



Your Place Your Plan

CELEBRATING OUR PAST, CREATING A
HEALTHY, GREEN & FAIR FUTURE FOR ALL

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

Focused Consultation: Ideas and Objectives

August 2023



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is preparing a new Local Plan which will help shape the future of West Oxfordshire to 2041.
- 1.2 Having an up-to-date plan in place is vital because it provides a vision and framework to guide decisions on how, where and when development can come forward and how we can protect and enhance our surroundings for current and future generations.
- 1.3 Working closely with local communities and key stakeholders, we have the opportunity to update our evidence and introduce better, stronger policies on critical issues such as climate change, water quality, housing and jobs, supporting infrastructure, town centres, nature recovery and health and well-being.
- 1.4 In terms of process, preparing a Local Plan falls into two main stages:
 - **Plan preparation**¹ - is when the Council carries out informal engagement on the potential scope of the Local Plan and explores different options to inform emerging policies and proposals and help identify a preferred approach.
 - **Publication**² – is the formal stage when the Council produces the final draft version of the plan which it considers to be ‘sound’ and ready for independent examination.
- 1.5 We are currently at the plan preparation stage, seeking views on the general scope and content of the new Local Plan. An initial consultation ‘[Your Voice Counts](#)’ took place last year through which we explored six potential ‘areas of focus’.
- 1.6 The consultation generated valuable feedback and we are now looking to move the conversation on so that we can start to identify some preferred policy approaches.
- 1.7 In particular, we are seeking comments on three specific areas:
 - **Draft local plan objectives** – a series of draft objectives which are intended to guide the future evolution of the plan in terms of its overall approach and anticipated policy content;
 - **The future pattern of development in West Oxfordshire** – different scenarios for how and where we might look to focus future growth in the period up to 2041;

¹ Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

² Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

- **Call for sites, ideas and opportunities** – an open invitation for stakeholders to put forward their thoughts on how land in the District might be used in the future such as new housing, employment, infrastructure, community use, green space, nature recovery and renewable energy.
- 1.8 The consultation runs for 8-weeks from 30 August – 25 October and the feedback received will be used to inform a series of preferred policy approaches which will be the subject of further consultation later in 2023.
- 1.9 So that we are able to more easily review the responses received, we are encouraging all stakeholders to respond using our online digital platform:
<https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/>
- 1.10 Alternatively, written comments can also be submitted as follows:
- Email: planning.consultation@westoxon.gov.uk
 - Write to: Planning Policy Team, Woodgreen, New Yatt Road, Witney, OX28 1NB

2. Progress to date – what have we learned so far?

- 2.1 To kick start the new Local Plan, we ran a 6-week consultation last year called [‘Your Voice Counts’](#).
- 2.2 The purpose of the consultation was to generate early debate on which issues the new Local Plan should be looking to focus on. This is to ensure that the plan is specific and relevant to West Oxfordshire and its local communities.
- 2.3 Six potential ‘areas of focus’ were identified as follows:
1. Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
 2. Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
 3. An enhanced natural and built environment
 4. Attractive, accessible and thriving places
 5. Meeting the housing needs of all
 6. A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy
- 2.4 Respondents were asked whether they agreed in principle with each area of focus and then more specifically for views on potential measures which the new Local Plan might look to introduce such as zero carbon buildings and affordable homes.
- 2.5 The consultation was held predominantly online although supported by two events held with Town and Parish Councils and key stakeholders.
- 2.6 The online consultation attracted a good response with over 5,000 visitors, 441 respondents and 1,143 contributions. Just under 3,000 people also signed up for future news updates.



- 2.7 A [consultation summary report](#) was published in April providing an overview of the responses received.
- 2.8 The report demonstrates a strong level of support for the 6 areas of focus and we are now confident that they form a solid basis for developing the new Local Plan.
- 2.9 Good support was also expressed for many of the more specific ideas we put forward which is helpful as we look to consider how these might be taken forward as potential policies.

3. Purpose of this consultation – what are we looking to find out?

- 3.1 Developing a new Local Plan should be a genuinely iterative and engaging process. The Council wants to avoid a situation whereby local communities and key stakeholders are presented with a series of worked-up policies and proposals late in the day, with little or no chance to influence them.
- 3.2 That is why we ran the initial ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation last year and why we are now looking to move the conversation on and start thinking about the shape of the new Local Plan and the policies and proposals it should include.
- 3.3 To do this, we are looking for responses on 3 three specific areas:
- Draft local plan objectives;
 - The future pattern of development in West Oxfordshire; and
 - Call for sites, ideas and opportunities.

Draft Local Plan objectives

- 3.4 To guide the content of the Local Plan, influence development and measure progress once the plan is adopted, we need to establish a set of overarching plan objectives.
- 3.5 Taking account of relevant national and local considerations and responses to our initial consultation last year, we have prepared a series of draft objectives and are looking for feedback on those.

The Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire

- 3.6 A key role of the Local Plan is to shape the future pattern of development in terms of where new homes, jobs and other land uses will come forward across the District. In planning terminology, this is often referred to as a ‘Spatial Strategy’.
- 3.7 We are therefore seeking views on what approach the Council should take in its new Local Plan - in particular whether we should be looking to roll forward the current Local Plan strategy or look to do something different.
- 3.8 A series of potential scenarios are presented and we would welcome feedback on these.

Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities

- 3.9 The third aspect of this consultation is an open invitation to put forward sites, ideas and opportunities for how land within the District might be used in the future. This could include existing sites and how they might be re-purposed or undeveloped land that could potentially be brought forward for a new use.

4. Draft Local Plan objectives

4.1 Having a clear set of plan objectives is helpful for a number of reasons:

- It helps to guide the overall content of the Local Plan, providing context for emerging policies and proposals;
- Objectives form part of the Local Plan itself and therefore have an influence on how development proposals are put together and assessed; and
- They allow us to measure progress once the plan is adopted, helping us understand if the plan is delivering as expected.

4.2 Set out below is a series of draft plan objectives which we would welcome your feedback on. These are set out under the six areas of focus we consulted on last year because these were well supported and provide a sound basis upon which to develop the new Local Plan.

4.3 To further explain our thinking, we have also set out the reasons why each objective has been identified and the potential policy topics we anticipate as being needed to deliver it. These are initial thoughts only and our preferred approach will be refined in light of the comments we receive and emerging evidence.

Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Objective 1

To minimise the impact we are having on our changing climate by reducing carbon emissions across all sources, with a particular focus on transport, housing, industry and energy.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

Mitigating our impact on climate change is a core theme of national policy, with the planning system having a key role in transitioning to a low carbon future.

Although many of the consequences of climate change are already ‘locked in’, we need to limit any further impact we have, in particular reducing carbon emissions.

This includes ‘operational’ carbon emissions from buildings and ‘embodied’ carbon associated with building materials, construction and maintenance.

The [Oxfordshire Strategic Vision](#) looks to place the County at the forefront of UK and global de-carbonisation efforts, by maximising all opportunities to significantly reduce Oxfordshire’s carbon footprint.

Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire³ (PaZCO) aims to achieve a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050 in Oxfordshire.

At the District level, the Council’s Climate Change Strategy (2021- 2025) commits us to working in partnership with Oxfordshire councils and partners to support the transition to ultra-low-emission transport and active travel, a zero-carbon economy and clean energy supply.

Building on this, our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to drive down carbon emissions from Council operations and pursue a drive to net zero carbon buildings in new developments.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Net zero operation carbon in new build: fossil fuel free, 100% powered by renewable energy and achieves high energy performance;
- Embodied carbon: best practice targets are met and buildings are made from re-used materials and can be disassembled at the end of life in accordance with circular economy principles;
- Retrofit: reduce energy consumption in existing buildings and prioritise occupant and building health;

³ <https://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/news/2021/0629-pathways-to-zero-carbon-oxfordshire.html>

- Renewable and low-carbon energy provision, including electrification of heat generation and transport and fossil fuel free;
- Pattern of development (spatial strategy);
- ‘Living local’ / 20 minute neighbourhood concept;
- Active and healthy travel;
- Location, orientation and design of buildings.

Objective 2

To facilitate the roll out of clean, renewable energy at a range of different scales in suitable, appropriate locations across the District.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

The UK’s net zero strategy⁴ is based largely on the electrification of transport and heat provision and decarbonising electricity generation.

The rapid roll-out of renewable energy is essential and the Local Plan has a key role to play in supporting this.

Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire⁵ (PaZCO) highlights the need to increase local renewable electricity generation in response to an expected doubling of electricity demand due to the electrification of heating, transportation and high population growth.

Our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to encourage renewable energy generation at appropriate sites in the District, improving local energy and economic resilience and supporting the community benefits that this resilience will bring.

Strong support was also expressed through our initial consultation last year for the roll-out of more renewable and low-carbon energy solutions, particularly where there would be a benefit to the local community and subject to there being no harmful impact on the countryside.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Potential identification / allocation of areas suitable for renewable and low carbon energy and/or criteria-based approach to guide future development;
- Community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy including Neighbourhood Planning;
- Renewable / low-carbon energy provision in new build development;
- Retrofitting of low and zero carbon energy solutions in existing buildings.

⁴ [Build Back Greener \(2021\)](#)

⁵ <https://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/news/2021/0629-pathways-to-zero-carbon-oxfordshire.html>

Objective 3

To respond and effectively adapt to the consequences of climate change that are already happening, building resilience and wherever possible, reversing harmful impacts, including nature's decline.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

It is commonly accepted that many of the harmful impacts of climate change are already 'locked-in' despite concerted efforts to limit further impacts.

Planning has a key role to play in ensuring that we respond and adapt to the inevitable consequences of climate change such as drought, heatwaves and more intense rainfall and flooding.

This is reflected in national policy which requires local plans to take a proactive approach towards climate adaptation including flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes and risk of overheating.

More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision highlights the importance of developing greater resilience to climate change and a natural environment that is more biodiverse, supporting social, economic and ecological resilience and having the capacity to adapt.

Our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to support local communities in adapting equally so that climate change does not further exacerbate any inequalities.

This is not to say however that we must simply accept climate change as an inevitable consequence of our actions. Indeed, there is a good argument to suggest we should be going further and seeking to reverse some of the impacts that have already been set in motion such as species decline.

There is much the new Local Plan can do in this respect, including in relation to flood risk, water efficiency, the location, design and orientation of development, nature recovery and potentially identifying land that may be needed for future climate adaptation measures such as natural flood management.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Flood risk – ensuring that the future impacts of climate change are taken into account in the design and location of new development;
- Promotion of nature-based solutions in the design of new development (e.g. use of urban cooling, natural flood defence);
- Sustainable building design measures to avoid overheating, increase ventilation and promote increased resource efficiency (e.g. water efficiency measures, grey water recycling);

- Provision of green infrastructure, trees and woodland to promote carbon sequestration and provide increased shade/cooling;
- Nature recovery/habitat restoration and connectivity;
- Biodiversity net gain;
- Potential identification of land that may be appropriate for climate adaptation measures.

Objective 4

To make the most efficient use of land, buildings and natural capital and ensure that waste is minimised whilst being seen as a valuable resource.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

In defining the environmental aspects of sustainable development, national policy emphasises need to make effective use of land, use natural resources prudently and minimise waste and pollution.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision defines what ‘good growth’ looks like including a ‘de-coupling’ of growth from the consumption of finite resources.

Through our Council Plan, we have also committed to being a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit all.

In response to our initial consultation last year, strong support was expressed for making more efficient use of land and buildings including the use of previously developed sites.

Support was also expressed for waste being considered at all stages of development in line with ‘circular economy’ principles which aim to keep resources in use for longer, minimise waste and maximise re-use, recycling and recovery.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Adoption of a ‘natural capital’ based approach to new development;
- Development densities - to ensure the most efficient use of land and buildings;
- Efficient use of resources (e.g. water, building materials);
- Re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land/buildings;
- Waste – embedding circular economy principles in new development (waste seen as a resource with a focus on keeping resources in use for as long as possible)

Healthy, Safe, Strong and Inclusive Communities

Objective 5

To help achieve thriving communities where people can lead healthy, happy and sustainable lives, going about their daily activities in well-designed, safe, crime-free, inclusive and accessible environments.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

A core national planning principle is for there to be a focus on the health of local communities, by taking into account and supporting the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all sections of the community.

Recent research highlights that nationally the last decade has been marked by deteriorating health and widening health inequalities, emphasising that ‘for men and women everywhere the time spent in poor health is increasing’.

While the health of residents in West Oxfordshire is generally good, there are health inequalities and hidden pockets of deprivation, as well as increasingly issues associated with, for example, overweight/obesity, rural isolation, depression and strokes and respiratory diseases.

The place we live – the built, natural and social environment – can have a profound impact on our health and well-being and shaping our communities by planning for health and well-being provides an opportunity to influence and establish positive behaviour, healthier lifestyle habits and inclusive communities.

The concept of healthy place shaping has been endorsed across Oxfordshire, with the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision aiming to achieve healthier and happier residents and improved overall wellbeing by 2050.

One of the five priorities of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan is to enable a good quality of life for all.

There was also a strong level of support for the adoption of healthy place shaping principles in our initial consultation last year, with particular support for the use of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) both at the plan-making stage and when considering future development proposals (e.g. accessibility of buildings).

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Adoption of locally relevant healthy place shaping principles;
- ‘Living local’ / 20 minute neighbourhood concept;

- Design quality expectations (e.g. Building for a Healthy Life, Healthy Homes Principles);
- Use of Health Impact Assessments and the Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit.

Objective 6

To create environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles through promoting physical activity for people of all ages and abilities, including maximising safe and convenient opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport and the provision of sport, recreation and play facilities and high quality green space.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

In recognition that a lack of physical activity can damage health, Public Health England are aiming to get ‘everyone active, every day’⁶. In Oxfordshire, almost 20% of the adult population are physically inactive (undertaking less than 30 minutes per week) and 79% of children and young people do not meet guidelines of 60 minutes daily activity.

A particular focus for Public Health in Oxfordshire is ‘Healthy weight, healthy communities, healthy lives’ and the Local Plan has an important role to play in promoting healthy weight environments and influencing opportunities for leisure time, sport, recreation and play, which are vital to good health and wellbeing.

Nationally⁷, increased emphasis is being placed on enabling people to incorporate movement, including walking and cycling, into their daily activities.

Our Council Plan sets commits us to working with the County Council and others to increase opportunities for travelling on foot or by bike, or on public transport, to reduce car dependence and benefit from the health and economic benefits of doing so.

Many of the responses to our initial consultation last year made specific reference to active travel and its role in promoting healthy communities including the importance of the Council working with key partners, particularly to achieve safe routes to schools and integrated networks of accessible green space.

84% of those who replied said that it was important that the Council supports improved physical health by providing a range of opportunities for leisure and recreation, walking and cycling including access to the open countryside.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-5-years-on/everybody-active-every-day-5-years-on>

⁷ For example within Sport England and Public Health England

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Creating health-promoting, healthy-weight environments;⁸
- Local prescribed standards for leisure facilities, playing fields, open space, green infrastructure, etc.
- Active design principles, covering such criteria as: walkable, safe communities; connected walking and cycling routes; multifunctional open space; and appropriate infrastructure. Making use of Sport England’s Active Design guidance;⁹
- Local design codes.

Objective 7

To deliver integrated and inclusive environments that promote good mental health and wellbeing for those living, working and visiting West Oxfordshire and help tackle mental health issues.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

Mental illness can be more common, long-lasting and have a greater effect than many other health conditions. It is estimated that one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health condition and this figure is increasing. Locally, the prevalence of depression recorded by all GP surgeries has risen, particularly in Witney.

As West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district, with limited public transport and key facilities in some areas, isolation and loneliness are factors affecting mental health. Loneliness is also felt in urban areas, particularly by older people, and by vulnerable minorities, including disabled people and ethnic minorities.

Feeling lonely is often linked to low life expectancy (on a par with smoking or obesity) and to increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, depression, cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease.

Planning can help influence mental health through delivering well-designed places, for example, through the provision of quality, accessible, safe greenspace, public realm and community space and improved access to nature and cultural activities.

In response to our initial consultation last year, a number of comments raised the issue of isolation and inequality, calling for a positive and effective strategy to tackle it, including improved public transport (costs and service) the provision of affordable homes and making use of community activation measures.

⁸ https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GC_PracticalGuide_Health1.pdf

⁹ <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-inspiration/new-active-design-guidance-published>

85% of those responding to the question on mental health said it was an important issue for the Council to address.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- The provision of high quality, accessible public spaces and social community infrastructure, including an emphasis on measures/facilities that help to address mental health and wellbeing and support social integration, interaction and inclusion;
- Improved access to services, including through active travel, especially encouraging intergenerational, community and cultural uses;
- Design criteria to include measures to address safety, crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Design criteria to include the creation of dementia-friendly spaces, buildings and communities.

Objective 8

To create a healthier food environment, with the opportunity for people to make better food choices, including growing and consuming healthy food locally.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

Poor diet and nutrition are recognised as major contributory risk factors for ill health and premature death.

In terms of healthy food and healthy weight indicators, West Oxfordshire residents tend to perform relatively poorly in comparison with other local districts. For example, the proportion of adults in West Oxfordshire who are overweight (61%) exceeds the county average (58%).

Supporting ‘healthy weight environments’ (including improving the food environment for both consumption and production of healthier food) is a priority for Oxfordshire County Council.

76% of those responding to our initial consultation last year, agreed that the Council should enable the provision of opportunities to grow food locally and make healthier food choices. Specific reference was made to the need for more allotments and orchards and provision for younger people.

Recent events – such as Brexit, the war in Ukraine and rising fuel, food and other living costs - have highlighted the need to re-evaluate the entire food system, including addressing

issues of food poverty, food security, diet-related health and impacts on the natural environment.

In 2022, the [Oxfordshire Food Strategy](#) was developed through a multi-stakeholder group to improve Oxfordshire's food system and make it more sustainable, affordable and resilient. A Food Action Plan for West Oxfordshire is now being drawn up, with four priority areas:

- Build vibrant food communities with the capacity and skills to enjoy food together;
- Strengthen short, transparent local food supply chains;
- Grow the local food economy through enterprise, local jobs, local wealth generation;
- Tackle food poverty and diet-related ill-health.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Standards and guidance on community food growing spaces, including allotments;
- Edible planting in landscape schemes, including fruit and nut trees and opportunities for foraging;
- Multi-purpose social and community hubs, e.g. for cooking clubs, food larders and selling local produce;
- Protection of best and most versatile agricultural land;
- Agriculture - including sustainable farming enterprises (agro-ecological measures, regenerative farming, diversification and small holdings).

Objective 9

To identify and secure the timely investment in infrastructure needed for health and wellbeing and the care system, including measures for the prevention of health related problems.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy highlights the importance of identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure, to reflect current and future needs and to support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.

The NHS make clear that strong, vibrant, sustainable and cohesive communities require good quality, accessible public services and infrastructure. Access and proximity to health and social care, education, community and sports facilities as well as employment opportunities, retail options and access to healthy food can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision expects high-quality development that is properly supported by necessary infrastructure, including excellent digital connectivity.

Our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to ensure the timely provision of built and green infrastructure which meets the needs of existing and incoming residents and, supports health and care to enable physical and mental well-being, community cohesion and deliver a high quality of life.

It also aims to support the retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community wellbeing and cohesion.

In response to our initial consultation last year, there was overwhelming support for the Council seeking to ensure that new development and local communities are supported by effective and timely investment in supporting infrastructure with 90% of those replying saying this is important.

Concerns were raised about existing local services and facilities (especially in relation to difficulties in getting appointments with GPs and dentists and the paucity of leisure facilities) and the fear that the situation will be made worse by additional development.

Even when improvements to infrastructure are planned, there is concern that these will be inadequate and/or come forward too late with a call for infrastructure to be properly secured (e.g. through developer contributions) and provided 'in-step' with new development.

In preparing the new Local Plan we will carefully consider the infrastructure which is needed to support any further planned growth to 2041. This will involve close liaison with service providers and with local communities (who can help in identifying local community priorities and needs) about what improvements are needed, when they are needed and how they will be funded and delivered.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Requirement that new development and existing local communities are supported by effective and timely investment in supporting infrastructure, such as, health care, schools, green spaces and utilities;
- Major developments to be supported by site-specific Infrastructure Delivery Plans with clear details of phasing, implementation and long term management, maintenance and stewardship, where necessary;
- Provision of multi-functional, shared, adaptable infrastructure where possible e.g. village/community hub, dual-use school facilities and green/public spaces.

An Enhanced Natural and Built Environment

Objective 10

To conserve and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of West Oxfordshire's countryside, at both a strategic level (e.g. the Cotswolds) and a local level, recognising its contribution to people's quality of life and the area's social and economic wellbeing.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises the need for the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside to be recognised as part of an overarching objective to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment.

More locally, one of the guiding principles of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision is to enhance the natural environment through valuing our countryside, landscape, greenspaces and environmental assets, protecting them where necessary and seeking new opportunities to add to and enhance them.¹⁰

West Oxfordshire's countryside is distinctive and varied, contributing to the district's character. River valleys and wet meadows, historic parkland, ancient forest remnants, and undulating wolds landscape are important features.

Almost a third of the district has national recognition for its landscape and scenic beauty – the Cotswolds National Landscape (NL) – and, on the eastern edge, lies part of the Oxford Green Belt, both areas of which are given special protection through national planning policy.

Our initial consultation last year highlighted how important people considered the character and beauty of West Oxfordshire's countryside - 97% of those addressing this issue said it is important for the Council to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and to proactively consider opportunities to enhance the Cotswolds NL and Oxford Green Belt.

Specific feedback makes reference to the natural landscape being a key asset of the District, how all countryside needs to be protected (not just the NL and Green Belt), the importance of retaining high value agricultural land and that a landscape-led approach to development should be adopted. A number of responses emphasised the need to consider tranquillity, dark skies and lighting, especially within the Cotswolds.

¹⁰ https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Strategic-Vision_V0.7.pdf

Given the rural nature of West Oxfordshire and the predominant land use of its countryside as farmland, the many national and local initiatives emerging (in part because of Brexit and fears over food security) will impact on the character of the landscape.

Where these initiatives meet the Council's objectives, they will generally be supported, such as Defra's recent Landscape Recovery Project. Likewise, landscape-scale initiatives related to nature's recovery and environmental improvements will be supported, for example the Wychwood Forest and the Lower Windrush Valley Project.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Locally-specific measures to conserve and enhance the overall character and beauty of our countryside and landscape, recognising the inter-relationship with the built environment and its multi-functional role (e.g. productive, biodiversity rich and an environment for activity);
- The approach to character and beauty for the Cotswolds NL, in the context of the Cotswolds Conservation Board's Management Plan and guidance documents;
- Rural design quality;
- West Oxfordshire-specific approach to the Oxford Green Belt, including opportunities for enhancement;
- Support for landscape-scale initiatives such as catchment sensitive farming, NE Cotswolds Farm Cluster Project (and Defra Landscape Recovery Project), the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Project, Wychwood Forest Trust and strategic green infrastructure networks.

Objective 11

To conserve and enhance biodiversity, supporting resilient habitats for species and robust and valued environments for people, where natural capital and the benefits of ecosystem services are recognised, valued and invested in over the long term and measurable net gains in biodiversity are achieved locally.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

Biodiversity (biological diversity) is the variety of life on Earth: genes, species and ecosystems. It includes all species of animals and plants and the habitats and natural systems that support them.

Despite commitments made by the Government in 1992, biodiversity has been in long-term decline with the Oxfordshire State of Nature report¹¹ and the UK State of Nature Report¹² both pointing to a continuing decline in species and habitats.

National policy has been strengthened with the Government's current 25-Year Environment Plan emphasising the importance of biodiversity in achieving sustainable development and shifting from an approach based on 'no net loss' to one requiring positive 'biodiversity net gain'.

The Environment Act 2021 is introducing new incentives, actions and planning tools to drive improvements for nature, including mandatory requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG) through the planning system (where the natural environment is left in a measurably better state post-development) and the creation of Nature Recovery Networks through Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).

In response to our initial consultation last year, 87% of those responding on the issue biodiversity wished to see an increase in biodiversity, including a requirement for exemplary BNG. Specific issues highlighted included the potential impacts of public access on nature, the importance of robust management of sites and the need for the allocation of areas for biodiversity creation.

As the national requirement for major developments to provide at least a 10% net gain becomes mandatory in November 2023 (and for all development in April 2024), a local plan policy is not essential.

However, if a local approach to BNG can be justified, a policy could be pursued, for example, advocating a higher percentage net gain and requiring any off-site delivery to be in West Oxfordshire.

Natural England published a Green Infrastructure Framework in February 2023¹³ in order to 'make a significant contribution to nature recovery by embedding nature into new developments.' It provides resources that can be applied locally. Oxfordshire County Council provides useful existing information and guidance.¹⁴¹⁵

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Taking a natural capital approach to biodiversity conservation and enhancement, with a focus on valuing nature's services and achieving nature-based solutions.

¹¹ <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/oxfordshires-nature/oxfordshires-state-of-nature>

¹² <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>

¹³ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>

¹⁴ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/countryside/natural-environment/environmental-policy-and-planning/green-infrastructure>

¹⁵ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/countryside/GreenInfrastructurefulltext.pdf>

- A West Oxfordshire-specific pro-active approach to conserving and enhancing biodiversity, making use of a local Biodiversity Toolkit and integrating opportunities for nature recovery.
- Setting out local requirements and guiding principles for BNG.
- Mapping Local Nature Recovery Networks and supporting the Oxfordshire LNRS.
- Embedding Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Standards and setting local standards / requirements for high-quality green infrastructure schemes close to where people live and work, making use of local information and guidance.

Objective 12

To achieve a healthy water environment, where better water management and multiple benefits for people and wildlife are provided, through the use of an integrated water management approach that brings together sustainable water supply, usage and recycling, wastewater disposal, improvement of water quality and flood risk management.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

Water, and its effective management, is vital to life. It is a precious and finite resource which needs to be protected, not only the sources of water (both surface and underground) and the quality of water, but also the general environment associated with the water system. Rivers provide important nature corridors, opportunities for recreation and the setting for many towns and villages.

The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan sets out goals for improving the environment within a generation, including achieving clean and plentiful water by improving the natural state of the water system. River Basin Management Plans are seen as having an important role to play in this, identifying the challenges that threaten the water environment and how these challenges can be managed.

West Oxfordshire lies within the Cotswolds management catchment of the Thames River Basin,¹⁶ where physical modifications, wastewater pollution (raw effluent) and pollution from rural areas (such as fertilizers and pesticides) are seen as particular issues preventing waters of the Evenlode and Windrush catchments achieving a good status.

Local groups and researchers have raised concerns about our rivers, gathering substantial empirical evidence on their deteriorating health and quality.

¹⁶ <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/v/c3-plan/ManagementCatchment/3021>

With three significant rivers flowing through the district (Thames, Windrush and Evenlode), flooding has long been an issue in West Oxfordshire, given added emphasis by extreme flooding in the summer of 2007. Climate change is leading to more flooding events.

One of the Council Plan's focus for action is to work with others to facilitate environmentally sensitive flood management of our river catchments.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Adoption of a catchment-based approach to the management of water to deliver multiple benefits for people and wildlife, working collectively with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Support for the Evenlode and Windrush Catchment Partnerships, e.g. for their work on natural flood risk management and catchment sensitive farming.
- Making use of design standards, such as Building with Nature, to ensure delivery of high quality schemes.
- Requirements for appropriate local flood risk mitigation, including for surface water drainage, to include the need for it to be effective, not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and maximise the opportunity to deliver environmental benefits.
- Safeguarding floodplains and re-connecting rivers to their floodplain.
- Use of sustainable drainage systems that are designed to provide multi-functional, including in particular opportunities for biodiversity gain.
- Adopting high water efficiency standards for all new development.
- Ensuring appropriate water infrastructure is provided to support development (e.g. use of site-specific infrastructure delivery plans, potential use of planning conditions)

Objective 13

Protect and enhance the quality of environmental assets by avoiding harmful impacts of all forms of pollution, especially on local amenity, health, landscape character and biodiversity.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan sets out goals for improving the environment and 'leaving it a better state than when we found it'. Not only does the natural environment need to be protected from pollution, its quality needs to be improved.

Development has the potential to affect the quality of land, soil, air and water which, in turn, impacts upon amenity, public health, biodiversity and quality of life.

Low air quality is experienced in the congested parts of our towns and villages, mainly due to vehicle emissions. The increasing use of electric vehicles should help, so too if a modal

shift can be made towards walking and cycling. There are two particular areas of poor air quality, one in Witney and one in Chipping Norton. Air Quality Management Area Action Plans are currently being reviewed and updated, setting out specific measures to help reduce concentrations of air pollution.

It is essential that the quality of our water bodies and groundwater resources is improved for a wide range of reasons, including local amenity, healthy and biodiversity.

The value of our soils is also being increasingly recognised, not just as a resource for food production at a time of food security concerns but also for their role in water management, biodiversity enhancement and storage of carbon.

There are multiple needs for external lighting, e.g. highway safety, sport floodlighting and security, but these needs require balancing against any adverse impacts lights might have, such as, on the nocturnal wildlife, local amenity and human health. National policy calls for careful control of light pollution on local areas, especially intrinsically dark skies and the natural environment.

Although West Oxfordshire is a largely rural area, noise pollution is still an issue locally, often associated with road traffic and aircraft. Mitigation and design measures can be used to reduce noise nuisance and, as a general principle, significant and intrusive sources of noise should be kept away from properties and areas sensitive to noise.

In our initial consultation last year, over 90% of those responding to the question on reducing all forms of pollution and improving environmental quality, identified it as important.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Locally specific policy based on an overall approach that development proposals which are likely to cause pollution or risk to safety must incorporate measures to minimise pollution and risk to a level that provides a high standard of protection for health, environmental quality and amenity.
- Requirement for development proposals to demonstrate that environmental risks have been evaluated and that appropriate measures have been taken to minimise the risks of adverse impact to air, land and water quality, e.g. through air quality assessments and detailed noise assessments.
- Partnership working to deliver improvements in the quality of local environmental assets.
- Delivery of air quality improvements, especially through the actions highlighted in the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Management Area Action Plans.
- Potential identification of Dark Skies.

Objective 14

Conserve and enhance the character and significance of the historic and cultural environment, recognising and promoting the wider contribution to people's quality of life and social and economic wellbeing and enabling sensitive adaptation in light of climate change.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

West Oxfordshire has a rich and varied historic environment that contributes to the area's distinctive character and to its culture, economy and the quality of life of residents and visitors.

National planning policy provides guidance on the identification, significance and protection of heritage assets – from sites and buildings of local historic value to listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, historic landscapes and archaeological remains. Heritage assets are to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

National policy requires a pro-active approach, with a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including considering opportunities for development.

The Local Plan does not need to repeat national policy but should provide a locally specific policy approach, based on an understanding of the character and significance of West Oxfordshire's overall historic environment and heritage assets and of the potential threats and opportunities locally.

Improving this understanding will require partnership/collaborative working with key stakeholders, such as Parish Councils through Village Design Statements, and detailed evidence from developers and landowners as part of their proposals.

An assessment of the implications of actual or predicted changes during the coming years will be needed, e.g. the implications on historic town centres of their changing function and the easing of planning control through changes in permitted development rights.

It is also important to consider the historic environment in the context of climate change, such as through the use of energy in traditional and historic buildings, the amount of embodied energy within existing buildings, ways to sensitively retrofit energy and water efficiency measures and the assessment of impacts on historic landscapes of large-scale renewable energy.

A number of specific points relating to the historic environment were raised through our initial consultation last year, including the importance of the new local plan being based on

a positive approach to conservation and enjoyment, with a focus on enhancement, and considering the natural and historic environment, as well as climate change, in an integrated way throughout the plan.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Locally specific policies to conserve and enhance the historic environment, including in relation to addressing climate change and the use of renewable/low carbon energy.
- New development required to seek opportunities to draw on the historic environment in order to maintain, respect and enhance local character and distinctiveness i.e. to be context, character-led.
- Use of Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Management Plans.
- Design Coding to include addressing quality of growth in historic places.
- Adoption of a 'whole' building approach' in addressing climate change by integrating fabric measures (e.g. insulation, new windows and draught-proofing) and services (particularly ventilation, heating, controls and renewables) along with consideration of how people live and use buildings.
- Encouraging local research, recording and advancing understanding of local historic character and significance, including through the preparation of Village Design Statements by our communities.
- Specific approach for the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site and its setting, assessing how its exceptional cultural significance (Outstanding Universal Value) can be conserved and enhanced.

Attractive, Accessible and Thriving Places

Objective 15

To provide a framework within which West Oxfordshire's resident communities and businesses are able to thrive across a network of attractive, safe and inclusive, vibrant and well-connected market towns and villages.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

At a national level, policy is clear that planning policies should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.

There should be an emphasis on promoting social interaction for example through mixed-use developments and easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods.

Our surroundings should be safe and accessible, so that crime and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion including through the use of attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public spaces.

At the local level, the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) identifies 6 key themes many of which revolve around strengthening our local communities including improved digital connectivity, a more inclusive transport system with any barriers to access removed and sustainable well-designed, thriving communities that are resilient to climate change.

Notably, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision places a particular emphasis on the need for plans to reflect the unique and distinctive qualities of places within Oxfordshire and to recognise the diversity of our city, towns and villages and the importance of local identity.

Our initial consultation last year prompted a number of comments on the well-being of our local communities, towns and villages with particular issues raised including the importance of accessibility, especially in rural areas, a need for enhanced public transport, the role of mixed-use development in promoting social interaction and connections and the need for well-designed, high-quality public spaces which encourage their active use and reduces the fear of crime.

It was also highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic had demonstrated the strength of West Oxfordshire's local communities and that we need that vibrancy to continue.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Pattern of development (spatial strategy);
- 'Living local' / 20 minute neighbourhood concept;

- The provision of high quality, accessible public spaces and social community infrastructure;
- Improved access to services, including through active travel;
- Design criteria to include measures to address safety, crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Design vision, principles and expectations;
- Digital connectivity.

Objective 16

To ensure that all new development in West Oxfordshire is underpinned by a high quality, innovative and inclusive approach to design.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy places significant emphasis on the importance of good design, with the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places being fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

National policy places particular emphasis on the need to set clear design expectations, with local authorities encouraged to produce design guides or codes consistent with the general principles set out in the National Design Guide¹⁷ and National Model Design Code¹⁸.

Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale and should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations.

More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision places particular emphasis on sustainable design and construction and energy efficient, well-designed homes.

The West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2016) seeks to encourage a high standard of design and to promote new development which respects and fits in with the character of West Oxfordshire.

In response to our initial consultation last year, some strong views on the issue of design were expressed with some people calling for more imaginative and high quality housing design – avoiding ‘soulless boxes’.

¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

Other respondents identified the need for high-quality public spaces and greater sustainability of building design as well as the need for developers to adhere more closely to the current West Oxfordshire Design Guide.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Design vision, principles and expectations;
- Local design policies and standards;
- Use of local design guides/codes including community engagement;
- Preparation of Village Design Statements (VDS) and Neighbourhood Plans;

Objective 17

To create a safe, welcoming and accessible environment in which West Oxfordshire's town and village centres can adapt and prosper, taking advantage of changing trends and shopping habitats to ensure they remain a destination of choice.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises the importance of fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.

It also emphasises the importance of creating places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

With specific regard to town centres, national policy emphasises the need for plans to support the role of town centres by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

In particular, planning policies should promote their long-term vitality and viability by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in retail and leisure, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive character.

A positive strategy should be adopted with clarity provided over what uses will be permitted and where. Existing markets should be retained and enhanced and sites should be allocated to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed.

The particular role of residential development in ensuring the vitality of town centres is highlighted.

In line with this, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision seeks to promote the development of new homes that will add to the vitality and viability of our communities while positively contributing to our collective well-being.

It also strives to achieve high quality places where people want to live, work, visit and invest.

There are currently five designated town centres in West Oxfordshire at Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton, Burford and Woodstock. Town centres are important as they underpin the economic well-being of towns, they are the most accessible locations by all means of transport and act as a cultural and social focus for the towns and surrounding areas.

Shopping habits are however changing and this has damaged the viability of many traditional high street retailers, including some larger anchor stores as illustrated by the recent closure of Debenhams in Witney.

In response to our initial consultation last year, the importance of creating welcoming town centres was highlighted as well as the need for flexibility as such centres evolve to meet consumer demand, the marketplace and the structural changes influenced by Covid-19.

The importance of public spaces to the health of our town centres was also highlighted along with the importance of local shops and services, particularly in rural areas.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Town and Village Centre Network, Hierarchy and Strategy;
- Sequential approach to main town centre uses (e.g. retail);
- Retention, enhancement and provision of markets;
- Re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land/buildings;
- Commercial and mixed-use development including potential site allocations;
- Adaptation and expansion of existing business premises;
- Provision of re-purposable space.

Objective 18

To achieve equality and inclusivity within our local communities by ensuring that everyone is able to access the core services and facilities that they need to meet their daily needs.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises that in preparing local plans, local authorities should make sufficient provision for community facilities (e.g. health, education and cultural infrastructure) at a local level.

It emphasises that planning policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs, as well as ensuring that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community.

With particular reference to rural areas such as West Oxfordshire it states that planning policies should enable the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

The rurality of the district and sparsity of some communities will have an adverse effect on some residents if key services related to retail, banking, social activities and health are not provided locally.

A recent study of rural facilities and services in West Oxfordshire¹⁹ found that whilst in overall terms, services and facilities across the District have remained relatively stable in recent years, some communities have seen significant change with a number of examples of communities have lost the 'last remaining' of a specific asset type e.g. Stonesfield which has no pub now, when it did in 2016 and Stanton Harcourt which has no shop when it did in 2016.

The report identifies the potential to consider the effectiveness of current planning policy relating to the provision and protection of services and facilities through the review of the Local Plan.

Our initial consultation last year also highlighted the importance of local shops and services, particularly in rural areas as well as the role of multi-purpose buildings in villages and the need to retain key services (e.g. pubs) and prevent their loss to other uses.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Pattern of development (spatial strategy);
- 'Living local' / 20 minute neighbourhood concept;
- Provision and protection of community services and facilities;
- Requirement that new development and existing local communities are supported by effective and timely investment in supporting infrastructure, such as, health care, schools, green spaces and utilities;
- Provision of multi-functional, shared, adaptable infrastructure where possible e.g. village/community hub, dual-use school facilities and green/public spaces;
- Support for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

¹⁹ Rural Facilities and Services in West Oxfordshire 2023 – Plunkett Foundation

Objective 19

To empower and enable local communities to positively shape and influence the future of their area from the ‘grass roots’ up.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

Under national policy, the primary purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means the planning system has 3 overarching objectives including a social objective which is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

It highlights the particular role of Neighbourhood Planning in giving local communities the power to shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development including the use of Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders to grant planning permission and Local Green Space to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to local communities.

In relation to design, national policy emphasises that design policies, design codes and design guides should be based on effective community engagement.

It also emphasises that local authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy.

In terms of new housing, national policy highlights the potential role for neighbourhood plans in allocating small and medium-sized sites suitable for housing.

More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision highlights the importance of community assets in giving Oxfordshire’s residents – current and future – the best opportunity to prosper and thrive and strong community networks, with communities to be supported and empowered to do the things that matter to improve their health and wellbeing.

In our initial consultation last year, support was expressed for a ‘localisation’ of decision-making e.g. through neighbourhood plans, particularly where they add value to the overall local plan. Concerns were also raised in relation to maintenance arrangements in new developments and the need to avoid excessive management charges for residents.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy including Neighbourhood Planning;
- Use of local design guides/codes including community engagement;
- Village Design Statements (VDS);
- Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders;
- Long-term management, maintenance and stewardship arrangements in new developments.

Meeting the Housing Needs of All

Objective 20

To enable the delivery of a continual supply of high quality, well-designed and sustainable new homes to meet identified housing needs in the period 2021 – 2041.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises the importance of significantly boosting the supply of new homes, including small and medium-sized sites and highlights the importance of achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places.

More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision²⁰ expects the delivery of new homes to meet the needs of current and future generations through sustainable, high-quality development.

It is also the case that that the delivery of new homes under the current Local Plan has not kept pace with the required trajectory, with delays experienced at the larger strategic allocations.

It is important that the new Local Plan is developed in such a way that the delivery of new homes is able to meet identified needs consistently over the plan period.

We also need good quality, sustainable homes that are fit for the future with strong support stakeholder support for high standards of design and zero-carbon building standards.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Housing requirement - the overall quantum of new homes to be provided in the period 2021 – 2041
- Timing/phasing of housing delivery over the plan period
- Any agreed distribution of the housing requirement by area/location
- Housing allocations (including mixed-use development where appropriate)
- Design quality expectations (e.g. Healthy Homes Principles)
- Sustainable construction standards in new build developments

²⁰ https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Strategic-Vision_V0.7.pdf

Objective 21

To ensure that new homes in West Oxfordshire are genuinely affordable over the short and longer-term to a broad range of people, including those who are not able to afford market priced housing to buy or rent.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy requires us to consider the housing needs of different groups including those who require affordable housing.

More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision highlights concerns around housing affordability in Oxfordshire and aims to deliver more truly affordable homes for rent and home ownership.

In 2021, West Oxfordshire's housing affordability ratio suggested that full-time employees can expect to spend around 11.4 times their annual earnings on buying a home - higher than the national average of 9.1

The review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider how we can best tackle the issue of housing affordability to help more people access the homes they need.

We also need to make sure that new homes are affordable in the longer-term in terms of running costs. Fuel poverty in West Oxfordshire increased to 7.3% of all households in 2020, particularly affecting rural areas.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Affordable housing (e.g. provided as a proportion of market-housing schemes and through rural exception sites);
- Housing mix – ensuring a broad mix of housing opportunities including smaller, more affordable market units as well as determining the size and type of affordable homes needed;
- Provision of custom and self-build housing (which can provide both market and affordable housing) potentially including specific site allocations;
- Construction standards in new build developments.

Objective 22

To make sure everyone is able to access the home that they need.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy requires us to consider and plan for the housing needs of different groups of society.

In addition to those requiring affordable housing (outlined above) this might include families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

National policy also emphasises the importance of providing rural housing, reflecting local needs.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision looks to improve health and well-being and reduce inequality including the provision of homes to meet all people's needs.

Through our initial consultation last year, there was strong support for creating balanced communities, providing for younger people through smaller, more affordable homes and meeting the needs of key workers and other groups including the elderly and those who are interested in community-led housing.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Housing mix – ensuring a broad mix of housing opportunities including smaller, more affordable market units as well as determining the size and type of affordable homes needed;
- Provision of custom and self-build and community-led or co-housing - potentially including specific site allocations;
- Adaptability of properties and accessibility standards in new dwellings;
- Provision of older persons housing (e.g. as part of overall housing mix or potentially through specific site allocations);
- Rental provision (e.g. build to rent²¹);
- Provision for travelling communities – potentially including specific site allocations.

²¹ Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. |

Objective 23

To ensure that the type, size and tenure of new homes coming forward helps to create a balanced and sustainable mix of opportunities and encourages community cohesion and well-being.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy requires us to have a good understanding of the size, type and tenure of new housing that is needed and plan for that accordingly. It also emphasises the importance of creating mixed and balanced communities.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision aims to achieve flourishing, diverse and vibrant communities with new homes of the right type, size and tenure to meet the needs of our growing economy, young people, residents and future generations.

In West Oxfordshire, we know there is a predominance of larger properties including detached and semi-detached homes.

In preparing the new Local Plan we have the opportunity to consider up to date evidence on housing need and address this through appropriate policies.

There was strong support in our consultation last year for ensuring that the new Local Plan provides a range of housing opportunities for different groups of people in the interest of creating balanced communities and avoiding ‘ghettoization’.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Housing mix – ensuring a broad mix of housing opportunities including the size and tenure of new homes needed;
- Mixed-use developments;
- Adoption of locally specific healthy place shaping principles.

Objective 24

To make the most efficient use of the District's current housing stock and maximise the opportunities presented by existing and previously developed land and buildings.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises the importance of using natural resources prudently, encouraging the re-use of existing resources including the conversion of existing buildings and making as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.

Similarly, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision emphasises the importance of making efficient use of Oxfordshire's natural resources and land.

In our initial consultation last year, there was very strong support for using previously developed land and buildings as well as making more efficient use of the District's existing housing stock and opportunities from existing buildings.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Re-use of / alterations to existing residential and non-residential buildings;
- Development densities;
- Efficient use of resources;
- Re-use of previously developed land/buildings.

A Vibrant, Resilient and Diverse Local Economy

Objective 25

To provide the framework within which the West Oxfordshire economy can thrive and diversify, building on its inherent strengths and capitalising on future growth potential to increase economic productivity, well-being and resilience.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises the need for planning policies and decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt.

Significant weight must be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity and the approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision has a strong economic dimension, seeking to ensure that by 2050, Oxfordshire is a globally competitive economy which is sustainable, diverse and inclusive, generating high-quality, productive and knowledge-based employment.

It places a particular emphasis on addressing inequality and providing the conditions within which everyone in Oxfordshire can benefit and thrive.

Our Council Plan places a particular focus on ensuring economic resilience and working with partners to secure a vibrant local economy, giving residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions.

Through our initial consultation last year, there was strong support for strengthening and diversifying West Oxfordshire's economy particularly to support the well-being of our local communities through improved skills and opportunities.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Economic vision/strategy

Objective 26

To enable the delivery of a balanced portfolio of high quality employment land to provide flexibility, meet identified needs and cater for a broad range of user requirements over the plan period.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy requires us in preparing the Local Plan, to have a clear economic vision and strategy and a good understanding of anticipated needs over the plan period so that criteria can be set or sites identified to meet those needs.

We also need to address potential barriers to investment including inadequate infrastructure. In our initial consultation last year, congestion on the A40 was flagged up as a particular ‘handbrake’ to future economic growth and prosperity.

National policy also highlights the importance of supporting the rural economy – the Local Plan cannot focus solely on our urban areas particularly as West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision supports diverse, accessible employment and looks to generate a highly productive and inclusive economy based on world-class research, innovation and technology.

The proposed Science and Technology Park at Salt Cross Garden Village is a prime example of such an opportunity and through the new Local Plan we have the chance to consider other future provision within the District.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Pattern of development (spatial strategy);
- Provision of new business land/sites (at a variety of scales) including potential site allocations;
- Adaptation and expansion of existing business premises;
- Mixed-use development including potential site allocations;
- Provision of supporting infrastructure.

Objective 27

To support West Oxfordshire's existing and future economic assets by providing the right infrastructure, land and premises, enabling them to improve, expand and adapt as appropriate and ensuring they are not lost to other uses where they have an important economic, social and environmental role to play.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

As well as influencing the delivery of new business and employment land opportunities, the Local Plan has a role to play in supporting the District's existing economic assets both in our urban and rural areas.

National policy requires us to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and take account of both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

It also emphasises the need for flexibility, to accommodate unforeseen needs, allow for changes in working practices and enable a rapid response to changing economic circumstances.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision looks to utilise the County's strengths and resources, including its existing assets and our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) places an emphasis on working with existing businesses, with part of the overall vision being to create a thriving and prosperous place for entrepreneurs and businesses.

Initial consultation responses last year highlighted the importance of providing supporting infrastructure to enable business growth and providing support for small businesses whilst avoiding the blanket protection of all existing sites which may stifle inward investment.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Adaptation and expansion of existing business premises;
- Redevelopment of existing business premises to other uses;
- Provision of supporting infrastructure.

Objective 28

To provide flexibility to be able to respond to future trends and technological changes to support working practices such as increases in remote, hybrid and co-working.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National policy emphasises the need for planning policies to be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen needs, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision recognises that technological innovation can be increasingly transformational in shaping places and building sustainable communities. It looks to embrace innovation, developing new solutions for working, learning, mobility, health care, resource management, sustainable design and improved public services.

The Oxfordshire Innovation Framework for Planning and Development²² emphasises the importance of futureproofing development for new technology and for when current innovations become mainstream. It includes a ‘roadmap’ of anticipated innovation on topics such as mobility and transport, digital communications and energy and seeks to encourage new development to be sufficiently flexible to allow for the uncertainty of the future.

It highlights the potential role of ‘Innovation Plans’ in new developments which are site-specific plans produced by the developer or infrastructure planner setting out how a particular development or scheme will both integrate and plan for innovation.

Through our initial consultation last year, there was strong support for flexible working spaces in vacant town centre units, a need to focus on green skills, providing support for small businesses along with support for home-working, business start-ups and niche industries.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Potential requirement for Innovation Plans in new developments;
- Remote/hybrid and flexible working spaces;
- Provision of re-purposable space;
- Provision of supporting infrastructure including superfast and ultrafast broadband;
- Conversion and re-use of existing buildings.

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Objective 29

To ensure that all residents of West Oxfordshire are able to benefit from improved education, training and skills opportunities to enhance their economic and social well-being to strengthen the local economy and benefit small and start-up businesses.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National planning policy requires local authorities to take a positive, proactive and collaborative approach to ensuring sufficient school places are available and supporting development that will widen the choice in education.

The Government's national growth strategy (Build Back Better) highlights that the best way of improving people's life chances is to give them the skills to succeed, with improved skills identified as one of 3 core pillars of growth (alongside infrastructure and innovation).

In Oxfordshire, the Local Industrial Strategy (2019) aims to build a skills system that better responds to local demand, which provides a range of opportunities for all across the county.

The more recent Oxfordshire Strategic Vision builds on this and stipulates that by 2050, the County will have improved educational attainment and a skills system aligned to the needs of business and communities, helping to provide the conditions in which all Oxfordshire's people can benefit and thrive.

In our initial consultation last year, particular support was expressed for the development of 'green skills' and creating an economy for the well-being of all.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Pattern of development (spatial strategy);
- 'Living local' / 20 minute neighbourhood concept;
- Provision of supporting infrastructure including education and training opportunities;
- Community Employment Plans (CEPs) linked to new development;
- Safer Routes to Schools.

Objective 30

To celebrate the rurality of our District, enabling the sustainable growth, expansion and diversification of the rural economy and providing support for farmers and other rural businesses including those linked to the visitor economy.

Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?

National planning policy places an emphasis on the development of prosperous rural economies, with planning policies and decisions expected to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses, sustainable rural tourism and leisure and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities.

This is of particular relevance to Oxfordshire as the most rural county in the south-east. The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision recognises this rurality and emphasises the importance of the agricultural sector in helping deliver our biodiversity and climate ambitions and in advancing new technologies and innovation in sustainable farming.

Through our initial consultation last year, strong support was expressed for sustainable tourism, supporting local farmers, potentially greater dispersal of smaller employment sites across rural areas, re-using previously developed land and buildings and the need to support rural land-based businesses, the local food economy and rural tourism.

What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?

- Conversion and re-use of existing buildings;
- Provision of small-scale business land/sites in rural areas;
- Farm/country estate diversification;
- Remote/hybrid and flexible working spaces;
- Sustainable tourism and leisure provision;
- Provision of supporting infrastructure including superfast and ultrafast broadband

5. The Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire

- 5.1 The Local Plan is ultimately a ‘spatial’ document, dealing with the distribution of different land uses across the District (e.g. housing, green space, infrastructure).
- 5.2 In preparing the plan, national policy²³ requires the Council to promote a ‘sustainable pattern of development’ that seeks to:
- Meet the development needs of the area;
 - Align growth and infrastructure;
 - Improve the environment;
 - Mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
- 5.3 Establishing a clear pattern of development (or ‘spatial strategy’) also helps to provide certainty and enable change to happen in a co-ordinated, planned manner.
- 5.4 At this point in time, the Council does not yet have in place much of the key information that will need to feed into the Local Plan such as how many additional homes we need to plan for or how much employment space to provide.
- 5.5 We had originally anticipated that much of that information would flow down from the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, however because that is no longer progressing, we will need to collate our own additional evidence.
- 5.6 Whilst that is currently in train, it will be several months before we know the outcome and so the purpose of this part of the consultation is to generate an early discussion about how and where we might focus future growth in the District in a broad sense.
- 5.7 The location of future growth is a vital consideration for the new Local Plan, not least because different approaches will lead to different outcomes.
- 5.8 Thus for example a more ‘dispersed’ pattern of growth is generally likely to increase car use and associated carbon emissions unless coupled with significant improvements in rural public transport and EV charging capabilities.

²³ NPPF Paragraph 11 (a)

- 5.9 Conversely, a more ‘concentrated’ strategy focusing new development in locations which have strong public transport availability and pedestrian and cycle access, could help to reduce car use and lower carbon emissions.
- 5.10 For the purposes of this consultation, a total of 8 potential development ‘scenarios’ have been identified as follows:
- Scenario 1 - Hierarchical approach
 - Scenario 2 - Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)
 - Scenario 3 - Witney Focus
 - Scenario 4 - Carterton Focus
 - Scenario 5 - Dispersed Growth
 - Scenario 6 - Village ‘Clusters’
 - Scenario 7 - New Settlement
 - Scenario 8 - Public Transport Focus
- 5.11 A description of each scenario is provided below along with some brief commentary. This is intended to stimulate some broad discussion rather than providing an exhaustive critique of each approach.
- 5.12 The feedback received will be considered alongside relevant evidence as it emerges and used to shape a preferred approach which will be the subject of further consultation in due course. We anticipate that this will include an assessment of the relevant ‘performance’ of each scenario in terms of their associated carbon emissions / implications and also their impact on travel times on local roads.
- 5.13 It should be noted that the 8 potential development scenarios are not mutually exclusive and there is inevitably a degree of overlap between some of them. Depending on stakeholder feedback and further evidence of need and opportunity, it may be that a combination of different approaches is preferred as the Local Plan moves forward.
- 5.14 Before considering each scenario, it is worth emphasising that the current Local Plan will remain a live document for some time. This is important because it includes a number of allocated sites where the principle of development has already been established but construction has not yet started.
- 5.15 This includes:
- REEMA North, Carterton (300 homes)
 - Land north of Hill Rise, Woodstock (120 homes)
 - Land at Myrtle Farm, Long Hanborough (50 homes)
 - Woodford Way Car Park, Witney (50 homes)

- Land to the east of Witney (450 homes)
- Land to the north of Witney (1,400 homes)
- Land to the east of Chipping Norton (1,200 homes plus 5 hectares of business land)
- Land to the west of Eynsham (763 homes²⁴)
- Salt Cross Garden Village (2,200 homes plus 40 hectares of business land)

5.16 In preparing the new Local Plan, we will need to consider the progress being made with these sites and provided there are no significant impediments to delivery, they will be carried forward as existing commitments.

5.17 There are also a number of large sites with planning permission that are currently under construction. As of 1st April 2022, sites of 50 or more homes included the following:

- North Curbridge (West Witney) – under construction with around 362 homes still to be built;
- Brize Meadows (Brize Norton) – under construction with around 466 homes still to be built;
- Land east of Woodstock – under construction with around 224 homes still to be built;
- Land east of Mount Owen Road, Bampton – under construction with around 107 homes still to be built;
- Shilton Road, Burford – under construction with around 70 homes still to be built;
- Land north of Burford Road, Witney – under construction with around 88 homes still to be built; and
- Land at Downs Road, Curbridge – under construction with around 68 homes still to be built.

5.18 A number of other large permissions have also been granted more recently and the intention is that these and any other current permissions will be identified as existing commitments in the new Local Plan.

5.19 This is important because the plan will effectively ‘reset’ West Oxfordshire’s housing requirement from 1st April 2021 onwards and any housing completions since then, or sites which are currently committed, will contribute towards meeting that new requirement.

²⁴ This is a residual figure based on the overall allocation of about 1,000 homes

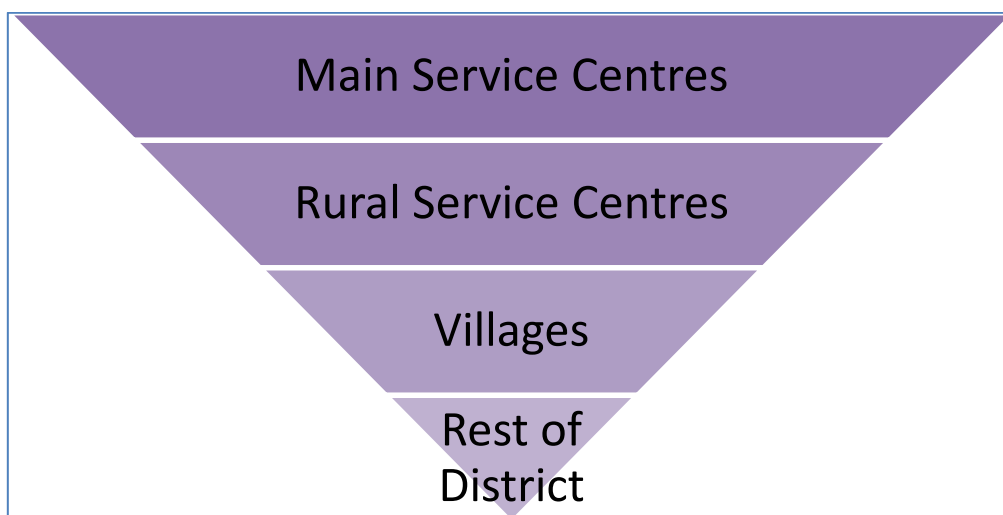
5.20 It will be for the new Local Plan to identify the additional land that may be needed to meet any residual growth requirement in the period up to 2041, providing sufficient flexibility in the process.

Scenario 1 - Hierarchal approach

5.21 Under Scenario 1, we would roll forward the strategy of the current Local Plan which is based on a 'hierarchal' approach as follows:

- A significant proportion of new homes, jobs and supporting services focused at the 3 main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton;
- Additional growth at the rural service centres, with Eynsham having a particularly important role (including a new village – Salt Cross – to the north) and Woodstock being identified as suitable for a reasonable scale of development. More modest levels of development at the other rural service centres of Burford, Charlbury, Bampton and Long Hanborough to help reinforce their existing roles;
- Limited development in villages; and
- Development in small villages, hamlets and open countryside restricted to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location.

Figure 1 – Illustration of Hierarchal Approach



5.22 The rationale for this strategy is that the District's larger settlements, in particular Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton offer the broadest range of services and facilities, are accessible by a choice of transport modes and offer a good number of job opportunities.

- 5.23 Many of our other larger towns and villages also offer a good range of services and opportunities but as settlements become smaller, their ability to absorb additional growth in a sustainable manner is generally reduced because people tend to need their cars more as other options become limited.
- 5.24 Under Scenario 1, this general ‘hierarchical’ approach would be rolled forward into the new Local Plan, with any future development (beyond existing commitments) being considered and planned for on this basis. (i.e. further growth focused primarily at the 3 main towns, followed by the rural service centres and then the larger villages).
- 5.25 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below (please note: this is not intended to be exhaustive).
- Well supported through consultation when the last Local Plan was prepared;
 - Accepted as a ‘sound’ approach by the previous Planning Inspector;
 - Likely to encourage less car use and thus reduce transport related carbon emissions by offering more alternatives (public transport, walking and cycling) and good access to services and facilities;
 - Larger settlements generally likely to include previously developed (brownfield) land which may be re-purposed for another use or mix of uses;
 - Allows for a proportion of future growth to take place in smaller settlements thus helping support their vitality and viability and enabling development sites to be locally identified (e.g. through Neighbourhood Plans);
 - Would help to provide a balanced mix of sites and opportunities;
 - Avoids much of the Cotswolds National Landscape (where there is a presumption against major development other than in exceptional circumstances);
 - Many larger settlements (e.g. Witney, Carterton, Eynsham, Long Hanborough) have already absorbed a significant amount of growth in recent years and/or have future growth already committed.

Scenario 2 - Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)

- 5.26 Scenario 2 would involve focusing the vast majority of future development (beyond existing commitments) more specifically at the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton.
- 5.27 As outlined above, these towns offer a broad range of services and facilities, good public transport accessibility and provide a mix of job opportunities. Two of them (Witney and Carterton) also lie outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited.
- 5.28 Under this scenario, proportionately less development (beyond existing commitments) would then take place at the rural service centres and villages and development elsewhere would continue to be restricted to that which requires a rural location.
- 5.29 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- The primary focus on the 3 main towns was well supported when the last local plan was prepared;
 - The three main service centres offer the broadest range of services and facilities in the District and are thus potentially well placed to accommodate further growth;
 - They also provide a good range of opportunities for the re-use of previously developed (brownfield land) in line with national policy;
 - Witney and Carterton lie outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
 - Witney and Carterton have already absorbed a significant amount of growth in recent years;
 - Proportionately less development taking place in the smaller settlements would limit the opportunity to provide new homes in those locations including affordable housing.

Scenario 3 – Witney Focus

- 5.30 Scenario 3 would see most future development (beyond existing commitments) focused narrowly at Witney as the District’s largest settlement and main service centre.
- 5.31 Witney enjoys an extensive range of services and facilities, a high quality built and natural environment and has a good level of accessibility including to the A40. Whilst there is no rail service, bus provision is good with frequent services to key destinations meaning the use of public transport is a realistic option.
- 5.32 The size of the town also means that there are large areas of previously developed (brownfield) land, some of which may be suitable for re-purposing to a different use or mix of uses. We are also aware of a number of undeveloped sites on the edge of the town which are being made available for development by landowners.
- 5.33 Furthermore, as Witney lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape, there is no expectation that the scale and extent of development should be limited.
- 5.34 However, there are known issues relating to any discussion around future growth at Witney, in particular traffic congestion, air quality and the capacity of existing infrastructure to absorb further development.
- 5.35 Anecdotally, there are also concerns that the special character of the town is starting to be eroded as a result of the large level of growth that has taken place in recent years and is further committed through the current Local Plan.
- 5.36 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- Witney is the District’s main service centre and offers an extensive range of services and facilities;
 - The town enjoys good access to the A40 which will be further enhanced by proposed improvements to the Shores Green junction;
 - The town offers good opportunities for the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land and buildings;
 - Various parcels of undeveloped land on the fringes of the town are also known to be available for development;
 - Witney lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
 - Focusing development primarily in one location would limit the opportunity to provide new homes elsewhere in the District;
 - Witney has already accommodated a significant amount of development in the last 20 – 30 years and there are known concerns around traffic congestion and air quality.

Scenario 4 – Carterton Focus

- 5.37 Under Scenario 4, most future development (beyond existing commitments) would be focused narrowly at Carterton as the District's second largest town and service centre.
- 5.38 Whilst perhaps not as diverse as Witney in terms of available services and facilities, Carterton still offers a great deal including frequent bus services, education and community facilities, a leisure centre, shops and a high quality country park. It is also home to RAF Brize Norton, the largest RAF station in the country.
- 5.39 Carterton has grown significantly in recent years with around 1,400 additional homes and supporting facilities provided at Shilton Park in the northern part of the town and a further 700 homes currently under construction at Brize Meadow to the east of the town in the parish of Brize Norton. There has also been some development in and around the town centre, including new supermarkets, cafes and restaurants alongside improvements to the public realm.
- 5.40 Like Witney, the size of Carterton means that there are large areas of previously developed (brownfield) land including that which is associated with RAF Brize Norton. We are also aware of a number of undeveloped sites on the edge of the town which are being made available for development by landowners in adjoining parishes.
- 5.41 Carterton also lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape and as such, there is no expectation that the scale and extent of development should be limited.
- 5.42 However, the town has no direct (A-road) access from the A40, it has a relative imbalance of homes and jobs which contributes to out-commuting and whilst the town centre has improved in recent years, it still 'underperforms' compared to some other destinations.
- 5.43 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- Carterton is the District's second largest town and offers a good range of services and facilities;
 - Traffic congestion is not generally a concern but the town has no direct (A-road) access to the A40;
 - The town offers good opportunities for the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land and buildings including land associated with RAF Brize Norton and sites in and around the Town Centre;
 - Various parcels of undeveloped land on the fringes of the town in adjoining parishes are also known to be available for development;

- Carterton lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
- Focusing development primarily in one location would limit the opportunity to provide new homes elsewhere in the District;
- Carterton has a relative imbalance of homes and jobs leading to out-commuting;
- The impact of noise and lighting from RAF Brize Norton has been previously raised through consultation.

Scenario 5 - Dispersed Growth

5.44 Scenario 5 would involve a more 'dispersed' approach to the future pattern of development so that instead of growth being steered mainly towards the District's larger settlements, it would be more evenly distributed across West Oxfordshire.

5.45 Thus, whilst some additional growth would still take place at Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton and the rural service centres, there would be a much stronger emphasis on small to medium-scale development taking place in the following villages:

- Alvescot
- Ascott under
- Wychwood
- Aston
- Bladon
- Brize Norton
- Cassington
- Chadlington
- Churchill
- Clanfield
- Combe
- Curbridge
- Ducklington
- Enstone
- Filkins & Broughton Poggs
- Finstock
- Freeland
- Fulbrook
- Great Rollright
- Hailey
- Kingham
- Langford

- Leafield
- Middle Barton
- Milton-under-Wychwood
- Minster Lovell (South of Burford Road)
- North Leigh
- Over Norton
- Shipton-under-Wychwood
- Standlake
- Stanton Harcourt
- Stonesfield
- Tackley
- Wootton

5.46 Under this scenario, we would anticipate that the more restrictive approach that currently applies to very small villages, hamlets and the open countryside would continue to apply.

5.47 Adopting a more 'dispersed' approach to growth such as this would mean that more small and medium-size sites would need to be identified either through the Local Plan or through Neighbourhood Plans.

5.48 National policy emphasises the contribution that such small and medium sites can make to meeting overall housing requirements.

5.49 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.

- Small and medium-size sites are generally able to deliver new homes more swiftly than larger strategic sites;
- Could provide a broader range of new housing and employment opportunities across the District;
- Could offer a greater degree of local influence and control (e.g. new sites brought forward through Neighbourhood Plans);
- A number of the villages listed fall within the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
- A number of the villages listed are relatively poorly served by public transport leading to potentially higher car use and carbon emissions;
- Such an approach could 'cumulatively' place strain on local infrastructure capacity.

Scenario 6 - Village 'Clusters'

- 5.50 Like Scenario 5, Scenario 6 is based on a dispersed approach to the future pattern of growth but, instead of villages being treated separately, they would be considered collectively in small groups or 'clusters' based on the services and facilities they are able to cumulatively offer.
- 5.51 Each village 'cluster' would then be the focus for an appropriate and proportionate amount of growth.
- 5.52 The logic of this approach is rooted in the NPPF which emphasises that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services and that where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.
- 5.53 This could apply to clusters of existing larger villages for example:
- Long Hanborough and Freeland;
 - The Wychwoods (Ascott under Wychwood, Milton under Wychwood and Shipton under Wychwood);
 - Bampton and Aston
- 5.54 But it could also potentially apply to some smaller villages where the current Local Plan adopts a more restrictive approach to growth, particularly where these are close to other larger villages that offer a broader range of services and facilities.
- 5.55 **Hypothetical examples** of such an approach might include:
- Stanton Harcourt and Sutton;
 - Alvescot and Black Bourton;
 - Standlake and Brighthampton;
 - North Leigh and New Yatt;
 - Church Hanborough, Long Hanborough and Freeland
- 5.56 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- It would consider the 'collective' opportunities and advantages presented by settlements rather than treating each in isolation;
 - Likely to bring forward some development opportunities in locations where historically this has not been possible, thus potentially helping them to thrive;
 - Potential to increase community cohesion and inclusivity;
 - However, could potentially lead to a perception of loss of identity between different settlements;
 - Many smaller settlements are poorly served by public transport with limited opportunities for walking and cycling.

Scenario 7 - New Settlement

- 5.57 Scenario 7 would see future growth focused primarily at a large, purpose-built new settlement somewhere in the District.
- 5.58 We already have one new settlement identified in the current Local Plan which is Salt Cross Garden Village located to the north of the A40 near Eynsham. This will deliver around 2,200 new homes, 40 hectares of business land in the form of a new science and technology park and a broad range of supporting services and facilities.
- 5.59 The new Local Plan could potentially look to focus any additional growth (beyond existing commitments) into a second new settlement somewhere in the District.
- 5.60 At this point we are seeking general 'in principle' views on such an approach rather than identifying any potential locations, however because there is a presumption against major development taking place within the Cotswolds National Landscape other than in exceptional circumstances, the likelihood is that any such new settlement would need to be located outside of this area.
- 5.61 For similar reasons, any new settlement would most likely need to be located outside of the eastern part of the District which falls within the Oxford Green Belt.
- 5.62 National policy recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes).
- 5.63 National policy also makes it clear that any such approach should include careful consideration of a number of factors including infrastructure opportunities (existing or planned) size and location (ability to be self-supporting) the quality of places (e.g. garden city principles) and likely rates of delivery given the lead-in times for large scale sites.
- 5.64 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- The principle of establishing a new settlement is supported by national policy
 - A degree of precedent has already been established by Salt Cross Garden Village;
 - Provides the opportunity to create a well-designed, sustainable and self-sustaining location for new homes, jobs and supporting services and facilities;
 - Provides the opportunity to create significant new infrastructure investment including education, public transport and green space;
 - In acting as the primary focus for growth under the new Local Plan, it could reduce development 'pressures' on other locations within the District;

- Development of this scale would have a significant lead-in time to delivery so other sites are likely to be needed to meet shorter-term requirements (e.g. 5-year housing land supply);
- Larger sites are generally more complex to assemble and deliver;
- Development of this scale would likely have a significant environmental, social and economic impact, irrespective of location.

Scenario 8 - Public Transport Focus

- 5.65 Under this final scenario, we would look to focus future growth (beyond existing commitments) along key public transport corridors and around public transport hubs e.g. rail stations. In a recent rail study commissioned by the County Council, the consultants stated that by 2031, car journeys along the A40 will take up to 30 minutes longer.
- 5.66 In focusing development where the availability of public transport is good, people will be less likely to use their car, helping to reduce congestion and carbon emissions - particularly with increased electrification of our public transport services.
- 5.67 Public transport options in West Oxfordshire are however variable in terms of coverage and frequency.
- 5.68 In terms of bus services, although good, frequent services run along the A40 and A44 including services to Oxford, journey times can be affected by congestion, particularly at peak times. Coverage across much of the rest of the District, in particular more rural areas, is sporadic or even non-existent in some locations, particularly off-peak.
- 5.69 Oxfordshire County is currently progressing its Smart Corridor project which will see the provision of bus priority measures along the A40, including east and westbound bus lanes as well as improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity. Improvements to the A44 are also scheduled as part of the North Oxford Corridor (NOC) project.
- 5.70 In terms of rail services, the District is served by two main rail lines, the Cotswold line and the Cherwell Valley Line.
- 5.71 The Cotswold line passes through the largely rural central part of the District, connecting several towns and villages with Hereford in the west and Oxford and London in the east. Stations are located at Long Hanborough, Combe, Finstock, Charlbury, Ascott under Wychwood, Shipton under Wychwood and Kingham.
- 5.72 A very small proportion of the Cherwell Valley Line runs through the eastern part of the District with a station at Tackley providing services northwards to Birmingham and southwards to Oxford and onto London Paddington.

- 5.73 Notably, none of the District's main towns (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton) are served by rail. However, Oxfordshire County Council have recently commissioned work to further investigate the concept of a possible new railway line solution from Carterton and Witney to Oxford and to establish if there is a strategic need for the proposed railway line and any resulting investment required.
- 5.74 Four potential station locations have been identified at Carterton West, Carterton North, Witney and Eynsham with initial assessments suggests the journey would take approximately 23 minutes from Carterton, 16 minutes from Witney, and 11 minutes from Eynsham.
- 5.75 Although the provision of a new railway line would be a costly (£500m+) and complex project to bring forward, the study concludes that the journey time savings compared to anticipated bus and car journey times in 2031 are considerable, with nearly an hour saved against the relevant car journey from Carterton and Witney, and more than half an hour from Eynsham. Compared with buses, the time savings are about an hour from Carterton, 40 minutes from Witney, and 25 minutes from Eynsham. A new railway line would also assist with longer-term capacity issues along the A40.
- 5.76 Taking account of the above, a public transport focused scenario would therefore see future additional growth focused in locations where there are good current and potential future opportunities to use public transport such as the A40 and A44 for bus services and along the Cotswold rail line for rail. Depending on how the project progresses, this could also include consideration of future development taking place along the potential Carterton – Oxford rail line.
- 5.77 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- Would help to encourage 'modal shift' away from the use of the private car and towards increased use of public transport;
 - Potentially reduces carbon emissions – particularly with the electrification of bus services;
 - The A40 and A44 corridors and the Cotswold rail line include a number of larger settlements which have a good range of services and facilities available;
 - Development along the route of the potential Carterton – Oxford rail route could possibly help to fund it (e.g. through land value capture);
 - Coverage of public transport across the District is variable;
 - Much of the Cotswold rail line runs through the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
 - The potential Carterton – Oxford rail line is at a feasibility study stage only;

- This approach would mean further growth at a number of towns and villages which have already absorbed a significant amount of development in recent years (e.g. Carterton, Witney, Eynsham, Long Hanborough, Woodstock).

6. Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities

6.1 A key role of the Local Plan is to determine how land in West Oxfordshire is used in the future. It can do this in a number of ways, including:

- ‘Criteria-based’ policies which are used to guide development proposals when they come forward;
- Specific ‘designations’ which influence how an area will be managed in the future and what the main considerations for development are (e.g. the Cotswolds National Landscape); and
- Site ‘allocations’ which specify how particular areas of land are expected to be used (e.g. new housing, jobs, shopping, infrastructure and community uses).

6.2 As we are still at an early stage in developing the new Local Plan, we are keen to hear different views on how land within the District should be used in the future.

6.3 Through this part of the consultation we are therefore issuing an open invitation to all local residents, businesses and key stakeholders to put forward their ideas.

6.4 This can relate to any size of land and might be a site that is already in use or undeveloped land that is considered suitable for development.

- **Nature recovery and biodiversity gain** including potential networks of joined-up spaces;
- **Renewable energy** e.g. water, solar and wind;
- **Community uses** such as meeting spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities, co-working facilities and burial space;
- **New homes** including market housing but also affordable housing, self and custom-build and other forms of specialist housing (e.g. for older people and community-led housing projects);
- **Supporting infrastructure** such as new cycling and walking routes, highway improvements, energy, waste, health, education, libraries etc;
- **Green space** including outdoor sport, allotments, parks and gardens, amenity and natural green space;
- **Employment** generating uses such as (but not limited to) offices, research and development, industrial, retail, indoor sport and commercial leisure uses such as cinemas, hotels, leisure centres.

6.6 To put forward your ideas you can complete and return the template attached to this consultation paper or use our online mapping tool here²⁵.

²⁵ <https://yourvoice.westoxon.gov.uk/en-GB/>

7. Next steps

- 7.1 In parallel with this consultation taking place, the Council is in the process of commissioning a range of supporting evidence to help inform the new Local Plan.
- 7.2 As that evidence takes shape, we will take it into account along with the consultation responses received and work up a series of preferred policy approaches that we aim to publish for further consultation later this year.
- 7.3 We will then look to move towards publishing the final draft version of the plan and submitting it for examination in 2024.

8. Further advice and information

- 8.1 If you require any advice or information relating to this consultation, please contact the Council's Planning Policy Team via email at planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk or by telephone on 01993 861686

Call for ideas form

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities

West Oxfordshire District Council is producing a new Local Plan covering the period up to 2041.

As part of that process, we want to hear your ideas about how land within the District might be used in the future. This could be for new housing, employment, green space, renewable energy or some other land use.

Whether you have a detailed proposal, or just a broad idea, please complete this form and let us know what you think. You do not need to complete every section, just fill in as much as you can.

We are open to all ideas but would particularly welcome thoughts on sites or areas of land that may be suitable for:

- **Nature recovery and biodiversity gain** including potential networks of joined-up spaces;
- **Renewable energy** e.g. water, solar and wind;
- **Community uses** such as meeting spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities, co-working facilities and burial space;
- **New homes** including market housing but also affordable housing, self and custom-build and other forms of specialist housing (e.g. for older people and community-led housing projects);
- **Supporting infrastructure** such as new cycling and walking routes, highway improvements, energy, waste, health, education, libraries etc;
- **Green space** including outdoor sport, allotments, parks and gardens, amenity and natural green space;
- **Employment** generating uses such as (but not limited to) offices, research and development, industrial, retail, indoor sport and commercial leisure uses such as cinemas, hotels, leisure centres.

Contact Details:

Name

Address

Organisation (where applicable)

Email

What is the nature of your suggested site, idea or opportunity? Select/tick all that apply.

Nature recovery and biodiversity net gain	
Renewable energy	
Community uses	
New homes	
Supporting infrastructure	
Green space	
Employment	
Other	

What is the title/name of your idea?

Tell us more about your idea This might include why you feel it would be an appropriate use of the land along with any information you have on land availability, current or proposed access, potential site constraints and where applicable, the quantum and type of development envisaged.

What is the location of your idea?

Address:

OS Grid Ref (where known):

Site area (ha – where known):

Please attach any images/maps related to your idea

Please attach any other supporting documents

What happens next?

The Council will consider all suggestions carefully as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan.

Suggested development sites (e.g. housing, employment and mixed-use development) will be subject to further detailed assessment along with other sites identified by the Council itself.

Other suggestions such as green space provision, nature recovery and renewable energy will be taken into account as the Council develops the evidence base which is needed to support the Local Plan as it moves forward.



Your Place Your Plan

CELEBRATING OUR PAST, CREATING A
HEALTHY, GREEN & FAIR FUTURE FOR ALL



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL