



**Vale**  
*of White Horse*



Help us Shape the Future

# Preferred Options

Your Vale - Your Future

December 2008

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## **Section 1: Help Shape the Future of the Vale**

- 1.1 The District Council is preparing an important new plan - the Local Development Framework (LDF). It will replace the current Local Plan, help shape the future of the Vale up to 2026 and set out how new development is to be accommodated. A closely related document is the recently approved Sustainable Community Strategy called 'Working together for a better Vale'. It was prepared by the Vale Partnership, which brings together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors in the Vale (including the District Council). Both plans will address current issues and look to improve the quality of life in the Vale in the years ahead. Some issues will be tackled through policies and proposals in the Local Development Framework; others will be addressed through the Community Strategy. We want everyone living and working in the Vale to be involved in preparing the Local Development Framework, so please take time to read this report and let us have your ideas about the future.

### **What are Local Development Frameworks and Core Strategies?**

- 1.2 In 2004 the Government introduced a system of new regional plans and local development frameworks to replace local plans. This new approach goes beyond traditional land use planning to integrate policies for the use of land with other programmes that influence the nature of places and how they function. Planning authorities must consider the needs and problems of local communities and set out how social, economic and environmental objectives can be achieved through the policies in the LDF. Clearly there must be close working with local communities and service providers to ensure the LDF achieves the best outcomes for the future.
- 1.3 LDFs are made up of a number of separate documents. In the Vale these will be as follows.
- A Core Strategy which will set out a long-term vision and key objectives for the district up to 2026 - the same time horizon as the South East Plan. It will establish an overall approach for managing change and delivering development and this will be illustrated on a key diagram. Major new sites for housing, employment and retail development will be identified, as will the infrastructure needed to support them. The documents described below must comply with the Core Strategy.
  - A Managing Development document will allocate smaller sites for development and contain detailed planning policies to guide day-to-day decisions on planning applications for small scale developments.
  - A proposals map will show the sites identified for development in the Core Strategy and the Managing Development document, and show areas where other policies will apply.
  - Supplementary Planning Documents provide more detailed advice on a range of issues and individual sites. One has already been produced on Open Space, Sport and Recreation. Two others are being prepared: one will provide advice on the design of residential development and the other on sustainable construction. Both will give guidance on energy conservation, renewable energy and the design of buildings and the spaces around them to address the causes and impacts of climate change.

- 1.4 There are a number of other documents which have already been produced and are available on the Council's website
- A Statement of Community Involvement that sets out how the community will be involved in the process of preparing the LDF
  - A Local Development Scheme that sets out what documents will be produced and the timetable for preparing them. There is a useful diagram showing how the documents relate together
  - An Annual Monitoring Report that assesses the effectiveness of policies and progress on preparing LDF documents.

1.5 The Core Strategy, the Managing Development document, the South East Plan and the County Council's Mineral and Waste Development Plan Documents will make up the Development Plan for the Vale. Planning applications will be determined in accordance with the Development Plan.

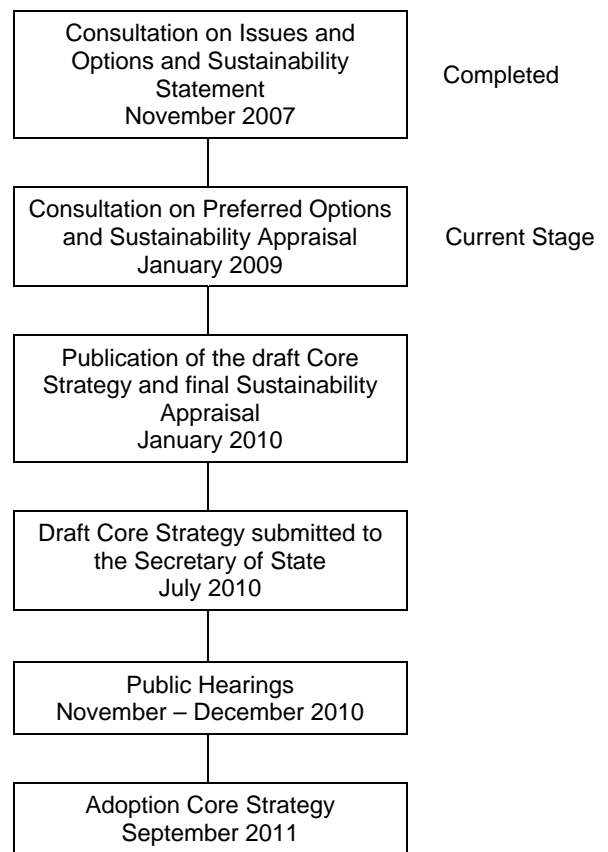
### Preparing the Core Strategy

1.6 The first key document the Council is preparing is the Core Strategy. The timetable and stages are set out in Figure 1.1. An Issues and Options report entitled "Your Vale – Your Future" was published in November 2007. The Vale Partnership and the District Council prepared it jointly. The report asked for people's opinions on a range of issues likely to affect the future of the district. It put forward possible solutions including broad options for the location of new development.

1.7 The next stage in preparing the Core Strategy is the publication of this Preferred Options report. It has been produced taking account of the comments received in response to the Issues and Options report and the findings from our evidence gathering (see paragraph 1.19 below). This Preferred Options report sets out:

- A description of the Vale today with some key issues facing the area
- A vision of what we want the Vale and the places within it to be like in 2026, together with objectives for achieving them
- The options for accommodating new development in accordance with the Council's preferred approach and what this means for different parts of the district
- An outline of how district wide issues (in Section 6) could be dealt with according to four main themes. It does not contain detailed wording of proposed planning policies or allocate small sites for development. For completeness and clarity this preferred options report gives a general indication of what will be included in the Managing Development document which will be published later

Figure 1.1



– A glossary to explain terms used in this report.

- 1.8 The next stage, after taking into account all of the comments received at the preferred options stage, will be to publish a draft Core Strategy for further comment. This will contain the policies for major development and how they will be achieved and monitored. Once comments have been received on the draft Core Strategy it will be amended and submitted to the Secretary of State. An independent Inspector appointed by Government will then examine the Core Strategy for its soundness (as set out in Planning Policy Statement 12). Objectors can put their case to the Inspector at a public hearing. The Inspector's report will contain recommendations to change the Core Strategy that the Council must take on board.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

- 1.9 The Council has to carry out a sustainability appraisal of all parts of the development plan to assess the likely social, economic and environmental effects. A Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was published for comment in March 2007 and a Sustainability Statement was published in November 2007 alongside the Issues and Options report. An updated Sustainability Appraisal report is available for comment alongside this report.

### **Context for preparing the Core Strategy**

- 1.10 Planning policies for the Vale have to take account of the context set by national and regional policies. Core strategies must not repeat national and regional guidance, but should apply it and develop locally distinctive policies. For ease of reference in the Core Strategy document we are thinking of summarising these 'higher level' policies the Council will apply and producing a 'companion document' that will set them out in full. The Council also has to take account of the plans and strategies of other organisations. Appendix 1 lists the guidance and studies taken into account when preparing this report.

### **National policy guidance**

- 1.11 National policies on a wide range of planning matters are contained in Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and more recent Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) issued by the Government. Overarching themes are for local authorities to deliver sustainable development and high quality, prosperous and inclusive communities with good access to jobs and services while responding to climate change. At the heart of these themes is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. A widely used definition of sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

### **Regional policies**

- 1.12 There are a number of plans produced at the regional level including housing and economic strategies. The most important for the LDF are the regional spatial strategies discussed below.
- 1.13 **The South East Plan** will be an enormously important influence on the future of the Vale as it will set the framework for development in the region to 2026, and decisions on planning applications will have to take its policies into account. It was prepared by

the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and subject to an independent public examination by a panel of inspectors from November 2006 to March 2007. The Panel's report was published in August 2007, and the Government's proposed changes to the plan, taking into account the views of the Panel, were published in July 2008. It is expected the plan will be approved in spring 2009.

- 1.14 The Core Strategy must be in general conformity with the South East Plan and show how its policies will be implemented at the local level. The South East Plan has a wide range of policies; some cover the whole region, and others apply to specific sub-regions. In effect the plan divides the district into two policy areas: the Central Oxfordshire policy area and the Rest of the Vale. The central and eastern parts of the Vale, including Abingdon, Botley, Wantage and Grove and the Didcot area, are within Central Oxfordshire. The boundary between the two is shown on Figure 1.2. Further details will be given in later sections of this report.
- 1.15 **The South West Plan.** The western edge of the Vale borders the south west region. The draft South West Spatial Plan identifies land on the eastern side of Swindon for a major urban extension of 12,000 dwellings. Following the Panel's report the Secretary of State published proposed changes to the plan in July 2008, which accepted the size of Swindon's eastern extension. Although the development will not extend into the Vale, the presence of such a large development close to the district will have implications including increased traffic on the A420 and minor roads, a demand for more fresh water supplies, and a growing concern that the nearby villages may lose their identity and rural setting. The Council has consistently objected to the proposals for the eastern expansion of Swindon but, if retained in the South West Plan, it will work with Swindon Borough Council and the communities on the western edge of the district to minimise any adverse effects in the area.

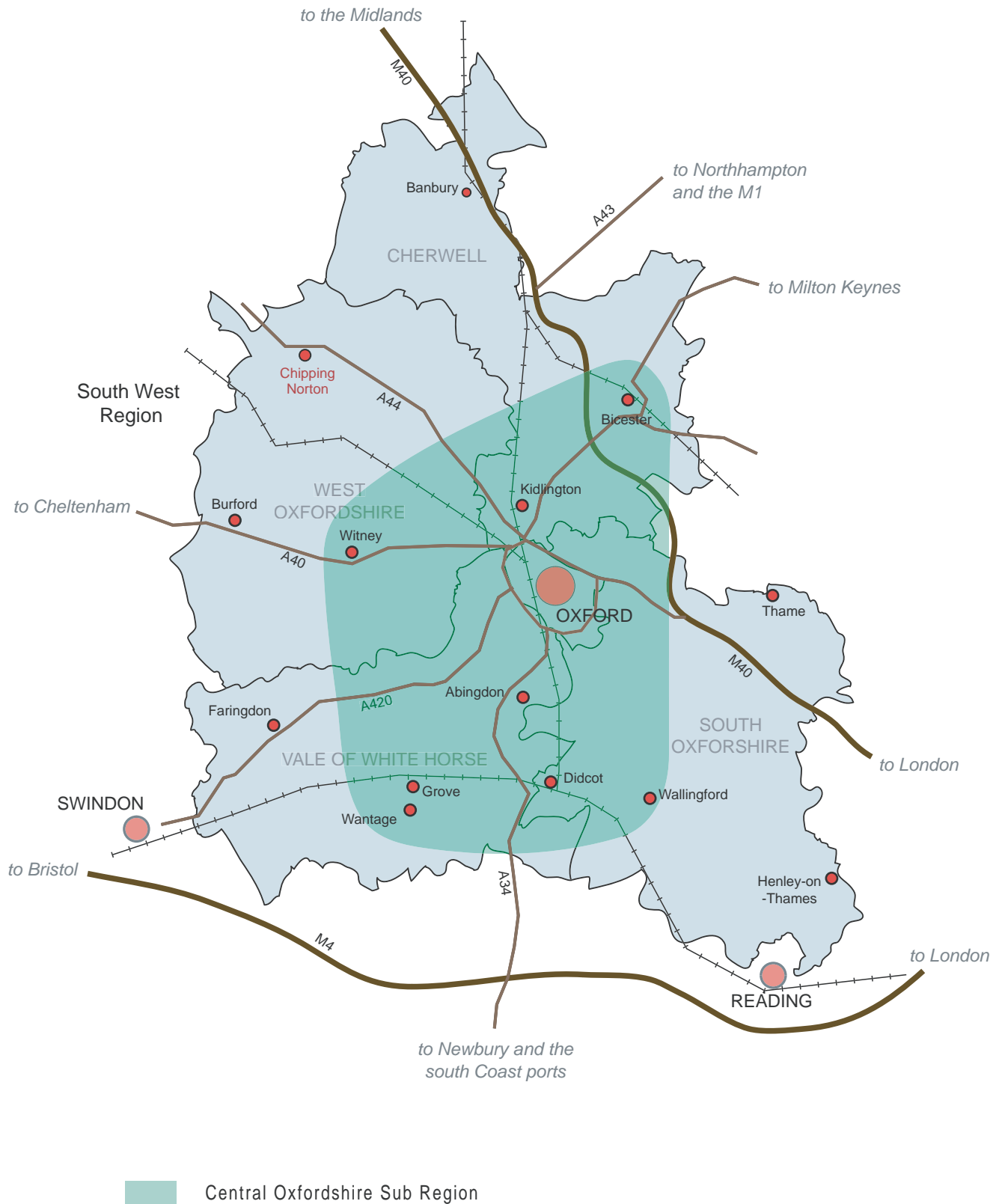
### **Local strategies, plans and partnerships**

- 1.16 Plans and strategies produced at the local level and local partnerships will also have a significant influence on the future of the Vale. Important plans and strategies include the Sustainable Community Strategies for Oxfordshire and the Vale, the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan, the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement and the other strategies and programmes of the District Council. All of these need to be taken into account by the Council in preparing the LDF.
- 1.17 The Local Development Framework has a key role in delivering the spatial, land use related aspects of the Community Strategy for the Vale. The Community Strategy to 2016 was approved by the Vale Partnership and the Council in October 2008.
- 1.18 The Community Strategy has a vision for the Vale to be a prosperous, inclusive and thriving community that has good access to a range of housing, jobs and services. It will also be a place where everyone can feel safe and enjoy life whilst having their needs met without compromising the natural and built environment. The vision, set out in section 3 below, has been developed so that it can be common to both the Core Strategy and the Community Strategy.

### **Local information and evidence**

- 1.19 To help understand the issues facing the district, we have gathered a great deal of information about the characteristics of the area and undertaken a number of detailed studies and consultations including

**Figure 1.2 The Vale in its wider setting**



- seeking the views of the public
- discussing the plans and strategies of other agencies with them to pick out issues that can be addressed through the LDF and to assess the deliverability of the options for development
- undertaking the following detailed studies on particular issues, sometimes with partners. Analysis of travel patterns of people living in new homes built between 2001 and 2007 in the Vale of White Horse
  - A study of village facilities in the Vale
  - Vale of White Horse Retail Study
  - Vale of White Horse Employment Land Review
  - Vale of White Horse Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
  - Vale of White Horse Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision Strategy, Background Report
  - Vale of White Horse Housing Needs Assessment
  - Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment
  - Landscape Assessment of Potential Housing Sites Around the Main Settlements
  - Habitat Regulations Assessment screening report
  - Parish Profiles
  - Vale of White Horse Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
  - 2006 - 2026 Oxfordshire Population Projections
  - Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Study (SCOTS)<sup>1</sup>
  - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for the Thames valley Region
  - Oxfordshire Travelling Show People Accommodation Assessment
  - Studies into air quality and noise levels from the roads west of Didcot
- All these will be available on the Council's web site from mid January.

1.20 Information has also been drawn from the Council's Annual Monitoring Report, Scoping Report and Sustainability Appraisal, and from the Oxfordshire Data Observatory which was set up by the Oxfordshire Partnership in 2004 to improve access to data for and about Oxfordshire communities. The Data Observatory can be contacted at [www.Oxfordshireobservatory.info](http://www.Oxfordshireobservatory.info)

**What are your views on the evidence we have collected?**

Question 1. Is there any additional information of which you think we should be aware?

**We need your views**

1.21 We would like to receive your comments on this Preferred Options report and the other supporting documents by 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009. From mid January all documents will be available for viewing on line at [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk) and during normal opening hours at all the local libraries in the district as well as at Didcot library and the Westgate library in Oxford. Copies of the document can also be seen at, and are available free of charge from, the Council Offices at Abbey House, Abingdon and the Local Services Point in Wantage and the Town Council Offices at Corn Exchange, Faringdon.

<sup>1</sup> The Central Oxfordshire Transport Study may also be available.



## **Submitting your comments**

- 1.22 Please send your comments by 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009, if possible via the Council's website [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk) . Otherwise send them by post to:

Development Policy Team  
Vale of White Horse District Council  
Abbey House  
Abingdon  
OX14 3JE

## **Exhibitions and discussion groups**

- 1.23 We will be holding a number of exhibitions and discussion groups across the district where you will be able to see what is proposed, speak to planning officers and join in discussion groups. Details of the venues and times are on our web site [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk) or phone 01235 520202.
- 1.24 **Your views are particularly sought on** the evidence the Council has gathered and whether there is any other information we should be aware of; the vision and objectives; the options for accommodating growth and what it means for the different places in the Vale. Detailed questions are contained in later sections of this report.

## **What happens next?**

- 1.25 Once the comments have been assessed we will start to prepare the Core Strategy document itself which will be submitted to the Government. We will involve the key service providers and also local communities in the areas where major change and development is proposed.

## Section 2: The Vale Today

- 2.1 In planning for the future of the Vale, it is important that decisions are firmly based on the characteristics of the district. This section sets out an assessment of the Vale today, first the factors and issues affecting the Vale as a whole and secondly those for individual places in the district.

### Factors affecting the Vale as a whole

#### Location

- 2.2 The Vale of White Horse District is a predominantly rural district stretching between the sub-regional centres of Swindon in the south west and Oxford in the north east. The south eastern edge of the district adjoins the growth town of Didcot. The district covers an area of some 580 square kilometres (224 square miles). It is bounded to the north and the east by the River Thames and to the south by the North Wessex Downs. The Vale takes its name from the 3,000 year old figure cut into the chalk downs near Uffington.

#### People

- 2.3 The 2001 census recorded that some 115,000 people lived in the Vale. By 2006 the population was estimated to have risen to 117,100<sup>2</sup> and there were 47,700 households in the district.<sup>3</sup> In 2006 a little over 16% of the Vale's population was estimated to be over 65 years old (in Oxfordshire the figure was 14.6% and in England as a whole the figure was 15.9%). Almost 26% was estimated to be under 20 years old (in Oxfordshire the figure was 24.4% and in England as a whole the figure was 24.3).
- 2.4 Population projections carried out for the County Council indicate that the population of the Vale will reach 139,000 by 2026 increasing by 17.8% over the 2006 population<sup>4</sup>. The proportion of the population that is over 65 will rise by 47% whereas the proportion of 15 to 64 will rise by 12.5% and those 14 and under will rise by 11.3 %. Average private household size is expected to fall from 2.4 in 2006 to 2.29 in 2026 meaning that in 2026 there will be just over 59,000 private households which is a rise of 11,550 or 24% over the 2006 figure of just under 48,000 private households. These figures are higher than those provided by the Office for National Statistics chiefly because they make different assumptions about migration and housing growth. In summary, over the lifetime of the LDF, and in common with national trends, the Vale will see an increasingly ageing population, with growing numbers of smaller and single person households.

#### Housing

- 2.5 There are about 48,000 homes in the Vale. Compared with the national average the housing stock is relatively modern and in generally good condition. Between 1996 and 2007 the Council's records show that nearly 4,000 homes were built in the Vale, of which almost 1,200 were affordable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mid 2006 Population Estimates from the Office of National Statistics – based on a continuation of past migration trends

<sup>3</sup> Small Area Population Forecasts, April 2006, OCC.

<sup>4</sup> Population projections prepared for Oxfordshire County Council – based on projected house building and household formation

<sup>5</sup> Vale of White Horse Annual Monitoring Report (2007)

2.6 Nevertheless, with house prices nearly nine times higher than average incomes, many local people continue to find it difficult to buy their own home or rent from a private landlord. The problem is particularly acute in the smaller communities where house prices are very high and few properties are available to rent from housing associations.

### **Education**

2.7 For a small rural district, the Vale is well provided for educationally. There is a total of 47 state primary schools, 9 of which are in Abingdon, 5 in Wantage, 2 in each of Grove, Botley and Faringdon and 27 in villages. These include special primary schools at Fitzwarren, Wantage and Besselsleigh. There are also a number of independent and special schools.

2.8 The district also has a number of tertiary educational establishments. These include the Abingdon and Witney College of Further Education, the Oxford Said Business School (formerly Templeton College) at Egrove Park in Kennington, the Westminster campus of Oxford Brookes University at Harcourt Hill, the Shrivenham Defence Academy, the Cranfield Defence College of Management and Technology and the Denman Adult Education College at Marcham.

### **Employment and the Economy**

2.9 Notwithstanding its predominantly rural character the Vale's economy has remained strong throughout the 1990s and early years of the new century, and opportunities for employment have been good. In 2006 in the Vale nearly 85% of those aged 16 and over were in employment, compared with some 78% and 74% in the South East and Great Britain respectively.<sup>6</sup> There was also an above average proportion of people in employment with above average earnings. However, as with all areas in the country there are uncertainties about the economic future of the district as a result of the current credit crisis and economic down turn.

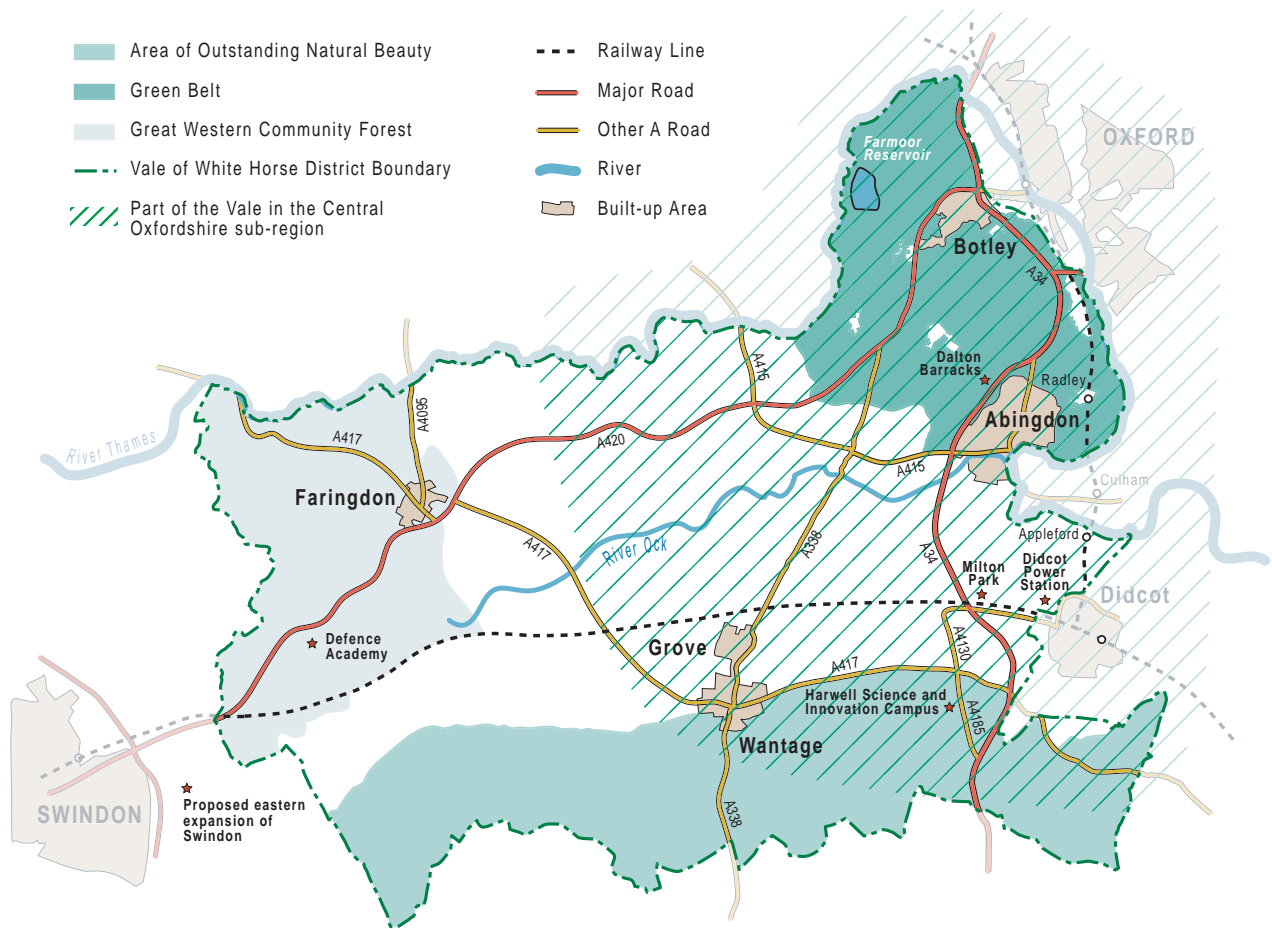
2.10 The Vale has a higher than average number of employees in service jobs and, because the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Milton Park and many research and development companies are located in the district, it has almost six times the national average of research and development jobs.<sup>6</sup>

- The Harwell Science and Innovation Campus covering an area of some 260 hectares (640 acres) is a leading location for science and technology based innovation and enterprise, including the Diamond Synchrotron and the ISIS neutron source. Over 4,500 people work for around 100 companies at the site.
- Milton Park covering an area of some 101 hectares (250 acres) is one of Europe's largest multi-use business parks, home to over 160 companies which employ around 6,500 people. There are over 160 companies on the site ranging from Cannon Haulage to Oxford Genome Sciences.
- The Vale also has two key military related sites providing a range of jobs. These are the Defence Academy at Watchfield and Dalton Barracks on the edge of Abingdon.

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Labour Market Profile ([www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk))

**Fig 2.1 The Vale today**



A key issue will be to raise the skill levels of local people to meet the expected growth in high tech and science based industries.

- 2.11 There are numerous rural business sites outside the main settlements and the rural economy is also supported by business activities which are directly related to the countryside, such as farming, forestry and equestrian activities.

### **Shopping and town centres**

- 2.12 Most of the main shopping outlets in the district are located in Abingdon, Wantage, Faringdon and Botley. They also have a range of other services including for example offices, libraries, museums, hotels, restaurants, bars and pubs. They provide a network of centres that serve their own communities and the surrounding villages. In addition there are local centres in residential areas of the towns and in villages. People tend either to shop in their nearest town centre or travel to Oxford, Swindon or Didcot. These offer a wide range of comparison goods that are not matched by centres in the Vale.

- 2.13 It is becoming apparent that some of the town centre developments in the Vale, built in the late 1960s and early 1970s, are not meeting the expectations of today's retailers and shoppers. The units tend to be too small and the environment dated. They are not enclosed, pavements and street furniture are poor, the buildings are no longer considered attractive, and the amount and location of car parking can be limited and inconvenient.
- 2.14 Throughout the country the development of large retail centres and the increasing number of people buying goods through the internet is threatening the vitality of market towns and their traditional role as service centres. The challenge is to create attractive local shopping environments in the towns and secure new shops of a sufficient scale and quality that attract key retailers and retain expenditure in the area. In addition there are opportunities for the Vale's historic town centres with their small shops, to attract independent, specialist businesses that provide a distinctive and contrasting experience to shopping in the multiple chains in large modern centres.
- 2.15 In common with national trends villages in the Vale have seen a decline in the number of shops and other services. New housing and employment development in villages will not bring new facilities unless it is of a major scale which would be out of keeping with and potentially damaging to their rural character. The challenge is to try and retain existing provision and enable small new shops and services to set up in response to initiatives from local entrepreneurs, particularly in the larger villages.

### **Transport and Accessibility**

- 2.16 The Vale is crossed by a number of important transport routes, which need to operate safely and efficiently if the economic success of the district is to be maintained.
- The A34 is of national significance providing an important link between the south coast ports and the Midlands. It also forms a vital part of Oxfordshire's road network, links towns within the Central Oxfordshire sub-region and provides links to the M4 and M40. It runs on a north to south alignment in the east of the district, passing closely to the west of Oxford, Abingdon and Didcot. The route frequently operates at or over capacity and traffic is routinely delayed especially in the morning and evening peak hours. There are capacity problems at the Marcham, Milton, Hinksey Hill and Botley interchanges which can cause delays on the A34 and the local road network. The Highways Agency has said there will be no major construction work to the road to increase its capacity over the next 20 years. A key issue is to plan development so it does not worsen the current traffic situation on this key route.
  - The A420 is a busy regional 'spoke' running north-east to south-west between Swindon and Oxford. The route has an improving safety record, but the Council will press for the effect of the proposed major expansion east of Swindon on traffic using the route to be thoroughly assessed and addressed before the expansion proceeds.
  - The A417 runs between Faringdon, Wantage and Harwell village. Given the level of accidents on this route and future levels of growth in the A417 corridor, measures to improve road safety and deal with the congestion at the Rowstock roundabout at peak traffic times will need to be considered.
  - The A415 between Abingdon and Witney is regularly congested during peak hours where it runs through Abingdon. The section through Marcham village has narrow, tight bends which are unsuitable for the large articulated vehicles that negotiate them. The draft South East Plan notes that improvements to the A415, particularly

the Marcham bypass, would provide an improved alternative to the A34 and A40 routes. There are also queues of traffic where it crosses the A338 at the Frilford traffic lights at peak times and the bridge over the River Thames at Newbridge needs to be replaced with a new structure on its western side. The County Council's Local Transport Plan indicates that improvements are needed between Witney and Abingdon in the period from 2011 to 2016, with a southern relief road for Abingdon beyond 2016 – but this is subject to further study.

- The A338 runs north to south and links Wantage and Grove with Oxford via the A420 from Tubney. There are particular problems on the route including the narrow bends at Venn Mill and at the Noah's Ark, and queues at the Frilford crossroads at peak times. Proposals for growth at Wantage and Grove will make it important that these problems are addressed.

- 2.17 Abingdon, Wantage, Grove, Faringdon and Botley have cycle and pedestrian networks that link residential areas to schools, shops and recreation areas.
- 2.18 Oxfordshire County Council has a strategy for supporting bus services across the county. In the Vale it includes the premium routes from Oxford to Abingdon, Wantage & Grove and Didcot and a number of second tier routes to destinations such as Faringdon, Swindon and Witney. Within the rural parts of the Vale there are community transport schemes as well as commercial services, however these services are not well enough developed to provide an alternative to the car.
- 2.19 The London Paddington to Bristol, South Wales and the west country railway line also runs east to west through the district. However, there are no stations on this line in the Vale. The nearest stations are at Swindon and Didcot. From Didcot a railway line links to Oxford and beyond to Birmingham and Worcester. Within the Vale on this line there are hourly services from the halt at Radley near Abingdon and a more limited service from Appleford halt to Oxford and Didcot. There is outline planning permission for a new rail station at Grove, but there are no proposals as yet by the train operators to bring this forward.
- 2.20 Within the district there is high car ownership. At the time of the 2001 Census, some 87% of households had access to a car, and of those households without a car, over 60% were occupied by residents over the state pension age. About half the people in the Vale live in villages where transport options are limited and for many the car will continue to be the main form of travel. Even so a key issue will be to ensure there are improvements to public transport, cycling and walking as these provide benefits to all people living in the Vale, as well as putting less pressure on the main road network and reducing harm to the environment.

## **Landscape**

- 2.21 The landscape of the Vale is attractive and varied. It divides into three main landscape character areas<sup>7</sup> which run generally east to west.
- In the south are the chalk downlands and rolling farmland of the Berkshire Downs - much of which are designated as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is an open landscape with vast panoramic views. At the foot of the Downs, the lower greensand has fertile soils, good tree cover and a

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<sup>7</sup> National Joint Character Areas, see link: <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CC/SEL/index.asp>

line of settlements along the spring line from Ashbury in the west to Blewbury in the east.

- In the centre of the district is the low lying flat clay vale of the River Ock and its tributaries.
- To the north is the Corallian Ridge with its typical landscape of wooded estate lands. Its steep north-facing scarp slopes afford fine views of the water meadows of the Thames valley. At the eastern end the ridge is an important part of the landscape setting of Oxford, and has been designated as part of the Oxford Green Belt.

These character areas have also been broken down into landscape types. The descriptions that apply are described in more detail in the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS)<sup>8</sup>. The north western part of the Vale around Faringdon is part of the Great Western Community Forest that surrounds Swindon.

## **Rivers**

- 2.22 The Vale has a long frontage to the River Thames and contains the River Ock and its tributaries including the Letcombe Brook. These waterways are important features which add diversity and interest to built-up areas and the countryside. They often enhance open spaces as well as providing corridors for recreation and wildlife.
- 2.23 The flood plains of these rivers cover extensive areas of the district, and with some 4,500 homes that could be affected, it is a serious issue in the Vale. Flooding could become more frequent and cover larger areas if the climate changes. Estimates indicate that peak river flows will increase by 10% by 2025. This is an issue the Council will have to address in the LDF.

## **Nature Conservation**

- 2.24 Within the district there are two internationally important nature conservation sites at Cothill Fen, near Abingdon, and Hackpen Hill, near Wantage; 23 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 84 County Wildlife Sites, some nine geologically important sites and five local nature reserves. Nine areas are identified as conservation target areas where the habitats could be restored.

## **Heritage**

- 2.25 The rich and varied built heritage of the district is recognised by its 52 conservation areas, 68 ancient monuments, a fine stock of over 2000 listed buildings and 8 historic parks and gardens. The Vale has a long history of settlement and an important archaeological heritage, with remains dating from prehistoric times. The range of sites and features is extensive including burial mounds, field systems, historic tracks and ancient settlements.

## **Places in the Vale**

- 2.26 The Vale is typical of many rural districts. At its heart are its three historic market towns, Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon, which provide essential services for the surrounding rural areas. There are more than seventy villages in the district, ranging

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<sup>8</sup> Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, see link from the County Council's web site : <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicsite>

from small hamlets to the large village of Grove. Beyond these, in the wider countryside, there are isolated farmsteads and small groups of dwellings, many of which in the past would have been related to and dependent on farming activity.

- 2.27 In the north east of the district is Botley,<sup>9</sup> a large, predominantly residential area on the outskirts of Oxford city. The town of Didcot lies close to the eastern boundary of the Vale in South Oxfordshire. Some of this town's future growth is soon to take place within the Vale, more of which is said in sections 4 and 5 of this report.
- 2.28 Just over half the Vale's population lives in Abingdon, Wantage, Grove, Botley and Faringdon. Together these comprise the Vale's five main settlements, described in more detail below. The geography of the district means that no village is really remote from one of the Vale's main settlements, with some villages also being conveniently close to Oxford, Didcot or Swindon.

### **Abingdon**

- 2.29 Abingdon is England's oldest continuously inhabited settlement. In 2001 the population was 31,289. Its attractive frontage to the River Thames and the fine array of old buildings at its historic core are major elements in its special character.
- 2.30 The town has experienced sustained growth over the last few decades with the development of extensive modern housing estates in the north, a business park in the west, a science park in the east, and the recent regeneration of sites in and close to the town centre. The 2001 census recorded that just over 15,000 Abingdon residents worked in the town<sup>10</sup>. More people are employed at Abingdon than at any other centre in the Vale and some of its companies are internationally known.
- 2.31 The town has a community hospital with a minor injuries unit, a college of further education, a library, a museum and seven secondary schools. The White Horse Leisure Centre which is a national centre of excellence for tennis, and the Tilsley Park sports centre provide modern, high quality facilities for sport. The River Thames, the open meadows beside it and Abbey Gardens are well used for informal recreation by locals and visitors to the town.
- 2.32 Recently, various initiatives for the rejuvenation of the town centre have been implemented. The central road system has been reconfigured with related environmental improvements to the public realm in the Market Place, Stert Street, around the Guildhall and the Abbey Gardens. Further improvements are also anticipated with, for example, the redevelopment of the Old Gaol and former police station.
- 2.33 Although public transport services are good from the town centre northwards to Oxford, there are problems of traffic congestion and air quality. These are being addressed through the changes to the road network, and the establishment of a town centre Air Quality Management Area should help lead to further improvements in air quality. To the west, traffic congestion occurs particularly along Drayton Road, Marcham Road and at the A34 Marcham interchange. A scheme to increase capacity along the section of the Marcham Road between the Tesco and Colewell Drive roundabouts will be completed during 2009. A challenge will be to complete the

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<sup>9</sup> Botley consists of those parts of North Hinksey and Cumnor parishes south and east of the A420 not designated Green Belt and including the Cumnor Hill and Chawley locations.

<sup>10</sup> 2001 Census, Workplace Population (UV75)



schemes proposed in the transport strategy and ensure that increases in traffic, particularly from the major growth at Didcot, do not cause further traffic problems. There are concerns that if there is no southern bypass, the congestion on the Drayton Road and at the double mini roundabouts at its junction with Ock Street and Marcham Road will increase. The District Council will press for the issue to be addressed in the next Local Transport Plan (2011-16).

- 2.34 The Bury Street and Charter areas of the town centre were redeveloped in the late 1960s to provide among other things a car free shopping precinct, multi-storey car park, library and health centre. These are now rather dated: the shop units are generally not large enough to attract national retailers and the library and health centre are too small to meet existing needs. Although Abingdon is only six miles from Oxford and cannot compete with the retail and commercial leisure facilities there, a challenge is to make a more attractive and vibrant centre that is able to meet the needs of residents of the town and surrounding rural area.
- 2.35 The risk of flooding is a particular problem for parts of the town, which sits at the confluence of the Thames, Ock and Stert rivers. This may have implications for the regeneration of some of the older parts of the town.

### **Botley**

- 2.36 Botley is located on the western outskirts of Oxford and it has a strong functional relationship with the city. Botley consists of those parts of North Hinksey and Cumnor parishes south and south east of the A420 not designated as part of the Oxford Green Belt. The residential areas around Botley include Cumnor Hill, Harcourt Hill, North Hinksey village and Chawley. The Green Belt boundary wraps tightly round the built-up area.
- 2.37 Botley is a service centre with a primary and secondary school, doctors surgery, library, family centre and community hall. It has a wide range of retail outlets including Elms Parade, West Way and at Seacourt. However, local residents tend to drive to out of centre stores some distance away for their main food shopping. An issue will be to explore opportunities to improve the retail offer over the lifetime of this plan. A variety of jobs are available at the Curtis Industrial Estate, the Hinksey Business Centre, the Minns Business Park, Seacourt Tower and Elms Court.
- 2.38 These retail and business areas are close to busy roads including the A34 and A420 and there are issues with traffic congestion, noise and air quality. Oxfordshire County Council recognises there are problems on Botley's roads and, subject to a more detailed study, expects any solutions to be focussed on measures to assist buses, cyclists and pedestrians. Commuter parking on residential streets and public car parks causes problems for local residents.
- 2.39 Parts of Botley are relatively low lying and these have frequently experienced flooding causing local sewers to overflow. A study undertaken on behalf of Thames Water indicates this will have to be remedied by a major upgrading of the sewers.
- 2.40 There are spacious residential areas off both sides of Cumnor Hill characterised by large well wooded gardens. The recent redevelopment of some of this for housing is felt by local residents to be spoiling this character, and it will need careful planning to avoid this in the years ahead.

- 2.41 On the higher ground on the southern edge of Botley is the Matthew Arnold secondary school and the Westminster campus of Oxford Brookes University. There are views of collegiate Oxford from this higher ground.
- 2.42 Raleigh Park and the Louie Memorial field are important open spaces within the area and there is good access to attractive countryside beyond. Although the secondary school and Westminster Campus have built sports facilities, there is a shortage of sports facilities that are available for public use.

### **Wantage and Grove**

- 2.43 The town of Wantage and the nearby village of Grove are separate but closely related and interdependent communities.

### **Wantage**

- 2.44 Wantage is an historic market town, thought to be the birth place of King Alfred. It is the second largest settlement in the district and a shopping and service centre for the central part of the Vale. In 2001 the population was 9,767. Its attractive market place and downland setting are essential components of its character.
- 2.45 It has four primary schools (one is a private preparatory school), the Fitzwarren special school, King Alfred's Community and Sports College, a community hospital, a residential home, a library, the Wantage Civic Centre, the Wantage Leisure Centre and the Vale and Downland Museum. There are plans to rationalise King Alfred's school onto two sites which will provide an opportunity to consider the future of the land no longer needed by the school. A challenge will be to upgrade the leisure centre to meet the growing recreational requirements of Wantage and Grove.
- 2.46 The former industrial area around Limborough Road has recently been redeveloped to provide a new Sainsbury supermarket and other retail and residential units, and the site of St Mary's School is being redeveloped for housing. An issue is the vacant and under used premises around the Waitrose supermarket in Wallingford Street which offer an opportunity to improve the retail offer and appearance of the town. A 'Health Check' has been carried out to provide an informed context to maintain the economic success of the town. A key challenge for the plan will be to maintain the vibrancy of the whole town centre, and serious thought will need to be given to how to retain and improve the character of the historic Market Place.

### **Grove**

- 2.47 Grove is a large village to the north of Wantage. In 2001 the population was 7,845. It has two primary schools, a library, the Millbrook and Grovelands local shopping centres and a village hall. The local health centre is serving both communities located north of Mably Way. Major housing development was allowed on appeal in the 1960s and there has not been the provision of the range and quality of services a settlement of this size would normally expect. There are also more economically active residents in the village than there are jobs.
- 2.48 The key local employment areas for the two communities are at Grove Technology Park, Crown Packaging, Williams F1 and Autotype. A major issue for the future will be how best to meet the employment needs of the growing communities.

- 2.49 The Local Plan 2011 identifies the former airfield west of Grove as a strategic housing site for some 2,500 homes. This will be carried out in accordance with comprehensive development principles to achieve a distinctive high quality sustainable development with a range of facilities including a new primary and secondary school, library, community buildings, sports pitches and a community park. This development will also enable improvements to the local road network including a new road to the north of the village and contributions towards a Wantage eastern relief road scheme.
- 2.50 A policy in the Local Plan identifies the important open land between Wantage and Grove which is to be protected from built development. The proposed community park and sports pitches lie within the gap and will help secure its protection for the long term. The line of the former Wilts and Berks canal also runs through this area. A challenge will be to help restore it to navigation and provide waterside facilities for informal recreation, walking and cycling.
- 2.51 Together, Wantage and Grove are identified in the draft South East Plan as a major location for growth. How much growth, where it should be located and the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities are key challenges for the Core Strategy.

### **The Didcot Area**

- 2.52 Didcot is just over the district's boundary in South Oxfordshire. In 2001 its population was 23,468. It is estimated that by 2026 the town's population will be nearly 34,800.
- 2.53 Didcot was a small rural village until the arrival of the railway in the 1840s. The railway meant more jobs and a greater demand for housing. The town continued to grow through the 20<sup>th</sup> century; a coal fired power station was built in the 1960s and a gas fired station in the 1990s. Major employment areas have grown up west of the town centre; at the Southmead industrial estate in South Oxfordshire, and at Didcot Power Station, Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus about 6 miles to the south west on land in the Vale. A key issue will be to ensure that local people have the skills to take the high tech jobs provided on these sites.
- 2.54 There has been a recent major redevelopment of the town centre providing much improved shopping and cultural facilities and there are plans for further improvements. Major housing growth of 8,750 homes is proposed in the draft South East Plan between 2006 and 2026, 1,500 of which are a result of South Oxfordshire District Council succeeding in a new growth point bid. This offered the opportunity to get additional funding from Government to help provide the infrastructure, services and facilities to support the high level of growth that is planned. Some 5,500 homes will be built to the west of the town, 2,900 of which will be built in the Vale. Key challenges will be to successfully integrate this major new development into the town, provide the services and facilities when they are needed and minimise the harm to the surrounding villages many of which – including Harwell, Milton, Sutton Courtenay and Appleford - are in the Vale. The A34 Milton Interchange just west of Didcot is often seriously congested and a major challenge will be to provide the improvements to the transport infrastructure necessary to support the efficient functioning of the town as it and the major employment areas grow and develop.

## **Faringdon**

- 2.55 Faringdon is the Vale's smallest market town. The population was 6,187 in 2001. Its attractive landscape setting on the limestone ridge overlooking the Thames Valley, its period Market Hall and town houses give it the ambience of a quintessential English market town. From afar the town is dominated by Folly Hill and its iconic tower. The A420 bypasses the town.
- 2.56 Although it acts as the local service centre and has a reasonable range of local shops and services, many people look to Oxford and Swindon for work and their higher order goods and services. It has one infant and one junior school, a secondary school, a health centre, a swimming pool, a leisure centre, a library and three hotels.
- 2.57 The Local Plan 2011 allocated land for some 400 houses and a new business centre between the town and the bypass. The housing development is now underway and outdoor leisure facilities at Jespers Hill are soon to follow. A key challenge will be to continue to maintain the vitality and historic character of the town and its centre, and ensure that future development supports the social and economic well-being of the town and its residents.

## **The Rural Areas**

- 2.58 The rural settlements vary in terms of size, character and availability of services. Services and facilities have been lost from many rural settlements so reducing local availability. Work done by the Council<sup>11</sup> shows that there is a hierarchy of villages ranging from those with a good range of services and facilities which, like Kingston Bagpuize and Stanford in the Vale for example, act as rural service centres for local day to day needs, to a number whose only remaining facility is the historic church. The high cost of houses in the area and the relatively few new houses being built in rural locations mean that local villagers have limited access to suitable housing. A key challenge for the future will be to secure the provision of affordable housing to meet needs in the Vale's rural communities.
- 2.59 The character of the Vale's villages also varies, but many have been able to retain their attractive rural character while at the same time being able to assimilate limited development. The historic cores of 45 of the Vale's villages are designated Conservation Areas to safeguard their special character. Others, while not having conservation area status are nevertheless attractive places to live with strong communities, popular with residents. There is also a fine stock of listed buildings throughout the rural Vale. These range from magnificent country houses to modest cottages and include structures such as bridges, memorials, telephone kiosks and gravestones. There are also seven historic parks and gardens in the rural areas.
- 2.60 The economy of the rural Vale is changing. Agriculture and forestry are still major land uses but employ less than 2% of those in work. Alongside the traditional farming there are other activities including commercial horse rearing, farm shops, farm diversification, and leisure and tourist developments. Rurally located business sites offer an alternative and often cheaper option for local enterprises than the larger business parks and industrial estates and can provide valuable local employment in rural areas. These include the sites at Ardington, Challow, Radley, Kingston Bagpuize, Stanford in the Vale, Shrivenham, Steventon, Uffington, Watchfield and Wootton.

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<sup>11</sup> 'A Study of Village Facilities in the Vale', Vale of White Horse District Council, December 2007

**What are your views on the description of the Vale today and the issues and challenges for the future?**

Question 2. Do you agree with the way the Vale and the challenges for the future are described? It is meant to be a broad overview, but please let us know if you disagree or have any thing you wish to add.

## Section 3: The Vision and Objectives for the Future

- 3.1 In planning for the future of the Vale it is important that the Council has in mind a clear vision of how the area and the places within it should develop and what they will be like in 2026 if its plans and strategies are successful. This section sets out how the Council considers the Vale could change in the future. The Council's vision for the future and its objectives have to take into account national and regional policies and the characteristics of the district. They should reflect the issues and challenges facing the Vale and the aspirations of local people and organisations. Even though it may not be possible to achieve all objectives by 2026, setting them out now will establish the future direction of travel, guiding future development and investment in the Vale. **The Council acknowledges that its vision contains aspirations and objectives that it cannot deliver alone. In many cases delivery will depend on the actions of its partner organisations taken forward through the Sustainable Community Strategy.**

### The vision and objectives for the Vale as a whole

- 3.2 The vision for the Vale as a whole set out below is common to both the LDF and the Sustainable Community Strategy. As explained earlier, each of these documents will deliver different aspects of the vision: to be effective this will require close working between the Council and its many partner organisations.

The vision for the future is a sustainable Vale

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

- 3.3 The objectives for the Vale are that in 2026

1. The development proposed for the area in the South East Plan has been provided and high quality, sustainable homes have been built that create attractive environments close to shops, community facilities, jobs and public transport. The homes meet the needs of all the population, including the elderly, disabled, families and young adults. Affordable homes have been built throughout the Vale and the local needs of the gypsy and traveller community are provided for.
2. New shopping, leisure, recreational, health, educational and community facilities have been provided and existing ones improved. The network of high quality green spaces in and around the towns and villages and indoor and outdoor sport facilities are well used and enjoyed by people living and working in the Vale.
3. Most new development has been focussed at the main settlements of Abingdon, Wantage and Grove, Faringdon, Botley and the western edge of Didcot. Limited development in villages has helped retain services and facilities that meet

people's day to day needs. This has helped reduce carbon emissions by minimising the need to travel by car.

4. The local economy is successful. There are diverse, secure, well-paid and rewarding jobs. The science and research facilities and associated businesses at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and Milton Park have expanded and are the envy of many other areas. The rural economy is thriving.
5. The market towns of Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon are economically buoyant with a good range of local businesses, shops and other facilities. The flourishing town centres retain their historic charm and character.
6. Public bus services provide good, frequent access between the main towns within the Vale and with Milton Park, the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Oxford, Swindon and Didcot. Many villages have good access to these services and community bus services are successful in rural areas.
7. There are good cycle and footpath routes within and between communities: those in the countryside are well maintained and used for recreation.
8. The rail station at Grove is popular with residents living in the central parts of the Vale and its services have helped reduce the flows of traffic from Grove and Wantage in the peak hours.
9. The findings of the South Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy have been acted on and have allowed development to proceed without major traffic impacts on the A34 or people living in Wantage, Grove, Didcot and the surrounding villages.
10. The Vale is still an area of beautiful countryside, rich in wildlife, famed for its built heritage, wide-open landscapes, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and views of collegiate Oxford which are all protected from development.
11. The Oxford Green Belt has been maintained.
12. The district's towns, villages and countryside are attractive places, enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.
13. All new buildings respect the character and local distinctiveness of the Vale. They are energy and resource efficient and able to withstand more extreme weather conditions, and progress is being made to bring older buildings to similar standards.
14. There is improved flood protection for people and properties and vulnerable uses are no longer allowed in areas with a medium or high risk of flooding.
15. Schemes for the production of renewable energy provide a good proportion of the district's needs and have been designed in sympathy with the local environment.
16. Less waste is produced and a high proportion of waste products are recycled. Those that cannot be put to productive use through other processes including composting and energy recovery.

17. The water supply to the residents of the Vale and surrounding areas is secure, reliable and safe. If the needs case has been proven, a major reservoir to the south west of Abingdon, has been built, it is well designed and landscaped with bio-diverse habitats, and it provides a wide range of popular informal leisure and water sports.

## **The Vision and Objectives for places in the Vale**

### **The Vision and Objectives for Abingdon**

- 3.4 Abingdon is the Vale's main town and service centre. The objectives for Abingdon are that in 2026
1. Its vibrant town centre has a successful range of varied and specialist shops, restaurants, public houses and hotels. It has improved cultural facilities and a buoyant local economy providing a range of jobs enjoyed by local residents. A range of uses, including residential and offices, occupy the first and second floors of many central buildings.
  2. Bury Street Precinct and the Charter area have been comprehensively and attractively developed for new shops and town centre uses that have improved the retail offer and vitality of the town centre.
  3. Environmental improvements elsewhere have enhanced the historic character of the town including High Street, the southern side of Market Place and Ock Street. The reuse and redevelopment of old buildings, including the Old Gaol and former police station in Thames Street and the refurbishment of the old County Hall, have brought new vitality to the town.
  4. There are good facilities for cycling, walking and car parking. There are frequent reliable bus services to Oxford, Didcot, Wantage, Milton Park and Harwell Science and Innovation Centre.
  5. Traffic congestion across the town has eased with improvements carried out in the town centre, along Marcham Road and by completing the four-way junction onto the A34 at Lodge Hill. A new bypass and river crossing to the south of the town has been built and has relieved congestion. If a major housing site has been built to the south west of the town, the first part of the southern bypass from Marcham Road to Drayton Road has been completed.
  6. Air quality throughout the town has been improved.
  7. The networks of attractive and tranquil green spaces are well used for informal recreation. The River Ock retains its rural character and provides an attractive pedestrian route away from traffic into the town centre. The Stert valley provides an attractive leafy open space and provides a safe route into the town centre for local residents. The undeveloped floodplain of the River Thames provides a unique riverside setting for the historic town.



8. Abingdon is an important centre for sailing, rowing, motor boating and other water based activities on the River Thames. The path beside it is well used by long distance and local walkers.
9. Visitors are attracted to the historic town centre, the museum, the Abbey Gardens and the River Thames and its meadows. The rebuilt Wilts and Berks Canal to the south of the town is a well used recreational facility which attracts visitors to the area.
10. The White Horse Leisure Centre continues to provide high class sports facilities for the town and surrounding areas.
11. Measures are in place to protect properties from flooding and vulnerable development has not been allowed in the floodplain.
12. Fairacres retail park provides a range of comparison (non food) shops selling bulky goods that complement but do not compete with those in the town centre. The superstore at the A34 Marcham Interchange is a main outlet for day to day shopping.
13. Dalton Barracks has been successfully upgraded to meet its operational and accommodation needs and retains its role as an important part of the Abingdon community.
14. The openness of the Green Belt west, north and east of the town has been retained.

### **The Vision and Objectives for Wantage and Grove**

- 3.5 Wantage and Grove are successful separate but interdependent communities with their own distinct identities. The objectives for Wantage and Grove are that in 2026
1. The town centre of Wantage has been sympathetically regenerated:
    - the shops built 20 years ago in the Limborough Road area west of the Market Place continue to thrive and have boosted the vitality of the shops in Mill Street and Grove Street
    - the redevelopment of the area around Wallingford Street, Waitrose and Campbells Yard east of the Market Place has further strengthened the retail offer of the town
    - these provide two popular destinations, generating strong pedestrian movements through the refurbished historic Market Place.
  2. The historic centres of Wantage, Charlton and the old village of Grove have retained their distinctive characters and charm.
  3. Visitors continue to come to enjoy the local tourist attractions in Wantage including the historic market place, the Vale and Downland Museum, and the nearby Berkshire Downs, White Horse and Ridgeway path.
  4. Local people are proud of recent housing developments in the area and the way they have integrated with the environment and socially with the established communities.

5. The secondary school at Grove provides an excellent range of facilities for local people; and the new public library, community centre, primary school, sports and youth facilities and community park make Grove a place where people are proud to live and work.
6. Wantage has modern indoor leisure facilities and there are good facilities for outdoor sport and recreation including Tugwell Fields to the west and improved sports pitches to the south of the town.
7. The local economy provides a range of jobs for residents. Grove Technology Park, Crown Packaging, Williams F1, Autotype and a new business park are flourishing and the smaller businesses within the town are successful. Although people continue to find work in Oxford and the two major employment sites at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, new jobs have been provided in the area.
8. The health check for Wantage and Grove has helped the economic success of the two communities.
9. Public bus services provide good, frequent access to other towns and the major employment sites at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus.
10. The rail station at Grove is open and is popular with residents.
11. Two new roads, one to the north of Grove and one to the north east of Wantage, have relieved traffic congestion on the local road network within Grove and Wantage, improved the speed and reliability of bus services and improved the local environment and quality of life of people living beside the previously busy roads.
12. Work is about to start on a road to the north west of Wantage that will complete the Wantage relief road and bring further traffic relief to the historic market place and the residential areas in the western parts of Wantage. The road has been a major factor in attracting new business to the area.
13. There is a well landscaped and much used area of open space between Wantage and Grove, and the Wilts and Berks Canal has been restored along a substantial part of its length and is a valued local amenity.
14. Careful and sensitive management of the Letcombe Brook has enhanced its appearance and ecological value. It provides an attractive route between the two communities for cyclists and walkers.
15. Potential flooding from housing development on the former airfield at Grove has been prevented by the careful design and construction of a drainage scheme.

### **The Vision and Objectives for Faringdon**

- 3.6 Faringdon is a small, but thriving market town serving the western part of the Vale. The objectives for Faringdon are that in 2026

1. It has retained its special character as an historic market town in an attractive landscape setting.
2. The shopping offer in the town centre has been revitalised and attracts residents and visitors alike and they enjoy the pleasant ambience of the market place.
3. New homes to the south east of the town have successfully integrated with the established community. The new residents use the services and facilities in the town and have supported improvements to the social and cultural facilities.
4. Businesses in the town are thriving and the town is nearly self sufficient in employment terms. The high quality business park at the junction of Park Road and the A420 is a high profile and attractive entrance to the town. Further employment development has taken place in association with the new housing.
5. Public bus services provide good, frequent access to Swindon, Wantage, Abingdon, Oxford and Witney; and together with the community bus, there are good services into Faringdon from the surrounding area.
6. Park Road is a safe and attractive main entrance to the town, and one that people are proud of.
7. There is good provision for leisure and sport including a well used artificial playing surface.
8. Folly Park - with its well-landscaped area for informal recreation, cricket field, rugby pitch, pavilion and skate park - is very popular with people living and working in the town.
9. The historic landscape setting of Faringdon has been protected, and local people and visitors frequently walk to Folly Hill to enjoy the panoramic views.

### **The Vision and Objectives for Botley**

- 3.7 Botley is a thriving community on the western outskirts of Oxford city. The objectives for Botley are that in 2026
1. The upgraded Botley shopping area, with an improved community centre and library, is an attractive and busy place, successfully providing a wide range of goods and services to the local community.
  2. New housing has been built without harming the character of the area.
  3. Cumnor Hill has retained its generally leafy character that makes it such an attractive and desirable place to live, and the conservation area of North Hinksey has retained its village character.
  4. Noise and air quality issues adjacent to the A34 have been addressed and there is greater use of public transport.
  5. Improvements to the local drainage system have resolved the problems of the sewers overflowing.

6. The Green Belt around the area has been maintained and the views of collegiate Oxford have been protected and continue to be enjoyed by local people.
7. The modernised Westminster Campus on Harcourt Hill continues to provide high quality higher education, and local people are able to use its sports facilities.
8. Local leisure facilities have been improved including the Louie Memorial field and the Fogwell playing pitches.
9. There are improved footpaths to the countryside including a safe crossing of the A420 to Wytham Hill and Seacourt and Hinksey Streams.

### **The Vision and Objectives for the area west of Didcot**

3.8 The area in the Vale west of Didcot is a successful, sustainable and high quality major new addition to the town. The objectives are that in 2026

1. South of the A4130 a major development of high quality homes has been built to the highest achievable standards of sustainable design and construction. A good range of new facilities including a secondary school and a science based learning park, community centre, local shops and sports facilities serve the development. Residents have integrated well with the rest of Didcot with easy access by frequent and reliable buses, or along safe and convenient footpaths and cycle ways, to the other facilities in the town. These include the thriving and vibrant town centre with its good range of shops and evening activities, multipurpose leisure centre, a network of linked green spaces and an attractive and efficient rail station providing interchange facilities to other modes of travel.
2. Investment in a range of transport initiatives has resulted in a number of improvements:
  - a new road running beside the A34 linking the A4130 with the A417 in the south, has resulted in less traffic congestion particularly at the A34 Milton interchange and relieved the villages of Harwell and East and West Hagbourne of through traffic.
  - the appearance of the A4130 Didcot – Milton Heights link road is much improved through major landscaping, particularly south of the road, where there are well used pedestrian and cycle routes linking the housing west of the town to the rail underpass into Milton Park.
3. At the A34 Milton interchange, the motel and services area has been improved to provide modern and attractive facilities.
4. Milton Park continues to create employment in a wide range of modern high quality business units in a well landscaped setting. They are attractive to businesses that offer well paid secure jobs for people in the south of the county.
5. Some limited additional land has been developed to replace the jobs from the former Steventon Storage Depot.
6. Didcot power station continues to generate electricity using the most fuel efficient and sustainable technologies.

7. The separate identities of the villages of Harwell, Milton, Sutton Courtenay and Appleford close to Didcot and Milton Park have been maintained, and there are open areas of attractive landscape between the villages and the recent new development.
8. The waste disposal site to the north of Didcot power station is now largely completed and restored. If the County Council decides that an incinerator will be built north of Didcot Power Station it will have been carefully designed to lessen its impact in its surroundings, to incorporate the highest technical standards so it does not have any adverse effects on the local environment and traffic going to and from the site does not cause congestion on local roads or harm local amenities.

### **The Vision and Objectives for the Rural Areas**

3.9 The rural areas of the Vale are attractive and prosperous with a diverse economy. The objectives for the rural areas are that in 2026

1. The countryside and villages have maintained their distinctive character and are much enjoyed by those living, working and visiting the Vale.
2. The larger villages have retained their services and provide for people's day to day needs including those living in the nearby smaller villages.
3. New homes have been built in small-scale schemes, reflecting the distinctive character of the villages, and providing much needed affordable homes. The new residents are helping to sustain the services and social life of the communities.
4. Commercial and community buses provide links to the nearby towns.
5. The rural economy is strong due to its successful agricultural and equestrian enterprises, farm diversification, tourism and thriving small businesses in villages and on rural business sites.
6. Countryside footpaths, cycleways and bridleways are well way-marked and used. The White Horse, Ridgeway and River Thames continue to provide a focus for visitors. New opportunities along the restored Wilts and Berks canal and in the area of the Great Western Community Forest are growing in popularity.
7. The extreme south-western part of the Vale has been protected from adverse effects of the eastwards expansion of Swindon by a well landscaped rural buffer between the town and the Vale.
8. If a reservoir has been built in the Vale it will have been successfully landscaped to soften its visual impact on the surrounding countryside. It will be a popular venue for water sports and the banks will provide areas for wildlife and access for informal recreation, with appropriate road infrastructure and services such as car parking.

<b>What are your views on the vision and objectives?</b>
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Question 3. Do you agree with the vision and objectives for the future of the Vale and the places within it? If not please give your reasons.

## **Section 4: The spatial strategy - the location of new development**

- 4.1 In preparing the Local Development Framework the Council has to make sure enough land is brought forward to provide homes and jobs for local people and ensure the economy can continue to flourish. It must show where new homes will be built, where opportunities to provide new jobs will be created and where new infrastructure and services (such as new roads, schools, shops and leisure facilities) will be required. The aim should be to foster healthy, thriving, sustainable towns, villages and countryside.
- 4.2 The decisions the Council has to make should be based on a sound, clear and consistent strategy – a “spatial strategy”, which looks at how the district and the places within it will function and relate together, and how new development, infrastructure and services can best be delivered to achieve the vision and objectives set out for the Vale and its communities in Section 3 of this report.

### **The context for the spatial strategy**

- 4.3 The Council’s spatial strategy has to be consistent with national and regional policies and should be based on sound evidence about the district, its needs and how it functions. This section outlines briefly what national and regional policies tell us we have to do, what the studies the Council has undertaken say about the future needs of the area and how people responded to the Issues and Options consultation . A full list of the documents referred to is in Appendix 1.
- 4.4 The draft South East Plan (policy CO1) directs most development in the south of the Central Oxfordshire sub-region to Didcot and Wantage & Grove. The plan refers to promoting this area as a location for higher value and knowledge-based businesses. It will focus on the designation of Didcot as a new growth point and the potential of the established research and business parks for further growth (principally Milton Park and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus). There are also references to pooling resources and contributions from developments to help deliver the transport improvements needed in the area and reduce pressure on the A34.

### **Housing**

- 4.5 National and regional policies require the Council to:
- Locate housing where
    - there are good community facilities and services
    - there is good access to jobs and key services such as health, education and leisure
    - the need to travel by car can be minimised
  - Provide a continuous supply of land so a minimum of 11,560 homes can be built in the Vale between 2006 and 2026 with 10,240 in the Central Oxfordshire part of the Vale and 1,320 in the rest of the district
  - Identify a supply of housing land to 2027(as it has to last for at least 15 years from the date of adoption of the LDF) and show alternative sites in case the ones identified do not come forward for development as expected
  - Test whether more homes should be built than set out in the draft South East Plan.

- 4.6 Figure 4.1 shows the scale of the challenge the Council faces – to find sites for about 4,470 new homes in the district. This assumes that 520 homes will be built on small sites of less than 20 houses in the last 5 years of the plan period that are not specifically identified in the plan (windfall sites), and at least 500 homes on sites of between 20 and 200 houses that will be identified later in the Managing Development document. The sites which the Council believes could be developed are listed in Figure 4.1. A detailed assessment of possible sites in and around the main settlements and larger villages is in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that is available on the Council's website. Further work will be carried out to see whether other sites could be allocated in the Managing Development document.

**Are there any other sites that could be used for housing in towns and villages?**

Question 4. Are there any other sites within the built up areas of settlements, in addition to those referred to in Figure 4.1, that could be developed for housing by 2027? If answering yes, please give

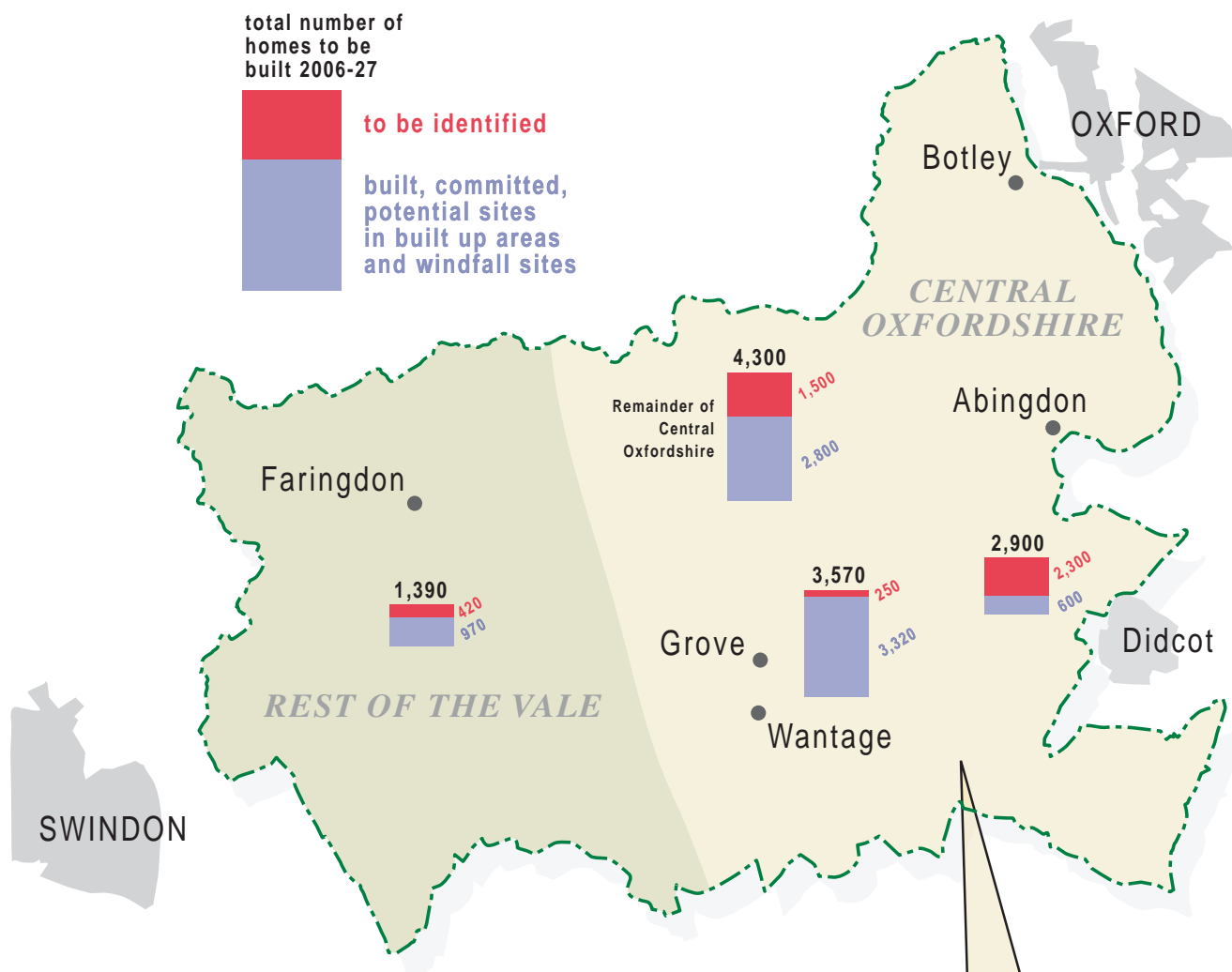
- the name, location (including a site plan) and size of the site
- its current land use, why that use will no longer be needed or where it will be relocated
- the date the site might be available for development and the number of homes that could be built on it
- details of constraints or other factors that could influence the development of the site.

## **Economy**

- 4.7 National and regional policies require the Council to:
- Provide a well-located and flexible supply of land and premises for businesses
  - Provide for sufficient employment to meet the needs of local communities
  - Ensure that business and industrial development, regardless of location, is of high quality and addresses the particular economic needs of rural communities
  - Support important business clusters such as those relating to the knowledge economy and research and development
  - Protect business sites from being redeveloped for other uses
  - Achieve smart economic growth. This involves increasing economic prosperity while reducing the rate of increase in its ecological footprint. It can be achieved by increasing the productivity of the workforce, raising skill levels, reducing traffic congestion, and using land and resources efficiently.
- 4.8 The Council has carried out an Employment Land Review which indicates that a sufficient quantity and variety of employment land is already identified across the Vale to meet the development needs of local businesses. It is clear that many new jobs will be provided at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus in the east of the district and on other existing sites. However, the location of future housing development may not match the current distribution of employment land, so further land allocations may be justified to provide some new employment opportunities nearer to where people will live.

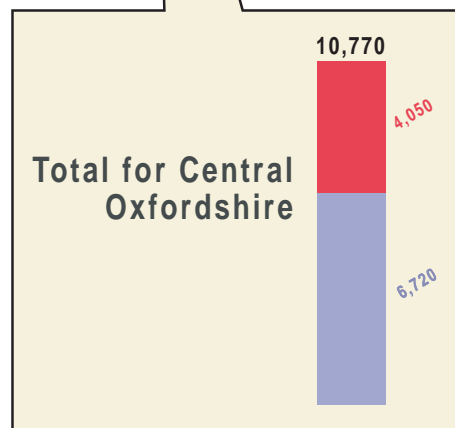


**Figure 4.1 Number of homes to be built in the Vale 2006 - 2027**



**Potential sites in built up areas:**

Parish	Site	Number of dwellings
Abingdon	Old Gaol	74
Botley	Poplar Road	50
Grove	C of E Primary School	24
Wantage	King Alfred's East Site Tennis Courts & Pavilion	192 10
Harwell	Science and Innovation Campus	50
Faringdon	South of Willes Close, North of Pioneer Road North of Park Road, East of Volunteer Way	48 10
Watchfield	Cowan's Camp	50



An allowance for windfall sites has been made for the last 5 years of the plan period. This is calculated as 80% of the average annual build rate achieved on sites of 1 – 20 homes between 2001 and 2008, excluding sites outside the settlements.

## Shopping and town centre uses

- 4.9 National and regional policies require the Council to:
- Improve the range and accessibility of shops and services for local people
  - Focus and promote growth in existing centres and actively manage change
  - Define a hierarchy of centres and set out how they will contribute to meeting the needs of the area
  - Apply a sequential approach to locating new development within the centres where an identified need is to be met. This is to look
    - First within existing centres
    - Then on the edge of centre locations
    - Then out of centre sites
  - Define the town centre areas in which suitable types of new development will be focussed.
- 4.10 The Council's retail study indicates that between now and 2027, 3,950 square metres of convenience floorspace and 21,813 square metres of comparison floorspace may be required in the district. A large proportion of this (64% and 69% respectively) will not be required until after 2018. (To give an idea of what this means, the Waitrose store in Abingdon is 2,418 square metres.) The consultants recommend that the additional floorspace should be located in the centres of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon and Wantage, with about half in Abingdon as the main centre.

## Transport

- 4.11 National and regional policies and the advice of the Highways Agency indicate the Council should
- Concentrate development where the need to travel, particularly by private car, can be reduced
  - Give priority to measures that increase the use of public transport, cycling and walking
  - Avoid traffic increases on the A34.
- 4.12 Evidence shows that demand for travel in Oxfordshire will increase 25% by 2026 which is well above the predicted national average of 18%. A draft transport study and strategy for southern Central Oxfordshire (SCOTS) shows major improvements are needed to the local road network to accommodate the new development required by the draft South East Plan in the Wantage & Grove and Didcot areas. It includes the already accepted link road north of Grove required to serve the major housing development on the former airfield - this was allocated for housing in the Local Plan 2011. The strategy also shows the need for
- A range of road safety and junction improvements on the A417 east of Wantage and the A338 north of Grove
  - A relief road to the north east of Wantage
  - A strategic link road west of Didcot between the A4130 (the road from Didcot to the A34 Milton interchange) and the A417 (to the south of Harwell village), and
  - Either a link from the A417 to the A34 Chilton interchange with improvements to Featherbed Lane, or a bypass to Rowstock roundabout south of its current line and minor improvements to Featherbed Lane.
- 4.13 Without these improvements there will be severe congestion leading to delays in journey times, reduced reliability of bus services, diversion of traffic on to unsuitable minor roads and worsening road safety. Even with the measures outlined above, the

transport study shows there will be significant amounts of traffic travelling through villages particularly Marcham, Steventon, Drayton and Sutton Courtenay.

- 4.14 The Council should also focus on ways of increasing the use of public transport, cycling and walking. It can do this by the careful location of new development; ensuring development provides contributions towards improved public transport, cycling and walking; and a range of measures such as parking policies, bus priorities and travel plans. By working with its partners the Council can also provide better travel information, continue with the better ways to work and school projects, maintain the rights of way network, and support transport in rural areas and community transport schemes.
- 4.15 An 'Access to Oxford' project is currently being undertaken by the County Council to improve the way traffic is managed to reduce congestion on the A34 and the Oxford ring road. A central Oxfordshire transport study will assess the highway infrastructure requirements for the Abingdon area.

#### **Other infrastructure**

- 4.16 The Council has talked with the organisations providing health, education, water, leisure facilities and emergency and social services to see if there is capacity in existing services and whether new provision should be made in the future. There is no area of the district where there is sufficient spare capacity in all services to accommodate the amount of development needed in the future.

#### **The Oxford Green Belt**

- 4.17 Government policy is to strictly limit development in Green Belts to protect their openness. The Oxford Green Belt covers a significant area in the north east of the district. No review of the Green Belt in the Vale is proposed in the draft South East Plan. As all the development it proposes can be built on land outside the Green Belt, there is no justification for a major review of its boundaries.

#### **The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

- 4.18 Government policy is to protect AONBs from major development. The AONB covers much of the southern part of the district. The draft South East Plan states that in considering proposals for development in AONBs the emphasis should be on allowing small scale proposals that are sustainably located and well designed.

#### **Land liable to flood**

- 4.19 Extensive areas of the district are at medium or high risk of flooding where, according to Government guidance in PPS25, development should not be allowed. However, there are opportunities for development in sustainable locations where the risk of flooding is low. The Environment Agency shows areas at risk from river flooding on its website. The Council also commissioned consultants to undertake a strategic flood risk assessment for the district which looks at the problems of flooding in more detail at the main settlements and larger villages.

## **Important sites in the natural and historic environment**

- 4.20 Government and regional policy is that nationally important wildlife sites and species, listed buildings, conservation areas, nationally important archaeological sites and registered historic gardens should not be damaged by development. The Council has commissioned a Habitats Regulation Assessment screening report to see whether the development proposed in the Vale would have an adverse effect on any sites of European importance for nature conservation within and close to the district. It shows that adverse impacts cannot be ruled out at this stage, but various measures are suggested to ensure that harm does not occur. This is being more fully investigated and any detailed measures necessary will be incorporated in the draft Core Strategy.

## **Choices looked at in the issues and options consultation and people's responses**

- 4.21 In November and December 2007 the Council asked people, local service providers and other organisations what they thought about six broad options for locating new development in the district to 2026. These were: a) concentrating development within existing settlements, b) locating it on brownfield (previously developed) land throughout the Vale, c) building on the edges of the main settlements (Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, Wantage & Grove and west of Didcot) d) developing on the edges of villages, e) planning an entirely new settlement or f) focussing development along public transport routes. The Council's assessment of these options is contained in the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 4.22 People responding to the issues and options report generally considered that
- Planning a new settlement or focussing development along public transport routes were not appropriate
  - On their own none of the options make a satisfactory strategy
  - Housing should be located close to the jobs and services that people need
  - New development should be accessible by as many different ways of travel as possible, and measures taken to improve bus, train, cycling and walking facilities
  - Infrastructure is needed to support new development
  - New employment should continue to be focussed at Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus
  - There should be some flexibility for job creation in the towns and larger villages near to where people live
  - Developing on previously developed land has advantages
  - The character, services and facilities in town centres should be protected and improved.

A full summary of the responses can be found in 'Issues and Options: summary of responses received' available on the Council's web site.

## **Towards a preferred strategy**

- 4.23 Having assessed the options in detail the Council decided to reject
- a new settlement as it was considered there was no need or justification for it and considerable resources (in the form of new infrastructure and services) would be required to deliver it. The amount of development needed would not be of a scale to make a new settlement sustainable or financially viable

- the option of focussing development along public transport routes as it would almost certainly damage village character, lead to ribbon development and it would be likely that many people would still travel by car. Nevertheless it was recognised that it would be good practice to locate development at settlements with good public transport
- the option of redeveloping previously developed land for housing that is not in or next to a settlement as it could result in a scatter of new homes in the countryside. It would not locate people close to a good range of services and facilities, would not enable the development of strong and cohesive communities, would harm the countryside and result in increased carbon emissions as people would be heavily dependent on the private cars for most journeys.

4.24 Consequently, the Council focussed attention on developing a hybrid of the other options it consulted on, with the aim of maximising the benefits and minimising the disadvantages which flow from each. The approach which performs best against sustainability criteria, national and regional policy, and best reflects local circumstances and aspirations can be summarised as ‘urban concentration’.

### **The preferred strategy – urban concentration**

4.25 This would look to:

- Concentrate most housing development, including specialist housing and that for the elderly, at the main settlements of Abingdon, Botley, Wantage & Grove, the western edge of Didcot and Faringdon. This will involve identifying sites on the edges of these settlements for about 4,470 homes
- Concentrate new services, including shops, tourist related and community facilities, in the main centres to improve their vitality and ensure the services can be reached by as many people as possible
- Promote the redevelopment and intensification of Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus for science based research and high-tech businesses, and encourage some limited new development to provide extra jobs at Wantage & Grove and Faringdon
- Allow limited development within villages or on suitable, brownfield sites next to them. The development of greenfield sites next to villages may be acceptable but only to provide affordable housing (not market housing) and facilities for the local community that cannot be met elsewhere
- Limit development in the countryside to that needed to meet the specific needs of farming, forestry, equestrian centres or other rural enterprises, enable informal countryside recreation or the reuse of appropriate rural buildings.

### **An alternative approach – more development on the edges of villages**

4.26 An alternative approach the Council has investigated, but does not favour, would be similar to that described above, but with

- Fewer housing developments on the edges of the main settlements. (However, to follow the policy in the South East Plan there would still be a need to find land for an additional 2,300 homes at Didcot and 250 at Wantage & Grove)
- Homes provided on green field sites on the edges of those villages with the best range of services and facilities, but not in villages surrounded by the Oxford Green Belt. This could involve

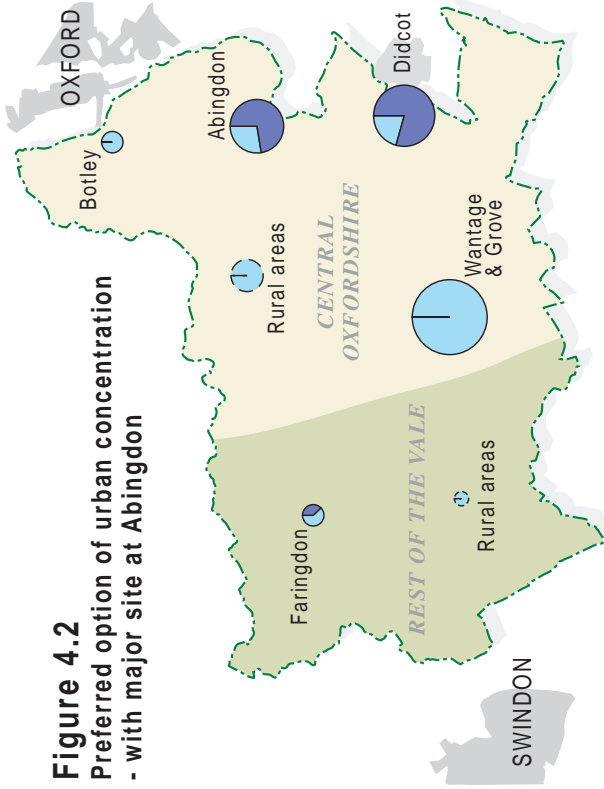
- about 1,500 new homes spread between greenfield sites on the edges of the Central Oxfordshire villages of Drayton, Sutton Courtenay, Steventon, Kingston Bagpuize & Southmoor, Milton, Harwell, Blewbury, East Hendred, Marcham, East Challow and East Hanney
- about 420 homes on greenfield sites on the edges of the five larger villages in the rest of the Vale policy area. These are Watchfield, Shrivenham, Stanford in the Vale, Childrey and Uffington
- Some limited expansion of the rural business sites, such as Kingston Bagpuize, Stanford in the Vale and Shrivenham, depending where the new housing is built.

This is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

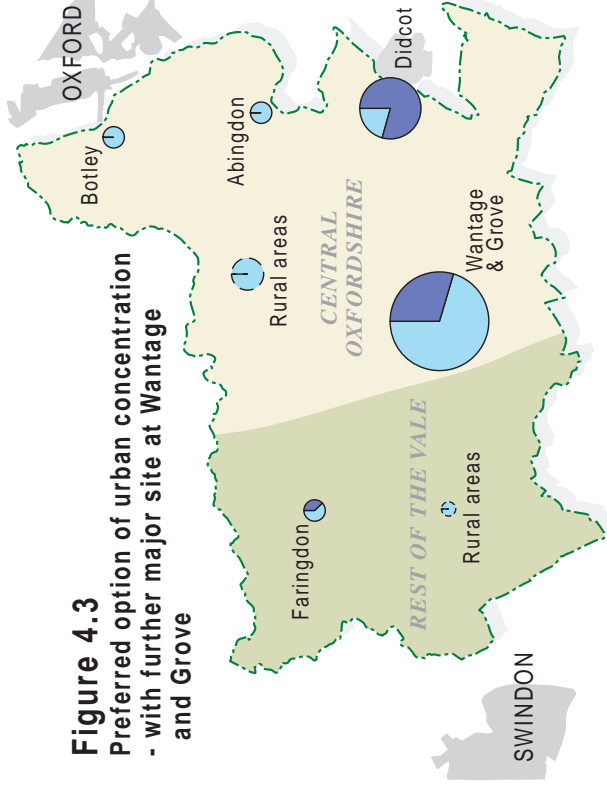
- 4.27 The Council's clear preference is to concentrate development at the main settlements as this will help support the vitality of the Vale's market towns, locate new housing close to more services and facilities, and offer the best chance of securing new infrastructure. The main settlements have the best range of services, facilities and jobs available and new development can be more easily planned to be accessed by walking, cycling and public transport. This could minimise journey lengths, reduce the need to travel by car and lead to lower carbon dioxide emissions. The strategy would be consistent with the approach required by the draft South East Plan which is to focus development in the urban areas. The main settlements are also the places where there is most pressure for affordable housing. It is also clear that the main service providers including the Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, the County Council as highway authority and the emergency services, prefer this approach as it will help them to deliver their services more efficiently. Although none of the main settlements is within walking or easy cycling distance of Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, additional housing in the main settlements could support improved bus links to the site.
- 4.28 The Council has seriously considered the argument that additional housing on the edges of villages could help maintain the rural economy and services and facilities already provided. It may also support informal social networks and bring about environmental improvements. However, even the villages with the best services, facilities and jobs do not have the range available in the towns. None of the rural villages listed above, for example, has a state secondary school or a permanent public library, and only Shrivenham has a doctors' or dental surgery open for more than 8 sessions a week. The Council believes that major development at villages would harm their rural character and setting, and would increase the need to travel by car to jobs and the 'higher order' services. It would be unlikely to bring any new services and facilities, unless the development was to be focussed in just one or two villages. The ability to achieve affordable housing on rural exception sites on the edges of villages would be undermined, as landowners would almost certainly wish to promote their land for general housing or reserve it in the hope that it could be brought forward for general housing at some time in the future.

# Possible distribution of new homes 2006 - 2027

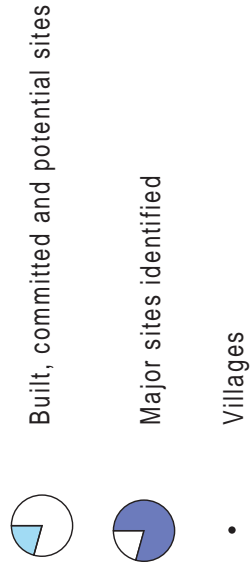
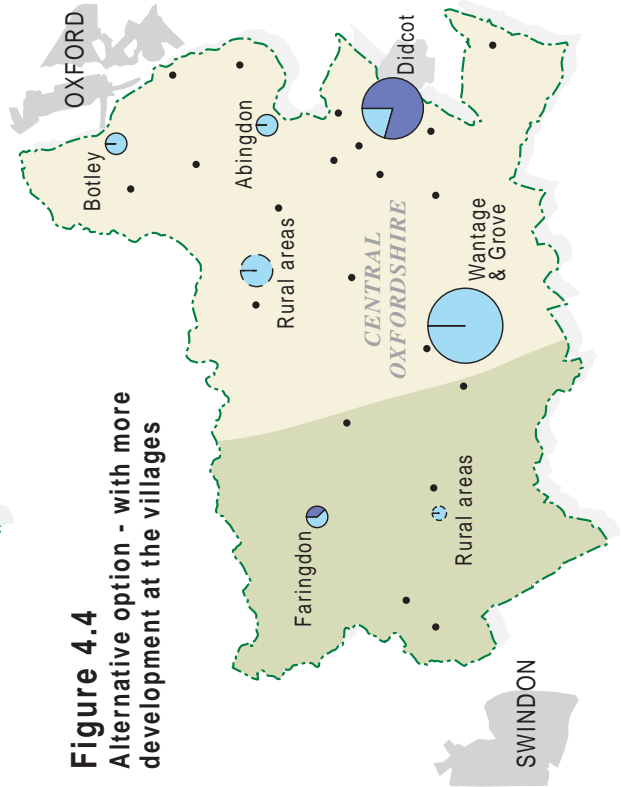
**Figure 4.2**  
Preferred option of urban concentration  
- with major site at Abingdon



**Figure 4.3**  
Preferred option of urban concentration  
- with further major site at Wantage  
and Grove



**Figure 4.4**  
Alternative option - with more  
development at the villages



## **What do you think about the preferred approach to locating development?**

Question 5. Do you agree that the Council's preferred approach to concentrate development at the main settlements is the best option for the future? Please give reasons for your answer.

Question 6. We are particularly keen to hear what parish councils and people living in villages think about the alternative strategy of allowing more development in the rural areas. If you believe it is a good idea, please give an indication of the amount of housing and employment you think would be acceptable, a plan of the sites you have in mind and the benefits it could bring.

## **The preferred approach - possible sites for development to be identified in the Core Strategy**

### **Housing**

- 4.29 The Inspector who examines the draft Core Strategy will have to be satisfied that the development proposed is deliverable, that suitable major sites have been identified in the Core Strategy and that smaller sites can be identified in the Managing Development document. There should be a clear and consistent method for identifying sites based on national and regional policies and the distinctive characteristics of the local area. Wherever possible major development should avoid land:
- in the Oxford Green Belt, the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and land with a medium to high risk of flooding
  - containing a scheduled ancient monument, essential to preserve a listed building and its setting, within or adjacent to a conservation area where the openness is an important attribute of its special character, or a registered historic park or garden
  - containing, or where it would harm, a Site of Special Scientific Interest or Special Area of Conservation
  - in small open gaps between settlements that help to retain their separate identities (as between Grove and Wantage and Wantage and East Challow)
  - where residential development would be difficult to integrate with the existing community, including land which is not next to a settlement or separated from it by a major road.
- 4.30 There are other factors to be taken into account including:
- grade 1, 2 and 3a farmland – this is defined by the Government as being the best and most versatile farmland
  - mineral reserves that should be safeguarded for use in the future on the advice of the County Council as minerals planning authority
  - landscapes that are not protected by a national designation but are important in the local context
  - the value of the existing use, for example if land is used for recreation
  - locally important wildlife sites
  - the capacity of the transport network – whether the development would cause major problems, or whether there are opportunities to provide new roads or beneficial traffic management measures



- opportunities for access by walking, cycling and public transport and whether there are opportunities to improve these facilities
- proximity to services, facilities and jobs
- land ownership, particularly that owned inalienably by the National Trust
- the proximity of uses that generate noise/disturbance/smell/emissions to a level incompatible with a pleasant living environment – including major roads such as the A34, railway lines, Didcot power station, mineral workings and refuse disposal sites
- the capacity of other forms of infrastructure to cope with the new development – including the supply of fresh water and the disposal of waste water
- the ability of key service providers to cater for the proposed development – including health, education, libraries, recreation and emergency services
- opportunities to provide new services and support existing ones
- opportunities to secure environmental improvements and use previously developed land
- the implications of the cumulative impact of developments on the social and physical fabric of a settlement and the aspirations of local communities
- the availability and deliverability of sites and the risks to delivering development.

4.31 Appendices 2 - 6 to this report contain assessments the Council has made of the land around Abingdon, Wantage & Grove, the western edge of Didcot, Botley and Faringdon. There are annotated maps and text setting out the advantages and disadvantages of development at particular locations. These are based on the factors listed above and show how the Council has arrived at its preferred major site for housing development in each area.

4.32 Although the LDF looks ahead to 2026, the Council has to ensure there is a 15 year supply of land for housing when the LDF is adopted. This means that sufficient land has to be identified for the period up to 2027. The scale of what remains to be identified and where is shown in Figure 4.1. The Council's preferred locations for new housing can be summarised as follows:

- 2,300 homes in the Vale west of Didcot, this is in addition to the homes that have planning permission at Great Western Park. The preferred site is between the A4130 and the B4493 Wantage Road
- Either
  - About 1,500 homes on the south western edge of Abingdon, and
  - 250 homes at Wantage and Grove in addition to the homes west of Grove already allocated in the Local Plan and those that have permission or will be developed on sites within the town. These could be on a number of small sites that would be identified in the Managing Development document.

Or

- As above for Wantage and Grove, plus about a further 1,500 homes north east of Wantage, taking the total to be built in the two communities between 2006 and 2027 to 5,070 homes and
- No major development on the edge of Abingdon
- 420 homes on the edge of Faringdon south west of Park Road.

These are illustrated on Figures 4.2 and 4.3. On all these sites the Council is working with the key service providers to ensure that people living there will have good access to the services and facilities they need (including the health facilities, schools, libraries, sport and recreation), and that new infrastructure will also be provided (including new roads, improved public transport, fresh water and sewage disposal). No new major

housing site is proposed at Botley: the plan in Appendix 5 shows there are no major sites around Botley that are not in the Green Belt

### **Abingdon – land to the south west of the town**

- 4.33 The plans in Appendix 2a indicate that the only land on the edge of Abingdon that is not in the Green Belt or floodplain is south west of the town. Although this land could be difficult to develop, Abingdon is the main town and service centre in the Vale. It is the most sustainable location for development in the Vale having the best range of services, facilities and jobs of all settlements in the district. It is close to Oxford and has excellent bus services to it. A major housing site in Abingdon may encourage investment in the town centre to help improve the retail offer and could encourage commercial leisure facilities such as restaurants. Development south west of the town could also contribute to the restoration of the Wilts and Berks canal which would provide an attractive setting for the new homes. If accompanied by new community services and facilities, more housing may also help reinvigorate the community of south Abingdon.
- 4.34 However, development to the south west of the town would not be without serious difficulties. The Highways Agency and the County Council are concerned that a major housing site in Abingdon would lead to more out commuting to Oxford, Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus along the already congested A34. Development south west of the town would also generate extra traffic, particularly on the Drayton Road where there are already problems of traffic congestion – in the early morning traffic can queue back to Drayton village. This is likely to get worse in the future with more traffic travelling northwards from the Didcot area. The County Council has said that development south west of Abingdon would have to be accompanied by a new road linking the Drayton Road with Marcham Road. It is possible that this could eventually form part of a southern bypass for the town that would relieve congestion and improve air quality in the town centre. A key disadvantage, however, is that the new road from Marcham Road to Drayton Road (the section needed with new housing development) would be expensive to build - provisional estimates are in the order of £20 million. It could have significant implications for traffic movements not only in Abingdon but also on the wider road network - the County Council is assessing these in more detail. The road would have to cross the River Ock and its floodplain, and would affect the tranquil character of the river and adjoining meadows.
- 4.35 Further work is being done to more fully assess the potential for development south west of Abingdon including investigating:
- the possibility of building a primary school, a secondary school and other community facilities in south Abingdon in association with the development
  - the impact of a new link road on traffic in the town and the wider road network including through Marcham, Drayton, Steventon and Sutton Courtenay in particular
  - other potential solutions to Abingdon's traffic problems including the reopening of the slip roads onto the A34 at Drayton and constructing south facing slip roads at the A34 Lodge Hill interchange
  - whether a new link road could cross the A34 and join the A417 just west of the A34 Marcham interchange. This could be in association with the access road to the proposed Upper Thames reservoir if it is built, and/or a flood relief scheme for the town
  - whether a new link road would be part of a southern bypass for the town that would be included in the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan.
  - the costs of these road schemes and how they could be funded.

4.36 Further work is being done to assess how the site, if included in the draft Core Strategy, should be developed and what other infrastructure would be needed to support it. An outline of a possible policy for this major site is in Appendix 2b to this report.

#### **Wantage and Grove – the former airfield and land north east of Wantage**

4.37 Appendix 3a contains an assessment of possible housing sites around Wantage and Grove. The Local Plan identifies the former airfield site west of Grove as a location to build 2,500 homes. A key issue for the Core Strategy is whether the Wantage and Grove area should have a second major housing site. If it does, the Council's preferred site is to the north east of Wantage on land that could be enclosed by the north eastern relief road proposed in the SCOTS report. The land is in Grove parish. Further work is being done to assess how the site, if included in the draft Core Strategy, should be developed and what infrastructure would be needed to support it. An outline of a possible policy for this major site is in Appendix 3b to this report.

4.38 Wantage & Grove are named in policy CO1 of the draft South East Plan as being one of the main locations for development in Central Oxfordshire. With Wantage having a good range of services and facilities, they are sustainable locations for housing development. Additional housing over and above the 3,400 indicated in the explanatory text of the draft South East Plan could help deliver the Wantage north eastern relief road more quickly. It could also make financial contributions towards improving the Wantage leisure centre.

4.39 However, further development in Wantage and Grove would not be without difficulties. There are few jobs in the two communities and many people have to travel elsewhere to work, particularly north to Oxford and Abingdon, and east to Milton Park, the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Didcot and other towns in the south east. Irrespective of whether a second major housing site is proposed, there is a strong case for some additional jobs in Wantage and Grove. Public transport is not as good as at Abingdon and needs improving. Heavy traffic is already an issue on the A338 north of Grove and the A417 east of Wantage.

#### **Didcot – between the A4130 and the B4493**

4.40 To meet the requirements of the draft South East Plan and PPS3, some 2,900 homes have to be built in the Vale at Didcot by 2027. 600 homes have recently been permitted on land in the Vale as part of the Great Western Park development, leaving land for some 2,300 homes to be identified. The plans and text in Appendix 4a show why the Council's preferred site is between the A4130 and the B4493 Wantage Road. The site is in the parish of Harwell but separated from Harwell village by the A34. The homes would be in walking distance of a single new neighbourhood centre to be built on the site. It would contain a primary school, a small number of shops and a community building. Provision would also be made on site for outdoor sport and informal recreation. Good links would be provided to the larger district centre and secondary school planned on Great Western Park. The site would only be built in association with a new link road from the A4130 to the A417 to the east of the A34. Landscaped areas would be provided beside the A4130 and the new link road to protect the homes from noise and pollution from the roads and ensure attractive approaches to the town. Further work is being done to assess how the site could be developed and what additional infrastructure would be needed to support it.

Contributions would have to be made to improving community facilities off the site – including education, health and indoor sport. An outline of a possible policy for this major site is in Appendix 4b to this report. It is envisaged the site would be developed between 2016 and 2027. Land to the south of the B4493 could be used if the land uses cannot all be accommodated north of the Wantage Road, or if South Oxfordshire District Council chooses to locate its housing development to the south of the town.

- 4.41 We have considered whether even more homes should be built west of Didcot, but have concluded that as the draft South East Plan requires 8,750 homes to be built at Didcot to 2026 it is far from certain that a build rate in excess of this would be achievable. It is already a major challenge to integrate the 5,600 homes planned west of the town with the town as a whole.

#### **Faringdon – south of Park Road**

- 4.42 The plans and text in Appendix 6a show why the Council's preferred site at Faringdon is south of Park Road. The Council considers it could be developed for a mix of housing and employment uses. The site is the least damaging to the landscape setting of the town and has the safest access to the A420. It is close to the secondary school, health centre and the town centre. Not all of the site shown in Appendix 6a will be developed because a landscaped area will need to be provided along the A420. Further work is being done to assess how the site would be developed and an outline of a policy is included in Appendix 6b. Part of the site contains deposits of soft sand and there is a question as to whether the sand should be extracted before the housing is built. The Council is concerned this could delay the start of the housing beyond 2016. It could harm the amenities of people living in the homes near the site and spoil the appearance of the main entrance to the town, which the Council has been trying to improve. Applications for mineral extraction are dealt with by the County Council.
- 4.43 Landowners around the town have suggested an alternative proposal to use all the land south of Park Road within the A420 bypass for housing and redevelop Wicklesham quarry south of the A420 for business use. However, this would provide land for housing and business development well in excess of what is needed to 2027. It could lead to businesses in the town relocating to the quarry site, and even if linked by a pedestrian/cycle bridge over the A420, it would not be as accessible to Faringdon residents as sites in the town. Given the distance from the town centre, people working on the quarry site would be unlikely to use the town centre, particularly if they did not live in the town.

#### **What are your views on the major housing sites proposed?**

If you disagree with the Council please give your reasons

Question 7. If a major housing site is proposed for Abingdon do you agree that the area south west of Abingdon is the best location for new homes to be built – if possible located west of the Drayton Road?

Question 8. If a major housing site is proposed for Wantage and Grove do you agree that the area north east of Wantage is the best location for new homes to be built?

Question 9. Do you think that a major new housing development which could involve up to 1,500 homes should be built either

- south west of Abingdon, or

- north east of Wantage?

Question 10. Do you agree that the area between the A4130 and the B4493 is the best location for new homes to be built west of Didcot?

Question 11. Do you agree that land south of Park Road is the best location for new homes to be built at Faringdon and that new jobs should also be provided on the site?

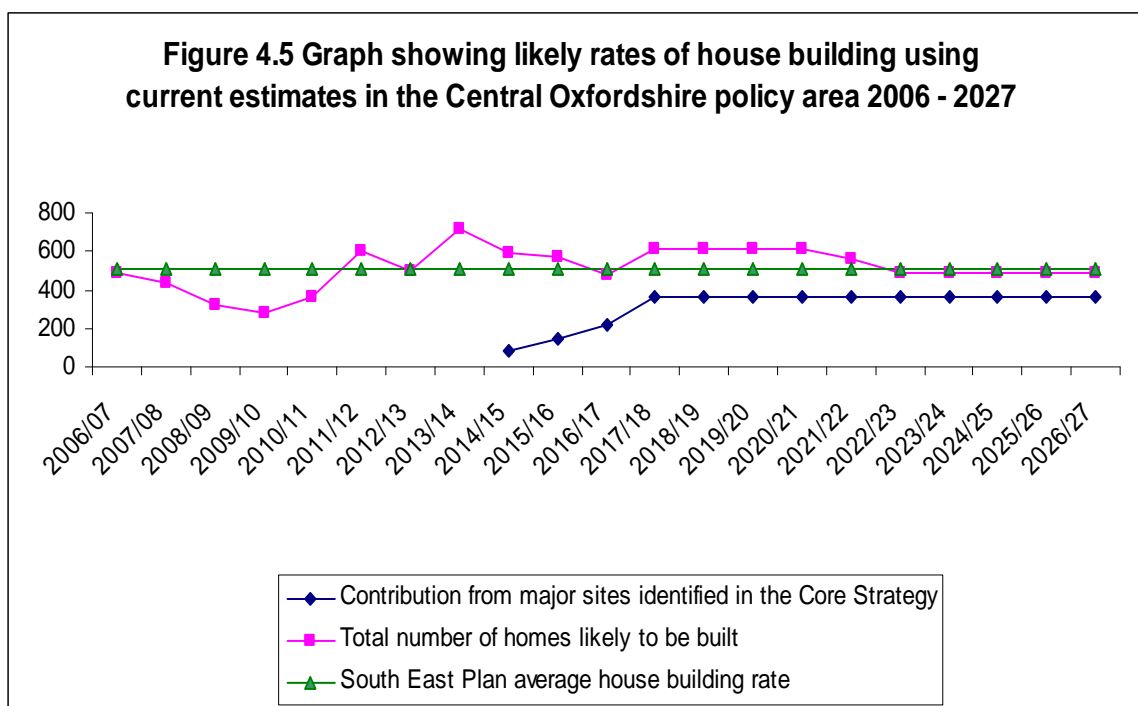
Question 12. Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 6 outline policies that would be included in the Core Strategy to manage the development of the proposed major sites and establish the infrastructure that would be needed to support the additional population. Are there other factors you think should be taken into account?

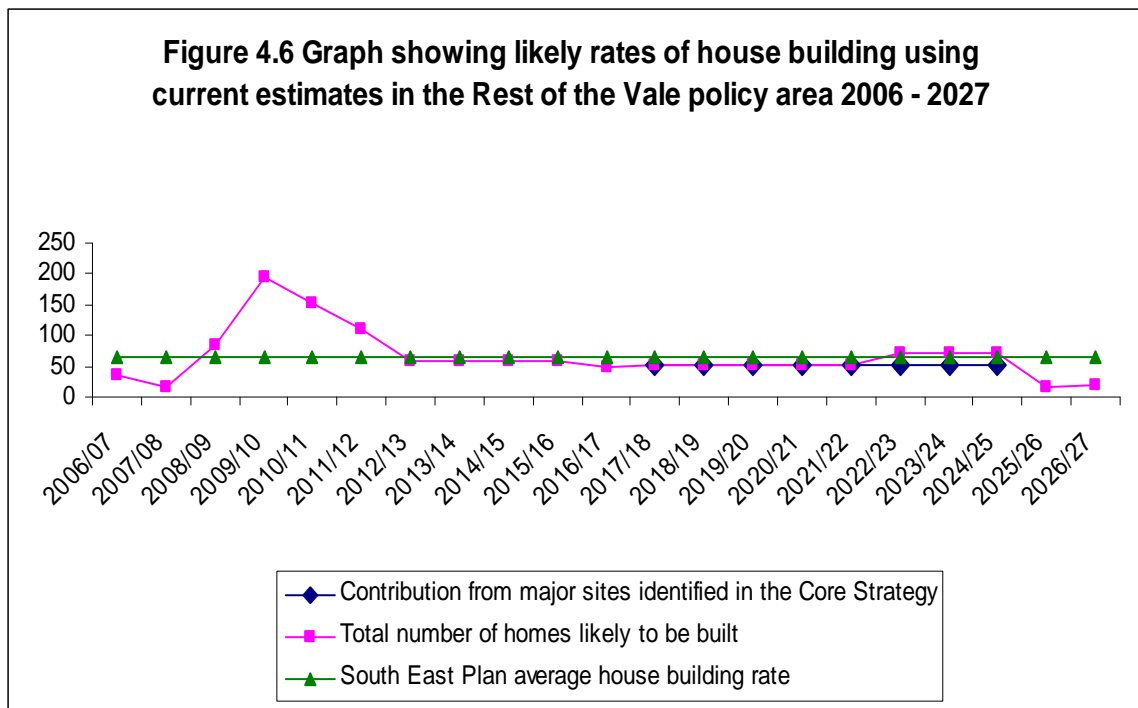
## Implementation Strategy

4.44 The Government's Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' requires that a housing implementation strategy is prepared that describes the approach to managing the delivery of housing and previously developed land targets. The strategy for bringing previously developed land into housing use will not involve major strategic sites and so will be included in the Managing Development document. The Core Strategy will include an implementation strategy for delivering the major sites identified. This has to include:

- different delivery options in case housing delivery does not occur at the rate expected
- a risk assessment to identify obstacles to delivery, management strategies to address any risks and the circumstances when they may be introduced
- the approach to engaging with house builders and other stakeholders to ensure the delivery objectives are understood
- the approach to regular monitoring and review.

**Figure 4.5 Graph showing likely rates of house building using current estimates in the Central Oxfordshire policy area 2006 - 2027**





4.45 Figures 4.5 and 4.6 show the likely rates of house building in the Central Oxfordshire and Rest of the Vale policy areas. All the sites that will be identified in the Core Strategy require major investment, particularly to fund new roads and schools, and community and recreation facilities. There are risks if the investment is not forthcoming there will be delays in developing the major sites. However, given the large amount of development the draft South East Plan requires in the Vale, major new infrastructure will be needed wherever the new homes are built. Even if the 1500 homes the Council is considering could be built in either Wantage & Grove or Abingdon were to be spread around the villages instead, there would still be a need for the investment in roads, secondary schools, health, emergency and other services. The Council considers that if there are delays in developing the major sites it is not an acceptable alternative to allow smaller sites to be developed on the edges of villages. These would be more expensive to service and it would be more difficult to plan for new facilities comprehensively. Dispersing development to villages would result in more and longer journeys by car, thus increasing carbon emissions from the area and traffic on minor roads.

- 4.46 To help achieve the high building rates proposed in the draft South East Plan the Council will
- Ensure the sites it identifies have no insurmountable barriers to development. However, some investment will be needed from Central Government and whether this will be forthcoming may not be known by the time the draft Core Strategy is published
  - Identify more land than is needed to give flexibility. By planning to 2027 the Council is already providing for an additional 5% on top of what is required to 2026. Further work on sites within the main settlements will enable more previously developed sites to be identified in the Managing Development document than are shown on Figure 4.1
  - Identify alternative sites. If the Council considers this necessary, specific sites will be identified in the Core Strategy, drawn from the sites shown in Appendices 2 – 6. In assessing whether these sites should be developed account will be taken of the

stock of land with planning permission as it is likely that additional 'windfall' sites will have been permitted

- Work constructively with partners to remove barriers to development including compulsory purchase of land and exploring innovative solutions
- Find alternative sources of funding to deliver the infrastructure needed, for example through the Regional Transport Fund, the Local Transport Strategy and the Building Schools for the Future programme.

4.47 The Council considers that

- If housing cannot be built at Didcot at the rate expected, alternative sites should not be permitted elsewhere in the Vale
- Any over provision of housing in the Rest of the Vale policy area should be taken into account when considering whether to permit alternative greenfield sites in Central Oxfordshire
- A general down turn in the economy or lack of credit for mortgages are not reasons for permitting alternative sites.

#### **The implementation strategy – what do you think?**

Question 13. Do you agree with the Council's proposed approach to ensuring the numbers of houses in the draft South East Plan are built?

#### **Should the Council be planning for higher levels of housing growth?**

4.48 The Government has made it clear that the housing figures in the draft South East Plan are the minimum that should be built by 2026. Given the importance of the South East region to the national economy, local planning authorities are encouraged to test higher levels of growth when preparing their LDFs. Although a higher rate of growth would deliver more affordable houses, the preferred strategy is not to identify significantly more land than necessary to ensure the numbers of homes required in the South East Plan are actually built. The Council considers that the Vale already has above the average rate of growth proposed and to achieve even higher levels would need significant additional investment in infrastructure (particularly roads, schools and leisure facilities) if the area is to continue to function efficiently. There is no indication that major investment would be forthcoming.

#### **What do you think about higher levels of housing growth?**

Question 14. Do you agree that the Council should not plan to build more houses than in the draft South East Plan? If you disagree please give your reasons.

### **Employment**

4.49 Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus are the two largest employment sites in the district and they have the capacity to generate some 12,000 additional jobs by 2026 within the boundaries of their existing sites. Given the success and prestige of the sites the Council considers they should be identified and promoted for development in the Core Strategy. A challenge will be to ensure there are good

linkages to these sites from the housing areas at Didcot and Wantage and Grove by road, public transport, cycling and walking.

4.50 The Steventon Storage Facility, formerly used by the Home Office as a storage depot, is a 30 hectare site used for warehousing and distribution. Although there is relatively little traffic arising from the site now, if used more intensively it would result in significant amounts of traffic on an unclassified rural road with access to the trunk road network only through villages. The Council would like to see the business use removed to a more sustainable site, at a scale that would generate a similar number of jobs to those currently on the site. This will require a much smaller area of land than currently occupied by the storage facility. The Didcot area provides better links to the A34 and is closer to residential areas, thus offering the chance of shorter journeys to work that could be cycled or walked. Three options have been identified in the Didcot area

- land on the undeveloped part of the service area east of the A34 Milton Interchange
- land east of the power station
- land north of Milton Park.

These are indicated on diagrams in section 5.

4.51 As most job growth will occur at Milton Park and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus in the east of the district, the Council also thinks there is scope for some limited additional employment at Wantage and Grove and Faringdon, as this would give opportunities for people to work close to where they live. If a housing allocation is made to the south of Abingdon the Council also thinks that a small employment site should be allocated close by. The sites will need to be restricted in size to avoid the district having more jobs than workers. The Council also considers that such small sites will complement the existing employment sites rather than compete with them. The sites which are under consideration are:

- land to the south of the proposed Grove Station
- adjacent to the possible housing site to the east of Wantage (if allocated)
- at Elms Farm east of the A338 at Grove
- as a northern extension to Grove Technology Park
- as part of a mixed development to the south of Park Road, Faringdon
- adjacent to the possible housing site to the south of Abingdon (if allocated).

These are indicated on a diagram in section 5.

### **Employment – what do you think**

Question 15. Do you agree that Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus should be promoted in the Core Strategy for further job growth?

Question 16. Do you agree that the Steventon Storage Facility should be replaced by a smaller area of land in the Didcot area to provide the same number of jobs? Which of the three sites do you think is the best location? Please give your reasons

Question 17. Do you agree that additional employment sites should be provided in Wantage & Grove and Faringdon, and at Abingdon if housing is allocated? What do you think about the possible sites proposed?



## Shopping and town centre uses

- 4.52 The Council considers it important that the Core Strategy refers to the sequential approach to locating shops and town centre uses, and makes provision for additional floorspace in the town and district centres. Without this it is unlikely that the Council would be able to resist new shopping floorspace elsewhere, including on the edges of the towns. This would undermine the vitality of the existing centres and potentially lead to their decline.
- 4.53 There are opportunities to redevelop the shopping areas built in the late 1960s/early 1970s in Abingdon, Wantage and Botley, and also achieve more limited improvements in Faringdon. This would provide shop units that more closely match what retailers want and an environment that shoppers expect. The Council therefore proposes that the Core Strategy should reinforce the roles of the town and district centres as follows and identify areas for redevelopment.
- Abingdon will continue as the Vale’s largest shopping area serving the town and villages in the east of the district. The Bury Street precinct and the Charter could be redeveloped to improve the range of shops and the appearance of the area. Opportunities could be taken to enlarge the library and health centre, and provide offices and homes above the ground floor.
  - Wantage will continue as the second largest shopping area serving the town, Grove and the villages in the southern central part of the district. The area around Waitrose in Wallingford Street could be redeveloped to improve the environment and provide a larger store, other shops, offices and town centre uses.
  - Faringdon will continue as a small but important centre serving the western part of the Vale. The area of Budgens store and Southampton Street car park could be redeveloped to provide more shopping floorspace and better car parking.
  - Botley will continue as a district centre serving the community, the nearby parts of Oxford city and villages in the north east of the Vale. West Way shopping centre and Elms Parade could be identified as a site for comprehensive redevelopment to include a large supermarket, shops, offices and other town centre uses.

Plans of the potential redevelopment areas are in Appendices 2c, 3c, 5b and 6c.

- 4.54 The Managing Development document will have policies for local service centres in the residential areas of the towns and the villages. The Local Plan requires the provision of a new local centre on the major development site west of Grove, and one will be required on the proposed development west of Didcot.

### **Shopping and town centres – what do you think?**

Question 18. Do you agree with the future roles of the town and district centres described above?

Question 19. Do you agree that additional shopping floorspace should be provided in the town and district centres?

Question 20. Do you have comments on the proposed redevelopment sites for Abingdon, Wantage, Faringdon and Botley?

## Transport

- 4.55 Figure 4.7 draws together the range of highway improvements identified in the Local Transport Plan and the draft transport study and strategy for Southern Central Oxfordshire. The Council will seek contributions from development towards these measures. It also indicates where the District Council considers measures are needed to reduce congestion and improve environmental conditions in Abingdon and Wantage.
- 4.56 In the Core Strategy the Council will also:
- require measures to improve cycling, walking and public transport
  - ensure traffic arising from development can be accommodated without causing safety, congestion or environmental problems
- 4.57 The Managing Development document will promote the provision of cycling and walking networks in the main settlements and identify them on the proposals map.

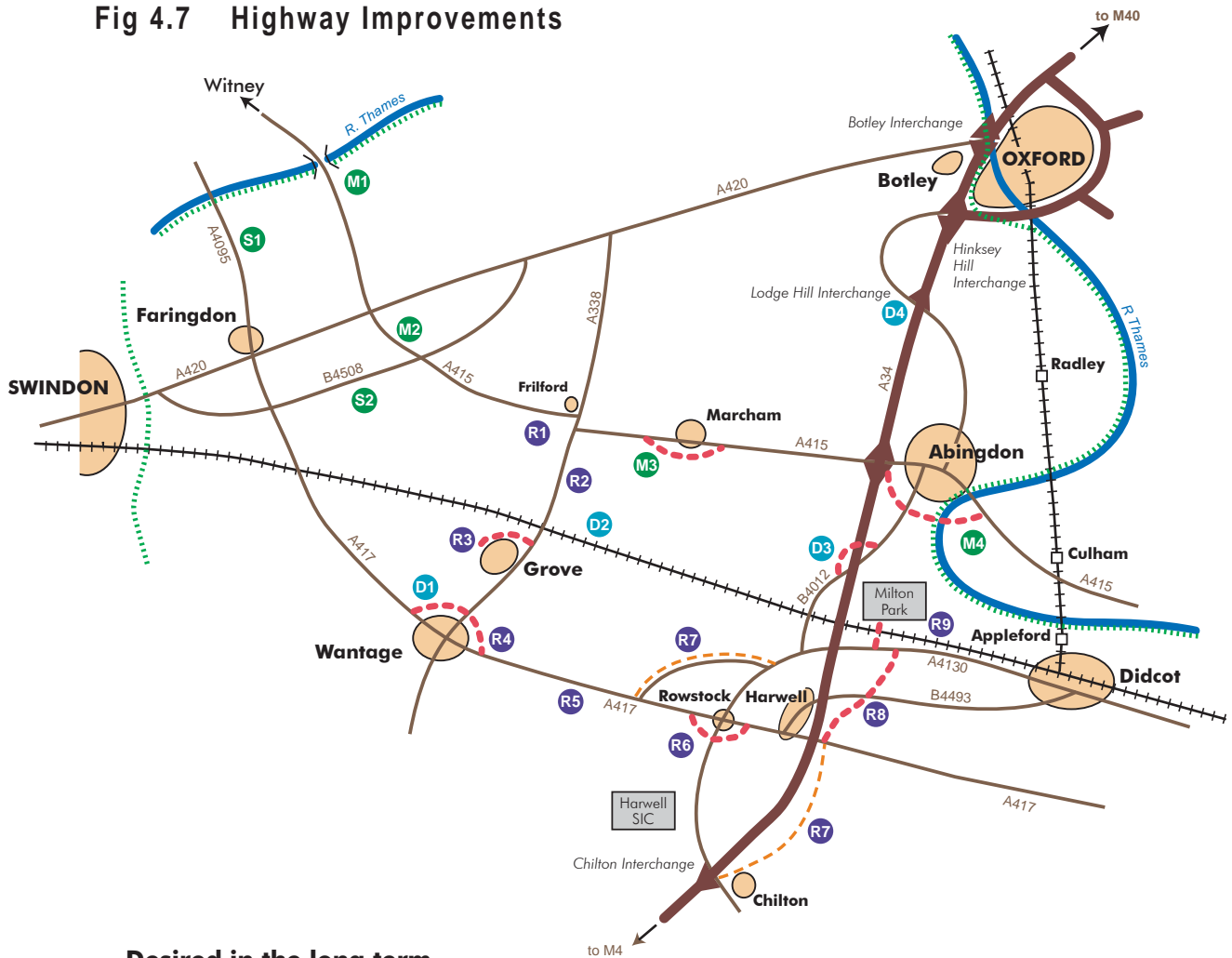
### Transport – what do you think?

Question 21. Do you agree with the highway improvements shown on Figure 4.7? If not please say why.

## Key Diagram

- 4.58 The Core Strategy will contain a key diagram to illustrate the strategy. It will show
- the major road and rail lines, and how they link to key settlements outside the district
  - the main settlements (with a circle in proportion to the amount of housing development proposed)
  - major town centre redevelopment areas
  - the key employment sites
  - the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
  - the Oxford Green Belt
  - the River Thames

**Fig 4.7 Highway Improvements**



**Desired in the long term**

- D1** Safeguard the land for a Wantage western relief road
- D2** Safeguarded land for the reopening of Grove station
- D3** Investigate the reopening of the A34 slip roads at Drayton
- D4** Investigate south facing slip roads at Lodge Hill

..... District Boundary

**Schemes required with development**

- R1** Improvements to Frilford crossroads
- R2** Road safety and junction improvements on the A338 corridor
- R3** Link road to the north of Grove
- R4** Wantage eastern relief road
- R5** Road safety and junction improvements on the A417

**Schemes being investigated by OCC through LTP**

**Short term**

- S1** A4095 downgrade to B road
- S2** B4508 downgrade to unclassified road

**Medium and Long Term**

- M1** Improvements to the Thames crossing at Newbridge
- M2** Improvements to the A415 corridor
- M3** Marcham bypass
- M4** Abingdon southern bypass. If land southwest of Abingdon is allocated for development, the western section will be the first phase

**A solution for congestion at Rowstock Crossroads**

- R6** Bypass to Rowstock crossroads or improvements to Featherbed Lane together with a link road between the A417 to the A34 at Chilton
- R7** New link road between the A4130 and A417
- R8** Reopen the Cow Lane underpass to provide new cycle link
- R9** Reopen the Cow Lane underpass to provide new cycle link

## **Section 5: What the preferred strategy would mean for different places in the Vale**

- 5.1 To show how the Local Development Framework will help shape the future of the different places in the Vale this section outlines the policies that will be included for Abingdon, Wantage & Grove, Didcot, Botley (all in the Central Oxfordshire policy area), Faringdon (in the Rest of the Vale policy area) and the rural areas (which are in both policy areas). To give a complete picture, outlines are given of the policies to be included in both the Core Strategy and the Managing Development document (see paragraph 1.3). Major sites of at least 200 homes or 10 hectares of employment land will be included in the Core Strategy, sites smaller than this will be identified in the Managing Development document. The key changes for each of the main settlements are illustrated by diagrams. The policies the Council is suggesting would be included in the Core Strategy document are those which have been highlighted by a background tone. Please let us know if you think a policy proposed for the Core Strategy should be in the Managing Development document and vice versa.
- 5.2 Issues such as design, energy conservation and the protection of the natural and built environment which will affect all parts of the Vale are covered in section 6 of this report.

### **Abingdon**

- 5.3 Abingdon is the main town and service centre in the Vale. However, it suffers from competition from the larger range of shops in Oxford and more recently in Didcot. There are also problems of traffic congestion in the centre and western parts of the town. Much of the edge of the town is within the Oxford Green Belt or is in the floodplains of the rivers Thames and Ock – these are major limitations to the expansion of the town. The main proposals for the town are illustrated in Figure 5.1.
- 5.4 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to

#### ***Housing***

- Establish the number of new homes to be built in the town between 2006 and 2027.
- If selected for development, identify the major site south west of the town. It would have to be accompanied by a major new road from Drayton Road to Marcham Road and provide community facilities on the site. The development would also need to contribute to the provision of improved facilities elsewhere in the town. An outline of a proposed policy is in Appendix 2b.
- Later, in the Managing Development document, the Council will
  - Identify sites and broad areas within the built up area of the town where new homes could be built. This could include the redevelopment of properties in Ock Street, if the findings of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment are accepted by the Environment Agency. It may be possible to identify further sites if flood defences are put in place
  - Support the redevelopment of the Old Gaol and former police station for mixed housing and other town centre uses including restaurants and cafes
  - Encourage the reuse of upper floors in the town centres to provide new homes.

## ***Employment***

- If the major site south west of the town is identified for housing development, then the Core Strategy would identify some land in that area for additional business growth.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will safeguard important local business sites. This could include those identified in the current Local Plan, so they remain in employment use. It will also indicate whether there are any employment sites that could be released for other uses and if there are opportunities to create jobs on other sites.

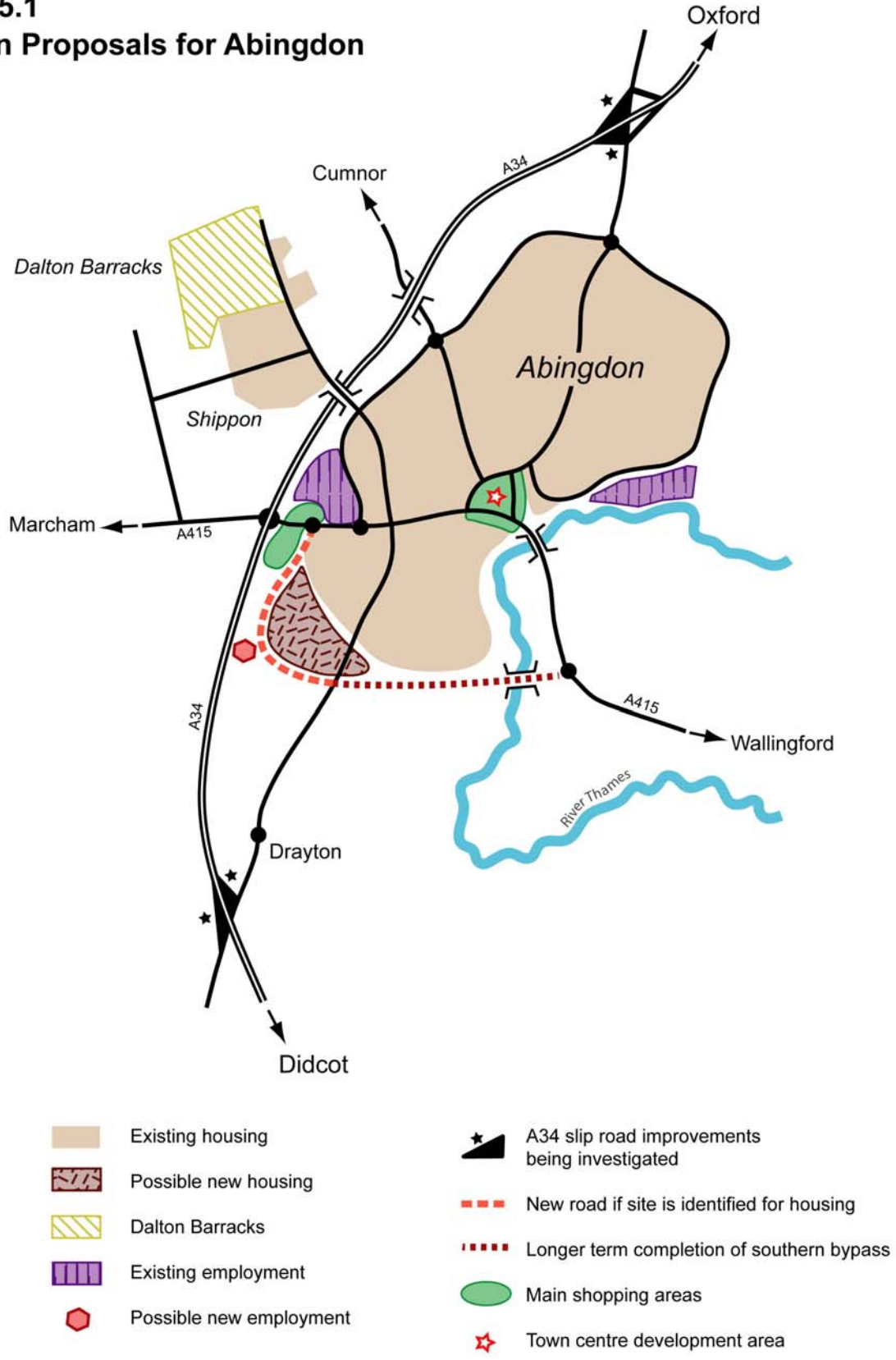
## ***Shopping and town centre uses***

- Identify the Bury Street Precinct and the Charter for a comprehensive development and environmental improvement including new shops and town centre uses, such as restaurants and commercial leisure uses. These could include facilities that are open late into the evening so long as this could be achieved without harm to the amenities of nearby residents. It could also include a larger library and health centre, with offices and new homes above the ground floor. It is likely to come to fruition in the second half of the plan period. (See plan in Appendix 2c).
- Enable large non-food retail units for bulky goods to continue to locate at Fairacres, to complement and not compete with the town centre, so the town as a whole has a wide variety of shops.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Have detailed policies for the town centre, including policies to protect the primary and secondary shopping frontages. The areas to which they will apply will be defined on the proposals map
  - Consider whether to identify other areas for redevelopment for retail or town centre uses – this could include the Cattle Market car park or Coxeters
  - Safeguard local shopping areas elsewhere in the town, for example at Peachcroft and Northcourt.

## ***Transport***

- Promote the provision of a southern bypass to the town including a bridge over the River Thames and safeguard a route on the proposals map. If a major housing site is allocated south of the town, require that the first stage from the Drayton Road to the Marcham Road will be built within the plan period.
- Promote the provision of
  - south facing slips at the A34 Lodge Hill interchange and safeguard land for it on the proposals map
  - reopening the north facing slips at Drayton if these schemes are shown to reduce traffic congestion in the town.
- The Managing Development document will have policies and proposals to

**Fig 5.1  
Main Proposals for Abingdon**



- Further improve traffic management in the town to reduce the impact of vehicles on air quality and make the town a safer place for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improve the networks for cycling and walking, including the provision of safe and convenient cycle parking
- Rationalise car parking in the town centre.

### ***Leisure and recreation***

- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Safeguard sites for leisure and recreation identified in the open space, sport and recreation audit
  - Identify new sites if needed
  - Safeguard a route for the Wilts and Berks canal to the south of the town and seek contributions towards its construction from new developments in the area
  - Identify Nags Head Island as a centre for improved commercial leisure activities associated with the River Thames.

### ***Environmental protection and improvements***

- Preserve and enhance the historic character of the town and its setting on the River Thames.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Define areas for environmental enhancements in the town centre, including new signage, street furniture and paving particularly around the Old County Hall and High Street
  - Incorporate measures emerging from the Abingdon town centre action plan promoted by the town's Joint Economic Forum
  - Protect the continuity and natural character of the green corridors beside the rivers Thames, Ock and Stert for informal recreation and wildlife interest.

### ***Flood risk***

- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Work with the Environment Agency to find measures to reduce the risk of flooding in the town, and will seek to identify where flood protection measures could be located and, if necessary, safeguard the land for this purpose on the proposals map
  - Establish the approach to development in areas liable to flood for the redevelopment and change of use of existing buildings.

### ***Minerals and waste disposal***

- The proposals map will show the area south of the town proposed for mineral working. Although this is a matter for the County Council in its minerals and waste LDF, the Vale's proposals map is required to show it.

**What do you think about the suggested policies to deliver the vision for Abingdon?** Please give reasons for your answers.

- Are there any other issues you think should be covered?

- |   |
|---|
| - Are there any policies that should not be included? |
|---|

## **Wantage and Grove**

- 5.5 Wantage and Grove are the second and third largest settlements in the Vale and are identified in the draft South East Plan as a location where development will be focused. Key challenges will be to provide the new development with the services and facilities it needs, improve the vitality and viability of Wantage town centre and improve the transport linkages to the area. The main proposals for the area are illustrated on Figure 5.2.
- 5.6 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to have policies and proposals to

### ***Housing***

- Establish the number of homes to be built between 2006 and 2027. This could be in order of 3,570 homes or 5,070 homes if a major site is included north east of Wantage. 2,500 of these homes were allocated in the Local Plan on a site west of Grove. This will include the provision of a range of facilities including a new primary and secondary school, library, community centre, sports pitches and a community park. A new road also has to be built north of Grove before more than 1,500 houses can be built and contributions made to the Wantage eastern relief road.
- If selected for development, identify a major site north east of Wantage for housing development and associated facilities. It is envisaged that development would start after 2016. It would have to be accompanied by a major new road from the roundabout at the Mably Way/A338 junction to the A417 east of Wantage. The outline of a policy that could be included in the Core Strategy is in Appendix 3b.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will identify smaller sites for new development in and around the two settlements. These could include for example, King Alfred's school east site in Wantage, the site of the Church of England primary school in Grove when this relocates to the development west of Grove, and possibly, currently undeveloped sites east of Chainhill, west of Newbury Street and west of Manor Road. These are shown in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Study and the first two sites are referred to in Figure 4.1.

### ***Employment***

- If the major site north east of Wantage is identified for housing development, then the Core Strategy could identify some land in that area for additional business growth which would be part of a comprehensive scheme and provide local employment adjacent to the new housing.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Safeguard important local business sites. This could include those identified in the Local Plan, so they remain in business use and continue to provide local jobs
  - Identify other new sites for business use to ensure a better balance between jobs and local residents. This could be, for example, on land at Elms Farm, as



an extension to the Grove Technology Park, or south of the site reserved for a rail station at Grove to the east of the A338.

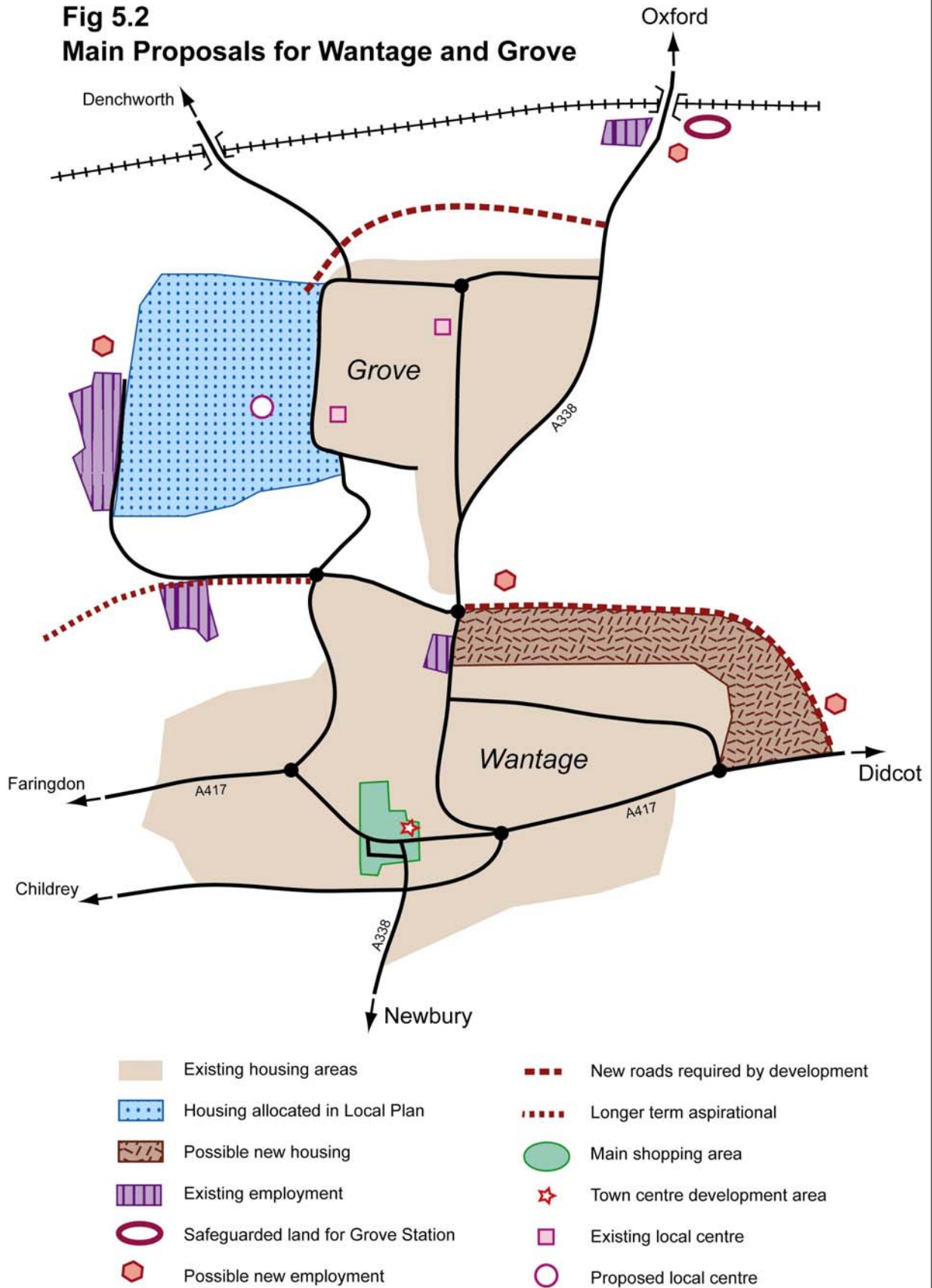
### ***Shopping***

- Identify the Waitrose/Campbell's yard area in Wallingford Street for comprehensive redevelopment for retail and other town centre uses. This could include commercial leisure facilities that may be open late into the evening provided this could be achieved without harm to the amenities of nearby residents. (See plan in Appendix 3c.)
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Have detailed policies for the town centre, including for primary and secondary frontages. The areas to which they will apply will be defined on the proposals map
  - Consider whether identify other areas for retail or town centre uses
  - Safeguard local shopping areas for example at Millbrook Square, Grovelands, in the major development area on the former airfield at Grove, and Barnards Way in Wantage.

### ***Transport***

- The Local Plan requires the provision of a new road to the north of Grove linking the major development site west of the village with the A338. This will be funded by the development to the west of the village on the former airfield and must be completed before more than 1,500 homes are built.
- Provide a new road to the north east of Wantage linking the A338 at Mably Way with the A417 east of the town, and secure contributions from developments in the area.
- Promote the provision of a Wantage relief road to the west of Wantage and safeguard a route for it on the proposals map.
- Safeguard the site for a rail station at Grove, and press for it to be built and brought into use.
- Require contributions to road safety and junction improvements
  - On the A338 to the north of Grove, including the junction with the A415 at Frilford
  - On the A417 to east of Wantage, including improvements to relieve congestion at Rowstock crossroads
  - Within Wantage and Grove to improve traffic management and the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Require improvements for public transport along
  - The corridor from Wantage & Grove to Didcot, taking in the major employment sites at Milton Park and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus
  - The corridor from Wantage & Grove to Oxford.
- In the Managing Development document Council will include policies and proposals to

**Fig 5.2  
Main Proposals for Wantage and Grove**



- Improve the networks for cycling and walking, including the provision of safe and convenient cycle parking
- Improve traffic management in the town, particularly in the Market Place, to reduce the impact of vehicles on air quality and make the town a safer place for pedestrians and cyclists.

The District Council will work closely with the County Council as highway authority in developing and taking forward these proposals.

### ***Environmental protection and improvements***

- Preserve and enhance the historic character of Wantage and its setting at the foot of the Downs, together with the character of the old villages of Grove and Charlton.
- In The Managing Development document the Council will
  - Protect the open gaps between Wantage, Grove and East Challow to retain the separate identities of the three communities
  - Define Wantage Market Place as an area for environmental enhancement
  - Incorporate measures emerging from the Wantage and Grove health check
  - Protect the continuity and natural character of the Letcombe Brook green corridor which runs through Wantage and Grove and provides informal recreation, amenity value and wildlife interest.

### ***Leisure and recreation***

- Improve the Wantage Leisure Centre and seek contributions towards it from developments in the area.
- In The Managing Development document the Council will
  - Continue to promote the use of the gap between Wantage and Grove for recreational use, including the community park south of the housing on the former airfield west of Grove
  - Safeguard other sites for leisure and recreation as identified from the open space, sport and recreation strategy
  - Identify new sites if needed
  - Safeguard the line of the Wilts and Berks canal and associated structures and seek contributions from developments towards their restoration for their recreational, nature conservation and heritage value. The line of the canal will be shown on the proposals map.

**What do you think about the suggested policies to deliver the vision for Wantage and Grove?** Please give reasons for your answers.

- Are there any other issues you think should be covered?
- Are there any policies that should not be included?

### **The area west of Didcot**

5.7 Didcot is the town in the south of the county that has been identified for major growth in successive structure plans. It is identified in the draft South East Plan as a location

where development will be focused – at least 8,750 homes are to be built at the town over the 20 years to 2026 on land in both South Oxfordshire and the Vale. It is important to ensure that the future growth of Didcot is planned comprehensively so the town has the services, facilities and infrastructure it needs, and it functions as a single efficient community. The two district councils will work together to produce a high level master plan to integrate the different uses proposed.

5.8 Work is being carried out to establish the full range of community facilities needed, but they will include additional secondary education, a new sports centre, health provision, and a network of accessible green spaces through and around the town. Further improvements are proposed for the town centre and around the rail station. It would be a great boost to the town and Southern Central Oxfordshire if it could attract higher or further education facilities. One idea is that this could be in the form of a science based learning park aimed at increasing the skills of local people to match the expected growth of science based and high tech businesses in the area. It will be a challenge to establish such a facility and find a prestigious location that is embedded in the town and has good links to the surrounding communities and businesses. The main proposals for the area are illustrated on Figure 5.3.

5.9 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to

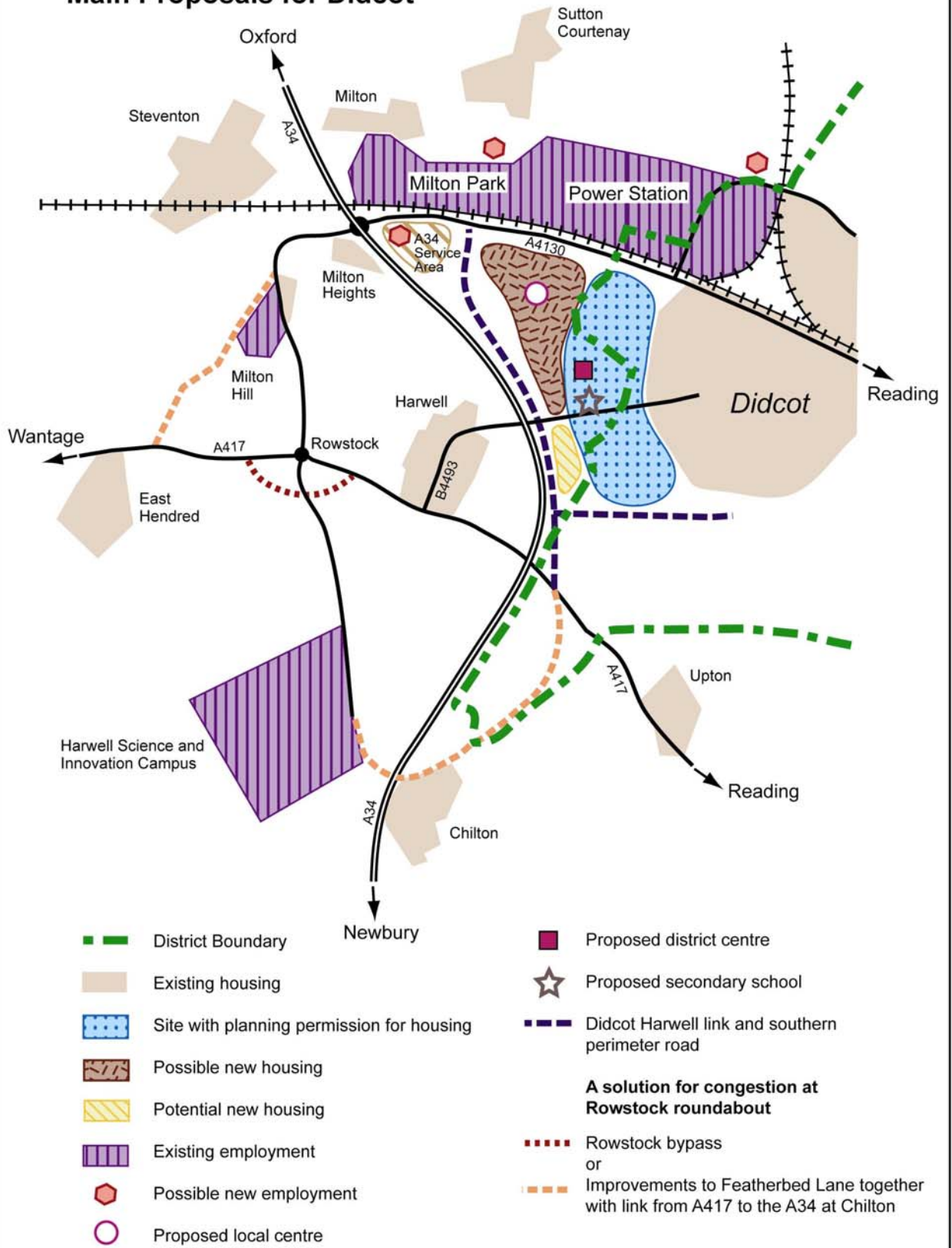
### ***Housing***

- Provide 2,900 new homes between 2006 and 2027: 600 of these are already permitted for development as part of Great Western Park.
- Identify a site for 2,300 homes and associated community facilities and services between the A4130 and the B4493 Wantage Road. An outline of a possible policy for this major site is in Appendix 4b to this report.

### ***Employment***

- Promote the redevelopment and intensification of Milton Park as strategic employment site for B1, B2 and B8 uses.
- Promote the redevelopment and intensification of Harwell Science and Innovation Campus for scientific research, knowledge based businesses and other uses in classes B1 and B2.
- Identify the power station site for existing and future power generation using the most fuel efficient and sustainable technologies.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - protect key employment sites such as those identified in the Local Plan
  - identify a site for business use near Didcot to replace the Steventon Storage Facility. Sites could include land on the undeveloped part of the area currently identified for a service area at the Milton interchange, land east of the power station, or land north of Milton Park.

**Fig 5.3  
Main Proposals for Didcot**



## ***Shopping***

- Require a neighbourhood centre to be built on the major new housing site with a limited number of shops, a community centre and a primary school.

## ***Transport***

- Provide major new road infrastructure funded principally by contributions from new developments to include
  - A strategic link road between the A4130 and the A417 east of the A34
  - A scheme to resolve congestion at Rowstock crossroads by
    - Either a link from the A417 to the A34 Chilton interchange with improvements to Featherbed Lane
    - Or a bypass to Rowstock crossroads south of its current line.
- Provide public transport, cycle and pedestrian links between the housing and the district centre and secondary school on Great Western Park, the town centre and the employment centres at Milton Park and Harwell, including
  - Reopening the Cow Lane (west) railway underpass to Milton Park for cycling and walking
  - Improvements to public transport along the corridor from Didcot to Milton Park, Harwell and Wantage & Grove
  - Bus priority measures on the A4130 between the A34 Milton interchange and the rail station.
- Safeguard the site of the existing services south of the A4130 at the A34 Milton interchange and promote their improvement. Consideration will be given to providing space for a lorry park.
- Provide safe places for cycle parking in the main housing and employment sites.

## ***Community facilities***

- Require contributions to community facilities including a secondary school, a science based learning park and a sports centre. In some cases this may involve the provision of land in the Vale.

## ***Environmental improvements***

- Promote environmental improvements along the A4130 – particularly to the south of the road where major tree planting would improve the appearance of the approach to the town.
- Protect the separate identities of the villages of Harwell, Milton, Sutton Courtenay and Appleford by maintaining open gaps between them and the expansion of Didcot and the major employment sites.

## ***Minerals and waste disposal***

- The proposals map will show the area north of Didcot power station proposed for mineral working and waste disposal. Although this is a matter for the County

Council in its minerals and waste LDF, the Vale's proposals map is required to show it.

**What do you think about the suggested policies to deliver the vision for the Didcot area?** Please give reasons for your answers

- Are there any other issues you think should be covered?
- Are there any policies that should not be included?

## **Botley**

5.10 The area referred to as Botley is on the western outskirts of Oxford to the south and east of the A420. There is limited scope for growth in the area as the Oxford Green Belt tightly bounds the area.

5.11 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to

### ***Housing***

- Establish the number of homes to be built between 2006 and 2027. This is likely to be in the order of 750 homes and includes the three sites identified for housing in the Local Plan at Tilbury Lane, Lime Road and the Timbmet site.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will identify new sites not covered by the Green Belt, including for example the site north of Poplar Road if access issues can be resolved.

### ***Employment***

- In the Managing Development document the Council will safeguard important local business sites, this could include those protected in the Local Plan.

### ***Shopping***

- Identify the West Way shopping centre and Elms Parade as a site for comprehensive redevelopment and environmental improvements to include a large supermarket, shops, offices, car parking and other uses to meet the needs of Botley and surrounding area. This could include commercial leisure facilities that may be open late into the evening provided it could be achieved without harm to the amenities of nearby residents. (See plan in Appendix 5b.)

### ***Leisure and Recreation***

- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Safeguard leisure and recreation facilities as identified in the open space, sport and recreation audit.

### ***Environmental protection and improvements***

- The Council will work with Thames Water to resolve as soon as possible the problems of the sewers overflowing in times of heavy rain.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will protect the attractive character of the low density residential areas. The residential design guide supplementary planning document will contain more specific guidance for such areas including Cumnor Hill.

**What do you think about the suggested policies to deliver the vision for the Botley area?** Please give reasons for your answers

- Are there any other issues you think should be covered?
- Are there any policies that should not be included?

## **Faringdon**

5.12 Faringdon is the only town in the rest of the Vale policy area and, in accordance with the Council's preferred approach, is the location where most development in this area will be located. The main proposals for the town are illustrated on Figure 5.4.

5.13 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to

### ***Housing***

- Establish the number of new homes to be built between 2006 and 2027. This is likely to be in the order of 1,060 homes and includes the 400 homes on the former nursery site north of Park Road that has already been permitted.
- Identify the site south of Park Road for a mixed housing and employment development. Further work is being done to assess how the site would be developed and an outline of a policy is included in Appendix 6b.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will identify redevelopment sites within the town which could be suitable for housing development, including for example north of Pioneer Road/south of Willes Close and north of Park Road/east of Volunteer Way (these are currently identified for employment use in the Local Plan).

### ***Employment***

- Identify part of the major site south of Park Road for employment use, in part to replace other less suitable sites within the town and provide for the needs of new residents.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Safeguard important local business sites within the town so they remain in employment use, these could include some of the sites shown in the Local Plan (excluding the two sites named above)



- Identify sites for business development. This would include retaining the site at the junction of Park Road and the A420 as shown in the Local Plan unless it has been developed by the time the document is submitted to the Government.

### ***Shopping***

- Identify part of the town centre, including Budgen's supermarket and the Southampton Street car park, for comprehensive redevelopment and environmental improvement for retail and other town centre uses, including improved car parking. (See plan in Appendix 6c.)
- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Have detailed policies for the town centre, including for primary and secondary frontages. The areas to which they will apply will be defined on the proposals map
  - Safeguard local shopping areas for example at Folly View Road.

5.14 It has been suggested that a supermarket should be built on Park Road on land currently used by local businesses. The Council is concerned that this could lead to the loss of jobs in the town and the supermarket would divert trade from the town centre so harming its vitality and viability. For this reason it is not an option the Council thinks it should pursue.

### ***Transport***

- Seek contributions to improving public transport (including the community bus) to Oxford, Swindon, Abingdon, Wantage, Witney and surrounding villages.
- Ensure Park Road remains a safe and convenient route to and from the A420.
- Improve car parking in the town centre.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will have policies and proposals to improve the networks for cycling and walking including the provision of safe and convenient cycle parking.

### ***Community facilities***

- Set out the improvements needed to community facilities. These are still being discussed with the service providers.

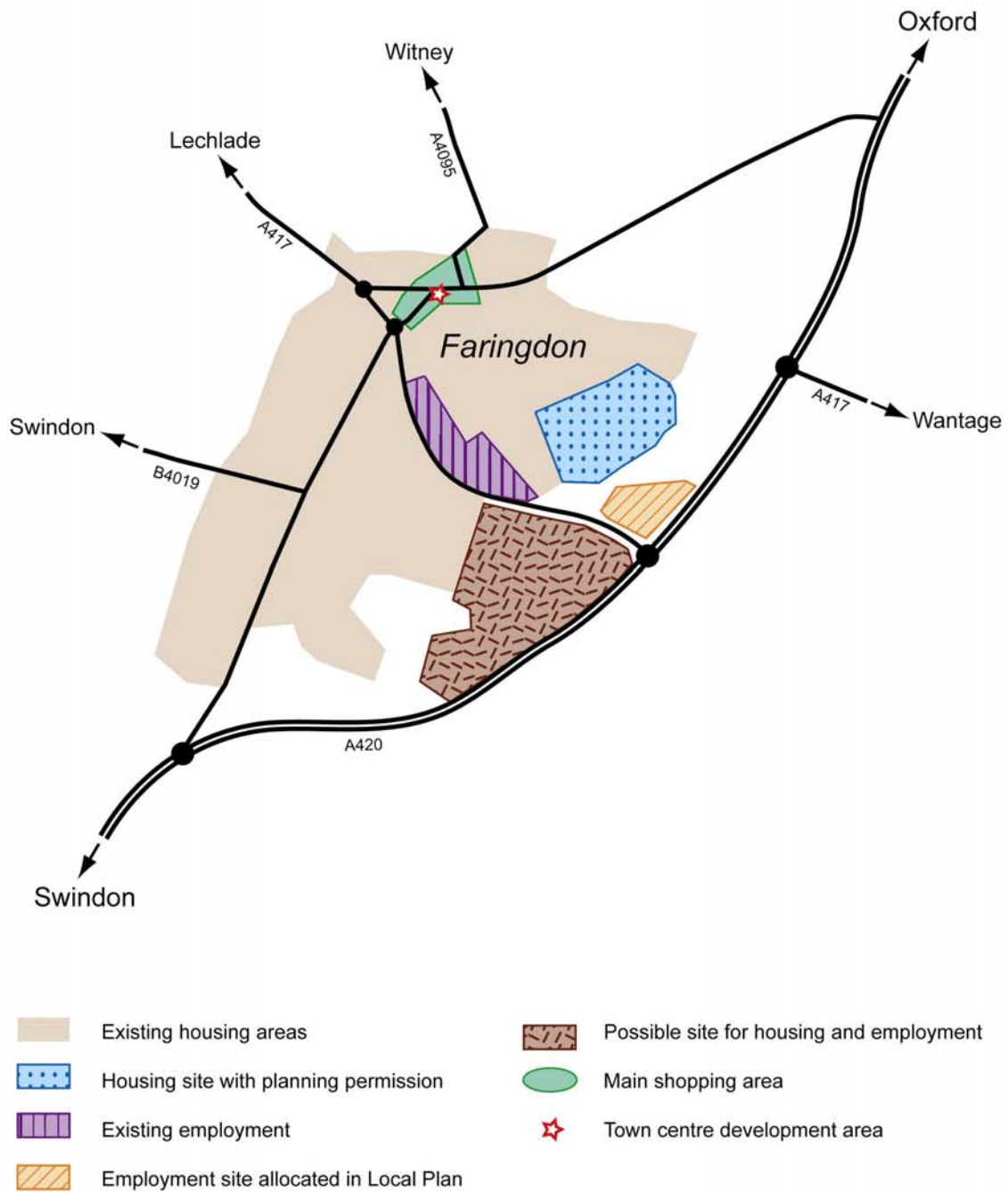
### ***Leisure and recreation***

- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Safeguard sites for leisure and recreation including for example Folly Park and Folly Hill
  - Seek the provision of an all weather sports pitch at the leisure centre.

### ***Environmental protection and improvements***

- Preserve and enhance the historic character of the town and its setting on the limestone ridge.

**Fig 5.4  
Main Proposals for Faringdon**



- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Propose areas for environmental improvements, including for example along Park Road and other approaches to the town

- Incorporate measures from the Faringdon health check, including improvements to the Folly
- Promote initiatives through the Great Western Community Forest.

**What do you think about the suggested policies to deliver the vision for Faringdon area?** Please give reasons for your answers.

- Are there any other issues you think should be covered?
- Are there any policies that should not be included?
- Do you agree that efforts should be focussed on improving the shopping offer in the town centre, together with improving the car parking?

## The Rural Areas

- 5.15 Although the larger villages provide a limited range of services that can meet day to day needs, most people living in the rural areas will continue to rely on the towns for many of their services. This includes doctors, dentists, sports facilities, secondary schools and shopping for items such as clothes, shoes electrical goods and furniture. The current Local Plan has policies that enable different scales of development in villages based on their level services. The Council is minded to keep this approach broadly the same.
- 5.16 Based on a recent study of services and facilities available in villages, the Council is proposing the following approach.
- 20 larger villages, shown in Figure 5.5, have a reasonable range of services and facilities to meet day to day needs. All have a primary school, a place of worship, a village hall, a mobile library service and some recreation facilities. Most have at least one shop and/or post office and an hourly bus service. The Council thinks these villages should continue to provide local services and to support their role, schemes of up to 15 new homes will be allowed within them. New premises up to 500 square metres for businesses will be allowed in villages and on the rural business sites.
  - 22 smaller villages, shown in Figure 5.5, have a more limited range of services and the Council considers that schemes for up to 5 new homes should be allowed within them.
  - In both these categories of villages new premises would be allowed to provide services and facilities for the social well being of local communities, such as shops, affordable housing and community buildings. Development next to villages may be allowed for these facilities if they cannot be provided in any other way.
  - In the other settlements that have a very narrow range of services or are part of the Oxford Green Belt, only 1 or 2 homes would be allowed.
- 5.17 The Council considers that focusing development in the larger villages will help them retain their service role. An alternative would be to allow the same level and type of development in all rural communities irrespective of their current role. However, this would locate people in settlements with a very narrow range of services, would

increase the need to travel and could weaken the services already located in the larger villages. Although there are some social and economic linkages between villages, in the Council's view this does not justify a higher rate of development in the smaller villages.

5.18 Higher levels of development throughout the rural areas than that proposed could spoil the rural character of villages, would locate more people in areas where there are limited services and facilities, and people would be heavily dependent on the private car for access. Not allowing any development in villages would lead to population decline and the further loss of rural services. In preparing the Managing Development document the Council will consider whether to define settlement boundaries for villages and whether ideas put forward in parish plans can be promoted.

5.18 The Council proposes the Core Strategy will have policies to enable

### ***Housing***

- Schemes of up to 15 new homes within the built up areas of the larger villages.
- Schemes of up to 5 new homes within the built up areas of the smaller villages.
- Affordable housing to meet the needs of the community on the edge of these villages if it cannot be met in any other way.
- Specialist accommodation for the elderly within the larger villages. This could provide housing for the elderly in the same community or near to where they live. It could be accompanied by services – such as gyms or cafes – that are open to the public and could free up existing village housing for new families.
- In the Managing Development document the Council will have policies to enable
  - Infilling with 1 or 2 new small homes within other settlements
  - In the countryside, homes to meet the essential needs of a rural enterprise – such as farming, forestry or equestrian enterprises where a person is needed to be available at all times.
- The Managing Development document and the proposals map may identify
  - Sites for between about 10 – 15 homes within the built up areas of the larger villages and
  - Sites for affordable housing adjacent to the built up areas of villages.

### ***Employment***

- New premises for firms up to 500 square metres to be built within the larger villages or on local rural business sites. These could include those identified in the Local Plan.
- New premises for small scale tourist facilities within the villages, including museums, heritage centres, hotels, guest houses, self catering accommodation.
- Require the complete clearance of the Steventon Storage Facility if the number of jobs at the site can be replaced on an alternative site in the Didcot area.



restaurants, public houses, open space, sport, recreation and community buildings that meet the day-to-day needs of local people. Development next to a village may be allowed if the facility cannot be provided in any other way.

- In the Managing Development document the Council will include policies to retain village shops, pubs and other community facilities.

### ***Transport***

- Highlight the need for improvements
  - along the A415, including a bypass to Marcham to remove through traffic
  - to the junction of the A338 and the A415 at Frilford
  - to the A338 north of Grove
  - to the A417 east of Wantage
  - to mitigate the increases in traffic through the villages north of Didcot including Marcham, Steventon, Drayton, Sutton Courtenay and Appleford.

### ***Leisure and recreation***

- The Managing Development document will have policies to enable
  - Small scale developments to provide facilities for informal countryside recreation
  - A safe, convenient and attractive network of footpaths to be retained
  - The restoration of the Wilts and Berks canal and associated structures for their recreational, nature conservation and heritage value. The route will be shown on the proposals map.

### ***Environmental Protection and Improvement***

- Preserving and enhancing the distinctive rural character of the villages and countryside.

### ***Other ways of addressing the social and economic needs of rural areas***

The Council can help address the social and economic needs of the rural areas outside the land use planning system. This could include for example

- Focusing the Council's grant aid to maintain and improve community facilities
- Working with partners to maintain and where possible improve access to services, including for example by supporting community buses
- Encouraging service providers to devolve their services and/or improve electronic access to services to reduce the need to travel
- Encouraging service providers to work together to secure joint provision e.g. police offices in village halls, wider use of village churches and church buildings
- Continuing to support the work of rural voluntary and community sector groups including for example the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
- Working with parish councils, particularly through the preparation of parish plans, to help them identify the needs of their residents and consider measures for addressing them
- Continuing to support the work of the rural housing enabler to promote affordable housing in rural areas.

Partnership working with the Vale Local Strategic Partnership, parish councils and other interest organisations including the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, the Country Landowners Association and the National Farmers Union will be particularly important.

***What do you think about the suggested policies to deliver the vision for the rural areas?***

Question 22. Do you agree that the Core Strategy should define the three categories of rural settlements – larger villages, smaller villages and other settlements? If you think your community should be in a different category to that shown on Figure 5.5 please say why.

Question 23. Do you agree that affordable housing (not involving any market housing) should be provided next to the larger and smaller villages shown on Figure 5.5? If you think affordable housing should be allowed elsewhere in rural areas please say why

Question 24. Do you agree with the scale of new housing and employment proposed for the different rural settlements? If not please say whether you think there should be more or less development, with reasons to explain why.

Question 25. Do you agree that the Core Strategy should enable facilities for the day to day needs of a rural community next to the village if they can not provided in the built up area?

Question 26. Please let us know if you think there are other issues in the rural areas that should be covered in the Core Strategy.

## **The Oxford Green Belt**

- 5.19 The fundamental aim of national Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open. It follows that new building will be severely restricted and only allowed for a very limited number of purposes. Government Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 'Green Belts' (PPG2) states there is a general presumption against development in Green Belts. It establishes that new building is inappropriate unless it is for
- Agriculture or forestry
  - Outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and other uses that preserve the openness of the Green Belt
  - Limited extension or replacement of existing dwellings
  - Limited infilling in villages and limited affordable housing for community needs
  - Limited infilling or redevelopment of major developed sites
  - The reuse of permanent and substantial buildings, in keeping with their surroundings, where the use does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on its openness
  - Park and ride development.
- 5.20 Policy CO4 in the draft South East Plan sets out the purposes of including land in the Oxford Green Belt and refers to the need for a review of its boundaries to facilitate the urban extension to Oxford (this is not proposed for the Vale). It states that 'Development in the Green Belt will only be permitted if it maintains its openness and does not conflict with the purpose of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities'.

## 5.21 In the Core Strategy the Council will

- State it will continue to implement national and regional policies to safeguard the Green Belt from inappropriate development. It cannot repeat them, but for ease of reference they will be summarised in the Core Strategy and a companion document will contain extracts or more detailed summaries of the policies to be applied.
- Name the major developed sites in the Vale where infilling and redevelopment will be allowed in accordance with the guidance in PPG2, Annex C. It is proposed that the following sites be named
  - Dalton Barracks
  - Farmoor water treatment works
  - Swinford water treatment works
  - Radley College
  - Westminster campus of Oxford Brookes University
  - Said Business School, Egrove Campus at Kennington
  - Cothill School
  - Chandlings Manor
  - Oakenholt nursing home.

In the past landowners have requested that other sites be defined as major developed sites, but none has been suggested of a sufficient scale to warrant this approach.

- In the Managing Development document the Council will
  - Name the villages where limited infilling will be allowed
  - Establish the increases in floorspace that will be allowed as extensions to dwellings of different sizes.
- The proposals map to be published at the same time as the Managing Development document will define
  - The boundaries of the Green Belt
  - The extent of the major developed sites
  - The boundaries of the villages where infilling will be allowed.

### **What do you think about the Council's proposed approach for the Green Belt?**

Question 27. Do you agree with the approach for dealing with the Green Belt outlined above? If not please give your reasons

## **The Upper Thames Reservoir**

- 5.22 Thames Water has proposed that a major new reservoir should be built in the Vale to the south west of Abingdon between the villages of East Hanney, Steventon and Marcham. The draft South East Plan states that a small number of major new reservoirs may be required to meet the needs of current and future development including an Upper Thames Reservoir in Oxfordshire. It states that local development documents should allocate and safeguard sites identified for the reservoir schemes



identified in the policy. The Environment Agency and the Council have not accepted that the case put forward by Thames Water justifies a reservoir of the scale proposed. For this reason the Council is not proposing to identify the site in the Core Strategy.

5.23 The Council, following the policy in the draft South East Plan, will not permit any development that would hinder the construction of the reservoir in case the Secretary of State for the Environment decides this is the most appropriate way of catering for the water supply needs of the London and Upper Thames areas. The policy in the Local Plan (CF9) is considered adequate to consider any formal proposal for the construction of the reservoir. If the need has been established for the reservoir to be located in the Vale, the policy states it will not be permitted unless

- its impact on existing communities, the transport networks, landscape and nature conservation interests are minimised
- the potential benefits for the creation of wildlife habitats and the restoration or provision of an alternative route for the Wilts and Berks Canal are maximised.

**What do you think of the Council's approach to the Upper Thames Reservoir?**

Question 28. Do you agree with the Council's approach to the Upper Thames Reservoir as expressed in the LDF?

## **Section 6: Policies applying across the Vale**

- 6.1 Beyond the essential place shaping elements of the Core Strategy, which have been set out earlier in the spatial strategy, a number of other Vale wide policies need to be included in the Core Strategy or the Managing Development document to achieve the objectives of the LDF. The matters covered by these policies cover a wide range of topics that fall into four main themes: building communities, supporting prosperity and delivering and protecting quality environments. They cover very important issues including for example the provision of infrastructure, new services and facilities and affordable housing, as well as addressing the causes of climate change and the effects of flooding. Policies that will be applied when considering planning applications on the major development sites will be set out in the Core Strategy with other development control matters and smaller site allocations being contained in the Managing Development document

### **Building Communities**

- 6.2 Planning is not just about the amount and location of new development, it is also about fostering healthy, safe and inclusive communities, which meet the diverse needs of people living in the area. Through the LDF the Council can help achieve this by making sure that

- New homes meet the needs of all sections of the community
- People have access to jobs and good quality services such as health, education, leisure, sport, recreation and youth and community facilities and feel part of a thriving community
- New development provides or contributes towards the infrastructure and facilities needed to support it, and is designated to create safe communities and enable people to lead healthy lives.

To achieve this there will need to be close working with partners in public, voluntary and community organisations.

### **Providing new infrastructure**

- 6.3 One of the main concerns local people have when new development is proposed is the impact on existing infrastructure. Infrastructure includes such things as

- roads
- affordable housing
- education (nursery, primary and secondary schools, as well as special needs, further and higher education)
- health (hospitals, health centres, ambulance services)
- social infrastructure (supported housing, social and community facilities, sports centres, open spaces, parks, play spaces and facilities for teenagers)
- green infrastructure (parks, public and domestic gardens, urban green spaces, outdoor sports facilities, village greens)
- public services (libraries, cemeteries, emergency services, police, places of worship)
- utility supplies (gas, water, electricity)

- facilities for waste collection and recycling
- flood defences.

6.4 The Government accepts that the timely provision of infrastructure is a key aspect to improving people's quality of life. It supports the 'manage and invest' approach of the South East Plan which seeks the better use of existing infrastructure, reducing demand by encouraging changes in people's behaviour and providing additional capacity by extending or providing new facilities.

6.5 The Council proposes to include a policy in the Core Strategy to ensure that where existing infrastructure is not able to deal with the extra demands resulting from a proposed development, developers will be expected to provide or contribute towards additional services or facilities. This may be in the form of new facilities or improving existing ones, or be on or off the site. Without this the quality of life of people living in the Vale would be gradually eroded.

6.6 It is seldom possible to require that new infrastructure is provided before a development starts, particularly on larger developments, but wherever possible it will be delivered at the time it is needed. This approach cannot be used to make good existing short-comings in infrastructure. Councils can only require developers to pay for facilities reasonably related in scale and kind to the development proposed. To give people greater confidence that infrastructure will be provided in a timely manner, the Council will prepare an implementation strategy to show when and who will provide the essential infrastructure.

6.7 The Council currently secures new infrastructure required by development through conditions on planning permissions or planning obligations through Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act. The Planning Bill currently before parliament, if enacted, will empower local authorities to charge a 'community infrastructure levy' to be spent on local and sub-regional infrastructure to support the development of the area. It will broaden the range of developments asked to contribute, allow the cumulative impacts of small developments to be addressed and enable important sub-regional infrastructure to be funded. Before the levy can be charged the Government insists there must be an up to date development plan for the area that has set out the likely cost of the required infrastructure. Authorities will be expected to prepare a draft charging schedule as part of the LDF that will be subject to consultation and public inquiry. Before publishing the draft Core Strategy the Council will decide whether it wishes to charge the community infrastructure levy and, if so, how proposals will be included in the Core Strategy.

**The approach to infrastructure – what do you think?**

Question 29. Do you agree with the approach to securing new infrastructure where it is needed by new development?

**Widening housing opportunities and choice**

6.8 Delivering good quality housing which meets the needs of communities is one of the most essential functions of the planning system. The Government's Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' aims to deliver sufficient good quality market and affordable housing with a mix of house types, tenures and prices in appropriate locations. Previously developed land should accommodate 60% of housing, at suitable densities,

in the context of creating mixed communities. The overall objective set out in the guidance is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live.

- 6.9 The draft South East Plan aims for a substantial increase in the provision of affordable housing by setting an overall regional target with higher targets for some sub-regions including Central Oxfordshire. The draft South East Plan defines affordable housing as non-market housing, provided to those whose needs are not met by the market, for example homeless people or key workers. Tenures defined as affordable include:
- social rented housing from a Registered Social Landlord, or
  - intermediate tenures such as
    - shared ownership housing where the occupier owns part of the house
    - shared equity where land value is retained to allow sales below market value.
- 6.10 The draft South East Plan states that affordable housing in Central Oxfordshire should account for 40% of all new housing (CO3) whilst in the rest of the Vale account should be taken of the overall regional target of 35% (H3). On the type and size of new housing it says that an appropriate range and mix of housing opportunities should be provided to meet the needs in an area (H4). Housing density should take into account the overall regional average of 40 dwellings per hectare with appropriate local variations (H5).
- 6.11 Government guidance for gypsies and travellers is contained in Circular 01/06 'Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites'. This sets out the need to carry out Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessments, for the results of these to be reflected in regional plans and for LDFs to reflect the regional provisions at the local level. A partial review is being undertaken of the draft South East Plan to include provisions for gypsies and travellers.
- 6.12 As referred to in the spatial strategy a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment of the Vale has been undertaken by the Council. Also, a Strategic Housing Market Assessment has been undertaken which showed Oxfordshire to be a relatively self contained housing market with development of market housing in the Vale broadly in balance with demand. However for affordable housing it showed the discrepancy was so large that if all of the housing allocated to the Vale in the draft South East Plan was to be affordable housing this would still not meet need.
- 6.13 A Housing Needs Assessment was also undertaken to provide more specific information. It has concluded that the percentage of 40% of new housing being affordable as set out in the draft South East Plan can be justified across the Vale and that 50% of new market housing should be one or two bed with 60% of affordable housing being one or two bed. It also sets out a range of tenures for each type of affordable house. Information from the study can be used to customise the overall standards for particular areas.
- 6.14 At the issues and options stage we were told that the issues of housing an ageing population, providing more affordable housing and meeting gypsy and traveller needs were important issues that needed to be addressed by the Council. The use of brownfield land for housing was one of the most favoured options for locating new housing development.

- 6.15 For the Core Strategy the major housing sites which will be developed to meet the requirements set out in the draft South East Plan are detailed in the spatial strategy. The proposed policy approaches related to affordable housing issues and housing density are set out below. All the remaining housing issues in the Vale will be addressed by the provisions of the Managing Development document as set out below or the actions of partner organisations.
- 6.16 The Council proposes to include a policy which will set out the need to provide an average of 40% of new housing as affordable housing in new developments across the Vale to accord with the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment. As indicated in the assessment the thresholds for applying the policy will be 15 dwellings at the most in urban areas and 5 dwellings at the most in rural areas. The Council's preferred option would be for lower thresholds, so as to increase the amount of affordable housing being built in the Vale. However, lower thresholds will need to be justified by further work in relation to financial viability.
- 6.17 As set out above, affordable housing can be provided under a range of tenures. A policy needs to be included in the Core Strategy to influence the tenure mix of affordable housing so that they match local need. The Council considers this policy to be based on the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment that 75% of affordable housing should be social rent and 25% intermediate housing.
- 6.18 To accord with PPS3 and the draft South East Plan, the mix of housing types by number of bedrooms in affordable and market housing based will need to be controlled by a policy which the Council thinks should be in the Core Strategy. This policy will also be based on the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment which states that overall delivery in the social sector should be 60% for single/couple and small family households, principally flats and terraced houses, and 40% houses to meet the needs of larger families. The imbalance of 80% of the current market stock having 3 bedrooms or more needs to be addressed to take account of future changes in demographic and household formation. The Housing Needs Assessment sets out the following delivery by tenure.

Tenure	Bedroom Size (%)				
	1-Bed	2-Bed	3-Bed	4-Bed	Total
Market Sector	10	40	25	25	100
Intermediate	50	50	0	0	100
Social Rented	30	30	25	15	100

- 6.19 Housing density will also need to be controlled by a policy to ensure adherence to the average of 40 dwellings per hectare in the draft South East Plan. The Council's preferred choice is for a hierarchy of densities setting out the level of 50 dwellings per hectare in and close to the centres of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon and Wantage: 40 dwellings per hectare elsewhere in the main settlements and 30 dwellings per hectare in the rural areas. These are the densities in the recently adopted Local Plan.

### **Meeting housing needs – what do you think?**

Question 30. Do you agree that the Council should seek 40% affordable housing across the Vale even though the draft South East Plan indicates 35% outside Central Oxfordshire?

Question 31. Do you agree that the Council should seek to apply lower thresholds for affordable housing than those currently in force if further work indicates this would be viable?

Question 32. Do you agree that the Council should try to achieve the mix of housing types and tenures as set out above?

Question 33. Do you agree that the Council should seek to apply the density targets currently set out in the Local Plan?

Question 34. Should any further policies be included for affordable housing in the Core Strategy?

If you consider that alternative provisions or thresholds should be made, please supply evidence to justify your response.

6.20 Through the Managing Development document many of the objectives relating to housing will be delivered through the application of detailed policies to planning applications. These policies must be set out in the development plan but as they deal with detailed matters they are not appropriate for inclusion in the Core Strategy. Detailed development control policies will therefore be set out in the Managing Development document relating to:

- delivering about a third of new housing on previously developed land. This is lower than the draft South East Plan's target as such sites are in shorter supply in rural districts like the Vale and the area is accommodating a high level of growth,
- the circumstances in which the Council will permit the development of rural 'exception' sites, which can be permitted for affordable housing where market housing would not be allowed, such as the completion of a local housing need survey to justify them,
- extra care housing setting out the provision to be made within new developments or alternatively what contributions would be acceptable to allow for the creation of facilities which bridge the gap between independent and fully supported living,
- the criteria to be taken into account when considering proposals for housing to meet the requirements of defined groups with special needs,
- the circumstances where development to accommodate dependant relatives will be permitted,
- the percentage of 'lifetime' homes in new housing developments, which can be easily adapted to meet the needs arising from the ageing of occupants, and
- the criteria which will be taken into account when considering whether proposals for Gypsy and Traveller or Travelling Showpeople accommodation should be permitted.

### **Detailed housing policies – what do you think?**

Question 35. Are there any other housing matters that should be addressed in the Managing Development document? If so, what should they say and why are they required?

- 6.21 The smaller housing sites referred to in Section 4 above will be listed and shown on the proposals map together with any rural 'exceptions', gypsy and traveller or travelling showpeople site allocations. Until the partial review of the draft South East Plan is complete the Council has no longer term basis for deciding the level of any allocations for gypsies and travellers or travelling showpeople
- 6.22 Associated housing initiatives which will be delivered through the actions of partners will include
- the delivery of an extra care housing strategy,
  - improving the quality of existing homes by continuing to give home improvement grants to those in greatest need and assist owners to access other sources of funding,
  - providing 'staying put' grants to assist with the adaptation of existing homes to enable elderly people to stay in their own homes longer,
  - support for the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme which allows Housing Register applicants to find a new home and to have more of a say in where they would like to live,
  - supporting housing associations to provide an increased number of affordable homes, and
  - reducing the risk of homelessness by continuing to provide people in housing need with good quality advice and support.

### **Community infrastructure**

- 6.23 The quality and convenience of every day life is greatly influenced by the nature and extent of community services and facilities such as schools, community halls, doctors and dental surgeries. The provision of these services and their retention are elements that should be addressed in the LDF.
- 6.24 Many organisations are involved in running these services. As well as the District Council they include the police and health authorities; the County Council for education, libraries, social services and the fire service; town and parish councils often look after community halls, open spaces, cemeteries and allotments; and there is a range of private, faith and voluntary organisations, as well as local clubs and societies. Private companies provide electricity, gas, water, sewage disposal and telephones.
- 6.25 Through the LDF the Council has an important role to coordinate development with the services it requires, provide for new facilities and make the best use of existing ones. The Council will work with organisations to establish the services needed for the future, and where possible identify the land. The Core Strategy will also have a policy to enable new services and facilities to be provided to meet local needs.
- 6.26 In addition the Managing Development document will

- Resist the loss of existing well-used and valued community facilities, and set out the circumstances when the redevelopment of existing facilities will be allowed. This will apply to such things as community buildings and public houses.
- It may also identify sites for new community facilities.

### **Open space, sport and recreation**

6.27 Open space and facilities for sport and recreation are also fundamental to the quality of life for residents of the Vale. They are used for relaxation and for a wide range of social activities that help to build communities and bring health benefits associated with regular exercise. Ensuring that existing sport and recreation facilities are protected and that all new housing provides or contributes to new facilities is the main way the LDF will support the priority to promote healthier communities in the sustainable community strategy.

National and regional guidance indicate the Council should

- Undertake an assessment of both the quantity and quality of open space, sport and recreation from which local standards can be derived
- Not allow facilities to be built on unless there is a surplus
- Improve the quality of provision
- Take opportunities to remedy deficiencies
- Incorporate open space within new development
- Work with partners to plan, provide and manage networks of accessible open space that can be used for different functions.

6.28 An audit of open space, sport and recreation facilities (carried out in 2007) found in general there is adequate provision across the district. But there are shortfalls in parts of the district: in particular artificial pitches at Faringdon, Wantage and Grove; grass pitches in several locations; and a general shortage of facilities for teenagers. The quality of some provision, especially amenity space, is often poor. A separate study has also found that Oxfordshire, including the Vale, does not have good access to natural green space such as woodland, commons and country parks.

6.29 Using the audit the District Council has produced an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision Strategy. This sets a vision for future provision, addresses the detailed issues to be tackled, and sets out a delivery plan for implementation. A Supplementary Planning Document 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation future Provision' sets out the quality and quantity standards that the Council will be looking for new development to provide.

6.30 In response to the issues and options report people generally supported ideas to protect existing facilities and seek new or improved facilities from housing developments. People also thought a green infrastructure plan should be prepared to identify existing open spaces, potential new ones and links between them.

6.31 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to have policies to

- Enable new facilities to be provided to meet local needs
- Enable new buildings and facilities for river related recreation at or next to existing settlements along the River Thames.
- Promote the restoration of the Wilts and Berks canal and associated structures, along its historic route. At Abingdon, where it has been built over, a new route for it



south of the town will be safeguarded. The canal linked the River Thames with the Kennet and Avon canal. Although it was abandoned in 1914, it is an important historic feature and in many locations provides a well used recreational facility.

6.32 The Managing Development document will

- Resist the loss of existing high value open spaces and recreational facilities, especially if there is a shortage in the area
- If required identify sites for open space, sport and recreation facilities
- Ensure the long term future management and maintenance mechanisms are in place for open space, sport and recreation facilities
- Protect important urban open spaces and green corridors
- Protect existing rights of ways and national trails
- Establish criteria against which development associated with the keeping and rearing of horses will be allowed

**Building communities – do you have any other comments?**

Question 36. Are there any other comments you would like to make in relation to building communities?

## **Supporting Prosperity**

6.33 Economic growth is vital for the creation of strong and viable communities because such growth generates wealth and raises living standards. As set out in Government planning guidance, the draft South East Plan and the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy a successful economy is essential to the development of sustainable communities. The Vale as part of the South East region shares the benefits of its role as an internationally important economic entity. The spatial strategy describes the majority of the policies which will be included in the Core Strategy and the Managing Development document to support prosperity in the Vale. This section sets out the other Vale wide policies that will be included to support prosperity in the Local Development Framework, and how they relate to government guidance and policies in the draft South East Plan. Provisions for retailing and town centre development are entirely covered in the spatial strategy so no further provision for policies needs to be included in this section.

### **Employment**

6.34 To ensure continued economic growth, and the benefits that arise from it, the planning system is a key lever in its delivery Government guidance in draft PPS4 emphasises the need for the planning system to play its part in delivering economic growth by ensuring that there are sufficient sites and available premises which can deliver high quality development whilst avoiding unacceptable impacts on the environment and promoting alternative travel choices. PPS7 says planning authorities should support a wide range of economic activity in rural areas by identifying sites where needed and setting out criteria for permitting economic development. PPS6 directs many forms of development which can generate employment to town centres.

6.35 In response to our issues and options consultation we were told that the Council should generally support economic growth and should continue to support the development of Milton Park and at Harwell Campus in the context of the Quadrant (now Science Vale UK) area between Wantage and Didcot which seeks to maximise the areas economic success. It was suggested that further employment allocations should be made at Grove, Didcot and in or next to villages. A number of respondents felt that employment development should be related to new housing and that greater commuting would lead to traffic congestion. The Council has undertaken an Employment Land Review which has concluded that sufficient employment land was already available across the Vale to meet future need for employment land.

6.36 The Regional Economic Strategy identifies the central Oxfordshire area as a diamond for growth and investment. The draft South East Plan requires the LDF to;

- help the region's economy to contribute to the UK's competitiveness and address changes in the global economy,
- deliver 'smart growth' to maintain the competitiveness of the most successful areas,
- support important clusters like the knowledge economy and research and development.
- provide flexible supplies of strategic employment land as well as land and premises for more general employment need
- Address the particular needs of rural communities also need to be addressed.

Council actions can include the provision and protection of sites/suitable premises, creation of ICT infrastructure, exploitation of assets like environmental quality and interventions like skills development.

6.37 The Council considers that the Core Strategy should refer to the main site allocations necessary to support continued prosperity and further economic growth, as required by national and regional guidance, are set out in the spatial strategy. The main sites of Milton Park and Harwell Science and Innovation Campus are specifically identified as they will provide the majority of job growth.

6.38 The Council considers that the Managing Development document should contain policies for dealing with employment development and some have already been set out in the spatial strategy. The Managing Development document will also set out detailed development control policies relating to:

- Development for business purposes on sites not allocated for such uses
- The development of ancillary uses on employment sites where they will be of an appropriate scale, clearly related to the business uses and not harmful to the viability and vitality of town centres or villages,
- The circumstances where working at home may require planning permission
- The allocation of non strategic employment allocations on the basis set out in the spatial strategy
- The continued protection of employment sites which are currently protected in the adopted Local Plan from other forms of development, apart from two sites at Faringdon, to support continued economic prosperity.

6.39 Associated actions of other partners will include the delivery of a minerals and waste development framework, the promotion of the Science Vale UK initiative,

improvements in skill levels within the Vale workforce, promotion of the Vale as a tourism destination and enhancement of the Vale's market towns.

## **Tourism**

- 6.40 The Government's Good Practice Guide on Tourism recognises the value of tourism to the economy. The emphasis is on meeting the development needs of tourism in such a way that benefits, such as the revitalisation of market towns and villages, are achieved without untoward impacts. PPS7 'Sustainable Development in Rural Areas' indicates that economic development in the open countryside should involve the reutilisation of existing buildings and PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres' directs hotel development towards town centres. The South East of England comprises the largest tourism market outside Greater London, the tourism hotspots of Oxford and the River Thames are closely related to the Vale and the Ridgeway National Trail passes to the south.
- 6.41 The draft South East Plan recognises the economic importance of tourism and refers specifically to the River Thames and Oxford as important attractions. It contains policies on the following matters which will need to be taken into account in deciding applications
- Promoting rural diversification where it leads to jobs for local residents and will be appropriate to its location,
  - Encouraging enhancement and upgrade of existing tourism attractions and have policies for determining proposals for new or upgraded attractions,
  - Encouraging cooperation over visitor management, and
  - Recognition that Oxford and the River Thames are priority areas for tourism.
- 6.42 Taking into account the specific requirements of national and regional planning policy on tourism development, the Council does not consider that specific policies on tourism are required in the Core Strategy.
- 6.43 The Council does however need to set out specific guidance to deal with proposals for tourism development in the Managing Development document. In particular policy TSR4 says councils should have policies for determining proposals for new or upgraded attractions. Also, TSR5 lists criteria to be taken into account in formulating policy including protecting existing accommodation, encouraging improvement, permitting development in suitable locations and encourage the provision of affordable staff accommodation. Detailed development control policies will therefore be set out relating to:
- Under what circumstances new tourist attractions or improvements to existing tourist attractions will be permitted.
  - Where new or improved tourist accommodation will be allowed
- 6.44 In conjunction with its partners the Council will also work towards the protection and enhancement of the Vale's tourism assets to ensure continued economic benefits to the area.

### **Supporting prosperity – what do you think?**

Question 37. Are there any other Vale wide supporting prosperity issues that should be addressed in the Core Strategy or the Managing Development document?

## Delivering Quality Environments

- 6.45 Government guidance in PPS1 emphasises that planning policies should protect the environment by
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions
  - taking the effects of climate change into account
  - minimising the need to use natural resources
  - protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment
  - promoting high quality inclusive design.

The Community Strategy for the Vale has similar priorities. We know from the responses to the Issues and Options report that people attach great importance to the high quality environments in the Vale and that new developments should also be of the best quality. This section sets out how the LDF will contribute to achieving these and related priorities.

### **Climate Change – reducing carbon emissions and adapting to living with more extreme weather conditions**

- 6.46 There is a substantial body of evidence that the earth's climate is changing. It is widely recognised that this is caused by an increase in greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal. Many believe that climate change is one of the most important challenges facing society and that we need to act now. The changes in climate are likely to result in more extreme weather conditions. In March 2007 the Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on climate change and made a commitment to addressing climate change at the local level. The challenge is to reduce emissions and consider methods for adapting to the effects of more extreme weather patterns.
- 6.47 Flooding is a particular problem in the Vale and there are concerns that it will become more frequent as the climate changes. It arises from a number of different sources, including rivers flooding their banks, or water being unable to soak into the ground during intense periods of rainfall. Ground water flooding can also occur when the water levels in the ground rise above the surface of the land, or when surface water drains and sewers flood during heavy rainfall. These different forms of flooding have all been assessed in the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Flood risk maps relating to flooding from rivers are available on the Environment Agency's website.
- 6.48 Following the flood event of July 2007 the Government set up an independent review of what happened and what may be done differently in the future. The final report, referred to as the 'Pitt Report', was published in June 2008 and contains 92 recommendations. Although the Government has yet to act on many of the recommendations, they indicate a stronger role for local authorities in managing flood risk in the future.
- 6.49 The District Council also carried out its own review of the 2007 flood event from which three actions emerged:

- A new plan to respond to emergencies
- Encouraging the setting up of local flood groups
- Making grants available to reduce the risks of flooding

#### 6.50 The Council proposes that the Core Strategy will have policies to

- Require that all new development
  - Helps reduce carbon emissions by achieving the highest standards of energy efficiency and the on-site production of renewable energy. Targets will be set in the Sustainable construction Supplementary Planning document for the proportion of energy to be met from on-site renewable or low carbon sources on developments over a certain size. This could be achieved by a range of technologies including biomass heating, combined heat and power, ground source heat pumps, solar panels, solar water heating, absorption cooling and wind turbines.
  - Is resilient to more extreme weather conditions such as more intense rainfall, increased flooding and wind speeds and higher temperatures.
- Encourage proposals for renewable energy development. Larger scale schemes should be in less sensitive areas including previously developed land and where there is already intrusive development or infrastructure. Within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty proposals should generally be of a small scale. In addition the Council will promote the sustainable design and construction of buildings in a supplementary planning document currently being prepared.
- Locate most new development in areas where there is a low probability of flooding. Areas with a low probability of flooding from rivers are shown as zone 1 on the Environment Agency's flood maps. Development in areas with a medium or high probability of flooding (zones 2 and 3) will only be allowed if there are no reasonably available sites in areas with a lower probability, taking into account the vulnerability of the land uses proposed. For ease of reference this is set out in Appendix 7.
- Ensure new development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. This can be achieved through such measures as the use of sustainable drainage systems and increasing the capacity of the floodplain.

#### 6.51 The Managing Development document will

- Set out the circumstances when a site specific flood risk assessment will be required (this will relate to all forms of flooding shown in the SFRA) and what flood mitigation measures new development will need to incorporate
- Identify areas that may be required for future flood defences
- Set out whether exceptions can be made for development within flood zones 2 and 3 in the main settlements which would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh the risk of flooding
- Allow minor development in flood zones 2 and 3 such as extensions and ancillary buildings within the curtilage of existing properties and the reuse of the upper floors of buildings where a safe access can be achieved.

## **Protecting natural resources and using them wisely**

- 6.52 One of the key principles of sustainable development is to protect natural resources and ensure they are used wisely to meet the future needs of people and businesses. Natural resources include water, air, undeveloped land (including good quality farmland) and mineral reserves.
- 6.53 The Core Strategy will require that new developments use resources – such as energy, water, land and construction materials – more efficiently. Some of the elements have been considered above in relation to climate change.

In the Managing Development document the Council proposes to have policies to

- Resist development that would harm the environment, for example by noise, air pollution or other forms of contamination.
- Seek high standards of water efficiency through the use of such measures as reusing 'grey' or already used water and harvesting rainwater.
- Reduce the need to develop currently undeveloped land by
  - identifying suitable sites for future development on brownfield or previously developed land
  - encouraging the reuse of existing buildings
  - encouraging high densities of development without harming the character or quality of the environment or the amenities of people living or working in the area
  - reducing the need for mineral extraction through the use of alternative construction materials
- Ensure development does not occur on important mineral bearing land the County Council considers should be protected for future extraction
- Reference will also be made to implementing
  - policy NMR2 in the draft South East Plan which states that water quality will be maintained and enhanced through avoiding adverse effects of development and
  - paragraph 28 of PPS7 which states that where development of agricultural land is unavoidable, areas of low agricultural value should be used in preference to that of a higher quality, except where this would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations.

## **The design of all new development**

- 6.54 The Council considers it important to promote high quality, sustainable development so that we hand on an even better environment to future generations. This involves good design which is about the way a development functions, its appearance and its relationship to its surroundings. Well-designed, safe and attractive new development can help to raise the quality of the built environment and the quality of people's lives who live and work there. A challenge is to ensure new developments are also energy efficient, make better use of renewable energy, are more resilient to climate change and are constructed using sustainable materials.
- 6.55 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to have a policy to ensure complements and that new development achieves a high quality, sustainable, inclusive design that makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of the area. This can be achieved by imaginative design in either a traditional or modern

interpretation. Reference will be made to such matters as the scale, mass and height of new buildings and the materials to be used.

6.56 The Managing Development Document will have policies to

- Set out the elements of design that result in high quality, inclusive developments including
  - providing safe and convenient access for all
  - giving priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, people with impaired mobility and users of public transport
  - increasing security and deterring crime
  - hard and soft landscaping that retains existing important features and softens the impact of development on its surroundings
  - providing public art
  - adequate facilities for the storage, sorting and collection of waste
  - enabling flexible use and adaptation to reflect changing lifestyles
- Control development that could be adversely by existing sources of noise, emissions, pollution or contamination
- Control the display of advertisements and external lighting

The Council is preparing two supplementary planning documents that will give further advice. These are on the design of new homes and extensions to existing ones and how all new buildings can be constructed sustainably.

## **Protecting and improving the high quality natural and built environment**

6.57 A key issue for the LDF will be to ensure new development is managed in such a way that it protects and improves the diverse natural environment of the Vale and preserves and enhances its rich built heritage.

### **Landscape**

6.58 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to have a policy to protect and improve the diverse landscape including

- The beauty of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which covers much of the south of the district (reference will be made to the national policy in PPS7)
- The fine open views across the clay vale
- The undulating, partly wooded and largely undeveloped character of the corallian ridge that forms a distinct feature between the Thames valley to the north and the clay vale to the south
- Oxford's landscape setting and the views of the Oxford colleges.

These areas will be defined on the proposals map

- The Managing Development document will have policies to
  - Make a positive contribution to the creation of a diverse woodland environment in the area of the Great Western Community Forest

- Enhance areas of damaged or compromised landscape – this could include the area shown in the Local Plan between Abingdon and Didcot, which has been affected by gravel workings, waste disposal sites, pylons and major development including Didcot power station.

## Wildlife

6.59 In the Core Strategy the Council will state that policy NRM5 in the draft South East Plan will be applied. This requires, among other things, that local authorities shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity and achieve a net gain by a variety of measures including

- giving the highest level of protection to internationally designated sites
  - high protection to nationally designated sites
  - avoiding damage to county wildlife sites and locally important wildlife and geological sites
  - ensuring unavoidable damage is minimised through mitigation and any damage is compensated for
  - requiring green infrastructure in conjunction with new development.
- The Managing Development document will
    - Encourage the enhancement of biodiversity, particularly in conservation target areas and ecological networks – these will be shown on the proposals map
    - Protect the habitats of species protected provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

## Built heritage

6.60 In the Core Strategy the Council proposes to have a policy to protect the built heritage of the Vale including

- Preserving the fabric and setting of listed buildings
  - Preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas and their settings – these will be identified on the proposals map
  - Preserving in situ nationally important archaeological remains – known sites will be listed in an appendix to the Core Strategy
  - Protecting historic parks and gardens from harmful development – these will be identified on the proposals map
- The Managing Development document will refer to detailed Government guidance for protecting these features (set out in PPGs 15 and 16 and the Heritage Protection Bill) in the context of the Vale's local character and assets.

### **Delivering quality environments – what do you think?**

Question 38. Do you agree with the Council's approach to delivering quality environments? If not please say why.



## Glossary

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Housing built for people who are unable to buy or rent a home suitable for their needs on the open market. It will be provided with a subsidy to enable the asking price or rent to be substantially lower than the prevailing market rates. Most affordable housing will be provided through a registered social landlord, mainly in the form of housing for rent, although some shared-equity housing may be appropriate (i.e. part owned, part rented).

**AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION:** Classification system which allows agricultural land to be graded from best (grade 1) to worst (grade 5) in a way which is consistent across the country. Grades 1, 2 & 3a are referred to as the 'best and most versatile' land.

**AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA (AQMA):** Under Section 82 of the Environment Act 1995, the Council must declare an Air Quality Management Area where there is a likelihood that the objectives set out in Air Quality Regulations 2000 will not be met. There are two AQMAs in the Vale, one in Abingdon and one in Botley.

**ALLOCATION:** Land identified in the Local Development Framework (with or without planning permission) for a particular land use.

**ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT (AMR):** A report submitted to the government by a local planning authority that assesses the effectiveness of policies and progress on preparing the Local Development Framework.

**AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB):** Area of high landscape value of national importance within which the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty is the priority. AONBs are designated on the advice of the Countryside Agency under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

**BETTER WAYS TO SCHOOL:** Initiatives that aim to reduce unnecessary car journeys and improve the safety along routes to and from school. These can include provision of pedestrian crossing points, secure cycle parking and unique training and educational activities to give essential safety skills.

**BETTER WAYS TO WORK:** Initiatives that aim to reduce business and home to work travel. This can be achieved in a variety of ways that include home working, remote working, and flexible working policies.

**BIODIVERSITY:** Biodiversity is seen as the total complexity of all life, including not only the great variety of organisms, but also their varying behaviour and interactions.

**BIOMASS:** Usually takes the form of wood pellets and chips. In a biomass boiler these would be burned to produce heat.

**BROWNFIELD SITES:** Previously developed land and premises which could be partially occupied or used. Is most commonly associated with derelict urban land with redundant industrial buildings and includes the curtilage of buildings. Excludes agriculture or forestry land and previously used land which now has nature conservation or recreation value.

**BUSINESS CLUSTERS:** Clusters are geographically close, interconnected companies and specialised suppliers within certain fields that work and co-operate with each other as well as being competitors.

**BUSINESS USES:** Those uses in Part B of the Schedule of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2005. This applies to B1, B2 and B8 uses (see Use Classes Orders).

**CODE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOMES:** Introduced to increase environmental sustainability of homes and sets out standards (from 1 to 6) for the sustainability performance of a house.

**COLLEGIATE OXFORD:** The University and College buildings of the old city.

**COMBINED HEAT AND POWER:** Captures and converts into useable energy the waste heat from other power generating systems.

**COMMITMENTS:** Proposals for development which are the subject of a current full or outline planning permission or unimplemented allocations in the Local Plan 2011.

**COMMUNITY FOREST:** A national programme of major environmental improvements creating attractive well-wooded countryside around and within our towns and cities, providing a high quality environment for housing, employment, recreation and education.

**COMPARISON SHOPPING:** Shopping for items not obtained on a frequent basis, including clothing, footwear, household and recreational goods.

**CONSERVATION AREA:** An area designated by the District Council under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historical merit, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. There are additional controls over certain works carried out within a conservation area, e.g. total demolition of buildings.

**CONSERVATION TARGET AREAS:** Areas that present the best opportunities for prioritising the conservation, enhancement and re-creation of designated sites and important habitats.

**CONVENIENCE SHOPPING:** Shopping for everyday essential items, including food, drinks, newspapers/magazines and confectionary.

**CORE STRATEGY:** A document that sets out a long-term vision and key objectives for the district up to 2026. It establishes the overall approach for managing change and delivering development. Major new sites for housing, employment and retail development will be identified, as will the infrastructure needed to support them.

**DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS:** New development may have a direct impact on the provision of existing community facilities. This may require the enhancement of existing facilities or the provision of entirely new facilities by the developer.

**DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD):** A Local Development Framework must include a Core Strategy, Site-Specific Allocations of land and a Proposals Map. These are known as DPDs.

**DEVELOPMENT PLAN:** An area's development plan consists of the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy and the Development Plan Documents contained within the authority's Local Development Framework including in the case of the Vale the Minerals and Waste Development Framework prepared by Oxfordshire County Council. All planning applications will be determined in accordance with the development plan.

**DEVELOPMENT:** In a planning context this term means the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land. It includes the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land (as defined in Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990), as well as the redevelopment of land and buildings.

**ECOHOMES:** Quality standard applied to new homes by BREEAM. (Building Research Establishment Assessment Method) and now replaced by the Code for Sustainable Homes.

**EMERGENCY SERVICES:** Emergency services are organizations which ensure public safety by addressing different emergencies. This includes the police, firefighters and emergency medical services.

**EMPLOYMENT LAND:** Relates to B1, B2 and B8 uses within the Town and Country Planning (use classes) order 1987 as amended.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CORRIDORS:** Green spaces that provide avenues for wildlife movement, often along streams, rivers or other natural features.

**EXCEPTION SITES:** Sites on the edges of villages for affordable housing which are permitted as an exception to planning policy providing they are justified by evidence of need. Market housing cannot be included in such developments

**FLOODPLAIN/FLOOD RISK ZONES:** Areas identified by the Environment Agency, marking areas as high (zone 3), low to medium (zone 2), or little or no risk (zone 1). These designations help establish where development should not be permitted. (further information is contained in appendix 7.)

**GREEN BELT:** Designated land around a town or city where land is kept permanently open and where there is a strong presumption against inappropriate development.

**GREEN FIELD SITES:** Land that has not been previously developed, it can include agricultural land but not land used for recreational purposes.

**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:** The network of accessible, multi-functional green and open spaces.

**GROSS:** The total amount before anything is deducted.

**GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS:** Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependants' educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently.

**HEALTH CHECK:** An analysis of a settlement or area to provide an informed context within which to maintain the economic success of the main settlements.

**HIGH ORDER GOODS:** Products that are not bought on a frequent basis such as clothing, footwear, household and recreational goods.

**HIGHWAY AUTHORITY:** In the Vale this is Oxfordshire County Council, except for trunk roads (A34) where it is the Highways Agency.

**INFILLING:** The filling of an appropriate small gap with one or two new dwellings in an otherwise built-up frontage.

**INFORMAL RECREATION:** Unstructured, voluntary use of recreation facilities.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** All the ancillary works and services which are necessary to support human activities, including roads, sewers, schools, hospitals, etc.

**ISSUES AND OPTIONS REPORT:** Prepared by the District Council, this document forms part of the Core Strategy and sets out what key issues the Vale will face in the future. It was adopted in November 2007.

**LISTED BUILDINGS:** Buildings and structures which have been identified by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport as being of special architectural and historic interest and whose protection and maintenance are the subject of special legislation. Their curtilage and setting is also protected. Listed building consent is required before any works are carried out on a listed building.

**LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA):** An agreement between central government and local government as well as other key partners at the local level that sets out the priorities for the local area.

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS (LDDs):** The documents that make up the Local Development Framework. Those that will contain the Council's spatial policies and proposals are those associated with the process of preparing and implementing the individual development plan documents.

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (LDF):** The government requires all local planning authorities to prepare a series of documents which together are known as the Local Development Framework. The documents are known as Local Development Documents and Development Plan Documents.

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS):** A document that sets out what planning documents will be produced by the Council and a timetable for preparing the LDF documents.

**LOCAL PLAN:** Until replaced by the Local Development Framework, the Local Plan, together with the Structure Plan and Minerals and Waste Local Plan prepared by the County Council, forms the Development Plan for the area, the essential framework for planning decisions. The Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan was adopted in 2006 and covers the period up to 2011.

**LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP):** A way of bringing together the public, private and voluntary sectors of a local authority district to work jointly to tackle issues and plan for the future.

**LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN:** Prepared by Oxfordshire County Council this is a 5 year strategy for the development of local, integrated transport, supported by a programme of transport improvements.

**LOW ORDER GOODS:** Products that are essential for everyday use such as food, drink, newspapers and confectionary.

**MANAGING DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENT:** A document that will allocate small sites for development and contain detailed planning policies to guide day-to-day decisions on planning applications.

**MINERALS AND WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:** Prepared by Oxfordshire County Council, this will be a 'folder' of several Minerals and Waste Development Documents, which will together replace the existing [Minerals and Waste Local Plan](#).

**NET:** The amount once deductions have been made.

**NEW GROWTH POINT:** This is a designation that areas across the country have bid for. This status allows extra funding to provide essential infrastructure, services and facilities in support of the increased future housing provision.

**NORTH VALE CORALLIAN RIDGE:** Designated in the Local Plan 2011 this is an area of high landscape quality where the protection of the visual qualities of the landscape is sought.

**OXFORDSHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN:** Prepared by the County Council and adopted in 2005, it covers the period up to 2016. It is the strategy for the development and use of land in the county. Under the new planning system it will be replaced by the South East Plan which will provide the strategic framework to guide development in the county.

**PARISH PLANS:** Non-statutory plans devised by parish councils for their administrative areas which may outline the principles of development.

**PARKS AND GARDENS OF HISTORIC INTEREST:** Parks and gardens listed in a register prepared and maintained by English Heritage. Like listed buildings, they are graded I, II\* and II. By reason of their historic layout, features and architectural ornaments, the parks and gardens are considered to be of particular interest and quality.

**PHOTOVOLTAIC :** Photovoltaic panels convert solar radiation directly into electricity.

**PLANNING PERMISSION:** New buildings, major alterations and enlargement of existing buildings and many changes of use of buildings and land as well as certain engineering works require planning permission. An application for planning permission may be approved, subject to certain conditions or refused. The applicant has the right to appeal to the Secretary of State against any refusal or condition.

**PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTES (PPG):** Guidance on general and specific aspects of planning policy issued by Central Government.

**PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS (PPS):** Updated guidance on general and specific aspects of planning policy issued by Central Government.

**PREMIUM ROUTES:** A network of high frequency bus routes around Oxfordshire running without subsidy on a 'turn up and go' basis with high quality infrastructure.

**PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND:** Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure and associated fixed surface infrastructure. The definition covers the curtilage of the development. It excludes land and buildings that are currently in use for agriculture or forestry purposes, and land in built-up areas which has not been developed previously such as parks, recreation grounds and allotments. See also 'Brownfield Land'.

**PRIMARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE:** An area where there is a high proportion of retail uses.

**PROPOSALS MAP:** A map to show the sites identified for development in the Core Strategy and the Managing Development Document and areas where other policies will apply.

**REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORD:** independent housing organisations registered with the Housing Corporation under the Housing Act 1996. They may be Industrial and Provident Societies, registered charities or companies.

**REAL TIME INFORMATION:** A service that uses satellite tracking technology to monitor the movement of vehicles. The arrival of buses at all stops along equipped routes can then be predicted and allow passengers to better plan their journeys.

**RENEWABLE ENERGY:** Energy flows that occur naturally in the environment from the sun, wind, oceans, plants and the fall of water.

**RIBBON DEVELOPMENT:** Development that results in a string of three or more houses along a road radiating from a town.

**RURAL ECONOMY:** Economic activity that takes place in rural areas.

**SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENT:** Designated by English Heritage these are features of archaeological or historic interest, which are afforded special protection by the law to prevent damage or destruction.

**SECOND TIER ROUTES:** Either hourly or local services providing public transport to serve more lightly populated areas away from the premium routes.

**SECONDARY SHOPPING FRONTAGE:** An area where there is a wider range of non-retail uses such as banks, building societies and restaurants.

**SEQUENTIAL APPROACH:** Commercial development should only be allowed where both need can be demonstrated and a sequential approach has been applied to site selection. First preference should be for town centre sites, followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport.

**SERVICE JOBS:** Jobs that provide a service to the general public.

**SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST:** Area designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (amended 1985) for the value of its flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features and thereby protected from damaging operations.

**SMART ECONOMIC GROWTH:** This is a model designed to optimise the potential of people, space and technology, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the environment.

**SOLAR HEATING:** Solar panels, usually roof mounted, use the sun to heat the water that passes through them which can then be used in the property.

**SOUNDNESS:** Local Development Framework documents are required by tests set out in PPS12 to be 'sound', in summary, that they are justified, effective, consistent with national policy and have satisfied the legal procedural requirements. CHECK with 'Tests of Soundness'

**SOUTH EAST PLAN:** The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East. This sets out the region's policies in relation to the development and use of land. It is being produced by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) and is currently in draft form. It is expected to be approved in Spring 2009 when it will replace the existing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG9).

**SOUTH WEST PLAN:** The Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West. This sets out the region's policies in relation to the development and use of land. It has been prepared by the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) and is currently in draft form. It is expected to be approved in Spring 2009 when it will replace the existing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG10).

**STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI):** A document that sets out how and when the local authority intends to consult local communities and other stakeholders when preparing LDF documents. It also explains how the community will be consulted on planning applications.

**SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD):** A Local Development Document that does not create policy but adds detail to the Development Plan Document and can be taken into account in development control decisions.

**SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL:** An assessment of policies in the development plan for their social, economic and environmental impacts.

**SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT:** All planning applications for new developments (except householder development or single houses) must be accompanied by a sustainability statement. This is a statement that sets out how the development complies with sustainability principles.

**SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY:** A document that discusses the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Vale. It sets out a vision for the future of the district and identifies priority actions to help achieve this vision.

**SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION:** Building in a way that uses less energy, causes less pollution and less waste.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SUDS):** An approach which manages and reduces the amount of surface water run-off from development that runs directly to water courses.

**SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES:** These include cleaner fossil fuels, hydrogen, fuel cells, and distributed generation which can all be said to be low carbon energy technologies. Whilst not renewable, these technologies offer significant potential to meet the UK's environmental and economic policy objectives over the medium - long term.

**TESTS OF SOUNDNESS:** The LDF and its components are subject to tests of soundness which are set out in PPS12. These ask a series of questions about the content of the LDF and the processes that have happened to produce it. The answers to these questions establish whether or not the LDF is sound. CHECK see also 'soundness'

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (USE CLASSES) (AMENDMENT) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2005:** A set of Government regulations which define categories for different uses of land and building. Within each class the use for another purpose in the same class does not usually require planning permission. The categories are:

- A1 Shops
- A2 Financial and Professional Services
- A3 Restaurants and Cafes
- A4 Drinking Establishments
- A5 Hot Food Takeaways
  
- B1 Business, including offices, research and development and light industry
- B2 General Industrial
- B8 Storage and Distribution
  
- C1 Hotels
- C2 Residential Institutions
- C3 Dwelling Houses
  
- D1 Non-Residential Institutions
- D2 Assembly and Leisure
- Sui Generis

**TOWN CENTRE:** A defined area, including the primary shopping area, that provides a range of services and facilities to a certain catchment area.

**TRAVEL PLANS:** To encourage and facilitate better environmental travel choices by residents, workers and visitors from the larger scale developments.

**TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE:** Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family's or dependants' more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently,

**VALE PARTNERSHIP:** A Local Strategic Partnership set up by the Vale of White Horse District Council to help it prepare the first community strategy for the Vale.

**WINDFALL SITES:** This refers to those sites which become available for development unexpectedly and are therefore not included as allocated land in a planning authority's development plan.

**ZERO CARBON:** In a zero carbon emission home, over a year, the net carbon emissions from energy use will be zero. The Government's target is that by 2016 all new homes will be zero carbon.