5.0 How we will deliver new green infrastructure

5.1 This section sets out how we will deliver new green infrastructure within the district.

Existing green infrastructure assets

5.2 Map 2 in section 2 shows the existing green infrastructure assets within the district. In accordance with Policy CSG1: ‘Green Infrastructure’ of the emerging Core Strategy, proposals for new development will be required to contribute towards the delivery of new green infrastructure assets to meet identified needs or deficiencies and towards the improvement and enhancement of existing green infrastructure.

5.3 The council’s Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17 Assessment of Sport and Recreation Facilities 2008 identified where there are shortfalls in the provision of green space for the major towns and larger villages of South Oxfordshire. This section builds on the information published in the PPG17 assessment. It looks at the existing shortfalls in the provision of green space whilst also taking into account any increase in these shortfalls which will be created by the proposed new housing set out in the council’s Core Strategy.

5.4 We used population data from the Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) profile of December 2006 as a baseline. This data is more up to date than that used for the PPG17 assessment and is considered to show a more accurate profile of the settlement’s populations. The existing shortfalls in provision of green space therefore differ in this strategy when compared with the shortfalls identified in the PPG17 assessment.

5.5 We looked at the identified shortfalls in provision of green space in the three market towns (Henley, Thame and Wallingford), and for the larger villages proposed for new housing in the period up to 2026. Didcot has been looked at separately as part of the Didcot Green Space Network project\(^5\). A brief summary of the recommendations of the Didcot study are contained at Appendix 5.

Addressing the need for South Oxfordshire’s main towns

Parks and Gardens

5.6 Parks and gardens are multi-functional greenspaces which are used for informal recreation (including community events such as firework displays and fetes), plus other activities such as outdoor sports activities and

\(^5\) Didcot Greenspace Network – Feasibility Study, March 2008
Delivery of new green infrastructure – the towns

children’s play.

5.7 The standard of provision for parks and gardens is 3.5ha per 1000 people within 1000m of all homes within the district’s main towns. The shortfall for parks and gardens was predicted for 2026 based on estimates of population growth. Estimated population growth was calculated using proposed housing allocations outlined in the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy Preferred Options and the average household occupancy for 2026 based on Oxfordshire Data Observatory predicted figures of 2.19 people per house by 2026. Table 2 summarises the identified shortfalls for Wallingford, Thame and Henley.

Table 2: Summary of existing and predicted shortfall in the provision of parks and gardens for the main towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Pop 2001</th>
<th>Current provision</th>
<th>Current shortfall ha</th>
<th>Proposed housing to 2026</th>
<th>Pop growth predicted to 2026</th>
<th>Shortfall for proposed housing ha</th>
<th>Total shortfall ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>10513</td>
<td>17.06</td>
<td>19.73</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>21.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thame</td>
<td>10886</td>
<td>25.71</td>
<td>12.39</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1861.5</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>18.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallingford</td>
<td>8019</td>
<td>23.21</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>1861.5</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>11.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ha = hectares

Accessible natural and semi-natural greenspace

5.8 Accessible natural and semi-natural green spaces consist of sites that provide for wildlife conservation, biodiversity, environmental education and awareness. The criteria for assessing accessible natural greenspace is based on distance from a settlement as opposed to population size. The standard for provision of accessible natural greenspace is a minimum of one site in each of the categories listed below in table 2. Table 3 summarises the accessible natural greenspace shortfall for Wallingford, Thame and Henley.

Table 3: The number of accessible natural greenspace sites needed for each town

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Deficit in 2 – 20ha sites within 2km</th>
<th>Deficit in 20 – 100ha sites within 5km</th>
<th>Deficit in 100 – 500ha sites within 10km</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Henley</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thame</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallingford</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.9 The PPG17 assessment categorises green spaces based on their primary uses but there is a degree of overlap for sites categorised as parks and

6 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facility Assessment, April 2008
7 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facility Assessment, April 2008
gardens and those classed as accessible natural greenspace, particularly in the 2 – 20ha category. This overlap has been considered when looking at potential sites that could be enhanced to address the predicted shortfall in green infrastructure for these towns. Sites can potentially be made up of a mixture of more formal recreation areas and less formal ‘natural’ areas which would be considered as accessible natural greenspace. Therefore, the areas of new greenspace identified in this strategy have been reduced by combing the two requirements. As a result it will be important that these new areas are developed to be multi-functional delivering both new accessible natural greenspace and parks type facilities.

5.10 The assessment of the need for new greenspace has been divided into two categories:
1) need associated with the existing population of a settlement and
2) need created by the requirement for new housing which is set out in the Local Development Framework.

5.11 In some settlements, notably Henley and Thame the assessment has demonstrated that there is a considerable existing deficit of greenspace according to the standards we have set. By comparison, the deficits attributable to new housing allocations can be linked directly to the proposed new development.

5.12 As set out in paragraph 2.7, one of the key underlying aims of this strategy is that it should be realistic and achievable. As a result we have prioritised the provision of the new greenspace to meet the needs created by planned new development in the Local Development Framework. We will seek to deliver these new greenspaces by working with developers, town and parish councils and other potential funding partners. We will also look to deliver these greenspaces within the plan period of the Core Strategy, which runs to 2026, (subject to development going ahead).

5.13 The existing deficits are also considered in this strategy and where possible preferred sites have been identified. The delivery of these areas is a longer term ambition of the Council but it is not possible at this stage to be specific about timescales or funding options.

5.14 The rest of section 5 shows the options we have considered for improving the green space provision in each settlement. It shows the Council’s preferred options for each place. We welcome your views on the sites chosen.
Wallingford

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing shortfall of provision for parks and gardens</td>
<td>4.86 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional need for parks and gardens created by new housing development</td>
<td>6.51 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall for accessible natural greenspace</td>
<td>0 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Potential greenspace sites around Wallingford

5.15 The existing deficit for parks and gardens in Wallingford (4.86ha) combined with the need created by new housing development to 2026 (6.51ha) results in a total shortfall of 11.37ha (see Table 2). There are no shortfalls in the provision of accessible natural greenspace (the PPG17 assessment showed a need for a site in the 2-20ha category however, this is inaccurate as Wallingford Castle Meadows should have been included in this assessment which at 16.6ha meets the need).
Delivery of new green infrastructure – the towns

5.16 Figure 1 above shows alternative sites that could potentially deliver the predicted need for greenspace created by new development and to address the existing shortfall.

Option 1: Extension to Wallingford Castle Meadows, north along Thames (6.6ha). Our preferred option.

5.17 This site would deliver the predicted need of 6.51ha for Wallingford to 2026. The Thames corridor in this area is constrained from development by the flood plain and the site would link into the Thames Path. The current management of the Wallingford Castle Meadows site could be extended to cover the new area allowing the restoration of flood plain meadows and woodland. There is existing access to the site via Wallingford footpath 6 and 7 and through Castle Meadows. Footpath 6 links well with footpath 8 which provides an access from the northern residential areas of the town.

5.18 The existing Wallingford Castle Meadows site is 16.4ha. Providing this extension would create a site of 22.95ha. Whilst there is no accessible natural greenspace shortfall for Wallingford there is in Cholsey. Creating a larger site by extending Wallingford Castle Meadows would provide for the shortfall in sites in the 20 – 100ha category for Cholsey.

5.19 Extending Wallingford Castle Meadows to the north along the Thames is the preferred option. The land is not suitable for new development as it is located within the Flood Zone. The land is also of lower agricultural value than other options. There is great potential for the enhancement of landscape features and flood plain habitats. This site also links in well to existing open spaces and restoration projects.

Option 2: Extension to Wallingford Castle Meadows to the west (6.6ha)

5.20 This site would deliver the predicted need of 6.51ha for Wallingford to 2026. This is an alternative option to site 2 and has been chosen as it provides an extension to the existing Wallingford Castle Meadows site. It links to the existing residential areas to the north of Wallingford and a new path could be created linking Wallingford footpath 8 to the Thames path.

5.21 By extending the existing Wallingford Castle Meadows, this site would also meet the deficit for accessible natural greenspace in the 20 -100 ha category for Cholsey.

5.22 This site is not the preferred option as it does not follow the line of the Thames which is a wildlife corridor, and it also does not have the same potential for enhancement as the preferred option.

Option 3: Wantage Road east side (6.6ha)
Delivery of new green infrastructure – the towns

5.23 This site would deliver the predicted need of 6.51ha for Wallingford to 2026. The site has been chosen as it would provide for the existing shortfall in provision of parks and gardens. This would also provide additional greenspace on the western edge of the town which is partially outside the 1000m distance criteria for parks and gardens. The site could be managed as an area of open parkland suitable for informal recreation.

5.24 This is not the preferred option as it is flat arable land with few landscape features. It also does not link to any existing areas of biodiversity or wildlife importance.

Recommended approach for achieving the shortfall at Wallingford

5.25 It is recommended that Option 1, an extension to Wallingford Castle Meadows is the preferred option for Wallingford. This site links well into existing facilities, it makes sense in landscape terms and has great potential to provide biodiversity benefits.

5.26 The choice of this site meets the requirement for greenspace created by the development proposed in the Local Development Framework and the assessed shortfall in accessible natural greenspace for Cholsey.
Thame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing shortfall of provision for parks and gardens</th>
<th>12.39 ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional need for parks and gardens created by new housing development</td>
<td>6.51 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall for accessible natural greenspace</td>
<td>1 x 20-100ha site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Potential greenspace sites around Thame

5.27 The existing shortfall of parks and gardens in Thame (12.39ha) combined with the need created by new housing development to 2026 (6.51ha) results in a total shortfall of 18.90 ha (see table 2). There is also a shortfall of accessible natural greenspace for a site in the 20-100ha category (see table 3). Figure 2 above shows alternative sites that could potentially deliver the predicted need for greenspace created by new development and address the existing shortfall.
Option 1: Extending the existing Cuttle Brook Nature reserve to the south along the Cuttle Brook (6.5ha). Our preferred option

Parks and gardens

5.28 This area would meet the predicted need of parks and gardens for the planned new housing in Thame to 2026. The Cuttle Brook Local Nature Reserve is a well used resource providing access to natural habitats such as meadows, ponds, swamp and woodland as well as facilities such as paths, interpretation and a picnic area. Extending the existing reserve to the south would allow the expansion of these important habitats and facilities and create new areas for public enjoyment and informal recreation. Initial assessments of this area suggest that it is already wildlife rich and would provide a significant addition to the existing local nature reserve.

5.29 The site is already well linked into the centre of Thame with footpaths and other access points as well as the link to the Sustrans Phoenix Trail which runs through the southern end of the expanded reserve. This site is adjacent to the preferred option for new housing in Thame and is constrained in development terms due to the flood plain of the Cuttlebrook.

Accessible Natural Greenspace

5.30 The existing Cuttle Brook Nature reserve measures approximately 15ha. Extending this site south to address the shortfall created by new housing (6.5ha) would create a site of approximately 21.5ha. This would also address the identified shortfall in accessible natural greenspace in the 20-100ha category. This is shown in Figure 3 below. This option has all the benefits mentioned above for Option 1.

5.31 This is the preferred option for both the provision of green space to meet the created by new housing at Thame of the total shortfall for green space in the longer term.
Figure 3. Existing (green) and potential (blue) accessible natural green space provision for Thame in relation to the following accessible natural green space standards:

- A 2 to 20ha site within 2km of settlement
- A 20 to 100ha site within 5km of settlement
- A 100 to 500ha site within 5km of settlement

Option 2: Extending the existing Cuttle Brook nature reserve North (7.0ha).

Parks and gardens

5.32 This area would meet the predicted shortfall of parks and gardens for the planned new housing in Thame to 2026. As with Option 1 this option would provide an extension to the existing local nature reserve but to the North. This site has not been chosen as the preferred option as it does not relate well to the preferred sites for new housing in Thame contained in the emerging Core Strategy.
Accessible Natural Greenspace

5.33 The existing Cuttle Brook Nature reserve measures approximately 15ha. The extension of this site north to address the shortfall created by new housing (6.5ha) would create a site of approximately 22ha. This would create a 20-100ha site within 5km of the town centre. This would address the identified shortfall accessible natural greenspace for Thame. Extending the local nature reserve to the North would provide similar benefits to those mentioned for option 1.

5.34 This site has not been chosen as a preferred option as it does not relate well to the proposed areas for new housing in Thame contained in the emerging Core Strategy.

Option 3: Northern Thame along River Thame (7.4ha)

Parks and gardens

5.35 This area would meet the predicted shortfall of parks and gardens for the planned new housing in Thame to 2026. This site has been chosen as it is well linked to the existing public rights of way and extends to the banks of the River Thame. There are opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement as well as providing areas for more formal recreational use.

5.36 This is not a preferred option as it is remote from the preferred option for new housing provision contained in the emerging Core Strategy.

Accessible Natural Greenspace

5.37 The full extent of Option 3, measuring 19.9 ha, would deliver the total predicted shortfall of 18.91ha for Thame to 2026. It would also meet the identified shortfall in accessible natural greenspace in the 20-100ha category. The area has been chosen as an alternative option as it is well connected by Thame bridleway 2 and Thame footpath 10 to the larger residential estate to the north of the town. The site extends along the banks of the River Thame.

5.38 This is not a preferred option as it is remote from the preferred option for new housing provision contained in the emerging Core Strategy.

Recommended approach for achieving the shortfall at Thame

5.39 It is recommended that Option 1, an extension to the Cuttlebrook Local Nature Reserve to the south is the preferred option for Thame. The site links well with existing facilities and is easily accessible from the town and via the Sustrans cycle route. There are opportunities on this site to provide significant habitat enhancements as well as facilities for the public.

5.40 The choice of this site would meet the requirement for greenspace created by the housing development proposed in the Local Development Framework. The existing shortfall in greenspace for Thame is large at
18.9ha. The preferred option for delivering this is again by extending Cuttlebrook Local Nature Reserve to the South. This has all the benefits outlined above and would also meet the shortfall in accessible natural greenspace sites in the 20 – 100 category for Thame.

Henley on Thames

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing shortfall of provision for parks and gardens</td>
<td>19.74 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional need for parks and gardens created by new housing development</td>
<td>1.92 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall for accessible natural greenspace</td>
<td>0 ha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Potential greenspace sites in Henley

5.41 Henley currently has a large shortfall of parks and gardens of 19.74ha. This combined with the need created by new housing development to 2026 (1.92ha) creates a total shortfall of 22.04ha (see table 2). There is no
5.42 Figure 4 above shows alternative sites that could potentially deliver the predicted shortfall in green space to meet the need created by new housing the total shortfall (1.92 ha).

5.43 Allocations for housing sites have not been made for Henley within the emerging Core Strategy as this will be dealt with as part of the our Site Allocations Document. The sites set out below in Figure 4 provide several options for how the need created by new housing and the existing deficiency can be met. A preferred option has not been selected as this will need to be informed by the location of the housing sites.

Option 1: South of Gillotts Lane (3.0ha)
5.44 This site would deliver the predicted need of 1.92ha for Henley to 2026 as a result of new housing development. This site would extend the existing open space at Gillotts Field towards the south. It is well linked to the existing public rights of way network and the main residential areas of southern Henley.

5.45 Gillotts Field has been developed as a public resource and has benefited from significant amounts of tree planting and is gradually being restored into a wildflower meadow. The area is already well used by local people for informal recreation.

5.46 The extension of Gillotts Field to the South is the preferred option. It would allow the extension of the existing management, bring conservation benefits and link to the Conservation Target Area to the South of Henley.

5.47 The full extent of Site 1 is connected with existing areas of accessible countryside via Harpsden footpath 8 including Lucy’s Copse proposed county wildlife site and areas of ancient woodland. It is also well connected to a broad network of public rights of way that extend out to the west of the Henley area. The site forms part of the Conservation Target Area.

Option 2: North of Valley Road (2.1ha)
5.48 This site would deliver the predicted need of 1.92ha for Henley to 2026. This site is adjacent to the Valley Road Chalk Bank and could provide and extension to this existing green space. It is well connected to existing residential areas and Henley town centre.

5.49 The full extent of site 2 is close to Henley town centre and well linked with Henley footpath 6 and 29 to residential areas. It is linked to the Hernes county wildlife site to the immediate north and Henley footpath 8 which links to the broader network of public rights of way extending west of the Henley area.
Option 3: South of Friar Park Estate (2.5ha)

5.50 This site would deliver the predicted need of 1.92ha for Henley to 2026. This site is well linked to the existing public rights of way. It forms a single field with a large spinney of trees at the centre which would enable the use of the site to be divided up incorporating parkland and a potential woodland trail. This site is not as close to the main residential areas of Henley but is well linked by Henley Footpath 8 to the residential area around Blandy Road and Henley bridleway 22 to the town centre.

5.51 The full extent of Site 3 contains important wildlife habitats (calcareous grassland) which form part of the existing Hernes County Wildlife Site. The site is also within the Nature Conservation Target Area.

Option 4: South of Blandy Road (2.0ha)

5.52 This site would deliver the predicted shortfall of 1.92ha for Henley to 2026. This site follows the line of the existing bridleway 20 which is well linked to existing housing.

5.53 The full extent of site 4 extends south from Blandy Road and is well linked to the southern residential areas of Henley by bridleway 20 and the town centre by Henley footpath 2. It provides a link to Harpsden Wood SSSI via Harpsden footpath 23 to the south of the town and forms part of the nature conservation target area.