

# **South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 Publication Version**

## **Employment Topic Paper Updated February 2019**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This topic paper explains the employment policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034. It sets out the relevant national policies and guidance relating to our employment policies, summarises the evidence that we have gathered to respond to this, and explains how we have developed our policies based on them.
- 1.2. The Council has published this version of the topic paper (January 2019) to support its consultation on the proposed submission Local Plan. In accordance with Paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (July 2018), we have assessed how each policy is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.
- 1.3. This topic paper is split across the following sub-theme of which further explanation is provided for the following:
  - The need for additional employment land
  - The overall employment strategy
  - Employment distribution strategy
- 1.4. This topic paper covers the following policies in the Local Plan:
  - STRAT2: South Oxfordshire Housing and Employment Requirements
  - EMP1: The Amount and Distribution of New B-class Employment Land
  - EMP2: Range, Size and Mix of Employment Premises
  - EMP3: Retention of Employment Land
  - EMP4: Employment Land in Didcot
  - EMP5: New Employment Land at Henley-on-Thames
  - EMP6: New Employment Land at Thame
  - EMP7: New Employment Land at Wallingford
  - EMP8: New Employment Land at Crowmarsh Gifford
  - EMP9: New Employment Land at Chalgrove

## 2. **National Policy Context**

### ***National Planning Policy Framework 2018***

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in 2018, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. At its heart is the need to ensure planning contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development, which should encompass economic, social and environmental considerations.
- 2.2 Paragraph 81 of the 2018 NPPF states that planning policies should:
- Set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
  - Set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
  - seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment;
  - be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.
- 2.3 The 2018 Framework also requires that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

- 2.4 Currently, there is no Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which is relevant to the assessment of economic needs and uses. However, the now redacted 'Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment' PPG provided additional guidance on assessing economic development needs and uses. In the absence of updated guidance from government, we have referenced this, and will update the Topic Paper accordingly if new guidance is published prior to the submission of our Local Plan. The guidance stated that, when looking at what type of employment land is needed, the increasing diversity of employment generating uses requires different policy responses and an appropriate variety of employment sites. Although this has now been replaced (by an updated PPG, 'Housing Needs Assessment'<sup>1</sup> (September 2018)), it is

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<sup>1</sup> Available from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

the only basis by which there is to suitably ascertain appropriate economic need and as such the Council is cognisant of it.

### **3. The need for additional employment land**

- 3.1. South Oxfordshire lies within the economically buoyant Thames Valley area between Oxford and Reading. Oxfordshire is one of the strongest economies in the UK, partially due to it being home to one of the most important clusters of research-based, high-value businesses in Europe. This cluster includes scientific research and development, higher education, health related industries, car manufacture and motorsports, creative and digital sector businesses and visitor economy. Oxfordshire is uniquely placed with sectors poised for growth including medicine and life sciences (biotechnology, for example), advanced engineering (cryogenics, space, advanced materials), information technology, and low carbon environmental technologies. However economic growth is hindered by productivity per person being below the average for the South East of England, a heavily constrained energy network, higher median house prices and, while full fibre roll out is double the UK average at 8%, this is well behind our international competitors.
- 3.2. In the western part of the District, there is an area known as Science Vale which includes Berinsfield, Culham Science Centre and Didcot, and extends across the border into the Vale of White Horse to include Milton Park, the Harwell Campus, Wantage and Grove<sup>2</sup>. Science Vale is one of the most successful science clusters in the UK. Government announced the 'Science Vale Oxford Enterprise Zone' in 2012, which covers parts of Harwell and Milton Park. Government also announced the 'Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise Zone' on 25 November 2015, which covers roughly the area around the former Didcot A power station, five sites to the north of Didcot and six extension sites in Milton Park. These Enterprise Zones create simplified local authority planning, for example, through Local Development Orders that grant automatic planning permission for certain development (such as new industrial buildings or changing how existing buildings are used) within specified areas.
- 3.3. The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) published a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)<sup>3</sup> in 2016 setting out an ambition for accelerated economic growth for Oxfordshire. The plan seeks to meet the needs of our science and knowledge-rich economy, placing Oxfordshire at the forefront of the UK's global growth ambitions. Oxfordshire has developed a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) (Technical Negotiating Draft, December 2018)<sup>4</sup>, which outlines how Oxfordshire will support the achievement of the National Industrial Strategy. The LIS is being developed by OxLEP and will build on the current SEP, providing a framework to guide Government, public and private sector investment decisions to make Oxfordshire one of the top global innovation networks and increase productivity of all businesses. Whilst this strategy is in the development stage, the Local Plan can support this opportunity to build an ambitious programme for long-term economic growth and increased productivity for all residents.
- 3.4. Whilst the LIS will benefit South Oxfordshire businesses, the Council's Business and Innovation Strategy (BIS) 2017 to 2020 outlines its support for

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<sup>2</sup> Map available at - <http://sciencevale.com/living-and-working-in-science-vale-uk/science-vale-uk-locations/regional-map/>

<sup>3</sup> Available from <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications>

<sup>4</sup> Technical Negotiating Draft – December 2018 available from <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis>

all businesses in the District: from the home-based sole traders to the rapidly growing small and medium businesses that are integral to the science and high-technology supply chain. The BIS highlights the challenges businesses have in finding quality office space of the right size, in the right location, and at the right price. The Local Plan can help address this challenge by implementing policies to encourage the safeguarding and refurbishment of existing employment land and the creation of new sites that will allow our innovative businesses to increase productivity and grow.

- 3.5. In addition to the Science Vale area within the District, South Oxfordshire's four towns are the main employment centres, with our rural areas providing a large number of small firms and some major international research institutions. The largest employment centre outside the towns is Culham Science Centre, which specialises in fusion research and hosts a number of high-tech research and development activities in energy, materials and robotics, in addition to commercial technology organisations. The business area around Monument Business Park at Chalgrove provides an important range of businesses and premises. There is also an important cluster of environmental science companies and research institutions in Crowmarsh Gifford and Wallingford.
- 3.6. South Oxfordshire has a higher than average number of economically active people at 82.1% compared with a national average of 78.4% as of 2018<sup>5</sup>. The District also has a lower than average unemployment rate at 2.5% compared with a national average of 4.2%<sup>6</sup>.
- 3.7. In 2018, 69% of South Oxfordshire's employees were either Managers, Directors or Senior Officials, employed in Professional Occupations or employed in Associate Professional & Technical positions, significantly higher than the national average of 46.1%<sup>7</sup>. Correspondingly the area employs lower than average numbers of people in all other professions<sup>8</sup>. South Oxfordshire's residents are also highly-qualified with almost 48.6% of the workforce with qualifications at Level 4 and above, compared with 38.6% nationally<sup>9</sup>.
- 3.8. Employers take a very positive view of South Oxfordshire as a place to do business. Almost 92% of businesses surveyed in 2010 are satisfied with South Oxfordshire as a business location. Key strengths highlighted by employers include its central geographic location bringing them in close proximity to customers, suppliers and other businesses alongside good transport links and the fact that it is a thriving and prosperous area<sup>10</sup>. For many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the quality of life and work/life balance represents the key reason for locating and operating within the District<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Available from <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157325/report.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> Available from <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157325/report.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Available from

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157325/report.aspx#tabempocc>

<sup>8</sup> ONS annual population survey - Employment by occupation (Jan 2015-Dec 2015)

<sup>9</sup> Available from <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157325/report.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Oxfordshire Employers Skills Study 2010, Oxfordshire Economic Partnership

<sup>11</sup> Available from

<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SME%20Business%20and%20Innovation%20Strategy%20Final-Report-14.03.17.pdf>

## **Strategic Housing Market Assessment**

- 3.9. The local authorities in Oxfordshire commissioned the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)<sup>12</sup> to produce an objective assessment of housing need, as required under the previous NPPF. To support and inform the development of the SHMA, together with the OxLEP, the local authorities commissioned consultants to prepare economic forecasts for Oxfordshire.
- 3.10. The committed economic growth scenario from this forecasting, projects a total increase in employment of around 88,000 people over the period 2011-31, or 4,400 p.a. (1% p.a.) for Oxfordshire. This compares with growth recorded for Oxfordshire over the period 2001-11 of around 3,000 p.a. (0.8% p.a.). The report advises that employment growth based on past trends may have been underestimated in 'Science Vale' where there is strong potential for both inward investment and growth of existing businesses.
- 3.11. In terms of the housing numbers required to meet the committed/planned economic growth scenario, the 2014 SHMA projects an objectively assessed need of 749 dwellings per annum (d.p.a.). This figure does not include an uplift for affordable housing. Local Plan Policy STRAT2 sets out the overall housing and employment requirement for the Local Plan. It identifies a total housing need of 22,775 homes between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2034. This is based on an annual housing need of 775 homes a year for the entire 23-year period (17,825 homes), with an additional 495 homes a year between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2031 (4,950 homes) to address some of Oxford's unmet housing needs. The Housing Topic Paper<sup>13</sup> to support the Local Plan fully addresses this figure.

## **Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal**

- 3.12. Government announced the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal<sup>14</sup> (the Growth Deal) in its 2017 Autumn Budget. The Oxfordshire authorities and Government signed the outline agreement and delivery plan in March 2018, and various elements of the deal have been implemented since. The deal covers the period to 2031, but currently only has a lifespan for the delivery of housing to March 2023. Both national government and the local partners' expectation is that the deal will be kept under review and extended periodically.
- 3.13. The Growth Deal has committed the councils in Oxfordshire to collectively planning for and supporting the delivery of 100,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031. The Growth Deal also commits to £215m of funding for the county to deliver new and accelerated housing delivery. The Oxfordshire Growth Board is currently determining the best way to apportion this funding to various infrastructure projects in Oxfordshire, with the first tranche having been paid in 2018.
- 3.14. For the reasons set out in the "Housing Topic Paper", the proposed South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 has included an annual housing requirement of

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<sup>12</sup> Available from [www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/projects/oxfordshire-strategic-housing-market-assessment-shma/](http://www.oxfordshiregrowthboard.org/projects/oxfordshire-strategic-housing-market-assessment-shma/)

<sup>13</sup> Available from <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies>

<sup>14</sup> Available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxfordshire-housing-deal>



775 d.p.a., with an additional 4,950 homes being delivered between 2021 and 2031 to support Oxford City Council's commitments to the Oxfordshire Growth Deal.

- 3.15. Whilst there is no explicit requirement within the Deal for additional employment land and jobs, as part of the deal, the authorities have committed to produce the Oxfordshire Industrial Strategy as a headline commitment under the productivity strand of the Deal. As stated earlier, a Technical Negotiating Draft was published in December 2018.

### **South Oxfordshire Employment Land Review 2015**

- 3.16. Following the publication of the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014, the Council published the South Oxfordshire Employment Land Review (ELR)<sup>15</sup> in 2015 (prepared on behalf the council by URS Consultancy). The ELR considers all commercial and industrial uses falling into classes B1 (business uses), B2 (industrial uses) and B8 (storage and distribution uses) of the Use Classes Order. A broad range of land and premises were assessed including industrial estates, business parks, science and technology parks and some office premises. The ELR sets a projected demand for industrial and office space of 24.4ha over the period 2014-2033.
- 3.17. The review undertook an appraisal of the quality and characteristics of employment land in the District, identifying where existing employment areas have capacity for expansion. The ELR went on to make recommendations for these potential locations and their approximate capacity for additional office, research and development (B1a/b) space:
- Culham Science Centre: 3.3 hectares
  - Central Didcot: 2.6 hectares
  - Land at or near Monument Business Park - Chalgrove: 0.7 hectares
  - With a remainder of 0.3 hectares met in the town centres of Henley-on-Thames, Wallingford (including Crowmarsh Gifford) and Thame.
- 3.18. Furthermore, recommendations were made within the review for the potential locations and approximate amounts of additional industrial land (B1c/B2/B8) as follows:
- Crowmarsh Gifford: 2.5 hectares
  - Culham Science Centre: approximately 1.3 hectares
  - Hithercroft Industrial Estate - Wallingford: 1.9 hectares
  - London Road Industrial Estate - Wheatley: 0.4 hectares
  - Land at or near Monument Business Park - Chalgrove: 2.5 hectares
  - Southmead Industrial Estate - Didcot: 2.9 hectares
  - Thame: 1.6 hectares
  - The remainder of 6.3 hectares provided at new sites at the four main towns.

### **Employment Land Review Addendum – August 2017**

- 3.19. The ELR provides a forecast of employment requirements from 2014 to 2031 whereas the October 2017 Regulation 19 Local Plan is based on the period 2011 to 2033. Furthermore, it does not consider employment land needs

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<sup>15</sup> Available from <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies>

associated with projected growth in South Oxfordshire's labour supply (resident workforce). To address this the Council commissioned consultants Lichfields to prepare an addendum to the 2015 review (ELR), which is the South Oxfordshire Employment Land Review Addendum (SOELRA) (2017)<sup>16</sup>.

- 3.20. The SOELRA raises two important points. Firstly, an important consideration for any technical work of this type is that the study is inevitably a point-in-time assessment. Additionally, it states that it should be noted that the ultimate judgement as to the level of need that South Oxfordshire should plan for is not purely quantitative, and that there will be a number of qualitative factors not covered in this addendum to consider, such as environmental considerations, transport links and proximity to services. These factors will influence the employment space requirements that will need to be planned for, and should be considered alongside the modelled scenarios.
- 3.21. The Addendum provides an updated view of the scale and type of employment space that should be planned for over the October 2017 Regulation 19 Local Plan period (to 2033). It utilises the same Cambridge Economics (CE) employment projections as the ELR and SHMA, but applies these to the longer time period associated with the new South Oxfordshire Local Plan, providing a clear overview of the various assumptions and methodologies that have been applied to arrive at overall requirements. It also considers a labour supply-based scenario of future economic growth in the District. The SOELRA (2017) does not provide recommendations for the locations of additional employment land.
- 3.22. The Addendum forecasts that between 33.2 and 35.9 hectares of additional employment land will be required in the District over the plan period 2011 to 2033. Therefore, the Addendum sets a slightly higher requirement in line with the SHMA (2014).

### **Updated Local Plan Period**

- 3.23. As the employment forecast provided by the SOELRA (2017) ends at 2033, to account for the additional year in the plan period beyond the date of the evidence base an additional requirement of between 1.5 and 1.63 ha is required (based on a pro-rata of the previous plan period). This results in an employment requirement of between 34.7 and 37.5 hectares of employment land in the District over the period 2011 to 2034.

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<sup>16</sup> Available from <http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies>

#### **4. The strategy for employment land**

- 4.1. Within the Spatial Strategy chapter of the Local Plan, Policy STRAT2 sets the overall housing and employment land requirements for the Local Plan. The policy requires, based on the evidence base discussed previously in this paper, at least 37.5 hectares of employment land to be provided within the plan period.
- 4.2. Within the Employment and Economy chapter of the Local Plan, Policy EMP1 translates this overall plan requirement to locations of proposed employment land. It sets out the locations for 47.2 hectares of employment land. This figure is higher than the requirement, however the Council has sought to ensure it has a sufficient supply of employment land. The Council considers that the proposed allocations have a reasonable prospect of being utilised for employment purposes over the plan period.
- 4.3. In order to encourage sustainable economic growth and meet this requirement the Local Plan identifies locations and allocations for employment throughout the District, dispersed between the Plan's strategic allocations and the sustainable locations. This approach reflects the Local Plan's spatial strategy.
- 4.4. The locations for employment are as follows:

Within Science Vale:

- Culham Science Centre and the adjacent strategic site;
- Didcot, albeit with some in the Vale of White Horse; and
- The strategic site at Berinsfeld.

At other sustainable locations outside of Science Vale:

- The strategic sites at Chalgrove and Grenoble Road;
- The towns of Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford, with sites to be identified through Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs); and
- At Crowmarsh Gifford with sites to be identified through the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

- 4.5. The proposed allocations include a proportion of sites per the following mechanisms: carried forward as existing allocated sites from the Core Strategy; at land on strategic allocations; and through Neighbourhood Development Plans. These are distributed as follows:

<b>Table 1: Employment land distribution</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Hectares</b>
Didcot – Southmead Industrial Estate	EMP4 – Carried forward from the Core Strategy	2.92
Didcot – Milton Park	Core Policy 6 - Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 – Carried forward from the Core Strategy	6.5
Wallingford – Hithercroft	EMP7 – Carried forward from the Core Strategy	2.25

<b>Table 1: Employment land distribution</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Hectares</b>
Industrial Estate		
Culham – Culham Science Centre	STRAT8 and 9 – Carried forward from the Core Strategy	7.3 (redistributed within the Strategic Allocation)
Berinsfield	STRAT10 – At Strategic Allocation	5.0
Chalgrove	STRAT7 – At Strategic Allocation	5.0
	EMP9 – At Monument Business Park	2.25
Culham Science Centre – land adjacent to	STRAT8 and STRAT 9 – At Strategic Allocation	7.3 (redistributed within the Strategic Allocation)
Grenoble Road	STRAT11 – At Strategic Allocation	10.0
Henley-on-Thames	EMP5 – Allocation through Neighbourhood Development Plan	1.0
Thame	EMP6 – Allocation through Neighbourhood Development Plan	1.6
Wallingford	EMP7 – Allocation through Neighbourhood Development Plan	3.1
Crowmarsh Gifford	EMP8 – Allocation through Neighbourhood Development Plan	0.28
<b>Total</b>		<b>47.2</b>

## **5. Distribution of the employment strategy**

### **Strategic Allocations**

#### ***Culham Science Centre***

- 5.1. The Culham Science Centre (CSC) site was first developed during the Second World War and opened in 1944 as an Aircraft Receipt and Despatch Unit for the Royal Navy named RNAS Culham (HMS Hornbill). Currently, Culham Science Centre is owned by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and is located within Science Vale. The site hosts the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy which includes the Joint European Torus (JET) project. It is the leading UK centre for fusion research and technology and is of international importance. The site also hosts a number of related businesses. The UKAEA aims to redevelop the CSC buildings within the next five years as the current stock is outdated. The Government is committed to this world-renowned technology innovation enclave with high levels of investment planned. It has recently been announced that there will be Government investment of almost £100m to CSC for fusion research to create two new centres of excellence.
- 5.2. The Council recognises the key role of the CSC site and its contribution to employment and research. This is evident through the Local Plan 2011 and Core Strategy policies which aim to support the redevelopment and intensification of the site for science-based businesses. Furthermore, in previous consultation documents through the Emerging Local Plan process, the site has been a core focus of economic growth.
- 5.3. There is significant potential at the CSC with its location adjacent to Culham train station, the fact it is within the Science Vale, and is a main focus for development within the Local Plan's spatial strategy. We recognise that development and investment at CSC has been constrained by its inclusion within the Green Belt. The exceptional circumstances justifying a review of the Green Belt at this location are set out in the proposed Local Plan.
- 5.4. Policy STRAT1, the spatial strategy of the Local Plan, seeks to focus new development in Science Vale, including the area around Culham, so that this area can play an enhanced role in providing homes, jobs and services with improved transport connectivity.
- 5.5. Policy STRAT8 builds on this spatial strategy and supports the redevelopment and intensification of CSC by allocating a net increase in employment land of 7.3 hectares. Policy STRAT9 further builds on strengthening Science Vale through a strategic allocation on land adjacent (to the west) of CSC. It is proposed that in combination with the adjacent CSC, the site is developed for a mix of uses including housing and employment in order to make the best use of its strategic location adjacent to CSC and Culham railway station. Policy STRAT9 recognises the importance of the existing businesses occupying units at the No. 1 site and the existing employment the No. 1 site provides. Therefore, the existing 10ha of employment land provided by the No. 1 site will be retained within the wider strategic allocation in accordance with the masterplan. The sites are inset from the Green Belt through Policy STRAT6.

- 5.6. Both policies support proposals for the redevelopment and intensification of the Culham No. 1 site whilst ensuring limited visual impact, particularly on the openness of the surrounding Green Belt and the Registered Parkland associated with Nuneham House. The allocation is provided in Figure 1 below:

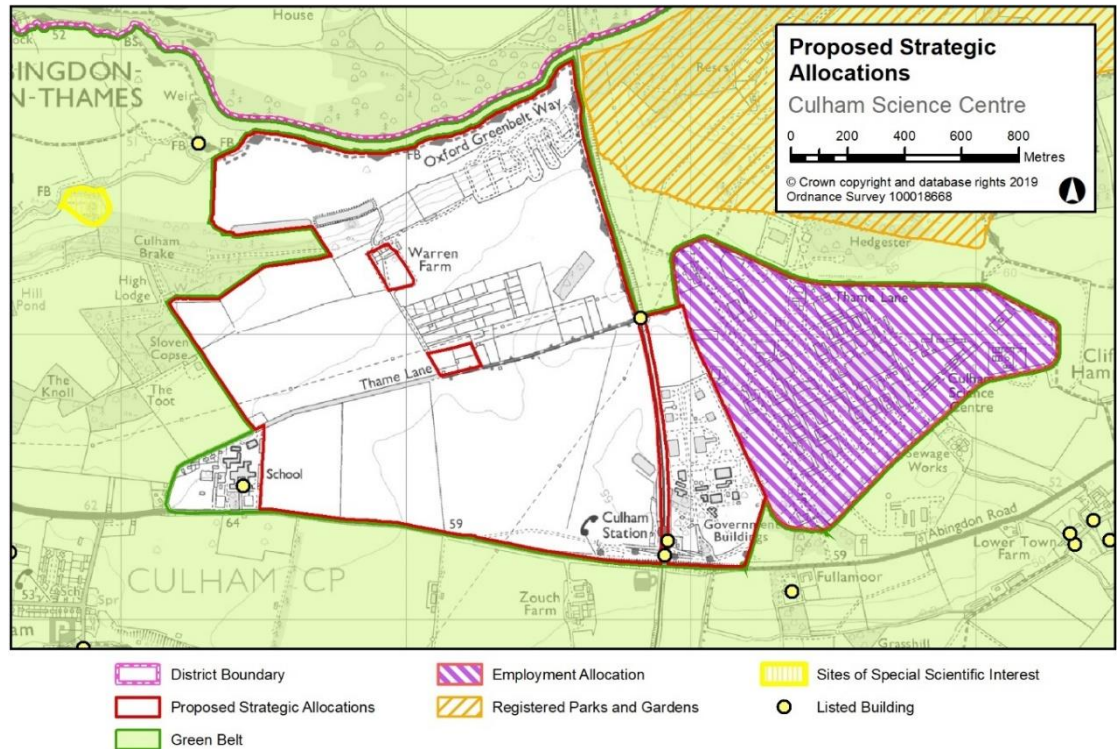


Figure 1 – Culham Science Centre Strategic and Employment Allocation

- 5.7. An indicative Concept Plan has been provided within the plan, of which illustrates the preferred location of this employment allocation, shown in Figure 2.



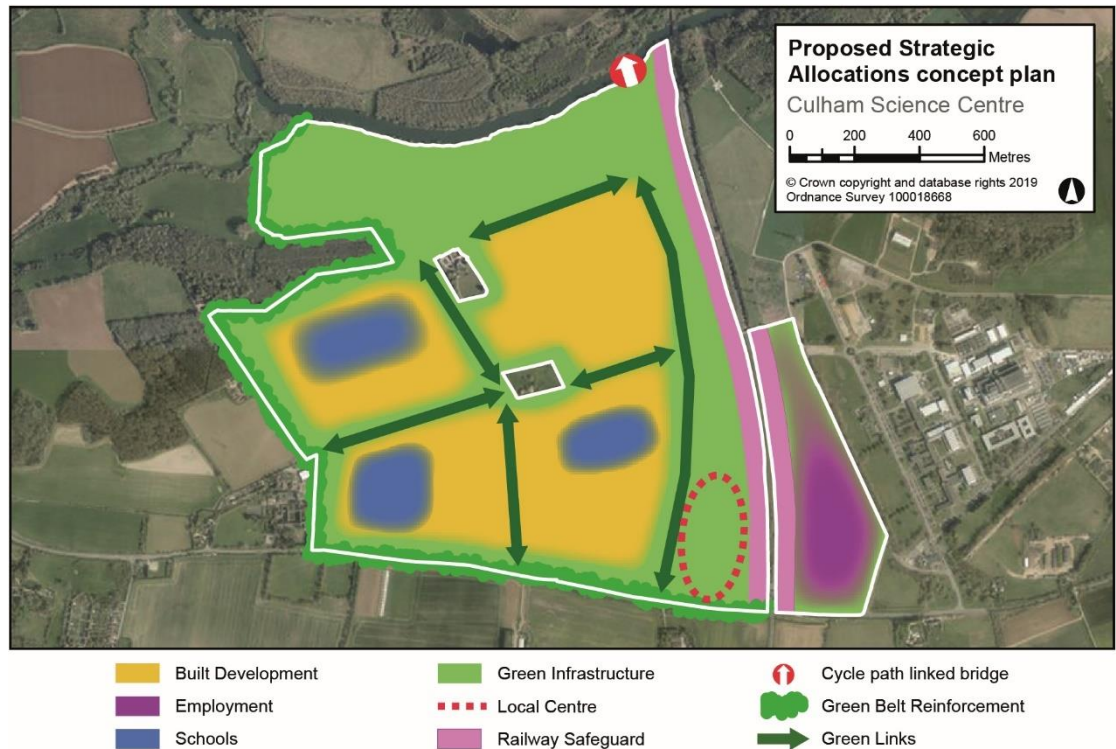


Figure 2 – Culham Concept Plan

### ***Berinsfield***

- 5.8. For Oxfordshire, the village of Berinsfield scores highly on the Indices of Deprivation, particularly in the areas of barriers to housing and services; education, skills and training; employment; income; adult skills; children and young people; and proximity of local services. In 2016, the Council confirmed the Community Investment Scheme for the village. This initiative identified the challenges that the village is currently facing and set out a range of objectives to address these.
- 5.9. Development at Berinsfield will deliver the necessary and specific benefits to address the relatively high levels of deprivation prevalent within the village. The allocated site is shown in Figure 3 below.

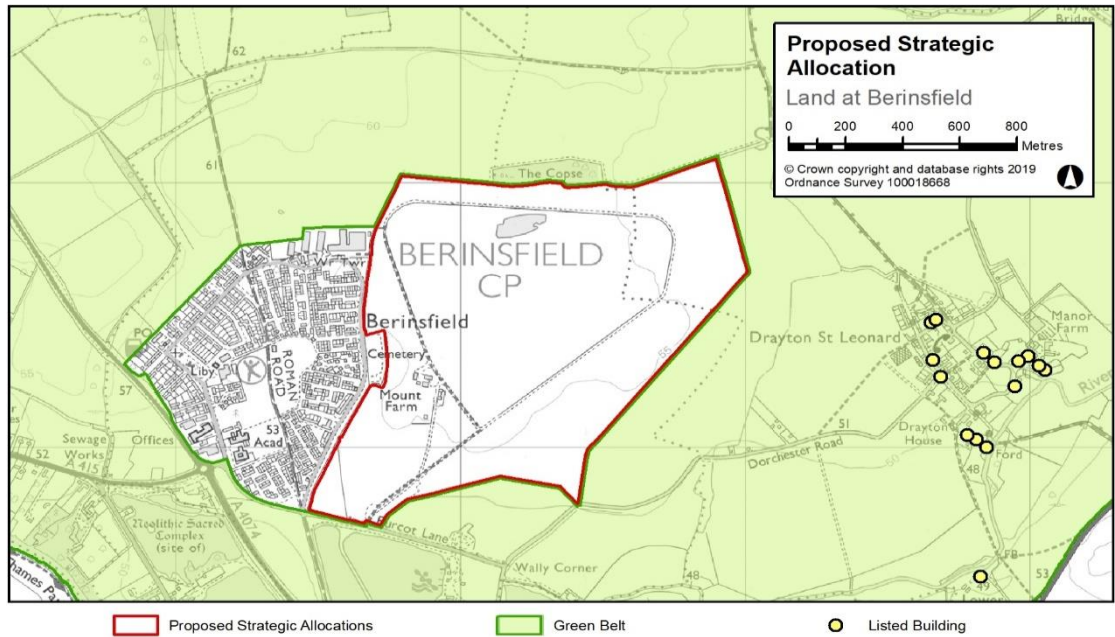


Figure 3 – Berinsfield Strategic Allocation

- 5.10. The policy pertaining to Berinsfield, STRAT10, proposes 5 hectares of employment land within the strategic allocation. There are existing employment uses within the village and the policy is clear that any proposals will be expected to be supported by a comprehensive masterplan for the whole village with the 5ha being provided for within this.
- 5.11. An indicative Concept Plan has been provided within the plan, of which illustrates the preferred location of this employment allocation, shown in Figure 4.

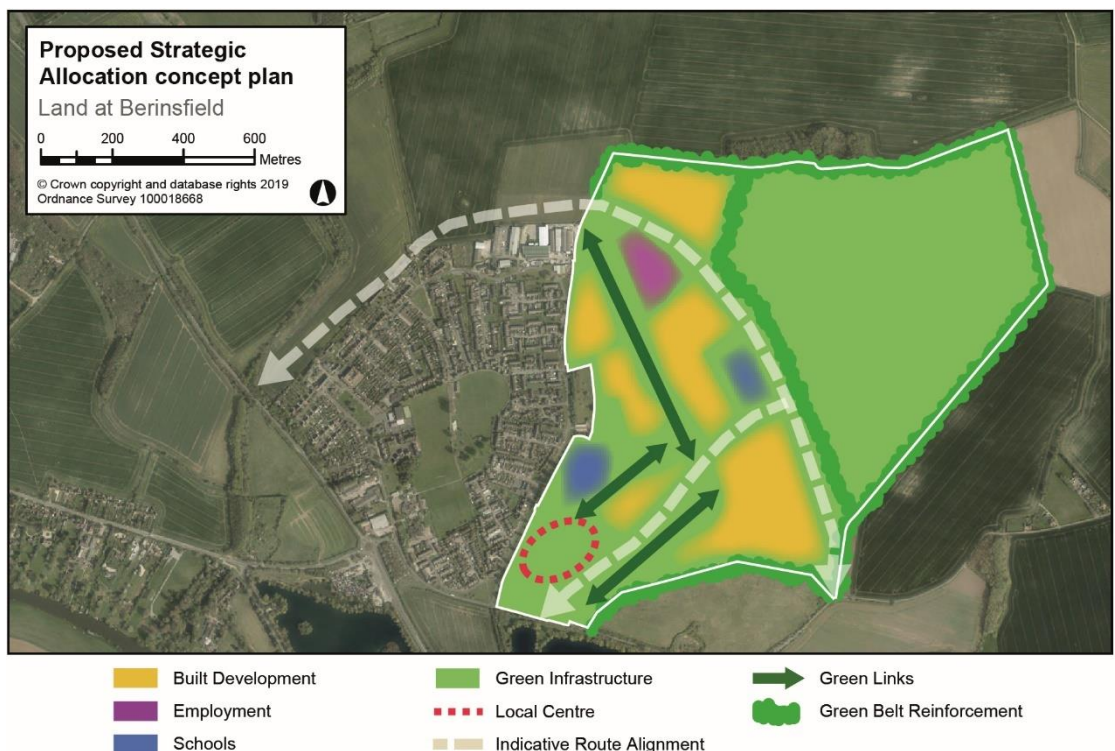




Figure 4 – Berinsfield Concept Plan

### Chalgrove Airfield

- 5.12. Chalgrove employment allocations are proposed at two locations: at the existing Monument Business Park, located north-east of the village of Chalgrove, and at the strategic allocation for the redevelopment of Chalgrove Airfield, located north of the village and adjacent to Monument Business Park. Both allocations are shown in Figure 5. Discussion is provided in further sections below in regard to the allocation within the existing business park.

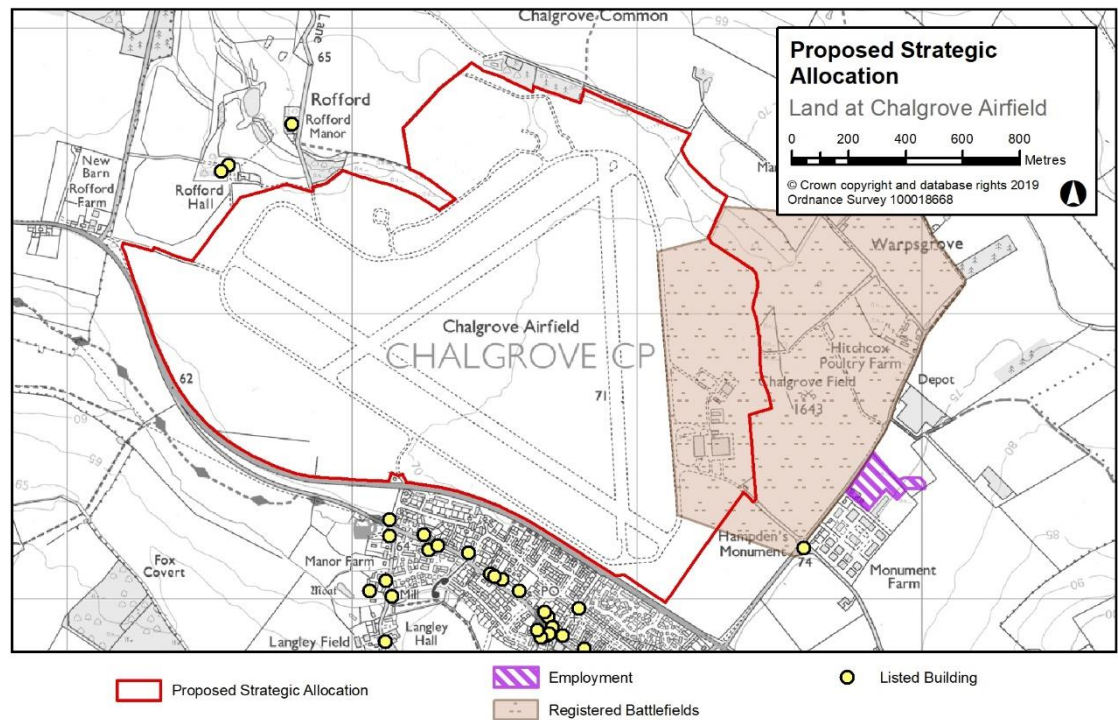


Figure 5 – Chalgrove Strategic and Employment Allocation

- 5.13. Chalgrove Airfield is a former Second World War airfield and partially previously developed land. Opened in 1943, it was used by both the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Forces. During the Second World War, it was used primarily as a combat reconnaissance airfield. After the war, it was closed in late 1946. Today, the airfield is primarily used by the Martin-Baker company for testing aircraft ejector seats. Ownership of the airfield has been transferred from the Ministry of Defence to Homes England, a Government Department. The site is located outside of the Green Belt and outside of any designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 5.14. The 2015 ELR identifies 4.5ha of undeveloped land suitable for employment use within the park and recommends the provision of 0.7ha of office space and 2.5ha of B2 and B8 (general industrial and storage and distribution use). Despite its rural location, Monument Business Park was deemed a very successful location for office use, particularly in providing affordable and flexible space to accommodate the growth of SMEs. Vacancy was observed to be relatively low during the site survey, with high value occupiers attracted to the excellent public realm and good quality stock. This site is suitable for expansion to meet additional rural demand.

- 5.15. The strategic allocation at Chalgrove through policy STRAT7 proposes 5ha of employment land at this strategic location to support this sustainable development. It is considered that the site is well related to Monument Business Park and will provide appropriate expansion to be realised. Furthermore, the provision of employment land on this strategic site will provide the opportunity for those living in the new dwellings to find local employment. An indicative Concept Plan has been provided within the Local Plan which illustrates the preferred location of this employment allocation, shown in Figure 6.

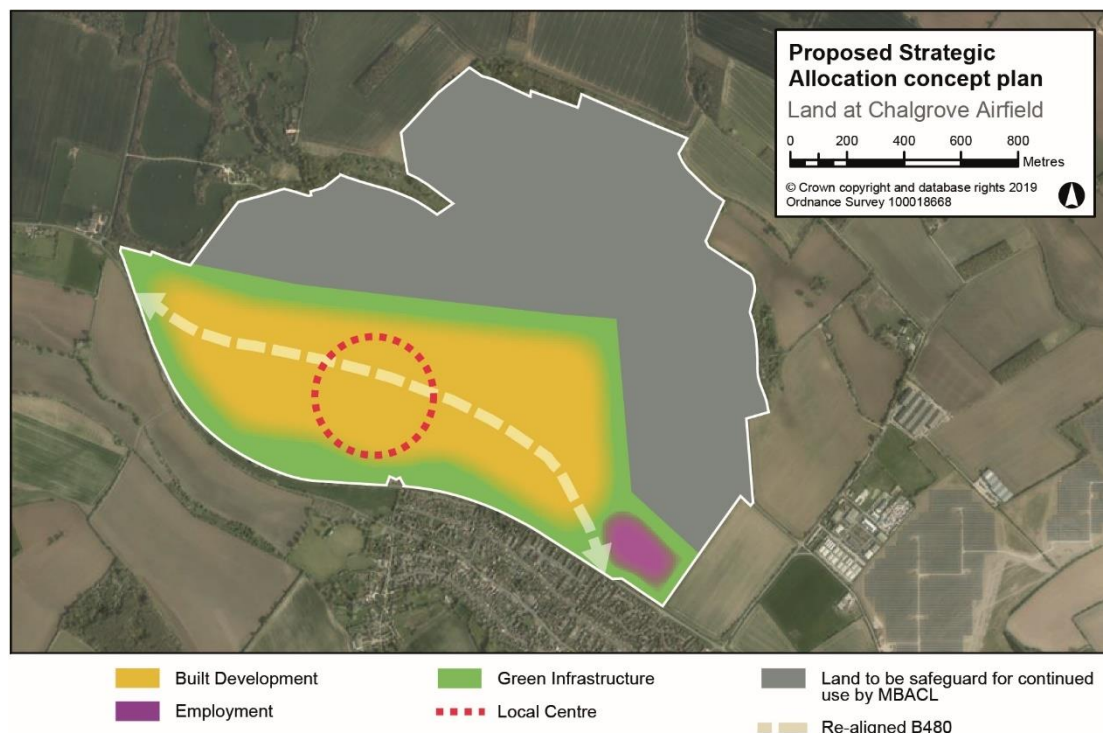


Figure 6 – Chalgrove Concept Plan

### ***Grenoble Road***

- 5.16. Grenoble Road is a strategic location within the Local Plan, located to the north of the District adjacent to the south of Oxford City, shown in Figure 7 below.

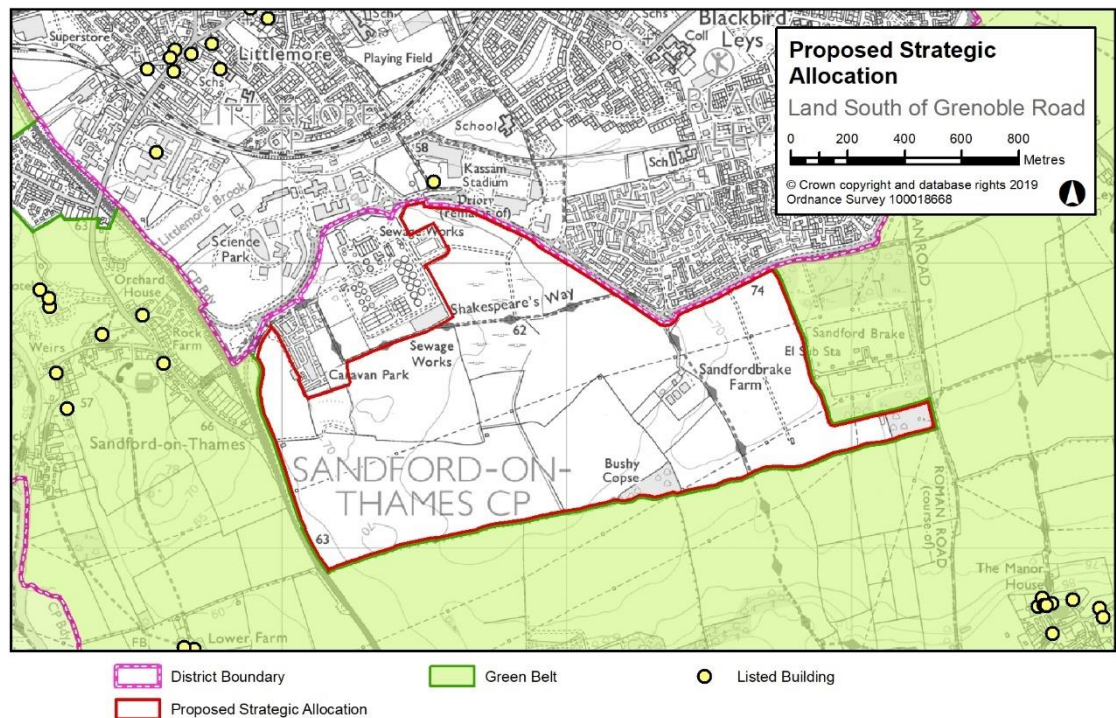


Figure 7 – Grenoble Road Strategic Allocation

- 5.17. The strategic policy pertaining to this allocation is STRAT11. Policy EMP1 allocates 10ha of employment land at this allocation, to be distributed as per the requirement of the strategic policy. It is proposed that the site will provide this allocation as an extension to the existing Oxford Science Park, of which is a key employment site adjacent to Grenoble Road. Science Vale and key employment sites in and on the edge of Oxford City all form part of the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine, which includes Bicester Ecotown. This employment allocation at this location is considered to support the economic growth of the knowledge industry to the south of Oxford City along the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine by providing additional employment within this area. In terms of unique opportunities, the site can deliver an extension to the Oxford Business Park which is a strong part of the County's knowledge economy and would indirectly support the growth of Science Vale.
- 5.18. An indicative Concept Plan has been provided within the Local Plan which illustrates the preferred location of this employment allocation, shown in Figure 8.





Figure 8 – Grenoble Road Concept Plan

## Large Towns

### *Didcot – Science Vale*

- 5.19. Didcot is within the Science Vale area and is the largest town in South Oxfordshire. Significant new housing development has been developed with more planned within the Local Plan period.
- 5.20. Southmead Business Park, also known as Southmead Industrial Park, is located north of Didcot and is occupied by a wide variety of employers. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 previously identified two employment sites within Southmead Business Park (under saved policy DID9).
- 5.21. The ELR recommends that both sites have potential to be allocation as employment sites to meet proposed demand. As such, Policy EMP4 makes allocations, shown in Figure 9 below:

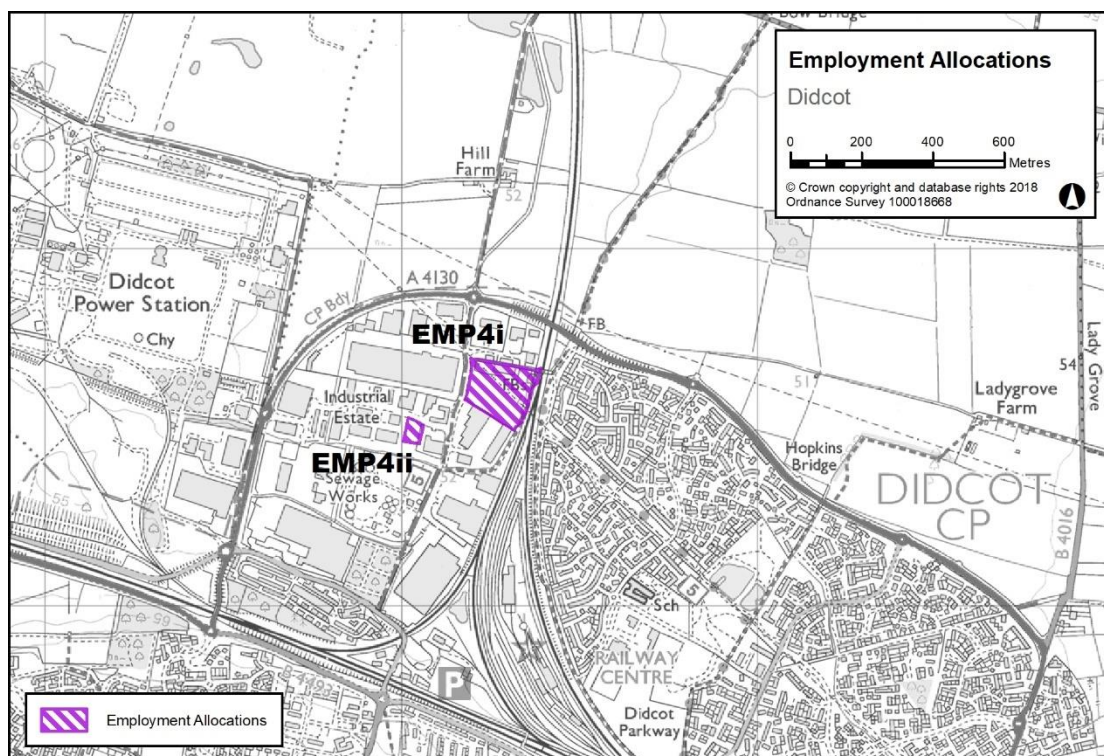


Figure 9 – Allocated Employment Sites in Didcot

- 5.22. Both sites were granted 'Enterprise Zone' status under the '*Didcot Growth Accelerator Enterprise Zone*' (announced 25 November 2015).
- 5.23. On site EMP4ii planning application P16/S3514/FUL was granted on 2 December 2016 for '*Change of use to category B8 for storage of construction equipment. Erection of building for workshop, offices and welfare facilities, car parking and landscaping...*'. The total site area is identified as 0.384 hectares as it included land to the south of the allocation.
- 5.24. Due to the significant amount of housing development carried forward/planned within Didcot, the sites are considered appropriate to be carried forward within the Local Plan. Furthermore, there is no Neighbourhood Plan being produced within Didcot with the responsibility for appropriate allocation therefore being through the Local Plan.

### **Didcot (Vale of White Horse)**

- 5.25. The Council's strategy makes a strong link between the housing growth in Didcot and the business growth needs of 'Science Vale', including at Harwell Oxford<sup>17</sup> and Milton Park outside the District (within Vale of White Horse District). The Council has worked with the Vale of White Horse District Council to plan for enough B-Class jobs to cater for the planned growth at Didcot.
- 5.26. Part 1 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 was adopted in December 2016. Core Policy 6 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan Part 1 identifies 218 hectares of land for future employment development. 28 hectares are allocated at Milton Park and Paragraph 4.31 of the Part 1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 states that 6.5 hectares of this land at Milton Park is to meet

<sup>17</sup> Harwell Oxford formerly known as Harwell Science and Innovation Centre

the cross-boundary employment land needs of Didcot within South Oxfordshire.

- 5.27. Under our 'Duty to Cooperate', in addition to the two allocated sites in Didcot above, policy EMP1 states that 6.5 hectares of employment land to serve Didcot will be located within the Vale of White Horse. It is considered appropriate to roll this land forward.

### ***Henley-on-Thames***

- 5.28. Saved policy HEN2 of the Local Plan 2011 proposed mixed-use development at Market Place Mews with office uses at upper floor levels. Saved policy HEN3 proposed redevelopment of under-utilised land on the southern part of Reading Road Industrial Estate for Class B1 and B8 uses. The policies did not specify the areas of employment on these sites.
- 5.29. The Joint Henley and Harpsden NDP was made in April 2016. The NDP has allocated various employment sites within the NDP area and contains employment-related policies. There are policies in relation to the Reading Road Industrial Estate and details of the Market Place Mews development.
- 5.30. The 2015 ELR makes recommendations for B1a/b uses and B1c/B2 and B8 uses within the town. In order to support sustainable development, policies EMP1 and EMP5 recommend a further 1ha of employment land at Henley in line with the recommendations of the 2015 ELR. Appropriate sites are to be identified within a review of the Joint Henley and Harpsden NDP.

### ***Thame***

- 5.31. The Thame Neighbourhood Plan was made in March 2013. The NDP sets out policies on how the Cattle Market site is to be re-developed. The NDP allocates 3ha of employment land to the east of the town, referred to as Site B. Planning application P14/S1347/FUL was granted on 17 October 2014 on site B for the "erection of two industrial units (Class B1/B2/B8) ....". This permission has since been implemented.
- 5.32. The ELR notes that there is 1.6ha of undeveloped land within land south-east of Howland Road Business Park which would be suitable for employment development. This 1.6ha is in addition to the Thame NDP allocation of 3ha discussed above. The ELR recommends that this site is allocated as a potential development site for employment.
- 5.33. To ensure that the sanctity of neighbourhood planning is protected, to meet the needs of business in Thame, policies EMP1 and EMP6 of the proposed Local Plan recommend a further 1.6 hectares. This is based on the recommendations within the ELR (2015), which considered the amount available and suitable. Land south-east of Howland Road Business Park is suggested as available; however, it is for the Thame NDP to allocate sites as evidence deems appropriate.

### ***Wallingford***

- 5.34. The main employment area within Wallingford is the Hithercroft Trading Estate, established in the 1970s. Policy WAL5 of the Local Plan 2011 was saved and carried forward to the Core Strategy. Policy WAL5 allocated 5.8ha



of land for employment development. Of the 5.8ha carried forward to the Core Strategy, 3.12 ha was available during the Core Strategy plan period. 0.96ha of this has been developed thus far in the plan period with a remaining 2.16ha for the period up to 2027.

- 5.35. The ELR identifies potential development sites of 1.9ha of undeveloped land at Hithercroft Industrial Estate. The ELR recommends that 1.9ha of employment land is provided in Wallingford at the Hithercroft Industrial Estate during the period 2014 to 2031 at the previously allocated sites within the Local Plan 2011 and the Core Strategy. When extrapolated over the emerging Local Plan period to 2034, this equates to approximately 2.46ha. The following sites are considered appropriate to be allocated within the Local Plan with policy EMP7 allocating: land at Hithercroft Road and Lupton Road (2ha) (EMP7i) and land at the junction of Whitley Road and Lester Road (0.25ha) (EMP7ii), shown in Figure 10.

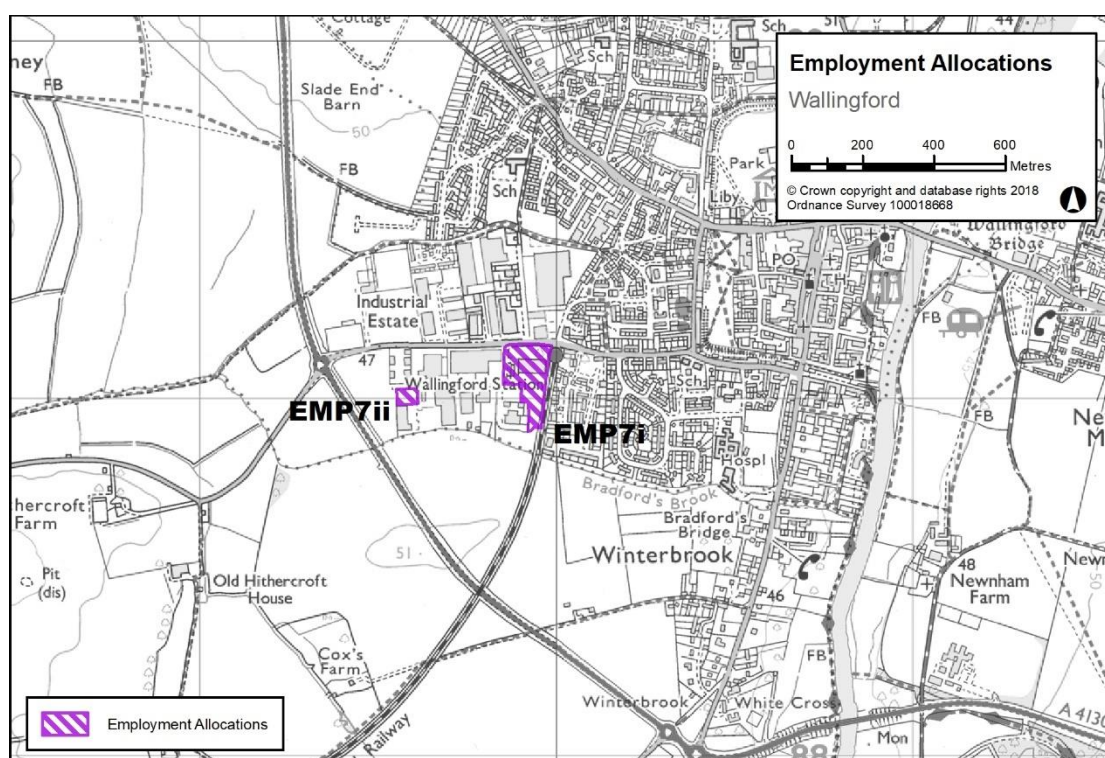


Figure 10 – Allocated Employment Sites in Wallingford

- 5.36. Wallingford Parish Council is currently preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). In order to meet the requirement for further employment development at Wallingford, 3.1ha of employment land is allocated on sites identified within the Wallingford NDP. It would be the prerogative of the NDP group to find suitable and available sites based on an appropriate evidence base.

### ***Crowmarsh Gifford***

- 5.37. Crowmarsh Gifford provides an important cluster of environmental science companies at the Howbery Business Park. The ELR identifies 2.5ha of undeveloped land suitable for employment uses within Crowmarsh Gifford. The ELR identifies two undeveloped plots of 1.9 ha and 0.6ha at Howbery

Park. The review recommends the provision of additional office space with residual demand met at Crowmarsh Gifford.

- 5.38. Crowmarsh Gifford Parish Council is currently preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). In order to provide sustainable development and to meet the requirements of the 2015 ELR and SOELRA the Local Plan requires at least 0.28ha of employment land to be allocated within the Crowmarsh Gifford NDP.

### ***Chalgrove - Monument Business Park***

- 5.39. Monument Business Park (MBP) is currently operated by Jennings and is occupied by a variety of enterprises. The 2015 ELR advised that MBP is “a very successful location for office use, particularly in providing affordable and flexible space to accommodate the growth of SMEs”.
- 5.40. The Chalgrove Neighbourhood Plan was made in December 2018. The NDP is not allocating land for employment within this plan and have not included any employment allocations. The Neighbourhood Plan notes that the Parish Council recognise the importance of employment in the area for a sustainable community and support development of the Business Park whilst ensuring there is no adverse impact on the local area. Therefore, as the Neighbourhood Plan has not allocated appropriately, it is the responsibility of the Local Plan to allocate suitable sites.
- 5.41. The 2015 ELR identifies 4.5ha of undeveloped land suitable for employment use within the park and recommends the provision of 0.7ha of office space and 2.5ha of B2 and B8 (general industrial and storage and distribution use). Despite its rural location, Monument Business Park was deemed a very successful location for office use, particularly in providing affordable and flexible space to accommodate the growth of SMEs. Vacancy was observed to be relatively low during the site survey, with high value occupiers attracted to the excellent public realm and good quality stock. The site was deemed suitable for expansion to meet additional rural demand. The site survey determined the park to be a more suitable location for office provision. As such the contribution of this site to meeting the additional employment land requirement is dependent on the extent to which demand for office space comes forward.
- 5.42. Application P13/S3488/O was granted outline planning permission on 12 February 2014 for “*Expansion of the existing business park and PV solar array*”. Reserved matters for this outline permission were granted permission on 18 August 2015 under reference P15/S1804/RM for a new two storey B1 use class building and parking facilities. Further reserved matters were granted permission on 17 December 2015 under reference P15/S3610/RM. These permissions provide 2.25ha of B1a (4250 sqm) and 0.2ha of B8 (600sqm), with 400sqm of ‘other’ uses.
- 5.43. In line with the recommendations of the 2015 ELR and considering the above extant planning permissions, policy EMP1 and EMP9 recommend that 2.25ha of employment land is allocated at this site in order to safeguard this site for future employment growth, shown in Figure 11 below



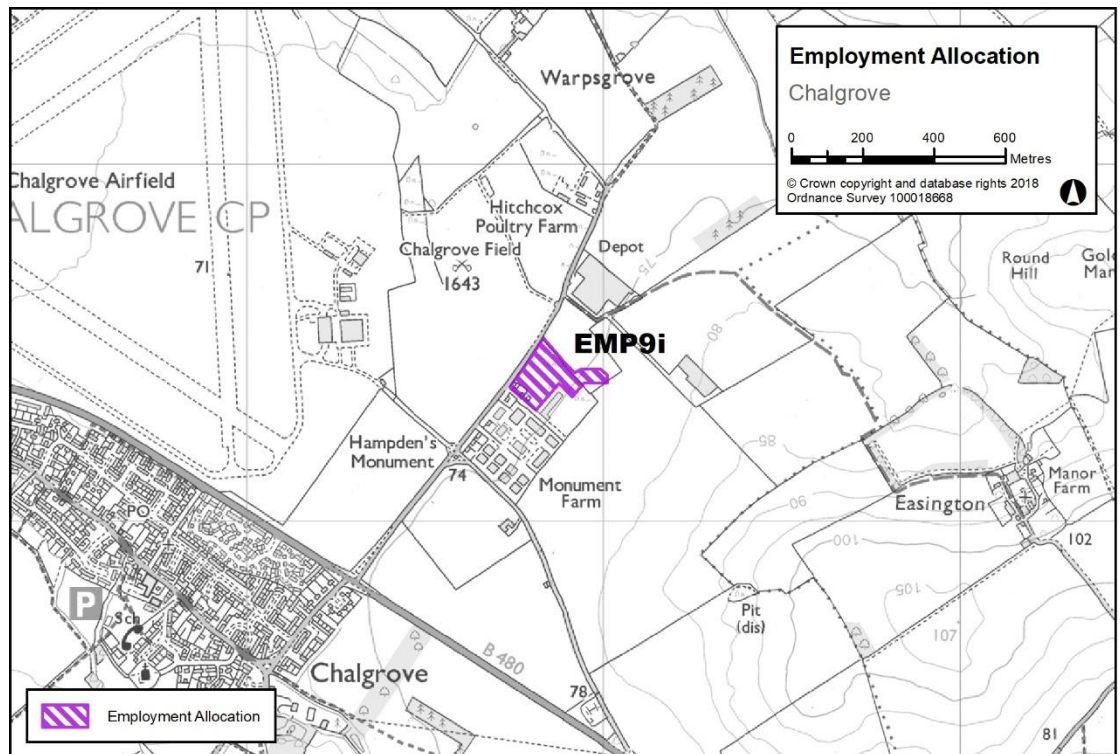


Figure11 – Allocated Employment Site at Monument Business Park

## **6. Consultation on the Local Plan 2011-2033 Final Publication Version (October 2017)**

- 6.1. The Council published the Final Publication Version Local Plan 2033 in October 2017 for public consultation. A number of comments were received relating to the policies on employment which highlighted some key considerations that have helped to refine the policies for inclusion in the Local Plan 2034 Final Publication Version 2<sup>nd</sup> (January 2019).
- 6.2. The representations received are summarised in the relevant Consultation Statement and can be viewed in full on the council's website<sup>18</sup>. The OxLEP raised no objections and made no specific comments on the employment strategy. They did raise support for Policy EMP10 – Community Employment Plans (of which is not discussed within this topic paper). Other individuals made comment and the main concerns raised can be summarised as follows:
- Insufficient deliverable employment land has currently been identified and additional sites should be allocated.
  - The allocations do not meet with the evidence.
  - The plan should apportion sites more effectively.
  - Questions raised on the emphasis on offices.
- 6.3. The Council has amended Policy EMP1 to allocate additional employment land. The allocations are aligned with the evidence base discussed earlier within this paper. It is considered that the policies provide for an appropriate class of employment and distribution strategy.

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<sup>18</sup> The Consultation Statement that supports the Final Publication Version 2<sup>nd</sup> (January 2019) of the Local Plan 2034 is available to view and access at:  
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/emerging-local-plan>

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1. In developing the latest iteration of the Local Plan, consideration has been given to updated national policy and guidance, the latest available evidence and consultation responses received in relation to the Final Publication Version Local Plan 2033 (October 2017) as set out above.
- 7.2. The employment policies within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2034 Final Publication Version 2<sup>nd</sup> (January 2019) are therefore positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.