Vale of White Horse

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

March 2007

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Vale of White Horse Core Strategy

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (Stage A)

Introduction

1. The UK Government has published a Sustainable Development Strategy (Securing the Future – delivering a UK sustainable development strategy, March 2005) which contains a 'purpose', which has been agreed by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. This states that the goal of sustainable development is

   "to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations".

2. A set of shared UK principles that will be used to achieve the purpose and which will form the basis for policy in the UK is outlined in the shared UK framework and reflected in the UK Government's Strategy. These have been agreed by all of the administrations in the UK including the vale of White Horse District Council:

   - Living within environmental limits;

   - Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;

   - Achieving a sustainable economy;

   - Promoting good governance; and

   - Using sound science responsibly.

4. The framework strategy also identifies four shared priorities for immediate action:

   - Sustainable consumption and production – achieving more with less;

   - Climate change and energy – securing a profound change in energy generation and use, preparing for climate change and setting a good example;

   - Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement through a better understanding of environmental limits, environmental enhancement and recovery, and a more integrated policy framework; and

   - Sustainable communities that embody the principles of sustainable development at the local level.

5. The Council's own core objectives are as follows:

   a. Strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information, consultation, and devolution of power so that everyone can take part in our community and contribute to the decisions which affect our lives

   b. Create a safer community and improve the quality of life among Vale residents

   c. Encourage a strong and sustainable economy which benefits all who live in, work in or visit the Vale

   d. Help disadvantaged groups and individuals within the Vale to realise their full potential

   e. Provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale

   f. Protect and improve our built and natural environment

6. The concept of sustainable development is central to the reformed planning system. The purpose of sustainability appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of new Development Plan Documents (DPDs). Paragraph 24 of Planning Policy Statement 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' states that "planning authorities should ensure that sustainable development is treated in an integrated way in their development plans. In particular, they should carefully consider the inter-relationship between social inclusion, protecting and enhancing the environment, the prudent use of natural resources and economic development."

7. Under the previous system where local plans were produced sustainability appraisal was optional. Government guidance was produced to indicate what these appraisals should contain and most local planning authorities carried out an appraisal of their plan. One was carried for the now adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan in accordance with the then relevant Government Guidance.

8. To ensure that there was a consistent approach to the environmental appraisal of local government plans and programmes across europe the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the "strategic environmental assessment of plans and programmes on the environment" (the SEA Directive) was put in place. This was then transposed into UK law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These regulations widened the original intention of the SEA Directive from environmental appraisal to sustainability appraisal which evaluates social and economic effects of plans or programmes as well as environmental effects.

9. Under the Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Sustainability Appraisal is mandatory for new Development Plan Documents (DPDs). To assist local planning authorities the now Department for Communities and Local Government produced guidance on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of Local Development Documents in November 2005. This sets out the stages in a

sustainability appraisal of a development plan document such as a core strategy. These are set out in the table on the following page.

10. The first step in the sustainability appraisal process is stage A which is the production of a scoping report. This sets out the framework for carrying out the appraisal and its justification. The first part of the scoping report consists of an examination of other relevant plans and programmes (Stage A1) so that relevant sustainability objectives can be brought into the sustainability appraisal framework. This ensures that the appraisal takes those objectives into account when assessing the sustainability of policies and proposals in the core strategy.

11. The next part of the scoping report is the collection of baseline information (Stage A2) about the Vale. This provides the baseline for assessing any effects of a policy or proposal on the Vale. The baseline assessment contains comparisons to other areas so that issues or problems can be identified. The baseline assessment also contains predictions of how the various factors will progress into the future based on current expected development. The effects of any policies or proposals on these expectations can then be assessed as part of the SA.

12. Part A3 of the scoping report is the identification of sustainability issues and problems which affect the Vale. Many of these are already known from work on the adopted local plan. Others can be identified from the baseline information and from relevant plans and programmes. These can then be taken into account in the sustainability appraisal objectives when assessing the core strategy.

Incorporating SA within the DPD process

Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope	
A1:	Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives.
A2:	Collecting baseline information.
A3:	Identifying sustainability issues and problems.
A4:	Developing the SA framework.
A5:	Consulting on the scope of the SA.
Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects	
B1:	Testing the DPD objectives against the SA framework.
B2:	Developing the DPD options.
B3:	Predicting the effects the DPD.
B4:	Evaluating the effects of the DPD.
B5:	Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects.
B6:	Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPDs.
Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report	
C1:	Preparing the SA Report.
Stage D: Consulting on the preferred options of the DPD and SA Report	
D1:	Public participation on the preferred options of the DPD and

	the SA Report.
D2(i): Appraising significant changes.	
D2(ii): Appraising significant changes resulting from representations.	
D3: Making decisions and providing information.	
Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD	
E1: Finalising aims and methods for monitoring.	
E2: Responding to adverse effects.	

12. Part four of the scoping report (Stage A4) is the development of the sustainability appraisal framework. The foundations of this framework are the sustainability objectives which are developed from the information contained in the first three parts of the scoping report. These objectives can then be used to score the various policy and proposal options in the core strategy so that the most sustainable option can be chosen. It also allows the potential for unsustainable impacts to be removed or mitigated to be examined.

13. The next stage is for the scoping report to be made available for comment. The regulations require the Council to formally consult the now three statutory environmental bodies. These are English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The government guidance indicates that Council's should also consult stakeholders. The Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out how this will be undertaken.

14. Following that consultation any comments will be considered and any modifications which are felt to be necessary will be made. The assessment framework will then be used to assess the policy and proposal options in the core strategy and a report will be produced setting out the results of that assessment.

15. When the core strategy is submitted a final sustainability appraisal report will be prepared and published. Whether the sustainability appraisal is sound will then be examined as part of the inquiry. The monitoring elements of the appraisal will then be used to assess the actual effects of the core strategy after its adoption by the Council.

Core Strategy SA Scoping Report – A1 Review of Plans and Programmes

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
Planning Policy Statement 3 Housing	To achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community.	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes
	To widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need.	Increased quality of life for Vale residents.
	To improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing.	Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential
	To create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.	Improve and protect the built environment
Planning Policy Statement 9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.	To promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development, so that policies and decisions about the development and use of land integrate biodiversity and geological diversity with other considerations.	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity).
	To conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology by sustaining, and where possible improving, the quality and extent of natural habitat and geological and geomorphological sites; the natural physical processes on which they depend; and the populations of naturally occurring species which they support.	Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.
	To contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance by:	Maintained and improved river quality and water resources.
	– enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among	Reduced air, noise and light pollution.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being; and – ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity in supporting economic diversification and contributing to a high quality environment.	
Planning Policy Statement 10 – Planning for Sustainable Waste Management	Help deliver sustainable development through driving waste management up the waste hierarchy, addressing waste as a resource and looking to disposal as the last option, but one which must be adequately catered for; Provide a framework in which communities take more responsibility for their own waste, and enable sufficient and timely provision of waste management facilities to meet the needs of their communities; Help implement the national waste strategy, and supporting targets, are consistent with obligations required under European legislation and support and complement other guidance and legal controls such as those set out in the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994; Help secure the recovery or disposal of waste without endangering human health and without harming the environment, and enable waste to be disposed of in one of the nearest appropriate installations; Reflect the concerns and interests of communities, the needs of waste collection authorities, waste disposal authorities and	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity). Improve and protect the built environment. Improved health and wellbeing. Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	business, and encourage competitiveness;	
	Protect green belts but recognise the particular locational needs of some types of waste management facilities when defining detailed green belt boundaries and, in determining planning applications, that these locational needs, together with the wider environmental and economic benefits of sustainable waste management, are material considerations that should be given significant weight in determining whether proposals should be given planning permission;	
	Ensure the design and layout of new development supports sustainable waste management.	
Planning Policy Statement 25 – Development and Flood Risk	To ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process,	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes.
	To avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and	Reduced risk of flooding.
	To direct development away from areas at highest risk.	Effective action on climate change.
The Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change	Work with central government to contribute, at a local level, to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the target for carbon dioxide reduction by 2010.	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes.
	Participate in local and regional networks for support.	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale.
	Within the next two years develop plans with our partners and local communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate change, according to our local priorities,	Reduced road congestion and

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	securing maximum benefit for our communities.	associated pollution.
	Publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations, especially energy sourcing and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services.	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity).
		Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.
	Assess the risk associated with climate change and the implications for our services and our communities of climate change impacts and adapt accordingly.	Effective action on climate change.
	Encourage all sectors in our local community to take the opportunity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions and to make public their commitment to action.	Increased generation of energy by renewables.
	Monitor the progress of our plans against the actions needed and publish the result.	
The South East Plan	1. Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home 2. Reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public wellbeing, the economy and the environment 3. Improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reduce inequalities in health 4. Reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region	*All of these matters are included in the sustainability objecives.*

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	5. Raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work	
	6. Reduce crime and the fear of crime	
	7. Create and sustain vibrant communities	
	8. Improve accessibility to all services and facilities	
	9. Encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East	
	10. Improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings, including re-use of materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance	
	11. Reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve	
	12. Address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and ensure that the South East is prepared for its impacts	
	13. Conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity	
	14. Protect, enhance and make accessible for enjoyment, the region's countryside and historic environment	
	15. Reduce road congestion and pollution levels by improving travel choice, and reduce the need for travel by car/lorry	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	16. Reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably produced and local products	
	17. Reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste	
	18. Maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers and coasts, and achieve sustainable water resources management	
	19. Increase energy efficiency, and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the region	
	20. Ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region	
	21. Sustain economic growth and competitiveness across the region	
	22. Stimulate economic revival in priority regeneration areas	
	23. Develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities	
	24. Encourage the development of a buoyant, sustainable tourism sector	
	25. Develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the region	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
Thames Corridor Abstraction Management Strategy	To manage water resources sustainably by providing a structured approach to water resources management in the Thames Corridor which recognises the needs of abstractors, river users and the environment.	Maintained and improved river quality and water resources. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
Thames path Management Strategy 2006-2011 (Natural England)	1. To encourage all relevant partners to be fully represented, involved in and committed to the management of the Thames Path.	Increased quality of life for Vale residents. Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector.
	2. To secure adequate funding for the management of the Thames path	Improved health and wellbeing.
	3. To manage the Thames path sustainably by having as minimal an impact on the environment as possible.	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
	4. To market the Thames Path and its corridor in accordance with the principles of sustainable use.	
	5. To ensure the ongoing maintenance of the Thames Path is economic, effective and carried out efficiently and sustainably.	
	6. To gather and maintain the information necessary to enable the effective ongoing management of the Thames Path.	
	7. The Thames Path to be adjacent to the River Thames.	
	8. The router of the Thames Path to provide the highest quality experience for visitors.	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	9. To ensure the Thames Path is safe and easy to follow and reaches the standards outlined in 'Quality Standards for National Trails in England'. All structures and materials to be of a high standard of design, sustainable, sympathetic to the surroundings, well-maintained, safe, and easy and convenient to use.	
	10. To improve and maintain those strategic routes within the corridor of the Thames Path that provide access from the Trail to villages and towns or are part of promoted circular walks around the Thames Path.	
	11. To improve public transport access to principal points along the Thames Path and to increase the percentage of people using it to visit the Trail.	
	12. To manage the issue of cycling in relation to the Thames Path in line with the Management Group's Cycling Policy.	
	13. To protect and enhance the visual, ecological, historical and architectural landscape within the corridor of the Thames Path.	
	14. To maintain and develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals with interests in the Thames Path and its corridor.	
	15. To provide facilities and services for users of the Thames Path.	
	16. To provide well-targeted, accurate, relevant and branded information and promotional material to encourage and enable people to visit and enjoy the Thames Path.	
Thames Waterway Plan 2006-2011 (River Thames Alliance)	Vision – The healthy growth in the use of the freshwater Thames for communities, wildlife, leisure and business.	Increased quality of life for Vale residents.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	Core Objectives:- 1. Improve and promote access and information for all users (on water and land). 2. Improve and maintain the river infrastructure, facilities and services for all users. 3. Contribute to enhanced biodiversity, heritage, and landscape value in the waterway corridor. 4. Increase use of the river and its corridor	Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector. Improved health and wellbeing. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
The Ridgeway Management Plan	1. To encourage all relevant partners to be fully represented, involved in and committed to the management of The Ridgeway. 2. To secure adequate funding for the management of The Ridgeway 3. To market The Ridgeway and its corridor in accordance with the principles of sustainable use 4. To ensure the ongoing maintenance of The Ridgeway is effective and carried out efficiently. 5. To gather and maintain the information necessary to enable the effective ongoing management of The Ridgeway. 6. The route of The Ridgeway to provide the highest quality experience for walkers, horseriders and cyclists. 7. To ensure The Ridgeway is safe and easy to follow and reaches the standards outlined in 'Quality Standards for National Trails in England'. All structures and materials to	Increased quality of life for Vale residents. Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector. Improved health and wellbeing. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	be of a high standard of design, sympathetic to the surroundings, well-maintained, safe, comfortable, and easy and convenient to use.	
	8. To improve and maintain those strategic routes within the corridor of The Ridgeway that provide access from the Trail to villages and towns or are part of promoted circular walks and rides around The Ridgeway.	
	9. To improve public transport access to principal points along The Ridgeway and to increase the percentage of people using it to visit the Trail	
	10. To deter illegal use of The Ridgeway and trespass offences.	
	11. To reduce conflict between users by promoting responsible use and by increasing awareness of who can legally use The Ridgeway so as to improve expectations.	
	12. To protect and enhance the visual, ecological, historical and architectural landscape within the corridor of The Ridgeway.	
	13. To maintain and develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals with interests in The Ridgeway and its corridor (see appendix 7 for ongoing actions).	
	14. To provide facilities and services for users of The Ridgeway.	
	15. To provide well-targeted, accurate, relevant and branded	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	information and promotional material to encourage and enable people to visit and enjoy The Ridgeway.	
The Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016	**Aim 1. To protect and enhance the environment and character of Oxfordshire.** i. to provide effective protection and enhancement for Oxfordshire's biodiversity, landscape and heritage; ii. to reduce pollution and emissions of greenhouse gases; iii. to maintain and improve the quality of surface and groundwater; iv. to protect the quality of soils and agricultural land.	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes. Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public. Increased quality of life for Vale residents.
	Aim 2. To encourage the efficient use of land, energy and resources. i. to locate development where it can reduce the need to travel and encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport; ii. to minimise the use of greenfield land; iii. to encourage the location and design and development which makes efficient use of energy and resources, and minimises waste for disposal.	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale. Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities. Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector.
	Aim 3. To support progress towards a better quality of life for all Oxfordshire's people. i. to provide for sufficient new dwellings to meet the requirements of Regional Planning Guidance, of an appropriate size and type for Oxfordshire's residents, and to contribute to meeting affordable housing need; ii. to support communities in which people have access to jobs, services, community and leisure facilities; iii. to provide for a range of travel options to meet	Reduced road congestion and associated pollution. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity) Improve and protect the built

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	transport needs; and iv. to provide safe and attractive places to live and work. **Aim 4. To sustain prosperity by supporting sustainable and appropriate economic development.** i. to support the continued development of Oxfordshire's existing and emerging growth sectors and clusters; ii. to provide for development to meet the economic needs of the county's residents and local businesses; and iii. to support the diversification of the rural economy in Oxfordshire.	environment. Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources. Effective action on climate change. Increased generation of energy by renewables. Reduced risk of flooding. Maintained and improved river quality and water resources. Reduced air, noise and light pollution.
Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011	Tackling congestion Delivering accessibility Safer Roads Better Air Quality Improving the Street Environment	Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public. Reduced road congestion and associated pollution. Improve and protect the built environment. Reduced air, noise and light pollution.
Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2000)	To influence policy and legislation	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
		homes.
	To promote the implementation of positive management for biodiversity through the environmental stewardship schemes	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale.
	To safeguard existing semi-natural habitats and species, prevent further losses and encourage restoration and creation	Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector.
	To improve our knowledge of species and Habitats	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
	To continue to establish further monitoring and research systems	Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.
	To raise awareness of habitats and species	Effective action on climate change.
	To consider the effects and impacts of climate change on biodiversity	
Oxfordshire's Local Area Agreement	Sustaining Oxfordshire's successful economy	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes.
	Addressing housing needs	
	Tackling traffic congestion	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale.
	Improving educational attainment and skills	
	Improving the street scene and enhancing the environment	Reduced road congestion and associated pollution.
	Reducing crime & anti-social behaviour	
	Improving health and reducing inequalities to narrow the gap	Raised educational achievement and skills levels.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	in life expectancy	Improve and protect the built environment.
	Rationalising waste management to reduce the environmental and economic impact	Increased quality of life for Vale residents.
	Making better use of natural resources	Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.
Oxfordshire's Economic Development Strategy 2006-2016	The Strategy recognises four schemes for investment:	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes.
	Promoting and marketing Oxfordshire in the international environment.	Raised educational achievement and skills levels.
	Nurturing and growing enterprise.	
	Developing skills and widening participation.	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale.
	Overcoming the issues of infrastructure.	
	Within these schemes the Strategy also identifies 15 themes as follows:	Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities.
	Promoting Oxfordshire.	Reduced road congestion and associated pollution.
	Developing international links.	
	Encouraging enterprise and entrepreneurship.	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
	Exploiting the commercial potential of the science and technology base.	Improve and protect the built

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	Removing barriers to growth. Business clusters and support networks.	environment.
		Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.
	Maximising opportunities created by technology innovation and utilisation.	
	Connecting education and business. Widening participation in learning, training and the labour market.	
	Investing in workforce development.	
	Securing investment in infrastructure.	
	Land use.	
	Transport.	
	Housing.	
	Natural and built environment.	
Oxfordshire's Community Strategy	To enable Oxfordshire's employers to recruit and retain key staff more effectively through the implementation of housing and other measures:	Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public.
	To make Oxfordshire safer by tackling anti social behaviour, alcohol misuse, domestic violence and the needs of disaffected young people	Improved community safety.
		Increased quality of life for Vale residents.
	To promote joined up, people friendly travel throughout the county	Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	To promote sustainable economic prosperity for all in Oxfordshire	groups achieving potential.
		Creating vibrant communities.
	To enhance the quality of life, self-esteem and economic prosperity of Oxfordshire people by promoting lifelong learning	Creating vibrant communities.
	To create the environment we want now, and for the future	Greater engagement in cultural activity.
	To work together to improve the health and well-being of the people of Oxfordshire	Improved health and wellbeing.
	To develop high quality recreation, culture and leisure provision that is sustainable and accessible for all	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
		Improve and protect the built environment.
Oxfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2006-2011 (Oxfordshire County Council)	Aim 1 - Public rights of way are protected and well maintained.	Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector.
	Aim 2 - A better joined-up network that meets the needs and demands of users whilst accommodating the interests of land managers, the natural environment and our cultural heritage.	Improved health and wellbeing.
	Aim 3 - A public rights of way network which enables access for all	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
	Aim 4 - A thriving countryside where residents and visitors are able to understand and enjoy their rights, in a responsible way.	
Oxfordshire Joint Household Waste Strategy 2001 - 2020	To encourage Government and business to improve the efficient use of resources, reduce the impact of activities on resource consumption which results in the production of household waste, and to encourage them to take responsibility for the wastes they produce.	Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources.
		Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	To help householders and individuals to reduce and manage their wastes.	Effective action on climate change.
	To encourage the controlled reuse and reclamation of items so that materials which would otherwise be destined for disposal can be used by others.	
	To provide an integrated system of collection and processing of household waste which will achieve the Waste Strategy 2000 recycling and composting targets within the context of the EU Landfill Directive targets.	
	To provide a system for recovering value from residual wastes in order to meet the EU Landfill Directive targets.	
	To identify the best ways of dealing with the residual waste stream, especially those elements of the waste stream which are potentially most polluting.	
	To ensure the availability of landfill sites for the disposal of residual wastes.	
	To ensure that waste facilities are suitably sized and distributed with the aim of minimising the transport of waste. Facilities will be well related to areas of population, given the environmental and amenity constraints, and the availability of suitable sites.	
	To assist the development of local markets for recovered materials.	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	To develop methods of working together to improve the level of service through effective and efficient use of resources within Oxfordshire	
Vale of White Horse Community Strategy	**Transport Priorities** Bus services and linkages with community transport services, Traffic congestion, Improved and expanded cycle tracks, Improved road maintenance, Greater consultation to ensure a more systematic and co-ordinated transport system, Parking provision. **Access to Services Priorities** Improved, reliable and relevant current information about services, events etc, Enhanced communication, More extensive consultation, Increased access to and use of new technology, Greater and better networking opportunities, More local access points (e.g. shops and local facilities). **Recreation, Culture and Leisure Priorities** Expanded range of facilities/affordable venues, Support for better networking among local associations, Greater use of development control opportunities to secure open spaces. **Safe and Supportive Communities Priorities** Better information to allay the fear of crime,	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public. Reduced road congestion and associated pollution. Improved community safety. Increased quality of life for Vale residents. Raised educational achievement and skills levels. Improved health and wellbeing.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	Additional measures to tackle anti-social behaviour, More visible policing, Better enforcement of traffic regulations. **Environment Priorities** Reduce litter both in streets and fly tips, Increase recycling facilities, Greater engagement and education of communities on environmental issues, Ensure services are provided in a sustainable manner. **Housing Priorities** Provide more genuinely affordable housing, particularly for key workers, young families and local people, Ensure balanced housing developments, Identify more exception sites, Provide more and better facilities for homeless people. **Education and Lifelong Learning Priorities** Encourage greater co-ordination between learning institutions, Promote the social/community/ individual benefits of learning, Support parents and guardians, Promote learning opportunities for older people. **Health and Wellbeing Priorities** Increase support for older people to avoid isolation, Maximise opportunities for older people to exercise, Greater support for young parents, Improve education generally, Increase use of local facilities.	
Vale of White Horse Corporate Plan	Strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information, consultation, and devolution of power	Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	so that everyone can take part in our community and contribute to the decisions which affect our lives	in decision making for the public.
		Improved community safety.
	Create a safer community and improve the quality of life among Vale residents	
	Encourage a strong and sustainable economy which benefits all who live in, work in or visit the Vale	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale.
	Help disadvantaged groups and individuals within the Vale to realise their full potential	Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential.
	Provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
	Protect and improve our built and natural environment	Improve and protect the built environment.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
Great Western Community Forest Plan	• improve the landscape, including reclamation of derelict land, to create a visually pleasing and varied countryside; • increase opportunities for access, sport and recreation and for artistic and cultural events; • protect the best and most versatile agricultural land from irreversible development, ensure that farming manages to re-create attractive landscape and wildlife areas and that opportunities for farm diversification are increased; • protect areas of high-quality landscape, and areas of historical or archaeological interest; • regenerate the environment within green belt, or equivalently protected areas, and help to ensure that it is permanently green and open; • protect sites of nature conservation value and create new opportunities for conservation; • provide new opportunities for educational use of the area and ensure that community forests can be used for the environmental education needs of the surrounding schools;	Increased quality of life for Vale residents. Greater engagement in cultural activity. Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale. Improved health and wellbeing. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity) Improve and protect the built environment.

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	• establish supplies of local timber and encourage development of timber-based industries, employment opportunities and woodland products;	
	• improve the economic well-being of towns and cities through the creation of more-appealing locations for industry and commerce;	
	• improve the environment near housing and local industry, enhancing the value of properties and businesses;	
	• encourage a high level of local community commitment to the concept and community involvement in the implementation;	
	• seek private-sector support to implement the community forests and to invest in the area.	
	• to separate and provide an identity for the settlements within the area;	
	• to raise awareness of the vital role that woodlands play in the global context and provide local people with the opportunity to express their concern in a positive and practical way.	
North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan	Conserving and enhancing landscape character and diversity Celebrating the past Conserving remoteness and tranquillity	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	Increasing biodiversity	Improve and protect the built environment.
	Sustaining natural resources	
	The land-based economy as custodian of the landscape	Raised educational achievement and skills levels.
	Promoting a low carbon economy	Creating vibrant communities.
	Enjoyment as an economic driver	Reduced road congestion and associated pollution.
	Diversifying economic opportunities	
	Developing appropriate skills for the future	
	Supporting vibrant communities	
	Encouraging sustainable travel	
	Establishing common understanding	
	Maintaining productive partnerships	
Vale Housing Strategy	Review enabling and strategic housing role of the Council	Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes
	Provide more affordable housing (including housing for key workers)	Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential.
	Implement Council's Home Renewal Strategy	
	Implement Choice Based Lettings policy for allocation of social housing	
	Implement the Council's Homelessness Strategy	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	Supporting People	
	Improve performance of Council's Best Value Performance Indicators	
	Implement the Council's Fuel Poverty Strategy	
Vale of White Horse Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2001/2002	To promote the diversity of the Vale's economy and enhance its competitiveness;	Raised educational achievement and skills levels.
	To maintain the vitality of the east, and develop and strengthen the centre and west of the Vale;	Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale.
	To encourage the development of sustainable businesses;	Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities.
	To ensure that people in the Vale benefit from economic development and have the opportunity for skills enhancement to meet the changing needs of local employers;	
	To promote sustainable tourism based on the inherent qualities and assets of the Vale;	Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector.
	To improve the environment and role of town centres;	Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)
	To protect and enhance the environment of the Vale and maintain it as an attractive location for business, residents and visitors;	Improve and protect the built environment.
	To identify funding opportunities and develop better links with Europe;	
	To work in partnership with the other public, private and	

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	voluntary sectors and co-ordinate activities on economic development with the range of key players in the area; To further the understanding and knowledge of local economic issues through research and liaison with businesses and organisations involved in economic development.	
Vale of White Horse District Council Arts Development Strategy 2002 – 2005	Support, advise and encourage the voluntary arts community in the Vale; Develop and encourage access to a diverse range of arts activities in rural areas; Advocate and work on projects and opportunities with professional arts partners; Encourage and develop partnerships between the arts and the non-arts related areas; Improve, enhance and develop the arts infrastructure, service and facilities; and Use the arts to improve the physical environment.	Greater engagement in cultural activity. Improve and protect the built environment.
Vale Youth Development Strategy 2006 - 2009	The Strategy's vision is to provide children and young persons in the Vale with the opportunity to: Live a healthy life; Stay safe; Fulfil their potential;	Improved community safety. Increased quality of life for Vale residents. Raised educational achievement and skills levels. Reduced poverty and social

Plan or Programme	Aims and/or Objectives	Related Sustainability Objectives
	Get the most out of life and develop the skills for adulthood.	exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential.
Vale Community Safety Strategy 2005 - 2008	The Strategy's priority aims are: To improve the safety of the Vale's roads To reduce the number of anti-social behaviour incidents in the Vale To make the Vale a cleaner, greener community To reduce volume crime (including domestic violence and acquisitive crime) overall by 10.1% by March 2008 To reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol misuse	Improved community safety. Increased quality of life for Vale residents. Improved health and wellbeing. Reduced air, noise and light pollution.

1.0   Introduction

1.1   Part A2 of the sustainability appraisal process involves the collection of information about the Vale so as to provide essential background to the appraisal. Information has to cover the broad range of environmental, social and economic matters which are involved in assessing sustainability. This potentially involves an enormous amount of information. The aim has been to present sufficient information to provide an overall understanding of the general situation in the Vale. Greater detail could be provided but a balance has to be achieved between detail and clarity. It is felt that sufficient detail is presented to identify sustainability issues without an overwhelming level of information.

2.0   Population/Demography

2.1   One very significant factor in the planning of an area is the level of the population. If the level is rising it often means an increased demand for housing and related to that demand for employment and facilities such as transport infrastructure and retailing. The level of the population in the Vale is therefore an important piece of contextual information for the planning process.

2.2   An understanding of the population of the Vale and of trends in its movement is therefore essential parts of the context for the deposit draft Local Plan. In the 2001 Census the Vale was found to have a resident population at the time of some115,627. This had increased by 3% since the 1991 Census. As indicated on the NOMIS organisation's website the 2005 mid year population estimate was 117,000 showing a further small increase. Information provided by the National Statistics Office (NSO) shows that between 1982 and 2002 the Vale's population increased by 12%. The population projection for 2011 indicates that the Vale's population will reach 120,168 which is a rise of 4,541 or nearly 4% since 2001.

2.3   All the relevant information sources show a gradually increasing resident population which must be taken into account in the level of housing development the Council must plan for. However, to put this information into context, the NSO's profile of the Vale refers to population density which in the Vale in 2002 averaged 202 people per square kilometre, compared with an average of 421, for the South East region and 380 people per square kilometre for England overall. So although the Vale's population is rising it is still a mainly rural area.

2.4   Another significant contextual factor for future planning is the age structure of the local population. A young population will tend to indicate a greater need for employment and education facilities. An older population will mean that education and employment facilities are not needed as much due to the greater preponderance of retired residents.

2.5   The 2001 Census found that the age structure was very similar to that of England and Wales and the South East, with only minor differences. The NSO website shows that there were comparatively slightly more 5 to 19 year olds at19.6% in the Vale than the SE or England and Wales, then slightly fewer 20 to 44 year olds at

33.7%, slightly more 45 to 64 year olds at 25.4 and less over 65s at 15.44%. In comparison then the Vale has slightly more young people, its working age population is skewed to the over 45s but there are fewer retired residents than would be expected for England and Wales or the South East.

2.6   This information indicates that there may be more pressure for family housing than housing for the retired but the differences are not enough to produce a dramatic difference when comparing the Vale to other areas. This information is monitored via the mid year estimates but the only accurate figures are those produced by the national census every ten years.

2.7   In 2011 the population of the Vale is expected to be 120,168. In comparison to 2001 there will be proportionally slightly less 0 to 4s at 5.7% and slightly less 5 to 19s at 19.4%. The proportion of 20 to 44s will decrease in proportion significantly to 30.5%. In contrast the proportion of 45 to 64s will rise to 27.1% and the proportion of 65+ will rise to 17.3%. This is a reflection of national population changes with an increase in the proportion of the population over 45. In the Vale this means the 45+ category is expected to increase from 40.85% of the population in 2001 to 44.36% in 2011. In common with the rest of the country this greater longevity will increase the number of single person households and increase housing demand.

2.8   There are five main settlements in the Vale which are Abingdon, Wantage, Grove, Botley and Faringdon. The largest is Abingdon with a 2001 population of 31,329 which is expected to reach 32,438 by 2011. The next largest is Wantage with a 2001 population of 10,511 which is expected to rise to 11,373 by 2011. The parish of Grove had a population of 7,845 in 2001 with the ward population slightly lower at 7,428. The Grove ward population is expected to reach 9,249 by 2011. The area of Botley approximates to the parish of Cumnor which had a population of 5,503 in 2001. The larger ward of Appleton and Cumnor had a population of 6,409 in 2001 and this is expected to decline to 6,166 by 2011. In 2001 the parish of Great Faringdon had a population of 6,187 and the larger ward of Faringdon and the Coxwells had a population of 7,037. The ward population is expected to reach 7,851 by 2011.

2.9   The total population of the more 'urban' wards, which still take in some surrounding settlements, was 56,306 in 2001 with the remaining more 'rural' wards in the Vale totalling 59,466. This 'rural' population therefore accounted for just over 51% of the Vale's population in 2001. By 2011 the 'urban' wards are expected to account for 60,771 persons with 58,542 in the 'rural' wards thus tipping the population towards a more 'urban' character in terms of where people live. However, the 'urban' part of the Vale consists of two market towns, two expanded villages and the suburban area of Botley. The character of the Vale will therefore continue to be rural but by 2011 the majority of its population (just under 51%) will live in the wards containing its larger settlements. As development is expected to continue to focus on the larger settlements this will lead to an increasing proportion of the Vale's population living in its larger settlements compared to the rural area.

2.10   In the longer term the Vale's population is expected to continue to grow. The Office of National Statistics publishes long term predictions based on long term trends. The latest of these predictions for the Vale runs from 2004 to 2028. This shows that the population will increase by 11,100 persons or 9.5% to 127,300. I should be

noted that this is based on extrapolating current trends and is based on an estimated base figure for 2004. Actual growth may be higher or lower than this. However together with expected further reductions in household size the predicted growth in population will mean a continuing demand for new housing.

2.11   As well as the overall increase in population there will also be changes in the age structure of the population. For example the numbers of over 75s will increase by 81% and will form 12.7% of the population in 2028 compared to 7.7% in 2004. Given the high levels of single households in this group this is one of the main reasons for decreasing household sizes. Another significant change will be in those of working age relative to the proportions of children and retired. The figures show that the numbers of persons below 15 and above 59 years of age will rise by 12,800 persons whilst those around working age will fall by 1,700. This has implications for the ability of the working population to support those who are not working.

3.0   Housing

3.1   During the 1960s there was substantial house building at Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon, and in most of the larger villages, especially Grove. Planning policies then focused on restraint of development to protect the environment and the essentially rural nature of the District, which resulted in a reduction in the rate of population growth. The most recent Structure Plan to 2016 emphasized the concentration of development on the main urban areas with Grove proposed as a main location for development. Provision was also made for relatively modest development in other towns and villages where there is a reasonable range of employment services and community facilities.

3.2   The total number of dwellings in the District as of 31st March 2004 was 47,765. The housing stock in the District is relatively modern, with 40% being built since 1964, against national and regional averages of 36.6% and 43% respectively. The proportion of older dwellings is less than the regional average. 15% of the stock was built prior to 1919 against a regional average of 20.5%.

3.3   Of the nearly 3,000 properties built since 1991, 15% have been in the social sector, less than the regional average of 18%. Of the total stock 12.8% is Affordable Housing. Housing stock in the District has a relatively lower density compared to the regional average.

3.4   At the 2001 census, 38.7% of homes were detached, 31.4% semi-detached and 18.5% were terraced. Flats and smaller converted properties amounted to only 10.1% of homes, despite the rapidly increasing number of smaller households and an increased emphasis on this type of development in recent years.

3.5   The level of owner occupation is similar to the average for the South East Region but above the national average of 74.4% (2001 Census). The level of outright owner occupation in the District is 32.3% which compares to a figure of 29.75% for Oxfordshire as a whole. As at 31 March 2004 the tenure of housing in the District was as follows:

Type of Accommodation	Percentage
Owner Occupied	76.2

Housing Association	12.8
Private Rented (estimated)	8
Other (e.g. LA, Almshouses)	3
TOTAL:	100

3.6 Of the above, 349 dwellings were vacant, which equates to a figure of 0.007% of the total dwelling stock.

3.7 Whilst the rate of population growth may have subsided, there has continued to be a dramatic increase in the number of households. This reflects the national trend towards smaller and more rapidly changing households. In the 2001 Census the average household size in the Vale was 2.52 persons. This compared to 2.43 persons for the South East and 2.4 persons for England. The draft South East Plan predicts that the figure will be 2.19 persons in 2026 in the Vale.

3.8 House prices in the UK have risen steeply in recent years, often outpacing wage increases. This has introduced a situation where housing is becoming less affordable in many areas. As set out in PPG3 Housing the Government therefore wishes to see a proportion of new houses being affordable and policy H16 in the draft deposit Local Plan is intended to reflect this requirement in the Vale.

3.9 A key factor in the provision of suitable housing is the affordability of houses in relation to wages. According to figures published by the Land Registry the average house price in the Vale has risen from £166,296 in 2001 to £243,943 in 2005. This equates to a rise of £77,647 or 46.7% over 5 years or an average of £15,529.4 per annum which is 9.3% per annum compared to the 2001 average price. In comparison information from the NOMIS organisation's website shows that average pay in the Vale has only increased from £26,713 in 2002 to £30,015 in 2005. This equates to a rise of 3% per annum in relation to 2002 wage levels. Housing in the Vale has therefore become significantly less affordable relative to pay.

3.10 This conclusion is supported from the house price to income ratio information as published by the Audit Commission using information from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This shows that in 2003 house prices in the Vale were 4.54 times higher than incomes in the 20-39 age group. This compares to a national average ratio of house price to income of 4.13. Given the figures set out above it is likely that the ratio has continued to increase in the Vale.

3.11 Information supplied by the County Council also supports the conclusion that there is a severe disparity between wages and house prices in the Vale. The information shows that the ratio between the mean house price and gross annual pay for all employee jobs in 2004 was 9.6. This was above the ratio for England of 8 and the ratio for the South East of 9.5. It was however below the ratio for Oxfordshire of 10.3. House price rises have slowed recently but in the longer term it is still likely that house prices will rise at a level which may be greater than wage rises. Affordability is therefore likely to remain a key issue for the Vale in the future.

3.12 Government guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (PPS1) states that in preparing development plans, planning authorities should seek to promote the more efficient use of land through "the use of suitably located previously developed land and buildings". A core

indicator in the Annual Monitoring Report is an output indicator in relation to the use of previously developed land for development. It shows how many of the dwellings being created in the Vale are on previously used or 'brownfield' land and therefore to what extent Government policy is being implemented as well as how relatively sustainable housing development in the Vale is.

3.13   The percentage of new homes built in an area on brownfield land is a Best Value Performance Indicator which councils are required to monitor and publish as part of their Performance Plans. In the Vale 277 homes were constructed during 2004/05 and of these 254 were constructed on previously developed or 'brownfield' land. This equates to a percentage of 92% which indicates that the Vale is very successful at directing development to brownfield land and is therefore relatively sustainable in its use of greenfield land for housing. This is also not an isolated set of results as the figures for 2003/04 showed that 87% of new homes had been delivered on brownfield land.

3.14   In comparison to performance elsewhere information supplied to the Council by the Audit Commission shows that the average for similar councils across England for 2004/05 was 80% and for 2003/04 the figure was 75%. The Vale has therefore exceeded the national average for the last two years.

3.15   Continued delivery of new housing on brownfield land is dependant on the availability of suitable brownfield land. Given the largely rural nature of the Vale and the major housing allocations on greenfield sites in the draft Local Plan it will not be possible to maintain these high figures. The Council is however aiming to deliver 60% of new homes on brownfield land in future years in its performance plan.

3.16   As well as directing new housing development to suitable brownfield land, a further way in which development can be more sustainable is by ensuring that whilst having regard to the need to maintain high quality design, densities of development are kept as high as possible. This ensures that the amount of land taken for development is minimised. Government policy in PPS1 is that in preparing development plans, planning authorities should seek to promote the more efficient use of land through higher density, mixed use development. This is reflected in policy H14 of the draft deposit Local Plan which aims to deliver 50 dwellings per hectare on sites close to the centre of the Vale's main settlements, 40 dwellings per hectare elsewhere in those settlements and at Didcot, and then 30 dwellings per hectare in the rest of the Vale.

3.17   The relevant core output indicator from the Annual Monitoring Report is divided into three levels. The lowest is for dwellings built at less than 30 dwellings per hectare (dph), the next is for dwellings built between 30 and 50 dph and the highest is for dwellings built at over 50 dph. Information on the densities which will be achieved on sites over 25 dwellings where planning permission has been granted or they are allocated in the draft deposit Local Plan 2011 has been collected since 1996. This shows that of the 4,219 dwellings permitted or allocated over this period 665 or 16% were to be constructed at less than 30 dph, 2,109 or 50% were to be constructed at between 30 and 50 dph and 1,445 or 34% were to be constructed at over 50 dph. The average density over all permitted or allocated sites for over 25 dwellings in the Vale was 40 dph. The distribution between the various densities is shown in the chart below.

Density of Permitted Housing Development in the Vale of White Horse

□ Less than 30 dph ■ 30 - 50 dph ■ 50+ dph
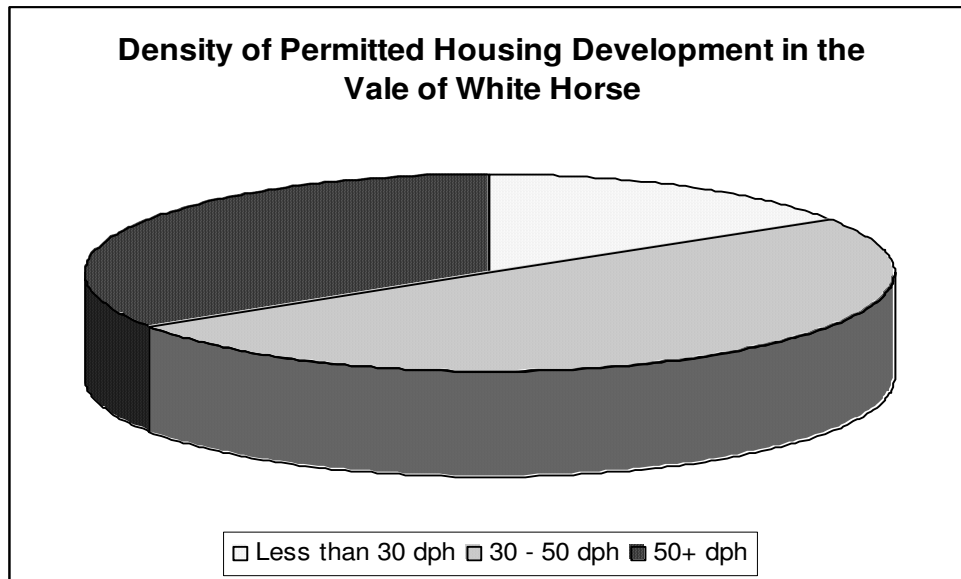
3.18   The Government's guidance set out in PPG3 'Housing' is that planning authorities should avoid developments of less than 30 dph, encourage housing development at 30 to 50 dph and in suitable locations aim to exceed 50 dph. This is the basis for the deposit draft Local Plan policy. However no such policy is contained in the 1999 adopted Local Plan. The Council was therefore only able to achieve densities in accord with PPG3 via negotiation due to the limited weight which could be given to emerging Local Plan policies. Following adoption of the Local Plan policy the Council is now able to require higher densities. Therefore with the circumstances which have prevailed since 1996 it is considered that the achievement of an overall density of 40 dph with 84% of new homes permitted or allocated at densities greater than 30 dph is in accord with national policy on densities.

4.0   Economy

4.1   In 2005/6 the total of employees working in the Vale was 63,200. As can be seen below the Vale is ahead of the national and regional figures for the top three socio economic groupings and is behind the national and regional figures for groups 6 to 8. The figure for the lowest grouping is however above the average for the South East.

Employment by occupation (Apr 2005-Mar 2006)

|	Vale of White Horse (%)	South East (%)	Great Britain (%)
Soc 2000 major group 1-3	51.6	46.1	41.9
1 Managers and senior officials	18.5	17.1	14.9
2 Professional occupations	17.7	14.0	12.7
3 Associate professional & technical	15.4	15.0	14.3
Soc 2000 major group 4-5	23.6	23.1	23.4
4 Administrative & secretarial	14.1	12.9	12.5

5 Skilled trades occupations	9.5	10.2	10.9
Soc 2000 major group 6-7	11.1	14.9	15.6
6 Personal service occupations	5.2	7.9	7.9
7 Sales and customer service occupations	5.9	7.0	7.7
Soc 2000 major group 8-9	13.1	15.8	18.9
8 Process plant & machine operatives	2.0	5.4	7.5
9 Elementary occupations	11.1	10.4	11.4

4.2 The level of unemployed in an area is an important contextual indicator for the state of the local economy. Generally the lower the level of unemployment in an area the better a local economy is performing. Whether this is in well paid occupations is another matter however, so low unemployment may not mean that the local economy is thriving. Also the level of unemployed cannot be accurately counted. Only those who are qualified for and are claiming the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) can be counted. Actual unemployment is always higher. It does however provide a benchmark with which to compare areas.

	Vale of White Horse (%)	South East (%)	GB (%)
Apr-00	0.8	1.7	3.1
Apr-01	0.7	1.4	2.7
Apr-02	0.7	1.5	2.7
Apr-03	1.0	1.6	2.6
Apr-04	0.8	1.5	2.4
Apr-05	0.7	1.5	2.4

4.3 As set out in the table above the Vale's level of JSA claimants is consistently low in comparison to both the South East region and the levels for Great Britain.

4.4 Another contextual indicator which can help to demonstrate the health or otherwise of the local economy is the percentage of the working age residents that are economically active. This gives a good idea of the economic productivity of an area. Again it does not indicate how prosperous an area is. As can be seen from the table below the Vale's population has consistently maintained a higher proportion being economically active in comparison to the South East and to Great Britain. In more recent years however the Vale has trended downwards to the same level as the South East.

Ratio of Ecomically Active to Working Age Population
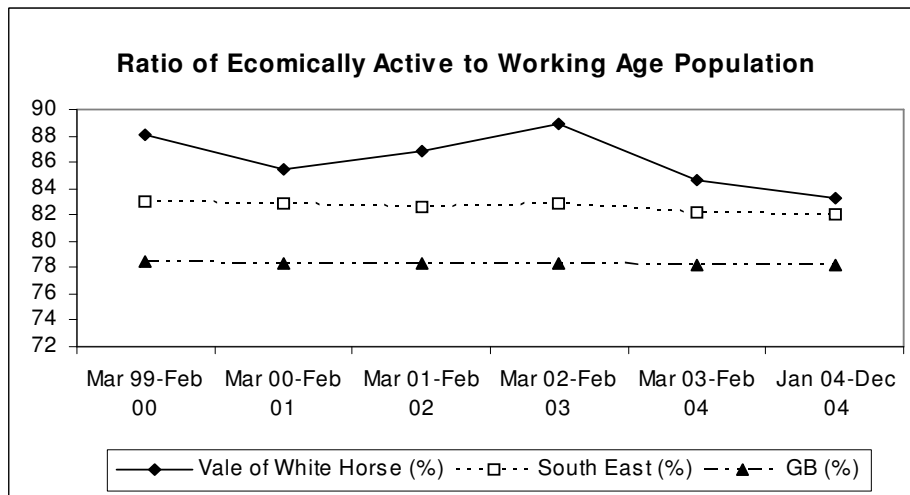
5.51   The level of qualifications within the working population is another useful contextual indicator for the potential strength of the local economy. A working population which is well qualified will generally be able to take advantage of higher level jobs and generate greater levels of income. It also can make an area more attractive to employers. However, very well qualified people work in the public sector which is generally not relatively well paid.

Qualifications of the Labour Force

	Vale of White Horse (%)	South East (%)	GB (%)
NVQ4 and above	34.6	28.5	25.2
NVQ3 and above	51.1	46.9	43.1
NVQ2 and above	72.0	66	61.5
NVQ1 and above	82.7	81.1	76
Other Qualifications	6.0	8.0	8.8
No Qualifications	11.3	10.8	15.1

4.5 As can be seen from the table above the Vale has above average results for qualifications in relation to the rest of Great Britain and has above average results for every category in relation to the South East except for that for "no qualifications" which is slightly worse than the South East. This means that the population of the Vale is relatively better able to take advantage of employment opportunities in terms of qualifications than the rest of the UK. Information on this matter is obtained from NOMIS

4.6 Another indicator which can help to give a picture of an area's economic health is the number of businesses registering for VAT each year in an area. This gives an insight into the level of business formation in an area. In 2003 there were 425 businesses registering for VAT in the Vale. This was 4.5% lower than in 2002 but was 10.4% higher than in 1994. In comparison the South East experienced an increase in VAT registrations in 2003 of 6.7% in comparison to 2002 and showed an increase 11.9% in comparison to 2004. This means that in the short term the Vale has not performed well compared to the South East but in the longer term the Vale is close to the figure for the South East.

4.7 Another important area of the economy is retailing. Within the Vale Abingdon has the widest range of shops which are comparable to similar sized towns. In Wantage the choice of shops is limited and there are less national retailers than in Abingdon. Elsewhere Grove relates to Wantage for its main shopping needs, Faringdon has a good selection of shops for its size and Botley has a district centre which primarily serves as day to day shopping.

4.8 Recent assessment in a Retail Capacity Study concluded in relation to convenience shopping that the retention of floorspace expenditure in the District is relatively high and existing retail floorspace is trading healthily. In relation to comparison shopping the study concluded that retention of comparison expenditure is much lower than that for convenience shopping with the majority of such expenditure occurring in Oxford, Swindon and Reading.

4.9 In the future the study conclude that expected improvements in shopping provision such as the new Sainsburys in Wantage would meet convenience need up to 2007 with only a modest increase likely before 2011. This meant that a retail allocation was not required in the Local Plan 2011. For comparison shopping any development was also expected to be within existing resources. In the longer term the Draft South East Plan refers the further development of Didcot as a matter for priority support whereas oxford is regarded as physically constrained and lacking in physical capacity for development.

5.0   Travel

5.1   The Vale of White Horse has the A34 trunk road running north/south close to its
        eastern edge. This gives access to the M4 to the south and the M40 to the north.
        The A417 and A420 roads run diagonally across it linking to Swindon to the west
        and Didcot to the east. The main east west railway line runs through the Vale but
        there are no stations currently within the Vale. The station at Didcot is however
        close to the District's boundary and a new station is proposed at Grove.

5.2   In terms of the transport methods which Vale residents use to get to work the
        majority (66%) drive, or are a passenger in, a car. This is slightly higher than the
        South East (65%) and higher than the rate for England (61%). This high level of car
        usage is partly balanced by the fact that a higher percentage of people travel by bus
        or cycle in the Vale (12%) compared to the level in the South East (7%). Also a
        slightly higher number of people work from home in the Vale (11%) compared to the
        South East (10%). Probably due to the lack of rail stations in the Vale only a small
        percentage of workers travel by rail (2%) compared to the South East (6%). Also
        travelling to work on foot is less popular in the Vale (8%) than in the South East
        (10%).

5.3   In common with the rest of the UK car ownership has consistently been rising in the
        Vale. In 1981 78% of households in the Vale had access to at least one car when
        the figure for Oxfordshire was 73%. By 2001 86% of households in the Vale had
        access to at least one car when the figure for Oxfordshire was 82%. Over the same
        period the number of cars owned by Vale households rose by 73% and by 78%
        across Oxfordshire. Figures from the Census show that longer distance commuting
        for work is increasing. In 1991 5,992 residents commuted out of the Vale for work.
        By 2001 this had increased by almost 35% to 8,062. The increase across
        Oxfordshire was slightly lower at 33%.

5.4   Traffic on Oxfordshire's roads between 1995 and 2005 rose by over 20% on
        strategic roads including the M40 and the trunk roads. In comparison traffic on the
        non-strategic roads only grew by nearly 11%. For all roads traffic grew by 14.5% in
        Oxfordshire over 10 years compared to a growth of 16.2% on all roads nationally.
        For the future the Local Transport Plan 2006 to 2011 states that as a result of
        expected development the number of vehicle trips in the County could increase by
        more than 25% by 2011 and almost 40% by 2021 compared to 2000. National
        growth is expected to be lower to 2011 at 18%. The effect of this level of growth
        without road improvements would be severe congestion on major routes with a
        lengthening of peak traffic hours and diversion of traffic on to minor routes.

6.0 Historic Environment

6.1 The area covered by the Vale has supported human habitation for thousands of years and it therefore has a rich and varied historic environment. Ancient remains dot the Downs to the south and the Vale's three market towns grew to prosperity in the middle ages. The Vale currently has 52 designated Conservation Areas within which there are certain limitations on development. There are also over 2000 Listed Buildings in the Vale where changes to their structure or setting are strictly controlled. As well as the built environment the vale also has eight historic parks and gardens that are included in the English Heritage National Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

6.2 With the long history of human habitation the Vale also has a significant number of important archaeological sites. At present there are 68 Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Vale where consent is required from the Secretary of State for any works. These include such sites as the Neolithic long barrow called Wayland Smithy and the Roman temple at Frilford. New archaeological sites are also constantly being found and assessed and development is likely to lead to the discovery of further sites and artefacts.

7.0 Natural Environment

7.1 The Vale also has a rich natural environment. Among the diverse habitats are a broken band of Ancient Woodland on the North Corallian Ridge, the Chalk Downs which are designated as an AONB, fenland and heathland forming some of Oxfordshire's rarest habitats and some traditional hay meadows in floodplains of the Thames and Ock rivers. The area of the Vale within the AONB is 23.4% or 135 sq km of its total land area and 908 hectares are currently designated as 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Two sites are also candidate european Special Areas of Conservation.

7.2 A core indicator in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report is the change in areas and populations of biodiversity importance. The first part refers to change in priority habitats and species (by type). Information for this indicator is supplied by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC). The information relates to recent survey data (5 years old) for County Wildlife Sites (CWS) but older data (approx. 15 years old) has been used for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as discussed below. Only designated sites– CWS and SSSI – have been mapped completely to date. Non-designated sites will be mapped for BAP priority habitats by 2006 using known available datasets. Improved reporting from 2006 will improve the measurement of change. The following table sets out the baseline information for UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats in the Vale :

UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats in the Vale

Habitat	District baseline information (hectares)	County context (hectares)	% of Oxfordshire Habitat in VoWH
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	684.5	2467.5	27.7%
Lowland beech and yew woodland	2.0	563.2	00.35%
Wet woodland	39.6	98.4	33.5%
Wood pasture and parkland	3.3	101.3	03.26%
Lowland calcareous grassland	182.5	668.9	27.3%
Lowland meadow	81.2	1100.8	07.4%
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	0.0	9.3	NA
Lowland dry acid grassland	18.8	40.3	46.6%
Lowland heathland	0.0	2.9	NA
Fen	19.9	92.6	21.5%
Reedbeds	0.4	6.5	06.1%
Eutrophic standing water	161.4	355.8	45.4%

7.3 Comparison data for previous years is not available in relation to the priority habitats. As can be seen from the table though the Vale contains significant portions of a range of the priority habitats found in the County. However none of the areas amount to a significant portion of the overall UK priority habitats. The Vale does however contain two candidate Special Areas of Conservation. One is at Cothill fen where the calcium-rich springwater-fed fens are considered rare in the European context. The other is at Hackpen Down, an area of unimproved chalk grassland. In relation to UK BAP priority species TVERC records show that the Vale has 40 of the UK's 382 priority species. Overall the County has a total of 69 species recorded.

7.4 Part (ii) of the indicator relates to change in areas designated for their intrinsic environmental value including sites of international, national, regional or sub-regional significance. Data supplied by TVERC in the table below indicates that the Vale contains over one fifth of the County's SSSI area, over one quarter of the County's CWS area and, as stated above, two candidate SACs :

Significant Environmental Areas

Type of Site	District baseline information (hectares)	County context (hectares)	% of Oxfordshire Habitat in VoWH
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Na	Na	Na
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	908.2	4401.1	20.6%
County Wildlife Sites (CWS)	1,316.9	5,062.7	26.0%

7.5 As well as those indicators defined as essential by the Government it is important for locally important species to be monitored to gauge the health of the Vale's biodiversity. Information has therefore been collected across the County by TVERC on the following important indicative species and on SSSI:

- Distribution and Status of Water Voles
- Distribution and Status of Farmland Birds
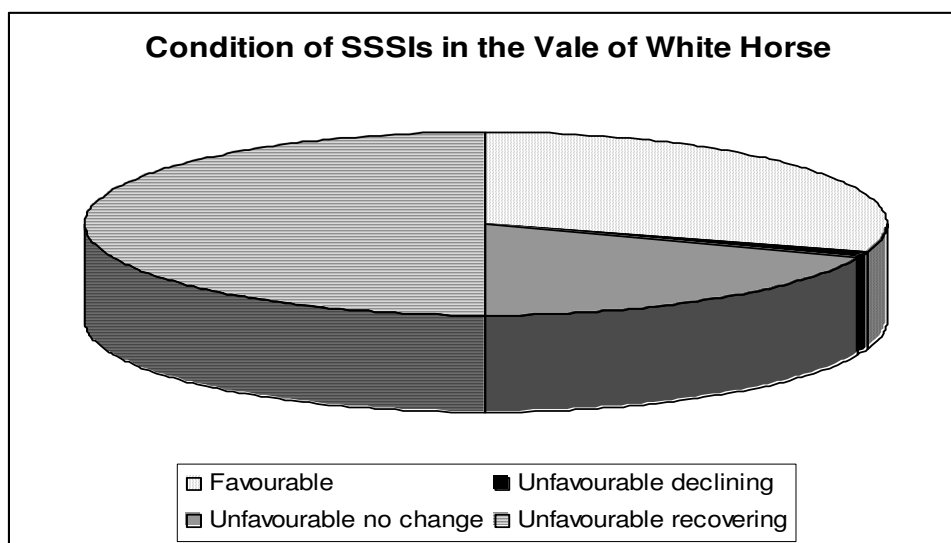- Distribution and Status of Garden Butterflies
- Condition of SSSI

7.6 Distribution and Status of Water Voles – Information on Water Voles is important because they are a UK BAP priority species which has declined rapidly in numbers across Oxfordshire in recent years. Out of the County total of 9,645.2 ha the Vale has 4,371.9 ha or 45.3 % of the area measured as a Key Area positive for Water Voles. The Vale is therefore a very important area for Water Voles in the County context.

7.7 Distribution and Status of Farmland Birds – Information on farmland birds is important because they are a useful indicator of the impact of rural activity on the natural environment. Data is derived from surveys by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Compared to the 1994 baseline value of 1.0, population densities have risen to 1.28. This compares favourably to a County value of 0.68. However the information is based on small sample sizes which may be leading to statistical errors.

7.8 Distribution and Status of Garden Butterflies – Information on garden butterflies is important because it can indicate the impact of development on an area's natural environment. In the Vale all 22 of the commonly occurring species surveyed were present but two, the Essex Skipper and the Wall butterflies, were less common. These species are however historically less common in the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire areas. This suggests that development is not having a significant effect on butterfly populations.

7.9 Condition of SSSI – Information on SSSI is a useful contextual indicator for the health of the natural environment. In the Vale 30% of the SSSI are in favourable condition at April 2005 as shown below. In comparison 45% of SSSI in the County and 45% in England are in favourable condition. However the Vale only has 1% of its SSSI in unfavourable and declining condition whereas the County has 3% and

England has 12%. Also, some of the SSSI surveys relate to 1999. These figures will be monitored to check on any improvement or deterioration in the Vale's SSSI. With the isolated location of most SSSI in the Vale change in condition is likely to be related to land management practices rather than development.

Condition of SSSIs in the Vale of White Horse

Legend:
- □ Favourable
- ■ Unfavourable declining
- ▨ Unfavourable no change
- ▦ Unfavourable recovering

7.10   A significant feature of the Vale's environment is its rivers, particularly the Thames and the Ock with its tributaries. Monitoring their quality is therefore an important contextual indicator of the relative health of the Vale's environment. Information is sourced by the Audit Commission from OFWAT, which is the economic regulator for the water and sewerage industry in England and Wales, on the chemical and biological quality of rivers in local authority areas. The latest information for the Vale is for 2003 and can be seen on the Audit Commission's Area Profiles website. This will be monitored as a contextual indicator AMR.

7.11   The information shows that in relation to biological quality the rivers in the Vale achieved a percentage of 79.17% of their length at or above good quality in 2003. This compares to the national average of 53.61% of rivers achieving good quality. The Vale's rivers are therefore in good biological condition in comparison to the national average.

7.12   In relation to the chemical quality of the rivers within the Vale they achieved a percentage of 67.89% of their length at or above good quality in 2003. This figure compares well to the national average of 51.32% of rivers achieving good quality. The Vale's rivers are therefore also in relatively good condition in relation to the national average of chemical quality.

7.13   Biodiversity is linked to the landscape of the area. English Nature is promoting the identification of Regionally Important Geological Sites through the establishment of local groups. These sites will be non-statutory, locally based sites which will be designated and informally and voluntarily managed. Regionally Important Geological Sites are proposed at Coxwell Pit; Faringdon (Rogers Concrete); The Manger, Whitehorse Hill; Hatford Sand Pit; Gimbro Copse Quarry, Pusey; Dry Sandford Quarries; Tubney Woods; Shellingford Quarry; and Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon. Four of these sites are also identified as Sites of Special Scientific

Interest.

7.14   Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) may be established by local authorities in consultation with English Nature under section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are habitats of local importance. In the Vale there is a LNR at Tuckmill Meadows and new LNRs are proposed at the Abbey Fishponds and the western end of the Ock Valley in Abingdon, Chilswell Valley in South Hinksey, and Kennington Pond in Kennington. A local nature reserve is also proposed by Oxford City Council at the Iffley Fritillary Meadows, a small proportion of which lies within the area of the Vale.

7.15   Beyond the statutory designations the Vale also contains a number of County Wildlife Sites designated for their local ecological importance and a number of areas of woodland that have been identified as remains of Ancient Woodland. Also, part of the Vale to the west of Faringdon lies within the Great Western Community Forest. The aims of the Forest Plan 2006-2010 include the creation of a multi-purpose forest embracing Swindon and its environs, increasing forest cover from an average 5% to 30%, encouraging community involvement and public access and enhancing biodiversity and landscape quality.

7.16   The Vale is a rural area with a significant part of its land under cultivation for farming. The quality of the farmland ranges from Grade 4 up to Grade 2 in a number of locations. Guidance in PPS7 states that land of grade 3a or better should be protected from development unless sustainability considerations indicate otherwise. The Agricultural Census from DEFRA indicates that in 2003 there were 448 holdings covering 47,249.3 ha in the Vale. Of these 326 holdings covering 9,894 ha are permanent grass. There are then 147 holdings covering 13,452 ha which produce wheat. Then there are 79 holdings covering 3,731.8 ha producing oilseed rape and 86 holdings covering 2893.2 producing winter barley. Agriculture in the Vale is therefore very varied. In terms of employment only 1,067 residents gave their employment as being in the agriculture, hunting and forestry category which amounts to 1.8% of the resident workforce.

7.17   As stated earlier a substantial part of the Vale (23.36%) lies within the Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. With it's high concentration of wildlife sites and rural hinterland the remaining part of the Vale is also made up of attractive landscapes. The Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) has identified a range of landscape types in the Vale. These include significant areas of wooded estate lands and rolling farmland to the north and south with alluvial lowland, clay vale and lowland village farmland landscapes in the centre, all running generally east west. There are also river meadowlkands in close association with the rivers in the Vale and chalk downland within the AONB.

8.0   Living Environment

8.1   The Council has a duty under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to promote community safety. This is the subject of policy DC3 in the Local Plan dealing with designing development against crime. Crime is therefore a matter to be taken into account in planning decisions. It is therefore important to gauge the level of crime in an area to determine the level of the problem and tangentially get some indication of the impact of planning policies. Planning of development is however only one

facet of what has to be a multidimensional approach to the reduction of crime in an area.

8.2   The Audit Commission's area profile for the Vale contains an indicator which relates to domestic burglaries per 1,000 households. Information for 2004/05 shows that the rate in the Vale was 5.51 per 1,000 households. This compares to a rate of 9.59 for the County and a national rate of 11.72. This indicates that the Vale is a relatively safe area in relation to domestic burglaries.

8.3   This information cannot be directly related to the planning of new development. However it does indicate that the Vale is a relatively safe area which must partly relate to the character of development. This is a subjective impression rather than an objective measurement of the safety of an area, but it is a useful contextual indicator for assessing the Vale against other areas.

8.4   The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a means of comparing information about a range of indicators showing levels of deprivation for an area as one figure. This then allows the relative deprivation of areas to be established, compared and monitored over time. Areas can be deprived in terms of income, education, employment, health, good housing, services, environment and levels of crime. Information was originally produced for 2000 but this has been refined and a new set of information has been produced for 2004 by ODPM.

8.5   The Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2004 shows that only one of the 75 Super Output Areas (SOA) in the Vale is deprived enough over the whole range of factors to be counted amongst the top 25% most deprived areas in England. There are no other SOAs in the Vale in the next ranking between 25% and 50%. This situation varies though when individual deprivation factors are considered. For example in relation to housing and services 10 out of the 75 SOAs in the Vale are in the most deprived 25% of SOAs in England. Overall though the Vale is relatively less deprived than the rest of England.

8.6   In terms of mortality the Quality of Life Indicator 3.2 is drawn from the Compendium of Clinical Health Indicators 2002 and shows trends in mortality from all causes using directly standardised mortality rates per 100,000. Information has been produced for 1993-2001 annually for all ages for the Districts in Oxfordshire. Overall in Oxfordshire the mortality rate has declined from 689.7 in 1993 to 586.7 by 2001. In comparison the Vale's rate has fallen from a lower level of 662.1 to 540.2 over the same period. The Vale therefore continues to have a lower mortality rate than the County overall.

8.7   In terms of life expectancy the figure for the South East is 79.3 years compared to the higher figure for the Vale of 80.4 years. There are further variations within the Vale and the Abingdon Dunmore ward has the highest life expectancy with a figure of 86.6 years.

8.8   Another aspect of health is the number of people who suffer from a limiting long term illness. This was the subject of a specific question in the 2001 Census. It found that The South East was the healthiest region in England on this measure with 15.5% of the total population rating themselves as having a limiting long term illness, compared with the England average of 17.9%. Oxfordshire at 13.4% was

ranked the second healthiest county in the South East (behind Buckinghamshire). For the Vale the figure was even lower at 13.1%.

8.9 Teenage conception rates are also monitored as part of the Audit Commission's area profiles. They are only collected on a County basis. The figure for 2004 was 34.3 conceptions to under-18 year olds in a calendar year per thousand females aged 15 to 17. This compares favourably to the national average which was 44.3 in 2004. Rates have fallen locally from 36.0 and nationally from 45.46 since 2002.

8.9.1 Recreation is strongly linked to health. The National Playing Fields Association standards suggest that that a total of 2.4 hectares of playing space should be provided for every 1,000 persons. In 2002 the Council conducted a survey of formal playing space provision in the Vale's five main settlements. The results of the 2002 playing space survey are set out in the table below.

Survey of Playing Space 2002 – summary of findings						
Population (2001)	Sports Pitches 1.6–1.8ha per 1000		Outdoor Play Space 0.6–0.8ha per 1000		Total Hectares	
	NPFA Range	Found (02)	NPFA Range	Found (02)	NPFA Range	Found (02)
Abingdon 32,526	52.04 – 58.55	49.25	19.5 – 26.0	45.60	71.54 – 84.55	94.85
Wantage 9,442	15.11 – 17.00	11.59	5.7 – 7.5	10.18	20.81 – 24.5	21.77
Grove 8,212	13.14 – 14.78	10.54	4.93 – 6.6	7.74	18.03 – 21.38	18.28
Faringdon 6,053	9.7 – 10.9	8.28	3.63 – 4.8	3.21	13.31 – 15.7	11.49
Botley 8,967	14.35 – 16.1	17.73	5.4 – 7.2	4.96	19.75 – 23.3	22.69

8.10 In Abingdon the study suggests that the overall provision of playing space is adequate by comparison to the NPFA standard; however, sports pitches are under-provided but space suitable for play is well above standard. This is accounted for by the large areas of open space along the Thames, at Abbey Meadows, Albert Park and Long Furlong. The study indicates that Wantage is within standard for outdoor play space but is below standard for sports pitches. The proposal for a new pitch at Tuckwell Fields opposite the cricket ground on the A417 east of Wantage will help to address this shortfall. The situation at Grove is similar to Wantage with a shortfall of sports pitches but play space is within standard. In Botley sports pitches meet the standard and play space is just below standard. At Faringdon sports pitches and play space are below standard.

8.11 Another relevant indicator is the percentage of residents within 20 minutes of a range of three different sports facilities. This is included in the Audit Commission's area profile for the Vale and in 2005 showed that in 2005 16.8% of the Vale's

population lived within 20 minutes travel time of 3 different sports facilities. This compares to the national average of 20.86% living within 20 minutes travel time of 3 different sports facilities. The Vale is therefore less sustainable in terms of the distribution of its sports facilities. However, this is probably an effect of the Vale's rural character which will mean that it will generally be below the average as the majority of the national population live in more urbanised areas.

8.12   Another relevant indicator in the Audit Commission's area profile for the Vale is resident satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities. The indicator specifically relates to whether residents of an area consider that sport and leisure facilities have improved or stayed the same in the past 3 years. For the Vale 93.26% of residents consider that sport and leisure facilities have improved or stayed the same. In comparison the national average for this indicator is 88.43% and for the County the figure is 89.17%. The Vale's residents are therefore slightly more satisfied with their sport and leisure facilities than either in the County overall or nationally. This is a subjective impression rather than an objective measurement of the provision of sport and leisure facilities, but it is a useful contextual indicator for assessing the quality of such facilities. It is likely that it reflects recent Council and private investments in leisure facilities in the Vale.

8.13   A further relevant indicator in the Audit Commission's area profile for the Vale is resident satisfaction with Parks/Open Spaces. The indicator refers to what percentage of an area's residents consider that parks and open spaces have got better or stayed the same over the previous three years. For the Vale the indicator shows that 94.17% of residents consider that parks and open spaces have got better or stayed the same in the last 3 years. In comparison the figure for the County is 86.41% and nationally the figure is 86.8 %. The Vale's residents are therefore more satisfied with their parks and open spaces than either in the County overall or nationally. This is a subjective impression rather than an objective measurement of the provision of parks and open spaces, but it is useful for assessing the quality of such facilities.

9.0   Sustainability

9.1   A significant sustainability indicator is the amount of water we consume. Recent dry periods have illustrated how dependant we are on a supply of water for our everyday lives. Reducing consumption and wastage of this increasingly scarce resource is therefore a desirable aim. Information on this subject is contained in the Audit Commission's area profile for the Vale and has been taken from information supplied by OFWAT. The information indicates that the average daily per capita consumption of water in litres in the Vale in 2003 was 154.14. In comparison the national average daily per capita consumption of water for 2003 was 154 litres. Per capita consumption of water in the Vale was therefore the same as the national average and is therefore no more or less sustainable than the rest of the country. No information is however available for previous years so a trend for water consumption cannot be established.

9.2   Information relating to the domestic consumption of gas and electricity is produced by the Audit Commission as part of its area profile for the Vale. It is taken from information produced by DTI Energy Trends. It indicates that the annual average per customer consumption of gas in the Vale in 2003 was 20,360 kWh. This

compares to a national average of 20,126.16 kWh which means that gas consumption in the Vale is slightly above average. However between 2001 and 2003 gas consumption in the Vale fell by 1.4% whereas the national average consumption rose by 1%. If these trends continue then gas consumption in the Vale should fall below the national average in the near future.

9.3   The average annual per customer consumption of electricity in the Vale in 2003 was 5,301 kWh. The national average per capita consumption for 2003 was however 4734.19 kWh. Per capita consumption of electricity in the Vale was therefore some 12% higher than the average. No information is available for previous years so a trend for electricity consumption cannot be established. However the figures indicate that in relation to the national picture the consumption of electricity in the Vale is significantly less sustainable. This may be related to a higher than average proportion of higher earners in the Vale with associated higher appliance usage.

9.4   Another matter which is a good sustainability indicator is the average amount of waste collected per head. Audit Commission figures for 2003/4 indicate that the average in England was 439.1 kilograms per head and in the South East was 533 kilograms. In comparison the Vale figure of 358 kilograms was much lower. Information on recycling from the Audit Commission shows that 19.4% of waste was recycled in the Vale in 2003/4 which compares to the figure for Oxfordshire of 17.5%.

9.5   Waste collected and the level of recycling are closely linked with higher recycling leading to lower levels of waste collection. Increasing population and further economic growth could mean that the total tonnes of household waste produced per annum in Oxfordshire could rise from 240,000 tonnes in 2003/4 to 410,000 by 2020. To meet Government targets recycling in Oxfordshire must rise from its current level of 24% to 33% by 2020. This would mean an 80% increase in the amount of waste recycled.

9.6   The Council monitors levels of nitrogen dioxide throughout the district using passive diffusion tubes and continuous monitoring. Monitoring is also undertaken to assess levels of sulphur dioxide, ozone, and airborne particles of less than 10 microns which are known as PM_{10} and benzene. The concentrations of air pollutants in the district do not exceed the national air quality objective levels except in the busy narrow streets of central Abingdon due to the levels of nitrogen dioxide from vehicle emissions. In view of this the council has been advised to declare an 'Air Quality Management Area' in the the centre of Abingdon. The council is working with the Highways Authority, Oxfordshire County Council with the aim of improving traffic-related air quality in Abingdon. The Abingdon Integrated Transport Strategy [AbITS] is one initiative to improve traffic flow in Abingdon. One of the aims of this strategy is to improve air quality through reduced traffic congestion in the centre of Abingdon.

9.7   Following the outcome of their Progress Report 2004, the Council commissioned NETCEN to undertake a Detailed Assessment for nitrogen dioxide at locations in the central Abingdon area. This Detailed Assessment has identified a significant risk of exceeding the UK objectives for NO_2 in 2005 and the EU Limit values for NO_2 in 2010 at the locations in central Abingdon studied in the detailed assessment. This necessitated the introduction of an air Quality Management Area in central

Abingdon with the need for a Further Assessment Report later this year (2007). This report will try to assess the impact of the AbITS road changes and to identify areas where the Air Quality Objectives are still being exceeded. It is anticipated that there may still be exceedences at some locations and that there may be the need to develop an Air Quality Action Plan in consultation with stakeholders and interested parties. This will follow on from the Further Assessment Report.

9.8   Elevated levels of NO_2 have also been noted at Westminster Way, Botley, close to the A34. Extended monitoring is now being undertaken in this area in order to inform a Detailed Assessment Report which may show exceedence of the Air Quality Objective. If this is the case there may be a need to declare an Air Quality Management Area in this locality. It is anticipated that this report will be available mid 2007.

Core Strategy SA Scoping Report A3 - Sustainability Issues and Problems

Stage A3 in the SA process involves the identification of any sustainability issues or problems that relate to the Vale. Some issues and problems have already been identified via the preparation of the Local Plan, others can be identified via the review of other plans and strategies and by examining the baseline data. Further issues and problems may arise as a result of the consultation on this document. The issues and problems will then be used to inform the sustainability objectives that will be the foundation of the sustainability appraisal framework. The following sustainability issues and problems have been identified in relation to the Vale:

- Lack of affordable housing

- Provision of employment opportunities

- Congestion on strategic and local road network

- Lack of alternatives to the private car

- Need to conserve water

- Reduction and prevention of flooding

- Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage renewables

- Protection of valued landscapes

- Quality of built environments

- Protection of cultural heritage

- Protection and improvement of biodiversity

- Need to restrain/reduce effects of noise air, water and light pollution

- Pressure for development, particularly housing

- Protection and provision of recreational facilities

- The health of Vale residents

- Impacts from tourism

- Low levels of educational achievement

- Action to address the causes and effects of climate change

- The generation of waste

Core Strategy SA Scoping Report – A4 Sustainability Objectives and Framework

1. Task A4 in the SA process is the development of a sustainability framework which will be used to assess the sustainability of policies and proposals in the Core Strategy. The foundation of this assessment is the development of sustainability objectives against which to compare the policies and proposals. These can be developed from the information gleaned via tasks A1, A2 and A3 already undertaken in this Scoping Report.

2. Once established the policies and proposals will be compared to the objectives and will be assigned a negative or positive effect where possible. The balance between the negative and positive values will then be used to measure the relative sustainability of options. It should be noted that it may not be possible to clearly define what effects a policy or proposal might have. In such cases an indeterminate value will have to be awarded or there may not be an effect in relation to that objective so a zero score would be given.

3. Where a score shows that there will be unsustainable impacts from a policy or proposal the first step will be to examine alternative options, if they are available, and if this does not resolve the issue then to consider what mitigation may be possible to reduce the impacts. It should also be noted that even after an appraisal finds a policy or proposal to be relatively unsustainable there may still be reasons to proceed with it. This would be the case for example in relation to the quantity of housing allocated to the Vale in the South East Plan. As it is a requirement of the South East Plan the Vale's Core Strategy will need to allocate sufficient land to meet the requirement. The aim of the appraisal is to reduce and mitigate unsustainable impacts. It is not possible to remove them all.

4. The Integrated Regional Framework (IRF), which is used as the basis for the SA of the South East Plan, contains 25 sustainability objectives under the following four headings drawn from the UK strategy for sustainable development A Better Quality of Life:

    - Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
    - Effective protection of the environment
    - Prudent use of natural resources
    - Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth

5. The 25 IRF objectives could be utilised as the basis of the SA framework for the Vale as other Council's have done. It is considered however that the objectives should relate as closely as possible to the Council's own objectives as set out below:

    a. Strengthen local democracy and public involvement through access to information, consultation, and devolution of power so that everyone can take part in our community and contribute to the decisions which affect our lives

    b. Create a safer community and improve the quality of life among Vale residents

    c. Encourage a strong and sustainable economy which benefits all who live in, work in or visit the Vale

d. Help disadvantaged groups and individuals within the Vale to realise their full potential

e. Provide and support high quality public services which are effective, efficient and responsive to the needs of people within the Vale

f. Protect and improve our built and natural environment

6. Out of these objectives it is considered that all of the objectives can be utilised to form sustainability objectives. Objectives b, c and f can then be split into subsidiary objectives. In relation to the 25 IRF objectives the following topics are not specifically reflected in the Council's overall objectives and are suitable sustainability objectives for a Core Strategy:

   i)   Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes;
   ii)   Reduced risk of flooding;
   iii)   Improved health and wellbeing;
   iv)   Raised educational achievement and skills levels;
   v)   Vibrant communities;
   vi)   Greater engagement in cultural activity;
   vii)   Sustainable use of land, buildings and materials;
   viii)   Reduced air pollution;
   ix)   Effective action on climate change;
   x)   Reduced road congestion and associated pollution;
   xi)   Maintained and improved river quality and water resources;
   xii)   Increased generation of energy by renewables; and
   xiii)   Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities.

7. It is considered that a combination of the Council's corporate objectives and those from the IRF provide a suitable range of sustainability objectives as set out below. Each objective has the relevant reference from the preceding objectives to show the linkages.

   1.   Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes (i)
   2.   Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public (a, e.)
   3.   Improved community safety (b)
   4.   Increased quality of life for Vale residents (b)
   5.   Raised educational achievement and skills levels (iv)
   6.   Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale(c)
   7.   Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities (xiii)
   8.   Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector (c)
   9.   Reduced road congestion and associated pollution (x)
   10. Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential (d)
   11. Vibrant communities (v)
   12. Greater engagement in cultural activity (vi)
   13. Improved health and wellbeing (iii)
   14. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity) (f)
   15. Improve and protect the built environment (f)

16. Sustainable use of land, buildings and materials (vii)
17. Effective action on climate change (ix)
18. Increased generation of energy by renewables (xii)
19. Reduced risk of flooding (ii)
20. Maintained and improved river quality and water resources (xi)
21. Reduced air, noise and light pollution (viii)

8. To ensure that these objectives take account of the sustainability issues and problems identified at stage A3 in the process the following table shows the relationship between the two. All the identified issues are addressed by the sustainability objectives.

Sustainability Objective	Relevant Issue/Problem
1. Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes (i)	Lack of affordable housing: Pressure for development, particularly housing.
2. Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public (a, e.)	
3. Improved community safety (b)	
4. Increased quality of life for Vale residents (b)	Protection and provision of recreational facilities.
5. Raised educational achievement and skills levels (iv)	Educational achievement
6. Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale (c)	Provision of employment opportunities
7. Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities (xiii)	
8. Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector (c)	Impacts from tourism
9. Reduced road congestion and associated pollution (x)	Congestion on strategic road network
10. Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential (d)	Lack of alternatives to the private car;
11. Creating vibrant communities (v)	
12. Greater engagement in cultural activity (vi)	
13. Improved health and wellbeing (iii)	The health of Vale residents
14. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity) (f)	Protection and improvement of biodiversity
15. Improve and protect the built environment (f)	Protection of valued landscapes and built environments; Protection of cultural heritage
16. Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources (vii)	
17. Effective action on climate change (ix)	Action to address the causes and effects of climate change
18. Increased generation of energy by renewables (xii)	Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage renewables

19. Reduced risk of flooding (ii)	
20. Maintained and improved river quality and water resources (xi)	Need to conserve water
21. Reduced air, noise and light pollution (viii)	Need to restrain/reduce effects of noise air, water and light pollution

9. The 21 sustainability objectives also need to be checked back against the objectives selected from the relevant plans and programmes reviewed in section A1 of this report. This is addressed in the third column of the table where the related sustainability objectives are set out.