

Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 4 July 2023

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EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive which will be held in the Eynsham Parish Council Village Hall, 46 Back Lane, Eynsham, Witney OX29 4QW on **Wednesday, 12 July 2023 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Andrew Prosser, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul and Alaric Smith

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Executive, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted. By participating in this meeting, you are consenting to be filmed.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Democratic Services officers know prior to the start of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any apologies for absence or lateness.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations from Members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 14)**
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 June 2023.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council or Members of the Executive.
5. **Participation of the Public**
Members of the public may ask a question at a meeting of the Executive for up to three minutes on any item of business for decision at the meeting or on any issue that affects the district or its people. Members of the public wishing to speak at an Executive meeting must notify democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, including their name and the agenda item or topic they wish to speak on, by 2.00pm two clear working days before the meeting (e.g. for a Wednesday meeting, the deadline would be 2.00pm on the Friday before). If the topic of the question is not within the remit of the Council, advice will be provided on where best to direct the question. The relevant Executive Member will either respond verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.
6. **Financial Performance Report 2022/23 Year End (Q4) (Pages 15 - 44)**
Purpose:
This report provides details of the Council's Financial performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4)

Recommendation:
That Executive resolves to:
 - a) Note the 2022/23 end of year financial performance;
 - b) Recommend to Council to approve the carry forward of the Capital Budget of £2,372,557;
 - c) Recommend to Council to approve the transfers to and between Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.
7. **Service Performance Report 2022-23 Quarter 4 (Pages 45 - 62)**
Purpose:
This report provides details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4)

Recommendation:
That the Executive resolves to:
 - a) Note the 2022/23 Q4 service performance

8. **West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Masterplan (Pages 63 - 100)**

Purpose:

To consider an addendum to the West Eynsham SDA masterplan which has been produced by the four main landowner/developers in response to further engagement with third party landowners.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the content of the report;
- b) Consider the recommendations of the Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 8th June, which resolved to recommend to the Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward (see Annex A); and
- c) In light of the above, consider whether it wishes to approve the West Eynsham SDA masterplan addendum attached at Annex B as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

9. **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 (Pages 101 - 174)**

Purpose:

To consider a focused consultation paper which is intended to help inform the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the content of the report;
- b) Agree that the Local Plan focused consultation paper attached at Annex A be published for an extended period of stakeholder engagement (8-10 weeks) to help inform the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041;
- c) Authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary minor amendments to the focused consultation paper in liaison with the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, prior to consultation taking place.

10. **Updates to Terms of Reference of Future Oxfordshire (Pages 175 - 200)**

Purpose:

Recent changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal require some adjustments to the working of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and this report proposes corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Approve the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.

11. **Combe Village Design Statement (VDS) (Pages 201 - 228)**

Purpose:

To consider the final version of the Combe Village Design Statement (VDS), following feedback from a 6-week period of public consultation, and to recommend to Council that it be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Note the content of the report including the consultation summary report attached at Annex A; and
- b) Recommend to Council to formally adopt the final version of the Combe Village Design Statement attached at Annex B as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), subject to any amendments the Executive may wish to make.

12. **Our House Funding Extension for 2023-24 (Pages 229 - 242)**

Purpose:

To update members on the 'Our House' project since its inception with a recommendation that funding be extended from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2024.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Approve an extension to the Our House project for one year;
- b) Agree to use Housing Reserves of £112,500 as set out in section 3;
- c) Agree to continue with the current Support Provider via waiver;
- d) Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare to make any minor amendments to this funding extension;
- e) Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare to apply for external funding should any become available to continue the project.

13. **Planned Expenditure of the Ukraine Homelessness Prevention Grant - Homes for Ukraine Top Up 2023-2024 (Pages 243 - 256)**

Purpose:

To consider the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant – Homes for Ukraine top up 2023/2024.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Approve the expenditure of £220,541 detailed within section 3 of this report;
- b) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare and the Chief Finance Officer to make any amendments to these allocations to subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions;
- c) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Chief Finance Officer to make decisions on any other uplifts or grants that may be given over the financial years 2023-24 to address increased demands on the Housing Service, subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions.

14. **Leisure - Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (Districtwide) (Pages 257 - 262)**

Purpose:

To seek approval for budgetary provision for the appointment of a consultant to prepare a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model for the District.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Authorise Officers to commence a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model for the District.
- b) Agree to include a provision of £26,850 within the 2023/24 Leisure budget.
- c) Appoint specialist leisure consultants to undertake the work.

15. **Matters raised by Overview and Scrutiny or Audit and Governance (Pages 263 - 272)**

Purpose:

To consider a recommendation made to the Executive by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 June 2023.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to agree it's response to the following recommendation from the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Annex B (to follow):

- I. That the Council explores the idea of the recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council's finance team.

16. **Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Installations on Council Estate (Pages 273 - 288)**

Purpose:

To seek agreement to invest in the installation of solar PV on the roofs of buildings owned and in some cases leased by the Council based on the business case set out in this report. To agree to enter into a contract with the preferred contractor for the installation of the solar PV.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Agree that the Council should proceed with investment in roof mounted solar PV based on the business cases in this report;
- b) Agree to enter into sale agreements for the electricity generated, with the tenants, where financially viable and delegate decisions on whether or not to proceed with individual agreements to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance;
- c) Agree to enter into contract with the preferred contractor identified in Annex A, for the provision and installation of Solar PV and related equipment;
- d) Delegates to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change the decision to exclude any tenanted sites based on further Due Diligence associated with energy usage or vulnerability around continued tenant occupation;
- e) Delegates to the Section 151 Officer the decision to adjust the indicative electricity sale price to tenants as long as changes to the projected project returns are in-line with projections contained within this report.
- f) Funding for contingency costs of £27,634 is approved with delegation to the Section 151 Officer for expenditure of contingency subject to the business case still being viable or expenditure being unavoidable due to structural condition of

the building;

- g) That revenue funding of £11,200/year is allocated for the part-time shared Energy Manager post and included in the next budget update. Noting that this will be funded from Solar PV income.

17. Exclusion of Press and Public

If the Executive wishes to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for the Executive to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of the Paragraph 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in specific paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

18. Exempt Annexes for item 16: Commercial Solar Photovoltaic Installations on Council Estate (Pages 289 - 300)

19. Cleaning and Maintenance of Public Conveniences (Pages 301 - 310)

Purpose:

To provide a summary of options for the delivery of the public convenience cleaning and maintenance service.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Approve a further one-year extension under a contract waiver for the cleaning and maintenance of Public Conveniences with Danfo;
- b) Approve the reduced specification/service requirements for the one-year extension;
- c) Instruct officers to conduct an in-depth review of service provision to be carried out during the period of extension to inform future contract options.

20. Funding for Landlord's Works and Approval of New Lease's at Investment Property in Cumnor (Pages 311 - 316)

Purpose:

To seek authority to agree new leases with existing occupiers at the subject property and to seek funding for Landlord's Works required.

Recommendations:

That the Executive resolves to:

- a) Approve the proposed capital budget of up to £125,000 for refurbishment works;
- b) Approve the proposed new leases to the current sub tenants;
- c) Delegate the decision on the final costs of works and terms of leases to the Assistant Director for Property & Regeneration in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Executive Member of Resources;
- d) Recommend to Council to add £125,000 to the Capital Programme for this item to be financed from the Property Improvement and Incentive Reserve.

(END)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Executive

Held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 21 June 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham (Leader of the Council), Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Dan Levy, Andrew Prosser, Alaric Smith, Carl Rylett and Geoff Saul.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer), Frank Wilson (Executive Director (Finance) - Publica), Claire Locke (Assistant Director, Property and Regeneration), Phil Martin (Assistant Director, Business Services), Bill Oddy (Assistant Director, Commercial Development), Andrew Brown (Business Manager, Democratic Services), Phil Shaw (Business Manager, Development Management and Sustainability), Mandy Fathers (Business Manager, Environment, Welfare and Revenues), Andrew Turner (Business Manager, Assets & Council Priorities, Land, Legal and Property), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Barry Clack (Communications Officer), Elise Chowdhury (Communications Officer), Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager) and Michelle Ouzman (Strategic Support Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Andrew Coles and Julian Cooper.

40 Apologies for Absence

There were no Apologies for Absence received from members of the Executive.

41 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest received from members of the Executive.

42 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 19 April 2023, were approved by the Executive, and signed by the Leader as a true and accurate record.

43 Participation of the Public

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed all attendees to the meeting. The Leader also stated that if members of the public wished to stay behind after the meeting to speak informally with Executive members, they were welcome to do so.

Max Thompson, Senior Democratic Services Officer, explained to the Executive that in advance of the meeting, the Executive had received one public question to be answered during the meeting. The following answer was given to question put:

QI Asked by Sandra Coleman:

A shortage of open space in Chipping Norton was identified and well documented in WODC's own Open Space Study published in 2013. This included a shortfall of 5.55 hectares of public playing pitches. Since then about 500 homes have been built but no playing pitches provided. WODC was about to publish a masterplan for the 1200 homes East Chipping Norton as Planning Guidance before it was abandoned, and that also showed no playing

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pitches. 1200 homes would generate a need for 2.88 hectares of playing pitches based upon the nationally accepted Fields in Trust standards. In total, then, we will have a shortfall of about 8.5 hectares of playing pitches. Can you explain to the people of Chipping Norton how the adopted West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan, approved last year, was able to conclude that no additional playing pitches were needed at Chipping Norton?

AI Answered by Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects:

The rationale for developing the playing pitch strategy was to provide the District Council with a robust and objective assessment of the current quality and quantity of pitch provision and ancillary facilities, and to determine the potential need now and in the future. In terms of pitch analysis the study was only undertaken on playing pitches (sites which have a delineated area for a particular sport) and playing fields which contained at least one playing pitch. Therefore it wasn't an assessment of general open spaces for recreation. The playing pitch strategy scope included the assessment of the following pitch provision; Football, Rugby, Cricket, Hockey, Bowls and Tennis.

One of the initial stages in the development of the strategy was to consult with all relevant clubs, National Governing Bodies of sport and the Town and Parish Councils. In Chipping Norton the following were consulted; Chipping Norton Swifts, Chipping Norton Cricket Club, Chipping Norton Rugby Club, Chipping Norton Town Football Club, Chipping Norton School and Chipping Norton Town Council.

Future demand was based on team generation rates which were driven by the clubs individual development plans but also population increases. The potential housing growth from the East Chipping Norton development was taken into account at the time the strategy was developed.

In terms of sport specific requirements, there is spare capacity for football pitches with no increase in future demand identified by the club. Although Chipping Norton Town Football Club relocated in 2014 to Enstone, the strategy indicates that given there are only 2 adult teams in the town and 4 suitable pitches available, there is adequate provision to accommodate the need.

For Cricket there is space capacity on Sundays and mid-week and Rugby only identified limited capacity at peak times. The Rugby club also indicated a need for enhanced sports lighting and ancillary facilities. All of which have been included in the strategy action plan.

Also identified was the underutilisation of Chipping Norton School pitches which are available to hire for community use.

Given all the evidence that was gathered, only additional pitches were required for rugby, but this could be solved by relocating to Chipping Norton School for training to alleviate the overplay on the Greystone pitches.

As part of the Playing Pitch Strategy delivery, we meet quarterly with all the governing bodies of sport and also have an annual steering group to update and ensure the data and need is still correct at that point in time. Therefore any concerns that are raised can be picked up at these sessions, to see whether any adjustments need to be made to the action plan.

44 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed Andrea McCaskie to West Oxfordshire District Council, who had recently taken up post as the Council's Director of Governance. The Leader stated that he would look forward to working with the Director of Governance.

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, announced the receipt of the annual review regarding the Council's 'YouMove' programme, which would also be shared with all Members of the Council. The Executive Member gave a brief overview of the project, paid tribute alongside the Leader to the Communities team, and strongly encouraged all Members to read the report once it had been disseminated.

45 Transfer of Playing Areas to Witney Town Council

Councillor Joy Aitman, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which outlined proposals to transfer the responsibility of Playing Areas from West Oxfordshire District Council to Witney Town Council.

Councillor Andrew Coles stated that he supported the report and asked for a progress update regarding Unterhatchen park located in Witney. The park had historically been subject to anti-social behaviour, graffiti and was deemed to have needed significant work, all of which had negative effect on neighbouring properties and residents. The Executive Member, in conjunction with Bill Oddy, Assistant Director for Commercial Development, confirmed that the transfer of responsibility for the park was imminent, and the desired repair works were noted, particularly to lighting within the park.

Councillor Aitman proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to the proposals outlined in the paper to transfer the Playing Areas from WODC to Witney Town Council;
2. Delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities to agree the final Heads of Terms for each transfer.

46 Development Management Improvement Programme

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced and gave a detailed overview of the report, which updated on progress against Phases 1 and 2 of the Development Management Improvement Programme, and made recommendations for further improvements (Phase 3), following receipt of a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report.

In debate, the Executive paid tribute to the work of the Development Management teams, recognised some of the challenges faced in the past and supported proposed improvement changes that would take effect in the future.

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Councillor Rylett proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the improvement progress to date;
2. Approve the changes detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the Agenda Reports Pack.

47 Chipping Norton Leisure Centre Roof Repairs

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which requested approval to repair the roof at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre.

In debate, the Executive highlighted the effects that the leaking roof had caused to and within the Leisure Centre, and that detailed, immediate action would be greatly welcomed both by users of the Leisure Centre, and also more widely by residents of Chipping Norton.

Councillor Levy proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the repair works required, as detailed in the report;
2. Recommend that, the authority to approve the final budget to cover the repair cost, is delegated to the Assistant Director for Property & Regeneration in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Member for Finance.

48 Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered the final version of the West Oxfordshire District Council Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

In debate, the Executive highlighted the number of responses received in a recent consultation, and the community & commercial aspects related to the updated document.

Councillor Rylett proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Note the contents of the report;
2. That subject to any amendments the Executive may wish to make, Council be invited to formally adopt the final version of the West Oxfordshire District Council Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

49 Council Chamber Refit Design and Procurement of Contractors

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which sought agreement for the Council Chamber refit design and associated costs, and to proceed with the procurement of contractors via an open tender process.

In debate, the Executive highlighted the extensive work that had been undertaken in relation to planned improvement works for the Council's Woodgreen site, including the Council Chamber. These included decarbonisation, sustainability upgrades, and meeting the needs of an ever-changing work and lifestyle balance. The Executive also highlighted the community benefits of the regeneration work, an example of which would see a refurbished Council Chamber becoming available for hire by residents of the District. The Executive also paid tribute to the Agile Working project team, for both their work to date, and for being able to help deliver the Council Chamber refurbishment project at an underspend.

Councillor Graham proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to the Chamber design as proposed by the Agile Steering Group;
2. Agree to proceed to the contractor procurement phase.

50 Approval of Award of Contract for External Printing and Postage (Hybrid Mail)

Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which considered the result of a procurement exercise to award a new contract for the provision of external printing and postage for the Council and its partners.

Councillor Levy proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Award the contract for external printing and postage from 1 August 2023 to iMail for a period of 3 plus 1 year.

51 Matters raised by Overview and Scrutiny or Audit and Governance

Councillor Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, introduced the report, which considered recommendations from the Climate and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 23 March 2023.

The Executive Member gave a brief summary of the Motions raised and debated at Full Council in February 2023, which were subsequently referred to the Council's Climate and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Executive Member explained that the considerations would consider policy options desired to be included within the review of the Local Plan, including Grampian conditions.

Councillor Rylett proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree its response to the following recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny:
 - a) That Officers include, within the current review of the Local Plan, specific policies in respect of Swift Nesting Sites, as per the motion.

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b) That Officers include, within the current review of the Local Plan, specific policies in respect of Development Grampian Conditions, as per the motion.

52 Exclusion of Press and Public

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, proposed that Executive agree to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the remaining exempt items of business, on the basis that public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information. This was seconded by Councillor Andy Graham, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

53 Disposal and Development of land at Walterbush Road, Chipping Norton, for custom build zero carbon homes.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which sought to agree a delivery approach for the development of homes at Walterbush Road.

In debate, the Executive praised the work of Officers relating to the Scheme, and that the proposal in front of the Executive, was deemed to be the right action course, after exploring multiple avenues to find the right solution, and also after the Executive had deliberated, at length, on the subject matter. Local interest in the scheme was also highlighted by the Executive, and it was further noted that further, unnecessary delays would not be in keeping with the Council's priority of putting residents first.

Councillor Saul proposed that the Executive agree to the recommendations as listed on the report. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to cease the relationship with the current proposed developer;
2. Seek formal Expressions of Interest on the site for a development which as a minimum delivers affordable homes but also encourages net carbon zero and self-build proposals;
3. Delegate to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, the decision to proceed with cable diversion and award a contract.

54 Letting at Marriott's Walk Witney

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development, introduced and gave an overview of the report, which requested approval for a lease, as set out in the report, and to recommend to Council a new process to approve transactions at Marriott's Walk in the interests of commercial efficiency.

Councillor Enright proposed that the Executive resolve to amend recommendation 'b', as originally stated within the original agenda report, to remove the words "*in consultation with the members of the Capital Programme Investment Board*", to replace them with "*in*

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consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Economic Development'. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.

Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Amend recommendation 'b' to state:

“Recommend that Council amend the delegation arrangements to give authority to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Economic Development to approve future lettings at Marriott’s Walk”.

Councillor Enright proposed that the Executive agree to the amended recommendation, alongside recommendation 'a' as listed in the original recommendations listed within the agenda report. This was seconded by Councillor Dan Levy, was put to a vote and was unanimously agreed by the Executive.


Executive **Resolved** to:

1. Approve the grant to lease at Marriott’s Walk on the terms detailed in the report;
2. Recommend that Council amend the delegation arrangements to give authority to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and the Executive Member for Economic Development to approve future lettings at Marriott’s Walk.

The Meeting closed at 2.48 pm

CHAIR

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE: WEDNESDAY 12TH JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23 YEAR END</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Dan Levy Cabinet Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Elizabeth Griffiths, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861188 Email: Elizabeth.Griffith@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Revenue Outturn Annex B – Capital Programme including slippage Annex C – Update on Aged Debt</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That Executive resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the 2022/23 end of year financial performance; b) Recommend to Council to approve the carry forward of the Capital Budget of £2,372,557; c) Recommend to Council to approve the transfers to and between Earmarked Reserves as detailed in the report.
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Council approved its Council Plan 2023-27 in January 2023. The Plan sets out a Council vision that is “to support West Oxfordshire to be fit for the future through action across a set of priority themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Putting Residents First 2. A Good Quality of Life for All 3. A Better Environment for People and Wildlife 4. Responding to the Ecological and Climate Crisis 5. Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>

I. FINANCIAL POSITION AT YEAR END

2022/23 was financially a very difficult one for the Council, driven by high inflation across the board and the continued pressure on income generating services such as Building Control, Land Charges and Car Parking in addition to void units in our Investment Property Portfolio. A realistic budget was approved in February 2022 which provided for a £1.6m surplus for the year but the final position is a deficit of £573,004.

While the position is significantly worse than budgeted, it is relatively in line with reporting through the year as it has developed and also with our budget for 2023/24. While this provides some confirmation that our projections of a deficit budget position and deteriorating financial stability are not overstated, it also reconfirms the need to address it.

Our largest controllable risks continue to be the Leisure contract which has not delivered the expected management fee income, the Waste contract whose costs continue to rise rapidly, and an emerging risk around homelessness. This was an area which saw elevated costs through Covid but the level of these has not reduced to pre pandemic levels.

While the outturn report typically focuses on the revenue budget, this report also touches on our balance sheet. This is something of an anomaly between private sector and public sector reporting and a greater increase in focus on the balance sheet is required. The concern around aged debt has been known for some time and WODC brought in a credit control specialist in order to recover as much as possible of the outstanding monies and to investigate current procedures to determine why such a backlog exists. Good progress has been made and an update on that is appended in Annex C. This increased focus on debt is now being extended to Housing Benefit, Council Tax and Business Rates – the aged debt of which do not appear in the Finance system but are very much of concern to the Council. Housing Benefit in particular is an area where unresolved overpayments impact our finances. On receiving the report at Annex C, FMOS endorsed the suggestion that the role of credit controller become a permanent addition to the Finance team, removing the need for this to be paid through an agency as it is currently and to carry on the work outlined in the report.

The Revenue Outturn for all Council Services at 31st March 2023 is shown in Annex A.

There are a number of budget variances identified in the report across a range of service areas, commentary for the most significant of these is set out below. These figures are subject to External Audit review, however no material change is expected from what is being reported here.

2. FINANCIAL REPORTING

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - Budget Monitoring

Revenue Budget Monitoring Outturn 2022/23

Service Area	Quarter 4			
	Original Budget 2022/23	Current Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over spend
	£	£	£	£
Democratic and Committee Services	1,058,971	1,082,956	1,151,784	68,828
Environmental & Regulatory Services	507,109	489,940	570,529	80,589
Environmental Services	7,106,814	7,076,617	8,031,375	954,758
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	922,288	977,832	981,286	3,454
ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,924,570	1,953,156	1,893,647	(59,509)
Land, Legal & Property	903,130	864,539	1,089,038	224,499
Leisure & Communities	661,071	637,421	1,435,217	797,796
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,528,061	953,786	917,854	(35,932)
Revenues & Housing Support	1,049,459	910,673	1,041,053	130,380
Investment Property and Retained Services	(2,218,585)	(2,095,710)	(1,494,324)	601,386
COVID-19 specific costs	284,525	404,715	431,874	27,159
Total cost of services	13,727,413	13,255,925	16,049,334	2,793,409
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,139,501)	(1,139,501)	(1,364,483)	(224,982)
Cost of services before financing:	12,587,912	12,116,424	14,684,850	2,568,426
Retained Business Rates	(4,373,420)	(1,855,594)	(2,166,459)	(310,865)
Interest Payable	102,857	102,857	13,217	(89,640)
General Government Grants	(2,834,598)	(3,083,048)	(3,087,910)	(4,862)
Budgeted contribution to GF	1,609,731	1,609,731	0	(1,609,731)
MRP & Capital financing underspend	995,002	995,002	828,473	(166,529)
Earmarked Reserves	(826,239)	848,227	1,065,102	216,875
Capital Charges	(1,769,650)	(1,724,178)	(1,724,178)	0
Contribution (to)/from General Fund	7,261,245	9,885,372	9,443,698	573,004

2.1. Car Parking

The combined overspend across On and Off street parking is £178,000, 90% of which relates to the underachievement of income. The remaining 10% is for the annual cost of the Chipside parking system and the increase in electricity costs. The Parking budget for 2023/24 has increased by £142,000 due to the transfer of On Street parking back to Oxfordshire County Council from 1st April 2023 and the loss of £169,000 of budgeted income. In addition a vacant Civil Parking Enforcement Officer post, supposed to be funded through excess income, has been disestablished. A report from the Business Manager – Support and Advice, to whom responsibility for the Parking Service transferred in 2022/23 will be submitting a report to the Executive on the future of the Parking Service subsequent to the transfer of On Street Parking out of West Oxfordshire's remit.

2.2. Democratic Services

Consistent with reporting throughout the year, Members Allowances are £55,000 overspent at year end with additional overspends of £16,000 for the printing and posting of Committee Papers and £4,000 for the Council's contribution to the Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership which champions the region as a world leader in innovation and business in a sustainable way. The 2023/24 budget has been increased for Members Allowances in line with the agreed Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations, Committee Paper printing and an additional amount for Member Training.

2.3. Land Charges

As reported in the 2021/22 outturn and the quarterly budget monitoring reports in 2022/23 Land Charges income has fallen significantly below budgeted levels, with a further fall of 8% in 2022/23 compared with the previous year. The volume of free Personal Searches remains very high at over 70% of total Land Charge searches in the year. The Council will also be impacted by the transfer of the statutory LLC1 searches to HM Land Registry in 2023/24 which will result in an estimated loss of £14,000 per annum. The government has provided grant income to support the loss of the LLC 1 searches for 2 years, so the impact of this income loss will manifest in the 2025/26 budget.

2.4. Leisure Contract

At the beginning of the financial year GLL confirmed their expectation to pay the contracted management fee to the Council of £1.4m and therefore no income contingency was included in the 2022/23 budget. The terms of the contract allow for an increase in management fee income based on CPI which has increased significantly in the last 12 months. The invoiced management fee for 2022/23 was £1.9m of which £1.6m has been paid reflecting the previous level of fees without this year's high RPI increase. The continued high cost of utilities and lower level of footfall into the District's leisure centres has impacted on the financial stability of the leisure contract and put GLL's ability to meet the contracted obligations in doubt. For this reason a specific Bad Debt provision was made in the amount of £1.18m in order to recognise this substantial risk in our Financial Statements. £1.1m was paid in the middle of June, post year end which means that the requirement for bad debt provision has been superseded but was correct to the best of our knowledge at year end.

2.5. Ubico Contract

The Ubico contract is £424,000 overspent, the majority of which relates to the pay award being 3.5% higher than initially budgeted for, the significantly higher cost of diesel throughout the year which has only started to drop in the last few weeks and vehicle hire & repairs. The impact of this overspend has been allocated against each part of Environmental Services, more details of which can be seen in Annex A. The budget for the Ubico contract in 2023/24 is £8.1m, an increase of £745,000 but this may not be sufficient if the pay award for the current financial year is more than the 4% included in the base contract sum.

2.6. Building Control

The service has ended the year £77,000 overspent due to underachievement of income, a 14% drop on the previous financial year. The service has struggled against competition from the Private sector and the general state of the economy. With the sharp rise in interest rates since Autumn 2022, mortgage and borrowing costs have impacted on the volume of house renovations and moves which shrinks the market for Building Control commercial services. The latest estimates for the Bank of England base rate is that it will peak this year at 5.25% and will fall gradually. The Building Control service is therefore unlikely to be able to reach their budgeted income target in 2023/24 and it may not be realistic to expect it in 2024/25. This will be assessed as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

2.7. Environmental Services - Waste Contract

The Waste Contract as a whole is £713,000 overspent, but this figure includes the Ubico contract overspend of £424,000.

Recycling – the Suez contract is £138,000 overspent at £1.052m. The 2023/24 budget was increased to £1m for this contract but this figure now looks insufficient in the light of the month on month increase in costs. The average monthly charge was £86,000 in Q1 rising to an average of £104,000 a month during Q4. There has also been a £109,000 overspend on recycling bins and boxes plus £25,000 on an options appraisal for the service.

Green Waste – the service achieved 99% of its income target but the costs for printing and posting out of Green Waste licences, of £20,000, formerly funded through licence income in excess of budget are a revenue overspend in 2022/23. The licence fee was increased by £5 for 2023/24 and in the first 2 months of 2023/24 income is at 89% of the budget for the year.

Trade Waste – this service has shown a significant turnaround in the last 2 years with the 2022/23 position showing a £106,000 underspend overall driven by a £59,000 underspend in Tipping Charges paid to the County Council, a £35,000 of additional income for Schedule 2 collections (which are collections from domestic premises that incur a fee) and a £30,000 reduction in bad debt provision due to a mixture of recovery and write offs. Progress has been made, most notably with the introduction of payment via direct debit but there is still work to do to ensure all processes are robust and that ongoing bin collections are closely tied to customer payments for the service and that ceasing one results in suspension of the other.

Household Waste – there has been a £22,000 overspend on bins which together with recycling bins and boxes puts the total overspend for the year at £134,000.

Downs Road Depot – there has been a requirement to undertake major drainage works costing £30,000 and additional repairs and maintenance costs of £31,000 to both the site and building fixtures and fittings.

2.8. Admin Buildings

Across the Council's Admin Buildings there is an overspend of £168,000 of which £147,000 relates to electricity and gas. Growth has been included in the 2023/24 budget for an increase in utility expenditure of £253,000. With changes to the energy cap in July and October 2023, this budget is likely to be underspent in the 2023/24 financial year with any significant variances included in the quarterly budget monitoring reports.

In addition to utility costs, there has been £25,000 of costs related to Agile Working which are ineligible to be recognised as capital expenditure and have therefore been recognised as a revenue overspend.

2.9. Publica Contract

In spite of the pay award for 2022/23 being 3.5% above the base budget, the Publica contract has returned a surplus to the Council of £80,000. This includes a refund for the proposed change to National Insurance contributions that was included in the base contract sum but subsequently scrapped by the Government in the year plus a reimbursement for vacant posts. The base budget for 2023/24 includes a pay award of 4% but it is as yet unknown what the award will be as the final offer from the National Employers has been rejected by all 3 Unions.

2.10. Homelessness

The average number of clients in temporary accommodation has risen and stayed consistently around 60 during the second half of the year, which is an unprecedented level for West Oxfordshire, much higher than during the Pandemic.

The purchase of The Old Court in 2020/21 was supposed to meet our emergency housing needs without reliance on Bed & Breakfast and Travelodge but the capacity in Council owned temporary accommodation for single people is 22 between Horsefair in Chipping Norton and The Old Courthouse in Witney. Both of these properties have had a low level of voids in 2022/23 with significantly lower costs for repairs and maintenance, resulting in a surplus of £54,000 for the year.

The reliance on Bed & Breakfast and Travelodge to house the remaining average of 38 clients has cost the Council £153,000 in Housing Benefit and £280,000 in Housing Benefit Subsidy a total of £433,000.

Pressure on the Homelessness Team has been unrelenting since the start of the Pandemic in 2020. During a time of material increase to the number of clients being supported, housed and then moved on into more secure tenancies, there has been no increase in the number of permanent posts in the team. Additional FTC posts have been provided, but there has been an understandable churn in these posts as people move on into permanent posts elsewhere.

It would be appropriate to undertake a review of the Homelessness service to determine if additional resource could reduce the losses of Housing Benefit and Subsidy.

2.11. Investment Property

We have seen a mixed year for the Council's Investment Property with an overall overspend of £369,000. This is mostly made up of a reduction in rental income either due to vacant units i.e. Des Roches & Talisman or periods of reduced rent for new tenants i.e. Carterton Ind

Estate. It is now a market standard to offer rent free or rent reduced periods for new tenants in return for the stability of a 10 year lease. When considered over the life of the lease the rent free period is on average is 5% – 7.5% of the total rental income.

Marriotts Walk – in January 2023 the Council completed the purchase of Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre. This purchase allows the Council to protect the sustainability of Witney Town Centre by proactively seeking tenants who compliment rather than detract from the existing traders in the High Street, encourage increased footfall into Witney due to the nature/stature of our Marriotts offering and the regeneration of the central square.

2.12. Housing Benefit Subsidy

There is a £280,000 subsidy loss related to the use of B&Bs and Travelodge as emergency accommodation as the Council is able to recover only a small percentage of the costs through Subsidy. This loss is offset in the most part by £186,000 Admin Subsidy and one off grants of £51,000. Admin Subsidy is allocated to the Council to help fund the running of the Housing Benefit service i.e. to pay for staff, but in recent years this grant has filled the gap between Benefits paid out and the Subsidy we receive in compensation.

2.13. Investment Income

The bond and equity markets have had a dynamic year meaning that our Pooled Funds have returned £225,000 more in interest than was budgeted for, but are still subject to a capital loss of £1.6m. Under Cipfa guidance the Council must crystallise any capital loss from the Pooled Funds and recognise this loss in the Statement of Accounts for 2024/25. In the last year this capital loss has increased by £1.2m.

2.14. Council Tax and Business Rates Arrears

Since 2020/21 reporting has shown a significant increase in both Council Tax and Business Rates arrears. Initially due to the Pandemic and latterly to the Cost of Living Crisis. The table shows the arrears specific to 2020/21 to 2022/23 and the amounts recovered to date. The effect of the suspension of raising liability orders through the Magistrates Court during the Pandemic can be clearly seen in the significant rise in arrears between 20/21 & 21/22 and it is taking longer to recover outstanding amounts than it has in the past, due to the accumulated volume of the last 3 years. It is encouraging that the arrears specific to 2022/23 are significantly lower than the previous year.

Council Tax	20/21	21/22	22/23
Arrears at 31.03	2,654,907	3,805,222	2,993,806
Balance after 1 year	1,661,311	2,209,117	
Balance after 2 years	1,282,456		
% collected	52%	58%	
NNDR	20/21	21/22	22/23
Arrears at 31.03	1,871,523	2,727,554	1,319,753
Balance after 1 year	708,449	749,187	
Balance after 2 years	400,670		
% collected	78%	72%	

3. FUNDING

3.1. Retained Business Rates and Pooling

The accounting arrangements for Business Rates are complex and statute requires recognition of items charged in one financial year to be resolved in the following year i.e. the deficit arising in 2022/23 (the shortfall in collectable rates vs expected due to the Govt's reliefs) will be repaid to the Collection Fund in 2023/24. This deficit has therefore been budgeted for in 2023/24 and will be funded by the Business Rates deficit earmarked reserve set up specifically for this repayment. The deficit at the end of 2022/23 is £1.273m, higher than the £991,000 estimated in the submission of NNDR I for 2022/23, the difference between the estimate and the actual deficit will be repaid in 2024/25 and will be taken account of in the budget setting process.

In the 2022/23 budget Retained Business Rates income accounted for 34% of funding for Council services but our ability to collect it was impacted by the CARF (Covid Additional Relief Fund) scheme announced by the Government to give Covid support to businesses ineligible for any of the other available schemes. The scheme provided Business Rate relief against 2021/22 billing but the scheme was not implemented until the beginning of 2022/23 due to the timing of the announcement & funding arrangements. As a result the amount of Business Rate income we collected this year fell to £34,366,635 against an original budget of £36,451,916.

As the Billing Authority we collect 100% of the 'payable' income but distribute 50% of the 'budgeted' income (regardless of whether the actual cash collected has reduced significantly due to Govt reliefs) to Central Government & 10% to the County Council on a monthly basis.

The table below shows the calculation of the budgeted / expected Business Rate income for the Council vs the Actual. You can also see the funding of the deficit payable in the year through earmarked reserves, as discussed in the 2021/22 outturn report. We have an identical situation in 2022/23, where we must repay £4.578m of deficit in 2022/23 and therefore needed to move that amount out of the earmarked reserve.

	Budget 2022/23 £m	Actual 2022/23 £m	
Total Business Rate Income	36.451	34.366	Expected vs Collectable
WODC Business Rates Income (40%)	14.580	14.580	WODC receive 40%. 50% goes to Govt with 10% going to the County, fixed through NNDR 1 at Budget Setting. Uncollectable income compensated by exceptional S31 Grant.
Less Tariff	-12.035	-12.035	This is a Govt specified adjustment to reduce our collected rates to the baseline funding level they determine.
NDR Deficit Payable from the Collection Fund	-4.578	-4.578	Fixed at Budget Setting
S31 Grant	4.278	4.432	Grant received to compensate for lost business rates income due to Central Gov policy
Renewable Energy	0.211	0.209	Income retained by WODC for renewable energy schemes
Business Rates Income	2.456	2.454	
Less Levy	-2.037	-0.896	This represents 50% of excess funding over baseline net of Pool Gain
Net Business Rates	0.419	1.576	
Levy Surplus	0	0.018	One off redistribution of grant income to each billing authority
Excess S31	0	0.154	S31 grant due over and above the budgeted figure
Movement from reserves	3.955	3.955	To fund the deficit paid out in the year relating to 2021/22
Movement to reserves		-1.000	To fund the deficit paid out in 2023/24 relating to 2022/23
Retained Business Rates	4.374	4.703	

4. TRANSFERS TO EARMARKED RESERVES

The table below shows the proposed movements to earmarked reserves.

After the proposed movements to earmarked reserves, the final outturn position will be £573,004 deficit which will be funded from the General Fund balance.

	Transfers To Reserves	
Reserve	£	
Business Rates Deficit	1,000,000	S31 grant to fund Business Rates deficit relating to 2022/23 to be repaid to the Collection Fund in 2023/24
New Burdens Funding	197,590	Grant funding for the admin of Council Tax rebate and energy schemes
Redmond Review	18,860	Grant funding for the increase in external Audit requirements
Homelessness Prevention	184,862	Specific grant allocation for Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation county wide scheme and funding agreed in 2022/23 to fund a Domestic Abuse & Rough Sleeping Specialist post and a Flexible Homelessness Prevention Fund to reduce reliance on Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
Total Proposed Movement to Reserves	1,401,312	

5. GRANTS DISTRIBUTED

There has continued to be a significant amount of Post Payment Assurance work during 2022/23 which we are obligated to carry out and New Burdens grant funding has been provided by the Government to offset the cost of the resource employed by the Counter Fraud Unit to deliver this work.

£191k of COMF (Contain Outbreak Management Fund) grant in Earmarked Reserves has been used to fund the ICT improvements to the Committee Rooms and Council Chamber to allow the spaces to be used to live stream meetings and to enable their use by members of the Community as a flexible meeting space.

6. FINANCIAL REPORTING - CAPITAL

- 6.1. The capital programme approved by Council as part of the budget for 2022/23 totalled £30,596,188. At year end £15,291,292 had been spent against this budget.
- 6.2. The majority of the expenditure was the purchase of Marriotts Walk shopping centre in Witney to hold as an opportunity to regenerate Witney's central shopping area
- 6.3. The majority of the underspend is £15.3m related to the Recovery Investment strategy due to the difficulty in finding investment opportunities that comply with the restrictive borrowing requirements of the PWLB and offer the level of return required in the Council's approved Investment Strategy. Work is ongoing to identify and investigate further investment opportunities.
- 6.4. A full breakdown of the schemes for the year and expenditure at 31st March is attached at Annex B.

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Democratic Services			
DRM001-Democratic Representation and Mgmt	139,440	140,416	976
DRM002-Support To Elected Bodies	395,746	471,070	75,324
ELE* - Elections	161,452	160,850	(602)
SUP001-Administration	386,318	379,447	(6,871)
Total - Democratic Services	1,082,956	1,151,784	68,828

DRM002 - Members Allowances are £55k overspent, consistent with reporting in Q2 & Q3, with a further £16k overspend for the printing of Committee papers, Catering and conference expenses plus £4k for the Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Membership. The Budget has been increased in 23/24 to fund the additional cost of Allowances, Committee Papers and Member Training.

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Environmental & Regulatory Services			
BUC001-Building Control - Fee Earning Work	(85,897)	(8,630)	77,267
BUC002-Building Control - Non Fee Earning Work	3,131	3,227	96
EMP001-Emergency Planning	13,609	7,452	(6,157)
ESM001-Environment - Service Mgmt & Supp Serv	95,748	95,815	67
PSH002-Private Sector Housing-Condition	3,000	0	(3,000)
REG002-Licensing	20,478	19,239	(1,239)
REG009-Environmental Protection	175,008	168,101	(6,907)
REG011-Authorised Process	(11,900)	(9,097)	2,803
REG013-Pollution Control	134,223	134,224	1
REG016-Food Safety	135,240	135,200	(40)
REG021-Statutory Burials	5,000	8,477	3,477
TAC309-Other Trading Services - Markets	1,900	15,586	13,686
Total - Environmental & Regulatory Services	489,940	570,529	80,589

BUC001 - income is £74k below target at 81% of the budget for the year, a drop of 14% year on year plus there has been £3k expenditure to employ external Building Inspectors.

EMP001 -there is no expenditure against a legacy budget of £5k for professional fees and a £1k underspend against equipment i.e. the purchase of sandbags. The legacy budget was not removed in 23/24 due to the unpredictable nature of emergencies like flooding and heavy snow.

TAC309 - Markets are £15k below target at 78% of the budget for the year, a drop of 7% from 21/22. There are £3k additional Ubico contract costs, and a £2k underspend in professional fees - a legacy budget removed in 23/24, plus a £3k reduction in Bad Debt provision.

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement			
SUP003-Human Resources	161,773	177,242	15,469
HLD302-Miscellaneous Cash	0	0	0
HLD313-Lease Cars	0	0	0
SUP009-Accountancy	385,928	386,164	236
SUP010-Internal Audit	172,404	157,260	(15,144)
SUP011-Creditors	40,755	40,045	(710)
SUP012-Debtors	56,766	56,573	(193)
SUP013-Payroll	54,586	54,766	180
SUP019-Health & Safety	32,022	34,373	2,351
SUP020-Training & Development	27,822	28,800	978
SUP033-Central Purchasing	36,432	36,432	0
SUP035-Insurances	9,344	9,631	287
Total- Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	977,832	981,286	3,454

SUP003 - the Council incurred unbudgeted advertising costs of £16k for the Director of Governance post

SUP010 - SWAP Internal Audit services are on budget at £100k and there is a £15k underspend for the Counter Fraud Unit who have taken on all Business Support Grant post payment assurance work as required by the Government over and above the agreed Counter Fraud work undertaken on behalf of the Council.

Q4 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
£	£	£

ICT, Change & Customer Services

SUP002-Consultation, Policy & Research	153,069	152,652	(417)
HLD301-ICT Purchases	0	0	0
SUP005-ICT	1,205,108	1,155,024	(50,084)
SUP006-Telephones	10,000	13,215	3,215
SUP008-Reception/Customer Services	473,036	473,265	229
SUP014-Cashiers	100	(164)	(264)
SUP041-Business Solutions	11,268	11,614	346
TMR002-Street Furniture & Equipment	(14,685)	(21,294)	(6,609)
TOU002-Tourist/Visitor Information Centre	115,260	109,907	(5,353)
Total - ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,953,156	1,894,218	(58,938)

SUP005 - the underspend of £50k is a combination of £45k in Telephone costs, £40k in external consultancy, £14k in cabling and overspends of £41k for licences and £8k costs for cyber security training. The 23/24 budget removes legacy budgets for Telephones and External Consultancy and moves budget into licences to fund the shortfall in 22/23 and the inflationary growth in renewal contracts.

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Land, Legal & Property			
ADB301-3 Welch Way (Town Centre Shop)	29,390	43,840	14,450
ADB302-Guildhall	13,153	17,134	3,981
ADB303-Woodgreen	209,040	338,095	129,055
ADB304-Elmfield	179,650	210,686	31,036
ADB305-Corporate Buildings	423,737	449,565	25,828
ADB306-Depot	(32,159)	(68,144)	(35,985)
LLC001-Local Land Charges	(176,029)	(85,890)	90,139
SUP004-Legal	250,292	215,036	(35,256)
TAC303-Swain Court & Newman Court Ind Est Witney	(32,535)	(31,285)	1,250
Total - Land, Legal & Property	864,539	1,089,038	224,499

ADB301 - as the Council have taken over the whole of Welch Way as an operational building in 22/23, there is an underachievement of rental income for the first floor of £6k, a £2k overspend on electricity and gas, a £2k overspend of Business Rates and £4k of expenditure on layout design

ADB303 - in 22/23 there have been costs of £25k relating to the Agile Working programme that cannot be treated as capital expenditure and therefore are represented in this cost centre as a revenue overspend. In addition there is a £77k overspend on electricity, £15k overspend on Gas and £10k for the Woodgreen Boiler replacement design, £2k overspend skip hire and contractor fees

ADB304 - there is an overspend of £19k for electricity, £7k for Gas, £2k for replacement lights and £3k underachievement of income. The 23/24 budget includes additional budget to cover the ongoing higher cost of utilities

ADB305 - £13k overspend Standby Pay for the unlocking and locking up of the Council buildings and responding to out of hours emergencies plus a £13k overspend Electricity.

ADB306 - £73k of invoices have been raised to Ubico relating to compliance for 19/20, 20/21 & 21/22, £9k overachievement of rental income and £11k of backdated service charges, £3k underspend Insurance and waste collection. £14k overspend on Electricity & Gas, £36k for repairs, £13k EVCP fitted in year.

LLC001 - £85k underachievement of income, in line with in year reporting and representing an 8% drop since 21/22. Additionally there is a £5k overspend for Idox support & maintenance

SUP004 - £11k overspend employee costs due to regrading in the year, £14k overspend on external advice, £39k underspend Partnership Fees, £5k overachievement of income, £9k underspend on books, £4k underspend IT licences, £2k underspend conference expenses & printing.

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Leisure & Communities			
CCR001-Community Safety (Crime Reduction)	120,447	91,509	(28,938)
CCR002-Building Safer Communities	(3,386)	2,559	5,945
CCR301 - Communities Revenue Grant	218,820	202,528	(16,292)
CCT001-CCTV	94,335	100,382	6,047
CSM001-Cultural Strategy	83,003	82,072	(931)
CUL001-Arts Development	54,922	49,235	(5,687)
ECD001-Economic Development	65,842	63,057	(2,785)
ECD010 - SPF Community & Spaces	0	0	0
REC001-Sports Development	56,008	56,456	448
REC002-Recreational Facilities Development	52,562	90,547	37,985
REC003-Play	82,058	81,446	(612)
REC301-Village Halls	13,958	14,517	559
REC302-Contract Management	(473,669)	327,808	801,477
SUP016-Finance - Performance Review	103,927	104,506	579
TOU001-Tourism Strategy and Promotion	168,594	168,596	2
Total - Leisure & Communities	637,421	1,435,217	797,796

CCR001 - £37k underspend Professional Fees, £10k overspend Household Support Fund and small variances making up an underspend of £2k

CCR301 - there were fewer grants paid out than budgeted for

REC002 - £38k Kier options report for Carterton Decarbonisation

REC302 - £7k overspend professional fees for advice on roof at Carterton Leisure Centre, £5k overspend Insurance, £13k backdated Solar income, £465k more management fee income than in budget due to indexing for inflation and a £1.2m contribution to Bad Debt provision against the contract sum outstanding for 22/23. A provision of £75k has been charged for a disputed invoice that is currently with Legal. If the challenge is successful and the invoice is not due, the provision will be reversed in 23/24.

Q4 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
£	£	£

Environmental Services

CCC001-Climate Change	112,786	126,069	13,283
COR301-Policy Initiatives - Shopmobility	21,629	19,688	(1,941)
CPK001-Car Parks - Off Street	260,858	347,858	87,000
CPK011-On Street Civil Parking Enforcement	4,360	95,550	91,190
ENI002-Grounds Maintenance	379,870	465,545	85,675
ENI303-Landscape Maintenance	2,373	4,045	1,672
FLD001-Flood Defence and Land Drainage	136,731	131,346	(5,385)
REG004-Dog Warden	105,212	126,087	20,875
REG005-Public Health Sewerage	(25)	(26)	(1)
REG018-Pest Control	224	2,702	2,478
REG019-Public Conveniences	136,323	175,714	39,391
REG023-Environmental Strategy	79,860	76,498	(3,362)
RYC001-Recycling	2,952,980	3,336,919	383,939
RYC002-Green Waste	(143,886)	(57,569)	86,317
STC001 - Street Cleansing	34,723	36,744	2,021
STC004-Environmental Cleansing	1,043,641	1,115,346	71,705
STC011 - Abandoned Vehicles	0	(3,192)	(3,192)
TRW001-Trade Waste	57,636	(48,729)	(106,365)
TRW002-Clinical Waste	(1,100)	(398)	702
WST001-Household Waste	1,831,404	1,956,974	125,570
WST004-Bulky Household Waste	30,649	33,355	2,706
WST301-Env. Services Depot, Downs Rd, Witney	30,369	90,848	60,479
Total - Environmental Services	7,076,617	8,031,375	954,758

CCC001 - £7k difference between PSDS consultancy costs and £22k Salix income received for the Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS design work, £6k expenditure on Woodgreen Thermal Remodelling

CPK001 - £62k underachievement of income in line with in year reporting, £7k overspend electricity, £14k annual charges for Chipside not in budget, £2k overspend Postage and £2k underspend Business Rates

CPK011 - £97k underachievement of income in line with in year reporting, £5k underspend professional fees. The service transfers to the County Council on 1st April with the fixed salary costs transferring to Off Street Parking in the 23/24 budget

ENI002 - £57k underachievement of income - put in the 22/23 budget as recharges to Parish Councils plus £29k additional Ubico contract costs

REG004 - £16k underachievement of income - when a dog is not claimed we send them to a rescue centre. In previous years, if we found and informed a dog owner that we had found their dog and they did not immediately come and collect them, we were entitled to charge them for kennelling fees for each day we had the dog in our custody. Due to the change in process it is now not possible to collect income for the Stray Dog service, plus £4k additional Ubico contract costs.

REG019 - £19k underachievement of income, £18k overspend electricity and £2k cash collection contract

RYC001 - £109k overspend recycling bins and boxes, £138k overspend Suez contract, £143k additional Ubico contract costs, £3k additional income from recycling credits, £25k unbudgeted spend on options appraisal offset by £29k underspend in marketing and IT licences

RYC002 - £11k underachievement of income for Garden Waste licences and £20k cost to print annual licence stickers, usually funded through excess income, £7k overspend Garden Waste bins and £48k additional Ubico contract costs.

STC004 - £2k underachievement of income, £3k new bin installation across district and £63k additional Ubico contract costs.

TRW001 - £35k income achieved for Schedule 2 waste collections which is not budgeted for, £23k additional Ubico contract costs, £5k overachievement of income, £59k underspend Tipping charges plus a £30k reduction in Bad Debt provision due to the successful collection of aged debt throughout the year.

WST001 -£22k overspend on bins, £5k revenue costs for In Cab and £99k additional Ubico contract costs

WST301 -£61k expenditure on general and reactive repairs

Q4 position		
Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
£	£	£

Planning & Strategic Housing

DEV001-Development Control - Applications	(342,540)	(377,294)	(34,754)
DEV002-Development Control - Appeals	79,670	80,636	966
DEV003-Development Control - Enforcement	162,703	163,108	405
ECD301-WOSP - West Oxon Strategic Partnership	9,000	0	(9,000)
ENA001-Housing Enabling	112,967	104,334	(8,633)
ENI301-Landscape Initiatives	53,911	58,132	4,221
HLD315-Growth Board Project (Planning)	140,633	139,185	(1,448)
PLP001-Planning Policy	504,571	505,553	982
PLP003-Implementation	(959)	(988)	(29)
PLP004-Conservation	101,460	97,645	(3,815)
PSM001-Planning Service Mgmt & Support Serv	132,370	147,545	15,175
Total - Planning & Strategic Housing	953,786	917,854	(35,932)

DEV001 - £22k overachievement of Pre Planning advice income, £77k overachievement of Planning Application income £40k legal fees relating to the West Eynsham Masterplan and Barns Lane Burford, £20k overspend on external consultants and £5k Agency Staff, equipment purchase and subscriptions.

ECD301 - £9k underspend professional fees, cost centre closed in 23/24

ENA001 - £9k underspend against legacy budget for Professional Fees, removed in 23/24

PSM001 - £29k overspend for professional fees - Barristers relating to Wroslyn Rd Freeland, offset by £14k underspend for printing & subscriptions

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Retained Services			
COR002-Chief Executive	339,694	330,272	(9,422)
COR003-Corporate Policy Making	70,160	69,767	(393)
COR004-Public Relations	12,089	12,747	658
COR005-Corporate Finance	529,473	713,442	183,969
COR006-Treasury Management	26,700	18,535	(8,165)
COR007-External Audit Fees	57,000	76,357	19,357
COR008-Bank Charges	78,500	58,140	(20,360)
COR302-Publica Group	32,815	(68,447)	(101,262)
FIE341-Town Centre Properties	(603,256)	(643,652)	(40,396)
FIE342-Miscellaneous Properties	(831,820)	(820,320)	11,500
FIE343-Talisman	(1,186,200)	(1,081,572)	104,628
FIE344-Des Roches Square	(497,600)	(305,322)	192,278
FIE345-Gables at Elmfield	(40,865)	(41,164)	(299)
HLD319 - New Initiatives Programme	20,112	20,112	0
NDC001-Non Distributed Costs	599,100	766,916	167,816
TAC304-Witney Industrial Estate	(166,320)	(168,935)	(2,615)
TAC305-Carterton Industrial Estate	(501,950)	(397,430)	104,520
TAC306-Greystones Industrial Estate	(10,355)	(12,213)	(1,858)
TAC308-Other Trading Services - Fairs	(2,875)	(1,443)	1,432
Total - Retained Services	(2,075,598)	(1,474,211)	601,386

COR002 -£12k underspend Professional fees (LEP), £3k overspend conference expenses

COR005 - £253k compensation claim relating to a period prior to 1980, £3k overspend employee costs, £32k underspend for legal costs & professional fees plus a £38k reduction in Bad Debt provision relating to Sundry debts

COR006 - £8k underspend for Treasury Advisory service from Arlingclose

COR007 - there have been additional costs relating to the 2021/22 Audit for Housing Benefits and the Statement of Accounts due to additional testing required by enhanced Audit Standards

COR008 -underspend due to backdated refund against bank charges received in Q4

COR302 - the underspend represents the refund against the 22/23 contract sum due to the Council for posts that were vacant in the year

FIE341 - £43k Business Rates for the Q4 relating to the void units in Marriotts Walk, £225k rent for Q4 Marriotts Walk not in the budget, £5k legal costs ref Marriotts purchase, £6k underspend professional fees, £9k additional insurance for Marriotts, £36k credit note relating to Freebrights who had half of their rent arrears for the Pandemic period credited on the understanding they paid the remaining 50% within 12 months. £85k underachievement of income Woolgate as the head rent is variable and based on income received by our subtenant, £24k credit note issued to Rreef for rent Q4 22/23 plus a £10k reduction in Bad Debt provision

FIE342 - £54k underachievement of rental income due to change in tenant mid way through the year, £7k expenditure on Options Appraisals for Chawley Park and Between Towns Road, £5k expenditure on Energy Performance Certificates, £4k clearance of Unit F Range Road, £5k overspend professional fees and £1k overspend Insurance. Plus a £65k reduction in Bad Debt provision.

FIE343 - £136k underachievement of income due to void units, £23k underspend professional fees, £8k underspend repairs & maintenance

FIE344 - £112k underachievement of rental income due to void unit, £70k Business Rates for void unit, £10k overspend electricity & gas

NDC001 -the costs relate to the cash element of the Council's pension contribution to the LGPS to maintain the employers contribution at 17.6%, based on actuarial information available at budget setting time. The actual cash element ended up being higher than anticipated during 22/23 budget setting, additional budget has been put in in 23/24

TAC305 - £96k underachievement of rental income due to the budget including the full year income for Plot I which we purchased in 21/22 but the lease terms included a period of reduced rent in 22/23. Plus an £8k contribution to the Bad Debt Provision.

	Q4 position		
	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp	Variance (under) / over
	£	£	£
Revenues & Housing Support			
HBP001-Rent Allowances	447,379	443,130	(4,249)
HBP003-Local Housing Allowance	0	76	76
HBP005-Benefit Fraud Investigation	5,477	5,723	246
HOM001-Homelessness	213,806	376,359	162,553
HOM002-Homelessness Grants	10,000	5,000	(5,000)
HOM003-Rent In Advance Scheme	0	(443)	(443)
HOM004-Refugees	6,634	6,634	(1)
HOM005-Homelessness Hostel Accomodation	11,586	4,827	(6,759)
HOM006 - The Old Court	30,625	(12,666)	(47,412)
LTC001-Council Tax Collection	245,990	281,848	35,858
LTC002-Council Tax Support Administration	6,636	7,592	956
LTC011-NNDR Collection	(55,308)	(74,811)	(19,503)
PSH001-Private Sector Housing Grants	48,352	49,181	829
PSH004-Home Improvement Service	(60,504)	(47,275)	13,229
Total - Revenues & Housing Support	910,673	1,045,174	130,380

HBP001 - £280k subsidy loss but this is offset against Admin Subsidy grant of £186k and one off government grants of £51k. Admin Subsidy is given to the Council to help fund the running of the Housing Benefit service but in recent years this grant has filled the gap between our Benefit Payments out and the Subsidy we receive. Additionally there is a £16k underspend for Printing, £9k underspend for Bailiffs, £6k underspend IT licences and £5k underspend on postage and a reduction in Bad Debt provision.

HOM001 - there is a difference of £153k between B&B and Travelodge expenditure and Housing Benefit received plus a £9k contribution to Bad Debt provision

HOM002 - legacy cost centre, has been merged with HOM001 in 23/24

HOM006 - set up to be self financing, occupation has been consistent throughout the year with low void periods. Housing Benefit has been easier to administer because of longer occupancies and this income has more than offset the cost of running The Old Court in terms of maintenance & repairs.

LTC001 - Postage is £62k overspent, £4k overspend NAFN and legal costs, £30k additional income from liability orders, £5k underspend in subscriptions

LTC011 - £11k overachievement of court costs - liability orders raised in the magistrates court to repay aged debt, £9k underspend postage & printing

PSH004 - £26k overspend on contractor fees - the cost of fitting key safes and carrying out minor works, offset by a £13k overachievement of income

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Annex B

Capital Slippage - 2022/23

The annual Revenue Budget setting process requires the Council to put forward a 10 year Capital Programme of estimated future expenditure. It is only expenditure that is funded through Revenue that is approved through the budget setting process. Capital Expenditure funded through Earmarked Reserves, S106, Grants, Borrowing or External Contributions all require a business case to be submitted to Members for approval.

Scheme	2022/23 Budget	2022/23 Actual	Funded By	Over/(Underspend)	Recommended c/f	2023/24 Original Budget	2023/24 Total Budget	
Agile Working		191,697	Borrowing	191,697		2,150,000.00	2,150,000.00	
Replacement dog and litter bins	25,000	16,258	Borrowing	-8,742	0	25,000	25,000	
Chipping Norton Roof Replacement			Borrowing	0		1,000,000	1,000,000	
Ubico Fleet - Replace Vehicle Hire Costs	1,080,000	488,327	Borrowing	-591,673	0	2,000,000	2,000,000	a
Update to Planning System (Idox)			Borrowing			150,000	150,000	
Update to Finance System (ABW)			Borrowing	0		25,000	25,000	
Town Centre Shop building renovation project	51,197	3,354	Borrowing	-47,844	0	0		b
Electric vehicle charging points	200,000		Borrowing	-200,000	200,000		200,000	c
Land Purchase at Cogges		76,054	Borrowing	76,054				
Investment Strategy for Recovery	22,599,538	9,542,112	Borrowing	-13,057,426	0	5,000,000	5,000,000	d
CCTV - Upgrading	300,000	44,365	Capital Receipts	-255,635	255,635		255,635	e
Shop Mobility - Replacement stock	10,000		Capital Receipts	-10,000	10,000		10,000	
Cottsway - Blenheim Court Growth Deal	170,500	170,500	External Contribution	0				
Cottsway - Lavender Place Growth Deal	99,000	99,000	External Contribution	0				
Affordable Housing in Witney (Heylo)	1,761,875	1,549,750	External Contribution/S106	-212,125	212,125		212,125	f
Improvement Grants (DFG)	807,750	887,981	Grant	80,231		800,000	800,000	
Carterton Leisure Centre PSDS Project	1,300,000		Grant	-1,300,000	1,300,000		1,300,000	g
Deployment of High Speed Broadband	1,230,366	1,187,041	Reserves	-43,325	0			
IT Provision - Systems & Strategy	100,000	67,260	Revenue Contribution	-32,740	0	100,000	100,000	
Council Buildings Maintenance Programme	200,000		Revenue Contribution	-200,000	0	200,000	200,000	h
IT Equipment - PCs, Copiers etc	40,000	9,069	Revenue Contribution	-30,931	0	40,000	40,000	
Community Grants Fund	200,000	171,208	Revenue Contribution	-28,792	0	200,000	200,000	
Madley Park playing Fields Project	6,165	6,742	S106	577				
Windrush Public Art		11,344	S106	11,344				
Weavers Fold			S106			378,000	378,000	
Play Parks	100,000		S106	-100,000	100,000		100,000	i
EVCP Woolgate	167,000		S106	-167,000	167,000		167,000	j
Chipping Norton Creative	28,297	20,000	S106	-8,297	8,297		8,297	
Carterton Connects Creative (Swinbrook s106)	44,500		S106	-44,500	44,500		44,500	
Raleigh Crescent Play Area (s. 106)	75,000		S106	-75,000	75,000		75,000	
Developer Capital Contributions		749,231	S106	749,231				
	30,596,188	15,291,292		-15,304,896	2,372,557	12,068,000	14,440,557	

Annex B

Comments:

- a. The delivery lead times of new Ubico vehicles have not improved over the course of the year. At the year end there are £379k of vehicles ordered in the year that we expect will be delivered in 23/24. The long delay between order and delivery has been a constant for the last 3 years and centres around supply chain issues for a small number of key components. The vehicle replacement programme is regularly updated to ameliorate these supply chain issues as much as possible. A major replacement programme of c£5m is due in 24/25 where the Waste team will work closely with Ubico to manage this as efficiently as possible.
- b. The Town Centre shop renovation project is now part of the Agile Working Programme and is therefore removed from the Capital Programme as a separate item in 23/24. The project is managed by the Agile Working Steering Group and they estimate that the Programme will be complete by the end of the 23/24 financial year.
- c. The provision of Electric Vehicle charging points in the wider District is still under discussion under the leadership of the Assistant Director of Property and Regeneration.
- d The purchase of Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre as a regeneration project will enable the Council to protect our existing High Street retailers and stimulate a regeneration of the central Witney area through locality upgrading and the management of new tenants to compliment rather than compete with existing traders. Opportunities of this nature do not come up very often and the combination of very strict PWLB lending criteria and high interest rates make it very difficult to find investment opportunities with a sufficient level of return to comply with our adopted Investment Strategy requirements. These requirements ensure that any project invested in does not impose any additional revenue burden on the Council at a time when we are facing a significant budget gap from 24/25 onwards.
- e The first stage of upgrading the CCTV system has been implemented in 22/23 with the installation of a new operator system. This project is expected to continue in 23/24 subject to Member approval of the business case.
- f The affordable housing scheme in Witney delivered in partnership with Heylo completed in 22/23 with a final contract payment payable in 23/24
- g The PSDS project to decarbonise Carterton Leisure Centre has been long discussed and has evolved over 22/23. It is likely that the cost will be higher than the £1.3m included in the Capital Programme and will be the subject of a business case for Member approval in 23/24 when the total ongoing revenue impact of the project is known.
- h The Corporate Buildings Maintenance programme has been subsumed by the Agile Working Programme in 22/23. This item in the Capital Programme is intended for the planned and reactive maintenance costs of the Council's operational buildings and will fluctuate year on year.
- i Draft Heads of Terms have been drawn up to transfer the ownership of a number of play areas to Witney Town Council. Throughout the year there has been £50k of maintenance and repair works done which has been funded through growth to the revenue budget included for 22/23.
- j It is hoped that the Council can utilise S106 monies in 23/24 to fund installation of EVCP in the Woolgate car park to encourage the switch to electric vehicles in line with the Council Priority to respond to the ecological and climate crisis.

Aged Debt - Management and Reporting

Statistical information taken from *G3 West Ox Aged Debt 31st March 2023*

Introduction

The Section 151 officer at West Oxfordshire District Council identified some time ago that aged debt was a growing concern and brought a credit control specialist in to not only work on the aged balances but to review processes in an attempt to stop new balances remaining uncollected and perpetuating the problem. A root and branch review has been undertaken of the way Aged Debt is both managed and reported at West Oxfordshire District Council. This review has identified weaknesses in both internal control systems and the management reporting of debt.

This paper does not include any analysis or commentary relating to Council Tax, Business Rates or Housing Benefit overpayments as these debts are raised and managed in the OpenRevs system rather than through the Finance system and will be the subject of separate recommendations.

Overview

The main issue in the effective management and therefore reduction of aged debt is a lack of accepted and widely understood accountability for the process and clear reporting visibility for procedural outliers which often attract the greatest levels of risk. Whilst documented policies and procedures have not been formally reviewed and updated in some time, they remain relevant and consistent with expected industry standards but while it was agreed several years ago that the responsibility for credit control would sit with the service areas, structural team changes have resulted in the lines of accountability becoming ambiguous over time and the policies and procedures have not been followed.

The introduction of the Agresso Business World ERP system in 2012 moved the responsibility for the raising invoices and managing debt to service area managers and their teams. Previously this function was carried out by the Finance team. Over time as resources and the demands on service areas have changed, there has been a lessening of focus on the management of debt. Monthly system generated reports are sent out to Budget Managers detailing debt in their area of responsibility but these reports are not user friendly. Coding changes to the Agresso bad debt reporting would provide a more streamlined set of data to be sent out that would allow Budget Managers to more easily and quickly identify customers that need to be contacted regarding outstanding invoices, before those invoices move from being overdue to aged i.e. over 30 days past due. This would also simplify and therefore improve reporting to Senior Management and Elected Members.

Where an invoice has been raised for a legitimate charge to a customer, the intention of the Council is to collect payment for that invoice. System generated reminders are sent out after 14 and 28 days and ideally customer contact should be made at the reminder stage to discuss payment and find out if there are any issues that are preventing the invoice from being settled. All avenues, including the offer of setting up a payment plan should be made before the debt is handed to the Legal team to pursue with a request to write off the debt being the last resort. Currently there is no obvious consistency of process or documentation when staff are submitting legal referral requests or escalating a debt to Write Off, making both processes inefficient and often causing the case to hang in limbo between the two services. Moving the debt to Legal recovery or raising it as a write off request can be seen as a way to move the responsibility on and while Finance report aged debt as an

organisation wide figure, there is no clear evidence that while the resolution of it sits with Service areas that this is a KPI metric that is measured and emphasised in those areas.

Accounts Receivable do not have a role within the Aged Debt and Write Off process that is either clearly defined or widely understood. This has led to confusion in both the team and the wider Council service areas about who has responsibility to manage Write Off requests resulting in some requests being submitted erroneously which have then been left unresolved over a period of years while queries remain unresolved.

One of the biggest enablers to ensuring that all customer accounts are handled appropriately relates to the consistent updating of customer records, which is heavily reliant upon resource capacity (including activity such as retrospective quality sampling) and IT systems capability or access.

It is essential that all customer contact activity and records of all customer communications are updated onto our finance system, but staff resourcing challenges have contributed to customer record keeping being patchy and inconsistent. This issue prevents efficient handling of escalated case referrals but also has the potential to cause breaches in GDPR requirements, centred on governance, responsibility and accuracy.

Aged Debt position

The total aged debt position at 31.03.23 is £5.7m made up of 2,145 invoice entries, where the average age of the invoice is 437 days. However, this figure includes £3.4m of invoices currently 'Not Due' and £0.2m of invoices relating to Business Support Grants.

Invoice Category	Number	Days
Greater than 1 yr	260	>365
Pending write off	74	1,407
Legal Referrals >1yr	93	1,211
Legal Referrals <1yr	5	<365
Halted Recovery >1yr	33	890
Halted Recovery <1yr	16	<365
Credits	269	338
GLL	2	157
Time Barred	116	2,190+
	868	

Credits

The total aged debt position is being underreported, due to credit entries that are waiting for some form of procedural action to take place.

The average time lapsed from the original credit entry being made is 136 days which would indicate that there are general processing delays due to the confusion around roles and responsibilities. Invoices can be raised, without approval, by most people across the Council service areas. Credit Notes, which reduce our income by netting off against invoices, must be approved by Budget

Managers who have the responsibility to assess the legitimacy of the credit note before signing it off. Raising credit notes to eradicate aged debt is not appropriate as it denies the Council the opportunity to recover money owed to it.

Other credits of £13,065 represent potential overpayments where a refund may be due back to the customer. There are currently 108 customer credits linked to invoices that are on average 345 days old. Further investigation is needed to establish what proportion of these credits do need to be refunded and a resolution found for the remainder.

Write Offs

Write off decisions of up to £5,000 are delegated to the S151 Officer, with amounts in excess of that needing the approval of Members. A halt was put on S151 write off request approvals in 21/22 because of a lack of background information being available on which to make the decision. Following investigation, the credit controller has subsequently obtained S151 Officer Write Off approval for 11 customer balances, totalling £36,191.58 since December 2022.

The process for submitting, monitoring, and obtaining Write Off approval has become blurred over time, with unclear roles and responsibilities being assigned informally on a case by case basis. Appropriate interpretation of what constitutes a 'Write Off situation' is occasionally lacking as a result, and where the request is rejected due to lack of information or because the S151 officer judges that the debt should be pursued, it's unclear whose responsibility (or capability) it is to provide that info or to pursue the debt.

Misinterpretation around some of the rules linked to statutory law and company trading status has resulted in a number of cases being incorrectly marked for Write Off, when the debt is not actually irrecoverable. A lack of focussed reporting has meant that these issues are not picked up in a timely fashion and our ability to effectively recover the debt is then severely diminished.

Instances of customer insolvency are regularly identified within teams and act as the basis for the majority of Write Off requests. Lack of clarity over the correct process results in Proof of Debt submissions only being made infrequently, so potential dividend payments due to the Council are not being claimed.

Legal cases

The legal team have recently reviewed the cases listed as "With Legal" and advised that 13 are not contained within their internal records. There seems to be no formal procedures currently in place for Business Managers to obtain regular updates and maintain visibility of legal referral cases.

Staff resourcing challenges within the legal team mean that their ability to progress individual case referrals are already limited due to regular, often time-sensitive, commercial and legal matters.

A lack of detailed background information being readily available to staff and/or provided at the initial referral stage creates additional processing delays. This also means that our legal team regularly must take on tasks and activity that would normally sit outside of their expected role responsibilities, to ensure any subsequent claim applications made meet standard court requirements.

Halted Recoveries ('Disputed Invoice' and 'More time to pay')

This case status is used for various procedural reasons, mainly as it will stop system generated letters from automatically being issued. However, adopting this approach can make specific case review and accurate data interpretation difficult.

Whilst procedural exceptions ('workarounds') to manage potential commercial relationship issues are acceptable, the general lack of procedural clarity and length of processing delays, mean that any true debt cases contained within this category are unlikely to be appropriately identified, with potential for them to become overlooked and then neglected.

Limitations Act 1980 ('Time-Barred debt')

Time Barred debt is that which is 6 years past the original due date and under the Limitations Act we are prevented from taking legal enforcement action to recover our debt if no customer acknowledgement could be found.

90% of this debt relates to Homelessness support which has been covered in greater detail in Annex C. Actions to identify an appropriate risk based approach to avoid debt becoming 6 years past due without any customer contact is already underway.


Recommendations

Recent efforts to improve aged debt have been focussed on reviewing and addressing some of the Write Off and Legal referral backlogs and large balance invoices identified via the review. Progress has been restricted by a lack of knowledge and record keeping on existing cases and understanding or knowledge of the correct procedures generally across the organisation coupled with limited staff resource availability to support service areas.

Changes are required to bring the management of aged debt under robust control and there are a number of options and areas of improvement which include but are not limited to:

- Define, in consultation with Service Managers, the roles and responsibilities for all staff members involved in the Aged Debt process.
- Review and define the role of the Accounts Receivable team (AR) in the management of aged debt.
- Consider the inclusion of Aged Debt KPI metrics within the staff performance management framework.
- Update and circulate the approved Aged Debt procedure and publish it on the Portal with annual review dates
- Finance and the S151 Officer to review and agree the process for the raising of Credit Notes, Legal Referrals and Write Off requests.
- Secure/train additional resource to help clear current processing backlogs
- Review all Legal referral cases with Service Managers, identify and act upon all requests that have not been properly executed
- Make changes to the system generated Aged Debt report making it more user friendly and give greater prominence to areas of significant risk.
- Introduce regular reporting on company liquidations and write offs, to be monitored by the AR Team
- Recruit a permanent Credit Controller to the Finance Team to support Budget Holders in managing the Aged Debt process

Agenda Item 7

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-3 QUARTER FOUR</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861658 Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk Elizabeth Griffiths, Deputy Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer Tel: (01993) 861188 Email: elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>This report provides details of the Council’s operational performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4)</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Service Dashboards</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to: <i>a) Note the 2022/23 Q4 service performance</i></p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Putting Residents First Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Together for West Oxfordshire</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>No</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Council monitors service performance each quarter and a report on progress towards achieving the aim and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan is produced at the end of Q2 and Q4. On 13 July 2022, the Executive agreed to revise the Council Plan and develop an Action Plan that will set out how the priorities in the Council Plan will be delivered. Following consultation with stakeholders, a final draft was presented to the Executive on 11 January 2023 and adopted at Full Council on 18 January 2023.
- 1.2. A high level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020 which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard. The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.
- 1.3. The Council's Chief Executive has received a report on service performance and has assessed it in line with the high level Commissioning Statement. Particular attention has been drawn to the following:
 - i. The rising energy prices and higher cost of living is affecting householders, in particular those on low incomes. At the end of Q4, the council tax collection rate was slightly higher than the previous two years, but is short of the target by 1.64%. The improved collection rates have been helped by the Recovery Cycle being up to date with reminders and summonses being issued when needed. Debts are only ever written off when all avenues of recovery have been exhausted. The rising cost of living has affected the annual in-year collection rates. Overall customer contact with the service has increased and the number of applications for reductions in council tax in special circumstance (Section 13A) is rising. The Council Tax Support schemes have been revised in line with inflation to support more households and will be introduced in 2023-24. As expected, workloads did increase during Q4 as both the Revenues and Benefits teams implemented the additional £25 payment to all working age and pension age individuals in receipt of Council Tax Support; as well as the alternative energy payments. Running a regular reminder schedule helps in maximising collection across the authorities.
 - ii. Business rates collection rate improved by nearly four percent compared to last year but has not returned to pre-Covid levels. Recovery is expected to take longer due to the impact of the cost of living crisis. Extended retail relief continued through Q4 at a relief of 50%, and will increase to 75% in 2023-24 for leisure and retail businesses. However, the criteria for eligibility is more stringent than during covid times so some businesses will miss out. The service will be writing to those businesses affected. Some businesses will see their rates increase as a result of the business rates revaluation 2023-24.;
 - iii. The Council is continuing to support the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme in which people in the UK are sponsoring/hosting a Ukrainian individual or family. As at 31 March 2023 there were 124 guests at 49 active hosts/households. Re-matching guests with new sponsors is continuing as relationships break down or the sponsor does not wish to continue in the scheme;

- iv. Affordable housing completions are ahead of the year to date target (Actual: 309; Target: 276). Working in partnership with housing associations and developers to bring forward more affordable homes will help to alleviate some of the pressures in Housing Support;
- v. The Executive agreed to additional resources in the budget 2022-23 to increase enforcement activities around fly tipping and improving its response to issues raised. The new Environmental Services Officer has had an impact on the number of FPNs issued for fly tipping offences and is developing good relations with the police and other agencies such as the EA dealing with fly tipping and rural crime. 389 fly tips were reported in the quarter and 11 FPNs, 1 warning letter and 14 formal cautions were issued.

2. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

- 2.1. The West Oxfordshire Council Plan 2023 – 27 was adopted at Full Council on 18 January 2023. This presents five strategic priorities, of equal importance, for the District:
 - Putting Residents First
 - A Good Quality of Life for All
 - A Better Environment for People and Wildlife
 - Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
 - Working Together for West Oxfordshire
- 2.2. Portfolio Holders will work with Officers to develop an Action Plan that will identify a range of actions to be taken over the next 12 months and beyond to make progress on the delivery of the Council Plan priorities.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

- 3.1. Overall, performance for the quarter appears mixed. Over the last year, a number of services have highlighted the potential impact of the cost of living crisis on households, businesses and the Council's services in particular Revenues and Benefits, Planning, Housing Support and Leisure. Some services such as Revenues and Benefits have reported increased customer contact and workloads while Planning has reported a slow-down in applications and potentially fewer applications for large developments due to a loss of confidence in the housing market. The business rates collection rate has been depressed over the last couple of years due to Covid and may now take longer to recover.
- 3.2. Some areas that have performed well include planning determination times, customer satisfaction, high risk food premises visits and gym memberships/leisure visits.
- 3.3. There are a number of improvement programmes in progress across services focussed on improving the way services communicate with customers, increasing automation and self-serve options for customers (OpenPortal in Revenues and Benefits and the Channel Choice project), and improving the monitoring of workflows using case management tools to help services to actively manage resources (Enterprise in Planning).

KEY POINTS BY SERVICE AREA THEMES

- 3.4. Customer services

- Service delivery can be affected by a range of factors both within the service and in other services. For example, shortage of staff, new systems, how the Council communicates with residents/clients.
- Average waiting time increased slightly during Q4 as expected because workloads are higher due to annual billing, garden waste renewals and the introduction of voter ids.
- The staggered approach to comms regarding annual billing and garden waste sign ups has had a positive impact in helping to manage demand.
- The service continues to have a higher turnover of staff as advisors move onto other roles within the business but a new highly structured training programme means that new starters can usually be ready for all phone lines within 3 months.
- Despite an increase in calls from Q3, the annual number of calls continues to drop in line with improved online reporting and the advisors promoting the online services with leaflets and QR codes. There was around 14% drop in calls from 2021-22 to 2022-23
- Further work on automation and integration of forms to the back office systems is continuing, aimed at improving the on-line offer for customers and reducing call volumes and call length time.

3.5. Development Management

- Overall, planning determination times for all types of applications have made good improvements over the course of the year, with the majority of targets now being met or exceeded. In fact the last 5 quarters have seen improvements.
- Workloads are more manageable as the number of applications continues to slow in line with the national trend. Better capacity in the DM team means that there is more scope for upskilling but a shortage of ecologists is still delaying response times for some planning applications.
- As a result of the PAS report, further improvements and revisions have been compiled in a report which is due to go to cabinet in Q1 of 2023-24
- The validation checklist was launched in February as part of the improvement roadmap. It has largely been well received and a better quality of applications is being received. The sections around Biodiversity and Sustainability have had more significant changes in preparation for new legislation coming later in the year. Following feedback from agents, these sections will be reviewed.

3.6. Housing

- The pressures on Housing services, systems and pathways remain high. The numbers of people contacting the Housing team continues to rise due to the cost of living crisis and the evolving Refugee schemes, specifically Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement. The continuing cost of living crisis has resulted in some people who would normally be staying between family and friends becoming homeless which has required greater use of hotel placements. The use of this type of placement impacts on the Council's budget as not all of the costs can be recovered by claiming Housing Benefit. The Council's owned and managed hostels are operating at capacity however the use of specialist Temporary Accommodation officers are able to offer dedicated support and bespoke solutions for helping clients move on successfully from emergency accommodation..
- The Housing Team have been successful in addressing some complex issues surrounding accommodation for 4 entrenched rough sleepers during the winter months and have now

brought them into longer term accommodation. Although West Oxfordshire's entrenched rough sleeping population of 6 to 7 people sleeping out at any one time has been traditionally low compared to neighbouring areas, thanks to the dedicated work of our Rough Sleeping Specialist and our county Outreach partners, West Oxfordshire is now reporting one entrenched rough sleeper. Any one new to the streets are contacted swiftly and accommodation solutions offered at the earliest opportunity. The aim is to end rough sleeping for all however, where it does unfortunately occur, this is rare and short lived.

- Our three grant funded Housing Specialist Officers, including our Ukraine Specialist Officer are also working with families and to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist families to secure their own accommodation in the private sector. The successful recruitment of a further Complex Needs specialist will complete the Team by offering bespoke and early interventions to our most vulnerable clients to further prevent homelessness from occurring.
- Seventy-five affordable homes (50 affordable rent, 2 first homes and 21 shared ownership) reached practical completion in Q4.. Overall, a total of 309 for the year has been completed against a target of 274.
- Proactive work continues with individual property owners to reduce the number of LTE properties in the District - During Q4, 238 properties were removed from the LTE list, but 215 were added.

3.7. Revenues and Benefits

- Although the Collection Rates for both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates have increased year-on-year, they are both still below the target.
- The rising cost of living has affected the annual in-year collection rates. Overall customer contact with the service has increased and the number of applications for reductions in council tax in special circumstances (Section 13A) is rising. The Council Tax Support schemes have been revised in line with inflation to support more households and will be introduced in 2023-24.
- As expected, workloads did increase during Q4 as both the Revenues and Benefits teams implemented the additional £25 payment to all working age and pension age individuals in receipt of Council Tax Support; as well as the alternative energy payments.
- Running a regular reminder schedule helps in maximising collection across the authorities.

3.8. Waste and environment

- The combined recycling rate for January to March 2023 was 55.95% compared to 57.74% in 2022. The lower rates have been mostly attributed to the cost of living crisis in line with national trends. The percentage of Recycled, Composted, Reused waste has fallen by 1.5% from last financial year which is in line with the rest of Oxfordshire as a whole.
- Since emerging from the pandemic, total household waste (tonnages) have fallen. Taking into account the growth in households, the District produced over 17 kg less residual waste per household than last year.
- The contract with the Council's Waste Environmental Services Partner, Ubico, has been extended to March 2026
- Three battery electric utility vans have been procured in an effort to further reduce the carbon emissions of daily operations including within the waste, recycling and street

cleansing service. Two zero emission street sweepers are due for delivery in late spring to replace two 'end of life' diesel equivalents.

- The new Environmental Services Officer has had an impact on the number of FPNs issued for fly tipping offences and is developing good relations with the police and other agencies such as the EA dealing with fly tipping and rural crime. 389 fly tips were reported in the quarter and 11 FPNs, 1 warning letter and 14 formal cautions were issued.

3.9. Finance

- Further detail on the Council's financial performance will be provided as a separate item on this agenda.

3.10. The service dashboards are attached at **Annex A**.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1. None

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1. None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

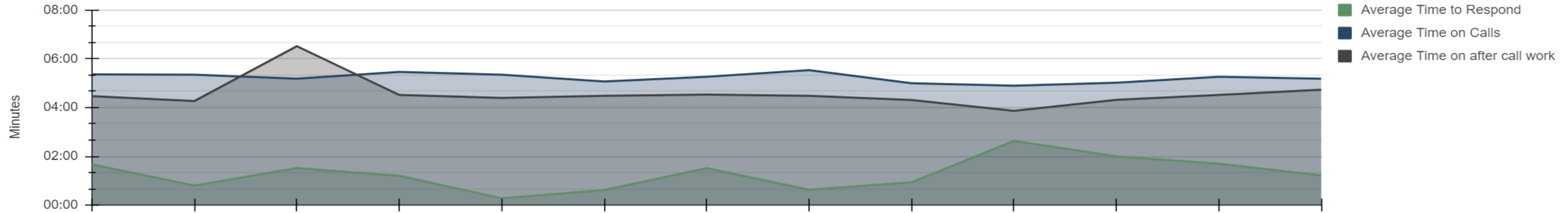
7.1. None



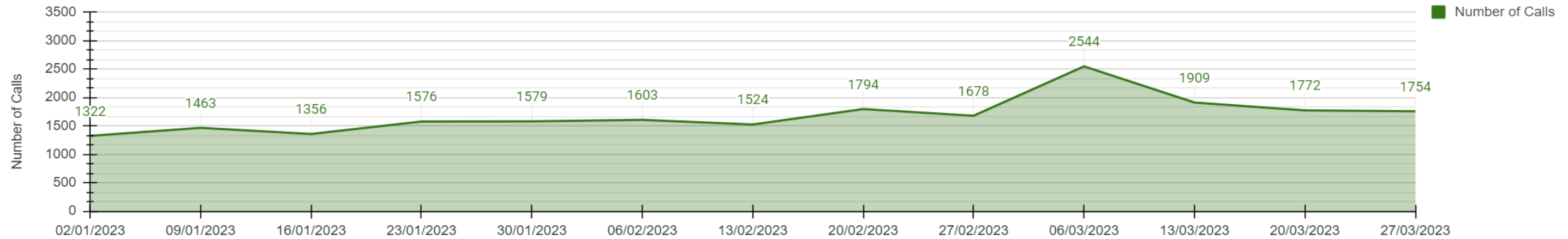
Satisfied

Customer Services Quarter 4

Average time to respond, on calls, and on after call work



Call volumes



Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Sickness and two on compassionate leave

Waste Service failures; broken down vehicles. Compassionate leave x 2; 1000 Tax Reminders

HNL's elections - whole district

Business as Usual

Diddly squat - inundated with emails.

Diddly squat - inundated with emails.

Business as Usual

Annual billing dropped WODC

Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Business as Usual

Average waiting time for increased slightly during Q4 as expected. Workloads were higher in Q4 due to annual billing, garden waste renewals and the introduction of voter ids. The staggered approach to comms regarding annual billing and garden waste sign ups has had a positive impact surrounding managing demand. Peaks in after call work in mid January relate to cementing the training of new advisors.

Despite an increase in calls from Q3, the annual number of calls continues to drop in line with improved online reporting and the advisors promoting the online services with leaflets and QR codes. There was around 14% drop in calls from 2021-22 to 2022-23

The service continues to have a higher turnover of staff as advisors move onto other roles within the business but a new highly structured training programme means that new starters can usually be ready for all phone lines within 3 months.

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Development Management Quarter 4 Performance

January 2023 - March 2023

Average Cases closed per Planner in Quarter

69
TARGET 50

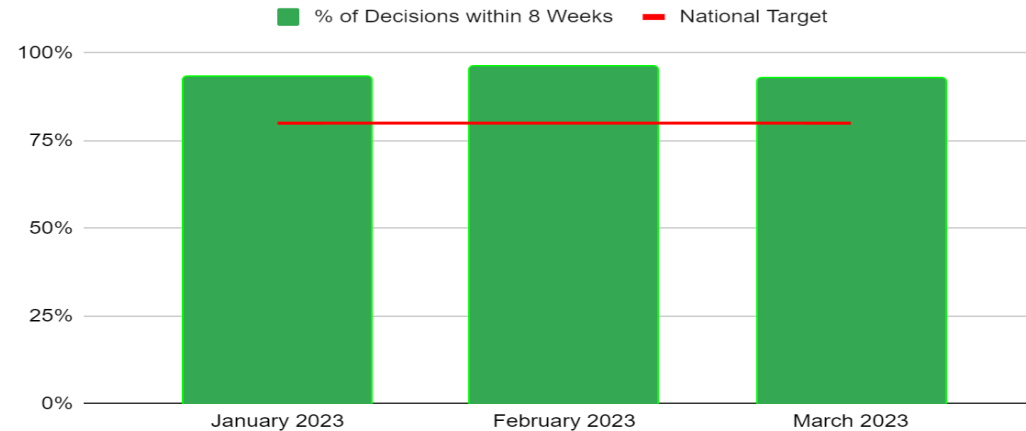
Average Cases closed per Senior Planner in Quarter

41
TARGET 40

Average Cases closed per Principal Planner in Quarter

18
TARGET 25

Planning Decisions (PS1/PS2) made within 8 weeks or agreed time (Excludes applications for discharge of conditions, pre application advice and general enquiries)



Average Planner Caseload

38
TARGET 50

Average Senior Planner Caseload

34
TARGET 35

Average Principal Planner Caseload

16
TARGET 20

Average days from receipt to validation

14
TARGET 7

Customer Satisfaction



n/a

Overall, planning determination times for all types of applications have made good improvements over the course of the year, with the majority of targets now being met or exceeded. In fact the last 5 quarters have seen improvements. Workloads are more manageable as the number of applications continues to slow in line with the national trend. This has translated into a greater focus on closing cases as is evident in the closure data for each group of planners. Better capacity in the DM team means that there is more scope for upskilling but a shortage of ecologists is still delaying response times for some planning applications.

As a result of the PAS report, further improvements and revisions have been compiled in a report which is due to go to cabinet in Q1 of 2023-24.

The validation checklist was launched in February as part of the improvement roadmap. It has largely been well received and has resulted in a better quality of applications, however this has not yet translated into quicker validation times. The sections around Biodiversity and Sustainability have had more significant changes in preparation for new legislation later in the year and, following feedback from agents, these sections will be reviewed.

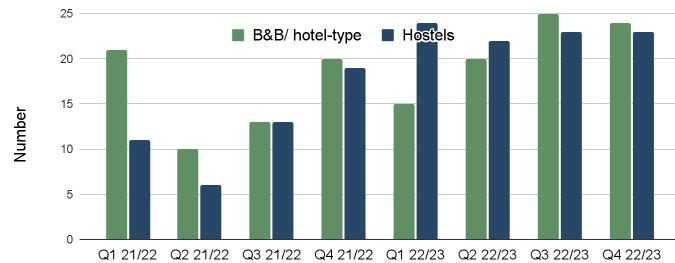
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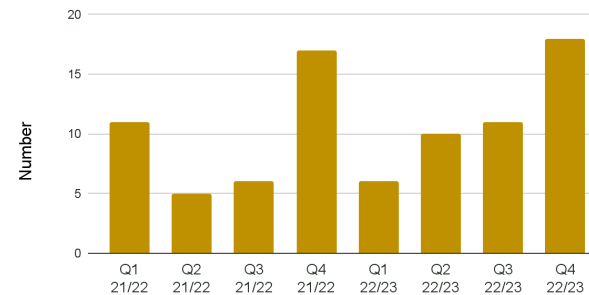
Housing Quarter 4

The Number of households in Emergency Accommodation (B&B/hotel type; and hostels owned and managed by the Council) at the end of each quarter

** 22 bed spaces available in hostels

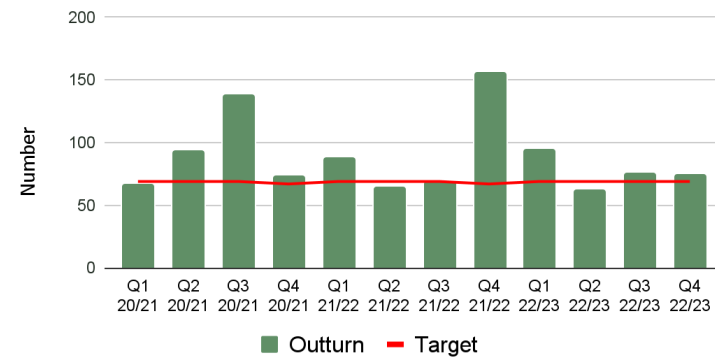


The number of successful 'move ons' from Emergency Accommodation to long term accommodation



The number of affordable homes reaching practical completion

*practical completion is when the property is ready for occupation; Target is from Local Plan



The pressures on Housing services, systems and pathways remain high. The numbers of people contacting the Housing team continues to rise due to the cost of living crisis and the evolving Refugee schemes, specifically Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement. The continuing cost of living crisis has resulted in some people who would normally be staying between family and friends becoming homeless which has required greater use of hotel placements. The use of this type of placement impacts on the Council's budget as not all of the costs can be recovered by claiming Housing Benefit. The Council's owned and managed hostels are operating at capacity however the use of specialist Temporary Accommodation officers are able to offer dedicated support and bespoke solutions for helping clients move on successfully from emergency accommodation..

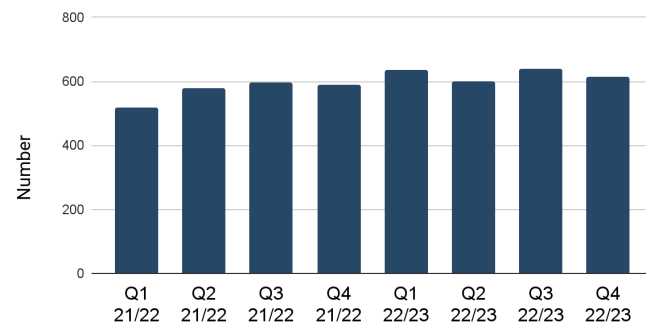
The Housing Team have been successful in addressing some complex issues surrounding accommodation for 4 entrenched rough sleepers during the winter months and have now brought them into longer term accommodation. Although West Oxfordshire's entrenched rough sleeping population of 6 to 7 people sleeping out at any one time has been traditionally low compared to neighbouring areas, thanks to the dedicated work of our Rough Sleeping Specialist and our county Outreach partners, West Oxfordshire is now reporting one entrenched rough sleeper. Any one new to the streets are contacted swiftly and accommodation solutions offered at the earliest opportunity. The aim is to end rough sleeping for all however, where it does unfortunately occur, this is rare and short lived.

Our three grant funded Housing Specialist Officers, including our Ukraine Specialist Officer are also working with families and to prevent homelessness wherever possible and assist families to secure their own accommodation in the private sector. The successful recruitment of a further Complex Needs specialist will complete the Team by offering bespoke and early interventions to our most vulnerable clients to further prevent homelessness from occurring.

Seventy-five affordable homes (50 affordable rent, 2 first homes and 21 shared ownership) reached practical completion in Q4.. Overall, a total of 309 for the year has been completed against a target of 274.

Proactive work continues with individual property owners to reduce the number of LTE properties in the District - During Q4, 238 properties were removed from the LTE list, but 215 were added.

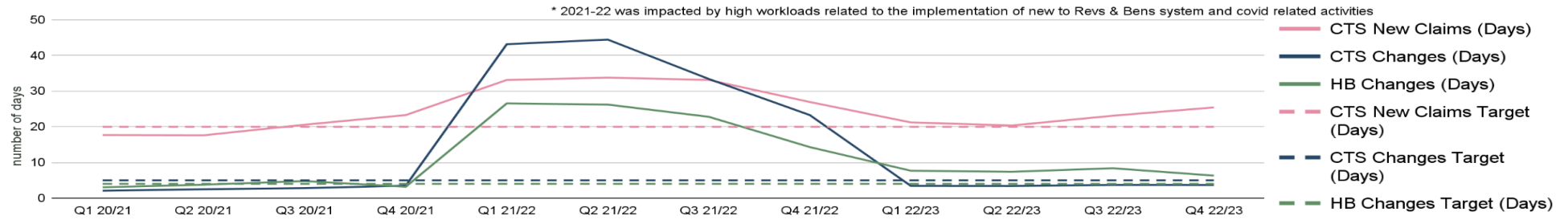
The number of Long Term Empty Properties (6 months plus) in the District



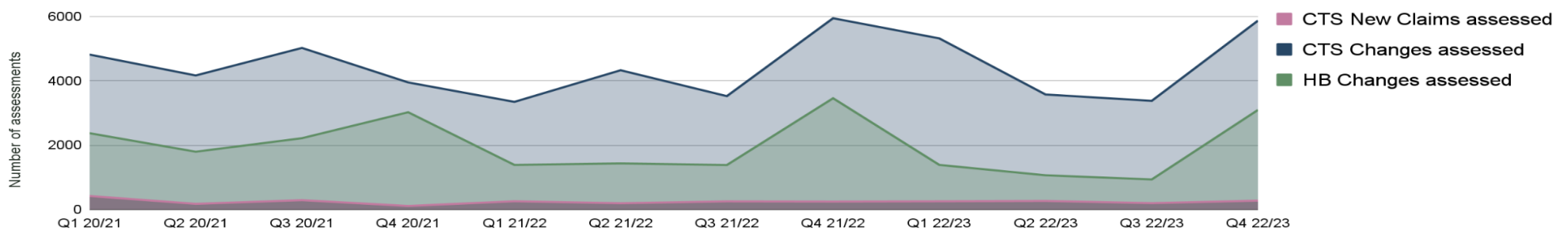
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Revenues and Benefits Quarter 4

Average number of days to process Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes



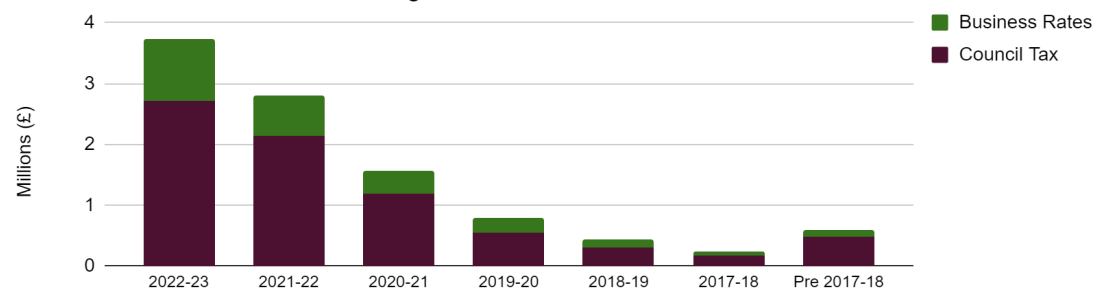
Number of assessments for Council Tax Support (CTS) New Claims and Changes and Housing Benefit (HB) Changes



22/23 Collection Rates

	Council Tax		Business Rates	
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
QTR	7.3%	8.9%	15.5%	12%
YTD	97.4%	99%	97.3%	99%

Council Tax & Business Rates Aged Debt



Qtrly Aged Debt

% Change Council Tax	-7.36
% Change Bus. Rates	-31.47

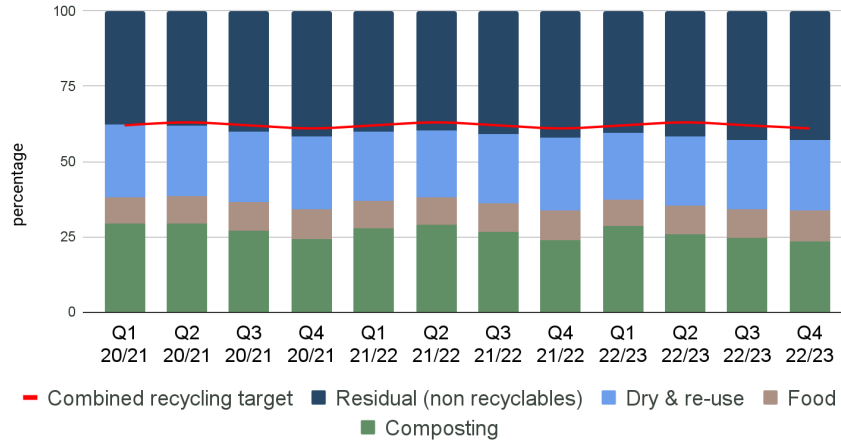
Although the Collection Rates for both Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates have increased year-on-year, they are both still below the target. The improved collection rates have been helped by the Recovery Cycle being up to date with reminders and summonses being issued when needed. Debts are only ever written off when all avenues of recovery have been exhausted. The rising cost of living has affected the annual in-year collection rates. Overall customer contact with the service has increased and the number of applications for reductions in council tax in special circumstance (Section 13A) is rising. The Council Tax Support schemes have been revised in line with inflation to support more households and will be introduced in 2023-24. As expected, workloads did increase during Q4 as both the Revenues and Benefits teams implemented the additional £25 payment to all working age and pension age individuals in receipt of Council Tax Support; as well as the alternative energy payments. The processing time for CTS new claims has risen in Q4, as a result of customers failing to provide the correct information. A report has been developed around defective claims that will indicate where to focus website and process improvements.

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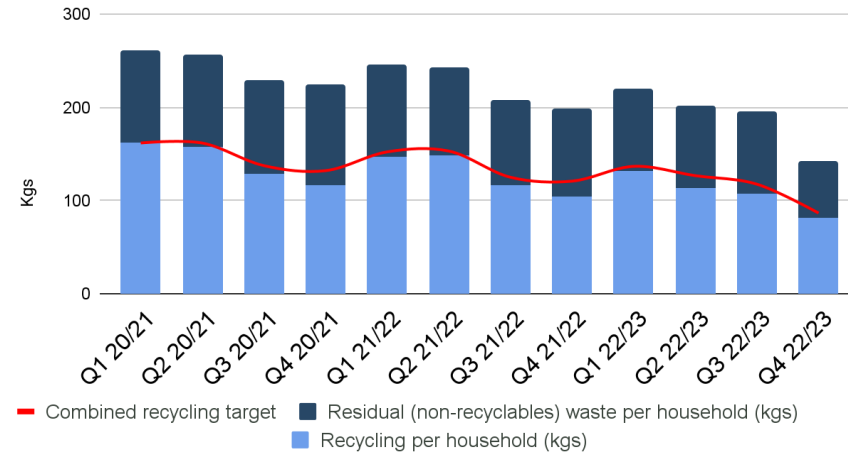


Waste and Environment Quarter 4

(Cumulative) Household waste collected composition



Household waste collected per household



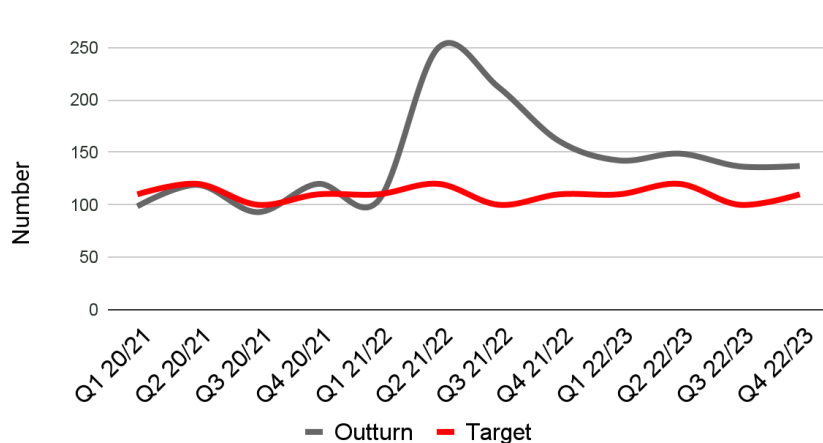
The combined recycling rate for January to March 2023 was 55.95% compared to 57.74% in 2022. The lower rates have been mostly attributed to the cost of living crisis in line with national trends. Since emerging from the pandemic, total household waste (tonnages) have fallen. Taking into account the growth in households, the District produced over 17 kg less residual waste per household than last year.

Missed bins are investigated by the Contract Monitoring team daily. A new Operations Manager at Ubico started at the end of the quarter with an urgent action of decreasing missed bin numbers and rectifying any long-standing issues. He will ensure that all operatives are using the technology provided and recording areas or bins that cannot be collected until the next working day due to operational issues such as vehicle breakdowns, or any bins that have not been presented correctly.

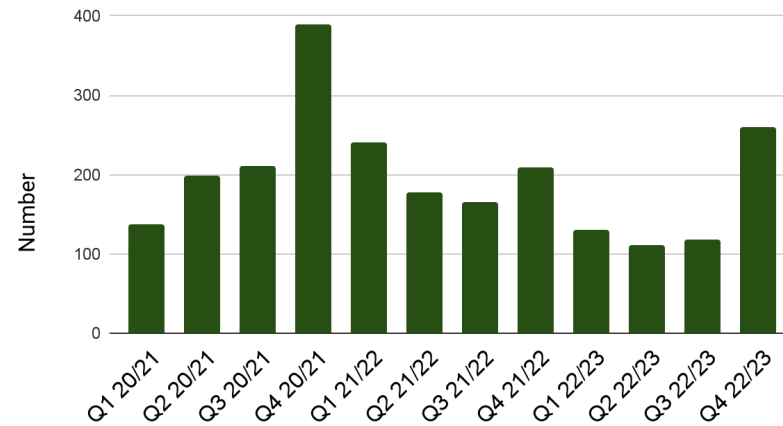
The contract with the Council's Waste Environmental Services Partner, Ubico, has been extended to March 2026

The additional Environmental Services Officer that started in Q3 has had an impact on the number of FPNs issued for fly tipping offences and is developing good relations with the police and other agencies such as the EA dealing with fly tipping and rural crime. 389 fly tips were reported in the quarter and 11 FPNs, 1 warning letter and 14 formal cautions were issued.

Missed bins per 100,000 scheduled collections



Number of flytips collected



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WODC FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Service Area	£k			
	Original Budget	Profiled Budget	Actual Exp.	Variance (under) / over
Democratic and Committee Services	1,058	1,083	1,151	68
Environmental & Regulatory Services	507	490	570	80
Environmental Services	7,106	7,077	8,031	954
Finance, Human Resources & Procurement	922	977	981	4
ICT, Change & Customer Services	1,924	1,953	1,893	(60)
Land, Legal & Property	903	865	1,089	224
Leisure & Communities	661	637	1,435	798
Planning & Strategic Housing	1,528	953	918	(35)
Revenues & Housing Support	1,049	910	1,041	131
Investment Property and Retained Services	(2,218)	(2,096)	(1,494)	602
Covid Related costs	284	404	431	27
Total cost of services	13,724	13,253	16,046	2,793
Plus:				
Investment income receipts	(1,139)	(1,139)	(1,364)	(225)
Cost of services before financing:	12,585	12,114	14,682	2,568

AGED DEBT SUMMARY

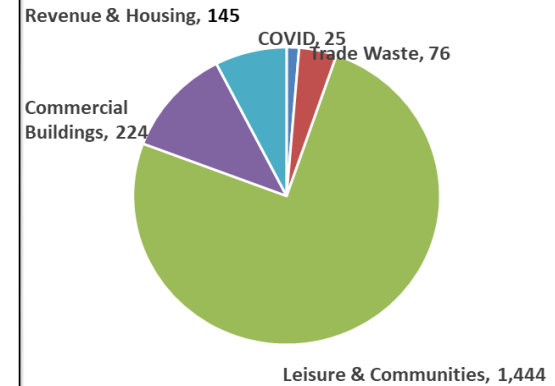
	Mar-23	Dec-22	Sep-22	Movement vs. prior period		
Invoices	1,233	1,297	1,180	-64	-5%	↓
£k	1,913	613	609	1,300	68%	↑

Aged Debt Summary:

The biggest contributor to the increase in aged debt this quarter is GLL as their outstanding management fees are under discussion but are technically overdue. This has increased the balance of aged debt by £1.4m which means that outside of that specific issue, the remainder of debt has reduced by £100k in the quarter.

This is partly driven by write offs where, after investigation, it was judged that the balance was irrecoverable, commercial properties where recovery has improved and the resolution of outstanding commercial debt where invoices had been incorrectly raised. The management of Trade Waste debt going forward will be much easier as any rejected Direct Debits can be followed up on a monthly basis.

AGED DEBT BY BUSINESS SERVICE

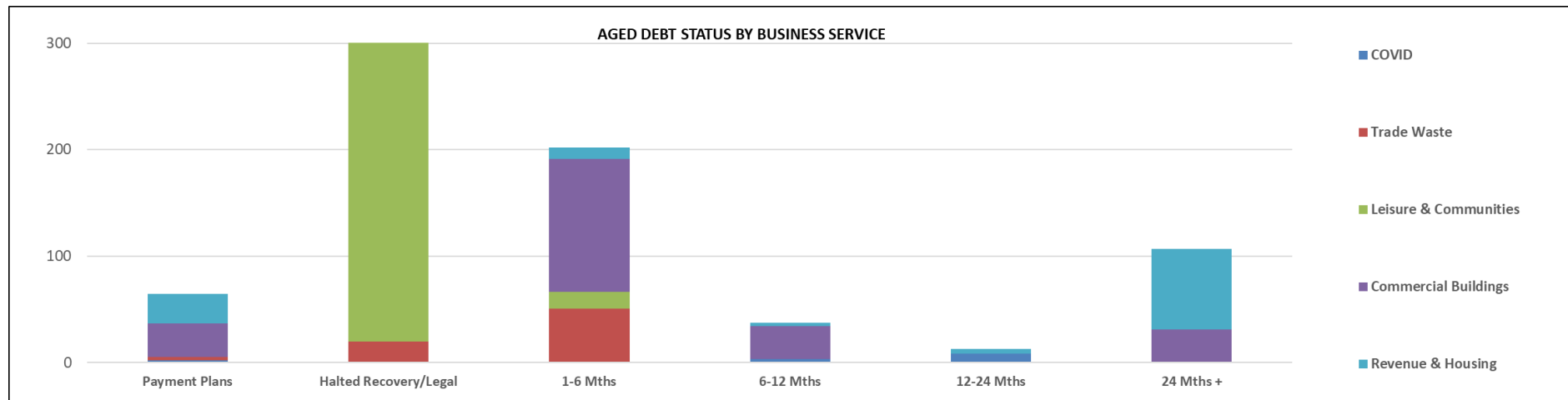


Overall Summary:

The 2022/23 financial year has been very challenging for the Council with the impact of high inflation and wages growth contributing to a £2.5m overspend in our Cost of Services budget. This is combined with continued pressure on income generating services like Land Charges & Building Control where we have seen market share erode over the last few years. There have been additional losses from our Investment Property portfolio due to void units, but negotiations are at an advanced stage with new tenants for these properties. The purchase of Marriotts Walk as a regeneration project for central Witney increases our rental income and is recognised in the 23/24 budget. Electricity and gas overspends amount to £210k in the year with additional growth included in the 23/24 budget assuming a similar cost to 22/23.

A realistic budget was set for 22/23 that due to the continuation of Government funding, especially New Homes Bonus, resulted in an expected surplus of £1.6m. Inflation in supplies & services and wages created unavoidable budget pressures that have turned overall outturn into an overspend of £573k. This is consistent with the reporting for Q2 & Q3 and also with our budget expectations for 2023/24

AGED DEBT STATUS BY BUSINESS SERVICE



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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>WEST EYNHAM SDA MASTERPLAN ADDENDUM</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>Eynsham</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Cllr Carl Rylett, Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability Email: Charlie.Jackson@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider an addendum to the West Eynsham SDA masterplan which has been produced by the four main landowner/developers, in response to further engagement with third party landowners.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Minutes of Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee, held on 8th June 2023. Annex B – West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the content of the report; b) Consider the recommendations of the Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 8th June, which resolved to recommend to the Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward (see Annex A); and c) In light of the above, consider whether it wishes to approve the West Eynsham SDA masterplan addendum attached at Annex B as a material planning consideration for any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>The original West Eynsham SDA masterplan was subject to a process of stakeholder engagement from August 2021 including the establishment of a dedicated liaison group, a community newsletter delivered to all Eynsham households, a dedicated website and virtual and face to face exhibitions held in November 2021.</p> <p>The masterplan addendum document has been subject to more focused consultation with a number of third party landowners that were not engaged when the original masterplan document was prepared. Further discussions have also taken place with Eynsham Parish Council.</p> <p>The addendum document was considered at a meeting of the Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee held 8th June 2023 (see comments attached at Annex A).</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the land to the west of Eynsham is allocated as a strategic development area (SDA) in the Local Plan 2031 and is anticipated to deliver about 1,000 homes.
- 1.2 In June 2021, the four main SDA landowners began work on a masterplan for the SDA to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivery and a high quality, sustainable development.
- 1.3 The masterplan was considered at a Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2022 and subsequently at a meeting of the Council's Executive on 16 March 2022 where it was formally agreed as a material planning consideration.
- 1.4 Subsequent to the decision of the Executive, the District Council received correspondence on behalf of a landowner whose land falls within the boundary of the SDA, but who had not been engaged in the preparation of the masterplan document.
- 1.5 As an outcome of legal advice and discussions that followed, in July 2022, the Executive agreed that the four main landowners/developers responsible for the masterplan should be invited to engage with all third party landowners within the SDA, with any updates/consequential amendments to the masterplan to be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Executive.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to summarise the process and outcomes of that focused, third party engagement.
- 1.7 The report also includes details of the comments made by the Council's Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee when it met to consider the matter on 8th June 2023.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 allocates the land to the west of Eynsham as one of a number of strategic development areas (SDAs) with the site expected to deliver about 1,000 homes. Of these, 237 have already been completed or are under construction and there is a current outline planning application for 180 homes in the northern part of the site. Planning applications for the rest of the SDA are expected to come forward later this year.
- 2.2 To ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivery and a high quality development, Policy EW2 of the Local Plan requires '*comprehensive development to be led by an agreed masterplan*'.
- 2.3 To fulfil this policy requirement, in June 2021, the four main SDA landowner/developers (Jansons, Berkeley Homes, Oxfordshire County Council Property and Facilities and Blenheim Strategic Partners) assembled a technical team to prepare a masterplan for the SDA.
- 2.4 Further to ongoing stakeholder engagement during the second half of 2021, the final draft masterplan document was submitted to the District Council in February 2022. Having first been considered at a Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2022, the masterplan was subsequently agreed as a material planning consideration at a meeting of the Executive held on 16 March 2022.

- 2.5 However, following that decision the District Council received correspondence on behalf of a landowner whose land falls within the boundary of the SDA, but who had not been engaged in the preparation of the masterplan document. The correspondence related to the Council's decision to approve the masterplan and took the form of a letter before claim in accordance with the judicial review pre-action protocol.
- 2.6 The District Council subsequently took its own legal advice and it was agreed that the Council would reconsider the masterplan having first given the claimant and any other landowners who were not involved in its preparation, the opportunity to submit representations to the Council by 23 June 2022.
- 2.7 In light of the correspondence received and the existence of other third parties which had not been involved in the process, in July 2022, the Executive agreed that the four main landowners/developers should be invited to engage with all other third party landowners within the SDA boundary with any updates/consequential amendments to the masterplan to be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Executive.

3. MASTERPLAN ADDENDUM

- 3.1 Following the decision of the Executive in July 2022, the four main landowners/developers, through their consultants Chess Engage, began a process of engagement with the relevant third parties who own land within the SDA boundary – specifically to seek views on the content of the masterplan document.
- 3.2 Hard copies of the masterplan were sent on 29 August 2022, requesting comments to be returned by 23 September 2022.
- 3.3 The comments received were considered by the main developer/landowner team and reflected in a number of proposed updates/amendments as set out in a masterplan addendum document.
- 3.4 The addendum was shared with the third party landowners in December 2022/January 2023 and also with Eynsham Parish Council and WODC Officers. The final version was submitted to the District Council on 2 February 2023 and is attached to this report at Annex B.
- 3.5 As can be seen, the addendum is concise at just 23 pages long. The main changes to the original masterplan document can be summarised as follows:
- **The land ownership plan** (Figure 1 in the addendum, Figure 12 in the original masterplan) has been updated to more clearly indicate which parcels of land are within the control of the four main landowners/developers and which parcels are owned by other 'third parties' or is unregistered land;
 - **Ecology and biodiversity** – the text has been amended to clarify that the former orchard, west of Fruitlands in the north of the site, is partially covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is designated as a priority habitat (Deciduous Woodland);
 - **Existing Green Infrastructure and ecology plan** (Figure 2 in the addendum, Figure 21 in the original masterplan) has been updated to show the confirmed extent of the

Fruitlands Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and to show the updated Natural England designations within the Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory mapping for Deciduous Woodland. The plan has also been updated to show the Local Green Spaces designated in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan. An inset map has been provided to show these amendments at a closer scale;

- **Site constraints and opportunities plan** (Figure 3 in the addendum, Figure 26 in the original masterplan) has been updated to reflect the confirmed extent of the Fruitlands TPO, the areas of National Forest Inventory and Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland and Local Greenspace Designation 'LGS 6 - Fruitlands Wood', as set out in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan. The opportunities plan has been updated to show less additional woodland in the northern part of the site and a reduction in the extent of the proposed linear park in the eastern part of the site;
- **Masterplan** (Figure 5 in the addendum, Figure 27 in the original masterplan) has been updated to illustrate third party land in the north and east of the site as *potential development land* (although possible land uses are not indicated) subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the Local Plan and other material considerations. This supersedes the previous Figure 27 of the masterplan which retained these areas in their current land use.
- **Land-Use Strategy plan** (Figure 6 in the addendum, Figure 28 in the original masterplan) has been updated in line with the amendments to Figure 5/27 referred to above;
- **Landscape Strategy plan** (Figure 7 in the addendum, Figure 29 in the original masterplan) has been updated to clarify the area of retained woodland proposed within the masterplan area and the confirmed extent of the Fruitlands TPO. Also updated to show the areas of *potential development land* referred to above with the supporting text amended to clarify that any such third party land has been treated separately for the purposes of establishing landscaping quantum for the four main landowners/developers;
- **Indicative Phasing Strategy plan** (Figure 8 in the addendum, Figure 61 in the original masterplan) has been updated to illustrate third party land in the north and east of the site as *potential development land* (possible land uses not indicated) subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the Local Plan and other material considerations.

- 3.6 The masterplan addendum document was considered by the Council's Executive on 8 March 2023 where the Executive resolved to note the contents of the report and to request that the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider the item and provide any comments, before being re-considered by the Executive.
- 3.7 Subsequently, a meeting of the Council's Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee was held on 8th June 2023 where the masterplan addendum document was considered.
- 3.8 The comments raised during the meeting are set out in full at Annex A. The primary concern raised during the meeting was the delineation of two parcels of land within the SDA boundary as 'potential development land' with particular concerns raised in relation to potential vehicular access to those two land parcels and an increase in the overall number of homes being provided within the SDA.
- 3.9 Other concerns included the lack of existing burial space capacity in the Eynsham area and the stewardship and maintenance of community assets including green space.
- 3.10 As a result of the concerns raised, the Committee resolved to recommend to the Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward.

4. SUMMARY

- 4.1 Following the decision of the Executive in July 2022, the four main landowners/developers have engaged with all third party landowners within the SDA boundary in order to ensure that their views have been properly taken into account in the masterplan.
- 4.2 That process of engagement has resulted in a number of relatively minor amendments to the masterplan as set out in the addendum document attached at Annex B and summarised in Section 3 above.
- 4.3 Perhaps the most notable amendment is the delineation of two small parcels of land in the north and east of the SDA as *potential development land*. The addendum does not refer to what type of development, if any, may be forthcoming in these locations. Rather it is intended to allow for the possibility of something coming forward at a future point in time, subject to relevant local plan policies and other material considerations. This is in contrast to the original masterplan document which showed them as being retained in their existing use.
- 4.4 It is of course relevant to note that even if the masterplan were to remain unaltered in this respect, the two parcels of land in question fall within the SDA boundary as defined in the Local Plan and those landowners could still bring forward development proposals which would need to be considered on their own merits.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 If approved by Members, the masterplan addendum would become a material planning consideration updating a number of aspects of the original masterplan document which was approved in March 2022, with both documents then being used to help determine any current or future planning applications that come forward in relation to the West Eynsham SDA.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 Whilst Policy EW2 of the Local Plan requires development of the West Eynsham SDA to be led by an agreed masterplan, it does not specifically stipulate that any such masterplan should be approved by the District Council.
- 6.2 The Executive could therefore choose not to endorse the addendum document attached at Annex B. The earlier decision to endorse the original masterplan document made by the Executive in March 2022 would however remain in place.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The report raises no direct financial implications although there is an indirect risk of expenditure having to be incurred by the District Council should any further legal action be taken.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Executive's decision in March 2022 to approve the original masterplan document was the subject of a subsequent threat of legal challenge. The proposed course of action which was subsequently agreed led to that claim being discontinued.
- 8.2 The Masterplan Addendum has been prepared in direct response to discussions with third party landowners, and as such, although not specifically required by the Local Plan, should the Executive choose not to approve the addendum, there may be a risk of further legal challenge.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 In the absence of an agreed masterplan for the West Eynsham SDA, there is a risk to delivery in terms of housing land supply, place-making objectives and the provision of supporting infrastructure to support the development of the site as a whole.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1 The report raises no specific equality implications for any specific group/protected characteristic.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The masterplan addendum addresses a number of issues relating to the climate and ecological emergencies including ecology and biodiversity, greenspace and woodland provision and landscaping.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 None.

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 4.00 pm on
Thursday, 8 June 2023

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Alaa Al-Yousuf (Vice-Chair), Thomas Ashby, Andrew Coles, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Natalie King, Nick Leverton, Andrew Lyon, Charlie Maynard, Martin McBride, Michele Mead, Rosie Pearson, Sandra Simpson, Ruth Smith, Harry St. John, Tim Sumner, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Chris Hargraves (Planning Policy Manager) and Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Dan Levy, Alaric Smith and Carl Rylett.

5 Election of Chair

Councillor Andrew Coles, Chair of the Council, opened the meeting and asked for nominations to the position of the Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Michele Mead proposed that Councillor Andrew Beaney be appointed Chair of the Joint Committee for the Civic Year 2023/24. This was seconded by Councillor Liam Walker and was put to a vote, as a result of no further nominations. The Vote Carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Andrew Beaney as Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Civic Year 2023/24.

6 Election of Vice-Chair

Councillor Andrew Beaney, Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee, asked for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Michele Mead proposed that Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf be appointed Vice-Chair of the Committee for the Civic Year 2023/24. This was seconded by Councillor Liam Walker and was put to a vote, as a result of no further nominations. The Vote Carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf as Vice-Chair of the Chair of the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Civic Year 2023/24.

7 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Colin Dingwall, Hugo Ashton, Alistair Wray and Rizvana Poole.

Councillor Michele Mead Substituted for Councillor Colin Dingwall.

08/June2023

8 **Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of Interest were received as follows:

- Councillor Harry St John declared that he lived in Eynsham.
- Councillors Andrew Coles, Nick Leverton and Liam Walker declared that they were also elected Members of Oxfordshire County Council.

9 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Monday 14 March 2022, were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 **Participation of the Public**

Councillor Ross Macken, Chair of Eynsham Parish Council, addressed the Committee and raised the following points;

- The importance of preserving the character of the village of Eynsham;
- A perception that the addition of two new areas of development were ill-judged, and were a quick fix to deal with any potential legal challenges from landowners;
- The Parish Council requested that the term 'about 1000 homes', be modified to read 'maximum of 1000 homes' for the avoidance of doubt.
- Concerns about vehicle access to potential development sites as the addendum would not conform to the previously agreed planned vehicle access;
- How the areas in the addendum would be integrated into the rest of the development.

The Parish Council also raised two additional points;

- Request for the provision of a burial ground in the Masterplan, due to limited capacity with 12 months remaining of the current site.
- Request that the Masterplan should define a form of stewardship of the shared assets and green spaces.

Councillor Macken concluded by requesting that the Committee reject the addendum, and ask that developers prepare a new version addressing the points raised, before conducting a full consultation with the residents of Eynsham.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask any questions for clarification.

Councillor Al-Yousuf asked for clarification on comments regarding integration of spaces in the rest of the development.

Councillor Macken stated it was felt that the Masterplan was well constructed, however the Addendum did not present how the additional spaces would be integrated and felt that the spaces were 'add-ons'. Councillor Al-Yousuf asked if there had been further discussion with the planning department. Councillor Macken stated that the new areas had not been considered and there was no guidance on what could be potentially build on the additional land included in the Addendum.

Councillor Phil Godfrey entered the committee room at 4.09pm.

08/June2023

Dr Angie Titchen addressed the meeting with comments from EPIC and Green Tea community groups, stating the following points of concern:

- A perceived lack of public consultation following a response from developers on 7 March 2023 there had been no further contact with the community or local groups;
- Vehicle access and active travel – Concerns raised that an extensive use of the spine road and Witney Road would result in potentially long term disruption to residents.
- Phasing – Concerns raised that the access issue was connected to phasing and the addendum had not addressed this point.
- Climate and Biodiversity – Concerns raised that two areas of green space were potential sites for land development. Concerns also raised that the addendum was in conflict with WODC corporate priorities – The response to the climate and ecological emergencies.

Councillor Martin McBride entered the committee room at 4.20pm.

The Chair invited the Committee to ask any questions for clarification.

Councillor Rosie Pearson asked for clarification on the timings of consultation with developers, with focus on the period of late 2022.

Dr Titchen confirmed the only contact with the Parish Council and community groups received from the developers, was a letter dated March 2022 with no further contact.

II West Eynsham Strategic Development Area (SDA) Masterplan Addendum

The Chair introduced the Planning Policy Manager, Chris Hargreaves.

The Chair reminded the Committee of the recommendations in the report and suggested the Committee, as the Parish Councillor requested, not accept the Addendum and refer back to the original report.

The Planning Policy Manager started the presentation by responding to the Chair's question, and clarified that there had been extensive consultation to produce the Masterplan. The Masterplan had gone before Cabinet in March 2022 and to the Joint Climate and Environment and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2022. After the threat of a legal challenge, West Oxfordshire District Council sought legal advice which resulted in the developer being asked to engage with the landowners, including the Parish Councillor, and make any updates accordingly. This resulted in the Addendum document being produced by the developer. The Planning Policy Manager clarified that the Master Plan was not to be reviewed, only focused updates were to be added. These included the following;

- Clarification on points within the Masterplan;
- Factual updates to information, with focus on corrections in Masterplan;
- Visual updates, which included formatting to improve clarity;
- Information updated to include 2 parcels of land as potential development land;
- Clarification on the existing use of the 2 parcels of land; one site was a green space and the other site was garden land. They were now shown on the addendum with hatching as potential development land;

08/June2023

- Clarification that if landowners requested the development plans be possibly brought forward, any such applications would be in consideration with the policies of the Local Plan and any other policies within planning at that time.

In response to the question if the document were not to be accepted by the Committee, The Planning Policy Manager clarified that the document responds to the discussion points asked when brought to Cabinet in March 2022.

Councillor Wilson entered the committee room at 4.30pm.

The Chair suggested that the committee go through the document page by page to pick up points. Councillors asked if the Planning Policy Manager had a prepared presentation for the committee to refer to, for the benefit of new members of the committee. The Councillors highlighted that this was not an officers' report and asked that points be clarified when planning policy was considered.

The Planning Policy Manager gave a recap on the Masterplan and included the following points;

- The initial consultation stage of the report;
- The criteria of the report;
- After a legal challenge, the Council agreed that the four main developer teams would take on any further strategic planning, which resulted in the Masterplan;
- Masterplan was considered as material consideration planning documentation, and would not supersede the Local Plan and the same principle would apply to the Addendum document;
- For any future planning applications the Masterplan and Addendum would also be considered.

The Committee asked for the two parcels of land to be focused on, as these were the significant changes to the Addendum document. The following points were focused on;

- The Burial Ground – recognition that there was a shortage of sites however there was no policy requirement to include a burial ground by the developers. The Parish Council was in discussion with Oxfordshire County Council to provide a piece of land for a burial ground and discussions had been positive.;
- The Stewardship – The Planning Policy Manager had met with Councillor Ross Macken to discuss this issue, and it was agreed discussion would take place the main landowner team with the West Eynsham Site and the Garden Village Site. The aim would be to find the most suitable model for long term stewardship;
- The Local Plan – Currently under review, enabling issues raised in the meeting to be addressed;
- Potential housing and access to land – Concerns were raised over the potential development of the two parcels for housing, with particular focus on vehicular access to the sites. Although there was no current application for housing on these sites, it was hard to predict what landowners were minded to do in the future.

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Councillor Rosie Pearson proposed that the Committee recommend to Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward.

Councillor Andy Goodwin seconded the proposal, which was put to the vote. There were 10 votes in favour and 9 votes against with 1 abstention (Councillor Charlie Maynard). The vote was carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Recommend to Executive that the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan Addendum be rejected and not taken forward.

12 Eynsham Parish Council Letter

The Agenda item was not formally considered at meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.25pm

CHAIR

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WEST EYNESHAM STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AREA



Masterplan Document Addendum



February 2023



Forward

This Masterplan Document Addendum has been produced by Turley Design, on behalf of Jansons, Berkeley, Blenheim Strategic Partners and Oxfordshire County Council (Property and Facilities Team).

This Addendum provides an update to the Masterplan (approved in March 2022) following engagement with third party landowners within the SDA boundary as resolved by WODC Cabinet on the 13th July 2022.

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Revision	C
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Introduction

Document Structure & Purpose

This Addendum to the West Eynsham SDA Masterplan document approved on 16th March 2022, sets out the outcome of the further engagement with other third party landowners within the SDA and provides both updated constraints information and consequential amendments/ updates to the masterplan, supporting text and diagrams. The updated plans and supporting material contained in this Addendum replace and supersede the relevant sections of the approved Masterplan Document.

Land Ownership

The masterplan area is covered by a number of different land ownerships. This document has been prepared on behalf of the four landowners/developers who control the majority of the land within the SDA boundary. These parties have worked together in preparing the masterplan and will continue to do so in bringing the development forward.

The Masterplan Process

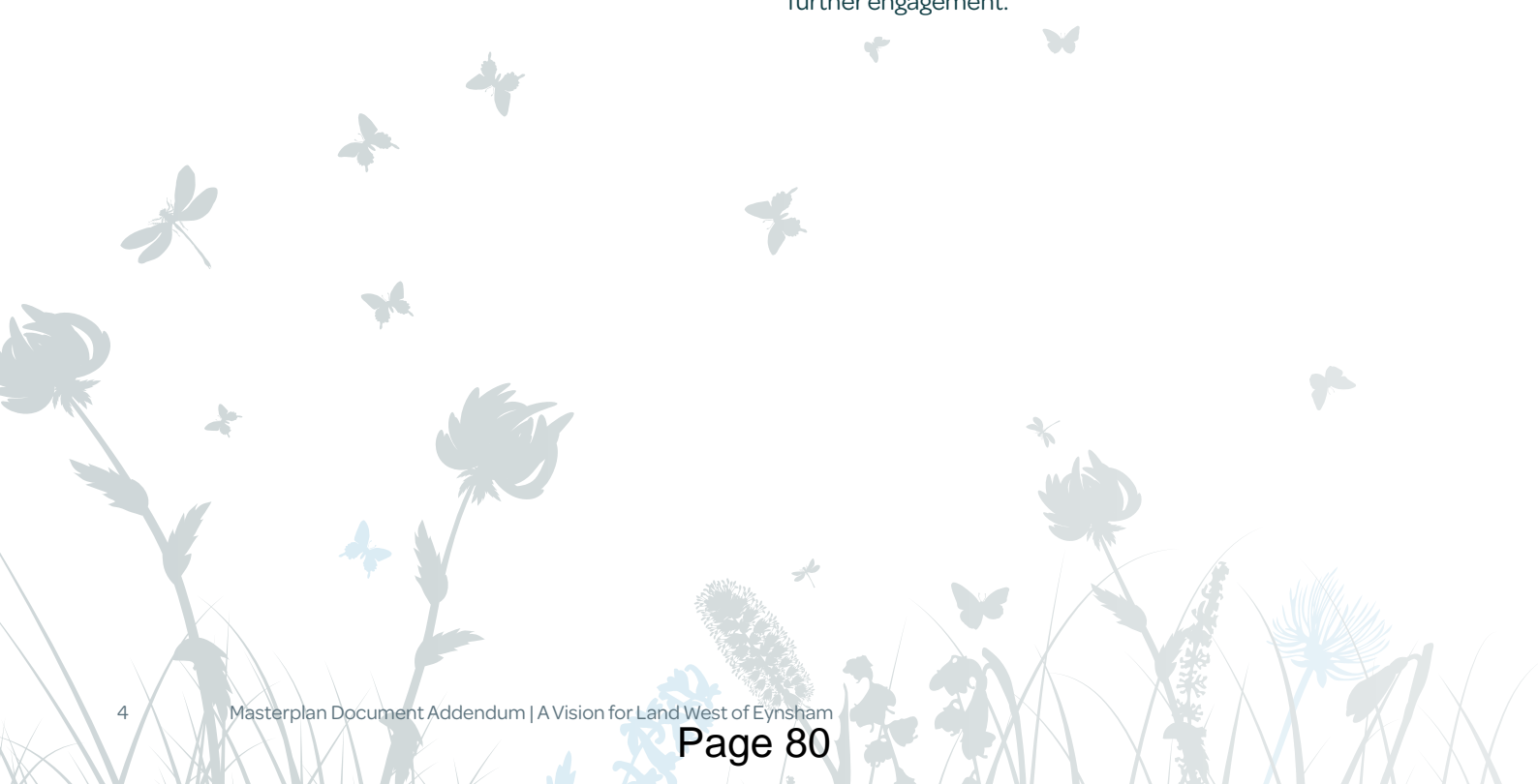
The masterplan was considered by the West Oxfordshire District Council Joint Climate & Environment and Economic & Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 March 2022 and subsequently at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 16th March 2022 where it was formally agreed as a material planning consideration.

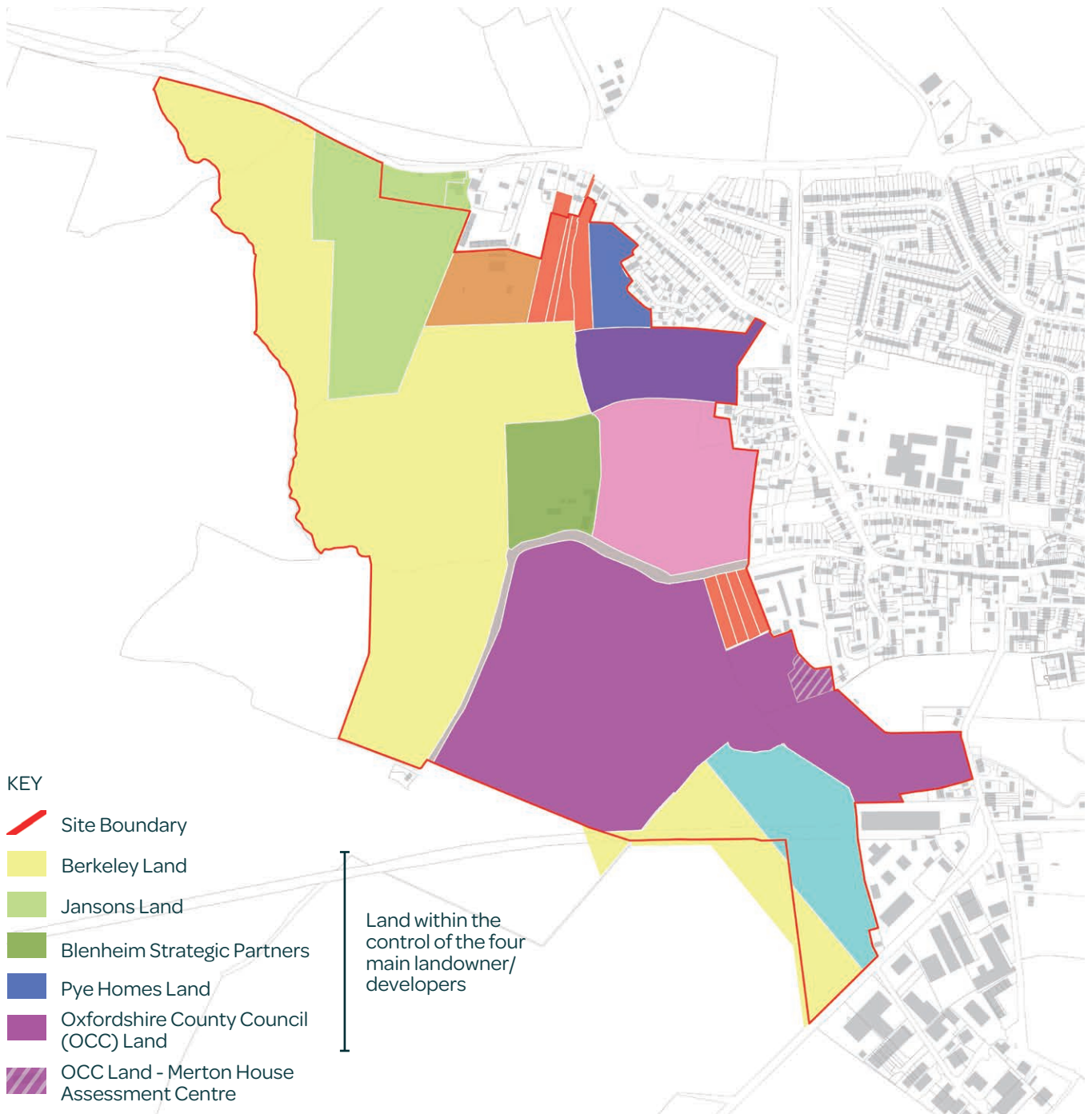
Following representations by one of the third party landowners within the SDA boundary, the Council decided to reconsider the Masterplan Document having first given the landowner and any other third party landowners, the opportunity to submit representations on the Masterplan Document to the Council by 23rd June 2022.

On the 13th July 2022 the WODC Cabinet resolved to invite the four main landowners/developers responsible for the preparation of the masterplan to engage with the third party land owners to seek their comments on the Masterplan Document.

It was resolved that a further report would then be brought back to Cabinet, setting out the outcome of that further engagement, including where necessary, any consequential amendments/ updates to the masterplan.

This Masterplan Addendum sets out the outcome of this further engagement.





KEY

-  Site Boundary
-  Berkeley Land
-  Jansons Land
-  Blenheim Strategic Partners
-  Pye Homes Land
-  Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) Land
-  OCC Land - Merton House Assessment Centre
-  OCC Leasehold - Bartholomew School
-  Thomas Homes Land
-  Thornbury Green development
-  Polar Technology
-  Other Third Party Land
-  Unregistered Land

Figure 1: Land Ownership Plan - Land Registry Data October 2022 (to supersede Figure 12 of Masterplan Document)



Engagement

Chess Engage on behalf of the four main landowner/ developers has undertaken a process of engaging with other third party landowners within the SDA.

The 'Consultation Strategy' section of the SDA Masterplan document (pages 40-41), summarises how the SDA was subject to extensive engagement with the local community prior to the Masterplanning process. The SDA Masterplan document (pages 42-45) then explains the engagement at the Masterplan preparation stage and provides a summary of amendments to the Masterplan following engagement with the dedicated Liaison Group in 2021 and 2022.

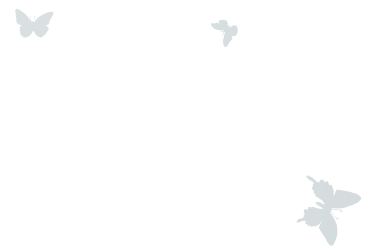
Post Masterplan Agreement

In line with the agreed resolution of the WODC Cabinet meeting on 13th July 2022, the main landowner/developer team engaged with the other third party landowners within the West Eynsham SDA to seek any comments on the Masterplan document.

A hardcopy letter dated 29th August 2022 was posted, along with a copy of the Masterplan document agreed at Cabinet on 16th March 2022, to the other third party landowners within the SDA requesting comments to be returned by 5pm on 23rd September 2022. These letters were followed up with electronic correspondence (to those with email addresses the landowner/ developer team were aware of).

Comments received from the other third party landowners to this correspondence were considered by the main landowner/ developer team and as a result some updates have been made to this Masterplan document. These updates are detailed later in this Addendum.

The other third party landowners within the SDA were contacted again in December 2022/ January 2023 to obtain their feedback on this Masterplan Addendum, alongside sharing the document with Eynsham Parish Council and WODC Officers.





Landowner Consultation

August 2022

Letters and emails sent to all Registered and other third party Land Owners

September - October 2022

Replies received from other third party Land Owners

November 2022

Masterplan Addendum prepared to respond to landowner responses

December - January 2023

Further consultation with third party landowners on Masterplan Addendum

Spring 2023

Masterplan Addendum submitted to WODC Cabinet for approval



Ecology and Biodiversity

There are no specific nationally designated sites of importance for biodiversity within the SDA. The SDA is predominantly greenfield with farmland arable and semi-improved grassland fields, woodland, orchard, trees, mature hedgerows, ditches and the Chil Brook. There are valuable habitats and wildlife corridors within the site, especially the Chil Brook.

There are records of protected and notable species within and adjoining the site. Phase 1 surveys and assessment of the site have been carried out and prior to any planning application, it is recommended that specialist Phase 2 surveys for protected species are carried out, in addition to further assessment of hedgerow, grassland and arable habitats, in order to establish the presence or absence of protected or notable habitats and species in order to ensure compliance with UK nature conservation legislation and, where necessary, identify measures to avoid or mitigate potential impacts.

The former orchard, west of Fruitlands in the north of the site, is partially covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and is designated as a priority habitat (Deciduous Woodland).

The previous surveys of the site, have identified the areas of highest ecological value, which are primarily along the Chil Brook and the woodland and hedgerow corridors.

The “low ecological value” areas, shown in Figures 2 and 3, are identified in the Oxfordshire Garden Village and Strategic Development Area Preliminary Ecological Impact Assessment Prepared by TACP for West Oxfordshire District Council. This preliminary assessment identified the key ecological features and the areas with the greatest potential for protected species. The low ecological areas have the lowest potential for protected species.

In accordance with national and local policy, development of the site will be required to demonstrate a net gain in biodiversity where possible. This is also reflected in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan (Policy ENP4a).

To the south east of the site is the proposed ‘Fishponds’ Local Nature Reserve (LNR) on the site of the Eynsham Abbey Fish Ponds.

A further consideration for the West Eynsham site is the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is 3.3km east of the SDA. In respect of increased nitrogen deposition from additional traffic on the A40, a combination of a modal shift away from the use of the private car and a trend for reduction in nitrogen from vehicular emissions will limit any significant effect.

Figures 2 and 3 show the known existing green infrastructure and ecology constraints of the site. This plan has been updated to show the confirmed extent of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) WODC Ref: No.1/2015 – Land at Fruitlands, Eynsham 141.289 and to show the updated Natural England designations within the Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory mapping for Deciduous Woodland. The plan has also been updated to show the Local Green Spaces designated in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.

Below is an extract of the updated plan (figure 3) to show these amendments at a closer scale.





Policy Requirement

WODC Policy EW2: h) Requires biodiversity enhancements including arrangements for future maintenance. The provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development and associated infrastructure.

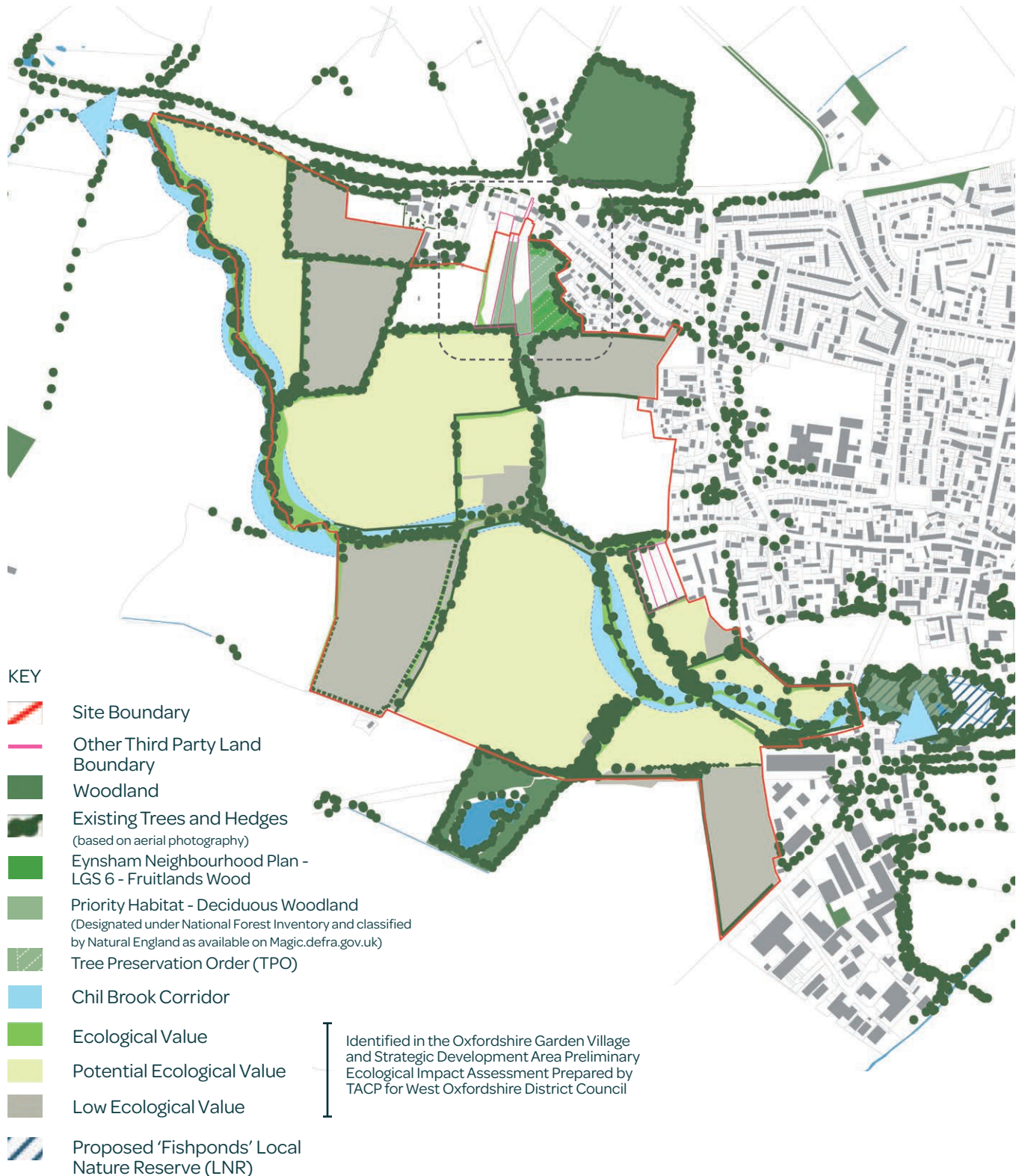


Figure 2: Existing Green Infrastructure and ecology (to supersede Figure 21 of Masterplan Document)

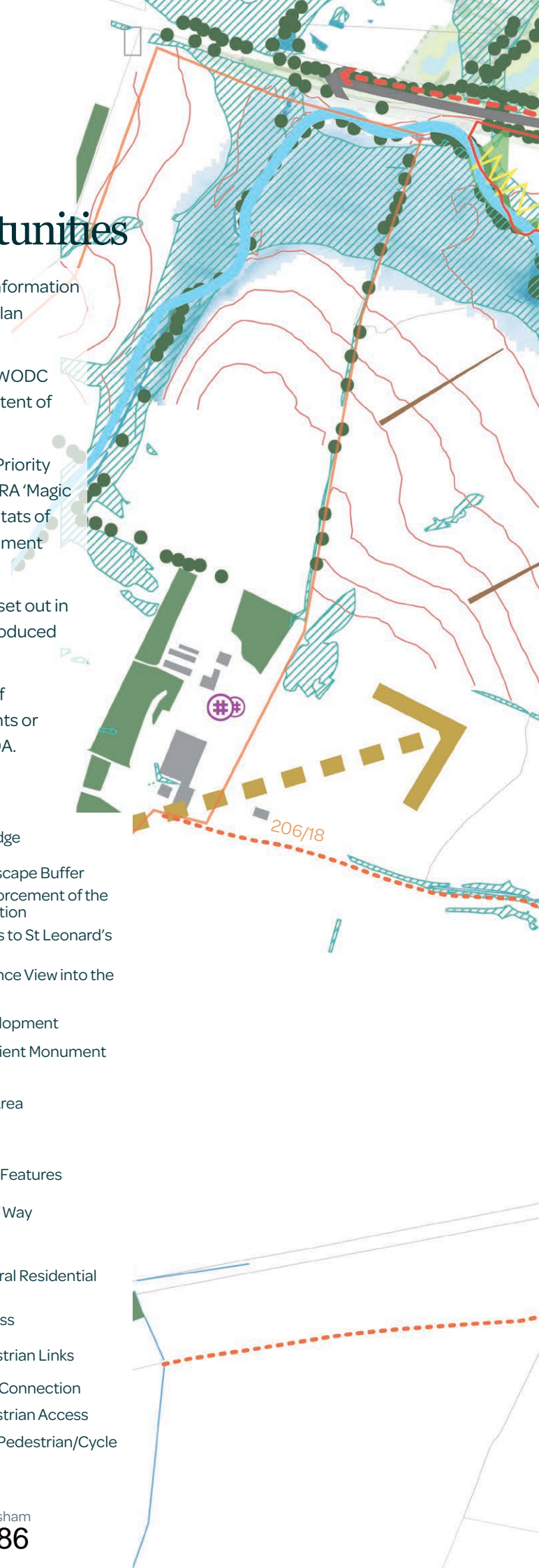


Site Constraints and Opportunities

The Site Constraints Plan has been updated to reflect further information that has become available since the submission of the Masterplan Document. This includes:

- The confirmed extent of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) WODC Ref: No.1/2015 – Land at Fruitlands, Eynsham 141.289. The extent of the TPO has been confirmed by WODC officers, and
- The areas of National Forest Inventory and Natural England Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland, as outlined in DEFRA ‘Magic Maps’ (Dec 22) which defines the location and extent of habitats of principal importance in accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) Section 41.
- Local Greenspace Designation ‘LGS 6 - Fruitlands Wood’, as set out in the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan 2018 - 2031 has been introduced for reference.

These amendments provide greater clarity to the boundaries of these areas but do not fundamentally change the site constraints or consequent masterplan layout and it’s opportunities for the SDA.



KEY

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | Site Boundary | | Existing Built Edge |
| | 1m Contours | | Potential Landscape Buffer |
| | Direction of slope | | Potential Reinforcement of the Existing Vegetation |
| | Modelled Flood Depth (MFD) <150mm | | Glimpsed Views to St Leonard’s Church |
| | MFD 150 - 300mm | | Key Long Distance View into the site |
| | MFD 300 - 450mm | | Industrial Development |
| | MFD 450 - 600mm | | Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) |
| | MFD 600 - 900mm | | Conservation Area |
| | MFD > 900mm | | Listed Building |
| | Surface Water Flood Risk | | Archaeological Features |
| | Woodland | | Public Rights of Way |
| | Existing Trees and Hedges (based on aerial photography) | | Cycleway |
| | Eynsham Local Greenspace Designations - LGS 6 - Fruitlands Wood | | Proposed Central Residential Boulevard |
| | Priority Habitat - Deciduous Woodland (Designated under National Forest Inventory and classified by Natural England as available on Magic.defra.gov.uk) | | Proposed Access |
| | Tree Preservation Order (TPO) | | Potential Pedestrian Links |
| | Chil Brook | | Existing PROW Connection |
| | | | Potential Pedestrian Access |
| | | | Proposed A40 Pedestrian/Cycle Crossing |



Figure 3: Site Constraints and Opportunities Plan
 (to supersede Figure 26 of Masterplan Document)

Opportunities

Chil Brook Linear Park



A landscape for all to enjoy



A new Primary School with safe and convenient access



Local Centre providing a community hub



Design Principles

The design principles for the masterplan have been informed by the assessment of the site and its context and engagement with stakeholders and the community. They establish the vision for how West Eynsham will integrate into the village.

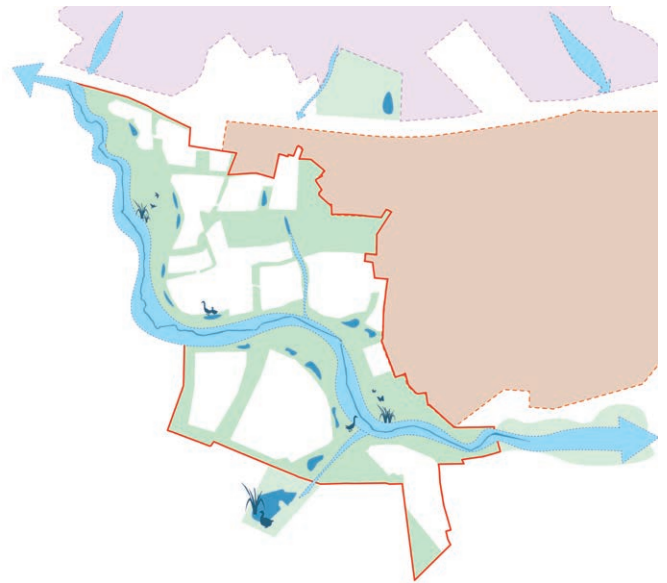
Integrated Landscape Network



The masterplan will create a network of landscape corridors and spaces that will run through the site and connect into the landscape network around Eynsham.

The masterplan will deliver biodiversity enhancement by retaining existing habitats where possible, and creating new habitats to encourage wildlife to use the site. The biodiversity enhancements will form part of a rigorous Green Infrastructure Strategy fully integrating biodiversity through a series of green connections.

Blue infrastructure

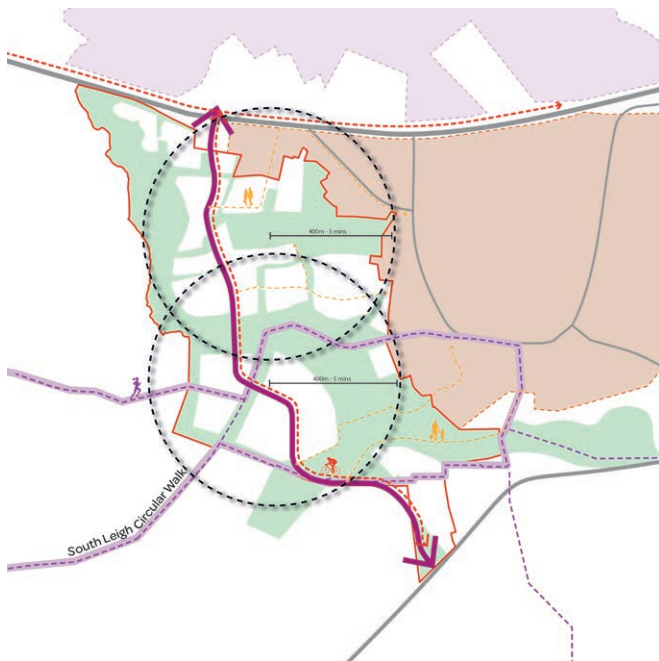


The Chil Brook runs through the site and creates a strong blue infrastructure network. The masterplan will seek to enhance and support this infrastructure by improving and introducing new wet habitats to help encourage wildlife to use the site.

Sustainable drainage systems will be distributed across the site, using natural drainage paths to manage surface water flows and deliver attractive public open space to be enjoyed by people and wildlife.



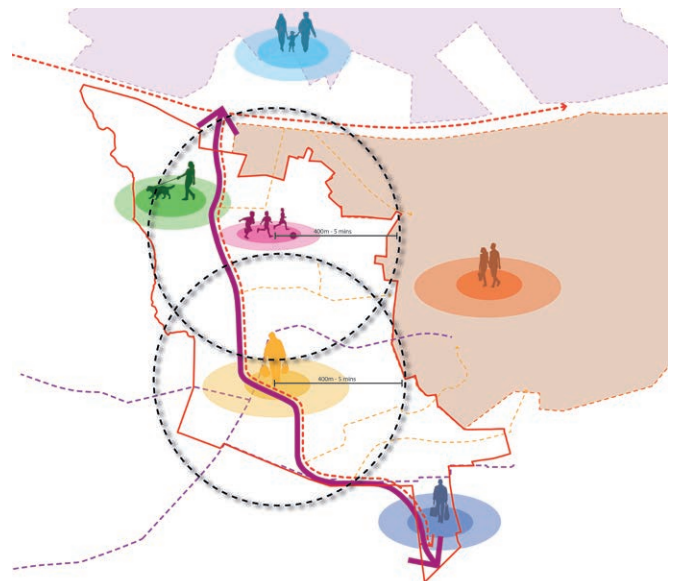
Access and Movement



The proposed Central Residential Boulevard will provide the main access into the proposed development, connecting the A40 with the B4449 Stanton Harcourt Road. This will include integrated cycle lanes within its design, in line with latest national standards, providing an excellent link through the centre of the site with a controlled crossing over the A40, linked to the Park and Ride site and Garden Village to the north.

Existing Public Rights of Way (PROWs) will be retained and incorporated into the fabric of the masterplan, creating a robust and permeable scheme, with increased connectivity into Eynsham. An active modes first approach to the masterplan, supported by off-site improvements will encourage more active means of movement, within, to and from the site.

Land uses & Amenities



The masterplan will seek to deliver a series of land uses to benefit the wider area. A new linear park will provide amenity space for new and existing residents.

A new primary school will be provided to support the development. A new local centre will be provided in the heart of the masterplan and will be accessed from the Central Residential Boulevard, in close proximity to the Chilbridge Road PROW. The provision of on-site land uses such as the primary school and local centre reduce the need for residents to travel, reducing off site movements and particularly those by private car.

The sites sustainable location also means that the site is in the immediate context of Eynsham Village centre and the proposed Garden Village centre, opening up wider opportunity for amenity, and access to a wider array of facilities and services.



Masterplan

The indicative masterplan has been updated to reflect the feedback from other third party landowners within the SDA and now defines the land within the control of third party landowners as potential development land, subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations.

This supersedes the previous Masterplan which retained these areas within their current land use.

KEY

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
|  | Site Access from A40 |  | Existing PROW (Footpath) to be Retained |
|  | Site access from Stanton Harcourt Road |  | Existing PROW (Bridleway) to be Retained |
|  | Central Residential Boulevard with segregated cycle path |  | Existing PROW to be Re-routed |
|  | Bridge crossing over Chil Brook |  | Revised PROW Route |
|  | Sensitively designed crossing of PROW over the Central Residential Boulevard |  | Proposed Informal Pedestrian & Cycle Links |
|  | Chil Brook Linear Park |  | Residential Development |
|  | Primary School |  | Green Infrastructure and Open Space |
|  | Local Centre |  | Attenuation Features |
| | |  | Potential development land |

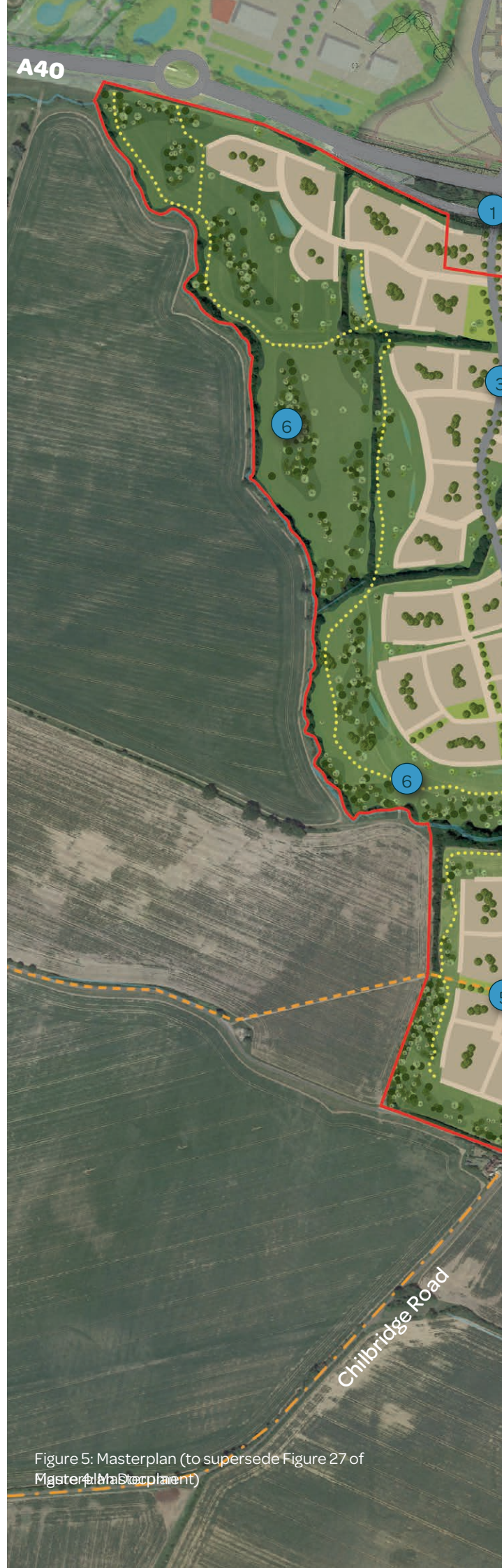


Figure 5: Masterplan (to supersede Figure 27 of Masterplan Document Addendum)



Policy Requirement

WODC Policy EW2: b) requires comprehensive development to be led by an agreed masterplan.












Land Use Strategy

The total site area is circa 88 ha. The land use strategy below sets out the proposed distribution of uses across the site. This provides the appropriate developable area for the required land uses including about 1,000 homes, a primary school, local centre, employment, delivery of the Central Residential Boulevard and green infrastructure.

Existing land uses of Bartholomew’s School playing fields, the Merton House assessment centre and the Horizon Technology Park will be safeguarded and retained within their current land use.

Areas of Potential Development Land, within third party ownership, have been identified within the Masterplan as potential development land subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations.

Land Use Strategy		
Land Use	Quantum	Commentary
 Residential	About 1,000 homes of varying densities	West Eynsham is expected to accommodate around 1,000 new homes although this is not an exact, fixed figure and should not be treated as such.
 Education	A new Primary School	A 2.2 hectare site will be provided which is large enough to cater for a 2-form entry primary school.
 Local Centre	A mixture of community uses and small-scale commercial uses	The local centre will provide a community focal point at the heart of the masterplan and will be accessed from the Central Residential Boulevard, in close proximity to the Chilbridge Road PROW. It will include a range of uses including a mixed use and multifunctional community centre.
 Employment	Horizon Technology Park Advanced Engineering Campus	The approximately 4ha employment site of the Horizon Technology Park Advanced Engineering Campus (16/02369/FUL & 17/01114/FUL).
 Green & Blue Infrastructure	Extensive green and blue infrastructure	Approximately 40 hectares of natural and semi-natural green space, amenity green space, formal parks and gardens, sustainable urban drainage, allotments, community orchards, play areas and other outdoor provision.
 Retained Existing Uses	Bartholomew’s School playing field and Merton House Assessment Centre	The existing use of an approx 3ha site for playing fields for Bartholomew’s School and the 1.61 ha site for the Merton House Assessment Centre will be retained.
 Potential Development Land	Land within the SDA which is owned by other third party landowners	Land beyond the main Landowner /developers control has been identified as potential development land, subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations.



Vision



Spaces will be designed to be easy to navigate, with a wide range of interlinked uses and generous green spaces allowing residents to flourish within their own surroundings.

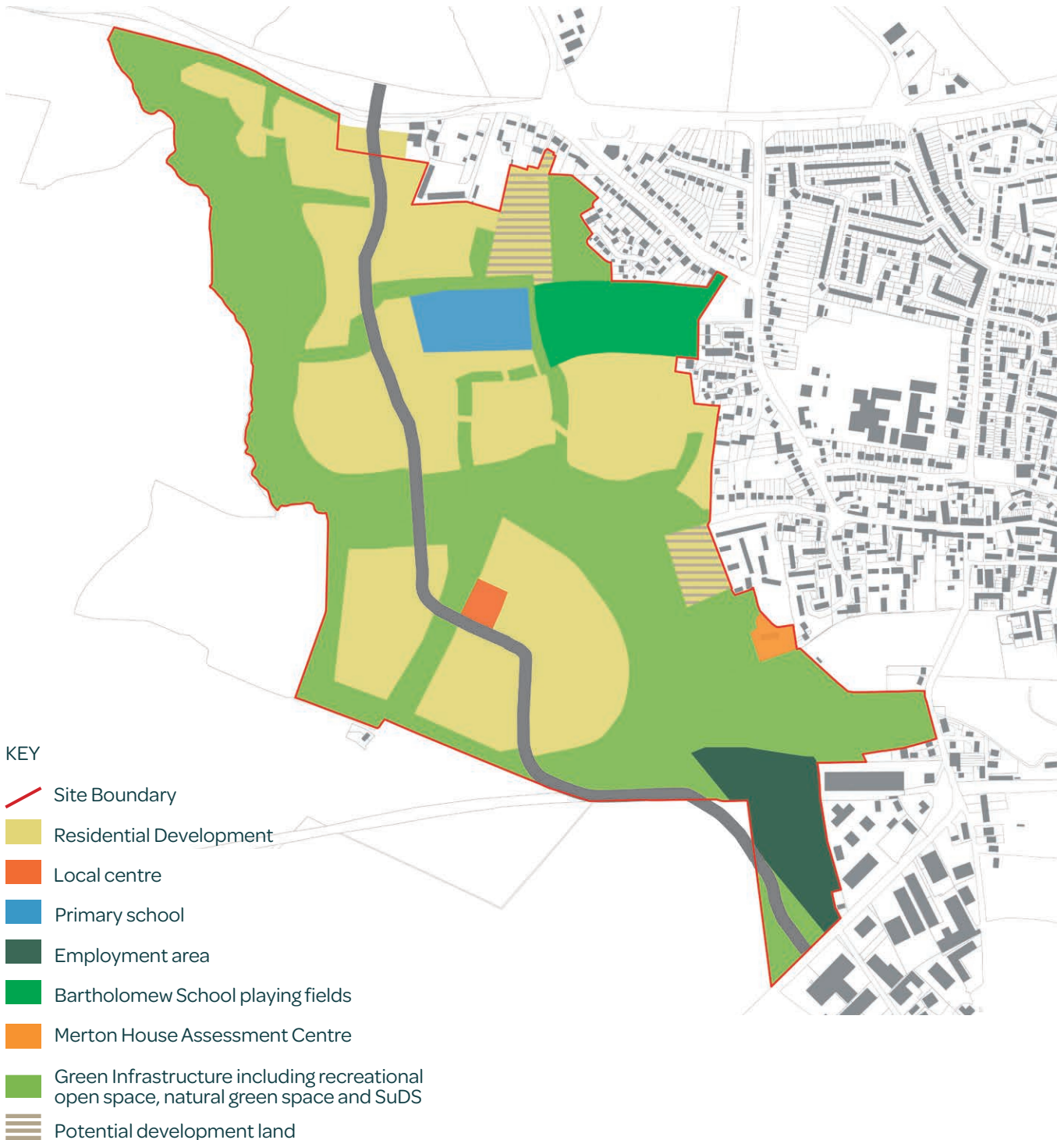


Figure 6: Land Use Strategy (to supersede Figure 28 of Masterplan Document)



Landscape Strategy

The Landscape Strategy has been updated to clarify the area of retained woodland proposed within the Masterplan area and reflects the confirmed extent of the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) WODC Ref: No.1/2015 – Land at Fruitlands, Eynsham 141.289.

The landscape strategy has been designed to accommodate a significant quantum of open space in accordance with local policy as set out in Policy EH5 (Sport, recreation and children’s play) of the WOLP 2031 within the land controlled by the landowner/developer team.

Potential development areas within land controlled by third parties within the SDA boundary are excluded from the landscape quantum proposed for the four landowner/developers, who would rely on land within their control for their landscape proposals.



KEY

 Chil Brook Linear Park

 Biodiversity links connecting to the linear park following tree lines and hedgerows



Figure 7: Landscape Strategy (to supersede Figure 29 of Masterplan Document)



Indicative Phasing Strategy

The SDA falls within multiple land ownerships and the indicative phasing strategy is split to reflect these land ownerships. The strategy plan has been updated to identify the areas of potential development land (subject to any subsequent planning application being assessed against the development plan and other material considerations) within the SDA that is within the control of other third party landowners.

The principles of the Phasing Strategy set out within the Masterplan Document remain in place.

KEY

-  Site Boundary
-  Consented Development
-  Phase 1 - Jansons
-  Phase 2/3 - Blenheim Strategic Partners
-  Phase 2/3 - Berkeley
-  Phase 4 - Berkeley
-  Phase 5 - OCC
-  Other Third party Land

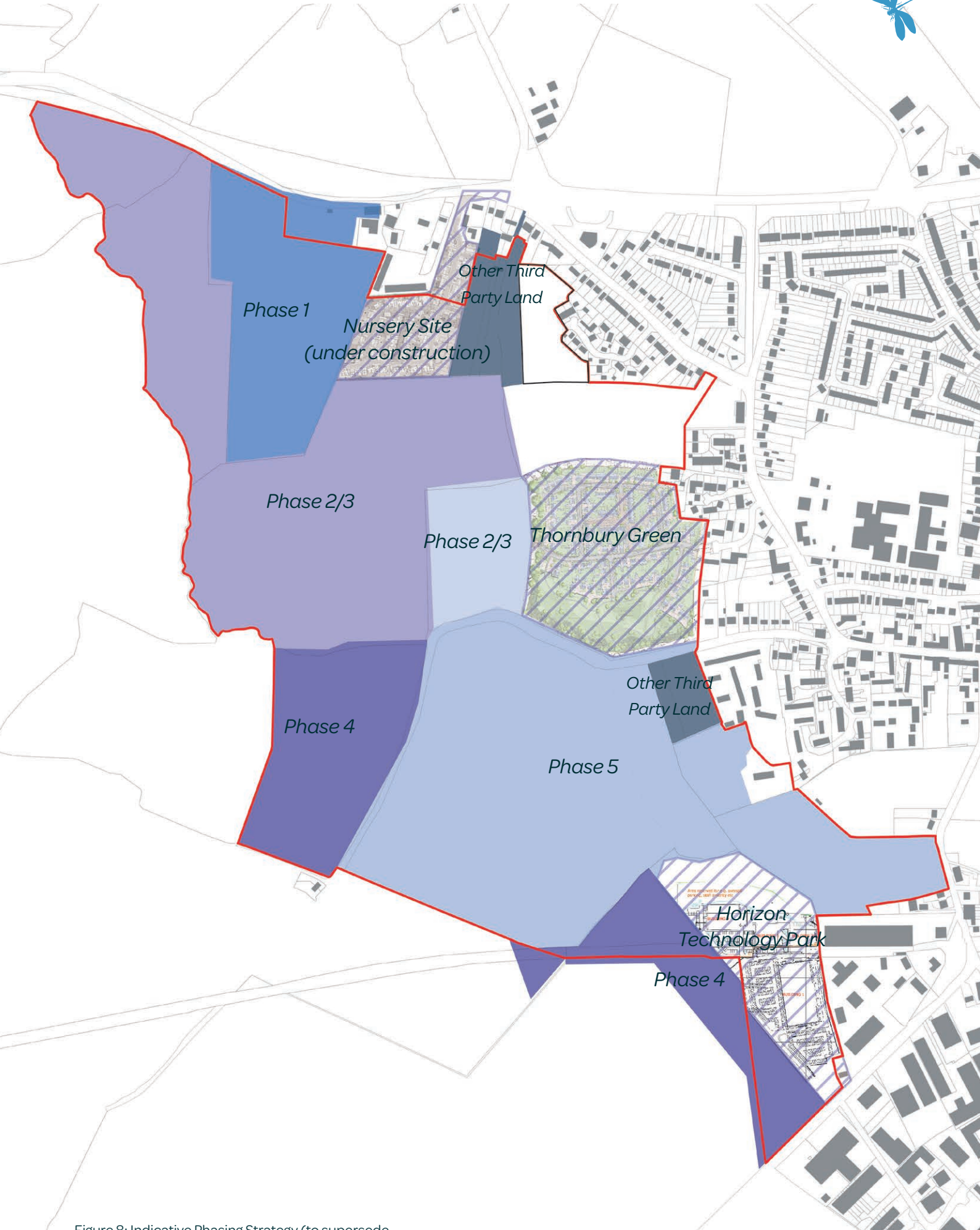



Figure 8: Indicative Phasing Strategy (to supersede Figure 61 of Masterplan Document)



 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2041</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Carl Rylett Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Charlie Jackson, Assistant Director Planning and Sustainability Email: charlie.jackson@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider a focused consultation paper which is intended to help inform the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Local Plan 2041: Focused Consultation Paper (July 2023)</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Note the content of the report; b) Agree that the Local Plan focused consultation paper attached at Annex A be published for an extended period of stakeholder engagement (8-10 weeks) to help inform the preparation of the new Local Plan 2041; c) Authorise the Planning Policy Manager to make any necessary minor amendments to the focused consultation paper in liaison with the Executive Member for Planning and Sustainable Development, prior to consultation taking place.
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>The preparation of a new Local Plan for West Oxfordshire will help to support all of the Council's corporate priorities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>An initial consultation '<i>Your Voice Counts</i>' was held in late summer/autumn last year to kick start the process of preparing the new Local Plan.</p> <p>The focused consultation paper attached at Annex A seeks to move the discussion with stakeholders on, firming up on draft local plan objectives and outlining potential scenarios around the future pattern of development in West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>It also includes a call for sites, ideas and opportunities as to how land in the District might be used for different purposes.</p> <p>Subject to the agreement of the Executive, the consultation paper will be published for an extended period of stakeholder engagement, including a mixture of digital online consultation and in person events.</p> <p>The feedback received will then be used to help shape a series of preferred policy approaches which will be the subject of further consultation later in the year.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the District Council has committed to a review of its current Local Plan which was adopted in September 2018. The new Local Plan will cover the 20-year period 2021 – 2041.
- 1.2 To help inform the new plan, Officers propose to carry out further public engagement over the summer.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to explain the nature of that further engagement and to provide an overview of the next steps involved in taking the Local Plan forward.

2. LOCAL PLAN 2041 – PROGRESS TO DATE

- 2.1 Work on the new Local Plan began last year, with an initial 6-week consultation ‘*Your Voice Counts*’ taking place from 24 August – 5 October. The purpose of the consultation was to seek early views on what issues the new Local Plan should focus on.
- 2.2 It was a predominantly online consultation but also included two face-to-face workshop events held with Town and Parish Councils and key stakeholder groups.
- 2.3 The consultation was very successful with over 5,000 online visits and 1,143 contributions from 441 respondents. Just under 3,000 people also signed up for future news updates.
- 2.4 Since the consultation closed, Officers have been carefully considering the responses received and in April, published a [consultation summary report](#) which provides an overview of the responses received both in quantitative and qualitative terms.
- 2.5 Generally speaking, the report demonstrates strong support for many of the initial topics and ideas put forward including the six main ‘areas of focus’ which formed the basis of the consultation. This is welcome and provides a good platform upon which to move the new Local Plan forward.
- 2.6 In addition to considering the consultation responses received, Officers have also been scoping out the supporting evidence which will be needed to underpin and justify the new Local Plan when it is considered at independent examination.
- 2.7 Work has been commissioned or is currently in the process of being commissioned on a variety of topics including Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) infrastructure delivery, housing and economic needs, viability, nature recovery and carbon impact. The evidence base will be further developed as the Local Plan progresses.

3. FOCUSED CONSULTATION PAPER

- 3.1 To help further inform the preparation of the new Local Plan, Officers propose to undertake a further focused consultation over the summer months. The intention is that this takes place in parallel with the preparation of supporting evidence outlined above, so that the Council is then in a position to publish a series of preferred policy approaches later in the year.

3.2 The focused consultation paper attached at Annex A comprises three main elements; draft Local Plan objectives, potential scenarios for the future pattern of development in the District and a call for sites, ideas and opportunities. Each aspect is further explained below.

Draft Local Plan Objectives

3.3 Based on the feedback received last year and also taking account of relevant national policy and Oxfordshire specific considerations, Officers have prepared a series of draft Local Plan objectives.

3.4 These are set out on a thematic basis for ease of reference but it should be noted that there are inevitably some overlaps between different objectives such as those relating to climate change, the environment and health and well-being.

3.5 As these objectives will ultimately form the basis upon which the new plan is prepared, it is important to gauge early feedback so that they can be refined as the plan takes shape.

3.6 The wording of each objective is presented along with a brief explanation as to why the objective has been prepared and an indication of the anticipated policy coverage when the Local Plan reaches a more advanced stage.

Potential Scenarios for the Future Pattern of Development in the District

3.7 In accordance with national policy, all Local Plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to meet development needs, aligns growth and infrastructure, improves the environment, mitigates climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapts to its effects.

3.8 The current Local Plan is based on a 'hierarchal' approach which, in summary, seeks to focus growth primarily at the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton followed by rural service centres such as Eynsham and Woodstock with more limited growth then taking place in larger villages. Development in small villages, hamlets and open countryside is restricted to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location.

3.9 Officers are keen to understand whether there is support for this approach being rolled forward in relation to any further planned growth or whether the new Local Plan should be looking to take a different approach.

3.10 The focused consultation paper therefore presents a series of different scenarios for the future pattern of development (beyond existing commitments), including:

Scenario 1 – Hierarchal Approach

- Essentially a business as usual type scenario, whereby the current hierarchal strategy of the adopted Local Plan is rolled forward to 2041. This would see growth continued to be focused primarily at the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton followed by the rural service centres and larger villages.

Scenario 2 – Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)

- Under this scenario, there would be a greater focus on development taking place at the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton and thus proportionately less growth at the rural service centres and villages.

Scenario 3 – Witney Focus

- Here, Witney would be the principal focus for development, with proportionately less growth then taking place at the other main service centres of Carterton and Chipping Norton and at the rural service centres and villages.

Scenario 4 – Carterton Focus

- Under scenario 4, Carterton would be the principal focus for development, with proportionately less growth then taking place at the other main service centres of Witney and Chipping Norton and at the rural service centres and villages.

Scenario 5 – Dispersed Growth

- Scenario 5 would see a more ‘dispersed’ pattern of growth, whereby there is less of a focus on growth taking place at the main service centres and rural service centres and a more even distribution of development across the District including at the villages.

Scenario 6 – Village ‘Clusters’

- Scenario 6 is similar to scenario 5 insofar as growth would be intentionally dispersed across the District but rather than individual villages being treated in isolation, they would be considered in ‘clusters’ based on the services and facilities they can collectively offer (e.g. education, retail, employment opportunities).

Scenario 7 – New Settlement

- Under scenario 7, future growth would be concentrated primarily in a single location in the form of a planned new settlement.

Scenario 8 – Public Transport Focus

- The final scenario relates to public transport availability and would see future growth focused along key public transport corridors and hubs.

3.11 The views which are received on these different scenarios will be taken into account alongside consideration of relevant supporting evidence (including housing and employment needs and sustainability appraisal) to help inform a preferred approach.

3.12 It should be noted that the scenarios presented are not mutually exclusive and it may be that a combination of certain elements is shown to be the most appropriate way forward.

Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities

- 3.13** A Local Plan is primarily a land-use document, setting out criteria-based policies to ensure that land is brought forward for appropriate uses in suitable, sustainable locations and allocating land for specific uses such as housing, employment and retail.
- 3.14** The third aspect of the consultation is therefore an open invitation for stakeholders to put forward their thoughts on how land across the District might be used in the future – effectively a call for sites, ideas and opportunities that can be further explored through the Local Plan as it takes shape.
- 3.15** The scope of this exercise is purposefully broad, seeking views on land that may be suitable for the following sorts of uses:
- New housing;
 - Employment;
 - Retail and other commercial development (e.g. hotels, leisure)
 - Community use;
 - Supporting infrastructure;
 - Green space provision;
 - Areas for nature recovery and biodiversity enhancements;
 - Renewable energy provision.
- 3.16** This list is not intended to be exhaustive – rather it is intended to provide an indication of the type of suggestions that Officers are looking for and all ideas will be carefully considered as the Local Plan is taken forward.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1** Subject to the approval of Members, the focused consultation paper attached at Annex A will be published for a period of public consultation beginning in August. To take account of the summer holiday period, an extended period of consultation of between 8-10 weeks is considered to be appropriate.
- 4.2** The consultation will comprise a combination of online digital engagement and in-person events, the nature and scope of which is currently under consideration. Further information on these consultation events and activities will be publicised in due course.
- 4.3** In parallel, Officers will continue to prepare and commission the supporting technical evidence that will be needed to further inform the content of the Local Plan and ultimately demonstrate its soundness when considered at examination.
- 4.4** Depending on the outcome of these two processes, Officers are aiming to be in a position to present and further consult on a series of preferred policy options later in the year before moving to formal publication and submission of the draft plan in 2024.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 The District Council could choose not to progress with an update of the Local Plan. However, local authorities are required to keep plans up to date, typically reviewing them every 5-years or so.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The preparation and adoption of a new Local Plan has significant financial implications with provision for this having been made through the District Council's budget setting process.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The report raises no direct legal implications. The Local Plan is being prepared in accordance with legislative requirements and when considered at examination, the appointed Planning Inspector will determine whether or not the District Council has fulfilled those requirements.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The report presents no significant risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1 The preparation of the new Local Plan will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment as it reaches a more advanced stage later this year and next.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 As set out in Annex A, the climate and ecological emergencies are intended to form a central component of the new Local Plan and the policies contained therein.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 None.

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ANNEX A

**West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041
Focused Consultation Paper**

July 2023

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Progress to date – what have we learned so far?**
- 3. Purpose of this consultation – what are we looking to find out?**
- 4. Draft Local Plan objectives**
- 5. Potential Scenarios for the Future Pattern of Development**
- 6. Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities**
- 7. Next steps**
- 8. Further advice and information**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is preparing a new Local Plan which will help shape the future of West Oxfordshire to 2041.
- 1.2 Having an up-to-date plan in place is vital because it provides a vision and framework to guide decisions on how, where and when development can come forward and how we can protect and enhance our surroundings for current and future generations.
- 1.3 Working closely with local communities and key stakeholders, we have the opportunity to update our evidence and introduce better, stronger policies on critical issues such as climate change, water quality, housing and jobs, supporting infrastructure, town centres, nature recovery and health and well-being.
- 1.4 In terms of process, preparing a Local Plan falls into two main stages:
 - **Plan preparation**¹ - is when the Council carries out informal engagement on the potential scope of the Local Plan and explores different options to inform emerging policies and proposals and help identify a preferred approach.
 - **Publication**² – is the formal stage when the Council produces the final draft version of the plan which it considers to be ‘sound’ and ready for independent examination.
- 1.5 We are currently at the plan preparation stage, seeking views on the general scope and content of the new Local Plan. An initial consultation ‘[Your Voice Counts](#)’ took place last year through which we explored six potential ‘areas of focus’.
- 1.6 The consultation generated valuable feedback and we are now looking to move the conversation on so that we can start to identify some preferred policy approaches.
- 1.7 In particular, we are seeking comments on three specific areas:
 - **Draft local plan objectives** – a series of draft objectives which are intended to guide the future evolution of the plan in terms of its overall approach and anticipated policy content;
 - **The future pattern of development in West Oxfordshire** – different scenarios for how and where we might look to focus future growth in the period up to 2041;

¹ Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

² Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

- **Call for sites, ideas and opportunities** – an open invitation for stakeholders to put forward their thoughts on how land in the District might be used in the future such as new housing, employment, infrastructure, community use, green space, nature recovery and renewable energy.

1.8 The consultation runs for **X**-weeks from **X** to **X** and the feedback received will be used to inform a series of preferred policy approaches which will be the subject of further consultation later in 2023.

1.9 So that we are able to more easily review the responses received, we are encouraging all stakeholders to respond using our online digital platform: **WEB LINK TO BE ADDED**

1.10 Alternatively, written comments can also be submitted as follows:

- Email: planning.consultation@westoxon.gov.uk
- Write to: Planning Policy Team, Woodgreen, New Yatt Road, Witney, OX28 1NB

2. Progress to date – what have we learned so far?

- 2.1 To kick start the new Local Plan, we ran a 6-week consultation last year called '[Your Voice Counts](#)'.
- 2.2 The purpose of the consultation was to generate early debate on which issues the new Local Plan should be looking to focus on. This is to ensure that the plan is specific and relevant to West Oxfordshire and its local communities.
- 2.3 Six potential 'areas of focus' were identified as follows:
 1. Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
 2. Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
 3. An enhanced natural and built environment
 4. Attractive, accessible and thriving places
 5. Meeting the housing needs of all
 6. A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy
- 2.4 Respondents were asked whether they agreed in principle with each area of focus and then more specifically for views on potential measures which the new Local Plan might look to introduce such as zero carbon buildings and affordable homes.
- 2.5 The consultation was held predominantly online although supported by two events held with Town and Parish Councils and key stakeholders.
- 2.6 The online consultation attracted a good response with over 5,000 visitors, 441 respondents and 1,143 contributions. Just under 3,000 people also signed up for future news updates.



- 2.7 A [consultation summary report](#) was published in April providing an overview of the responses received.
- 2.8 The report demonstrates a strong level of support for the 6 areas of focus and we are now confident that they form a solid basis for developing the new Local Plan.
- 2.9 Good support was also expressed for many of the more specific ideas we put forward which is helpful as we look to consider how these might be taken forward as potential policies.

3. Purpose of this consultation – what are we looking to find out?

3.1 Developing a new Local Plan should be a genuinely iterative and engaging process. The Council wants to avoid a situation whereby local communities and key stakeholders are presented with a series of worked-up policies and proposals late in the day, with little or no chance to influence them.

3.2 That is why we ran the initial ‘Your Voice Counts’ consultation last year and why we are now looking to move the conversation on and start thinking about the shape of the new Local Plan and the policies and proposals it should include.

3.3 To do this, we are looking for responses on 3 three specific areas:

- Draft local plan objectives;
- The future pattern of development in West Oxfordshire; and
- Call for sites, ideas and opportunities.

Draft Local Plan objectives

3.4 To guide the content of the Local Plan, influence development and measure progress once the plan is adopted, we need to establish a set of overarching plan objectives.

3.5 Taking account of relevant national and local considerations and responses to our initial consultation last year, we have prepared a series of draft objectives and are looking for feedback on those.

The Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire

3.6 A key role of the Local Plan is to shape the future pattern of development in terms of where new homes, jobs and other land uses will come forward across the District. In planning terminology, this is often referred to as a ‘Spatial Strategy’.

3.7 We are therefore seeking views on what approach the Council should take in its new Local Plan - in particular whether we should be looking to roll forward the current Local Plan strategy or look to do something different.

3.8 A series of potential scenarios are presented and we would welcome feedback on these.

Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities

3.9 The third aspect of this consultation is an open invitation to put forward sites, ideas and opportunities for how land within the District might be used in the future. This could include existing sites and how they might be re-purposed or undeveloped land that could potentially be brought forward for a new use.

4. Draft Local Plan objectives

4.1 Having a clear set of plan objectives is helpful for a number of reasons:

- It helps to guide the overall content of the Local Plan, providing context for emerging policies and proposals;
- Objectives form part of the Local Plan itself and therefore have an influence on how development proposals are put together and assessed; and
- They allow us to measure progress once the plan is adopted, helping us understand if the plan is delivering as expected.

4.2 Set out below is a series of draft plan objectives which we would welcome your feedback on. These are set out under the six areas of focus we consulted on last year because these were well supported and provide a sound basis upon which to develop the new Local Plan.

4.3 To further explain our thinking, we have also included a more detailed table which summarises why each objective has been identified and sets out the potential policy topics we anticipate as being needed to deliver it. These are initial thoughts only and our preferred approach will be refined in light of the comments we receive and emerging evidence.

Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency

Objective 1 - To minimise the impact we are having on our changing climate by reducing carbon emissions across all sources, with a particular focus on transport, housing, industry and energy.

Objective 2 - To facilitate the roll out of clean, renewable energy at a range of different scales in suitable, appropriate locations across the District.

Objective 3 - To respond and effectively adapt to the consequences of climate change that are already happening, building resilience and wherever possible, reversing harmful impacts, including nature's decline.

Objective 4 - To make the most efficient use of land, buildings and natural capital and ensure that waste is minimised whilst being seen as a valuable resource.

Healthy, Safe, Strong and Inclusive Communities

Objective 5 - To help achieve thriving communities where people can lead healthy, happy and sustainable lives, going about their daily activities in well-designed, safe, crime-free, inclusive and accessible environments.

Objective 6 - To create environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles through promoting physical activity for people of all ages and abilities, including maximising safe and convenient opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport and the provision of sport, recreation and play facilities and high quality green space.

Objective 7 - To deliver integrated and inclusive environments that promote good mental health and wellbeing for those living, working and visiting West Oxfordshire and help tackle mental health issues.

Objective 8 - To create a healthier food environment, with the opportunity for people to make better food choices, including growing and consuming healthy food locally.

Objective 9 - To identify and secure the timely investment in infrastructure needed for health and wellbeing and the care system, including measures for the prevention of health related problems.

An Enhanced Natural and Built Environment

Objective 10 - To conserve and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of West Oxfordshire's countryside, at both a strategic level (e.g. the Cotswolds) and a local level, recognising its contribution to people's quality of life and the area's social and economic wellbeing.

Objective 11 – To conserve and enhance biodiversity, supporting resilient habitats for species and robust and valued environments for people, where natural capital and the benefits of ecosystem services are recognised, valued and invested in over the long term and measurable net gains in biodiversity are achieved locally.

Objective 12 - To achieve a healthy water environment, where better water management and multiple benefits for people and wildlife are provided, through the use of an integrated water management approach that brings together sustainable

water supply, usage and recycling, wastewater disposal, improvement of water quality and flood risk management.

Objective 13 - *Protect and enhance the quality of environmental assets by avoiding harmful impacts of all forms of pollution, especially on local amenity, health, landscape character and biodiversity.*

Objective 14 - *Conserve and enhance the character and significance of the historic and cultural environment, recognising and promoting the wider contribution to people's quality of life and social and economic wellbeing and enabling sensitive adaptation in light of climate change.*

Attractive, Accessible and Thriving Places

Objective 15 – *To provide a framework within which West Oxfordshire's resident communities and businesses are able to thrive across a network of attractive, safe and inclusive, vibrant and well-connected market towns and villages.*

Objective 16 – *To ensure that all new development in West Oxfordshire is underpinned by a high quality, innovative and inclusive approach to design.*

Objective 17 – *To create a safe, welcoming and accessible environment in which West Oxfordshire's town and village centres can adapt and prosper, taking advantage of changing trends and shopping habitats to ensure they remain a destination of choice.*

Objective 18 – *To achieve equality and inclusivity within our local communities by ensuring that everyone is able to access the core services and facilities that they need to meet their daily needs.*

Objective 19 - *To empower and enable local communities to positively shape and influence the future of their area from the 'grass roots' up.*

Meeting the Housing Needs of All

Objective 20 - To enable the delivery of a continual supply of high quality, well-designed and sustainable new homes to meet identified housing needs in the period 2021 – 2041.

Objective 21 - To ensure that new homes in West Oxfordshire are genuinely affordable over the short and longer-term to a broad range of people, including those who are not able to afford market priced housing to buy or rent.

Objective 22 - To make sure everyone is able to access the home that they need.

Objective 23 - To ensure that the type, size and tenure of new homes coming forward helps to create a balanced and sustainable mix of opportunities and encourages community cohesion and well-being.

Objective 24 - To make the most efficient use of the District's current housing stock and maximise the opportunities presented by existing and previously developed land and buildings.

A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy

Objective 25 - To provide the framework within which the West Oxfordshire economy can thrive and diversify, building on its inherent strengths and capitalising on future growth potential to increase economic productivity, well-being and resilience.

Objective 26 - To enable the delivery of a balanced portfolio of high quality employment land to provide flexibility, meet identified needs and cater for a broad range of user requirements over the plan period.

Objective 27 - To support West Oxfordshire's existing and future economic assets by providing the right infrastructure, land and premises, enabling them to improve, expand and adapt as appropriate and ensuring they are not lost to other uses where they have an important economic, social and environmental role to play.

Objective 28 - To provide flexibility to be able to respond to future trends and technological changes to support working practices such as increases in remote, hybrid and co-working.

Objective 29 - *To ensure that all residents of West Oxfordshire are able to benefit from improved education, training and skills opportunities to enhance their economic and social well-being to strengthen the local economy and benefit small and start-up businesses.*

Objective 30 - *To celebrate the rurality of our District, enabling the sustainable growth, expansion and diversification of the rural economy and providing support for farmers and other rural businesses including those linked to the visitor economy.*

Table 1 – Further Explanation of Draft Local Plan Objectives

Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency		
Draft Local Plan Objective	Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?	What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?
<p>Objective 1</p> <p><i>To minimise the impact we are having on our changing climate by reducing carbon emissions across all sources, with a particular focus on transport, housing, industry and energy.</i></p>	<p>Mitigating our impact on climate change is a core theme of national policy, with the planning system having a key role in transitioning to a low carbon future.</p> <p>Although many of the consequences of climate change are already ‘locked in’, we need to limit any further impact we have, in particular reducing carbon emissions.</p> <p>This includes ‘operational’ carbon emissions from buildings and ‘embodied’ carbon associated with building materials, construction and maintenance.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision looks to place the County at the forefront of UK and global de-carbonisation efforts, by maximising all opportunities to significantly reduce Oxfordshire’s carbon footprint.</p> <p>Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire³ (PaZCO) aims to achieve a 50% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050 in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>At the District level, the Council’s Climate Change Strategy (2021- 2025) commits us to working in partnership with Oxfordshire councils and partners to support the transition to ultra-low-emission transport and active travel, a zero-carbon economy and clean energy supply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net zero operation carbon in new build: fossil fuel free, 100% powered by renewable energy and achieves high energy performance; • Embodied carbon: best practice targets are met and buildings are made from re-used materials and can be disassembled at the end of life in accordance with circular economy principles; • Retrofit: reduce energy consumption in existing buildings and prioritise occupant and building health;

³ <https://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/news/2021/0629-pathways-to-zero-carbon-oxfordshire.html>

	<p>Building on this, our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to drive down carbon emissions from Council operations and pursue a drive to net zero carbon buildings in new developments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewable and low-carbon energy provision, including electrification of heat generation and transport and fossil fuel free; • Pattern of development (spatial strategy); • ‘Living local’ / 20 minute neighbourhood concept; • Active and healthy travel; • Location, orientation and design of buildings.
<p>Objective 2</p> <p><i>To facilitate the roll out of clean, renewable energy at a range of different scales in suitable, appropriate locations across the District.</i></p>	<p>The UK’s net zero strategy⁴ is based largely on the electrification of transport and heat provision and decarbonising electricity generation.</p> <p>The rapid roll-out of renewable energy is essential and the Local Plan has a key role to play in supporting this.</p> <p>Pathways to a Zero Carbon Oxfordshire⁵ (PaZCO) highlights the need to increase local renewable electricity generation in response to an expected doubling of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential identification / allocation of areas suitable for renewable and low carbon energy and/or criteria-based approach to guide future development;

⁴ [Build Back Greener \(2021\)](#)

⁵ <https://www.eci.ox.ac.uk/news/2021/0629-pathways-to-zero-carbon-oxfordshire.html>

	<p>electricity demand due to the electrification of heating, transportation and high population growth.</p> <p>Our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to encourage renewable energy generation at appropriate sites in the District, improving local energy and economic resilience and supporting the community benefits that this resilience will bring.</p> <p>Strong support was also expressed through our initial consultation last year for the roll-out of more renewable and low-carbon energy solutions, particularly where there would be a benefit to the local community and subject to there being no harmful impact on the countryside.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy including Neighbourhood Planning; • Renewable / low-carbon energy provision in new build development; • Retrofitting of low and zero carbon energy solutions in existing buildings.
<p>Objective 3</p> <p><i>To respond and effectively adapt to the consequences of climate change that are already happening, building resilience and wherever possible, reversing harmful impacts, including nature’s decline.</i></p>	<p>It is commonly accepted that many of the harmful impacts of climate change are already ‘locked-in’ despite concerted efforts to limit further impacts.</p> <p>Planning has a key role to play in ensuring that we respond and adapt to the inevitable consequences of climate change such as drought, heatwaves and more intense rainfall and flooding.</p> <p>This is reflected in national policy which requires local plans to take a proactive approach towards climate adaptation including flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes and risk of overheating.</p> <p>More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision highlights the importance of developing greater resilience to climate change and a natural environment that is more biodiverse, supporting social, economic and ecological resilience and having the capacity to adapt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood risk – ensuring that the future impacts of climate change are taken into account in the design and location of new development; • Promotion of nature-based solutions in the design of new development (e.g. use of urban cooling, natural flood defence); • Sustainable building design measures to avoid

	<p>Our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to support local communities in adapting equally so that climate change does not further exacerbate any inequalities.</p> <p>This is not to say however that we must simply accept climate change as an inevitable consequence of our actions. Indeed, there is a good argument to suggest we should be going further and seeking to reverse some of the impacts that have already been set in motion such as species decline.</p> <p>There is much the new Local Plan can do in this respect, including in relation to flood risk, water efficiency, the location, design and orientation of development, nature recovery and potentially identifying land that may be needed for future climate adaptation measures such as natural flood management.</p>	<p>overheating, increase ventilation and promote increased resource efficiency (e.g. water efficiency measures, grey water recycling);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of green infrastructure, trees and woodland to promote carbon sequestration and provide increased shade/cooling; • Nature recovery/habitat restoration and connectivity; • Biodiversity net gain; • Potential identification of land that may be appropriate for climate adaptation measures.
<p>Objective 4</p> <p><i>To make the most efficient use of land, buildings and natural capital and ensure</i></p>	<p>In defining the environmental aspects of sustainable development, national policy emphasises need to make effective use of land, use natural resources prudently and minimise waste and pollution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of a ‘natural capital’ based approach to new development;

<p><i>that waste is minimised whilst being seen as a valuable resource.</i></p>	<p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision defines what ‘good growth’ looks like including a ‘de-coupling’ of growth from the consumption of finite resources.</p> <p>Through our Council Plan, we have also committed to being a progressive custodian of our environmental resources, supporting a healthy natural landscape and functioning ecosystem which is rich in wildlife and habitats that are enjoyed by and benefit all.</p> <p>In response to our initial consultation last year, strong support was expressed for making more efficient use of land and buildings including the use of previously developed sites.</p> <p>Support was also expressed for waste being considered at all stages of development in line with ‘circular economy’ principles which aim to keep resources in use for longer, minimise waste and maximise re-use, recycling and recovery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development densities - to ensure the most efficient use of land and buildings; • Efficient use of resources (e.g. water, building materials); • Re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land/buildings; • Waste – embedding circular economy principles in new development (waste seen as a resource with a focus on keeping resources in use for as long as possible).
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Healthy, Safe, Strong and Inclusive Communities		
Draft Local Plan Objective	Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?	What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?
<p>Objective 5</p> <p><i>To help achieve thriving communities where people can lead healthy, happy and sustainable lives, going about their daily activities in well-designed, safe, crime-free, inclusive and accessible environments.</i></p>	<p>A core national planning principle is for there to be a focus on the health of local communities, by taking into account and supporting the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all sections of the community.</p> <p>Recent research highlights that nationally the last decade has been marked by deteriorating health and widening health inequalities, emphasising that ‘for men and women everywhere the time spent in poor health is increasing’.</p> <p>While the health of residents in West Oxfordshire is generally good, there are health inequalities and hidden pockets of deprivation, as well as increasingly issues associated with, for example, overweight/obesity, rural isolation, depression and strokes and respiratory diseases.</p> <p>The place we live – the built, natural and social environment – can have a profound impact on our health and well-being and shaping our communities by planning for health and well-being provides an opportunity to influence and establish positive behaviour, healthier lifestyle habits and inclusive communities.</p> <p>The concept of healthy place shaping has been endorsed across Oxfordshire, with the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision aiming to achieve healthier and happier residents and improved overall wellbeing by 2050.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of locally relevant healthy place shaping principles; • ‘Living local’ / 20 minute neighbourhood concept; • Design quality expectations (e.g. Building for a Healthy Life, Healthy Homes Principles); • Use of Health Impact Assessments and the Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit.

	<p>One of the five priorities of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan is to enable a good quality of life for all.</p> <p>There was also a strong level of support for the adoption of healthy place shaping principles in our initial consultation last year, with particular support for the use of Health Impact Assessments (HIA) both at the plan-making stage and when considering future development proposals (e.g. accessibility of buildings).</p>	
<p>Objective 6</p> <p><i>To create environments that support and encourage healthy lifestyles through promoting physical activity for people of all ages and abilities, including maximising safe and convenient opportunities for walking, cycling and the use of public transport and the provision of sport, recreation and play facilities and high quality green space.</i></p>	<p>In recognition that a lack of physical activity can damage health, Public Health England are aiming to get ‘everyone active, every day’⁶. In Oxfordshire, almost 20% of the adult population are physically inactive (undertaking less than 30 minutes per week) and 79% of children and young people do not meet guidelines of 60 minutes daily activity.</p> <p>A particular focus for Public Health in Oxfordshire is ‘Healthy weight, healthy communities, healthy lives’ and the Local Plan has an important role to play in promoting healthy weight environments and influencing opportunities for leisure time, sport, recreation and play, which are vital to good health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Nationally⁷, increased emphasis is being placed on enabling people to incorporate movement, including walking and cycling, into their daily activities.</p> <p>Our Council Plan sets commits us to working with the County Council and others to increase opportunities for travelling on foot or by bike, or on public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating health-promoting, healthy-weight environments;⁸ • Local prescribed standards for leisure facilities, playing fields, open space, green infrastructure, etc. • Active design principles, covering such criteria as: walkable, safe communities; connected walking and cycling routes; multifunctional open space; and appropriate infrastructure. Making use

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-5-years-on/everybody-active-every-day-5-years-on>

⁷ For example within Sport England and Public Health England

⁸ https://tcpa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/GC_PracticalGuide_Health1.pdf

	<p>transport, to reduce car dependence and benefit from the health and economic benefits of doing so.</p> <p>Many of the responses to our initial consultation last year made specific reference to active travel and its role in promoting healthy communities including the importance of the Council working with key partners, particularly to achieve safe routes to schools and integrated networks of accessible green space.</p> <p>84% of those who replied said that it was important that the Council supports improved physical health by providing a range of opportunities for leisure and recreation, walking and cycling including access to the open countryside.</p>	<p>of Sport England’s Active Design guidance;⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local design codes.
<p>Objective 7</p> <p><i>To deliver integrated and inclusive environments that promote good mental health and wellbeing for those living, working and visiting West Oxfordshire and help tackle mental health issues.</i></p>	<p>Mental illness can be more common, long-lasting and have a greater effect than many other health conditions. It is estimated that one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health condition and this figure is increasing. Locally, the prevalence of depression recorded by all GP surgeries has risen, particularly in Witney.</p> <p>As West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district, with limited public transport and key facilities in some areas, isolation and loneliness are factors affecting mental health. Loneliness is also felt in urban areas, particularly by older people, and by vulnerable minorities, including disabled people and ethnic minorities.</p> <p>Feeling lonely is often linked to low life expectancy (on a par with smoking or obesity) and to increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke, depression, cognitive decline and Alzheimer’s disease.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision of high quality, accessible public spaces and social community infrastructure, including an emphasis on measures/facilities that help to address mental health and wellbeing and support social integration, interaction and inclusion; Improved access to services, including through active travel, especially encouraging

⁹ <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-inspiration/new-active-design-guidance-published>

	<p>Planning can help influence mental health through delivering well-designed places, for example, through the provision of quality, accessible, safe greenspace, public realm and community space and improved access to nature and cultural activities.</p> <p>In response to our initial consultation last year, a number of comments raised the issue of isolation and inequality, calling for a positive and effective strategy to tackle it, including improved public transport (costs and service) the provision of affordable homes and making use of community activation measures.</p> <p>85% of those responding to the question on mental health said it was an important issue for the Council to address.</p>	<p>intergenerational, community and cultural uses;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design criteria to include measures to address safety, crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; • Design criteria to include the creation of dementia-friendly spaces, buildings and communities.
<p>Objective 8</p> <p><i>To create a healthier food environment, with the opportunity for people to make better food choices, including growing and consuming healthy food locally.</i></p>	<p>Poor diet and nutrition are recognised as major contributory risk factors for ill health and premature death.</p> <p>In terms of healthy food and healthy weight indicators, West Oxfordshire residents tend to perform relatively poorly in comparison with other local districts. For example, the proportion of adults in West Oxfordshire who are overweight (61%) exceeds the county average (58%).</p> <p>Supporting ‘healthy weight environments’ (including improving the food environment for both consumption and production of healthier food) is a priority for Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>76% of those responding to our initial consultation last year, agreed that the Council should enable the provision of opportunities to grow food locally and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards and guidance on community food growing spaces, including allotments; • Edible planting in landscape schemes, including fruit and nut trees and opportunities for foraging; • Multi-purpose social and community hubs, e.g. for cooking clubs, food

	<p>make healthier food choices. Specific reference was made to the need for more allotments and orchards and provision for younger people.</p> <p>Recent events – such as Brexit, the war in Ukraine and rising fuel, food and other living costs - have highlighted the need to re-evaluate the entire food system, including addressing issues of food poverty, food security, diet-related health and impacts on the natural environment.</p> <p>In 2022, the Oxfordshire Food Strategy was developed through a multi-stakeholder group to improve Oxfordshire’s food system and make it more sustainable, affordable and resilient. A Food Action Plan for West Oxfordshire is now being drawn up, with four priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build vibrant food communities with the capacity and skills to enjoy food together; • Strengthen short, transparent local food supply chains; • Grow the local food economy through enterprise, local jobs, local wealth generation; • Tackle food poverty and diet-related ill-health. 	<p>larders and selling local produce;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of best and most versatile agricultural land; • Agriculture - including sustainable farming enterprises (agro-ecological measures, regenerative farming, diversification and small holdings).
<p>Objective 9</p> <p><i>To identify and secure the timely investment in infrastructure needed for health and wellbeing and the care system, including measures for the prevention of health related problems.</i></p>	<p>National policy highlights the importance of identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure, to reflect current and future needs and to support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being.</p> <p>The NHS make clear that strong, vibrant, sustainable and cohesive communities require good quality, accessible public services and infrastructure. Access and proximity to health and social care, education, community and sports facilities as well as employment opportunities, retail options and access to healthy food can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement that new development and existing local communities are supported by effective and timely investment in supporting infrastructure, such as, health care, schools, green spaces and utilities;

	<p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision expects high-quality development that is properly supported by necessary infrastructure, including excellent digital connectivity.</p> <p>Our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) seeks to ensure the timely provision of built and green infrastructure which meets the needs of existing and incoming residents and, supports health and care to enable physical and mental well-being, community cohesion and deliver a high quality of life.</p> <p>It also aims to support the retention of existing and development of new services and facilities that contribute to the local economy, community wellbeing and cohesion.</p> <p>In response to our initial consultation last year, there was overwhelming support for the Council seeking to ensure that new development and local communities are supported by effective and timely investment in supporting infrastructure with 90% of those replying saying this is important.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about existing local services and facilities (especially in relation to difficulties in getting appointments with GPs and dentists and the paucity of leisure facilities) and the fear that the situation will be made worse by additional development.</p> <p>Even when improvements to infrastructure are planned, there is concern that these will be inadequate and/or come forward too late with a call for infrastructure to be properly secured (e.g. through developer contributions) and provided ‘in-step’ with new development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Major developments to be supported by site-specific Infrastructure Delivery Plans with clear details of phasing, implementation and long term management, maintenance and stewardship, where necessary;• Provision of multi-functional, shared, adaptable infrastructure where possible e.g. village/community hub, dual-use school facilities and green/public spaces.
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	In preparing the new Local Plan we will carefully consider the infrastructure which is needed to support any further planned growth to 2041. This will involve close liaison with service providers and with local communities (who can help in identifying local community priorities and needs) about what improvements are needed, when they are needed and how they will be funded and delivered.	
An Enhanced Natural and Built Environment		
Draft Local Plan Objective	Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?	What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?
<p>Objective 10</p> <p><i>To conserve and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of West Oxfordshire’s countryside, at both a strategic level (e.g. the Cotswolds) and a local level, recognising its contribution to people’s quality of life and the area’s social and economic wellbeing.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises the need for the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside to be recognised as part of an overarching objective to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment.</p> <p>More locally, one of the guiding principles of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision is to enhance the natural environment through valuing our countryside, landscape, greenspaces and environmental assets, protecting them where necessary and seeking new opportunities to add to and enhance them.¹⁰</p> <p>West Oxfordshire’s countryside is distinctive and varied, contributing to the district’s character. River valleys and wet meadows, historic parkland, ancient forest remnants, and undulating wolds landscape are important features.</p> <p>Almost a third of the district has national recognition for its landscape and scenic beauty – the Cotswolds National Landscape (NL) – and, on the eastern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally-specific measures to conserve and enhance the overall character and beauty of our countryside and landscape, recognising the inter-relationship with the built environment and its multi-functional role (e.g. productive, biodiversity rich and an environment for activity); The approach to character and beauty for the Cotswolds NL, in the

¹⁰ https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Strategic-Vision_V0.7.pdf

	<p>edge, lies part of the Oxford Green Belt, both areas of which are given special protection through national planning policy.</p> <p>Our initial consultation last year highlighted how important people considered the character and beauty of West Oxfordshire’s countryside - 97% of those addressing this issue said it is important for the Council to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and to proactively consider opportunities to enhance the Cotswolds NL and Oxford Green Belt.</p> <p>Specific feedback makes reference to the natural landscape being a key asset of the District, how all countryside needs to be protected (not just the NL and Green Belt), the importance of retaining high value agricultural land and that a landscape-led approach to development should be adopted. A number of responses emphasised the need to consider tranquillity, dark skies and lighting, especially within the Cotswolds.</p> <p>Given the rural nature of West Oxfordshire and the predominant land use of its countryside as farmland, the many national and local initiatives emerging (in part because of Brexit and fears over food security) will impact on the character of the landscape.</p> <p>Where these initiatives meet the Council’s objectives, they will generally be supported, such as Defra’s recent Landscape Recovery Project. Likewise, landscape-scale initiatives related to nature’s recovery and environmental improvements will be supported, for example the Wychwood Forest and the Lower Windrush Valley Project.</p>	<p>context of the Cotswolds Conservation Board’s Management Plan and guidance documents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural design quality;• West Oxfordshire-specific approach to the Oxford Green Belt, including opportunities for enhancement;• Support for landscape-scale initiatives such as catchment sensitive farming, NE Cotswolds Farm Cluster Project (and Defra Landscape Recovery Project), the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Project, Wychwood Forest Trust and strategic green infrastructure networks.
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<p>Objective 11</p> <p><i>To conserve and enhance biodiversity, supporting resilient habitats for species and robust and valued environments for people, where natural capital and the benefits of ecosystem services are recognised, valued and invested in over the long term and measurable net gains in biodiversity are achieved locally.</i></p>	<p>Biodiversity (biological diversity) is the variety of life on Earth: genes, species and ecosystems. It includes all species of animals and plants and the habitats and natural systems that support them.</p> <p>Despite commitments made by the Government in 1992, biodiversity has been in long-term decline with the Oxfordshire State of Nature report¹¹ and the UK State of Nature Report¹² both pointing to a continuing decline in species and habitats.</p> <p>National policy has been strengthened with the Government’s current 25-Year Environment Plan emphasising the importance of biodiversity in achieving sustainable development and shifting from an approach based on ‘no net loss’ to one requiring positive ‘biodiversity net gain’.</p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 is introducing new incentives, actions and planning tools to drive improvements for nature, including mandatory requirements for biodiversity net gain (BNG) through the planning system (where the natural environment is left in a measurably better state post-development) and the creation of Nature Recovery Networks through Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS).</p> <p>In response to our initial consultation last year, 87% of those responding on the issue biodiversity wished to see an increase in biodiversity, including a requirement for exemplary BNG. Specific issues highlighted included the potential impacts of public access on nature, the importance of robust management of sites and the need for the allocation of areas for biodiversity creation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking a natural capital approach to biodiversity conservation and enhancement, with a focus on valuing nature’s services and achieving nature-based solutions. • A West Oxfordshire-specific pro-active approach to conserving and enhancing biodiversity, making use of a local Biodiversity Toolkit and integrating opportunities for nature recovery. • Setting out local requirements and guiding principles for BNG. • Mapping Local Nature Recovery Networks and supporting the Oxfordshire LNRS.
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¹¹ <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/oxfordshires-nature/oxfordshires-state-of-nature>

¹² <https://nbn.org.uk/stateofnature2019/>

	<p>As the national requirement for major developments to provide at least a 10% net gain becomes mandatory in November 2023 (and for all development in April 2024), a local plan policy is not essential.</p> <p>However, if a local approach to BNG can be justified, a policy could be pursued, for example, advocating a higher percentage net gain and requiring any off-site delivery to be in West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Natural England published a Green Infrastructure Framework in February 2023¹³ in order to ‘make a significant contribution to nature recovery by embedding nature into new developments.’ It provides resources that can be applied locally. Oxfordshire County Council provides useful existing information and guidance.¹⁴¹⁵</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Standards and setting local standards / requirements for high-quality green infrastructure schemes close to where people live and work, making use of local information and guidance.
<p>Objective 12</p> <p><i>To achieve a healthy water environment, where better water management and multiple benefits for people and wildlife are provided, through the use of an integrated water management approach that brings together sustainable water supply, usage and recycling, wastewater disposal,</i></p>	<p>Water, and its effective management, is vital to life. It is a precious and finite resource which needs to be protected, not only the sources of water (both surface and underground) and the quality of water, but also the general environment associated with the water system. Rivers provide important nature corridors, opportunities for recreation and the setting for many towns and villages.</p> <p>The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan sets out goals for improving the environment within a generation, including achieving clean and plentiful water by improving the natural state of the water system. River Basin Management Plans are seen as having an important role to play in this,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of a catchment-based approach to the management of water to deliver multiple benefits for people and wildlife, working collectively with a wide range of stakeholders. • Support for the Evenlode and Windrush Catchment Partnerships, e.g. for their

¹³ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>

¹⁴ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/countryside/natural-environment/environmental-policy-and-planning/green-infrastructure>

¹⁵ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/countryside/GreenInfrastructurefulltext.pdf>

<p><i>improvement of water quality and flood risk management.</i></p>	<p>identifying the challenges that threaten the water environment and how these challenges can be managed.</p> <p>West Oxfordshire lies within the Cotswolds management catchment of the Thames River Basin,¹⁶ where physical modifications, wastewater pollution (raw effluent) and pollution from rural areas (such as fertilizers and pesticides) are seen as particular issues preventing waters of the Evenlode and Windrush catchments achieving a good status.</p> <p>Local groups and researchers have raised concerns about our rivers, gathering substantial empirical evidence on their deteriorating health and quality.</p> <p>With three significant rivers flowing through the district (Thames, Windrush and Evenlode), flooding has long been an issue in West Oxfordshire, given added emphasis by extreme flooding in the summer of 2007. Climate change is leading to more flooding events.</p> <p>One of the Council Plan’s focus for action is to work with others to facilitate environmentally sensitive flood management of our river catchments.</p>	<p>work on natural flood risk management and catchment sensitive farming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making use of design standards, such as Building with Nature, to ensure delivery of high quality schemes. • Requirements for appropriate local flood risk mitigation, including for surface water drainage, to include the need for it to be effective, not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and maximise the opportunity to deliver environmental benefits. • Safeguarding floodplains and re-connecting rivers to their floodplain.
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¹⁶ <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/v/c3-plan/ManagementCatchment/3021>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of sustainable drainage systems that are designed to provide multi-functional, including in particular opportunities for biodiversity gain. • Adopting high water efficiency standards for all new development. • Ensuring appropriate water infrastructure is provided to support development (e.g. use of site-specific infrastructure delivery plans, potential use of planning conditions)
<p>Objective 13</p> <p><i>Protect and enhance the quality of environmental assets by avoiding harmful impacts of all forms of pollution, especially on local amenity, health, landscape character and biodiversity.</i></p>	<p>The Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan sets out goals for improving the environment and ‘leaving it a better state than when we found it’. Not only does the natural environment need to be protected from pollution, its quality needs to be improved.</p> <p>Development has the potential to affect the quality of land, soil, air and water which, in turn, impacts upon amenity, public health, biodiversity and quality of life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally specific policy based on an overall approach that development proposals which are likely to cause pollution or risk to safety must incorporate measures to minimise pollution and risk to a level that provides a high

	<p>Low air quality is experienced in the congested parts of our towns and villages, mainly due to vehicle emissions. The increasing use of electric vehicles should help, so too if a modal shift can be made towards walking and cycling. There are two particular areas of poor air quality, one in Witney and one in Chipping Norton. Air Quality Management Area Action Plans are currently being reviewed and updated, setting out specific measures to help reduce concentrations of air pollution.</p> <p>It is essential that the quality of our water bodies and groundwater resources is improved for a wide range of reasons, including local amenity, healthy and biodiversity.</p> <p>The value of our soils is also being increasingly recognised, not just as a resource for food production at a time of food security concerns but also for their role in water management, biodiversity enhancement and storage of carbon.</p> <p>There are multiple needs for external lighting, e.g. highway safety, sport floodlighting and security, but these needs require balancing against any adverse impacts lights might have, such as, on the nocturnal wildlife, local amenity and human health. National policy calls for careful control of light pollution on local areas, especially intrinsically dark skies and the natural environment.</p> <p>Although West Oxfordshire is a largely rural area, noise pollution is still an issue locally, often associated with road traffic and aircraft. Mitigation and design measures can be used to reduce noise nuisance and, as a general principle, significant and intrusive sources of noise should be kept away from properties and areas sensitive to noise.</p>	<p>standard of protection for health, environmental quality and amenity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement for development proposals to demonstrate that environmental risks have been evaluated and that appropriate measures have been taken to minimise the risks of adverse impact to air, land and water quality, e.g. through air quality assessments and detailed noise assessments. • Partnership working to deliver improvements in the quality of local environmental assets. • Delivery of air quality improvements, especially through the actions highlighted in the Witney and Chipping Norton Air Quality Management Area Action Plans.
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	<p>In our initial consultation last year, over 90% of those responding to the question on reducing all forms of pollution and improving environmental quality, identified it as important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential identification of Dark Skies.
<p>Objective 14</p> <p><i>Conserve and enhance the character and significance of the historic and cultural environment, recognising and promoting the wider contribution to people’s quality of life and social and economic wellbeing and enabling sensitive adaptation in light of climate change.</i></p>	<p>West Oxfordshire has a rich and varied historic environment that contributes to the area’s distinctive character and to its culture, economy and the quality of life of residents and visitors.</p> <p>National planning policy provides guidance on the identification, significance and protection of heritage assets – from sites and buildings of local historic value to listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, historic landscapes and archaeological remains. Heritage assets are to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.</p> <p>National policy requires a pro-active approach, with a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including considering opportunities for development.</p> <p>The Local Plan does not need to repeat national policy but should provide a locally specific policy approach, based on an understanding of the character and significance of West Oxfordshire’s overall historic environment and heritage assets and of the potential threats and opportunities locally.</p> <p>Improving this understanding will require partnership/collaborative working with key stakeholders, such as Parish Councils through Village Design Statements, and detailed evidence from developers and landowners as part of their proposals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally specific policies to conserve and enhance the historic environment, including in relation to addressing climate change and the use of renewable/low carbon energy. • New development required to seek opportunities to draw on the historic environment in order to maintain, respect and enhance local character and distinctiveness i.e. to be context, character-led. • Use of Heritage Impact Assessments and Conservation Management Plans.

	<p>An assessment of the implications of actual or predicted changes during the coming years will be needed, e.g. the implications on historic town centres of their changing function and the easing of planning control through changes in permitted development rights.</p> <p>It is also important to consider the historic environment in the context of climate change, such as through the use of energy in traditional and historic buildings, the amount of embodied energy within existing buildings, ways to sensitively retrofit energy and water efficiency measures and the assessment of impacts on historic landscapes of large-scale renewable energy.</p> <p>A number of specific points relating to the historic environment were raised through our initial consultation last year, including the importance of the new local plan being based on a positive approach to conservation and enjoyment, with a focus on enhancement, and considering the natural and historic environment, as well as climate change, in an integrated way throughout the plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design Coding to include addressing quality of growth in historic places.• Adoption of a ‘whole’ building approach’ in addressing climate change by integrating fabric measures (e.g. insulation, new windows and draught-proofing) and services (particularly ventilation, heating, controls and renewables) along with consideration of how people live and use buildings.• Encouraging local research, recording and advancing understanding of local historic character and significance, including through the preparation of Village Design Statements by our communities.• Specific approach for the Blenheim Palace World
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		Heritage Site and its setting, assessing how its exceptional cultural significance (Outstanding Universal Value) can be conserved and enhanced.
Attractive, Accessible and Thriving Places		
Draft Local Plan Objective	Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?	What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?
<p>Objective 15</p> <p><i>To provide a framework within which West Oxfordshire’s resident communities and businesses are able to thrive across a network of attractive, safe and inclusive, vibrant and well-connected market towns and villages.</i></p>	<p>At a national level, policy is clear that planning policies should support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.</p> <p>There should be an emphasis on promoting social interaction for example through mixed-use developments and easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Our surroundings should be safe and accessible, so that crime and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion including through the use of attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public spaces.</p> <p>At the local level, the Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP5) identifies 6 key themes many of which revolve around strengthening our local communities including improved digital connectivity, a more inclusive transport system with any barriers to access removed and sustainable well-designed, thriving communities that are resilient to climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of development (spatial strategy); • ‘Living local’ / 20 minute neighbourhood concept; • The provision of high quality, accessible public spaces and social community infrastructure; • Improved access to services, including through active travel;

	<p>Notably, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision places a particular emphasis on the need for plans to reflect the unique and distinctive qualities of places within Oxfordshire and to recognise the diversity of our city, towns and villages and the importance of local identity.</p> <p>Our initial consultation last year prompted a number of comments on the well-being of our local communities, towns and villages with particular issues raised including the importance of accessibility, especially in rural areas, a need for enhanced public transport, the role of mixed-use development in promoting social interaction and connections and the need for well-designed, high-quality public spaces which encourage their active use and reduces the fear of crime.</p> <p>It was also highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic had demonstrated the strength of West Oxfordshire’s local communities and that we need that vibrancy to continue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design criteria to include measures to address safety, crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour; • Design vision, principles and expectations; • Digital connectivity.
<p>Objective 16</p> <p><i>To ensure that all new development in West Oxfordshire is underpinned by a high quality, innovative and inclusive approach to design.</i></p>	<p>National policy places significant emphasis on the importance of good design, with the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places being fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.</p> <p>Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.</p> <p>National policy places particular emphasis on the need to set clear design expectations, with local authorities encouraged to produce design guides or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design vision, principles and expectations; • Local design policies and standards; • Use of local design guides/codes including community engagement;

	<p>codes consistent with the general principles set out in the National Design Guide¹⁷ and National Model Design Code¹⁸.</p> <p>Design guides and codes can be prepared at an area-wide, neighbourhood or site-specific scale and should be based on effective community engagement and reflect local aspirations.</p> <p>More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision places particular emphasis on sustainable design and construction and energy efficient, well-designed homes.</p> <p>The West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2016) seeks to encourage a high standard of design and to promote new development which respects and fits in with the character of West Oxfordshire.</p> <p>In response to our initial consultation last year, some strong views on the issue of design were expressed with some people calling for more imaginative and high quality housing design – avoiding ‘soulless boxes’.</p> <p>Other respondents identified the need for high-quality public spaces and greater sustainability of building design as well as the need for developers to adhere more closely to the current West Oxfordshire Design Guide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Village Design Statements (VDS) and Neighbourhood Plans;
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¹⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>

<p>Objective 17</p> <p><i>To create a safe, welcoming and accessible environment in which West Oxfordshire's town and village centres can adapt and prosper, taking advantage of changing trends and shopping habitats to ensure they remain a destination of choice.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises the importance of fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.</p> <p>It also emphasises the importance of creating places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.</p> <p>With specific regard to town centres, national policy emphasises the need for plans to support the role of town centres by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.</p> <p>In particular, planning policies should promote their long-term vitality and viability by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in retail and leisure, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive character.</p> <p>A positive strategy should be adopted with clarity provided over what uses will be permitted and where. Existing markets should be retained and enhanced and sites should be allocated to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed.</p> <p>The particular role of residential development in ensuring the vitality of town centres is highlighted.</p> <p>In line with this, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision seeks to promote the development of new homes that will add to the vitality and viability of our communities while positively contributing to our collective well-being.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town and Village Centre Network, Hierarchy and Strategy; • Sequential approach to main town centre uses (e.g. retail); • Retention, enhancement and provision of markets; • Re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land/buildings; • Commercial and mixed-use development including potential site allocations; • Adaptation and expansion of existing business premises; • Provision of re-purposable space.
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	<p>It also strives to achieve high quality places where people want to live, work, visit and invest.</p> <p>There are currently five designated town centres in West Oxfordshire at Witney, Carterton Chipping Norton, Burford and Woodstock. Town centres are important as they underpin the economic well-being of towns, they are the most accessible locations by all means of transport and act as a cultural and social focus for the towns and surrounding areas. Shopping habits are however changing and this has damaged the viability of many traditional high street retailers, including some larger anchor stores as illustrated by the recent closure of Debenhams in Witney.</p> <p>In response to our initial consultation last year, the importance of creating welcoming town centres was highlighted as well as the need for flexibility as such centres evolve to meet consumer demand, the marketplace and the structural changes influenced by Covid-19.</p> <p>The importance of public spaces to the health of our town centres was also highlighted along with the importance of local shops and services, particularly in rural areas.</p>	
<p>Objective 18</p> <p><i>To achieve equality and inclusivity within our local communities by ensuring that everyone is able to access the core services and facilities that they need to meet their daily needs.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises that in preparing local plans, local authorities should make sufficient provision for community facilities (e.g. health, education and cultural infrastructure) at a local level.</p> <p>It emphasises that planning policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs, as well as ensuring that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of development (spatial strategy); • ‘Living local’ / 20 minute neighbourhood concept; • Provision and protection of community services and facilities;

	<p>With particular reference to rural areas such as West Oxfordshire it states that planning policies should enable the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.</p> <p>The rurality of the district and sparsity of some communities will have an adverse effect on some residents if key services related to retail, banking, social activities and health are not provided locally.</p> <p>A recent study of rural facilities and services in West Oxfordshire¹⁹ found that whilst in overall terms, services and facilities across the District have remained relatively stable in recent years, some communities have seen significant change with a number of examples of communities have lost the ‘last remaining’ of a specific asset type e.g. Stonesfield which has no pub now, when it did in 2016 and Stanton Harcourt which has no shop when it did in 2016.</p> <p>The report identifies the potential to consider the effectiveness of current planning policy relating to the provision and protection of services and facilities through the review of the Local Plan.</p> <p>Our initial consultation last year also highlighted the importance of local shops and services, particularly in rural areas as well as the role of multi-purpose buildings in villages and the need to retain key services (e.g. pubs) and prevent their loss to other uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement that new development and existing local communities are supported by effective and timely investment in supporting infrastructure, such as, health care, schools, green spaces and utilities; • Provision of multi-functional, shared, adaptable infrastructure where possible e.g. village/community hub, dual-use school facilities and green/public spaces; • Support for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.
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¹⁹ Rural Facilities and Services in West Oxfordshire 2023 – Plunkett Foundation

<p>Objective 19</p> <p><i>To empower and enable local communities to positively shape and influence the future of their area from the 'grass roots' up.</i></p>	<p>Under national policy, the primary purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means the planning system has 3 overarching objectives including a social objective which is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities.</p> <p>It highlights the particular role of Neighbourhood Planning in giving local communities the power to shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development including the use of Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders to grant planning permission and Local Green Space to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to local communities.</p> <p>In relation to design, national policy emphasises that design policies, design codes and design guides should be based on effective community engagement.</p> <p>It also emphasises that local authorities should support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy.</p> <p>In terms of new housing, national policy highlights the potential role for neighbourhood plans in allocating small and medium-sized sites suitable for housing.</p> <p>More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision highlights the importance of community assets in giving Oxfordshire's residents – current and future – the best opportunity to prosper and thrive and strong community networks, with communities to be supported and empowered to do the things that matter to improve their health and wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy including Neighbourhood Planning; • Use of local design guides/codes including community engagement; • Village Design Statements (VDS); • Neighbourhood Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders; • Long-term management, maintenance and stewardship arrangements in new developments.
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	In our initial consultation last year, support was expressed for a 'localisation' of decision-making e.g. through neighbourhood plans, particularly where they add value to the overall local plan. Concerns were also raised in relation to maintenance arrangements in new developments and the need to avoid excessive management charges for residents.	
Meeting the Housing Needs of All		
Draft Local Plan Objective	Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?	What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?
<p>Objective 20</p> <p><i>To enable the delivery of a continual supply of high quality, well-designed and sustainable new homes to meet identified housing needs in the period 2021 – 2041.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises the importance of significantly boosting the supply of new homes, including small and medium-sized sites and highlights the importance of achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places.</p> <p>More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision²⁰ expects the delivery of new homes to meet the needs of current and future generations through sustainable, high-quality development.</p> <p>It is also the case that that the delivery of new homes under the current Local Plan has not kept pace with the required trajectory, with delays experienced at the larger strategic allocations.</p> <p>It is important that the new Local Plan is developed in such a way that the delivery of new homes is able to meet identified needs consistently over the plan period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing requirement - the overall quantum of new homes to be provided in the period 2021 – 2041 • Timing/phasing of housing delivery over the plan period • Any agreed distribution of the housing requirement by area/location • Housing allocations (including mixed-use

²⁰ https://futureoxfordshirepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Strategic-Vision_V0.7.pdf

	<p>We also need good quality, sustainable homes that are fit for the future with strong support stakeholder support for high standards of design and zero-carbon building standards.</p>	<p>development where appropriate)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design quality expectations (e.g. Healthy Homes Principles) • Sustainable construction standards in new build developments
<p>Objective 21</p> <p><i>To ensure that new homes in West Oxfordshire are genuinely affordable over the short and longer-term to a broad range of people, including those who are not able to afford market priced housing to buy or rent.</i></p>	<p>National policy requires us to consider the housing needs of different groups including those who require affordable housing.</p> <p>More locally, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision highlights concerns around housing affordability in Oxfordshire and aims to deliver more truly affordable homes for rent and home ownership.</p> <p>In 2021, West Oxfordshire’s housing affordability ratio suggested that full-time employees can expect to spend around 11.4 times their annual earnings on buying a home - higher than the national average of 9.1</p> <p>The review of the Local Plan provides the opportunity to consider how we can best tackle the issue of housing affordability to help more people access the homes they need.</p> <p>We also need to make sure that new homes are affordable in the longer-term in terms of running costs. Fuel poverty in West Oxfordshire increased to 7.3% of all households in 2020, particularly affecting rural areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordable housing (e.g. provided as a proportion of market-housing schemes and through rural exception sites); • Housing mix – ensuring a broad mix of housing opportunities including smaller, more affordable market units as well as determining the size and type of affordable homes needed; • Provision of custom and self-build housing (which can provide both market and affordable housing)

		<p>potentially including specific site allocations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction standards in Sustainable construction standards in new build developments.
<p>Objective 22</p> <p><i>To make sure everyone is able to access the home that they need.</i></p>	<p>National policy requires us to consider and plan for the housing needs of different groups of society.</p> <p>In addition to those requiring affordable housing (outlined above) this might include families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes.</p> <p>National policy also emphasises the importance of providing rural housing, reflecting local needs.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision looks to improve health and well-being and reduce inequality including the provision of homes to meet all people’s needs.</p> <p>Through our initial consultation last year, there was strong support for creating balanced communities, providing for younger people through smaller, more affordable homes and meeting the needs of key workers and other groups including the elderly and those who are interested in community-led housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing mix – ensuring a broad mix of housing opportunities including smaller, more affordable market units as well as determining the size and type of affordable homes needed; • Provision of custom and self-build and community-led or co-housing - potentially including specific site allocations; • Adaptability of properties and accessibility standards in new dwellings; • Provision of older persons housing (e.g. as part of overall housing mix or

		<p>potentially through specific site allocations);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rental provision (e.g. build to rent²¹); • Provision for travelling communities – potentially including specific site allocations.
<p>Objective 23</p> <p><i>To ensure that the type, size and tenure of new homes coming forward helps to create a balanced and sustainable mix of opportunities and encourages community cohesion and well-being.</i></p>	<p>National policy requires us to have a good understanding of the size, type and tenure of new housing that is needed and plan for that accordingly. It also emphasises the importance of creating mixed and balanced communities.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision aims to achieve flourishing, diverse and vibrant communities with new homes of the right type, size and tenure to meet the needs of our growing economy, young people, residents and future generations.</p> <p>In West Oxfordshire, we know there is a predominance of larger properties including detached and semi-detached homes.</p> <p>In preparing the new Local Plan we have the opportunity to consider up to date evidence on housing need and address this through appropriate policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing mix – ensuring a broad mix of housing opportunities including the size and tenure of new homes needed; • Mixed-use developments; • Adoption of locally specific healthy place shaping principles.

²¹ Purpose built housing that is typically 100% rented out. |

	<p>There was strong support in our consultation last year for ensuring that the new Local Plan provides a range of housing opportunities for different groups of people in the interest of creating balanced communities and avoiding 'ghettoization'.</p>	
<p>Objective 24</p> <p><i>To make the most efficient use of the District's current housing stock and maximise the opportunities presented by existing and previously developed land and buildings.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises the importance of using natural resources prudently, encouraging the re-use of existing resources including the conversion of existing buildings and making as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land.</p> <p>Similarly, the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision emphasises the importance of making efficient use of Oxfordshire's natural resources and land.</p> <p>In our initial consultation last year, there was very strong support for using previously developed land and buildings as well as making more efficient use of the District's existing housing stock and opportunities from existing buildings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-use of / alterations to existing residential and non-residential buildings; • Development densities; • Efficient use of resources; • Re-use of previously developed land/buildings.

A Vibrant, Resilient and Diverse Local Economy		
Draft Local Plan Objective	Rationale – why has this been identified as a draft objective of the new Local Plan?	What policies/policy topics are anticipated to help deliver this objective?
<p>Objective 25</p> <p><i>To provide the framework within which the West Oxfordshire economy can thrive and diversify, building on its inherent strengths and capitalising on future growth potential to increase economic productivity, well-being and resilience.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises the need for planning policies and decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt.</p> <p>Significant weight must be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity and the approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision has a strong economic dimension, seeking to ensure that by 2050, Oxfordshire is a globally competitive economy which is sustainable, diverse and inclusive, generating high-quality, productive and knowledge-based employment.</p> <p>It places a particular emphasis on addressing inequality and providing the conditions within which everyone in Oxfordshire can benefit and thrive.</p> <p>Our Council Plan places a particular focus on ensuring economic resilience and working with partners to secure a vibrant local economy, giving residents the opportunity to prosper and fulfil their ambitions.</p> <p>Through our initial consultation last year, there was strong support for strengthening and diversifying West Oxfordshire’s economy particularly to support the well-being of our local communities through improved skills and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic vision/strategy

<p>Objective 26</p> <p><i>To enable the delivery of a balanced portfolio of high quality employment land to provide flexibility, meet identified needs and cater for a broad range of user requirements over the plan period.</i></p>	<p>National policy requires us in preparing the Local Plan, to have a clear economic vision and strategy and a good understanding of anticipated needs over the plan period so that criteria can be set or sites identified to meet those needs.</p> <p>We also need to address potential barriers to investment including inadequate infrastructure. In our initial consultation last year, congestion on the A40 was flagged up as a particular ‘handbrake’ to future economic growth and prosperity.</p> <p>National policy also highlights the importance of supporting the rural economy – the Local Plan cannot focus solely on our urban areas particularly as West Oxfordshire is a predominantly rural district.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision supports diverse, accessible employment and looks to generate a highly productive and inclusive economy based on world-class research, innovation and technology.</p> <p>The proposed Science and Technology Park at Salt Cross Garden Village is a prime example of such an opportunity and through the new Local Plan we have the chance to consider other future provision within the District.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of development (spatial strategy); • Provision of new business land/sites (at a variety of scales) including potential site allocations; • Adaptation and expansion of existing business premises; • Mixed-use development including potential site allocations; • Provision of supporting infrastructure.
<p>Objective 27</p> <p><i>To support West Oxfordshire’s existing and future economic assets by providing the right infrastructure, land and premises, enabling them to improve, expand and adapt as</i></p>	<p>As well as influencing the delivery of new business and employment land opportunities, the Local Plan has a role to play in supporting the District’s existing economic assets both in our urban and rural areas.</p> <p>National policy requires us to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and take account of both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation and expansion of existing business premises; • Redevelopment of existing business premises to other uses;

<p><i>appropriate and ensuring they are not lost to other uses where they have an important economic, social and environmental role to play.</i></p>	<p>It also emphasises the need for flexibility, to accommodate unforeseen needs, allow for changes in working practices and enable a rapid response to changing economic circumstances.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision looks to utilise the County’s strengths and resources, including its existing assets and our Council Plan (2023 – 2027) places an emphasis on working with existing businesses, with part of the overall vision being to create a thriving and prosperous place for entrepreneurs and businesses.</p> <p>Initial consultation responses last year highlighted the importance of providing supporting infrastructure to enable business growth and providing support for small businesses whilst avoiding the blanket protection of all existing sites which may stifle inward investment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of supporting infrastructure.
<p>Objective 28</p> <p><i>To provide flexibility to be able to respond to future trends and technological changes to support working practices such as increases in remote, hybrid and co-working.</i></p>	<p>National policy emphasises the need for planning policies to be flexible enough to accommodate unforeseen needs, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision recognises that technological innovation can be increasingly transformational in shaping places and building sustainable communities. It looks to embrace innovation, developing new solutions for working, learning, mobility, health care, resource management, sustainable design and improved public services.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Innovation Framework for Planning and Development²² emphasises the importance of futureproofing development for new</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential requirement for Innovation Plans in new developments; • Remote/hybrid and flexible working spaces; • Provision of re-purposable space; • Provision of supporting infrastructure including

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	<p>technology and for when current innovations become mainstream. It includes a 'roadmap' of anticipated innovation on topics such as mobility and transport, digital communications and energy and seeks to encourage new development to be sufficiently flexible to allow for the uncertainty of the future.</p> <p>It highlights the potential role of 'Innovation Plans' in new developments which are site-specific plans produced by the developer or infrastructure planner setting out how a particular development or scheme will both integrate and plan for innovation.</p> <p>Through our initial consultation last year, there was strong support for flexible working spaces in vacant town centre units, a need to focus on green skills, providing support for small businesses along with support for home-working, business start-ups and niche industries.</p>	<p>superfast and ultrafast broadband;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion and re-use of existing buildings.
<p>Objective 29</p> <p><i>To ensure that all residents of West Oxfordshire are able to benefit from improved education, training and skills opportunities to enhance their economic and social well-being to strengthen the local economy and benefit small and start-up businesses.</i></p>	<p>National planning policy requires local authorities to take a positive, proactive and collaborative approach to ensuring sufficient school places are available and supporting development that will widen the choice in education.</p> <p>The Government's national growth strategy (Build Back Better) highlights that the best way of improving people's life chances is to give them the skills to succeed, with improved skills identified as one of 3 core pillars of growth (alongside infrastructure and innovation).</p> <p>In Oxfordshire, the Local Industrial Strategy (2019) aims to build a skills system that better responds to local demand, which provides a range of opportunities for all across the county.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pattern of development (spatial strategy); • 'Living local' / 20 minute neighbourhood concept; • Provision of supporting infrastructure including education and training opportunities; • Community Employment Plans (CEPs) linked to new development;

	<p>The more recent Oxfordshire Strategic Vision builds on this and stipulates that by 2050, the County will have improved educational attainment and a skills system aligned to the needs of business and communities, helping to provide the conditions in which all Oxfordshire’s people can benefit and thrive.</p> <p>In our initial consultation last year, particular support was expressed for the development of ‘green skills’ and creating an economy for the well-being of all.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Routes to Schools.
<p>Objective 30</p> <p><i>To celebrate the rurality of our District, enabling the sustainable growth, expansion and diversification of the rural economy and providing support for farmers and other rural businesses including those linked to the visitor economy.</i></p>	<p>National planning policy places an emphasis on the development of prosperous rural economies, with planning policies and decisions expected to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business, the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses, sustainable rural tourism and leisure and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities.</p> <p>This is of particular relevance to Oxfordshire as the most rural county in the south-east. The Oxfordshire Strategic Vision recognises this rurality and emphasises the importance of the agricultural sector in helping deliver our biodiversity and climate ambitions and in advancing new technologies and innovation in sustainable farming.</p> <p>Through our initial consultation last year, strong support was expressed for sustainable tourism, supporting local farmers, potentially greater dispersal of smaller employment sites across rural areas, re-using previously developed land and buildings and the need to support rural land-based businesses, the local food economy and rural tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversion and re-use of existing buildings; • Provision of small-scale business land/sites in rural areas; • Farm/country estate diversification; • Remote/hybrid and flexible working spaces; • Sustainable tourism and leisure provision; • Provision of supporting infrastructure including superfast and ultrafast broadband.

5. The Future Pattern of Development in West Oxfordshire

- 5.1 The Local Plan is ultimately a ‘spatial’ document, dealing with the distribution of different land uses across the District (e.g. housing, green space, infrastructure).
- 5.2 In preparing the plan, national policy²³ requires the Council to promote a ‘sustainable pattern of development’ that seeks to:
- Meet the development needs of the area;
 - Align growth and infrastructure;
 - Improve the environment;
 - Mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
- 5.3 Establishing a clear pattern of development (or ‘spatial strategy’) also helps to provide certainty and enable change to happen in a co-ordinated, planned manner.
- 5.4 At this point in time, the Council does not yet have in place much of the key information that will need to feed into the Local Plan such as how many additional homes we need to plan for or how much employment space to provide.
- 5.5 We had originally anticipated that much of that information would flow down from the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, however because that is no longer progressing, we will need to collate our own additional evidence.
- 5.6 Whilst that is currently in train, it will be several months before we know the outcome and so the purpose of this part of the consultation is to generate an early discussion about how and where we might focus future growth in the District in a broad sense.
- 5.7 The location of future growth is a vital consideration for the new Local Plan, not least because different approaches will lead to different outcomes.
- 5.8 Thus for example a more ‘dispersed’ pattern of growth is generally likely to increase car use and associated carbon emissions unless coupled with significant improvements in rural public transport and EV charging capabilities.
- 5.9 Conversely, a more ‘concentrated’ strategy focusing new development in locations which have strong public transport availability and pedestrian and cycle access, could help to reduce car use and lower carbon emissions.

²³ NPPF Paragraph 11 (a)

- 5.10 For the purposes of this consultation, a total of 8 potential development ‘scenarios’ have been identified as follows:
- Scenario 1 - Hierarchal approach
 - Scenario 2 - Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)
 - Scenario 3 - Witney Focus
 - Scenario 4 - Carterton Focus
 - Scenario 5 - Dispersed Growth
 - Scenario 6 - Village ‘Clusters’
 - Scenario 7 - New Settlement
 - Scenario 8 - Public Transport Focus
- 5.11 A description of each scenario is provided below along with some brief commentary. This is intended to stimulate some broad discussion rather than providing an exhaustive critique of each approach.
- 5.12 The feedback received will be considered alongside relevant evidence as it emerges and used to shape a preferred approach which will be the subject of further consultation in due course. We anticipate that this will include an assessment of the relevant ‘performance’ of each scenario in terms of their associated carbon emissions / implications.
- 5.13 It should be noted that the 8 potential development scenarios are not mutually exclusive and there is inevitably a degree of overlap between some of them. Depending on stakeholder feedback and further evidence of need and opportunity, it may that a combination of different approaches is preferred as the Local Plan moves forward.
- 5.14 Before considering each scenario, it is worth emphasising that the current Local Plan will remain a live document for some time. This is important because it includes a number of allocated sites where the principle of development has already been established but construction has not yet started.
- 5.15 This includes:
- REEMA North, Carterton (300 homes)
 - Land north of Hill Rise, Woodstock (120 homes)
 - Land at Myrtle Farm, Long Hanborough (50 homes)
 - Woodford Way Car Park, Witney (50 homes)
 - Land to the east of Witney (450 homes)
 - Land to the north of Witney (1,400 homes)

- Land to the east of Chipping Norton (1,200 homes plus 5 hectares of business land)
 - Land to the west of Eynsham (763 homes²⁴)
 - Salt Cross Garden Village (2,200 homes plus 40 hectares of business land)
- 5.16 In preparing the new Local Plan, we will need to consider the progress being made with these sites and provided there are no significant impediments to delivery, they will be carried forward as existing commitments.
- 5.17 There are also a number of large sites with planning permission that are currently under construction. As of 1st April 2022, sites of 50 or more homes included the following:
- North Curbridge (West Witney) – under construction with around 362 homes still to be built;
 - Brize Meadows (Brize Norton) – under construction with around 466 homes still to be built;
 - Land east of Woodstock – under construction with around 224 homes still to be built;
 - Land east of Mount Owen Road, Bampton – under construction with around 107 homes still to be built;
 - Shilton Road, Burford – under construction with around 70 homes still to be built;
 - Land north of Burford Road, Witney – under construction with around 88 homes still to be built; and
 - Land at Downs Road, Curbridge – under construction with around 68 homes still to be built.
- 5.18 A number of other large permissions have also been granted more recently and the intention is that these and any other current permissions will be identified as existing commitments in the new Local Plan.
- 5.19 This is important because the plan will effectively ‘reset’ West Oxfordshire’s housing requirement from 1st April 2021 onwards and any housing completions since then, or sites which are currently committed, will contribute towards meeting that new requirement.
- 5.20 It will be for the new Local Plan to identify the additional land that may be needed to meet any residual growth requirement in the period up to 2041, providing sufficient flexibility in the process.

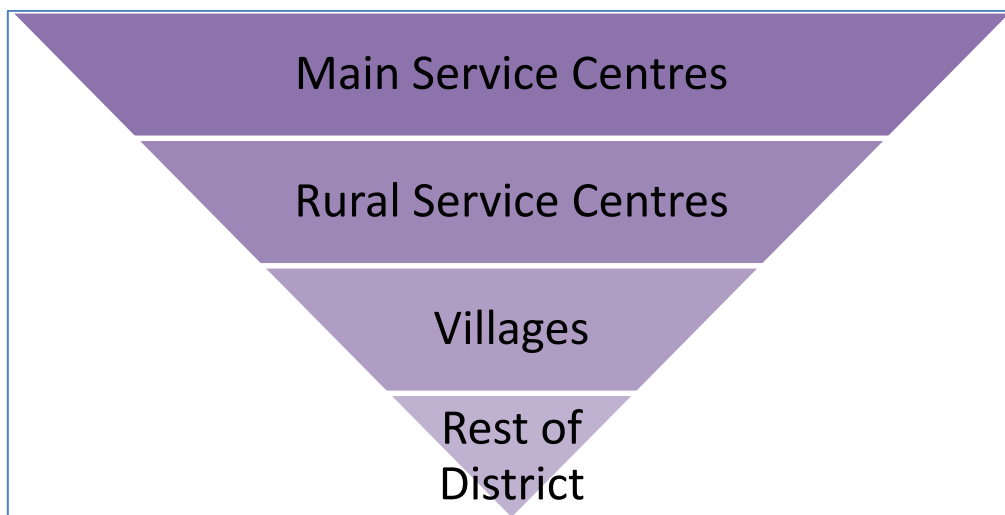
²⁴ This is a residual figure based on the overall allocation of about 1,000 homes

SCENARIO 1 - HIERARCHAL APPROACH

5.21 Under Scenario 1, we would roll forward the strategy of the current Local Plan which is based on a 'hierarchal' approach as follows:

- A significant proportion of new homes, jobs and supporting services focused at the 3 main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton;
- Additional growth at the rural service centres, with Eynsham having a particularly important role (including a new village – Salt Cross – to the north) and Woodstock being identified as suitable for a reasonable scale of development. More modest levels of development at the other rural service centres of Burford, Charlbury, Bampton and Long Hanborough to help reinforce their existing roles;
- Limited development in villages; and
- Development in small villages, hamlets and open countryside restricted to that which requires and is appropriate for a rural location.

Figure 1 – Illustration of Hierarchal Approach



5.22 The rationale for this strategy is that the District's larger settlements, in particular Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton offer the broadest range of services and facilities, are accessible by a choice of transport modes and offer a good number of job opportunities.

- 5.23 Many of our other larger towns and villages also offer a good range of services and opportunities but as settlements become smaller, their ability to absorb additional growth in a sustainable manner is generally reduced because people tend to need their cars more as other options become limited.
- 5.24 Under Scenario 1, this general ‘hierarchical’ approach would be rolled forward into the new Local Plan, with any future development (beyond existing commitments) being considered and planned for on this basis. (i.e. further growth focused primarily at the 3 main towns, followed by the rural service centres and then the larger villages).
- 5.25 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below (please note: this is not intended to be exhaustive).
- Well supported through consultation when the last Local Plan was prepared;
 - Accepted as a ‘sound’ approach by the previous Planning Inspector;
 - Likely to encourage less car use and thus reduce transport related carbon emissions by offering more alternatives (public transport, walking and cycling) and good access to services and facilities;
 - Larger settlements generally likely to include previously developed (brownfield) land which may be re-purposed for another use or mix of uses;
 - Allows for a proportion of future growth to take place in smaller settlements thus helping support their vitality and viability and enabling development sites to be locally identified (e.g. through Neighbourhood Plans);
 - Would help to provide a balanced mix of sites and opportunities;
 - Avoids much of the Cotswolds National Landscape (where there is a presumption against major development other than in exceptional circumstances);
 - Many larger settlements (e.g. Witney, Carterton, Eynsham, Long Hanborough) have already absorbed a significant amount of growth in recent years and/or have future growth already committed.

Scenario 2 - Main Service Centre Focus (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton)

- 5.26 Scenario 2 would involve focusing the vast majority of future development (beyond existing commitments) more specifically at the three main service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton.
- 5.27 As outlined above, these towns offer a broad range of services and facilities, good public transport accessibility and provide a mix of job opportunities. Two of them (Witney and Carterton) also lie outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited.
- 5.28 Under this scenario, proportionately less development (beyond existing commitments) would then take place at the rural service centres and villages and development elsewhere would continue to be restricted to that which requires a rural location.
- 5.29 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- The primary focus on the 3 main towns was well supported when the last local plan was prepared;
 - The three main service centres offer the broadest range of services and facilities in the District and are thus potentially well placed to accommodate further growth;
 - They also provide a good range of opportunities for the re-use of previously developed (brownfield land) in line with national policy;
 - Witney and Carterton lie outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
 - Witney and Carterton have already absorbed a significant amount of growth in recent years;
 - Proportionately less development taking place in the smaller settlements would limit the opportunity to provide new homes in those locations including affordable housing.

Scenario 3 – Witney Focus

- 5.30 Scenario 3 would see most future development (beyond existing commitments) focused narrowly at Witney as the District’s largest settlement and main service centre.
- 5.31 Witney enjoys an extensive range of services and facilities, a high quality built and natural environment and has a good level of accessibility including to the A40. Whilst there is no rail service, bus provision is good with frequent services to key destinations meaning the use of public transport is a realistic option.
- 5.32 The size of the town also means that there are large areas of previously developed (brownfield) land, some of which may be suitable for re-purposing to a different use or mix of uses. We are also aware of a number of undeveloped sites on the edge of the town which are being made available for development by landowners.
- 5.33 Furthermore, as Witney lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape, there is no expectation that the scale and extent of development should be limited.
- 5.34 However, there are known issues relating to any discussion around future growth at Witney, in particular traffic congestion, air quality and the capacity of existing infrastructure to absorb further development.
- 5.35 Anecdotally, there are also concerns that the special character of the town is starting to be eroded as a result of the large level of growth that has taken place in recent years and is further committed through the current Local Plan.
- 5.36 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- Witney is the District’s main service centre and offers an extensive range of services and facilities;
 - The town enjoys good access to the A40 which will be further enhanced by proposed improvements to the Shores Green junction;
 - The town offers good opportunities for the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land and buildings;
 - Various parcels of undeveloped land on the fringes of the town are also known to be available for development;
 - Witney lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
 - Focusing development primarily in one location would limit the opportunity to provide new homes elsewhere in the District;

- Witney has already accommodated a significant amount of development in the last 20 – 30 years and there are known concerns around traffic congestion and air quality.

Scenario 4 – Carterton Focus

- 5.37 Under Scenario 4, most future development (beyond existing commitments) would be focused narrowly at Carterton as the District's second largest town and service centre.
- 5.38 Whilst perhaps not as diverse as Witney in terms of available services and facilities, Carterton still offers a great deal including frequent bus services, education and community facilities, a leisure centre, shops and a high quality country park. It is also home to RAF Brize Norton, the largest RAF station in the country.
- 5.39 Carterton has grown significantly in recent years with around 1,400 additional homes and supporting facilities provided at Shilton Park in the northern part of the town and a further 700 homes currently under construction at Brize Meadow to the east of the town in the parish of Brize Norton. There has also been some development in and around the town centre, including new supermarkets, cafes and restaurants alongside improvements to the public realm.
- 5.40 Like Witney, the size of Carterton means that there are large areas of previously developed (brownfield) land including that which is associated with RAF Brize Norton. We are also aware of a number of undeveloped sites on the edge of the town which are being made available for development by landowners in adjoining parishes.
- 5.41 Carterton also lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape and as such, there is no expectation that the scale and extent of development should be limited.
- 5.42 However, the town has no direct (A-road) access from the A40, it has a relative imbalance of homes and jobs which contributes to out-commuting and whilst the town centre has improved in recent years, it still 'underperforms' compared to some other destinations.
- 5.43 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- Carterton is the District's second largest town and offers a good range of services and facilities;
 - Traffic congestion is not generally a concern but the town has no direct (A-road) access to the A40;

- The town offers good opportunities for the re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land and buildings including land associated with RAF Brize Norton and sites in and around the Town Centre;
- Various parcels of undeveloped land on the fringes of the town in adjoining parishes are also known to be available for development;
- Carterton lies outside the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
- Focusing development primarily in one location would limit the opportunity to provide new homes elsewhere in the District;
- Carterton has a relative imbalance of homes and jobs leading to out-commuting;
- The impact of noise and lighting from RAF Brize Norton has been previously raised through consultation.

Scenario 5 - Dispersed Growth

- 5.44 Scenario 5 would involve a more ‘dispersed’ approach to the future pattern of development so that instead of growth being steered mainly towards the District’s larger settlements, it would be more evenly distributed across West Oxfordshire.
- 5.45 Thus, whilst some additional growth would still take place at Witney, Carterton, Chipping Norton and the rural service centres, there would be a much stronger emphasis on small to medium-scale development taking place in the following villages:
- Alvescot
 - Ascott under
 - Wychwood
 - Aston
 - Bladon
 - Brize Norton
 - Cassington
 - Chadlington
 - Churchill
 - Clanfield
 - Combe
 - Curbridge
 - Ducklington
 - Enstone
 - Filkins & Broughton Poggs

- Finstock
- Freeland
- Fulbrook
- Great Rollright
- Hailey
- Kingham
- Langford
- Leafield
- Middle Barton
- Milton-under-Wychwood
- Minster Lovell (South of Burford Road)
- North Leigh
- Over Norton
- Shipton-under-Wychwood
- Standlake
- Stanton Harcourt
- Stonesfield
- Tackley
- Wootton

5.46 Under this scenario, we would anticipate that the more restrictive approach that currently applies to very small villages, hamlets and the open countryside would continue to apply.

5.47 Adopting a more 'dispersed' approach to growth such as this would mean that more small and medium-size sites would need to be identified either through the Local Plan or through Neighbourhood Plans.

5.48 National policy emphasises the contribution that such small and medium sites can make to meeting overall housing requirements.

5.49 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.

- Small and medium-size sites are generally able to deliver new homes more swiftly than larger strategic sites;
- Could provide a broader range of new housing and employment opportunities across the District;
- Could offer a greater degree of local influence and control (e.g. new sites brought forward through Neighbourhood Plans);
- A number of the villages listed fall within the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;

- A number of the villages listed are relatively poorly served by public transport leading to potentially higher car use and carbon emissions;
- Such an approach could ‘cumulatively’ place strain on local infrastructure capacity.

Scenario 6 - Village ‘Clusters’

- 5.50 Like Scenario 5, Scenario 6 is based on a dispersed approach to the future pattern of growth but, instead of villages being treated separately, they would be considered collectively in small groups or ‘clusters’ based on the services and facilities they are able to cumulatively offer.
- 5.51 Each village ‘cluster’ would then be the focus for an appropriate and proportionate amount of growth.
- 5.52 The logic of this approach is rooted in the NPPF which emphasises that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services and that where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby.
- 5.53 This could apply to clusters of existing larger villages for example:
- Long Hanborough and Freeland;
 - The Wychwoods (Ascott under Wychwood, Milton under Wychwood and Shipton under Wychwood);
 - Bampton and Aston
- 5.54 But it could also potentially apply to some smaller villages where the current Local Plan adopts a more restrictive approach to growth, particularly where these are close to other larger villages that offer a broader range of services and facilities.
- 5.55 Hypothetical examples of such an approach might include:
- Stanton Harcourt and Sutton;
 - Alvescot and Black Bourton;
 - Standlake and Brighthampton;
 - North Leigh and New Yatt;
 - Church Hanborough, Long Hanborough and Freeland

- 5.56 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.
- It would consider the ‘collective’ opportunities and advantages presented by settlements rather than treating each in isolation;
 - Likely to bring forward some development opportunities in locations where historically this has not been possible, thus potentially helping them to thrive;
 - Potential to increase community cohesion and inclusivity;
 - However, could potentially lead to a perception of loss of identity between different settlements;
 - Many smaller settlements are poorly served by public transport with limited opportunities for walking and cycling.

Scenario 7 - New Settlement

- 5.57 Scenario 7 would see future growth focused primarily at a large, purpose-built new settlement somewhere in the District.
- 5.58 We already have one new settlement identified in the current Local Plan which is Salt Cross Garden Village located to the north of the A40 near Eynsham. This will deliver around 2,200 new homes, 40 hectares of business land in the form of a new science and technology park and a broad range of supporting services and facilities.
- 5.59 The new Local Plan could potentially look to focus any additional growth (beyond existing commitments) into a second new settlement somewhere in the District.
- 5.60 At this point we are seeking general ‘in principle’ views on such an approach rather than identifying any potential locations, however because there is a presumption against major development taking place within the Cotswolds National Landscape other than in exceptional circumstances, the likelihood is that any such new settlement would need to be located outside of this area.
- 5.61 For similar reasons, any new settlement would most likely need to be located outside of the eastern part of the District which falls within the Oxford Green Belt.
- 5.62 National policy recognises that the supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed, and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities (including a genuine choice of transport modes).

5.63 National policy also makes it clear that any such approach should include careful consideration of a number of factors including infrastructure opportunities (existing or planned) size and location (ability to be self-supporting) the quality of places (e.g. garden city principles) and likely rates of delivery given the lead-in times for large scale sites.

5.64 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.

- The principle of establishing a new settlement is supported by national policy
- A degree of precedent has already been established by Salt Cross Garden Village;
- Provides the opportunity to create a well-designed, sustainable and self-sustaining location for new homes, jobs and supporting services and facilities;
- Provides the opportunity to create significant new infrastructure investment including education, public transport and green space;
- In acting as the primary focus for growth under the new Local Plan, it could reduce development 'pressures' on other locations within the District;
- Development of this scale would have a significant lead-in time to delivery so other sites are likely to be needed to meet shorter-term requirements (e.g. 5-year housing land supply);
- Larger sites are generally more complex to assemble and deliver;
- Development of this scale would likely have a significant environmental, social and economic impact, irrespective of location.

Scenario 8 - Public Transport Focus

5.65 Under this final scenario, we would look to focus future growth (beyond existing commitments) along key public transport corridors and around public transport hubs e.g. rail stations.

5.66 In focusing development where the availability of public transport is good, people will be less likely to use their car, helping to reduce congestion and carbon emissions - particularly with increased electrification of our public transport services.

5.67 Public transport options in West Oxfordshire are however variable in terms of coverage and frequency.

- 5.68 In terms of bus services, although good, frequent services run along the A40 and A44 including services to Oxford, journey times can be affected by congestion, particularly at peak times. Coverage across much of the rest of the District, in particular more rural areas, is sporadic or even non-existent in some locations, particularly off-peak.
- 5.69 Oxfordshire County is currently progressing its Smart Corridor project which will see the provision of bus priority measures along the A40, including east and westbound bus lanes as well as improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity. Improvements to the A44 are also scheduled as part of the North Oxford Corridor (NOC) project.
- 5.70 In terms of rail services, the District is served by two main rail lines, the Cotswold line and the Cherwell Valley Line.
- 5.71 The Cotswold line passes through the largely rural central part of the District, connecting several towns and villages with Hereford in the west and Oxford and London in the east. Stations are located at Long Hanborough, Combe, Finstock, Charlbury, Ascott under Wychwood, Shipton under Wychwood and Kingham.
- 5.72 A very small proportion of the Cherwell Valley Line runs through the eastern part of the District with a station at Tackley providing services northwards to Birmingham and southwards to Oxford and onto London Paddington.
- 5.73 Notably, none of the District's main towns (Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton) are served by rail. However, Oxfordshire County Council have recently commissioned work to further investigate the concept of a possible new railway line solution from Carterton and Witney to Oxford and to establish if there is a strategic need for the proposed railway line and any resulting investment required.
- 5.74 Four potential station locations have been identified at Carterton West, Carterton North, Witney and Eynsham with initial assessments suggests the journey would take approximately 23 minutes from Carterton, 16 minutes from Witney, and 11 minutes from Eynsham.
- 5.75 Although the provision of a new railway line would be an extremely costly (£500m+) and complex project to bring forward, the study concludes that there would be significant journey time savings compared to anticipated bus and car journey times in the future and would assist with longer-term capacity issues along the A40.
- 5.76 Taking account of the above, a public transport focused scenario would therefore see future additional growth focused in locations where there are good current and potential future opportunities to use public transport such as the A40 and A44 for bus services and along the Cotswold rail line for rail. Depending on how the project

progresses, this could also include consideration of future development taking place along the potential Carterton – Oxford rail line.

5.77 Some broad commentary on this potential approach is provided below.

- Would help to encourage ‘modal shift’ away from the use of the private car and towards increased use of public transport;
- Potentially reduces carbon emissions – particularly with the electrification of bus services;
- The A40 and A44 corridors and the Cotswold rail line include a number of larger settlements which have a good range of services and facilities available;
- Development along the route of the potential Carterton – Oxford rail route could possibly help to fund it (e.g. through land value capture);
- Coverage of public transport across the District is variable;
- Much of the Cotswold rail line runs through the Cotswolds National Landscape where the scale and extent of development is expected to be limited;
- The potential Carterton – Oxford rail line is at a very early ‘conceptual’ stage only;
- This approach would mean further growth at a number of towns and villages which have already absorbed a significant amount of development in recent years (e.g. Carterton, Witney, Eynsham, Long Hanborough, Woodstock).

6. Call for Sites, Ideas and Opportunities

6.1 A key role of the Local Plan is to determine how land in West Oxfordshire is used in the future. It can do this in a number of ways, including:

- ‘Criteria-based’ policies which are used to guide development proposals when they come forward;
- Specific ‘designations’ which influence how an area will be managed in the future and what the main considerations for development are (e.g. the Cotswolds National Landscape); and
- Site ‘allocations’ which specify how particular areas of land are expected to be used (e.g. new housing, jobs, shopping, infrastructure and community uses).

6.2 As we are still at an early stage in developing the new Local Plan, we are keen to hear different views on how land within the District should be used in the future.

6.3 Through this part of the consultation we are therefore issuing an open invitation to all local residents, businesses and key stakeholders to put forward their ideas.

6.4 This can relate to any size of land and might be a site that is already in use or undeveloped land that is considered suitable for development.

6.5 We are open to all ideas but would particularly welcome thoughts on sites or areas of land that may be suitable for:

- **New homes** including market housing but also affordable housing, self and custom-build and other forms of specialist housing (e.g. for older people and community-led housing projects);
- **Employment** generating uses such as (but not limited to) offices, research and development, industrial, retail, indoor sport and commercial leisure uses such as cinemas, hotels, leisure centres;
- **Community uses** such as meeting spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities, co-working facilities and burial space;
- **Supporting infrastructure** such as new cycling and walking routes, highway improvements, energy, waste, health, education, libraries etc;
- **Green space** including outdoor sport, allotments, parks and gardens, amenity and natural green space;

- **Nature recovery and biodiversity gain** including potential networks of joined-up spaces;
- **Renewable energy** e.g. water, solar and wind.

6.6 To put forward your ideas you can complete and return the template attached to this consultation paper or use our online mapping tool here²⁵.


²⁵ Weblink to be added

7. Next steps

- 7.1 In parallel with this consultation taking place, the Council is in the process of commissioning a range of supporting evidence to help inform the new Local Plan.
- 7.2 As that evidence takes shape, we will take it into account along with the consultation responses received and work up a series of preferred policy approaches that we aim to publish for further consultation later this year.
- 7.3 We will then look to move towards publishing the final draft version of the plan and submitting it for examination in 2024.

8. Further advice and information

- 8.1 If you require any advice or information relating to this consultation, please contact the Council's Planning Policy Team via email at planning.policy@westoxon.gov.uk or by telephone on 01993 861686

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>UPDATES TO TERMS OF REFERENCE OF FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Andy Graham, Leader of the Council Email: Andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>Recent changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal require some adjustments to the working of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and this report proposes corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>How this report contributes to the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision Outcomes: The proposed changes to governance documents will result in the Strategic Vision being explicitly mentioned in the Terms of Reference for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Future work programmes will be expected to contribute to the delivery of the outcomes in the Strategic Vision.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annexes: Annex 1: Revised FOP Terms of Reference Annex 2: Revised FOP Memorandum of Understanding</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p>

	<i>a) Approve the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal is entering its final phases, and the governance documents for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) now need to be updated to reflect the current position.

2. THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 The terms of Reference were originally drafted in 2014 at the formation of what was then known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board, and were last subject to substantive change in 2020 following a review. Since then there have been minor drafting changes reflecting the change of name to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

3. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

- 3.1 The Memorandum of Understanding was introduced in 2018 as a requirement of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, and sets out operational aspects of decision making and responsibilities in relation to the deal. As with the Terms of Reference, the last substantive change was made in 2020 and subsequent updates have replaced references to the Growth Board with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 3.2 Three particular areas of change have arisen which are described in the following paragraphs.

4. CESSATION OF OXFORDSHIRE PLAN 2050

- 4.1 Following the decision in August 2022 to cease work on the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, it is proposed to remove references to that work programme from the Terms of Reference.

5. HOMES FROM INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME

- 5.1 The final tranche of funding for the Homes from Infrastructure Programme, the last remaining major element of the Housing and Growth Deal, is subject to a number of governance and reporting requirements which were set out in a letter dated 5 December 2022 from the then Housing Minister.
- 5.2 These requirements and their implications were described in detail in a report presented to the 20 March 2023 meeting of the FOP by the Director of Finance, Oxfordshire County Council, and are not repeated here. Oxfordshire County Council has subsequently written to DLUHC and Homes England confirming acceptance of the final funding and agreement to the associated governance and reporting requirements.
- 5.3 The changes which are proposed to the Terms of Reference are intended to reflect the new requirements from government which have now been agreed.
- 5.4 Corresponding changes are proposed to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which sets out responsibility for decision making on matters of funding and work programmes. Although it is now a requirement that Oxfordshire County Council should be held

accountable for delivery of the remaining programme, the MoU sets out some commitments to positive partnership behaviour and in particular to consultation with partners over any proposed changes to the programme of infrastructure delivery.

- 5.5 It should be noted also that the district councils are expected to provide quarterly updates to the county council regarding housing delivery on sites which benefit from this investment in infrastructure. In turn the county council will provide the data to DLUHC as part of its quarterly reporting regime.

6. ADOPTION OF THE STRATEGIC VISION

- 6.1 Finally an overhaul of the Terms of Reference provides an opportunity to include reference to *Oxfordshire's Strategic Vision for Long-Term Sustainable Development* which was endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting of 22 March 2021, and subsequently in April 2021 by each individual council.
- 6.2 It was agreed that the Strategic Vision should be a basis for informing partners' future work planning and strategy. It is therefore appropriate to make reference to this document in the Terms of Reference for the partnership, without seeking to repeat details which are contained in the vision document itself.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding are matters reserved for decision by each local authority's Cabinet / Executive.
- 7.2 If endorsed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership at its meeting on 13 June 2023, indicative dates for these governance updates to be considered by individual partners' Cabinets/Executives are as follows:

Authority	Cabinet date
Cherwell District Council	3 July 2023
Oxford City Council	12 July 2023
Oxfordshire County Council	18 July 2023
South Oxfordshire District Council	22 June 2023
Vale of White Horse District Council	23 June 2023
West Oxfordshire District Council	12 July 2023

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.2 There are no financial implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference in the current financial year. Future Oxfordshire Partnership membership will be a growth item for future budget years which will need to be considered in the context of a projected budget deficit.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference. At its March 2023 meeting the members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership agreed to accept the final instalment of Housing and Growth Deal funding, and these amendments are required to capture the new governance and reporting obligations.

10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1 The revised governance documents are required to set out how the councils will meet the requirements set out in DLUHC's letter dated 5 December 2022, securing the final £30 million of funding for infrastructure to support the accelerated delivery of new homes.

10.2 Executive is asked to approve the proposed changes.

(END)

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Future Oxfordshire Partnership Memorandum of Understanding June 2023

This memorandum of understanding is made by and between the Parties:

- i) Oxfordshire County Council of County Hall, New Road, Oxfordshire OX1 1ND
- ii) Future Oxfordshire Partnership; a joint committee formed by Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

The local authorities listed above comprising of the county, city and district councils are together referred to as “the Parties” and each a “Party.” Individual constituent members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership are as each a “Council.”

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership, (formerly known as the Oxfordshire Growth Board), was established in 2014 and has the purpose of facilitating and enabling collaboration between Oxfordshire local authorities and other bodies operating in Oxfordshire in relation to economic, housing and infrastructure development.
- 1.2 Oxfordshire County Council is the designated accountable body for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership providing Section 151 and Monitoring Officer related services to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. References in this MoU to “Oxfordshire County Council” are in its capacity as accountable body unless stated otherwise.
- 1.3 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council may change these arrangements by mutual agreement, and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) shall be reviewed annually by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council to ensure it is accurate and complete.
- 1.4 The purpose of this MoU is to set out the respective roles and responsibilities of Oxfordshire County Council acting as accountable body for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and that of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership itself and therefore the Parties hereby agree the Scheme of Roles and Responsibilities set out in Section 6 hereto. This MoU also sets out commitments made in respect of existing joint programmes of work overseen by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, and incorporates material elements of the formerly established Memorandum of Information Disclosure, which will cease in effect from the date of the signing of this document.
- 1.5 This MoU shall commence upon the date hereof and shall continue in effect until terminated by either Party.

2. Termination and Variation

- 2.1 Termination can be enacted by either Party upon giving six months’ notice in writing to the other. In terminating this MoU the Parties shall comply with the requirements, if any, of Central Government and any other funding agencies.
- 2.2 If Oxfordshire County Council cease to be the accountable body, it shall:
 - i) Continue to co-operate with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and any successor accountable body and with all grantors to ensure a smooth transition; and

- ii) Provide to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership or the new accountable body (where requested to do so by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership) all such invoices, receipts and other relevant records which are in its possession and which it holds in connection with its role of accountable body. For the avoidance of doubt, documents will be retained in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Corporate Retention Schedule Policy.
- 2.3 This MoU shall terminate automatically upon the disbanding of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. In such case, Oxfordshire County Council and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership shall complete all of their obligations concerning:
- i) Monies granted to or by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership;
 - ii) Other assets held by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership; and
 - iii) Any accounts required to be submitted to Central Government or to any other relevant funding organisation.
- 2.4 This MoU shall be varied in writing only by the mutual agreement of Oxfordshire County Council and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership save that this shall not prevent the Future Oxfordshire Partnership from making amendments to its Governance and Working Arrangements. Where a variation of this MoU requires a change to be made to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's governance and working arrangements, that change shall not come into effect until the governance and working arrangements have been duly amended in accordance with its requirements.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is responsible for defining its strategic vision and overseeing delivery of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership priorities in accordance with any relevant funding arrangements.
- 3.2 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership will operate in accordance with:-
- i) Its Terms of Reference;
 - ii) This MoU;
 - iii) The guidelines provided by Central Government or any other body whose regulation controls the use of funds provided to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership; and
 - iv) Statutory requirements.
- 3.3 In addition, Future Oxfordshire Partnership members will
- i) where possible, work together to procure services to ensure best value is achieved;
 - ii) give assurance and commit to do everything reasonably possible to ensure the objectives and targets of jointly funded programmes (such as the Housing and Growth Deal) are met.
 - iii) once the Future Oxfordshire Partnership has determined funding allocations, take steps required to reflect those allocations within their budgets.
 - iv) accept that in certain circumstance spend relating to individual workstreams may be greater than the funding allocations. In these circumstances the source of additional funding will be clearly identified.

- 3.4 Oxfordshire County Council will operate in accordance with:-
- i) Its Constitution;
 - ii) This MoU;
 - iii) Individual project collaboration agreements;
 - iv) The guidelines provided by Central Government or any other body whose regulation controls the use of funds provided to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership; and
 - v) Statutory requirements.

4 Financial Management Arrangements

- 4.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is currently allocated public funding under a Housing and Growth Deal. Use of this funding, and any other future funding deals, must be undertaken in accordance with statute and the principles of democratic and financial accountability.
- 4.2 This requires there to be a public-sector body identified as the accountable body for audit and transparency purposes. Oxfordshire County Council is the accountable body for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 4.3 As the accountable body, Oxfordshire County Council is held accountable for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's funds in the same way that it is for its own funds. All funding received and expenditure incurred on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership will be subject to the same scrutiny. This means that Oxfordshire County Council will administer any funds held on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership under its own accounting policies, financial procedure rules and contract procedure rules as set out in the Council's constitution to ensure that funds are applied and accounted for appropriately. This will be carried out under the direction of the Section 151 Officer.
- 4.4 Oxfordshire County Council, as recipient of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's grant allocations from Central Government in relation to the Housing and Growth Deal is responsible for compliance with the grant conditions (including those set out in the letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities dated 5 December 2022) which may include the obligation to repay, in whole or in part, grants in the event of non-compliance with grant conditions.
- 4.5 Oxfordshire County Council will, subject to the terms hereof, hold any funding it receives and all interest or income earned for and on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and ensure that the money is not moved or converted to cash without specific instruction from the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 4.6 Oxfordshire County Council will consolidate the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's cash balances with its own cash balances and deposit the co-mingled funds in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Treasury Management Strategy. Oxfordshire County Council will pay interest on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership daily cash balances based on the 'Average 7 Day Rate'.
- 4.7 Any infrastructure constructed or acquired by Oxfordshire County Council acting on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's behalf, will be accounted for as part of the Council's asset register in line with Oxfordshire County Council's normal accounting procedures.

5 Provision of Services by Oxfordshire County Council

- 5.1 Oxfordshire County Council provides a range of services to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Those that are only incurred because of the requirement to have an accountable body are provided free of charge. These include Section 151 Officer time to provide advice and support to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and relevant sub committees/groups with regard to the use of any public funds that are allocated to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. This also includes Monitoring Officer time to provide advice in relation to legal matters.
- 5.2 In addition, Oxfordshire County Council also provides the following chargeable services to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership:
- i) Finance functions relating to the monitoring and reporting of total funding received and available to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership; the monitoring and reporting of programmes and schemes; the payment of funds to Future Oxfordshire Partnership delivery partners; the calculation of interest earned on funds received; the provision of financial information for internal and external audit requirements and the completion of relevant government financial returns
 - ii) Internal Audit functions in regard to the governance arrangements between the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and the accountable body as well as use of public funds allocated to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership
 - iii) legal functions including preparation of funding agreements with regard to the use of any public funds that are allocated to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and advice on state aid / subsidy issues.
- 5.3 Chargeable and non-chargeable arrangements will be reviewed annually and if/ when the scale of accountable body responsibilities, managed resources or project portfolio resource requirements increase significantly. Where specific, additional work is required then these may be charged where mutually agreed.

6 Scheme of Roles and Responsibilities

- 6.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership shall:
- i) make all decisions on the allocation of grant funding agreed by Government with the exception that from the date of agreement of this revised MoU Oxfordshire County Council shall make decisions regarding the remainder of the Homes from Infrastructure programme arising from the Housing and Growth Deal, following consultation with the Future Oxfordshire Partnership;
 - ii) prioritise and allocate funding and be accountable for the delivery of projects funded by funding streams awarded to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and for which Oxfordshire County Council is to act as accountable body, with the exception of the remainder of the Homes from Infrastructure programme arising from the Housing and Growth Deal;
 - iii) monitor all activities financed by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and ensure that all decisions are fully documented and recorded in writing;
 - iv) for future programmes other than the Homes from Infrastructure programme arising from the Housing and Growth Deal, agree robust and transparent assessment criteria against which funding will be allocated;
 - v) for future programmes other than the Homes from Infrastructure programme arising from the Housing and Growth Deal, ensure that projects are approved only after an appraisal has been carried out and that the separation of duties between project appraisal and project approval;

- vi) for future programmes other than the Homes from Infrastructure programme arising from the Housing and Growth Deal, through agreed project plans, ensure appropriate timescales and operating practices are in place to support effective implementation of decisions made;
- vii) following approval, request Oxfordshire County Council to effect the payment of funding to the relevant organisations;
- viii) fulfil the client role vis a vis Oxfordshire County Council as the accountable body and, in particular, give Oxfordshire County Council clear and comprehensive instructions in relation to the performance by Oxfordshire County Council of its roles and responsibilities as set out in paragraph 6.2 below;
- ix) Co-operate with and assist Oxfordshire County Council acting in its role as accountable body in undertaking the day to day responsibility for financial matters.

6.2 Oxfordshire County Council shall:

- i) provide support and assistance to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership to ensure both legal and financial probity in relation to the receipt and use of specific funding for which it acts as accountable body;
- ii) ensure decisions and activities of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership conform with legal requirements with regard to transparency, equalities, social value, environment, State Aid / subsidies and procurement;
- iii) ensure that funds are used appropriately and advise the Future Oxfordshire Partnership on the procedures necessary to ensure formal compliance with any terms and conditions of funding or grant;
- iv) provide advice on proper and effective governance for overseeing the allocation and spend of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership funding;
- v) enter into funding agreements on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership for agreed funding streams;
- vi) enter into appropriate legal agreements or contracts with the relevant Future Oxfordshire Partnership member on behalf of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership once the project is approved by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership following a successful due diligence process;
- vii) ensure that the funding is passed on to the relevant Future Oxfordshire Partnership member without delay and in line with the conditions of the funding; where this is to be passed onto a third party it will be for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership member to action;
- viii) submit the claims to the funding body and prepare and submit relevant documents for inspection by Central Government or external auditors as required;
- ix) where the funding stream is working on a claim basis, ensure that the claimed funding is passed on to the relevant Future Oxfordshire Partnership member delivery partner without delay and in line with the conditions of the funding or loan agreements;
- x) ensure that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership performance and financial systems are robust;
- xi) provide details of all monies expended in accordance with the terms and conditions of funding;
- xii) monitor approved projects during and after implementation in line with the agreed monitoring framework or as required by the funding body;
- xiii) inform and keep the Future Oxfordshire Partnership informed of any grant funding allocations received and the procedures and recommended criteria for distributing the funding based on the funding body's requirements;
- xiv) assist the Future Oxfordshire Partnership in identifying other sources of funding or to apply for these where commissioned by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership;

- xv) ensure that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership adheres to its assurance framework in respect of maintaining the official record of Future Oxfordshire Partnership proceedings and holding copies of all relevant documents relating to funding; and
- xvi) report and take appropriate action where it has reason to believe that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, or anybody acting as its agent, is failing to
 - a) adhere to the terms and conditions of funding requirements or the funding or loan agreements;
 - b) comply with its governance and working arrangements or any statutory requirement;
 - c) provide a suitable standard of probity.

6.3 Specifically in relation to the Homes from Infrastructure programme, being the remainder of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, Oxfordshire County Council shall from the date of the agreement of this revised MoU:

- i) make all decisions on the allocation of the remaining grant funding agreed by Government
- ii) prioritise and allocate funding and be accountable for the delivery of projects funded by this funding stream
- iii) act reasonably and in good faith, modelling positive partnership behaviour specifically by making no changes to the programme without careful consultation with affected district partners, and by not seeking to remove schemes from the programme or to reduce their scope as long as they remain on track for delivery on time and within budget.

7 Audit

7.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership shall

- i) co-operate with and assist Oxfordshire County Council in audit examinations relating to governance arrangements, use of public funds and all operating systems;
- ii) act upon all agreed management actions contained within Oxfordshire County Council's internal audit report;
- iii) report to Oxfordshire County Council any financial irregularity or suspected irregularity in the use of any funding.

7.2 Oxfordshire County Council shall

- i) maintain proper records, in accordance with its Constitution, of all monies received and disbursed for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and make such records available for inspection by both internal and external regulators;
- ii) arrange regular audit examination of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's activities with regards to use of public resources and, following each audit, present a report to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership with recommendations to strengthen their governance and management practices;
- iii) allow funding bodies to have access to all files and records of projects for which it acts as accountable body; and
- iv) supply, as necessary, completed statements of income, expenditure and disbursements to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, funding organisations, Central Government and external auditor.

8 Recovery of funds

8.1 The conditions where funds will be recovered will be laid out in the initial funding or grant agreement. Where recovery of funds is at risk, the general stage of fund recovery

will be as follows:

- i) Stage 1: Oxfordshire County Council will send notice containing the reason for concern, outlining the potential fund recovery situation and giving time where appropriate for corrective action;
- ii) Stage 2: If corrective action is not taken or is deemed insufficient to avoid fund recovery a further notice will be sent by Oxfordshire County Council asking for the return of funds with a deadline for the return of the funds. In cases of particular difficulty Oxfordshire County Council may accommodate a fund return payment plan of instalments over an agreed period of time. However, this must be agreed in writing and cannot be assumed;
- iii) Stage 3: If funds are not returned within the set deadline then Oxfordshire County Council may then instigate debt recovery procedures which may result in legal action being taken.

8.2 Oxfordshire County Council will only take the step to recover funds from those Future Oxfordshire Partnership members it has a direct agreement with. In the case of a third party such as a subcontractor it would be up to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership member Oxfordshire County Council is seeking funds from to determine and take any action they require to recover their losses from any third parties.

8.3 Oxfordshire County Council does not wish to undertake stage 3 if at all avoidable but will do so in order to protect the public purse and ensure that public funding is being used appropriately.

9 Data Protection

9.1 The Parties hereto shall comply with their obligations under the EU General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679(GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 and any subordinate legislation made under such Act together with any guidance and codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner or relevant government department in relation to such legislation in the performance of their obligations under this agreement.

10 Publicity and Disclosure in Relation to Meetings

10.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership will operate in accordance with the publicity requirements applicable to a joint committee under Part VA of the Local Government Act 1972. Papers relevant to meetings of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership will be placed into the public domain in the normal way by the Party with administrative control of that joint committee in compliance with s100A to 100K (and Schedule 12A) of the Local Government Act 1972. In accordance with those provisions confidential information as defined in that Act will not be disclosed. Exempt information as defined in that Act may or may not be disclosed. It is acknowledged that under these provisions' information is exempt if the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

11 Requests under Freedom of Information and Environmental Information

11.1 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership and the Monitoring Officers of the relevant Councils have developed a Protocol for Handling Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests. This is based on the principle that the Future Oxfordshire Partnership itself and each member authority is a 'freedom of information authority' in its own right. The agreed Protocol (Annex 1 to the MoU) shall guide how

the Board and the member authorities will handle requests relating to the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

12 Confidentiality

- 12.1 Each Party agrees not to unilaterally disclose any information identified by any Council as confidential information or exempt material (under the Local Government Act 1972) information unless required by law without giving notice of at least 14 calendar days to the Council or Councils who provided the confidential/exempt information. No confidential/exempt information will be disclosed without full consideration having been given to any objection made to its disclosure, unless disclosure is otherwise required by law.
- 12.2 Neither Party will use or disclose any confidential material provided by the other pursuant to this agreement otherwise than for the performance of their obligations under this agreement, save as may be otherwise agreed or required by law.
- 12.3 For the avoidance of doubt, confidential information shall not include (a) any information obtained from a third party who is free to divulge such information; (b) any information which is already in the public domain otherwise than as a breach of this agreement; or (c) any information which was rightfully in the possession of a Party prior to the disclosure by the other Party and lawfully acquired from sources other than the other Party.

13 Dispute resolution

- 13.1 If either Party has any issues, concerns or complaints about any matter in this MoU, they shall notify the other Party and the Parties shall then seek to resolve the issue by a process of consultation. If the issue cannot be resolved within a reasonable period of time, the matter shall be escalated to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Chairman (or if the Chairman is an Oxfordshire County Council appointee, the Vice-chairman) and Oxfordshire County Council's Section 151 Officer (or if the dispute is between the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council, one of the district/city council's Section 151 Officer) who shall decide on the appropriate course of action to take.
- 13.2 If either Party receives any formal inquiry, complaint, claim or threat of action from a third party they shall notify the other Party and co-operate with each other to respond, or take such action, as is appropriate and/or necessary

14 The Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999

- 14.1 The Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 shall not apply to this MoU but this does not affect any rights which are available apart from this Act.

15 Status

- 15.1 This MoU is not intended to be legally binding, and no legal obligations or legal rights shall arise between the Parties from this MoU. The Parties enter into the MoU intending to honour all their obligations.

16 Governing Law and Jurisdiction

- 16.1 This MoU shall be governed by and construed in accordance with English law.

This Memorandum of Understanding is agreed and signed by:

Signed for and on behalf
of Oxfordshire County Council in its capacity as accountable body

.....

FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS

Signed for and on behalf
of Oxfordshire County Council

.....

Signed for and on behalf
of Oxford City Council

.....

Signed for and on behalf
of Cherwell District Council

.....

Signed for and on behalf
of South Oxfordshire District Council

.....

Signed for and on behalf
of Vale of White Horse District Council

.....

Signed for and on behalf
of West Oxfordshire District Council

.....

Annex 1

FOI/EIR PROTOCOL – INFORMATION REQUESTS RELATING TO THE FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

This process has been agreed by Oxfordshire's Monitoring Officers and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership managers. It provides a means of handling Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests regarding the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Each member authority of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's officers themselves may be recipients of information requests.

This outline provides a legally compliant means of dealing with such requests while providing a degree of mutual consultation whilst also ensuring the identity of requesters is not disclosed to other members of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. **Each authority will be responsible for responding to requests submitted to it. Authorities should not simply redirect requesters 'to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership'** but should answer the request on the basis of any information held by the receiving authority in relation to it.

Freedom of Information Teams should adopt the following principles and process:

1. Each of the county's principal councils, and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, are **separate FOI authorities** in their own right. Requesters may therefore submit requests from time to time to any or all of the bodies, about the Future Oxfordshire Partnership partnership's work.
2. Should there be such an FOI or EIR request in relation to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's work received by any of the authorities, then the **receiving body's FOI Team will notify each of the other bodies' FOI Teams**: for the purpose of consulting them about how the receiving authority intends to respond.
3. The original receiving body will **consider all representations** (which shall also be made at the earliest opportunity) received in discharging its statutory obligations. The requester's **name will not be disclosed** to the other authorities.

4. In the event of a disclosure of information in response to a request under the Environmental Information Regulations or the Freedom of Information Act, the **disclosing body shall notify all other Councils immediately** and shall provide an explanation of its decision-making process on request.
5. A similar process will then be followed if an Internal Review request is received; or an Information Commissioner referral.
6. This process is on the basis that, while each authority is an FOI authority in its own right, **consultation between authorities** on a proposed response does not breach that principle.
7. If all authorities receive the same request, then each must respond to it at its own relevant level of management. **Achieving a 'consistent' response can not be the primary aim.** While approaches can be discussed, it will be for each authority to 'sign off' its own responses. This will also be important if a request is referred to the Commissioner, who would be likely to ask how each authority addressed the response.
8. It should be borne in mind that **a requester can also ask for the 'metadata'** to any request, which would bring into frame any information shared between authorities in the consideration of a response.

NB The County Council will be acting as FOI advisers to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

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The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Joint Committee

Terms of Reference June 2023

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners working together to deliver the bold and ambitious outcomes of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development.
- 1.2** Oxfordshire's growing economy is set to create challenges and opportunities for the County related to housing, infrastructure, public services and the environment. These issues will best be addressed through joined up planning between local councils which prioritises sustainable development and quality of life. Collective planning, where it makes sense to do so, will be the most effective means of minimising the unwanted impacts of a growing economy, whilst leveraging the maximum benefit from the opportunities it brings for our existing and future communities.
- 1.3** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership ("Joint Committee") will:
- 1.4** Coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits;
- 1.5** Support the development of local planning policy that meets the UK Government's stated aim of net zero carbon by 2050, and contributes towards biodiversity gain whilst embracing the changes needed for a low carbon world; and,
- 1.6** Seek to secure funding in the pursuit of these aims and oversee the delivery of related work programmes delegated to it by the Joint Committee's constituent local authority members.

2.0 Membership

- 2.1** The Joint Committee's core membership includes the local authorities within Oxfordshire comprising, Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. Voting rights are reserved to local authority members only.
- 2.2** It also includes co-opted associate members from those organisations listed below:
 - Chair of OxLEP
 - Chair of the Oxfordshire Skills Board
 - Universities Representative
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Bicester
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Oxford City
 - OXLEP Business Representative-Science Vale
 - Homes England Representative
 - DEFRA Agencies Representative
 - Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board Representative

- 2.3** When considering transport infrastructure matters, Network Rail and National Highways will have the right to attend as associate members. As the Joint Committee is constituted to be able to discharge executive functions if delegated to it by the constituent authorities, then the appointed person must be from the Executive of the constituent authorities. There should be one member from each constituent authority.
- 2.4** Each constituent authority shall appoint a substitute (also being an Executive member). The substitute member shall have the same rights of speaking and voting at the meetings as the member for whom the substitution is made.
- 2.5** The Joint Committee, with the agreement of the local authority members, may co-opt other associate members to its membership where it is considered conducive to the effective consideration of any matter.
- 2.6** The Joint Committee may appoint representatives to the other outside bodies for which the Committee has membership.

3.0 Governance

- 3.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a Joint Committee under s101 (5), 102 Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) and s9EB Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000) and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 3.2** Notwithstanding the above each constituent authority will retain all non-executive and executive functions generally and specifically in relation to economic development, housing provision, strategic spatial planning and strategic transport planning.
- 3.3** The Joint Committee will meet in public subject to the provisions of s100 LGA 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. The Joint Committee will be hosted under local government arrangements and chairing will be rotated between the local authorities on an annual basis in line with the arrangements at 9.1.
- 3.4** The policy advice and support will be provided by the Joint Committee's Executive Officer Group (Chaired by the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director), Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, reporting to the Local Authority Chief Executive Group.
- 3.5** The resources and capacity required to deliver the Joint Committee's work programmes, and the work of any associated advisory groups, will be agreed by the Chief Executive Group.

4.0 General functions

- 4.1** To facilitate and enable collaboration between local authorities and key partners to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

- 4.2 To facilitate strategic alignment of spatial, economic and infrastructure plans in a way that is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable in order to safeguard Oxfordshire's unique historical, cultural and environmental character.
- 4.3 To facilitate collective engagement of Joint Committee Partners with other national, regional and sub-regional bodies on matters concerning the environment, infrastructure and strategic planning and where relevant, comment on wider proposals and decisions from national agencies, where these have a strategic impact on Oxfordshire.
- 4.4 To act as the voice of Oxfordshire to Government and other national and Sub National bodies to ensure Oxfordshire's infrastructure and housing needs are recognised in future investment priorities and funding.
- 4.5 To provide a strategic partnership forum for the identification and development of sustainable strategies and plans for Oxfordshire related to the environment, spatial planning, economic development, housing and transport.
- 4.6 To coordinate the prioritisation of funding from devolved funding sources for infrastructure schemes, where this funding is not already within the remit of the Local Transport Authority, to ensure that decisions are made in one place and supported by all relevant partners and stakeholders.
- 4.7 To oversee the delivery of detailed work programmes as delegated to the Joint Committee by the constituent authorities, as set out under specific functions at 5.0.
- 4.8 To bid for the allocation of resources and investment to support the above purposes.

5.0 Specific Functions

Strategic Planning

- 5.1 To oversee joint work on cross border issues to ensure partners meet the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate under S33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and wider national planning policy.
- 5.2 To assess whether strategic spatial planning, infrastructure and public services are integrated and delivered in a sustainable way, and to make recommendations to encourage this, while recognising the sovereignty of individual Local Plan processes.
- 5.3 To appoint representatives on behalf of the Joint Committee to other partnerships as required, including the Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership and England's Economic Heartland.

The Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal

5.4 To oversee and facilitate delivery of remaining elements of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (“the Deal”), noting that:

- Oxfordshire County Council as accountable body shall, acting reasonably at all times and in consultation with the Joint Committee, take any decisions regarding the inclusion, timetabling and delivery of schemes in the Homes from Infrastructure programme
- the City and District councils shall provide information on housing numbers relating to this programme to Oxfordshire County Council in a timely manner in order to enable the accountable body to fulfil its reporting obligations to central government.

5.5 To approve and monitor the implementation of work programmes for the delivery of the Deal (including infrastructure and capacity funding).

5.6 To oversee the delivery of a productivity stream work programme to be delivered by OxLEP.

5.7 To support an Advisory Group to oversee delivery of work programmes to meet the agreed milestones and targets set out in the Deal relating to Infrastructure.

5.8 To receive and publish quarterly performance and finance monitoring reports as set out in the Deal Delivery Plan.

6.0 Voting

6.1 Only local authority Members (or their substitutes) shall be designated as voting members and shall be entitled to one vote on items of business considered by the Joint Committee, although members intend to agree matters on a unanimous basis where possible.

6.2 A majority vote shall be required. In the event of there being an equal number of votes for and against a particular proposition, a casting vote by the Chair may be exercised.

7.0 Quorum and Safeguard

7.1 The quorum for a meeting shall be four voting members.

7.2 Where the effect of a particular proposition, if adopted by the Joint Committee on a majority basis, would give rise to policy, contractual or financial implications for a constituent authority that it does not support, that authority may opt out of participation in that proposition in so far as it affects their authority before any vote is taken but this will not prevent the other parties proceeding with the proposition. In respect of other matters, all other voting will be on a normal majority basis.

7.3 Normal rules as to declarations of interest to be applied to local authority members in accordance with the respective Council’s Code of Conduct.

8.0 Accountable Body

8.1 The Accountable Body for the Joint Committee is Oxfordshire County Council. It will provide Section 151 and Monitoring Officer roles to the Committee in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding between Oxfordshire County Council and the Joint Committee.

8.2 The County Council's Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) will provide the Joint Committee with quarterly financial reports for funding that has been allocated directly to Oxfordshire County Council as the Accountable Body. These reports will provide the Joint Committee with an overview of the funds spent and funds committed against funds allocated.

8.3 For those programmes and funding streams where another local authority is the Accountable Body, the relevant Section 151 Officer will provide the financial and performance information to the County Council's Section 151 Officer, for integration into the quarterly reporting process.

9.0 Meetings

9.1 The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee will be elected at the first meeting in each Future Oxfordshire Partnership year, which runs from 1 June to 31 May.

9.2 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Director shall be responsible for convening meetings in consultation with the Chief Executive of the authority which holds chairing responsibilities.

9.3 Meetings shall usually be held six times each year. However, meetings may be called by the Chair, Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive Group, or any three voting members of the Joint Committee, in circumstances where business cannot be reasonably deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

9.4 Agendas and minutes will be published, and meetings held in public, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. A Forward Plan of items to be considered will be published online each month, and included with each agenda.

9.5 Public speaking procedures will be established in line with a separate protocol as agreed by the Joint Committee.

10. Advisory Groups

10.1 The Joint Committee will establish Advisory Groups to oversee specific work programmes or broader thematic areas as required. Advisory groups, reporting into the Joint Committee, will be managed in accordance with separately published terms of reference as agreed by the Joint Committee.

10.2 The role, remit and membership of Advisory Groups will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain flexible to the demands of ongoing and new programmes of work.

11. Scrutiny Arrangements

11.1 A non-statutory Scrutiny Panel with a cross party membership of councillors from each constituent local authority reviews decisions and actions taken by the Joint Committee. The Scrutiny Panel is managed in accordance with separately published terms of reference.

11.2 The Scrutiny Panel is non-statutory and not strictly constituted in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. The Panel's function therefore

complements, rather than replaces, the statutory overview and scrutiny duties of the constituent authorities, as set out under the Local Government Act 2000.

12. Funding Contributions

- 12.1 The budget for the Joint Committee's administration will be endorsed no later than 1 December of the preceding financial year by the local authority membership of the Joint Committee. The cost of meeting the expenditure planned in the budget shall, to the extent not met from other sources, be divided among all members of the Joint Committee, with discretion to vary fees between associate and local authority membership.
- 12.2 The budget endorsed by the Joint Committee will subsequently be recommended to each Local Authority member for approval during the February budget setting process.

13. Withdrawal

- 13.1 If any member determines that they no longer require membership to the Joint Committee, they may give written notice to the Joint Committee's Chair and Director no later than 1st January preceding the financial year to which the budget will apply. Unless they withdraw that notice in writing, they shall cease to be a member from 1st April of that year. Any member which has not given due notice shall be obliged to pay its subscription for the next year.

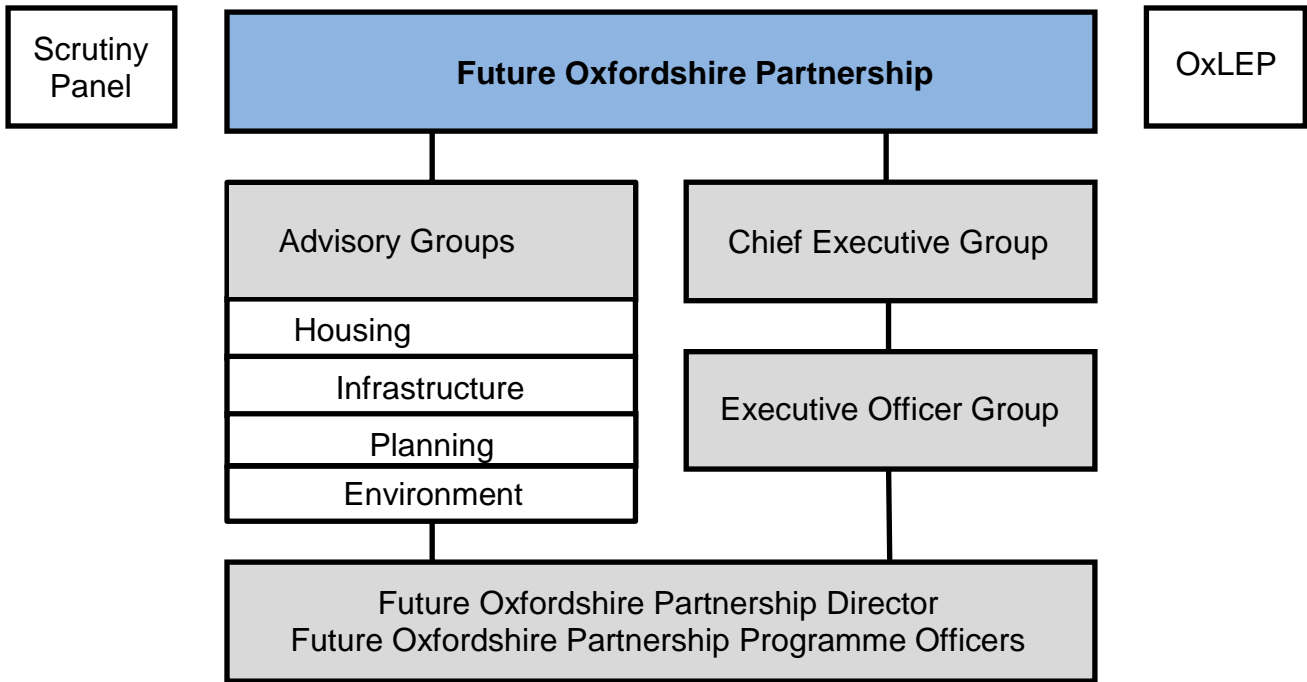
14. General principles

- 14.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they remain fit for purpose and flexible to meet the requirements of ongoing and future work. Any changes to the Joint Committee's powers or functions will be a matter for each constituent authority to agree.
- 14.2 In adopting these terms of reference, members of the Joint Committee agree to support the purposes of the Joint Committee by ensuring that in their decision making, they:
- Collaborate and cooperate with each other
 - Are open and accountable to each other


- Adhere to all relevant statutory requirements
- Deploy appropriate resources
- Act in good faith

14.3 These principles are not intended to be legally binding, and no legal obligations or rights shall arise from this.

Appendix 1 – Future Oxfordshire Partnership High Level Governance



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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023
Subject	COMBE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (VDS)
Wards affected	Stonesfield and Tackley
Accountable member	Cllr Carl Rylett Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Development Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Chris Hargraves, Planning Policy Manager Tel: 01993 861686 Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the final version of the Combe Village Design Statement (VDS), following feedback from a 6-week period of public consultation, and to recommend to Council that it be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
Annexes	Annex A – Consultation Summary Report Annex B – Combe Village Design Statement (VDS) – final adoption version (June 2023)
Recommendation/s	That the Executive resolves to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>That the content of the report including the consultation summary report attached at Annex A be noted; and</i> b) <i>That subject to any amendments the Executive may wish to make, that Council be invited to formally adopt the final version of the Combe Village Design Statement attached at Annex B as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</i>
Corporate priorities	Taking forward the Combe VDS as a supplementary planning document would be consistent with a number of aspects of the current Council Plan (2023 – 2027) including putting residents first, enabling a good quality of life for all, creating a better environment for people and wildlife, responding to the climate and ecological emergency and working together for West Oxfordshire.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Combe VDS has been subject to extensive public consultation. Attached at Annex A is a consultation summary report which sets out the comments received and how they have been taken into account.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.** Combe Parish Council have prepared a Village Design Statement (VDS) the stated purpose of which is to *‘provide design guidelines that can help to shape any future development so that it blends in with Combe’s distinctive rural landscape and heritage’*.
- 1.2.** Work on the VDS began in 2019 through a series of informal discussions and events, followed by a questionnaire survey and consultation on a draft version of the VDS.
- 1.3.** The VDS was finalised in November 2021 and submitted to the District Council for consideration, with the Parish Council seeking a view on whether it would be possible for the VDS to be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.
- 1.4.** Given the wholehearted support of Officers of its content, Cabinet agreed in October 2022 that the draft be published for a further 6-week period of public consultation. This took place between Friday 3 February – Friday 17 March 2023, with a view to it then potentially being formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

2. COMBE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (VDS)

- 2.1.** Members will be aware that the primary purpose of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in an adopted Local Plan.
- 2.2.** In this instance, the Combe VDS, if adopted as SPD, would effectively provide additional guidance on the application of Local Plan Policy OS4 – High Quality Design more specifically in relation to development proposals that come forward within Combe Parish. In doing so it would sit alongside the District Council’s overarching Design Guide which was adopted as SPD in 2016.
- 2.3.** Annex A is a consultation summary report which provides an overview of the consultation which has been undertaken on the VDS: who was consulted; the main issues raised by respondents; and how those issues have been addressed in the final proposed adoption version of the SPD.
- 2.4.** A copy of the final proposed adoption version of the Combe VDS is attached at Annex B. It is a comprehensive and well-written document which follows a logical structure, providing a detailed overview of the parish including its landscape setting, settlement pattern, green and built environment, including the public realm.
- 2.5.** Building on this context, Section 10 of the VDS sets out a series of design guidelines including a number of general and specific principles.
- 2.6.** The expectation is that these principles would be considered alongside the policies of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 and the West Oxfordshire Design Guide (2016) when development proposals in Combe Parish are being considered.

3. SUBMISSION DRAFT CONSULTATION

- 3.1.** As part of the formal process, and in accordance with the District Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), a statutory 6-week period of consultation took place (3 February – 17 March 2023), involving the notification of a range of stakeholders and making the document available online and at 15 deposit locations at local council offices and libraries.
- 3.2.** Eight organisations and individuals responded, two of which had no comment.
- 3.3.** The Consultation Summary Report includes a schedule of the responses. Officers have since liaised with Combe Parish Council and a number of changes have been made to the VDS, following consideration of the comments received.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1.** The Combe VDS will need to go through the formal adoption process. Copies of the document will be made available in accordance with legislative requirements including the publication of an adoption statement. Those who have responded at the formal consultation stage will be notified and sent a copy of the adoption statement.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.** The report raises no direct financial implications.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1.** The report raises no specific legal implications.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1.** The report raises no significant risks.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1.** The report raises no specific implications for any particular equality strand.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1.** The Combe VDS recognises the importance of climate change with one of the general design principles contained therein being to ensure that new development has regard for community cohesion, sustainable living, biodiversity and the implications of climate change.

10. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 10.1.** The alternative option would be for Members to decide that the Combe VDS should not become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). It would then carry limited, if any, weight in terms of guiding future planning decisions within the parish.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1.** None.

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**West Oxfordshire District Council
Combe Village Design Statement
Consultation Summary Report**

June 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A draft Village Design Statement (VDS) has been prepared by residents of Combe parish, under the auspices of the Parish Council. The purpose of the VDS is to *'provide design guidelines that can help to shape any future development so that it blends in with Combe's distinctive rural landscape and heritage'*.
- 1.2 The VDS underwent initial public consultation in 2019/2020 and was submitted to the District Council in November 2021.
- 1.3 The Council published the draft VDS for a further 6-week period of public consultation between Friday 3 February – Friday 17 March 2023.
- 1.4 The main purpose of this consultation summary report is to provide an overview of the February/March 2023 consultation: who was consulted; the main issues raised by respondents; and how those issues have been addressed in the final proposed adoption version of the SPD.
- 1.5 The responses received will now be considered and a view taken on whether the VDS should be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and carry the weight as a 'material planning consideration' for determining planning applications within the Parish of Combe. If the VDS is taken forward for formal adoption as a SPD, this is likely to take place in July 2023.

2. Pre-submission consultation

- 2.1 As a community-led planning document, with the aim of reflecting the views of all local residents, the production of the VDS involved an extensive process of consultation and engagement with those living and working in the parish of Combe.
- 2.2 The first step in the process was to find out what residents felt about the character of Combe, what makes it special, and what priorities people have for the future. The consultation began with informal discussions and activities across the village, and ended with a household questionnaire survey. In June 2020 the Parish Council published a summary report of the findings from this six-month exercise which took place over the summer and autumn of 2019.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 sets out the summary report (which is also available on both the Parish Council and the West Oxfordshire District Council websites: <https://combec.org/2021/02/24/vds/> and <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/e04jzwsd/combe-vds-consultation-summary-report.pdf>)

2.4 The findings from the public consultation work fed into the draft VDS, including three main messages:

'People told us that they loved the wide-open views across the countryside, the wooded approaches to the village, river walks, the dark night skies, and the generally well-kept appearance of Combe. The church, the stone cottages, the village green with its oak trees, and the traditional Cotswold buildings at the heart of the village stood out as particularly special.

One of the clearest messages from the findings was how much people value, and wish to protect, green open spaces within the village. This included not only the larger green areas, such as the village greens, Alma Grove field, the recreation ground, the church yard etc., but also the smaller spaces and verges that make up the open character of our village and provide a haven for wildlife. This links closely with people's growing concerns about protecting the countryside, the river and green spaces for the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

Residents were less happy with the impact of traffic and parked cars on the village's appearance. Overall, there was support for traffic calming measures. Respondents were realistic about the possibility of future housing development, but if this happens, most people would prefer affordable housing, built on a small scale, and in sympathy with the existing character of the village. The preservation of hedges and traditional dry-stone walls was seen as integral to the distinctive character of the parish.'

3. Submission draft consultation

3.1 The VDS was finalised in November 2021 and submitted to the District Council for consideration, with the Parish Council seeking a view on whether it would be possible for the VDS to be formally adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

3.2 Following internal consultation and positive feedback, the VDS was considered by the District Council's Cabinet on 12 October 2022 who agreed for the document to be published for public consultation. As part of the formal process, and in accordance with the District Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), a statutory 6-week period of consultation took place (3 February – 17 March 2023), involving the notification of a range of stakeholders and making the document available online and at 15 deposit locations at local council offices and libraries.

3.4 In response, consultation responses were received from eight organisations and individuals as follows:

- Malcolm Axtell

- Rosalind Kent
- The Coal Authority
- Wootton Parish Council
- Canal & River Trust
- Aidan Coates
- Sport England
- Historic England

3.5 Attached at Appendix 2 is a schedule of the comments received. These comments were passed on to Combe Parish Council and the second column of the schedule sets out how they were taken into account in preparing the final proposed adoption version of the VDS. . The final column in the schedule adds relevant District Council observations.

Appendix 1 – village consultation and questionnaire survey findings - draft Combe Village Design Statement – June 2020

COMBE VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT (VDS)

VILLAGE CONSULTATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY FINDINGS



Steering group:

Deborah Phillips (898627), Paul Coffey, Jen Hurst, Margaret Moore, Alan Revell, Julia Sharpe, Elena Softley.

1. INTRODUCTION

Why do we need a Village Design Statement?

Given potential threats to Combe from increasing development in West Oxfordshire, the Parish Council decided to embark upon writing a Village Design Statement (VDS). A VDS is a community-led planning document that seeks to protect and enhance the visual character of a village and its surroundings. This is achieved by devising a set of design principles that will guide future planning decisions. A VDS aims to reflect the views of all local residents.

This report

The first step in this process has been to consult widely with residents to find out what they feel about the character of Combe, what makes it special, and what priorities people have for the future. This report gives a summary of the findings from a six-month period of consultation over the summer and autumn of 2019.

The consultation began with informal discussions and activities across the village, and ended with a household questionnaire survey. Over half (53 per cent) of the households in Combe responded to the survey, giving us a total of 169 questionnaires. We heard from people across different age-groups living in all areas of Combe.

What's next?

The VDS Steering Group is working with West Oxfordshire District Council planners to come up with planning design principles that reflect the values and priorities of Combe residents based on these findings. These principles will be incorporated into a formal planning document.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation process. We enjoyed talking to people of all ages at the cricket match barbeques held at the recreation ground, to children at Combe School, and to those walking the parish boundaries of Combe - thank you to Jonathan Ford for leading the walks and to David O'Brien for a photographic display in the Reading Room. We are also very grateful to everyone who completed the household survey and to the team of volunteers who helped to distribute and collect the questionnaires.

June 2020

2. CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF COMBE



What words did residents use to describe Combe in the questionnaire?

peaceful

unspoilt

quintessential Cotswold village

picturesque

open spaces

outstanding natural beauty

beautiful

delightful

pretty

bucolic

charming

a gem

How would residents describe Combe to someone who didn't know it?

The best of English country living. Friendly, maintained with love and pride, beautiful, sleepy (on the surface), quiet.

[Combe is] high above the Evenlode valley, so there are lovely views – rural, fields. Many walks towards Blenheim. Lovely river and river views. Quiet, dark and peaceful. Not too big a village.

Rural village in Cotswold stone, around a village green. Steep sided river valley with flat meadows to the south of the parish. Intensive arable large fields to north of parish.

Beautiful small Cotswold village..... set in beautiful countryside surrounded by well managed farm land and woodland.

Small old English Cotswold village with a medieval church and cricket grounds in the centre and quaint cottages surrounded by farmland and countryside.

It is a real English village wrapped inside beautiful scenery.

What do people feel contributes most to the appearance and character of Combe?

The village green, the playfield/sports ground, the Cock Inn, the Reading Room, the way most homeowners take pride in the appearance of their homes and gardens, the spaciousness of the village (not built up), the history of the village with its old houses and buildings, the fact that it's so close to Blenheim.

The mixture of houses, old and new, and how they seem to fit together. The open airy feel of the village. Hearing the trains in the distance, the planes flying overhead, the church clock and bells, the cricket in the summer, and the football in the winter.

What did young people say about Combe?

The fields are lovely. It wouldn't be Combe without footpaths and endless fields. The wildlife in Combe plays a big role in its friendly and caring reputation ... [age 13]

Combe is nice, but I don't want them to build all over it. [age 12]

I love the surrounding unspoilt countryside, traditional buildings and the field in the middle (Alma Grove). [age 18]

3. FINDINGS - WHAT DO PEOPLE VALUE ABOUT COMBE?

The people of Combe told us that they value the following aspects of Combe's character and appearance, and would like to see them preserved and/or enhanced.

LANDSCAPE SETTING

Rural vistas

There was a strong desire to retain and preserve the rural integrity of the village and the surrounding landscape, with its open, uninterrupted views across the countryside. Views across the fields towards Blenheim and Long Hanborough, and across the Evenlode Valley, were particularly valued. This is captured in a quote from one survey respondent:

[I like] the views across the playing field towards the church clock tower, with the green of the countryside beyond, together with the wide endless view of the sky.

Approaches to the village

The wooded approaches to the village, together with the surrounding fields, were highlighted as important to the rural feel of the village and its special character. One participant during our informal consultations described the approaches as a '*portal into paradise*' and another referred to them as '*setting the scene*' for the village.

Settlement pattern

People would like to minimise settlement expansion in order to preserve the separate rural identity of Combe. Recurring comments highlighted the fate of surrounding villages (e.g. Stonesfield, Long Hanborough and Church Hanborough) that have succumbed to rapid development.

Survey respondents commented:

It would be nice if Combe could avoid becoming part of the extended conurbation around Oxford - a fate rapidly overtaking places like Church Hanborough.

Combe is a beautiful village, largely unchanged in visual character over many decades, yet still very much a living village. The most important thing is that it doesn't lose the glorious ring of rolling fields and woodlands that surround it. And that it does not succumb to the urban/suburban creep that is changing the nature of so many surrounding villages.

River and river walks

The river, river valley walks and historic water meadows were valued by all age-groups.

Landscape and wildlife/biodiversity

There was an interest in retaining and managing copses, hedgerows and field margins, using native species. This was valued for appearance and biodiversity (see section on biodiversity).

Footpaths through the surrounding countryside

People wanted to preserve, maintain and, where possible, extend the network of footpaths.

Dark night skies

With very few exceptions, people appreciated the dark skies of Combe and did not wish to see street lighting.

Proximity to Blenheim estate

Residents of Combe value, and are sensitive to, the role of the Blenheim estate in the surrounding landscape. The management of the estate and farmland within the parish has implications for Combe in terms of landscape appearance, traffic flows, the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity, and potential future housing development.

VILLAGE CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE***Old village heart, with village green***

The heart of the village is highly prized for its history, tranquility and spaciousness, and traditional features (e.g. stone cottages, village pumps, stone trough etc.). This historic heart is regarded as generally well-maintained and the key feature contributing to the appearance and character of Combe.

92 per cent of survey respondents (Table 1, appendix) thought that it was 'very important' to preserve the village green in the future. The Green was commonly described as the '*heart of the village*' and is spoken of with affection by many residents. Respondents told us that:

Protecting the village green and other open spaces is central to the character of the village.

[The village green is] essential to the character of the village - a precious resource.

It is a space for community events and celebrations. This helps to build relationships, unity and a sense of belonging and identity. It also brings all generations together.

Rurality of the village

Combe was described as a traditional, largely unspoilt, well-kept Cotswold village, comfortably integrated into its surrounding rural landscape. One person described it as '*nestling in the landscape*'. Another commented: '*It looks like it belongs in its landscape*'.

Green open spaces within the village

There is a widely held desire to preserve green spaces, such as the two village greens, Alma Grove field, the recreation ground, private gardens, allotments and the few remaining orchards within the village. People valued the proximity of grazing animals to the heart of the village (especially on Alma Grove field). Children emphasised the importance of nearby woods and open green spaces for the freedom to roam and play.

In answer to the question ‘What do you like best about the appearance of Combe?’, several respondents captured wider sentiments when they referred to:

The beautiful green open spaces in the very heart of the village; the Green, Alma Grove field and the playing field. They are like green lungs.

The scattered nature of the village with fields, orchards and trees interspersed between groups of buildings.

The open, rural aspect at the centre of the village, with its large, usually animal occupied field, village green, playing fields and the undulating countryside beyond.

Density of building

The emphasis on the importance of green spaces within the village is consistent with the traditional character of Combe as a dispersed village settlement. The importance of this characteristic is captured in the following comment:

It is important that in small villages such as Combe, infilling is really limited. The spaces that exist between areas of residential development are just as important as the buildings themselves in their contribution to the overall character of the village. They allow glimpses between spaces, views in and out of the village and enable the countryside and large trees to penetrate into the centre of the village. Areas such as the remnants of orchards, the village pound and allotments are all part of the historical character of the village and deserve to be retained.

This, and other comments, indicate support for maintaining low densities of building. For example, one person commented:

Combe is the perfect balance between old buildings and newer built ones in the traditional style. It is not over dense, with green spaces and the preservation of the ‘building line’ along the main roads, avoiding a ‘closed-in’ feeling.

Iconic views within the village

Respondents cited a wide range of favourite views, both within the village and across the surrounding countryside. Iconic views (in order of popularity) were:

- the view across the recreation ground towards the church (54 per cent of respondents mentioned this);
- the view from Akeman Street, across Alma Grove field, towards the church;
- views in all directions across the village green;
- the view along Church Walk.

Iconic buildings

The church and church yard, the Reading Room, the pub, the Cotswold stone cottages, Church Walk cottages, buildings clustered around the historic village green, and other historic buildings (e.g. the old chapel/Hub, the old school building, Old Vicarage and Combe House) were singled out for their contribution to the distinctive character of Combe.

Boundaries - dry stone walls and hedges

The preservation of traditional boundary walls and hedges was seen as integral to the distinctive character of the parish. Table 1 (see appendix) indicates that 75 percent of survey respondents think that it is 'very important' to preserve Combe's stone walls for the future and a similar proportion (74 per cent) regard hedgerows as 'very important'.

One respondent described the special character of the boundaries:

[I like] the mixture of stonewalls, hedges and boundaries and the different degree of colour they give through the seasons.

Tree cover

Trees, especially the oaks in the centre of the village, are regarded as an important visual component of Combe's landscape. The cedar tree in the grounds of the Old Vicarage is greatly admired and is felt to be integral to the landscape of the historic village centre. Nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) of respondents regarded protecting trees as 'very important' for Combe's appearance (Table 1) and for wildlife. As one respondent observed:

Trees and hedgerows help keep our wildlife and add to the beauty of Combe.

ARCHITECTURE AND MATERIALS**Traditional vernacular buildings**

The Cotswold stone cottages and other historic vernacular buildings in the centre of Combe are highly valued for their contribution to what makes Combe special. Some people also appreciated the good mix of old and newer housing in the village, although there were some examples of newer housing developments that were less well received.

Materials

Use of materials that complement existing buildings was favoured. Table 1 indicates that 65 percent of survey respondents think that it is 'very important' to build with traditional, or similar, building materials in the future. Only 6 per cent thought it was 'unimportant'. Some people were happy to see the use of more modern materials, if of high quality.

Views on new development

People were realistic about the need for more housing, but stressed the importance of affordability and sympathetic scale and design. It was felt that any future housing development should be:

- in character/sympathetic to the existing mix of housing and historical legacy of the village;
- of modest scale, to protect the rural appearance and feel of the village.

One recent development in particular was frequently cited for its inappropriate scale and style, whilst three new houses on Akeman Street were appreciated for their sensitive design.

Tables 2 and 3 (see appendix) indicate that two-thirds of the survey respondents felt that it was 'very important' that the scale and design of any new developments should blend in with the surrounding buildings, particularly in the case of 'in-filling'. It should also be noted that, given the above comments on the importance of green spaces and low-density building, the idea of 'in-filling' in Combe is unlikely to be popular.

Comments by one respondent summed up the feelings of many people on development:

Villages such as Combe should be treated with sensitivity so as to keep that character, not as museum pieces, but as living villages that grow and expand in a sympathetic way, so that in years to come they still represent the history of our countryside and people.

HIGHWAYS

Traffic

Many people had observed an increase in the volume and speed of traffic in recent years. Just over half of the survey respondents (52 per cent) supported additional traffic calming measures, although there was ambivalence about the addition of more street furniture.

Verges

These were regarded as important for the visual appearance of Combe and as green spaces for wildlife. 62 per cent of survey respondents felt that it was 'very important' to preserve verges (Table 1).

Parking

Parking presents many challenges in the village, especially in its historic centre, where there is little off-street parking. This drew many adverse comments about the effect of parked cars on the appearance of the village and the destruction of grass verges in particular.

Pavements and footpaths

Just over one third (35 per cent) of respondents would like to see more designated pavements and footpaths. There were particular concerns about the absence of a safe path to Combe Halt. Others would like to see existing pavements and paths better maintained.

BIODIVERSITY

Although no specific questions were asked about biodiversity during the public consultations, several biodiversity-related themes emerged during informal discussions and in the questionnaire survey responses. People expressed a wish to:

Preserve open spaces for biodiversity

This was seen to be important both within the village and in the surrounding countryside areas (see comments on verges above).

Protect the countryside

References were made to the importance of trees, meadows, the river, field margins and hedgerows as eco-systems for biodiversity. Three-quarters of the questionnaire respondents thought it was 'very important' to preserve hedgerows and trees, both for the village's appearance and wildlife. Hedgerows were described '*as wildlife corridors*' and '*living barriers [that] provide home and protection and food to a diverse amount of wildlife*'.

Looking to the future, one survey respondent commented:

It will be important to retain the green and semi-wild spaces in order to maintain the range of wildlife (birds and mammals) that are so much a part of the magic of the village.

Younger residents showed particular concern for Combe's environmental wellbeing in their comments:

The fields are lovely. It wouldn't be Combe without footpaths and endless fields. The wildlife in Combe plays a big role in its friendly and caring reputation. It would be nice to add information boards in the woods to explain the wildlife and what grows. [age 13]

The environment of Combe is of unrivalled importance in this modern age of climate change. [age 15]

Enhance the river and river walks

There was some concern over the loss of water quality in the Evenlode river following adverse media reports, and a desire to enhance both the quality of the river and river walks.

Restore lost habitats

There was regret over certain habitat losses, particularly in areas of surrounding farmland. A few people favoured a policy of 'rewilding' and minimal trimming of verges.

Reduce lighting at night

Although many praised Combe's dark night skies, there were some who would like to see lighting levels reduced further, both for reasons of appearance and nocturnal wildlife. The light pollution from LED lighting at Combe Halt was singled out for particular criticism, and some would also like to see people's domestic external lighting arrangements moderated.

In summary, these concerns fit with Blenheim Estate's stated policy commitment to enhancing the area's 'natural capital' (i.e. nature, with its social, economic and cultural benefits) and biodiversity. This is encapsulated in Blenheim's 'Land Strategy' (launched in 2019), which has implications for the evolving landscape in and around Combe.

CONCLUSION – WHAT WERE THE MAIN MESSAGES?

People told us that they loved the wide-open views across the countryside, the wooded approaches to the village, river walks, the dark night skies, and the generally well-kept appearance of Combe. The church, the stone cottages, the village green with its oak trees, and the traditional Cotswold buildings at the heart of the village stood out as particularly special.

One of the clearest messages from the findings was how much people value, and wish to protect, green open spaces within the village. This included not only the larger green areas, such as the village greens, Alma Grove field, the recreation ground, the church yard etc., but also the smaller spaces and verges that make up the open character of our village and provide a haven for wildlife. This links closely with people's growing concerns about protecting the countryside, the river and green spaces for the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

Residents were less happy with the impact of traffic and parked cars on the village's appearance. Overall, there was support for traffic calming measures. Respondents were realistic about the possibility of future housing development, but if this happens, most people would prefer affordable housing, built on a small scale, and in sympathy with the existing character of the village. The preservation of hedges and traditional dry-stone walls was seen as integral to the distinctive character of the parish.

APPENDIX

Table 1 Looking to the future, how important do you think it is to

	Very important	Important	Quite important	Not important	Unsure
Protect verges	62%	21%	12%	4%	1%
Protect the village green	92%	6%	2%	<1%	-
Preserve traditional stone walls	75%	19%	4%	1%	<1%
Protect hedgerows	74%	20%	5%	1%	<1%
Protect existing trees	74%	20%	5%	1%	<1%
Build with traditional, or similar, building materials	65%	19%	9%	6%	1%

Which of these, if any, is the most important?

95 respondents picked out one of the above as particularly important to them, as follows:

Verges	9
Village green	48 - commonly described as the 'heart of the village'
Stone walls	2
Hedgerows	8
Existing trees	14
Traditional materials	14

Table 2 Where new housing is built between existing houses (so called in-filling), how important do you feel it is that the new housing blends in with the surrounding houses in terms of (i) design and (ii) scale?

	Very important	Important	Quite important	Not important	Unsure
(i) Design	66%	20%	9%	4%	<1%
(ii) Scale	63%	22%	11%	4%	<1%

Table 3 Where new housing is built at the edge of the village (so called linear development), how important do you feel it is that the new housing blends in with the surrounding houses in terms of (i) design and (ii) scale?

	Very important	Important	Quite important	Not important	Unsure
(i) Design	66%	20%	9%	4%	<1%
(ii) Scale	60%	22%	11%	5%	1%

Appendix 2 – consultation responses received in response to the draft Combe Village Design Statement – March 2023

Name	Representation	Combe Parish Council response and amendments to the draft VDS	District Council Comment
Malcolm Axtell	<p>This is an impressive work which captures the essence of this special village environment. It emphasises the importance of appreciating and protecting the multitude of invaluable historic and natural features of a typical Cotswold area settlement which can so easily be threatened by unattractive and unwelcome development trends of today.</p> <p>This same study could equally apply to a large number of similar village locations throughout the WODC area and beyond.</p>		Support noted.
Rosalind Kent	<p>Any buildings built in Combe need to be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Net Zero construction 2. South facing or larger windows on the south 3. Photovoltaic panels on roofs. 4. Generated electricity fed into a local grid, supplying local people first. 5. Houses in small groups, not long rows. 6. At least 50% affordable houses. 	<p>The revised draft VDS has been amended to include reference to the District Council’s Net Zero Carbon Toolkit on p.39, column 2, fourth bullet point; and again on p.41, Reference list, with link to the: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/how-to-achieve-net-zero-carbon-homes/</p>	<p>The adopted Local Plan Policy H3 (Affordable housing) requires schemes of 11 or more homes to provide 50% as affordable housing on-site.</p>
Deb Roberts, Planning & Development	<p>As West Oxfordshire District Council lies outside the defined coalfield, the Coal Authority has no specific comments to make.</p>		<p>The Coal Authority is a non-departmental public body sponsored</p>


<p>Manager, The Coal Authority</p>			<p>by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. As a statutory consultee, the Coal Authority has a duty to respond to planning applications and development plans in order to protect the public and the environment in mining areas.</p>
<p>John Harwood Chair, Wootton Parish Council</p>	<p>Following the circulation of the draft Combe VDS by the Council and the invitation to comment, the consultation documents were discussed by Wootton Parish Council at its meeting on Monday 13 February.</p> <p>Village Design Statements are an important way in which local residents are able to exert some influence over building development in their local area. The Parish Council supports the adoption of VDSs, thanks Combe PC for taking the initiative and drafting one for their parish, and urges WODC both to approve the Combe VDS and encourage and help other parishes to develop their own Statements.</p>		<p>Support noted.</p>
<p>Jane Hennell, Area Planner, Canal & River Trust</p>	<p>Based on the information available, the Trust has no comment to make on the design statement as we do not own or maintain any canals within the plan area.</p>		<p>The Canal & River Trust is a statutory consultee in the Development Management process. It is a charity who looks after and brings life to 2000 miles of canals and rivers.</p>

Aidan Coates, local resident	<p>I would like to express support for the Combe Village Design Statement, agreeing with the content and thinking it is important for the feel of the village to be protected (particularly against aggressive developers).</p> <p>I would also like to be notified when the council has adopted the VDS as a supplementary planning document.</p>		<p>Support noted.</p> <p>A wide range of organisation are notified when a SPD is adopted, as are those who responded during the formal consultation period.</p>
Bob Sharples, Principal Planning Manager - South Team, Sport England	<p>I note that the village cricket pitch appears several times in the document, which highlights the importance of cricket to the village. The West Oxfordshire Playing Pitch Strategy identifies Combe cricket club's facilities as in need of improvement and there is a requirement for some fixed lane cricket nets.</p> <p>The cricket nets, if provided, may benefit from limited sports lighting. Sport England would advise that these improvements are taken into consideration within the VDS and the parish council should weigh up the social and health benefits, in particular to young people, when any planning applications come forth.</p> <p>I would be happy to discuss my comments with the authors of the draft VDS if that was helpful.</p>		<p>Bob Sharples' contact details have been shared with Combe Parish Council.</p> <p>Sport England's comments have been passed on to the District Council's Leisure Team.</p> <p>Local Plan Policies EH2 (Landscape character) and EH8 (Environmental protection) address lighting.</p>
Guy Robinson, Historic Environment Planning Adviser, Development	As the Government's adviser on the historic environment, Historic England is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process. We applaud the work done to draft the Village Design Statement, and offer a small number of comments below, which we hope are useful.	Thanks to Guy Robinson (Historic England) for the helpful comments.	Support noted.

<p>Advice – London and the South East Region, Historic England</p>	<p>Page 11: reference is made to the Blenheim Palace as a World Heritage Site. For completeness it should also be mentioned that area is designated as a Registered Park and Garden (GI). We suggest the following wording for consideration:</p> <p>“The panoramic view over the countryside from Combe Lodge Gate, and the remnants of ancient woodlands to the east and south of the parish, are highlighted as particularly special. <u>In addition to its designation as a World Heritage Site, Blenheim Palace is also a Registered Park and Garden (GI).</u>”</p> <p>Page 19: we suggest minor changes to the sentence that includes reference to “Historic England’s Listed Buildings” as follows:</p> <p>a) The phrase “Historic England’s Listed Buildings” could mistakenly imply that the Listed Buildings belong to Historic England in some way. So, we advise this reference is changed to the National Heritage List for England.</p> <p>b) We suggest adding the year which relates to the number of Listed Buildings, reflecting the fact that the ‘List’ changes over time.</p> <p>c) While protection (of significance) is important, designations also provide a stimulus for proposals, encouraging the design of a scheme to respond positively in a manner informed by that significance.</p> <p>Taking the above points together, we propose revised wording for consideration: “Combe has 38 <u>Listed Buildings on the National Heritage List for England</u> (I’d suggest breaking this down in parenthesis in terms of the number of GI, GII* and GII and include the year this was checked). entries in Historic England’s Listed Buildings, which Designated status affords protection when development is proposed <u>and is based on heritage significance.</u>”</p> <p>Page 24: the text on green spaces and green infrastructure offers another opportunity to mention that Blenheim Palace is also a RPG i.e. “..., and the</p>	<p>All but one of the suggested amendments have been incorporated into the revised VDS on the pages indicated in the representation.</p> <p>The only exception is the insertion suggested for p11. It was felt that reference to the Blenheim Palace’s ‘Registered Park and Garden’ status did not contribute anything to an understanding of Combe’s iconic views. Reference is made on p.24 to Blenheim Palace’s designation as a Registered Park and Garden (GI), as suggested by Historic England.</p>	
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	<p>backdrop of the dense woodlands of the Blenheim Palace Great Park to the north (<u>which is also a GI Registered Park and Garden</u>)”.</p> <p>Page 27: we anticipate it would be more helpful to state that Fern Cottage, Rose Cottage and End Cottage are highlighted in their List entries by Historic England as a group of dwellings that form an integral part of the historic centre of the village and strongly define Combe’s vernacular tradition. “By Historic England” could be deleted if space is tight and to avoid re-setting the page.</p> <p>Pages 32-35: we welcome the section on the public realm. As the Council may know, a source of relevant advice on development in the public realm is ‘Streets for All’. The Village Design Statement could include a reference to this advice, if appropriate: https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/streets-for-all/</p> <p>Page 34: reference is made to further cabling being “placed under ground”. We acknowledge the importance of avoiding further “blight” as referenced in the draft VDS and simply would flag the potential to impact on the historic environment below ground too, if further cabling were proposed in an area of archaeological potential. This may merit a minor tweak such as: “Further cabling should be placed under ground, <u>where appropriate</u>”. If further advice is needed on this matter, we would suggest liaison with the Council’s archaeological adviser.</p> <p>Page 37: for completeness, we suggest reference is made also to the landscape’s contribution to the setting of nearby heritage assets e.g. adding a new bullet such as: “New development should respond sensitively to nearby designated heritage assets, avoiding unacceptable harm to their significance (and taking into account the contribution to that significance made by their setting)”.</p> <p>Page 37: it would strengthen the section on the historic core to refer to the village’s designated and non-designated heritage assets e.g.</p>		
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	<p>“Development within the Conservation Area should adhere to the pattern and character of existing settlement, and respect the historic heart of Combe <u>and conserve or enhance the village’s heritage assets</u>”.</p> <p>This response is based on the information provided by you in the document dated November 2021 and, for the avoidance of doubt, does not affect our obligation to advise you on, and potentially object to any specific development proposal which may subsequently arise from this or later versions of the Design Statement which is the subject to consultation, and which may have adverse effects on the environment.</p> <p>If you have any queries about any of the matters raised above or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.</p>		
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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE 12TH JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>OUR HOUSE FUNDING EXTENSION FOR 2023/2024</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Geoff Saul Executive Member for Housing Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officers</p>	<p>Caroline Clissold, Business Manager Housing Caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk</p> <p>Jon Dearing, Assistant Director Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Caroline Clissold, Business Manager Housing Caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To update members on the 'Our House' project since its inception with a recommendation that funding be extended from 1st November 2023 to 31st October 2024</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Project outcomes Annex B – EIA</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That the Executive resolves to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Approve an extension to the Our House project for one year</i> <i>2. That the Council agrees to use Housing Reserves as set out in section 3</i> <i>3. That Executive agrees to continue with the current Support Provider via waiver</i> <i>4. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare to make any minor amendments to this funding extension;</i> <i>5. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing in</i>

	<i>consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare to apply for external funding should any become available to continue the project.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Chief Finance Officer Cabinet Members with Responsibility for Housing and Finance Monitoring Officer Chief Executive Head of Legal Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** West Oxfordshire District Council has worked with our countywide partners for many years to provide a collaborative approach to ending rough sleeping in the County.
- 1.2** As a result of this collaboration, Oxfordshire has both an established Young Peoples Supported Accommodation Pathway (predominantly for care leavers) and a general needs Adult Homelessness Pathway and has achieved much success in reducing the numbers of those that are sleeping out. However, due to the high concentration of rough sleeping in Oxford City, and the graduation of people from rural areas to the services located in the City much of the funding and supported accommodation projects are located in Oxford.
- 1.3** Many of our local residents however, especially young people who have high support needs, do not wish to be relocated outside of our District or to lose contact with their own support networks in the area. The traditional supported accommodation approach does not work for all with many clients preferring the 'own front door' or to live in smaller shared schemes.
- 1.4** West Oxfordshire District Council therefore created an innovative project called the 'Our House' Project in 2018 by working with our local housing provider, Cottsway and specialist support provider Aspire to address the needs of our local young people who are either rough sleeping, at threat of rough sleeping or are unable to remain at home with family or friends.
- 1.5** The Our House project now provides accommodation with support for up to 12 young people across 3 shared houses located within the District.
- 1.6** Funding was initially secured through government grants however once these ran out, further funding was secured in November 2021 from Earmarked Reserves.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1** The current funding arrangements are due to end in October 2023. The cost for continuing the project from November 2023 for a further year and delivering the support element is £75,000 per annum.
- 2.2** The majority of referrals into the project are from young people who were either 'sofa surfing' or 'street homeless'.
- 2.3** As the residents have varying levels of need, a bespoke package of support is identified for each new resident prior to them moving into the property thus unlocking further potential by better managing the support required of the trainees and their own personal journeys towards employment and independent living.
- 2.4** The majority of the residents accommodated in the three properties have had complex and sometimes challenging support needs and mental health issues meaning that the project has often had to be very reactive to certain situations to help reduce further escalations. The continuation of the project in partnership with Aspire will provide experienced and diverse support with a greater variety of resource that can be delivered 'in house' by the Council.
- 2.5** The 'Our House' project has provided some much needed single accommodation for young people within West Oxfordshire and has assisted us with discharging our homelessness

duties. Using the ‘Our House’ project has significant financial benefits as well as providing better outcomes for our young people.

- 2.6 Residents have been able to access employment and training opportunities and work alongside independent work coaches to establish their own plans and goals towards employment. Given the nature of the project there have been challenges, but these have been overcome through the work of various partnerships the project has created
- 2.7 The cost of providing this accommodation with high level bespoke support averages out at around £133 per week per person. Should funding for the project not be agreed, the cost of providing emergency B&B accommodation would be in the region of £300 - £500 per week, plus additional staffing to offer support to the young people to maintain this.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Council currently has sufficient funding to meet the costs of extending the Our House project in Earmarked Reserves from an underspend in previous years ring fenced grants.
- 3.2 The proposed Our House support package costs are set out below:

November 2023 – October 2024	£75,000
6 month contingency to ‘wind’ down the project should external funding not be available in Oct 24	£37,500
Total	£112,500

- 3.3 Should the Council not continue with the project there will be cost implications in respect of other homelessness/ housing benefit costs and these are set out below:-

Annual Cost without Our House	
Temporary accommodation for 12	£187,200
Loss of Subsidy	£134,160
Total	£321,360

- 3.4 In addition to these costs there may be other complex needs support costs.
- 3.5 The tables set out above demonstrate that whilst it is an additional financial cost to the Council it is also an effective cost avoidance programme and therefore is recommended to the Executive for continued funding.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Executive may wish to consider not extending the funding for the project any further however this is likely to have a detrimental impact on the finances of the Council.
- 4.2 Should this be the case however, the Council and Cottsway would have to issue notices to the 12 young people to leave their accommodation by 31st October 2023.

- 4.3** If the residents are not able to source their own accommodation, the Council would need to offer emergency accommodation in B&B until such time as alternative accommodation could be found.
- 4.4** Therefore this option is not recommended due to the increased costs that would be incurred and the detrimental effect on the cohort of being moved from their homes into emergency accommodation.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Spending allocations need to follow the expectations set out in the DLUHC's allocation of funding instructions and comply with the conditions of any ring fenced grant schemes or funding bid awards.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6.1** The current twelve residents of the Our House project will need to be served notice and alternative properties sourced for them if we are unable to extend funding for the project into 2023/24. West Oxfordshire has a shortage of social and affordable one bedroom accommodation and the private sector would prove to be unaffordable to those in minimum wage jobs, apprenticeships or training therefore sourcing this type of accommodation is likely to be unachievable.
- 6.2** If move-on properties are not found for the Our House residents, this could force them into homelessness, emergency / B&B accommodation or rough sleeping.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1** Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in relation to:
- Race
 - Disability
 - Gender, including gender reassignment
 - Age
 - Sexual Orientation
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Religion or belief
- 7.2** The Council also has a duty to foster good relations, and to consider the impact of its decisions on human rights. The law requires that this duty to pay 'due regard' is demonstrated in the decision making process. Therefore a full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed – Annex B.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

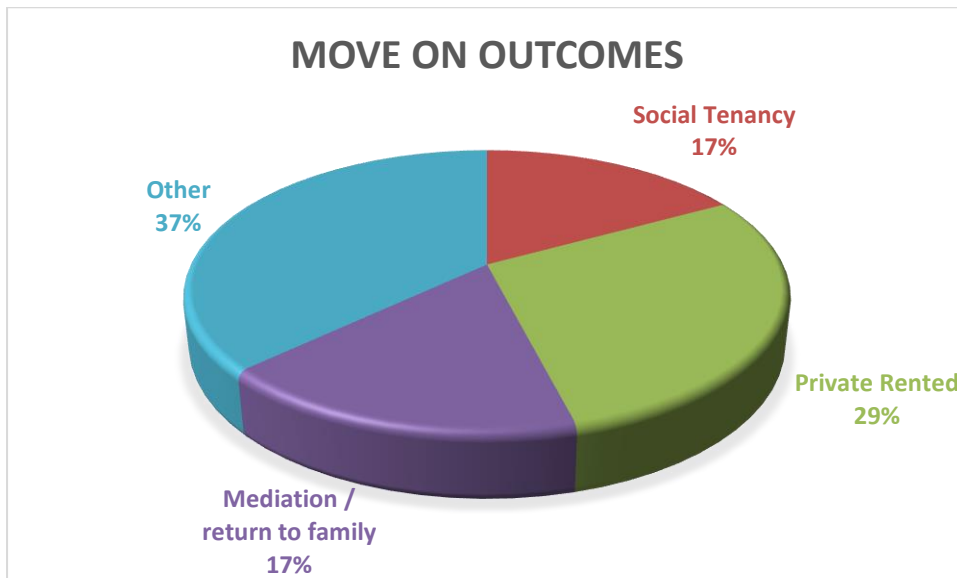
None

(END)

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Annex A:

Our House Project – Aims and Outcomes 2022/23



Other: This category includes a small number of residents who were evicted from the project for issues such as anti-social behaviour and refusal to pay rent/ service charges AND who refused to engage with the support.

When evicted Aspire work with the Housing Team and our wider Oxfordshire partners and pathways to source alternative accommodation ensuring that no one becomes homeless.

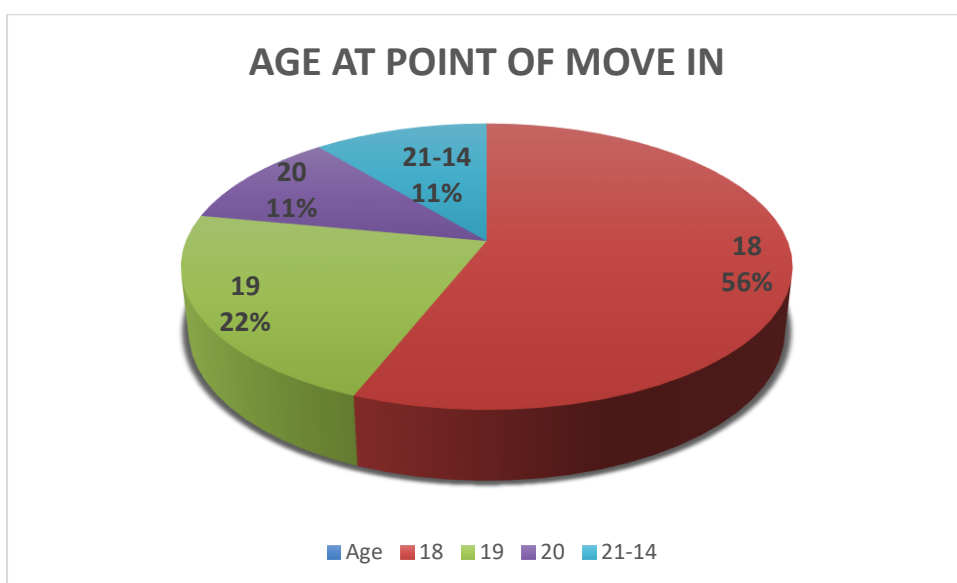


Chart 2 demonstrates just how young some of the Our House cohort is at the time of becoming homeless and referral into the project. To assist in raising awareness of our services the Housing Team have recently employed a Complex Needs Prevention Officer who will be targeting this age group alongside the Families First Officer who is providing mediation for families at the earliest possible stage. The aim of both officers is to try and encourage more families to come forwards before relationships breakdown irretrievably.

The work that Aspire does – snapshot of Q4 2022/23

- 264 interactions with residents where support was provided
 - 64% face to face visits, 36% via phone catch up's / check ins

Individual outcomes

- Resident previously out of work due to an injury now back in employment
- Resident previously struggling to retain work has now passed their probation and has been promoted to Team Lead at a supermarket
- Resident previously long term unemployed working in hospitality
- Resident previously long term unemployed recently requalified in Construction
- Resident previously long term unemployed now starting their own pet care business through the Princes Trust

Wider Holistic Support

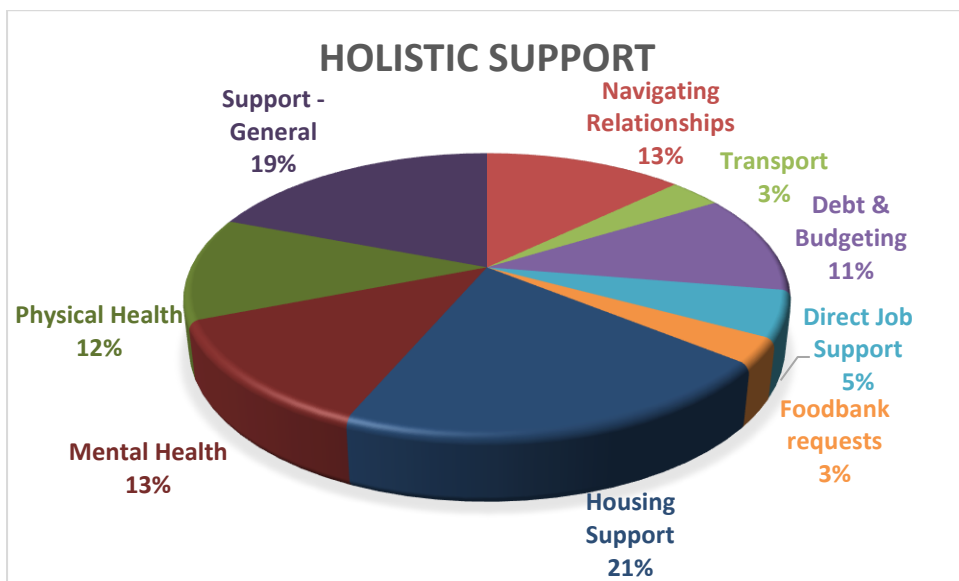


Chart 3

More detailed information can be made available on request

Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the ‘protected characteristics’ may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to Cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Caroline Clissold	
Date of assessment: 19/06/2023	

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Our House Project Funding Extension
Is this a new or existing one? Existing project

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

<p>The Our House project was sent up in 2018 specifically to address the needs of young people with complex needs in the district facing homelessness. Young people need a high level of support which often differs significantly from older adults.</p> <p>The Our House Project provides 12 bed spaces split between 3 housing within the district and provides bespoke in person support to assist young people to find education, employment, volunteering alongside longer term sustainable housing options.</p>
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4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (along with various other Housing Legislation) provides the statutory framework against how the Housing Team provide advice and assistance to households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	✓	Regular monitoring of local housing trends and data obtained from HomeseekerPlus which is reported to central government via our H-CLIC reporting requirements
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

No gaps identified

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No

NA

If NO please outline any planned activities

NA

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People		✓		The proposal is specifically to address the support and housing needs of young people	

Age – Old People	✓			The proposal is specifically to address the support and housing needs of young people so excludes older adults over 25 in most cases	Older Adults have other options available to them in West Oxfordshire in other Projects aimed at over 25's
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	
Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity, but it is not specific to this group	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of West Oxfordshire district	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned – see note	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of West Oxfordshire district	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
NA			

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?


NA

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Caroline Clissold	Date:	19/06/2023
Line Manager:	Jon Dearing	Date:	19/06/2023
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan	Date:	20/06/2023

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE 13 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>PLANNED EXPENDITURE OF THE HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT – HOMES FOR UKRAINE TOP UP 2023-2024</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Cllr Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare Email: Geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Jon Dearing, Assistant Director, Resident Services Email: jon.dearing@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Caroline Clissold Business Manager - Housing Email: caroline.clissold@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the planned expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant – Homes for Ukraine top up 2023/2024</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities (DLUHC) Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Homes for Ukraine top up Grant Letter, 12th June 2023 Annex B – Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approve the expenditure of £220,541 detailed within section 3 of this report; b) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Social Welfare and the Chief Finance Officer to make any amendments to these allocations to subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions; c) Delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Resident Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Chief Finance Officer to make decisions on any other uplifts or grants

	that may be given over the financial years 2023-24 to address increased demands on the Housing Service, subject to compliance with the ring fenced grant conditions.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Executive Member with Responsibility for Housing; Chief Executive Deputy Chief Executive / S151 Officer; Monitoring Officer Head of Legal Services

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has provided an annual grant allocation to assist with the Prevention of Homelessness for several years in varying different formats and amounts. This was recently changed to a two year award for 2023 onwards.
- 1.2 DLUHC awarded West Oxfordshire District Council through the Homelessness Prevention Grant £269,927 for 2023-24 rising to £282,704 in 2024-25
- 1.3 On the 12th June 2023 DLUHC announced that a £150 million UK Homelessness Prevention Grant top up has been awarded to assist local authorities with the additional pressures faced by Homelessness services relating to the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 West Oxfordshire DC received a letter from DLUHC on the 12th June 2023 advising that the Council had been awarded an additional £220,541 from the Homelessness Prevention top up grant
- 2.2 This grant is ring fenced for homelessness targeting those most in need and to ensure local authorities are resourced to take action to prevent homelessness and to continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
- 2.3 The purpose of this specific top up is to assist West Oxfordshire with maximising the support available to the Ukrainian cohort living with Hosts in the district under the Homes for Ukraine scheme to find sustainable accommodation.
- 2.4 The grant can also be used to support wider homelessness pressures and other refugee groups however all funds must be spent by the end of March 2024.
- 2.5 Full details of the Grant conditions are set out in the letter from DLUHC – Annex A

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 West Oxfordshire DC's Housing Team have seen significant homelessness pressure increases over the course of the pandemic and recent cost of living crisis with a significant increase in homelessness presentations and emergency accommodation placements.
- 3.2 The additional work generated by the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme alongside other Refugee schemes such as the Afghan Resettlement Scheme has seen workloads increase even further, specifically in the management side of the staff structure and the strategic representation at the various new local and countywide meetings that have been created to discuss these issues.
- 3.3 Staffing and management structure is therefore a priority area that needs to be addressed using this grant.
- 3.4 Given the short term nature of the fund and that there is only 9 months left before this must be spent, recruiting additional staffing through usual channels is unlikely to be

successful. Usual recruitment times are also lengthy, averaging three months before new staff can be successfully recruited. It is therefore likely that we will need to use agency staff as we are unlikely to attract a high quality applicant for a 6 month contract.

- 3.5 There is sufficient knowledge and experience within the current Housing Team to regrade an existing post to take on the new management responsibilities however this post will then need to be backfilled.
- 3.6 It is therefore proposed that a new post is created for the duration of the Grant period - Resettlement and Complex Needs Manager - and shared across the Public Authorities. West Oxfordshire has the highest level of need / workload in this area so this will be shared 50/25/25
- 3.7 Although new role will need to be evaluated it is likely that this will be a Level 3 Specialist or Manager level
- 3.8 Additional resourcing will also be needed to provide direct support to the Ukrainian and other Refugee groups to assist with finding alternative sustainable accommodation.
- 3.9 The remainder of the grant will be used to provide a flexible prevention approach to avoid the need for emergency accommodation, however where homelessness cannot be prevented, the grant will be used to support the costs of providing emergency accommodation:

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 None considered as the allocation is ring fenced to specific outcomes.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposals set out in the table below are aimed at addressing the expectations set out by DLUHC and available accommodation in the West Oxfordshire District. There are limited options and significant costs associated with the provision of emergency accommodation within the district, as well as a shortage of longer term accommodation.

Item	Full costs	WODC cost
Resettlement and Complex Needs Manager (subject to Job Evaluation)	Circa £45,000 (to be shared % 50/25/25)	£22,500
Additional HfU family / Prevention support staff		£70,000
Flexible Prevention Grant to include, but not limited to: Rent in Advance Deposits Tenancy Set Up / Furniture / White goods Emergency Accommodation costs		£128,041

Total Costs		£220,541
Funding		
UK Homelessness Prevention Grant top up		£220,541

5.2 As the total expenditure planned matches the grant allocation from government, the impact on the revenue budget will therefore be cost neutral.

5.3 The proposal is therefore aimed to ensure that resourcing and finances are available to assist with reducing the use and time spent in expensive short term, emergency accommodation benefiting both the Council and the client.

5.4 Any staffing related costs are subject to evaluation so are approximate and will require appropriate contract variations to the Publica contract.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Spending allocations need to follow the ring fenced grant schemes.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not use this grant funding effectively for the specific purposes set out in the DLUHC letter to Chief Executives on the 12th June 2023

7.2 DLUHC require a full financial breakdown of how the Homelessness Prevention Grant has been spent at the end of each financial year. If it has not been spent in full, or has not complied with the conditions of the Grant, West Oxfordshire Council could be required to return all or some of it.

7.3 There is also a risk that rising demands on the service from ongoing financial and housing challenges facing residents of the West Oxfordshire District Council area during the ongoing pandemic and Cost of Living Crisis could impact on the Council's ability to deliver a full statutory Housing service if resources are not adequate to meet demand

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 Please see attached Equalities Impact Assessment – Annex B

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Emma Payne

*Director – Resettlement and
Humanitarian Directorate*

Penny Hobman

*Director – Homelessness and
Rough Sleeping Directorate*

**Department for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities**

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

To Local Authority Chief Executives in England

12 June 2023

Dear Local Authority Chief Executive,

**HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT – 2023/2024 HOMES FOR UKRAINE
FUNDING TOP-UP TO SUPPORT GUESTS INTO SUSTAINABLE
ACCOMMODATION**

Thank you for your continuing work to support our Ukrainian guests and others at risk of homelessness across the UK.

We are pleased to update you on the allocation of the £150 million funding for 2023/24 to support Ukrainians into sustainable accommodation that was announced in December. This is in addition to the tariff and thank you payments provided to councils for each arrival in their area.

The purpose of the £150 million UK-wide funding is to help local authorities and the devolved administrations support Ukrainian guests as they move into their second year and to reduce the risk of homelessness. This includes, for example, supporting guests into independent living, supporting employment access, and facilitating ongoing sponsorship. Within England the funding will be administered via a top up to the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) in line with the existing grant conditions. Local authorities are best placed to understand the support needed for local communities and can use this funding to support Ukrainians as well as other people at risk of homelessness.

As set out in December, the funding has been allocated to England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland on the basis of numbers of Ukrainian arrivals. As such, £109,397,777 will be allocated across English local authorities. To reflect broader pressures on local authorities alongside those arising from the Ukrainian cohort, in England, 66% of the funding will be allocated using the HPG formula, on the same basis as the core HPG allocation for 2023/24. The remaining 34% will be allocated based on the Homes for Ukraine arrival numbers reported for each LA as of 4 April 2023, as the closest date to the beginning of this financial year for which arrival numbers are published.

The details of [allocations to local authorities can be found on gov.uk](#), alongside a [technical note](#) setting out the allocation approach.

Conditions of funding

As a top-up to the existing Homelessness Prevention Grant, this grant is ringfenced for homelessness to target those most in need and to ensure local authorities are resourced to take action to prevent homelessness and continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The purpose of this specific top up is for you to maximise supporting the Ukrainian cohort into sustainable accommodation, for example through access to the private rental sector, employment support, facilitating ongoing sponsorship into guests' second year and other upstream support, in line with the flexibility that the HPG conditions afford. This funding may also be used to support with wider homelessness pressures. We expect to provide funding for 2023/24 in August. Reporting requirements will be in line with the existing HPG requirements.


We will be holding a webinar on Wednesday 14 June at 14:00 to discuss details of this announcement. A calendar invite will follow shortly. If you have any questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact HomelessnessPolicy@levellingup.gov.uk.

We will also be providing an FAQ document on the £150m funding, as well as an overview fact sheet on all funding available to local authorities for humanitarian and resettlement routes.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Payne
Director – Resettlement and
Humanitarian Directorate



Penny Hobman
Director – Homelessness and
Rough Sleeping Directorate

Equality and Ruralty Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the ‘protected characteristics’ may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to Cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Caroline Clissold	
Date of assessment: 19/06/2023	

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Planned Expenditure of the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2023-2025 top up – Homes for Ukraine (HfU)
Is this a new or existing one? Top Up Grant to address homelessness pressures

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

<p>The Homelessness Prevention Grant is allocated each year to local authorities to provide funds to assist with the prevention of homelessness and to limit the use of Bed and Breakfast type accommodation. A top up grant has been received for 2023-24 to assist Homelessness Teams with managing the additional pressures on services from the Homes for Ukraine cohort. The top up may also be used to address other pressures within the Housing service, but is ring fenced to Homelessness Prevention. Expectations of how the Grant should be spent is set out by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities (DLUHC) in a grant letter sent to Chief Executive’s – see below.</p>
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4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

As a top up to the existing Homelessness Prevention Grant, the grant is ring-fenced for homelessness to target those most in need and to ensure local authorities are resourced to take action to prevention homelessness and continue to implement the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

More detailed delivery expectations are set out in the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant Letter, December 2021 (Annex A).

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (along with various other Housing Legislation) provides the statutory framework against how the Housing Team provide advice and assistance to households who are threatened with homelessness.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	✓	Regular monitoring of local housing trends and data obtained from HomeseekerPlus which is reported to central government via our H-CLIC reporting requirements
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

No gaps identified

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No

NA

If NO please outline any planned activities

NA

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;

Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;

Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Age – Old People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	
Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity, but it is not specific to this group	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of West Oxfordshire district	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned – see note	Although the Grant is to be used to assist the Homes for Ukraine cohort into more sustainable accommodation, the grant can also be used to assist all other

					homelessness groups with preventing homelessness
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of West Oxfordshire district	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
NA			

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?


NA

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Caroline Clissold	Date:	19/06/2023
Line Manager:	Jon Dearing	Date:	19/06/2023
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan	Date:	20/06/2023

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>LEISURE – STRATEGIC OUTCOMES PLANNING MODEL (DISTRICTWIDE)</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Cllr Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects Email: Alaric.smith@wetoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Scott Williams, Business Manager - Contracts Email: scott.williams@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Rachel Biles, Strategic Projects Lead (Leisure) Email: Rachel.biles@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To seek approval for budgetary provision for the appointment of a consultant to prepare a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) for the District.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Authorise Officers to commence a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model for the District.</i> b) <i>Agree to include a provision of £26,850 within the 2023/24 Leisure budget.</i> c) <i>Appoint specialist leisure consultants to undertake the work.</i>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Putting Residents First ● A Good Quality of Life for All ● Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>

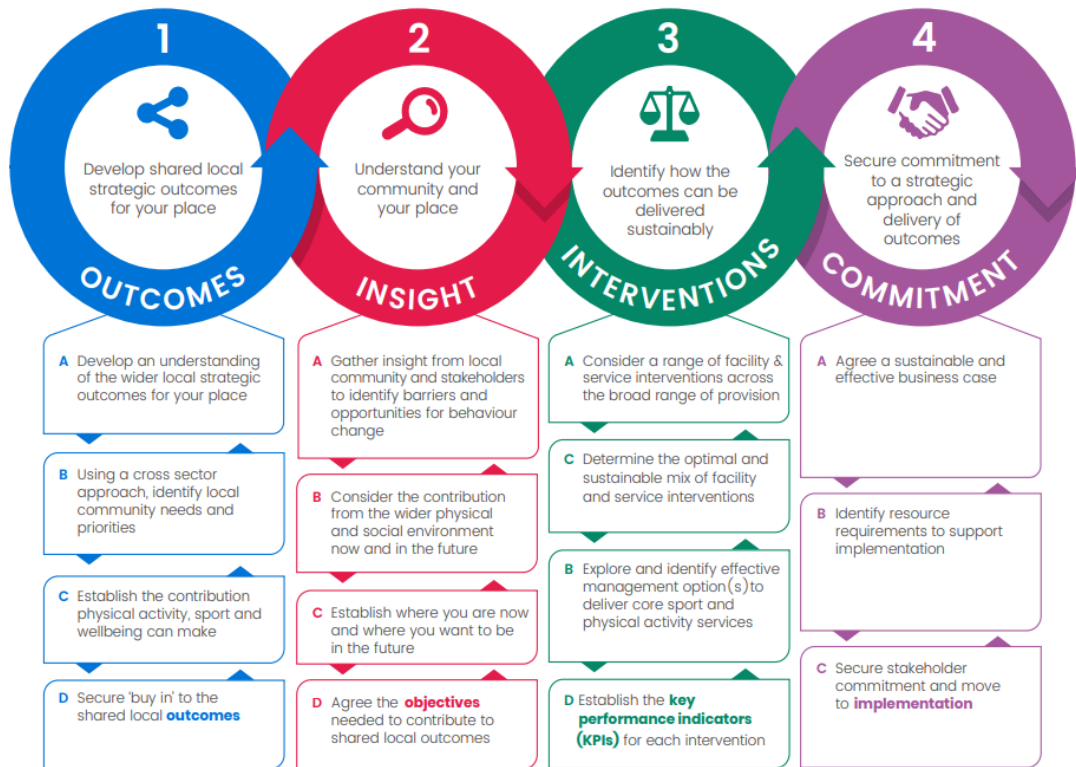
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, and Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Through the development of the Strategic Outcomes Planning Model a range of individuals and organisation will be consulted, such as residents through online community surveys/ focus groups and key stakeholders (including but not limited to; Active Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council, Cotswold National Landscape, Cotsway Housing, Clinical Commissioning Group and Greenwich Leisure Limited).</p>

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** In 2017, West Oxfordshire District Council entered into a 10 year contract with the leisure operator Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL).
- 1.2** It is well published that COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on communities, this has heightened the importance of support for physical and mental wellbeing by providing an active environment.
- 1.3** As a result of the pandemic, participation levels in the Councils facilities fell by 30% year on year, when comparing pre and post covid figures, and the operator is still experiencing a reduction in centre usage and take up of memberships.
- 1.4** This coupled with economic and budgetary pressures (cost of living crisis and rising utility costs) has accelerated the need for the Council to adapt and re-evaluate its leisure services purpose, so they are delivering the local community needs, whilst contributing to broader strategic outcomes in order to deploy and utilise resources effectively.
- 1.5** Leisure Services have historically operated on low margins to ensure inclusivity and accessibility to all sectors of the population. The financial position that leisure operators are now facing nationally is having a knock on effect in the services they provide, which could result in a detrimental effect on the health and wellbeing of residents and the future viability of the sector.
- 1.6** As there are still four years remaining on the existing contract, the Council needs to work in partnership with other stakeholders to create facilities and services that communities will need and use, and that are financially sustainable to operate.
- 1.7** West Oxfordshire District requires a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (SOPM) – Leisure Strategy for the District, to develop a clear approach (determined by local priorities and outcomes) and agreed roadmap in order to provide effective and sustainable physical activity and sports opportunities for local communities.
- 1.8** The SOPM will support the Council to make informed decisions regarding the development of capital projects and investment in the Council owned leisure facilities and other non-facility service interventions.

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1** The development of a SOPM utilises Sport England guidance which aims to assist local authorities in developing a strategic approach to their sport, leisure and physical activity services.
- 2.2** The SOPM will also ensure the requirements and outcomes of local plan, Indoor built facilities strategy and playing pitch strategy are embedded into the SOPM as will be a long term strategy to align with the local plan and housing growth in the district.
- 2.3** The development of a SOPM involves a series of stages as set out below:



- 2.4 As mentioned above, the current Leisure Operating Contract is due for renewal in 2027, therefore the establishment of a SOPM and the consideration of the current mix of facilities and services will help to inform changes that are required to deliver future strategic priorities and outcomes. This will ultimately ensure residents have access to sustainable and good quality leisure provision, and opportunities to be physically active across the District, whilst reducing health inequalities.
- 2.5 The council has already completed an assessment of needs and opportunities of its built indoor sports facilities and playing pitches, which will help to inform the facility interventions.
- 2.6 Officers are recommending commissioning specialist leisure consultants to undertake the SOPM on behalf of the Council. In terms of timescale we would commence the SOPM at the end of July 2023 with the anticipated completion being December 2023/ January 2024.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The proposed consultancy cost would be circa £30,000.
- 3.2 The Council made budget provision of £95k to “Implement leisure strategy & review income generation” in the 2023/24 budget and it is proposed the SOPM work will draw down from this allocation.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A formal consultancy contract will be entered into between the Council and Consultant.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Failing to develop a SOPM for the District would result in a lack of strategic direction for leisure services and could disadvantage the Council when bidding for future external funding such as developer contributions towards specific interventions and schemes.
- 5.2 There are no specific risks to the Council arising from the appointment of the consultancy firm for a fixed price contract, but in order to control cost, a payment schedule will be agreed prior to work commencing.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 None

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS


- 7.1 None at this time, although emerging interventions from the SOPM may have climate implications, this will be reported on at a later stage.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None

(END)

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 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 12 JULY 2023
Subject	RECOMMENDATION FROM FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Dan Levy, Executive Member for Finance. Email: dan.levy@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Elizabeth Griffiths – Chief Finance Officer, Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive. Email: Elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Officer, West Oxfordshire District Council. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider a recommendation made to the Executive by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 June 2023.
Annexes	Annex A – Minutes of the meeting of Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 14 June 2023. Annex B – Executive response (to follow).
Recommendation.	<p>That the Executive resolves to agree it’s response to the following recommendation from the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Annex B (to follow):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. That the Council explores the idea of the recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council’s finance team.
Corporate Priorities	Working Together for West Oxfordshire.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO

Consultees/ Consultation	Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
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1. BACKGROUND AND MAIN POINTS

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 14 June 2023, the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend to the Executive that consideration be given to the potential recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council's finance team, which would, in turn, address resourcing levels.
- 1.2 The Finance team currently employs, through the Publica arrangement, a temporary credit controller within the finance team. The Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny believed that a permanent position would bring stability to the team, which would also help bring the team's ongoing workload to a manageable level, helping to ease pressures faced in a time of external budgetary pressures.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Council may opt to continue with current arrangements and maintain the temporary provision of a credit controller. This would be considered as part of the budget setting process, due to take place from Autumn 2023.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 The Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to recommend to the Executive that consideration be given to the potential recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council's finance team.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Financial Implications of the proposal by the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, would be determined during the Council's budget setting process, due to take place from Autumn 2023.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Not applicable for this report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 Not applicable for this report.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Not applicable for this report.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 14 June 2023 can be found at Annex A.

(ENDS)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Held in Committee Room 1, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 14 June 2023**

PRESENT

Councillors: Alaa Al-Yousuf (Chair), Julian Cooper, Hugo Ashton, Mark Johnson, Andrew Lyon, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson, Ruth Smith, Phil Godfrey, Elizabeth Poskitt and Alex Wilson.

Officers: Elizabeth Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer), Phil Martin (Assistant Director – Business Services), Georgina Dyer (Chief Accountant), Will Barton (Business Development Officer), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: Dan Levy and Duncan Enright.

55 Election of Chair

The Vice-Chair of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, opened the meeting, welcoming Members and Officers to the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Vice-Chair of the Council asked the Committee for nominations to the position of Chair of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024.

Councillor Michele Mead proposed that Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf be elected Chair of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024. This was seconded by Councillor Julian Cooper and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Elect Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf as Chair of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024.

56 Election of Vice-Chair

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Alaa Al-Yousuf, proposed from the Chair that Councillor Charlie Maynard be elected Vice-Chair of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024. This was seconded by Councillor Julian Cooper and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Elect Councillor Charlie Maynard as Vice-Chair of the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023/2024.

57 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Charlie Maynard, Michael Brooker and Jane Doughty.

Councillor Rosie Pearson arrived late to the meeting at 2.16pm.

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58 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest received by Members of the Committee.

59 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 12 April 2023, were unanimously agreed by the Committee, and signed by the Chair as a true & accurate record.

60 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

61 Decision - Decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre

Claire Locke, Assistant Director for Property and Regeneration, joined the Committee virtually and delivered a briefing to the Committee regarding a decision taken under urgency rules relating to Carterton Leisure Centre.

The Council identified that an Investment Grade Proposal (IGP), is required to fully understand the requirements of decarbonising Carterton Leisure Centre. If the Council decided to proceed with or without grant funding, this advanced design proposal would still be required. A design and build contract was procured via a Framework and the Council has been working with Kier and their sub-contractor 'Hydrock', in preparing detailed modelling of the available options for replacement heating systems. The options considered were for space heating, swimming pool heating and hot water with the addition of Solar PV and battery storage to reduce the reliance on electricity from the grid.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss the briefing and update received, which clarified the following points:

- Fees associated with the project;
- Planning permission required to undertake the work;
- Contractors procured to undertake the work;
- Elements associated with increased project costs;
- Impacts on service provision at the Leisure centre;
- Engineering works associated with the project;
- Improvement of a Council asset;
- Potential grant funding associated with the project;

The Chair proposed the Committee note the decision taken under urgency rules. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the decision taken under urgency rules regarding Carterton Leisure Centre;
2. Invite the Assistant Director to 6 December meeting to advise on progress made.

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62 Presentation on Commercial Waste

Stuart Rawlinson, Business Manager for Data, Resources and Growth, delivered a presentation to Committee relating to commercial waste, which included debt management and further work undertaken by his team.

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss the presentation, which clarified the following points:

- Reduction of historic aged debt levels;
- Partnership working with shareholders, e.g. Ubico;
- Additional service improvements;
- Collaboration with Customer Service departments;
- Processes of onboarding new customers;
- Reputation of trade waste services;
- Recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Trade waste collection not being a statutory service;
- Exclusion of fly-tipping collections;
- Compatibility of vehicles for trade waste;
- Returning to levels of profit;
- Identifying levels of resilience in the service;
- Services of commercial food waste collection.

The Chair proposed the Committee note the presentation received. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the presentation on commercial waste.

63 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Will Barton, Business Development Officer, introduced and gave a high-level overview of the report, which updated the Committee regarding the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and Rural England Prosperity Fund, in West Oxfordshire.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was launched in April 2022 and was part of the Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration agenda. The Fund provided £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation. The primary goal of the UKSPF was to build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK. The Council had to submit an 'Investment Plan' in July 2022 setting out how the funds would be used in the district. The Plan identified the challenges the District faces and the opportunities to address these using the fund with interventions, outputs and outcomes from the list. The Investment Plan also set out the Council's governance structure which included a 'Local Partnership' comprising external stakeholders.

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The Chair invited the Committee to discuss the report presented, which clarified the following points:

- Collaboration with local, higher-education authorities, regional chambers of commerce and skilled working groups;
- Improvements to community infrastructure;
- Investment in small and medium sized businesses;
- Further opportunities for county-wide skill initiatives;
- Liaison with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP);
- Skillset provision of military service leavers from RAF Brize Norton;
- Future, business support projects;
- Adaptation of green skills.

The Chair proposed the Committee note the updates received. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

1. Note the updates provided regarding the UK Shared prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund.

The Chair announced a short adjournment at 3.43pm for Members to take a comfort break. Committee reconvened at 3.49pm.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer, Max Thompson, advised the Committee upon its return that owing to technical issues, the live streaming of the meeting had ceased and the meeting was no longer able to be viewed on the Council's website. The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised that the approval for the ceasing of the live stream was made between the Assistant Director for Business Services and himself. The Chair of the Committee thanked the Senior Democratic Services Officer for updating the Committee.

64 Service Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter Four

Elizabeth Griffiths, Chief Finance Officer, Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, introduced and gave an overview the report, which provided details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4).

The Chief Finance Officer clarified subject points made in the report, in discussion with the Committee, which were as follows:

- Reduction of aged debt;
- Liaison with leisure providers and consultants;
- Adaptation of leisure provisions for community use;
- Recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Heavily increased utility costs;
- Contractual position with GLL regarding Finances;

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- Management fees for Leisure provision;
- Increased inflationary pressures of service contracts;
- Pressures faced within the Council's finance teams;
- Enforcement action on fly-tipping;
- Impacts on waste service provision.

The Chair proposed that the Committee note the Service Performance Report for 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4). This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Service Performance Report for 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4).

Councillor Ruth Smith left the meeting at 4.08pm.

65 **Financial Performance Report 2022/23 Quarter 4**

Elizabeth Griffiths, Chief Finance Officer, Section 151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, introduced the report, which provided details of the Council's financial performance at the end of 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4).

The Chair invited the Committee to discuss the report, which clarifies the following points:

- Staffing levels within the Council's finance department*;
- Budget overspending and underspending;
- Budget building process leading up to February Council;
- Future provisions for moving to paperless meetings;
- Year-end financial positions;
- Controlled debt recovery;
- Transfer of parking services.

*Councillor Alex Wilson proposed that the Committee recommend that the Executive explore the idea of the recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council's finance team. This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead and was put to a vote, The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Recommend that the Executive explore the idea of the recruitment of a permanent Credit Controller to help strengthen staffing levels within the Council's finance team.

The Chair proposed that the Committee note the Financial Performance Report for 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4). This was seconded by Councillor Michele Mead, and was put to a vote. The vote carried.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Financial Performance Report for 2022-23 Quarter Four (Q4).

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66 Committee Work Programme

The Chair asked the Committee if there were any comments Members wished to make regarding the Committee Work Programme.

Councillor Mark Johnson queried the Leisure Centre Strategy report, due to come to Committee at the next meeting, as to what it would entail. The Chief Finance Officer stated that the report would focus on the financial aspects of the strategy.

Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Committee Work Programme.

67 Executive Work Programme

The Chair asked the Committee if there were any comments Members wished to make regarding the Executive Work Programme, of which none were received.


Committee **Resolved** to:

- I. Note the Executive Work Programme.

The Chair of the Committee paid tribute to the Chief Finance Officer, Elizabeth Griffiths, and thanked her for her hard work and service to West Oxfordshire District Council. The Chief Finance Officer would leave the Council ahead of the next meeting to take up post at another local authority. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, wished the Chief Finance Officer well for the future.

The meeting closed at 4.56 pm.

CHAIR

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>EXECUTIVE MEETING 12 JULY 2023</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>COMMERCIAL SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC INSTALLATIONS ON COUNCIL ESTATE</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Andrew Prosser Email: andrew.prosser@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Hannah Kenyon - Climate Change Manager Email: hannah.kenyon@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Claire Locke - Assistant Director Property and Regeneration Email: claire.locke@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Summary/purpose</p>	<p>To seek agreement to invest in the installation of solar PV on the roofs of buildings owned and in some cases leased by the Council based on the business cases set out within this report. To agree to enter into a contract with the preferred contractor for the installation of the solar PV.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A - EXEMPT Procurement tender outcome summary Annex B - EXEMPT Business cases Annex C - Climate Impact Assessment Annex D - EXEMPT Lease risk summary</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That Executive resolves to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) <i>Agree that the Council should proceed with investment in roof mounted solar PV based on the business cases in this report, and that,</i> (b) <i>Agree to enter into sale agreements for the electricity generated, with the tenants, where financially viable and delegate decisions on whether or not to proceed with individual agreements to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance.</i> (c) <i>Agree to enter into contract with the preferred contractor identified</i>

	<p><i>in Annex A, for the provision and installation of Solar PV and related equipment.</i></p> <p>(d) <i>Delegates to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and Climate Change the decision to exclude any tenanted sites based on further Due Diligence associated with energy usage or vulnerability around continued tenant occupation.</i></p> <p>(e) <i>Delegates to the Section 151 Officer the decision to adjust the indicative electricity sale price to tenants as long as changes to the projected project returns are in-line with projections contained within this report.</i></p> <p>(f) <i>Funding for contingency costs of £27,634 is approved with delegation to the Section 151 Officer for expenditure of contingency subject to the business case still being viable or expenditure being unavoidable due to structural condition of the building.</i></p> <p>(g) <i>That revenue funding of £11,200/year is allocated for the part-time shared Energy Manager post and included in the next budget update. Noting that this will be funded from Solar PV income.</i></p>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency ● Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key decision	Yes
Exempt	<p>Yes (Annexes only)</p> <p>Exempt Annex A containing named bidders - commercially sensitive</p> <p>Exempt Annex B containing commercially sensitive information</p> <p>Exempt Annex D containing details of leases</p>
Consultees/ consultation	<p>Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>Procurement team</p> <p>Legal team</p>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Executive approval to bring to Full Council a recommendation to invest in Solar Photovoltaic (Solar PV) electricity generation (including battery storage) at Woodgreen council offices, Des Roches Square in Witney, and Talisman Business Park in Bicester.
- 1.2 In round numbers the total investment sums will be £50,972 for Unit 2 Des Roches Square (site 1), £22,318 for Unit 6 Des Roches Square (site 2), £65,015 for Woodgreen council offices (site 3), and £138,040 for Units 4-5 Talisman Business Park (£276,345 total, if all sites proceed).

- 1.3 Making an investment in solar PV contributes to reducing the climate impact of electricity consumption within the council's estate (both council-occupied and tenanted). Benefits to the Council include a) delivering a part of its commitment to becoming net zero carbon in operation by 2030, b) generating a return on investment (as per the financial model in the business case annex), and c) supporting a tenant organisation in their own carbon reduction journey.
- 1.4 An open procurement process has been undertaken to establish accurate installation costs, and the winning contractor is an established PV installer. No substantive costs will be incurred and no contract for installation will be entered until full Council decision.
- 1.5 A key investment decision factor is the likely future price of power, which affects the value of PV electricity consumed at Woodgreen, and the price of power sold to the tenants in the Des Roches Square and Talisman Business Park properties. Most power sector commentators expect power prices to remain firmly above the levels that were common a few years ago, but professional economic forecasters give a range of expectations. This lack of certainty must be considered when reviewing the financial model in Annex B.
- 1.6 Investment has been modelled on an assumption of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The 25 year financial model at Annex B takes account of the cost of power to the Council which is largely known for the next two years, and from then on takes a reasonable central estimate of future power provided by a professional consultant. For the tenanted properties, there is uncertainty at this point whether the proposed price for selling power, necessary to support the Council's business case, will be acceptable to the tenants. A firm price proposal will be put to the tenants following the Executive decision. Solar panels have a realistic expected lifetime of 25 years or more.
- 1.7 The business case for installing panels on Woodgreen appears strong, even with inevitable uncertainty over future power price. The business case for the tenanted properties is less strong, and depends on the agreement of the tenant to take the power. The investments in aggregate have a reasonable business case.
- 1.8 This PV installation is viewed as a pilot project that should give the Council confidence and experience in replicating such installations in other council-owned and tenanted properties, subject to future business cases.
- 1.9 To ensure that PV assets are maintained and their performance monitored, and that tenants are correctly charged for PV power consumed, additional technical / financial staff resources will be required. This report identifies in outline how such additional resources could service, and be combined with, other related energy needs.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 West Oxfordshire District Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in June 2019, with the aim of making the District carbon neutral by 2030. Following public consultation in May 2020, the Council adopted a Climate Action Plan in October 2020 and subsequently a Climate Change Strategy was adopted in February 2021.
- 2.2 The Council has identified a number of Priorities within its Corporate Plan which include climate action, supporting local businesses and ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council.
- 2.3 Solar PV, whilst not a panacea, is an important part of meeting the council's objective of becoming operationally net zero carbon by 2030.
- 2.4 The Council owns a number of buildings which are let commercially to provide a return on investment which underpins the delivery of core services to the public. A number of these office and warehouse buildings have large roofs which could be suitable for the installation of Solar PV and could generate energy to power the activities within the buildings.
- 2.5 Tenants are responsible for paying their own utility bills but the Council could sell PV-generated energy to tenants in parallel with their existing supply arrangements, subject to suitable legal agreements being in place.
- 2.6 The capital investment is capable of providing a return on capital sufficient to meet the council's expectations and reflect future uncertainties, and this commitment to decarbonisation would align well with the council's Carbon Action Plan.
- 2.7 Viability for rooftop PV is highly site dependent, so the focus of this pilot phase is on larger buildings. Smaller properties could be considered in future phases.
- 2.8 A fully compliant open procurement has been undertaken, including a "meet the buyer" event at pre tender stage in order to attract both local and national PV installers to partake in the procurement exercise. Four bids were received and the summary of those bidders is set out in Annex A. Bidders were assessed on a combination of quality and price. The preferred bidder achieved a combined score of 78.75%.

3. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

- 3.1 The Council procures energy (gas and power) through a broker. Due to extreme market volatility since the invasion of Ukraine, the council's energy costs have risen dramatically in the last 12 months, with the estimated spend for WODC projected to be £86,000 for gas and £313,994 for electricity in 2023/24. Future energy costs are uncertain, but most energy sector commentators warn that prices are unlikely to fall to pre-Ukraine levels for many years. With this level of expenditure there is potential for significant savings if the contract and billing

can be carefully managed and usage can be analysed to identify areas where investment in improved systems could reduce usage and therefore costs.

- 3.2 Energy supply contracts are currently managed from existing resources across council and Publica teams. Given the complexity of the administrative arrangements associated with Solar PV and EVCPs (e.g. energy generation and general PV performance, sale to the grid and billing to tenants) a dedicated role is needed to support the Council and maximise investment performance and returns. There is also a wider requirement for the Council to review energy consumption and identify investment that could be made to provide energy efficiency and reduce usage in future years.
- 3.3 WODC plans to install new charging points at the Woolgate car park in the summer 2023 and are also exploring chargers for Burford to complement the network of charging points installed through the countywide Park and Charge project in 2022. These public charging points will have fees set which aim to recover costs (installation, electricity, maintenance and back office services) and generate a small surplus for reinvestment. With costs fluctuating careful management is required to protect the council's income and ensure costs do not exceed income. When the installation at Burford was approved, a contribution to additional staff resources for EVCP management of £3117 per annum was agreed as part of the business case (Executive 16 March 2022 Minute 97 refers). However challenges presented by the flood risk at this site has meant the charging point installation has not progressed and this staff resource has therefore not been actioned.
- 3.4 Considering the energy management required across these three activities, the level of investment and revenue cost involved and the need for this across Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire district councils, a dedicated shared Energy Manager would be of significant benefit. It is recommended that some of the projected income from Solar PV is top sliced to fund a part-time post. If this post demonstrates significant savings, a recommendation may be made in the future to increase this resource. Each council is asked to fund 1 day per week, to provide a shared post of 3 days (22.5 hours). This post is estimated to have a salary of £42,500/year, this equates to £25,500 pro-rata and totals £33,600 with on-costs. The cost to each council would be £11,200.
- 3.5 As part of these works, contractors will access the roof spaces of buildings. This offers the opportunity to informally review the building fabric from an energy perspective and maximise surveying onsite.

4. BUSINESS CASE METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Business cases have been prepared which set out the capital costs and anticipated revenue return (annex B). This is based on the sale of energy to tenants, or the avoidance of purchased electricity, to provide a return on investment. Borrowing is based on 20 years and the principal assets (the solar arrays) have an expected life of at least 25 years.

4.2 The cost of electricity for Woodgreen is known with high certainty for one year ahead, and known with slightly less certainty for two years ahead. Thereafter it is assumed that power cost will be in line with the central estimate of market price of power provided by a professional consultant. It is important to recognise that the confidence level on such industry economic forecasts is relatively low, and confidence decreases the further in the future the projection is made. It is nonetheless necessary to use such projections in order to derive the IRR, RoI etc. on a 20 year business case. The known rate for Woodgreen is £0.52/kWh, provided by our Energy Brokers.

4.3 This report seeks approval for the Section 151 officer, in consultation with others, to agree an appropriate sale price for PV-generated electricity to the council's tenants. It is proposed that such a sale price would seek a mid-point between:

- firstly, the minimum target return identified by the Section 151 officer that relates both to the council's project-specific cost of capital and future revenue risk, and
- secondly, the currently known, and estimated future, cost of grid electricity to the tenant.

Such a price mid-point would seek a balance between the objectives of achieving carbon reductions, supporting the viability of a tenant's business (which in turn reduces risk to the Council as landlord), supporting a tenant's journey towards decarbonisation, and maximising financial return to the Council. Clearly if no such mid-point is achievable (for example if a tenant has a current or expected future cost of electricity below the council minimum) then the site investment is very unlikely to proceed.

4.4 The business case has modelled a first year electricity sale price to the tenanted properties, with suitable inflation and future indexing, which provides (on average) a rate of return above the council's minimum target. Further clarity will be gained on tenants' expected future cost of electricity before a sale price is offered, and binding agreement from tenants will be obtained before proceeding with installation.

4.5 It has been difficult to generate interest from tenants, despite the opportunity to buy 'green' energy which should be attractive to businesses. Those who have indicated some interest have shared their energy costs which has shown a dramatic variance in current charges (14.86p - 52.44p). Some are paying very low tariffs but are likely to be on limited time offers which will expire and result in charges rising substantially in the current market. Fee setting will need to reflect the fact that 5 of the 10 buildings across all councils have tenants currently paying less than 20 p/kWh. Setting charges above their current rate will almost certainly result in them declining the offer.

4.6 Battery storage has been proposed by the successful tenderer for some WODC sites. The batteries enable excess solar electricity to be stored and used at times when there is little or no solar generation, thereby maximising the amount of solar electricity used on-site.

4.7 The supply and installation of Solar PV is a fixed price provided by the installer. Adding a contingency sum to cover any unforeseen costs is therefore likely to unfairly skew the

business case. However there is a risk that unforeseen costs do occur principally associated with the building structure itself. For budgeting purposes a 10% contingency sum of £27,634 should be agreed and set aside but will only be incurred subject to agreement from the S151, that incurring the costs still delivers a positive business case, or ceasing the project at that point is not feasible, or costs are essential due to building defects and would have to be incurred anyway.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report proposes a methodology that will be used for assessing the financial viability for the installation of Solar PV on council-owned properties. The report recommends that in the first phase of properties to be assessed, Solar PV should be installed on four properties - council offices at Woodgreen, and tenanted properties in Witney and Bicester.
- 5.2 As discussed in the report, the principal driver for investment in Solar PV is to reduce the climate impact of the Council's energy consumption as part of the commitment to become net zero carbon by 2030. Solar PV installations will provide the Council with an ongoing financial benefit and return on investment, although members should note the volatility in energy prices over the last 12 months and projections of future prices does impact on the certainty of financial returns.
- 5.3 Initial capital expenditure of £276,345 is required to deliver Solar PV on the four properties in the first phase. The financial modelling undertaken by the project team (based on a number of assumptions around energy usage and future energy prices) indicates a return on investment of 10.5% with an average payback period of 9.5 years.
- 5.4 With significant volatility in the energy market over the last 12 months and a degree of uncertainty around when the market will stabilise over the medium-term, it is difficult to provide members with certainty around the financial returns on an annual basis. The financial modelling over a 25-year period shows positive cash flows from the investment taking into account running costs, annual inspections and routine maintenance. Where energy is sold to tenants, future electricity prices have been modelled based on market intelligence and an assessment of the size and scale of each Solar PV installation.
- 5.5 Whilst the business case has assumed capital financing costs, the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer will consider the capital financing of the investment alongside the capital financing requirements associated with the wider capital programme. This will take into account the level and availability of internal resources (e.g. capital receipts) alongside external resources (e.g. prudential borrowing). Recent increases in the Bank of England base rate and expectations of further interest rate rises has led to increases in the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates. Should the Council need to undertake prudential borrowing to support the capital programme over the immediate short-term, this may put pressure on the revenue budget given the increased cost of capital and may make future capital expenditure and financing decisions more challenging.

5.6 The financial implications of the capital financing and treasury management decisions will be reported to members through the regular financial performance reports to the Executive and through the treasury management reporting to the Audit and Governance Committee.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The responsibilities of the Council as landlord and its ability to alter buildings whilst tenants are in occupation will vary depending on individual lease agreements. Tenants will have existing energy contracts in place with third party providers. The Council cannot insist that existing tenants switch to the supply that the Council installs and therefore this needs to be mutually agreed, with a contract for the energy purchase put in place. Where PV is installed and a tenant ends their tenancy, the Council will market the property with green energy provision and would require that any incoming tenant purchases energy generated from the solar PV.

6.2 External legal support is being sought to amend the lease agreement and / or provide a side letter to the tenant setting out the terms of selling PV power. The cost of such external legal support is likely to be non-material in the context of the overall project investment cost, not least since such cost will be shared with Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire district councils.

6.3 As a landlord, the Council will have a responsibility to meet the government's Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for non-domestic buildings. The current regulations require all tenanted non-domestic buildings to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of no lower than a rating of E. From 1st April 2018 any commercial property that has an EPC of lower than an 'E' cannot be rented out to new tenants, or renew any existing tenancy contracts until at least an 'E' rating is obtained. From 1st April 2023 all tenanted commercial properties must have an EPC rating of no lower than 'E' to continue being leased. There are exemptions to the MEES for properties such as listed buildings. The installation of Solar PV would therefore make a notable contribution to lowering the EPC. The Government is also currently reviewing the potential to introduce a further target of an EPC of B by 2030. The Council is currently preparing a plan to consider the works required in non-compliant buildings.

6.4 Save from the above there are no other legal implications arising directly from this report.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 At a high level, key financial risks may be broken down into: a) uncertainty on quantity of electricity generated and either sold to tenant or consumed in Woodgreen; b) uncertainty over whether electricity will continue to be consumed at the assumed rate (either by the tenant or Council), and c) uncertainty over the price charged to the tenant, or the value of displaced purchased electricity for Woodgreen.

- 7.2 On uncertainty over quantities of energy: Generation of solar PV is known to a high degree of confidence (typical variability of +/- 5-10% in an individual year, much less variability over the project length). Consumption of PV generated electricity can be modelled with a high level of confidence for Talisman (one year of half hourly consumption is available) and a lower level of confidence for Woodgreen and the Des Roches units (monthly consumption data). Where half hourly data is lacking, contractors have used standard industry estimates of daily consumption.
- 7.3 On uncertainty over maintaining consumption: The Council has a medium-long term commitment to Woodgreen. There is a level of uncertainty of tenant turnover across the council's tenanted estate. For all sites, electricity consumption in the future is more likely to rise than fall, since over time decarbonisation will push energy services (notably space heating and vehicle charging) away from gas and towards electricity.
- 7.4 On uncertainty over price / cost: For Woodgreen the financial modelling takes known (or close to known) prices for two years, and then assumes electricity cost will follow a central estimate provided by a professional consultancy. Nonetheless it should be noted that no economic models claim to accurately predict future energy cost. For the tenanted properties the tenants have disclosed their year-ahead electricity price. Agreements with the tenants would include both the starting price for PV power sold into the premises, and an escalator.
- 7.5 The business cases have been prepared based on capex costs provided by the preferred bidder. There is a risk that there are unforeseen costs, particularly relating to roof structures and therefore a contingency sum has been built into the business case to mitigate this risk. There is a risk however that an issue arises with significant costs that affect the viability of the scheme. Every effort will be made to avoid this and a decision to proceed would be made in consultation with the Section 151 Officer.
- 7.6 The current construction and materials market is volatile and inflationary pressures have seen costs rise dramatically in the last 12 months. Bidders have been asked to hold fixed prices for 90 days from bid submission, for the initial installations. Any delays in decision making or placing purchase orders could see prices rise. It should be noted that further phases of installations on additional buildings will be the subject of a re-tender process, with learning from this initial phase embedded. Further phases should be relatively quick and easy to tender as specifications, tender evaluation and the financial model are likely to stay fairly similar. It should be noted however that costs are likely to rise if inflation continues to increase material costs.
- 7.7 The business case is predicated on income being generated from the sale of energy to tenants (or for Woodgreen, purchased electricity cost being avoided). There is little income from sale to the grid at tenanted premises at this point in time but this will continue to be reviewed. For Woodgreen any electricity 'spilled' to the grid will be able to attract a market value. There is risk around the continual purchase of the energy if the tenants breach the purchasing agreements, fail to pay invoices for energy, or terminate the tenancy and a prolonged void

period occurs. As some of these risks will be largely determined by the demand for that unit, information on risk is provided on a building specific basis (see Annex D).

- 7.8 At present the volatile energy market means that purchase of green energy from the Council should be attractive to tenants. However, future market conditions are unknown and significant cost reductions could mean the council energy offer is less attractive to tenants.
- 7.9 The cost for a replacement battery at Units 4/5 Talisman Business Park has been included within future revenue costs at Year 15, in line with the expected useful life of a Tesla battery. Extended warranties will be explored but breakdown and repair or replacement costs will remain a risk.
- 7.10 Certain pre-investment risks cannot be resolved until further technical work is carried out as step one of the contract. These include gaining permission to connect from the electricity distribution operator, and confirming suitability of roof structures to support panels. Whilst unlikely, if such risks manifested and were unresolvable, installations would not be able to proceed. However the scheduling of activity means that any such blocks would precede any commitment of capital investment, and therefore capital would not be at risk.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 There is no identified Equalities Impact from this proposal.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Installing Solar PV will reduce the use of fossil fuels in the council’s estate (it will reduce ‘Scope 2’ emissions in the council’s annual carbon emissions reporting). It will provide tenants with a renewable form of energy, which may also offer them cost savings.
- 9.2 Information on the estimated carbon savings from the commercial PV installations is shown below:

Site 1 Unit 2 Des Roches Square, Witney:

Annual avoided emissions impacts:			
Average avoided monthly kWh		2,992 kWh/month	
	Nitrogen Oxides	49	kg/yr
	Methane	23	kg/yr
	Carbon Dioxide	9,081	kg/yr
Annual avoided emissions equivalencies:			
Avoided emissions equivalencies	CO ² avoidance	22,477	average passenger vehicle miles
	CO ² emissions	1.1	average home's annual electricity use
	Carbon sequestered by	413	tree seedlings grown for 10 years

Site 2 Unit 6 Des Roches Square, Witney:

Annual avoided emissions impacts:			
Average avoided monthly kWh		2,128 kWh/month	
	Nitrogen Oxides	35	kg/yr
	Methane	17	kg/yr
	Carbon Dioxide	6,460	kg/yr
Annual avoided emissions equivalencies:			
Avoided emissions equivalencies	CO ² avoidance	15,991	average passenger vehicle miles
	CO ² emissions	0.8	average home's annual electricity use
	Carbon sequestered by	294	tree seedlings grown for 10 years

Site 3 Woodgreen council offices, Witney:

Annual avoided emissions impacts:			
Average avoided monthly kWh		3,829 kWh/month	
	Nitrogen Oxides	63	kg/yr
	Methane	30	kg/yr
	Carbon Dioxide	11,622	kg/yr
Annual avoided emissions equivalencies:			
Avoided emissions equivalencies	CO ² avoidance	28,768	average passenger vehicle miles
	CO ² emissions	1.4	average home's annual electricity use
	Carbon sequestered by	528	tree seedlings grown for 10 years

Site 4 Units 4-5 Talisman Business Park, Bicester:

Annual avoided emissions impacts:			
Average avoided monthly kWh		10,506 kWh/month	
	Nitrogen Oxides	173	kg/yr
	Methane	82	kg/yr
	Carbon Dioxide	31,888	kg/yr
Annual avoided emissions equivalencies:			
Avoided emissions equivalencies	CO ² avoidance	78,932	average passenger vehicle miles
	CO ² emissions	3.9	average home's annual electricity use
	Carbon sequestered by	1,449	tree seedlings grown for 10 years

9.3 The project has a number of climate and ecological impacts which have been considered and mitigated where possible. For a full breakdown, please see Annex C.

- While delivering renewable energy to the selected buildings and to the grid will reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), there will also be emissions produced from the manufacture, delivery and installation of the solar panels, known as the embodied

carbon. However, research shows that carbon savings and energy generation across the lifetime of the solar panels will be significantly more than the carbon emitted or energy consumed in their manufacture and installation¹. Additionally, the Council have requested that contractors minimise the embodied carbon of the contract.

- The mining and material extraction processes associated with manufacturing the solar panels will affect soil and waterway health in manufacturing and mining locations.
- There are known issues around the sustainability of materials used for solar panels over which we do not have control. However, the Council has requested that consideration be given to decommissioning so that the panels can be repaired as needed and recycled at end-of-life.

10. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

10.1 The Council could decide not to install Solar PV for its commercial estate.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 The council's approach to carbon reduction can be found on the council's website:

<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/>

(END)

¹ e.g. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/solar-wind-nuclear-amazingly-low-carbon-footprints/>

Annex C - Climate Impact Assessment

Commercial Rooftop Solar PV



Criteria	Score	Justification
GHGs	2	<u>Moderate, long-term positive impact.</u> This project will reduce GHGs by delivering renewable electricity to the buildings and to the grid. There is some increase in GHGs from manufacture, delivery, installation and recycling of solar panels (embodied carbon) but this is generally accepted as being lower than the carbon savings from decarbonising the grid (operational carbon) ¹ . The Council sought to mitigate embodied carbon by asking contractors to account for this when selecting solar technologies. However, the overall carbon benefit is only 'moderate' as the scope of work does not include measures or financial incentives to reduce the overall energy use of the building. Additionally, the carbon benefits of battery storage (where this is proposed) are unclear.

¹ e.g. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/solar-wind-nuclear-amazingly-low-carbon-footprints/>

Air quality	0	<u>Not net change.</u> Increasing renewable energy generation reduces the use of fossil fuels for electricity generation which is responsible for air pollution. However, this impact is minor in the grand scale of the energy system and is counteracted in the short-term by the air pollution associated with the transportation of materials and contractor travel.
Sustainable transport	0	<u>No net change.</u> No impacts identified and no measures included in the tender specification to incentivise a shift towards active travel.
Land use change	0	<u>No net change.</u> Solar panels are roof mounted, not ground mounted, so there is no impact on land use.
Biodiversity	0	<u>No net change.</u> No impact unless panels are on roofs found to be used by nesting birds or bats. Biodiversity surveys will be undertaken where applicable.
Soil and waterway health	-2	<u>Moderate negative impact beyond the delivery location.</u> Mining and other processes relating to the manufacture of solar panels affects soil and waterway health in these mining and manufacturing locations.
Climate change adaptation and resilience	0	<u>No net change.</u> Though installing renewable energy reduces reliance on fossil fuels and supports tenants in being better prepared for phasing out fossil fuels, the project does not impact on adaptation to future climate impacts.
Energy use	0	<u>No net change.</u> We are displacing the energy currently used from one source to another but not changing the amount of energy used as energy efficiency measures or fossil free replacement heating systems were not incorporated into the project. There is a risk that the selected electricity price for tenants may increase energy use if the cost is significantly lower than their existing contracts but this is unknown at this stage. However, use of renewable energy is positive.
Sustainable materials	-2	<u>Moderate, short-term negative impact.</u> Solar panels are usually manufactured internationally so have significant embodied carbon. Many of the materials/metals used are not sourced sustainably but the Council does not have much influence over this. However, solar panel materials can be recycled at end-of-life (such as aluminium and glass) and panel recycling technology continues to improve so a high level of material recovery is expected by the time these panels reach end-of-life.

Waste	-2	<u>Moderate, long-term negative impact.</u> The production of solar panels will inevitably mean waste will be produced when they reach end-of-life. The Council included a requirement in the tender documentation for contractors to consider decommissioning and end-of-life, with 25-year product guarantees for the panels. It is therefore assumed that the solar panels will be repaired as needed and recycled at end-of-life, to mitigate the waste impact.
Food	0	<u>No net change.</u> No impact on food.
Health	0	<u>No net change.</u> Reducing air pollution from fossil fuel use will have a negligible impact on health at a local and national level given the scale of this project. Depending on sale agreements, the project may alleviate financial stress of some tenants by improving resilience to market fluctuations. To be updated following agreements.
Housing	0	<u>No net change.</u> No impact on housing.
Education	1	<u>Moderate, short-term positive impact.</u> Apprenticeship and/or training opportunities were included in the contractor's social value offering, alongside community engagement to provide information on the benefits of renewable energy. The final social value commitments are still to be agreed with the Council.
Built community	0	<u>No net change.</u> The addition of solar will not impact the sense of place, green space, or connectivity infrastructure.
Cultural community	0	<u>No net change.</u> This is not a community-based solar model and no other cultural impacts or benefits are anticipated.
Accessibility	2	<u>Moderate, long-term positive impact.</u> The project presents no barriers to access and may improve access to energy information as part of the metering and monitoring included in the work. Metering and monitoring will be available to tenants and the Councils. The Council will be funding the capital costs of the solar panels to remove the financial barrier to installing them.
Local economy and jobs	2	<u>Moderate, long-term positive impact.</u> The chosen contractor is based locally with 40+ staff in the Gloucestershire region and have stated they will aim to work with local suppliers and contractors where possible. Their social value proposals included providing training and apprenticeships to

		local workers. In providing lower, more stable energy costs to companies occupying the tenanted units, this project also aims to support the economic stability of those businesses.
Safety	-1	<u>Moderate, short-term negative impact.</u> There are health and safety risks associated with the work but these are mitigated by the contractor's health and safety practices, and the Council included this consideration in the tender criteria. There is risk of harm through the supply chain, associated with forced labour in the production of solar panels, and contractors have been asked to consider this. There is a risk of vandalism and this will be monitored post-project.
Democratic voice	1	<u>Moderate, short-term positive impact.</u> Tenants have been engaged throughout the process so far and will continue to be involved in the shaping of the project, particularly during the purchase agreement process.
Equity	0	<u>No net change.</u> No impacts on groups with protected characteristics.

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