

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE BECKLEY AND STOWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

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## Non-technical summary

**The Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan.** Beckley and Stowood parish have prepared a neighbourhood plan. The plan aims to protect and improve the character of the parish. It has 12 policies that relate to the parish as a whole, for instance on biodiversity, important views, parking and good design. It also has 23 policies that relate to the strategic development site Land North of Bayswater Brook in the south of the parish, for instance on transport assessment, protection of the Sydlings Copse nature area, and building heights.

**Strategic environmental assessment (SEA).** The neighbourhood plan requires SEA because it is likely to have environmental effects, particularly in the south of the parish. SEA is the process of identifying and assessing the environmental impacts of a plan and its alternatives, and minimising any negative impacts of the plan.

**Policy context.** The neighbourhood plan legally must meet ‘basic conditions’, including contributing to sustainable development (which the SEA process helps to show), and being in general conformity with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. The local plan includes a policy for development at Land North of Bayswater Brook, and developers have already put forward a masterplan for the site involving 1450 homes. The middle third of the development site lies in the south of Beckley and Stowood parish.

**Environmental context.** The parish population is slightly over 600. Most people are in good health. Most live in detached houses. One in five live in the Wick Farm residential mobile home site which is within the strategic development site Land North of Bayswater Brook. The parish is made up of rolling hillside, with a high point near Beckley and outstanding views. There are two sites of national nature conservation importance - the Sydlings Copse and Otmoor Sites of Special Scientific Interest – as well as ancient woodland and other sites with good biodiversity. Beckley is a heritage conservation area, and Roman roads run through the parish. It also includes important archaeological sites, including a Roman villa. Air quality is good. The whole parish lies within the Green Belt, apart from Land North of Bayswater Brook. Soil quality ranges from very good in the south to very poor in the north. The parish is in an area of serious water stress.

There are few existing environmental problems in the parish. The main ones are: high housing prices and low housing affordability; poor public transport, leading to heavy use of private vehicles; high water stress; and the need for good agricultural management to protect water quality.

**Assessment framework.** An assessment framework – Table 0.1 - has been used to assess the vision, objectives, alternatives and policies in the neighbourhood plan.

**Table 0.1 SEA framework**

Topic	Example assessment questions: will the vision/alternative /policy
Population & human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide and enhance access to green infrastructure?</li><li>• Improve road safety?</li></ul>
Air and climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the need to travel?</li><li>• Improve the energy efficiency of buildings?</li></ul>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect and enhance the parish’s wildlife site?</li><li>• Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?</li></ul>
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings?</li><li>• Conserve and enhance the parish’s conservation area?</li></ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conserve and enhance local diversity?</li><li>• Protect the area’s dark skies?</li></ul>

Topic	Example assessment questions: will the vision/alternative /policy
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a range of house types and sizes for local residents?</li> <li>• Improve the quality of the current housing stock?</li> </ul>
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the use of previously developed land?</li> <li>• Avoid development on the best agricultural land?</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the water quality of streams and water bodies?</li> <li>• Prevent development from flooding?</li> </ul>

**Key to appraisal:**

+	Improvement	+/-	Both positive and negative impacts
+?	Possible or indirect improvement	-?	Possible or indirect worsening
0	Impact unlikely	-	Worsening

**Appraisal of the plan vision and objectives:** Both the vision and the objectives are environmentally positive, but are very critical of development at Land North of Bayswater Brook which would provide homes in the south of the parish. For this reason, their impacts on housing and human health would be mixed: the plan would be good for existing residents of the parish, including those of Wick Farm, but in practice would limit the number of new residents.

**Appraisal of reasonable alternatives:** Many alternatives were considered as part of writing the Neighbourhood Plan. These included:

- Whether to have a settlement boundary where development can take place: a tighter boundary, a wider boundary, or no boundary. The tighter boundary is the preferred alternative.
- Whether to include policies about the main road going through Land North of Bayswater Brook, changes to the footpath leading to Sydlings Copse, and other traffic/road issues related to the new development. Some of these affect land outside the parish boundary, or go beyond what is possible with a neighbourhood plan, so have not been included.
- Whether to limit building heights in the parish to three storeys. In Beckley, this will help to maintain the character of the village, and near Wick Farm it will protect the privacy of residents. In other parts of Land North of Bayswater Brook, such a limit will reduce visual impacts but also the number of homes that can be built there. Limiting building heights throughout the parish is the preferred alternative.

**Appraisal and mitigation of plan policies:** Table 0.2 summarises the impacts of the plan policies using the SEA framework of Table 0.1. Table 0.3 discusses the overall impacts of the plan. As part of the appraisal process, significant changes were made to the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Some draft policies were turned into community aspirations where they were not within the remit of the land use planning system or would affect land outside the parish
- Policies were rewritten to support the residents of Wick Farm (Policies VB2, LV1 and LV2)
- Clearer links were made to biodiversity net gain
- More environmental protection was given to Land North of Bayswater Brook, for instance through Construction Management Plans and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

**Monitoring:** To monitor the impacts of the plan, the following will be measured every three years:

- Condition of Sydlings Copse nature area
- Distance of Sydlings Copse from the nearest new road
- No. of new buildings in Beckley that do not fit the character of the area
- No. buildings in the parish over 3 storeys in height
- Traffic levels at Bayswater Road

**Next steps:** This Environmental Report and the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan will be examined by an inspector to see if the plan meets 'Basic Conditions' and is in general conformity with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. If the plan passes the examination, it will be subject to a referendum. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the neighbourhood plan, then it will become part of the development plan for Beckley and Stowood Parish.

**Table 0.2 Overall impacts of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan**

	Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Landscape	Housing	Soil	Water
VB1. Settlement boundary	-?	0	+?	+/-	+?	-	+?	0
VB2. Outside sett. boundary	-?	0	+?	+/-	+?	-	+?	0
E1. Biodiversity	0	0	+	0	+?	-?	+?	+?
H1. Heritage	0	0	0	+	+?	-?	0	0
DS1. Important views	+/-	0	0	0	+	-?	+?	0
DS2. Parking	+?	-?	0	0	+?	-?	0	0
DS3. Flood risk	+?	0	0	0	+?	0	0	+
DS4. Dwelling size	0	0	0	0	+?	-?	0	0
DG1. Design guide	+/-	-?	0	+?	+	-	0	0
DG2. Night sky	+?	0	+?	0	+	0	0	0
CC1. Energy efficiency	+?	+	+?	0	-?	+/-	0	+
CC2. Low carbon transport	+	+	+?	0	+/-	-?	0	0
CE1. Community engagement	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Mitigation policies</b>								
GB1. Green Belt boundary	0	0	0	+?	0	0	0	0
TA1. Transport assessment	+?	+?	0	0	0	-?	0	0
TA2. TA baseline	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
TA3. TA assessments	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
CM1. Constr. mgmt. plan	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
TA4. NICE physical activity	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PC1. Footpaths	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PC2. Bridge over A40	+?	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
PC3. Safety	+?	0	0	0	-?	0	0	0
PC4. Widening RoWs	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B1. Public transport	+?	+	+?	0	0	-?	0	0
LR1. NICE air quality	+	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
SSSI1. Assessment	0	0	+?	0	0	0	0	0
SSS2. Protection zone	0	+?	+	0	0	-?	0	0
SSS3. Enhancements	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
LV1. Wick Farm views	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LV2. Building heights	+/-	-	-?	0	+/-	-	-?	-?
LV3. Landscaping	+	+?	0	0	+	0	0	+
LV4. Urban edges	+?	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
LV5. Design	+/-	+?	+?	0	+	-?	+?	+?
HAP1. Air quality ass.	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
HAP2. Indoor air quality	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Overall impacts of NP</b>	<b>+?</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>+?</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table 0.3 Impacts of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan (NP) plus other relevant plans and projects**

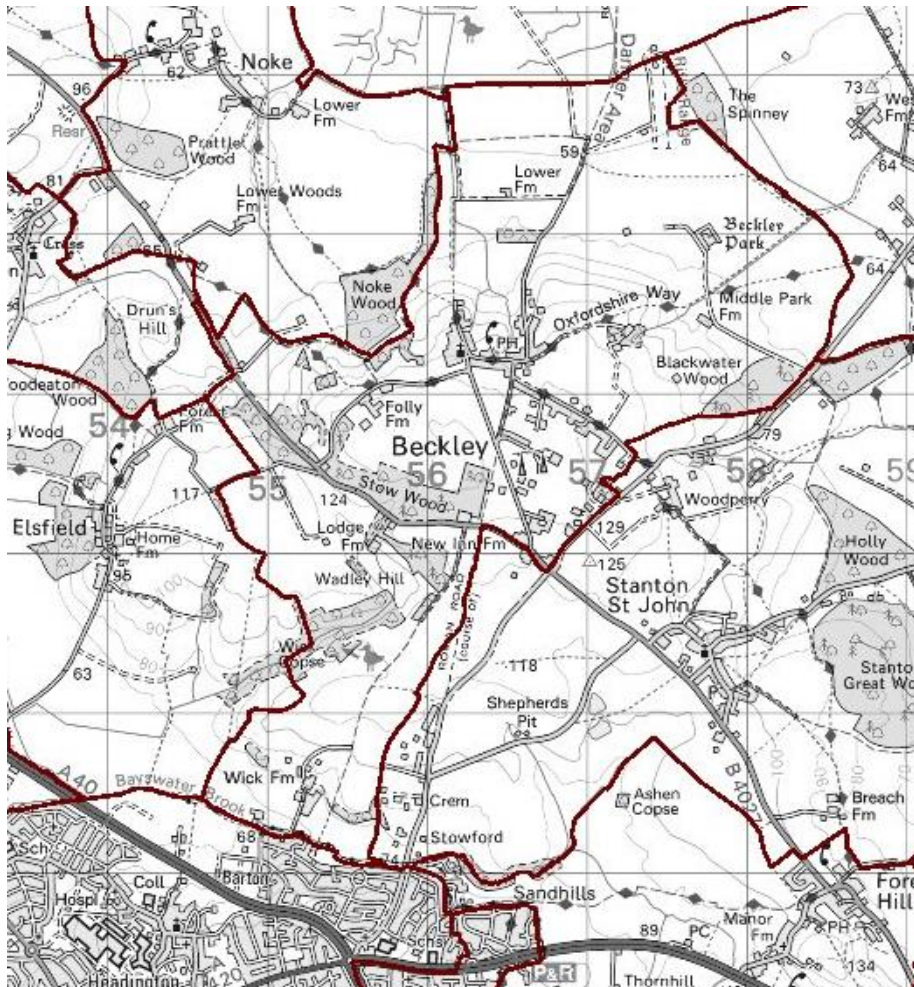
Topic	Overall impacts of NP	Impacts with other plans & projects	Comments
Population & human health	+?	+/-	The NP aims to protect local people from the negative impacts of development, and improve their health. It aims to protect residents of Wick Farm by controlling building height and encouraging planting near the park home site. Jointly with development at Land North of Bayswater Brook, the NP's impact will be mixed: the number of people in the parish will more than double; the new homes may help to improve the health of the new residents; but the health of existing residents is likely to slightly worsen.
Air & climatic factors	+	-?	The NP aims to protect and improve air quality in the parish, and minimise carbon emissions. However the new homes planned at Land North of Bayswater Brook, and the traffic and congestion they would bring, is likely to worsen air quality overall. In the longer run, electric vehicles will start to replace petrol/diesel vehicles, leading to improved air quality.
Biodiversity	+?	-	The NP aims to protect and enhance biodiversity in the parish. This includes a protection zone around Sydlings Copse, and aspirations for improved biodiversity. Development at Land North of Bayswater Brook is likely to have significant negative impacts on hedges, Sydlings Copse etc.
Heritage	0	0?	The NP aims to protect heritage in the parish. Development at Land North of Bayswater Brook is likely to improve Wick Farm and the listed Wick Farm Wellhouse. None of these impacts are significant.
Landscape	+	-	The NP aims to protect the landscape in the parish, including the traditional character of the parish, views in and out of the parish, building heights, and dark skies at night. It also aims to protect the privacy of the residents of Wicks Farm. The new development will change the southern part of the parish from farmer's fields to urban development, and it will be visible from much of the parish.
Housing	-	+	The NP policies on building heights, a buffer zone for Sydlings Copse, housing design etc. all reduce the number of homes that can be built in the parish. Development at Land North of Bayswater Brook would more than double the number of homes in the parish. This would help to provide housing.
Soil	0	-	The NP policies have limited impacts on soil. The new development would turn farmer's fields into urban development.
Water	0	-	The NP policies have limited impact on water quality, water resources or flooding. New residents of Land North of Bayswater Brook will need more water; the paved-over areas will increase the chance of flooding; and water quality in nearby streams could be affected by runoff from roads.

# 1. Introduction

This report documents the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) process for the emerging Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan (NP). This section briefly describes Beckley and Stowood parish, its neighbourhood plan, and the SEA process.

## 1.1 Beckley and Stowood parish

Beckley and Stowood is a predominantly rural parish located at the northern end of South Oxford District Council, about 7km northeast of the centre of Oxford (Figure 1.1). Most of the parish is within Oxford's Green Belt. In the 2011 census, the parish had a population of 608, of which about 470 lived in the village of Beckley. The B4027, which bisects the parish, is the only larger road in the parish. At its southern end the parish adjoins the eastern edge of Oxford. Its northern end includes the southern end of the Otmoor Site of Special Scientific Interest.



From south to north, the land in the parish rises steeply from 70m to a limestone ridge at 140m above sea level at Beckley, falling again to 60m near Otmoor and Horton-cum-Studley. Beckley has wide-ranging and attractive views over Otmoor.



## 1.2 Submission Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan

The submission Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan aims to maintain the character of the parish; and support sustainable development that will not adversely impact on the parish's rural nature. It also contains policies that aim to mitigate the impacts of the strategic development site 'Land North of Bayswater Brook' which partially falls within the parish. The plan contains:

### Vision

*"Our Parish is already an outstanding place to live. Our vision is that its character should be conserved and even improved for the present and future generations of its inhabitants by means of the following positive actions by the community:*

- Preserve, maintain, nurture and enhance our environmental assets and biodiversity, particularly ancient woodland, SSSIs and the important setting of the village and settlements in the surrounding countryside.*
- Conserve and enhance our heritage and the rural character of the village and settlements*
- Maintain the important views from Beckley village, Stowood and towards the Parish from Oxford, Otmoor, Brill and beyond and maintain our dark sky.*
- Enable the sustainable modest growth of housing numbers within the village boundary while ensuring design is compatible and in keeping with surrounding houses.*
- New developments should be built to the highest energy conservation standards and retrofitting of existing buildings is encouraged, working towards conserving energy being carbon neutral*
- Encourage a mix of size of housing to enable residents to downsize and encourage young families*
- Local residents are very much opposed to development at Wick Farm as part of the 'Land North of Bayswater Brook' strategic development site in the SODC Local Plan. While nothing could mitigate the destruction of the Green Belt around Oxford and in this Parish or the great threat to the very important SSSI sites at Sydlings Copse and College Pond, policies have been developed to try to reduce harm, as much as possible, both to the environment and lives of residents at Wick Farm in the event that development at this site should go ahead."*

### Core Objectives

- 1. Preservation of the Green Belt: The preservation of the Green Belt in our Parish is vital to maintaining the environment, biodiversity and the setting of the village and dwellings*
- 2. Conserving and Enhancing our Heritage and Rural Character: It is important to conserve our heritage and the setting in which it is found, along with the countryside and fields that make up the Parish*
- 3. Maintaining Views and Dark Skies: The Parish is within the Oxford heights area and rises from Bayswater Brook in the south to 140 metre limestone ridge and Stowood and Beckley village. This gives rise to many extraordinary views and vistas for many miles in all directions, which, alongside the dark night skies, must be maintained.*
- 4. Sustainable Growth and Compatible Design: Provide for sustainable levels of residential development within the Settlement Boundary and avoid houses "that are out of character with the rest of the village".*
- 5. Sustainable New Development: To achieve the highest standards of energy efficiency and carbon neutrality with new development wherever possible*
- 6. Encouraging Housing Mix : A housing mix is desirable to accommodate young families wishing to move into larger houses and older residents wishing to downsize.*
- 7. Reducing the harm to the Environment and Residents from Development at Land North of Bayswater Brook: To develop policies to help mitigate the harm arising from the strategic development proposed on land North of Bayswater Brook."*

#### Policies for the whole of the parish

- VB1. Settlement Boundary
- VB2. Residential Development Outside the Settlement Boundary
- E1. Biodiversity
- H1. Preservation of heritage
- DS1. Important Views
- DS2. Parking
- DS3. Flood Risk and Development
- DS4. Dwelling Size
- DG1. Beckley Design Guide
- DG2. Night Sky/Lighting
- CC1. New Construction and Energy Efficiency
- CC2. Low Carbon Transport Solutions

#### Mitigation policies for the strategic development site “Land North of Bayswater Brook”

- CE 1. Community engagement
- GB 1. Definition of a new Green Belt boundary
- TA 1. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan
- TA 2. Transport Assessment – Baseline assumptions
- TA 3. Transport Assessment and Travel Plan – Highway and road assessments
- CM 1. Provision of Construction Management Plans
- TA 4. Compliance with NICE guidelines on physical activity and the environment and health assessment
- PC 1. Maintenance of access and separation of footpaths and bridleways
- PC 2. Siting of pedestrian and cycle bridge over A40 Northern Bypass Road
- PC 3. Safety and Crime Reduction
- PC 4. Widening of Public Rights of way for safety
- B 1. Provision of Public Transport
- LR 1. Land North of Bayswater Brook – Link Road
- SSSI 1. Report and assessment requirements for the SSSI Sydlings Copse and College Pond
- SSSI 2. Implementation of protection zone from roads
- SSSI 3. Agreement of landscape and recreational enhancements
- LV 1. Landscaping and maintaining important views for Wick Farm and Lower Farm
- LV 2. Maintaining privacy and avoiding overlooking - Building Heights
- LV 3. Specific landscaping and mitigation for loss of countryside
- LV 4. Avoiding hard urban edges
- LV 5. Design in sympathy with the landscape and surroundings
- HAP 1. Air quality assessment and mitigation
- HAP 2. Indoor air quality

The neighbourhood plan has been under preparation for more than six years. It began in January 2016, in response to concerns about proposals to build housing developments along the Oxford ring road. Pre-examination consultation was carried out between December 2018 and February 2019. Subsequently the plan development slowed down as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and South Oxfordshire District Council's work on their Local Plan 2035, which was adopted in December 2020.

In May 2021, South Oxfordshire District Council issued a screening opinion which states that the neighbourhood plan requires a strategic environmental assessment because, although it does not allocate any sites of development:



- It will determine the use of sites/small areas at a local level, notably by establishing a settlement boundary for Beckley and setting criteria for development at Land North of Bayswater Brook; and
- It is likely to have significant effects on the environment through its policies relating to a potential link road through the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook, the Sydtings Copse SSSI, and building height restrictions at the strategic site.

### 1.3 Strategic environmental assessment (SEA)

SEA is the process of identifying and assessing the environmental impacts of a plan and its alternatives, and minimising any negative impacts of the plan. SEA aims to inform and influence the plan-making process, to maximise the plan's contribution to sustainable development. The legal requirements for SEA are set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). The stages of SEA are:

- Scoping
- Assessment of alternatives
- Assessment of the draft plan and preparation of the SEA environmental report
- Consultation, examination and adoption of the plan
- Monitoring.

The current stage

Table 1.1 shows where these requirements are covered in this report.

### 1.4 SEA process for the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan

Funding for this SEA was provided by Locality in early 2022. Consultants Levett-Therivel carried out the SEA in discussions with the neighbourhood plan team.

A. Scoping. A draft SEA scoping report was sent to the Environment Agency, Historic England, Natural England and South Oxfordshire District Council on 29 March 2022. The Environment Agency wrote on 4 April to say that they would answer in time but hadn't done so by late May. Historic England confirmed on 9 April that they had no comments. Natural England responded on 29 April, requesting consideration of the Bernwood Focus Area in the neighbourhood plan: this has now been included at Section 3.3 of this report and Policy E1 of the neighbourhood plan.

South Oxfordshire recommended:

- Discussing in the policy context the National Planning Policy Framework approach to air quality and transport. This has been included at Section 2.
- Removing the statement that the South Oxfordshire Local Plan is controversial. This has been done, although Section 2 still summarises the fraught history of the Local Plan since that has a bearing on the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan.
- Mentioning the Oxford AQMA. This has been done at Section 3.2.
- Including reference to evidence on the Sydtings Copse and College Pond SSSI prepared for the South Oxfordshire Local Plan inquiry. This is now mentioned at Section 7.3.

B. Alternatives. Alternatives already considered as part of the neighbourhood plan-making process (e.g. on settlement boundary) and new alternatives suggested by the SEA scoping process (e.g. on Wick Farm and on biodiversity enhancements) were discussed at two meetings between the neighbourhood plan team and the SEA consultant - on 28 March and 19 April 2022 – as well as through various phone calls and email exchanges. Many changes were made to the draft neighbourhood plan in response to these discussions, which are summarised at Section 7.7.

**Table 1.1 Environmental report requirements**

Requirement under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004	Where covered in this scoping report
1. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship (if any) with other relevant plans and programmes.	Section 1.2
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	Section 2
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Section 3
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and the Habitats Directive.	Sections 2 & 3
5. The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme	Section 4
and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Section 2
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues including (a) biodiversity; (b) population; (c) human health; (d) fauna; (e) flora; (f) soil; (g) water; (h) air; (i) climatic factors; (j) material assets; (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (l) landscape; and (m) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).	Section 5 SEA framework
7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Sections 6 (vision, objectives) and 8 (policies)
8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and	Section 7.6
a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information.	Section 7
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.	Section 1.5
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.	Section 9
	Section 0

C. Plan assessment and environmental report. A first round of policy appraisal was carried out in early April 2022, and formed the basis for many additional changes to the plan. The neighbourhood plan team provided a final round of plan policies on 23 May, and these are appraised in this report.

The parish council is keen for the Neighbourhood Plan to be adopted in time to inform the planning application for Land North of Bayswater Brook.

### 1.5 Difficulties faced

Few difficulties were faced when carrying out the SEA for the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan. The delays to the plan in terms of coronavirus and getting funding for the SEA mean that the plan is being prepared at the same time as masterplanning on Land North of Bayswater Brook is taking place. This is unfortunate as it puts pressure to get the neighbourhood plan completed quickly.

Some environmental data were not available at the parish scale (e.g. agricultural land quality) and census data are more than ten years out of date.

## 2. Policy context

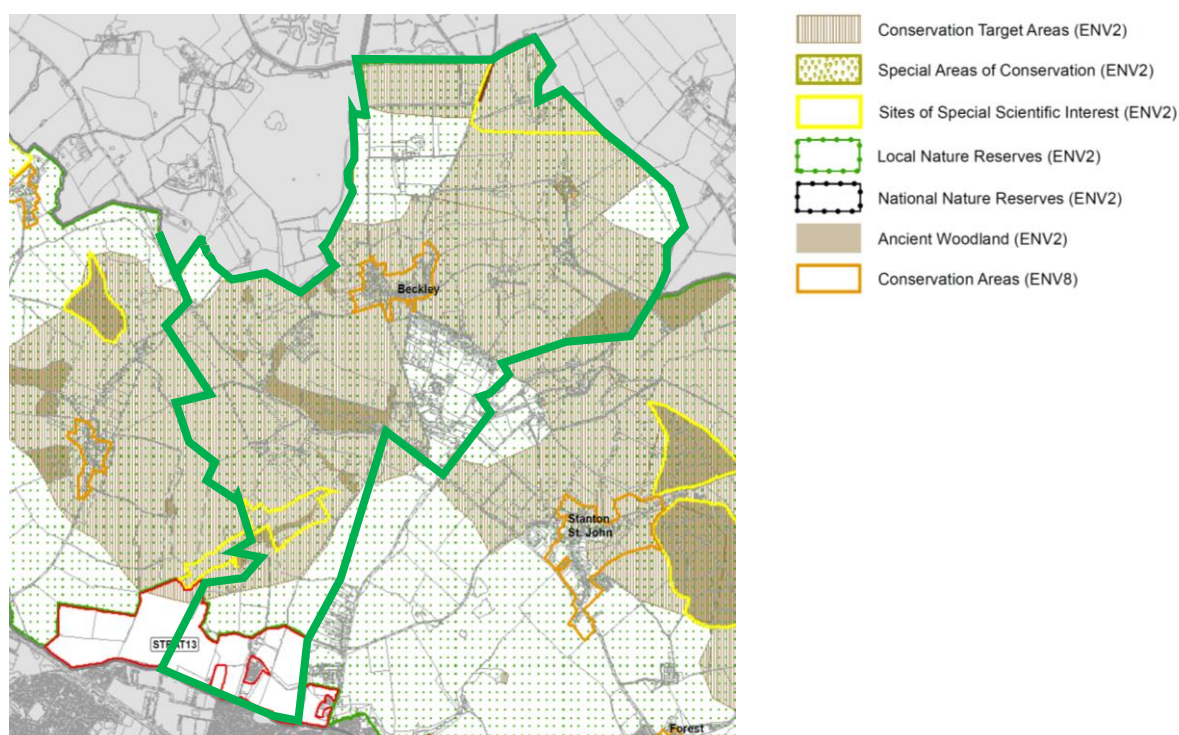
This section discusses other policies, plans and environmental objectives that set the policy context for the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan.

Schedule 4B to the **Town and Country Planning Act 1990**<sup>1</sup> (as amended) states that, before a neighbourhood plan can be approved by an examiner, it must meet a number of ‘basic conditions’. These include that the neighbourhood plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development (which the SEA process helps to show), and that the plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the neighbourhood plan area.

The main plan affecting the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan is the **South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035**<sup>2</sup>. The plan is for 23,550 new homes that help to provide for Oxford’s unmet housing need, including changes to the Green Belt boundary at seven strategic allocation sites. The plan was submitted for examination in March 2019, but in October 2019 the newly-elected Council Cabinet recommended withdrawing it due to concerns about over-development. The Secretary of State stopped the local authority from withdrawing the plan, and subsequently directed it to progress the plan through examination<sup>3</sup>. The Local Plan was adopted in December 2020.

Figure 2.1 is an excerpt from the South Oxfordshire Local Plan’s key diagram which shows policies relevant to Beckley and Stowood Parish.

**Figure 2.1 Excerpt from South Oxfordshire Local Plan key diagram showing policies relevant to Beckley and Stowood parish**



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/schedule/4B>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/local-plan-2035/adopted-local-plan-2035/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/Inspectors-Report-November-2020.pdf>

Most of the parish is a Conservation Target Area; there are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the parish; and there are several areas of ancient woodlands in the parish. These are jointly covered by Policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan:

#### **Policy ENV2: Biodiversity - Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Species**

1. The highest level of protection will be given to sites of international nature conservation importance (Special Areas of Conservation). Development that is likely to result in a significant effect, either alone or in combination, on such sites will need to satisfy the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
2. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are of national importance. Development that is likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either on its own or in combination with other developments) will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh any harm to the special interest features and the SSSI's contribution to the local ecological network. In such circumstances, measures should be provided (and secured through planning conditions or legal agreements) that would mitigate or, as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects resulting from development.
3. Development likely to result, either directly or indirectly to the loss, deterioration or harm to:
  - Local Wildlife Sites
  - Local Nature Reserves
  - Priority Habitats and Species
  - Legally Protected Species
  - Local Geological Sites
  - Ecological Networks (Conservation Target Areas)
  - Important or ancient hedges or hedgerows
  - Ancient woodland and veteran treeswill only be permitted if:
  - i) the need for, and benefits of the development in the proposed location outweigh the adverse effect on the interests;
  - ii) it can be demonstrated that it could not reasonably be located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm to the interests; and
  - iii) measures will be provided (and secured through planning conditions or legal agreements), that would avoid, mitigate or as a last resort, compensate for the adverse effects resulting from development.
4. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) will be refused planning permission, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons justifying the granting of planning permission.
5. Where development has the potential to affect a proposed wildlife site the developer must undertake surveys and assessments to determine whether the site meets the criteria for Local Wildlife Site status.

Much of Beckley village is also a Conservation Area, and covered by policy ENV8 of the Local Plan:

#### **Policy ENV8: Conservation Areas**

1. Proposals for development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area must conserve or enhance its special interest, character, setting and appearance. Development will be expected to:
  - i. contribute to the Conservation Area's special interest and its relationship within its setting. The special characteristics of the Conservation Area (such as existing walls,

- buildings, trees, hedges, burgage plots, traditional shopfronts and signs, farm groups, medieval townscapes, archaeological features, historic routes etc.) should be preserved;
  - ii. take into account important views within, into or out of the Conservation Area and show that these would be retained and unharmed;
  - iii. respect the local character and distinctiveness of the Conservation Area in terms of the development's: siting; size; scale; height; alignment; materials and finishes (including colour and texture); proportions; design; and form and should have regard to the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and any relevant Conservation Area Character Appraisal;
  - iv. be sympathetic to the original curtilage of buildings and pattern of development that forms part of the historic interest of the Conservation Area;
  - v. be sympathetic to important spaces such as paddocks, greens, gardens and other gaps or spaces between buildings which make a positive contribution to the pattern of development in the Conservation Area;
  - vi. ensure the wider social and environmental effects generated by the development are compatible with the existing character and appearance of the Conservation Area; and/or
  - vii. ensure no loss of, or harm to any building or feature that makes a positive contribution to the special interest, character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
2. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a Conservation Area, consent will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss.

In terms of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan's most relevant policy is for the strategic site "Land North of Bayswater Brook", which is located at the southern end of the parish. The strategic site is covered by Policy STRAT13:

**Policy STRAT13: Land North of Bayswater Brook**

Site area: 110 hectares

1. Land within the strategic allocation at Land North of Bayswater Brook will be developed to deliver approximately 1,100 new homes and supporting services and facilities within the plan period.
2. Proposals to develop Land North of Bayswater Brook will be expected to deliver:
  - i. affordable housing provision and mix in accordance with Policy H9;
  - ii. sufficient educational capacity likely to be a 1.5-form entry primary school including early years provision, appropriate contributions towards an off-site secondary school and Special Educational Needs (SEN);
  - iii. sufficient contributions towards enabling primary healthcare services to address patient growth associated with the development, as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
  - iv. provision of convenience floorspace that meets the day-to-day needs of the local community only without impacting on the vitality and viability of existing centres in accordance with Policy TC2 – Retail Hierarchy;
  - v. necessary facilities for movement. As a first priority, these should provide high quality pedestrian, cycle and public transport connections into Oxford to maximise the number of trips made by non-car modes, and measures to discourage car-based development. If, having taken the impact of these measures into account, significant residual impacts on the highway network are still predicted, new highway infrastructure will be required to mitigate those impacts. Any planning application will be expected to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. Transport improvements are likely to include:
    - a. provision of high quality pedestrian, cycle and public transport access and connectivity to Oxford City Centre and other major employment locations, particularly the hospitals and Oxford Science and Business Parks, including (but not limited to) the



- links to and across the A40 Oxford Northern Bypass and a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the A40 which will require a suitable landing point outside of the allocated site;
- b. road access from the surrounding road network;
- c. measures to mitigate any significant residual impacts on the highway network, first taking into account the benefits from the sustainable movement measures described above.
- vi. a schedule of works as agreed with the Council for the repair of the Grade II\* Wick Farm Wellhouse identified on the Heritage at Risk Register. This is to be agreed prior to the determination of an application for development. An application for planning permission must be accompanied by an application for listed building consent for the works to the Wellhouse;
- vii. a development that ensures that there will be no demonstrable negative recreational, hydrological or air quality impacts on the Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI;
- viii. appropriate air quality mitigation measures to minimise impacts on the Oxford AQMA as demonstrated through an appropriate Air Quality Screening Assessment; and
- ix. low carbon development and renewable energy in accordance with STRAT4.
- 3. The proposed development at Land North of Bayswater Brook will deliver a scheme in accordance with an agreed comprehensive masterplan taking into consideration this policy's indicative concept plan. The masterplan must be prepared in collaboration and agreed with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council. Proposals will be required to deliver a masterplan that has been informed by detailed landscape, visual, heritage and ecological impact assessments and demonstrates an appropriate scale, layout and form that:
  - i. focuses built development within Flood Zone 1 only, with areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 preserved as accessible green space;
  - ii. includes a landscape buffer between the development and Wick Farm, as well as incorporating high quality design to preserve or enhance listed buildings and their settings, both within and surrounding the site, in accordance with Policy ENV7;
  - iii. develops a transport and movement hierarchy which promotes non-car modes of travel and permeability across the site and beyond to Oxford City, including on and off-site public rights of way enhancements, and identifies where on-site highways infrastructure will be required, ensures appropriate highways and sustainable transport access and permeability across the site, including between Bayswater Road and the B4150 Marsh Lane/ A40 junction;
  - iv. provides a permanent defensible Green Belt boundary around the allocation and a strong countryside edge;
  - v. retains and incorporates existing hedgerows and tree belts, particularly where this assists with the creation of a new Green Belt boundary;
  - vi. relates to and connects with adjoining built development and development that is planned within Oxford City;
  - vii. respects and avoids harm to Oxford's historic setting;
  - viii. minimises visual impacts on the surrounding countryside;
  - ix. delivers higher density development (a minimum of 45 dph) along key frontages, transport corridors and towards the south and east boundaries of the main site and the south of the smaller site, to respond to the existing adjacent development, provided it does not adversely impact any heritage assets or their settings, and provided that it respects the character of, and living conditions within, neighbouring residential development. This will be interspersed with green links and public access to attractive walking routes. Densities on both sites will gradually reduce towards the northern landscape buffer and on the main site, densities will be lower close to Sidlings Copse and

College Pond SSSI and also reduce towards the western edge of the site to reflect the sensitivities of the view cone;

- x. a net gain in biodiversity through the protection and enhancement of habitats along the Bayswater Brook, new habitats to the north buffering the Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI and offsite biodiversity enhancements;
- xi. provides a network of Green Infrastructure that:
  - a. retains and incorporates areas of functional flood plain and existing surface water flow paths;
  - b. protects and enhances existing habitats, particularly those associated with Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI and the Bayswater Brook;
  - c. connects with adjoining Green Infrastructure within Oxford City;
  - d. retains and incorporates existing public rights of way, improves and extends public rights of way where appropriate, and supports movement through the site and into adjoining areas by walking and cycling; and
  - e. provides an appropriate buffer to the Oxford view cone.
- 4. Archaeological evaluation was undertaken during 2020 before the preparation of the masterplan. A scheme of appropriate mitigation should be established, to include the physical preservation of significant archaeological features and their setting.
- 5. The number and phasing of homes to be permitted and the timing of housing delivery linked to the planned infrastructure need to be informed by further evidence as per the requirements of other policies in the Plan including Policy TRANS4. This will be agreed (and potentially conditioned) through the planning application process, in consultation with the relevant statutory authority.

Additionally, Policy TRANS4 requires new developments that have significant transport implications to submit a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement, and where relevant a Travel Plan. It requires appropriate provision for works and/or contributions towards providing an adequate level of accessibility by all modes of transport and mitigating the impacts on the transport network.

The other key policy document affecting the neighbourhood plan is the **National Planning Policy Framework**, notably its statements about the Green Belt, air quality and transport. Green Belts serve five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The NPPF (para. 137-150) states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts; that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt, with a few limited exceptions, including “limited infilling in villages”; and that development that is harmful to the Green Belt should be approved only in very special circumstances. The Inspector’s Report on the South Oxfordshire Local Plan<sup>4</sup> explains the very special circumstances relevant to removing Land North of Bayswater Brook from the Green Belt.

The NPPF (para. 186) states that planning policies and decisions should help to achieve air quality objectives, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), and the

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<sup>4</sup> The Inspector’s Report (footnote 2) explains the very special circumstances relevant to removing Land North of Bayswater Brook from the Green Belt.

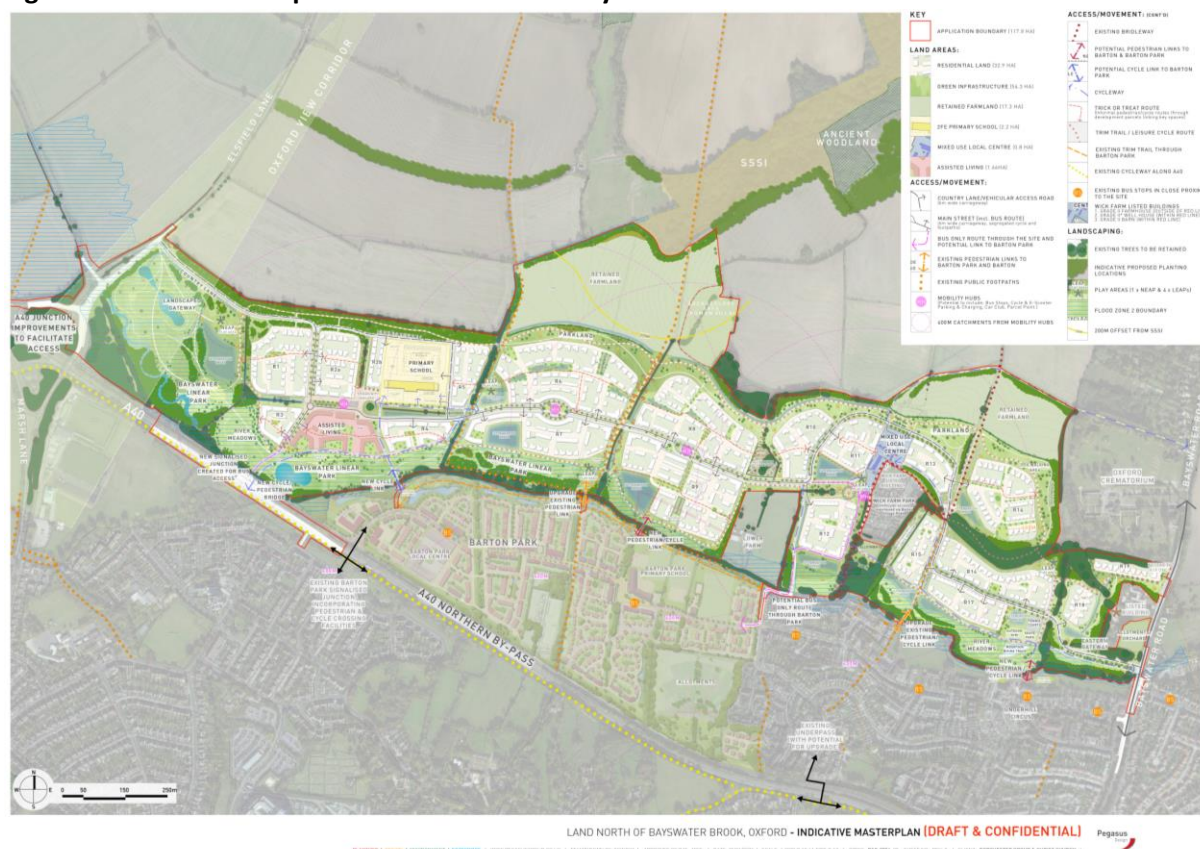


cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas. Although there is no AQMA in the parish, the Oxford AQMA lies just to the south of the parish.

The NPPF (para. 105) also notes that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth to minimise the negative impacts of vehicular transport and promote walking, cycling and public transport. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. Within the parish, residents in the southern part have better access to services via walking, cycling and public transport than those in the northern part.

In March 2022, Christ Church and Dorchester Residential Management put forward a **draft masterplan for Land North of Bayswater Brook** (Figure 2.2). This includes 1450 homes, of which 50% would be “financially accessible”; green spaces and green infrastructure, and a new primary school and café/restaurant.<sup>5</sup> Consultation on the draft masterplan closed on 31 March.

**Figure 2.2 Draft masterplan for Land North of Bayswater Brook**



South Oxfordshire District Council has declared a climate emergency and developed a **Climate Action Plan**<sup>6</sup>. Its targets are to become carbon neutral within its own operations by 2025, and for South Oxfordshire to be a carbon neutral district by 2030. This affects the energy requirements of new dwellings, and the council’s approach to vehicular transport.

<sup>5</sup> [www.bayswateroxford.co.uk](http://www.bayswateroxford.co.uk)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/tackling-the-climate-emergency/>

### 3. Environmental context

This section describes the environmental context of Beckley and Stowood parish in terms of population and human health, air and climatic factors; biodiversity, flora and fauna; heritage; landscape; material assets (housing); soil and water. It also discusses the likely future environment without the submission neighbourhood plan.

#### 3.1 Population and human health

The 2011 census provides the most recent information about the population and health of Beckley and Stowood parish. In 2011, the population of the parish in 2001 was 608 in 256 households, up more than 10% from 2001 when the population was 553<sup>7</sup>.

The parish falls in the middle 20% in terms of the UK Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019<sup>8</sup> (Figure 3.1). High housing costs and comparatively poor accessibility to services are balanced out by higher than average employment and income, and good health.

**Figure 3.1 Index of Multiple Deprivation for South Oxfordshire** Beckley and Stowood parish in the middle 20%<sup>9</sup>

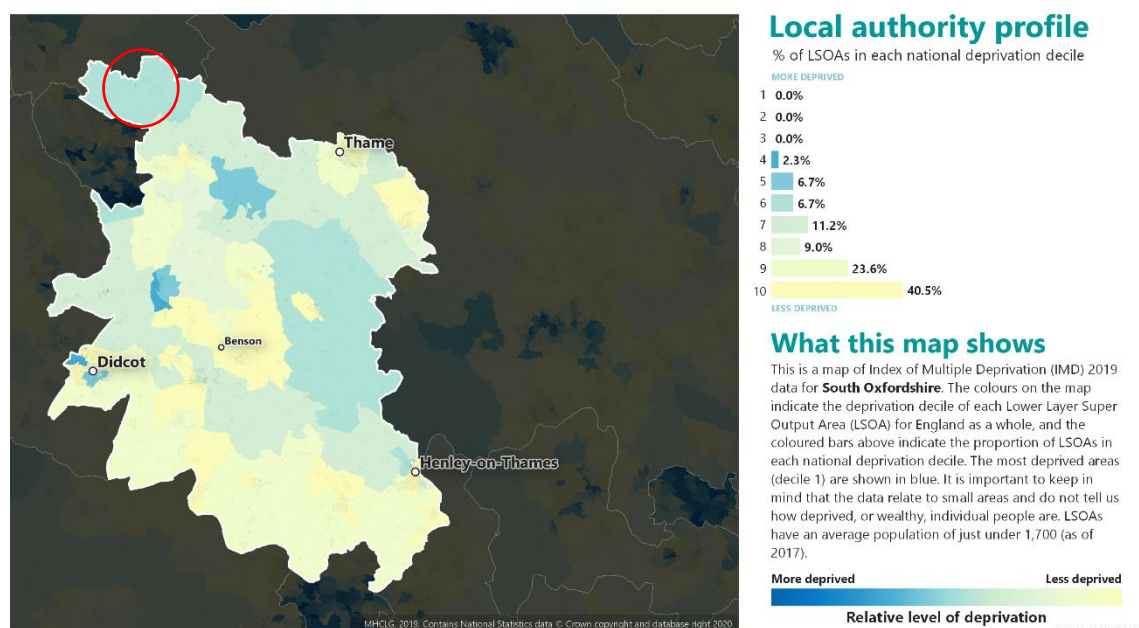


Table 3.1 provides more information about the population and health of parish residents in 2011. Overall, in 2011, people in the parish were slightly older and less ethnically diverse than the England and Wales (E&W) average. The parish population was overall healthier than the E&W average, and had higher qualifications: generally higher qualifications and income are associated with better health. A more recent - 2020 - health analysis for South Oxfordshire confirms that the parish's population (in the Forest Hill and Holton ward) is healthier than average – see Figure 3.2.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.oxford.gov.uk/districtdata/download/downloads/id/61/south\\_oxon\\_census\\_2011\\_summary\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/districtdata/download/downloads/id/61/south_oxon_census_2011_summary_leaflet.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The Index of Multiple Deprivation brings together information about income, employment, education, health, crime, access to housing and services, and living environment.

<sup>9</sup> [https://research.mysociety.org/sites/imd2019/media/lsao\\_maps/E07000179\\_LAD-LSOA\\_IMD2019\\_South-Oxfordshire.png](https://research.mysociety.org/sites/imd2019/media/lsao_maps/E07000179_LAD-LSOA_IMD2019_South-Oxfordshire.png)

**Table 3.1 Census 2011 information about the population of Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>10</sup>**

	B&S parish	England & Wales average
<b>Population</b>		
People aged 16-64	63%	63%
People aged 65+	20%	16%
People in White ethnic group	96%	86%
People not in White ethnic group	4%	14%
Population born in UK	90%	87%
<b>Health</b>		
People aged 16-64 stating that their health is good or very good	86%	81%
People aged 16-64 stating that their health is bad or very bad	3%	6%
People aged 16-64 whose day-to-day activities are limited a little or a lot	12%	18%
<b>Employment and qualifications</b>		
People aged 16-74 who are economically active	75%	70%
People aged 16-74 who are unemployed	1%	6%
People with Level 4+ qualifications	44%	27%

*Likely future without the plan:* The population of the parish is likely to grow, albeit slowly, even in the absence of Land North of Bayswater Brook. However the new development – the current masterplan is for 1450 homes – would more than double the population of the parish. In the absence of the strategic development Land North of Bayswater Brook, the average age of the parish population, like that of the UK generally, is likely to increase over coming decades. The health of the residents of existing housing in the parish is likely to remain high. However new residents – many of whom will be in new affordable accommodation – may be younger and/or have poorer health.

### 3.2 Air and climatic factors

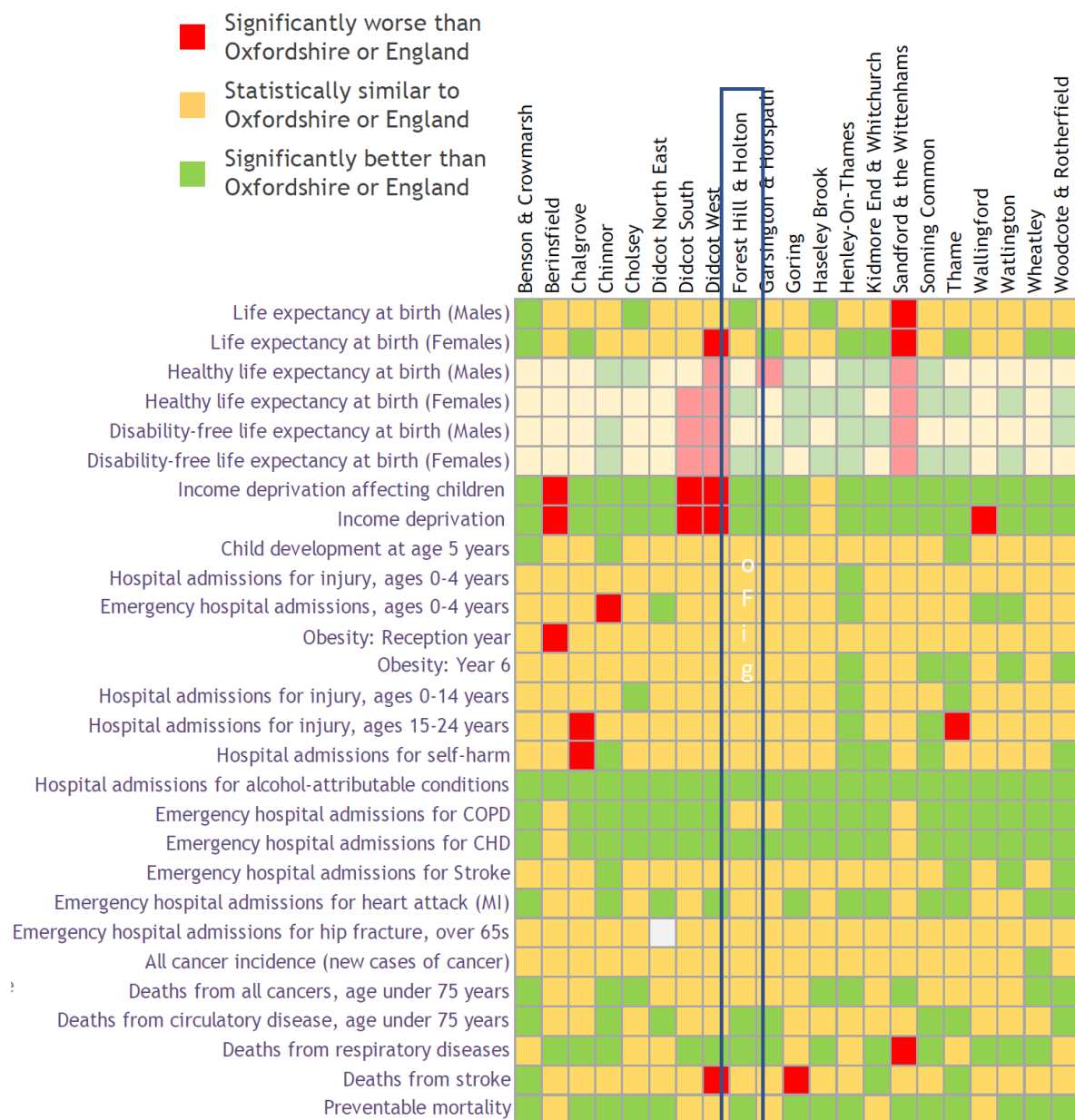
There is no Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in the Beckley and Stowood NP area, but the Oxford AQMA lies just to the south of the parish. Households in the parish have a higher average number of vehicles than the England and Wales average, and there are few households with no car or van – see Table 3.2. Similarly, because of the high proportion of detached houses in the parish – detached houses typically require more energy to heat than terraced houses or flats – parish residents are likely to use disproportionately more fuel to heat their homes, with associated impacts on air quality and climatic factors.

*Likely future without the plan:* In the future, the generally increasing proportion of electric vehicles and air source heat pumps is likely to reduce per-person air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

New housing at Land North of Bayswater Brook is likely to be more energy efficient than the parish's current housing stock; and easy accessibility to Oxford by walking, cycling and bus is likely to mean that the per-person transport emissions of new residents is lower than that of current parish residents. However overall air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in the parish will increase as a result of new development.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

**Figure 3.2. Health of Forest Hill and Holton ward (containing Beckley and Stowood parish), and South Oxfordshire District Council population, 2020<sup>11</sup>**



**Table 3.2 Census 2011 information about transport in Beckley and Stowood parish**

	B&S parish	England & Wales average
<b>Transport</b>		
Households with no car or van	5%	25%
Average no. cars/household	1.6	1.2

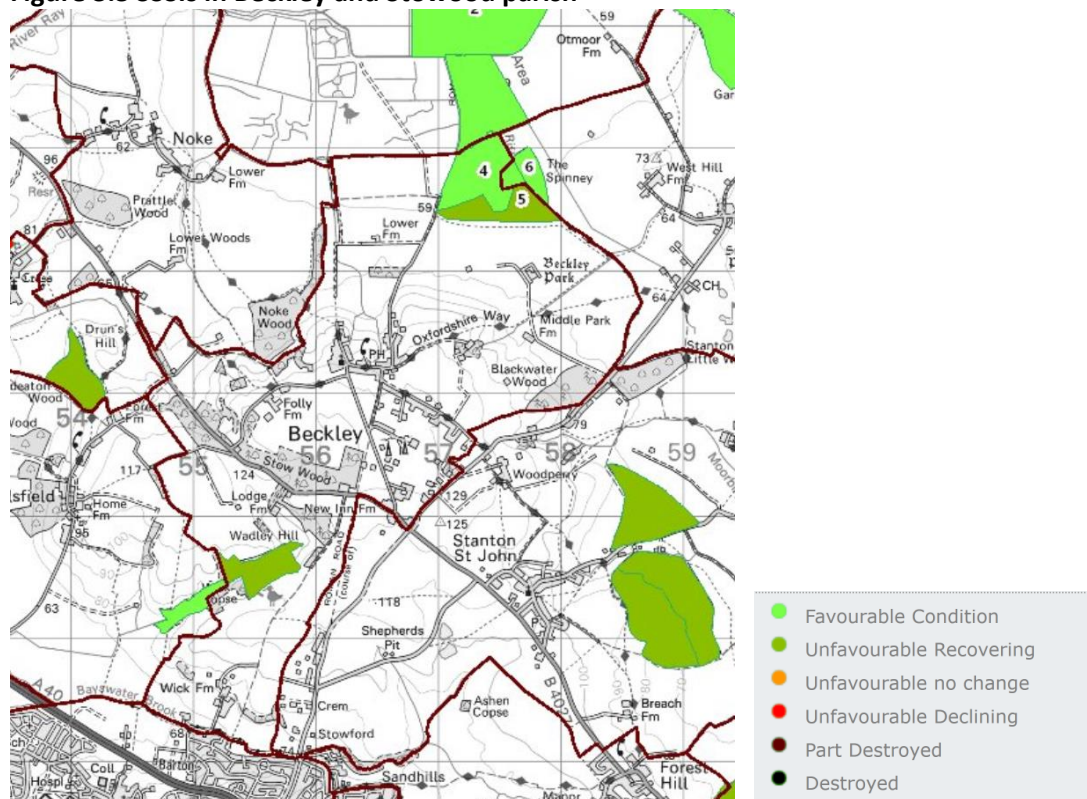
<sup>11</sup> [https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/SouthOxon\\_JSNA\\_2020.pdf](https://insight.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/system/files/documents/SouthOxon_JSNA_2020.pdf)



### 3.3 Biodiversity, flora, fauna

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the parish: Sidling's Copse and College Ponds SSSI in the south, and Otmoor SSSI in the north (Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3 SSSIs in Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>12</sup>**



Sidling's Copse (also spelled Sydling's Copse) consists of a mosaic of several habitats including calcareous fen, carr, broadleaved woodland scrub, reedbed, open water and acid and limestone grassland, lying in close proximity in and around a steeply sloping valley. It hosts over 400 plants including several uncommon species. Twenty-eight species of butterfly, 149 species of moth and several uncommon molluscs have been reported. The site has a long history of recording and was well known to early Oxford naturalists such as Gerard, Cole, Ashmole and Druce. The condition of the SSSI unit in the parish is 'unfavourable recovering'.<sup>13</sup>

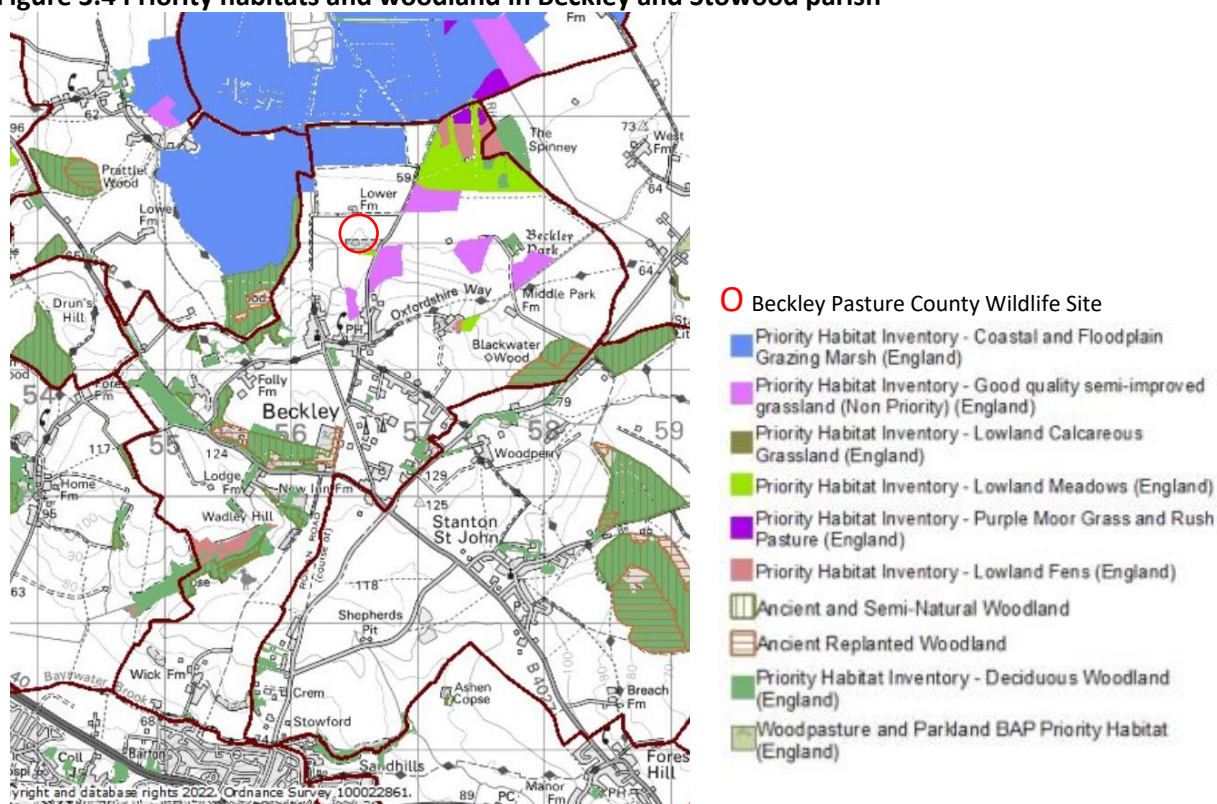
Otmoor is an RSPB reserve. It is a large bowl-shaped area of land on the floodplain of the River Ray. The area of special scientific interest represents the core of what was, until recent times, an extensive area of wetland which was flooded in winter and was traditionally managed as rough grazing marsh. Much of the land outside the core area has been drained and converted to arable or improved pasture. The site contains a wide range of habitats with many species of nationally uncommon plants and animals. Otmoor was once renowned as an outstanding site for overwintering wildfowl and waders, and is still of high regional value for birds with over sixty breeding species recorded in recent years. The condition of the SSSI units in the parish is 'unfavourable recovering' and 'favourable'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> MAGIC map

<sup>13</sup> [https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1000378&SiteName=College %20Pond&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1000378&SiteName=College%20Pond&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=)

<sup>14</sup> [https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1002962&SiteName=Otmoor &countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAArea=](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=S1002962&SiteName=Otmoor&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAArea=)

**Figure 3.4 Priority habitats and woodland in Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>15</sup>**



Beckley and Stowood parish is within Natural England’s Bernwood Focus Area. Bernwood covers the relics of the ancient royal hunting forest in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, in an approximate triangle between Oxford, Buckingham and Aylesbury encompassing the river Ray and the Thame. The area supports the best population in the country of black and brown hairstreak butterflies which lay their eggs on the thick blackthorn hedgerows weaving between the ancient woodlands and species-rich lowland meadows. The area provides a habitat for a number of wading birds and bat species including the rare Bechstein’s bat. The area still supports a few isolated pairs of breeding turtle doves which need scruffy arable margins close to large thick hedges in order to survive. Beckley and Stowood parish also contains a number of priority habitat types - semi-improved grassland, lowland meadows, lowland meadows, and purple moor grass and rush pasture – as well as the habitats found in the SSSIs (Figure 3.4). There is also a range of woodland in the parish, both ancient and more recent.

*Likely future without the plan:* Biodiversity is plummeting nationally and internationally as a result of land take, habitat fragmentation, climate change, poor habitat management and other trends. The condition of the two SSSIs in the parish is broadly good. Woodland in the parish may be negatively affected by poor management. Development at Land North of Bayswater Brook could negatively affect Sidling’s Copse SSSI through increased recreational use and reduced air quality: many fens are susceptible to acid deposition, including from vehicle emissions<sup>16</sup>. However, South Oxfordshire Local Plan’s Policy STRAT13 sets some requirements: the development should

- ensure that there will be no demonstrable negative recreational, hydrological or air quality impacts on the Sydtings Copse and College Pond SSSI;
- retain and incorporate existing hedgerows and tree belts, particularly where this assists with the creation of a new Green Belt boundary;

<sup>15</sup> MAGIC map

<sup>16</sup> [www.apis.ac.uk/acid-deposition-fen-marsh-and-swamp](http://www.apis.ac.uk/acid-deposition-fen-marsh-and-swamp)

- provide a net gain in biodiversity through the protection and enhancement of habitats along the Bayswater Brook, new habitats to the north buffering the Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI and offsite biodiversity enhancements;
- provide a network of Green Infrastructure that, amongst other things, protects and enhances existing habitats, particularly those associated with Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI and the Bayswater Brook.

## Heritage

The parish has a long history, and several heritage assets are still visible. Sections of a Roman road on Otmoor once linked Dorchester on Thames with Alchester, and are now a bridleway (Figure 3.5). The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built in 1150 to replace an original wooden Saxon building, and was rebuilt in the 14th and 15th centuries. The interior has several 14th- and 15th-century wall paintings.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 3.5 Location of the Roman Road (blue line), Church of the Assumption (blue cross) and Beckley Park (pink)**



Beckley Park was first enclosed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a hunting lodge was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the centre of the enclosure. The later Tudor brick edifice of Beckley Park is now a Grade I historic building, and the surrounding 20<sup>th</sup> century formal gardens, which incorporate the remains of three concentric medieval moats, are a Grade II\* Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest.

Much of Beckley village is a conservation area, with a range of listed buildings, and important trees and walls (Figure 3.6). Beckley's comparative inaccessibility and strong planning constraints have meant that the village has remained small. The settlement was first designated as a conservation

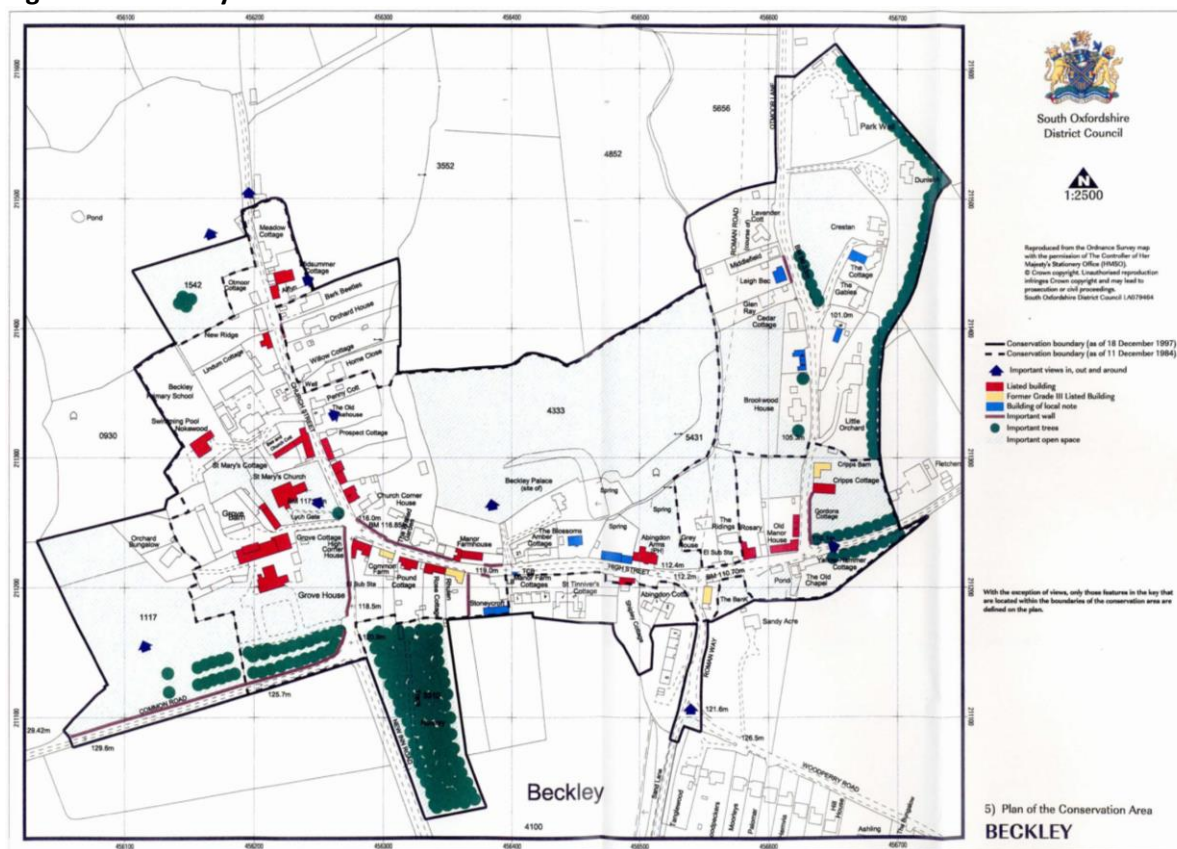
<sup>17</sup> [Sherwood & Pevsner 1974](#), p. 447–449; [Long 1972](#), p. 91.



area in 1984, and the boundaries of the area were extended in 1997.<sup>18</sup> Figure 3.7 shows the listed buildings in the parish.

*Likely future without the plan:* Given the current planning regime, and the limited amount of development likely to take place in most of the parish, most of these heritage assets are likely to remain in their current state. The key exception is Wick Farm in the south of the parish, where the Wick Farm Wellhouse is on the Heritage at Risk register. South Oxfordshire Local Plan's Policy STRAT13 states that, as part of the Bayswater development, a schedule of works must be agreed with the council for the repair of Wick Farm Wellhouse; a landscape buffer must be put in place between the development and Wick Farm; and high quality design must be incorporated to preserve or enhance the listed buildings and their settings.

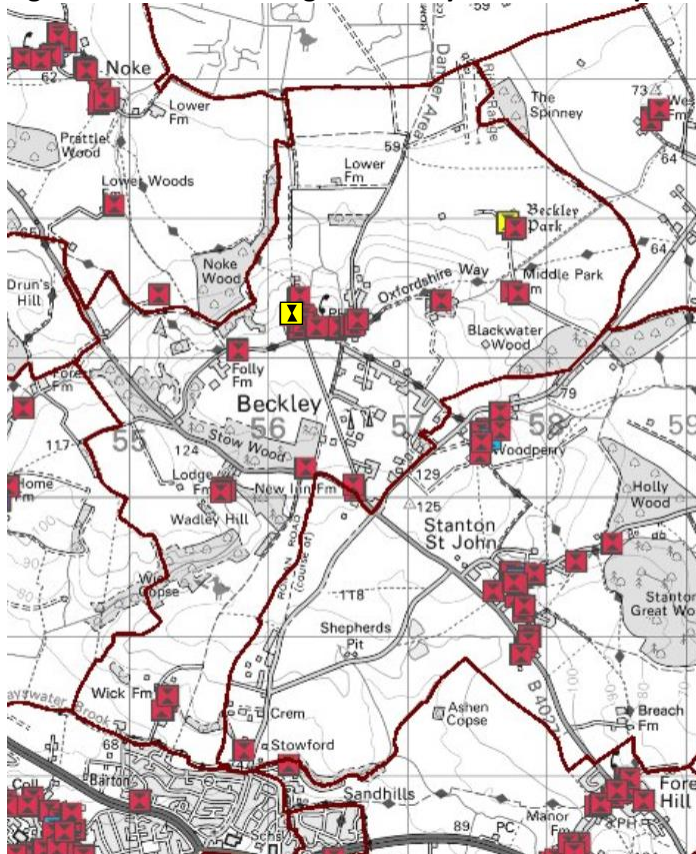
**Figure 3.6 Beckley conservation area<sup>19</sup>**



<sup>18</sup> [https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Beckley-CA-Study-1998\\_.pdf](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Beckley-CA-Study-1998_.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

**Figure 3.7 Listed buildings in Beckley and Stowood parish: yellow = Grade I, red = Grade II**



## Landscape

Beckley village is set in rolling countryside with outstanding views over Otmoor and the Oxfordshire countryside. Figure 3.8 shows the topography of the parish: there is a clear high point at Beckley, with land dropping off in all directions from there. The village and surrounding countryside retain much of their original character. On the southern side of Beckley village is a television relay mast that is a local landmark.

The parish is in the Midvale Ridge National Character Area 109: NCA109 is

*“set on a band of low-lying limestone hills stretching east–west from the Vale of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire to Swindon. It is surrounded by the flat lands of the Oxfordshire clay vales, giving extensive views across the surrounding countryside. It is a predominantly agricultural area with a mixed arable/ pastoral farming landscape, cereals being the most important arable crop. The main towns are Swindon, at the western end, and Oxford, which lies across the centre of the area, but otherwise the settlement pattern is characterised by small nucleated villages along the top of the ridge and along the springline. The soils types are a mix of heavy rendzinas, stagnogleys and lighter sandy brown earths with small patches of sandy soils.*

**Figure 3.8 Topography of Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>20</sup>**



<sup>20</sup> [http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic\\_serve.jsp?ID=1239694365&CODE=61A7F95ACAA10B8F5E1FCB2A20794036](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1239694365&CODE=61A7F95ACAA10B8F5E1FCB2A20794036)

*The unusual geology gives rise to habitats that are uncommon in the south of England, such as calcareous flushes and fens, calcareous heath and calcareous grassland. These in turn support a variety of rare plants and invertebrates.*

*The NCA is notably more wooded in character than the surrounding Upper Thames Clay Vales NCA with about 9 per cent woodland coverage. Evidence of previous land use is still clearly visible across the area from iron-age and Romano-British settlements and nationally important examples of ridge and furrow to the remains of quarries...”<sup>21</sup>*

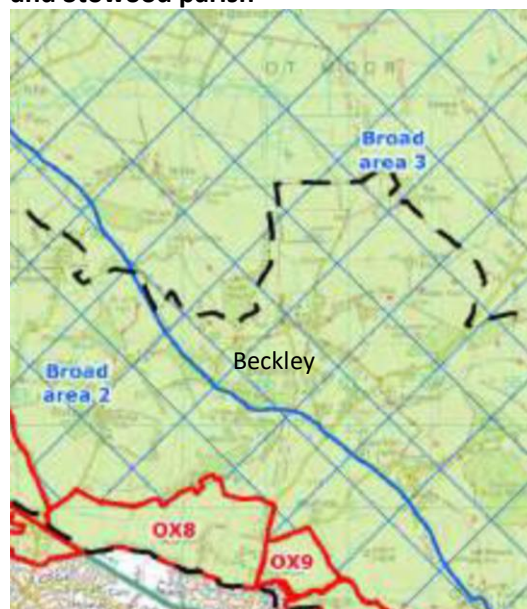
Natural England recommend the following ‘environmental opportunities’ for the area:

1. Maintain the historic environment and cultural character of the Midvale Ridge by ensuring that permitted development is well integrated to preserve local distinctiveness and sense of place and providing green space and recreational opportunities for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.
2. Manage, enhance and expand the valuable semi-natural habitats of the Midvale Ridge such as fens, grassland and calcareous heathland to benefit biodiversity, prevent soil erosion, improve water regulation and quality, support pollinators and protect and enhance wildlife corridors.
3. Manage and enhance the woodland cover and expand areas of native broadleaved woodland to benefit landscape character and biodiversity, for carbon sequestration, to prevent soil erosion, improve water quality, supply renewable fuel and to provide access and recreation opportunities.
4. Maintain and enhance the National Character Area’s internationally important geological heritage for the educational benefits it provides, its contribution to a sense of place and history and to increase recreational opportunities.

All of Beckley and Stowood parish except the Land North of Bayswater Brook strategic site is within Oxford’s Green Belt. The strategic site was also in the Green Belt until the adoption of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035. A Green Belt study of 2015 assessed the area in the parish - ‘Broad Area 3’ in the north, ‘Broad Area 2’ in the south, and ‘OX8’ at Bayswater - in terms of the purposes of Green Belts. Figure 3.9 shows the areas studied and Tables 3.3 – 3.5 show the key findings of the study.

*Likely future without the plan:* Most of the parish landscape is unlikely to be significantly affected in the absence of the neighbourhood plan. However development at Land North of Bayswater Brook will have a significant impact on the landscape at the southern end of the parish. That land is expected to change from open agricultural fields to an urban landscape, and at night the currently-dark area would be much more lit-up.

**Figure 3.9 Green Belt ‘broad areas’ in Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>22</sup>**



<sup>21</sup> <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5792154>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/5843/gdl16> - oxford green belt study.pdf



**Table 3.3 Green Belt purposes of Area OX8**

Green Belt purpose	Rating	Comments related to Beckley and Stowood parish
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	High	<p>The parcel is adjacent to the large built-up area of Oxford. The parcel is predominantly made-up of large regular shaped agricultural fields, some of which, along the southern and western edges of the parcel are in the floodplain of the Bayswater Brook. The land within the parcel is open and rises to the north east from the Brook to the north eastern corner of the parcel where there are good views of the surrounding countryside. The urbanising influences in the parcel are concentrated in its eastern half; these include a caravan park at Wick Farm<sup>23</sup>, the residential developments along Bayswater Road and adjacent to Stowford Farm, and buildings associated with the Oxford Crematorium. All are reasonably well contained within the wider landscape. Distinction can be made between eastern edge of the parcel, which is rated 'medium', and the central and western area which makes a 'high' contribution to openness.</p> <p>Bayswater Brook, which forms the southern boundary of the parcel where it abuts the urban area, is a distinct feature which has performed a role in limiting development, but there is considered to be potential for development spreading north from Barton, including along Barton Village Road (the existing access to Wick Farm) and from Bayswater Road on the eastern edge of the parcel and Elsfield Road on the western edge. The Brook is not physically a sufficiently prominent feature to be considered a significant and durable boundary in its own right<sup>24</sup>, and whilst in places it has a strong buffer of associated vegetation, in others it is more exposed. The length of the Brook through this parcel can also be considered to increase the potential for future breaches.</p>
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or into neighbouring smaller settlements	N/C	The parcel has a strong sense of openness but is not in close proximity to any other settlements considered against this purpose. Therefore, the parcel makes no contribution to preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	High	The land within the parcel is for the most part open and rural in character, and rises to the north from the Brook to provide good views of the City (dominated by Headington and Barton), from which a sense of separation is created by the elevation of the terrain, and surrounding countryside. The urbanising influences in the parcel are concentrated principally at its eastern end and their overall influence on countryside character within the Green Belt is considered to be limited.

<sup>23</sup> The Neighbourhood Plan team feel that a more appropriate description would be “mobile home park at Wick Farm, a farmhouse and converted barns at Lower Farm”

<sup>24</sup> The Neighbourhood Plan team note that the brook is the current Green Belt boundary and there are no other significant geographical features to create a new boundary.

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	High	The tree-lined Bayswater Brook, which runs through the valley between Headington and the ridge to the north on which Elsfield, Beckley and Stanton St John are located, forms a distinct boundary, with smaller, largely pastoral fields to the south and larger, arable fields to the north... There is some intervisibility with Oxford from higher ground within parcel, which forms a backdrop to views from the east and from the city centre, but whilst most of the parcel is too low-lying to be significant in this respect, it can be seen as an important foreground area which illustrates the immediate rural setting of Oxford from elevated viewpoints on the high ground to the north. There are three rights of way passing through the parcel between the City and Elsfield/Beckley, all of which provide views of the City's setting from high ground (although visibility of the historic centre is limited, and the hospital complex at Headington dominates the built form).
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**Table 3.4 Green Belt purposes of Broad Area 2**

Green Belt purpose	Rating	Comments related to Beckley and Stowood parish
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	N/C	The Broad Area does not lie adjacent to a large built-up area <sup>25</sup>
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or into neighbouring smaller settlements	Low	The Broad Area includes the settlements of Elsfield and Forest Hill... Both settlements, due to their elevated positions, have views between their respective settlements and Oxford. The Green Belt therefore plays a role in preventing the reduction of the physical and visual gap between these settlements and Oxford.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	High	The area in the parish is made up of open agricultural fields, typically with open views of the surrounding countryside.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	High	The ridge and slopes to the south of the Broad Area provide a backdrop to views out from Oxford, and to views from the hills to the west of the city. Elsfield provides one of the key viewpoints over Oxford featured in the 'viewcones' policy.

**Table 3.5 Green Belt purposes of Broad Area 3**

Green Belt purpose	Rating	Comments related to Beckley and Stowood parish
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	N/C	The Broad Area does not lie adjacent to a large built-up area
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or into	N/C	The Broad Area has a strong sense of openness throughout its landscape, including the flatter lower lying topography in the northern area and the more undulating southern topography. The Broad Area is not, however, in close proximity to any other settlements... Beckley is located in the southern central

<sup>25</sup> The Neighbourhood Plan team disagree. The southern end of the parish is immediately adjacent to the edge of Oxford – Barton, Risinghurst and Sandhills – and they feel that the building of Land North of Bayswater Brook will increase urban sprawl from the Oxford outskirts within the rural parishes.

neighbouring smaller settlements		area of the Broad Area in close proximity to Horton-cum-Studley, both of which are located with undulating topography thereby limiting views between the settlements. The Green Belt therefore plays a limited role in preventing the reduction of the physical and visual gap between these settlements.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	High	The Broad Area contains nine villages, including Beckley. All are rural in character. Other significant features within the broad area include Otmoor and the River Ray. There are several SSSIs scattered throughout the broad area on the moor and in ancient woodlands. The rest of the broad area is made-up of open agricultural fields with excellent views of the surrounding countryside.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Low	The northern end of the parcel, around Otmoor, is a very open, sparsely settled, low-lying landscape alongside which the A34 Bicester-Oxford road passes before entering the Cherwell Valey on the approach to Oxford. The ridge along the south-western side of the parcel provides extensive views across a very wooded, rural landscape to the east which, in the absence of any visual relationship with Oxford, or any major routes towards it, feels less connected in terms of setting but nonetheless contributes to the city's wider rural context.

South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy STRAT13 includes mitigation measures related to the landscape at Broad Area 8 (Land North of Bayswater Brook). The development should:

- provide a permanent defensible Green Belt boundary around the allocation and a strong countryside edge;
- retain and incorporate existing hedgerows and tree belts, particularly where this assists with the creation of a new Green Belt boundary;
- relate to and connect with adjoining built development and development that is planned within Oxford City;
- respect and avoid harm to Oxford's historic setting;
- minimise visual impacts on the surrounding countryside;
- provide a network of Green Infrastructure that provides an appropriate buffer to the Oxford view cone.

### Material assets (housing)

The 2011 census counted 256 households in Beckley and Stowood parish. Of these, 62% lived in detached houses, which is a much higher proportion than the England and Wales average (Table 3.6). 17% lived in caravans or other mobile structures, again much higher than the national average: these are the park homes at Wicks Farm in the south of the parish. More homes are owned outright in the parish than the national average, and fewer are rented. Housing in the Forest Hill and Holton ward (including Beckley and Stowood parish), as for much of the area near Oxford, is scarce and expensive. Table 3.7 shows housing costs in the ward compared to the England average.

*Likely future without the plan:* Without the neighbourhood plan, the policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan apply. Housing in most of the parish is likely to increase only slowly. However major development is expected at Land North of Bayswater Brook, which is likely to more than double the number of homes in the parish. Half of the new homes are expected to be affordable.

**Table 3.6 Census 2011 information about housing in Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>26</sup>**

Households living in...	B&S parish	England & Wales average
Detached houses or bungalows	62%	22%
Semi-detached or terraced houses	20%	56%
Caravans or other mobile/temporary structures	17%	1%
Homes owned outright	85%	64%
Homes privately rented	8%	18%
Homes socially rented	5%	17%
Homes with central heating	98%	97%

**Table 3.7 Cost of housing in Forest Hill and Holton ward, 2020<sup>27</sup>**

	Forest Hill and Holton ward	England
Average house price	£868,000	£310,000
Average detached house price	£937,000	£436,000
Lower quartile house price affordability gap* ('affordable housing')	£154,000	£39,000
Average house price affordability gap*	£245,000	£42,000
Years of earning for affordable housing	7.5	3.6
Years of earning for an average house	9.2	5.5

\* Estimated gap between the cost of local houses and the amount residents can borrow.

## Soil

Agricultural land quality in the parish ranges from very good in the slopes around Beckley to very poor at Otmoor (Figure 3.10). There are no geological SSSIs in the parish, but the biodiversity of Sydling's Copse SSSI in particular is related to its varied geology of limestone, calcareous soils, and coarse, loamy, sandy and acid soils.

*Likely future without the plan:* Agricultural soil is likely to become more important in the future as the combination of Brexit, threat of wider conflict, and climate change make food self-sufficiency more necessary and attractive. The development at Land North of Bayswater Brook is expected to turn 110ha of agricultural land into a combination of housing, green infrastructure, and community services.

**Figure 3.10 Agricultural land quality**

## Water

**Water quality:** Beckley and Stowood parish straddles three river catchments: the Cherwell, Ray, and Thames and Southern Chilterns. All of these are in the Thames River Basin District. The ecological status of the Thames River Basin is generally moderate (64% of water bodies), with 22% of water

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=E04008104>

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.oxford.gov.uk/districtdata/download/downloads/id/1116/2021\\_forest\\_hill\\_and\\_holton.pdf](http://www.oxford.gov.uk/districtdata/download/downloads/id/1116/2021_forest_hill_and_holton.pdf)



bodies being poor, 5% being bad and only 8% being good. Almost all the water bodies in the Thames River Basin are of good chemical status. The groundwater quality in the parish is good<sup>28</sup>.

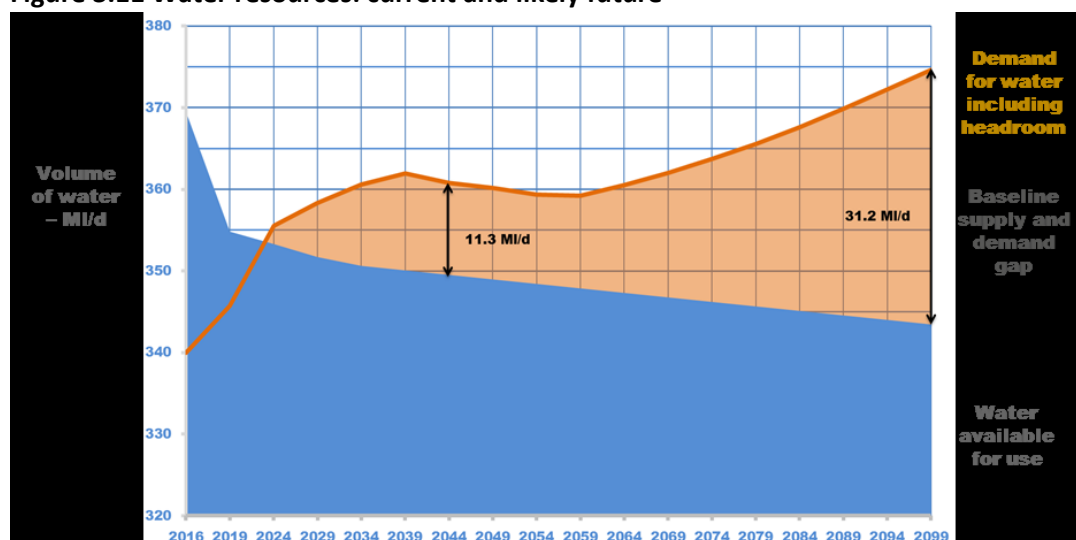
Beckley and Stowood parish is entirely within a drinking water safeguard zone (surface water) and a nitrate vulnerable area, which are areas where above-ground activities can influence drinking water quality. The south-western half of the parish is a high groundwater vulnerability area, namely an area where groundwater can easily be contaminated by above-ground activities. These zones primarily relate to agricultural activities rather than development<sup>29</sup>.

A 2021 draft catchment plan for the Cherwell and Ray<sup>30</sup> identifies a range of actions to reduce the impact of development on water quality, including ensuring that:

- Local Planning Authorities are encouraged to adopt specific policies for watercourses and aquatic habitats which offer ecological buffers
- All developments follow best practice guidelines when developing near to watercourses, floodplains and sensitive habitats, including planting with native species, control of invasive species, and appropriate level of public access
- Active floodplain and river corridors are protected and enhanced as part of the planning process, contributing to the preservation and improvement in Green Infrastructure
- New development proceeds at a pace which ensures there is no derogation in water quality as a result of treated sewage effluent impacts on receiving waters
- comprehensive Sustainable Urban Drainage System measures are employed
- The Partnership is engaged with and takes an active role in the major infrastructure projects impacting on the catchments

Water resources: The Oxford area, including Beckley and Stowood parish, lies within an area of serious water stress. Figure 3.11 shows the expected demand and supply of water in the 'SWOX' area, taking into account the future growth in population in the area. Thames Water is planning for a new reservoir at Abingdon, to help breach the gap between demand and supply.

**Figure 3.11 Water resources: current and likely future<sup>31</sup>**



<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/thames-river-basin-district-river-basin-management-plan>

<sup>29</sup> MAGIC maps

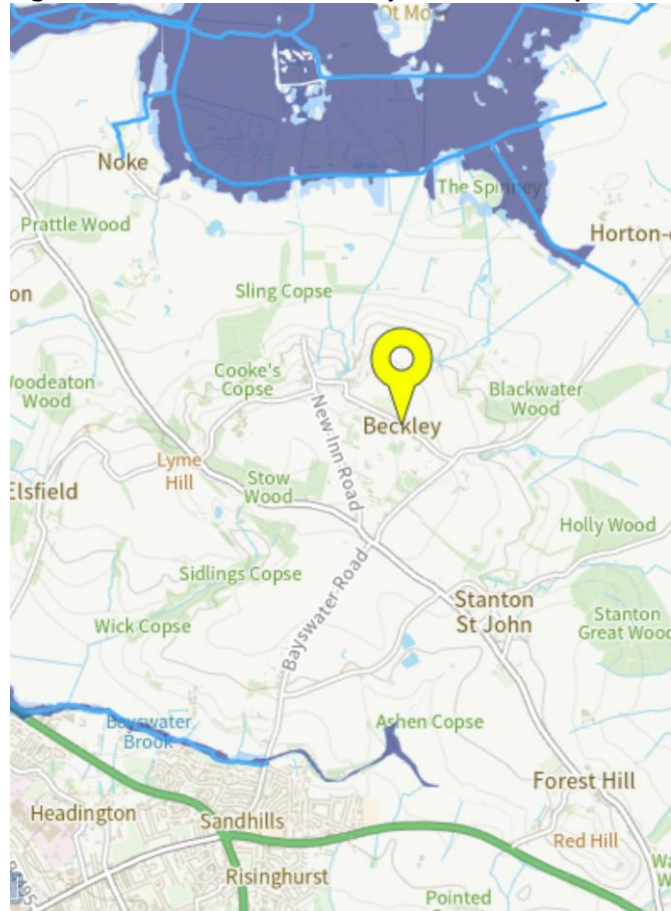
<sup>30</sup> <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Draft-Cherwell-and-Ray-Catchment-Plan-Mar-2021.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/about-us/regulation/water-resources/technical-report/executive-summary.pdf>

**Flooding:** Given its topography, most of the parish has a low risk of flooding (Figure 3.12). However the 2019 strategic flood risk assessment for South Oxfordshire has identified Land North of Bayswater Brook as having some areas in Flood Risk Zones 3a and 3b, which have a greater than 1 in 100 annual probability of river flooding<sup>32</sup>.

*Likely future without the plan:* Water quality is generally improving in the UK, and this is also likely in the parish area. The exception is Bayswater Brook, whose water quality could be affected by the proposed strategic development Land North of Bayswater Brook, particularly during construction. In terms of water resources, average water consumption in the UK is 150 litres/person/day, but the government planning assumption is that this should be reduced to 110 litres/person/day by 2050<sup>33</sup>. In the parish, this per-person efficiency savings would be more than counterbalanced by the more than doubling of population as a result of Land North of Bayswater Brook.

**Figure 3.12 Flood risk in Beckley and Stowood parish<sup>34</sup>**



Flooding is unlikely to be a significant issue for most of the parish. However it could be a problem at Land North of Bayswater Brook, especially under climate change. South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy STRAT13 requires that:

- Built development should be in Flood Zone 1 only, with areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 preserved as accessible green space; and
- A network of green infrastructure through the site should retain and incorporate areas of functional flood plain and existing surface water flow paths.

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic\\_serve.jsp?ID=1239694365&CODE=61A7F95ACAA10B8F5E1FCB2A20794036](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1239694365&CODE=61A7F95ACAA10B8F5E1FCB2A20794036)

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/meeting-our-future-water-needs-a-national-framework-for-water-resources/meeting-our-future-water-needs-a-national-framework-for-water-resources-accessible-summary>

<sup>34</sup> <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/confirm-location?easting=457006&northing=210854&placeOrPostcode=Beckley%2C%20Oxfordshire>

## 4. Existing environmental problems

There are few existing environmental problems in the parish. The main ones are:

- High housing prices and low housing affordability
- Extremely limited public transport, leading to a heavy reliance on private vehicles, with associated high per-person transport emissions
- High proportion of older detached homes with high energy use
- The parish lies in an area of high water stress
- Sensitive agricultural management is needed to protect water quality

## 5. SEA framework

An SEA framework – Table 5.1 - has been developed to act as a structure for the environmental assessment of the vision, objectives, alternatives and policies in the neighbourhood plan. It takes into account the findings of the policy and environmental context (Sections 2 and 3), and the environmental problems identified in Section 4.

**Table 5.1 SEA framework**

Topic	Assessment questions: will the alternative /policy
Population and human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities for all age groups?</li> <li>• Provide and enhance access to green infrastructure?</li> <li>• Promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement of local people in community activities?</li> <li>• Improve road safety, and reduce the impact on residents from the road network?</li> </ul>
Air and climatic factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• Promote the use of walking, cycling and public transport?</li> <li>• Improve the energy efficiency of buildings?</li> <li>• Minimise fuel poverty?</li> <li>• Facilitate working from home and remote working?</li> <li>• Support the development of renewable energy?</li> <li>• Be resilient to the risks associated with climate change?</li> </ul>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and enhance the parish's SSSIs and county wildlife site?</li> <li>• Protect and enhance other habitats in the parish, including ancient woodland and priority habitats?</li> <li>• Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?</li> <li>• Support links between biodiverse areas and reduce habitat fragmentation?</li> </ul>
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the parish's conservation area?</li> <li>• Help to interpret and understand the historic environment?</li> </ul>
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the Oxford Green Belt?</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance local diversity and distinctiveness, and the local landscape character?</li> <li>• Protect the area's dark skies?</li> </ul>

Topic	Assessment questions: will the alternative /policy
Material assets (housing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a range of house types and sizes for local residents?</li> <li>• Improve the quality of the current housing stock?</li> <li>• Deliver housing that will allow people to downsize but continue to live locally as they get older? Provide assisted living facilities?</li> <li>• Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?</li> <li>• Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?</li> </ul>
Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the use of previously developed land?</li> <li>• Avoid development on the best and most versatile (Grade 2 and 3) agricultural land?</li> </ul>
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and improve water quality, including reduction of nitrates and other contaminants to drinking water?</li> <li>• Protect the water quality of streams and water bodies?</li> <li>• Minimise water consumption?</li> <li>• Sustainably manage water run-off?</li> <li>• Prevent development in Flood Zones 2 and 3?</li> </ul>

#### Key to appraisal:

+	The vision/alternative/policy will lead to an improvement in this topic, or protection of this topic is the main purpose of the policy
+?	The vision/alternative/policy may lead to an improvement in this topic, or improvement in this topic is a side-benefit of this policy
0	The vision/alternative/policy is unlikely to significantly affect this topic
+/-	The vision/alternative/policy is likely to have both positive and negative impacts on this topic, e.g. negative during construction but positive during operation
-?	The vision/alternative/policy may lead to a deterioration in this topic, or deterioration in this topic is a side-impact of this policy
-	The vision/alternative/policy will lead to a deterioration in this topic

## 6. Appraisal of the plan vision and objectives

This section appraises the environmental and social impacts of the vision and objectives of the submission Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan. Section 1.2 lists the neighbourhood plan's vision and objectives in full. These were assessed using the SEA framework of Table 5.1:

	Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
Vision	+/-	+	+	+	+	+/-	0	0
Objective								
1	+/-	+	+	0	+	-	+	+
2	+/-	0	+	+	+	-	+	0
3	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
4	+/-	0	0	0	+	+	0	0
5	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	+	0	0	0	0	+	0	0
7	+/-	+	+	0	+	-	+/-	0

Both the vision and the objectives are environmentally positive, particularly in terms of air quality, biodiversity and landscape. They are very critical of development at Land North of Bayswater Brook which would provide homes in the south of the parish. This accounts for the mixed impacts shown for housing and human health: the plan would be good for existing residents of the parish, including those of Wick Farm, but in practice would limit the number of new residents.

## 7. Appraisal of reasonable alternatives

As part of the SEA process, 'reasonable alternatives' to the plan must be identified, assessed and compared. The environmental report must also explain the reasons for choosing the preferred alternatives.

The neighbourhood plan has been under development for six years, during which time many alternatives have been considered. Initially 12 draft policies that would apply to the parish as a whole were discussed with South Oxfordshire District Council and planning consultants Bluestone. The key issue of concern at that time was a policy on a settlement boundary for the parish.

In December 2020, the South Oxfordshire Local Plan was adopted, including Policy STRAT13 which establishes a strategic allocation on Land North of Bayswater Brook. Concerned about the implications of the strategic allocation on the parish, the Neighbourhood Plan team wrote 29 additional "mitigation policies" which aimed to minimise the negative environmental and social impacts of the strategic allocation.

In May 2021, South Oxfordshire District Council commented on the draft neighbourhood plan policies. The main draft policies of concern to the district council were those on:

- Ring Road and rat runs (formerly policies LR 3 and LR 4)
- Protection of the Sydlys Copse SSSI (formerly policy SSSI 2)
- Protection zone from roads (formerly policy SSSI 3)

- Building heights (policy LV 1)

This section discusses alternatives considered for the settlement boundary; for the policies of key concern to South Oxfordshire District Council; and for two additional topics suggested by the SEA process.

## 7.1 Settlement boundary

The issue of a settlement boundary was controversial both because of the size of the boundary (there is now a tighter boundary than that initially proposed) and whether there should be a boundary at all (South Oxfordshire District Council's view). The Neighbourhood Plan team believes that a settlement/village boundary is essential in the Green Belt so that any potential developers can have guidance of where infilling is allowed.

Alternative A, with a tighter settlement boundary, is intended to distinguish between the built-up area of the main village and the wider surrounding areas in order to manage development proposals accordingly. This will give planning applicants and the local planning authority certainty when preparing and determining planning applications respectively.

Alternative B, with a more extensive settlement boundary, including New Road and Sand Path, was originally suggested as the settlement boundary<sup>35</sup>. This included two development sites that had previously had planning permission that had lapsed. However they were removed after public consultation on a draft neighbourhood plan, in response to objections from local residents and South Oxfordshire District Council.

Alternative C, no settlement boundary was originally proposed by South Oxfordshire District Council, who argued that a settlement boundary could increase the chance of development in the parish<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.beckley-and-stowood-pc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/BECKLEY%20AND%20STOWOOD%20NEIGHBOURHOOD%20PLAN%20-%20Section%203%20Policies.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> "Whilst a village boundary does not exist, the [neighbourhood plan] proposes to introduce a village boundary that would expand what is, in terms of planning history in Beckley, been the 'unofficial' built limits of the village in which there is potential for development to be infill. The intention is to allow for more land to fall under the definition of infill and therefore to be considered an exception in terms of the Green Belt policy of the NPPF.

This could set a principle for development on land where there currently is not one by making land that currently would not be considered at the planning application stage to be within the built limits to be within it in policy terms.

Whilst Green belt policy would still apply, development is considered less inappropriate within the built limits of a village washed over by Green belt compared to outside its built limits due to its status as infill. Therefore, the planning status of certain sites could be changed by the introduction of a village boundary.

In this way, the [neighbourhood plan] village boundary could, as a direct result, increase the likelihood of development in certain places. Given the historic nature of Beckley and the land surrounding it, development on certain sites could have likely significant effects on the environment by affecting the setting of the conservation area, listed buildings and the purposes of the Oxford Green Belt in terms of protecting the landscape setting of Oxford. The extent of this, its likelihood and its implications, are not easy to quantify and needs further consideration than has been given in the drafting of the BSNP. A cautious approach should therefore be taken.

It is therefore concluded that the implementation of the Beckley and Stowood NP could result in likely significant effects on the environment and an SEA should be undertaken.

Additionally, such a village boundary policy may not meet the basic conditions as it appears to conflict with the strategic level, Green Belt, policy and the Green Belt policy CSEN2 of the Core Strategy."

The environmental impacts of the three alternatives were appraised using the SEA framework of Table 5.1:

Alternative A (preferred). Tighter settlement boundary

Alternative B. More extensive settlement boundary

Alternative C. No settlement, as per the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035

Alter-native	Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodi-versity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
A	-?	0	0?	+/-	0?	+	0?	0
B	0	0	-?	+/-	-?	+	-?	0
C	-?	0	0?	+/-	0?	0	0?	0
Comments	The proposed tight settlement boundary (Alt. A) will limit the number of homes that can be located within Beckley, which may indirectly affect human health. However it will help to protect biodiversity, landscape and soil (prevent them from getting worse). The settlement boundary means that new homes would go into the conservation area, potentially affecting heritage assets there, although protecting others in the rest of the parish. A more extensive settlement boundary (Alt. B) would offer potential for more housing, but could negatively affect biodiversity, landscape and soil. In practice, Alt. C is likely to have impacts similar to Alt. A, but Alt. A may lead to slightly more homes in the parish.							

Alternative A is the preferred alternative. It gives a clear indication of where development is acceptable in the parish, notably in/near existing development. This avoids sprawl; maintains people's far-ranging views over Otmoor; and facilitates local travel by foot and cycle. It is very similar to the settlement boundary that has been decided on and used by South Oxfordshire District Council planning officers: one which parishioners had never been informed about or consulted on. South Oxfordshire has consistently had a policy against settlement boundaries in Neighbourhood Plans and opposed them, while using Planning Officers' settlement boundaries: however, a number of Neighbourhood Plans have passed examination and been successfully made with settlement boundaries. It also gives more certainty to parishioners, as otherwise the district council could change this boundary. It also responds to local residents' concerns.

## 7.2 Link Road and rat runs

The Neighbourhood Plan team is concerned about congestion at the Headington Roundabout, which is expected to considerably worsen once Land North of Bayswater Brook becomes operational. Additional traffic is expected from other new developments on/near the Oxford ring road. The Oxford ring road and Headington roundabout are part of the national trunk road network, and are already seriously congested at peak times.

In order to alleviate this 'over capacity' at peak times on the Northern By-pass ring road and Headington roundabout, two schemes were originally suggested in the Local Plan – 1. A 'Link Road' to by-pass the Headington Roundabout and 2. Reconfiguration of the Headington Roundabout.

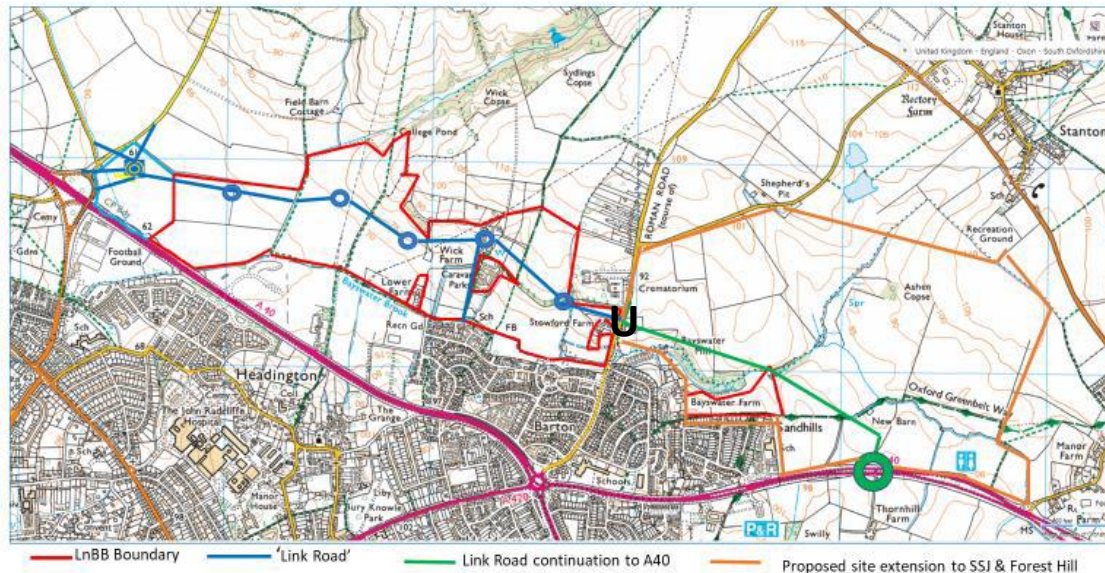
The 'Link Road' would run from the Marston/Elsfield Road junction with the ring road through the development site and adjoining fields on the eastern side of the Bayswater Road to A40 between Forest Hill and the Sandhills Park and Ride side, as shown in Figure 7.1. This would allow ring road traffic destined for the A40 towards Wheatley and London to by-pass the Headington Roundabout. The developers had originally suggested the part of the 'Link Road' through the development site



could also act as a 'spine/estate road' that roughly corresponds to the blue line at Figure 7.1. The green line in Figure 7.1 would by-pass the Headington Roundabout across fields in the Green Belt. If a Link Road were to end at the Bayswater Road via a roundabout, this would give priority to cars coming from Land North of Bayswater Brook and increase queues along the Bayswater Road

**Figure 7.1 Possible Link Road**

SCHEMATIC MAP OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT LAND NORTH OF BAYSWATER BROOK



towards the Headington roundabout significantly. It would not by-pass the Headington Roundabout, which was its main purpose. It would also allow vehicles from the congested ring road to use the Link Road and Bayswater Road as a rat run through the villages of Stanton St John and Forest Hill to the A40, increasing the potential for accidents on these small rural roads. An additional concern is that, in the longer run, an area between the Link Road and Sandhills might be opened up for housing development (green line at Figure 7.1)

Both a Link Road and a reconfiguration of the Headington Roundabout could have significant impacts on residents of Beckley and Stowood parish, but without traffic alleviation for local roads and the ring road and Headington roundabout current residents would see significantly increased journey times at peak times. The most recent masterplan for Land North of Bayswater Brook (Figure 2.2) does not include any alleviation scheme for congestion on the ring road and Headington roundabout, any 'Link Road or any significant changes at the Headington Roundabout.

Several draft neighbourhood plan policies aimed to reduce the potential threat and harm of these road developments to existing residents. The neighbourhood plan team felt that the only way that the impact of a Link Road could be reduced would be to ensure that there was no junction between the Link Road and Bayswater Road. There was a preference for an underpass ('U' in Figure 7.1), since the alternative, a bridge, would be visible from some distance and would be very near the existing houses on the Bayswater Road.

A further concern was that roads within Land North of Bayswater Brook could be used as rat runs, avoiding congestion at the Headington Roundabout and on the A40. A draft neighbourhood plan policy aimed to narrow the entrances to the new estate, giving priority to those entering the estate. However South Oxfordshire District Council argued that:

- There is no evidence to suggest that a Link Road or underpass would be the best option or, indeed, unsafe;
- There is no evidence to suggest why access from the strategic site should be restricted; and

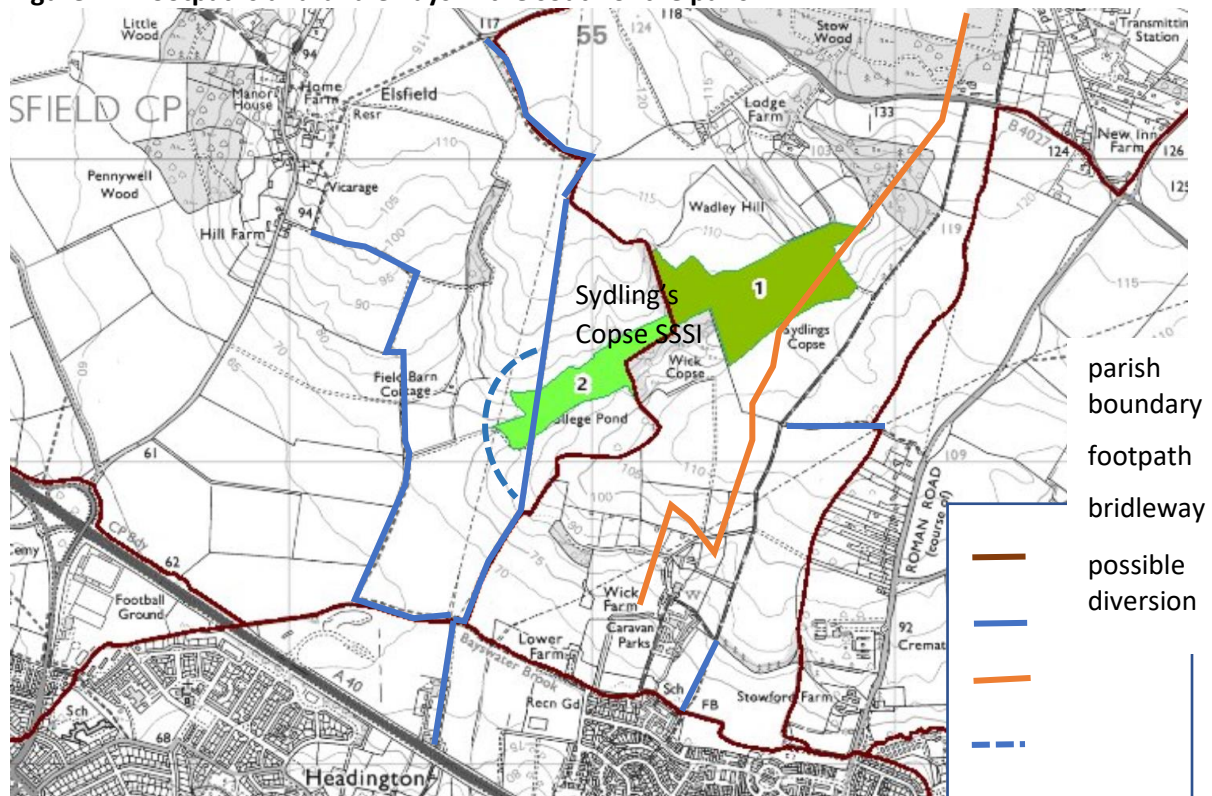
- Bayswater Road falls outside the neighbourhood plan area, and so a neighbourhood plan policy on this would be inappropriate.

The last of these points was confirmed by the chair of another neighbourhood plan and proved conclusive. The draft policies regarding a Link Road have thus been mostly deleted from the plan, but the issue remains a significant concern for current and future residents.

### 7.3 Footpath changes

The development of Land North of Bayswater Brook is likely to significantly increase the recreational use of local footpaths and bridleways, including the footpath that crosses Sydlings Copse SSSI (see Figure 7.2). The neighbourhood plan team is concerned that this will have a negative effect on the condition of the SSSI, particularly its southern portion which is currently in favourable condition. The main constraint to keeping the condition of the southern part of the SSSI favourable is woodland encroachment<sup>37</sup>.

**Figure 7.2 Footpaths and bridleways in the south of the parish**



One alternative to protecting the SSSI is to fence the site so that public access is not possible: this was recommended as part of the evidence base for the South Oxfordshire Local Plan<sup>38</sup>. However the site owner – the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust – has a policy of maintaining public access to its sites.

<sup>37</sup> <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/ReportUnitCondition.aspx?SiteCode=S1000378&ReportTitle=Sidling%27s%20Copse%20and%20College%20Pond%20SSSI>

<sup>38</sup> [https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic\\_serve.jsp?ID=1670533802&CODE=1E063994FDB285D9E26E5CDF053CF3F7](https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/dynamic_serve.jsp?ID=1670533802&CODE=1E063994FDB285D9E26E5CDF053CF3F7)



Another alternative is to divert the footpath so that it goes around the SSSI rather than crosses it. This is shown in dashed lines at Figure 7.2. However the parish has no control over footpaths or indeed the fields through which the proposed footpath diversion would go.

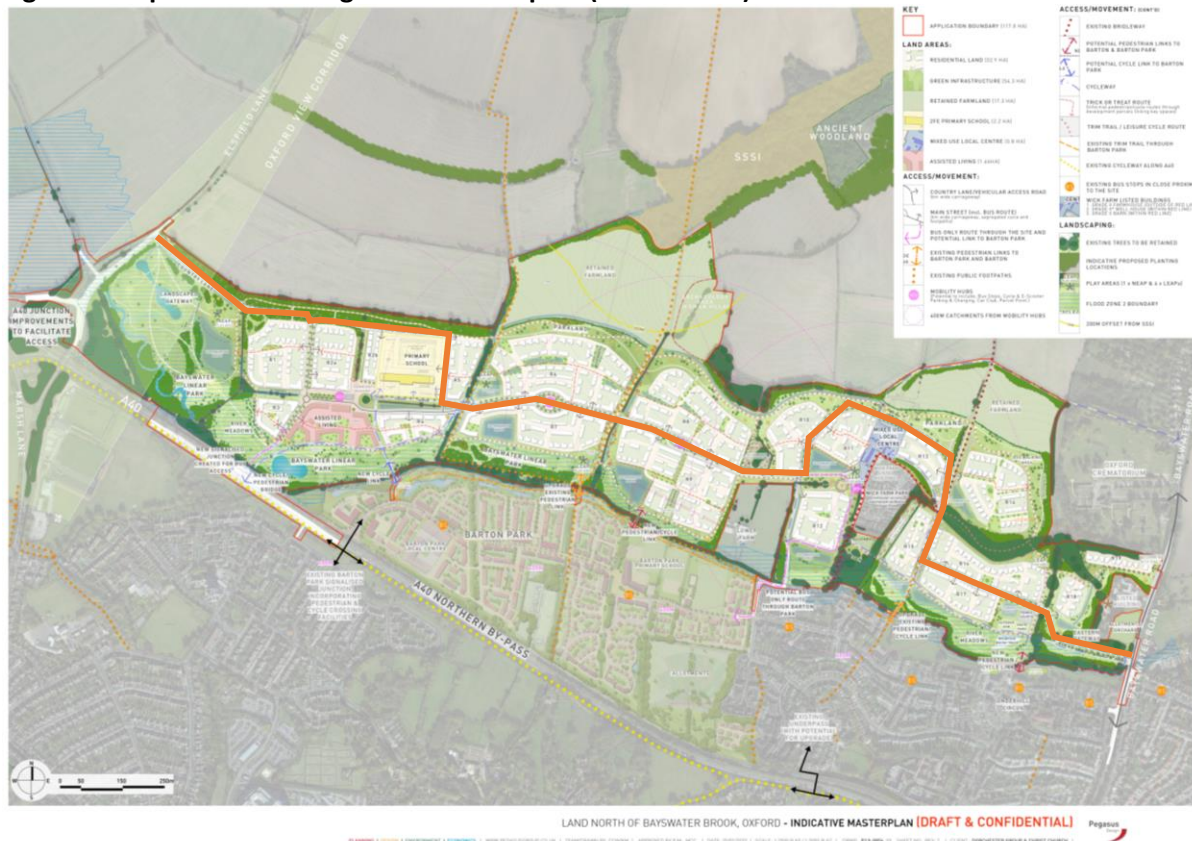
Instead, the NP team have decided to have a community aspiration for the footpath to be rerouted as part of any development at Land North of Bayswater Brook to reduce the number of new visitors at the SSSI.

#### 7.4 Protection zone from roads

Early proposals for Land North of Bayswater Brook included an access road on the northern edge of the development, near the southern end of the SSSI. Air pollution from such a road could affect the SSSI, notably its sensitive fen habitat. A draft neighbourhood plan policy would have required the site developers to agree with Natural England and BBOWT the minimum distance that any roads in the development would have to be from the SSSI.

The most recent masterplan for the site has a spine road going through the middle of the development rather than along the northern edge (Figure 7.3), and an agricultural field between the edge of the development and the SSSI. If implemented, this would effectively provide a buffer zone

**Figure 7.3 Spine road through draft masterplan (March 2022) for LnBB**



between the road and the SSSI. In addition, South Oxfordshire Local Plan policy STRAT13 already requires proposals to develop LnBB to deliver “vii) a development that ensures that there will be no demonstrable negative recreational, hydrological or air quality impacts on the Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI”. STRAT13 also states that the masterplan should plan for

*“x) a net gain in biodiversity through the protection and enhancement of habitats along the Bayswater Brook, new habitats to the north buffering the Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI and offsite Biodiversity enhancements.*

xi) provides a network of green infrastructure that;...

b. protects and enhances existing habitats, particularly those associated with Sidlings Cope and College Pond SSSI and the Bayswater Brook...

d. retains and incorporates existing public rights of way, improves and extends public rights of way where appropriate and supports movement through the site and into adjoining areas by walking and cycling;"

Nevertheless, in case future plans for Land North of Bayswater Brook include a more northerly spine road, the neighbourhood plan team believe that the neighbourhood plan should include a policy protecting the SSSI from air pollution – Mitigation Policy SSSI 2 - with the additional requirement that the costs of pollution monitoring should be borne by the developer.

## 7.5 Building heights

An additional concern relates to building height. Tall buildings have the potential to affect views into Oxford from the surrounding hills. They would be particularly intrusive at Wick Farm, where single storey park homes could be surrounded by much taller buildings, with associated visual intrusion and shading. Buildings in the adjacent Barton Development are confined to 3 storeys. The newer Barton West development is mostly 3 storeys but has some buildings that are taller than 3 storeys near the A40.

The neighbourhood plan team originally put forward a policy limiting building heights to 3 storeys (Alternative A). South Oxfordshire District Council argued that this was overly restrictive and unnecessary: that policy STRAT 13 of the adopted Local Plan already provides for a visual buffer, and aims to focus development away from more visually sensitive areas. They note that:

*"The sensitive areas located to the west and north of the site are not included within the allocation, as they are considered to be of particular significance to Oxford's historic setting. Development should be focused on the lower lying ground on the south and east of the site, which has a greater likelihood to accommodate acceptable development in landscape terms, as it is less visible from the wider area and has higher potential for mitigation to be achieve."*

Alternative B reflects that approach, i.e. no neighbourhood plan policy on building heights.

During discussions related to this strategic environmental assessment, a third alternative (Alternative C) was identified, namely limiting building height to 3 storeys on the northern edge of the development and around Wick and Lower Farms, but allowing taller buildings elsewhere within Land North of Bayswater Brook within the parish.

The impacts of these three alternatives were appraised using the SEA framework of Table 5.1.

Alternative A. (preferred) Limit building heights at Land North of Bayswater Brook to 3 storeys

Alternative B. No policy on building heights

Alternative C. Limit building height at Land North of Bayswater Brook to 3 storeys on the northern edge of the development and adjacent to Wick Farm, but permit taller development elsewhere in Land North of Bayswater Brook

Alter- na- tive	Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodi- versity	Heritage	Land- scape	Housing	Soil	Water
A	+/-	0	-?	0	+/-	+/-	-	-
B	+/-	0	+/-	0	-	+	+/-	+/-
C	+/-	0	+/-	0	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-

Comments	<p>Alt. A aims to minimise the visual impact of development at Land North of Bayswater Brook, and ensure that it fits into the local landscape. However preventing development over 3 storeys means that, for the same quantity of housing, more land take would be needed; or else that less housing would be able to be provided on the same amount of land. A more extensive, low lying development would have negative landscape impacts, as well as impacts on soil, biodiversity and water (more land used for homes, so more runoff).</p> <p>In contrast, Alt. B would help to minimise impacts on biodiversity, soil and water , though it would still have significant impacts. It would maximise the number of homes that could be built on a given amount of land. However it could have significant impacts on the landscape, and particularly on residents of Wick Farm.</p> <p>Alt. C is similar to Alt. A, but leaves more flexibility outside the areas identified as being 3 storeys, allowing for greater density of development and more housing provision.</p>
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Although Alternative C is broadly more sustainable, Alternative A (applied only to land within the parish) remains the preferred alternative. This is because keeping new buildings to no more than 3 storeys is more in keeping with the existing character of the parish, and will help to protect existing views, especially since land rises steeply at the strategic site, with the potential for significant visual intrusion.

## 7.6 Additional alternatives considered

As part of the SEA process, two additional issues were considered. One was whether the draft neighbourhood plan needed to include more information on the Lower Farm and Wick Farm mobile home site, which will be affected by development at Land North of Bayswater Brook. The draft masterplan for the site – Figure 2.2 – suggests that Wick Farm could be tightly surrounded by new development, potentially affecting residents’ sunlight and privacy. This led the neighbourhood plan team to strengthen mitigation policies LV 1 and LV 2 regarding planting and building heights near Wick Farm and Lower Farm.

The second was whether the neighbourhood plan needs to be more proactive about enhancing – not just protecting – biodiversity in the parish, particularly in response to Natural England’s Bernwood Focus Area. This topic was felt to go beyond what neighbourhood plan policies can include, but a community aspiration was included in the plan that focuses on biodiversity enhancements.

## 7.7 Additional changes to the draft Neighbourhood Plan, including mitigation

As part of the appraisal process, significant changes to the neighbourhood plan were agreed by the neighbourhood plan team. Some of these changes were made to ensure that the plan is legally compliant with neighbourhood plan legislation and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. These include:

- Turning draft plan policies into community aspirations where they were not within the remit of the land use planning system (e.g. on improving biodiversity in the parish, retrofitting existing houses, tree and pond management, provision of cycleways, footpath changes to protect the Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI)
- Removing draft policies that applied outside the parish boundary (e.g. policies about roads and underpasses; limiting building heights throughout the strategic site)
- Clearer phrasing of plan policies (e.g. Mitigation Policy GB 1 on a new Green Belt boundary)



Other changes – mitigation measures - aim to avoid and minimise the environmental and social impacts of the plan, increase its environmental and social benefits, and manage the negative impacts of other plans and projects, notably development at Land North of Bayswater Brook. These mitigation measures include:

- Providing increased protection for residents of the Lower Park and Wick Farm mobile home site (Policies VB 2 on residential development outside the settlement boundary; LV 1 on landscaping and maintaining important views for Wick Farm and Lower Farm; LV 2 on maintaining privacy and avoiding overlooking)
- Clearer reference to biodiversity net gain and support for Natural England’s Bernwood Focus Area ambitions at Policy E 1 on biodiversity
- Inclusion of environmental safeguards (e.g. broadening Mitigation Policy CM 1 on Construction Management Plans to include issues beyond transport; adding a condition to Mitigation Policy PC 4 on widening public rights of way to protect biodiversity and the landscape; broadening Mitigation Policy LV 3 on landscaping to include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and access by walking, horse riding and cycling)

## 8. Appraisal and mitigation of plan policies

This section assesses the environmental impact of the Neighbourhood Plan policies using the SEA framework of Figure 5.1. It begins by appraising the individual plan policies, and concludes with an overall appraisal of the impacts of the plan.

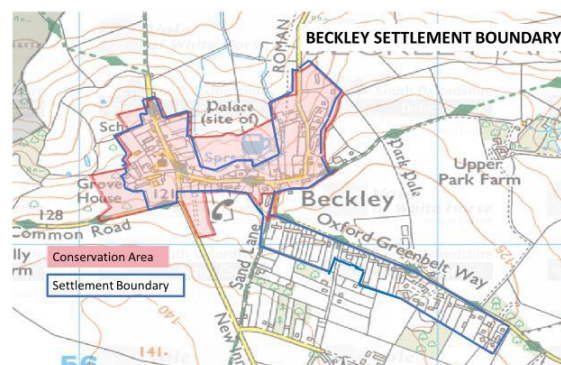
Section 7.7 lists mitigation measures already incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan. Where appropriate, this section suggests further mitigation measures to avoid or minimise negative impacts identified as part of the appraisal process; and explains why the Neighbourhood Plan team have decided to not proceed with these.

### 8.1 Appraisal of individual plan policies

Policy references to a ‘Link Road’ are taken to mean an alleviation for the ring road and Headington roundabout from the Marston flyover/March Land/Elsfield Road east through Land North of Boundary Brook to the A40 between Forest Hill and Sandhills, as shown at Figure 7.1.

#### POLICY VB 1. SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY

The Neighbourhood Plan defines the settlement boundary as set out in Figure VB1 on the Policies Map. The settlement boundary includes parts of the Conservation Area as well as the area of land containing dwellings on the west side of Roman Road and the south side of Woodperry Road. Proposals for infill development within the settlement boundary will be supported, provided they accord with the design and development management policies of the development plan and other policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
-?	0	+	+/-	+	-	+	0
Comments		The proposed tight settlement boundary will limit the number of homes that can be located within Beckley, which may indirectly affect human health. However it will help to protect biodiversity, landscape and soil (prevent them from getting worse). The settlement boundary means that new homes would go into the conservation area, potentially affecting heritage assets there, although protecting others in the rest of the parish.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## **POLICY VB 2. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE THE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY**

Outside the settlement boundary depicted on the Policies Map proposals for residential development will only be supported if they are for one of the exceptions to national Green Belt policy. Other residential development will generally be inappropriate.

Development proposals outside the settlement boundary which meet one of the Green Belt exceptions should be designed to ensure that they are in keeping with the prevailing character of the area in terms of their impact on built form, density and landscape quality, and that the location, sustainability and accessibility of the site is acceptable having regard to the principles of sustainable development.

The southernmost area of the parish including Wick Farm and Lower Farm have been removed from the Green Belt with the adoption of the SODC Local Plan as they are within the strategic development site of Land North of Bayswater Brook and are therefore not included in this policy.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
-?	0	+	+/-	+	-	+	0
Comments		See VB 1.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## **POLICY E 1. BIODIVERSITY**

Development proposals which show a biodiversity net gain, support Natural England's Bernwood Focus Area ambitions, and conserve and enhance the environmental and landscape assets in the Plan area, including areas of designated Ancient Woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, RSPB reserves, Conservation Target Areas, Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Local Wildlife Sites (including BBOWT reserves) will be strongly supported. Development proposals that protect and enhance existing areas of hedgerow, woodland and meadow corridors will also be supported.

Development proposals should demonstrate, through their plans and supporting technical information, how they will deliver a biodiversity net gain and conserve local assets such as mature trees, hedgerows, grass verges along the roads and woodland edges, and secure the provision of additional habitat areas for wildlife and green spaces for the community.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
0	0	+	0	+	-?	+	+

Comments	This policy is positive for biodiversity and, indirectly, the landscape, soil and water that underpin biodiversity. It may restrict housing developments.
Proposed mitigation	Consider identifying in the neighbourhood plan those areas where biodiversity enhancements would be particularly welcome. This could include wildlife corridors that link other green areas.
NP team response	Mostly dealt with through the community aspiration on biodiversity.

#### **POLICY H 1. PRESERVATION OF HERITAGE**

Applicants should demonstrate how they have had regard to the character and appearance of the historic environment (including heritage assets both above and below ground), as described in the Beckley Conservation Area Appraisal and the individual Character Assessments at Appendices 12 to 15 of this Neighbourhood Plan, in the formulation of their development proposals. Proposals that demonstrably sustain or enhance the significance of the historic environment and the features that contribute to that significance will be supported.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
0	0	0	+	+	-	0	0
Comments	This policy is beneficial for heritage assets and, indirectly, the historic landscape. It is likely to restrict housing development – both numbers and the flexibility of retrofits.						
Proposed mitigation	None proposed						

#### **POLICY DS 1. IMPORTANT VIEWS**

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following Important Views on the Map see Figure 2.11.1 and photographs in Section 2.11

- views from the top of the hill at Beckley village looking north, north east and north west towards Otmoor
- views of the countryside from within Oxford city, notably the green fields around Wick Farm
- views from the approach roads towards the village northwards over Otmoor and adjacent farmland
- views from the village towards Shotover
- views towards Brill and towards Aylesbury from Woodperry Road
- views from the north towards the church and Conservation Area
- views from Stowood to Didcot and the Stokenchurch cutting
- views from Wick Farm and Lower Farm across the Green Belt and agricultural landscape

Development proposals should preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape and through their design, height and massing should recognise and respond positively to the various Important Views. Development proposals which would have a significant adverse impact on an identified Important View will not be supported.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+/-	0	0	0	+	-	+	0
Comments	This policy helps to protect views out of and into Beckley and, indirectly, the rural feel of the area including protection of land from extensive development. Because it may significantly restrict housing						

	developments, it may also affect human health. On the other hand, attractive views help to support mental health.
Proposed mitigation	None proposed

## POLICY DS 2. PARKING

New developments and extensions/changes to existing development (e.g. change to House in Multiple Occupation) should make adequate provision for parking within the overall site, to avoid parking on the narrow village roads, in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan.

Parking provision should:

- Wherever practicable, parking be provided off-road.
- Be sufficient for the full life of the development and should avoid the increase in on street parking or use of existing car parks in the future.
- Minimise the impact of the private car on the street scene and reflect the character and appearance of the immediate locality as set out in the Character Assessments at Appendices 12 and 13.
- Avoid leading to the loss of front gardens where alternative solutions can be shown to exist.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+?	-?	0	0	+?	-?	0	0
Comments		This policy helps to protect the character of Beckley, and prevent safety hazards associated with on-street parking. Indirectly, it supports car use (negative for air quality), although there is no viable alternative for most residents as public transport is extremely limited in the parish. It also restricts the ability to maximise the use of housing plots for housing. It helps to maintain front gardens and so helps to protect biodiversity in a minor way.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## DS 3. FLOOD RISK AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Development proposals should demonstrate, through the provision of flood risk assessments, where required, how the risk of flooding resulting from the prospective development will be managed, so that the risk of flooding within the Neighbourhood Plan Area for Beckley and Stowood will not be increased, and that opportunities to reduce flood risk, for example, through the use of sustainable drainage systems, are exploited, where possible.

2. Where new development will result in the generation of additional foul sewerage, developers should ensure that they demonstrate how an appropriate foul drainage strategy can be delivered, and then ensure that it is delivered.

3. Proposals which minimise the use of paved and hard standing areas and utilise porous driveways and planting instead to reduce the risk of flooding and run off will be supported.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+?	0	0	0	+?	0	0	+

Comments	This policy helps to maintain water quality in the parish. It also helps to reduce flooding from run-off which has been the cause of some flooding in the village, particularly down Otmoor Lane. Indirectly, it supports a pleasant landscape and helps to protect human health.
Proposed mitigation	None proposed

#### **POLICY DS 4. DWELLING SIZE**

Extensions to dwellings or the erection and extension of ancillary buildings within the curtilage of a dwelling, will be permitted provided that:

- within the Green Belt the extension or the alteration of a building does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original\* building;
- adequate and satisfactory parking is provided. Development should have regard to the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Policy DS2. Parking; and
- sufficient amenity areas are provided for the extended dwelling. Development should have regard to the advice within the South Oxfordshire Design Guide and the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide DG 1.

\*'Original' means the volume as existing on July 1st 1948, or if constructed after that date, as originally built. Garages and outbuildings will not be included in this calculation.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
0	0	0	0	+?	-?	0	0
Comments	The policy helps to protect the landscape from disproportionate additions. It restricts the type of housing that can be accommodated on a given plot.						
Proposed mitigation	None proposed						

#### **DG 1. BECKLEY DESIGN GUIDE**

Applications for development should have regard to the guidance contained in the Beckley and Stowood Design Guide. They should also have regard to, and where appropriate incorporate design elements which are technologically innovative and of a high quality, and which are reflective of the local character and vernacular as described in the character assessments at Appendices 12-15 and the Conservation Area appraisal for Beckley, including:

For the Conservation Area -

- In the Conservation Area materials such as limestone rubble with quoins, in other areas of the parish also brick, rendered blockwork or timber cladding, wooden lintels and either wooden window casements or high-quality double-glazed units.
- Roofs should be pitched and generally of tile, slate or thatch.
- Solar panels which mimic roof tiles or have minimal visual impact

Within the whole parish new development should respect the character and qualities of the village, in particular focussing on the following:

- Buildings should be compatible with the size and character of their neighbours and in the Conservation Area they should generally be built of natural stone.
- Power cables shall wherever possible be located underground in order to minimise the visual impacts associated with new development.
- Building heights should be in keeping with that of the surrounding buildings and should not rise beyond three storeys, to protect the character and privacy of other residents.



- The design of new buildings should avoid appearing over-bearing by comparison with the neighbouring buildings, having regard to their height, massing and general scale.
- Extensions to buildings should be subservient to the original building and should appear a natural evolution of development which is sympathetic to the existing building.
- Porches and canopies should be in keeping with the general appearance and architecture of the dwelling.
- External landscaping proposals should respect the character of the village and the landscape of the immediate surroundings.
- Open fencing, railings and hedging that allows the enjoyment of public views towards the open countryside will be encouraged.
- Traditional pitched roofs are more representative of the local vernacular and will be encouraged whereas flat roofs are not in keeping with other houses in the Parish and will be discouraged.
- Dishes and aërials should generally be kept away from the principal elevations and not visible on any silhouette elevations.
- Large box-type dormer windows will generally be discouraged.
- Where possible, solar panels should face the rear of the property, located in hidden valleys and away from principal elevations. Consideration should be given to the use of more aesthetically pleasing designs such as panels without frames, and ones that blend into the roofing colour and design where appropriate.

Development proposals shall also demonstrate how they will maintain the nucleated pattern of settlements, and promote the use of building materials to maintain vernacular style and a scale of development which is in keeping with and appropriate to the Oxford Heights landscape character area.

The following design policies apply outside the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook -

- Gardens are a very important feature in Beckley and provision of a garden in proportion to the house size is an important criterion to the character of the village.
- Grass verges on the road frontage of dwellings are an important feature of the village and should be protected because they contribute positively to the character of the village.
- The separation between dwellings should be maintained as it is an important characteristic of the village. New buildings should avoid significantly impairing important gaps between existing buildings where they provide glimpsed views towards the open countryside.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Landscape	Housing	Soil	Water
+/-	-?	0	+	+	-	0	0
Comments		<p>This policy aims to maintain an attractive landscape and living environment in the parish. The emphasis on gardens, verges etc. indirectly helps to make the area liveable and provide informal spaces for social contact.</p> <p>The emphasis on 'separation between dwellings' has the potential to lead to wind tunnels, and prevents more energy-efficient semi-detached and terraced forms of development.</p> <p>There is also a possible inconsistency between the last bullet point (solar panels should face the rear of the property etc.) and Policy CC 1. (buildings should be south facing to maximise possible solar panels).</p>					

Proposed mitigation	<p>Remove “The separation between dwellings should be maintained as it is an important characteristic of the village” which suggests that new development should be detached.</p> <p>Remove the last bullet point which would be difficult to enforce and is inconsistent with how solar panels actually should be sited.</p>
NP team response	<p>The reason for having separation between dwellings is to maintain the character of the village. Houses are being extended sideways from fence to fence and this affects the character.</p> <p>Conventional solar panels are not attractive, which is why we have suggested they should not face the front where possible, particularly in the conservation area. However, if the house does face south this is a problem, unless they use the newer more aesthetically pleasing designs.</p>

## POLICY DG 2. – NIGHT SKY / LIGHTING

Where external lighting is necessary, development proposals must incorporate design features and mitigating measures that avoid excessive lighting in order to limit the adverse impact of lighting on neighbouring residents, the rural character of the countryside and biodiversity.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
Comments		A very positive policy which helps to protect views of the night sky, people’s ability to sleep well, and biodiversity.					
Proposed mitigation		-					

## POLICY CC 1. NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

New dwellings should be built to the highest standards in terms of energy and materials efficiency. The provision of the following sustainability features, where appropriate, will be supported:

- Alignment of dwellings - south facing where possible to give passive solar heating and to maximise solar roof panels.
- Maintenance - ensure minimum maintenance in all design features.
- High level of energy generation on site utilising solar panels, ground source and air source heat pumps as appropriate.
- High level of insulation.
- Sustainable water systems including drainage (driveways) and storage.
- Developers shall be encouraged to provide electric vehicle charging points for all new dwellings.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	+	0	-	+	0	+
Comments		A very positive policy in terms of climate change and the climate emergency; also indirectly for human health (reduced energy cost, reduced fuel poverty) and biodiversity (impacts of climate change). The additional costs of sustainable construction will slightly increase					

	the cost of housing during construction, but will reduce operational costs. Some of the energy efficiency measures – solar panels, heat pumps etc. – are likely to have a negative impact on the landscape.
Proposed mitigation	This should ideally also apply to retrofits
NP response	Retrofits included as a community aspiration

## POLICY CC 2. LOW CARBON TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

Development proposals which deliver low carbon transport solutions, including new cycle ways, safer walking, and increased use of buses where possible will be strongly supported.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	+	0	+/-	-?	0	0
Comments		This policy would have very positive impacts for air quality and climatic factors, and for people's health. The main development to which this is likely to apply is Land North of Bayswater Brook.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## POLICY CE 1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In bringing forward proposals for the development of the Land North of Bayswater Brook strategic allocation site the developers should have regard to the Community Engagement Strategy outlined in this Neighbourhood Plan.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		<p>The Community Engagement Strategy would require the developers of Land North of Bayswater Brook to have regular meetings with the community. It would also involve establishing a Community Liaison Committee which would help to shape the proposal.</p> <p>The main impact would be a social benefit: the developers having a better understanding of the needs and wishes of local residents, and residents feeling less powerless in terms of development happening within their parish. Indirectly, it could also help to protect all of the other factors, although it is unlikely to lead to significant environmental enhancements.</p>					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## MITIGATION POLICY GB 1. DEFINITION OF A NEW GREEN BELT BOUNDARY

A line of English Oak *Quercus robur* saplings, pot grown, at least 1.8m high will be planted every 10m along the new Green Belt boundary and will be actively maintained for at least 5 years.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0

Comments	This policy would have very minor beneficial impacts on biodiversity and the landscape, but feels more symbolic; more like “we are setting a boundary that will act as future heritage”.
Proposed mitigation	None proposed

#### MITIGATION POLICY TA 1. TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT AND TRAVEL PLAN

All development proposals for the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook are to be accompanied by a transport assessment and travel plan which contain measures to maximise the number of trips made by non-car modes, and measures to discourage car based development and this should inform the masterplan. Furthermore, where residual impacts on the highway network are predicted after sustainable transportation measures are taken into account, the Transport Assessment should assess the effect of new highway infrastructure in mitigating any residual impacts. These Transport Assessments and Travel Plan for Land north of Bayswater Brook must be completed objectively, to a high standard and be overseen by and conducted to the satisfaction of Oxfordshire County Council.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+?	+?	0	0	0	-?	0	0
Comments		This policy is very similar to policy TRANS4 in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. The main aim of both policies is to help to reduce transport by car, and ensure that transport is safe.					
Proposed mitigation		Delete this policy as it is already covered by TRANS4.					
NP team response		This is the most significant issue for local people from the Land North of Bayswater Brook development. The point of this policy was to ensure that the transport modelling is completed properly and to the satisfaction of the County Council and the requirement to provide alleviation is not ignored or shirked. So far the developers have produced 2 masterplans for consultation with no transport modelling and no consideration of alleviation of the additional traffic.					

#### MITIGATION POLICY TA 2. TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT AND TRAVEL PLAN – BASELINE ASSUMPTIONS

The transport assessment modelling for the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook should include in its baseline assessment -

- the population growth forecasts used in the SODC Local Plan 2035 and any updates.
- the full impact of the changes in Connecting Oxford, including highways and local roads and village roads
- the full impact of the changes in any proposals for ‘bus gates’ within the City of Oxford or elsewhere in the suburbs including highways and local roads and village roads.
- the full impact of any other proposals for reduction of cars within Oxford, including highways and local roads and village roads
- the full impact of the development at Barton Park, including highways and local roads and village roads
- the full impact of the other proposed strategic developments at Grenoble Road, Northfields and Wheatley, including highways and local roads and village roads

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy adds considerable local detail to policy TA 1, and South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy TRANS4. It focuses on other generators of traffic. In particular, it helps to ensure that the cumulative transport impacts of the new strategic site are fully considered.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					
PC comment		A recent meeting with the County Council about this shows they are also very concerned, agree with our policy that all these factors need taking into account and are also concerned that the ring road and Headington roundabout are national trunk roads serving not only Oxford but important routes across the country to Cheltenham etc.					

### MITIGATION POLICY TA 3. TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT AND TRAVEL PLAN – HIGHWAY AND ROAD ASSESSMENTS

The transport assessment and travel plan for the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook should include an assessment of the effect of the strategic site on all roads likely to be impacted by the Land North of Bayswater Brooke development. In particular the capacity of the following roads should be assessed before and after the development–

- The Woodeaton Road
- The Elsfield Road
- Marsh Lane
- The Bayswater Road along its entire length from B4027
- The Shepherd's Pit Road
- B4027
- Roads within the villages of Beckley, Stanton St John, Forest Hill, Elsfield and Woodeaton
- Roads within the Barton estate with junctions onto the Bayswater Road
- The Oxford Ring Road from the Cutteslowe roundabout to the Headington roundabout
- The Headington roundabout

Access for staff, patients and visitors to the John Radcliffe Hospital site should also be included in the assessment in order to ensure that the effects of the development on access to this facility are mitigated.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy adds considerable further local detail to policy TA 1, and South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policy TRANS4. It focuses on receptors of the cumulative impacts of traffic in the area. In particular, it helps to ensure that the cumulative transport impacts of the new strategic site are fully considered.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

### MITIGATION POLICY CM 1. PROVISION OF CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PLANS

A Construction Management Plan for the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook should be provided as part of the supporting information accompanying any planning application.



This plan should include, but not be confined to –

- Traffic – both HGVs and contractor vehicles
- Noise management – pile driving and other disturbing construction activity should be kept to a minimum. Pile driving in particular at the Barton Park site can be heard in Stowood and many miles. Hours of permitted operation should be agreed with local residents via the Community Liaison Committee. Noise can be harmful to health. It must be ensured that local residents are not harmed by any noise from construction, can continue to enjoy their gardens and that shift workers and other residents do not have sleep disturbed.
- Vibration – this is not only harmful to buildings, but also to local residents. Vibration will arise from pile driving and from construction vehicle movement. It must be ensured that vibration and disturbance is kept to a minimum and a schedule must be agreed with the Community Liaison Committee.
- Dust and airborne pollutants management – construction dust can be hazardous to health and cause serious lung and eye disease. Dust and air pollution must be monitored to ensure levels do not become hazardous.
- Trees and hedgerows should be preserved and protected during construction and afterwards, from damage, dust and pollutants.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy focuses on the construction impacts of the new development. This will help to minimise noise, vibration, dust, air pollution and biodiversity.					
Proposed mitigation		Reinstate reference to construction traffic.					
NP team response							

#### MITIGATION POLICY TA 4. COMPLIANCE WITH NICE GUIDELINES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Development at the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook should have regard to the NICE guidelines “Physical Activity and the Environment” - [NG90] and any updates or reviews. In addition, all strategic site planning applications should be accompanied by a health, mobility, active travel and physical activity assessment.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		The NICE guidelines are available at <a href="https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng90/chapter/Recommendations">https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng90/chapter/Recommendations</a> . This policy aims to ensure that the new development encourages walking and cycling by, for instance, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists when developing or maintaining streets; ensuring adequate lighting and lack of obstruction etc. This goes beyond the policies of the SODC Local Plan, and would further help to support walking and cycling (thus improving health) and decrease car use.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## MITIGATION POLICY PC 1. MAINTENANCE OF ACCESS AND SEPARATION OF FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

To ensure safety for all cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians all existing footpaths and bridleways within Beckley and Stowood Parish must be maintained and kept open and accessible, ensuring that they are not overgrown and passable, during any post-construction. To ensure safety any crossings that are required to ensure rights of way are not severed by new roads must be fully protected by either bridges or light controlled crossings to accommodate pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists. Crossings of site roads for accessibility to houses i.e. not bypass or 'Link Roads' should be by pedestrian crossings.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to protect the health and safety of people using footpaths and bridleways, including making it easier for them to cross roads.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## MITIGATION POLICY PC 2. SITING OF PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE BRIDGE OVER A40 NORTHERN BYPASS ROAD

Both the current and future residents of the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook in Beckley Parish need to have 'connectivity' with Oxford, along the length of the site west to east as set out in the Local Plan. Siting of any bridges or underpasses should have regard to this requirement.

Regarding the pedestrian and cycle bridge over the A40 Northern Bypass ring road, required in the Local Plan, these measures should include (but not be confined to) –

- It should be as straight, short and as wide as possible
- It should also be well lit, with clear lines of sight so that pedestrians can see what is ahead.
- Ambiguous spaces, such as gaps and corners should be avoided as they can provide hiding places for potential offenders and can increase fear of crime.
- It should be designed so that it can be maintained in good order and monitored on a regular basis

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to make crossing the A40 on foot or by bike safer. A new bridge would have negative visual impacts, particularly at night if it is lit.					
Proposed mitigation		Is this policy still relevant, now that there is an intersection at Northway? Would the 'Northway bridge' be in the parish and, if not, does the NP have any control over it?  If the policy remains, does it need to say something about minimising light pollution, or lighting coming from 'inside' the bridge rather than being located on top of it?					
NP team response		This policy may need to be moved or reworded as the pedestrian footbridge is not in Beckley parish. However, the policy is relevant and this was discussed with the developers as there is no access toward					

	Oxford from the middle of the Land North of Bayswater Brook site. There is a proposed footbridge to the west of the site then nothing until the 2 underpasses near the Headington roundabout. The developers were not unsympathetic to this idea. In view of the fact that any foot and cycle bridge would be outside the parish and therefore the neighbourhood plan area should it be reworded to something like – It must be ensured that pedestrian and cycle routes from Land North of Bayswater Brook towards Oxford are accessible from as many points as possible including the middle of the site, as well as a bridge to the west and suitable, safe underpasses to the east, near the Headington Roundabout.
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### MITIGATION POLICY PC 3. SAFETY AND CRIME REDUCTION

The recommendations from “Reducing Crime Hotspots in City Centres” should be implemented at the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook to reduce crime and increase safety. Regarding the pedestrian and cycle bridge these measures should include (but not be confined to) –

- CCTV
- Improved lighting to encourage people to use, but directed downwards so as not to increase light pollution
- Footpaths should be wide and straight
- Potential hiding places for offenders should be avoided

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
Comments		The policy aims to improve personal safety and encourage people to walk and cycle, thus improving human health. The policy on lighting is likely to have a negative visual impact, and straight footpaths may look aesthetically displeasing.					
Proposed mitigation		Again specify what ‘pedestrian and cycle bridge’ this applies to					
NP team response							

### MITIGATION POLICY PC 4. WIDENING OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY FOR SAFETY

Where existing footpaths and bridleways pass through the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook they should be widened or maintained to a width to enhance personal safety, allow people to pass each other in different directions and encourage residents to use them, where this would not cause negative biodiversity or landscape impacts.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		The policy aims to improve personal safety and encourage people to walk and cycle, thus improving human health. Widening of the footpaths could involve removing hedgerows or trees, but this is dealt with by the final clause (“where this would...”).					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

### MITIGATION POLICY B 1. PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The transport package secured to mitigate the delivery of the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook shall include measures to ensure that public transport services are integrated with the new development, providing connections to key employment destinations such as the centre of Oxford, Headington, the hospitals and Cowley.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+?	+	+	0	0	-?	0	0
Comments		The policy aims to encourage use of public transport – thus improving people’s health, reducing air pollution, and indirectly protecting biodiversity - by ensuring that public transport services are well integrated with new development. Depending on funding required to implement this policy, it could have a negative impact on the provision of affordable homes.					
Proposed mitigation		It might be worth discussing with SODC whether a development plan policy can require connections (the actual bus services) to be provided or just bus stops etc. Should this be a community aspiration rather than a policy?					
NP team response		Buses are the responsibility of the County Council and we have discussed this with them. The proposal at present has only 2 bus routes, 1 to the JR and another to central Oxford, so getting anywhere else would be very time consuming.					

### MITIGATION POLICY LR 1. COMPLIANCE WITH NICE GUIDELINES – IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

Any road through the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook in Beckley Parish should be designed to be compliant with - NICE guideline [NG70] Published date: June 2017 or any updates or reviews to minimise poor air quality. The design of the link road shall be developed taking into consideration the following measures set out in 1.1.2 of the NICE Guidelines -

- Minimising the exposure of vulnerable groups to air pollution by not siting buildings (such as schools, nurseries and care homes) in areas where pollution levels will be high.
- Siting living accommodation away from roadsides.
- Avoiding the creation of street and building configurations (such as deep street canyons) that encourage pollution to build up where people spend time.
- Including landscape features such as trees and vegetation in open spaces or as 'green' walls or roofs where this does not restrict ventilation.
- Including information in the plan about how structures such as buildings and other physical barriers will affect the distribution of air pollutants.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		The NICE guidance is at <a href="https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng70">https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng70</a> . This policy aims to protect people’s health by reducing their exposure to air pollution (not necessarily by reducing air pollution). It does not significantly affect other environmental topics.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

### MITIGATION POLICY SSSI 1. REPORT AND ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SSSI SYDLINGS COPSE AND COLLEGE POND

The development of the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook should be informed by a detailed assessment of the effect of the development on the SSSI including

- The need for buffer zones
- A study of visitor numbers to the SSSI to determine the risk.
- The likely recreational pressure
- Mitigation policies on potential damage from domestic cats
- A detailed hydrology survey
- A reliable high-quality ecology report
- Research pre and post construction on pollutant levels from vehicle emissions as well as particulate matter from tyres etc which are likely to be high from any 'Link Road' with HGVs.
- A full Ecological Impact Assessment the methodology stipulated by Natural England and to their satisfaction

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to maintain the biodiversity of the Sidlings Copse and College Pond SSSI.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

### MITIGATION POLICY SSSI 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTION ZONE FROM ROADS

Any road development within the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook will take place only if it can be shown to not worsen air pollution at Sydtings Copse, Wick Copse and College Pond SSSI, and if it is agreed with Natural England and BBOWT. Any associated requirements for monitoring of pollutants and their effects on the SSSI as determined by Natural England and BBOWT must be implemented and the costs borne by the developers.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
0	+	+	0	0	-	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to protect biodiversity at Sydtings Copse and College Pond SSSI by ensuring that roads in the new development do not adversely affect air quality at the SSSI. The policy may restrict the presence and location of roads on the new development, so affecting the delivery of housing.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

### MITIGATION POLICY SSSI 3. AGREEMENT OF LANDSCAPE AND RECREATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

A buffer zone of at least 200m is required to protect the fragile SSSI - Sydtings Copse, Wick Copse and College Pond. Further protection will be required in line with any recommendations from hydrology, air quality, ecology and environmental reports to be produced on protecting the SSSI. The design and detailed planting of a buffer and recreational zone around the SSSI should be in keeping with the rural landscape and not appear to be an urban or suburban park.



Planting of fruit trees such as apples and indigenous trees would be encouraged in preference to urban trees. The design and planting should be discussed and agreed with the Community Liaison Committee.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to protect the biodiversity of the Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI, and ensure that any new planting near the SSSI is in keeping with the area's rural character. This helps to protect the local landscape and, indirectly, supports local biodiversity. Fruit trees could be a source of fresh food for local residents, further improving health.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

#### MITIGATION POLICY – LV 1. LANDSCAPING AND MAINTAINING IMPORTANT VIEWS FOR WICK FARM AND LOWER FARM

The landscape buffer between Wick Farm and the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook must

- Maintain existing trees and hedgerows around Wick Farm and Lower Farm
- Provide additional planting of native trees and hedgerows at a density and height and maturity to ensure adequate screening for the residents from the Land North of Bayswater Brook development and that the development is hidden.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to ensure the amenity of residents of Wick Farm by providing a visual buffer between Wick Farm/ Lower Farm and the strategic site. It expands on the requirement of South Oxfordshire Local Plan policy STRAT13 which requires a "landscape buffer" between the development and Wick Farm.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

#### MITIGATION POLICY – LV 2. MAINTAINING PRIVACY AND AVOIDING OVERLOOKING – BUILDING HEIGHTS

Building heights should not extend above three storeys within the area of the strategic site of Land North of Bayswater Brook in the parish of Beckley and Stowood to ensure that: -

- Residents of Wick Farm and Lower Farm are not overlooked by the new development Land North of Bayswater Brook and can maintain their privacy
- Their views are protected as far as possible
- When viewed from the south (Oxford) or north east (Stowood or Stanton St John) or west (Elsfield) visual impact is minimised on the surrounding countryside
- It takes into account landform, layout and landscaping
- It respects the local context and complements the scale, height and details of the surrounding area

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+/-	0	-?	0	+/-	-	-?	-?
Comments		<p>This policy aims to ensure the amenity of residents of Wick Farm mobile home park. If buildings over three storeys were sited close to Wick Farm, this could affect the lighting and amenity at Wick Farm, and could lead to residents of Wick Farm being visible from the higher storeys of the new buildings. The policy also aims to minimise the visual impact of the strategic site, and ensure that it fits into the local landscape.</p> <p>However, this policy would also restrict the height of buildings further west within the parish (e.g. R8 and R9 in Figure 2.2). It would thus restrict the density of housing over the central third of Land North of Bayswater Brook. This would, in turn, limit the number of homes (and affordable homes) available, with indirect implications on the population and human health. Indirectly, it could lead to taller dwellings being proposed on other parts of the strategic site, or to new development being needed elsewhere to accommodate the equivalent population of new residents.</p>					
Proposed mitigation		Allow taller development further away from Wick Farm; do not impose blanket ban on 4+ storey housing.					
NP team response		<p>The local plan says development should be in keeping with surrounding and surrounding buildings in Barton, Barton Park and SSJ (Bayswater Road) are not above 3 storeys. 5 storeys would overlook existing buildings, have an adverse effect on the landscape and setting and would also enable more housing. More housing and more people have adverse effects on the existing population, traffic, biodiversity, landscape, water, soil and traffic -air pollution. It is also proposed that the building have solar panels on top. While this is positive solar panels will reflect and been seen for some distance.</p>					

### MITIGATION POLICY – LV 3. SPECIFIC LANDSCAPING AND MITIGATION FOR LOSS OF COUNTRYSIDE

Applications to develop the strategic site North of Bayswater Brook shall be supported by a comprehensive landscaping strategy which ensures that the link road, housing estate roads and the edges of the development including but not confined to around Wick Farm, Lower Farm are appropriately landscaped to avoid impacting adversely on the adjacent countryside and the openness of the Oxford Green Belt.

The landscaping should include Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems where appropriate, to help reduce flooding and maintain water quality in adjacent waterbodies.

The strategy should include provision for access by walking, horse riding and cycling.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	0	0	+	0	0	+
Comments		This policy is beneficial for the landscape and, indirectly, for air quality.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

#### MITIGATION POLICY LV 4. AVOIDING HARD URBAN EDGES

The strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook development should be designed to contain low density edges to the housing areas. These should be landscaped appropriately to minimise the risk of visual impacts arising from the development and to mitigate the effects of the development on the adjacent countryside and the openness of the Green Belt.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+?	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
Comments		This policy is beneficial for the landscape, and indirectly for people travelling near the site.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

#### MITIGATION POLICY LV 5. DESIGN IN SYMPATHY WITH THE LANDSCAPE AND SURROUNDINGS

The design quality of the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook overall and the individual neighbourhoods should maintain and enhance existing landscape features and complement and be in sympathy with the prevailing character of the Oxford Heights landscape character area and the Character Assessment for the Wick Farm Area section 2.11.7 and Appendix 14.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+/-	0	0	0	+	-?	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to protect the landscape, and indirectly biodiversity, soil quality, and the water regime. An attractive new development will also be positive for human health. However the policy restricts the amount and type of housing that can be provided, with indirect impacts on population and human health.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

#### MITIGATION POLICY HAP 1. AIR QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Applications for development at the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook shall be accompanied by technical information identifying nearby habitats and species that are sensitive to air pollution, and setting out a management regime to protect them from air pollution from the development. This should include regular monitoring of air quality.

Air pollution can cause serious disease, especially to the lungs, heart and skin. There should be compliance with NICE guidelines on Air pollution: outdoor air quality and health NICE guideline [NG70] Published: 30 June 2017 and any updates and reviews to minimise disease and improve local health. The Oxford Air Quality Management Area should be extended to the strategic site if monitoring suggests that air pollution levels there exceed legal standards.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to minimise the impact of air pollutants from Land North of Bayswater Brook on local ecosystems and human health.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## MITIGATION POLICY HAP 2. INDOOR AIR QUALITY

New buildings and refurbishments of existing buildings should comply with “Indoor air quality at home” - NICE guideline [NG149] Published: 08 January 2020 and any updates and revisions.

- Building materials should be specified that only emit a low level of formaldehyde and VOCs.
- Heating systems should be specified that minimise indoor exposure to particulate matter.
- Designs should include provision for removing indoor air pollutants.
- Ventilation systems should be designed to reduce or avoid exposure to outdoor air pollution and ensure there is permanent, effective ventilation.

Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Land-scape	Housing	Soil	Water
+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
Comments		This policy aims to minimise indoor air pollution and protect people's health.					
Proposed mitigation		None proposed					

## 8.2 Appraisal of the overall Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan

Table 8.1 brings together the appraisals of the individual Neighbourhood Plan policies from Section 8.1 and shows the impacts of the plan overall. Clearly some policies would have a greater impact than others, so the +/- marks should not be added up. However the table gives an indication of the overall impacts of the plan, and of those policies that are likely to have the most positive and negative impacts from a strategic environmental assessment perspective.

Overall, the Neighbourhood Plan is particularly positive for air and climatic factors; landscape; and to a lesser extent human health and biodiversity. It would have negative impacts on the provision of housing. Very positive policies include those on biodiversity, the night sky, energy efficiency, low carbon transport, and many of those that aim to reduce the impacts of the strategic site Land North of Bayswater Brook. The most problematic policy is on building heights at the strategic site, as this would **indirectly** affect other areas that would need to provide the replacement housing.

Table 8.2 provides further information on the Neighbourhood Plan's overall impacts, as well as the plan's **cumulative** impacts with other relevant plans and projects: the key other project is the proposal for development at Land North of Bayswater Brook, but other trends and policies (e.g. trends towards an increasing use of electric cars but plummeting biodiversity nationally) also act cumulatively with the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan's key **short-term** and **temporary** impacts (0-5 years) will be in influencing the design of Land North of Bayswater Brook, including how local roads are used during construction; and helping to protect the amenity of Wick Farm residents. In the **longer term** (6+ years) and more **permanently**, the Neighbourhood Plan would help to maintain the attractiveness of Beckley, the darkness of night skies, and the favourable condition of the Sydtings Copse and College Pond SSSI.

**Table 8.1 Overall impacts of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan**

	Pop & human health	Air & climatic factors	Biodiversity	Heritage	Landscape	Housing	Soil	Water
VB1. Settlement boundary	-?	0	+?	+/-	+?	-	+?	0
VB2. Outside sett. boundary	-?	0	+?	+/-	+?	-	+?	0
E1. Biodiversity	0	0	+	0	+?	-?	+?	+?
H1. Heritage	0	0	0	+	+?	-?	0	0
DS1. Important views	+/-	0	0	0	+	-?	+?	0
DS2. Parking	+?	-?	0	0	+?	-?	0	0
DS3. Flood risk	+?	0	0	0	+?	0	0	+
DS4. Dwelling size	0	0	0	0	+?	-?	0	0
DG1. Design guide	+/-	-?	0	+?	+	-	0	0
DG2. Night sky	+?	0	+?	0	+	0	0	0
CC1. Energy efficiency	+?	+	+?	0	-?	+/-	0	+
CC2. Low carbon transport	+	+	+?	0	+/-	-?	0	0
CE1. Community engagement	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mitigation policies								
GB1. Green Belt boundary	0	0	0	+?	0	0	0	0
TA1. Transport assessment	+?	+?	0	0	0	-?	0	0
TA2. TA baseline	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
TA3. TA assessments	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
CM1. Constr. mgmt. plan	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
TA4. NICE physical activity	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PC1. Footpaths	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PC2. Bridge over A40	+?	0	0	0	-	0	0	0
PC3. Safety	+?	0	0	0	-?	0	0	0
PC4. Widening RoWs	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B1. Public transport	+?	+	+?	0	0	-?	0	0
LR1. NICE air quality	+	+?	0	0	0	0	0	0
SSS1. Assessment	0	0	+?	0	0	0	0	0
SSS2. Protection zone	0	+?	+	0	0	-?	0	0
SSS3. Enhancements	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
LV1. Wick Farm views	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LV2. Building heights	+/-	-	-?	0	+/-	-	-?	-?
LV3. Landscaping	+	+?	0	0	+	0	0	+
LV4. Urban edges	+?	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
LV5. Design	+/-	+?	+?	0	+	-?	+?	+?
HAP1. Air quality ass.	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
HAP2. Indoor air quality	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Overall impacts of NP</b>	<b>+?</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>+?</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>



**Table 8.2 Cumulative impacts of the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan plus other relevant plans and projects**

Topic	Overall impacts of NP	Cumulative impacts with other plans & projects	Comments
Population & human health	+?	+/-	The neighbourhood plan aims to protect local residents from the negative impacts of development, and to improve their health through better opportunities for active travel. It particularly aims to protect the amenity of residents of Lower and Wick Farms by controlling building height and encouraging planting near the mobile home site. Cumulatively with the strategic site at Land North of Bayswater Brook, the impact will be mixed: under current proposals, the number of people in the parish would more than double; the new homes at the strategic site would help to improve the health of the new residents; the number of homes at the strategic site may be partly limited by the NP policies; the health and wellbeing of new residents of the parish may improve whilst that of existing residents is likely to slightly worsen.
Air & climatic factors	+	-?	The neighbourhood plan aims to protect and improve air quality in the parish, and minimise carbon emissions. However the new homes planned at the strategic site, and associated construction and operational traffic (including congestion on Bayswater Road) is likely to worsen air quality overall. Nationally, in the longer run electric vehicles will increasingly replace petrol/ diesel vehicles, leading to improved air quality, although traffic congestion will continue to negatively affect air quality in the short/medium term.
Biodiversity	+?	-	The neighbourhood plan aims to protect and enhance biodiversity in the parish. This includes a protection zone around the Sydtings Copse and College Pond SSSI; protection of the SSSI from air pollution; and community aspirations for improved biodiversity in the parish. The NP's requirement for all homes in the parish to be no taller than 3 storeys means that housing would have to be accommodated elsewhere, with indirect negative impacts on biodiversity. The strategic site is likely to have significant negative impacts on biodiversity: on hedges in the strategic site, on the SSSI through increased recreational use, etc., although it would need to provide biodiversity net gain as compensation. Biodiversity is also plummeting nationally.
Heritage	0	0?	The neighbourhood plan aims to protect heritage assets in the parish. Development at the strategic site is likely to improve Wick Farm and the listed Wick Farm Wellhouse. However none of these impacts are likely to be significant.
Landscape	+	-	The neighbourhood plan aims to protect the landscape in the parish, including the traditional character of Beckley; the small

Topic	Overall impacts of NP	Cumulative impacts with other plans & projects	Comments
			nucleated settlement pattern of the parish; views in and out of the parish; and dark skies at night. It also aims to ensure that the strategic site at Land North of Bayswater Brook reflects this character to the extent possible, and to protect the views and privacy of the residents of Wicks Farm park homes. The policies on building height limit all homes to 3 storeys. However development at the strategic site will have a definite negative impact on the landscape: it will change from agricultural fields to a relatively high density urban development. The development will be visible from much of the parish.
Housing	-	+	Overall, the neighbourhood plan policies limit the potential for new housing in the parish. The policies on building heights, on a buffer zone for the SSSI, on housing design in Beckley etc. all serve to reduce the number of homes that could be built in the parish. Under current proposals, the proposed development at Land North of Bayswater Brook would more than double the number of homes and residents in the parish. This would help to provide housing in a location that is comparatively accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
Soil	0	-	The neighbourhood plan policies have limited impacts on soil. The policies on settlement boundaries would help to minimise development on greenfield land, but are not significantly different to policies already in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. In contrast, the strategic site would have a significant negative impact on soil, converting Grade 2 and 3 agricultural/greenfield land into urban development.
Water	0	-	The neighbourhood plan policies also have limited impact on water quality, water resources or flooding. The NP includes a policy on flooding, and several policies refer to sustainable urban drainage systems, so any impact is likely to be slightly positive. In contrast, the strategic site would have significant negative impact on water: the new residents will need more water, affecting water resources; the development would pave over large areas of land, increasing the possibility of flooding; and it is likely to affect water quality in nearby water bodies (e.g. Bayswater Brook) through runoff from roads.

## 9. Monitoring

The main impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan are of two types:

- Long-term protective policies (e.g. biodiversity, night skies)
- Short-term mitigation policies for development at Land North of Bayswater Brook

To monitor the effectiveness of the long-term protective policies, the following indicators are proposed

- Condition of Sydlings Copse and College Pond SSSI
- No. of new buildings in Beckley that are disproportionate to the character of the area

To monitor the effectiveness of the mitigation policies, the following indicators are proposed

- No. buildings in the parish over 3 storeys in height
- Distance of SSSI from the nearest new road
- Traffic levels (average annual daily traffic) at Bayswater Road

These indicators will be monitored every three years, with the results reported to the parish council.

## 10. Next steps

This Environmental Report accompanies the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan for submission to the Local Planning Authority, South Oxfordshire District Council, for subsequent independent examination. At independent examination, the neighbourhood plan will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for neighbourhood plans<sup>39</sup> and is in general conformity with the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

If independent examination is favourable, the neighbourhood plan will be subject to a referendum, organised by South Oxfordshire District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the neighbourhood plan, then it will be 'made'. Once made, the Beckley and Stowood Neighbourhood Plan Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the development plan for Beckley and Stowood Parish.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>