

WOODCOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
2013 - 2035

Sustainability Appraisal

Scoping Report

October 2020

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Introduction

Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 - 2035

In May 2014 South Oxfordshire District Council 'made' the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2012 – 2027 (the current plan, WNP1) following successful Examination and Referendum.

The Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 – 2035 (referred to in this document as WNP2) updates the current Plan to reflect the changes required by the new South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2035) and other relevant plan and policy requirements.

Report Purpose

This document is the scoping report for a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating the requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Woodcote Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNP2) and describes the procedure which the team producing the Plan will follow to effect that assessment.

The purpose of sustainability appraisal is to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are incorporated into all levels of planning policy including the WNP. Sustainability appraisal is a requirement of the EC Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'SEA Directive') on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and is enshrined in UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (The Regulations).

Sustainability appraisal applies to plans with significant environmental effects. Woodcote is entirely situated within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB), a 'sensitive' area. It is possible that WNP2 will allocate sites for development that have not already been appraised in the Sustainability Appraisal in the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan or WNP1, the current Neighbourhood Plan, and thus a sustainability appraisal is required.

Report Structure

This report is presented in six Sections:

1. **Section One** provides an introduction to Woodcote and the objectives of its Neighbourhood Plan;
2. **Section Two** describes the methodology to be used to effect the SA and SEA;
3. **Section Three** identifies the relevant plans, policies and programmes of others;
4. **Section Four** presents the sustainability baseline data and identifies the sustainability challenges;
5. **Section Five** provides the sustainability goals; and
6. **Section Six** proposes the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

Report Status

This scoping report has been reviewed by the Statutory Consultees (the Environment Agency, English Nature and English Heritage). Appendix II contains copies of the Statutory Consultees' returns and the Woodcote Parish Council response

Section 1: Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

1.1 Woodcote Parish

The designated area of the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2035 is the parish of Woodcote which is located (Figure 1.1) some 10 miles to the north west of Reading in the South Oxfordshire District. The parish boundary is shown by the orange line on Figure 1.2.



Figure 1.1 Woodcote in South Oxfordshire



Figure 1.2 Area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan

The parish:

- Is within, and forms part of, the Chilterns AONB; and
- overlooks, and is visible from, the North Wessex Downs AONB.

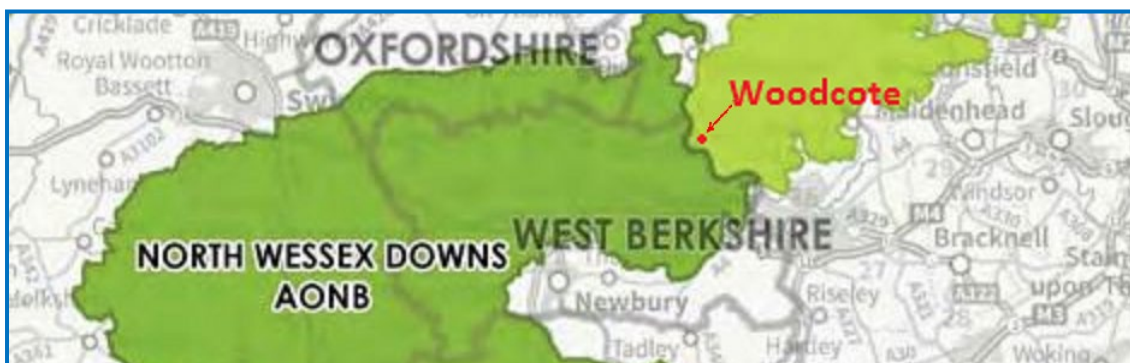


Figure 1.3: Woodcote within the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs

1.2 Plan Vision, Goals and Objectives

1.2.1 A Vision for Woodcote

Woodcote is a village of some 2600 people located entirely within the Chilterns AONB. Following rapid development in the 1970s, it is now a well-established, vibrant, active community with, for example, some 40-plus clubs and societies. The village's location within the AONB makes it an attractive place to live but house prices are very high. Poor public transport has led to car ownership being substantially higher than that nationally.

Any vision must balance what the community wants against the constraints of planning policy and what can be delivered.

The Community Need

Woodcote is fortunate in having the documented results of consultation and workshops conducted over more than 40 years. These consistently show a community that:

- values and wishes to conserve the landscape of the AONB;
- is concerned about road safety and traffic volumes;
- is concerned about high house prices preventing young people moving to the village;
- is concerned about the impact of development on the local primary school;
- is concerned about over development of the village.

Recent surveys have shown a substantial increase in concern for sustainability and the desire to reduce the community's carbon footprint.

Planning Policies

The NPPF and both the Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan are strongly committed to conserving the nationally designated landscape of the AONB. In particular, the NPPF recognises the need for major development within an AONB to be justified by a local need that cannot be met elsewhere.

Practicality

A vision must be aware that funding for major infrastructure projects or local services may not be available.

The Vision

This, and future Neighbourhood Plans, will continue to support the development of Woodcote as a village that is a pleasant place to live and:

- **that retains its vitality and vibrancy by providing a housing mix that is accessible to younger people and facilities, such as a well-supported and popular primary school, medical services and a social centre, that are attractive to younger families;**
- **in which the rural location, landscape and green spaces are conserved and enhanced for future generations to enjoy;**
- **in which cycling and walking are promoted, and roads are safe for pedestrians and motorists;**
- **for which the developed footprint is controlled to conserve the AONB;**
- **which sits lightly upon the planet continuously contributing to a reduction of net greenhouse gas emissions and increasing support for wildlife and biodiversity.**

1.2.2 Goals

The vision leads directly to the seven goals of the WNP.

1. To provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home.
2. To seek opportunities for landscape, recreational and biodiversity gain while minimising the environmental impact of development.
3. To reduce the contribution to climate change by seeking to minimise or reduce the impact of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
4. To reduce the need for travel by car and shorten the length and duration of local journeys.
5. To reduce road traffic congestion.
6. To enhance the prospects for local employment.
7. To maintain the character and vitality of the village.

1.2.3 Objectives

Table 1.1 lists the objectives of WNP2 and maps their contribution to each of the plan goals.

The objectives are placed into five categories: Housing, Environment, Movement Traffic & Transport, Economy, and Community.

Housing		Goal						
	Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
H1	To provide new housing to meet local community needs; including a greater range of affordable housing for Woodcote residents.	X						
H2	To provide a mix of housing types including smaller homes for elderly villagers wishing to downsize and new homes for families.	X						X
H3	To limit new developments to no more than 30 homes.							X
H4	To give preferential access to some new homes for people with a strong local connection	X						X

Table 1.1 Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan Objectives

Environment		Goal						
	Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
En1	To protect and enhance the village's open spaces.							X
En2	To protect, enhance and conserve the AONB, landscape and views.		X					
En3	To protect and enhance the historic environment of the village and District.		X					
En4	To conserve and enhance biodiversity.		X					
En5	To use land efficiently and to preserve high quality agricultural land.		X					
En6	To position development in order to avoid increasing pollution from traffic congestion.					X		
En7	To ensure that new development is of high-quality design with a low carbon footprint			X				
En8	To ensure that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and flooding.	X						
En9	To reduce the need for travel by car within the parish.			X	X			

Movement, Travel and Transport		Goal						
	Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
T1	To position development within easy walking distance of bus stops, the schools, the health centre, a shop and other village facilities.				X			
T2	To link all developments to the village centre with footpaths, where appropriate.				X			
T3	To position new development such that current problems with congestion, parking and road safety are not exacerbated and, if possible, reduced.					X		
T4	To create new car parks to alleviate the worst areas of congestion within the built-up area.					X		

Economy		Goal						
	Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ec1	To encourage and support home working.			X	X	X		
Ec2	To provide local affordable housing for local employees.						x	
Ec3	To provide a net increase in sites for future employment within the parish.			X	X	X	X	

Community		Goal						
	Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
C1	To integrate new housing into Woodcote such that today's rural look and feel and open character of the developed area is maintained.		X					X
C2	To provide homes for younger people and young families and so counter the growing demographic imbalance.	X						X
C3	To preserve important village assets.							X

Table 1.1 Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan Objectives (Continued)

Section Two: Method

2.1 Scoping the Sustainability Assessment

Planning Policy Guidance sets out a six-stage process for undertaking SEA for a Neighbourhood Plan (see Figure 2.1)

Proposals in the emerging version of the updated WNP will be assessed for environmental impact in accordance with this process.

Stage A: Screening has been completed and the location of Woodcote in an AONB and the probable likelihood that the WNP2 will recommend additional development in the AONB means that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan requires Sustainability Appraisal.

Stage B: Scoping the SEA:

This document is the scoping report required by Section B of the recommended assessment process. The approach to its production has followed five essential steps:

- Describe the objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- Identify the policy and sustainability context;
- Collect baseline information and identify the sustainability challenges;
- Identify the sustainability goals; and
- Describe the sustainability framework.

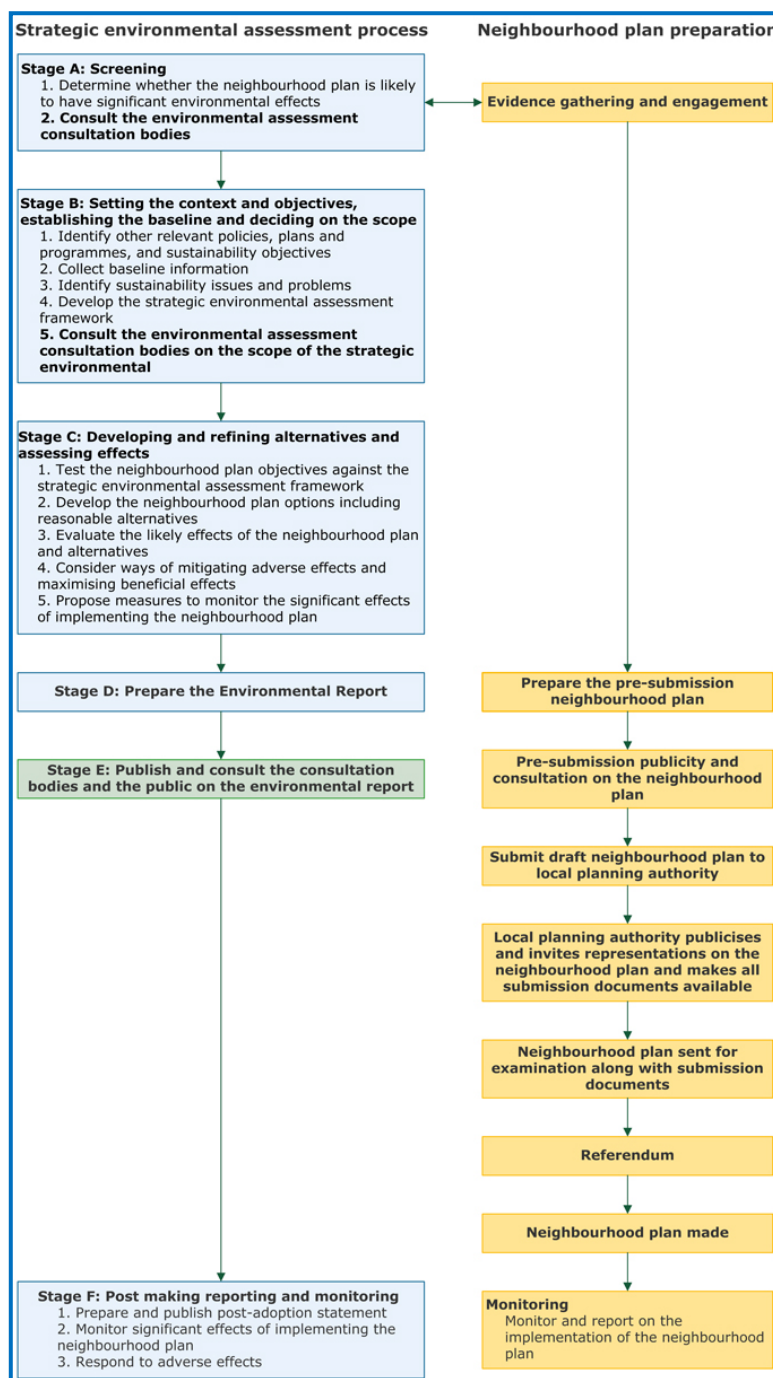


Figure 2.1: Recommended Approach to Sustainability Assessment

Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency will then be consulted on the framework.

Section Three: Policy Context

3.1 Requirement

The requirement to undertake a review of the policy context arises from the SEA Directive which states that the Environmental Report should include:

“an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes”

“the environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation”

Annex 1(a) and (e)

The primary policy context for the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan is the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2013-2035. Woodcote is a parish within South Oxfordshire and the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan must be in general strategic compliance with the local plan. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan must itself identify and consider the sustainability objectives of relevant policies, plans and programmes and, as such, if the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan complies with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan then it will comply with the relevant international and UK objectives.

This section of the Scoping Report focuses on the sustainability policies that apply specifically to Woodcote, a village entirely within the Chilterns AONB and with a made Neighbourhood Plan.

The results of the review have been used to identify the key policies applicable to the WNP2 and, using the baseline data, to identify the sustainability challenges.

In so doing, we note that Local Plans and key policies applicable to Neighbourhood Development Plans can change. The Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan will, therefore, be reviewed every five years and revised should that be necessary.

3.2 Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Although the NPPF applies nationally and, therefore, to the Local Plan there are particular elements that deal with development in designated areas such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty:

- i. **Paragraph 11** which states that, although the NPPF has a presumption in favour of sustainable development at its heart, *“Strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area”*. The protection of AONBs is identified as a reason for restricting development.
- ii. **Paragraph 170** which requires that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes in a manner commensurate with their statutory status.

- iii. **Paragraph 171** which requires that plans should:
 - a. distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national, and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; and
 - b. take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
- iv. **Paragraph 172** which requires that:
 - a. great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.
 - b. the scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest
- v. **Paragraph 174** which requires that local ecologically rich habitats be safeguarded and conserved.
- vi. **Paragraph 110** which requires that priority be given to pedestrian and cycle movements, to addressing the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility, and developing places that are secure, safe and attractive

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035

Many policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 require the protection of the AONB and local ecologies. For example:

- **ENV1** Landscape and Countryside
- **ENV2** Biodiversity of non-designated sites
- **DES8** Efficient use of resources

Other policies must be considered:

- i. seek to protect the historic environment:
 - **ENV6** Historic environment
 - **ENV9** Archaeology and scheduled monuments
 - **ENV10** Historic battlefields, registered parks and gardens and historic landscape
- ii. recognise the difficulties faced by small, relatively isolated, poorly serviced communities such as Woodcote:
 - **INF1** Infrastructure provision
 - **TRANS2** Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility
 - **EMP3** Retention of employment land
- iii. seek to address the very high cost of housing in the district and in villages like Woodcote in particular:
 - **H9** Affordable housing
- iv. In addition, policies:
 - **ENV12** Pollution – impact of development on human health
 - **INF4** Water resources

A major feature of the parish of Woodcote, and hence the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan, is its location entirely within the Chilterns AONB and on the Chilterns Escarpment overlooking the Thames. As such the following policy documents have been reviewed as having particular relevance to this Neighbourhood Plan and, where appropriate, incorporated within the Sustainability Appraisal Framework objectives.

Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (Chilterns Conservation Board)

The *Chilterns AONB Management Plan* contains a comprehensive summary of the key issues facing the AONB and the management actions needed to conserve this special place.

North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2024 (North Wessex Downs Council of Partners)

There are views out of the North Wessex Downs AONB into Woodcote. The Management Plan describes how the primary purpose of AONB designation (to conserve and enhance their natural beauty) will be delivered. This includes preserving views into, and from, both the AONBs

South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (SOLA)

The South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment places Woodcote in Character area 8 – the Chilterns Escarpment and contains landscape policies particular to the area within which the parish is located. In support of the Core Strategy 2012- 2027 the SOLA noted that the escarpment is

“the most visually significant and distinctive landform unit within the whole District. It comprises the steep face and top of the Chilterns escarpment, which forms a dramatic backdrop to the low-lying landscape of the vale to the northwest”.

and that for this landscape

‘large-scale development of any kind will be inappropriate within open countryside areas in general but particularly within the Chilterns AONB’.

Historic England

Advice notes from Historic England have also been consulted, these include:

- a. the Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans;
- b. Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment; and
- c. Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Historic England Advice Note 8.

The Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2027

The Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 – 2027 was approved by 92% of the residents of Woodcote on a turnout of 59% - an absolute majority of those entitled to vote in the referendum – and made by South Oxfordshire District Council in May 2014.

Woodcote Village Appraisals 1984, 1991, and 2000

Woodcote Parish Plan 2008

The survey supporting the Parish Plan and each of the Appraisals were completed and returned by 85% of Woodcote households. They provide detailed, quantitative data on what the residents have seen as important for Woodcote over the last 35 years, and their views on how they would like the village to develop.

Planning for the Future

In August 2020 HM Government launched the Planning for the Future consultation which proposed reforms of the planning system. The proposed reforms have the aim of improving sustainability and, by designating AONBs as ‘protected Areas’ continuing to restrict development to protect the nation’s ‘treasured heritage like Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and National Parks’.

Although these are unlikely to result in policy changes before the WNP2 goes to examination note has been taken of the intent to protect the AONBs and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

3.3 Key Messages for Woodcote from the Context Review

Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 summarise the key policy messages for Woodcote.

3.3.1 Environment, Conservation and Sustainability

Woodcote is located on the Chilterns escarpment, entirely within the Chilterns AONB and is part of the view across the river Thames at the Goring Gap from the North Wessex Downs AONB. Environmental conservation and enhancement is of high importance and the landscape, conservation and sustainability policies of the National Planning Policy Framework are, therefore, particularly relevant as are those of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035 and the two AONB Management Bodies. Table 3.1 lists the key environmental, conservation and sustainability message.

3.3.2 Social

Woodcote is small community with no ‘village centre’, limited services (3 shops, a primary and secondary school located at various locations around the built-up area. The Post office has closed, housing is expensive, and the community is ageing. Table 3.2 lists the key social sustainability messages for Woodcote.

3.3.3 Economy

A recent survey of the community (January 2017) showed two thirds of adults to be working, comparable to the 2011 census data which also showed fewer than 3% of economically active residents to be unemployed. Of the two-thirds of adults who work 67% work outside the parish, 15% work from home and the remainder work in the village. Table 3.3 lists the key economic sustainability messages for Woodcote.

Plan Element	No.	Message
Landscape	En1	Great weight must be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in the Chilterns AONB. The transition from built-up area to countryside must not degrade the quality and character of the countryside within the AONB.
Biodiversity	En2	Great weight must be given to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the parish and consideration of the provision of new habitats when planning developments.
Efficient Land Use	En3	Plans must make efficient use of land by avoiding low density developments with fewer than 25 dwellings per hectare net. Development sites must be allocated using a structured approach to prioritise sites that use previously-developed land and land of lesser environmental value.
Water quality	En4	Plans must ensure that development protects and enhances the water environment.
Heritage	En5	Plans must conserve the historic environment, including designated and undesignated buildings, monuments, and historic sites, places, and landscapes.
Light Pollution	En6	The impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity and the intrinsically dark landscape of the AONB must be limited.
Carbon Footprint	En7	New developments must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. support the transition to a low carbon future and encourage the use of renewable resources and energy efficiency; b. be sited to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling; and c. contribute to the Government’s zero carbon buildings policies.
Movement	En8	Plans should reduce car dependence in households by facilitating home working, walking and cycling, and support good public transport links to new developments.
Services accessibility	En9	Plans should ensure that jobs, shopping, health, leisure facilities, meeting places and services are accessible by foot, by cycle or by public transport.

Table 3.1 Key Environmental, Conservation Sustainability Messages for Woodcote

Plan Element	No.	Message
Housing	S1	Plans should ensure that housing development contributes to meeting the social and economic needs of Woodcote, sustains the vibrancy of the village, and that new housing helps Woodcote better meet the demand for affordable housing in the village. Plans should provide a mix of housing accessible to, and meeting the needs of, the different groups in the community such as young families, families with children, older people, and people with disabilities.
Ageing Population	S2	Plans should ensure that development is designed with the needs of disabled people and an ageing population in mind.
Services	S3	Plans should ensure that the needs of those living and working in new village developments can be met from existing, or easily enlarged, local services (schools, shops, transport, health and leisure facilities, and community meeting places).
Recreation	S4	Plans should protect open spaces, sports and recreation facilities valued by the community.
Community cohesion/ Meeting Places	S5	Plans should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ensure that all new developments provide safe pedestrian routes, high quality public space, and encourage the active and continual use of public areas. b. plan for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of the community.
Safety	S6	Plans should create developments which are safe and where crime, disorder and fear of crime is low.
Design	S7	Plans should promote good design in new developments which is locally distinctive.

Table 3.2 Key Social Sustainability Messages for Woodcote

Plan Element	No.	Message
Local Economy	Ec1	Plans should promote the establishment of new sites for local employment.

Table 3.3 Key Economic Sustainability Messages for Woodcote

Table 3.4 shows how the key policy messages relate to the seven goals of the Plan.

Goal Key Policy Message	To provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home.	To seek opportunities for landscape, recreational and biodiversity gain while minimising the environmental impact of development	To reduce the contribution to climate change by seeking to minimise or reduce the impact of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.	To reduce the need for travel by car and shorten the length and duration of local journeys	To reduce road traffic congestion.	To enhance the prospects for local employment.	To maintain the character and vitality of the village
En1		X					
En2		X					
En3		X					
En4		X					
En5							X
En6		X					
En7			X	X	X		
En8			X	X	X		
En9			X	X	X		
S1	X					X	X
S2	X						
S3	X						X
S4		X					X
S5				X	X		X
S6	X				X		X
S7							X
Ec1						X	

Table 3.4 Plan Goals versus Key Policy Messages

Section Four: Sustainability Context & Challenges

4.1 Introduction

This section provides baseline information for the parish of Woodcote (the designated area of the Neighbourhood Plan) as required by the Directive. Baseline information for the neighbourhood will be provided under the headings listed below:

- Landscape and townscape
- Soils and geology
- Nature conservation (biodiversity, flora and fauna)
- Air quality and climate factors
- Water
- Human population
- Human health
- Material assets
- Heritage and archaeology
- Employment and jobs
- Education and skills

4.2 Baseline Information

4.2.1 Landscape

The parish of Woodcote is entirely within the Chilterns AONB as shown in Figure 4.1 and overlooks, and is overlooked by, the North Wessex Downs AONB.



Figure 4.1 Woodcote in the Chilterns AONB

Landscape Character

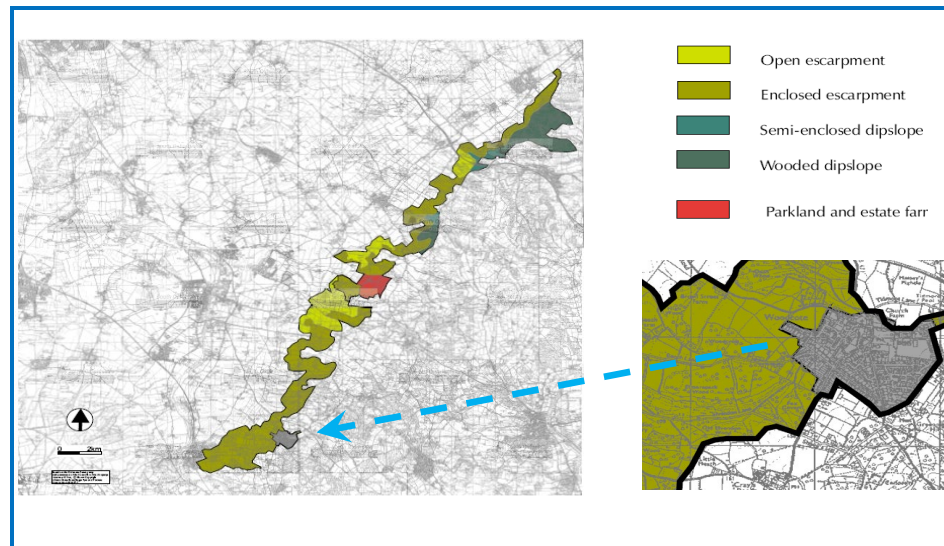
Woodcote straddles two Landscape Character Areas designated as LCA 8 (Chilterns Escarpment) and LCA 10 (Chilterns Plateau with Valleys) in the 2017 South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment.

The Chilterns Escarpment comprises the steep face and top of the Chilterns escarpment which falls dramatically from Woodcote to the River Thames and the Goring Gap. The previous South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment describes the escarpment as forming:

“the most visually significant and distinctive landform unit within the whole District. It comprises the steep face and top of the Chilterns escarpment, which forms a dramatic backdrop to the low-lying landscape of the vale to the northwest”.

The Chilterns Plateau with Valleys forms part of the Chilterns dip slope, and is described as a gently sloping plateau dissected by an irregular pattern of shallow valleys.

Figure 4.2
Woodcote and the
Escarpment



The SOLA further states in the section entitled “*Planning and Development Issues*”:

- (a) “*Large-scale development of any kind will be inappropriate within open countryside areas in general but particularly within the Chilterns AONB. The ability of the landscape to accommodate smaller-scale development will depend upon the potential impacts on distinctive landscape and settlement character; the potential impacts on intrinsic landscape quality; valued features and the overall sensitivity of the landscape to change and the visual sensitivity of the receiving landscape.*”
- (b) “*where the landscape is of particularly high scenic quality, is unspoilt, retains a strong, intact landscape structure and sense of place, and often contains areas or features of ecological or cultural heritage significance. In these landscapes, conservation is an overwhelming priority in order to maintain landscape character and quality.*”

Sustainability Challenge

The Chilterns AONB was designated for the natural beauty of its landscape, its natural and cultural heritage and, in particular, to protect its special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower rich downland, woodlands and commons. Woodcote sits astride that escarpment and is central to the view across the river Thames from the North Wessex Downs AONB. As such NPPF policies (especially paragraphs 170, 171 and 172) which highlight the need to ensure AONBs are given suitable protection are particularly relevant when producing the Neighbourhood Plan.

The sustainability challenge for the new Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan is, therefore, to ensure that any proposed development:

- conserves and enhances the special qualities and characteristics of the Chilterns AONB;
- is not, nor cannot be, cumulative as the effect over time can create a more crowded landscape with an array of associated, often unplanned or even unforeseen, features and structures;
- protects the views both out and back to the Chilterns AONB, including views into Woodcote from the North Wessex Downs AONB escarpment;
- is of a scale that reflects the local context and has regard to the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB;
- does not add to light pollution;
- contributes to the management of the landscape to enable it to adapt to climate change and to help mitigate the causes; and
- is only proposed after an assessment process that includes a consideration of the impact of the development on the local landscape.

4.2.2 Soil and Geology

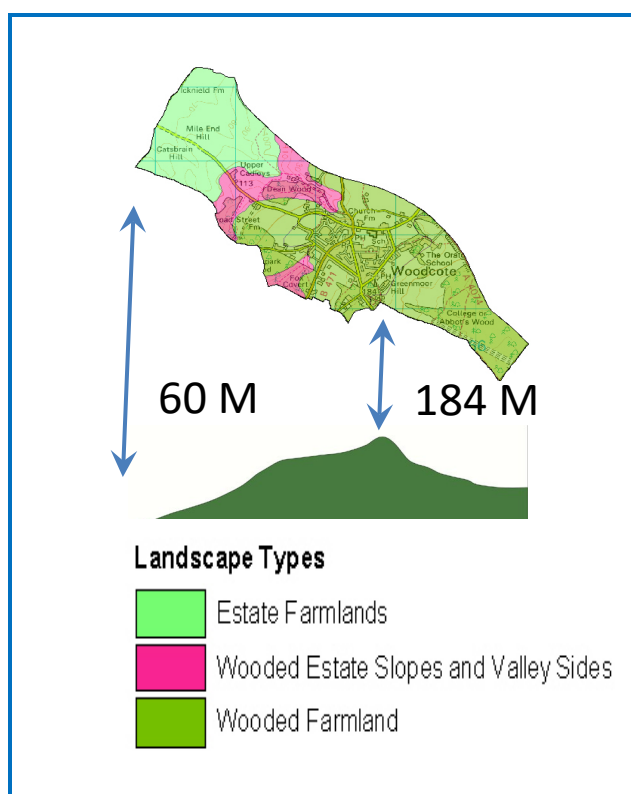
The parish of Woodcote is located on the Chiltern escarpment with the developed area concentrated in a roughly central location some 170 metres above sea level overlooking the Goring Gap.

The parish is essentially rural and surrounded by beech woods and farmland that drops down to the river valley – Figure 4.3

Figure 4.3
Land Uses in Woodcote

Land Quality

The developed area of Woodcote is enclosed by both woodlands and fields which are used for a variety of agricultural purposes. Agricultural land is classified on a scale from 1 to 5 with grades 1,2 and 3a being classed as the 'best and most versatile' for the purpose of agriculture.



4.2.3 Nature Conservation

The parish of Woodcote has one of the highest levels of biodiversity in Oxfordshire and encompasses parts of two Conservation Target Areas (CTAs).

Figure 4.3 shows the three wildlife habitats in the parish:

- Wooded Farmland. Comprising some 2/3rd of the parish this is characterised by ancient woodland and tall, thick, species-rich hedgerows. The landscape has been judged to be of prime biodiversity importance and weight must be given to the conservation of this resource.
- Estate farmland. Comprising some 25% of the parish this is a rolling agricultural landscape, largely unspoilt, characterised by medium to large, regularly-shaped hedged fields, small copses and which contains priority habitats such as ancient semi-natural woodland, species-rich hedgerows and some calcareous grassland.
- Wooded estate slopes and valley sides which comprise some 10-15% of the parish. This part of the parish is characterised by a steep escarpment and valley side with a mosaic of extensive woodland and farmland. It is a relatively small landscape type (occupying around 2.2% of the rural county) but particularly notable for its priority habitats including ancient beech woodland, species-rich hedgerows, and calcareous grassland.

Figure 4.4 reproduces the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study¹ Biomap for South Oxfordshire.

This uses 'biobands' to illustrate the extent to which areas in the county of Oxfordshire support wildlife.

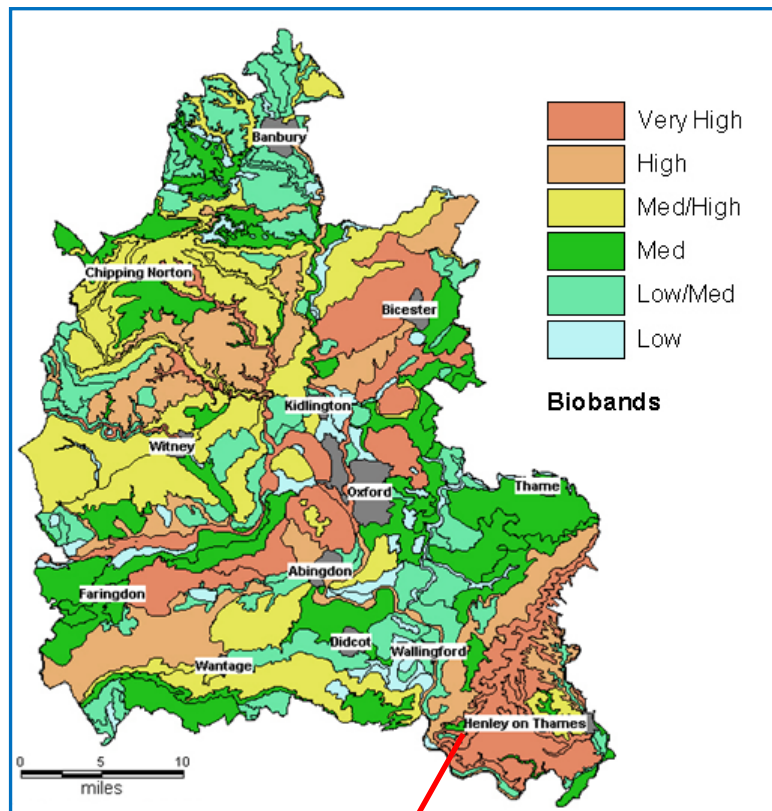
Six biobands, ranging from **Low** to **Very High**, are used.

A bioband which is classified as very high tends to support a wider range of wildlife habitats including some which may be of national or international importance.

Lower biobands generally have fewer habitats and these are usually of more local importance.

©Oxfordshire County Council

Figure 4.4 – Oxfordshire Biobands



Woodcote, as Figure 4.5 shows, is one of the most important locations for wildlife in the county with the habitat significance of some 60% of the parish being classed as **Very High** with another 25-30% being classed as **High**.

Figure 4.5
Woodcote within Oxfordshire Biobands



¹ <http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Local Wildlife Sites in Woodcote

The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre² has designated three locations in the village area as 'Local Wildlife Sites':

- i. Old Elvendon, Park and Griggs Woods
- ii. Dean Wood
- iii. Langtree House Bank

Local Wildlife Sites are a key component in the maintenance of the diversity of wildlife in the UK and although they are non-statutory sites the Neighbourhood Plan should seek to protect them.

Conservation Target Areas (CTAs)

CTAs in Oxfordshire are some of the most important areas for wildlife in the county where targeted conservation action can secure the maximum biodiversity benefits³.

Two CTAs are of particular significance to development in the parish of Woodcote:

- the Chilterns Escarpment South CTA which abuts the south western corner of the built-up area of the village – see Figure 4.6; and
- the Chilterns Escarpment South Central CTA which abuts the northern edge of the built-up area of the village – see Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.6
Chilterns
Escarpment
South CTA

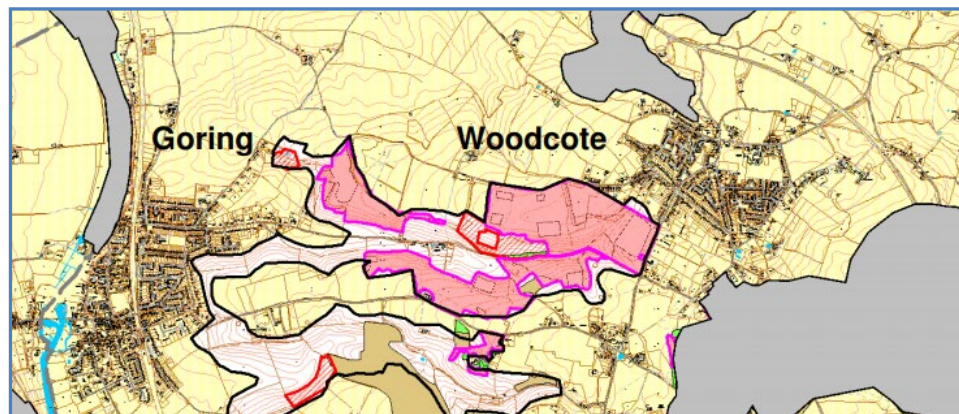
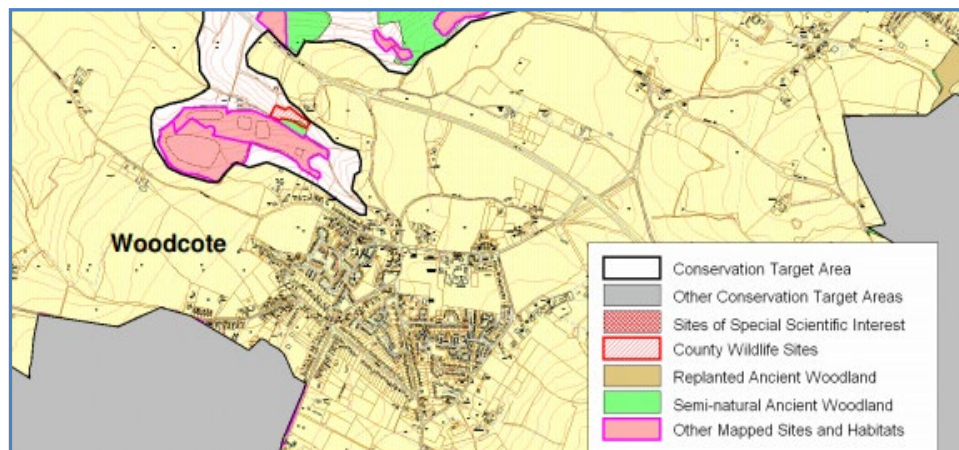


Figure 4.7
Chilterns
Escarpment
South
Central CTA



² <http://www.tverc.org>

³ Wild Oxfordshire www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk

Greenmoor Ponds

Two surveys (1990 and 2000) by Pond Conservation⁴ considered Greenmoor ponds to be to be ecologically important and judged that ‘both ponds have a very high conservation value’ with a rich fauna that include nine nationally scarce species. In addition, the ponds were considered to be within the top 15% of ponds identified by the National Pond Survey in terms of species richness. Some of the species recorded include water beetles, frogs, toads, and smooth, palmate and great crested newts (the latter were not recorded in the 2000 survey) and a wide range of plants.

Sustainability Challenge

Woodcote’s position in an area of prime biodiversity importance requires that significant weight be given to conservation when considering any development in the parish. In all cases consideration should be given to ensuring that any development increases connectivity of wildlife habitats within target areas and results in a net gain for biodiversity, to conserving trees and perimeter hedges that often have a high environmental value that is lost when they become part of gardens, and to maintaining and improving people’s access to nature.

4.2.4 Air Quality and Climate Factors

There are no Air Quality Management Areas in Woodcote and air quality in the parish is better than the national average. For example, during 2015, the annual mean level⁵ of:

- Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) was 10-20 µg m⁻³;
- Sulphur Dioxide was less than less than 3 µg m³; and
- particulate matter of **10** micrometres or less in diameter (PM10) was less than 13 µg m⁻³

The concentrations of SO₂ and PM10 fall into the lowest concentration bands whilst the NO₂ is in the second lowest band.

Climate Change

CO₂ is the major contributor to climate change. In 2014 the three largest sources of CO₂ were⁶

- Residential emissions 17%
- Energy Supply 14%
- Waste management 11%

Transport, although accounting for only 1% of CO₂ emissions nationally is among the most significant contributors to poor air quality in rural areas like Woodcote. There is an infrequent and unreliable bus service to Wallingford and Reading but other local destinations and services (such as the dentist) are only accessible by car. Recent censuses continue to show car ownership in Woodcote (Table 4.1) to be significantly higher than the local, regional and national average⁷. With limited parking congestion remains a major concern for residents and adds to vehicle emissions.

Table 4.1:
Average Cars per Dwelling

		Woodcote	South East Region	England
Census 2011	Cars/Dwelling	1.8	1.4	1.2
Survey 2017	Cars/Dwelling	2.0		

The dependency on private transport is reflected by the data in Table 4.2⁸ which shows the car ownership per household data for Woodcote.

⁴ www.pondconservation.org.uk

⁵ Source: Department for Food, Environment & Rural Affairs

⁶ Source: Department of Energy and Climate Change, 2014 UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions

⁷ Source: ONS Census 2011

⁸ Source: ONS Census 2011

Table 4.2
Cars per Household

Share (%) of households with:	Woodcote	South East	England
• Four or more cars	6	3	2
• Three cars	12	7	5
• Two cars	41	30	25
• One car	33	42	42
• No cars	8	19	26

Travel to School

Within the village there is an Academy serving local primary schools across the district, a primary school and two pre-schools. Travel to school can have a substantial effect on local traffic and contributes a large number of peak time journeys. The SODC 'Evidence Paper on School Travel Patterns (August 2007) notes that *'nearly all pupils at Woodcote Primary School are from within the settlement'*. Recent conversations with the headmistress confirm that this is still the case.

The Evidence Paper also observes that for Langtree, the secondary school:

- (a) 25% of pupils travel less than 1 km and these are nearly all from within the village of Woodcote;
- (b) 10% of pupils travel within 2 to 3km with most coming from Goring-on-Thames.
- (c) almost half of the pupils travel between 4 and 10km of the school mostly from Whitchurch and several small settlements within the District; and
- (d) a large number of pupils travel from Pangbourne, Purley, Caversham and Reading which are all outside the district but along the southern district boundary.

Sustainability Challenge

All new developments will add to the community's CO₂ emissions. Effective insulation and the use of renewable energy sources such as solar panels will reduce residential and other emissions.

New development will add to congestion on already congested village roads and lanes and reduce the air quality within the parish. All new developments must be positioned to minimise this impact by, for example, ensuring safe pedestrian routes and supporting electric vehicles.

4.2.5 Water and Flood Risk

Woodcote is located high in the Chiltern Hills and has no water courses. In 2013 the South Oxfordshire District Council & Vale of White Horse District Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment⁹:

- noted that there were no fluvial flood zones 2 or 3 in the parish;
- rated the surface water flood risk as Low;
- rated the groundwater flood risk as Low;
- rated the sewer flood risk as Low; and
- noted for Woodcote:
 - the absence of any recorded fluvial flooding events;
 - zero incidents or evidence of sewer flooding;
 - a medium risk of Surface Water Flooding significant flow paths along dry valleys;
 - no incidents of groundwater flooding mapped by DEFRA report for 2000/1 and 2002/3; and
 - no incidents recorded by Environment Agency.

Climate change may also result in prolonged periods of drought and national water shortages.

Sustainability Challenge

Climate change may lead both to increased rainfall intensity which may add to the risk of surface water flooding and more episodes of drought. Development must not impact on existing surface water flood risk or flow paths and should make better use of grey and rainwater.

⁹ South Oxfordshire District Council, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Final Report, July 2013

4.2.6. Human Population

4.2.6.1 Population Numbers

Woodcote's population is both shrinking and ageing.

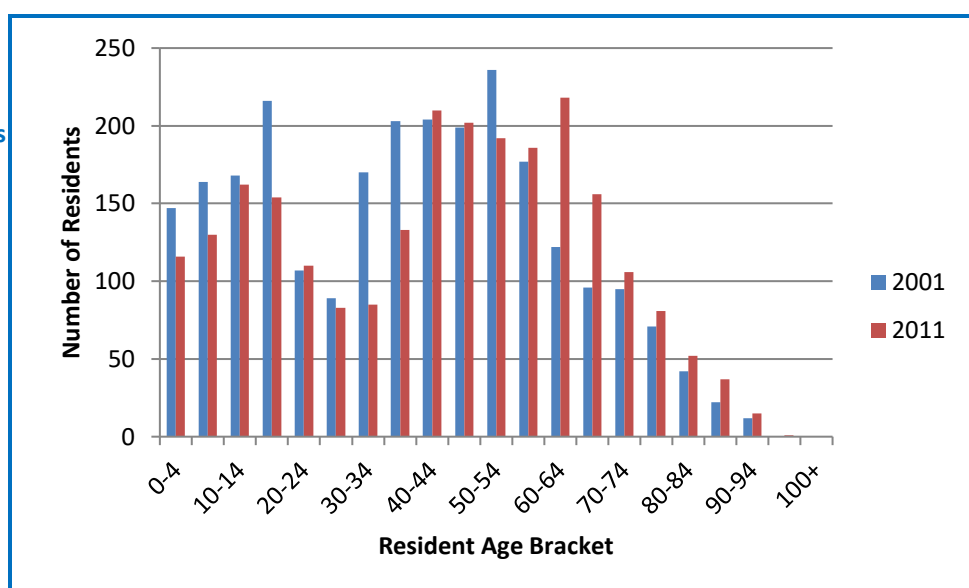
Table 4.3
Population Change in Woodcote
2001 - 2014

Census ¹⁰	Population	Residents ¹¹
2001	2715	2540
2011	2604	2430
2014	2700	2525
2019	2600	2425

The population number is inflated by the 150-175 pupils who board at the Oratory School. These are boys aged 11 to 18 and thus add to the 10-14 and 15-19 year age bands. The column headed Residents in Table 4.3 above adjusts the population on an assumption of 175 boarders. Similarly, the age distribution in Figure 4.8 has been adjusted by reducing the number in the 12-15 age group by 75 (25/year) and the number in the 15-18 age group by 100 (25/year). What is evident is the substantial growth in those aged 60-74.

Figure 4.8

Age Distribution of
Woodcote Residents
2001 & 2011



The current Neighbourhood Plan allocates sites for 76 new homes. Of these 14 are built and occupied. These, together with 'windfalls' have added nearly 40 new homes to the parish since 2011 but, despite these, the population is falling since the 2014 peak, largely because of under occupation of larger homes by elderly residents.

The ageing of the village follows the national trend although at 43 the median age of residents of Woodcote is more than South Oxfordshire (42) and more than the UK as a whole (40¹²). Equally the age profile of Woodcote residents closely aligns with that of predominantly rural communities in South Oxfordshire.

A major contributor to the ageing of the population is the high price of housing¹³ in the parish and an imbalance in the housing stock¹⁴ with more than half the homes being detached and less than half

¹⁰ Source: ONS

¹¹ Assuming that 175 pupils board at the Oratory School

¹² ONS

¹³ Zoopla, February 2017

¹⁴ ONS, 2013

the local and national share of private rented accommodation. The termination of the new Elizabeth Line at Reading is also putting significant upward pressure on local house prices.

Table 4.4
House Prices (£000s)

Average	Woodcote	Oxfordshire	England	Reading
House Price	517	423	315	418
Terraced House Price	316	337	252	306
Semi-detached House Price	381	370	269	388

Table 4.5
Composition of Woodcote Housing Stock (%)

Home Type	Woodcote	Oxfordshire	England	Reading
Detached House	53	37	23	14
Semi-detached House	30	32	32	27
Terraced House	7	19	26	33
Maisonette/flat	7	9	17	25

Table 4.6
Household Tenure

Tenure	Woodcote	Oxfordshire	England	Reading
Owned Outright	41%	37%	33%	31%
Owned with mortgage	36%	36%	35%	33%
Part rent part buy	1%	1%	1%	1%
Social rented	12%	11%	14%	18%
Private rented	7%	13%	16%	17%
Living Rent free	3%	1%	1%	1%

Sustainability Challenge

The ageing of, and fall in, the village's population poses a significant threat to the vitality of the village as a balanced demographic is required to sustain, among other facilities, the clubs and societies, local shops and businesses, and the primary and pre-schools. In addition, although the population is falling overall the increase in the elderly constitutes a significant increase in the demands on Woodcote Surgery.

Essential to obtaining this balanced demographic is the availability of housing suited to young families and to the elderly wishing to downsize but stay in village. The current imbalance in the housing stock needs to be addressed.

4.2.6.2 Deprivation

The index of multiple deprivation (IMD) is a composite indicator used to compare deprivation. It is made up of a number of factors that contribute to deprivation including employment, income, education and access to services. Deprivation indicators are ranked such that 1 is the most deprived community and 32,844 the least. In the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015) Woodcote was ranked at **32,221 out of 32,844 in England**¹⁵. The parish is, therefore, one of the least deprived areas in the country. Table 4.7 provides the ratings giving the overall measure.

4.2.6.3 Income

Average household net incomes exceed that of the South East of England by 20%¹⁶

When adjusted to reflect local housing costs average net household income exceeded the average for the South East of England by 12%

¹⁵ Source: Department for Communities and Local Government, English indices of deprivation 2015

¹⁶ Source: ONS

Table 4.7
Deprivation Measures in
Woodcote

Measure	Rating (%age better than all areas in England)
Overall	98%
Income Deprivation	84%
Employment	87%
Health	89%
Education	82%
Barriers to Services	95%
Living Environment	98%
Crime	91%

4.2.6.4 Crime and Public Safety

Woodcote is a safe place to live. Over the three-year period January 2017 to December 2019 the average annual crime rate per 1000 residents was 34¹⁷. This compares with some 110 for England as a whole and 45 for the South Oxfordshire District.

4.2.7 Human Health

Table 4.8¹⁸ shows the general health of the population of Woodcote follows closely that of South Oxfordshire and is better than that of the South East of England and England as a whole.

The village has a surgery, part of the Woodcote & Goring Medical Practice. In July 2016 the Care Quality Commission rated the service as Good following inspection. The practice is well located and highly valued by residents but faces accommodation issues and the challenge posed by the increasingly aged population. The practice also operates a dispensary which provides an essential service to residents and makes an important contribution to the financial viability of the practice.

Dental services are not available in the village. The nearest dental service available by public transport is in Wallingford, some 7 miles distant.

Table 4.9¹⁹ identifies Road Death and Injuries as the only area where residents of South Oxfordshire are at a health disadvantage compared to England.

**Table 4.8 General Health of
Woodcote Residents**

	Woodcote	South Oxon	South East	England
Very Good Health	52%	53%	49%	47%
Good Health	35%	33%	35%	34%
Fair Health	10%	11%	12%	13%
Bad Health	2%	3%	3%	4%
Very Bad Health	1%	1%	1%	1%

¹⁷ Source: Thames Valley Police, Henley District Crime Map

¹⁸ Source: ONS

¹⁹ Source: The Network of Public Health Observatories – www.apho.org.uk

Indicator	England	South Oxon	Measure
Obese children	18.74	13.74	% of year 6 children
Adult smoking	21.15	12.62	% of those aged 18 and over
Child tooth decay	0.74	0.5	Mean no. of decayed, missing or filled teeth in 12-year olds
Life expectancy - male	78.22	79.8	Years
Life expectancy - female	84.1	82.31	Years
Drug misuse	9.41	4.59	N ^o . per 1000 of pop'n aged 16-64 using crack and/or opiates
Early death heart disease & stroke	70.49	51.35	Rate per 100,000
Road injuries and death	48.12	64.88	Rate per 100,000
Early death cancer	112.07	95.56	Rate per 100,000
Hospital stays for alcohol related harm	1742	977	Rate per 100,000

Table 4.9 Human Health Indicators

Sustainability Challenge

The nearest pharmacy accessible by public transport is in Wallingford thus the dispensary operated by the Woodcote Surgery provides an essential service to residents making an important contribution to the financial viability of the practice and the well-being of the community. The aging of the local population is placing a strain on a service that struggles with a lack of space. The additional requirements resulting from new development must not add unacceptably to the load.

The busy B471 links the M4 and the M40 via the river crossing at Pangbourne and divides the built-up area of the village into two halves. Recent measurements of the speed of traffic confirm resident's concerns about speeding and pedestrian safety. New building must not add to the traffic hazard.

4.2.8 Material Assets

Woodcote is a parish with limited community facilities. The South Oxfordshire Settlement Assessment²⁰ produced as part of the evidence base for the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035, ranked Woodcote 8th of the 11 larger villages overall and 9th in terms of facilities. Since then both the Post Office and Woody Nook (a restaurant) have closed. The parish has:

- (i) an ageing Village Hall whose largely 95-year-old structure requires constant maintenance. Within the Hall are a kitchen, a large Main Hall, a smaller Pavilion Hall, a small, single room Youth Centre and two small meeting rooms (the 'Committee Room' and the 'Function Room'). There are also showers and changing rooms;
- (ii) a large village green, two LEAP²¹ standard playgrounds and its position within the AONB mean that it more than meets the Parks and Gardens, Natural and Semi-natural green space, Amenity green space and Children's play provision standards set out in the SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facility Assessment;
- (iii) a cricket pitch, an adult football pitch and a junior football pitch on the village green;
- (iv) a Community Centre in premises leased from Oxfordshire County Council and maintained by volunteers; and
- (v) a library that is shared by the Primary School and Langtree Academy and staffed, in large part, by volunteers.

²⁰ Source: SODC Settlement Assessment Background Paper, July 2016

²¹ LEAP = local equipped area for play. A minimum area of 400m² with at least five activities

Local sports provision is enhanced by:

- the generosity of the Oratory School (swimming and squash); and
- the use of the village hall (badminton, yoga, bowls).

The village has two small general-purpose stores, a Cooperative store and two public houses but lost its Post Office and the Woody Nook restaurant in 2018.

Sustainability Challenge

Woodcote is lacking in material assets. Any development must, therefore, support and enhance the assets that the community has and contribute to the achievement of essential social sustainability objectives such as improving the demographic balance while ensuring access to current assets for an ageing population.

4.2.10 Heritage and Character

There are just 12 listed buildings within the parish²². There are no entries for Woodcote in the Heritage at Risk Register. In addition to the listed buildings, the Heritage Gateway provides details of approximately 20 other historical sites or finds in the parish. These are listed in Appendix I.

Three Village Appraisals (1984, 1991, and 2000) have consistently emphasised the importance of maintaining the rural look and feel of the village and protecting the countryside and AONB enclosing the village. An all-village survey in 2017 reinforced this with 85% of the respondents wanting to maintain the open character of the village and 80% strongly opposed to sites of more than 25 new homes.

The Woodcote Conservation Group speaks for the village in requiring that historical features of the village should be retained, and development should not require the suburbanisation of the remaining country lanes with road-widening, pavements and street-lighting.

Sustainability Challenge

Woodcote is an open village characterised by low-level building with a gentle transition into the surrounding AONB. It has few listed buildings and heritage assets but there is a risk that large, unsympathetic, poorly located or poorly designed development could lead to the degradation or loss of the rural and historic character of the parish and impact negatively on the AONB.

4.2.11 Employment and Jobs

Occupations

Table 4.10 shows the occupations of Woodcote residents²³. As can be seen the majority are in professional or administrative positions.

²² See Appendix I

²³ Source: Office for National Statistics

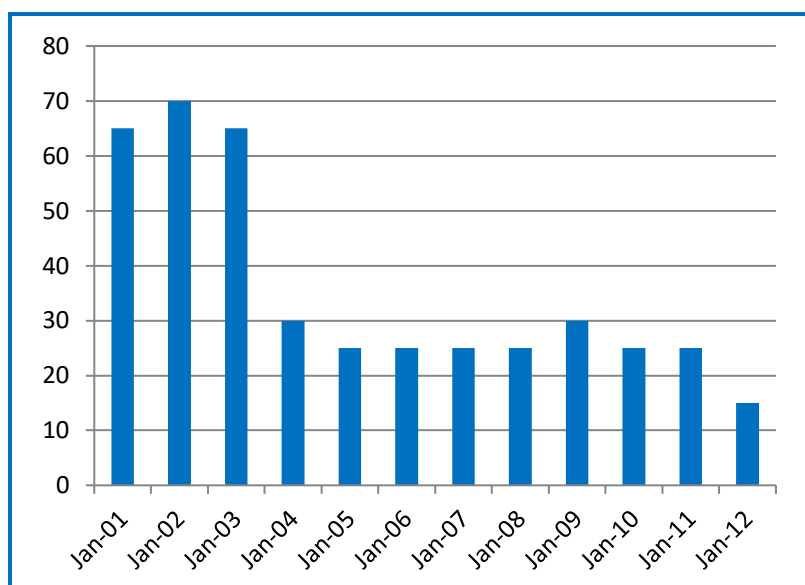
	Woodcote %	S Oxon %	South East %	England %
Managers, Directors and Senior Officials	14.1	14.4	12.3	10.9
Professional Occupations	22.8	21.4	18.7	17.5
Associate Professional and Technical Occupations	13.4	14.6	13.8	12.8
Administrative and Secretarial Occupations	11.8	10.6	11.5	11.5
Skilled Trades Occupations	12.9	11.4	11.1	11.4
Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations	7.9	8.1	9.3	9.3
Sales and Customer Service Occupations	5	6	7.9	8.4
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	3.7	4.8	5.7	7.2
Elementary Occupations	8.4	8.7	9.7	11.1

Unemployment

Unemployment is low in Woodcote in comparison to the rest of England with the rate of unemployment being around 2%, about one-half of the national figure²⁴.

The number of residents on income support in 2012 was 15²⁵ a reduction of 75% over the preceding decade.

Figure 4.9
Income Support Level in Woodcote



Sources of Employment

Most Woodcote residents who work are employed outside the village. Oxford and Reading are within easy reach by car and London is some 60 minutes from the nearest railway station at Goring.

The parish contains a major public school (the Oratory), a secondary school, a primary school and two pre-schools. Together these are the largest source of employment within the village although many of their employees commute to Woodcote from elsewhere.

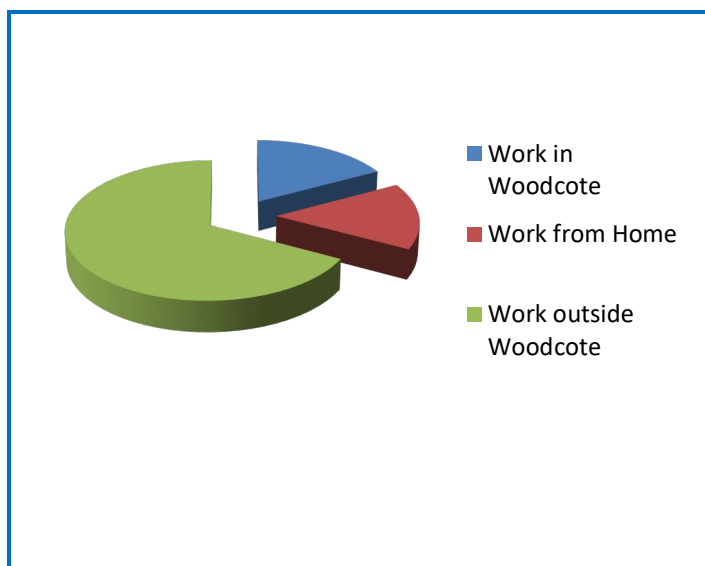
²⁴ Source: Office for National Statistics.

²⁵ Source: Office for National Statistics

In 2000 some 10% of those employed reported that they ‘worked from home’²⁶. This number had increased to 17% by 2016²⁷ and can be expected to continue to increase following the installation of high-speed broadband and the change in working practices occasioned by the CORONA virus pandemic.

Work in Woodcote	17%
Work from Home	17%
Work outside Woodcote	67%

Figure 4.10 Sources of Employment



Sustainability Challenge

Levels of unemployment in Woodcote are low and unemployment is not a major sustainability challenge. Current sources of employment rely heavily on the schools, the health service, local shops and small companies on two small industrial estates. Improved broadband services, installed in 2015, support working from home for many, and thus reduce the need for car trips. Otherwise development must be sensitive to the current sources of employment and needs of employers.

4.2.11 Education and Skills

In 2004 some 17% of Woodcote residents²⁸ had no qualifications which compared favourably with South Oxfordshire overall (21%) and the nation as a whole (29%)

This pattern, albeit with different numbers, is repeated in 2010²⁹

Table 4.11: Skill Levels in Woodcote

	Woodcote	Oxfordshire	England
People with no qualifications	5.9%	8.2%	13.4%
People with the highest qualification levels	38.3%	40.6%	32.7%

The parish contains three schools and two-preschools.

Woodcote Primary School

This is an OCC co-educational school for children aged 5 to 11 years. The primary school is on a secure site next to Langtree School and uses some of their resources, such as their playing fields, PE hall and dining hall.

The school has a theoretical capacity of 210 which, with 180 currently on its roll (an increase of 17 since 2012) suggests that there is little room for expansion. In practice accommodating any additional children will be difficult because of the poor design and condition of the 60-year-old classrooms.

²⁶ Source: Woodcote Village Appraisal 2000

²⁷ Source: Woodcote Village Survey January 2017

²⁸ Source: ONS (2004)

²⁹ Source: 2010 'Rural Community Profile for Woodcote. ACRE, OCSI and ORCC, 2012

The site is cramped and does not allow the construction of any additional classrooms.

Langtree Academy

This is a coeducational school for children aged 11 to 16 years. There is no 6th form and no plans nor desire to create one.

The school has a theoretical capacity of 650 (the headmaster believes the capacity to be 600) with 604 currently on its roll with more than half of children not resident in Woodcote. Any immediate need for classrooms can be accommodated within its existing space which means that there is no pressing requirement for more land. Parking is, however, restricted and the delivery and collection of children a major source of congestion, local pollution and child safety concerns.

The Oratory

The Oratory is the UK's only All Boys' Independent Catholic Senior Boarding and Day School with 420 boys aged from 11-18 years with Catholic and non-Catholic families. In 2020 the school began admitting girl students for the first time.

Cabin Pre-school

The Cabin is located in a temporary building in the playground of Woodcote primary School. It is operating at maximum capacity (21) and unable to expand because of space limitations.

Woodcote Pre-school

The Woodcote Pre-school is located in the Village Hall operates at 50% capacity and can, therefore, accommodate more pre-school children.

Sustainability Challenge

There are three main sustainability challenges when considering land used for education in the parish:

- (i) development supports the provision of provide primary school education for children in the village. Any movement of village children to primary schools in neighbouring villages (assuming they have spare capacity) would add to traffic congestion at a busy time, add to CO₂ emissions and distance the village children educated outside the village from those educated in the village;
- (ii) the Primary School is located next to Langtree Academy and benefits from being able to share resources. Close to both schools is the Village Library, Community Centre and children's playground which, together with the village hall and a small shop, form the nearest thing Woodcote has to a village centre. There are, therefore, both educational and social advantages to maintaining this situation which should not be lost; and
- (iii) car parking and the delivery and collection of children to the schools create significant congestion and road safety problems. Any new development in this part of Woodcote must not exacerbate these problems and, ideally, reduce their severity.

4.3 Sustainability Challenges

Neighbourhood Plans must meet certain 'basic conditions', which will be tested at examination, before they can proceed to referendum³⁰. As such, the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and will, therefore, be in general conformity with the sustainability objectives of the Local Plan and hence national and international requirements. There are, however, particular sustainability challenges that apply to Woodcote because of its location in the Chilterns AONB, its landscape sensitivity and the parish having one of the highest levels of biodiversity in Oxfordshire (sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 of this report). The sustainability challenges listed in Table 4.12 (A, B and C) reflect this special environmental sensitivity. This list is not an exhaustive list of sustainability challenges but focuses on those where the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan may contribute towards avoiding exacerbating and, where possible, reducing the severity of, problems. The numbering of the challenges is for reference purposes only and does not indicate priority.

The baseline data shows Woodcote to be located in an economically successful region. The parish has one of the lowest levels of deprivation nationally, higher than average incomes, low unemployment and lower than average levels of unqualified adults. The community is, however, ageing, suffers from very high housing costs, traffic congestion and road safety problems., and lacks facilities.

The NPPF requires that great weight be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in the National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Beauty³¹ and to the conservation of wildlife³². Woodcote is located within an AONB and has one of the highest levels of biodiversity in Oxfordshire. This represents a major sustainability challenge and requires that the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan gives high priority to conservation and enhancement of the AONB and local biodiversity³³. All development in the parish will be within the Chilterns AONB. If uncontrolled development takes place, without the Neighbourhood Plan containing a sustainable planning framework, then environmental conditions could deteriorate in the following ways:

- open spaces, areas of valued countryside and attractive landscapes could be harmed or destroyed;
- habitats and species of nature conservation importance could be lost, degraded or threatened;
- people's access to nature could be reduced or lost;
- traffic congestion and road safety could deteriorate and increased local traffic emissions would degrade air quality;
- greenhouse gas emissions from additional buildings and transport will be higher;
- stress on diminishing water resources could increase;
- natural resources could be used imprudently;
- the historic environment could be lost or damaged; and
- the amount of waste requiring disposal to landfill could be greater.

The Local Plan identifies Woodcote as one of the larger villages to be allocated new housing, albeit one of only two within an AONB. There is not enough space within the built-up area of the parish to accommodate new housing thus all developments will be an intrusion into the undeveloped areas of the AONB and the habitats therein. It is apparent, therefore, that the Neighbourhood Plan is a unique opportunity both to limit the negative impact of such development and, where possible, improve matters. This would not be the case without a Neighbourhood Plan if, in essence, a 'do nothing' approach was adopted.

³⁰ NPPF, paragraph 37

³¹ NPPF, paragraphs 170, 171 and 172

³² NPPF paragraph 174

³³ See also SODC Local Plan 2011-2044 policies ENv1, ENv2, ENv3

The Neighbourhood Plan has a major role in the delivery of new housing that complies with the requirements of sustainability and the NPPF through the application of a rigorous sustainability appraisal.

New open market housing is unlikely to reduce house prices and make housing more accessible to young people and young families given that demand for housing in the village and surrounding area is high. In the absence of a Neighbourhood Plan it is unlikely that new housing will contain a significant proportion of the affordable and shared equity housing needed to retain the vibrancy of the community or smaller open-market ‘starter homes’. The Neighbourhood Plan will play a significant role in the delivery of affordable housing and lower cost open market housing. Tables 4.12-A, 4.12-B and 4.12-C present a summary of the sustainability challenges.

Table 4.12.A Environmental Challenges

Environmental Challenges		Evidence	Reference
CEn1	Landscape deterioration	Woodcote is sited wholly within the Chilterns AONB in a sensitive position overlooking the North Wessex Downs AONB. Conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the AONB must not be threatened by inappropriate development either directly or cumulatively. There are views into Woodcote across the Goring Gap from the North Wessex Downs AONB which are at risk from inappropriate development in the north west of the parish.	Section 4.2.1 Section 4.2.2
CEn2	Loss of biodiversity	Woodcote is sited in one of the most biodiverse areas in the county. Any development outside the built-up area of the village will result in a loss of habitat and thus, potentially, degrade local biodiversity.	Section 4.2.3
CEn3	Air quality, climate change and the risk of drought	Climate change is a severe challenge. Disruption to historical weather patterns is likely to increase the severity and frequency of storms and increase the risk of drought. All development will add to CO ₂ emissions, will accelerate climate change and must, therefore, be constructed to the highest practical sustainability standards. New development brings additional traffic to an area where public transport is poor and very high car ownership adds to NO ₂ , SO ₂ , and diesel particulates so degrading air quality. Congestion adds to CO ₂ emissions and new development must be placed to encourage walking and avoid adding to congestion and car use. Woodcote is vulnerable to drought.	Section 4.2.4
CEn4	Energy Consumption	Domestic energy consumption and CO ₂ emissions in South Oxfordshire are higher than the Oxfordshire, South East and UK averages (Our Place, Our Future Draft SODC Core Strategy 2009 – 2026). All new developments will add to the community’s CO ₂ emissions. Effective insulation and the use of renewable energy sources such as solar panels will reduce CO ₂ emissions from fossil fuel driven power generation, but the take-up is slow.	Section 4.2.4
CEn5	Flood risk	Woodcote is not in a low-lying part of the Thames valley and not subject to fluvial flooding (EA). Heavy winter rainfall storms are expected to increase in intensity due to climate change. Development must not impact on existing surface water flood risk or flow paths.	Section 4.2.5
CEn6	Light Pollution	Street and other forms of lighting lead to light pollution and urbanise the landscape.	Section 4.2.5

Table 4.12-B Social Challenges

Social Challenges		Evidence	Reference
CS1	A growing demographic imbalance	The population of Woodcote is both falling and ageing which presents a growing threat to the vitality and vibrancy of the community. New development should contribute to reversing this trend.	Section 4.2.6
CS2	Increasing price of open market housing	The vibrancy of the community requires a balance of old and young. House prices in Woodcote are more than 20% higher than the average for South Oxfordshire, 24% higher than the average for Reading and 64% higher than the average for England. This makes it difficult for young people and families to buy a home and threatens the vitality of the community.	Section 4.2.6
CS3	Shortage of affordable housing	Only 13% of Woodcote's housing stock is affordable (including shared equity). Given that house prices are beyond the reach of most young people and families, if the share of affordable homes does not increase then the vibrancy of the community will rapidly diminish.	Section 4.2.6
CS4	Lack of appropriate size of housing.	Over 50% of Woodcote's homes are detached. This is more than 40% greater than the share on South Oxfordshire, 380% greater than Reading and 230% greater than England. Smaller, first time buyer and starter homes are required if the vitality of the community is not to rapidly diminish.	Section 4.2.6
CS5	The service and social needs of an ageing population.	Woodcote's population is ageing which is increasing the demands on the local surgery. As the population ages, residents are finding it increasingly difficult to access dentistry, the local surgery, shops, and social centres like the Village Hall and Community Centre. New developments must consider non-vehicular access and the other needs of an ageing population	Section 4.2.6
CS6	Fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.	Woodcote is a safe place to live and concern about crime is not high in Woodcote ³⁴ . At an average of 1.4 crimes per 1000 people Woodcote's crime rate is below average for the nation and is in the lowest 16% for crime and anti-social behaviour.	Section 4.2.6
CS7	Human health	The health of Woodcote residents is generally good or very good (87%) but the ageing population is straining the resources of the local surgery. If the current population age imbalance is not addressed, then overall health levels will fall and demand will overwhelm the surgery.	Section 4.2.7
CS8	Road traffic congestion.	Traffic from the M4 crosses the Thames at Whitchurch and passes through Woodcote on its way to Oxford and the M40, often at high speed causing a danger to residents. Parking outside the schools reduces the road to a single lane during the school day and, with children being brought to school by bus or car, constitutes a significant safety risk to children and road users at school start and finish times.	Section 4.2.7
CS9	School capacity	The number of children enrolled at Woodcote Primary School is close to its maximum in its current poor structural condition.	Section 4.2.11
CS10	Material assets	Woodcote compares poorly in terms of the material assets when compared to the other larger villages identified by South Oxfordshire for development. Material assets must be developed alongside new homes if the current assets are not to be overloaded.	Section 4.2.8
CS11	Heritage	Care should be taken to protect Woodcote's limited heritage assets from the detrimental impact of nearby development.	Section 4.2.10

³⁴ Source: Village Appraisals 1984, 1991, 2000 and 2008 Parish Plan.

Table 4.12-C Economic Challenges

Economic Challenges		Evidence	
Cec1	Housing	A lack of suitable affordable housing in the parish make it very difficult for many who work in the village to afford a home within easy reach of their employment.	Section 4.2.6
Cec2	Road traffic congestion	Traffic congestion and parking around Woodcote’s largest employment sites (the state schools, the surgery, Wards Farm and the Co-operative store) causes considerable disruption. All developments, including any for employment purposes, must provide adequate parking, storage, delivery and unloading space.	Section 4.2.7
Cec3	Infrastructure necessary to support future growth	The current village infrastructure, particularly roads, parking and public transport does not properly support local employment. Any development, including that for employment purposes must make provision for appropriate infrastructure improvement.	Section 4.2.4

Table 4.13 illustrates the relationship between the key sustainability messages and the sustainability challenges.

Key Sustainability Messages		Environmental Challenges (CEn)						Social Challenges (CS)										Economic Challenges (CEc)						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3				
Environmental and Conservation (En)	1	X																						
	2		X																					
	3	X	X																					
	4		X	X		X																		
	5																							
	6	X	X				X																	
	7			X	X											X							X	
	8			X												X							X	
	9			X												X							X	X
Social (S)	1							X	X	X	X	X								X				
	2							X				X		X										
	3												X		X	X								
	4												X			X								
	5							X				X	X	X		X								
	6												X											
	7				X								X											
Economic (Ec)	1										X									X	X	X		

Table 4.13 Key Messages versus Sustainability Challenges

Section Five: Sustainability Goals

5.1 Framework Considerations

The sustainability challenges identified in Section 4.3 have been used to formulate the sustainability objectives which underpin the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan sustainability framework. The framework will be used to evaluate different options for development in Woodcote and direct the derivation of the criteria used to evaluate potential development sites. In so doing, and to accord with the SEA regulations, the environmental effects of options and alternatives will also be tested. Particular consideration will be given to:

- A. the extent to which the plan:
 - establishes a framework for developments and other activities with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions of these developments;
 - complies with the NPPF and South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2035;
 - includes environmental considerations and promotes sustainable development; and
 - considers environmental problems relevant to proposed developments or sites.

- B. the particular impact on those areas within the parish likely to be affected by the proposals, in terms of:
 - the effects on the Chilterns AONB which surrounds and flows through Woodcote;
 - the impact on views from the North Wessex Downs AONB;
 - the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
 - the effect on biodiversity in Woodcote;
 - the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:
 - any special natural characteristics or cultural or historic heritage;
 - exceeding any environmental quality standards or limits; or
 - intensive land-use.
 - the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects;
 - the cumulative nature of the effects;
 - the impact on adjacent communities; or
 - the risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents or additional road traffic).

5.2 Sustainability Objectives

Table 5.1 provides a list of the sustainability objectives for the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan. These have been derived as a direct response to the particular sustainability challenges faced in Woodcote identified in Section 4.3 and complement the sustainability objectives in the Local Plan to ensure both compatibility and relevance to Woodcote.

It should be noted that a Neighbourhood Plan may not have equal influence on all aspects of sustainability within the parish. Some matters, such as the redevelopment of local schools, are beyond the scope of the Local Plan. Equally, some sustainability objectives will be attained through policies rather than the appraisal of development options or potential development sites. Examples of this are the use of sustainable building practices, the use of renewable energy generation in new developments, or the use of lighting that reduces light pollution.

Environmental	
	Objective
EnO1	To protect and enhance the parish open spaces and countryside and, in particular, the Chilterns AONB.
EnO2	To protect sensitive wildlife habitats, enhance biodiversity in the parish, and ensure that current ecological networks are not compromised and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced ³⁵ .
EnO3	To reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds and including light pollution.
EnO4	To obtain the efficient use of land and reduce development pressures on the countryside and natural resources such as landscape, biodiversity and soil quality.
EnO5	To reduce the need for travel by car, to shorten the length and duration of journeys in the parish and to reduce traffic congestion in the parish.
EnO6	To seek to address the causes and effects of climate change by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) securing sustainable building practices which conserve energy, water resources and materials; (ii) maximising the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources; and (iii) ensuring that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change.
EnO7	To reduce the risk of flooding and resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment.

Social	
SO1	To improve accessibility for everyone to health, education, recreation, cultural and community facilities and services.
SO2	To maintain and improve people's health, well-being and community cohesion
SO3	To help provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home.
SO4	To protect and enhance the Parish' historic assets and significance.
SO5	To ensure that new development is of a high-quality design and reinforces local distinctiveness.
SO6	To help to create safe places for people to use and for businesses to operate, to reduce antisocial behaviour and reduce crime and the fear of crime.

Economic	
EcO1	To assist in the development of small firms, particularly those that maintain and enhance the rural economy.

Table 5.1: Sustainability Objectives

³⁵ This is to address the risk that in some situations, development on land of limited biodiversity value in its own right can lead to the creation of islands of biodiversity, permanently severed from other areas

Table 5.2 shows how the Sustainability Objectives contribute to meeting the Sustainability Challenges.

Objectives Challenges	Environmental							Social						Econ
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1
CEn1	X		X	X										
CEn2	X	X		X										
CEn3					X	X			X					
CEn4														
CEn5							X							
CEn6			X											
CS1								X		X				
CS2								X		X				
CS3								X		X				
CS4								X		X				
CS5								X	X					
CS6													X	
CS7								X	X					
CS8					X									X
CS9														
CS10								X						
CS11											X			
CEc1										X				X
CEc2					X									X
CEc3					X									X

Table 5.2 Sustainability Objectives contribution to meeting the Sustainability Challenges

Section Six: Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

6.1 Developing the Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Stage C in the recommended approach to Sustainability Appraisal (*Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects*) requires that a sustainability framework be used to test the strategic plan options as they emerge and then to test all potential developments and sites.

The first task of the sustainability framework is to evaluate the strategic options to identify the most sustainable approach to delivering the plan goals and objectives recognising that some sustainability measures will be addressed by:

- i. the location and characteristics of allocated development sites; and
- ii. some, such as the energy performance of new buildings, will be addressed through policies.

As such, the sustainability framework consists of two sets of tests: the first to appraise the plan's strategic options (Table 6.1), and a second to appraise potential sites and developments (Table 6.2).

6.2 Sustainability Appraisal of Strategic Options

Table 6.1 identifies the tests (SOT-01 to SOT-11) to be used to determine the preferred strategic option. These tests recognise the importance attached in the NPPF to:

- conserving and enhancing the landscape of the AONB. Options that use brownfield land or sites within the built-up area of the parish will be preferred;
- avoiding major development in AONBs. In the absence of exceptional circumstances options requiring the loss of less than 1HA of greenfield land in the AONB will be preferred;
- habitat conservation and enhancement. Options that do not result in the loss of greenfield or ecologically rich land will be preferred; and
- responding to local character. Options that support development that would integrate both architecturally and socially will be preferred.

Sustainability Type		Test
Environmental		
SOT-01	Landscape	Could the option be delivered entirely within the existing built-up area?
SOT-02		Would the option result in a development greater than 1HA in then AONB?
SOT-03		Could the option be delivered on brownfield land
SOT-04	Ecological Impact	To what extent will the option result in loss of biodiversity and habitat
SOT-05		
Social		
SOT-05	Local Character impact	Would the option create a new development greater than 5% of current village size?
SOT-06	Heritage	Can the option be delivered without degrading or damaging any heritage assets or their significance
SOT-07	Flood risk	Could the option be delivered without increasing an existing, or creating a new, flood risk?
Economic		
SOT-8	Employment	Would the option improve the employment opportunities in the village?

Table 6.1: Sustainability Framework Strategic Option Appraisal Tests

The tests used to assess the strategic options are derived from the sustainability objectives and, hence, the plan goals and objectives and the relevant national, local, and other policies. Table 6.2 illustrates the relationship between the tests and the sustainability objectives.

The Table below shows:

- i. considerable attention being focussed on the environmental (landscape and habitat) impact of a strategic option. This reflects the particular importance of assessing options in a parish:
 - entirely within the Chilterns AONB; and
 - whose habitat significance has been independently classified as Very High for 60% of the parish and High for another 25-30%.
- ii. no tests for sustainability objectives En06, SO2, SO3, and SO6. This is because all options will meet sustainability objective SO3 (to help provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home) and the plan’s ability to deliver sustainability objectives En06, SO2, and SO6 will be tested in a second Framework used to assess the sustainability credentials of potential development sites.

Objective \ Framework Test	SOT-1	SOT-2	SOT-3	SOT-4	SOT-5	SOT-6	SOT-7	SOT-8
Environmental								
En01	X	X	X	X				
En02	X	X	X					
En03								
En04	X	X	X					
En05	X			X				
En06								
En07							X	
Social								
SO1	X							
SO2								
SO3								
SO4					X	X		
SO5				X				
SO6								
Economic								
Ec01								X

Table 6.2: Sustainability Objectives versus Strategic Option Framework Tests

6.3 Sustainability Appraisal of Potential Development Sites

Table 6.3 identifies the tests (PST-01 to PST-19) to be used to assess the degree to which the allocation of a site for development would contribute to the delivery of the plan's sustainable objectives and compliance with the Basic Conditions.

These tests recognise the importance attached in the NPPF to conserving and enhancing the landscape of the AONB and avoiding major development in AONBs. In the absence of exceptional circumstances sites capable of accommodating 45, or more, homes (1.5 HA at 30/homes per hectare) will be considered as major development.

In addition, potential sites will be tested to:

- ensure that heritage assets are not compromised;
- identify difficulties attached to safe pedestrian access for young and old alike and deterrents to walking and cycling;
- identify sites where development would add significantly to current congestion, parking or road safety problems; and
- ensure that development does not result in the loss of greenfield, species or ecologically rich land.

Test		
PST-01	Major Development	Is the size greater than 1.5HA?
PST-02		Does the site abut another potential or allocated site?
PST-03	Landscape and Visual Impact	What would be the landscape impact?
PST-04		What would be the visual impact?
PST-05	Contiguity	Is the site contiguous with the built area of the village?
PST-06		Does the site extend the boundary of the village beyond the existing build line?
PST-07	Heritage	Would development on the site be likely to affect the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting?"
PST-08	Accessibility	Is there a continuous footpath to the village amenities (surgery, shop, Village Hall, schools, etc)
PST-09		Is the pedestrian distance to surgery greater than 400m?
PST-10		Is the pedestrian distance to a bus stop greater than 400m?
PST-11		Is the pedestrian distance to a shop greater than 400m?
PST-12		Is the pedestrian distance to VH or CC greater than 400m?
PST-13		Is the pedestrian distance to WPS/Langtree greater than 500m?
PST-14	Traffic Issues	Is the site close to a traffic hotspot?
PST-15		Is the main route from the site a narrow road?
PST-16		Is the main route from the site restricted by on-street parking?
PST-17	Flood Risk	Is the site vulnerable to flooding?
PST-18	Ecology	Is the site ecologically valuable?
PST-19	Economy	Would development of the site add to, lose, or leave employment in the parish unchanged?

Table 6.3: Potential Development Site Sustainability Framework

The tests used to assess the sustainable characteristics of potential development sites are derived from the sustainability objectives and, hence, the plan goals and objectives and the relevant national, local, and other policies. Table 6.4 illustrates the relationship between the tests and the sustainability objectives.

Sustainability Objective \ Test	EnO 1	EnO 2	EnO 3	EnO 4	EnO 5	EnO 6	EnO 7	SO 1	SO 2	SO 3	SO 4	SO 5	SO 6	EcO 1
PST-01	X	X		X										
PST-02				X										
PST-03	X	X												
PST-04	X													
PST-05	x			X										
PST-06	X	X		X										
PST-07											X			
PST-08			X					X	X					
PST-09			X					X						
PST-10			X					X						
PST-11			X					X						
PST-12			X					X	X					
PST-13			X					X						
PST-14					X									
PST-15					X									
PST-16					X									
PST-17						X	X							X
PST-18		X												
PST-19														X

Table 6.4: Sustainability Objectives versus Potential Development Site Framework Tests

Table 6.4 shows:

- i. considerable attention being focussed on the environmental (landscape and habitat) impact of a strategic option. This reflects the particular importance of assessing options in a parish:
 - entirely within the Chilterns AONB; and
 - whose habitat significance has been independently classified as Very High for 60% of the parish and High for 25-30%.
- ii. no tests for sustainability objectives SO2, SO3, and SO6. This is because these objectives will be delivered on every allocated site through the application of appropriate design policies.
- iii. limited attention being paid to objective EnO6. This is because the plan will contain design policies to help meet this objective for all allocated sites and the plan will contain policies supporting renewable energy generation in the parish.

Appendix

Appendix I Listed Buildings and Historical Sites in Woodcote³⁶

Listed Buildings

1. The Oratory School	Grade II*	
2. Barn and Kitchen Garden Wall , Oratory School	Grade II	
3. Church of St Leonard (also in Church Historical Record)	Grade II	South Stoke Road
4. Pillar Piscina, Church of St Leonard	Grade II	
5. Church Farmhouse and Attached Barn	Grade II	Reading Road
6. Barn, Church Farmhouse	Grade II	
7. Granary, Church Farmhouse	Grade II	
8. Pickets Cottage	Grade II	Behoes Lane,
9. Toggs and Weevil Cottages	Grade II	Oxford Road,
10. Dean Farmhouse	Grade II	
11. The Folly	Grade II	South Stoke Road
12. Barn Adjacent to the Folly	Grade II	South Stoke Road

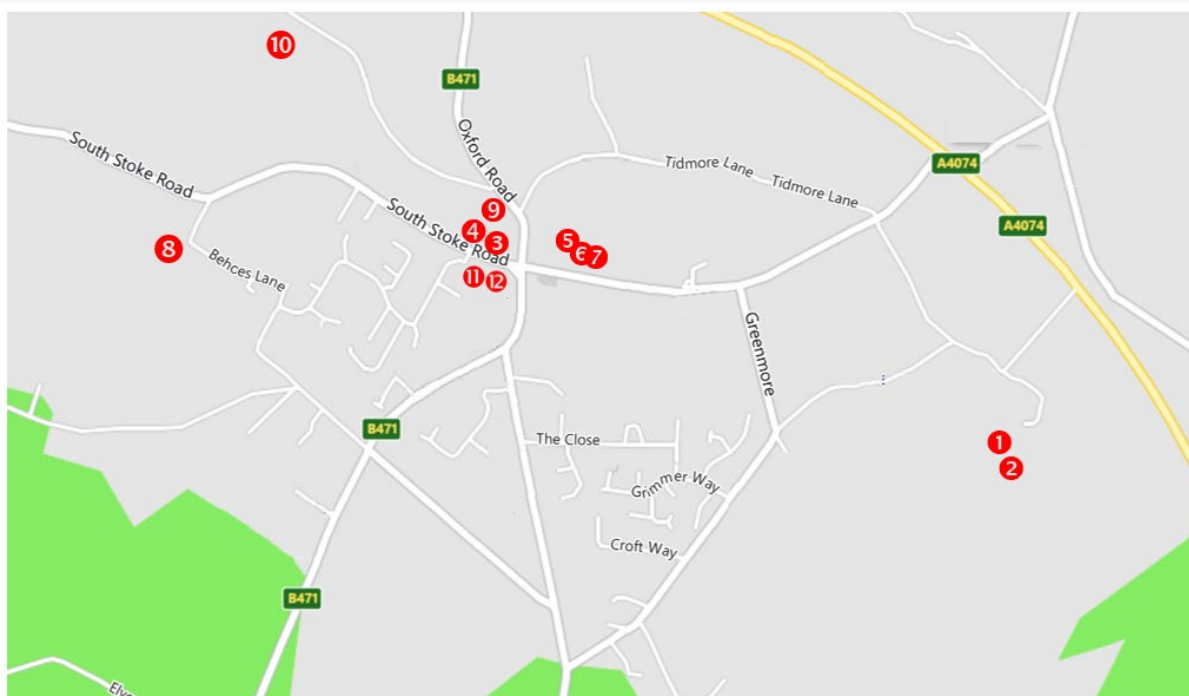


Figure A-I Location of Designated Heritage Assets

Designation (Non-designated entries)

Masseys Pightle, Tidmore Lane

Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record

Methodist chapel, Long Toll

Post medieval saw pits

Post medieval clay pits

³⁶ Sources: Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record and the National Heritage List for England

Post medieval sheep wash (Greenmoor Hill)
Site of brickworks, brickyard and kiln
Undated chalk pits (c.770m south west of Woodcote crossroads)
Undated woodland boundary bank
Undated linear feature

Finds Record

Palaeolithic hand axe (Greenmoor Hill)
Roman coin hoard
Mesolithic to Neolithic flint implements
Possible Iron Age stone head
Mesolithic mace
Mesolithic tranchet axe

Historic Milestone Society Database

Fingerpost on the B471 (Goring Road) junction with Whitehouse Road

NMR Excavation Index

Archaeological watching brief during groundworks for the construction of a salt store barn.

Appendix II. Statutory Consultee's Returns

Summary

Environment Agency :		WNP 2 Action
1	agrees that the draft scoping report has included the environmental issues and have no additional comments or suggestions for changes.	None required.

Natural England:		WNP 2 Action
1	has not reviewed the plans listed and not identified any plans or programmes that have been excluded from the scoping report.	None required.
2	has no comment on possible baseline data omissions.	None required.
3	suggests, that if information is available on the agricultural land classification of soils in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, this should be included in the baseline.	Information sought but not found
4	identifies no inaccuracies or anomalies in the data presented;	None required.
5	welcomes the identification of the Parish's location within the Chilterns AONB and setting of the North Wessex Downs, and the high biodiversity value of the area, as key issues.	None required.
6	suggests, again subject to information on agricultural land quality being available, that reference may also need to be made to the potential loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land.	Information sought but not found
7	suggests adding ' <i>Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised, and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced</i> ' to sustainability objective En02; adding that " <i>This is to address the risk that in some situations, development on land of limited biodiversity value in its own right can lead to the creation of islands of biodiversity, permanently severed from other areas.</i> "	Agreed – added to the sustainability objectives
8	suggests that, within the key issues and sustainability objectives, reference is also made to maintaining and improving people's access to nature.	Agreed – added to the sustainability objectives

Historic England:		WNP 2 Action
1	considers, on the whole, that the SEA scoping report has identified the plans and programmes which are of relevance to the NP and that it has established an appropriate baseline against which to assess the plan's proposals;	None required.
2	recommends the addition of, and reference to, Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Historic England Advice Note 8, in Section 3.2.	Agreed – added to Section 3.2
3	recommends the addition of a map, the Appendices I and II, showing the location of the designated heritage asset and other entries on the historic environment record.;	Agreed – added to the Appendix
4	suggests that the two site evaluation questions relating to the historic environment in Section 6.3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the site include any designated heritage assets? ▪ Is the site immediately adjacent to any designated heritage assets? be reframed as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would development on the site be likely to affect the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting? 	Agreed – criteria reframed as advised

Environment Agency Return

Received 28-Feb-20 from Samuel Pocock
Planning Advisor, Thames Sustainable Places Team

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the scoping report for the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan. We are a statutory consultee in the SEA process and aim to reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the water environment. Based on our review of the draft scoping report, we agree with the environmental issues that have been included and do not have any further comments to make.

For your information we have published joint advice with Natural England, English Heritage and the Forestry Commission on neighbourhood planning which sets out sources of environmental information and ideas on incorporating the environment into plans.

This is available at:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140328084622/http://cdn.environment-agency.gov.uk/LIT_6524_7da381.pdf

Please note that the Local Authority can advise if there are areas at risk from surface water flood risk (including groundwater and sewerage flood risk) in your neighbourhood plan area. The Surface Water Management Plan is the evidence base for this and contains recommendations and actions to reduce the risk of flooding. This may be useful when gathering baseline data and drafting key sustainability issues and objectives on which to appraise the neighbourhood plan.

Natural England Return

Received 19-Mar-20 from Rebecca Micklem
Lead Advisor Sustainable Development Thames Solent Team

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 28 February 2020.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a statutory consultee in neighbourhood planning and must be consulted on draft neighbourhood development plans by the Parish/Town Councils or Neighbourhood Forums where they consider our interests would be affected by the proposals made. Please see below Natural England's responses to the questionnaire.

Are there any other plans and programmes relevant to the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan that have not been included within this review? Natural England has not reviewed the plans listed. However, we advise that the following types of plans relating to the natural environment should be considered where applicable to your plan area;

- Green infrastructure strategies
- Biodiversity plans
- Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- River basin management plans ☒ AONB and National Park management plans.
- Relevant landscape plans and strategies.

Is the baseline data appropriate to the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan? No comment.

Is there any other relevant baseline data? Please refer to the sources of local plan evidence on the natural environment in the appendix to this letter. We advise that if information is available on the agricultural land classification of soils in the Neighbourhood Plan Area, this should be included in the baseline.

Are there any inaccuracies or anomalies in the data identified so far? No comment

Do you agree with the key issues for the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan? We welcome that the location within the Chilterns AONB and setting of the North Wessex Downs, and the high biodiversity value of the area, have been flagged as key issues. Subject to information being obtained with regards agricultural land quality (see comments about baseline data), reference may also need to be made to the loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural land.

In terms of the sustainability objectives, we advise that the issue of ecological connectivity is addressed in En02; we suggest adding "Ensure current ecological networks are not compromised, and future improvements in habitat connectivity are not prejudiced" This is to address the risk that in some situations, development on land of limited biodiversity value in its own right can lead to the creation of islands of biodiversity, permanently severed from other areas.

We suggest that, within the key issues and sustainability objectives, reference is also made to maintaining and improving people's access to nature.

For any further consultations on your plan, please contact: consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Historic England Return

Received 24-Apr-20 from Edward Winter
Historic Environment Planning Adviser
Regions Group (London & South East)

Thank you for inviting Historic England to comment on the above document. As the government's adviser on the historic environment, we are keen to ensure that the historic environment is appropriately planned for in neighbourhood plan.

In terms of the historic environment, on the whole, we consider that the SEA scoping report has identified the plans and programmes which are of relevance to the neighbourhood plan, that it has established an appropriate baseline against which to assess the plan's proposals. However, we suggest some minor changes to section 3.2. In relation to the framework section, we recommend some more substantive changes are made, in respect of section 6.3, as set out below.

Section 3

In addition to the Historic England advice notes that are referred to in 3.2 Policy Context, we recommend you also consult and refer to:

- Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment
<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainabilityappraisal-and-strategic-environmental-assessment-advice-note-8/>

Appendices I & II

As well as listing the designated heritage asset and other entries on the historic environment record, it would be useful to plot these on a map so that they can easily be cross-referenced against any proposed site allocations.

Section 6

Section 6.3 contains the Potential Site Tests. In relation to the historic environment, two questions are included:

- Does the site include any designated heritage assets?
- Is the site immediately adjacent to any designated heritage assets?

Neither of these questions really capture the essence of heritage conservation. The most importance part of which concerns significance. Significance is defined as: *"The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting."*

We would therefore suggest that these two questions are reframed as: *"Would development on the site be likely to affect the significance of any heritage asset, including its setting?"*

Note – the word 'designated' is not included in the above question, so as to apply to both designated and non-designated assets. The setting of a heritage asset can be defined as: *"The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral."* Historic England's Advice Note 112 and Good Practice Advice Note 33 both contain useful information on setting. I hope the above advice is of assistance.