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# Foreword

by Cabinet Member for Planning Policy Councillor Angie Paterson

“Thank you all those who took part in our public consultation last summer when we were beginning to develop ideas for our new Local Plan. This consultation is an additional phase to help us refine the wide range of issues in the previous consultation before moving to the more formal ‘Preferred Options’.

In this Refined Options document we’ve listened to your views, undertaken further technical work and held discussions with infrastructure providers and key stakeholders. We have taken the best ideas and moved them forward, and have abandoned the options we no longer see as contenders. In this document you’ll find a revised (lower) number of additional homes we need to plan for to meet our needs to the year 2031, and a suggestion for how we distribute growth across the district. There is also a question for you on how much to each type of area and some specific suggestions on sites in the larger villages and for travelling communities.

We have worked hard over previous years to ensure that we have a Plan in place and that any growth in our district is directed by this. This is not a time to sit back, we need to move forward with the Local Plan to make sure we are on the front foot in county-wide discussions about what the level of housing need is and the highly contentious issue of how any overspill from Oxford should be accommodated. Sometimes it is better to be first than last with such discussions.

Once we’ve heard your views we’ll move forward to a Preferred Options consultation in the autumn of this year, before finalising it and submitting it for public examination by an independent planning inspector. By making these decisions through a Local Plan, we can compare options and sites and choose the best. We can make sure we retain a strong position and can show the required 5 year housing land supply. This will help protect our communities from unwelcome speculative planning applications from developers. Our new local plan will also provide a framework of policies to guide neighbourhood plans in the district, something of which we are very proud that our communities in South Oxfordshire are embracing to plan their own futures.

Your input is important to us and therefore I hope you will take part in this consultation and help us to shape the next stage of these important decisions.

Thank you.”

# Have your say on development in South Oxfordshire

South Oxfordshire District Council is continuing work on the Local Plan 2031 which will shape the future of our district. We are committed to involving our communities in preparing the new plan, and we would now like your views on our latest Refined Options.

## What is the Local Plan for?

A Local Plan sets out policies for change and includes a strategy for delivering growth. It identifies appropriate areas and sites for development, such as new homes, offices, shops, and community facilities. It sets out how valuable historic and natural environments will be protected and enhanced. It also includes policies which are used when the council is determining planning applications, covering, for example, design and access requirements. It also identifies the circumstances where development will not be appropriate.

In preparing the new plan we are:

- Exploring how much land is likely to be needed for different uses;
- Identifying the right areas and sites to make sure we have a healthy supply of developable land;
- Working with our neighbouring councils and the County Council, expert advisors (such as the Environment Agency and Natural England) and infrastructure providers (such as Thames Water) to look at how the impacts of development and growth can be managed across South Oxfordshire and beyond;
- Supporting parish and town councils who are working on community-led plans and neighbourhood plans; and
- Listening to our residents, businesses and communities.

# What will be in the Local Plan 2031?

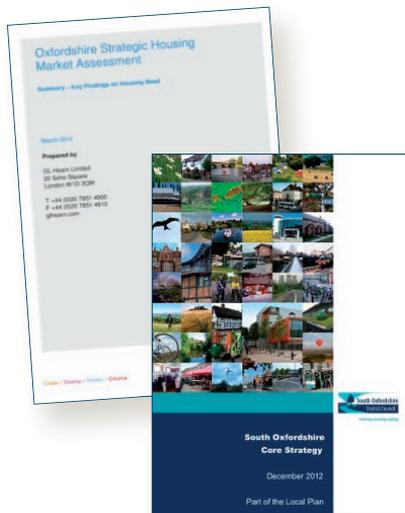
The plan will cover the whole of South Oxfordshire, and we will work with our neighbours to plan for cross-boundary issues (like how to accommodate the unmet housing needs of Oxford, and where new strategic transport and utilities infrastructure are needed)

This document is not a draft Local Plan (that will come later), it is a consultation document asking questions to gather your ideas for shaping the Local Plan. The local plan will cover many land uses like new homes, businesses, shops, transport, community facilities and green infrastructure.

It will contain:

- A vision of South Oxfordshire in 2031;
- Objectives and a strategy showing how we will get there;
- Allocations of sites for development where these are needed; and
- New policies which will be used to assess planning proposals.





...South Oxfordshire could need additional housing beyond that planned for in the existing Core Strategy – perhaps as many as 5,100 more homes

## Why are we preparing a new Local Plan?

In April 2014, the local authorities across Oxfordshire published a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), and this identified that South Oxfordshire needs additional housing beyond that planned for in the existing Core Strategy – perhaps as many as 5,100 more homes. As well as this, Oxford City Council indicated that they would have difficulties in meeting their identified housing need entirely within the city boundary and that the other districts across the county could be asked to consider taking some of this “unmet need”.

In response we decided that we need to review our existing plan and consider how we can plan for additional growth in the most advantageous and positive way. A recent letter from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis, to the Planning Inspectorate affirms the Government’s view that councils should have reasonable – but not unlimited – time to plan for new evidence of housing need identified in a SHMA<sup>1</sup>. This letter supports our approach, and by preparing a new Local Plan now we will ensure that we remain in control of where new development takes place, and that we can plan for all needs in the best way.

## Science Vale Area Action Plan

In order to ensure that we make the most of the economic development opportunities at Harwell, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre, we are also preparing a Science Vale Area Action Plan (AAP) with Vale of White Horse District Council. We want to plan comprehensively for this area which straddles our districts’ boundary and covers the growing town of Didcot as well as the three major employment sites. This will be prepared in parallel with our new Local Plan 2031. We are consulting on the Issues and Scope of the Science Vale AAP between 27 February and 10 April 2015, and you can find more information about this on our website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/sciencevale](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sciencevale).

<sup>1</sup> DCLG “Strategic housing market assessments” [www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-housing-market-assessments](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategic-housing-market-assessments)



By preparing a new Local Plan now we will ensure that we remain in control of where new development takes place, and that we can plan for all needs in the best way

## 5 year housing land supply

The Government requires us to maintain a five year rolling supply of land for new homes. By adopting our Core Strategy in 2012 which sets out where 11,600 new homes will be built, we have secured the housing land supply required by Government in the majority of the district. At present new homes are not being built as quickly as we would like at Didcot and we're working to change this. Where we cannot show a five year supply of housing land there is a presumption that planning permission will be given for any proposals unless adverse impacts are overriding. In this way decisions can be taken out of our hands. Our new plan will ensure we stay in a plan-led system and can keep control of planning for future housing.

Changes made last year to the National Planning Practice Guidance<sup>2</sup> clarify that some categories of building which we haven't counted previously in our five year supply can now be counted. In addition to housing allocations in earlier plans and housing sites with planning permission we will include in our sources of supply:

- An allowance for windfalls (these are homes on sites not allocated in our plans, often small infill housing schemes)
- Housing for older people in the C2 use class (like care homes)
- Student accommodation including both halls of residence and self-contained student housing
- Housing created from conversions of offices, shops or barns under permitted development<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/stage-5-final-evidence-base/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/when-is-permission-required/what-are-permitted-development-rights/>

## What we have done so far

During June and July 2014 we held a Local Plan Issues & Scope public consultation, which was the first public stage of preparing the new Local Plan. We asked a number of questions about how we could approach planning for additional housing, where business and job growth could be located, and how we can improve transport, infrastructure, shopping and community facilities. You can still see the consultation document on the council's website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/issuesandscope](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/issuesandscope).

We received almost 4,000 comments from the Issues & Scope consultation, from nearly 800 individuals and organisations – if you took part, thank you for your input. Our Issues & Scope Consultation Report is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/issuesandscope](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/issuesandscope) and provides a detailed summary of the main themes emerging from the responses. The responses in full can be seen on the council's website at <https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal/south/planning/pol/lp2031/is/lp>. This consultation is effectively a part two of the Issues & Scope work. We have used your comments to inform the more detailed options we propose in this document; we will refer to key points from the Issues & Scope consultation in the coming pages as we explain the Refined Options proposals. This is an informal consultation and we would like to hear any ideas you have about the potential for growth in South Oxfordshire before we move towards more formal plan drafting, starting with 'preferred options' in autumn this year.

Public consultations are only one of the means by which we collect evidence and information to help us prepare our new Local Plan. We have also carried out or commissioned a range of other studies to provide us with a comprehensive picture of the opportunities and constraints in the district. Some of these are already complete and are used to inform this consultation – for example, we already know that as well as new homes we could need more employment land. We have begun studies on the capacity of the transport network and the sensitivity of the landscape and natural environment, and we are also assessing where there might be a requirement for additional green spaces and sports facilities. Completed studies are available on the evidence pages of our website [www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence).

We received almost 4,000 comments from the Issues & Scope consultation, from nearly 800 individuals and organisations



**Studies which set out requirements** – these provide evidence of the level of need we should plan for, including for housing, employment, shopping and leisure.

**Studies which look at the suitability** of sites and places for development – these provide information about which places might be most appropriate for development.

**Studies which look at the impacts** of development – these provide information about how development will affect roads, water supply and so on, and what might need to be done to deal with these impacts.

**Public consultation** – this plan will go through at least four stages of public consultation (of which this is the second) and a public examination before it can be adopted as the development plan for the district.

There are also two issues we asked about in the Issues and Scope consultation – the Green Belt and transport – that we are continuing to investigate. We do not have any specific questions about these issues in this consultation, but below is an update on our work so far.

## Green Belt

Previously you told us:

- That you are on the whole very supportive of retaining the Green Belt, usually without suggesting that you thought any sort of review was needed.
- There is some support for reviewing Green Belt boundaries, land south of Oxford at Grenoble Road was suggested for removal (though its Green Belt status was defended by others). Other places mentioned for removal were Culham (Science Centre and No. 1 Site), and land around Wheatley.

The Oxford Green Belt is a ring of protected land around Oxford, stretching for about 5 miles into the northern part our district as shown in the map on page 4. We have begun a study to look at the land within our Green Belt to see how it performs against the purposes of Green Belt set out in national policy.

We do not have any further questions to ask about the Green Belt at this stage but will be inviting comment on how we have used the outcome of the study in the next iteration of the Local Plan 2031 consultation. You can also use the 'additional comments' section of the response form for this consultation if you wish.



## Transport

Previously you told us:

- You would like to see better cycle and pedestrian routes, especially off-road cycle links between settlements and major employment locations.
- In general you are supportive of green technology – e.g. electric car charging points, low-emission buses – but there is some scepticism also about how quickly and widely these might be used.
- Public transport provision needs to be better.
- Thames crossings within the district cause transport problems and are an issue – places mentioned were near Reading and around Culham/Clifton Hampden.

We have commissioned consultants to produce a piece of work called an Evaluation of Transport Impact (ETI). This will assess the impact of development on the road network and where particular bottle necks might occur. It will help us to identify where mitigation measures, such as junction improvements, might be required to aid traffic flow and to prioritise the most urgent of these for funding should it become available.

There are three places in the district where there are some cross-border transport issues. We are continuing to work with the related partner organisations and local authorities to understand the feasibility of routes across the river Thames south of Abingdon, between Culham and Clifton Hampden, and near Reading. We have not committed to any projects at this stage but when the evidence has been compiled we will return to the issue in the next consultation.

We are also continuing to investigate the issues of parking around junction 6 of the M40 at Lewknor and the feasibility of cycle networks across the district in combination with development opportunities.

While we do not have specific questions on transport schemes at this stage, you can use the 'additional comments' section of the response form for this consultation if there are other issues you wish to raise.

# The Local Plan's Vision and Strategy

## Updating our Vision

We asked in our Issues & Scope consultation whether or not you supported the vision from our existing Core Strategy and by a slim margin most of you did. At the same time, many people made suggestions about how we could improve the vision for our new Local Plan, in particular how it could be made more specific to South Oxfordshire. Other comments included that:

- it does not lead to deliverable and achievable objectives,
- it is too weighted towards economic growth; and, more positively
- it seemed reasonable and sensible.

The existing vision is supported by the overall strategy in the Core Strategy and we are not proposing radical changes to the approach we have taken for the existing allocations. However, we do propose the following for the Local Plan 2031 vision:

### In 2031:

- **South Oxfordshire will continue to be a beautiful and prosperous district, and a desirable and sustainable place to live, work and visit.**
- **The natural and built heritage of South Oxfordshire will be prized as our most important assets. We will have enhanced the quality of the built environment in our towns and villages, maintained the predominantly rural nature of the district, and preserved the natural beauty and character of areas such as the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs.**
- **Our positive attitude to business growth will have supported existing and new businesses and employment in the district and will have helped to secure economic prosperity for South Oxfordshire. Our exciting and high quality science base will have attracted more like minded businesses providing exciting and high value job opportunities.**
- **Didcot will be at the heart of the research and innovation-led businesses across Science Vale, and we will have delivered high-quality new housing, infrastructure and other opportunities to capitalise on economic growth in this part of the district in particular.**
- **We will have delivered sufficient housing to meet identified need across South Oxfordshire, and this will have helped to sustain and enhance shopping and services in our towns and villages, especially our historic market towns of Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford.**

**The natural and built heritage of South Oxfordshire will be prized as our most important assets**

- By supporting the development of some new housing within our larger villages we will have ensured that our rural communities can continue to thrive and everyone has access to services within a short distance.
- Through seeking appropriate levels of housing which those on lower incomes can afford and of affordable housing we will have ensured that the housing needs of all our residents are being met.
- Through careful management of the Green Belt we will have protected the important setting of Oxford whilst also making provision for the housing and business growth we need.
- New developments will be built to a high level of environmental and design standards, and will enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the district's towns and villages; the local character of the different places within South Oxfordshire will have been respected.
- Improvements to roads, public transport infrastructure, and pedestrian and cycle networks will have made it easier for people to get around South Oxfordshire, in particular to major employment areas.



**Q1:** *Does the vision identify the right priorities for South Oxfordshire and, if not, what changes do you suggest?*

## Updating our Strategy

The strategy by which we will deliver the vision will be an evolution of the current Core Strategy, rather than a radical rewrite, as we believe it is still appropriate and sustainable and reflects valued input from the community.

**Our overall strategy for the district is to protect and enhance what is best about South Oxfordshire, whilst supporting economic growth, delivering new homes and promoting healthy and vibrant communities. Our Strategy seeks to promote a network of sustainable settlements across the district to ensure that everybody has access to a basic range of services - it differentiates between towns and villages according to the role they play and the services they provide for our communities.**

The Core Strategy contains many policies that are still relevant, and these will be carried over to this plan (and reviewed where necessary). For example, the policies from the Core Strategy that help us to protect and enhance our heritage and countryside, such as our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, are just as important and relevant now. Our plans and policies will ensure that new development is of the highest quality, and respects and enhances the character of South Oxfordshire and its diverse places.

The Science Vale area, with Didcot at its heart, will continue to be the focus for economic development, investment in infrastructure, and the provision of additional services and community facilities. We will also continue with the Core Strategy's delivery of additional housing growth here, which will help to secure investment and improvement in the area. Together with our neighbours Vale of White Horse District Council, we are producing an Area Action Plan (AAP) that will plan for and deliver growth in the Science Vale area (see page 21).

To help meet our need for more homes, we propose providing for some more housing growth in the market towns and larger villages. This will help these places to remain vibrant service centres for our district, providing employment, shops, healthcare and other vital facilities, ensuring that our residents have access to the services they need, and the towns and villages themselves continue to thrive.

In the smaller villages (and perhaps also even in our other smallest settlements) we propose to allow a slightly more flexible approach to growth, through reviewing our existing policies. Where it is supported by local communities, and particularly where they wish to identify development opportunities in neighbourhood plans, being more flexible would help to meet local housing demand and could also help to ensure that shops and services remain viable.

We will continue to work with the other local authorities in Oxfordshire to look at cross boundary issues. When it is clear what the level of unmet need from Oxford is, we will seek to include this in a way that fits into our strategy.

**Our strategy in a nutshell is to focus change and development in Science Vale, and elsewhere plan for some smaller-scale change to make sure that our towns and villages remain vibrant.**



**Q2:** *Is this the most appropriate strategy to deliver the vision and, if not, what changes do you suggest?*

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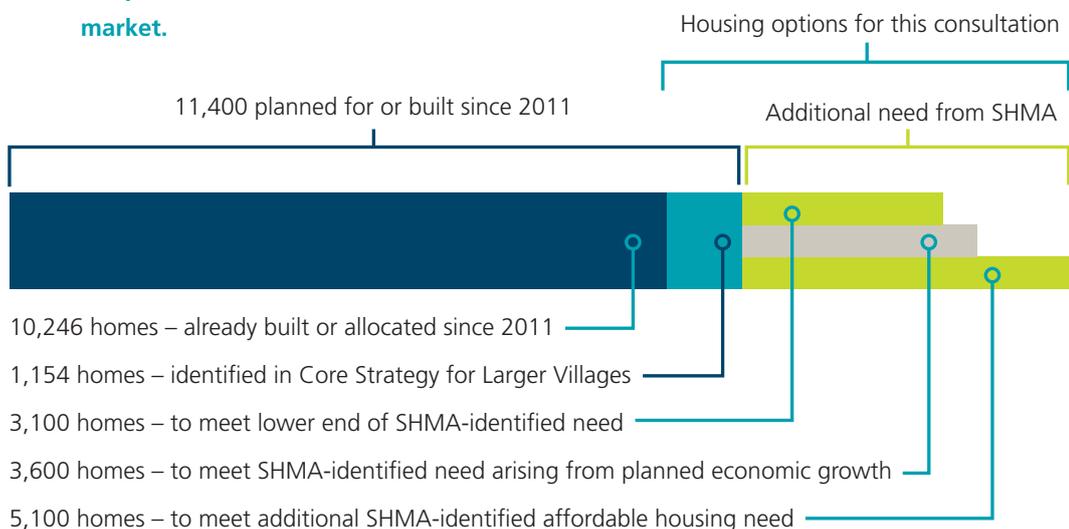
## How many extra homes?

**£ AFFORDABLE HOUSING** is housing provided at rates substantially lower than prevailing market rates to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing (like shared equity homes - part rent, part buy). Most affordable housing is provided through a registered social landlord. It is normally provided by housing developers as a requirement to build 40% affordable housing when they build homes for sale or rent on the open market.

In 2014 together with the other Oxfordshire authorities and using Government guidance we prepared a study called the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to understand how many new homes we need to provide. The SHMA looked at both the expected growth in population and at the anticipated economic growth between 2011 and 2031. Based on these, it recommended the amount of housing we should be planning for (known as the 'Objectively Assessed Need' or OAN). It also looked at the affordability of housing in South Oxfordshire and identified a need for additional affordable housing (see left), based on our Core Strategy policies which require 40% of new homes to be affordable. We explained in our Issues & Scope consultation that the cost of housing in South Oxfordshire is particularly high and that even the cheapest homes for sale cost more than ten times the annual earnings of someone on an average income.

The SHMA identifies a total need for between 14,500 and 16,500 homes for South Oxfordshire over the twenty year period 2011-2031. Around 15,000 homes are required to support planned economic growth – this is primarily to meet the needs of our existing businesses wishing to expand and to allow for new business formation at similar rates to the past – while an increase in the total number of new homes above this would go further towards meeting our affordable housing need.

We have already made provision for around 11,400 homes through allocations in our adopted Core Strategy and more recent planning permissions and commitments, including a 660 home allowance for potential windfall developments in future years<sup>4</sup>. Based on the SHMA evidence, to meet our own housing need we will therefore need to plan for between 3,100 and 5,100 additional new homes over the 2011—2031 period.



<sup>4</sup> This includes provision in residential care homes ("C2 uses") and permitted development changes from employment "B uses", retail "A uses" and agricultural buildings to housing.

Government guidance indicates that we should plan for our Objectively Assessed Need for housing. We believe that planning for a further 3,600 homes will help provide the extra housing needed to support our business community and its plans for economic growth.

Planning for this level of additional housing growth could leave a small shortfall in affordable housing of up to 30 homes per year, and we will investigate other ways this could be delivered, possibly including:

- shared ownership options
- support for housing in the private rental market
- rural exceptions sites
- self-build and custom build opportunities
- raising awareness of “Help to Buy” and “Homebuy” options available.

## Managing the delivery of new housing

New homes put pressure on existing natural resources, infrastructure and services so we need to strike a balance between the clear need for new homes and the impacts that result from more development. In many cases we can secure funding from development and design schemes to mitigate impacts in a satisfactory way. We are still investigating whether there are constraints to housing growth which would limit our capacity to build the homes we need. We are testing issues like:

- impacts on the environment, water supply, flood risk and air quality
- impacts on services and critical infrastructure
- the risk of market saturation in parts of the district.

Previously you told us that you had strong concerns about infrastructure including transport, education, healthcare, utilities, flood risk, ecology, landscape and air quality.

We continue to investigate factors including water supply, the impact on river water quality and infrastructure provision, particularly roads and schools. Some of these issues may mean we need to phase development and build a larger amount of homes later in the plan period where more substantial infrastructure improvement needs to be completed by the time new homes are occupied.



## Helping our neighbours

Our neighbours in Oxford City tell us they cannot find sites within the city to build all of their identified housing need. In these circumstances we are required by government to consider if we can help. We are working with the other Oxfordshire councils to identify the scale of this “unmet need”, and potential options and infrastructure requirements to meet it. Many of you suggested that the City should be making effective use of its land resources, and as part of this work we will be re-examining the housing within Oxford<sup>5</sup>. For this consultation, we have assumed that South Oxfordshire will need to consider planning for around 3,000 homes for Oxford in addition to the 3,600 extra homes for our own needs.

YOUR  
VIEW

**Q3:** *Is 3,600 for our needs and around 3,000 for Oxford City the correct number of additional new homes we should plan for, if not why?*

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<sup>5</sup> 'Unlocking Oxford's Development Potential', Cundall's Report, November 2014, [www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence)

# Where should the additional housing go?

## How do we plan for our 3,600 additional new homes?

In our Issues & Scope consultation last summer we presented eight different ways in which we could plan for additional housing in South Oxfordshire. Most of these asked about where in the district new housing could best be located – for example, should we continue with the distribution split we used in the Core Strategy, or would dispersing the additional growth across the district make more sense – but we also asked if there were other ways we could plan more effectively, for example by encouraging development on existing sites at higher densities.

In the Issues and Scope consultation, you told us:

- There was support for the continuing the Core Strategy distribution, though most of the options had supporters and opponents. None of the options was overwhelmingly favoured.
- Many respondents felt that large allocations made to Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford could change the nature of the towns.
- A lot of you expressed the feeling that the Green Belt should be protected, especially directly adjoining the built edge of Oxford. There were some counter-comments that this could be a sustainable location for a large number of houses, especially in terms of meeting unmet need from Oxford.
- Strong feeling that housing should be located near to employment sites and areas.



The colour coded diagram below shows our thoughts about how aspects of the different options have been developed for this consultation, having considered your comments and the evidence we have gathered so far. Green shows the options which we think could still make a major contribution to planning for housing growth, red those options which we think should largely be discounted.

**Option A: The Core Strategy approach.**

There are elements of the Core Strategy distribution that we think are appropriate to retain, such as the identification of the roles and character of different places: Didcot growth point, the market towns, larger villages, smaller villages and other villages.

**Option C: All in Science Vale.** We are unlikely to pursue this distribution strategy. We are already committed to high levels of growth in and around Didcot and we need to be sure that whatever we additionally plan will be sustainable and deliverable. There are also other places within South Oxfordshire which could benefit from taking some of the additional housing growth (for example, in terms of viability of shops and services), so we would not wish to restrict it to one part of the district.

**Option E: Dispersal.** This will not form a major part of the distribution of new homes, because spreading development too thinly would not deliver new infrastructure as effectively as the other options. However, allowing some housing in smaller settlements would help to meet local need and could support local services – these would be treated as windfall developments.

**Option G: Raising densities.** On its own this option is unlikely to deliver the number of additional homes that we are planning for. However, we will always seek to make the most efficient use of land. Some sites' character or location will make them more suited to higher density development.

**Option B: Science Vale and 'sustainable settlements.'**

This option strongly supports the vision we have set out. It is an evolution of 'Option A' which extends the housing focus of Science Vale beyond Didcot. It also makes clear that we are committed to protecting the most important natural and historic environments in South Oxfordshire; for example in the AONBs, the Green Belt and conservation areas.

**Option D: All growth in a single new settlement.**

This is unlikely to be the most appropriate way to deliver the identified need for housing in South Oxfordshire or the best way to support communities across the district. However, a new settlement could be a reasonable alternative to consider to plan for the unmet housing need from Oxford City.

**Option F: Next to neighbouring major urban areas.**

As with 'Option D', this is not likely to be the most appropriate way deliver the new homes required for South Oxfordshire. However, it could help accommodate unmet need from Oxford.

**Option H: locating development in settlements where it could help fund projects.**

This option would not meet our housing need on its own. However, we will continue to work with communities, especially through neighbourhood planning, to identify places where housing growth could help to deliver local infrastructure projects.

- Many elements of this option still considered appropriate
- Some elements of this option still considered appropriate
- Few elements of this option still considered appropriate

As we suggested in the Issues and Scope consultation we recognise that none of the scenarios offers the whole answer to the challenges in front of us, instead the answer will be a combination of those options.

At this stage we think that red option C represents the least appropriate distribution option.

**For our own housing need we think the economic growth potential of Science Vale and the opportunity to support the vitality of the market towns and larger villages make these the most appropriate places for locating most of our additional 3,600 homes. We also think that we could introduce more flexibility in the smaller villages<sup>6</sup>, for example by allowing neighbourhood plans to allocate housing sites or allowing larger infill schemes to come forward. This is essentially a combination of green/amber options A, B and E from the Issues and Scope consultation. Options G and H are unlikely to deliver sufficient homes to meet our needs but will be important to add detail to the overall strategy. For any unmet need from Oxford, we think it would probably be best to ring-fence this growth to one or more large strategic sites (options D and F).**

## How much development where?

Our vision on pages 11 and 12 outlines our ambitions for the different types of places within South Oxfordshire, and the strategy suggests how we think we might get there. We have also briefly set out how the previous Issues & Scope consultation responses have shaped our thinking as we continue to develop our new Local Plan. In the next section, we would like you to consider how best we plan for the additional housing growth in South Oxfordshire between three broad areas: a) Science Vale area in South Oxfordshire, b) the market towns and larger villages, and c) the smaller villages.

Science Vale is an important location for economic development and investment in infrastructure, and we believe that it should be a focus for housing growth to secure and support this investment. For example, locating growth near to committed road improvements can help fund and deliver them. At the same time, our market towns and largest villages have an important role to play providing jobs and services locally, and these too would probably benefit from having a reasonable share of the additional housing growth. This would help make sure they remain viable and vibrant service centres for the district, and are able to make use of brownfield site opportunities as they come forward for re-use.

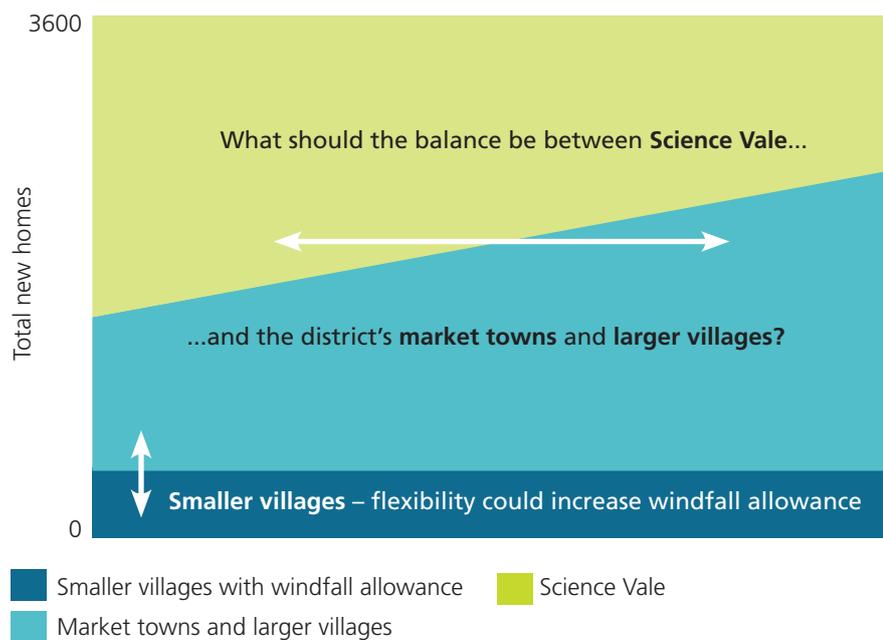
**Our vision outlines our ambitions for the different types of places within South Oxfordshire, and the strategy suggests how we think we might get there**

<sup>6</sup> These are the 58 smaller villages and 44 other villages listed in Appendix 4 of the Core Strategy at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy)

We therefore propose that most of our own housing need is allocated to these places – we would like you to think about the appropriate balance between the different areas, bearing in mind that we need to plan for at least 3,600 more new homes to meet our district’s need.

We would also like you to think about our smaller villages, whether communities should be able to identify housing sites in neighbourhood plans, and if a more flexible policy on infill housing development would help to meet local need and demand for housing.

Over the next few pages we introduce these areas and explain the opportunities in each.

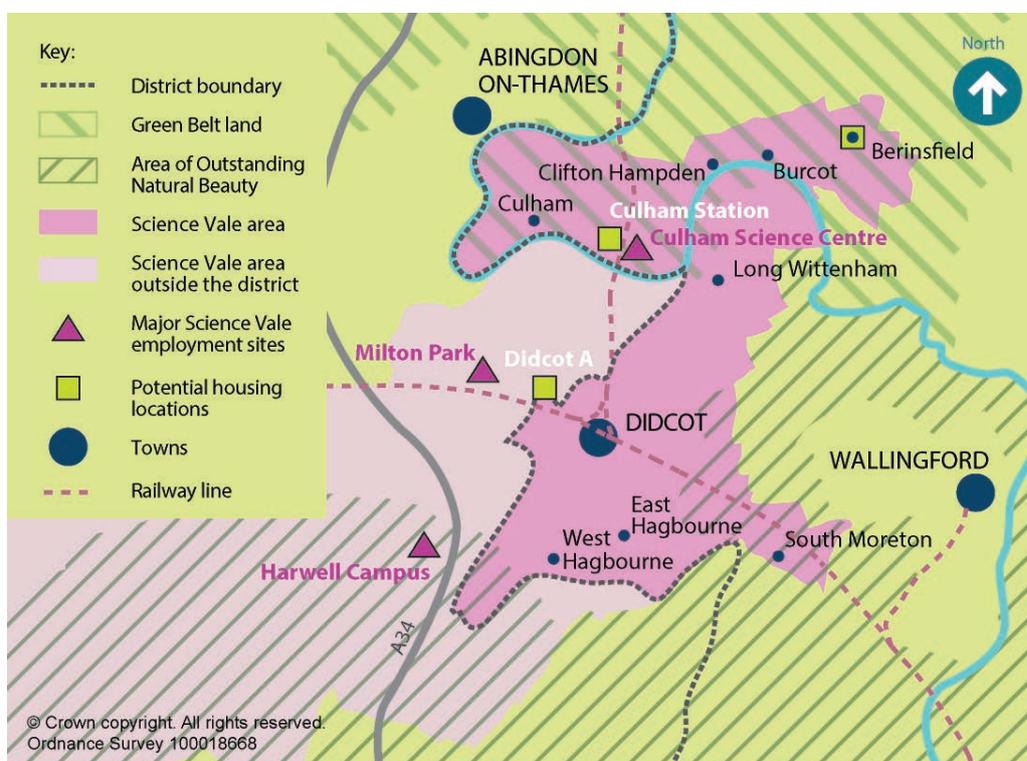


**YOUR VIEW** **Q4:** *What do you think is the most appropriate way of dividing the 3,600 homes between a) Science Vale within South Oxfordshire, b) the market towns and larger villages, and c) the smaller villages?*

## Didcot and Science Vale

Science Vale is already an international location for science and technology businesses. From this strong starting point we need to capitalise on Science Vale’s opportunity to provide an even better environment for business to flourish. Our vision for Science Vale in 2031 is grounded in continuing this story of economic success:

**Science Vale will consist of thriving communities that have benefited from sustainable growth and the successful delivery of major infrastructure.**



One of the priorities for Science Vale is to provide an environment in which science-led business can flourish. Part of this is ensuring that we have an attractive and diverse housing offer, set in an area with good communications networks, links to university research, ‘big science’, the space sector and cutting edge technology. Clustering development in one area gives a critical mass of economic, social and cultural activity to support the delivery of infrastructure and sustain vibrant town centres. Although some of the land is in the Oxford Green Belt and some in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, overall Science Vale is less constrained for planning purposes than much of South Oxfordshire. It also has good transport connections by road and rail, with improvements to both already

underway. Didcot is only 15 minutes from Oxford city centre by rail on a high frequency service, and rail electrification will bring faster and more frequent services to London; investments in the road and cycle network will make it easier to get to and around Science Vale.

The Science Vale Area Action Plan, that will complement the Local Plan, will help make sure that this is an excellent place to live, by developing vibrant neighbourhoods while also ensuring our villages and countryside maintain their distinctive character. Here's a taster of our approach for Science Vale:

- Excellent design embedded throughout Science Vale
- A coordinated approach to new development in Science Vale through an urban design framework
- Protection for the distinctive character and heritage of Science Vale's market towns, villages and countryside
- Didcot transformed into a well serviced and high quality urban hub
- New homes to balance the new jobs
- Opportunities for people to build their own homes in appropriate locations
- A 'step change' in travel choices away from car travel towards public transport, cycling and walking
- Didcot's role as a major rail interchange expanded and aspirations for rail services direct from Grove and Wantage
- A cycle strategy for Science Vale that enables people to reliably travel between our towns, villages and their jobs by means other than the private car
- Improved access onto the A34 and to the M40
- Aspirations for Superfast broadband across all of Science Vale by 2031

The Science Vale Area Action Plan consultation running between 27 February and 17 April is asking a range of more detailed questions about Science Vale, including where its boundary should be. You can comment on this through the AAP consultation online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/sciencevale](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sciencevale).

## Planning for housing growth in Science Vale

Science Vale is an area of growth and positive change and we think that putting part of the additional housing growth in the South Oxfordshire part of it could bring real benefits. However, putting all the additional housing here could mean that other locations in the rest of district miss out on the opportunity to use it to achieve stronger populations, to secure the future of their services and facilities, to build affordable homes and to use developer contributions and the community infrastructure levy to pay for new or expanded infrastructure.

In our Core Strategy, we allocated a large proportion of the housing to Didcot, and have 6,300 homes in the pipeline. Through our Issues & Scope consultation and elsewhere, we are aware that there are limited remaining sites available in Didcot which, combined with the time taken to provide necessary infrastructure, means we need to be mindful of how many houses could be delivered around Didcot between now and 2031. We are also continuing to explore ways to enhance the range of services and the quality of place within Didcot so that it can support its growing population. We recognise, however, we need to continue to make the most of opportunities for mixed use (employment, retail and residential) redevelopment of brownfield land such as the Didcot A former power station site and around the railway station.

We could look for other locations within the Science Vale area where new housing could bring benefits and help bring people and jobs closer together. A couple of locations which might be suitable for some housing growth have been suggested to us through our earlier consultation – perhaps you can think of other places too?

Around **Culham** railway station there is major high tech employment at Culham Science Centre, an industrial estate and pub & hotel. We could plan for a significant number of new homes at Culham near the station and/or on brownfield land at the Culham No. 1 employment site with the potential to serve these with improved public transport to Oxford (just ten minutes away on the train, although with a low-frequency service at present) and to plan a new road and bridge across the River Thames to relieve the congestion at Clifton Hampden.

At **Berinsfield** there is an existing large village with a good range of facilities (primary school, sports centre, library, children's centre) with good access to Culham Science Centre and Oxford, particularly the Science Park. Planning a significant number of new homes could help bring a secondary school, improved road links and aim to turn around some of the social deprivation that currently exists and rebalance the housing mix in Berinsfield, a large proportion of which was built as Council housing and is still in the social rented sector. As well as expanding Berinsfield, there is also scope for re-organising and re-developing some of the business areas and improving views to the lakes.

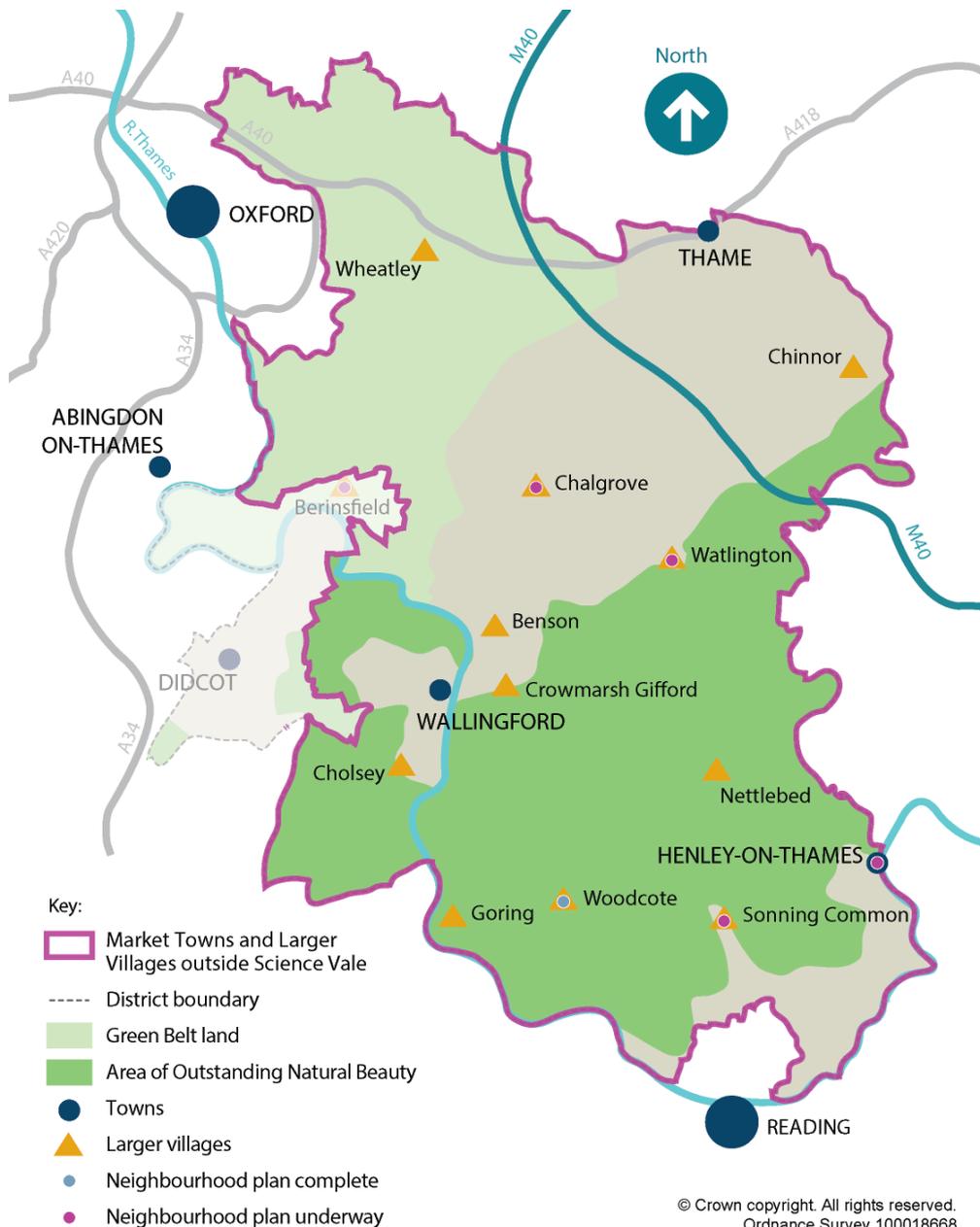
**YOUR VIEW**

**Q5:** *Which locations in Science Vale do you think could be suitable for additional new housing and what positives would you like to see the development bring?*

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# Market Towns and Larger Villages outside Science Vale

This section looks at the towns and larger villages outside the Science Vale area. These are: Henley, Thame, Wallingford, Benson, Chalgrove, Chinnor, Cholsey, Crowmarsh Gifford, Goring, Nettlebed, Sonning Common, Watlington, Wheatley and Woodcote.



Our towns and larger villages are the most sustainable places to live, they have the best access to jobs, shops, schools, public transport connections and other services and facilities and have vibrant clubs and community organisations. Our existing strategy in the Core Strategy seeks to enhance the vitality of towns and larger villages by allowing for a proportion of housing and employment growth. By maintaining the network of larger service centres we can help ensure that everyone in the district has access to a basic range of services and facilities.



In considering change we need to think about how we can maintain and improve:

- the very important and attractive historic town centres which are valued by residents and are important visitor attractions
- important views and approaches
- parking and access to and through village and town centres due to the narrow street patterns
- air quality in central areas
- the level of services and facilities for residents particularly health and education
- the quality of life that people enjoy and that attracts people to these areas

In the past in many cases we have secured important benefits for communities where new housing has been built:

- the relocation of noisy and unsightly uses and thereby reductions of heavy traffic
- enabling local businesses to grow on better and less constrained sites
- new community buildings, facilities, sporting and play areas
- improvements to facilities for example schools, water supplies and sewers
- a choice of homes for existing residents, including affordable homes

There are some constraints that limit new building for example flood risk, the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and important nature conservation areas.

In order to plan in a sustainable way we need to find a balance that allows us to make the best of opportunities and to identify appropriate solutions to problems. Previously developed ('brownfield') sites arise over time as needs change. They can help provide sites for the evolution and renewal of areas, removing eyesores and putting land or buildings to new use. Sometimes they are located within towns providing sustainable sites for housing or mixed uses. Others are in the villages or in more rural locations, having been industrial or institutional premises which are no longer needed for those uses. Although most of our allocations in Didcot in the past were on greenfield sites, elsewhere we have been able to deliver a significant proportion of new housing through re-using brownfield sites like Chinnor Cement Works, Fair Mile Hospital and Rycotewood College. We will continue to prioritise brownfield land where suitable sites become available.

## YOUR VIEW

**Q6:** *Are there particular places within or around the market towns and larger villages where some of the additional growth could be located, how much housing would be appropriate and what positives would you like to see the development bring?*

## Larger Villages – Core Strategy allocations

The Core Strategy allocated 1,154 homes to the Larger Villages. In July 2013 we consulted on how this number should be split between the villages. The final split, agreed by our councillors in September 2013, planned for growth based on the existing size of each village, except at Wheatley where the Green Belt forms a strong constraint. Communities in a number of these villages - Berinsfield, Chalgrove, Sonning Common, Watlington and Woodcote - have chosen to prepare neighbourhood plans which will identify the sites where new homes should be built (Woodcote's Neighbourhood Plan is now completed). If you are interested in





Over the coming pages we ask you to comment on the most appropriate sites to locate the homes earmarked for the Larger Villages in the Core Strategy

which sites these communities are choosing for housing please check with the local neighbourhood plan group – information is online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans).

In the larger villages of Benson, Cholsey, Chinnor, Crowmarsh Gifford, Goring and Nettlebed the sites chosen for new homes will be allocated in the Local Plan 2031. We have already done some work with these communities and with service providers to understand their views about where new homes should be built and what other services and facilities may be required to support additional housing. We have also done further work to identify constraints around these villages, and sustainability appraisal and site assessment tables are available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/lvallocations](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/lvallocations). For each village we set out below a refined list of sites which may be suitable for new homes, and on which we are seeking your views. There is more land shortlisted than will be needed, and some sites are much bigger than needed, so we would not necessarily have to allocate every site. For larger sites, only part might be appropriate, leaving room for landscaping and green space. By progressing with these decisions we maintain momentum and help reduce uncertainty in these communities.

Over the coming pages we ask you to comment on the most appropriate sites to locate the homes earmarked for the Larger Villages in the Core Strategy. **As explained in the previous section, we would also like you to consider the scope for all the larger villages to accommodate further housing as a share of the additional 3,600 arising from the SHMA.**

## Benson

Benson is a thriving village lying adjacent to the A4074 and close to the River Thames. The village has some attractive and historic buildings in the central area. Much post war housing has also taken place around the village. RAF Benson on the south and eastern side of the village is still an operational air base largely for training helicopter pilots. Operations at the air base lie outside the control of the district council and we need to have a cautious approach to future housing allocations. The activities at the air base can be noisy with day and night flying and this has influenced our view on the suitability of some sites for housing. The village is compact and very walkable with a good range of facilities including a primary school, doctor's surgery and a good range of shops and leisure uses.

We need to find sites for at least 125 new homes in Benson. In looking for suitable land we have not found any brownfield sites which may be available for re-use so we have looked at all the land around the edge of the village. Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>7</sup> shows sites we have identified and provides a summary of their potential, the map shows these sites.

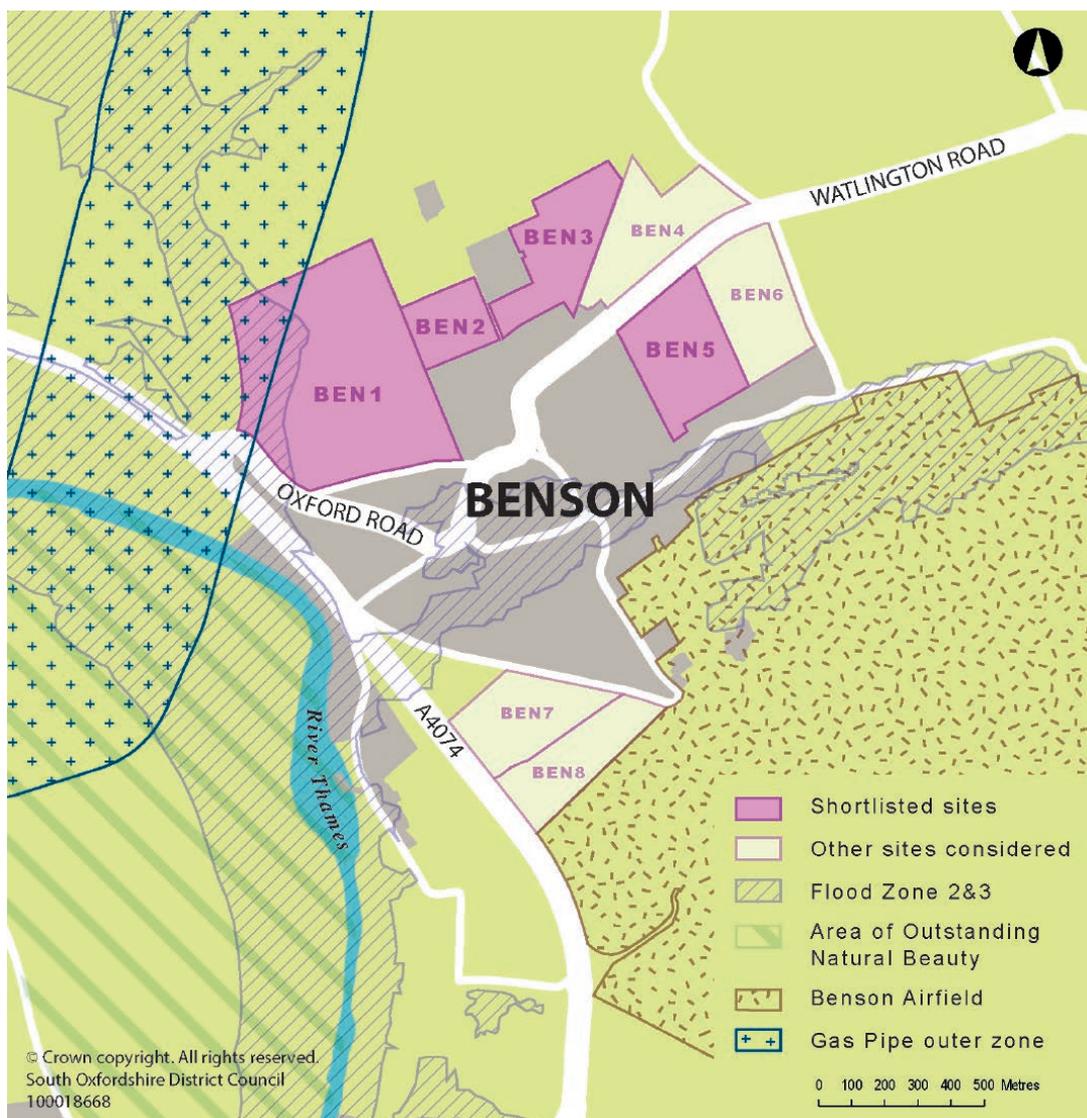
Using this as a starting point we have carried out a more detailed assessment and have consulted with the community and infrastructure providers. None of the sites are in the Green Belt or the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) although parts of BEN1 and BEN2 may be prominent in views from the AONB and our landscape study indicates that this should be avoided. There are also some important archaeological remains to the north. BEN7 and BEN8 lie underneath the helicopter landing and take-off flight path which is immediately to the south east of BEN8, it is our view that housing here would place future residents at unnecessary risk of excessive noise and potential danger when there are other suitable sites available. The more outlying areas and parts of BEN1, BEN3, BEN4, BEN5 and BEN6 would be prominent in the landscape and are not preferred. There is far more land covered by the assessment than we need for housing at Benson and development to the more outlying areas would completely change the character of the village. We will only take forward sites that are closely related to the existing built form of the village. The local community expressed a slight preference for the new housing to be spread across a number of sites, there was strong concern about potential traffic impacts and to ensure that infrastructure and services were improved. There has in the past been concern about the sewage capacity for Benson and Crowmarsh Gifford, and we are continuing to explore this with Thames Water.

<sup>7</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa)

The Benson site assessment table is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/) **ivallocations**. Using this information we believe that the choice of suitable sites should be made from a refined shortlist of the southern part of BEN1, BEN2, and the parts of BEN3 and BEN5 that adjoin the village. There is currently a planning appeal in progress on BEN1 for 177 homes, and if it is allowed by a planning inspector it will form the allocation for Benson.

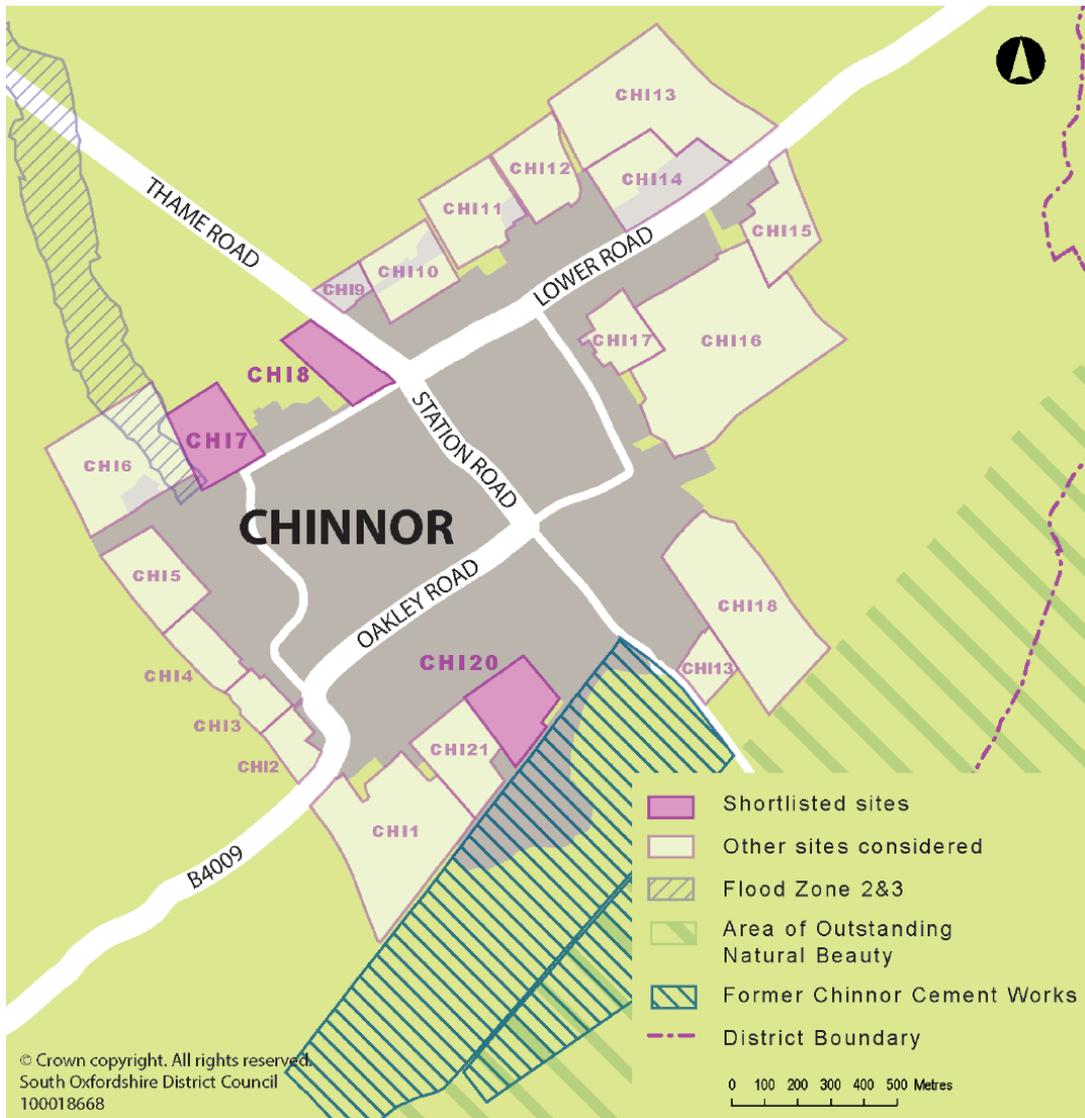
**YOUR VIEW**

**Q7:** Which of the Benson sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted BEN1, BEN2, part of BEN3, part of BEN5 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?



## Chinnor

Chinnor is one of our largest villages and lies close to the boundary with Wycombe District Council. The village has some attractive and historic buildings mainly in the central area. Much housing has also taken place in the post war era but the village is compact and very walkable with a good range of facilities including two primary schools, an outreach doctor’s surgery and a number of shops. Around 180 new homes have recently been completed in Chinnor at Old Kiln Lakes on the site of the former cement works and there are plans for significant amount of new housing in Princess Risborough, a short distance away in Wycombe district, which may impact on traffic through the village.



We need to find sites for at least 160 new homes in Chinnor. In looking for suitable land we have considered whether there are existing brownfield sites which may be available for re-use and all the land around the edge of the village. Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>8</sup> shows sites we have identified and provides a summary of their potential, the map shows these sites.

Using this as a starting point we have carried out a more detailed assessment and have consulted with the community and infrastructure providers. In general none of the sites are in the Green Belt or the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) although a number are prominent in views from the AONB CHI2 to 6, CHI13, CHI15 to CHI19 and the western part of CHI1 and our landscape study indicates that their development should be avoided. Some sites would be difficult to access and have a poor relationship to existing homes CHI10 to CHI14 and CHI17. The eastern part of CHI1 would enclose and make agriculture difficult on a large area comprising CHI20 and 21, if this land were put forward for housing it would be far more than we require at this point in time and would be contrary to community wishes to spread development across a number of sites to make community integration easier.

Oxfordshire County Council have indicated that there is capacity for a further 70 primary school pupils and that St Andrews School could be expanded in the longer term. Thames Water have indicated that sewer upgrades will be needed to provide additional capacity for any new development. At our consultations in 2013 the local community expressed a slight preference for the new housing to be spread across a number of sites, there was strong concern about potential traffic impacts and to ensure that infrastructure and services were improved.

The Chinnor site assessment table is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/ivallocations](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ivallocations). Using this information we believe that the choice of suitable sites should be made from a refined shortlist of CHI7, CHI8, and CHI20. The garden centre on CHI9 has closed, this is a brownfield site which is likely to be suitable for housing. It does not need to be allocated in the local plan, a planning application has already been submitted for 39 new homes and this will be considered on its merits. Any permission on this site will contribute to the 160 new homes allocated to Chinnor. There are currently two planning appeals in progress on CHI1 and CHI20 for a total of around 200 homes, and if either or both are allowed by a planning inspector they will form part of the allocation for Chinnor.



**Q8:** *Which of the Chinnor sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted CHI7, CHI8 or CHI20 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?*

<sup>8</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa)

## Cholsey

Cholsey is a village two miles south of Wallingford with a strong centre containing several local shops, pubs, a recently expanded primary school and a new pavilion containing a community run library and cafe. It benefits from a railway station offering good connections to London, Didcot, Reading and Oxford, although this brings associated commuter car parking issues. There is a shortage of parking in the village centre for those using the shops and facilities. Land to the south and west of the village is partly in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A large former institution, Fair Mile Hospital, has been converted to housing in recent years, together with new homes built on part of the grounds. The railway branch line known as the 'bunk line' from Cholsey to Wallingford remains as a preserved railway at bank holidays and some weekends. There is an hourly bus service to Wallingford and bus links to Goring.

We need to find sites for at least 128 new homes in Cholsey. In looking for suitable land we have considered whether there are existing brownfield sites which may be available for re-use and all the land around the edge of the village. Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>9</sup> shows sites we have identified and provides a summary of their potential, the map shows these sites.

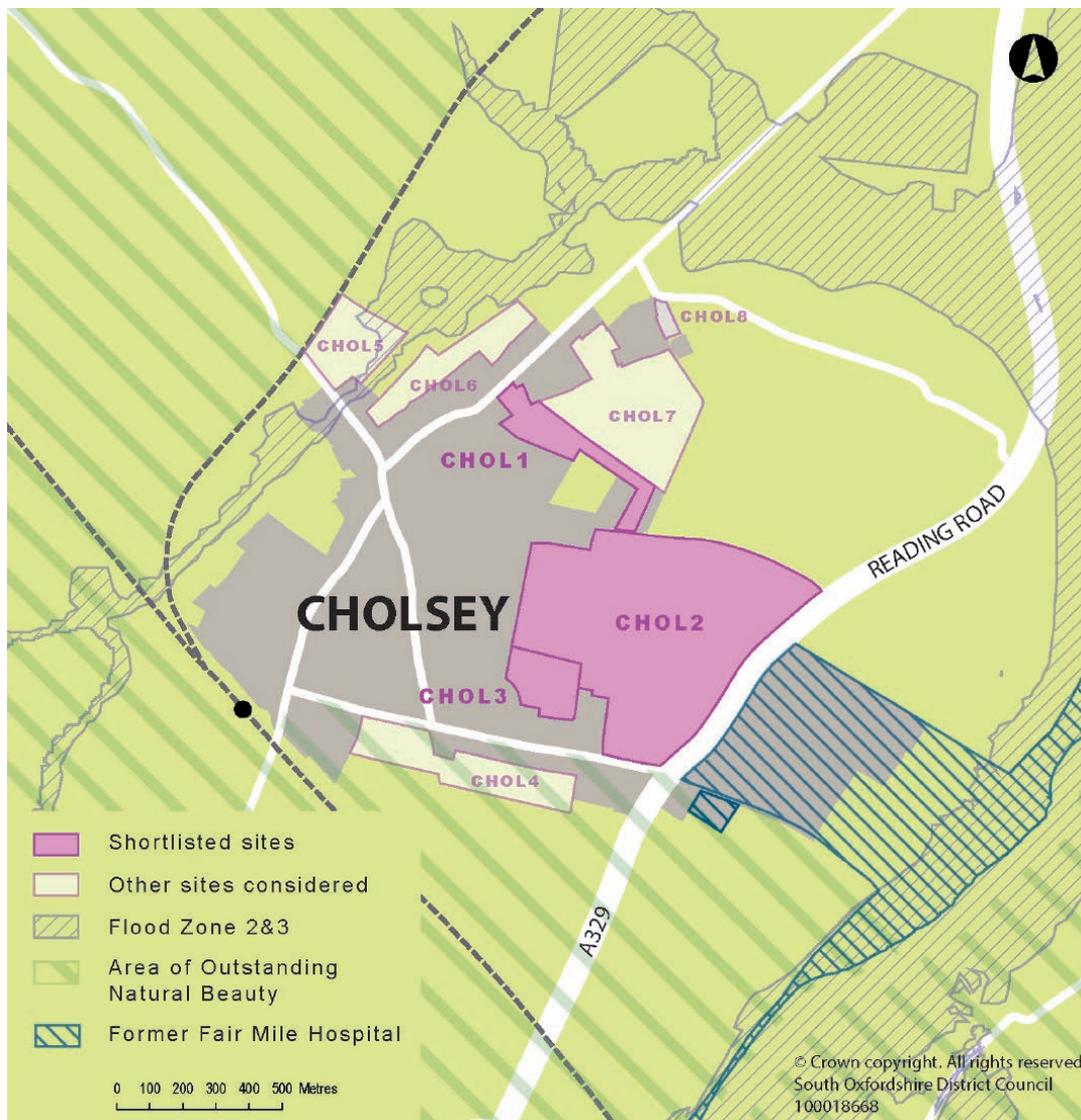
No further brownfield sites have emerged as available, although CHOL1 is partly a farm complex fairly close to the centre of the village. The site to the west, CHOL5, is not suitable on flood risk grounds, and local evidence suggests that CHOL6 also floods. CHOL4 is in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its development would have significant landscape impacts. CHOL8 is more remote from the village and on a bend in Caps Lane so is weaker in transport terms. The community consultation events have shown a desire to improve the integration of the village by reaching out development towards the new residential community at Fair Mile Hospital. There may also be scope to improve junctions and traffic flows around the Fair Mile Hospital entrance, and at the Papist Way/ Reading Road junction. The sites CHOL2 and CHOL3 could be planned together in a comprehensive scheme and provide significant green infrastructure and pedestrian/cycle links across these fields, only a part of which would be needed for the scale of development planned.

<sup>9</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa)

The Cholsey site assessment table is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/ivallocations](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ivallocations). Using this information we believe that the choice of suitable sites should be made from a refined shortlist of CHOL1, CHOL2 and CHOL3.

**YOUR VIEW**

**Q9:** Which of the Cholsey sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted sites CHOL1, CHOL2 and CHOL3 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?



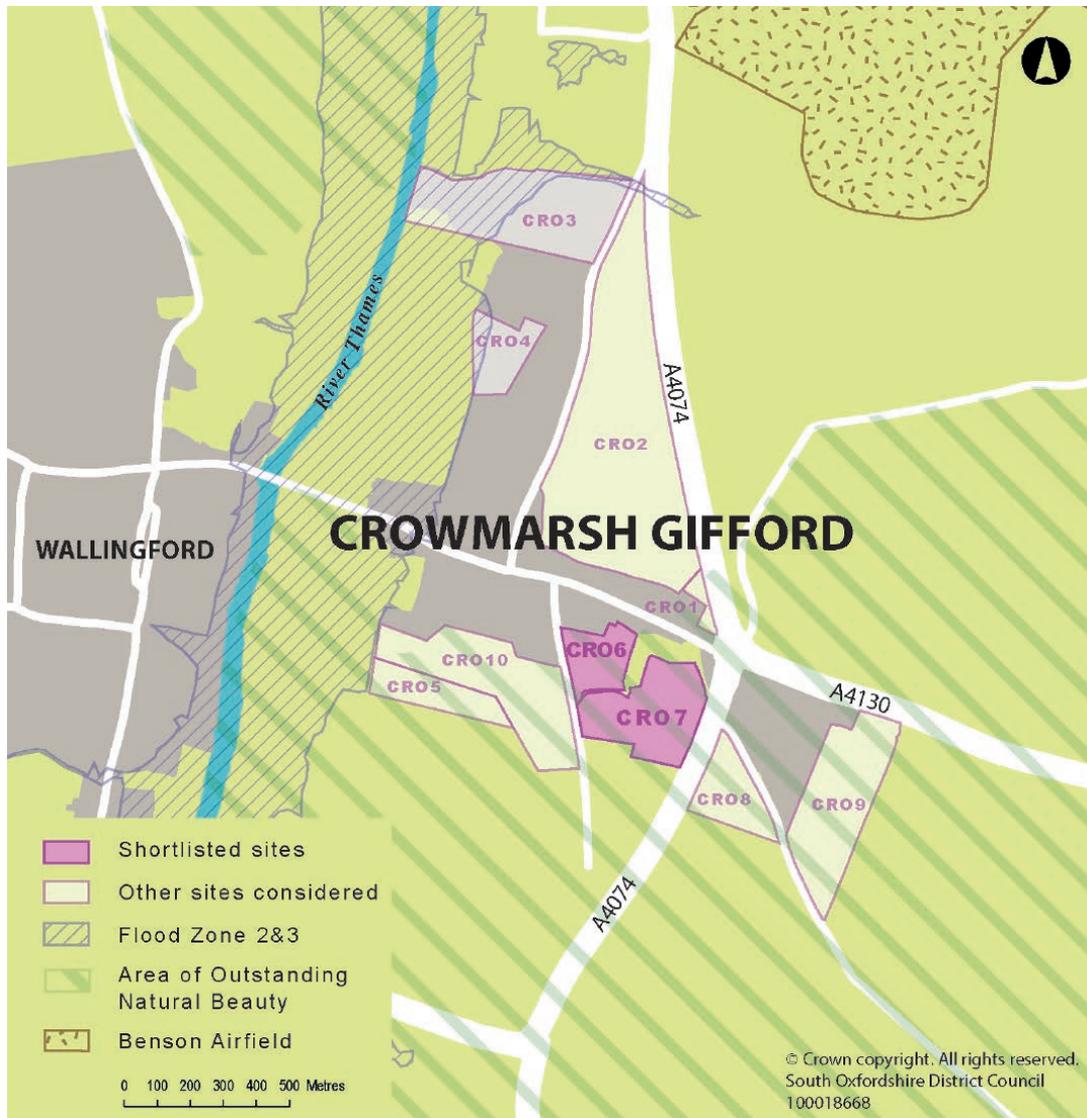
## Crowmarsh Gifford

Crowmarsh Gifford is one of our smallest 'larger villages'. It is located on the opposite bank of the River Thames from Wallingford, and it has its own separate village identity. It has a limited range of services and facilities (a shop, two pubs and a primary school) but benefits from being in easy reach of those in Wallingford. A notable feature is the collection of large employment sites along Benson Lane, consisting of the environmental science cluster in the grounds of the historic Howbery Park and along Benson Lane, and the council offices (recently damaged in a serious fire). The high frequency bus service between Oxford and Reading runs through Crowmarsh Gifford, providing opportunities for sustainable travel.

We need to find sites for at least 48 new homes in Crowmarsh Gifford. In looking for suitable land we have considered whether there are existing brownfield sites which may be available for re-use and all the land around the edge of the village. Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>10</sup> shows sites we have identified and provides a summary of their potential, the map shows these sites.

In community consultation events, brownfield site opportunities such as the Jewson's site, the Colliers yard and the Council Offices were suggested, but there is no indication that these are available for redevelopment. CRO6 is currently a caravan site and contains a selection of mostly rundown buildings in the Pheasantry area, which has potential for redevelopment to improve the area. Some of the sites around Crowmarsh are in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and would have a high landscape impact (CRO5, 8, 9 and 10). The large site option (CRO2) is not generally popular with the village community, and would be beyond the scale needed for 48 homes. Although in the AONB, CRO6 has limited landscape impacts because it is relatively contained and screened from wider views. Local feeling is that the Lister Wilder building has downgraded the quality of the landscape in this area. The site offers the opportunity to reuse a site close to the centre of the village, and assist the school by providing part of the site as new parking. Although some of CRO7 would be sensitive in AONB terms, using part of CRO7 which is in the same ownership, could provide vehicular access options to the A4074, avoiding adding to road safety concerns outside the primary school on the Old Reading Road. There has in the past been concern about the sewage capacity for Benson and Crowmarsh Gifford, and we are continuing to explore this with Thames Water.

<sup>10</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa)



The Crowmarsh Gifford site assessment table is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/lvallocations](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/lvallocations). Using this information we believe that the choice of suitable sites should be made from a refined shortlist of CRO6 and CRO7.

**YOUR VIEW**

**Q10:** Which of the Crowmarsh Gifford sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted sites CRO6 and CRO7 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?

## Goring

Goring sits beside the main railway line that connects Oxford and London, with the historic core lying to the west of the tracks and more modern development to the east. It lies within the nationally renowned geological and scenic landmark, the Goring Gap, where the Thames passes through a narrow gap between the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs hills. Goring is a popular village due both to its beautiful location, vibrant community and good facilities and to the excellent transport links afforded by its railway station. Goring is well served with amenities including a primary school, doctors, dentist, community hall, shops and leisure facilities. Goring lies entirely within the Chilterns AONB and is constrained by the flood plain to the west of the village.

We need to find a site or sites for at least 105 new homes in Goring. We have not identified any brownfield land that can be re-used. In looking for suitable land we have identified several parcels of land around the edge of the village. Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>11</sup> shows sites we have identified and provides a summary of their potential, the map shows these sites.

Using this as a starting point we have carried out a more detailed assessment and have consulted with the community and infrastructure providers. The County Council as Education Authority anticipate that 105 new homes could provide sufficient increase in local population to justify the school implementing its plan to expand to a 1.5 form entry school. Thames Water raised concerns with the sewerage network capacity for some of the sites, where additional drainage infrastructure is likely to be required.

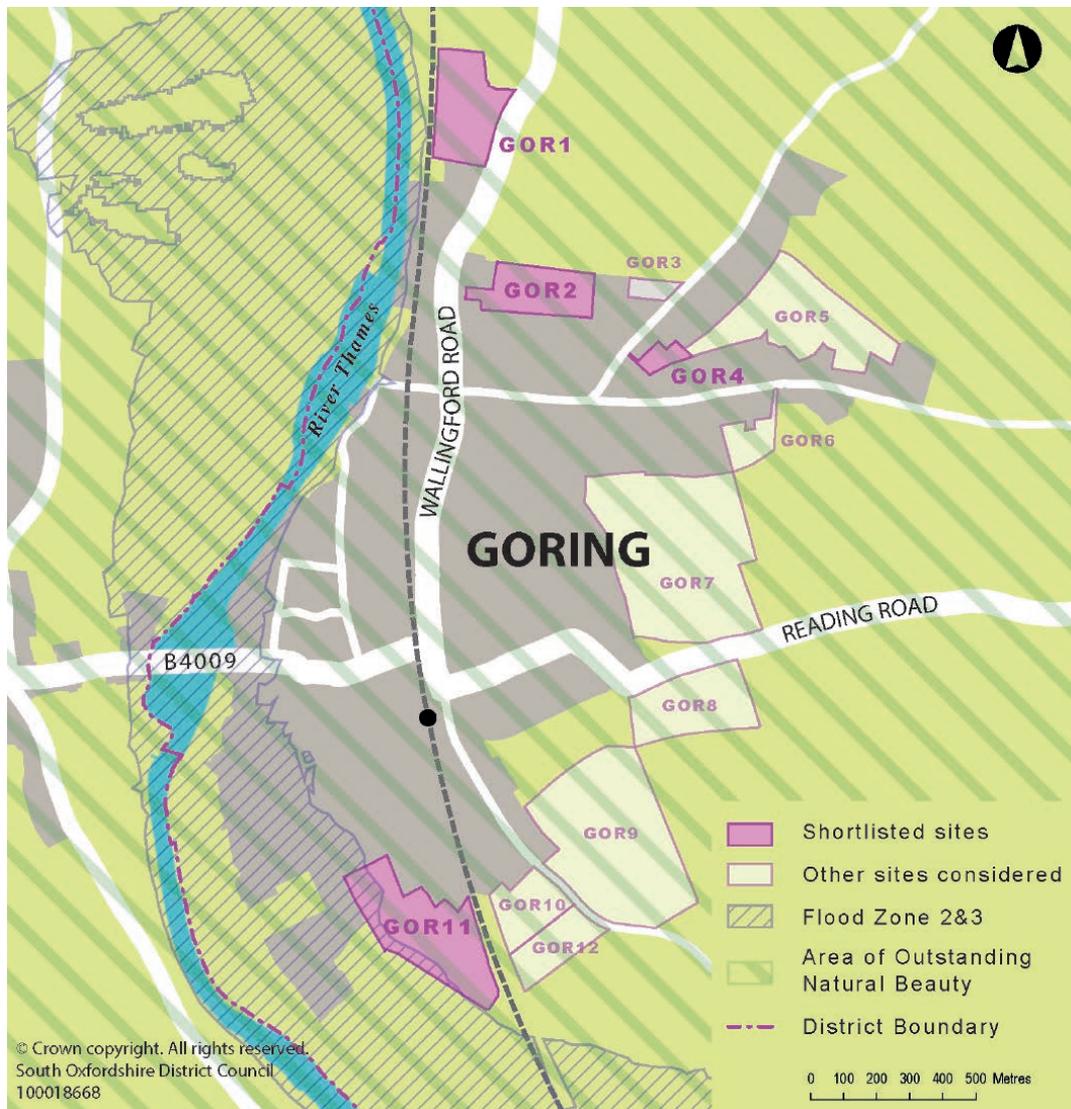
A number of sites were identified as being important in landscape terms and the landscape study recommended that development be avoided on these sites. GOR1 is one such site, but we have decided to take this forward to the next stage as there was considerable support from local residents and the parish council who favoured this site. GOR2 is also being taken forward as this site sits within the boundaries of existing development and received some support from the public consultation event. GOR11 lies to the south west of Goring and has some potential to provide a limited number of new homes, ensuring development avoids the flood plain. GOR4 is a small site nestled between existing developments and has potential to contribute towards the total number of new homes needed.

<sup>11</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa)

The Goring site assessment table is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/ivallocations](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ivallocations). Using this information we believe that the choice of suitable sites should be made from a refined shortlist of GOR1, GOR2, GOR4 and GOR11.

**YOUR VIEW**

**Q11:** Which of the Goring sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted sites GOR1, GOR2, GOR4 and GOR11 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?



## Nettlebed

Nettlebed is the smallest of the 'Larger Villages' but has a reasonable range of services including a primary school, doctor's surgery, village hall, convenience shop and garage, post office and pub/restaurant. It is also on the bus route with an hourly service being halfway between Wallingford and Henley. In addition, the village forms an important part of the network of settlements in the western area of the district along the A4130. The village has a small historic core centred on the High Street with more modern housing development to the north. Nettlebed is entirely within the AONB and much of the land to the north and east is common land. South of the High Street is Joyce Grove, a country estate that is currently owned by the Sue Ryder charity and operates as a hospice. The hospice is a highly valued facility for southern Oxfordshire.

We need to find a site or sites for around 20 new homes in Nettlebed. This is a relatively small number of new homes compared to the other larger villages. In looking for suitable land we have considered whether there are existing brownfield sites which may be available for re-use as well as some parcels of land around the edge of the village to the north and west (avoiding common land). Our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment<sup>12</sup> shows sites we have identified and provides a summary of their potential, the map shows these sites.

Using this as a starting point we have carried out a more detailed assessment and have consulted with the community and infrastructure providers. Feedback from consultation events held in 2013 indicated that NET3 was the most favoured site due to its location, proximity to the village, ease of access and it was felt that development here would have the least impact on the rest of the village. The landscape study also concluded that NET3 could accommodate some development. Due to the relatively small number of homes proposed in Nettlebed, no significant concerns were raised by infrastructure providers. The primary school would not need expanding, and Thames Water did not raise any concerns.

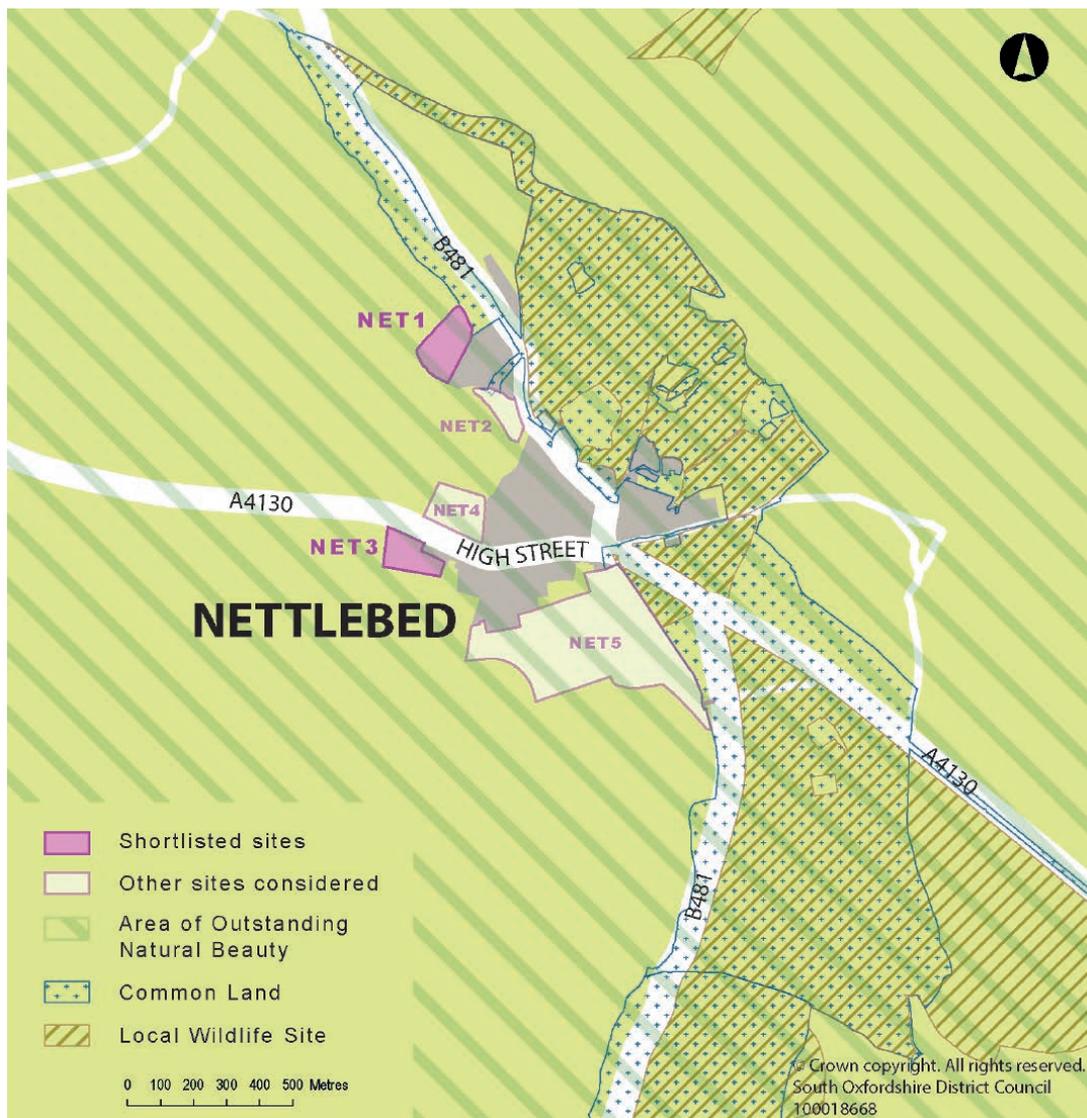
NET5 comprises Joyce Grove (a substantial house) and its parkland setting. This site would not be suitable for new-build housing but there could be scope to re-use and sympathetically convert existing buildings to provide some new homes. Unfortunately negotiations to move the hospice to Townlands Hospital in Henley have not progressed so the hospice will be staying at Joyce Grove for the foreseeable future, we have therefore not included this site as an option.

The landscape study found that development on sites NET1, NET2 and NET4 had potential for harm to the landscape setting of the village and AONB; and in the case of NET1 and NET4 would result in settlement expansion into the wider landscape. The landscape study found that NET2 and NET4 were visually prominent, whilst NET1

<sup>12</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/shlaa)

was not visually prominent due to it being an enclosed site. In addition, NET2 is highly constrained by landscape features (the topography) and NET4 has strong continuity with the open landscape to the north and west and is closest to the historic core of the village. Therefore, of these three sites, we feel that subject to appropriate landscaping and further landscape assessment, NET1 has the best development potential so we have retained it as an option at this stage. We have also increased the size of NET1 to extend further to the north so that there would be adequate space to provide an area of green space behind the existing houses in Priests Close. The Nettlebed site assessment table is available online at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/lvallocations](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/lvallocations). Using this information we believe that the choice of suitable sites should be made from a refined shortlist of NET3 and NET1.

**YOUR VIEW** **Q12:** Which of the Nettlebed sites - particularly the sites we have shortlisted sites NET1 and NET3 - should be used for new homes, and what positives would you like to see the development bring?



## Wheatley

Wheatley is one of our largest villages, it is inset in the Green Belt and has very limited opportunities for expansion. We asked our Core Strategy Inspector if we could alter the Green Belt boundary at Wheatley, making an exceptional circumstances case to allow for some more homes to be built, but he rejected this request. We have therefore pursued an exception site approach in Wheatley to achieve some desperately needed affordable housing. We have identified a site to the north of the London Road and a scheme for 50 homes is being prepared. We do not need to allocate this site in the Local Plan.



## Smaller Villages

Our approach to the smaller settlements identified in the Core Strategy is to continue to protect what is special about them but also to support an appropriate scale of development, especially where the local community think it is desirable. Small amounts of growth can help to support local facilities, house future local generations and foster community spirit. An aging population risks becoming isolated if they are the only people who have the opportunity to live in small rural villages. Furthermore with reducing household sizes the population of villages declines without at least some new homes.

We are not proposing to allocate land for new housing in every smaller village, but to have policies that allow them to come forward as windfalls and through neighbourhood plans. We think that small developments of a few homes at a time would allow for the gradual change and evolution of a place, echoing the way

villages traditionally grew. This would help to demonstrate a flexible and positively prepared plan, looking for opportunities and managing them rather than overtly controlling development.

We see two ways that we can encourage small-scale growth in smaller settlements across the district:

1) **Adding flexibility to the policies that manage development in and adjacent to smaller settlements**

Our current policy in the Core Strategy CSR1 allows development of up to 5-6 houses within smaller villages and 2-3 houses in other villages. We could be more flexible in our policies to allow slightly larger schemes, perhaps up to 10 in the smaller villages and 5 in the other villages.

2) **Allowing development to come forward through a Neighbourhood Plan**

Our current policy only allows sites to be allocated in the Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan in the towns and twelve larger villages. This precludes communities in smaller settlements from allocating sites through a neighbourhood plan, and in some cases communities are telling us that they want to allocate some pieces of land for development. We believe that communities in smaller and other villages wishing to allocate sites for housing should be allowed to do so through the neighbourhood plan, neighbourhood order or community right to build processes.

YOUR  
VIEW

**Q13:** *Do you think that policies for smaller villages should be relaxed to enable a small increase in the number of homes built, and are there other things we could do to help meet the local housing need in these villages?*

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# Helping to meet Oxford's Housing Need

## How could we plan for 3,000 additional new homes for Oxford?

Previously you told us:

- That Oxford should be accommodating more housing e.g. by using sites earmarked for commercial development, and some undeveloped green space.
- Grenoble Road on the edge of the city was a specific area mentioned for housing, although there was strong opposition to this site as well from many residents and parishes.
- There was some support for meeting unmet need from Oxford in a new settlement or garden city.

The Oxfordshire authorities are working together to understand the scale of the housing need that cannot be met in Oxford City and how much of this each should plan for. For the purpose of this consultation we would like you to consider a working assumption that we could need to plan for around 3,000 new homes for Oxford (on top of the 3,600 for our own needs). Until the joint work with other Oxfordshire authorities is complete we do not know what the scale of any unmet need will be, although Oxford City Council stated in their response to our Issues and Scope consultation that we should be planning for between 5,000 and 15,000 new homes.

We think that the additional housing to meet our own need (3,600 homes) could be appropriately planned to support the existing character of the district's towns and villages, and how people use the services within them. To then layer further growth above that (the unmet need from Oxford) in the timescale over which we are planning – up to 2031 – would begin to fundamentally change the character of the places. This is not to say that places cannot grow and develop further in the future but there would be further opportunities to plan for this growth too.

This additional housing need has been identified in Oxford, so it would be appropriate that development is well located to access the city in sustainable ways, like using public transport. This does not necessarily mean that it needs to be in a site adjoining the city's built area or in the adjacent green belt (which have been the City Council's suggested locations). For us to be able to manage the planning of this growth effectively and sustainably, while protecting our own 5 year housing land supply, we should also consider 'ring fencing' it in our plan. In order to do this we think it should be located in a single or limited number of sites.

Some approaches might be:

**An extension to Oxford in the Green Belt:** Landowners have suggested building urban extensions at two different edges of Oxford: at Grenoble Road south of the Kassam Stadium and at Wick Farm beyond Barton. Both these areas are in the Green Belt and have strong links to Oxford but would integrate less well with the South Oxfordshire community.

**A new settlement:** An alternative approach would be a new settlement – one suggested location is land close to Junction 7 of the M40. New settlements take longer to get off the ground but this may not be a problem if housing comes forward in Oxford in the short term. A new settlement provides an opportunity to plan a sustainable place from the outset, and could deliver the level of shops and services similar to our towns or larger villages, and the area suggested does not currently have this level of services. A location by the motorway, however, may encourage more car based travel and out-commuting but could also potentially be served by the very frequent coach services between Oxford and London.

**Extensions to existing settlements:** This would open up consideration of other places in the district, where they have (or have the potential for) sustainable transport connections to Oxford and, ideally, other employment locations including our focus for economic growth in Science Vale.



**YOUR VIEW** Q14: *Where do you think is the most appropriate place to plan for Oxford's unmet need and why?*

## Employment and the Economy

Our local plan cannot create new or expanded businesses but can try to create an environment where businesses can thrive and want to operate. Our policies for the local economy seek to achieve this aim. In particular we should consider how much land we need and where are the locations that businesses want. The council commissioned a study to look at the amount and potential location of future requirements for employment land<sup>13</sup>. This study identifies a need for between 16 and 25 hectares of additional employment land to 2031. We have already set out broad locations for around 20 hectares of this employment land in the Core Strategy. We believe we should seek to provide 25 hectares so will identify locations for an additional 5 hectares.

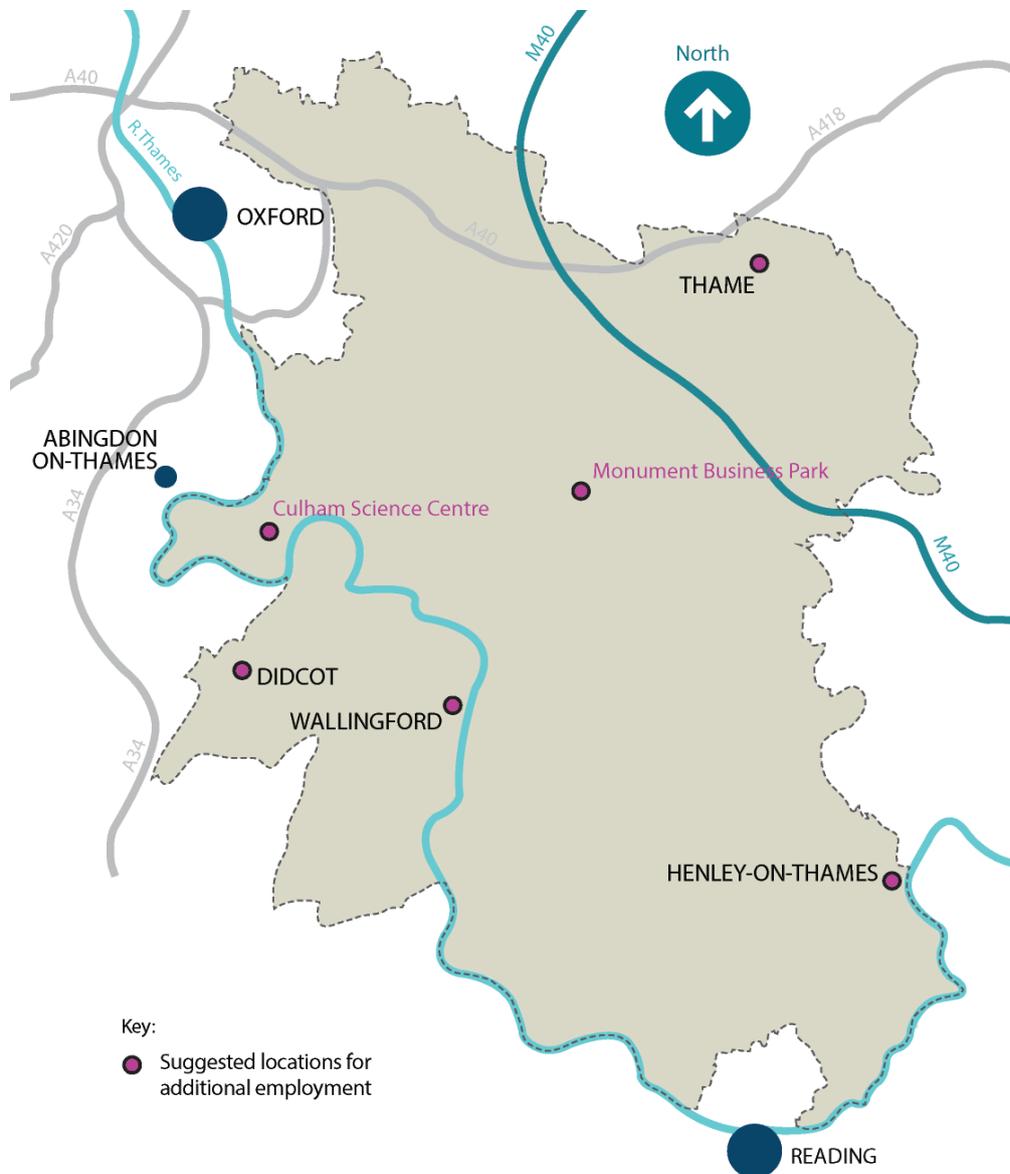
### Previously you told us:

- Most responses suggested new employment should be close to existing towns, this includes; Oxford, Reading, Didcot, Thame, Henley and Wallingford. A significant number suggested Science Vale.
- Some responses suggested close to housing and to existing employment areas.
- Some suggested employment should be spread across the district to enable agricultural diversification, a few suggested where there is business demand and gave support for home working and protecting existing employment sites.
- A significant number of you were concerned to ensure that employment is in accessible locations, close to transport corridors, where infrastructure (particularly high speed broadband), amenities and transport are available and where cycling and walking are possible.
- There were a number of comments about where not to put new employment land, these include; avoiding long distance commuting, avoiding unacceptable traffic impacts, not in the Green Belt, away from existing high employment areas, not in market towns and villages or close to heritage assets.

Between 6 and 7 hectares of the total requirement is needed for offices, with strongest demand likely to be at Culham. There is likely to be some demand in our market towns Henley, Thame and Wallingford. Some demand could also be met in Didcot which has not previously been a popular office location. This study supports our allocation of a substantial amount of floorspace at Culham Science Centre and suggests that the remainder should be allocated in the Didcot Station area and Monument Business Park in Chalgrove with the residual floorspace provided as smaller flexible offices in our market town centres.

Between 10.5 and 17.7 hectares of the total requirement is needed for industry and warehousing, the main areas of demand are in Science Vale, at Culham and Didcot. Wallingford and Thame are also relatively popular areas.

<sup>13</sup> South Oxfordshire Employment Land Review 2015 [www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence)



We have already made allocations at Culham Science Centre, Didcot, Thame and Wallingford. Monument Business Park at Chalgrove would appear to be the most suitable location for employment land in the rural areas and possibly has capacity for more than the 4.2 hectares we have suggested. Culham Science Centre has further capacity, within the existing site, but further road improvements would be necessary to expand employment there. The Didcot Station area would also be a suitable central location in Didcot.

**YOUR VIEW**

**Q15:** *Our suggested locations for additional employment land are at Monument Business Park, Culham Science Centre, Didcot station area and the market town centres. Do you have other suggestions?*

## How should our town centres change?

Previously you told us:

- You want to see adequate amounts of free car parking, and additional car parks. Better enforcement was also suggested though, as congestion and bad parking cause problems (especially in Henley).
- Strong desire to see independent retailers supported, including support for farmers' markets.
- You want to see the completion of Orchard Centre Phase 2 in Didcot.
- Town centres should be made more accessible to the elderly, because not everyone has the internet or wishes to shop online.
- We need to treat each town differently – a “one size fits all” approach isn't right for our towns.

Results from our recent South Oxfordshire Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment Update shows that our four town centres (Didcot, Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford) are all weathering the changes in the retail sector fairly strongly. Henley-on-Thames, Thame and Wallingford are identified as attractive and traditional town centres with a strong specialist and independent offer. This ensures local people use the centres often, and also attract customers from further afield. These centres are performing well, providing for a range of everyday goods, food, and higher quality and niche shopping requirements. Didcot performs a similar role, but has a stronger shopping offer from national retailers, particularly in the clothing and footwear sectors. The centre captures a stronger share of available catchment expenditure as a consequence. Despite the strong performance of our town centres, the local population often choose to travel to Reading, Oxford and High Wycombe for their main clothing and footwear needs.

What we do in our town centres is changing with the growth of on-line shopping and click and collect. The retail study update tells us that even taking this in account, there is a need for some new shops driven by the excellent town centre performance across the district. A town centre first approach, directing new supermarkets and other shops to town centres rather than out of town sites, is government policy and is important to help retain the vitality and viability of the town centres. The need for new shops is best directed to Didcot where there are clear development site opportunities. This strategy will ensure Thame, Wallingford and Henley-on-Thames can maintain their current 'status quo' roles, whilst helping to meet a greater range of shopping needs locally in Didcot. Directing new shops to Didcot will improve the district offer and encourage people to shop locally rather than travelling further afield to Reading, Oxford and High Wycombe.

**YOUR VIEW**

**Q16:** *Our suggested approach is to focus new shopping at Didcot, while continuing to allow for limited growth in the other town centres. Can you suggest site opportunities for expanding or redeveloping parts of the town centres?*

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# Providing for Travelling Communities

The size of the Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's communities in our district is small in comparison with the housed community, and our travelling community is small, settled and stable. As with the housed community, we have a statutory responsibility to assess and plan for travellers' needs. By maintaining a supply of new authorised caravan pitches to meet the identified needs arising from our travelling communities, we are in a stronger position to resist unauthorised sites and encampments and the associated issues these can bring.

#### Previously you told us:

- There was some feeling that we should not be providing any further sites.
- Some support for the approach of intensifying or expanding existing traveller sites.
- Brownfield sites suggested, including Didcot Power Station, Wормinghall Airfield [outside South Oxfordshire so not suitable for our needs].

The results of our study of accommodation needs<sup>14</sup> show that we'll need to find suitable sites for 24 traveller caravan pitches: 19 for Gypsies and Travellers and 5 for Travelling Showpeople. The study tells us that it is likely the additional caravan plots for Travelling Showpeople can be accommodated within the existing three yards or by minor extension. The South Oxfordshire Core Strategy proposed providing an adequate supply of traveller pitches through a combination of safeguarding existing sites, extending existing sites where possible, and identifying new sites. To date, it has proved difficult to find available land that passes the sustainability criteria of being in or near settlements or within walking distance of essential services/high frequency bus services, so we are taking a more flexible and pragmatic approach and looking at sites further afield and brownfield land.

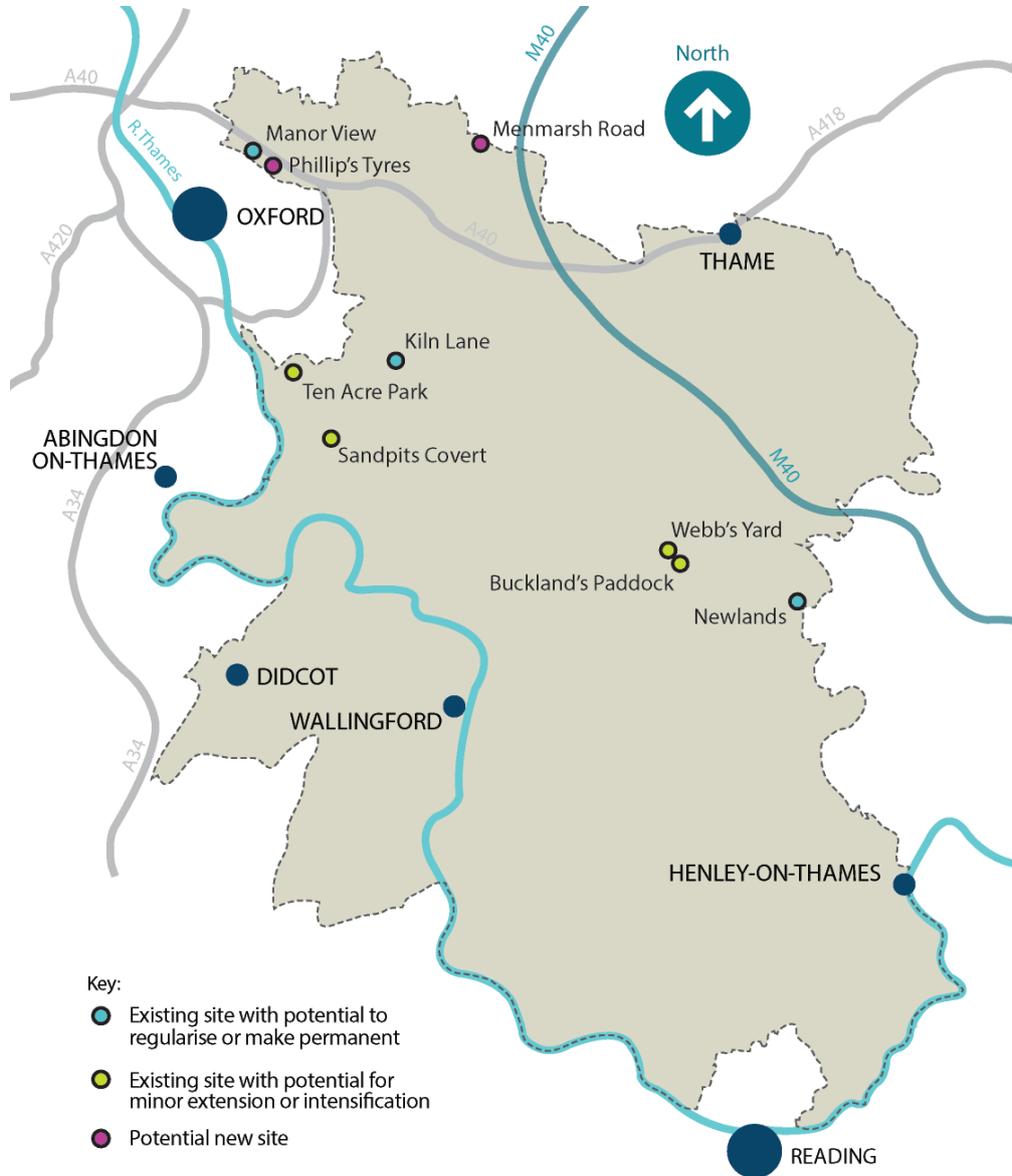
We could look to regularise or make permanent the Gypsy and Traveller pitches at:

- Newlands, Platts Lane, Northend
- Manor View at Mill Lane north of Oxford
- Kiln Lane, Garsington

We could consider minor extension or intensification of existing sites at:

- Ten Acre Park, Sandford (authorised Traveller site)
- Webb's Yard, Watlington (authorised Travelling Showpeople's site)
- Buckland's Paddock, Watlington (authorised Travelling Showpeople's site)
- Sandpits Covert, Marsh Baldon (authorised Travelling Showpeople's site)

<sup>14</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/evidence)



In addition to these the following sites are potentially suitable for new traveller caravan pitches:

- A brownfield site at Phillip's Tyres, a former tyre transfer station located on the A40 on the northern edge of Oxford; and
- A brownfield site at a former scrapyard on Menmarsh Road, Worminghall near Waterperry.

Not all these sites would be needed to provide enough traveller caravan pitches to meet the identified needs.

YOUR  
VIEW

**Q17:** *Do you think that these sites are suitable for traveller caravan pitches and can you suggest any further or more suitable sites?*

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## Housing for older people

Housing and health are inextricably linked, and the value of living in a suitable home in a sustainable location becomes even more important as people get older.

Being able to continue living independently for as long as possible may require some level of support which could be provided through adaptations to the home or receiving social care visits at home. However, other options can include moving to a more suitable property – perhaps a smaller home with no stairs - or to a home which is provided as part of a specialist housing scheme such as 'Close Care', Extra Care Housing or other form of retirement housing. Providing options for people to 'downsize' to smaller or specialist housing can help free up family housing.

YOUR  
VIEW

**Q18:** *What sort of housing should we plan for people as they get older and where should it be?*

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## Development opportunities

Since 2006 we have invited landowners and agents to submit sites they wish us to consider for development. We then display these sites on our website and use them to help inform our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. In order to meet additional housing need in South Oxfordshire we will need new sites to allocate for development. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to remind agents, landowners, and developers that they can submit sites to us to consider for development via our website [www.southoxon.gov.uk/sitesubmissions](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sitesubmissions).

## Self-Build register

Self-build housing provides an opportunity for home ownership for people who may not be able to afford housing on the open market. We want to make provision for self-build opportunities if there is a demand to do this. We've started a register of people interested in self-build housing in order to assess the scale of interest and help us decide how many sites we should provide and in what locations. If you are interested in self-build please register your interest at [self-build@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:self-build@southoxon.gov.uk) or use the mailing address on the back cover.

## Our Planning Policies

We'd like to know whether you think that all the saved policies we have in the Local Plan are still relevant and working, or whether any need changing. These are the saved policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 and the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy<sup>15</sup>. Having and using well-prepared policies in plans helps to ensure that decisions on different planning applications are fair and consistent. We're also interested to hear suggestions for newly emerging areas we could introduce policies for (e.g. self-build housing, custom-build housing), and what approach we should take for them.

YOUR VIEW

**Q19:** *Are there any of our policies that need changing, if so why, and are there any new emerging topics we should be introducing policies on?*

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## Anything else?

YOUR VIEW

**Q20:** *Do you have any other comments you would like to make?*

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<sup>15</sup> [www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/corestrategy) and [www.southoxon.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/localplan)

## Join in!

This consultation period on the Local Plan 2031 Refined Options starts on Thursday 19 February and ends on Thursday 2 April 2015.

If you want to comment formally on our proposals we encourage you to fill in the questionnaire on our website or email us your comments as they are the quickest and cheapest methods of replying. You can also send us your comments by post to the address below. Responding means we will automatically notify you of future consultation exercises.



**website:** [www.southoxon.gov.uk/planning-policy](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/planning-policy)  
**email:** [planning.policy@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@southoxon.gov.uk)



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# What happens next...

1

After this consultation we will analyse all the responses and produce a consultation summary of what we've learnt from what people told us.



2

## Preferred Options

We'll test options through sustainability appraisal, looking at their traffic and landscape impact, at the need for schools, outdoor recreation and other facilities, and check their deliverability. We'll prepare a preferred options document, showing options for site allocations and new policies that we've considered and which ones we plan to take forward. There will be a public consultation on the preferred options, and again we'll produce a consultation summary from this showing the results.



3

## Publication of the Draft Local Plan

Then we will prepare a submission plan and hold a further public consultation on it.



4

## Submission and Examination

We'll then submit it and all its associated background evidence and consultation responses for examination by an independent Planning Inspector, who will hold public hearing sessions.



5

## Adoption

Once we've received the Inspector's report and if necessary consulted on any recommended changes, we'll adopt the plan as part of our development plan.



6

## Monitoring and Implementation

We then monitor to check whether the plan policies and allocated sites are being implemented as planned.



You can see the timetable for our plan in our Local Development Scheme  
[www.southoxon.gov.uk/lds](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/lds)



