Ex.33

Open to the Public, including the Press

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillor Tony de Vere (Chair), Mary de Vere, Richard Farrell, Jenny Hannaby and Angela Lawrence

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Katie Barrett, Helen Bishop, Steve Bishop, Alice Brander, David Buckle, Steve Culliford, Bill Farrar, Rodger Hood, Mike Mackay, Mark Saunders, Paul Staines, Vicky Tilley, Tim Trueherz, Toby Warren

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 5

Ex.58 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jerry Patterson and Richard Webber.

Ex.59 MINUTES

The Executive minutes of the meeting held on 1 August 2008 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ex.60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

Ex.61 URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

Ex.62 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

It was reported that four members of the public had expressed a wish to address the Executive.

(1)   Eleanor Cowan made a statement on behalf of the South & Vale Carers Centre in support of its community grant application. She gave an example of the work carried out by the centre in helping a carer in need. The support offered by the centre's staff had allowed the carer and her family to overcome their difficulties, gain more local accommodation and obtain benefits. She asked the Executive for a grant to allow the centre to continue support to those in need.

(2)   Des Williams made a statement on behalf of the Vale of White Horse Schools' Football Association in support of its community grant application. The association covered secondary school football across the district and included representative matches for under 13s, under 14s and under 15s and held internal competitions for boys and girls. The association used to hold its matches at King Alfred's School in Wantage but had to find a new home ground. Matches were now played at Milton United's ground for a hire fee. Most running costs were covered but there was still a funding shortfall. Mr Williams sought a grant to assist with this shortfall.

(3)   Trudy Van Rijn made a statement on behalf of the Oxfordshire Playbus in support of its community grant application. The playbus operated across the county by bringing play facilities to special needs children and children who were diadvantaged. Care sessions were also given to the elderly with Alzheimer's disease. The organisation operated a sensory playbus but this had broken down and needed replacing. She sought a contribution towards the funds to replace the sensory bus.

(4)   Brian Simpson made a statement on behalf of Upton Village Hall Amenity Trust in support of its grant application. Further to the officer's report he updated the Executive with details of the trust's own contribution. It had £8,000 allocated to this project with a further £4,000 contingency. Donations had not yet been received but there had been pledges of around £5,500 from Upton residents. He sought a contribution towards the extension of the hall.

The Chair thanked the four speakers for their statements.

Ex.63 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None

Ex.64 REFERRAL UNDER THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES OR THE BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROCEDURE RULES

None

Ex.65 REFERRALS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND OTHER COMMITTEES

None

Ex.66 FINANCIAL MONITORING
        (Time: 2.45pm to 2.46pm)

The Executive received and considered six requests for virements under the Virements Policy. Members also noted seven virements that had been approved by the Deputy Director under delegated authority.

RESOLVED

that the virement requests set out in the agenda report be approved.

Vale of White Horse District Council

Ex.67   <u>FORWARD PLAN</u>
(Time: 2.46pm to 2.47pm)

The Executive received the Forward Plan setting out Executive decisions to be taken from October 2008 to January 2009.

RESOLVED

that the Forward Plan for October 2008 to January 2009 be noted.

Ex.68   <u>THE VALE'S STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES - 2008 TO 2016 (THE "SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY")</u>
(Time: 2.47pm to 2.54pm)

The Executive received and considered report 91/08 of the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) regarding the need to prepare a Sustainable Community Strategy, a requirement under the Local Government Act 2000 and Sustainable Communities Act 2007. Government guidance required the strategy to have regard to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Vale and to identify key priorities for action. The first community strategy had been prepared in 2004 for the period up to 2008. In 2007 the Council and its partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors (the Vale Partnership) had prepared a new strategy for 2008 to 2016 and sought the Executive's agreement.

The strategy was a commitment by the Council and its partners to work together with available resources to provide services that would help to improve quality of life and maintain communities where people wanted to live and work, now and in the future, e.g. "sustainable communities". The strategy acted as a starting point in achieving the partnership's vision but would be regularly monitored and reviewed. A detailed action plan would set out how the partnership would achieve the priorities. These were:
- social progress which recognised the needs of everyone
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment
- effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources

The strategy had been prepared on the basis that the resources of the partnership organisations and others were already fully allocated and successful progress was dependent on the best use of existing resources. Therefore the strategy did not have any new financial implications for the Council.

The officer was thanked for his report. The Executive supported the strategy and the intention to produce a summary version in colour for the public. Members commented that a strategy would need to consider targeting partnership resources at two areas where further work was needed: improving mental health and reducing loneliness. Both were likely to be key issues due to an increasingly aging population, a point recognised by the Scrutiny Committee during its recent discussion on the Health Improvement Plan.

RESOLVED

(a)   that report 91/08 be noted;

(b)   that it be recognised that John Robertson has been acting as Chairman of the Vale Partnership Board and that the Chair of the Executive be invited to write to John Robertson welcoming the strategy and thanking him for his chairmanship of the partnership board; and

R E C O M M E N D E D

(c)   that the Vale's Strategy for Sustainable Communities - 2008 to 2016, as appended to these minutes, be adopted.

Ex.69 REVIEW OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES
(Time: 2.54pm to 3.00pm)

The Executive received and considered report 92/08 of the Deputy Director (Commercial Services) regarding a review of public conveniences in the Vale with the aim of modernising the service managed by the Council. The Deputy Director had concluded that new arrangements should be implemented as soon as practicable including:
- reducing the opening hours of public conveniences
- relocating two Automatic Public Conveniences (APCs)
- increasing Automatic Public Conveniences' charges from 10p to 20p
- introducing in-house collection of revenue
- reducing the cleaning hours
- establishing and recruiting a suitable team of cleaning staff
- minimising agency support
- refurbishing premises

It was noted that the Direct Services Organisation had maintained the toilets within the £91,000 budget, without inflationary growth, for four years. Under the proposals the expenditure was expected to remain within this budget at an estimation of £80,905. Members noted that on 18 September 2008, the Personnel Committee had approved the updated establishment of the Direct Services Organisation with respect to its cleaning technicians, providing a total of 92 hours per week for this function. The benefits of the new arrangement included:
- reducing repairs and maintenance and cleaning costs
- reducing risk of vandalism
- maintaining the same staffing establishment
- achieving staff flexible working arrangements
- improving standard of cleanliness
- refurbishing premises
- introducing an income stream

The Executive looked at other options. It was noted that one alternative to directly employing staff would be to re-tender the cleaning contract to an external service provider. However, this was rejected as it would remove the control and flexibility preferred by the Council and might exceed the existing budget. The second option, that

of continuing to employ casual staff and agency support on an ad hoc basis, was considered to be unreliable and ineffective as well as being financially unpredictable and uneconomical. The third option to stop cleaning the toilets completely and seek to either to close all of the premises or transfer their ownership to Town and Parish Councils was considered unacceptable as the Executive considered it important for the Council to continue its public convenience service and not all Town and Parishes might agree to take this service on. The Executive rejected each of these options.

Members concluded that the public convenience service should continue on the basis of the new arrangements outlined above, recruiting a suitable team of cleaning staff and using the Direct Services Organisation to carry out maintenance. It was concluded that this arrangement would give the council better control over the service and improve it for all communities. Members asked the officers to promote the Richmond scheme, whereby shop and pub owners were encouraged to allow public use of their toilets. The officer was thanked for his review of this service.

RESOLVED

(a)   *that the new service arrangements for Council owned public conveniences, as detailed in report 92/08, be approved; and*

R E C O M M E N D E D

(b)   *that the Automatic Public Conveniences' charges be increased from 10p to 20p.*

Ex.70   COMMUNITY GRANTS
(Time: 3.00pm to 3.21pm)

The Executive received and considered report 93/08 of the Strategic Director which set out the Executive's Community Grants budget position and detailed seven grant applications received. One of the applications was for third party funding from the Council's Lottery and Other Grants' Support Fund.

Members noted that with only £8,214 remaining in its community grants budget for Vale-wide projects, they would not be able to fund each application to its full request. Members therefore had a difficult choice of which applications to support and how much grant to award. The choice of Members was guided by the Council's vision, aims and corporate priorities. One application, from Oxford Inspires to stage a series of arts events in the Vale, was noted as a good project but the Executive declined to award a grant as it only had limited funds and needed to target the most worthy applications.

The Chair requested that all the applications should be referred to the Council's Area Committees as these committees might be minded to consider the applications and make grant awards.

RESOLVED

(a)   *that the Executive's remaining Vale-wide Community Grants budget for 2008/09 of £8,214 be noted;*

(b) that the following applications for community grants be approved (all by five votes to nil):

Applicant	Scheme	Grant
Oxfordshire Play Association	Towards core costs of providing support services to play settings in the Vale	£1,500 (Social agenda and access priority)
Assisted Reading for Children in Oxfordshire	To impart a love of reading to children in the Vale	£1,000 (Social agenda and access priority)
Oxfordshire Playbus	Towards a replacement sensory vehicle for children with special needs	£2,000 (Social agenda and access priority)
Vale of White Horse Schools' Football Association	Towards additional pitch fees	£500 (Social agenda and access priority)
South & Vale Carers Centre	Towards core costs or providing a support service to carers	£3,214 (Social agenda and access priority)

(c) that the application for a community grant by Oxford Inspires to stage a series of arts events in the Vale be declined at this time; and

(d) that the following application for third party funding be awarded from the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund:

Applicant	Scheme	Grant
Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust	Third party funding towards an extension to the village hall	Up to £9,020

Ex.71 <u>BUDGET SETTING 2009/10</u>
(Time: 3.21pm to 3.28pm)

The Executive received and considered report 94/08 of the Head of Finance which proposed four stages to the budget setting process for 2009/10. These were:
1. gathering of base data and the production of a standstill budget
2. consolidate the standstill budget and share with the Executive
3. budget proposals issued for consultation
4. final budget proposed and approved

In December 2008, the Executive would be asked to issue its budget proposal for consultation. This would include details of the standstill budget, unavoidable growth, cost reduction ideas and discretionary growth bids. It would also include the Government's initial estimate of the grant support the council was likely to receive in 2009/10. Non-Executive Members would be able to question the Executive on its proposal either informally, by lobbying, or formally through the Scrutiny Committee. A meeting would also be held to allow the business community to be consulted on the budget proposals.

Members noted that it was proposed not to include the support service recharge budgets and the capital budgets within the net service budgets in the medium term

Vale of White Horse District Council

financial plan. This would more clearly demonstrate the net budgets of each Service Area which could be influenced and controlled by the appropriate Deputy Director. The Executive supported the proposed budget-setting timetable.

The first draft of the medium term financial plan was appended to the report. This looked at known budgets and cost pressures over a four year period and was used as a tool to set a long term sustainable budget. It was noted that the budget setting would again be difficult this year due to financial pressures.
The current economic climate had resulted in less income from planning applications, mainly due to developers being more cautious before proceeding with developments. There was less activity in the housing market generally, resulting in less income from Land Charges also.

RESOLVED

that the budget setting process, as detailed in report 94/08, be approved.

Ex.72 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CHANGES TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
(Time: 3.28pm to 3.33pm)

The Executive received and considered report 95/08 of the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) regarding the need to review the Local Development Scheme. The scheme set the overall timetable for producing the Local Development Framework documents. The current scheme had been agreed by the Government in May 2007. However, it was important that it was updated as it informed the public about the timescale for the production of documents. One element of the Planning and Housing Delivery Grant was dependent on councils meeting their key milestones set out in the Local Development Scheme. It was noted that the reason behind the revision was the extra work the Government now the required councils to do; originally the requirement had not been so onerous. A draft of the revised scheme had been considered and approved by the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group. The Advisory Group had recommended the scheme's approval by the Executive for submission to the Government Office.

The revised scheme had taken account of the following:
- The Government expected the Local Development Framework's Core Strategies to contain more information about place shaping and include strategic sites for development. More evidence had to be gathered than previously envisaged and there had been delays in obtaining responses from statutory consultees
- The Government had merged the issues and options stage with the preferred options stage and introduced consultation on the submission document before it was submitted to the Secretary of State. All of this would also require changes to the Statement of Community Involvement
- No bids had been received from consultants to prepare the Design Guide, resulting in a re-writing of the brief and a delay
- A new supplementary planning document had to be added to the scheme on sustainable construction and resource efficient building

The amended scheme had set out more realistic dates and avoided key consultations around the local elections in June 2009 (County Council) and May 2011 (District Council). The Core Strategy would be adopted in June 2011 and the Managing Development document would be adopted in August 2012.

Members also noted that the Council had received a request from Thames Valley Police to secure financial contributions towards their services and facilities. An assessment was taking place of the need for and timing of such guidance, and whether resources would be available to prepare and implement it. The Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group considered that a decision on whether to include this in the Local Development Scheme should be delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder and Opposition Spokesman. The Executive agreed to this delegation but considered that if extra work was required to prepare a supplementary planning document, it should be funded by the Police.

RESOLVED

(a)   *that the changes to the timetable for the preparation of the documents comprising the Local Development Framework be agreed, as set out in Appendix 1 to report 95/08, and that the Local Development Scheme, set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be submitted to the Government Office for approval;*

(b)   *that in the event that the Government Office requires changes to the Local Development Scheme, authority be delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) to:*
    (i)   *make minor changes that do not affect the overall approach of the scheme;*
    (ii)   *make more substantive changes in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder and Opposition Spokesman; and*

(c)   *that authority be delegated to the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy), in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder and Opposition Spokesman, to decide the principle of whether to include a supplementary planning document for contributions towards new infrastructure for the Police arising from new development.*

Ex.73   PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT SOUTH EAST PLAN
        (Time: 3.33pm to 3.36pm)

The Executive received and considered report 96/08 of the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) that set out proposed changes to the South East Plan to 2026 as they affected the Vale. The report also set out recommendations from the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group on the response that should be made to the Secretary of State.

The Executive concurred with the views of the Advisory Group, particularly surrounding the removal of the conditionality clause in policy CC7, which stated development would only be allowed if there was the infrastructure to support it, as it could result in unsustainable development. Members considered that councils could not be held responsible for the aspects of infrastructure delivery they could not control.

RESOLVED

that the Secretary of State for the Environment be informed that this Council:

(a) *Broadly supports the proposed changes to simplify the structure and format of the South East Plan, in particular the definition of a clear spatial strategy, and make the wording clearer, more focused and more succinct than in the draft plan. However, the focus for Central Oxfordshire should be managed economic growth as this more accurately reflects the policies for the sub region. It is also regrettable that some proposed policies that set out the approach local authorities should take when preparing Local Development Frameworks in the form of a list of criteria (e.g. Policy C7) have not been expressed as general policies that could be used to determine applications – this would have obviated the need for policies in local development documents covering the same matters;*

(b) *The changes to the wording from general intentions to a more positive approach, and the use of the word 'will' rather than 'should', put a much greater onus on the local authorities to deliver, particularly through the Local Development Framework process. Whilst this is not unreasonable, or the tasks difficult in themselves, the implications for local authorities are considerable. Local Development Frameworks are required to have a greater scope, give greater certainty and detail early in the development process, and cover a much longer time period than the local plans they replace. The Government should not expect such plans to be delivered more quickly than old style local plans particularly in view of the need to consider all reasonable options, the much greater emphasis on a robust evidence base, limited public funds (including the requirement for year-on-year efficiency savings), the shortage of experienced planning staff and the demands being put by all local authorities on the service providers who may be unable to respond fully in the timescales set out;*

(c) *The Council objects to the removal of the conditionality clause in policy CC7, which stated development would only be allowed if there was the infrastructure to support it, as, particularly through the development control process, it could result in unsustainable development and lead to a continuation of past trends of under investment in the region that could damage its social and economic strengths. The Government should recognise that councils cannot be held responsible for those aspects of delivery they do not control: the market and Government spending on infrastructure and affordable housing play a large part. The need for infrastructure to support the social well-being and economic vitality of the South East should be fully reflected in future Government spending reviews;*

(d) *While there is no objection to the deletion of the policy on strategic gaps at the regional level, the reasons for doing so must not preclude such designations at the local level. The panel recognised this may be necessary where gaps between settlements cannot be protected by landscape and other policies. Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) is not sufficient to prevent the coalescence of settlements where the open gaps are very narrow;*

(e)   *There should be references to the need to ensure inter-regional connectivity, including with the South West region, in the text introducing the spatial strategy;*

(f)   *The Council objects to policy RE1 as it should refer to employment land reviews being the basis for the provision of employment land in Local Development Frameworks. As worded it would allow for the release of more employment land than justified by employment land reviews in response to something as ill defined as changes in the global economy. It pushes down to a local level decisions that should be made at the national or regional level and could result in speculative applications and subsequent appeal decisions leading to a significant over development of employment land in some areas in relation to the level of housing and other planned infrastructure, which would not be sustainable. The Government should set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy what levels of employment development will be appropriate. Otherwise the decision over the level of development in the most important area of the UK for employment will be left up to individual Councils. This approach contradicts the early review of employment land suggested under policy RE3;*

(g)   *Policy RE5 refers to local authorities enabling businesses to operate as efficiently as possible in relation to movement. There should be recognition that the means to effect improvements in movement lie outside the hands of local authorities and are the responsibility of Government. Councils cannot improve the capacity of trunk roads, motorways or railways. Without Government support on this aspect Councils cannot operate this;*

(h)   *While the Council is pleased that the overall level of housing in the district has increased by only 60 houses over the 20 years, it objects to policy H1 as it does not give clear strategic guidance on the levels of housing development to be planned for, and fails to give certainty to communities, service providers and developers. Although there are figures for the minimum number of houses to be provided in each area, local development frameworks are expected to test higher levels of housing development. These are key strategic matters that should be resolved at the regional level and not in an ad hoc way through a myriad of local development documents. It puts additional demands on an already complex Local Development Framework process and it is not at all clear how local authorities will know whether they have done sufficient testing and whether any increase proposed will be in general conformity with the overall strategy of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Furthermore the approach could leave the way open for decisions to be taken on higher levels of growth through the development control process. Especially when taken in conjunction with policy RE1, it undermines the ability to plan comprehensively for balanced housing and employment growth and the provision of infrastructure and services to meet the needs of new development. It undermines the objectives of sustainable housing and the validity of the sustainability appraisal undertaken at the regional level. The reference to the housing figures being minimal should therefore be deleted and any increase sought should be determined through a review of the South East Plan. The Council also objects to the reference to councils assessing the ability to accelerate the rate of housing delivery in the new growth points (which includes Didcot) as this is something that should be assessed through the review of the South East Plan;*

Vale of White Horse District Council

(i)   If the Government retains the figures in policy H1 as minima, clarification is required that the need to provide a 'minimum annual average' rate of housing does not mean that over provision in one year will not count towards the overall total, or that the requirement to plan for an upward trajectory of housing completions does not necessitate a year on year increase in completions.   In addition it is not at all clear how local authorities are to test the longer term issues arising from eco-towns through emerging Local Development Frameworks when so little is known about them – this should be something the Government takes into account when it assesses whether particular proposals should be pursued;

(j)   The Council objects to policy NRM3 as the Environment Agency has concluded that currently it cannot support Thames Water's proposed reservoir. If the reservoir is not required to be as large as currently proposed, then in the Council's view there is no need for it to be located in Oxfordshire.   The geographic reference to the Upper Thames Reservoir being in Oxfordshire should therefore be removed from policy NRM 3;

In relation to the Central Oxfordshire policy area and the Rest of the Vale policy area:

(k)   While the objective of improving self containment of towns is generally supported, the plan must recognise that much of the employment for Didcot and Wantage/Grove will be provided at Milton Park and Harwell. Policy CO1 should seek the self containment of the Quadrant area as a whole and not the individual settlements;

(l)   The redistribution of some dwellings from the Central Oxfordshire part of the Vale to the figures for the rest of the district although small is welcome (policies CO1 and AOSR1);

(m)   The Council objects to the way the south Oxford strategic development area has been justified. The regional imperative to deliver higher housing numbers could be met elsewhere in the South East: therefore it is not an exceptional circumstance that over-rides Green Belt policy. Furthermore the Western Otmoor eco-town as proposed would provide housing linked to Oxford by a fast, free and frequent public transport services. It is not, therefore correct to say at this stage that there is a lack of alternatives to the strategic development area;

(n)   The Council objects to proposed paragraph 22.15 and the last sentence of paragraph 22.20. As worded there is no guidance on who will judge whether the land south of Oxford is unsuitable for development. It is not realistic to assume that the local authorities would agree alternative locations for the 4,000 homes proposed for this area. Even if agreement could be reached it is difficult to see how this could be tested at examination – which could involve two or more different Local Development Frameworks and would seriously prejudice public involvement in the process. Such proposals would not be in general conformity with the South East Plan and could result in legal challenges. The desire for flexibility to achieve the building rates proposed creates considerable uncertainty and may affect delivery. Furthermore it is not consistent with the Government's previous insistence that for Didcot the Oxfordshire Structure Plan had to clearly apportion the housing requirement to particular districts. If there are serious

doubts whether the strategic development area south of Oxford is deliverable it should not be included in the Plan. Given recent statements that the Government is reducing its overall target of 240,000 new homes a year to 210,000 and the current debate about a possible eco town at Weston Otmoor, the need for additional homes on the edge of Oxford should be deleted from this plan and reassessed through the review of the South East Plan. This would also give the opportunity to fully assess whether the location chosen for development is deliverable. It is noted that the South East England Regional Assembly's report to the regional planning committee objects to the south Oxford strategic development area as the preferred spatial option should be based on growth at Bicester, Didcot, Wantage & Grove and within the built up area of Oxford. However, this strategy was based on significantly lower level of development. This ability to deliver an increase in numbers in these locations and the implications for traffic accessing Oxford have not been tested, therefore no increase in housing numbers elsewhere should be made or alluded to in this Plan;

(o)   *The policy in the spatial strategy section of the plan (SP5) requires selective reviews of the Green Belt including to the south of the Oxford to accommodate an extension to Oxford city: by definition of it is demonstrated that land in South Oxfordshire is unsuitable, then to comply with the policy it would fall to the Vale to undertake a review of Green Belt in its area as it is the only other authority with land south of the city. Unlike land to the north of the city, the County Council has never proposed an urban extension to Oxford in this district. If the Government retains the strategic development area south of Oxford in the Plan and if subsequently a case is made that an urban extension cannot be built in South Oxfordshire, alternative locations must be considered through a review of the South East Plan. The wording of policies SP5 and CO4 should be changed to 'a selective review of Green Belt boundaries is required in the following locations'. This would mean that if the review failed in South Oxfordshire it would not follow that there should be a further review south of the city. In no other areas where a review is proposed does the South East Plan require a wider review to deliver alternative locations if the area proposed for the development is not achievable. In addition it is not reasonable for the review of the Green Belt to safeguard land for development to at least 2031 based on the rate of development proposed in the strategic development area to 2026. The strategic development area is proposed to meet the requirements of the period to 2026: what happens beyond then should be judged afresh and not simply continue the growth proposed in this plan period;*

(p)   *Changes in the transport section referring to prioritising transport schemes that aid delivery of the sub-regional strategy, improving the links between homes and jobs in the Didcot-Wantage and Grove corridor, and local schemes including improving the A415 and providing the Marcham bypass are welcome. However, it should be pointed out that in a relatively large and mainly rural area with only one rail station, the car will remain the dominant mode of travel; and*

(q)   *There should be recognition of the status of the larger market towns (such as Abingdon) in the policy or explanatory text of policies BE4 and/or CO1. They currently have the same policy approach as villages, yet they are sustainable locations that could accommodate development that meets the need of a wider area than just the needs of that community.*

Ex.74 <u>DRAFT SOUTH WEST SPATIAL STRATEGY – SECRETARY OF STATE'S
PROPOSED CHANGES AUGUST 2008</u>
(Time: 3.36pm to 3.40pm)

The Executive received and considered report 97/08 of the Deputy Director (Planning
and Community Strategy) that set out proposed changes to the draft South West
Spatial Strategy, also known as the South West Plan. The report also set out
recommendations from the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group on the
response that should be made to the Secretary of State.

In the draft South West Plan, Swindon had been identified as strategically significant
and included a proposal for 12,000 dwellings on the eastern side of the town, near to
the Vale's boundary.

While the basis of the draft Plan had been retained, changes were proposed to make
it clearer and shorter. The Executive reviewed the recommendations of the Advisory
Group and concurred with its views.

RESOLVED

*that the following responses be made on the draft South West Plan's proposed changes
to the Government Office for the South West:*

(a)   *The Council objects to Development Policy A, as proposed to be changed,
        because the references to the wider context have been deleted and
        recommends that new Development Policy A, as proposed to be changed, is
        amended to restore these explicit references to the wider context;*

(b)   *The Council objects to Development Policy D, as proposed to be changed,
        because it does not require that the regionally and sub-regionally significant
        infrastructure required to service development has been identified and proven
        to be deliverable and recommends that Development Policy D, as proposed to
        be changed, is amended by the addition of the words 'as part of the relevant
        major development proposal as set out in the RSS';*

(c)   *The Council supports the addition to para 3.7.3 of the clause "well-connected
        by sustainable transport to higher order services and facilities in city and town
        centres";*

(d)   *The Council objects to Development Policy F, as proposed to be changed,
        because it does not explicitly acknowledge that urban extensions have
        implications for their surrounding communities and recommends that
        Development Policy F, as proposed to be changed, fourth bullet point, is
        amended as follows; 'amenity space and green infrastructure that meets
        community needs, provides adequate protection to existing neighbouring
        communities, respects the landscape setting and supports improved
        biodiversity';*

(e)   *The Council objects to Policy HMA2: Swindon HMA, as proposed to be
        changed, because it should make provision for an additional search area of*

sustainable housing and accordingly make consequential changes to the quanta of new homes set out in the respective search areas and require that the regionally and sub-regionally significant infrastructure required to service development has been identified and proven to be deliverable. It recommends that Policy HMA2: Swindon HMA, as proposed to be changed, is amended;

(i) *as it relates to Area of Search 2A to the east of Swindon by the deletion of 12,000 new homes and the substitution of 10,200 new homes,*

(ii) *by the insertion of a new Area of Search at Commonhead for 1,800 new homes, and*

(iii) *by the insertion of the following text ' The release of land for the proposed 10,200 homes at Area of Search 2A to the east of Swindon is dependent upon the confirmation that the transport and other infrastructure required to service the development has been identified and proven to be deliverable.'; and*

(f) *The Council objects to Policy RTS1, as proposed to be changed, because it does not reflect the connectivity that the regionally important A420 provides between the South West and South East Regions and recommends that Policy RTS1, as proposed to be changed, is modified to reflect that the A420 Swindon to Oxford Road has the same status as it has in the draft South East Plan.*

Ex.75 <u>PARTIAL REVIEW OF THE SOUTH EAST PLAN - PROVISION OF CARAVAN SITES FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS</u>
(Time: 3.40pm to 3.42pm)

The Executive received and considered report 98/08 of the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy). The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) was undertaking a partial review of the South East Plan on the provision of sites for gypsies and travellers. Councils were asked to submit their advice on the expected numbers and distribution of sites in their areas. In Oxfordshire a county-wide steering group had recalculated the need for the county to 2016 which was 42 pitches. The response of this Council had been agreed at a meeting of the Executive on 5 October 2007.

SEERA was now undertaking consultation on four options for pitch provision for long term occupation, transit spaces and travelling showpeople. The Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group had met on 6 October 2008 to consider these options and made recommendations that were set out in the report.

The Executive concluded that, as the Council had made provision in the past to fully meet the requirement for gypsy sites and meet 'designation', it should not accept more than its share as there was no justified need to do so. Therefore, Members expressed a preference for option A rather than the remaining options which made provision for more sites than necessary.

RESOLVED

(a) *that the suggested overall provision of 42 gypsy and traveller pitches in Oxfordshire and provision for the Vale of 1 pitch under option A be supported;*

(b)   that the redistribution of gypsy and traveller pitches across the region under option B be opposed and the partial redistribution in options C and D be opposed as being arbitrary, not supported by evidence and unsustainable;

(c)   that the consultation's transit site provision for Oxfordshire be supported and that SEERA be requested to clarify the basis for the local distribution of sites and how the provision relates to the translation of transit provision into new sites in the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment;

(d)   that the overall provision of seven travelling showpeople plots across Oxfordshire and the distributions under options A and B be supported, with a preference for A;

(e)   that the redistribution of travelling showpeople plots across the region under options C and D be opposed as being arbitrary, not supported by evidence and unsustainable; and

(f)   that SEERA be requested to closely examine the information presented by the Guild of Travelling Showmen to support the provision for 42 homeless families and take into account their needs in the distribution of provision.

Ex.76   LOCAL AUTHORITY CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME
(Time: 3.42pm to 3.48pm)

The Executive received and considered report 99/08 of the Deputy Director (Housing and Community Development), which updated on progress made in delivering the council's climate change strategy. This covered progress on the carbon management programme, a Government sponsored programme to assist it with reducing carbon emissions.

The council now had an accurate picture of its carbon footprint and could now plan how it could be reduced. An action plan would be submitted to the Executive shortly. Members welcomed the report and were pleased with the progress that had been made.

It was noted that 40% of the council's carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions came from the leisure centres and 70% of that came from the White Leisure and Tennis Centre in Abingdon. In answer to a question from a Member it was reported that the heating of the swimming pool at the White Leisure and Tennis Centre could not be turned down significantly as it was already close to the statutory minimum temperature.

RESOLVED

that the progress made in delivering the climate change strategy be noted.

Ex.77   HEALTH AND SAFETY PERFORMANCE 2007/08
(Time: 3.48pm to 3.49pm)

The Executive received and considered report 100/08 of the Deputy Director (Organisational Development and Support) that set out an annual report on health and safety performance for 2007/08.

Members noted that the council's health and safety record had been good and a robust framework embedded to ensure high standards of health and safety performance at all levels, underpinned by an understanding of roles and responsibilities, quality training and development, and consistent application of policies and procedures. In particular, an IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) accredited development programme for managers and Members had been put in place and training commenced. A review of risk assessments had been undertaken in all service areas, ensuring that all significant risks had been covered. Also new initiatives on monitoring had been introduced with the Council's partners in delivering services in leisure and grounds maintenance.

Members welcomed the report.

RESOLVED

that the annual report on health and safety performance for 2007/08 be received and published.

Ex.78 LEISURE CONTRACTS ANNUAL REPORTING
(Time: 3.49pm to 4.08pm)

The Executive received and considered report 101/08 of the Strategic Director that provided background information on two annual reports from the leisure contractors currently operating the Vale's leisure facilities. Annual reporting by the contractors had been introduced by the Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement) as part of performance monitoring. Regular meetings were also held with the contractors' management. The annual reports had been presented to the Executive Portfolio Holder who considered that these should receive a wider audience at the Executive meeting. A Member tour of the council's leisure centres had also been arranged to increase Members' awareness of the facilities available.

Members welcomed the reports but asked for further details on pricing structure in comparison to other centres. However, it was noted that this information was considered each year with the Portfolio Holder and a proposal was made for fee changes as part budget-setting process.

Members asked if the officers could work with the contractors to reduce the CO_2 emissions from the leisure centres. It was reported that both contractors were keen to reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint with the council's help. However, it was noted that this was likely to result in financial discussions with the contractors as there was no flexibility within the contracts from the council's perspective, as they had been written to minimise the council's financial impact.

Members noted that there was a discrepancy in the way the council's major contracts were monitored. The Scrutiny Committee had chosen to annually monitor the waste contract, yet this was also monitored by the Executive Portfolio Holder. In the case of the two leisure contracts, the Portfolio Holder had escalated the two annual reports to the Executive for information. The Scrutiny Committee might consider these at its next meeting when reviewing the Executive's activity. It was suggested that a more consistent approach needed to found to monitoring the council's major contracts. Members asked that the Chief Executive and the Deputy Director (Contracts and

Procurement) should consider this matter and propose a better, more consistent process.

RESOLVED

(a)   *that the annual reports from leisure contractors continue to be submitted to Members for information;*

(b)   *that the Chief Executive and the Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement) be requested to propose a more consistent approach to monitoring the performance of major contracts; and*

(c)   *that the two leisure contractors be requested to provide information on their energy saving measures and that this be included in future annual reports.*

Ex.79   EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE PRESS

RESOLVED

that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered:

Item 23   *Minutes*
          (Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

Item 24   *Referral from Personnel Committee*
          (Category 3)

Ex.80   MINUTES

The Exempt minutes from the Executive meeting held on 1 August 2008 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ex.81   REFERRAL FROM PERSONNEL COMMITTEES

The Executive noted a report the Personnel Committee and the budgetary implications.

Vale of White Horse District Council

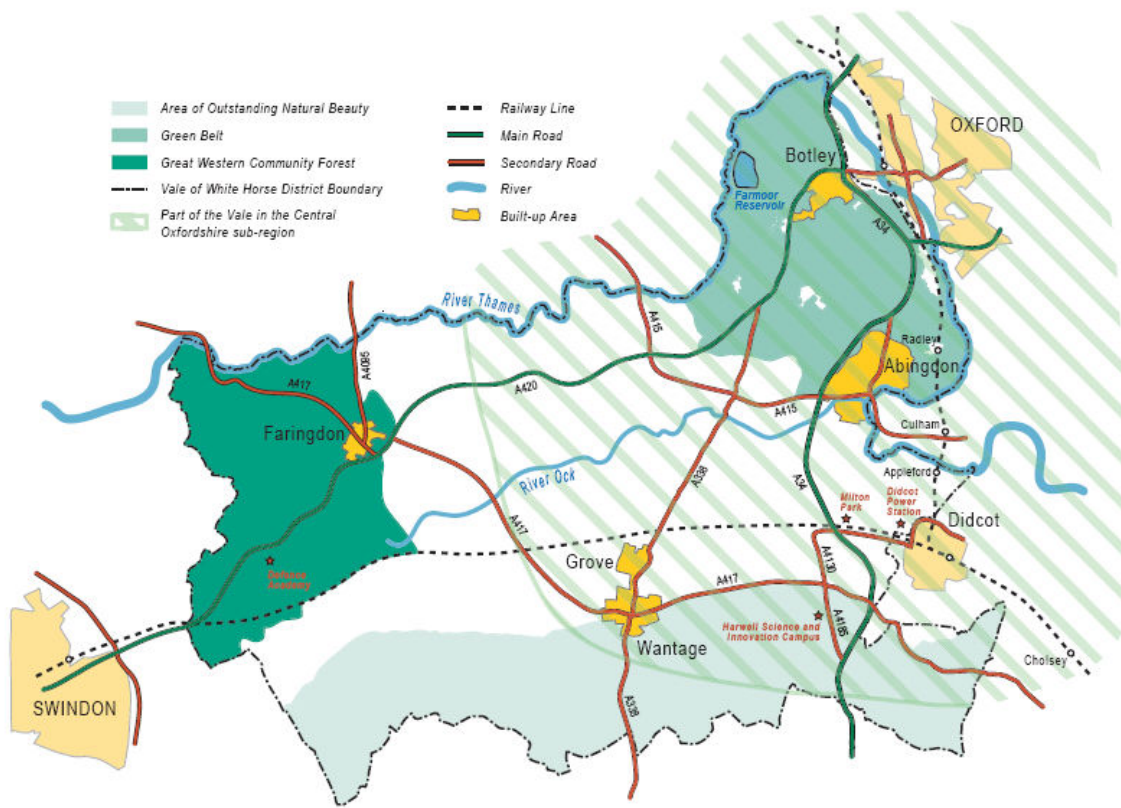**Your Vale – Your Future**

Working together for a better Vale

A Strategy for Sustainable Communities

2008-2016

(colour cover with design similar to that of November 2007 Issues & Options Report
but in line with corporate branding)

The Vale Today

(inside front cover; map same as that published in Issues & Options report; map to be enlarged and orientated as landscape)

Foreword

This strategy is a commitment by the members of the Vale Partnership to work together with available resources to provide services that will help to improve our quality of life and maintain communities where people want to live and work, now and in the future ("sustainable communities").

The Partnership has consulted a large number of people to identify the major issues that will affect quality of life in the Vale of White Horse in the future. This strategy identifies the priority actions that are needed to tackle these issues and achieve our vision of sustainable communities.

The Vale Partnership recognises that there will be many changes in the future and a long term strategy covering many years would be unrealistic. This strategy covers an eight year period (from 2008 to 2016) and acts as a starting point in achieving our vision. The strategy will be regularly monitored and reviewed and a detailed plan will set out how the Vale Partnership will work together to achieve the priorities. Partners will identify whether existing work supports this strategy. Where there are gaps, partners will work together to fill them.

Organisations not directly involved in the Partnership can also help to create sustainable communities: it needs the commitment of everyone working in the Vale. We need all organisations to use this strategy as a guide in developing their plans and in making decisions so that they too contribute to an improved quality of life in the Vale.

Signed   *Signed*

John Robertson   **Councillor Tony de Vere**
Chair of the Vale Partnership   **Leader of the Vale of White Horse**
                                                        District Council

Date

1 Introduction

1.1 What is the Strategy for Sustainable Communities?

Under the Local Government Act 2000 and Sustainable Communities Act 2007, the District Council is responsible for preparing a Sustainable Community Strategy. Government guidance requires the strategy to have regard to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Vale and to identify key priorities for action which will help secure that well being for the future.

The Strategy for Sustainable Communities (the "Sustainable Community Strategy") sets out the vision for the future of the Vale; identifies the issues that will affect our future and identifies the priority actions that will help us to shape the place we live in and thus help to achieve the vision. The strategy is based on clear evidence of particular local needs but also takes into consideration the aspirations of local residents, employers and community organisations. It is also important to take into account the resources that are likely to be available to meet these needs and aspirations.

Underpinning the actions in the strategy is the need for sustainability. This is generally defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To make sure that the strategy is sustainable it is based on the following principles:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, and
- effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources

1.2 What is the Vale Partnership?

The Vale Partnership is a Local Strategic Partnership which was set up by the Vale of White Horse District Council to help it prepare the first community strategy for the Vale. A Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is a way of bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors of a local authority district to work jointly to tackle issues and plan for the future.[1]

The Vale Partnership produced the first community strategy for the District in 2004. In 2007 the Vale Partnership began to look again at how it was going to achieve genuine improvements for local people.

---

[1] The current membership of the Vale Partnership's Strategic Board is listed in the Appendix to this strategy

2 Developing the Vale's Strategy for Sustainable Communities

2.1 The Partnership examined important information and statistics about the Vale

The sources included:

- The 2001 census www.statistics.gov.uk/census;
- The Index of Multiple Deprivation www.statistics.gov.uk;
- Neighbourhood Statistics from the Office for National Statistics www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk;
- Oxfordshire Data Observatory www.oxfordshireobservatory.info, and
- Official Labour Market Statistics www.nomisweb.co.uk.

2.2 The Partnership took account of other important strategies

The Vale's Strategy for Sustainable Communities takes particular account of the following strategies:

The Local Development Framework

The Vale Local Development Framework is the successor to the Vale Local Plan. It goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of communities and how they function.

The common aim of the Strategy for Sustainable Communities and the Local Development Framework is to create good places to live and work. Some issues will be tackled specifically through policies and proposals in the Local Development Framework; whilst others will be addressed through the Strategy for Sustainable Communities.

The Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy

At the same time as the Vale is preparing its strategy Oxfordshire County Council is preparing a sustainable community strategy for the whole of Oxfordshire. It has set up a Local Strategic Partnership (the Oxfordshire Partnership) to help in the planning, monitoring and review of the strategy. The Vale of White Horse District Council is a member of the Oxfordshire Partnership.

Like the Vale Partnership the Oxfordshire Partnership is looking again at how it can achieve genuine improvements for local people and it is hoping to finalise a new strategy by autumn 2008.

Preparing new strategies for Oxfordshire and the Vale at the same time means there is a good opportunity to agree what actions are best carried out at 'county level' and what actions are best carried out at 'district level'.

The Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement

A local area agreement (LAA) is a three year agreement between government and a local area. It is negotiated by the local authority (in Oxfordshire's case, the County Council) on behalf of the Oxfordshire Partnership, and the Government Office for the South East on behalf of central government.

Local area agreements contain a list of the local priorities for improvements, together with targets for the degree of improvement which should be achieved.

The priorities are directly related to the priorities set out in the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy. The targets are agreed by negotiation with the Government Office for the South East. Improvements are delivered jointly in partnership so the partnership, rather than any single organisation, has responsibility for achieving the agreed targets.

The Vale Partnership wants to make sure communities in the Vale share in the improvements that will result from the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement. The Vale Partnership will contribute to the delivery of improvement targets that are relevant to the Vale.

2.3 The Partnership also reviewed and took account of other strategies and programmes that influence the nature of communities

These include:

- The Regional Economic Strategy
- Oxfordshire Economic Development Strategy
- The draft South East Plan
- Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan
- The Local Transport Plan
- The Vale Community Safety Strategy
- The Oxfordshire Public Health Strategy
- The District Council's Housing Strategy[2]

2.4 The Partnership asked you

In autumn 2007 the Vale Partnership prepared an 'Issues and Options' report. The report outlined the issues that the Vale will face in the future and started to consider ways in which they might be addressed. The Partnership then consulted with residents and businesses to learn more about what the issues facing the Vale in the future might be, and how local people and businesses would suggest dealing with them. Hundreds of you wrote in and attended meetings and your feedback helped with the preparation of this strategy.

---

[2] Further information about these strategies is included in the Appendix to this strategy

3   The issues and what you had to say

In the 'Issues and Options' report the Vale Partnership identified the following issues as being particularly important for the Vale in the future. Residents, community groups and businesses that wrote in and attended consultation meetings were generally in agreement with the Partnership's analysis.

Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone…

- The Vale has an ageing population. Between 2006 and 2026 the population in the District aged over 75 is estimated to increase by 65% – you recognised that as we have an ageing population we will need to improve health care and support for the elderly; but you also made it clear that the needs of young people should be recognised and addressed.

- Many residents have reasonable incomes but in 2007 6,000 residents (5% of the Vale's population) were dependent on means tested benefits and around 1,900 children live in low income households. You recognised that the Partnership needs to address this issue.

- It is estimated that 20% of adults in the Vale are obese; there is concern that lifestyle choices will increase levels of obesity – you generally accepted the need to encourage healthier lifestyles.

- In terms of reported crime, the Vale is one of the safest districts in South East England, but the fear of crime is a real concern locally – you called for a more visible police presence to reduce the fear of crime.

- Many young people say they do not have things to do in their leisure time – you gave strong support in terms of the need for facilities to support new development and you favoured an increase in the range of community facilities funded by developers.

- In 2006 around 44% of pupils in the Vale's state schools did not achieve five or more A* to C GCSE passes - you felt that educational attainment needed to be improved and vocational as well as academic education is very important.

- There is a good sense of community in the Vale but you acknowledged that many residents do not have the time to be involved in their local community.

- The average house price in the Vale is nearly nine times higher than the average income – you agreed about the need for affordable housing, but there was less agreement about how we should achieve it.

- The Vale is a rural district and access to services and jobs in many areas is difficult, with many people having to use a car rather than public transport. However at the time of the 2001 Census more than 10% of households did not have a car - your views in particular supported the need to improve the provision of public transport. Some called for more of a focus on rural issues.

Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment…

- Traffic congestion, particularly on the A34, will continue to affect the competitiveness of local businesses – you highlighted the need to improve the transport infrastructure as a means of assisting employment growth.

- The Vale has six times the national average of research and development jobs but China, India and other emerging economies are investing heavily in the skills needed to compete with our economy – you supported the need for well-paid and skilled jobs.

- Our town centres are not all enjoying the full benefits of the Vale's economic success – you supported the need to maintain and improve the vitality and viability of town centres.

- Farming continues to change, with higher grain prices making livestock farming difficult and an increased interest in growing biomass or crops for bio-fuel; both of which have the potential to change the look of the countryside. You recognised that whilst agriculture employs fewer people it has a great influence on our landscape and it is an still an important part of the rural economy.

Effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources…

- On 20 July 2007 a record amount of rain caused extensive flooding in the Vale, a sign that flooding and other extreme weather conditions may become more frequent in the future. You favoured directing development away from areas at high risk of flooding and you felt there is a need for improvements in flood defences.

- In 2006 every person in the Vale produced an average of a third of a tonne of rubbish. The Government intends to penalise local authorities that do not reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill – you favoured encouraging reuse of materials and increasing awareness of the need to minimise waste.

- There is a substantial body of evidence that the Earth's climate is changing as a result of an increase in greenhouse gases which are trapping more heat at the planet's surface – you supported the opportunities that the renewable energy sector might bring and also supported the need to make our homes more energy efficient.

- The growing population in the Vale and the South East will place increasing pressure on water supplies; Thames Water is consulting on proposals to build a large reservoir near Abingdon. You felt that it is very important that the District Council and the Environment Agency continues with a detailed assessment of these proposals.

- The draft South East Plan proposes that 11,550 new homes should be built in the Vale between 2006 and 2026 and there is a requirement to make best use of previously developed land. A separate strategy, the Vale Local Development Framework, is the key planning mechanism that will allocate land for these new homes. You stressed the need to make sure that the residents of these new homes become and remain part of our community.

These issues and the views of residents, businesses and other organisations on the best way to tackle them have been carefully considered and the outcome is a strategy which delivers genuine improvements for local people and sets out to achieve the Partnership's vision for the Vale.

The Strategy for Sustainable Communities 2008 to 2016

4   The Vale today

The Vale of White Horse (the 'Vale') is a very attractive place to live, work and visit. It covers an area of 580 square kilometres and extends from the edge of Oxford in the north east almost to the edge of Swindon in the south west. The north east of the District contains parts of the Oxford Green Belt and in the south the Downs form part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The west of the Vale contains part of the Great Western Community Forest. The River Thames, on the northern and part of the eastern boundary of the District, is highly valued for leisure and recreation and for its contribution to the Vale's attractive landscape.

The Vale is far more than its rural character might suggest: the two power stations at Didcot and the reservoir at Farmoor make major contributions to the power and water supply of the wider region. The UK Defence Academy at Watchfield, the Saïd Business School's Executive Education Centre at Egrove Park, and Oxford Brookes University's Westminster Campus all provide higher education facilities. There are extensive employment areas including Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus – one of the largest research centres in Europe. Together these two sites employ about 11,000 people.

The Vale is well located in relation to key road transport routes, with the A34 linking the M4 and M40 motorways, and the train stations at Didcot and Swindon giving access to the London Paddington to Bristol/West Country/Cardiff rail line. There is good access to Heathrow Airport.

Just over half of the Vale's 117,300 residents live in the five main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Grove and Wantage. The rest of the population lives in over 70 villages and hamlets, many of which are of considerable conservation importance.

Did you know?

The resident population of Vale of White Horse, as measured in the 2001 Census, was 115,627, of which 50 per cent were male and 50 per cent were female. 25.6% of the Vale's population was under 20 years old (in England as a whole the figure was 25.1%) and 15.4% was over 65 years old (in England as a whole the figure was 15.9%). The largest ethnic population group at 97.6% was white (in England as a whole the figure was 90.9%).

According to the Government's long term population forecasts the population of the Vale of White Horse is estimated to increase by 7.4% (from 117,300 to 126,000) between 2006 and 2026. This compares to 11.4% for Oxfordshire and 10.1% for England.

---

5   Vision for the future

Both the Strategy for Sustainable Communities and the Local Development Framework should be based upon a clear and realistic vision of how the area will develop and change over the next twenty years. Although the vision will be shaped by national and regional policies and the objectives of sustainable development, it should also be firmly based on those characteristics that give the Vale its unique sense of place and local distinctiveness. Key to this is an understanding of how the different communities in the Vale function, how they relate together and how they interact with the surrounding areas.

The Partnership's vision for the future is:

A sustainable Vale;

- *With prosperous, inclusive and thriving communities that have good access to a range of housing, jobs and services.*
- *Where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life.*
- *Where our needs can be met without compromising the natural and built heritage or the ability of future generations to meet their needs.*

This is a long term vision but because the world is a constantly changing place the Strategy for Sustainable Communities is a strategy for the medium term which will help with progress towards the long term vision.

Accordingly the Vale Partnership has identified a number of priorities where it will be focussing its activity in the next eight years. At the end of each year the Partnership will monitor the progress in achieving the vision and, periodically, it will review its priorities to make sure that they are still appropriate for the Vale in 2016.

6 Priorities for action

In working towards the Vision and deciding its priorities for the next eight years the Partnership has taken account of the issues which residents and businesses have agreed are important for the future of the Vale. It has also considered what services are already being provided and the resources that may be available to improve existing services or deliver new ones. As a result it is proposing that the following will be key priorities for action:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone:

- Healthier communities;
- Improving quality of life for older people;
- Safer communities;
- Fostering a greater sense of community;
- A good understanding of town and parish priorities;
- Involving young people;
- Helping those without cars to access jobs and services;
- Affordable homes;
- Good quality homes; and
- Access to good quality green spaces, sport, cultural and leisure facilities.

- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment:

- Addressing economic weaknesses;
- Building on our economic strengths, and
- Maintaining and enhancing the health and vitality of the Vale's market town centres.

- effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources:

- A low carbon Vale;
- Living with extreme weather conditions;
- Using resources wisely;
- Reducing waste and increasing recycling, and
- A high quality natural and historic environment.

To achieve many of these priorities, action will be required not only through this strategy, but also through the Vale Local Development Framework. The chapters which follow show where joint action will be required.

6.1   How the Partnership will make a difference

This strategy will achieve nothing unless there is a clear emphasis on delivery and monitoring progress. Members of the Vale Partnership are committed to the strategy's priorities and will be co-ordinating existing funding and resources to make a difference.

This strategy sets out the key priorities and indicates what the Partnership will do to improve quality of life. There will also be a detailed action plan for each priority and progress will be monitored using performance indicators. The action plans will show who will be responsible for each priority, how a difference will be made and what progress should be achieved.

Many of the priorities are already in existing strategies and therefore action plans have already been prepared. Where this is the case, the Strategy for Sustainable Communities Action Plan will make this clear and include an appropriate cross reference.

Many of the performance indicators that will be used are taken from the 'Single Set of National Indicators' which were published by central government in October 2007. These indicators reflect national priorities and they are also being used in the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement. The Vale Partnership is using national indicators so that it can demonstrate that improving local quality of life in the Vale contributes to the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement and national priorities.

7 Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone

7.1 Healthier communities

Did you know?

Overall levels of deprivation in the Vale are low when compared to the whole of England, however, there are health inequalities within the Vale. For example, men from the least deprived areas can expect to live 3 years longer than those in the most deprived areas (NHS; 2008)
.

The Partnership is working to achieve good health and well being for all residents of the Vale, no matter where they live in the district. Full uptake of preventive health care services such as screening, immunisation and lifestyle advice (e.g. about healthy eating) across the communities will help to reduce the number of early deaths from preventable diseases.

Improved access to health and social care services which are responsive, effective and personalised, and which reflect the diversity of the Vale's population, will reduce the degree of inequalities in health across the District. Health inequalities arising from the impact of smoking-related diseases will be reduced as a result of a flexible stop-smoking service.

What the Partnership will do

> ➢ Promote and support healthy lifestyle choices around diet, physical activity and smoking to help reduce the number of early deaths from preventable diseases;

> ➢ Form partnerships between healthcare providers, environmental health teams and local businesses to maintain the health and well being of working age adults through Healthy Workplace initiatives and policies;

> ➢ Support and develop initiatives that break the cycle of deprivation by helping to improve the health and wellbeing of residents who are economically and socially disadvantaged, and

> ➢ Promote awareness of mental health issues and provide information on how, or where, to get help.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> ➢ Make sure that existing sport and recreation facilities are protected and that all new housing developments either provide or contribute to appropriate open space, sport and recreation facilities, with firm arrangements in place for their future maintenance, and

> Consider access to health facilities when planning new housing developments and make sure that all such housing developments either provide or contribute to appropriate health facilities.

What's already happening?

GO Active is Oxfordshire's answer to the challenge of getting more adults active. The project is supported by Sport England's Community Investment Fund, the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, five Oxfordshire district councils and leisure providers Nexus and Parkwood Leisure.

The aim is to provide more opportunities for people to be active and to enjoy the health benefits that this can bring. The project will employ more than ten new staff across the county.

7.2 Improving quality of life for older people

Did you know?

Between 2006 and 2026 the population of the Vale aged over 75 is estimated to increase by 65% (from 9,500 to 15,700). This compares to 78% for the Cherwell district in north Oxfordshire and 27% for Oxford City.

The Partnership is working to make sure that a range of community-based social and health care services will reflect the needs of the growing number of older people and the very elderly living in the Vale. Older people in the Vale should be able to live independently at home for longer with support closer to home.

What the Partnership will do

> Provide support for carers who are looking after someone at home who is ill, disabled, or has mental health problems;

> Continue to provide advice on tackling fuel poverty (which is a particular issue for older residents), and

> Continue to provide 'staying put' grants to assist with the adaptation of existing homes and enable more elderly people to stay in their own homes longer.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> Provide specialist housing suited to those residents with special needs such as the elderly (e.g. 'extra care homes'), both in the Vale's main towns and where appropriate in some villages, and

> ➢ Encourage developers to provide more new homes that are 'lifetime homes' (i.e. homes that can be easily adapted to meet the changing needs of older residents).

What's already happening…

Every year Oxfordshire's five district councils team up with Trading Standards and the Fire and Rescue Service to offer free electric blanket testing.

The aim of the testing is to take dangerous blankets out of circulation. In 2007, across the county 678 blankets were tested and 36 per cent were found to be unsafe and condemned.

7.3   Safer communities

Did you know?

Between 2003/4 and 2007/8 there was an overall reduction in crime of 17.1% in the Vale, from 3,830 crimes in to 3,174 crimes (Vale Community Safety Partnership Plan).

The Partnership wants to make sure the Vale remains a safe place to live and work. It is working to reduce crime, reduce the perception of high levels of anti-social behaviour and increase drug and alcohol education. The Partnership will also look to reduce the number of violent crimes in a public place related to alcohol and the number of domestic violence incidents reported to the police where alcohol is a factor.

What the Partnership will do

> ➢ Reduce the fear of crime by making sure that local people are aware that the Vale is a safe place in which to live and work

> ➢ Seek to reduce alcohol related violence and disorder, particularly incidents occurring in all Town Centres; reduce levels of drug and alcohol related crime and the impact of substance misuse on the local community;

> ➢ Develop and support a range of education and communication initiatives to reduce irresponsible drinking and behaviour;

> ➢ Seek to reduce anti- social behaviour (by people of all ages) and criminal damage across the Vale; reduce burglary in homes, reduce vehicle crime and robbery;

> ➢ Seek to reduce the impact that priority prolific offenders have on crime;

- Seek to reduce domestic violence but encourage the reporting of domestic violence to reduce the number of incidents in the long term, and

- Provide a service to victims of racial harassment who report racist incidents in order to improve their quality of life in the Vale.

What the Local Development Framework will do

- Plan new developments that reduce the possibility of crime and the fear of crime.

What's already happening?

Neighbourhood Action Groups, or NAGs are voluntary groups made up of representatives from the community. They include residents, the police, local authorities and other organisations, such as local businesses and schools. All parts of the Vale have a Neighbourhood Action Group. NAGs deal with key issues identified by local public consultation.

For example the key issues for the Wantage West NAG are anti-social behaviour, speeding and litter. The key issues for the Rural Abingdon NAG are speeding, anti-social behaviour and illegal or inconsiderate parking.

7.4   Fostering a greater sense of community

The Partnership is working to make sure that residents of the Vale regardless of age, race or background will feel that they are part of their local community, other members of the community care about their well being, and they are welcome to participate in local activities.

What the Partnership will do

- Encourage community cohesion (building understanding between people of different ages, circumstances and backgrounds) by supporting activity that celebrates diversity, tackles hate crime and builds mutual understanding (e.g. inter-faith and inter-generational work);

- Encourage and support voluntary and community groups that provide services which contribute to the achievement of this strategy;

- Look at ways of reducing the barriers to faith groups playing their full part in community life, and

- Support and develop initiatives that match the time that people have available to suitable volunteering opportunities.

What the Local Development Framework will do

➢ Plan balanced communities that offer a variety of different house types and sizes, including housing for families, and

➢ Secure financial contributions from developers to help provide new, or maintain existing, community facilities and amenities.

What's already happening?

The Embrace Partnership was formed to promote good relations between different cultures and communities and to stop racial harassment. To do this, the partners work together to listen and respond to the needs of communities in Southern Oxfordshire, particularly people from ethnic minority groups.

Partners on the Embrace Partnership include:

- Vale of White Horse District Council
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxfordshire Racial Equality Council
- Thames Valley Police
- Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB)

7.5   A good understanding of town and parish priorities

The Partnership is working to involve everyone in the community. Towns and parishes in the Vale should be encouraged to have action plans which have involved the whole community in identifying local priorities. These action plans will assist with the planning of local services to meet local need.

What the Partnership will do

➢ Encourage town and village communities to complete local action plans.

What the Local Development Framework will do

➢ Encourage local communities to become involved in the different stages of preparing and reviewing the Local Development Framework, so that the planning of new development takes into account local needs and priorities.

What's already happening?

In 2003 Faringdon was awarded 'Beacon Town' status by the the Countryside Agency. Nine towns were chosen, from more than 200 market towns involved in the Agency's Market Towns Initiative.

Faringdon was chosen because its market town partnership identified a number of issues relating to business support. One of the outcomes of the partnership's work was the development of the Faringdon Business Centre which helps to establish new businesses in the local economy.

7.6   Involving young people

The Partnership is working to make sure that young people will be actively involved in the community and seen as an asset rather than a nuisance. Young people should be provided with plenty of opportunities to realise their potential through education, training, employment, sport and leisure activities. Children and young people will be offered a wide range of informal educational opportunities and a network of well-resourced, integrated, high-quality, youth friendly facilities.

What the Partnership will do

> ➤ Publicise "things to do and places to go" for children and young people and encourage positive leisure time activities;

> ➤ Actively encourage children and young people to participate in decisions and activities in the school and within the community;

> ➤ Provide access for young people to non-judgemental advice about lifestyle and social issues, and

> ➤ Extend the school day to provide more opportunities for personalised learning and increase parental involvement (the 'extended schools' initiative).

What the Local Development Framework will do

> ➤ Consider how developers of new housing can provide or make financial contributions towards facilities and amenities for young people.

What's already happening?

The Vale Youth Forum (which was started in 1996) is the main way the Council consults young people about their views and encourages them to become involved in their community. It also gives them the opportunity to meet pupils from different schools and to express and share their opinions while discussing relevant issues.

Four Forums are held every year, including an introductory meeting for year 9 students in June. Eight representatives from each school in the Vale are invited. This includes Didcot and the European School as many of those pupils live in the Vale.

The Forums include presentations or talks, open discussion and various panels such as the Drugs Action Team. Local MPs and MEPs regularly come to answer challenging questions from the representatives.

7.7 Helping those without a car to access services

Did you know?

At the time of the 2001 Census there were just under 46,000 households in the Vale and just over 6,000 households did not have a car. Over 60% of households without a car were occupied by residents over the state pension age.

The Partnership is working to make sure that non-car owning households will be able to access services and employment.

What the Partnership will do

> Support the provision of high quality, welcoming public transport services and encourage and support community transport schemes;

> Try and influence travel behaviour through enhanced information and better travel planning;

> Promote the delivery of more services through the Internet and improve access to the Internet for residents who do not have a computer, and

> Improve community access to local school facilities.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> Make sure that land allocated for new development is located where it can be accessed by as many different travel modes as possible, in particular by public

transport, and where it is close to the jobs and services (including community facilities and libraries) that people need for their everyday lives;

➢ Seek financial contributions towards public transport services and infrastructure from significant new housing and commercial development;

➢ Make sure that major new residential developments provide local services such as shops and community facilities;

➢ Reduce the risk that valuable local services in villages, such as pubs, will be lost through redevelopment for other uses, and

➢ Improve facilities for cycling and walking.

What's already happening?

Wantage Independent Advice Centre manages a transport scheme run by volunteer drivers using their own cars. The scheme is open to people who have no means of transport themselves or who are unable to use public transport due to age, infirmity or disability.

In 2007/08 the scheme transported 5,170 people over 65,500 miles. The scheme is supported by parish, town, district and county councils.

7.8   Affordable homes

> **Did you know?**
>
> Between 1996 and 2007 a total of 3,955 homes were completed in the Vale, which is an average of 360 homes a year. Since 1995 the District Council has spent a total of £37,933,487 of Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) developing a total of 1,193 affordable properties. The Vale's 2005 Housing Needs Survey shows that more affordable homes should continued to be provided to meet the needs of the district.
>
> In 2005/06 89 people were accepted as homeless and 162 people were in temporary accommodation. 8.5% of households in the Vale were in receipt of housing benefit.

The Partnership is working to make sure that residents of the Vale, regardless of income, will have a good choice of different housing types and tenures, including family homes.

What the Partnership will do

➢ Support the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme which allows Housing Register applicants to find a new home and to have more of a say in where they would like to live.

➢ Support housing associations to provide an increased number of affordable homes.

➢ Reduce the risk of homelessness by continuing to provide people in housing need with good quality advice and support.

What the Local Development Framework will do

➢ Make sure the total number of homes to be built in the District meets in full the requirement set out in the draft South East Plan;

➢ Require developers to provide a significant proportion of affordable homes on new development sites, and

➢ Promote affordable homes on 'rural exception' sites ('Exception sites' are plots of land which would not normally be permitted for development; however, they are given planning permission exceptionally to meet local affordable housing needs.).

7.9 Good quality homes

The Partnership is working to make sure that the majority of homes in the Vale will be well built, well maintained and energy efficient.

What the Partnership will do

- ➢ Improve the quality of existing homes by continuing to give home improvement grants to those in greatest need and assist owners to access other sources of funding, and

- ➢ Make sure new homes are built to high standards by advising developers and builders of the new energy and water efficiency standards required by building regulations and enforcing them rigorously.

What the Local Development Framework will do

- ➢ Require higher standards of building in new developments so that they meet those at the higher end of the Government's new Code for Sustainable Homes (The Code measures the sustainability of a new home against various categories of sustainable design, rating the whole home as a complete package. It uses a 1 to 6 star rating system to communicate the overall sustainability performance of a new home.).

7.10 Access to good quality green spaces, sport, cultural and leisure facilities

The Partnership is working to make sure that residents of the Vale, regardless of income, will have access to good quality green spaces, sport, cultural and leisure facilities.

What the Partnership will do

- ➢ In partnership with town and parish councils, seek improvements to the quality of existing sport and leisure facilities and to open space provision, especially with regard to its biodiversity and play value;

- ➢ Raise awareness of the sport, culture and leisure opportunities that are already available in the Vale;

- ➢ Consider how more residents could be encouraged to become involved in cultural activities;

- ➢ Make better use of existing assets such as the River Thames, Ridgeway and public rights of way, and

- ➢ Make sure that if the proposed Upper Thames Reservoir is built in the Vale, it has appropriate public access for recreational and educational purposes.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> Make sure that existing green space, sport and recreation facilities are protected and that all new housing developments either provide or contribute to appropriate open space, sport and recreation facilities, with firm arrangements in place for their future maintenance.

What's already happening?

In August 2008 a new play area was opened in North Hinksey. North Hinksey Parish Council worked closely with local schools to give pupils the chance to help draw up plans for the site and to choose the final scheme. Tired old play equipment was replaced with brand new facilities including swings, a slide and climbing area.

Funding for the equipment was provided following a successful bid by the Vale of White Horse District Council for a £200,000 grant from the Big Lottery Fund. This money has also been used to make improvements to the Wantage Memorial Park and to fund a new play area in Watchfield.

7.11 How will you know that the Partnership is helping to improve social progress?

- The number of adults participating in sport is increasing;
- The number of young people participating in positive leisure time activities is increasing;
- The number of vulnerable people achieving independent living is increasing;
- The number of carers receiving needs assessment or review is increasing;
- More residents aged over 65 are able to continue living at home and participate fully in the community;
- The value of 'Warm Front' grants awarded to residents of the Vale is increasing;
- Local concerns about anti-social behaviour, violent incidents, including those related to alcohol misuse in a public place, repeat incidents of domestic violence, acquisitive crime (theft, burglary, robbery), and the re-offending rate of priority prolific offenders[3] are all reducing;
- The number of residents participating in regular volunteering is increasing;
- The number of town and parish communities that have completed local action plans is increasing;
- More residents feel they belong to their neighbourhood;
- Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling is improving;
- The number of affordable homes being built is increasing;
- The additional homes required by the South East Plan are being provided;
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation is reducing, and
- There is good overall satisfaction with the local area.

---

[3] A small number of repeat offenders have been identified as being responsible for a large amount of crime.

8   Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

8.1   Addressing economic weaknesses

Did you know?

Large numbers of people in the Vale are employed in science and technology. Research in 2008 suggests that there is demand for around 1,600 new entrants per year, a significant number of which will be in technicial professions at intermediate level. Employers have reported that it is difficult to recruit people with technician level skills.

The Partnership is working to improve the competitiveness of local businesses so that residents of the Vale continue to benefit from high and stable levels of economic growth.

What the Partnership will do

➢ Identify and highlight local skills needs by organising an employers' skills forum to gain a better understanding of the skills they require, and work with education and training providers to resolve skills related issues;

➢ Contribute to countywide initiatives that focus on communities in the Vale and Oxfordshire, where a majority of residents are disadvantaged because they lack the skills needed by employers;

➢ Create opportunities for people to access employment by improving the availability of child care services and after school clubs, and encourage employers to adopt and/or extend flexible working arrangements;

➢ Strengthen business links with education and training providers so that young people have a better understanding of the local career opportunities that are available to them, and.

➢ Encourage farm and other rural businesses to add value to basic commodities and develop new products and markets.

What's already happening?

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils have successfully secured £1.89 million funding to help support economic development in the rural communities of southern Oxfordshire. The funding is from Government and European Union sources, and is available until 2013.

The funding will provide support to a wide range of projects and training for farmers, growers, foresters, food businesses and rural communities.

8.2   Building on our economic strengths

The Partnership is working to make sure that the Vale's strength in science and innovation will result in the district being recognised internationally as a first choice location for high value added business and research, and as an attractive and desirable place to live. It is also working to make sure that a wide range of employment opportunities are available for those in need of work.

What the Partnership will do

➤ Work with Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, SEEDA, Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Milton Park and others to promote the 'Quadrant' growth area, from Didcot to Wantage and Grove as a global hotspot for enterprise and innovation in science, high technology and the application of knowledge, and

➤ Make the case for additional infrastructure investment in the 'Quadrant' and other parts of the Vale and surrounding areas.
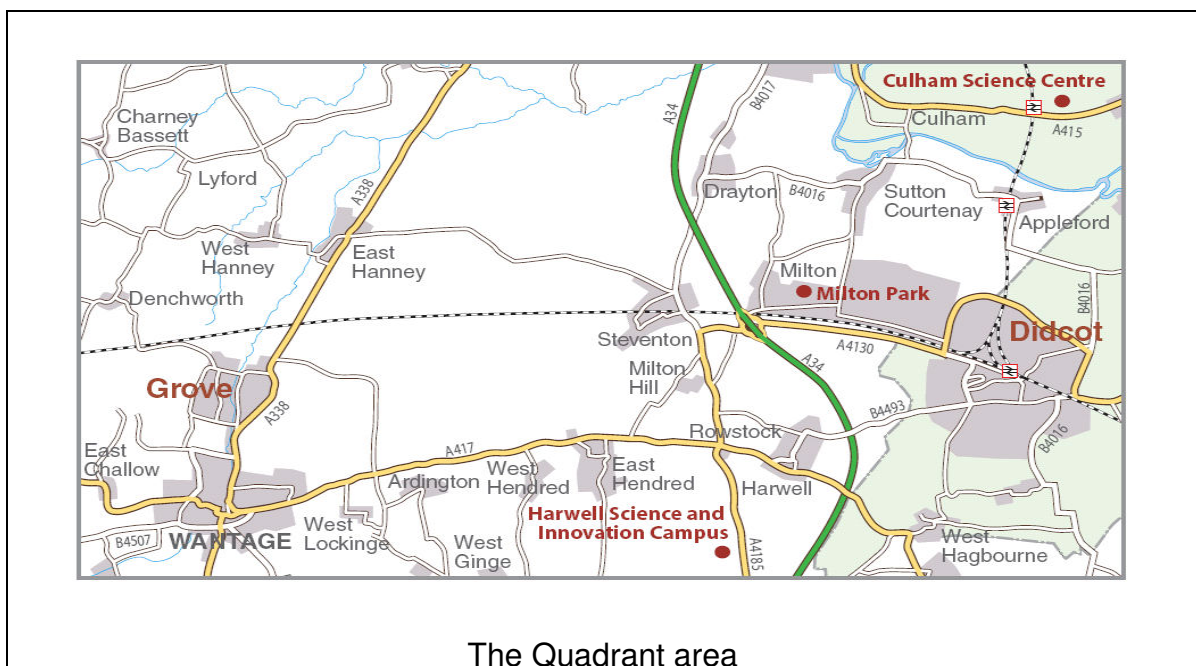
The Quadrant area

What the Local Development Framework will do

> ➢ Plan appropriate housing and amenities that will support innovation and enterprise and attract new high value business to the District, in particular, to the 'Quadrant' growth area, and

> ➢ Make sure that suitable sites are available (in our towns and rural areas) for business development that will result in economic and job opportunities.

What's already happening?

A joint venture for the 20-year development of the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus was announced in August 2008. The new public-private partnership is made up of the UK Atomic Energy Authority, the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and international property group Goodman. About 100,000 square metres of laboratory, high technology industrial and office space will be developed on sites within the existing 300 hectare Campus. It is estimated that 5,000 new jobs will be created.

8.3   Maintaining and enhancing the health and vitality of the Vale's market town centres

The Partnership is working to make sure that Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage town centres share in the economic prosperity of the rest of the Vale and provide residents with a good choice of shops and a wide range of cultural and leisure facilities.

What the Partnership will do

> ➢ Create better local awareness of the variety and quality of the shops and services that are available in the Vale's town centres;

> ➢ Prepare action plans designed to promote the retail offer in the town centres and consider the establishment of Business Improvement Districts for the Vale's main market town centres to help with the achievement of action plans, and

> ➢ Continue to improve the character of the town centres through investment in environmental improvement works and by maintaining control over fly-posting, advertisement display and street cleanliness.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> ➢ Resist retail and other commercial development where this would damage town centre health and vitality, and

> ➤ Encourage retail and other commercial development in town centres that will support town centre health and vitality.

What is already happening?

The Abingdon Shoppers' Guide "Choose Abingdon"shows the variety and diversity of the town centre. The guide includes a map of the town centre highlighting the location of more than 200 businesses, including shops, pubs and restaurants, and local amenities, as well as other places of interest. It also contains the contact phone number of almost every shop in the town centre.

The guide has been produced by Abingdon's Joint Economic Forum which brings together Abingdon Town Council, Abingdon Chamber of Commerce and the Vale of White Horse District Council.

8.4   How will you know that the Partnership is helping to improve the economy?

- Employers will indicate that it is easier to recruit the skilled workforce that they need
- Major employment sites will continue to attract high levels of business interest and inward investment.
- The number of young people achieving a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is increasing;
- The number of working age residents qualified to at least Level 3 or higher is increasing;
- Small businesses are growing and employing more people;
- The number of working age residents on out of work benefits is reducing; and
- Street and environmental cleanliness in town centres is improving.

9 Effective protection of the environment and wise use of natural resources

9.1 A low carbon Vale

The Partnership is working to raise awareness of the need to use resources more wisely, conserve energy and make sure that greenhouse gas emissions will be stabilised or reduced.

What the Partnership will do

> Reduce greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the operational activity of Partnership organisations;

> Encourage appropriate renewable energy schemes, and

> Encourage employers to adopt green travel plans which promote initiatives such as car sharing, walking and cycling to help reduce traffic congestion.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> Encourage developers to make new buildings energy and resource efficient and so reduce carbon dioxide emissions, and

> Make sure that land allocated for new development is located near to jobs and services and can be accessed by public transport, cycling or walking.

What's already happening?

On behalf of the Harwell Campus, UKAEA started work on a voluntary Travel Plan just after 2000. The Plan has resulted in the inclusion of green travel facilities such as showers, covered bicycle parking in   building design standards; connections to Wantage and Didcot via the National Cycle Network; new bus services focussed on the routes most used by employees and visitors, and a car share website and a variety of promotional materials.

New bus shelter at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus

9.2 Living with extreme weather

The Partnership is working to make sure that the disruption caused by extreme weather conditions will be minimised.

What the Partnership will do

➢ Continue to review and update statutory emergency response plans;

➢ Review and improve the effectiveness of flood defence measures and drainage systems;

➢ Encourage private landowners to maintain drains and ditches;

➢ Promote the use of community response plans and business continuity plans for extreme weather events, and

➢ Provide support mechanisms for older people and other vulnerable groups during extreme weather events.

What the Local Development Framework will do

➢ Require adequate flood storage capacity as part of all proposals for major new developments (measures could include new wetlands on to which rivers could be allowed to flood and mechanisms like 'balancing' ponds which collect and store surface run-off);

➢ Use planning controls to restrict development in locations within known flood risk areas;

➢ Make sure that flood risk assessments are carried out for all developments within known areas of flood risk;

➢ Design new housing areas to include cooling, shaded areas of open space and landscaping, and

➢ Encourage changes in housing design to cope with changing weather patterns (including passive cooling in their design; adequate guttering to cope with heavy downpours and gravel driveways and other porous surfaces to reduce surface water run-off).

What's already happening?

The District Council works in partnership with the Environment Agency to organise "flood fairs" which highlight the range of flood prevention products and services that are available, and to enable people to get advice from experts on the practical steps they can take to help protect their homes.

9.3   Using resources wisely

The Partnership is working to make sure that water, land and other limited resources will be used wisely.

What the Partnership will do

➢ Seek to reduce water leakage from the existing network and replace worn mains water pipes;

➢ Introduce metering to a larger number of properties as people are generally more careful if they pay for the water they actually use;

➢ Promote the replacement of existing toilet cisterns, taps and other domestic appliances with more water efficient models;

➢ Promote the use of water butts in gardens;

➢ Make sure the District Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water continue to work closely together to make a thorough assessment of the need for a major new water supply resource to meet future needs, in particular assess the case for a new reservoir of the scale and in the location currently proposed. The Council's planning policies will facilitate the delivery of the reservoir only if the need is proven for it to be built in the Vale, and

➢ Help to reduce the need for sand and gravel extraction by increasing the use of recycled or 'secondary' aggregates (such as pulverised fuel ash from Didcot Power Station) and other sustainable construction materials.

What the Local Development Framework will do

➢ Seek a high standard of water efficiency in new buildings on major development sites through such measures as recycling 'grey' water that has already been used and harvesting rainwater for use in the building and gardens;

➢ Identify as many previously developed ('brownfield') sites as possible in the right locations to help meet future needs for new development;

➢ Encourage appropriate reuse of existing buildings;

➢ Encourage more efficient use of land in all developments and re-developments, but without harming the character or quality of the environment, and

➢ Wherever possible avoid the use of high quality farmland and land containing mineral reserves that may be needed in the future.

> **What's already happening?**
>
> 'The extensive sedum green roof to this domestic extension is aesthetically, environmentally and economically advantageous'.
>
> (Judging Panel comment on an extension to a house in the Vale - Vale of White Horse District Council Design Awards 2006)

9.4 Reducing waste and increasing recycling

The Partnership is working to make sure residents and businesses will be able to reduce waste and increase recycling;

What the Partnership will do

> ➢ Encourage residents to reduce their waste by home composting or consuming products which produce less waste;
>
> ➢ Increase environmental awareness among residents and promoting community action, such as community swap-shops where people can exchange items they no longer use;
>
> ➢ Expand the range of recyclable materials that are collected from households;
>
> ➢ Encourage businesses to reduce waste and increase recycling, and
>
> ➢ Set an example, with Partnership organisations reducing their own waste and increasing recycling and composting.

What the Local Development Framework will do

> ➢ Ensure that space is available for recycling and composting in all new developments, including flats, and
>
> ➢ Seek financial contributions, from developers of residential schemes, towards the cost of equipment for collecting waste and recyclables.

What's already happening?

The District Council works in partnership with other councils in Oxfordshire to help promote the need to reduce, re-use and recycle waste wherever possible. The Council also helps fund initiatives which aim to raise awareness of waste issues in schools and the wider community.

One such initiative is the Wild Waste Show, an interactive roadshow for schools across the County. The Wild Waste Show, which is run by the Northmoor Trust, visits several schools in the Vale each year. It also provides outreach support to both primary and secondary schools.

9.5 A high quality natural and historic environment

Did you know?

There are over 2,000 listed buildings, 52 conservation areas, nearly 70 scheduled ancient monuments and 8 registered historic parks and gardens in the Vale.

There are also 21 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve at Cothill.

The Partnership is working to manage change in a way that will protect and enhance the Vale's distinctive natural and historic character.

What the Partnership will do

- ➢ Encourage improvements in the biodiversity value of land in public and private ownership;

- ➢ Implement measures to improve air quality in Abingdon town centre and close to the A34 at Botley, and

- ➢ Tackle fly tipping and inappropriate or unsightly advertising, lighting and fly posting.

What the Local Development Framework will do

- ➢ Make sure that new development is imaginatively designed so that it can complement the special character of our towns, villages and countryside;

- ➢ Continue to safeguard and enhance listed buildings and their settings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient

monuments, enabling them to be modernised and improved in ways that respect and enhance their character;

➢ Make sure the archaeological potential of sites and buildings affected by development is fully considered and where possible is preserved in situ or, if necessary, is fully recorded before development takes place;

➢ Make sure that new development retains important local landscape features and makes use of planting and landforms to help it blend into its surroundings and to enhance biodiversity;

➢ Allow development in rural areas that directly supports commercial land uses such as farming, forestry, equestrian centres and leisure activities such as golf, in ways that will maintain or improve the landscape as well as the wider environment, and

➢ Prevent developments that would lead to unacceptable reductions in air quality.

What's already happening?

In Stanford-in-the-Vale the local primary school is involved in appreciation of the local environment. School children are encouraged to keep a nature diary and are involved in the local wildlife gardens – funded by the Parish Council, District Council and the Waste Recycling Environment group.

9.6   How will you know that the Partnership is helping to improve the environment ?

- The amount of carbon dioxide produced from Partnership operations is reducing and air quality is improving;
- Major development in flood risk areas is avoided;
- More homes have water meters;
- The amount of residual household waste produced per head is reducing;
- The amount of household waste recycled and composted is increasing, and
- The number of fly tipping incidents is reducing.

10   Appendix

10.1   Membership of the Vale Partnership

The Vale Partnership Board is made up of representatives of the following organisations:

- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Abingdon and Witney College
- Age Concern Oxfordshire
- Diocese of Oxford
- Environment Agency
- Learning and Skills Council
- Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxfordshire Economic Partnership
- Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust
- Oxfordshire Secondary Schools' Head Teachers' Association
- Thames Valley Police
- Thames Water
- United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA)
- Vale Housing Association
- Vale Youth Forum

10.2   More detail on the strategies that influence this strategy

The Regional Economic Strategy;

The vision for the South East is to be a world class region achieving sustainable prosperity. The third Regional Economic Strategy for the South East responds to a new global context; sets targets to ensure that success is more widely accessible; and identifies the importance of quality of life as a competitive advantage. In setting out the challenges faced and how the region intends to address them to achieve the vision over the next decade, it sits within the overall context of the Integrated Regional Framework for sustainable development in the South East, and alongside the draft South East Plan as the region's spatial strategy. (www.seeda.co.uk)

Oxfordshire Economic Development Strategy;

Oxfordshire has always been a county of great, unrealised potential. Although globally acknowledged as an educational, scientific and technological centre of excellence, Oxfordshire also has a significant rural economy and a number of low skill employment sectors. As a result, the County's overall skills base has much room for improvement, its investment levels are low and its economic growth rate is only average by the standard of other parts of the South East of England and many parts of Europe. Much has to be done if Oxfordshire is to realise its potential. It must be more outward looking, more competitive and develop more of a sense of urgency.

The prize is to become one of the top sub-regional economies of Europe. The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership has been created to address the County's unrealised economic potential. It has set itself ambitious targets to improve the life of everyone who lives in, works in or invests in this unique and stimulating part of the United Kingdom.
(www.oep.org.uk)

The draft South East Plan;

The draft South East Plan was submitted to Government on 31 March 2006, following over two years of intensive work by the Regional Assembly with local authorities and stakeholders. The Plan provides a framework for the region for the next 20 years to 2026. It brings together policies for development with other policies and programmes that influence the nature of places and how they function, including those governing health, social issues, the economy, culture, skills and the environment.

The Plan sets out the direction that we need to take in the South East and the scale of change we need to make if we are to sustain a high quality of life across the region. The core objectives are to balance continuing economic and housing growth with rising standards of environmental management and reduced levels of social exclusion and natural resource consumption. The Plan's vision for 2026 is for a healthier region, a more sustainable pattern of development and a dynamic and robust economy, the benefits of which are more widely shared.
(www.southeast-ra.gov.uk)

Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan;

There is a statutory requirement to produce a single strategic plan for all services for children and young people provided in a local area. The intention is that the plan should support local authorities and their partners to agree clear targets and priorities for all their services to children and young people, to identify the action needed to achieve them and to ensure delivery.

The plan covers services for children and young people aged 0 - 19, and those over 19 receiving services, including leaving care and those over 19 and under 25 with learning difficulties.
(www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

The Local Transport Plan;

The Local Transport Plan covers a five-year period from April 2006 - March 2011 and sets out a vision for transport in Oxfordshire. It focuses on five priority areas:

- tackling congestion
- delivering accessibility
- improving the street environment

- safer roads
- better air quality

(www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

The Vale Community Safety Strategy;

The plan includes seven themes which reflect the local priorities identified by the assessment process as well as national priorities and the priorities of the participating partners. There are many cross-cutting elements, and the partnership works together as a whole to tackle community safety issues.

The seven thematic priorities are:

1. Reducing violent crime
2. Reducing anti-social behaviour
3. Reducing the fear of crime
4. Maintaining the current reduced level of acquisitive crime
5. Reducing the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse
6. Reducing the offending rate of priority & prolific offenders
7. Improving road safety

(www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

The Oxfordshire Public Health Strategy;

The strategic aims are:
- To improve overall life expectancy in all parts of Oxfordshire by 1 year by 2012
- To tackle health inequalities and so reduce the gap in all-age, all-cause mortality rates by 10% by 2012 between the top 20% and bottom 20%
- To "add life to years" by improving health and well-being.

(www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk)

The District Council's Housing Strategy

The key actions are:
- Facilitate private homes occupied by vulnerable persons to reach the decent homes standard, with 75 properties per year reaching the standard over the life of the strategy;
- To use all available data to trace and record empty properties and to use advice and other means to bring them back into use;
- To provide 100 units of affordable housing within each year of the life of the strategy of which 75 are social rented units and 25 shared ownership units;
- To continue to fund the rural housing enabler and work to develop on 5 sites within the Vale by 2010;
- To seek to improve the Council's approach to tackling domestic violence;
- use advice and assistance to prevent 250 households per annum from becoming homeless during the life of this strategy;
- To consider initiatives to ensure that all local people can easily access Choice Based Lettings.

(www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)

(Back cover)

This and other Community Strategy documents will be made available to reasonable requests in large copy print, audio cassette, braille or languages other than English. If you require the document in one of these formats please contact the Council's Community Strategy Team on 01235 547626, or by email on comments@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Vale of White Horse District Council, Community Strategy
Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE
www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk