclusive or exhaustive, it is a summary.
6. Abingdon and the Oxford Fringe
 - upgrading the A34 interchange at Lodge Hill to a 4-way junction
 - A338 junction improvements
 - supporting site-related improvements as required eg for access to the A4183 and Dunmore Road
 - a new primary school north of Abingdon
 - expansion to primary schools in Radley, South Kennington, East Hanney and Sutton Courtenay
 - contributions to increase secondary school capacity and for special needs education
 - developer contributions to front load waste water treatment capacity enhancement works

¹ <http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2014-08-28%20Vale%20Infrastructure%20Stategy.pdf>

7. South East Vale

- a new secondary school at Grove
- two new primary schools at Valley Park, one at Harwell campus, one at Wantage and one at Grove Airfield
- expansions to primary schools at Milton Heights and Harwell Village
- contributions to increase secondary school capacity in Great Western Park (Harwell/Didcot)
- land for a new 100-place special needs school at Valley Park
- enhanced or replacement leisure centres at Wantage and Didcot
- Wantage Eastern Link Road
- Wantage western relief road – area of search for the route safeguarded
- developer contributions to front load waste water treatment capacity enhancement works

- Contributions to the Science Vale Integrated Transport package (together with secured and future grants, Enterprise Zone business rate retention and contributions from development in the South Oxfordshire)
 - Milton Interchange upgrade including slip lengthening
 - Chilton North-facing Slips
 - Harwell Oxford Campus entrance improvements
 - Relief to Rowstock roundabout
 - Harwell Campus to Didcot bus link
 - Harwell Link Road Section 1 (B4493 to A417)
 - Harwell Link Road Section 2
 - Hagbourne Hill upgrade
 - Jubilee Way roundabout (Didcot)
 - Didcot Northern Perimeter Road Phase 3 (SODC)
 - Featherbed Lane & Steventon Junction
 - Dualling the A4130, A34 to Didcot
 - A417 Corridor improvements
 - Cycle Network Improvements
 - New Science Bridge, Valley Park / A4130 to the Didcot A site
 - Thames Crossing at Appleford / Culham.

8. Western Vale

- a new primary school in Faringdon
- an enlarged or new relocated primary school in Shrivenham, and enlarged primary school in Stanford in the Vale
- contributions to increase the capacity of Faringdon Community college secondary school and for special needs education
- developer contributions to a package of measure being developed by the County Council to improve the A420 corridor, including improvements to bus services
- A420 junction improvements at Shrivenham and Faringdon
- developer contributions to front load waste water treatment capacity enhancement works

APPENDIX 6: STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

Introduction

9. This appendix provides a brief overview of the main sustainability matters arising following the draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1: Housing Delivery Update that have informed this stage of the production of our local plan document. This consultation sought views on use of the SHMA figure for objectively assessed need as a housing target and 21 proposed new strategic housing sites in addition to the strategic site allocations proposed in the Local Plan 2029 Part 1 (consulted on in February 2013).

Background

10. It is a requirement that SA is undertaken in line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. A Sustainability Appraisal Report must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan, and reasonable alternatives'. The report must be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.
11. To date there have been five main consultation stages that have informed Local Plan Part 1 – three stages in the previous LDF/Core Strategy process; followed by a fourth and fifth Local Plan Part 1 consultation stage. We have published iterations of the SA report alongside each consultation, and are finalising the SA report to support the pre-submission consultation.
12. All significant effects have been identified throughout the SA process. Each of the potential development sites appraised have a number of both positive and negative impacts and these are used along with other evidence to inform the Plan making process. Mitigation where recommended is addressed through the policies within the Plan.
13. Following the last Housing Delivery Update consultation (Feb 2014) a number of consultation responses including proposed new sites have resulted in further SA work.

Sustainability Appraisal of 8 new sites proposed through the February 2014 consultation process

14. Of the 81 sites submitted eight met the size requirement and passed initial screening and proceeded to full testing as reasonable alternatives
 - 1) Kingston Bagpuize East

- 2) Kingston Bagpuize South
 - 3) North West Harwell Campus
 - 4) South of Harwell Campus
 - 5) Oxford Garden City
 - 6) South West Shrivenham
 - 7) South Radley
 - 8) South of East Hanney
15. The further sites would all lead to positive effects in terms of providing housing that would contribute towards meeting identified housing need in the Vale. Although a number of negative effects have been identified, the suggested mitigation through policy could reduce these impacts to acceptable levels except for the following two sites.
- **South of Harwell Campus** is located in the AONB and whilst the benefits of providing housing are significantly positive its environmental impacts is unlikely to be fully mitigated. The revised areas proposed to allocated for development in the Local Plan corresponds to the least harmful of the land parcels identified through further landscape assessment of the original larger site consulted upon in the Housing Supply Update. The SA concludes that development here would not lead to any significant adverse effects, and there is scope for planting mitigation.
 - **Oxford Garden City:** see paragraph 77 of the main report.

Other issues identified

16. **Agricultural Land Classification:** the SA shows that a number of strategic sites would potentially lead to the loss of some of the Best and Most Versatile Land in the district. The agricultural land quality is generally high in the Vale, particularly towards the south in and around the Science Vale Oxford area. The sterilisation of such land for employment and housing growth is a trade-off that would need to be justified.
17. **Mineral resources:** the SA shows that a small number of strategic sites would lead to the sterilisation of potentially viable mineral resources. The Council should work with landowners and the County Council to assess the viability of such sites and arrange prior extraction where possible before development commences.
18. **Water resources:** The Council should consider strengthening the policy approach for water use; reducing it from 125 litres / person / day to 110 litres / person / day. The Thames catchment is deemed to be in water stress. As such increased water efficiency will help to reduce the impact of new development on the catchment area.
19. **Development of business or tourism uses on unallocated sites** (respectively CP24 and CP27): the SA identifies potential harm to SA

objective 3. This objective seeks to reduce the need to travel and improve provisions for walking, cycling and public transport and reduce road congestion. The recommended mitigation is to refuse applications that would lead to significant transport impacts and are not accessible by public transport, and to ensure that new employment sites contribute towards sustainable transport improvements and are located alongside public transport routes if possible.

APPENDIX 7: STRATEGIC HOUSING SITE SELECTION, ARRIVING AT THE RECOMMENDED SITE PACKAGE

Introduction

1. This appendix summarises the consideration of strategic housing sites since the Housing Delivery Update consultation (February 2014) and describes the recommended final local plan strategic housing site allocations package.
2. The local plan strategic site threshold is the ability to accommodate 200 homes at 25 dwelling per hectare gross² typically a developable area of at least 8 hectares. This threshold was first consulted on in our 2013 draft local plan. At this scale development is capable of making a meaningful contribution to infrastructure provision. The use of a strategic threshold also focuses most growth in our more sustainable towns and larger villages in accordance with our spatial strategy.
3. Smaller sites options will be considered for allocation through the Local Plan Part 2, and can also be allocated in Neighbourhood Plans. We propose in Core Policy 4 Meeting our housing need that up to 1,000 homes will be provided from these sources.
4. The final list of 22 sites is recommended as representing the most sustainable and deliverable options for future housing development in the most appropriate locations. A balance of factors have been assessed and considered in coming to this position, including
 - fit to spatial strategy including proximity to more sustainable settlements and locations,
 - land availability and deliverability, land use planning status
 - critical policy constraints such as Flood Risk zones 2 and 3, Green Belt, AONB, Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - the availability of or scope for enhancement of infrastructure, services and facilities (including consultation with providers)
 - ability to integrate with existing settlements, avoiding coalescence
 - impact on biodiversity, wildlife sites, landscape quality

² 25 dph gross is equivalent to about 35 dph net of access and communal open areas.

- other factors where relevant such as proximity to noise, odour or other disturbance or safety risk, safeguarding for minerals extraction, airfield safeguarding zones
- Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations appraisal
- viability assessment
- transport network capacity
- consultation feedback

Process

5. The Local Plan 2031 Part 1 Housing Supply Update (February 2014) set out for the purposes of public consultation 21 additional housing sites to address the full objectively assessed need for housing in the Vale of White Horse set out in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The consultation sought views on these sites and also invited the submission of alternatives. These 21 sites were in addition to the four strategic housing sites identified in the February 2013 local plan consultation.
6. A total of 81 alternative site options were put forward for housing development in the Vale through the Housing Supply Update consultation. Initial assessment showed that 30 of these sites meet the 200 home strategic site size threshold³. A first, high level analysis indicated that 12 of these sites merited further consideration, following which eight warranted detailed assessment as reasonable alternative site options, listed below.
 - Oxford Garden City (estimated 5,600 homes to 2031, longer term potential 12-15,000 homes)
 - Kingston Bagpuize East (280 homes)
 - Kingston Bagpuize South (200 homes)
 - North West Harwell Campus (550 homes including land to west of the proposed 2013 draft allocation for 400 units)
 - South of Harwell Campus (estimated 1,400 homes to 2031, plus longer term potential)
 - South West Shrivenham (400 homes)
 - South Radley (260 homes)
 - South of East Hanney (200 homes)

³ Listed at Annex A. Site options unable to accommodate at least 200 homes and therefore classed as non-strategic were not considered further. These may be considered during the preparation of the Local Plan 2031 Part 2.

7. These eight sites were subject to further Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulations Appraisal and were also assessed by internal and County Council specialists (including transport, landscape, ecology, flooding and heritage) and external stakeholders (including English Heritage, Environment Agency, Natural England and Thames Water)

The analysis of feedback from stakeholder engagement, in the context of the availability of preferable alternative sites, resulted in five sites being removed from consideration. The grounds for doing so included their relative merits in relation to available alternatives on matters including impacts on character/rural setting (Kingston Bagpuize South and South West Shrivenham), transport, access and connectivity issues (South of Harwell Campus and South Radley).

8. The reasons for not taking forward the Oxford Garden City concept are covered in the main report at paragraphs 72-76.
9. From the 81 alternative site options put forward during the consultation, three sites have been included in the final sites package: Kingston Bagpuize East and North Harwell Campus and south of East Hanney for the following reasons.
 - the North Harwell Campus site was included in the 2013 draft Local Plan but the site was removed due to a misunderstanding about its availability for housing, clarified through the Housing Delivery Update consultation. The 2013 area has been corrected to exclude land designated part of the Enterprise Zone, and combined with adjoining land⁴ within AONB where development was assessed as not harmful on landscape grounds.
 - land east of East Hanney we replaced with an alternative site south of East Hanney better connected to the village and also preferred by the community.
 - land east of at Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor relates well to the existing developed area of the village and is unconstrained by protective planning designations and acceptable in landscape terms. It is a better alternative to some of the more harmful village sites in the Green Belt we consulted upon in the 2014 Local Plan Housing Supply Update.
10. In parallel to the new site testing process we also revisited the 21 sites proposed in the Housing Delivery Update consultation and recommend that eight should not be allocated for the following main reasons:

⁴ SHLAA site HASC14

- South Cumnor – exceeds landscape capacity recommendations, unacceptable harm to landscape character
- East Wootton – exceeds landscape recommendations, unacceptable harm to landscape character
- North Radley – exceeds landscape capacity recommendations, unacceptable harm to landscape character, harmful to Green Belt
- South Marcham – the actual developable area is below the strategic site threshold of 200 homes. The developable area could be considered through Local Plan Part 2
- South Drayton – allowing for an area susceptible to surface water flooding the actual developable area is below the strategic site threshold of 200 homes
- East Challow – site is constrained and the actual developable area is below the strategic site threshold of 200 homes. The developable area could be considered through LPP2
- South Shrivenham – consolidation of housing in Shrivenham onto the North Shrivenham site will better enable the potential relocation and re-provision of a new primary school, and also reflects community preference about where Shrivenham should grow
- East of East Hanney – replaced by an alternative site South of East Hanney as noted at paragraph 9.

11. Other decisions made following the consultation, include:

- Valley Park site (as included in the Housing Delivery Update consultation) has been split into two sites; Valley Park, and North West Valley Park⁵, and allocated a higher combined housing requirement. The sites will need closely aligned masterplanning
- Valley Park has been set a requirement of ‘at least’ 2,550 homes in recognition that higher density may be appropriate with a high quality design master planned to fully integrate with North West Valley Park and the wider area

⁵ Requested by both site promoters due to their different development proposals and timescales.

- North Abingdon on Thames site has been increased in size, following more detailed landscape capacity advice and to better facilitate school provision and the provision of a full junction on the A34 at Lodge Hill
 - East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon site has been included – it was only omitted previously because there was a planning application being determined⁶.
12. The final sites package of 22 sites comprises the four sites included in the Local Plan 2029, 13 sites included in the Housing Delivery Update, two alternative sites brought forwards through the Housing Delivery Update consultation, the partition of North West Valley Park from the rest of Valley Park and the addition of a site for 200+ homes only omitted previously because it has a resolution to grant planning permission (East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon). We are also saving the Grove Airfield site from the Local Plan 2011 as a planning application has not yet been determined⁷.
13. The 22 sites are as listed below and total 13,960 homes:

Abingdon and the Oxford Fringe

- North West Abingdon on Thames (200 homes)
- North Abingdon on Thames (800 homes)
- Radley Parish, land south of Kennington (270 homes)
- North West Radley (240 homes)
- East of Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor (280 homes)
- South of East Hanney (200 homes)

South East Vale

- East Sutton Courtenay (220 homes)
- Milton Heights (400 homes)
- Valley Park (at least 2,550 homes)
- North West of Valley Park (800 homes)
- West of Harwell (200 homes)
- East Harwell Campus (850 homes)
- North of Harwell Campus (550 homes)
- Crab Hill, Wantage/Grove (1,500 homes)
- Monks Farm, north Grove (750 homes)

⁶ The eastern part of the larger site was subject to a resolution to grant planning permission subject to legal agreement. The site was not included in the Housing Delivery Update consultation because a decision was taken at that time not to include any sites with live planning applications). However due to delays completing the section 106 legal agreement we consider it prudent to include this land in the final sites package.

⁷ Completion of the section 106 legal agreement is imminent but we consider it prudent to save this 2011 site allocation as part of the final sites package.

- Grove Airfield (saved Local Plan 2011 site) (2,500 homes)

Western Vale

- Land south of Park Road, Faringdon (350 homes)
- West Stanford in the Vale (200 homes)
- Great Coxwell Parish, South Faringdon (200 homes)
- South West of Faringdon (200 homes)
- North Shrivenham (500 homes)
- East of Coxwell Road, Faringdon (200 homes)

14. Details of the comprehensive site appraisal process undertaken by the Council since 2007 will be set out in the Topic Paper 3: Strategic Sites Selection (2014) which will be available to support the public consultation.

Annex A to Appendix 7

Sites underlined passed initial suitability sifting and were selected for further testing

Sites bold and underlined are included in the draft local plan

- 1) **Kingston Bagpuize, between the A420, the A415 Witney Road and Oxford Road**
- 2) Land north west of Harwell Oxford Campus
- 3) Land South of Downsview Road, West of Wantage
- 4) West Wantage, south of Wilts and Berks canal
- 5) **Land south of East Hanney**
- 6) Oxford Garden City
- 7) South of Harwell Campus
- 8) land to the south of Kingston Bagpuize
- 9) Radley South
- 10) **North West Harwell Campus** (reinstating a site previously included in 2013)
- 11) Valley Park (part of)
- 12) North West Abingdon on Thames (existing proposed allocation) - extension
- 13) North Abingdon on Thames (existing proposed allocation) - extension
- 14) Downsview Road, Wantage
- 15) East Drayton site
- 16) Land east of East Hendred.
- 17) Site south of Hanney Road in west Steventon
- 18) Didcot Power station site
- 19) North Shrivenham
- 20) South West Shrivenham
- 21) Proposed allocation at Crab Hill, (north east Wantage and south east Grove) should be enlarged
- 22) South Drayton, Drayton
- 23) Steventon
- 24) Land at Wootton, nr Abingdon
- 25) Shrivenham Park Golf Course
- 26) Land south of Steventon
- 27) North West Grove
- 28) Land off Kennington Road
- 29) Milton Heights (expansion of proposed allocation)
- 30) Land at Claylands Farm, Station Road, Shrivenham

Report to:

Audit and Governance Committee Cabinet Council

Report of: Head of Finance

Author: Bob Watson

Tel: 01235 540429

E-mail: bob.watson@southandvale.gov.uk

Cabinet Member responsible: Matthew Barber

Tel: 07816 481452

E-mail: matthew.barber@southandvale.gov.uk

To: Audit and Governance Committee on: 24 September 2014

To: Cabinet on: 3 October 2014

To: Council on: 15 October 2014

Treasury management outturn 2013/14

That Audit and Governance Committee:

1. notes the treasury management outturn report 2013/14,
2. is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy, and
3. make any comments and recommendations to cabinet as necessary.

That Cabinet:

Considers any comments from Audit and Governance Committee and recommends Council to:

1. approve the treasury management outturn report for 2013/14;
2. approve the actual 2013/14 prudential indicators within the report.

Purpose of Report

1. The report fulfils the legislative requirements to ensure the adequate monitoring and reporting of the treasury management activities and that the council's prudential indicators are reported to council at the end of the year. The report provides details of the treasury activities for the financial year 2013/14.
2. This complies with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA's) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised) 2009.

Strategic Objectives

3. Effective treasury management is required in order to meet our strategic objective of managing our business effectively. Managing the finances of the authority in accordance with the treasury management strategy will help to ensure that the resources are available to deliver our services and meet the council's other strategic objectives.

Background

4. The council's treasury activities are strictly regulated by legislation. The CIPFA Prudential Code and CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice require a report to be provided to council at the end of the financial year. The report covers the treasury activity for 2013/14.
5. The 2013/14 treasury management strategy was approved by council on 20 February 2013. This report provides details on the treasury activity and performance for 2013/14 against the prudential indicators and benchmarks set for the year. Full council is required to approve this report.
6. An update on the economic conditions and interest rate forecasts is contained in appendix 'A'.

Icelandic bank default – Landsbanki Islands hf

7. As previously reported, the Council has an investment of £1m with Landsbanki. The Icelandic Government has stated its intention to honour all its commitments as a result of their banks being placed into receivership.
8. In April 2011 the Reykjavik District Court ruled that local authorities' claims qualified for priority under Icelandic bankruptcy legislation. The decision was appealed to the Icelandic Supreme Court who affirmed the district court's ruling in October 2011. Subsequently the Reykjavik District Court recognised the council's claim at £1,004,890.41 (being the principal sum plus interest due).
9. The Winding Up Board for Landsbanki Islands hf anticipate that final recovery will exceed the book value of the priority claims and as a result the Council is eventually likely to recover 100 per cent of their deposit, although repayments will be received in stages up to 2018. The first distribution payment was made in December 2011, with a further three payments to date; the council has received a total of £531,286 by 31 March 2014. Councillors will be periodically informed on the latest developments as they become known.

10. In December 2013 the majority of those local authorities who held Landsbanki priority creditor status, sold their claims to Deutsche Bank. The actual amount the claims were sold for is unknown due to confidentiality clauses, but is believed to be in the region of ninety-two pence in the pound for the entire claim amount. The council did not sell its claim, and remains one of thirteen local authority creditors holding on to their claims.

Treasury activities in 2013/14

Council investments as at 31 March 2014

11. The council's investments at 31 March 2014 were as follows:

Table 1: maturity structure of investments at 31 March 2014:		
	£000's	% holding
Call	1,990	9%
Money market fund	10	0%
Up to 4 months	4,000	19%
5-6 months	1,000	5%
6 months to 1 year	8,500	40%
Over 1 year	4,000	19%
Total cash deposits	19,500	91%
CCLA Property fund	2,000	9%
Total investments	21,000	100%

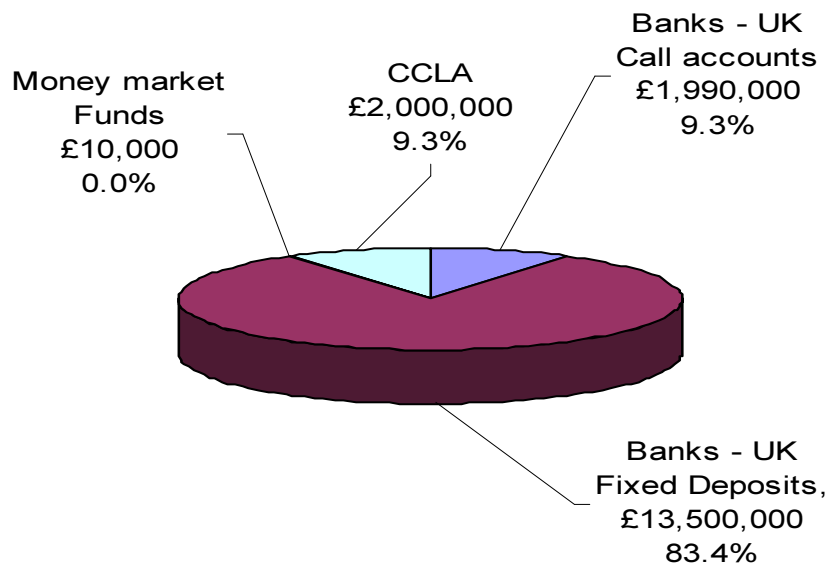
12. The majority of the funds invested are held in the form of fixed interest rate and term cash deposits. These provide some certainty over the investment return. The investment profile is organised in order to ensure sufficient liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security of investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities.

13. Money market rates over the year have remained very low and flat. One year rates have steadied and are now averaging just below one per cent. The government's Funding for Lending Scheme (FLS) has now completed, but there is still little demand for money in the markets which has perpetuated the low investment rates available. It continues to be difficult to find re-investment opportunities offering a return which also meet the security and risk criteria.

14. The weighted average maturity period at the end of the year was 623 days. This is mainly due to a long term investment with another local authority.

15. The chart below shows in percentage terms how the portfolio is spread across investment types:

Portfolio Exposure as at 31 March 2014



Investment income

16. The total investment income achieved in 2013/14 was £478,217 compared to the original budget estimate of £356,025 as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: Investment interest earned by investment type			
Investment type	Actual Budget £000's	Actual Interest £000's	Variation £000's
Call accounts	132	116	16
Cash deposits	104	257	(153)
MMFs	-	1	(1)
CCLA Property Fund	120	104	16
Total Interest	356	478	(122)

17. The actual return achieved was 39 per cent higher than the original budget. This was due to :

- The average rates achieved on internally managed investments were higher than originally forecast.
- The maturity period for investments was extended thereby attracting slightly higher rates.
- Average balances throughout the year have remained higher than forecast.

18. The total actual average interest rate achieved for the year was 1.39 per cent.

Performance measurement

19. A list of investments as at 31 March 2014 is shown in appendix B. The average level of investments held throughout the year was £34.4 million and the average return on these investments is shown below in table 3.

Table 3: investment returns achieved against benchmark				
	Benchmark return	Actual return	Growth (below)/above benchmark	Benchmarks
	%	%	%	
Bank & building society deposits - managed in house	0.40%	1.39%	0.99%	3 month LIBID
Industry average*	0.40%	0.26%	-0.14%	

*Source : Capita Asset Services weighted average of 5 fund managers' results covering 22 funds

20. The table shows in summary the performance of the council's investments against the benchmarks set out in the treasury management strategy. These benchmarks are used to assess and monitor the council's investment performance. The annual investment strategy set the benchmark target for internal cash invested as the 3 month LIBID. The performance for the year of 1.39% exceeded the benchmark by 0.99 per cent and was 1.13 per cent above the industry average.

21. The council uses short-term investments to meet daily cash-flow requirements and has also aims to invest a proportion of the portfolio over longer dated cash deposits where possible. The weighted average life (WAL) of the council's investments has increased to 623 days from 45 days in 2012/13. The council has kept much of its funds in call accounts as the rates on these are have been exceeding the fixed term deposit rate for 12 month deposits; to balance the investment portfolio the council has issued some longer term loans to local authorities, which has increased the average life of the investments.

Land and Property

22. The council holds a portfolio of non-operational assets, which includes land, offices and shops that are let on a commercial basis. These assets had a net book value of £20.6 million at 31 March 2014 (£20.8 million as at 31 March 2013) and generated income of £1.5 million (£1.5 million in 2012/13). This is equivalent to a gross return of 7.2% (2012/13, 7.2%), which excludes costs such as maintenance and management fees. Due to movement in property values and the exclusion of whole life costs, these rates of return should not be taken as a direct comparison with the treasury rates. The Economy, Leisure and Property (ELP) team manages investment property ensuring that rent is collected and rent reviews are implemented. The performance of the investment property portfolio is assessed annually by the property team to determine if assets should be retained or disposed of.

Treasury management limits on activity

23. The council is required by the Prudential Code to report on the limits set each year in the treasury management strategy. The purpose of these limits is to ensure that the activity of the treasury function remains within certain parameters, thereby mitigating risk and reducing the impact of an adverse movement in interest rates. However, if these limits are set to be too restrictive they will impair the opportunities to reduce costs/improve performance. During the year none of these limits were exceeded. These limits are shown in appendix C.

Liquidity and yield

24. The benchmarks for liquidity are set to ensure that sufficient funds can be accessed at short notice. These are targets and not limits. The weighted average life (WAL) in days sets a benchmark for how long investments should be made and the maximum benchmark is a target set to ensure that investments are not made for too long. For example the amount to be maintained for liquidity was £10m and the actual of £11m was above the benchmark. The actual year end position for the WAL of 623 days was higher than the benchmark of 150 days – this benchmark is set in the annual treasury management strategy as a guide to the average investment length in order to ensure a balanced investment portfolio. The reason the benchmark has been exceeded stems from a conscious decision to increase the length of some core investments in order to provide some balance to the overall portfolio of investments and to increase the return for the council. These long-term investments are balanced by a level of short-term cash holdings, which are being kept high due impending business rate refunds.

25. The year end position against the original benchmarks approved in February 2013 is shown below:

Table 11: Risk-liquidity against benchmark		
	2013/14 Benchmark	2013/14 Actual
	£m	£m
Bank overdraft	0.5	0
Short term deposits - minimum available within 1 week	10	11
	2013/14 Benchmark	2013/14 Actual
Weighted average life (days)	150.0	623.0

Debt activity during 2013/14

26. During 2013/14 there was one occasion when the council had to borrow for short term cash flow needs – this was for four days in March 2014 and was fully repaid before year end. The council will continue to take a prudent approach to its debt strategy. The prudential indicators and limits set out in appendix C provide the scope and flexibility for the council to borrow in the short-term up to the maximum limits, if such a need arose within the cash flow management activities of the authority, for the achievement of its service objectives.

Financial implications

27. Although there was talk of a rise in interest rates a year ago, the reduction in inflationary pressures has meant that interest rates have remained at their historic low. The current outlook for growth in the UK economy means that there may start to be an increase in rates towards the end of 2014/15, but any increases (if they occur) are likely to be gradual and in small steps. The investments made in 2013/14 ensured that the council earned interest of £478,000 (2012/13: £533,000), however from 2014, income is anticipated to remain stable with no real increase until market rates maintain a sustained rise. This will be reflected in the council's 2015/16 budget and its medium term financial plan.

Legal implications

28. There are no significant legal implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. Compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services, the DCLG Local Government Investment Guidance provides assurance that the council's investments are, and will continue to be, within its legal powers.

Conclusion

29. As at 31 March 2014, the council's financial investments portfolio had a value of £21.5 million. As a result of proactive management of investments held, and despite the continuing low market interest rates, during 2013/14 these investments generated £478,217 in investment income, which was £122,192 above the £356,025 original budgeted estimate.

30. The financial year 2013/14 continued to provide a challenge to treasury management. Concerns for counterparty risk continue to present the council with a difficult environment to invest in. The main implications of these factors were:

- low investment returns and difficulty to forecast;
- increased counterparty risk – reduced choice of counterparties
- Interest rate exposure risk – due to investments held in short-term maturity periods.

31. Despite the continued uncertainty the overall investment performance was above the industry average for 2013/14. Investments were made in the year that provided a reasonable return whilst maintaining security and liquidity.

Background papers

- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) code of practice for treasury management in the public sector.

- CIPFA treasury management in the public services code of practice and cross sectoral guidance notes
- Treasury Management Strategy 2013/14 – Council 20 February 2013.

Appendices

- A – Economic update and interest rates
- B – List of investments as at 31 March 2014
- C – Prudential indicators
- D – Glossary of terms

Economic update and interest rates as at July 2014

- A1. The UK returned to strong growth during 2013/14 and indications are this will continue through 2014/15.
- A2. Inflation has fallen sharply and expectations are that inflation will continue to be subdued. However, real incomes are still having an affect on households as wages have not risen with inflation. The squeeze on households' income will remain a critical factor in the economy over the next few years. The slow recovery has meant that social security payments remain high and tax income is low.
- A3. Deflation is now a threat in the Eurozone. The ECB took some action in June 2014 to loosen monetary policy in order to promote growth.
- A4. The government's Funding for Lending Scheme (FLS) has been introduced to improve access to mortgages at lower rates. This has reduced lenders need to borrow and money market rates have fallen considerably as a result. There will be a need to increase interest rates and reverse the government bond purchases at some stage, but it is unlikely that the latter will happen in the next 12 to 24 months.
- A5. Investor demand in UK gilts as a 'safe haven' continues to keep yield increases down. Long term rates will eventually rise, mainly due to the fact that high volumes of gilts have been issued already in the UK and also in other major western countries.
- A6. Following comments from the MPC and Mark Carney, along with the prospect of good economic recovery in 2014, interest rates are forecast to rise from 2015.
- A7. Concerns over investment counterparty risk remain because of the volatile economic conditions. However the council's current treasury management policy manages this risk down to a low level.

Interest rates

- A8. The Bank of England Inflation report upgraded its growth predictions to 3.4% in 2014 and 2.9% in 2015.
- A9. Bank rate remained unchanged at 0.5% throughout 2013/14. The earlier forecast of a rate rise in Q4 of 2016 has been revised to Q1 in 2015. This follows comments from the MPC and the fact economic recovery is likely to be robust.
- A10. Investment rates have remained flat with a range between 0.5 per cent to around 1.0 per cent for up to a year's maturity. This has dropped significantly as banks and building societies were offered further cheap cash supply via the FLS. The short term rates from one month to six months offer very little differential with six month rates ranging between 0.37 per cent and 0.55 per cent.

A11. Capita Asset Services' forecast of the expected movement in medium term interest rates:

	NOW	Sep-14	Dec-14	Mar-15	Jun-15	Sep-15	Dec-15
BANK RATE	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
3 month LIBID	0.50	0.50	0.60	0.80	0.80	1.10	1.10
6 month LIBID	0.58	0.60	0.80	0.90	1.00	1.15	1.20
12 month LIBID	0.80	0.80	1.00	1.00	1.20	1.30	1.40
5 yr PWLB	2.70	2.70	2.80	2.90	3.00	3.00	3.10
10 yr PWLB	3.50	3.70	3.70	3.80	3.90	4.00	4.00
25 yr PWLB	4.10	4.40	4.40	4.50	4.60	4.70	4.70
50 yr PWLB	4.10	4.40	4.40	4.50	4.60	4.70	4.70
	Mar-16	Jun-16	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17	Jun-17	Sep-17
BANK RATE	1.25	1.25	1.50	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00
3 month LIBID	1.30	1.40	1.60	1.90	2.10	2.25	2.25
6 month LIBID	1.40	1.50	1.80	2.00	2.20	2.30	2.30
12 month LIBID	1.70	1.80	2.10	2.20	2.30	2.40	2.40
5 yr PWLB	3.20	3.30	3.30	3.40	3.50	3.60	3.60
10 yr PWLB	4.10	4.20	4.20	4.30	4.40	4.40	4.40
25 yr PWLB	4.80	4.80	4.90	4.90	4.90	5.00	5.00
50 yr PWLB	4.80	4.80	4.90	4.90	4.90	5.00	5.00

Investments as at 31 March 2014

Counterparty	Deposit Ty	Maturity Date	Principal	Rate
Hull City Council	Fixed	January 2021	2,000,000	2.50%
Hull City Council	Fixed	August 2020	2,000,000	2.70%
Close Brothers Ltd	Fixed	November 2014	1,000,000	1.05%
Lloyds TSB Bank Plc	Fixed	June 2014	3,000,000	1.01%
National Counties Building Society	Fixed	June 2014	1,000,000	1.00%
Lloyds TSB Bank Plc	Fixed	December 2014	2,000,000	0.98%
Manchester Building Society	Fixed	October 2014	2,000,000	0.90%

Prudential indicators as at 31 March 2014		
	2013/14 Original estimate £m	31.03.2014 Actual £m
Authorised limit for external debt		
Borrowing	10	0
Other long term liabilities	5	0
	15	0
Operational boundary for external debt		
Borrowing	5	0
Other long term liabilities	0	0
	5	0
Investments		
Interest rate exposures		
Limits on fixed interest rates	50	23
Limits on variable interest rates	10	0
Maximum principal sums invested > 364 days		
Upper limit for principal sums invested > 364 days	20	4

Appendix D

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Basis Point (BP)	1/100th of 1%, i.e. 0.01%
Base Rate	Minimum lending rate of a bank or financial institution in the UK.
Benchmark	A measure against which the investment policy or performance of a fund manager can be compared.
Bill of Exchange	A non-interest-bearing written order used primarily in international trade that binds one party to pay a fixed sum of money to another party at a predetermined future date.
Callable Deposit	A deposit placed with a bank or building society at a set rate for a set amount of time. However, the borrower has the right to repay the funds on pre agreed dates, before maturity. This decision is based on how market rates have moved since the deal was agreed. If rates have fallen the likelihood of the deposit being repaid rises, as cheaper money can be found by the borrower.
[Cash] Fund Management	Fund management is the management of an investment portfolio of cash on behalf of a private client or an institution, the receipts and distribution of dividends and interest, and all other administrative work in connection with the portfolio.
Certificate of Deposit (CD)	Evidence of a deposit with a specified bank or building society repayable on a fixed date. They are negotiable instruments and have a secondary market; therefore the holder of a CD is able to sell it to a third party before the maturity of the CD.
Commercial Paper	Short-term obligations with maturities ranging from 2 to 270 days issued by banks, corporations and other borrowers. Such instruments are unsecured and usually discounted, although some may be interest bearing.
Corporate Bond	Strictly speaking, corporate bonds are those issued by companies. However, the term is used to cover all bonds other than those issued by governments in their own currencies and includes issues by companies, supranational organisations and government agencies.
Counterparty	Another (or the other) party to an agreement or other market contract (e.g. lender/borrower/writer of a swap/etc.)

Credit Default Swap (CDS)	A swap designed to transfer the credit exposure of fixed income products between parties. The buyer of a credit swap receives credit protection, whereas the seller of the swap guarantees the credit worthiness of the product. By doing this, the risk of default is transferred from the holder of the fixed income security to the seller of the swap.
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	The amount the council has to borrow to fund its capital commitments.
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.
CLG	[Department for] Communities and Local Government.
Derivative	A contract whose value is based on the performance of an underlying financial asset, index or other investment, e.g. an option is a derivative because its value changes in relation to the performance of an underlying stock.
Debt Management Account Deposit Facility (DMADF)	Deposit Account offered by the Debt Management Office, guaranteed by the UK government
European Central Bank (ECB)	European Central Bank – sets the central interest rates in the EMU area. The ECB determines the targets itself for its interest rate setting policy; this is to keep inflation within a band of 0 to 2%. It does not accept that monetary policy is to be used to manage fluctuations in unemployment and growth caused by the business cycle.
European and Monetary Union (EMU)	The Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is an umbrella term for the group of policies aimed at converging the economies of all member states of the European Union.
Equity	A share in a company with limited liability. It generally enables the holder to share in the profitability of the company through dividend payments and capital appreciation. Equity values can decrease as well as increase.
Forward Deal	The act of agreeing today to deposit funds with an institution for an agreed time limit, on an agreed future date, at an agreed rate.
Forward Deposits	Same as forward dealing (above).
Fiscal Policy	The government policy on taxation and welfare payments.

GDP	Gross Domestic Product.
[UK] Gilt	Registered UK government securities giving the investor an absolute commitment from the government to honour the debt that those securities represent.
LIBID	London inter-bank bid rate
LIBOR	London inter-bank offered rate.
Money Market Fund	A well rated, highly diversified pooled investment vehicle whose assets mainly comprise of short-term instruments. It is very similar to a unit trust, however in a MMF.
Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)	Government body that sets the bank rate (commonly referred to as being base rate). Their primary target is to keep inflation within plus or minus 1% of a central target of 2.5% in two years time from the date of the monthly meeting of the committee. Their secondary target is to support the government in maintaining high and stable levels of growth and employment.
Other Bond Funds	Pooled funds investing in a wide range of bonds.
PWLB	Public Works Loan Board.
QE	Quantitative Easing.
Retail Price Index	Measurement of the monthly change in the average level of prices at the retail level weighted by the average expenditure pattern of the average person.
Sovereign Issues (excl UK Gilts)	Bonds issued or guaranteed by nation states, but excluding UK government bonds.
Supranational Bonds	Bonds issued by supranational bodies, e.g. European Investment Bank. The bonds – also known as Multilateral Development Bank bonds – are generally AAA rated and behave similarly to gilts, but pay a higher yield (“spread”) given their relative illiquidity when compared with gilts.
Treasury Bill	Treasury bills are short-term debt instruments issued by the UK or other governments. They provide a return to the investor by virtue of being issued at a discount to their final redemption value.

Joint Cabinet report



Report of Strategic Director

Author: Steve Bishop

Telephone: 01235 540332

Textphone: 18001 01235 540332

E-mail: steve.bishop@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All (indirectly)

Cabinet member responsible (South): Anna
Badcock

Tel: 01491 614707

E-mail: annabadcock1@gmail.com

To: CABINET

DATE: 9 October 2014

Cabinet member responsible (Vale): Matthew
Barber

Tel: 07816 481452

E-mail: matthew.barber@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: CABINET

DATE: 3 October 2014

Future delivery of corporate services

Recommendations

The Cabinets are recommended to:

- (a) Confirm the re-tendering of financial services rather than seek to bring the services back inhouse, with the possible exception of the provision of the financial management system which should be linked to the provision of accountancy services
- (b) Confirm the following services should have detailed specifications written: accountancy, internal audit, CCTV operations, democratic services, land charges, legal, licensing, car park administration, the Poppin operations, data capture, human resources, street naming and numbering, IT applications support, IT helpdesk, IT infrastructure support, IT security, facilities management, procurement and engineering.
- (c) Ask the consultant to undertake market engagement activities ahead of the formal procurement process to inform our procurement strategy.

Purpose of Report

1. The financial services contract expires in July 2016 and officers are about to start preparing for that major procurement exercise. The existing contract has brought the councils many benefits and financial savings. This report considers the potential additional benefits and savings available by extending that procurement to encompass other corporate services and other district council partners.
2. This report seeks Cabinet approval for the range of services to be taken forward, for a joint procurement approach with multiple council partners and for market engagement activity.

Corporate Objectives

3. This report addresses the corporate priority both councils have of managing our business effectively and of providing value for money services that meet the needs of our residents and service users.
4. 'Value for money' is measured by comparing quality with cost/price. The councils continually strive to improve the value for money offered to residents and service users by assessing alternative ways to deliver services which may achieve higher quality and/or lower cost. The re-tendering of the financial services contract, and its potential expansion to encompass other corporate services, provides the greatest potential opportunity for the councils to significantly improve value for money in the foreseeable future.

Background

5. The local government financial landscape is changing as the government seeks to substantially reduce public sector spending. Government grant formula has changed from a needs basis to an incentive basis. The recent windfalls in New Homes Bonus are likely to be curtailed after next year's general election which would cause medium term financial pressures to South and Vale councils, as well as many other councils. To stay 'ahead of the curve' the Strategic Management Board is looking to use every opportunity to make further efficiency savings without cutting frontline services.
6. South and Vale have a successful track record of sharing services and undertaking joint procurements which now provide some of our best ever service delivery performance and save the councils over £4m annually.
7. For the past year members of the Strategic Management Board have been assessing the market's appetite for delivering the councils' corporate services. Officers have also been exploring opportunities to involve other district councils.
8. Since January, when officers briefed cabinet members on progress, three other district councils have expressed an interest in procuring corporate services jointly with us. The market research confirms the potential to secure substantial improvements in value for money if a broader range of services are offered alongside revenues and benefits.

9. In order to prepare the councils' procurement strategy and to negotiate possible agreements with the other councils, the cabinets are asked to approve the recommendations above.
10. This is an intermediate report. In December cabinets will be asked to take the important decisions to finalise the list of services to market test, and, to select the most appropriate procurement strategy. Both decisions will be informed by the market engagement activity and writing of detailed service specifications set out in this report.

Options

11. In reaching this point, the Strategic Management Board has considered the following three options.
12. **Option 1 (outsource nothing):** An option is to insource financial services and for the councils to deliver all corporate services themselves. Most of the £600k annual savings and the resilience benefits generated from outsourcing those services eighteen (South)/eight (Vale) years ago would be reversed. The councils would take back the significant operational risks. For these reasons the Strategic Management Board has not pursued this option
13. **Option 2 (outsource the same):** The 'status quo' option would be for South and Vale to simply re-tender the financial services already outsourced. These services comprise:
 - Council tax and non-domestic rates collection
 - Benefits administration
 - Accounts receivable and payable
 - Payroll
 - Integrated financial management information system
 - Cashier services
 - Customer contact services (front of house and switchboard)
14. This option represents low risk. Re-tendering would provide an opportunity for further service investment, efficiencies and financial savings. However market research has confirmed that these benefits would be on a modest scale given the significant investment and efficiencies already achieved by the current contractor, Capita. Without additional council volumes there would be no scope for greater economies of scale. If this option is pursued, cabinet members are asked to insource the provision of the financial management system as its separation from the accountancy service has caused problems. The cost of procuring a new system (approximately £0.5m across the two councils, plus annual support) would need to be budgeted for.

15. **Option 3 (outsource more):** The Strategic Management Board considers that there is potential benefit in outsourcing an additional range of services to those covered in option one. These are listed below:

- car park administration
- engineering/drainage
- democratic services
- facilities management
- IT security
- legal
- canteen operation
- IT helpdesk
- land charges
- human resources
- data capture
- licensing
- IT applications support
- street naming
- accountancy
- IT infrastructure support
- CCTV operation
- internal audit
- procurement

16. By pursuing this option all services, both already outsourced financial services plus the additional inhouse services above, would be potentially available to the market. The optimum scope of services will depend upon a number of factors such as market appetite, synergies, potential for scale efficiencies and the ability to deploy new technologies to achieve improvements in quality/efficiency of services. We propose that an evidence base be obtained through consultation with potential suppliers ('market engagement'). Tenders would then be invited around a preferred package and procurement route informed by an analysis of their views. The opportunity for additional benefits through the joint procurement will also be estimated and will help to inform the commercial arrangements under which the opportunity is advertised. The results of the tender evaluation and value for money conclusions would be presented to the cabinets in early 2016 to decide which services (if any) to outsource and which contractor to award a contract to.

17. This option could be pursued effectively by South and Vale with or without additional council partners. The market has indicated that efficiencies and economies of scale would be substantially greater with three or more councils. There are greater risks associated with this option but also greater potential rewards. The Strategic Management Board recommends this option and will mitigate the risks through robust project management.

18. In addition to the joint procurement of a new contractor, options 2 and 3 offer the potential for creating a single joint clientside supporting the three, four or five councils. This would provide resilience and efficiency benefits compared with each council trying to maintain its own (limited) client team.

Pros and Cons of option 3 – market testing corporate services

19. The proposal to market test, and potentially outsource, a service currently delivered inhouse by council employees, puts council jobs at risk and unsettles staff. The Strategic Management Board recognises this and recommends ongoing staff engagement to minimise any negative impact. The first stage has been to encourage affected service teams to assist their heads of service to contribute to

the identification of pros and cons of market testing their particular service, which has influenced this report. The detailed potential disadvantages and concerns identified in that exercise will be actively managed and monitored through the project risk register.

20. The major generic pros and cons affecting most of the services are summarised below:

Advantages ('Pros') of market testing the inhouse services	Disadvantages ('Cons') of market testing the inhouse services
Potentially better value for money	Potentially worse value for money
Lower operating costs if delivered from lower cost areas	Loss of control over business processes
Improved resilience from larger teams	Slow or expensive to innovate or change
Access to service specialist	Loss of local knowledge and key skills

Other councils

21. Another way to leverage step change improvements, service investment and even greater economies of scale savings is for additional councils to join South and Vale in this procurement. The Strategic Management Board is working with three other district councils in southern England to explore the possibility of a joint procurement. To date these discussions have been at director and chief executive level but shortly there will be a meeting of leaders to discuss a joint approach.
22. The other three councils already outsource a broader range of corporate services. Their contracts, which are also with Capita, expire between June and September 2017, the year after South-Vale. Any new contract would provide for staggered start dates.

Financial Implications

23. Under option 1 there would be significant upfront costs to insourcing financial services such as acquiring revenues and benefits software. It is likely that the annual cost would also be higher, as was the case when each council last provided the services inhouse.
24. When financial services were last re-tendered eight years ago together with the creation of a joint client team, South achieved annual savings of over £400k and Vale saved £240k per annum. The one-off cost of the procurement in consultancy fees was approximately £125k. This excludes the cost of officer time which was a 'sunk' cost.
25. The cost of consultancy this time will vary according to the breadth of services and number of councils involved. The technical consultant has been appointed on a flexible contract allowing South and Vale to flex the cost according to available

budget. The existing budget of £100k will be utilised this financial year under any of the above options. Additional budget will be required for external legal expertise. These costs will be shared with other participating council partners. In addition, the councils have successfully won £125k of the government's Transformation Challenge Award bid this year. Given these uncertainties the total cost of procurement will vary between £25k and £63k, plus legal costs.

26. This one-off cost should be compared with the potential annual savings arising from the procurement. Under option 2 above, if South and Vale simply re-tender financial services, without the involvement of other councils, it is likely that the market will provide modest additional savings compared to current contract prices. Any contractor will inherit high-performing services which benefit from the previous investments and efficiencies introduced by Capita. These modest savings would be enhanced by the economies of scale available from other councils' service volumes. (This saving could be outweighed by the cost of procuring a new financial management system if councillors choose to synchronise the responsibilities of financial staff (inhouse under this option) with financial software.)
27. The market suggests that option 3 presents a unique opportunity for multiple services across multiple councils, although this will be tested through further structured market engagement. The potential scale and volume of services would attract great market interest and investment proposals from tenderers which could lead to a step-change in both service investment and efficiency savings. For the purpose of the TCA bid officers have suggested a savings target of £4.5m over the ten year contract life, which is very modest. The flexibility offered by option 3 means that the councils are not committing to outsourcing any services until tenders are received and any increased value is tested. Therefore, in the unlikely event that additional savings are not available, the councils could choose to simply award a financial services contract.
28. As mentioned above, staff engagement is a key aspect to option 3. Teams would be encouraged (though not pressured) to consider introducing further 'lean' improvements to their services, re-structuring, streamlining, rationalisation and budget cuts in the run-up to market testing in order to be as cost-efficient as possible and delivering to the same levels of quality and volume by the time the market's value for money proposals are compared with inhouse service value for money. In practice this is likely to drive further efficiencies even if ultimately councillors decide to retain a service inhouse rather than outsource it. So the process itself as well as the specific outcomes of option 3 should deliver value for money improvements.

Legal Implications

29. The council must comply with EU procurement regulations to secure competitive tenders and to minimise the risk of challenge. The appointed consultant, our procurement officers, inhouse legal and external legal officers will advise on a compliant and successful procurement exercise. The procurement strategy, which will set out our approach, will be submitted to the cabinets in December for approval.

30. Partnering with other councils besides South-Vale introduces added complexity and risks, which are likely to require new legal agreements between all councils and strong governance arrangements.
31. Should the council choose to outsource any inhouse services there will be further complexities and liabilities such as arising from the transfer of staff to the preferred contractor. Any resulting issues and risks will be identified through the process, reported to councillors and mitigated/managed through the development of the new outsourcing contract.

Risks

32. Whether councillors decide to pursue option 1, 2 or 3, this will be a major procurement and project with significant risks arising. The consultant and strategic director will be responsible for managing and mitigating the risks in accordance with well-established risk management and project management toolkits. The following risks have already been identified and will be added to throughout the project:

- Political/reputational – that the project attracts negative publicity (mitigate by regular updates to politicians via the strategic management board and project board)
- Professional – that by outsourcing certain professional skills, the partners lose that expertise in-house (mitigate by each partner carefully assessing the outsourcing of each service and ensuring contractual provision of such services)
- Financial – that the project savings targets are not achieved and the tenders are higher cost (mitigate by carefully drafting the specification and draft contract, choice of procurement route to provide flexibility, establishing accurate cost base on which to benchmark tender costs, identifying volumes, thorough consideration of risk allocation - ultimately the councils can choose not to accept any tender that does not offer better value for money)
- Legal – challenge possibly due to breach of procurement regulations (mitigate by inclusion of procurement and legal expertise on project team to ensure compliance)
- Partnership – that the partnership breaks down and we fail to agree single specifications (mitigate by upfront acknowledgement of equal partner status and collective acceptance of compromise, chief executives and leaders on the project board to escalate and resolve disagreements, partnership spirit embraced by all)

- Staffing – the uncertainties around job security and long term prospects may cause some staff to look elsewhere and resign rather than be TUPE-transferred to an outsourcing company. This could disrupt service delivery causing extra management pressures (mitigate by staff representation on the project team, frequent communication, staff involvement at three influential stages)

Other implications

33. This procurement is a major project giving rise to many implications over the next two years which cannot be adequately covered here. It will be managed in accordance with the council's project management process, including strong governance in the form of a project board comprising the leaders and chief executives of participating councils, as well as a multi-disciplinary project team under the direction of a strategic director.

34. The strategic director will ensure any major implications are escalated to the project board and/or cabinets for resolution as required. The project timescales are set out below.

Project timescales

35. The main project milestones are summarised below:

Jan – June 2014 :	market research and identification of potential council partners
July :	staff briefing
July – Aug:	pros and cons appraisal of market-testing inhouse services
October :	cabinets to endorse approach (this report)
Oct – Dec :	services write detailed specifications
	Consultant engages market
	Consultant and procurement officers formulate procurement options
December :	cabinets to finalise services to be market tested and approve procurement strategy
Jan – Nov 2015 :	procurement exercise
	inhouse services prepare for market testing and comparison
Nov – Dec 2015 :	tender evaluation and comparison with inhouse services
Jan – Mar 2016 :	cabinets to award contract and decide which, if any, inhouse services to outsource in the contract

Mar – July 2016 :	prepare transition to new contract at South-Vale including any staff transfers
August 2016 :	South and Vale new contract commences
Early 2017 :	prepare transition to new contract at other councils including any staff transfers
Mid 2017 :	Other councils new contract commences

Conclusion

36. The re-tendering of the financial services contract is the single largest opportunity in the next five years to achieve a major step-change in council value for money. By market-testing a broader range of corporate services alongside the re-tendering of financial services, in partnership with other councils, we expect to secure substantial efficiency savings, improve resilience and secure ongoing service quality.
37. What we are setting out to achieve as described in this report is ambitious and pushes the boundaries of outsourcing, both in terms of the range of services covered and the number of partners involved. But the potential rewards are substantial, both financial and reputational. Both councils have always been at the forefront of innovation in service delivery and have seen how effective outsourcing can deliver financial and service quality benefits. This is the opportunity to move to the next level.
38. If the cabinets agree the list of services as set out in the recommendations to have detailed specifications written, the next and crucial stage of the project is market engagement. We will discover what appetite and expertise exists to deliver the individual services identified. This will allow the cabinets to take informed final decisions when they meet in December as to what services they wish to include in the market testing exercise, as well as the procurement strategy to adopt.

Background Papers

None