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WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Thursday, 10 April 2025

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EXECUTIVE

You are summoned to a meeting of the Executive which will be held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 23 April 2025 at 2.00 pm.**

Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Executive

Councillors: Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Lidia Arciszewska, Hugo Ashton, Rachel Crouch, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

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 from Members of the Executive. The quorum for the Executive is 3 Members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   To receive any declarations of interest from members of the Executive on any items to be considered at the meeting.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meetings** (Pages 5 - 20)
   To approve the minutes of the previous meetings, held on 12 March 2025 and 19 March 2025.

4. **Receipt of Announcements**
   To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive.

5. **Participation of the Public**
   Any member of the public, who is a registered elector in the District, is eligible to ask one question at the meeting, for up to three minutes, of the Leader of the Council, or any Member of the Executive on any issue that affects the district or its people.

   Notice, together with a written copy of the question, must be provided to Democratic Services, either by email to:

   democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

   or by post to:

   Democratic Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Woodgreen, Witney OX28 1NB.

   Questions are to be received no later than 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).

   A response may be provided at the meeting, or within three clear working days of the meeting. 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 appropriate 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. **Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
   To consider the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the meeting held on 4 December 2024 on Ubico Business Plan 2025-26, and any report(s) or recommendations from the meeting on 16 April 2025 (to follow).

7.   **Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee**
      To consider any matters arising from the Audit and Governance Meeting on 27 March 2025.

8.   **Ubico Business Plan 2025-26** (Pages 21 - 44)
      Purpose:
      To consider the Ubico Business Plan 2025-26, which has been produced by Ubico in consultation with the Directors and Shareholders, and to recommend that the Leader (as Shareholder Representative) approves the plan.

      Recommendations:
      That the Executive Resolves to:
      1. Note the Ubico Business Plan 2025-26; and
      2. Note that, subject to feedback from the Executive, the Leader of the Council, as Shareholder Representative, will sign the written resolution to approve the Ubico Business Plan 2025-2026 in due course.

9.   **Witney Community Insight Profile** (Pages 45 - 206)
      Purpose:
      This report relates to the Witney Central Community Insight Profile which has been published on the Oxfordshire Data Hub website and presented at the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 13 March 2025. It includes three reports:
      •   Witney Central Community Insight Report (Produced by Community First Oxfordshire) and related appendices.
      •   Witney Central Data Profile
      •   Witney Central Community Profile Summary of Findings
      It links to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and is a useful mechanism to pull together all the data and insight available at a local level to help inform future action planning and drive positive change in the community. Furthermore, the profile highlights the links to the Marmot Principles and the aims of Oxfordshire Marmot Place to tackle health inequalities in Oxfordshire.
      It is anticipated the profile will be useful for local partners to help with data needed for funding applications and developing local initiatives. The profile is aimed at community services, is relatable and can be used by everyone in the community.

      Recommendation:
      That the Executive resolves to:
      1. Note the content of the Witney Central Community Insight Profile, its three reports and appendices.

10.   **Cotswold National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030** (Pages 207 - 320)
      Purpose:
      To consider and endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030.

      Recommendations:
      That the Executive resolves to:
      1. Note the content of the report; and
      2. Formally endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030 attached at Annex A.

11.   **Decision taken under emergency powers: Sports England funding SPSF phase 2 (Carterton Leisure Centre)** (Pages 321 - 330)
        <u>Purpose:</u>
        To report to the Executive on a decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer under urgency powers.

        <u>Recommendation:</u>
        That the Executive resolves to:
        1. Note the decision taken as set out in Annex A.

(END)

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Executive
Held in the Village Hall (Bampton) - Bampton Village Hall, Market Square, Bampton, OX18 2JH
at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 12 March 2025.**

PRESENT

Councillors: , , Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Lidia Arciszewska, Hugo Ashton, Rachel Crouch, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer), Mark Pritchard (Business Manager for Communications and Marketing), Andrew Thomson (Lead Planning Policy & Implementation), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Caroline Clissold (Housing Manager), Mandy Fathers (Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service), Gemma Moreing (Business Information and Performance Lead) and Cheryl Sloan (Business Manager - Business Continuity, Governance and Risk)

Other Councillors in attendance: Alistair Wray and David Melvin

301 Apologies for Absence

Before proceeding onto the receipt of apologies, Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, welcomed members of the public and introduced the Executive and function of the meeting. Each Executive member was invited to introduce themselves and portfolio responsibilities to the public.

There were no apologies for absence.

302 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duncan Enright (Deputy Leader) declared that he has undertaken work with The Community Communication Partnership. He noted that this group did not do work in Oxfordshire. This interest was raised with reference to Item sixteen on the agenda, West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Regulation 18 Pre-Submission Draft Consultation.

303 Minutes of Previous Meeting

There were no amendments to the minutes of the previous meeting, held on

12 February 2025.

The minutes were proposed by Councillor Andy Graham and seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright.

They were voted on and approved unanimously.

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the previous meeting, held 12 February 2025.

304 **Receipt of Announcements**

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, announced that members of the Planning Team were present at the meeting to give an introductory presentation to the Local Plan and Preferred Options Consultation. Councillor Graham stated that the session was intended to provide insights into the content and progress of the plan and all members of the public were encouraged to remain after the meeting to ask questions of Executive Members and Officers.

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, announced the appointment of a new Youth Development Officer. The appointment was made three weeks before the meeting and was a full-time post for an initial period of two years. Councillor Crouch hoped that this role would improve provision for young people in the district and address some of the barriers they may face to engagement. Councillor Crouch announced that two groups, Stonesfield Scouts and Witney Mills Cricket Club, had successfully reached the fundraising targets through the Westhive Scheme. It was noted that this was a great success for them and the community.

Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, announced that the weekend of the 15/16 March would see a celebration of fifty years of the Windrush Leisure Centre. Councillor Sumner explained that this was an achievement for the centre which formed a cornerstone of the community and a facility which the Council was proud to maintain. The celebrations would include free gym introductions, taster swimming lessons and a roller disco.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, announced that he, along with Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, had visited the Milestone Drive housing development to speak to residents. Many residents reported that their lives were transformed by the affordable housing and shared ownership opportunities offered by the development.

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, announced that the CIL Draft Charging Scheme had been submitted for examination. This scheme would bring funds that could be spent partly by the Council and partly by the community. The Executive would be informed of the timetable and implementation details.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, announced that the CapZero project run by the Low Carbon Hub would be holding a Big Home Energy Day at Eynsham Village Hall on 22 March 2025.

Councillor Prosser also announced that the Coronation Living Heritage Fund would be extending grants until March 2026 and encouraged interested parties to look on the website for further information.

305 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation.

306 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 5 March 2025 and made no recommendations to Executive.

307 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

There were no matters raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

308 Publica Phase Two Transition Plan

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item stating that the purpose of the item was to consider the Transition Plan, to note its contents and to approve the recommendations therein. Councillor Graham explained that some of the services formerly provided through Publica had already been brought back under the Council, and that this was phase two of that process. Services under phase two would be brought back on 1 July 2025. Councillor Graham noted that the staff involved in these services were relied on, gave a professional service to the Council, worked cohesively with the Executive and did a fantastic job and it was therefore important that this was recognised. Areas to be brought back under this phase were Property & Estates, Waste, Leisure and Project Management.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, commented that it was fortunate that the Council had embarked on such changes prior to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as this would put the Council in a position to make transition into the new authority easier and as such it was a welcome step.

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, proposed accepting the recommendations.

Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader, seconded the recommendations

RESOLVED:

That the Executive recommend to Full Council to:

Executive

12/March2025

1.   Approve the implementation of Phase 2 of the Publica Transition on the basis of the Phase 2 Transition Plan.

2.   Delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council the decision to deal with any final detailed matters arising from the Phase 2 Transition Plan.

3.   Delegate authority to the Director of Governance in liaison with the Leader to update the Constitution by making any consequential changes required as a result of Phase 2 of the Publica Transition.

4.   Agree carry out a budget re-basing for the 2026/7 financial year so that the funding provided to Publica is proportionate to the services received.

309   **Homeless Prevention Strategy 2025-2028**

The purpose of the item was to present a new Preventing Homelessness Strategy to support the Council's statutory duties towards those households facing homelessness.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, introduced the proposal, stating this was a new strategy to tackle homelessness at its root and reduce reliance on temporary accommodation. Councillor Saul stated that at the time of the meeting rough sleeping in West Oxfordshire was recorded as at zero, however just one-person rough sleeping was too many. The strategy intended to step in early with the right support and offer stable housing to tackle the issue. It was proposed that this would lead to a stronger more sustainable community. The strategy also aligned with the Council's statutory duties in this area. In 2023/24 over 250 people were prevented from becoming homeless, with 95 households going into emergency accommodation. The Strategy looked to expand housing options to offer long term stable solutions.

In discussing the item, other members of the Executive thanked officers and Cllr Saul for their work on the strategy and said that it would help tackle the issues faced by residents at risk of homelessness.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1.   Approve the implementation of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025-2028.

310 **Update on Funding for Homelessness and Rough Sleeping**

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to update Members on the allocation of funding to address Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. Councillor Saul advised that the MHCLG Homeless Prevention Grant received by West Oxfordshire was £645,730. The stipulations of the grant meant that it was ringfenced for use to prevent single homelessness and rough sleeping, reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation and reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families. Councillor Saul noted that 49% of the grant was ringfenced to be used on prevention. The Council had seen increasing costs of providing accommodation with a 40-50% increase to numbers of households provided emergency accommodation, and as such the non-ringfenced allocation would be spent on such items. Councillor Saul noted that it was therefore welcome that the prevention amount was ringfenced.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, seconded the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1.   Note the ring-fenced grant conditions laid out in the MHCLG letter dated December 2024.

2.   Note the content of the report relating to the planned spending of this grant funding.

311 **Provision of an Empty Property Lending Scheme**

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item. The purpose of the item was to consider a loan provider for owners of long-term empty properties who needed financial support to bring their properties back into use. Councillor Smith noted that at the end of March 2024, 1,128 properties were registered as long-term empty. Councillor Smith stated that empty properties were a wasted resource and a source of complaints. The Scheme encouraged owners of such properties to carry out essential works to bring these properties back into use. Lendology would provide loans to owners to enable such works to be carried out. Lendology would manage the scheme on behalf of the Council. The Council would set the interest rates for the duration.

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, noted that in the context of the Council's planning targets it was important that existing stock was brought back into use.

Executive

12/March 2025

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care, seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Agree to partner with Lendology for the administration of loans subject to legal agreements being implemented for an initial period of one year.

2. Agree that loans are for the sole purpose of bringing empty properties back into use.

3. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance to approve the level at which interest is to be set on a loan repayment.

That the Executive recommend to Full Council to:

4. Approve a capital investment of £300,000 to create a lending pot.

5. Approve an initial set up fee of £30,125.

312   **Oxfordshire Leaders' Joint Committee Terms of Reference**

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to reset and change the name of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and make corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference. The changes were necessary in light of the new focus on devolution and the winding down of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal. Following approval, the changes would take effect for all six of the Oxfordshire authorities involved.

In discussion it was noted that this item was an interim measure ahead of LGR and that the Council could call in and scrutinise key decisions.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

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Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader, seconded the recommendations and noted that it remained vital that neighbouring authorities continued to work together and at present the Council was pleased with its relationships with its neighbours. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership had looked at strategic issues and should continue albeit with a new model after LGR.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Approve the revised FOP Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. These will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire Authorities.

313 **Community Grants - Westhive Review**

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, introduced the item the purpose of which was to present the review of the Westhive Crowdfunding scheme to date and consider the outcomes as detailed in the report. Councillor Crouch introduced background and context of the Westhive scheme and explained that this review had been recommended to take place by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 November 2024. The review had now taken place and been presented to the Committee in March. The conclusions of the report were:

- The Westhive scheme should continue to operate for the remainder of the contract.
- To consider the benefits and implications of CIF finding being made available on the platform on 2025/26
- To consider changing the Council's pledge level
- To activate the Community Activities Grant

In discussing the report, Executive Members noted that the scheme not only helped communities raise funds but also encouraged communities to take ownership due to the Council topping up community funds. It was stated that the scheme helped small projects who may not have knowledge of how to get on platforms and fundraise. The benefits of the scheme were highlighted, including more money being available and the greater diversity of the organisations that could take part. The Witney Mills Cricket Club was given as an example.

Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment, seconded the recommendations stating that the scheme had been a great success with funds being awarded

to a wide range of projects benefiting communities and the environment. Councillor Arciszewska thanked the officers involved for their work on the scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1.   Note the findings of the review on the Westhive Civic Crowdfunding scheme to date and introduce the following enhancements to the Council's approach to grant giving:

   i.   Continue with the 3rd year of the Spacehive contract

   ii.   Consider the benefits and implications of CIF funding being made available on the platform in 2025/2026

   iii.   Increase the maximum Council pledge to £12,000 or 75% of the project total, whichever is less.

   iv.   Launch a small grant scheme to complement the Westhive programme in consultation with Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities.

314   **Financial Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three**

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to detail the Council's financial performance for Quarter Three 2024-2025. Councillor Smith summarised the report highlighting the following items:

- There was an overall overspend of £34,344, an improvement from quarter two where the position was £96,821 overspent.

- Green waste was currently £64,000 below budget.

- A new contract for Dry Mixed Recycling started on 1 October 2024. In the first four months of the contract the average monthly cost has dropped by £23,000. The budget for 2025/26 included a saving of £300,000 for the processing of recycling.

- Development Management was difficult to forecast with no discernible pattern. At the end of quarter three the income sat at £240,000 below target. Although the income position had improved, the Council would only reach its target if it received a major application. The year end forecast was £145,000 behind target. The situation had been reflected in the budget for the next year.

- Bank and credit charges were reported as overspent for the previous two financial years. A new contract for processing had brought cost back within original budget for 2024/25. The forecast for quarter four was an underspend of £70,000.

- With regards to investment property, Councillor Smith advised that Between Towns Road in Cowley remained empty and was overspent as the Council was liable for Business Rates and Security costs. Officers were undertaking an asset review to consider alternative use for the site.

- Talisman Business centre showed a forecast underspend of £80,000 in quarter four.

- The income contingency of £200,00 put against the large Leisure Contract did not appear like it will be needed.

- The Council had identified risks in the Budget for 2025/26 relating to the Leisure Contract and Business Rates reset. It was recommended that any surplus in revenue outrun be transferred to budget deficit reserve to mitigate these risks.

- It was recommended that an earmarked reserve be set up to cover the extensive costs of exploring and scoping the optimal unitary solution.

- Councillor Smith noted that the agile working programme had been completed at Elmfield. There were some urgent works required to Woodgreen. The Solar PV replacement at Elmfield had also been completed. An Investment Grade Proposal for the decarbonisation of Windrush Leisure Centre in Witney was expected and the business case would go forward to the Executive in June 2025.

- Four new waste vehicles had been delivered.

- Councillor Smith concluded that the revenue outturn position was forecast to be £58,762 underspent. However, this position included elements which would not be known until year end. Therefore, although the position at the end of quarter three remained encouraging, there were still risks.

Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance. proposed accepting the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1.   Note the Council's Financial Performance for Quarter Three 2024-2025

2.   Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to review earmarked reserves to mitigate against the financial risks identified in this report.

315   **Service Performance Report 2024-25 Quarter Three**

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter Three (Q3). Councillor Graham highlighted the following:

- The purchase of three electric vans and an ultra-narrow van for the Council's green fleet.

- The installation of Solar PV at Elmfield. Councillor Graham noted that Elmfield was now let, with the main offices now at Woodgreen. Elmfield would be a business and social hub with a new café opening soon. The Elmfield conversion had been completed in a cost effective and environmentally friendly way.

- Service performance areas above target were highlighted in Customer satisfaction, planning applications determined within agreed timescales, missed bin collections and gym memberships.

- Councillor Graham noted that Land charge searches and visits to leisure centres were not on target, but that this was in part due to seasonal delays.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed accepting the recommendations, and thanked Council staff, Officers and Senior Management for their work in this area.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, seconded the recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1.   Note the 2024/25 Q3 service performance report.

316   **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 – Regulation 18 Pre-Submission Draft Consultation**

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, introduced the item, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the emerging draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041, including the Regulation 18 'preferred options' public consultation which was scheduled to begin in May 2025. Councillor Ashton reiterated that this item was an update and not a draft Local Plan, which would be completed in October. However, it was noted that the emerging plan had a much stronger focus than the Local Plan 2031 (adopted in 2018) on the following areas: mitigating climate change, tackling the ecological emergency, investment in infrastructure, focus on community health and wellbeing, water environment, reducing reliance on the private car, increasing the use of public transport and a provision for a Carterton to Oxford railway line. The next step would be the presentation of the preferred options consultation paper to the Executive on 14 May 2025. The consultation period would begin in late May and last through June. It was explained that there would be a presentation on this with the opportunity to ask questions following the meeting.

Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning, proposed accepting the recommendations of the report.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, seconded the recommendations

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1.   Note the content of the report including the implications of the updated NPPF published in December 2024 and the intention to defer consideration of the Local Plan preferred option consultation paper until May 2025.

2.   Agree that a minor addendum to the Council's published Local Development Scheme (LDS) – November 2024 be published to reflect the fact that the Local Plan 2041 preferred options consultation paper will now be considered by the Council's Executive in May 2025 with public consultation to begin in late May 2025.

The Meeting closed at 3.02 pm

                                                                        CHAIR

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the
Executive
Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
on **Wednesday, 19 March 2025** at the rising of Council

PRESENT

Councillors: Andy Graham, Duncan Enright, Lidia Arciszewska, Rachel Crouch, Andrew Prosser, Geoff Saul, Alaric Smith and Tim Sumner

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant), Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Councillors in attendance: Jane Doughty, Genny Early, Roger Faulkner, Liz Leffman, Dan Levy, Paul Marsh, Elizabeth Poskitt and Sarah Veasey

317 Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning.

318 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

319 Minutes of Previous Meeting

As the meeting of the Executive on 12 March 2025 took place after the publication date for the agenda there were no minutes to consider.

320 Receipt of Announcements

There were no announcements made by Executive Members.

321 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation.

322 Reports from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There had been no meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting of the Executive and therefore no reports from the Committee for consideration.

323 Matters raised by Audit and Governance Committee

There had been no meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee since the last meeting of the Executive and therefore no matters were raised.

324   **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation - Initial Options**

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council introduced the item. Councillor Graham stated that the purpose of the item was to provide an overview of the interim plan and each of the options for local government reorganisation (LGR) in Oxfordshire, prior to submission to the Government on 21 March 2025. Government would then share feedback to councils and would expect submission of final proposals no later than 28 November 2025.

Councillor Graham advised that the Council had been working within a tight timescale on the agreed submission and was pleased with the co-operative way in which all Oxfordshire councils had worked.

Councillor Graham went on to introduce the three initial options for LGR that have been agreed by Oxfordshire councils and formed the submission to Government as follows:

- A single unitary Council – Oxfordshire Council.
- Two unitary Councils – Oxford City, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell Council and Ridgeway Council (derived from existing boundaries of South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Berkshire Council)
- Three unitary Councils – Greater Oxford City Council, West Oxfordshire and Cherwell Council and Ridgeway Council.

Councillor Graham stated that the proposed options and representative letters that would outline the options were to be agreed and noted by Members of Oxfordshire councils at the relevant councils' Executive meetings that day and at County Cabinet on 20 March 2025 to provide a commonality of approach across Oxfordshire.

Councillor Graham stated that in addition to the agreed overarching letter of options, each council would be sending an accompanying letter in which they would take the lead on one of the options. West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Council would jointly be leading on the two-unitary model. Councillor Graham noted that West Oxfordshire District Council's individual response letter acknowledged the alternative options on which other Oxfordshire councils were taking the lead.

Councillor Graham advised that following a response from the Government the Council would begin to investigate the data around the option suggested in the feedback, and continue to work with partners, to work towards a final proposal. Councillor Graham advised that, following the Government feedback the Executive would continue to be transparent with Members. The Executive would create a Cross-party Working Group in the new civic year to

work towards planning LGR. Regular LGR briefings to Council would also continue to allow Members to have their views heard.

Councillor Graham concluded that Government would be expecting a final proposal by 28 November 2025. The Executive would be guided by Officers and Members in generating the proposal to ensure compliance with guidelines. Ultimately the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government would make the final decision on LGR and there remained a great deal of uncertainty.

In discussing the item, other members of the Executive congratulated Councillor Graham and Officers on the work, considering tight timescales. It was noted that the current proposals and options could be amended based on Government feedback and the work in creating other options. It was noted that the Council was not precluded from putting forward other options in final submissions if a more favourable option became available. It was noted that services would continue in the period of LGR, and the Council would work with partners to ensure that residents continued to receive good services. Where economies of scale provided opportunities for more cost-effective services this would also be explored. It was acknowledged that, within LGR, the identity and sense of place of residents and local democracy would need to be protected.

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, proposed accepting the recommendations.

The proposal was agreed unanimously by the Executive.

RESOLVED:

That the Executive:

1. Note the receipt of the statutory invitation received from the Minister of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government on 5 February 2025;

2. Note the interim plan update as set out in Appendix 1 and the emerging options for local government reorganisation set out in the Appendices 2-4;

3. Note that the Leader of the Council with the support of Officers will write to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to outline the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with other Oxfordshire Partners on LGR and Devolution options and to set out the initial views from the Executive.

The Meeting closed at 3.48 pm

CHAIR

	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 23 APRIL 2025
Subject	UBICO BUSINESS PLAN 2025-2026
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Bill Oddy – Assistant Director Email: bill.oddy@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To consider the Ubico Business Plan 2025-26, which has been produced by Ubico in consultation with the Directors and Shareholders, and to recommend that the Leader (as Shareholder Representative) approves the plan.
Annexes	Annex A – Ubico Business Plan 2025-2026
Recommendations	That the Executive Resolves to: 1. Note the Ubico Business Plan 2025-26; and 2. Note that, subject to feedback from the Executive, the Leader of the Council, as Shareholder Representative, will sign the written resolution to approve the Ubico Business Plan 2025-2026 in due course.
Corporate Priorities	• Putting Residents First • A Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The following people have all been consulted on this report and the detail contained within: • Councillor Andy Graham

	- Councillor Lidia Arciszewska - Senior Council Officers - Senior Publica Officers

1.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Ubico is a Teckal company wholly owned by local authorities including West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). The company delivers waste and environmental services on behalf of its shareholders, including WODC, and is required to submit an annual business plan for approval by its shareholders.

1.2 The Leader of the Council, as the Shareholder Representative, has authority to approve the Business Plan. Whilst the Leader of the Council has authority, as shareholder representative, to approve the business plan, it is being brought to Executive for Members to consider.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1 West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) is a shareholder of Ubico limited, a teckal company established to deliver waste and environmental services, offering better value for money than commercial contracts.

2.2 The Teckal model enables councils to commission services without the costs associated with an EU procurement process. Ubico delivers services on behalf of the council at a price which reflects the actual cost of service provision, but in doing so holds no assets, and so the depots it operates from, the vehicles it uses to perform the services and the waste and recycling containers which are provided to residents, are all owned or leased by the authority. This ensures that the shareholders have full control over high value expenditure.

2.3 As part of the establishment of Ubico, a number of items were identified as reserved matters for council (Shareholder) approval to ensure that Shareholder Councils retained an element of control over their company, this includes the annual business plan. The reserved matters decisions fall to the shareholder representatives to determine, this is the Leader of the Council.

2.4 The Managing Director of Ubico gave a presentation on the Draft Business Plan 2025-26 to the Scrutiny Committee on the 4th December 2024. The points relating to the Business Plan raised by the Committee, alongside comments from other Shareholder Councils as part of the consultation, have been considered as part of the development of the business plan.

3.   MAIN POINTS

3.1 The Business Plan provides the vehicle to carry forward and address the issues identified by the Ubico Shareholder Councils. The 5-year vision developed by the Ubico Board of Directors in 2021 identifies the following priorities:

- Leveraging synergies and economies of scale
- Harnessing opportunities to deliver value back to our partners
- Using technology to drive operational efficiency

- Understanding our communities needs
- Inspiring our workforce to be committed to providing value for money and carbon neutral services.

3.2 Ubico's 2025-26 Business Plan and 5-year vision are built around four key pillars:

People
We will have a well-trained, supported and engaged workforce who live our values and are proud to work for Ubico.

Operations
We will deliver high quality services, which remain safe and compliant, seeking continuous improvement in productivity, value and service excellence. We will harness innovation where appropriate and will explore synergies and opportunities for partnership and cross boundary working.

Climate
We will minimise our environmental impact and support our shareholders to meet their carbon neutral targets, integrating carbon reduction opportunities wherever reasonably possible in both our fleet and non-fleet activities.

Business Development
We will build business development capability which enhances our partnerships and allows for effective identification, analysis and presentation to shareholders of potential new business opportunities. We will explore opportunities that aren't simply about profit, including those that would deliver greater value, help our communities or improve services.

Local Government Reorganisation

3.3 On Monday 16 December 2024, the government published its [English Devolution White Paper](#). The paper sets out the government's ambitions for devolution and covers a wide range of policy areas as well as reorganisation of local government in two tier areas including Oxfordshire.

3.4 In January 2025 the Executive considered the review of the waste and environmental services contract with Ubico and agreed to extend the contract until 2027 as well as support the creation of The Oxfordshire Waste and Environmental Services Transformation Programme. Over the next year, councils in Oxfordshire will be determining the best operating model for waste and environmental services in parallel with the work to reorganise local government. As the future structure of local government in Oxfordshire becomes clearer in 2026, consideration will need to be given to the Councils future relationship with Ubico.

Service Transformation

3.5 In support of the council's service related and financial priorities, Ubico is continuing to work in partnership with Publica and the Council as part of the Environmental Services Innovation Program (ESIP) which is bringing forward opportunities to deliver better services to residents, reduce the effect services have on the climate and environment, and capture efficiency and financial savings for all partners. This will therefore further support the Business Plan. During the last year ESIP has delivered the following:

- Transfer of commercial waste back-office and management function from Ubico to Publica delivering circa £100,000 additional income and efficiencies as well as improved customer satisfaction
- A review of street cleansing delivering £100,000 of efficiencies and investment in in-cab technology by the Council
- Implemented a stream of work to adopt a vehicle strategy and support the Councils net-zero by 2030 target
- Implementation of a new dry mixed recycling and glass recycling contracts delivering £500,000 of efficiencies annually.
- Review of the Ubico contract with WODC and approval by Full Council
- Creation of The Oxfordshire Waste and Environmental Services Transformation Programme

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The Leader of the Council, as Shareholder Representative, has delegated authority to approve the Ubico business plan (which forms part of the 5-year vision), and there is no need, other than to support transparency for a report to be considered and noted by The Executive.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 It is recommended that The Ubico Business Plan 2025-26 is accepted to meet the company's members agreement, which is to approve the Business Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no additional financial implications associated with the Ubico Business Plan as the Council 2025-26 budget has already been approved. Ubico has committed to supporting the council deliver savings through the Environmental Services Innovation Program (ESIP) to support its medium-term financial strategy (MTFS).

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Business Plan has to be adopted in accordance with the Shareholder Agreement for Ubico.

## 8.	RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1	There are no specific risks in adopting the Ubico Business Plan. The council is a shareholder of the company and has already committed to a contract extension until 2027.

8.2	If the council does not approve the plan there is a risk that the company will not be able to support some of the activities necessary to deliver the savings set out in the council's MTFS or its corporate priorities.

## 9.	EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1	Not Applicable

## 10.	CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1	Climate implications feature heavily in the Business Plan with climate being a strategic pillar and emissions benchmarking and carbon reduction goals clearly detailed throughout the plan. If the council does not approve this plan, it could risk delivery of these targets and progress towards the Council's own net zero goal by 2030.

## 11.	BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1	None

(END)

2025/26 Business Plan

Contents

1. Business Overview

1.1. Introduction

Ubico is a successful and well-respected local authority owned company operating across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire. We deliver high quality environmental services including waste and recycling collections, grounds maintenance, street cleansing and household recycling centre management. Our purpose is to keep places clean and green for every resident, visitor, town, village and community. Our close relationships with our council shareholders see us working in partnership to deliver the best services possible for our local communities. Now operating across the whole of Gloucestershire and in West Oxfordshire, our growth, size and position places us in a strong position to leverage opportunities for greater efficiencies across a wider base, leading to cost-savings for our councils and their residents and the opportunity to explore new and exciting areas for growth and innovation. We set out a new five-year vision for the company in 2021, and in 2025/26, the fifth and final year of this vision, we will build on the successes already achieved.

We are a significant local employer, particularly in Gloucestershire, where we were 64th in the top 100 employers in the county based on 2023 turnover, up from 72nd in 2022. We employ around 1000 staff, the backbone of our operations. We will continue to have a strong focus on our people this year and will continue to advance our work on climate initiatives, continuing to work closely with our partners to support them in delivering their ambitious climate targets. Subject to shareholder approval and funding being in place, a shared fleet ownership pilot scheme will be initiated, and evaluation will take place for a model for round sharing and reduction of travel between depots. Other partnership-wide opportunities will continue to be explored and presented to shareholders for their consideration, as will any potential external growth opportunities that could deliver greater value to all partners.

1.2. Quality and safety

Ensuring high standards of health, safety and compliance is a key priority and underpins everything we do. This is demonstrated through our ongoing achievement of industry-recognised accreditations, including ISO 45001 and ISO 14001 for our Health and Safety Management and Environmental Management Systems respectively, which reflects our positive health and safety culture which we are committed to maintaining and improving. Our Safety, Health, Environment and Quality team drive our safety culture and practices, and

health and safety performance is monitored at all levels of the business and reviewed by our board of directors at every board meeting. Our internal compliance team supports the company in maintaining high standards through a thorough programme of scrutiny involving both scheduled and risk-based assessments, checking compliance in key areas such as ISO standards, fleet compliance, Environment Agency permitting requirements and the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. This is complemented by our annual internal audit plan which is drawn up in consultation with the chair of the Risk and Audit Committee and in partnership with our internal auditors.

1.3. Our services

Refuse collections	Food waste collections	Garden waste collections	Recycling collections	Trade waste and recycling collections	Recycling centre management
Recycling and bulking transfer	Street cleansing	Building and public convenience cleaning	Grounds maintenance	Fleet management and maintenance	MOT and tax testing

1.4. Our shareholders

1.5. Governance and risk management

1.5.1. Governance

Good corporate governance and the continued professional development of the board of directors and the senior management team is fundamental to the effective operations of the company. In 2025/26 we will continue to ensure appropriate competency standards and qualifying criteria are applied to all directors and follow the spirit of the UK Corporate Governance Code. At all times, the company will remain open, transparent and accountable. The board and its members will operate as a cohesive team, with its priority at all times to further the aims, goals and values of the company, whilst always having risk and risk management at the forefront of discussions.

The board is supported by two sub-committees, a Risk and Audit Committee and a Governance and Nominations Committee. These committees support the board in key governance areas, for example, better understanding of business risk, and ensuring the processes to mitigate risk are effective and there is compliance.

1.5.2. Risk management

Risk management is a core principle of effective corporate governance and is also a key contributor to a sound internal control environment.

Our strategic risk management objectives include board and senior management setting a 'tone from the top' on the level of risk we are prepared to accept - our risk appetite. We maintain a strategic approach to risk management in order to make better informed decisions and use risk management to enable consistent appraisal of options and improved flexibility/agility in delivering change. Overall, we aim to develop a culture of balanced and informed risk taking throughout Ubico, including strategic, programme, partnership, project and operational risk.

1.6. Our values

Ubico was created to enable local authorities to enjoy greater efficiencies through economies of scale, and more control over the delivery of services. This approach is reflected in our company values, which are applied across all our services.

1.7.2024 Headline performance

Pillar	Measure	2021 Goal	2021 Achievement	2022 Achievement	2023 Achievement	2024 Achievement	2026 Goal
People	Vacancy fill rate (advertise-ment to acceptance)	<1 month	84.08% fill rate Time to hire 2.4 months	85.02% fill rate Time to hire 1.9 months	Time to hire 2.3 months	Time to hire 61 days	<1 month
	Annual training budget utilisation	80% of annual training budget	80.08% (Apr to Dec)	100% (21/22)	108% (22/23)	108% (23/24)	100% of annual training budget
	Conformance to mandatory training to schedule	>90%	New starters >95%	New starters >95%	New starters >95%	New starters >95%	>95%
	Staff turnover	<14% attrition	9.62% (20/21)	13.4% (21/22)	15.09%	17.66%	<10% attrition
Operational Excellence	Service KPIs - Missed bins	<0.05 %	0.073% per 100,000 collections	0.0807% per 100,000 collections	0.071% per 100,000 properties	0.0725% per 100,000 property visits	<0.075 % per 100,000 properties
	Fleet compliance	Fleet Audit Scores >90%	92.37% average	92.76% average	93.2% average	93.05% average	Fleet Audit Scores >95%
	RIDDOR occurrence	<12 per year	6	11	9	7	<9 per year
	Deliver to set budget	Within 5% set budget	-6.4% (20/21)	-3.1% (21/22)	+1.5% (22/23)	0% (23/24)	Within 3% set budget
Climate	Reduced carbon emissions	Benchmark in 2021/22	Carbon reduction strategy in place Baseline work in progress (consultant engaged to advise on methodology)	Emissions from activities from fuel consumption: CO_2e 6,237t	Emissions from activities from fuel consumption April to Dec 23: CO_2e 4.161t	Scope 1 emissions from activities from fuel consumption for 23/24: CO_2e 5,838t	Sophisticated measures in place across transport, buildings and key activities

2. Business Plan 2025/26

2.1. Our five-year vision (2021-2026)

Recognised by our customers and employees as a quality provider of sustainable services for our local communities, delivering best value and reliability

Through:

- Leveraging synergies and economies of scale
- Harnessing opportunities to deliver value back to our partners
- Using technology to drive operational efficiency
- Understanding our communities' needs
- Inspiring our workforce to be committed to providing value for money and carbon neutral services

2.2. Strategic pillars

Four strategic pillars underpin delivery of our vision and our business plan:

People

Engaged colleagues in the right roles with the right skills

Operational Excellence

Deliver quality, add value, maintain high standards

Business Development

Build capability to deliver value to our partnerships

Climate

Minimise our environmental impact and support our shareholders to meet their carbon neutral targets
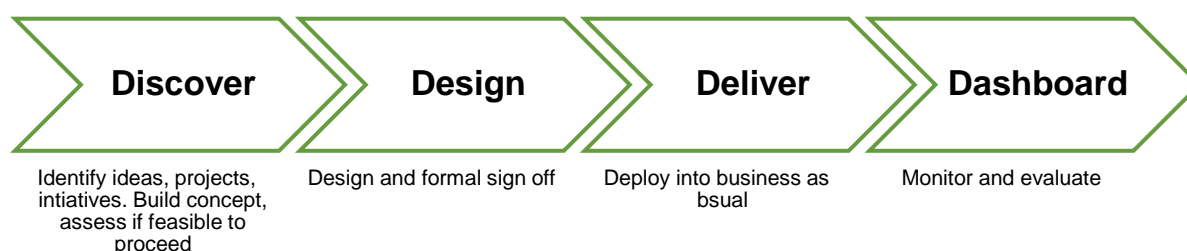
2.3. Strategy planning

Ubico's board routinely evaluate the validity of our five-year vision and plan, and the roadmap for its delivery, ensuring it reflects the needs and desires of our shareholders and maintains the company as a sound proposition, whilst driving value. The process for drawing up the annual business plan incorporates feedback from key stakeholders, including the company's senior management team and the board. Shareholder engagement presentations take place with each shareholder council ahead of presentation of the final written business plan, which incorporates feedback received.

Our current five-year strategy takes us to the end of the 2025/26 year. Liaison has already begun with our shareholders to understand key priorities for Ubico 2030 and this engagement will continue and will shape the agreed vision and strategy from 2026/27.

2.4. Project lifecycle

We have adopted a project lifecycle with four phases; Discover, Design, Deliver and Dashboard, and these can be seen alongside the activities outlined in this business plan. This aids in identifying the stage of each project or initiative and assists with long term planning and mapping, and resource management.

Discover	Design	Deliver	Dashboard
Identify ideas, projects, intiatives. Build concept, assess if feasible to proceed	Design and formal sign off	Deploy into business as bsual	Monitor and evaluate

All projects and programmes are managed through a stage gateway system and strategic projects are managed by the PMO and sponsored by a member of the executive leadership team. The project scope, objectives, goals, budget, and necessary stage documents are closely managed by the senior leadership team, and progress against delivery of strategic projects is routinely monitored by the board.

2.5. People pillar

> *We will have a well-trained, supported and engaged workforce who live our values and are proud to work for Ubico.*

Attract and retain	Recognise	Upskill	Satisfaction

2.5.1.   2025/26 activity

In our people pillar we will continue our focus on attraction and retention, supporting and valuing our excellent staff. In order to continue to deliver safe, compliant and relevant services for its shareholders, Ubico must offer a package that is competitive and attractive in the marketplace, and in 2025/26 we will deliver changes to our terms and conditions package, within existing budgets, to ensure that we are both competitive to retain our staff, and attractive in the employment market when we need to recruit.

We have successfully broadened our recruitment routes for new employees in the past few years, and this year will explore further recruitment routes for specific roles where recruitment remains challenging. We will also improve our candidate application system, both in terms of user experience and data insight capability. We will continue to extend our skills assessment process following successful roll out across our supervisor roles and will design and procure a learning management system to facilitate and support this process.

Our Communications Strategy has a strong focus on our market presence and enhancing our reputation to support attraction and retention of staff. Our employee engagement programme, delivered now for the past two years, has proven invaluable in gaining feedback from colleagues across the company and this will continue on an annual basis. We will continue to enter relevant sector awards to celebrate and promote our successes, and we will make best use of our social media platforms and other communication channels to promote working for Ubico.

2.5.2. People – key risks and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Agreement for changes to our terms and conditions, to remain attractive in the marketplace, is not achieved	Changes to be delivered within agreed budgets. Trade unions involved in the project from the outset.
Insufficient interest in Ubico vacancies, or high attrition rates	Increase reach of vacancies, routes to recruitment and improve job application process. Monitor market conditions, interest in our vacancies, vacancy fill rate and attrition rate.

2.6. Operational excellence pillar

We will deliver high quality services which remain safe and compliant, seeking continuous improvement in productivity, value and service excellence. We will harness innovation where appropriate and will explore synergies and opportunities for partnership and cross boundary working.

Performance	Quality

2.6.1. 2025/26 activity

The activities identified in our operational excellence pillar support Ubico in providing high quality, safe and compliant services, harnessing continuous improvement and innovation wherever possible.

Over the first four years of this five-year strategy window, we have been working to implement measures to demonstrate our progress against our strategic goals, develop sound business intelligence to be able to react and adapt to change, and use insights from our data to help evaluate quality and performance that we can use to strengthen the management of the business and inform future business decisions and strategy. In 2025/26 we will develop a data management policy for Ubico to ensure a consistent and compliant approach to data collection and processing. We will continue our work developing longer term strategic cost projections for each partner, aiming to combine them to create a company long-term strategic financial plan to better support our strategic aims.

The introduction of 'in-cab' technology across our waste, recycling, street cleaning and grounds maintenance services has been a key project in our digital transformation programme in recent years. Now in place across the company, our work this year will focus on benefits realisation and insight analysis and harmonising the operational approach to system use across the company, to drive efficiency. Another piece of work in our digital transformation programme has been in our workshops where we have been introducing technology which can provide an interface between workshop activity and back-office systems use for fleet management, providing improved efficiency and improved management information. In 2025/26 we will consider how to incorporate fleet unit costing into our back-office fleet management system which is due for re-procurement towards the end of the year. We will also implement a new three-year audit plan that reflects the work of

both the compliance function and internal audit and develop a value and quality strategy for Ubico 2030.

We will continue to support our in-house training team to deliver excellent, highly valued and effective training that meets the needs of our business, evaluating our use of internal and external instructors to ensure we are meeting our training requirements in the best possible way, and also developing a longer-term plan for the service.

We are committed to fostering positive impacts on society and the environment and will continue to ensure that social responsibility is embedded into our policies, plans and business practices to the benefit our staff, the wider community, and the environment. We will continue to leverage procurement opportunities to gain social, economic and environmental benefits for the communities we serve, sourcing local source goods and services wherever economical and practical. We will provide local employment opportunities with good employment standards and practices and will provide apprenticeship and training opportunities, and support community initiatives and events.

2.6.2. Operational excellence – key risks and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Budget pressures	Continue to seek early understanding of areas of cost pressure for partners and, with partners, consider mitigation plans where necessary. Continue to highlight potential areas of cost pressure as early as possible in both budget setting processes and monthly forecasting reports.
Benefits of digitisation projects are not recognised	Monitor, capture and share benefits realised through digitalisation, including financial benefits, future financial pressures mitigated following realisation of efficiencies, and other areas of added value.
Demonstrating value	Monitor, capture and share project benefits, including financial benefits, future financial pressures mitigated following realisation of efficiencies, and other areas of added value direct and indirect. Achieve agreed performance levels.
Capacity to deliver unplanned work	Project management office manages inflow and monitors resource availability. Partner expectations managed where unplanned work is requested, and additional resource requested if required.

2.6.3. Procurement activity 2025/26

In 2025/26 we will complete procurement activity to allow contract award as follows:

Further to procurement activity undertaken in 24/25, contracts will be awarded for the supply of:

- Small plant and equipment – hire
- Small plant and equipment – purchase
- Mobile compactors service and maintenance (sennebogen equipment)
- Bins/bags and containers
- Interceptor waste
- Permanent recruitment

Award contract extensions or undertake new procurement activity and award a contract for the supply of:

- Provision of connected workforce solution
- PPE and uniform
- Static compactor service and maintenance
- Fleet tyres
- RVS maintenance – West Oxfordshire services
- Provision of agency staff service
- Management of haulage, sale/disposal of recycling products

Undertake new procurement activity and award a contract for the supply of:

- Fleet management system
- Absence management service
- Insurance services
- Sofware solution for waste management
- Liquid fuels

2.7. Climate pillar

> *We will minimise our environmental impact and support our shareholders to meet their carbon neutral targets, integrating carbon reduction opportunities wherever reasonably possible in both our fleet and non-fleet activities.*

Our environmental impact	Supporting partners with their impact

2.7.1.   2025/26 activity

Ubico's carbon strategy recognises two strands of activity:

- Ubico owned carbon reduction activities that are within the gift of the company to deliver.
- Shareholder sponsored activity which requires approval and funding from our shareholders.

We will continue to deliver our programme of activities to reduce our environmental impact across the business. A key project will centre around the impact from our use of resources within the buildings and depots that we occupy, starting with a pilot scheme at one of our depots. The scheme will concentrate on changing attitudes and behaviours to reduce our energy consumption, saving money and reducing our environmental impact.

Work will continue with our significant suppliers to gather data on their scope 1 and 2 emissions, allowing us to gather more detailed data for scope 3. In addition, we will evaluate our opportunities for sourcing more environmentally friendly products in our supply chain, within our existing budget constraints. Following on from early consideration of climate impact within the PMO and project initiation process, we will move to the dashboard phase and develop a KPI for projects which have a significant climate impact.

Building on the successful introduction of a number of alternative fuelled vehicles (AFV's) and electric vehicles (EV's) with our partners, we will continue to advocate for and support the introduction of alternative fuel options, coupled with any associated change of infrastructure. Vehicle manufacturers are now required to meet specific targets for zero emission vehicle sales for certain categories of vehicle, or face significant fines. This is reducing the availability of new fossil fuelled vehicles in categories such as vans and caged vehicles and compelling a move to zero emission alternatives, at least for a proportion of the vehicles purchased. As a result of our programme of investment in alternative fuel vehicles

in partnership with our shareholders, we have now reached our charging capacity for electric vehicles at all our sites. In 2025/26 we will continue to work with partners to understand future infrastructure requirements and ensure these are put in place ahead of vehicle deployment. Whilst there is not yet a mandated sales target for suppliers of zero emission heavy goods vehicles, if/when this is introduced, we must have the relevant charging infrastructure in place and will work with partners to ensure that this is considered in future infrastructure plans. We will also continue to maintain our close working relationship with our partners and shareholders, supporting projects that increase biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions.

2.7.2. Climate – key risks and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Resource to deliver climate specific activities	Appropriate teams within Ubico lead on different elements of our climate pillar delivery, and all teams support initiatives.
Emissions from fleet remain high due to ageing fleet or fuels chosen.	Alternative fuel vehicle options identified on fleet replacement programmes; replacement strategy agreed with partners.
Ubico's success in reducing its carbon emissions is intrinsically linked to partner decisions.	Climate opportunities which must be approached jointly are presented to partners for consideration. Ubico invited to attend key partner climate meetings.
Lack of control of utility suppliers and sites where these remain under council control.	Work closely with partners to seek utility use information that is specific to Ubico use. Work with partners to identify and deliver site projects that will improve our climate performance.
Insufficient 'refuelling' infrastructure is currently in place to enable full transition to alternative fuelled fleet.	Seek partner-wide support for an assessment and surveys of infrastructure requirements at all Ubico sites, to include liaising with the local Distribution Network Operator (DNO). When considering fleet replacements, ensure understanding of the limitations resulting from not having infrastructure to support battery electric vehicles. Appraise partners of changes to legislation which may mandate the use of electric vehicles, which would require improved/increased charging infrastructure.

2.8. Business development pillar

> *We will build business development capability which enhances our partnerships and allows for effective identification, analysis and presentation to shareholders of potential new business opportunities. We will explore opportunities that aren't simply about profit, including those that would deliver greater value, help our communities or improve services.*

Assess and evaluate	Create value	Build

2.8.1. 2025/26 activity

Exploration and delivery of opportunities for partnership working across boundaries will continue, developing on the foundational work already undertaken in the previous four years. All future developments will take the Devolution White Paper published in December 2024, into consideration. The potential impacts of the Simpler Recycling regulations, also announced in late 2024, will be evaluated both with our partners and in relation to their impact on our own business-generated waste.

Several of the current partner contracts are due for renewal or extension in 2026 and 2027, offering an opportunity to review the current contract provisions and consider making any necessary adjustments, for example to reflect any new partnership working arrangements. Work will be undertaken in partnership with our shareholders to review the contract documentation ahead of upcoming renewal dates, with a view to all partners signing up to the same contract moving forward.

Following the successful mobilisation of waste, recycling and street cleaning services for the Forest of Dean and a significant project to ensure efficiency of collection routing in the Cotswolds, we will continue to support partner activities that safeguard future growth and improve operational efficiencies.

In addition, we will continue to consider any approaches relating to growth which could create value for the partnership, using our shareholder approved outline business case fund to forward business cases in a timely manner for shareholder consideration, and designing any growth projects which are approved.

2.8.2. Business development – key risks and mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Cross boundary or collaborative working proposals are not endorsed.	Proposals are not taken forward
A partner does not continue their contract at their 2026 or 2027 renewal date.	Work closely with partners to understand their position early and develop exit plans if a partner does not choose to renew. Consider impact of partner exit on other partners and work to mitigate the risks, operational and financial, wherever possible.
Expectation of delivery beyond that which can be achieved with available capacity.	Assess methods to estimate capacity and resourcing requirements to support strategic programmes.
Leadership capacity to manage an expanding portfolio.	Focus on core environmental services where we are skilled and experienced. Include additional, appropriate, leadership capacity in any business cases for growth.

	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 23 APRIL 2025**
Subject	**WITNEY COMMUNITY INSIGHT PROFILE**
Wards affected	Witney Central, Witney South
Accountable member	Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities Email: Rachel.Crouch@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin, Director of Place Email: Phil.Martin@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Martha Holland, Healthy Communities Officer Email: martha.holland@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report relates to the Witney Central Community Insight Profile which has been published on the Oxfordshire Data Hub website and presented at the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 13 March 2025. It includes three reports: • Witney Central Community Insight Report (Produced by Community First Oxfordshire) and related appendices. • Witney Central Data Profile • Witney Central Community Profile Summary of Findings It links to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and is a useful mechanism to pull together all the data and insight available at a local level to help inform future action planning and drive positive change in the community. Furthermore, the profile highlights the links to the Marmot Principles and the aims of Oxfordshire Marmot Place to tackle health inequalities in Oxfordshire. It is anticipated the profile will be useful for local partners to help with data needed for funding applications and developing local initiatives. The profile is aimed at community services, is relatable and can be used by everyone in the community.

Annexes	Annex A – Witney Community Profile Summary of Findings Annex B – Witney Community Insight Report Annex C – Witney Community Data Profile Annex D – Appendix 2 – Research questions. Annex E – Appendix 3 – Health survey. Annex F – Appendix 4 - Community survey report
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: 1. Note the content of the Witney Central Community Insight Profile, its three reports and appendices.
Corporate priorities	• Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	A Steering Group, established at the start of the process, included the following: the WODC Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, WODC Councillors, Witney Town Councillor, WODC and OCC Officers and a cross section of community groups and organisations working in Witney. Community insight research was conducted and reached a total of 167 individuals.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   In September 2024, Community First Oxfordshire was commissioned by West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council Public Health to undertake community insight research in Witney Central.

1.2   The aim of the research was to capture the opinions of the community in relation to:

- the local strengths and assets that support and enable health and wellbeing
- the challenges to health and wellbeing and what would help to address these.

1.3   The views and experiences collected are intended to help develop a better understanding of what local people think about health and wellbeing and how it can be improved.

1.4   The Witney Central Community Insight Report should be read in combination with the separate Witney Central Data Report. Together, these documents comprise the Witney Central Community Insight Profile (CIP). A summary covering both documents has also been produced.

1.5   The report aims to help West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and other local stakeholders and organisations working in Witney to plan better for the future and develop services and projects to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in Central Witney.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1   Community Insight Profiles (CIP) are being created to ensure that we understand as fully as possible the health outcomes, and factors that influence these outcomes, within wards in Oxfordshire where residents are most at risk of poor health or experiencing health inequalities.

2.2   Ten wards were identified in the Oxfordshire Director of Public Health Annual Report (2019) as having the greatest number of small areas that were listed in the 20% most deprived in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation update (published November 2019). Profiles for all these areas are now published.

2.3   Further CIPs are now being created for areas across the county identified as falling within the 30-40% most deprived nationally according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) and where local partners feel there would be added benefit to developing a Profile.

2.4   Witney contains three small areas listed in the IMD 2019 that fall within the 40% most deprived in England. Before starting work on this Profile, the Oxfordshire County Council Public Health team consulted with local stakeholders in Witney about the extent of the geographical area to be used for selecting data for this profile. Discussions informed by data and local intelligence highlighted priority areas that the stakeholders wanted the work to focus on. It was agreed that the CIP work would cover LSOAs West Oxfordshire 009A, 010B and 010F to complement existing work in Windrush Valley Estate (Smiths Estate) which has been aimed at supporting residents facing the greatest inequalities. It was agreed that Witney East 08B would not be included at this time.

2.5   Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health team are working with local partners to develop the CIPs, which give a detailed picture of both the health needs and the supportive resources in the community. The reports use local data and community feedback following an asset-based community development model (ABCD). The aim of this CIP is to:

• Understand the experiences of those living in Witney Central in relation to health and wellbeing

• Outline the health outcomes and the factors which can influence these health outcomes and bring this to life through the voices of the community

• Provide information and recommendations for local organisations, stakeholders and residents working to improve health and wellbeing in this area.

3.   SUMMARY OF POPULATION AND DATA

3.1   The Community Data Profile (Annex C) provides an overview of facts and figures about the Witney Central Community Insight area. Where relevant, data for the Witney Central Community Insight area is compared with West Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County, and the England averages.

3.2   **Population and housing**

- According to the latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) population estimates (mid 2022) the Witney Central Community Insight area had a resident population of 5,703 residents.

- Between the 2011 and 2021 Census surveys, the resident population of the Witney Central Community Insight area increased by 22%. This was more than double the West Oxfordshire increase of 9%.

- The population by broad age in the Witney Central Community Insight area grew between 2011 and 2021, with a 25% increase in children, a 24% increase in working aged people, and a 15% increase in people aged 60 and over.

- The proportion of social rented housing in the Witney Central Community Insight area (39%) was more than double the average for West Oxfordshire (13%) and Oxfordshire (15%).

3.3   **Health**

- The prevalence of hypertension, obesity, depression, and osteoporosis among GP patients reported from the two GP practices located in or close to the Witney Central Community Insight area, were well above the NHS Oxfordshire and NHS England average.

- 2 out of 32 local health and wellbeing indicators from the Witney Central (MSOA), were ranked as worse than the England average. These were:

- Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 years

- Emergency hospital admissions for self-harm (All ages)

- The proportion of adults receiving structured treatment for drugs or alcohol in the Witney Central Community Insight Area was higher (worse than) the Oxfordshire average.
- The rate of people per 1,000 population (16+ years) who are entitled to claim personal independent payment due to mental health in the Witney Central Community Insight area remained higher than the rate for Oxfordshire since March 2021.

3.4 Employment

- A much higher percentage of people in employment in the Witney Central Community Insight area were in the (generally lower paid) caring, leisure, sales, process, and elementary occupations.
- A quarter of the residents in the Witney Central Community Insight area were retired and this is similar to the average for West Oxfordshire.

3.5 Poverty and deprivation

- According to the 2021 Census, the Witney Central Community Insight area has a higher proportion of households classified as deprived at 55% than the averages for West Oxfordshire at 43% and Oxfordshire at 44%.
- The Witney Central Community Insight Area has a higher proportion than average of residents living in poverty compared with Oxfordshire for the following:
  - A higher proportion of working aged residents were claiming unemployment-related benefits.
  - Higher rates of child poverty and of pupils eligible for free school meals.
  - A higher rate of older people in poverty and claiming pension credit.
  - The Witney Central Community Insight area has a lower proportion of households estimated to be in fuel poverty compared to the Oxfordshire average. However, one small area within the Witney Central Community Insight area has a much higher proportion of households estimated to be in fuel poverty compared to Oxfordshire average.

3.6 Crime and community safety

- For the period 2022, the overall rate of crime in the Witney Central MSOA area was higher than the Oxfordshire average.

3.7 Access to green space

- Mapping by Natural England shows that the Witney Central Community Insight area is surrounded by accessible natural green and blue spaces including woodland, playing fields and other sports facilities.

4. COMMUNITY ASSETS AND LOCAL GROUPS

4.1 A local asset-mapping exercise was conducted by Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) from September to December 2024 to identify key community-based groups, organisations and

agencies which are active in the area. A full list of community assets, including local activities compiled by CFO can be found on the [Oxfordshire Data Hub](#) website in [Appendix 1](#) – Groups, organisations, and assets.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1   Community engagement by Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) reached a total of 167 individuals which included:

- 51 one-to-one interviews with local residents

- 19 one-to-one interviews with representatives from local groups and organisations

- An online survey completed by 32 total respondents

- 4 one-to-one conversations with children and young people

- 7 focus groups attended by 61 people in total (29 children and young people, and 32 adults).

A full breakdown of the community insight research and its findings can be found in the Witney Central Community Insight Report (Annex B).

5.2   The engagement covered Witney Central as a place to live, transport, social and community infrastructure, anti-social behaviour, keeping healthy and its challenges including the cost of living, housing, mental health, particular challenges for younger people and for asylum seekers.

5.3   Residents were positive about the range of shops and services and mainly satisfied with the availability of healthcare and open spaces. They commented that there are lots of groups and support organisations in the area. However, access to some healthcare services such as NHS dentistry, remain an issue for some residents. Access to community-based health support, particularly for young parents, also came across strongly as an issue.

5.4   Most people felt that Witney Central is a friendly place with good community spirit. Although some expressed reservations relating to anti-social behaviour and some experience of racism.

5.5   It was the first time that asylum seekers and refugees were engaged in consultation for an insight report. Responses were generally positive but there were some concerns relating to the availability of healthy food and frustrations around not being able to work.

5.6   Whilst overall it was felt that there is a lot happening in the area, not everybody is necessarily aware of everything that is going on. Some people reported feeling distanced from community consultations and involvement, particularly children and young people.

5.7   Themes that emerged focussed on organisation's issues and challenges around a lack of volunteers and the importance to improve support for volunteers to improve the chances of retention.

5.8   There was a strong sense that community work takes time. This was a common finding – noting that there needs to be more of an emphasis on long term funding to allow the all-important relationships and trust to be built.

5.9 Demand relating to special educational and neurodiversity needs is growing. Isolation is a strong theme, especially amongst older residents. There was strong support for the Council's Community Builder role which makes connections, nurtures relationships, and links people into activity and support organisations.

5.10 Community First Oxfordshire asked residents what more could be done to support health and wellbeing and some of the responses included activities/groups for young people, greater access to health visitors, improved transport, cooking skills sessions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

6.1 A range of recommendations developed from the community insight gathering are summarised briefly below by theme. Any actions resulting from these recommendations are the responsibility not just of the Council but of the wider system and community. A detailed discussion on these recommendations can be found in the Witney Central Community Insight report (Annex B).

6.2 **Healthcare, access, and inclusivity**

- Access to healthcare: discussions to explore improvements to local services
- Community-based mental health and associated health and wellbeing initiatives
- Additional support for SEND and neurodiverse needs
- A 'Local inclusivity and accessibility information campaign and audit'

6.3 **Community and integration**

- Develop a holistic, community-wide communication strategy
- Extend community development worker support
- Anti-social behaviour initiatives
- Extend community development activity on Smith's Estate
- Warm Spaces publicity campaign
- Extension of food bank offer

6.4 **Supporting community-based groups and organisations**

- Improve joint-working and networking
- Improve grant application processes and explore longer-term funding
- Explore funding opportunities to support extended community action
- Launch a Witney Volunteer Drive

6.5 **Community action: meeting identified needs.**

- Additional support for young people: safe spaces and access to support workers
- Additional support for asylum seekers: transport and exercise

6.6 **Community action: improving resiliency and developing skills.**

- Introduce community-based Life Skills sessions

- Extend befriending and community transport initiatives
- Seek new partnership connections to support and extend innovation in community health and wellbeing

6.7 Public realm, environment, and transport

- Local environment/streetscape improvement discussion
- Public transport improvement discussion

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 The officer will be working alongside the local Steering group to undertake the following actions:

- Review the recommendations in order to prioritise actions and identify action owners
- Design and operate a grants scheme
- Oversee and review a programme of interventions

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1 There are no alternative options.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no financial implications to this report. Oxfordshire County Council has provided funding as follows:

- A one-off payment of £5000 for project/stakeholder management
- A one-off payment of £5000 for the community insight element of the project
- A one-off payment of £25,000 for Officer time to support taking forward the recommendations of the CIP and contribute to the Oxfordshire-wide Community Health Development Officer programme
- A one-off payment of £25,000 to be disbursed as community grant funding to support taking forward the recommendations of the CIP, in line with agreed Oxfordshire County Council governance. The grant disbursement programme is expected to start from May 2025.

9.2 Evaluation is required to be completed by 1st November 2026.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council is required to deliver the remaining elements of the project in line with the legal agreement.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 If the Council fails to deliver the programme as set out in the legal agreement, in the appropriate timeframe, there is a risk that funding will be removed.

12. EQUALITIES IMPACT

12.1 As stated in the Contract, WODC shall:

- Comply with current equality law and fulfil duties under the Equality Act, 2010, for people with protected characteristics

- Respect the diversity of local communities by providing Services in a safe environment free from discrimination where all individuals are treated fairly, with the dignity and respect appropriate to their needs

- Ensure that the Service is culturally sensitive, non-discriminatory and promotes social inclusion, dignity, and respect.

13. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 This is a report which makes recommendations for local action to tackle inequalities. Whilst priority projects are not yet identified it will be key for providers and activities to work at a local level to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. We will be seeking to mobilise local services where possible and secure sustainable community-led solutions.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 None.

(END)

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Witney Central Community Insight Profile
Summary

Contents

Table of Figures

1   Introduction

Community Insight profiles are being created to ensure that we understand as fully as possible the health outcomes, and factors that influence these outcomes within wards in Oxfordshire where residents are most at risk of poor health or experiencing health inequalities.

Ten wards were identified in the [Oxfordshire Director of Public Health Annual Report (2019)](#) as having the greatest number of small areas that were listed in the 20% most deprived in England in the Index of Multiple Deprivation update (published November 2019). Profiles for all of these areas are now published.

Further community insight profiles are now being created for areas across the county identified as falling within the 30-40% most deprived nationally according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) and where local partners feel there would be added benefit to developing the profile.

Witney contains three small areas listed in the IMD 2019 that fall within the 40% most deprived in England. However, after discussion with the steering group and based on local need to complement existing work in Windrush Valley Estate, this profile focuses on two of the three areas listed. Additionally, it incorporates a further small area covering the Windrush Valley Estate aiming to target support to some of the most deprived areas in Witney.

Oxfordshire County Council's Public Health team are working with local partners to develop the community insight profiles, which give a detailed picture of both the health needs and the supportive resources in the community. The community profiles use local data and community feedback following an asset-based community development model (ABCD).

The aim of this profile is to:

- Understand the experiences of those living in Witney Central in relation to health and wellbeing,
- Outline the health outcomes and the factors which can influence these health outcomes and bring this to life through the voices of the community,
- Provide information and recommendations for local organisations, stakeholders and residents working to improve health and wellbeing in this area.

Note that this report is a summary and highlights a selection of findings from two in-depth reports:

1. *Witney Central Community Insight Project Report* by Community First Oxfordshire (CFO),
2. *Community data profile of Witney Central* compiled by the Public Health Intelligence team of Oxfordshire County Council.

This summary contains quotes from community insight gathering, these quotes have been edited to aid readability and identifiable information has been removed to anonymise the respondent.

With thanks to Community First Oxfordshire (CFO), West Oxfordshire District Council and especially to the Witney Central Community Insight Profile Steering Group who provided a wealth of knowledge and influence at every stage of the profile's development.

2   Location

Witney is a town and civil parish situated in the district of West Oxfordshire, around 12 miles west of Oxford.

The Witney Central Community Insight area included in this profile is based on a geographical area built from smaller Output Areas (see Figure 1), focusing on the areas just outside the high street surrounding the town centre. This area is referred to in the Community Insight profile as the 'Witney Central Community Insight area' and further detail on this boundary can be found in Annex 2 of the data profile report.

Figure 1 Map showing Output Areas selected for the Witney Central Community Insight area
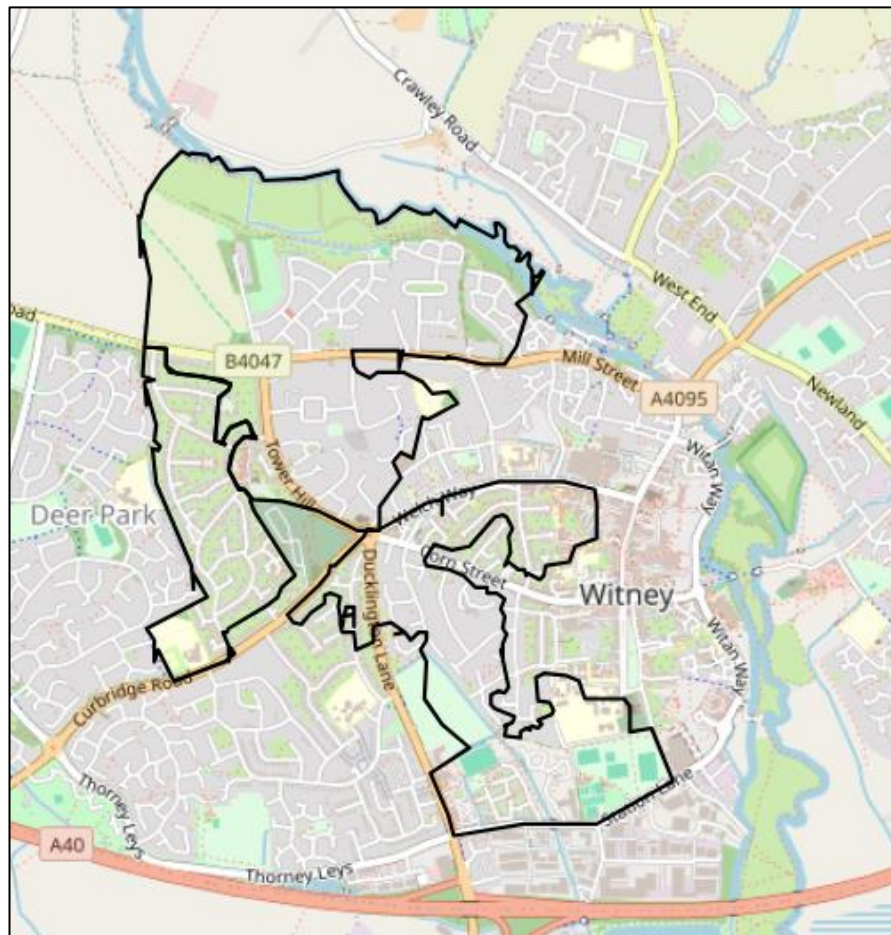
Map from www.nomisweb.co.uk

3 Summary of population and health data

Population and housing

- According to the latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) population estimates (mid-2022) the Witney Central Community Insight area had a resident population of 5,703 residents.
- Between the 2011 and 2021 Census surveys, the resident population of the Witney Central Community Insight area increased by 22%. This was more than double the West Oxfordshire increase of 9%.
- The population by broad age in the Witney Central Community Insight area grew between 2011 and 2021, with a 25% increase in children, a 24% increase in working-aged people, and a 15% increase in people aged 60 and over.
- The proportion of social rented housing in the Witney Central Community Insight area (39%) was more than double the average for West Oxfordshire (13%) and Oxfordshire (15%).

Health

- The prevalence of hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis among GP patients reported from the two GP practices located in or close to the Witney Central Community Insight area, were well above the NHS Oxfordshire and NHS England average.
- 2 out of 32 local health and wellbeing indicators from the Witney Central (MSOA[1]), were ranked as worse than the England average. These were:
  o Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 years
  o Emergency hospital admissions for self-harm (All ages)
- The proportion of adults receiving structured treatment for drugs or alcohol in the Witney Central Community Insight Area was higher (worse than) the Oxfordshire average.
- The rate of people per 1,000 population (16+ years) who are entitled to claim personal independent payment due to mental health in the Witney Central Community Insight area remained higher than the rate for Oxfordshire since March 2021.

Employment

- A much higher percentage of people in employment in the Witney Central Community Insight area were in the (generally lower paid) caring, leisure, sales, process, and elementary occupations.
- A quarter of the residents in the Witney Central Community Insight area were retired and this is similar to the average for West Oxfordshire.

Poverty and deprivation

- According to the 2021 Census, the Witney Central Community Insight area has a higher proportion of households classified as deprived at 55% than the averages for West Oxfordshire at 43% and Oxfordshire at 44%.
- The Witney Central Community Insight Area has a higher proportion than average of residents living in poverty compared with Oxfordshire for the following:
  o A higher proportion of working aged residents were claiming unemployment-related benefits.
  o Higher rates of child poverty and of pupils eligible for free school meals.
  o A higher rate of older people in poverty and claiming pension credit.

---

[1] Middle Layer Super Output Area, 87 in Oxfordshire, average population of 7600

- The Witney Central Community Insight area has a lower proportion of households estimated to be in fuel poverty compared to the Oxfordshire average. However, one small area within the Witney Central Community Insight area has a much higher proportion of households estimated to be in fuel poverty compared to Oxfordshire average.

Figure 2 Indicators of low income[2] Witney Central Community Insight area
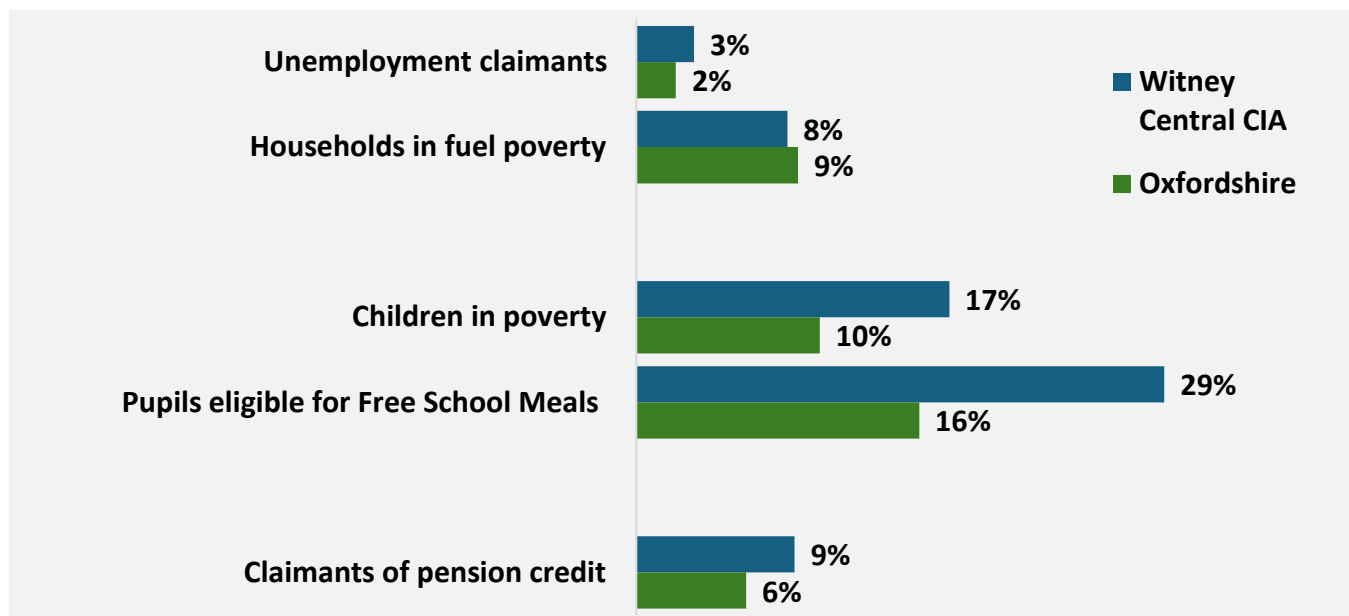
Chart data:
Indicator	Witney Central CIA	Oxfordshire
Unemployment claimants	3%	2%
Households in fuel poverty	8%	9%
Children in poverty	17%	10%
Pupils eligible for Free School Meals	29%	16%
Claimants of pension credit	9%	6%

Crime and community safety

- For the period 2022, the overall rate of crime in the Witney central MSOA area was higher than the Oxfordshire average.

Access to green space

- Mapping by Natural England shows that the Witney Central Community Insight area is surrounded by accessible natural green and blue spaces including woodland, playing fields and other sports facilities.

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[2] Sources: DWP claimant count December 2024 from nomisweb.co.uk, Claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, based on administrative data from the benefits system; Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2022 Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, fuel poverty refers to households living in a property with fuel energy efficiency rating of band D or below as well as households which after paying their energy bill to heat their home the residual income is below the official poverty line; Child poverty from DWP statXplore, children aged 0-15, 2022/23; FSM from January 2024 pupil census, Oxfordshire County Council; Pension credit (May 2024) from DWP statXplore as of February 2025.

Figure 3 Census 2021 profile of the Witney Central Community Insight area

Witney Central Community Insight area

Area map

@ Ordnance Survey ⓘ

Number of households

2,400
households

288,100 households in Oxfordshire

Rounded to the nearest 100 households

Household size

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

❚ (Oxfordshire)

1 person in household **30.1%** (27.1%)

2 people in household **32.8%** (35.7%)

3 people in household **17.5%** (16.5%)

4 or more people in household **19.6%** (20.7%)

% of all households

Household composition

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

❚ (Oxfordshire)

One person household **30.0%** (27.1%)

Single family household **63.1%** (65.4%)

Other household types **6.9%** (7.4%)

% of all households

Household deprivation

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

❚ (Oxfordshire)

Household is not deprived in any dimension **45.0%** (55.9%)

Household is deprived in one dimension **34.9%** (31.7%)

Household is deprived in two dimensions **16.0%** (10.1%)

Household is deprived in three dimensions **4.0%** (2.1%)

Household is deprived in four dimensions **0.2%** (0.1%)

% of all households

Tenure of household

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

❚ (Oxfordshire)

Owns outright **28.6%** (33.8%)

Owns with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership **23.6%** (31.3%)

Social rented **38.0%** (14.7%)

Private rented or lives rent free **9.8%** (20.2%)

% of all households

From Build a custom area profile – Census 2021, ONS

Figure 4 Census 2021 profile of the Witney Central Community Insight area continued

Population

5,700 people

725,300 people in Oxfordshire

Rounded to the nearest 100 people

Age profile

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

— (Oxfordshire)

0 years — 85+

% of all people, 5 year age bands

Ethnic group

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

| (Oxfordshire)

Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh **1.9%** (6.4%)

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African **0.6%** (2.1%)

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups **2.4%** (3.1%)

White **93.9%** (86.9%)

Other ethnic group **1.1%** (1.6%)

% of all people

Disability

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

| (Oxfordshire)

Disabled under the Equality Act **20.2%** (14.5%)

Not disabled under the Equality Act **79.8%** (85.5%)

% of all people

Accommodation type

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

| (Oxfordshire)

Whole house or bungalow **85.9%** (83.6%)

Flat, maisonette or apartment **14.1%** (15.7%)

A caravan or other mobile or temporary structure **0.0%** (0.8%)

% of all households

Socio-economic Classification (NS-SeC)

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

| (Oxfordshire)

L1, L2 and L3: Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations **11.2%** (18.4%)

L4, L5 and L6: Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations **18.6%** (21.5%)

L7: Intermediate occupations **11.9%** (10.8%)

L8 and L9: Small employers and own account workers **10.1%** (10.1%)

L10 and L11: Lower supervisory and technical occupations **6.1%** (5.0%)

L12: Semi-routine occupations **15.1%** (9.5%)

L13: Routine occupations **15.6%** (9.8%)

L14.1 and L14.2: Never worked and long-term unemployed **7.1%** (5.0%)

L15: Full-time students **4.2%** (9.8%)

% of people aged 16 years and over

From Build a custom area profile - Census 2021, ONS

4 Community assets and local groups

A local asset-mapping exercise was carried out by Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) from September to December 2024 to identify key community-based groups, organisations and agencies which are active in the area.

The map below displays a selection of the community venues within the Witney Central Community Insight Area. A full list 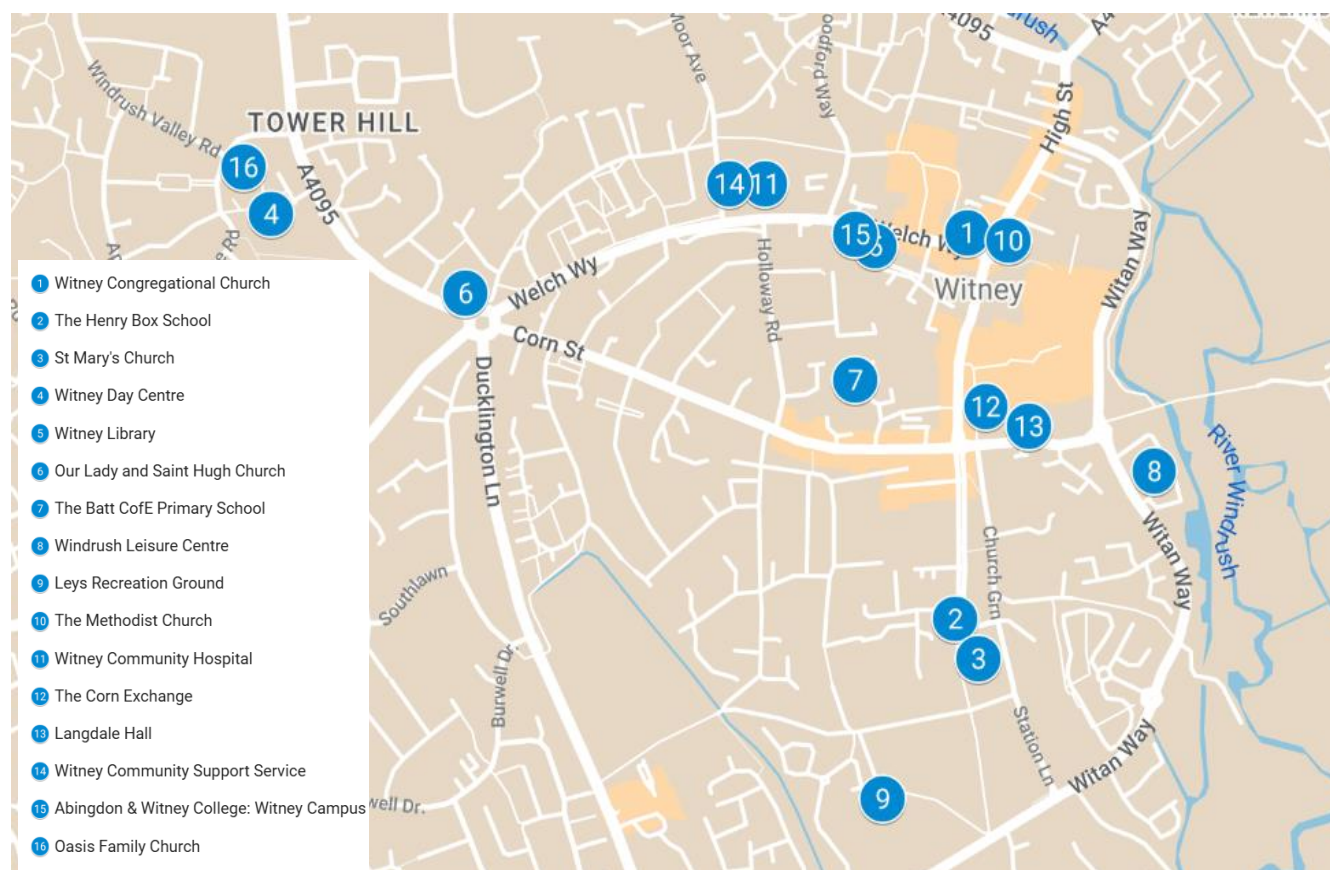of community assets, including local activities complied by CFO can be found in Appendix 1 of the *Witney Central Community Insight Profile report*.

Figure 5 Witney Central Community Venues

1. Witney Congregational Church
2. The Henry Box School
3. St Mary's Church
4. Witney Day Centre
5. Witney Library
6. Our Lady and Saint Hugh Church
7. The Batt CofE Primary School
8. Windrush Leisure Centre
9. Leys Recreation Ground
10. The Methodist Church
11. Witney Community Hospital
12. The Corn Exchange
13. Langdale Hall
14. Witney Community Support Service
15. Abingdon & Witney College: Witney Campus
16. Oasis Family Church

Map created by Oxfordshire County Council using Google My Maps

5   Community engagement

5.1   Engagement methodology and sample

Community engagement by Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) reached a total of 167 individuals which included:

- 51 one-to-one interviews with local residents,
- 19 one-to-one interviews with representatives from local groups and organisations,
- An online survey completed by 32 total respondents,
- 4 one-to-one conversations with children and young people,
- 7 focus groups attended by 61 people in total (29 children and young people, and 32 adults).

The proportion of survey respondents in the 12-17, 25-29, 30-44, 45-59 and 60-69 age bandings were somewhat similar to the age profile of the Witney Central residents according to the mid-2022 population estimates. For example, 19% of engagement respondents were aged 30-44 and 19% of the Witney Central population was aged 30-44.

Additionally, the engagement received an above total population average response rate for the age bandings of 7-11, 18-24, and 70+.

Figure 6 Proportion of respondents to the Witney Central Insight engagement by broad age vs split age of total population of the Witney Central Community Insight area
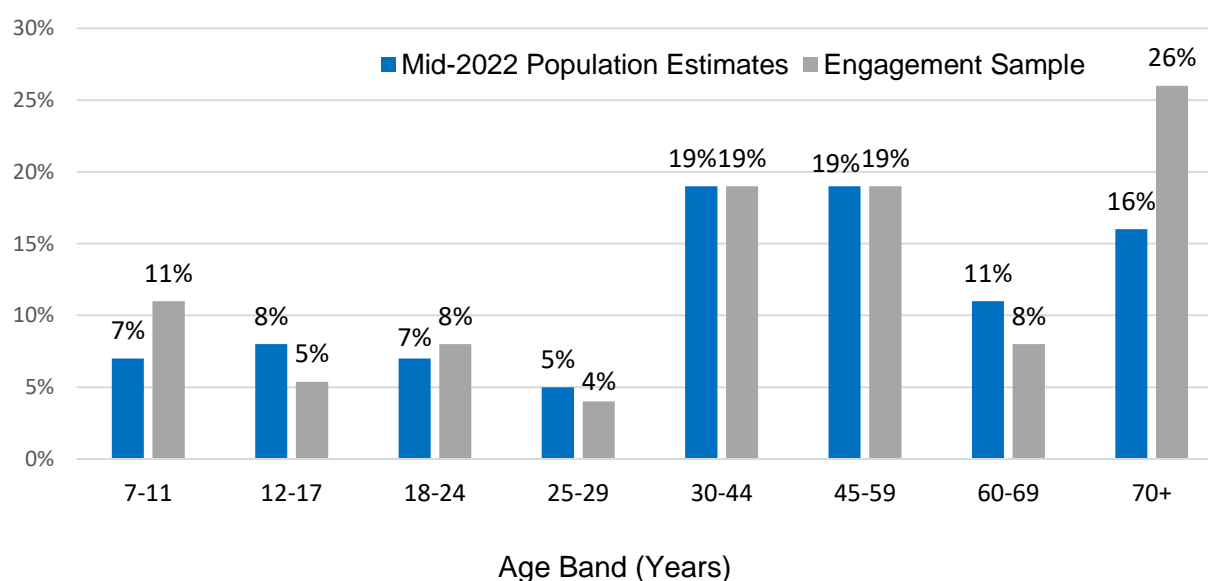
Research sample = 167 respondents in total. ONS mid-2022 population estimates; ONS mid-year population estimate for Witney Central Community Insight area from Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk).

The main ethic group in the Witney Central Community Insight Profile area according to the Census 2021 survey[3] was 'white', and this group was well represented in the survey.

- The proportion of the resident population in the Witney Central Community Insight profile area from a 'white ethnic background' was 94%
- 95% of survey respondents were from a 'white' ethnic background

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[3] ONS Census 2021 table TS021 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Residents from the Asian ethnic group were also well represented in the engagement, with 2% of the resident population and 3% of the survey respondents from an 'Asian' ethnic background. However, the main ethnic minority group (non-white British) in the area was 'Mixed or multiple' ethnic background (3% of the resident population) and this group was not represented in the survey (0% of survey respondents).

5.2   Living in Witney Central

Witney Central as a place to live

Among the online survey respondents (n=26), 42% reported being satisfied with Witney Central as a place to live, while 23% were unsatisfied and 35% remained neutral.

The proportion of dissatisfied residents was higher than respondents to the Oxfordshire residents survey (2024), where 15% of respondents county-wide were fairly or very dissatisfied with their local area as a place to live[4].

The top things that survey respondents (n=22) liked about living in the area were:

- Local shops and services (91%)
- Community feeling (45%)
- Green and open spaces (45%)
- Community groups and organisations (23%)
- Playparks (14%)

Focus groups and interviews highlighted the close proximity to shops and services, as well as the community feel and history within the area.

- *"People are friendly. There are interesting things to do and see in Witney. It's calm and peaceful"*
- *"It's very easy to get into to the town to the doctor's and that"*
- *"I want to say that all the people in Witney are good and kind"*
- *"Witney has a big history. Where I live there used to be a sewing factory"*

Transport

It was felt by respondents that public transport around Witney town is generally good and that the centre is well connected to the outer areas.

- 65% of online survey respondents (n=25) found it easy to get around central Witney
- In interviews and focus groups, West Oxfordshire Community Transport was frequently mentioned as an excellent and much valued service

"Since the Stagecoach bus stopped, the community bus is a godsend. Sometimes I use it to go into town and meet people for lunch." Quote from personal story

When asked which mode of transport on a daily basis 'you/ your household use most often', survey respondents (n=25) selected:

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[4] Note that the profile of the sample of the Witney Central engagement survey is different to the weighted sample used in the Oxfordshire residents survey and the question wording was slightly different. Witney Central respondents were more likely to be neutral about their area as a place to live (35% of survey respondents compared with 13% across Oxfordshire).

- Walking (56%)
- Car (40%)
- Bus (16%)
- Wheelchair/mobility aid (8%)

Social and community infrastructure

The community engagement identified that there is a wide range of local groups, courses, classes, community sessions, social and support groups, community venues and clubs available in Witney Central which people use and value.

- Over half of survey respondents (59%) agreed that there are places and spaces where people can meet in Witney Central
- Interviewees mentioned that there is lots available for older people in particular, with less for younger people

"There are plenty of support groups if you need it"

"I go to baby groups every day of the week except Tuesday. I like to get out. It's good for me and for the baby"

Anti-social behaviours

There was some comment from residents about neighbourhood disputes, anti-social behaviour and vandalism, with drug dealing and drug and alcohol consumption also referenced. This is reflected in the corresponding data, which indicated the overall crime rate in the Witney Central community insight area as almost double the Oxfordshire average.

- 87% of survey respondents (n=23) reported noticing people smoking in Witney Central and 78% noticed people drinking alcohol or alcoholic drink litter
- In interviews and focus groups it was mentioned that shoplifting and young people speeding on e-scooters were also ongoing problems

"Witney is not a safe place at night. More so at the weekend. My grandson was attacked one night because he wouldn't drive someone to Carterton"

"It is quiet during the day but sometimes busy at night with people taking drugs and alcohol. I can smell weed often"

5.3   Keeping healthy

When asked 'what do you do to look after your health', survey respondents (n=17) reported various approaches which were also reflected in interviews and focus groups.

- Keeping **active** (73%)

"I walk as much as I can. Getting involved in things helps mentally"

- **Socialising** with friends (68%)

"We sit down and talk about our memories. Where we've been and what we've done. I live on my memories of travel and holidays"

- Maintaining **healthy habits around food** and eating (68%)

> *"My husband and I are both diabetic, we have to eat healthily"*

For children and young people, various activities were mentioned in focus groups and interviews that support keeping healthy, including spending time with family, having a healthy diet and various sports such as football, running, martial arts and basketball.

5.4 Challenges to keeping healthy

A selection of findings on challenges to keeping health are outlined below. For further information on all challenges identified in the community engagement, please see the full Witney Central Community Insight report.

Cost of living

When asked about the challenges faced to health and wellbeing, there was much sustained comment regarding the rise in the cost of living. Related data supports this, revealing that rates of children in poverty in the area were almost double the West Oxfordshire average and higher than the Oxfordshire average. The number of people claiming benefits relating to unemployment was also higher than the West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire averages.

- 59% of survey respondents (n=17) stated that income made it more difficult to look after themselves
- Local organisations also frequently referenced the challenges regarding the rise in the cost of heating and the impacts on residents' ability to heat their homes

> *"The cost of living is a big problem for me. I can't afford to go out much and I am continuing to cut back on things"* Quote from personal story

> *"You can't buy nicer bread as its way above your budget. You end up having to buy processed bread"*

Housing

Concerns relating to housing were a common thread in engagement discussions. According to the Census 2021 data, the proportion of households in social rented accommodation in the Witney Central Community Insight area was well above the averages for West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire.

- Only 12% of survey respondents (n=17) indicated that problems with housing made it more difficult to look after themselves
- However, in interviews and focus groups the lack of affordable housing and poor state of housing repair were frequently mentioned as challenges to health and wellbeing
- Interviews with older people on the Smith's Estate noted a lack of interaction between longer standing and newer residents
- Homeless residents also discussed that there is no emergency accommodation in Witney and outlined the challenges in securing housing to meet demand

> *"A lot of the houses on Smith's Estate are getting older. Lots of repairs and maintenance are needed. It's been a sticking plaster approach across the year"*

"The flooring in my house (Housing Association) and the condition of my house is a challenge. It has mould on one side of the house as it isn't insulated, and the bathroom ceiling is black" Quote from personal story

Mental Health

The community engagement revealed a general sense that there has been an increase in mental health issues since the pandemic and this has been compounded by the cost-of-living crisis. This is reflected in data from Personal Independent Payments (PIP), highlighting entitlement to the payment due to mental health in the Witney Central Community Insight area remaining higher than the Oxfordshire rate since March 2021.

- Around half (47%) of survey respondents reported that a health condition (physical and/or mental) made it more difficult to look after themselves
- Local organisations identified a gap in trauma support in Witney based mental health services, as well as confusion around mental health provision portraying in the media as on their knees and people thinking that there are others who are worse off

"People's mental health has deteriorated since the pandemic and with the cost-of-living crisis"

"There are ongoing mental health implications for some people and with the cost-of-living crisis it has been a double whammy"

Challenges for younger people

Younger people (aged 6-11 years) highlighted that limited social and recreational opportunities is contributing to congregation in certain locations. Children also discussed vaping and noted the risk of normalisation of the behaviour, alongside a consensus that young people are not listened to.

"95% of young people would say they have no say [about their lives in general, including what happens in the community]"

"Don't have vaping shops. There's one that has toys in the window and little kids want to go in"

Challenges for asylum seekers

Asylum seekers consulted during the engagement noted several health and wellbeing challenges, including:

- A lack of money to access transport to attend activities
- Limited access to cooking facilities
- Restricted ability to volunteer or work
- The arbitrary nature of eviction to other parts of the country

"It's very difficult for us [asylum seekers] to get around. Can Witney council provide [free] bus passes like they do in Oxford?"

5.5 What more could be done to support health and wellbeing

When asked about what more could be done to support health and wellbeing, respondents proposed activities/groups for young people, access to health visitors, transport, cooking skills and a range of further initiatives.

- 68% of survey respondents agreed that free or reduced cost access to events and activities would help improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Witney Central
- Around half (47%) of survey respondents reported that more support groups for specific health issues would support their health and wellbeing
- Proposals by interviewees and focus group attendees included:
  - *"Activities that get people out of the house and interacting, e.g. creative things like art, crafts, pottery. Also being with animals outside can have therapeutic benefits"*
  - *"Getting people there is a problem, especially those with physical problems and disabilities. Need transport"*
  - *"I don't just want to meet old people. I want to mix with everybody"*

6 Recommendations

A range of recommendations derived from the community insight gathering are summarised briefly below. A detailed discussion on these can be found in the recommendations section of the full Witney Central Community Insight report.

6.1 Healthcare, access and inclusivity

- Access to healthcare: discussions to explore improvements to local services
- Community-based mental health and associated health and wellbeing initiatives
- Additional support for SEND and neurodiverse needs
- A 'Local inclusivity and accessibility information campaign and audit'

6.2 Community and integration

- Develop a holistic, community-wide communication strategy
- Extend community development worker support
- Anti-social behaviour initiatives
- Extend community development activity on Smith's Estate
- Warm Spaces publicity campaign
- Extension of food bank offer

6.3 Supporting community-based groups and organisations

- Improve joint-working and networking
- Improve grant application processes and explore longer-term funding
- Explore funding opportunities to support extended community action
- Launch a Witney Volunteer Drive

6.4 Community action: meeting identified needs

- Additional support for young people: safe spaces and access to support workers
- Additional support for asylum seekers: transport and exercise

6.5   Community action: improving resiliency and developing skills

- Introduce community-based Life Skills sessions
- Extend befriending and community transport initiatives
- Seek new partnership connections to support and extend innovation in community health and wellbeing

6.6   Public realm, environment and transport

- Local environment/streetscape improvement discussion
- Public transport improvement discussion

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WITNEY CENTRAL COMMUNITY INSIGHT REPORT

REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025

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Executive summary

In September 2024, Community First Oxfordshire was commissioned by West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council Public Health to undertake community insight research in Witney Central.

The aim of the research explored in this Insight Report was to capture the opinions of the community in relation to: 1- the local strengths and assets that support and enable health and wellbeing and; 2- challenges to health and wellbeing and what would help to address these. The views and experiences collected are intended to help develop a better understanding of what local people think about health and wellbeing and how it can be improved.

This Witney Central Community Insight Report should be read in combination with the separate Witney Central Data Pack. Together, these documents will comprise the Witney Central Community Insight Profile. An executive summary covering both documents will also be produced. The Profile aims to help West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and others local stakeholders and organisations working in Witney to plan better for the future and develop services and projects to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in central Witney.

Research

The community insight research took place from September-December 2024. A mapping exercise was undertaken at the outset to identify key community-based and non-community-based groups, organisations and agencies which are active in the area.

Key individuals were identified, and contact made to introduce the project aims and build relationships. Using these community contacts, an engagement strategy was developed which combined focus groups, one to one conversations, and community surveys. Through this methodology, **167 residents were reached**, across a broad demographic range. 72% of the total number of people consulted were female while 95% were of white British/ other white ethnicity. Further research focusing on the male voice and younger adults would be useful, as would exploring the opinions of those with other ethnicities and backgrounds.

Summary of Findings

A range of local assets to support health and wellbeing were identified. It was generally felt that Witney Central Community Insight Area was well-served with a range of shops and key services (including GP, dentist, pharmacy, and Post Office). Public transport was also viewed positively, with particular reference made to the West Oxfordshire Community Transport Service, which facilitates access to those areas more distant from the town centre. This is an especially beneficial service to older residents and those who struggle with mobility and could have the potential to offer extended services, depending on funding.

Notwithstanding the availability of healthcare services in Witney Central, a prominent concern was *access* to these services. There was extensive comment about the difficulty in getting a GP appointment (with some confused or intimidated by the process and sometimes being put off even

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trying) or finding an NHS dentist. Likewise, some have significant difficulty with transport to medical appointments outside Witney.

Comment was also made about needing more community support for new parents, easy access to Health Visitors, and locally-based services where families can ask for advice. This makes community-based support, via Health Visitors, community connectors and Home-Start sessions in particular very important, and all organisations supporting families need to work in partnership to ensure concerns are shared. It was also felt that there would be benefit to reinstating or introducing services at the community hospital.

Most residents thought that Witney Central was generally friendly, with good community spirit, although some reservations were expressed and there is also evidence of anti-social (ASB) behaviour. However, significant numbers did not feel involved with community discussion and decision-making or that they were asked their opinions, particularly children and young people. Regarding the latter, this is a significant shortcoming, potentially establishing patterns of non-involvement that may continue into later life. In terms of ASB, some concerns are related to a lack of available facilities, services, and opportunities for young people, who would benefit from more places to safely congregate and access to support workers.

Parks, play facilities, and green and open spaces were valued local assets, particularly the Leys recreation ground. Access to the wider countryside was also mentioned as a positive feature of local life. However, it was also felt that improvement initiatives would be beneficial, including in relation to litter, bins, and play facilities for younger children. Similarly, while the physical infrastructure in the public realm is generally seen as good, there are issues for less mobile residents in relation to high kerbs, poor state of pavements in certain location, and tactile paving. It was also suggested that more benches in the town centre would also be useful.

There is a large amount of community groups and activity taking place in Witney Central, valued by many users. At the same time, it is felt that communication of what is happening locally could be improved, with a range of methods suggested, tailored to the needs of particular audiences. Other suggestions to facilitate more resident involvement included free or low-cost activities, 'buddy-up' approaches, taster sessions, and holding activities and events at different days and times in order to maximise opportunities to take part.

There is good communication between community groups and agencies (particularly via the Witney Forum). However, there is room for improvement. Reference was made, for example, to the need for health agencies to take a less narrowly medical focus and better understand the value of community work and interventions in improving health outcomes.

Key challenges across all community groups are a lack of volunteers, a lack of support for volunteers, and the short-term fundraising cycle which make it difficult to develop projects with a lasting impact. It was generally felt that good community work takes time: trust must be built, particularly with those with multiple or complex needs. The necessity of working with residents to co-design what is needed (building trust and relationship and capacity building), a focus on long-term projects, and sustainable funding were also emphasised. Given the common challenges there may be opportunities to develop theme-based working groups to address collective issues, develop joint-funding bids, provide peer-to-peer support, share capacity, offer joint-training etc.

In addition to those related to young people and new parents, other important gaps in/ opportunities for support were identified. Isolation among older people was a prominent reference, with support

strongly made for on the ground community connector roles in identifying vulnerable individuals and encouraging them to access support and services. It was felt that introducing more community connectors would allow more people across a range of demographics to be reached and supported, with positive impacts on multiple outcomes related to health and wellbeing. Helping elderly and disabled residents to *physically access* community activity was also noted as a concern, while *financial access* was an issue for those with low incomes in terms of paying for sports and leisure activities, for example.

A strong theme related to special educational and neurodiversity needs among children and young people emerged, where it was felt that demand was large and growing, and that additional support was very important. In addition, while organisations such as MIND and Aspire offer mental health support, there was a strong sense that these services require more consistent, long-term funding to maximise (and extend) their impact. Asylum seekers would also benefit from improvements related to exercise, transport, and food, in particular.

Recommendations

A range of ideas were put forward regarding specific projects to meet challenges and improve health and wellbeing, and these are reflected in the recommendations. More information and underpinning rationale for these recommendations is available later in this document. However, it is not the intention of the report to offer detailed overviews of potential projects to meet those recommendations. These are initial findings based on research findings. Themes and potential initiatives will be further tested and explored in the next phase of the project.

A summary of recommendations is offered here, clustered by theme:

Healthcare, access, and inclusivity

Recommendations
1. Access to healthcare: discussions to explore improvements to local services
2. Community-based mental health and associated health and wellbeing initiatives
3. Additional support for SEND and neurodiverse needs
4. An 'Local inclusivity and accessibility information campaign and audit'

Community and integration

Recommendations
1. Develop a holistic, community-wide communication strategy
2. Extend community development worker support
3. Anti-Social Behaviour initiatives
4. Extend community development activity on Smith's Estate
5. Warm Spaces publicity campaign

6. Extension of food bank offer

Supporting community-based groups and organisations

Recommendations
1. Improve joint-working and networking
2. Improve grant application processes and explore longer-term funding
3. Explore funding opportunities to support extended community action
4. Launch a Witney Volunteer Drive

Community action: meeting identified needs

Recommendations
1. Additional support for young people and improved engagement: liaison with Youth Council, safe spaces, and access to support workers
2. Additional support for asylum seekers: transport and exercise

Community action: improving resiliency and developing skills

Recommendations
1. Introduce community-based Life Skills sessions
2. Extend befriending and community transport initiatives
3. Seek new partnership connections to support and extend innovation in community health and wellbeing

Public realm, environment, and transport

Recommendations
1. Local environment and streetscape improvement discussion/ link to ongoing initiatives
2. Public transport improvement discussion

Acknowledgements

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Research overview

A steering group for the Central Witney Community Insight profile oversaw the development of the work. This consisted of a range of partners, including West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council Public Health.

Community First Oxfordshire was asked to undertake community engagement and insight gathering for the Profile, exploring resident opinions and observations with regard to health and wellbeing.

This Witney Central Community Insight Report should be read in combination with a separate Witney Central Data Pack. Together, these documents will comprise the Witney Central Community Insight Profile. An executive summary covering both documents will also be produced. The Profile will help West Oxfordshire District Council, the County Council, and others to plan better for the future and develop services and projects to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in Witney Central.

Specifically, Community First was asked to:

- Produce a brief overview of the history of the area.

- Gather the experiences and voices of residents from all age groups, representing the range of communities in the area.

- Collect qualitative data to capture the opinions of the community in relation to: 1- the local strengths and assets that support and enable health and wellbeing and; 2- challenges to health and wellbeing and what would help to address these.

- Collect stories of people's experiences of living in the area, with particular regard to health and wellbeing and healthy eating.

- Gather insight on the two topics noted above from local organisations who work with the residents of Witney Central.

- Provide recommendations for further insight needed and/ or actions to take forward from the findings.

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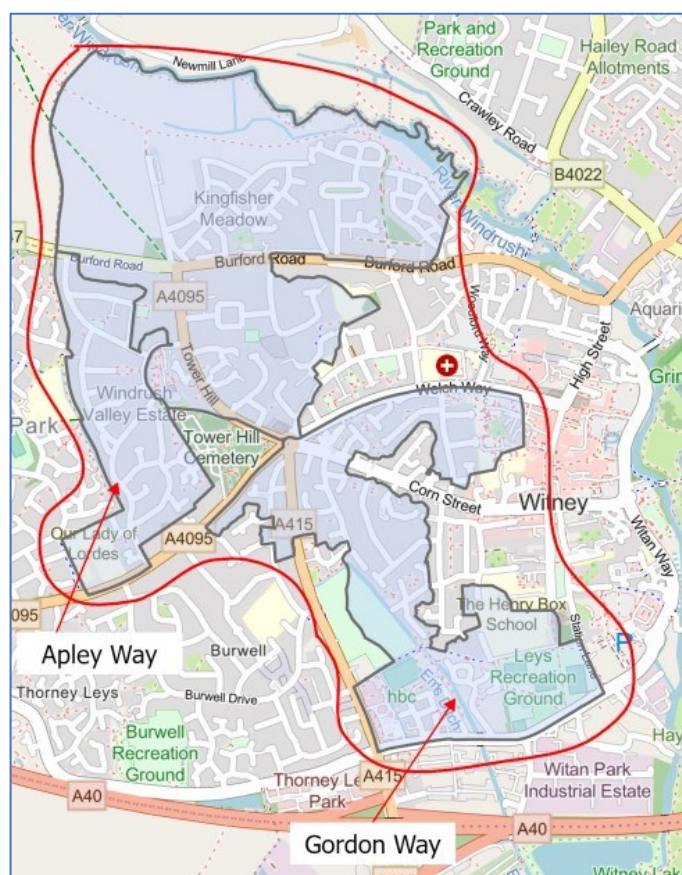Page 78

Witney Central - the community

Location and brief overview

Witney is a town and civil parish, located in the district of West Oxfordshire, 12 miles west of Oxford. The town lies on the River Windrush, which is subject to periodic flooding. Significant flooding happened most recently in 2007 – the worst in 50 years – impacting homes, businesses, and transport in the town.

Today, Witney has a population of 30,200 (ONS: 2021). The largest ethnic groups were white (94% - higher than the UK average), Asian, Asian British, Asian Welsh (2.2%), and mixed or multiple ethnic groups (2.1%). The percentage of both these latter groups were lower than the national average.

The Witney Central Community Insight Profile area is a distinct geography in the centre of Witney – see the area outlined in red in the map below.

Figure 1: Witney Central Community Insight area

History and economic development

The settlement of Witney has a long history, first mentioned in a Saxon charter in 939 and subsequently in the Domesday book (1086).

Witney was an ancient parish in the Bampton Hundred and became a civil parish in 1866. The town had a railway station until 1970, when the station was dismantled. Since then, there have been periodic discussions, although never any specific plans, to reopen the railway line.

Witney is most famous for its blankets, the blanket-making having been central to the town for hundreds of years until the last mill closed in 2002. 'The wool industry has left an indelible mark on the character and buildings of Witney and Cogges, with mills, workers' houses and associated structures scattered throughout the settlement. It is perhaps this, the woollen industry, that can be said to define most conspicuously and potently the historic character of Witney.'[1]

Until just before World War Two, 'the overall pattern of employment within the town remained much as in the late 19th century, with a large range of retailers, and the continuation of important firms

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[1] West Oxfordshire District Council (2013), *Witney & Cogges Conservation Area Character Appraisal*: https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/media/snadiyuv/witney-and-cogges-conservation-area-character-appraisal.pdf

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such as the builders Bartlett Brothers, the ironmongers and builders Leigh and Sons, Young's engineering, Marriott's coal business, and the Eagle Brewer.'[2]

Post war, new local industries emerged: 'Smiths of England opened a motor accessory plant at the former De Havilland factory west of the town in 1950, manufacturing mostly car and lorry heaters. By the mid-1960s it employed 1,500 people from the Witney area, including several hundred women engaged in both clerical and production work. Many employees were accommodated on a purpose-built housing estate nearby.'[3]

Other major local employers included Compton and Webb's uniform factory, Brazil's sausage and pie factory, and Lookers glove factory. Across the 1970s and 1980s, these industries declined, leading to significant local job losses. To counter this, 'in the 1980s West Oxfordshire District Council, in conjunction with private developers, promoted large industrial estates on the town's western edge.'[4] Witney also began to emerge as a significant shopping and commercial centre.

Today, as the West Oxfordshire Local Plan states: 'the economy is diverse with a range of shopping, leisure and tourist facilities and accommodation, several small employment sites throughout the town and large employment estates on the southern and western edges. The town retains a strong manufacturing and engineering presence, and the availability of good quality employment sites on the western side of the town has attracted significant investment, including some high technology manufacturers linked to the Oxford Bioscience Cluster.'[5]

The town has changed markedly from the 1960s, with 'the town's population growing from c.4,000 in the 1930s to c.27,000 by the first decade of the 21st century. This increase in population size saw a commensurate boom in housing development, with new estates to the west and north-east of the historic core dramatically altering the form, and enlarging the footprint, of the settlement.'[6] Further housing (and employment land) development is set out in the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan, including c. 2000 new homes being built at the East Witney and North Witney Strategic Development Areas.

Witney Central shops, services, and leisure: a brief overview

Witney is the main economic centre in West Oxfordshire and Witney Central is well served by shops, services, and facilities. Most, if not all everyday needs can be accessed within a relatively concentrated area in the town centre. Larger, more budget-oriented supermarkets such as Lidl are somewhat more distant from the centre.

Table 1 (below) sets out distances on foot to key services and facilities from different points in the survey area. Depending on location, therefore, these services have a greater or lesser ease of access. Distances may prove more challenging for those with limited mobility (who might be using a walker

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[2] British History Online, *Witney borough: Economic history, trade and industry 1900-1945*: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol14/pp97-100

[3] British History Online, *Witney borough: Economic history, trade and industry since 1945*: https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol14/pp97-100

[4] Ibid.

[5] West Oxfordshire District Council (2018), *Local Plan 2031*. https://westoxon.gov.uk/media/feyjmpen/local-plan.pdf

[6] *Witney and Cogges Conservation Area Character Appraisal*.

or scooter) and those who may be pushing a buggy or pram. Although the state of repair of pavements, kerbs and roads is generally good, issues in specific locations may add to access challenges.

In terms of public transport, the volunteer-led West Oxford Community Transport (WOCT) operates a regular Town Service (215) on a loop around the town. This offers good access for those more distant from the town centre, including locations within the area such as Smith's Estate (off Tower Hill) and Kingfisher Meadow (in the north). WOCT also operate a Monday-Friday 'shopper service' (216) from the town centre to Sainsbury's and Lidl.

In terms of accessible services beyond Witney, Stagecoach services S1 and S2 run from the town centre to Oxford and Carterton, while the H2 service runs to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford. WOCT run a service (210) from Market Square to Burford and the Wychwoods, while Pulhams Coaches operate a service 19 and 64 to Carterton and Swindon respectively.

Table 1: Estimated walking distances to a selection of key services and facilities from different points in the Community Insight Profile Area

	From Welch Way/ Corn Street roundabout[7]	From Smith's Estate (west of Tower Hill)	From Kingfisher Meadow (north of Burford Road)	From Gordon Way (north of Station Lane)
Windrush Medical Practice	800m	1.4km	1.8km	1.4km
Witney community hospital	700m	1.3km	1.7km	1.3km
Windrush pharmacy	800m	1.4km	1.8km	1.4km
Boots pharmacy	1.5km	2.1km	2.5km	1.3km
Library	800m	1.4km	1.8km	1.4km
Coop	1.5km	2.1km	2.5km	1.3km
Post office	1.5km	2.1km	2.5km	1.3km
Sainsbury's	1.8km	2.4km	2.8km	600m
Tesco local (Smith's Estate)	1k	Less than 1km	2km	2.2km
Methodist Church	1.6km	2.2km	2.6km	1.4km
Corn Exchange	1.4km	2km	2.4km	1.2km
Leys recreation ground	2.3km	2.9km	3.3km	400m
Henry Box school	1.3km	1.9km	2.3km	900m
Queen Emma's primary school	700m	1.3km	1.7km	1.1km
The Batt primary school	900m	1.5km	1.9km	1.1km

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[7] Estimated centre-point of the survey area

Witney dental clinic	700m	1.3km	1.7km	1.4km
Witney dental practice	1.5km	2.1km	2.5km	1.1km
Lidl	2km	2.6km	3km	700m
Windrush leisure centre	1.2km	1.8km	2.2km	1.1km

Community action, projects and initiatives

Table 2 (*below*) offers a non-exhaustive list of key organisations involved in community-based activity and support: as organisers, active participants, facilitators, hosts etc. The categories set out below are broad – in particular, it is recognised that there is often overlap in the function and organisation of volunteer-led and non-volunteer-led groups.

These organisations have been involved in a wide range of specific activities and projects, focusing on multiple themes. These include: community resilience, activities to support socialising, mental and physical health and wellbeing, cost of living and food poverty, parent and family support, education, and support for young people.

More detailed information of current groups, organisations, partnerships etc. supporting health and wellbeing (with details of the services offered) can be found at appendix 1. **Some of these are based in Witney Central while some are based elsewhere but offer support and services in the area.**

Table 2: Key groups and organisations active/supporting residents and offering services in Witney Central

LOCATION	ORGANISATION/ GROUP/ AGENCY	ACTIVITY/ THEMATIC FOCUS
Witney Central-based volunteer-led groups	Baby Bank	Provides vouchers for baby essentials to those in need
	Food Bank	Distributes food – by referral – to those in need
	Macular Society Support Group	Macular disease support charity
	MS Society Support Group	Support for those with MS
	Men's Shed	Social and craft space for men and women (based on Smith's Estate)
	Witney Food Revolution	Community fridge and larder
	Witney Ukraine Support	Support for Ukrainian residents
	Multiple exercise and fitness groups/ classes	
Witney Central-based organisations	Aspire	Support for 18-24 year-olds
	Cottsway Housing Association	Housing association
	Congregational Church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire	Advice centre

	Davenport Road Methodist Church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	Henry Box School	Secondary school
	Integrated Care and Education Centre	Support for those with learning difficulties
	High St Methodist Church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	Oasis family church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	Our Lady & St Hugh Catholic Church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	St. Mary's church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	St. Mary's primary school	Primary school
	The Batt primary school	Primary school
	The Station	Detached youth work project
	Volunteer Link Up	Community transport and befriending charity
	Welcome Church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	West Oxfordshire District Council	Local authority
	Witney Community Church	Place of worship – hosts community activities, events, and support groups
	Witney Day Centre (Ceewood Hall)	Daytime activities for older people
	Witney Library	Library – community events
	Witney Town Council	Local Authority
Non-Witney-Central-based organisations (volunteer or non-volunteer led)	Age UK Oxfordshire	Charity for older people
	Aspire	Support for 18-24 year olds
	Asylum Welcome	Support for refugees and asylum seekers
	Guideposts Trust	Mental health, learning disability and dementia charity
	Home-Start	Parent, child, and family support
	Oxfordshire County Council	Local Authority
	Oxfordshire MIND	Mental health support charity
	Sanctuary Housing Association	Housing association
	Turning Point	Health and social care services across multiple themes
	Yellow Submarine	Learning disabilities and autism charity
Partnership projects and networks	Witney Forum	Community resilience, strength and cohesion
	West Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Alliance	Community health and wellbeing

Community Insight Research

Methodology

Community mapping work identified groups and organisations, whether volunteer and community-led or externally based yet active in Witney Central, with which the Insight research needed to engage in order to comprehensively explore the research aims set out in the introduction. These groups and organisations were contacted in order to make introductions to the project and build relationships.

Different methodologies were utilised in order to capture opinions from both residents and organisations:

1. *One to one conversations*

Two sets of questions (one for resident-based conversations and one for representatives of community-based organisations) were developed by Community First and discussed with the project steering group (see appendix 2).

Researchers then attended community activity sessions and spoke to attendees, taking them through the questions and taking notes. Community First also undertook conversations in the wider community. For community-based organisations, conversations with key representatives were conducted either face to face or, where this was not possible due to pressures of time, via email. Attendees gave consent at the outset of 1 to 2 conversations for their comments to be recorded.

These one to one conversations were particularly useful in allowing researchers to talk to a range of local residents across a range of different demographics, particularly in relation to age and gender.

2. *Personal stories (case studies)*

Stories were identified as the research progressed, primarily developing naturally from one to one conversations, where individuals expanded on certain points and offered deeper personal insight on particular themes. Some details were amended/ omitted to prevent potential identification of individuals.

3. *Focus Groups*

Focus groups discussion allows for a deeper dive into given issues and can stimulate spontaneous ideas and personal disclosure. The approach that Community First took was that of semi-guided conversations. We did not wish to overly lead focus group discussion but 'go where people wanted it to go'. Attendees gave consent at the outset of Focus Groups for their comments to be recorded.

A list of questions was drafted by Community First and agreed with the Witney Central Community Insight Profile steering group (see appendix 2) and, where researchers were able and where it felt natural, guided the conversation back to consideration of those topics.

Again, the mapping process allowed the research team to identify potential focus groups, with the intention to hold sessions across a range of demographics, client groups, and community organisations.

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4. **Community survey**

The primary focus of the research was qualitative research.

However, it was recognised that a survey could help establish more general, quantitative opinion in relation to the key research themes (whilst also giving opportunities for respondents to offer longer, written comments)

To this end, Community First and the project steering group designed a community survey (hard copy and online- Survey Monkey), which was signed off by the steering group (see appendix 3). The survey was widely disseminated (primarily via a weblink), using the multiple local networks identified during mapping.

The survey was anonymous, although respondents were invited to leave their contact details should they wish to share their experiences and opinions with the research team. Only a small number of surveys were returned from residents who lived in the Witney Central research area.

A separate survey for young people was also drafted and shared with and distributed to pupils by teachers at Henry Box secondary school. However, survey returns were not received in time for inclusion in this report.

Research findings

Presented in this section are summaries of the key themes identified during project research in relation to the different methodologies used and questions asked. Non-attributed quotes from these sessions and anonymised case studies have also been used to illustrate many of the points made and opinions shared.

Resident one to one conversations (adults and older people)

51 residents were consulted in a range of settings, as summarised below:

Table 3: Number consulted in one-to-one interviews

Setting	Number of residents consulted
Age UK Oxfordshire - Chatterbox	10
Homestart @ Ceewood Hall	6
Men's Shed	1
The Community Fridge	11
The Place	4
Oasis café	7
Homestart @ Methodist Church	5
Baby Bank	1
Ceewood Hall day centre	4
Women's craft group @ Men's Shed	2
TOTAL	**51**

In terms of general observations, interviewees were generally quite willing to talk to researchers. In addition, many people chose to go into some detail, without prompting, about their physical and mental health, several of whom were suffering from multiple health conditions which affected their daily lives to a greater or lesser extent.

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Research question	Main themes	No. of references[8]
1. What do you like about Witney Central as a community?	Good size/ manageable/ shops and services are close by	16
	Friendly	15
	Community feel/ networks	15
	Events/ community groups/ things going on	7
	Don't like it/ don't like it as much as I used to	4

'I've lived here all of my life. I love everything about Witney. People are friendly. I'm a country boy and the town has a country feel. The neighbours enquire after me. My neighbour next door brings a newspaper and a coffee every morning at 8am and another person rings every day and gets my shopping.'

'People are friendly. There are interesting things to do and see in Witney. Its calm and peaceful.'

'I don't like the area as much as I did. I've been here 30 years and moved from the North. It now feels like a suburb of Oxford.'

Research question	Main themes	No. of references
2. Do you feel involved in decision-making locally and feel that you are listened to?	Don't get involved/ don't ask for advice or support	15
	No	12
	Yes	10
	To some extent	4
	There is help available if you need it	4

'Never had any specific issues to raise. But I know I can speak to the councillor if I need to.'

'You can give feedback but I've not tried and I don't believe it would change anything.'

Research question	Main themes	No. of references
3. What do you do to keep healthy, mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?	Walking	18
	Socialising/ family	14
	Exercise and sport	13
	Community events/ activities/ support groups	10
	Crafts and pastimes	7
	Gardening	4
	Age UK Oxfordshire sessions	4
	Volunteering/ caring	2

[8] Not every respondent gave an answer to every question. Some respondents made multiple comments in response to a question.

| | Eat healthily | 2 |
| | Spiritual practice | 2 |

'I get out and about to help my mental health. A sense of humour helps, and interactions with people when I go for a walk or to the shops.'

'I come to this group [Oasis coffee morning]. There's not much else to do on the estate [Smiths]. I go to town on the community bus now and then, and meet a friend for lunch.'

I just survive! I walk as much as I can. Getting involved in things helps mentally.

4. What kinds of things are most challenging for you living in Witney Central that impact on your health and wellbeing?	Cost-of-living	11
	Poor state of pavements/ roads	6
	Access/ difficulty in getting around for those with mobility issues	5
	Housing issues: poor quality/ unaffordable/ unhealthy	5
	Loss of winter fuel allowance	4
	Bus transport: expense/ infrequent	4
	Speeding and traffic	3
	Access to a GP: getting an appointment	1
	Over-development	1
	Lack of seating/ benches in town centre	1
	Cost of healthy food	1
	Poor quality local schools	1
	Lack of outdoor play facilities for toddlers	1
	Air pollution	1
	Lack of bins	1
	Lack of decent jobs	1
	Lack of public toilets	1

'Some of the pavements could do with being fixed in places. The [loss of] winter fuel payment will be difficult. I will be cutting back on heating. If you're not comfortable in your own home then where can you be?'

'The pavements are problematic to navigate with my walker. Church Green is very bad and the back of the church. They are uneven and there are potholes. It's dangerous if it's dark or there is rain. Blind people's crossing points are awful for walkers [i.e. mobility aids].'

The cost of living. My daughter has moved back in with her - she had to come back from living away [because she] couldn't afford to live there. It's hard to afford healthy food, I come here [The Fridge] to get fruit and veg.'

5. Do you feel safe in the community?	Yes	40
	Generally	5
	Don't go out at night	5
	Not at night	3
	No	2

'Yes, and I'm happy to go out in the dark. I don't feel unsafe anywhere.'

'Yes, safe and very friendly but less safe than it was. Some people drive too fast, 40-50mph on the estate.'

6. What local groups, services, organisations, community spaces etc. do you find particularly helpful or useful to your health and well-being?	The Fridge	8
	Homestart	7
	Age UK Oxfordshire - Chatterbox	6
	Oasis café	5
	Churches/ church events	5
	Church coffee mornings/ meals	4
	Community groups and activities/ clubs	4
	Methodist Church events/ café	3
	Men's Shed	3
	Food bank	2
	Leisure centre	2
	Toddler/ baby groups	2
	Town centre cafes	2
	The Place	2
	U3A	2
	Library groups	1
	Parks and outdoor spaces	1
	Charity shops	1
	Family centre	1
	Gym	1
	MIND	1
	Women's craft group at the Men's Shed	1

'The Fridge, queuing up, you meet lots of people get chatting, find out about useful things. Everyone is very friendly.'

'There are plenty of support groups if you need it.'

'I go to baby groups every day of the week except Tuesday. I like to get out. It's good for me and for the baby.'

'The Fridge - I know everyone. I go to the church and have friends who are an incentive to keep going.'

7. What are the other local strengths and resources that support community health and wellbeing (such as community spirit, individual skills, passions, knowledge, green spaces etc.)	Parks/ green spaces/ access to countryside	7
	Community feeling/ spirit	7
	The Leys	6
	Community Bus – West Oxfordshire Community Transport	5
	Leisure centre/ gym	3
	Community Fridge/ larder/ foodbank	3

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	Volunteering	2
	Community hospital	2
	Big community events	2
	Churches	2
	Free parking	1
	Citizen's Advice	1
	Parent and child groups	1
	Charity shops	1
	Library	1
	Community coffee mornings/ meals	1
	Community groups and organisations	1
	Groups and services are joined-up/ well-connected	1

'The community bus is excellent but it would help to extend the return time to the estate on a Saturday. There's not much time to do things in the town before you have to come back.'

'I live in a close of 20 houses and there's a real community spirit. Everyone has their phone numbers so there's always help. We have tea in the summer and the neighbours are fabulous at helping others. There's also Neighbourhood Watch.'

'Community Hospital is good but a bit limited. Could offer more, e.g. pregnancy scans, check-ups for baby. Currently have to go to JR in Oxford for this. GPs are accepting patients which is good but appointments are hard to get.'

'There's good access to the countryside, the Leys, Ducklington lake, the river which used to be good for fishing has got too polluted now.'

8. What do you think helps you/your family maintain healthy habits around food and eating and getting out and about, or what would help you?	Try to eat healthily/ do as well as I can	16
	Cost of healthy food makes it difficult	6
	Learned skills in the family/ developed good habits	3
	Need more education in schools	2
	Health issues mean eating healthily is vital	2
	Difficulty eating (specific medical conditions)	2
	Lack of time	1

'It's a challenge financially to afford good quality and my diet isn't what it should be. The only way to get cheap food is to shop out of town.'

'I try to eat healthily but am reliant on The Fridge. I have a Widows Pension but lost the winter fuel allowance. I come out so the heating is not on and I don't have hot water, I boil a kettle.'

'We keep an eye on what we eat but we're not fanatical about it.'

'My husband and I are both diabetic, we have to eat healthily.'

9. Do you think the local community would benefit from additional projects and ideas to support health and well-being? If so, what? This could be a new group, organisation or something else – be as creative as you want!	Yes	31
	Maybe	5
	No	1
	SPECIFIC IDEAS	
	Activities/ groups for young people, e.g. youth club	7
	More health visitors/ localised support for new mothers, babies, and toddlers	2
	Transport to get people to events	2
	Cooking skills	1
	More sport and exercise classes during the day	1
	Creative/ artistic/ craft activities/ groups	1
	Counselling programme/ a talking space	1
	Subsidised access to exercise	1
	Good soft play facility	1
	More groups for men	1
	More sports pitches	1
	Autism group for children	1
	Play area on Smith's Estate	1
	Mental health support group for young people	1
	Place to store shopping in the town centre	1
	Free healthy eating group	1

'Yes. Getting involved really helps mental health. Everyone has something to offer.'

'Yes. Some people have a stigma about coming along to Age UK events. Think it is not for them. When I moved here I felt isolated but plucked up the courage to come along. Befriending would help encourage people to come along.'

'Yes - but getting people there is a problem, especially those with physical problems and disabilities. Need transport.'

'The Shed is good - when you feel like it you can drop in. There are maybe a few too many people coming now. It's better to keep it smallish. Could do with more projects like this.'

'Yes - activities that get people out of the house and interacting, e.g. creative things like art, crafts, pottery. Also being with animals outside can have therapeutic benefits.'

10. What do you think would encourage more local people to create or take part in health and wellbeing initiatives?	Advertising: more/ better/ more targeted/ use different methods not just online/ a *what's on* leaflet	12
	Free/ more affordable events/ sessions	7
	Offer transport	2
	Show the benefits of volunteering	2

	Some people just don't want to get involved	2
	Some people are put off by events run by the church/ or a perception that they are	2
	Taster sessions	1
	Buddying up	1
	Home visiting	1
	Whole-community events	1
	Easy access	1
	Make a creche available	1
	More community development support	1

'There's stuff going on but you need to find out about it. You have to go online but not everyone is comfortable or able to do that. So don't just use Facebook. Also, some people are generally more outgoing that others, so home visiting is important, like social prescribers and community connectors. But that takes time. You need to build trust and confidence. More community connectors would absolutely make a difference.'

'More advertising. There are isolated people out there but sometimes they are embarrassed about asking for help. You could use people who know these isolated people to talk to them.'

'A buddy system. There are a lot of women on their own who are shy going to a new group or activity for the first time.'

11. Would you be interested in joining with others (perhaps in a community group or project) to work on projects to support health and well-being?	Yes	16
	No	7
	Maybe	5
	Already do	4
	Too busy	2

'Yes. If accessible and there is help with transport and sufficient stimulus which align with my interests.'

'Absolutely, I've done enough that has been solitary.'

LOCAL STORIES

'Deborah' - 69

I live on the Smith's Estate. I've lived here since 1984 and it has changed a lot. There was more of a community feel in the past. People lived and worked together at the Smith's factory. I don't feel it is friendly anymore and my neighbours don't mix with me, they're not interested.

I don't feel that younger people today get involved and talk to their neighbours like I did when I was their age. They don't want to bother with older people but they could learn so much from the older ones.

I used to go out walking with my dog but since he died I don't go out much. I don't like walking on my own and I can't walk far. And I can't do much gardening anymore.

Since the Stagecoach bus stopped the community bus is a godsend. Sometimes I use it to go into town and meet people for lunch. We go to the Wetherspoons for a lunch because it is cheaper. I wouldn't be able to get to town otherwise. Sometimes I go to the Shed for coffee. I try to eat healthily. It is important to keep your body going.

Before I came here [Oasis coffee morning] there wasn't much for me to go to. It was [the West Oxfordshire DC community connector] who persuaded me to come along. She came to my house and kept on saying. She is totally brilliant, look at all the people who are here! I think there are isolated people on the estate who could really benefit from coming here but they don't come out.

Rising prices have been an issue for me and the [loss of the] fuel payment will have an impact. But I can manage. Some of my friends will miss it much more than me.

LOCAL STORIES

'Jim' – 75

I moved here in 1981. This is my home. It is a very friendly and open place, and I feel safe. I don't get involved in much with talking to councillors or local consultations. I feel like someone has probably raised issues before me. I did try to talk to my MP a few years back but it was impossible to get an appointment.

I do some volunteering, helping children with reading skills. I socialise and also go to Age UK sessions and events at places like the Methodist Church. The cost of living is a big problem for me. I can't afford to go out much and I am continuing to cut back on things. My house needs some repairs but I can't afford the upkeep. There are times when I won't put the heating on and this winter will be the worst yet with the winter fuel payment being lost. I eat as healthily as I can but sometimes cost is an issue.

I struggle to get an appointment at the GP. I have to fight to get one, sometimes it is who you know on the reception and if they are willing to help. I feel abandoned by the health service, not that I go the doctor often. But when I need to I can't get seen.

I have friends and good neighbours but I do feel that older people like me are becoming more isolated. I don't want to be a burden but sometimes I just want to talk to people. It can be a bit scary living alone, and lonely. I think we need a general signposting service where people can go to find things out and get support.

Getting involved in things is good for my mental health and we need to show other people the benefits of volunteering. But I do think that since Covid it has been harder to get volunteers. Everyone has something to offer but you need to have the confidence to get involved. I'd love to take to part in more things. Free parking in Witney is really important in helping people to get around to do things.

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Locally active groups and organisations: one to one conversations

Table 4: Locally active groups and organisations consulted in one-to-one interviews

Organisation	
Age UK Oxfordshire	
Aspire	
Citizen's Advice	
Cottsway Housing – community investment team	
Home Start	
Inclusive Care and Education Centre (2 individuals)	
MIND Oxfordshire	
Oxfordshire County Council – adult social care	
Oxford Health Arts Partnership	
Sanctuary Housing Association – housing team (2 individuals)	
Sanctuary Housing Association – partnerships	
Thames Valley Police	
Volunteer Link-Up	
West Oxfordshire District Council – healthy communities	
West Oxfordshire District Council - community builder	
West Oxfordshire District Council - councillor	
Witney Baby Bank	
Witney Day Centre	
Witney Town Chaplains	
TOTAL	**19**

19 one to one conversations (face to face and/ or email) were held with groups and organisations which are actively engaged in community activity/ projects in Witney Central. Requests for conversations and questionnaires were sent to multiple others without reply.

The main intent of these conversations was to seek opinions and insight with regard to community action in the area (whether community-led or partnership-based) and elicit insight with regard to community health and wellbeing.

Summary of key themes

Research question	Main themes	
1. In your experience, what works well in getting residents involved in projects and initiatives, and what doesn't (barriers to involvement)?	**WHAT WORKS**	**BARRIERS**
	Friendliness and approachability	Transport- getting people to activities
	Getting people out of their homes	Address care needs of those attending/ might attend groups/ sessions
	Go through trusted contacts/ organisations to reach residents	Perceptions of being judged negatively by coming to events/ sessions

	Build trust	Encouraging vulnerable people to come to groups
	Good awareness raising around issues	Lack of visible progress on certain issues creates cynicism
	Give people a choice	
	Talk to people where they are – go *to* them	
	Be sensitive with new attendees and attentive to their needs/ levels of confidence	

'Social contact is hugely important. People struggle to get out and there are a lot of isolated people. This is an area that needs to be supported.'

'[Events/ session etc] need to be free. The biggest barrier is money.'

It's difficult to encourage vulnerable people to come along. With one mum it took me six months. But when they do come they are up and running!'

'Street meetings and have your say sessions on certain roads or hot spots where there have been issues [are useful]. Residents can voice their concerns and also find out what agency they need to contact for support.'

'There are no quick fixes [to low level crime] so people feel things are not going anywhere – they stop reporting and instead comment on social media.'

'Volunteers might be caring but not carers.'

'There are naturally groups who sit together and groups have been built from coming along to Chatterbox and not knowing anybody. We always try to mix people in a light touch way.'

2. In terms of the discussion and design of community-based projects and initiatives – what are the ingredients for success in the long term?	Walk alongside people to find out what they need and how to best support them
	Befriending and buddying up to encourage people to come along
	Take time to build connections and trust
	Know what the needs are – talk to people
	Make it resident/ community led: ask people what they want to do and have collective decisions about how to spend project funds
	Ensure that activities and inclusive and meet different needs
	Consistency- important to keep events running across the year, through school holidays etc.
	Free events and taster sessions
	Get the publicity right – use multiple means: social media, posters, word of mouth etc.

	Celebrate resident/ community involvement in projects
	Make it interesting and fun
	Make sure events are held at the best time of day/ different times to attract attendees

'Find out what people want and what is in their comfort zone. Sometimes we try to take people out of that and it doesn't work.'

'Relationship building takes a long time.'

'Give people a choice about taking part – ask them what they'd like to do and give them options.'

'It's important to celebrate what people have been doing and the difference that their involvement has made.'

'With vulnerable people word of mouth works best. Then you draw them in through befriending. But it's difficult to reach everyone.'

Going on your own to something can be barrier if you're not confident. Offering to go along with someone can help.'

'Ideas need to come from the residents – a community garden project was suggested but that didn't work well because no-one wanted to take the lead.'

'Activities have to be accessible for people who are non-readers or non-verbal for example, and differentiated, so everyone gets something out of it.'

3. What are the key challenges you face as a community-based organisation (or an organisation working in Witney Central)? What would help you solve them?	There was much overlap with themes set out above	
	CHALLENGES	**POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**
	Paid staff	Difficult without the necessary (extra) funding
	Securing long-term funding (2-3 years+)	Discussion with funders
	Ensure effectiveness of the organisation	Take time to reflect – review successes and be open about challenges/ is the organisation doing what it needs to?
	Volunteer-based organisations have common challenges	Offer collective support, e.g. shared training
	Effective support for volunteers	Establish specific interests, supporting, training, incentivise involvement (if possible) by paying expenses, do not over-burden people – work with what they can offer.

		All volunteers are equal: be attentive to 'hierarchies' that may have arisen from people volunteering for a long time
	Effective volunteer governance	Have people in the organisation assigned to tasks: safeguarding, compliance, policy
	Grant application processes and endless funding cycles are burdensome	(Collective) discussion with funders. The process needs to be straightforward
	Continued lack of understanding from some agencies about the complexities in achieving improvements in health and wellbeing outcomes	Discussion/ good partnership working
	Ensure activity is complementary and does not duplicate	Partnership working
	Poor uptake of community-based sessions	Partnership working/ effective outreach

'We need funding to sustain projects across the long terms. Short-term projects are difficult to sustain. 2-3 years funding helps to build something for the future.'

'People who set up organisations need to be able to change with them – this can be challenging.'

'People find can find grant application processes very difficult – we need to make sure they are more straightforward to navigate. People will say "can you help, I don't know how to answer this question".'

'Need to continue to educate the Primary Care Networks in the role that advice and non-health-based charitable support can play in supporting health. This is challenging to get across to some health colleagues. But the evidence is clear and has been there for many years. For example, if you fix people's money problems then they have better mental health.'

'We have gone to where people are but have struggled to fill community-based mental health sessions. Renamed it to "wellbeing sessions". Other services say it is needed but then their users don't turn up. Is it apathy? Have people had so much self-reflection during covid that they just want to get on with it?'

'It's about networking and not working in isolation – talking to other relevant agencies. I believe that is crucial, sharing ideas.'

'Good communication with stakeholders is very important, especially referral agencies.'

4. What do you think the main impacts of the pandemic were	**POSITIVE**
	Community spirit – people pulling together

locally, and do you think any impacts are still being felt?	Groups and initiatives sprung up
	NEGATIVE
	Isolation and fear, loss of confidence
	Increased mental health issues across all demographic groups
	Mobility for elderly people negatively affected due to not being able to get out
	Negative impacts for younger children: social skills, developmental concerns, speech and language
	Some people still somewhat reluctant to go out/ ongoing negative impacts from isolation

'Community spirit was very positive but there was also volunteer fatigue after a couple of years.'

'There are ongoing mental health implications for some people and with the cost-of-living crisis it has been a double whammy.'

'We had a spate around the second lockdown with a number of males committing suicide – since then this has not been so regular.'

'People haven't really recovered from the pandemic and there are isolated clusters of people who still don't leave the house.'

'There's still a big impact on children's social skills and speech and language – lockdown babies. There was a lack of social interaction and modelling which you get from other children. Speech issues could be due to people being cooped up and not talking to each other. Also changes in play skills.'

'People's mental health has deteriorated since the pandemic and with the cost-of-living crisis.'

5. What worked well – locally- in terms of supporting the community through the pandemic, and what could be improved/ developed to help ensure the community is best equipped to deal with anything similar in the future?	Increase in online support and using apps **BUT** this can increase isolation
	Welfare checks – dropping in on people – VERA list of vulnerable people
	Referrals to food banks
	Collaboration with Witney land Army
	Online peer support groups then smaller groups with distancing
	Telephone check-ins on welfare
	Good communication and engagement between agencies and between community groups
	Streamlining services and rapid adaptation
	Positive impact on service design

'If it happened again, we would have better awareness of what support is out there. We should try and keep groups going that came together in the pandemic.'

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'We're hoping that when the [Police Community Support Team] is more stable that visiting vulnerable people might become more of a regular thing as prevention [of problems that might arise from isolation].'

'Safe space to talk could be developed. Somewhere to off-load and get practical, emotional and spiritual support.'

'People are better prepared to look after themselves now.'

6. Have you noticed any cost-of-living crisis impacts affecting residents locally?	The negative impacts of the cost-of-living crisis was a prominent theme in discussions
	Negative impacts: mental health/ increased anxiety
	Increase in referrals to foodbanks/ reliance on foodbanks
	Increase in referrals to the baby bank
	Increase in referrals to local charities/ applications for support from housing associations
	More damp and mould in properties (linked to unaffordability of heating)
	Negative impact on groups and organisations from increased costs
	Services are responding, e.g. pension credit information campaign
7. Do you have any other observations about health and wellbeing in central Witney and how it could be improved?	OBSERVATIONS
	Often multiple interlinked issues which have cumulative negative impacts
	Increased numbers of individuals begging (not organised groups)
	Complexity in claiming disability benefits (Personal Independence Payments) leads to increased anxiety/ compounds other issues
	More young people struggling with neurodiversity/ SEND
	More young people struggling with mental health
	Some evidence of drug-taking/ ASB among young people (linked to boredom)
	Concern with young people vaping
	Unaffordability of sports memberships removes a means of addressing health
	Difficulty in getting a GP appointment (complexity of booking system)
	Difficulty in accessing NHS dentistry services
	A lot of community activity takes place in churches – this could put some people off
	Dedicated leisure sessions are available for those with special needs **BUT** nothing outside of these
	Loneliness and isolation in older people
	Some evidence of hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers

	Easier access to health visitors
	Poor state of repair of housing
	POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS
	Information about warm spaces would be useful so people can be signposted
	Opportunity to make more use of creative health – lots of evidence it has a positive impact
	A neutral community space that is not attached to any organisation
	Improved coordination role for the Council regarding what's happening/ available in the community/ joining things up
	More youth support **BUT** youth clubs difficult to set up
	Education campaign on risks of vaping

'A lot of the houses on Smith's Estate are getting older. Lots of repairs and maintenance are needed. It's been a sticking plaster approach across the years.'

'Working with a family at the moment and there are so many issues that you don't know where to start.'

'We deal with multiple issues. A wider range of people since the pandemic don't have enough to live on. More people are using foodbanks. More people are not able to afford the gap in rent between available benefits and actual rent. Demand shot up in the pandemic and hasn't really gone away.'

'We've bounced straight from covid into the cost-of-living crisis.'

'Disability payments are a key concern and further tightening up eligibility is going to hurt [people]. More people will suffer from the impacts, with all the increased stresses on health.'

'SEND need is exploding but it is very difficult to get help. There is a two-year wait for a speech and language therapist, for example.'

'The new online booking system at the Windrush surgery is putting off older people from making an appointment. There is then the risk of them getting more ill and presenting at A&E.'

'Cherwell District Council has good communication, joint events, Age Friendly Banbury – things really happen through this, it's not just talking. We could have this here.'

LOCAL STORIES
'Susan' - 32

I have three children and I'm either working or I come to the Home Start group at Ceewood Hall and the Methodist Church, there's nowhere else to go. I went to another one at Cogges Church but didn't feel so welcome. In lockdown there was a lack of socialisation for children and difficult for the children to go to school. The Home Start group was a godsend.

I live on the Smith's estate and generally feel safe but I have a twelve year old daughter and she thinks she's safe but I worry when it's dark. My neighbour's window was broken and an elderly man's window. I think it was random youths but I don't know if anything happened.

The flooring in my house (Housing Association) and the condition of my house is a challenge. It has mould as one side of the house as it isn't insulated and the bathroom ceiling is black. It hasn't been sorted in one and half years. I've been to the GP as my child has eczema, asthma, and a chest infection.

I go to The Leys but there is no baby equipment or equipment for toddlers and it needs to be better. You need to be hands-on in case your child falls so you can't relax. It would be good to have a new, local soft play area. The one in Witney has bad upkeep so you have to travel to Abingdon or Carterton and then there's travel and the cost of entry. For two five year olds it's £15 for an hour with no food and the time slots don't always match with bus times.

My youngest child isn't eating properly and there is no help or advice - I can't speak to someone, it's all by text. More health visitors are needed as families need more support for children up until they are five years old. A health visitor would help especially with my child who isn't eating. I try to eat healthy and the rest of the family but something around healthy eating - ideas and help with difficult/ fussy eaters would be really useful. My children keep me active so there is not much time for me but I would get involved with a project if I could.

I worry when the children get older. I had a youth centre so no wonder there are so many youths on the street getting into trouble its quite scary. The youth centre was closed down and it helped my friend to get out of drugs. Young people 11 upwards need something.

LOCAL STORIES
'Marco' - 42

Finances are really tight. I have two children and The Fridge and The Larder are 'life saving'. Without them I wouldn't be able to get through the week. I was a chef for 12 years and I'm good at creating healthy meals from whatever ingredients I can get and making them last.

I would like to do more to keep fit, but time and money are limited. I used to do boxing but my blood pressure is too high now and I have to take medication for it as well as painkillers for a bad back and knees.

Most of my time goes into looking after my children. I'd like to see accessible gym and sports facilities across the town for adults and children and cheaper transport for getting around – I have to pay for

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my children on the bus to get to the leisure centre for a swim, plus the entry cost which can make it unaffordable.

I often feel exhausted as a single parent but I'm grateful for support I've had from the children's primary school and the Witney Children and Family Centre Early Help services. Also, volunteers from a church charity have recently been helping me to tidy the garden and decorate my children's bedrooms.

Focus Groups

Table 5: Focus Groups Locations and Demographics

FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES		
Setting/ group	**Demographic**	**Numbers**
Inclusive Care and Education Centre	Adults in their twenties with learning disabilities	5
Asylum hostel	Adult asylum seekers aged 30-50	5
Project steering group	Adults in their 30s to 50s	8
Queen Emma's Dyke Residents	Adults in their 70s and 80s	9
Men's Shed Women's Coffee Group	Female adults in their 70s and 80s	5
TOTAL		**32**

Summary of focus group key themes – residents aged 20+

Research question	Key themes
1. What do you like about Witney Central as a community?	Friendly – sense of community with some contrasting, negative comment
	Lots going on for older people
	Range of different activities available in general
	Activities for those with specific needs (e.g. learning disabilities)
	The range and availability off shops and services

'It's very easy to get into to the town to the doctor's and that.'

'I'm here because of circumstance. I wouldn't choose to live here.'

'I want to say that all the people in Witney are good and kindly [asylum seeker].'

2. Do you feel involved in decision-making locally and that you are listened to?	The general sense amongst **older people** was that they did NOT feel involved. An issue raised was the fact that meetings were often held in the evening when they were less likely to go out.
	Other groups and individuals had less comment in this regard.

<div align="center">

'They just do what they want.'

'No-one really asks me anything.'

</div>

3. What do you do to keep healthy – mentally, emotionally and physically?	For **older people** activities prominently included gardening, craft activities. Reminiscence sessions were also mentioned
	For those with **learning disabilities** getting exercise (canoeing, cycling, horse riding, dancing) was a common theme. Healthy eating was also mentioned.
	For **asylum seekers**, a lack of financial resources to get out and about and do things meant that socialising with friends at the hostel was a key means of maintaining wellbeing. After-school clubs for children of asylum seekers were clearly seen as important and valued.

<div align="center">

'We sit down and talk about our memories. Where we've been and what we've done. I live on my memories of travel and holidays.'

'I've stopped going to the tuck shop and eat fruit salad every day.'

</div>

4. What kinds of things are most challenging for you living in Witney Central that impact on your health and wellbeing?	For **older people** several themes, issues and concerns were mentioned. These included: bereavement and the impact on mental health and; mental health in general, often related to isolation. Other issues included public realm concerns, such as potholes and the poor repair of pavements. This can be a particular issue for those with mobility problems/ walking aids/ scooter. There was also concern about cars still driving through the High Street despite pedestrianisation. Another prominent theme was problematic access to health services: difficulties in securing an appointment, including navigating the booking system; having to travel to Oxford for services that used to be provided locally; difficulty get access to a dentist. Cost-of-living was also a common topic. Rising prices have impacted on already stretched budgets. Rents have also increased. Some felt able to cope and were able to manage their budgets. Cost was also an issue in paying for activities such as swimming at the leisure centre.

	For **asylum seekers** a key issue was anxiety about being moved to another part of the country with no choice in the matter. This also caused particular difficulties for children, who may have just settled at school and now have to move on and start again.
	Lack of money was also a major concern (with an allowance of £9.20 a week per person). This leads to reliance on the food bank, where there has been some evidence of hostility from local residents. Lack of money also meant that access to paid exercise was almost impossible, leading to negative impacts on health. It was also almost impossible to pay for transport (bus) to get around. This leads to boredom and frustration, which is compounded by being unable to work or volunteer (without leave to remain, which takes c. 2 years).
	The quality of the food available in the hostel was also criticised strongly, and a lack of suitable diet for those with who are pregnant or whose children have medical issues. They also cannot cook in the hostel and there is one microwave for 200 people. It is common for people to boil eggs in kettles.

'I haven't been to a dentist since I have lived here and that is a long time. And I couldn't afford it anyway.'

'It's difficult to get around when you have mobility issues.'

'Christmas is coming and it's just depressing. I don't have the money I did last year.'

'I've just been given notice of eviction by the Home Office. I want to stay in Witney and stay with my Egyptian friends. I go to a church in Abingdon.'

'Exercise is good for mental health – every day at home I was swimming but here I get no exercise. I have a lot of pain in my body and it gets worse when I can't exercise' [asylum seeker]

'It's very difficult for us [asylum seekers] to get around. Can Witney council provide [free] bus passes like they do in Oxford?'

5. Do you feel safe in the community?	Across **all focus groups** the general sense was YES.
	However, for some **older people** there was a sense that Witney could be unsafe.

'Witney is not a safe place at night. More so at the weekend. My grandson was attacked one night because he wouldn't drive someone to Carterton.'

| **6. What groups, services, organisations, community** | For **older people** the role of the WODC community connector was mentioned as a source of support, advice and encouragement. The community bus – West Oxfordshire |

spaces do you find particularly helpful to your health and wellbeing?	Community Transport – is clearly valued as a key means of getting around the town. There was a common attitude that you 'just get on with things.' Various venues and activities were mentioned, including: The Shed, various churches, the day centre at Ceewood Hall, the U3A, walking groups, MIND, meals on wheels. Those at Queen Emma's Dyke valued their regular social gatherings in the common room.
	For those with **learning disabilities** the Integrated Care and Education centre was a highly valued resource. Mention was also made of community groups and activities in general.
	For **asylum seekers** comment was generally positive in relation to having good support from local health services and support groups such as Asylum Welcome and Volunteer Link Up.
'The doctor is very good. They make an appointment for us on the same day [asylum seeker].' *'Meals on Wheels are £3 but well worth it. It's a good bit of homemade cooking!'*	
7. What helps you and your family maintain healthy habits around eating?	Across all Focus Groups a range of opinions were offered, including: buying fresh fruit and veg; keeping up healthy habits (will power); home-cooking and baking and; putting fresh fruit in lunchboxes. Comment was made about the rising cost of living making it more difficult to afford healthy food. As noted above, for **asylum seekers** food is a key area of concern.
'You can't buy nicer bread as its way above your budget. You end up having to buy processed bread.' *'It would make a huge difference to be able to cook for ourselves [asylum seeker]'*	
8. Do you think the community would benefit from additional projects and ideas to support health and wellbeing	**Across all Focus Groups** a range of ideas were put forward. These included yoga, t'ai chi, and dancing classes, and other activities such as board games and snooker. There was also comment that there was already a lot going on, although much was in the evening – this made it problematic for some people to go to them (such as older people who are less confident in going out at night).

	Activities, including intergenerational initiatives that bring different parts of the community together, was also mentioned.

'I don't just want to meet old people. I want to mix with everybody.'

9. Would you be interested in joining with others to work on projects to support health and wellbeing?	There was a range opinion offered across **all Focus Group**s. Some were particularly keen, others much less so.
10. What do you think would encourage more people to take part in health and wellbeing initiatives?	Across all groups there was little comment in this regard. It was noted that young people need somewhere to go. Older people made reference for the need for things to be easily accessible. The need to improve communication so that more people were aware of what was going on was raised.

'An exercise class was started but it was too fast. The instructor was looking at herself instead of checking we were doing it right.'

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FOR LOCALLY ACTIVE COMMUNITY GROUPS, AGENCIES, AND ORGANISATIONS	
11. What works well in getting residents involved in projects and initiatives, and what doesn't (barriers to involvement)?	**FIND THE MOTIVATION**: give people a reason for taking part
	ACCESS: make sure people can get there.
	GET THE PUBLICITY RIGHT: use different means to reach different people/ groups.
	SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS EFFECTIVELY: give them a say in what they are doing. Offer training and support. Treat all volunteers equally. Take time to find out what they can specifically offer.
	TIME: there is often no short-cut to getting people involved
	BUDDY SYSTEM: link people up with someone who can take them along.

'The most effective way to get someone to engage in the first place is to answer the question "what's in it for me."'

'Witney is well-served by transport but there is much less in the evening.'

'It took me 6 months to get one mum from Smith's Estate to come along. But when she did she just kept coming, and we did an amazing piece of support work with her.'

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12. In terms of the discussion and design of community-based projects and initiatives, what are the ingredients for success in the long-term?	SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKERS: sharing of experience, ideas, challenges is very important.
	TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR ORGANISATIONS: all groups have similar issues. Offer collective training (e.g. health and safety, safeguarding, volunteer management). BUT cost is an issue – it really needs to be free.
	LESS FOCUS ON NARROW MEASURING OF HEALTH OUTCOMES: some improvements in health and wellbeing cannot be directly measured.
	EVALUATION OF IMPACT IS DIFFICULT: people are individuals – they engage and respond in different ways and over different timescales.
	FUNDING: core funding/ the endless funding cycle/ short-term funding are major issues for groups and organisations.

'You can feel on your own out there trying to drum up social interaction. It can be lonely doing that in isolation.'

'Training can be incredibly expensive for some organisations.'

'If someone comes in and they're on X amount a week and can't afford food and are supplementing with the food bank and by the time they have had support they have £50 more a week and now don't need the food bank. They are clearly eating better and their financial situation is better, all of which will have a positive impact on their health. Why can't we just take that as a given?'

'There is such a ripple effect to all this. You never actually know what's really gone on with someone because you might have had a short intervention. But something positive might happen 12 or 18 months down the line as a result of a conversation you had back then.'

'For those funders who offer year on year funding to the same groups and have done for a long time. Is there a way to offer multi-year funding instead?'

| 13. Have you noticed any cost-of-living impacts affecting residents locally? | There was strong agreement that this is an important current challenge, particularly in relation to debt and energy prices. There has been an increase in food bank referrals. An associated challenge is getting people to engage with advice in an effective way – trust is needed. |
| | The loss of the winter fuel allowance has been a major topic and concern recently. This is a major issue for Age UK Oxfordshire in particular, especially for those who just miss out on pension credits. |

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14. Do you have any other observations about health and wellbeing in Witney Central and how it may be improved?	**ACCESS TO GPs and DENTISTS**: there was much comment about issues for certain groups (such as the elderly and those with learning difficulties) navigating online booking systems. Also, anecdotal evidence that people are not making appointments because it is too difficult.
	ACCESS TO HOSPITALS AND MEDICAL SERVICES BEYOND WITNEY: this can be problematic for some and causes anxiety. Not everyone qualifies for free hospital transport and if they do the trip can take hours.
	MENTAL HEALTH AND ANXIETY: this was a generalised concern, as was the limited access to mental health support services.
	SEND: there are a number of families in central Witney who are not being supported.
	ACCESSIBILITY: comment was made that transport around Witney is quite good and West Oxford Community Transport services in particular. However, WOCT continues to struggle with funding. The quality of the public realm was felt to be quite good. There are issues of pavement/ roads state of repair in certain locations, which can create difficulties for those who struggle with mobility.

'[If you can't get an appointment or are intimidated by the process] small things just end up getting bigger and bigger and more difficult to sort out.'

LOCAL STORIES

'Peter' – 68

I help with a local men's group. I was referred by a local charity as I had mental health issues and was put on medication. I use my previous work experience to support the men, it's nice to be useful and give something back.

Informality is important in the group. Some men sit, look, and listen. They like to be in the environment and drink tea rather than do something practical. Some just want to be amongst

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people in a warm space and are in on themselves at the start and then get more involved with projects. There are shocking conditions that some live in and there is diversity in what people are living with. It's important to make it fun.

Everyone that comes feels oppressed in some way. It operates as a type of self-help group. We encourage the men to talk about what's acceptable and what's not. It important for them to be able to express themselves. There is real potential to use skills and share. Some have issues and can't realise their own potential, they might need a carer, have mobility issues, mental health issues etc. but can come on quickly if we find something simple for them to do. It's not a solution and some need professional support but we can open minds and see potential develop.

It's priceless - it's a family environment and we care about people. If they don't turn up they will get a phone call to check they are ok. Money must not get involved in this – money causes issues so it's all free.

Sometimes the needs are too complex for us – everyone is very different and we try to accommodate as many men as possible in the space. One man has the start of dementia but still has intellect and can do a project if we set one up for him. There is a woman who sometimes comes who we give wood to heat her house – she is looking after her husband.

The group is a little intervention but there should be a place like this in every built-up place. Its somewhere with less rules and it's the highlight of the week for some.

LOCAL STORIES
'Anne' - 46

I regularly visit the Community Café in the Methodist Church after getting fruit and veg from The Fridge. I appreciate the help since my food bills have increased and also believe in reducing food waste.

My son is autistic and suffers from Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA). It's been a huge struggle getting an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) but I'm relieved he has had a diagnosis after a very long wait. The local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) parent support group has been incredibly helpful. They organise speakers and provide helpful links to information and advice.

In terms of my own health and wellbeing, I like to swim at the leisure centre and do yoga. It helps that as a registered carer I get a discount at leisure facilities and playcentres. I think that schools should do more to educate children about healthy eating. My son has chosen the option of doing food technology but it's not a core curriculum subject and many children don't understand where food comes from and why a healthy diet is important.

I'd like to see more subsidised activities that promote good health, for example a community yoga class that is affordable for all. I also think there should be more time for PE at school – its only one hour a week for my son now he's in Year 10.

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Children and Young People: focus groups and one to one conversations

Table 6: Children and Young People focus group and one-to-one conversation attendee's breakdown

FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES		
The Batt Primary School	Children aged 6-11	18
Witney Youth Council	Young people aged 11-22	11
ONE TO ONE CONVERSATIONS		
Support organisation for young people	Young people aged 18-24	4
TOTAL		33

Summary of findings – children and young people

The Batt Primary School – Focus Group

Research question

1. What do you like about living in central Witney?

Key comments were that there are lots of things to do, such as shopping, going to the park and Cogges Farm. It is also a friendly place and community events are good, such as when they switch the Christmas lights on. The history of Witney was also mentioned as something people liked about Witney.

'Witney has a big history. Where I live there used to be a sewing factory.'

2. Do you feel that you are listened to and have a say in what affects your life?

There was a mixed response. Some felt they were listened to at home but less so at school. Generally, there was a feeling that they would like to be asked their opinions more often.

3. What do you do to keep healthy?

Various sports were mentioned, including football, running, martial arts, and basketball. Eating fruit and veg was also referred to. There was general discontent about the quality of school meals at the primary school – since a new caterer took over the portions were smaller and there was less choice.

Various other activities were also mentioned to help keep happy, including spending time with family, video games and family games.

4. What kind of things do you find difficult about living in central Witney?

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A strong theme for primary school children was low-level vandalism of play equipment in the park by older children. The quality of the public realm was also a concern with comment about littering, overflowing and not enough bins, and graffiti.

'I've seen trolleys and chairs thrown into the little stream.'

'Stop people making a mess so we don't have to clean it up.'

5. What do you think could be improved about central Witney?

The subject of vaping was prominent. Children are clearly aware of and concerned about this. There was comment that vaping shops should not be allowed.

As well as the public realm improvements (see above) there was also comment about the need to improve the parks and play areas and have more play facilities for older children. There was also concern expressed about junk food and the need to do something about it.

'Don't have vaping shops. There's one that has toys in the window and little kids want to go in.'

Witney Youth Council – Focus Group

Research question

1. What do you like about living in central Witney?

The peacefulness of the community and a good community feel were mentioned. However, comment was also made about antisocial behaviour, particularly around the skate park.

Attendees talked about attending community groups, particularly organised sport and martial arts, as well as attending the Youth Council. However, the general consensus was that there is not much for young people to do, with some people stating that some of their friends don't do much/ get involved with much at all**.**

'I see people being antisocial and it makes me feel uncomfortable, I try to stay away. When I'm walking past the skatepark and in town people shout racist things.'

2. Do you feel that you are listened to and have a say in what affects your life?

The general consensus was that young people are not listened to and few efforts are made to engage with young people. For example, there is currently an ongoing consultation about the Witney library refurbishment but young people haven't been included. This reflects the frustration that young people have ideas but nowhere to share them. However, it was also noted that while it is good to be listened to (if this can encouraged) it is then very important to act on what has been discussed.

It was noted that young people now feel more listened to in the secondary school setting but that this took a lot of effort from young people themselves to drive the change. It was suggested that members of the Youth Council they can play a role here as ambassadors.

> *'Young people should be involved in planning and design of public facilities and amenities.'*
>
> *'95% of young people would say they have no say [about their lives in general, including what happens in the community].'*

3. What does being healthy mean to you and what helps/ doesn't help

The main themes discussed were being happy and feeling safe and respected. Also, having the confidence to go out and about in the community.

5. What do you think could be improved about central Witney?

The consensus was that more clubs, organisations and activities were needed for young people. However, these need to be set up in discussion with young people, with different things for different age groups and interests. Specific ideas mentioned were a multi-sports club with running, football, rugby, and matches at the weekends.

The Youth Council has already identified that a cultural festival would be a very useful initiative to bring the community together. This could also help address issues such as racism. Activities that bring together different generations together would also be positive.

The need for a specific place for young people to hang out was also seen as needed, somewhere along the lines of Base 33 (which closed in 2017).

> *'When the Churches organised football over the summer lots of people went.'*
>
> *'People need to be educated about racist abuse. A cultural festival could be a good idea and more activities between younger and older people.'*

6. When you think about the world, what kind of things worry you?

A range of topics were referred to. These included the negative influence of 'troublemakers who cause divisions' such as Elon Musk and Andrew Tate (particularly the influence on boys and young men).

Fake news was also discussed as a source of worry, as were online fears and concerns, such as predatory individuals and the isolation that comes of spending too much time alone on the web/ social media. There was comment that this was contributing to young people feeling less able to talk about their feelings with others and even missing out on their childhood by not going out in the real world.

> *'Social media brings people down, affects mental health, causes low self-esteem. Everyone feels they have to be the same.'*

Support organisation for young people – one to one conversations

Research question	Main themes	No. of references[9]
1. What do you like about Witney Central as a community?		
	Friendly/ community feel	2
	Range of shops/ market	2
	Events/ community groups/ things going on	1
	'Witney is more peaceful than a big city where I came from. It feels tight knitted compared to other places.'	
2. Do you feel involved in decision-making locally and feel that you are listened to?	No	4
	'No because of my age I don't feel involved and feel that my age group are not asked for an opinion, others make decisions for us.'	
3. What do you do to keep healthy, mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?	Aspire Witney Hub, including courses	3
	Exercise, including gym	2
	Turning Point	1
	Healthy diet	1
	Walking	1
	Access adult social care	1
	Community midwife	1
	Nuffield health centre	1
	Occupational health	1
	Psychiatrist	1
4. What kinds of things are most challenging for you living in Witney Central that impact on your health and wellbeing?	Public transport: unreliable buses/ infrequent services to JR hospital	3
	Lack of affordable housing	2
	Poor state of housing repair	1
	Difficulty getting healthcare appointments (availability)	1
	Cost of living	1
	Lack of shopping choice locally	1
	Lack of jobs for those who lack experience	1
	Lack of things to do	1
	'I find the costs of living compared to Birmingham much higher.'	
	'Housing is not very affordable and in supported living doesn't make it all that easier.'	
	Mostly	2

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[9] Not every respondent gave an answer to every question. Some respondents made multiple comments in response to a question.

5. Do you feel safe in the community?	No	1
	Yes	1

'As a young woman I do not feel safe, someone is always getting beaten up or worse and where I live is not exactly the safest, I often worry about going out alone at night.'

'To a degree - it is quiet during the day but sometimes busy at night with people taking drugs and alcohol. I can smell weed often.'

6. What local groups, services, organisations, community spaces etc. do you find particularly helpful or useful to your health and well-being?	Aspire Witney hub	4
	Gym/ leisure centre	2
	Turning Point	1
	YPSA progress coach	1
	Better Me project/ support	1

7. What are the other local strengths and resources that support community health and wellbeing (such as community spirit, individual skills, passions, knowledge, green spaces etc.)	Don't often go out	2
	Unsure	1
	College	1
	Pubs	1
	GP	1

'I do not often leave my home to see things like that going on and just use the support that I already have. Aspire, doctors.'

8. What do you think helps you/your family maintain healthy habits around food and eating and getting out and about, or what would help you?	Difficult to maintain healthy habits: takeaways nearby	2
	Plan shopping and meals	1
	Make healthy diet a priority	1
	Food needs to be cheap	1

'Money is a struggle so most of the time it needs to be cheap so not junk food all the time however my house is located near a lot of takeaways so when pay days comes it is takeaways.'

9. Do you think the local community would benefit from additional projects and ideas to support health and well-being? If so, what? This could be a new group, organisation or something else	Better community healthcare: walk in centre for mental health and other concerns	3
	More pre-natal support/ support for new mothers	2
	Better access to GPs	1
	More resources to support those in housing difficulties	1
	More support for the homeless/ homeless shelter	1
10. What do you think would encourage more local people to create or take part in health and wellbeing initiatives?	More activities/ events for young people	2
	Unsure	1
	Open days at leisure centre/ gym	1
	Yes	2

11. Would you be interested in joining with others (perhaps in a community group or project) to work on projects to support health and well-being?	No	2
'Yes I would - for more art and craft projects and emotional wellbeing courses.'		

LOCAL STORIES
'Isuri' - 17

I recently came to the UK seeking asylum with my father and brother. I live locally and like the calm environment. I have found people friendly - in particular, my college tutor has been very helpful and supportive. When I am not studying for A-levels at the local college, I like to walk in the parks and green spaces.

It's been very hard to eat well because there are no facilities to cook in the hostel and there are no choices available in the food that is provided. The food isn't healthy and it's not what I'm used to. I go to The Fridge to get fruit and bread and other things that don't require cooking.

I think that a counselling programme offering a space for people to talk about what's on their mind would be very beneficial for mental health and wellbeing.

LOCAL STORIES
'Amanda' - 35

I suffer from social anxiety and fibromyalgia and can find it hard to go out with my young son. I've moved around quite a lot and haven't been living in Witney for very long but I have found the local community welcoming. I particularly like the green spaces, cafes, charity shops and local community events like Bonfire Night and the Christmas Fair. I enjoy coming to the Homestart group at Ceewood Hall on Mondays.

Since moving here, I haven't been able to get dental care for myself and my son. It's also been very hard finding some where affordable to live. We are currently in a privately rented house that is too small and has no garden. It means that my son doesn't have his own bedroom. When my two step-children are staying it can be difficult to find the private space I need for my mental wellbeing.

I also struggle to get my family to eat healthily and think there should be fewer fast-food outlets and less advertising of unhealthy food and drinks like KFC and McDonalds.

When my health improves, I'd be interested in joining with others to work on projects that support health and wellbeing, for example a community yoga and meditation group in the local park or library.

Discussion of findings

Introduction

Research themes

The research undertaken explored: 1- the local strengths and assets that support and enable health and wellbeing and; 2- challenges to health and wellbeing and what would help to address these. **167 individuals were consulted across the project**; focus group attendees (61); one to one conversations (74); and the community survey (32).

From the totality of research summarised above, key themes, issues, challenges, and opportunities were identified. These are discussed below, while also responding to the final element in the research brief, which was to provide recommendations for further insight needed and/ or actions to take forward from the findings.

Research and data overview/ limitations

Community First had a twelve-week period in which to undertake the research. The first weeks focused on introducing the project, building trust with local organisations and residents, and arranging specific research activities.

The objective of the qualitative research undertaken by CFO was to produce in-depth information in order to understand more about the research questions (see appendix 2). However, it is recognised that qualitative research can only provide illustrative information and data, sometimes very personal and perhaps only indirectly comparable.

Despite the shortness of the research window, a key focus was to reach a large number of people via higher-level approaches (shorter one to one conversations and the community survey) and complement this with more in-depth approaches (longer one to one conversations, personal stories and focus groups). This allowed findings to combine both numbers (of people consulted) and depth, building a richer, more detailed and more nuanced set of findings to support the recommendations set out below.

Multiple attempts were made to engage with organisations working with young people to explore issues including mental health, self-harm, drugs and alcohol, etc. However, we were unable to get responses.

The age of those consulted was as follows:

Figure 2: Chart showing age range of those consulted

Age of those consulted

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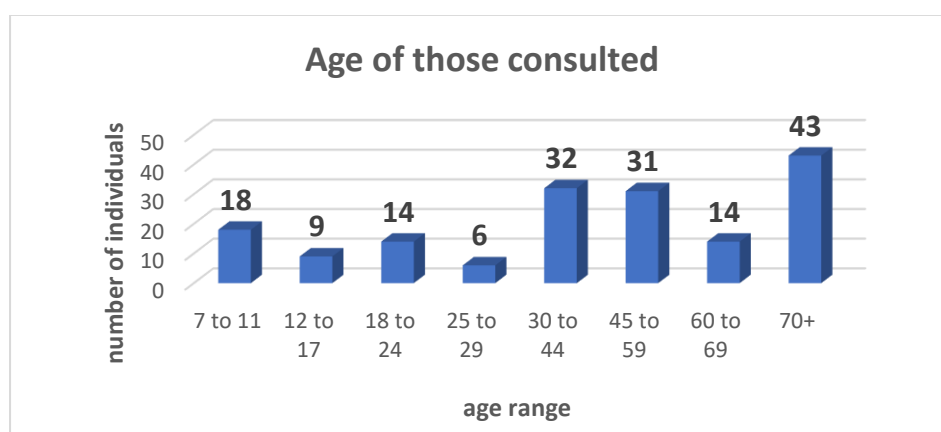
As can be seen, the project engaged with a broad range of age groups. 72% of the total number of people consulted were female while 95% were of white British/ other white ethnicity. The remaining respondents were Asian/ Asian British (1%), Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British (1%) or other ethnic group (3%).

Further research focusing on the male voice and younger adults would be useful, as would exploring the opinions of those with other ethnicities and backgrounds. Findings from the **West Oxfordshire Youth Needs Assessment** would offer particularly useful insight regarding the youth voice.

Local strengths and assets that support and enable health and wellbeing

A range of themes were identified and explored. Key findings are set out here to frame general perceptions and inform the discussion about improvements needed.

These summaries are predominantly derived from one to one conversation and Focus Group evidence. However, secondary evidence from the community survey is also presented to further inform these findings – complete survey results are available at Appendix 4**.**

The community and social cohesion

In general, respondents noted that the local area was friendly, with nice people and good neighbours, and had positive community spirit. 45% of survey respondents stated that community feeling was something they liked about living in central Witney. At the same time, there was some negative counter-opinion about friendliness.

In addition, most people across all demographics felt that the community was safe. 60% of survey respondents felt very safe during the daytime, although the percentage feeling very safe at night dropped to 16%. Some residents, especially older people, did not go out at night. And some parents stated that they worried about their children, particularly their daughters, when they were out in the community.

It was also felt that the size of Witney in general was manageable (not too large), with the centre and key services within a walkable distance, and had a country feel. Some longstanding residents clearly take pride in their community and how it has evolved with them, while others value Witney's history.

However, others noted that Witney has changed as a result of recent housing development and would continue to do so. There was a perception that continued increases in population may have potentially negative impacts on community interaction and services.

Public realm and transport

There was much positive comment about the value of green and open spaces (and beyond - access to the surrounding countryside was also seen as an asset). 79% of survey respondents stated that green spaces, parks and playparks support health and wellbeing, while 45% stated that *green and open spaces* was something they liked about living in central Witney. The Leys, in particular, is clearly a much-valued outdoors community space.

It was felt that public transport around the town is good, and that the centre is well connected to the outer areas. West Oxfordshire Community Transport was frequently mentioned as an excellent, much-

valued service, especially for allowing older people to easily access the town centre (and other destinations). 65% of survey respondents found it easy/ very easy to get around central Witney.

Local services and amenities, including healthcare and education

The was a general sense that Witney Central was well-served by shops and services and that they met most needs. 90% of survey respondents stated that 'local shops and services' was something they liked about living in central Witney. Some did feel that there were too many pubs and cafes.

Services mentioned as being of particular value include: the community hospital, the Windrush Health Centre, and the library. Valued amenities include the leisure centre, the cinema, and Cogges.

Social and community infrastructure

As set out at section *community action, projects, and initiatives* (above) and at appendix 1, there is a wide range of local groups, courses and classes, community sessions, social and support groups, sports clubs, community venues etc. available in central Witney. It is clear from multiple conversations that many people use and value these. Also, there are a lot of different churches and they are very active, running lots of community activities. 59% of survey respondents *agreed/ completely agreed* that there are places and spaces where people can meet in central Witney.

In terms of specific groups, it was felt there is much available for older people, in particular, with less for younger people (teenagers). There is also good provision for people with learning disabilities at the Integrated Care and Education Centre, based at Langdale Hall in the centre of town, and some support available for children with special educational needs and their families.

Groups mentioned as particularly useful were:

- Oasis coffee group
- The Shed
- Lunch at the Welcome Church in the High Street
- The day centre at Ceewood Hall
- U3A
- Walking groups
- Events at Churches
- MIND
- Meals on wheels
- Home Start and other toddler groups
- Early Help (run by Oxfordshire County Council - Children's Social Care)
- Chatterbox (Age UK Oxfordshire)
- Foodbanks
- Citizen's Advice
- SEND group
- Dementia Club

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Challenges to health and wellbeing and improvements needed

Set out in this section is:

- Further evidence relating to the local assets that support health and wellbeing set out above and how they could be improved.
- Health and wellbeing challenges in relation to specific groups and key themes.
- Specific improvement ideas identified in the research which could build on existing activity and initiatives or to develop new activity.

LOCAL ASSETS THAT SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELLBEING SET OUT ABOVE AND HOW THEY COULD BE IMPROVED

The community and social cohesion

There was some comment about neighbourhood disputes, anti-social behaviour (ASB), and vandalism (Smith's Estate). Drug dealing and drug and alcohol consumption near McDonalds, the astroturf facility, and the Leys was also commented upon. Shoplifting is also an ongoing problem, as is ASB in shops (people making a mess/ being rude to staff). There is also an issue with young people speeding on e-scooters.

Thames Valley Police have ongoing discussions with housing associations and West Oxfordshire District Council about neighbourhood disputes and ASB, the majority of which is youth-related. The issue of missing people was also raised by the Police Community Support officer (PCSO), with someone going missing every couple of days. While most were found, some could be high risk. There are also young people and older people with dementia who have been identified for safeguarding.

In addition, there is a perception that Witney is an affluent area but not everyone is affluent – there are people struggling with poverty (*see cost of living, below*).

In terms of taking part in community discussion and consultations, 44% of survey respondents *did not agree at all* that they feel 'involved in decision making in central Witney', while 36% *did not agree at all* that they are 'part of the local community in central Witney.' Street meetings already take place to allow residents to express their concerns about local issues. **More publicity about when and where these take place may allow more residents to engage.**

Public realm and transport

Transport

While West Oxford Community Transport (WOCT) is an excellent resource, its coverage is limited and its hours of operations are reduced at the weekends and in the evening. 60% of survey respondents support *more frequent bus frequencies or routes*. **There would be value in exploring longer-term sustainability of funding for WOCT and potential extension of services.**

Also, it can take two buses to get to shops outside the town centre or to reach certain areas where community sessions might be taking place (such as Cogges or Madeley Park). This can be especially problematic for older people/ parents with children and buggies etc. The cost of buses can be an issue

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for families struggling financially, particularly if they have children over the age of five who are required to pay a fare.

State of repair of streets and pavements

While it is relatively easy for most people to get around, this is more difficult for those with a wheelchair or mobility scooter of if you are pushing a pram or buggy. There can be access problems with high kerbs and paving in certain areas could be improved. In addition, Market Square can be slippy when it rains. 55% of survey respondents support improved pavements and walking routes.

Some people feel the changes to vehicle access on the High Street have made it more dangerous than it used to be to cross the road. Some commented that cars still drive through the pedestrianised area as there is no enforcement. Potholes were also mentioned as a concern, as was speeding.

Access and inclusivity

It was noted – particularly at Age UK Oxfordshire Chatterbox and The Place – that while tactile paving makes the public realm more accessible for those with visual impairments it creates problems for those with mobility aids (who struggle with the 'bumps'). **A public realm accessibility audit could be useful.**

The provision of additional benches in the town centre so people could sit down and rest would be beneficial. This could be linked to a community project, as happened in Caldecott, Abingdon for example, where the community art team organised decorated benches.

Parks and green spaces

These assets were generally viewed favourably. However, there was a sense that their **general upkeep and cleanliness could be improved and that bins could be more regularly emptied, litter removed etc.**

There was also a feeling from younger children that play equipment was sometimes vandalised/ occupied by older children. In addition, it was suggested that the **Leys recreation ground could be improved by providing baby and toddler play equipment/ soft play area.**

Local services and amenities, including healthcare and education

Healthcare access

A prominent concern was access to a GP and other healthcare services such as an NHS dentist and hospital services. 29% of survey respondents stated that *poor access to healthcare when I need it* made it more difficult to look after themselves/ their household.

There was extensive comment that it is difficult to get an appointment. Online-based systems are intimidating and off-putting for some, with some evidence that people simply give up trying or do not even try. 36% of survey respondents find accessing the health centre or GP *difficult*, while 55% find access *okay*. **Solutions to meet the needs of those disadvantaged/ intimidated by current booking processes should be explored.**

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Fewer services can now be accessed at the community hospital. This affects older people (e.g. no blood pressure checks) and younger parents (e.g. cannot get pregnancy scans and post-natal baby checks). At the same time, access to non-Witney hospitals can be difficult, especially those with limited transport options. This causes anxiety.

Access to leisure and exercise

Comment was made about the cost of the leisure centre, gym and membership of local sports clubs. To this end, **more concessionary/ subsidy schemes could be very helpful** (for example for family swims).

Social and community infrastructure

A range of issues, challenges, and opportunities were raised and discussed in this regard, many of which are overlapping and mutually informing:

Funding, resourcing, and need

The key challenges identified for community groups and organisation are:

- **Lack of volunteers**: not enough to go around and often lots of bureaucratic complexities
- **Adequate support for volunteers**: to improve recruitment and retention)
- **The constant fundraising cycle**: sometimes this leads to competition with other local groups, which is not helpful for collaboration
- **Short termism**: short term funding = short term contracts. This impacts consistency and creates a feeling that the community have been 'abandoned' if a project starts and quickly stops

These are prominent issues for many community-based (or led) groups and organisations. It is clear that most, if not all, are stretched in terms of available time and financial resource and, for those who work with them, the volunteer pipeline is drying up (compounded by the fall-off in community activity with Covid which has still not recovered).

To help tackle the volunteering challenge, a **Witney volunteer drive could be undertaken**, with specific strategies to reach different parts of the community (language and cultural outreach) and different age groups. Such a drive could consider ease of access for volunteers, flexibility of role, why people would want to become volunteers, and time commitment.

There are excellent examples of training, supporting, and developing volunteers which can be shared and the drive could also link into the Volunteer Vision work undertaken by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action and Community First Oxfordshire to learn and feed into best practice.

Shared training

Shared training would be very useful. This might focus on, for example, volunteering, training, health and safety, safeguarding, and funding etc. For many groups, cost is a key concern. Therefore, enabling free, subsidised, or very low-cost training (perhaps on a sliding scale) is very important. Having training in an accessible venue is also key.

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Training and information sharing focused on better measuring success/ impact for health outcomes would be very useful. Beyond the specific training topic, these sessions that bring different community groups together could also offer opportunities to offer peer-to-peer support, share learning, discuss common challenges and opportunities, and develop joint initiatives etc.

At the same time, strong comment was made that it is **important to effectively tell the story of community work and its benefit to individual and community health and wellbeing**. Most often, community work is not focused on one outcome or narrow health measure but is much more complex and multi-faceted with the benefits becoming clear over time.

Linked to this, it is important that **public health agencies (and statutory organisations and service providers) understand the complexity of people's lived experiences and the value of (often) intensive working with different individuals with unique needs**. These interventions may be less obviously *measurable and scalable* but are vital to a more holistic and realistic understanding of how to improve health and wellbeing, which must be directly related to individual need and circumstance.

Peer support group

Discussion among practitioners explored the nature of community development work. This is often solitary, complex, and emotionally-involving. It was felt there would be value in **practitioners coming together occasionally for peer support**. Such networking and support sessions would allow people to share experiences and support each other, while exploring common challenges and opportunities, including potential joint initiatives. **The existing Witney Forum could be developed or hold specific sessions.**

Encouraging more people to take part in health and wellbeing activities

A number of potential solutions were identified:

- **Keep it simple**: no membership, involve everyone in meetings and let people do what they want (they can get involved or just sit and watch).
- **Offer free activities and taster sessions**
- **Get the communication right**: find the right type of communication for the target group and offer accessible information
- **Make it resident-led**: find out what people want, don't do it to them
- **Provide transport to get people to the venue**
- **Use a befriending or buddying system to support new attendees**
- **Offer a creche so parents can take part**
- **Use the community connector approach:** a consistent, known face in the community, building connections and relationships with people and home-visiting

The point was also made that a community development work should also **aim to hand over projects to the community, reducing dependency and developing confidence**, building and releasing skills and capacity by supporting and mentoring residents to 'take over'. This could also facilitate pathways to skills development, education and training, also improving outcomes related to aspiration and mental health.

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69% of survey respondents stated that *free or reduced cost access to events and activities* would help improve health and wellbeing in central Witney. 42% and 47% respectively thought *more community-led activities* and *community events to encourage interest* would improve health and well-being.

Communication

The need for improved communication and publicity in order to spread the word about community groups, sessions, activity etc. was noted. 32% of survey respondents *did not agree at all/ did not agree* that they know where to get information about central Witney.

Various means of communication were referenced but the overall sense was that there is no single solution – multiple methods should be used and it is important (as noted above) to tailor the method/s to the audience/s. A holistic community communication strategy could be very usefully discussed and developed, combining a calendar, noticeboards, leafleting, and technology (websites and social media) and mapping of opportunities to share information by word of mouth.

Venues, access, and inclusivity

Comment was made that venues for community groups to meet within Witney Central can be difficult to find. There are not a lot of options and they can be expensive or have problems with access.

The point was made that while church-based or run activities were valuable, holding activities in a church can be a barrier for some residents. Some also made the point that they felt people were put off from attending certain sessions not held in a church because they perceived that they were church-run. The idea of looking into the **possibility of establishing a community-based owned and run-venue** was offered.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING CHALLENGES: SPECIFIC GROUPS AND KEY THEMES

SPECIFIC GROUPS

Children aged 0-5 and new parents

There was some concern expressed by residents about difficulties in access to Health Visitor support. There are many routes to accessing this support, through a digital/text offer, via telephone, drop-ins and child reviews. However, sometimes residents do not get support when they need it. Therefore, **continued partnership working between organisations, to reach and support families to access help, and continued communication about the support available from health visiting services and community groups, will be valuable**.

In addition, the community-based support for very young children and families is important and valued. Home-Start mentioned how valuable it is to have lots of different agencies working together, such as Health Visitors, Council Officers, Home-Start, and Housing Association Officers encouraging parents, especially young mothers to access community support. This can require effort and persistence, and it can be difficult (and take a very long time in some cases) to persuade vulnerable individuals in particular to come to groups and sessions. Some also feel a stigma about doing so.

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Increased support and resource for such community-based services could allow more people to be reached.

An additional challenge is ensuring consistency in service across holiday periods, which requires funding and resourcing.

Extensive comment was also made about impact of the pandemic on pre-school children. Many lacked social contact and are now behind in language and development skills. This was exacerbated by a lack of play and contact with other children, impacting socialisation skills. Physical development was also impacted negatively. For example, some children are wearing nappies for significantly longer than expected, with implications for readiness for school.

Younger people

Younger children (6-11) at a local primary school expressed the general opinion that there was lots for their age group to do. However, a frequent observation across the research from organisations as well as many residents is that **more activities and groups for older children/ teenagers are needed**. It was also noted that sports memberships/ paid sports are often unaffordable for young people.

Such a lack of social, recreational etc. opportunities are likely contributing to issues of anti-social behaviour among young people noted elsewhere in this report. Also, young people often tend to congregate in certain locations, such as sitting under The Buttercross. This indicates that there is no other place to go but also that, by coming together in that location, a safe space to meet is important. It was suggested that a **drop-in space would be very useful, somewhere where there are support professionals that young people can talk to about various concerns** (there was a space of this type available until a few years ago).

This situation is being further exacerbated by an increase in mental health issues for young people since the pandemic, such as social anxiety. In recognition of this challenge, a new school team has been set up by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Henry Box school. Comment was also made regarding some young people stopping attending school during the pandemic and simply not going back. A lack of aspiration was also noted by some, which is likely negatively affected by wider life experience and family situations noted elsewhere in this report.

For organisations that work with young people, such as Aspire, it is a challenge to get young people 'over the threshold.' Anxiety, isolation, and lack of confidence mean that effective engagement is long-term process, built on trust and 'going at the speed' of the young person. **More activities and services are needed, and the most effective practice in this regard is that activities are designed and led by young people themselves**.

Sanctuary Housing noted that there is not much for young people to do on Smith's Estate. They are talking to The Station and the Witney Bicycle Project about outreach to the estate.

In terms of specific health concerns, vaping was a regular topic of discussion. Children spoken to at a local primary school are aware of vaping shops and noted that some put toys in the window to attract children. They are also aware of older children using vapes and reports of parents buying vapes for their children, which raises the risk of the normalisation of behaviour. Those who work with young people also strongly expressed their concern about vaping and how this may lead on to more harmful

behaviours. **It was felt that more education about vaping risks for young people and parents was needed.**

There was also general feeling from young people that they are not asked their opinion about community matters and that others speak for them.

Older people

Several health and wellbeing challenges have been noted in this report. As well as mobility and access concerns, for example, related to the poor state of repair of pavements and roads, loneliness and isolation was mentioned frequently.

It is clear that even among those who attend groups that isolation was a concern. For some, attending a coffee morning or weekly session was their only social contact. Some were suffering with grief. However, people also stated that they were sure there were many others who were isolated yet were not accessing any community group/ support. This strong sense of hidden need was shared by community workers. Some may wish to engage and others may not, but the first challenge was identifying them.

The cost-of-living crisis and the removal of the winter fuel payment (linked to some just missing out on pension credit) were also prominent concerns (*discussed below*).

Those with special educational needs

There was extensive discussion regarding rising special educational and neurodivergent support needs and a lack in available support, including getting an educational healthcare plan. Several observers commented that there are many families in Witney Central who are not being supported and that helping the families navigate support and helping them through the process is very complex, and often stressful. MIND has developed a SEND course, developed by staff who have experience of navigating the systems. **This course could be adopted by other groups or MIND brought in to facilitate the course in other spaces such as they are doing in Kidlington**.

The weekly SEND group for parents/ carers is a very useful support group (also offering links to other organisations and services, and sometimes speakers). However, it seems clear **that additional support services for both children, young people and parents/ carers are required, including a neurodiversity group**.

Those with physical, learning or wellbeing needs

For those with physical, learning or wellbeing needs, 'Wheels for All' at Wood Green school offers inclusive cycling sessions for those with physical, learning or wellbeing needs. There are also dedicated sessions available at Windrush Leisure Centre for swimming and multi sports.

However, outside of these it is impossible for their people to join in with mainstream leisure/sports activities as venues don't have the resources to provide the additional support that people would need. This has a negative impact on breaking down barriers for disabled people and promoting the mainstreaming of disabled needs.

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Witney hosts a large asylum hostel, just outside the southern boundary of the research area. Some 200 individuals are currently resident there.

While access to local health services is generally good, a lack of money (individuals are given a £9.20 per week 'allowance') is a major challenge. People struggle with paying for public transport, and it is almost impossible to afford leisure activities such as swimming. Spare money, if there is any, tends to be spent on supplementing food, the meals which are delivered to the hostel being almost universally seen by interviewees as poor quality and offering poor choice. In the hostel, there are no cooking facilities other than one microwave and many residents use the community fridge. In addition, until an individual gets leave to remain it is extremely difficult to volunteer or work locally.

Health and wellbeing challenges from these issues include boredom (a sense of being 'stuck', unable to get to know the local area by visiting other places), frustration (being unable to contribute or get more genuinely involved in local life and society), and specific health issues related to inadequate or inappropriate diet. There is also some evidence of hostility towards asylum seekers from local residents.

Anxiety is a common concern, stemming from the arbitrary nature of the asylum system whereby someone can be given an eviction notice and told they are being moved to another part of the country with very little notice. This is particularly disturbing to children, who have started school locally, made friends, and now have to begin again somewhere else.

Ideas and potential initiatives to address these concerns included **free bus passes for asylum seekers**, as in Oxford, **subsidised access to the sports and leisure facilities**, and **access to cooking facilities at the hostel**.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Three prominent themes and challenges in the community conversations relevant to the wider context were the following:

Cost-of-living

As can be seen from the one to one conversation and focus group summaries, there was much sustained comment on this theme. It is clear that individuals across all demographics have been affected by rising prices, inflation, and energy costs, although some have been affected more than others. 59% of survey respondents stated that (lack of) income made it more difficult to look after themselves.

The cost of heating was mentioned specifically by MIND and Sanctuary Housing as a major issue, while the removal of the winter fuel payment was a significant concern for Age UK Oxfordshire. Aspire noted that many young people are struggling with their budgets and that many use food charities. A degree of stoicism was noted, particularly among older people, a sense of 'you just need to get on with it.' However, it is clear that the multiple impacts of rising prices and costs is a significant driver of anxiety.

There have been impacts on the ability of resident's to heating their homes. This is resulting in colder, more damp and mouldy homes which has obvious health risks, especially for children (as some people

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specifically noted). The ability to afford good, healthy food is also impacted and there has been an increase in the use/ referrals to the foodbank. At the same time, there has recently been a decrease in the amount of food available to food charities, which is linked both to a lack of supply but an increase in demand. Responding to this increase in demand, very recent discussions have been progressed which will extend foodbank support in the community.

Citizen's Advice (CA) noted that the top four issues that people approach them require support with are: benefits issues; debt; housing; and employment. Navigating people through the Personal Independence Payment process is also a significant and likely soon to be growing task as eligibility rules are further tightened. CA also noted that demand for its services rose during the pandemic and has remained at that level ever since.

Assistance with budgeting skills (support sessions) was mentioned as a very useful means to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Housing

Housing-related concerns were a common thread in discussions.

Young people talked about challenges with the cost of housing (rental costs) and access to affordable housing. Social housing tenants referenced increased rents and the state of repair of their homes (sometimes related to cost-of-living issues such as being unable to afford to put the heating on, leading to cold and damp houses). Homeowners also expressed concerns. Cost, for example, was making it difficult to afford repairs and adequately heat homes.

Sanctuary Housing Association is the main registered provider on Smith's Estate. Here, challenges include the age of the housing stock and related maintenance issues. The social mix on the estate can also cause complexities and conflict (agency efforts to better manage social conflict have been noted above). There are a number of older residents who were former Smiths (local factory) employees who have lived on the estate for a long time, plus newer residents, some of whom have complex needs, for example single parent families with children with SEND needs, including developmental delay, autism, and ADHD. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease is an issue for many tenants, exacerbated by an inability to properly heat their property. Sanctuary's hardship fund is well-subscribed.

One to one conversations on the estate with older people noted a lack of interaction between longer-standing and newer residents, particularly a gulf between older and younger generations. There was little confidence expressed that the community could benefit from whole community activities to bring people together. Sanctuary also noted that there have been mixed successes from holding community events, with limited participation.

Researchers also spoke to homeless residents. There is no emergency accommodation in Witney so people often camp in the woods and beg during the day. The PCSO noted increased numbers of individuals begging (not organised groups). It is clearly extremely challenging to secure housing, with a lack of available rooms to meet demand, which tend to be allocated very swiftly. To bid for a room you need to have a phone but if you do not have a place to live it can be challenging to keep it charged. There is therefore a risk of missing out.

As noted elsewhere this report, mental health issues, loneliness, and other conditions were frequent reference points across all demographic groups in one to one conversations and focus groups. In general, there is a sense that there has been an increase in mental health issues since the pandemic and compounded by the cost-of-living crisis.

At the same time, 65% of survey respondents stated that the pandemic had *no particular impact* on their mental health. What seems clear, however, is that mental health issues are more prevalent among certain groups.

Challenges for young people in relation to social anxiety and isolation have been explored above, with the PCSO noting incidences of suicide among young men. Loneliness, isolation, and bereavement among older residents has also been noted with isolation among older people noted as a major concern by Volunteer Link Up and Age UK Oxfordshire (which runs a monthly bereavement group). A lack of trauma support was also identified as a gap in Witney based mental health services. **The provision/ extension of specialist support for those suffering from grief and trauma would be beneficial**.

For residents across other demographic groups, while mental health *problems* were not regularly mentioned directly, a common comment was that 'exercise was good for mental health.'

Different community groups discussed their work with and support for those with mental health difficulties. The Shed work with a lot of men with learning disabilities, mental health issues, and dementia etc. MIND work with those affected by disabilities, long term health conditions, lack of mobility and unemployment, all of which can have negative impacts on mental wellbeing. It was also noted (Citizen's Advice) that those with mental health challenges often struggle to manage money. This creates a vicious circle.

There is some confusion with regards mental health provision. MIND is challenged with filling options appointments which enable people to access their services as a result of the 'media portraying that mental health services are on their knees' and 'people thinking that there are others who are worse off'. Uptake of MIND workshops in the community is also difficult despite using 'wellbeing' instead of 'mental health', and sessions being free and held in the community.

There is also more choice which can be confusing e.g. Keystone, Talking Spaces, Primary Care. The crossover with primary care is making it harder for GPs to know where to signpost. **More positive promotion of services is needed, opportunities for liaison with GPs and potentially providing support within existing group activities.**

Much like in relation to supporting young people, **a drop-in space open to all residents, with professionals on hand to offer support about mental health and other concerns was suggested.** There is a provision provided by Keystone at the Nuffield Health Centre but these are assigned appointments and so further provision could be considered and perhaps a community based location is needed.

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Recommendations

Recommendations have been clustered by key themes explored in the discussion of findings in previous sections.

It should be added that many of the recommendations should not be viewed or discussed in isolation: there is much overlap in theme and content, and discussions should emphasise the need for a holistic, strategic approach and design.

This discussion and recommendations set out below do not exist in a vacuum. While much has been identified in regard to community needs, wider and more deeply rooted long-term socio-economic indicators and the challenges of the current fiscal climate must also be recognised. As will be clear from the Data Profile for the Witney Central Insight Profile, the community has significant socio-economic issues and challenges across a range of indicators, many deep-rooted and structural.

In addition, while the value of community-based activity being undertaken in Witney Central is evident and potential initiatives to support, widen, and deepen volunteer and community-led activity have been identified, there is only so much that these groups – constricted in so many ways by funding, time, and the pool of available volunteers – can continue to achieve and deliver, and be expected to achieve and deliver, in a context which rightly makes a virtue of voluntary and community-based activity but often does not provide the resource to maximise the potential of that activity.

Healthcare, access, and inclusivity

Recommendations	
1. Access to healthcare: discussions to explore improvements to local services	Community steering group to seek discussions at a strategic level with service providers to explore solutions to key issues. These include: - More availability of health visitor support in the community, including more community-based services and drop ins. - Increased availability of ante-natal support and support for new parents, especially mothers. This could be intergenerational support - older mothers with grown up families sharing their experience with young mums. - Improving appointment systems to meet the needs of older residents/ residents with learning difficulties who struggle with or are intimidated by with online systems - Introduction of maternity support at the community hospital
2. Community-based mental health and associated health and wellbeing initiatives	Community steering group to discuss improved support, including: - Consistent funding for existing services such as Aspire and MIND to deliver support services, plus investigation into additional funding to provide extended support services,

	which may include: one to one and group support sessions at community venues (including schools); informal drop in support at set times in different venues and; offering workshops to existing groups. - Positive promotion of community services and their capability to counteract negative media publicity - More clarity about community-based services for GPs - Drop in space for those seeking support/ someone to talk to, with possible collaboration with Keystone to extend their drop-ins to Witney in a community-based location - Developing arts-based initiatives and opportunities to support health and wellbeing (via Oxford Health Arts Partnership)
3. Additional support for SEND and neurodiverse needs	Community steering group to seek discussions with key partners on: - Improved and extended community-based support for those with SEND and neurodiverse needs (including parents and carers), including setting up new groups - Possible roll-out of MIND SEND training in other locations
4. An 'Local inclusivity and accessibility information campaign and audit'	Community steering group to seek discussions with relevant partners: - An audit of accessibility (pavements/ tactile paving/ kerbs etc). in relation the needs of different users - Access to the leisure centre for those with disabilities and on low incomes - Opportunities considered for those with disabilities to volunteer in the community to promote understanding - An information campaign with shops/ services to raise understanding about better meeting the needs of those with mobility aids

Community and integration

Recommendations	
1. Develop a holistic, community-wide communication strategy	Community steering group to discuss: - Shared resources - Most effective ways of reaching community and target groups (hyper-local approaches) - Economies of scale regarding publicity and outreach
2. Extend community development worker support	Community steering group to discuss: - Totality of available community development support

	- Opportunities to join up initiatives and help facilitate improved links between local organisations and agencies, build bridges with residents (especially those at disadvantage) etc. - Possibility of new community connector/ community development resource
3. Anti-Social Behaviour initiatives	Community steering group to seek discussions with relevant partners regarding: - Approaching ASB concerns holistically. This may include additional police support, more support for young people, and introducing more street meetings to allow residents to voice concerns (based on the current Thames Valley Police model)
4. Extend community development activity on Smith's Estate	Community steering group to: - Arrange a Smith's Estate Forum with relevant partners to explore holistic strategies and opportunities to extend community development support/ events/ initiatives focused on improving health and wellbeing and improving community cohesion. This may include opportunities for intergenerational activities
5. Warm Spaces publicity campaign	To highlight to the community the location of all available warm spaces.
6. Extension of food bank offer	Consider adding a clothing and hygiene bank to food bank offer

Supporting community-based groups and organisations

Recommendations

1. Improve joint-working and networking	Community steering group to use existing networks to: - Explore ideas for community activity suggested by the research and how to potentially deliver - Map existing activity to identify gaps and crossovers in key themes, complement existing activity, avoid duplication, identify new provision etc. - Facilitate joint-activity (potentially theme-based steering groups) and funding bids - Explore common themes, challenges, opportunities and solutions (e.g. volunteering, safeguarding, training) - Identify where innovations such as creche/ childcare facilities could most usefully be made available to allow

	better access to community activities for parents and carers
2. Improve grant application processes and explore longer-term funding	Community steering group to work with local partners to: - Discuss ways and means to simplify grant/ funding application processes - Extend 1-year funding agreements to multi-year arrangements
3. Explore funding opportunities to support extended community action	Town Council to set up joint-discussions with District and County Councils and Housing Associations to explore sources and levels of available funding (for example, Section 106 and future Community Infrastructure Levy developer contributions, and also the use of Town Council funds.
4. Launch a Witney Volunteer Drive	Discussion between local partners using existing networks to launch a volunteering drive.

Community action: meeting identified needs

Recommendations	
1. Additional support for young people and improved engagement: liaison with Youth Council, safe spaces, and access to support workers	Community steering group to discuss improvement to engagement with children and young people and additional resource, including: - Liaison with Youth Council to facilitate young people involvement in discussions - More youth workers, to provide additional support sessions based on discussion of needs with young people - Identification of a potential 'safe space' for young people to meet
2. Additional support for asylum seekers: transport and exercise	Community steering group to discuss initiatives with key community partners (including Asylum Welcome) regarding: - Free bus passes for asylum seekers - Subsided access to leisure/ sports facilities - Extension of cooking facilities at the hostel

Community action: improving resiliency and developing skills

Recommendations	
1. Introduce community-based Life Skills sessions	Community steering group to discuss resourcing and running a regular programme of community-based support sessions. These might focus on, for example:

	- Household budgeting - Cooking and nutrition - Energy saving - Benefits advice - Parenting advice - Mental health coping strategies/ mental health first aid - Personal development – confidence building/ developing resilience etc. Efforts should also be made to explore how relevant sessions could be led by local residents.
2. Extend befriending and community transport initiatives	Community steering group to discuss opportunities to extend existing befriending (including home visiting) and community transport support to reach more isolated residents and encourage access to community support.
3. Seek new partnership connections to support and extend innovation in community health and wellbeing	Community steering group to develop connections with the Buck Project which will be running an 'Intelligent Kindness Project in the Abingdon, Didcot and Witney areas over the course of the next two years.'

Public realm, environment, and transport

Recommendations	
1. Local environment/ streetscape improvement discussion	Community steering group to seek discussions and link into existing projects with relevant partners regarding: - Improvement of litter issues (such as regular community-led litter picks, Leys Clean-Up) - Improvements to management of verges and trees etc. - Introduction of new benches in the town centre (potentially via a community art project) - Improvements to state of repair of pavements and roads
2. Public transport improvement discussion	Community steering group to discuss sustainable funding strategies with West Oxfordshire Community Transport to achieve the long-term viability of the existing service and potential extension of services.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Local Groups, Organisations and Assets

Appendix 2 – Research Questions

Appendix 3 – Witney Central Community Survey

Appendix 4 – Witney Central Community Survey Results

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Community Data Profile for Witney Central

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List of Tables

Compiled by the Public Health Intelligence Team at Oxfordshire County Council

1 Summary of findings

Population and housing

- According to the latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) population estimates (mid-2022) the Witney Central Community Insight area had a resident population of 5,703 residents.
- Between the 2011 and 2021 Census surveys, the resident population of the Witney Central Community Insight area increased by 22%. This was more than double the West Oxfordshire increase of 9%.
- The population by broad age in the Witney Central Community Insight area grew between 2011 and 2021, with a 25% increase in children, a 24% increase in working-aged people, and a 15% increase in people aged 60 and over.
- The proportion of social rented housing in the Witney Central Community Insight area (39%) was more than double the average for West Oxfordshire (13%) and Oxfordshire (15%).

Health

- The prevalence of hypertension, obesity, depression and osteoporosis among GP patients reported from the two GP practices located in or close to the Witney Central Community Insight area, were well above the NHS Oxfordshire and NHS England average.
- 2 out of 32 local health and wellbeing indicators from the Witney Central (MSOA[1]), were ranked as worse than the England average. These were:
    - Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 years
    - Emergency hospital admissions for self-harm (All ages)
- The proportion of adults receiving structured treatment for drugs or alcohol in the Witney Central Community Insight Area was higher (worse than) the Oxfordshire average.
- The rate of people per 1,000 population (16+ years) who are entitled to claim personal independent payment due to mental health in the Witney Central Community Insight area remained higher than the rate for Oxfordshire since March 2021.

Employment

- A much higher percentage of people in employment in the Witney Central Community Insight area were in the (generally lower paid) caring, leisure, sales, process, and elementary occupations.
- A quarter of the residents in the Witney Central Community Insight area were retired and this is similar to the average for West Oxfordshire.

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[1] Middle Layer Super Output Area, 87 in Oxfordshire, average population of 7600

Poverty and deprivation

- According to the 2021 Census, the Witney Central Community Insight area has a higher proportion of households classified as deprived at 55% than the averages for West Oxfordshire at 43% and Oxfordshire at 44%.
- The Witney Central Community Insight Area has a higher proportion than average of residents living in poverty compared with Oxfordshire for the following:
    - A higher proportion of working aged residents were claiming unemployment-related benefits.
    - Higher rates of child poverty and of pupils eligible for free school meals.
    - A higher rate of older people in poverty and claiming pension credit.
- The Witney Central Community Insight area has a lower proportion of households estimated to be in fuel poverty compared with the Oxfordshire average. However, one small area within the Witney Central Community Insight area has a much higher proportion of households estimated to be in fuel poverty compared with Oxfordshire average.

Figure 1 Indicators of low income[2]
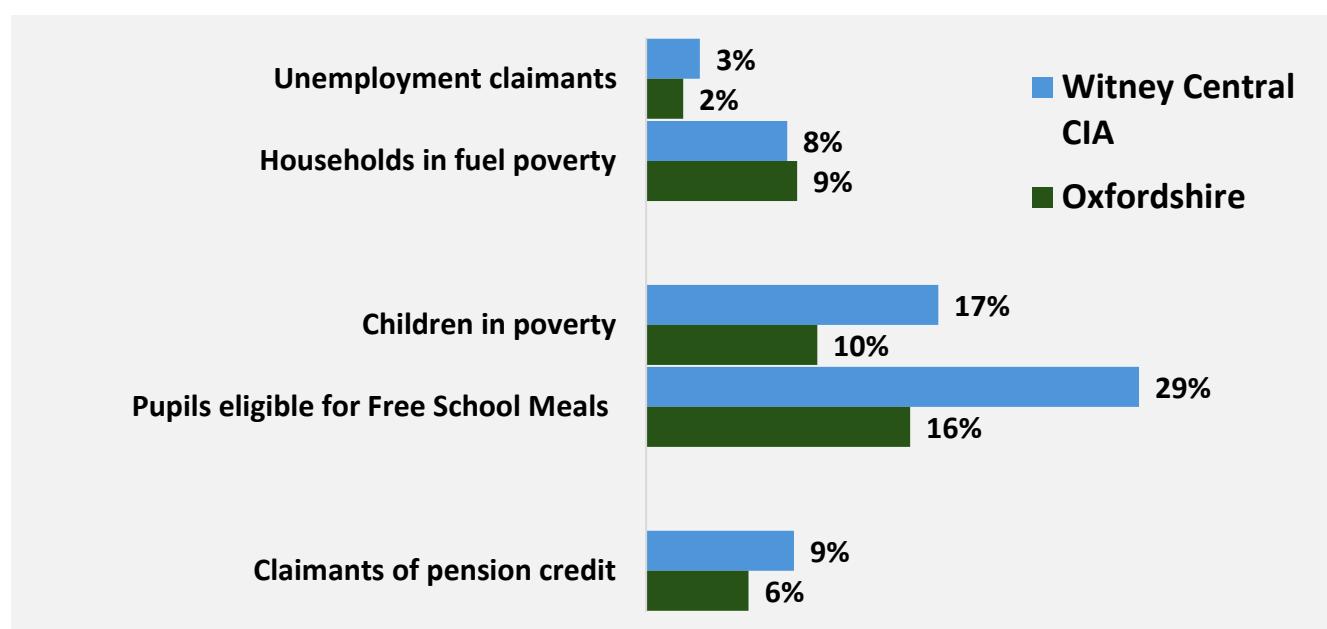
Crime and community safety

- For the period 2022, the overall rate of crime in the Witney central (MSOA[1]) area was higher than the Oxfordshire average.

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[2] Sources: DWP claimant count December 2024 from nomisweb.co.uk, Claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, based on administrative data from the benefits system; Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2022 Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, fuel poverty refers to households living in a property with fuel energy efficiency rating of band D or below as well as households which after paying their energy bill to heat their home the residual income is below the official poverty line; Child poverty from DWP statXplore, children aged 0-15, 2022/23; FSM from January 2024 pupil census, Oxfordshire County Council; Pension credit (May 2024) from DWP statXplore as of February 2025 .

Access to green space

- Mapping by Natural England shows that the Witney Central Community Insight area is surrounded by accessible natural green and blue spaces including woodland, playing fields and other sports facilities.

2   Introduction

This profile provides an overview of facts and figures about the Witney Central Community Insight area.

Witney Town is situated to the west of the West Oxfordshire District and is 15 miles west of Oxford city.

The Witney Central Community Insight area included in this profile is based on a geographical area built from three Lower Layer Super Output Areas[3] (LSOA, 2021 boundaries) (see Figure 2), focusing on the areas just outside the high street surrounding the town centre. Going forward this area will be referred to in this profile as the Witney Central Community Insight area or Witney Central CIA. Please see Annex 2 for further detail on why this boundary was selected.

Figure 2 Map showing Lower Super Output Areas selected for the Witney Central CIA
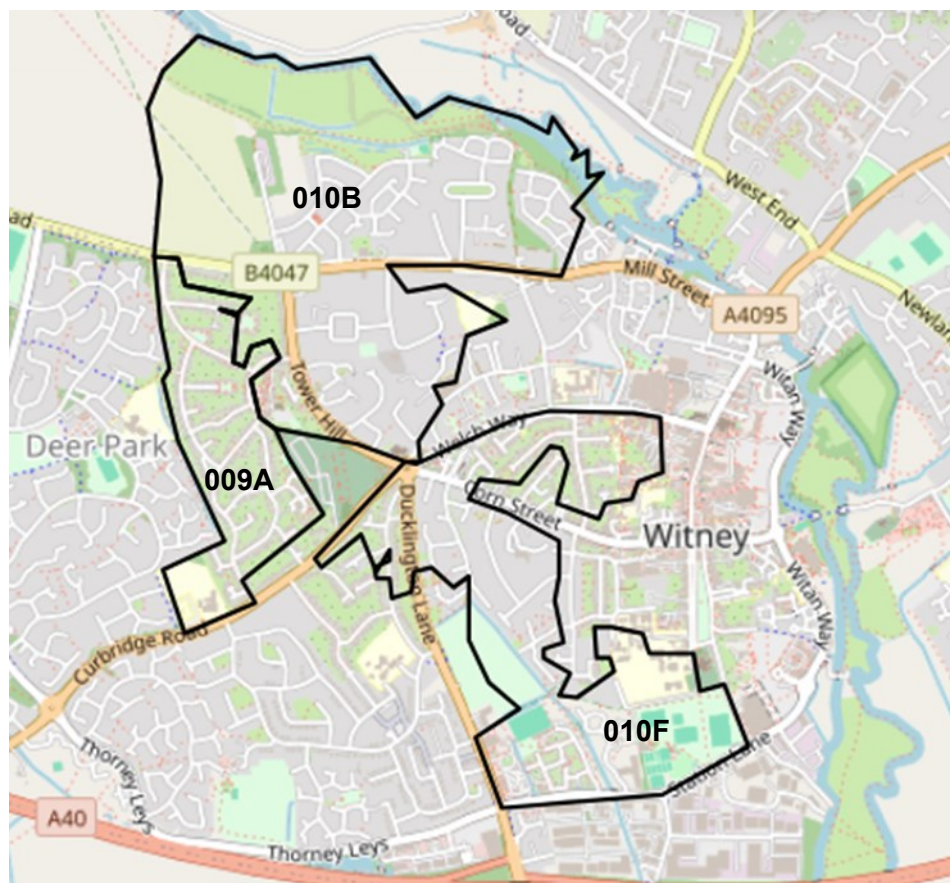
Maps from www.nomisweb.co.uk

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[3] **Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs):** 428 in Oxfordshire with an average of 1,700 residents. Between 4 - 6 LSOAs combine into an MSOA

Data for the Witney Central Community Insight area profile is drawn from:

- Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs): West Oxfordshire 009A, 010B and 010F.
- The Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA) Witney West and Witney Central, (West Oxfordshire 009 and 010 respectively). Data presented at these larger geographies should be interpreted with slight caution as they cover an area larger than the Witney Central Community Insight area and this may skew the data, hiding inequalities and challenges.

Where relevant, data for the Witney Central Community Insight area is compared with West Oxfordshire District, Oxfordshire County and the England averages.

The following maps show the three Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which cover the Witney Central Community Insight Area. An LSOA contains on average 650 households.

Figure 3 Maps showing LSOAs associated with the Witney Central Community Insight area

Maps from www.nomisweb.co.uk

Figure 4 Maps showing West Oxfordshire 009 – Witney West MSOAs and the LSOA within.
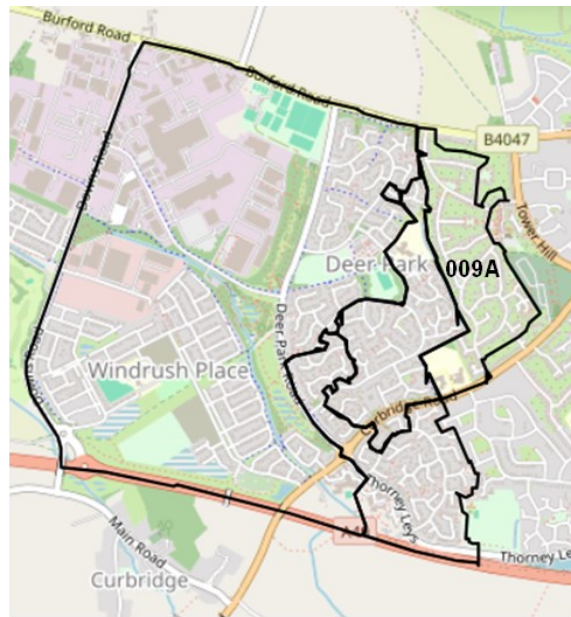
Maps from www.nomisweb.co.uk

Figure 5: Maps showing West Oxfordshire 010 – Witney Central MSOAs and the LSOAs within
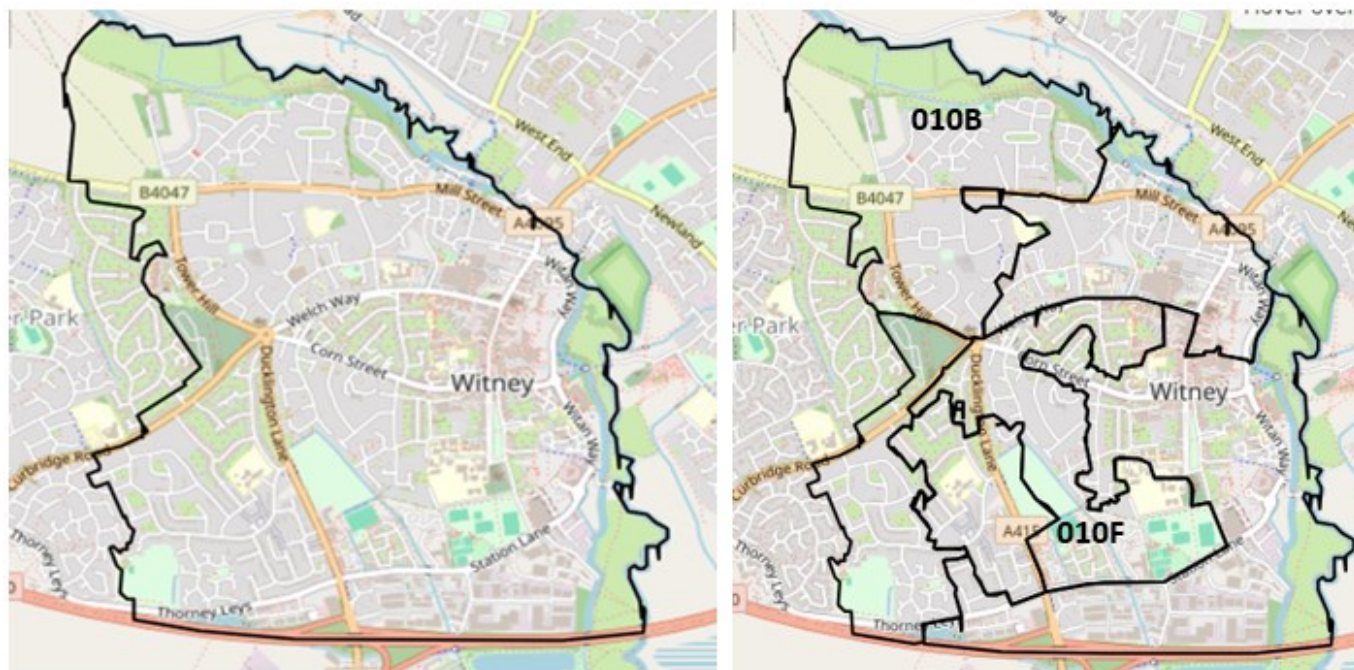
For reference, the table below shows the total resident population of the different geographical areas covering Witney and the Witney Central Community Insight area for this profile.

Table 1 Comparison of total resident population of the Witney area by levels of geography

Area	Source	Total count of residents
Witney Central Community Insight Area (from LSOAs)	ONS Census 2021	5,705
LSOA West Oxfordshire 009A	ONS Census 2021	1,466
LSOA West Oxfordshire 010B	ONS Census 2021	2,327
LSOAs West Oxfordshire 010F	ONS Census 2021	1,912
MSOA West Oxfordshire 009 - (Witney West)	ONS Census 2021	7,087
MSOA West Oxfordshire 010 - (Witney Central)	ONS Census 2021	10,769

3   Census 2021 profile

The following Census 2021 profile for the Witney Central Community Insight area shows that the area was **above** the Oxfordshire average for:

- Young residents (0 to 14 years old) (21% vs 17%)
- People from a White ethnic background (94% vs 87%)
- People living in social rented households (38% vs 15%)
- People's occupation:
  - Semi-routine occupations (15% vs 10%)
  - Routine (16% vs 10%)
- People who have never worked or are long-term unemployed (7% vs 5%).

And the proportion of the Witney Central Community Insight area was **below** the Oxfordshire average for:

- People in employment (55% vs 61%)
- Owns a home with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership (24% vs 31%)

Figure 6 Census 2021 profile of the Witney Central Community Insight area

Witney Central Community Insight area

Area map

Number of households

2,400
households

288,100 households in Oxfordshire
Rounded to the nearest 100 households

Household size
■ Witney Central Community Insight area
▮ (Oxfordshire)

1 person in household **30.1%** (27.1%)

2 people in household **32.8%** (35.7%)

3 people in household **17.5%** (16.5%)

4 or more people in household **19.6%** (20.7%)

% of all households

Household composition
■ Witney Central Community Insight area
▮ (Oxfordshire)

One person household **30.0%** (27.1%)

Single family household **63.1%** (65.4%)

Other household types **6.9%** (7.4%)

% of all households

Household deprivation
■ Witney Central Community Insight area
▮ (Oxfordshire)

Household is not deprived in any dimension **45.0%** (55.9%)

Household is deprived in one dimension **34.9%** (31.7%)

Household is deprived in two dimensions **16.0%** (10.1%)

Household is deprived in three dimensions **4.0%** (2.1%)

Household is deprived in four dimensions **0.2%** (0.1%)

% of all households

Tenure of household
■ Witney Central Community Insight area
▮ (Oxfordshire)

Owns outright **28.6%** (33.8%)

Owns with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership **23.6%** (31.3%)

Social rented **38.0%** (14.7%)

Private rented or lives rent free **9.8%** (20.2%)

% of all households

From [Build a custom area profile – Census 2021, ONS](#)

Figure 7 Census 2021 profile of the Witney Central Community Insight area continued

Witney Central Community Insight area

Population

5,700

people

725,300 people in Oxfordshire

Rounded to the nearest 100 people

Age profile

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

— (Oxfordshire)

0 years   85+

% of all people, 5 year age bands

Ethnic group

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

▎(Oxfordshire)

Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh **1.9%** (6.4%)

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African **0.6%** (2.1%)

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups **2.4%** (3.1%)

White **93.9%** (86.9%)

Other ethnic group **1.1%** (1.6%)

% of all people

Disability

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

▎(Oxfordshire)

Disabled under the Equality Act **20.2%** (14.5%)

Not disabled under the Equality Act **79.8%** (85.5%)

% of all people

Economic activity status

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

▎(Oxfordshire)

Economically active: In employment **55.1%** (61.3%)

Economically active: Unemployed **2.5%** (2.4%)

Economically inactive **42.4%** (36.3%)

% of people aged 16 years and over

Socio-economic Classification (NS-SeC)

■ Witney Central Community Insight area

▎(Oxfordshire)

L1, L2 and L3: Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations **11.2%** (18.4%)

L4, L5 and L6: Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations **18.6%** (21.5%)

L7: Intermediate occupations **11.9%** (10.8%)

L8 and L9: Small employers and own account workers **10.1%** (10.1%)

L10 and L11: Lower supervisory and technical occupations **6.1%** (5.0%)

L12: Semi-routine occupations **15.1%** (9.5%)

L13: Routine occupations **15.6%** (9.8%)

L14.1 and L14.2: Never worked and long-term unemployed **7.1%** (5.0%)

L15: Full-time students **4.2%** (9.8%)

% of people aged 16 years and over

From [Build a custom area profile – Census 2021, ONS](#)

4 Population and housing

4.1 Population and population growth

According to the latest ONS mid-year population estimate for mid-2022, the total resident population of the Witney Central Community Insight area is 5,703. This is similar to the population count for the ONS 2021 Census of 5,705.

The population in the Witney Central Community Insight area grew by 22% between 2011 and 2021, well above the average increase for West Oxfordshire of 9%, Oxfordshire of 11%, and England of 7%.

The population of the Witney Central Community Insight area has increased for each of the broad age groups.

- The change in the Witney Central Community Insight area population by broad age shows that the age groups 0-19 and 20-59 have increased considerably compared with West Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire and England. The older age population (60+) has increased also but is below West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire in comparison.

Figure 8 Population changes between Census 2011 and Census 2021
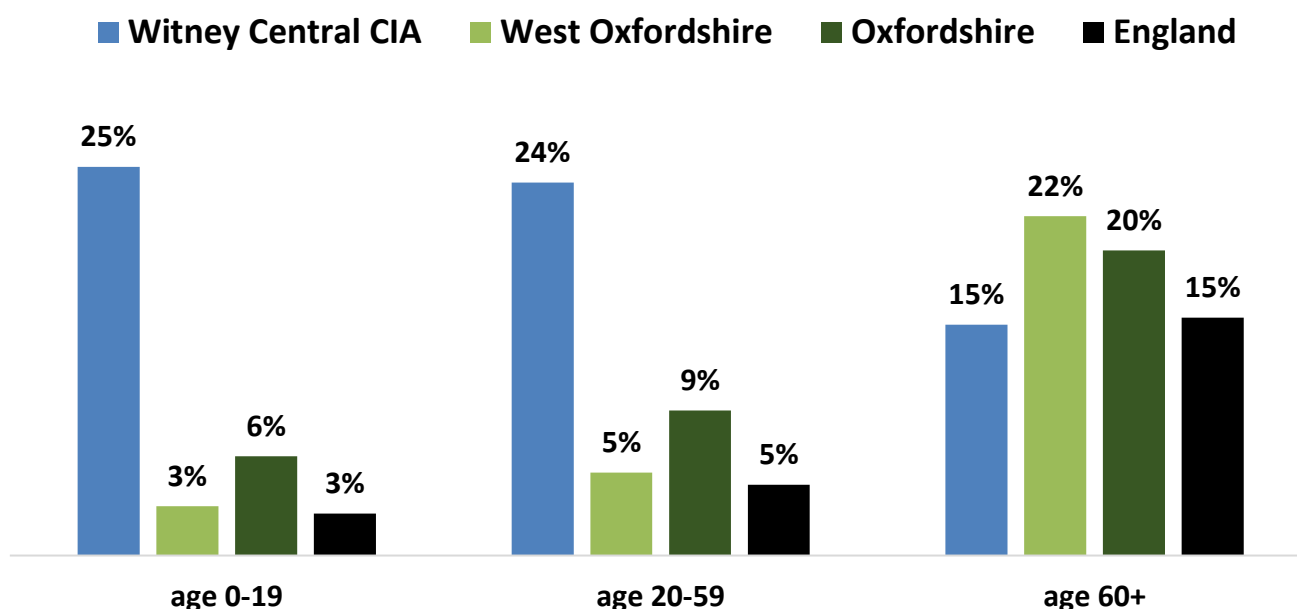
Source: ONS Census 2011 table KS102EW and Census 2021 table TS001 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

4.2 Population by age

As of Mid-2022, the Witney Central Community Insight area (CIA) had a higher proportion of young people (aged 0 to 15 years) than West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire averages. The proportion of older people (aged 85+) in the Witney Central Community Insight area was higher than the West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire averages.

Figure 9 Proportion of the population in the area by broad age band, Witney Central Community Insight area vs West Oxfordshire District and Oxfordshire County (Census 2021)
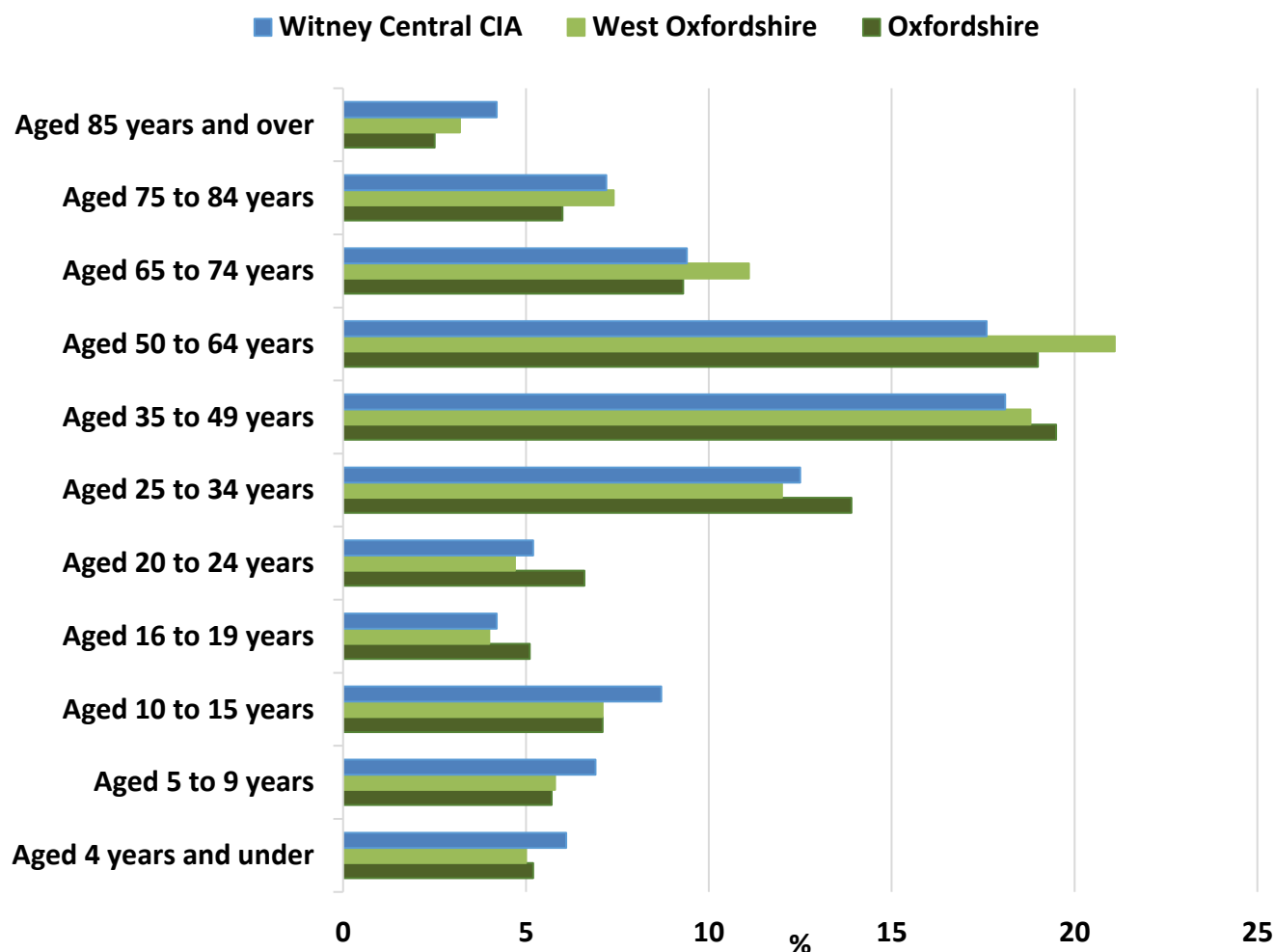
Sources: Source: ONS Census 2021 table TS007B - Age by broad age bands from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

4.3 Ethnicity

The most recent data on the ethnicity of the resident population is from the 2021 Census. At the time of the Census, 94% of residents in the Witney Central Community Insight area identified as White, this is lower than the district (95%) and above the county average (87%).

The percentage of the Mixed ethnic group was slightly higher in the Witney Central Community Insight area (3%) than West Oxfordshire (2%) and similar to the Oxfordshire average (3%).

Table 2 Resident population by ethnic group (2021)

	Witney Central CIA		West Oxfordshire		Oxfordshire	
Asian	114	2%	1,936	2%	46,389	6%
Black	38	1%	722	1%	14,883	2%
Mixed or Multiple	144	3%	2,141	2%	22,611	3%
White	5,345	94%	108,773	95%	630,054	87%
Other ethnic group	59	1%	664	1%	11,357	2%
Total: All usual residents	5,700		114,236		725,294	

Source: ONS Census 2021 table TS021 - Ethnic group from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Between 2011 and 2021 Census, there was an increase in the number of residents in the Witney Central CIA from all ethnic backgrounds.

The percentage change by ethnic group was: White (19%), Mixed (100%), Asian (36%), Black (6%) and Other (883.3%).

Figure 8 Change in population count in the Witney Central Community Insight area by broad ethnic group, Census 2011 to 2021

Source: ONS Census 2011 table KS201UK and 2021 table TS021 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

4.4 Housing

According to the Census 2021, the proportion of households in social rented accommodation in the Witney Central Community Insight area (39%) was well above the average for West Oxfordshire District and Oxfordshire County average (13% and 15% respectively).

Figure 9 Percentage of households in the Witney Central Community Insight area, West Oxfordshire District and Oxfordshire County by tenure
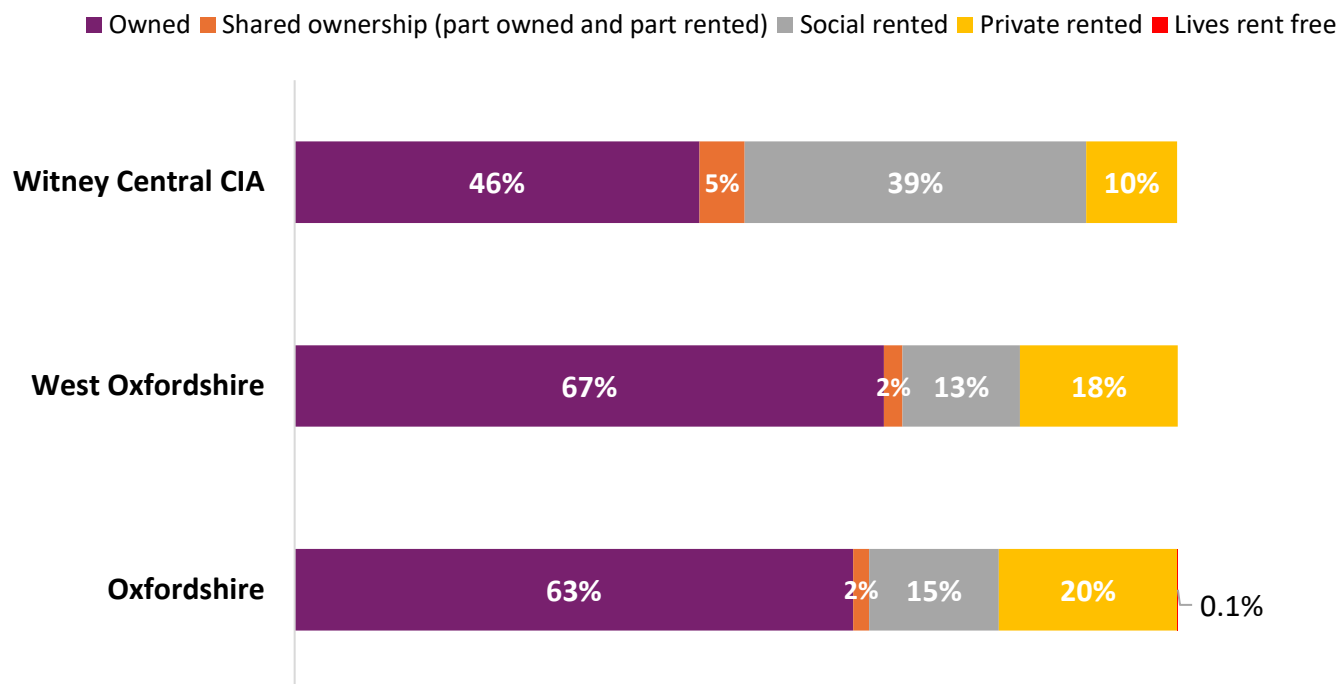
Source: ONS Census 2021 table TS054 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

5 Health and Wellbeing

5.1 Location of GPs for Witney Central Community Insight area

The following map shows the locations of the two GPs surgeries and the shaded areas indicates the walking distances from these GPs for the surrounding lower super output areas (LSOAs) within the wider Witney area.

NB: The areas circled on the map are the 3 LSOAs which make up the Witney Central Community Insight area.
Windrush Medical Practice is just outside the Witney Central Community Insight area.

Figure 10 Map showing GP surgeries in the Witney Central Community Insight area within 30 minutes' walking distance

Source: SHAPE - Shape

5.2 Summary of Health and wellbeing indicators for Witney MSOAs.

The following charts show the latest data available for health inequalities indicators for Witney Central and Witney West MSOAs. The values are compared with the Oxfordshire and England average and are shown statistically significant as either similar to (yellow), better than (green) or worse than (red) the Oxfordshire/ England average.
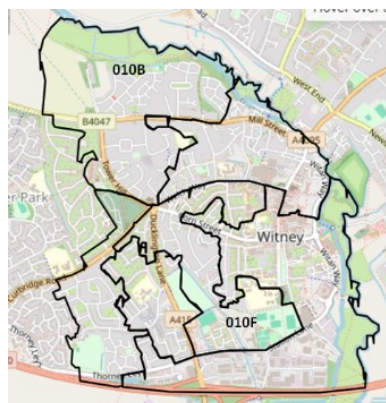
Witney Central MSOA

Of the local health and wellbeing inequalities indicators, 2 out of 32 are ranked as worse than the England average. Compared with other areas of Oxfordshire, Witney Central has 4 out of 32 indicators ranked as worse than the Oxfordshire average.

Figure 11 Table of health and wellbeing indicators for Witney Central MSOA

Witney Central

Indicator name	Value	Oxfordshire average	England average
(D1) Deprivation score (IMD)	10.7		
(D2) Children under 16 yrs living in poverty (%) (IDACI)	10.9		
(D3) Adults over 60 yrs living in poverty (%) (IDAOPI)	8.0		
(D4) Households in Fuel Poverty (%)	6.3		
(D5) Income deprivation (%)	7.5		
(D6) Unemployment, ages 16-64 years (%)	3.5		
(CH1) Emergency hospital admissions, ages 0-4 years (crude r..	130.6		
(CH2) Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 0-4 year..	98.6		
(CH3) Obesity: Reception year (%)	8.3		
(CH4) Obesity: Year 6 (%)	21.3		
(CH5) Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 0-14 yea..	81.0		
(CH6) Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 ye..	183.5		
(H1) Emergency hospital admissions for self-harm (SAR)	153.4		
(H2) Hospital admissions for alcohol-attributable conditions (SA..	93.2		
(H3) Emergency hospital admissions for all causes (SAR)	93.0		
(H4) Emergency hospital admissions for COPD (SAR)	37.0		
(H5) Emergency hospital admissions for CHD (SAR)	67.9		
(H6) Emergency hospital admissions for Stroke (SAR)	74.4		
(H7) Emergency hospital admissions for heart attack (MI) (SAR)	68.2		
(H8) Emergency hospital admissions for hip fracture, over 65s (..	91.3		
(M1) Life expectancy at birth (Males)	79.8		
(M2) Life expectancy at birth (Females)	86.0		
(M3) Deaths from all causes (SMR)	81.7		
(M4) Deaths from all cancer, age under 75 years (SMR)	102.7		
(M5) Deaths from circulatory disease, age under 75 years (SM..	88.5		
(M6) Deaths from respiratory diseases (SMR)	63.6		
(M7) Deaths from stroke (SMR)	67.8		
(M8) Deaths from all causes, age under 75 years (SMR)	94.4		
(M9) Deaths from all cancer (SMR)	87.1		
(M10) Deaths from circulatory disease (SMR)	71.8		
(M11) Deaths from coronary heart disease (SMR)	63.9		
(M12) Preventable mortality (SMR)	69.9		

Source: ONS from Oxfordshire Local Area Inequalities Dashboard

The highlighted indicators ☐ are those in which Witney Central has a much higher (worse) value compared with the Oxfordshire and England average. These are broken down further in the following charts for Oxfordshire.
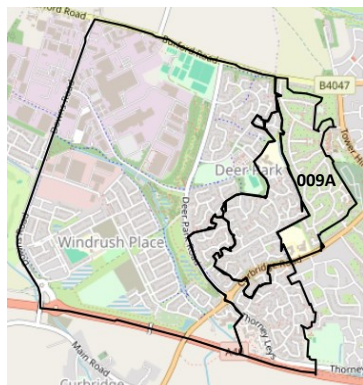
Witney West MSOA.

Of the 32 local health and wellbeing inequalities indicators, none are ranked as worse than the Oxfordshire or England average.

Figure 12 Table of health and wellbeing indicators for Witney West MSOA

Witney West

Indicator name	Value	Oxfordshire average	England average
(D1) Deprivation score (IMD)	11.3		
(D2) Children under 16 yrs living in poverty (%) (IDACI)	11.1		
(D3) Adults over 60 yrs living in poverty (%) (IDAOPI)	7.5		
(D4) Households in Fuel Poverty (%)	6.0		
(D5) Income deprivation (%)	7.4		
(D6) Unemployment, ages 16-64 years (%)	3.4		
(CH1) Emergency hospital admissions, ages 0-4 years (crude r..	103.7		
(CH2) Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 0-4 year..	121.5		
(CH3) Obesity: Reception year (%)	4.3		
(CH4) Obesity: Year 6 (%)	18.2		
(CH5) Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 0-14 yea..	86.9		
(CH6) Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 ye..	126.7		
(H1) Emergency hospital admissions for self-harm (SAR)	91.9		
(H2) Hospital admissions for alcohol-attributable conditions (SA..	65.6		
(H3) Emergency hospital admissions for all causes (SAR)	88.7		
(H4) Emergency hospital admissions for COPD (SAR)	43.1		
(H5) Emergency hospital admissions for CHD (SAR)	80.6		
(H6) Emergency hospital admissions for Stroke (SAR)	93.0		
(H7) Emergency hospital admissions for heart attack (MI) (SAR)	90.6		
(H8) Emergency hospital admissions for hip fracture, over 65s (..	75.4		
(M1) Life expectancy at birth (Males)	83.9		
(M2) Life expectancy at birth (Females)	86.1		
(M3) Deaths from all causes (SMR)	70.1		
(M4) Deaths from all cancer, age under 75 years (SMR)	81.7		
(M5) Deaths from circulatory disease, age under 75 years (SM..	64.9		
(M6) Deaths from respiratory diseases (SMR)	58.6		
(M7) Deaths from stroke (SMR)	102.3		
(M8) Deaths from all causes, age under 75 years (SMR)	62.2		
(M9) Deaths from all cancer (SMR)	85.8		
(M10) Deaths from circulatory disease (SMR)	81.5		
(M11) Deaths from coronary heart disease (SMR)	82.9		
(M12) Preventable mortality (SMR)	51.4		

Source: ONS from Oxfordshire Local Area Inequalities Dashboard

5.3 Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 years

This measure is the rate per 10,000 of emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in children and adults aged 15-24 years.

For the period (2016/17 – 20/21) the rate for Witney Central MSOA (West Oxfordshire 10) was 183.5 and was amongst the highest in Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire average 123.5).

Figure 13 Emergency hospital admissions for injury, ages 15-24 years (2016/17 – 20/21)

Area	Rate
England	127.9
Oxfordshire	123.5
Cherwell	143.9
Oxford	96.0
South Oxfordshire	144.9
Vale of White Horse	137.2
West Oxfordshire	147.2
Barton	294.3
Blackbird Leys	283.8
Chadlington & Wychwoods	227.3
Chipping Norton	225.6
Thame South	215.3
Greater Leys	212.1
Kidlington South	210.2
Marston	208.1
Littlemore & Rose Hill	204.8
Faringdon & Stanford	197.5
Woodstock, Stonesfield & T..	194.6
Abingdon South	194.6
Banbury Ruscote	191.9
Didcot West	188.4
Wallingford & Brightwell	184.6
Islip, Arncott & Chesterton	184.5
Witney Central	183.5
Didcot South East	183.2
Deddington, Steeple Aston ..	183.0
Wolvercote & Cutteslowe	174.4
Sonning Common & Kidmor..	172.9
Abingdon Town & West	170.9
Carterton North	167.4
Burford & Brize Norton	166.9
Sutton Courtenay, Drayton ..	165.9

Source: OHID from Oxfordshire Local Area Inequalities Dashboard

5.4 Emergency Hospital admissions for self-harm

This measure is the standardised admission ratio for emergency hospital admissions for intentional self-harm for all ages.

For the period (2016/17 – 20/21), Witney Central MSOA is the 6th highest for emergency hospital admissions for self-harm of all 86 MSOAs in Oxfordshire and was worse than West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire averages.

Figure 14 Emergency hospital admissions for self-harm 2016/17-2020/21 (SAR)

England	100.0
Oxfordshire	98.9
Cherwell	92.4
Oxford	109.8
South Oxfordshire	95.2
Vale of White Horse	95.6
West Oxfordshire	96.0
Greater Leys	318.7
Barton	201.3
Littlemore & Rose Hill	174.6
Didcot South East	170.4
Blackbird Leys	160.2
Witney Central	153.4
Faringdon & Stanford	152.2
Kidlington South	151.5
Banbury Grimsbury	146.0
Beckley & Horspath	144.5
Abingdon South	142.4
Risinghurst & Sandhills	139.5
Churchill	139.1
Didcot West	138.0
Islip, Arncott & Chesterton	134.4
Cowley North	131.0
Cowley South & Iffley	130.2
Grove	123.0
Chipping Norton	122.5
Abingdon Town & West	120.2
Banbury Ruscote	118.6
Sutton Courtenay, Drayton ..	117.2
Bicester West	116.5
Wallingford & Brightwell	115.2
Wolvercote & Cutteslowe	114.1

Source: NHS Digital from Oxfordshire Local Area Inequalities Dashboard

5.5 GP Quality and Outcomes Framework data

The following table shows measures published as part of the GP Practice Quality Outcomes Framework (QOF) for 2023-24 (NHS Digital) for the GP practices in the Witney Central Community Insight area. These are Nuffield Health Centre and Windrush Medical Practice. Note that patients living in the Witney area may register with any GP practice in Witney or surrounding areas and it is not possible to separate health prevalence measures for specific areas using this data source.

The majority of the health conditions listed below had a higher prevalence among patients registered at both the Nuffield Health Centre and the Windrush Medical Practice compared with the Oxfordshire average. Nuffield Health Centre shows that the prevalence of hypertension, obesity and osteoporosis are well above the average for the county. Data for Windrush Medical Practice shows the prevalence of hypertension and osteoporosis were well above the average for the county. Patients with chronic kidney disease had the highest percentage of increase from the previous year for Nuffield Health Centre (+6.6%) and Windrush Medical Practice (+58%).

Table 3 GP QOF data for the Nuffield Health Centre General Practice surgery, Windrush Medical Practice and Oxfordshire 2023-24

	NHS Oxfordshire (10Q)	Nuffield Health Centre	% Change between year	Difference between NHS Oxfordshire (10Q)	Windrush Medical Practice	% Change between year	Difference between NHS Oxfordshire (10Q)
Cardiovascular group							
Atrial fibrillation, prevalence (%)	2.2	3.09	▼ -4.0%	0.89	2.75	▲ 3.8%	0.55
Coronary heart disease, prevalence (%)	2.32	3.59	▼ -0.6%	1.27	2.63	▼ -3.3%	0.31
Hypertension, prevalence (%)	13.29	20.99	▼ -1.3%	7.7	16.64	▲ 1.0%	3.35
Heart failure due to left ventricular systolic dysfunction, prevalence (%)	0.95	0.87	▼ -7.4%	-0.08	0.77	▼ -2.5%	-0.18
Peripheral arterial disease, prevalence (%)	0.45	0.9	▼ -4.3%	0.45	0.43	▼ -2.3%	-0.02
Stroke and transient ischaemic attack, prevalence (%)	1.78	2.34	▼ -4.1%	0.56	1.89	▼ -3.1%	0.11
Respiratory group							
Asthma, prevalence (%)	6.12	7.1	▼ -5.7%	1.02	7.4	▲ 4.2%	1.26
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, prevalence (%)	1.31	1.6	▼ -11.9%	0.32	1.4	▲ 1.5%	0.08

	NHS Oxfordshire (10Q)	Nuffield Health Centre	% Change between year	Difference between NHS Oxfordshire (10Q)	Windrush Medical Practice	% Change between year	Difference between NHS Oxfordshire (10Q)
Lifestyle group							
Obese, prevalence (%)	10.73	18.45	▲ 1.8%	7.72	11.37	▲ 0.6%	0.64
High dependency and other long term conditions group							
Cancer, prevalence (%)	4.15	5.66	▲ 0.3%	1.51	4.91	▼ -0.7%	0.76
Chronic kidney disease, prevalence (%)	3.38	6.26	▲ 6.6%	2.88	4.40	▲ 58.2%	1.02
Diabetes Mellitus, prevalence (%)	5.61	7.19	▼ -0.7%	1.58	6.49	▲ 0.0%	0.88
Non-diabetic hyperglycaemia, prevalence (%)	4.64	7.45	▲ 2.5%	2.81	3.30	▼ -0.2%	-1.34
Palliative care, prevalence (%)	0.29	0.68	▼ -10.6%	0.39	0.15	▼ -19.0%	-0.14
Mental health and neurology group							
Dementia, prevalence (%)	0.75	1.42	▲ 0.7%	0.67	0.78	▲ 8.3%	0.03
Epilepsy, prevalence (%)	0.73	1.16	▲ 1.8%	0.43	0.86	▼ -5.5%	0.13
Learning disability, prevalence (%)	0.43	0.81	▼ -1.2%	0.38	0.67	▲ 17.5%	0.24
Mental health, prevalence (%)	0.86	1.07	▼ -4.5%	0.21	0.92	▼ -1.1%	0.06
Musculoskeletal group							
Osteoporosis, prevalence (%)	1.96	5.06	▼ -1.2%	3.1	5.23	▲ 7.0%	3.27
Rheumatoid arthritis, prevalence (%)	0.68	0.79	▼ -3.7%	0.11	0.69	▲ 3.0%	0.01

Source: NHS Digital QOF 2023-2024 Quality and Outcomes Framework, 2023-24 - NHS England Digital

5.6 Adults in drug and alcohol treatment

The rate for adults (18+) per 1,000 population receiving drugs or alcohol treatment in the Witney Central Community Insight area (CIA) has remained higher than the rates for West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire since March 2023.

For 2023-24 the rate was double the Oxfordshire average at 10.3 per 1,000 compared with 5.6 per 1,000.

Figure 15 Rate per 1,000 adults in structured treatment for drugs and alcohol.
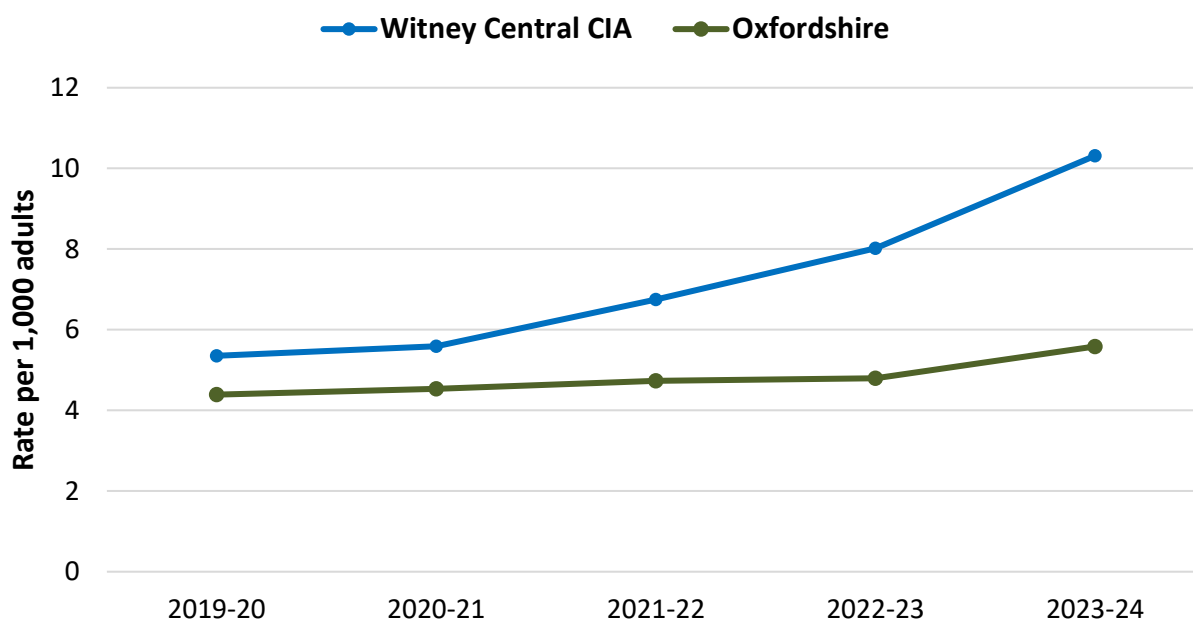
Source: Local drugs and alcohol services commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council; rate calculated ONS mid-2022-year population estimates.

5.7 Personal Independent Payments (PIP) for people with mental health

Personal Independent payments (PIP) claims with entitlement show a total for all entitled cases for Psychiatric disorders. It shows both the number of people in receipt of PIP and those with entitlement where the payment has been suspended (for e.g. if they are in hospital at a point in time).

The rate of people per 1,000 population (16+ years) who are entitled to claim personal independent payments due to mental health in the Witney Central Community Insight area remained higher than the rate for Oxfordshire since March 2021.

For Oct 2024 the rate was double than the Oxfordshire average at 17 per 1,000 compared with 34 per 1,000 for Witney Central Community Insight area.

Figure 16: Rates per 1,000 population (16+ years) for Personal Independent Payments for people with mental health
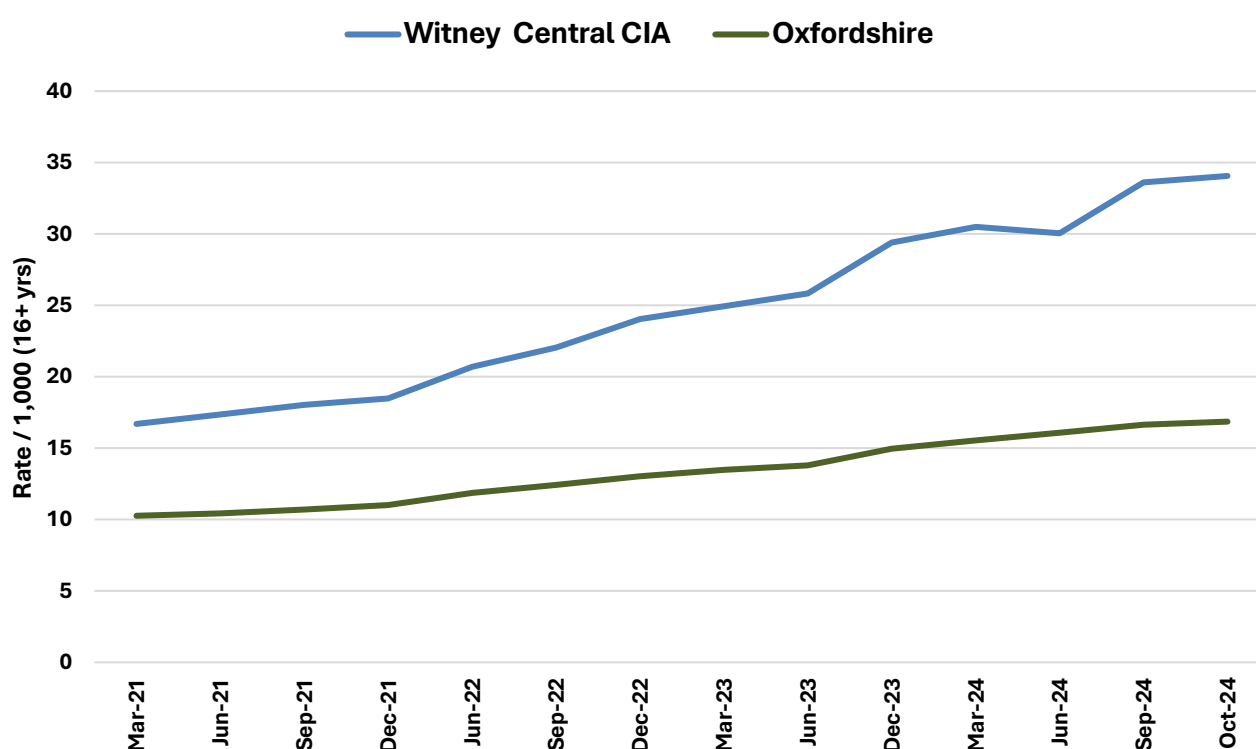
Source DWP benefit statistics Stat-Xplore. Rates calculated using the mid-estimates for 2022 for all years.

6 Employment

6.1 Economic activity

Data on economic activity is available from 2021 Census and counts people aged 16 years and over as economically active if, between 15 March and 21 March 2021, they were:

- *In employment (an employee or self-employed),*
- *Unemployed, but looking for work and could start within two weeks*
- *Unemployed, but waiting to start a job that had been offered and accepted*

As of March 2021, the percentage of people who were economically active in the Witney Central Community Insight area was 59.4%. This was below West Oxfordshire (64.8%) and Oxfordshire (63.7%) averages.

Further breakdown of economic activity shows that, compared with the Oxfordshire average, Witney Central Community Insight area had a:

- Lower proportion of residents self-employed (8% vs 10%).
- Slightly higher proportion unemployed (3% vs 2%).
- Lower proportion of students (3% vs 8%).
- Higher proportion retired (24% vs 20%).
- Higher proportion of who were long term sick of disabled (4% vs 2%).

Figure 17 Economic activity (Census 2021)
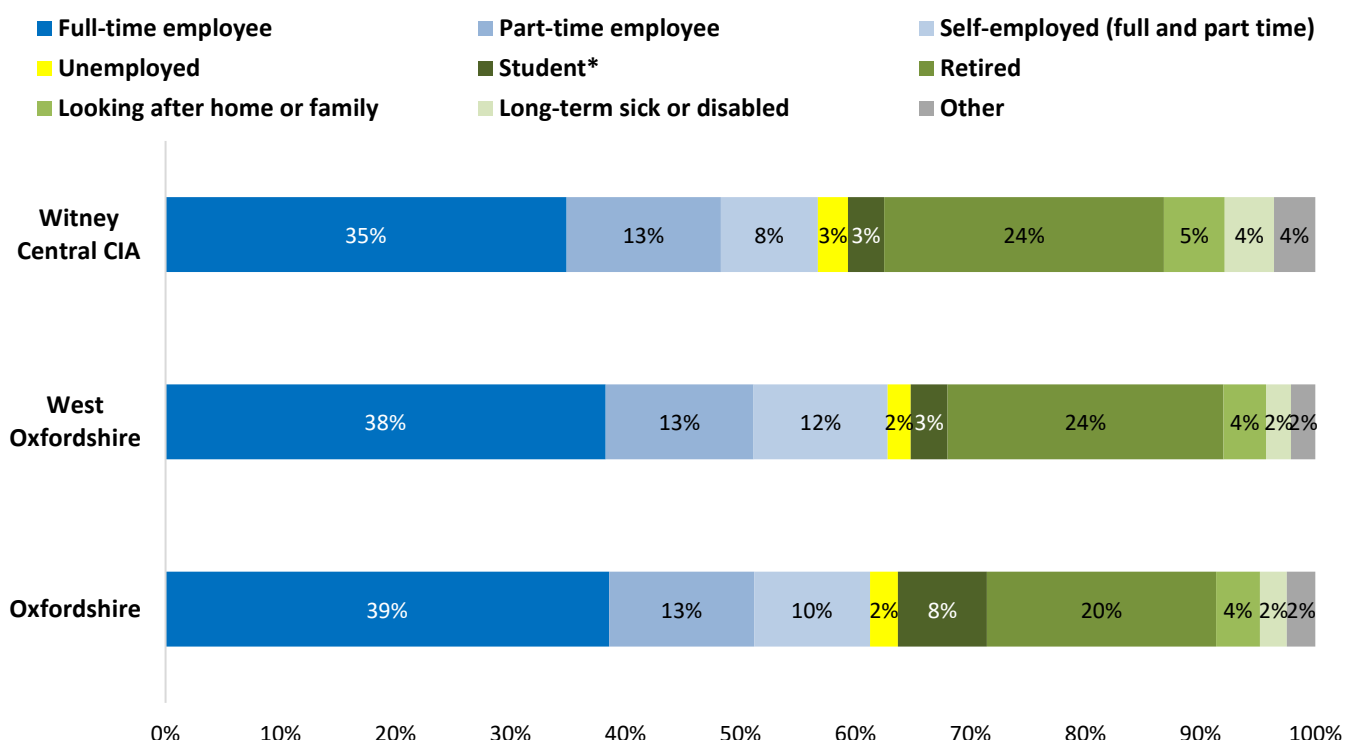
Source: ONS Census 2021 table TS066 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

*student includes economically inactive full time students only, some full time students are included in the economically active populations.

6.2 Occupation

The occupation indicator classifies what people aged 16 years and over do as their main job. This includes job title or details of activities they do in their job and any supervisory or management responsibilities.

According to the Census, 51% of people in employment in the Witney Central Community Insight area (CIA) were in the (generally lower paid) caring, leisure, sales, process, and elementary occupations (shown circled in Figure 19). This was well above averages for West Oxfordshire (29%) and Oxfordshire (28%).

Figure 18 Proportion of people aged 16+ in employment by occupation (Census 2021)
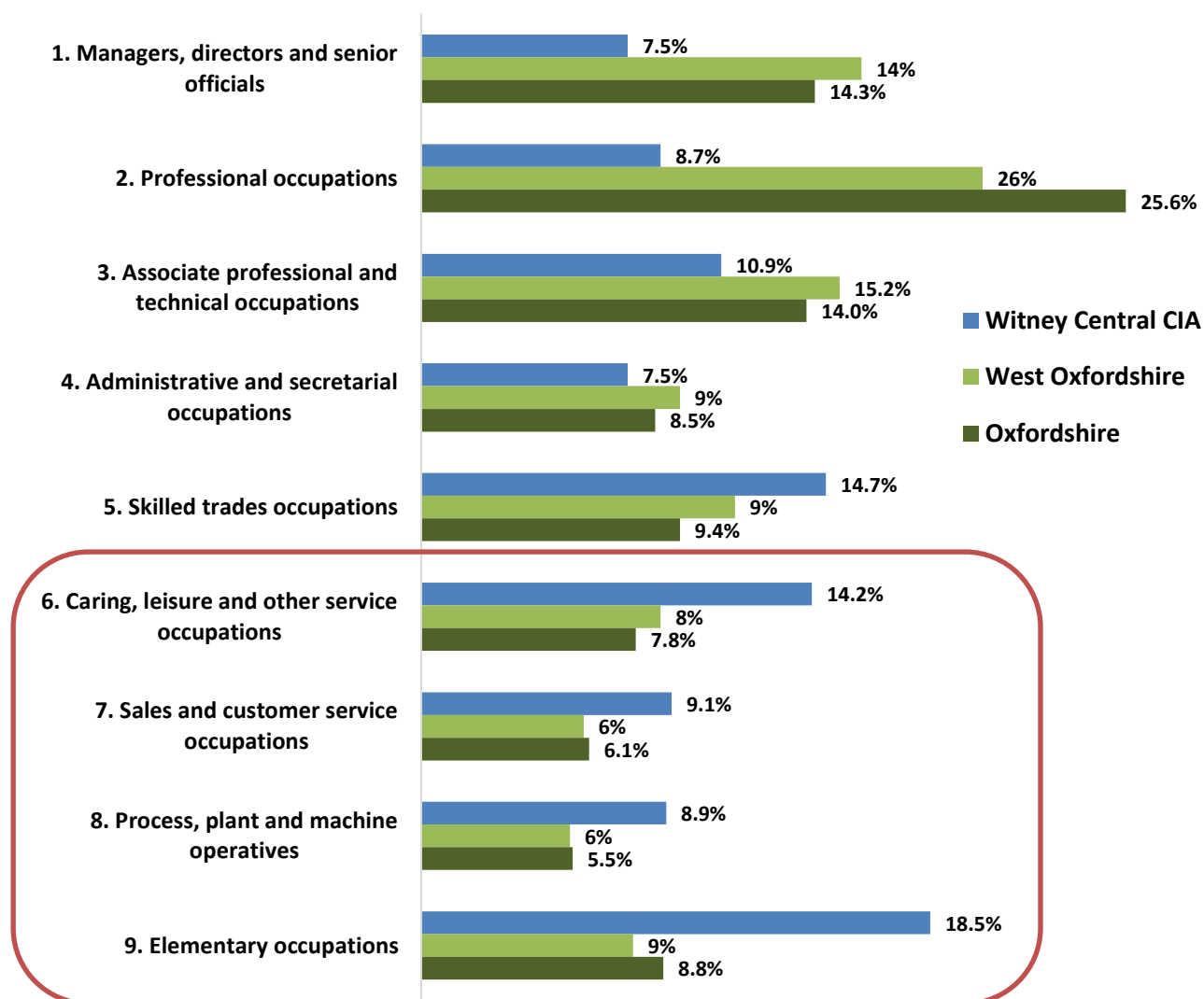
Source: ONS Census 2021 Table TS063 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

6.3 Employment sector

The Witney Central Community Insight area has the same two largest employment (industry) sectors as Oxfordshire. The top three sectors within Witney Central Community Insight area of retail, health and social work and construction each have higher proportions of employment than West Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire.

Table 4 Percentage of residents in employment in these sectors

	Witney Central CIA	West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire
Retail	15.4%	12.7%	12.7%
Health and social work	14.3%	12%	13.4%
Construction	11.4%	9%	7.4%

Source: ONS Census 2021 table TS060A – industry

6.4 Unemployment

The claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, based on administrative data from the benefits system.

The below chart shows the claimant count for the Witney Central Community Insight area between March 2019 and December 2024.

The number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits in the Witney Central Community Insight area increased significantly at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March and May 2020.

Claimant count as a proportion of the residents aged 16-64 for the Witney Central Community Insight area was 3.2% as of December 2024, higher than the average for West Oxfordshire (1.8%) and Oxfordshire (2.3%).

Figure 19 Claimant count trend for Witney Central CIA from March 2019 to December 2024
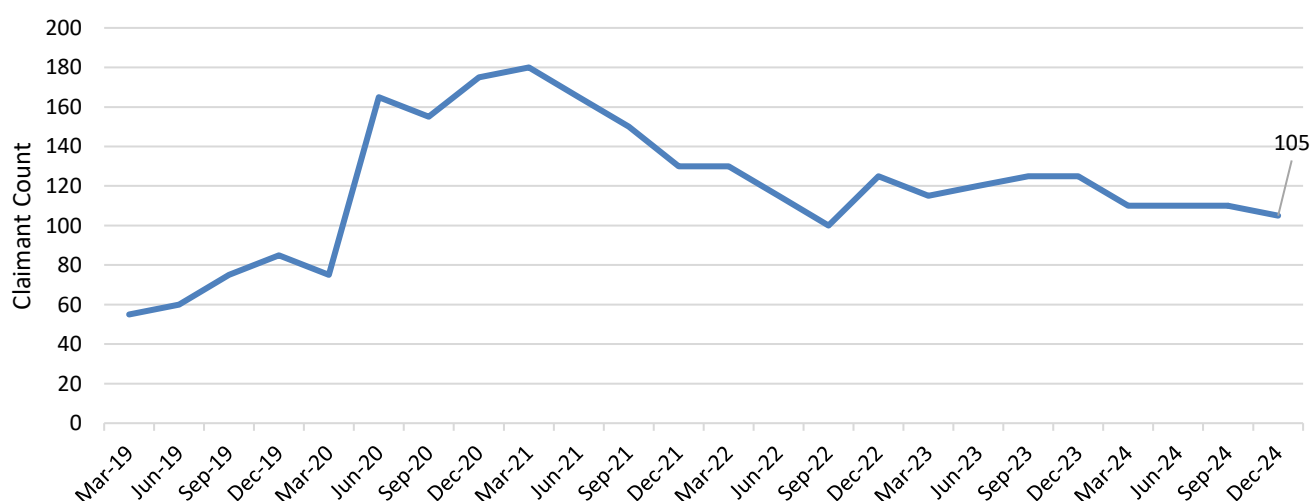
Source: DWP Claimant count from www.nomisweb.co.uk; rate uses ONS mid-year population estimate from Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

7 Poverty and deprivation

7.1 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The index of multiple deprivation is an official measure of relative deprivation of small areas within England. The measure is created by combining and weighing data from 7 different domains: income, employment, health deprivation and disability, education and skills training, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment. The overall IMD score is used to rank small areas based on level of deprivation.

The table below shows the LSOAs in the Witney Central Community Insight area ranked against areas across England.

The LSOA West Oxfordshire 009A falls within the 10% most deprived in Education Skills and Training.

Table 5 MHCLG English Indices of Deprivation 2019 deciles for the LSOAs in the Witney Central Community Insight area.

LSOA area name	Overall IMD	IMD Domains							IDACI and IDAOPI	
	IMD	Income	Employment	Education, Skills and Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment Decile	Income Deprivation Affecting Children	Income Deprivation Affecting Older People
West Oxfordshire 009A	4	4	4	1	7	8	5	9	3	7
West Oxfordshire 010B	8	8	8	5	8	8	6	9	6	9
West Oxfordshire 010F	4	4	3	3	4	5	4	10	5	5

(1 is the most deprived, 10 is the least deprived)

Figure 20 Map showing LSOA West Oxfordshire 009A, ranked within the 10% most deprived in Education, Skills and Training
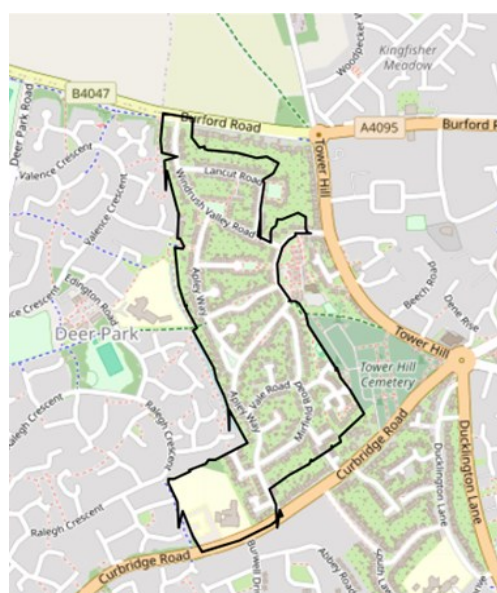
Map from www.nomisweb.co.uk

7.2 Household deprivation

The dimensions of deprivation used to classify households are indicators based on four selected household characteristics.

- *Education: A household is classified as deprived in the education dimension if no one has at least level 2 education and no one aged 16 to 18 years is a full-time student.*

- *Employment: A household is classified as deprived in the employment dimension if any member, not a full-time student, is either unemployed or economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability.*

- *Health: A household is classified as deprived in the health dimension if any person in the household has general health that is bad or very bad or is identified as disabled.*

- *Housing: A household is classified as deprived in the housing dimension if the household's accommodation is either overcrowded, in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating.*

Overall, the Witney Central Community Insight area has a higher percentage of households classified as deprived in one or more dimensions at 55% than West Oxfordshire at 43% and Oxfordshire at 44%.

Figure 21 Proportion of households not deprived in any dimensions, deprived in one, two, three or four dimensions (2021)

	Witney Central CIA	West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire
Household is not deprived in any dimension	45.4%	56.6%	55.9%
Household is deprived in one dimension	34.7%	31.8%	31.7%
Household is deprived in two dimensions	15.7%	9.7%	10.1%
Household is deprived in three dimensions	4.0%	1.8%	2.1%
Household is deprived in four dimensions	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
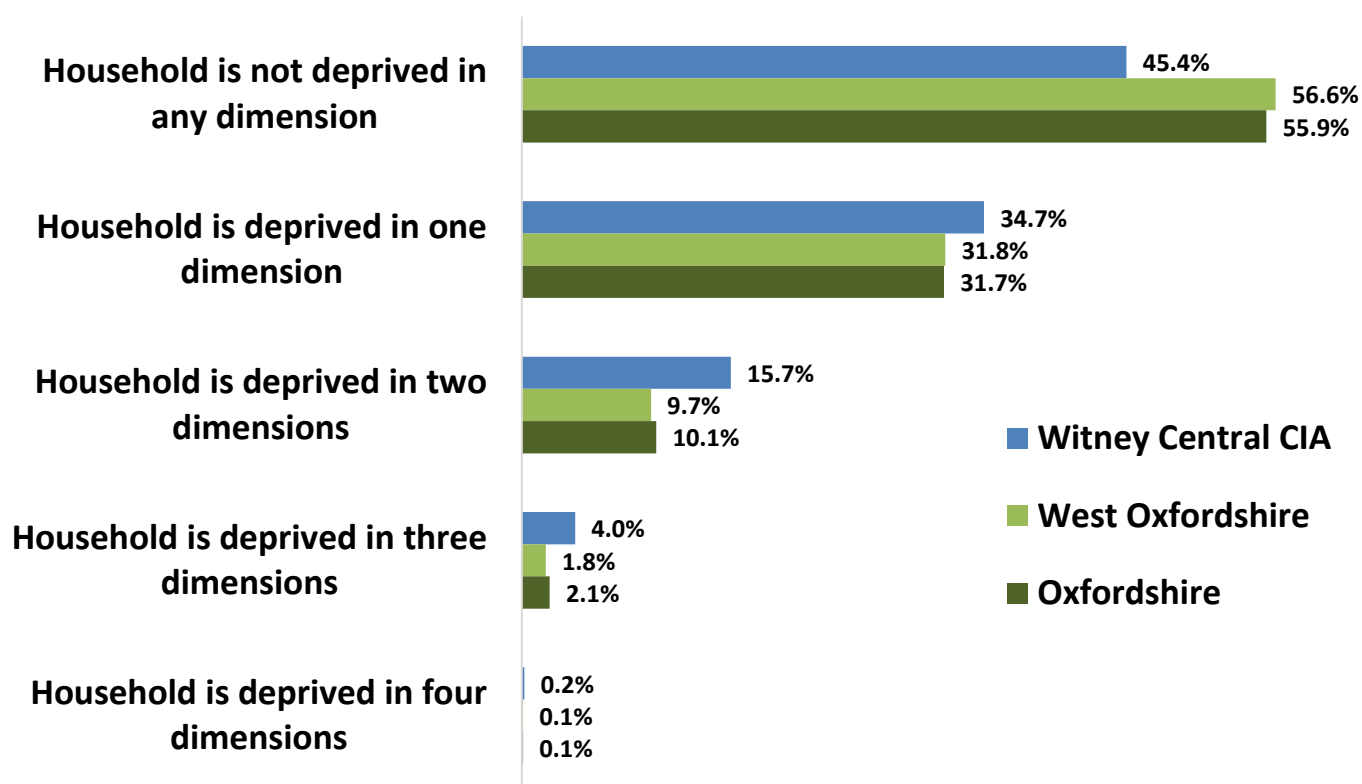
Source: ONS Census 2021 Table TS011 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

However, there is variation in household deprivation within the Witney Central Community Insight area, which means that the averages for the area may hide wide differences. The area between Ashcombe Close and Holloway Road (circled in Figure 2) is more likely to have households in relative deprivation and is the highest percentage of household deprived in three dimensions at 10.9% for the Witney Central MSOA.

Figure 22 Map of the Witney Central Community Insight area showing the percentage of household deprived in three dimensions

England and Wales
Household is deprived in three dimensions

| 0.0% | 1.9% | 4.7% | 8.2% | 13.0% | 45.0% |
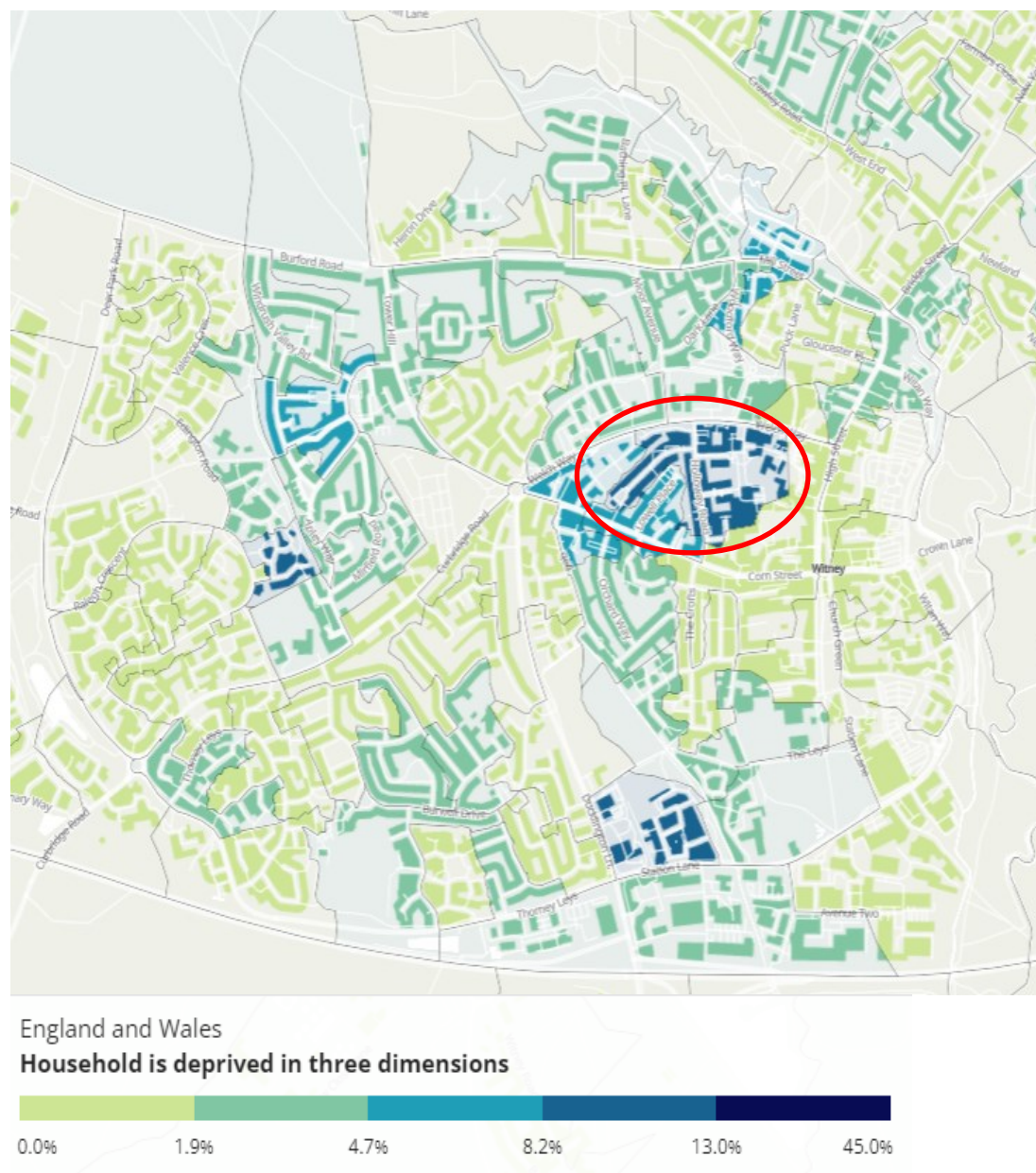
[Household deprivation - Census Maps, ONS](#)

7.3 Children in poverty

Relative low-income is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year. A family must have claimed Child Benefit and at least one other household benefit (Universal Credit, tax credits, or Housing Benefit) at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics. Gross income measure is Before Housing Costs (BHC) and includes contributions from earnings, state support and pensions.

As of 2022/23, there were 208 children aged 0-15 years living in poverty (relative low-income families) in the Witney Central Community Insight Area, a rate of 17% of the population aged 0-15 years old. This is almost double the child poverty compared with the average for West Oxfordshire (9%) and higher than Oxfordshire (11%) average.

Table 6 The number and rate of population for children in poverty (2022/23) for each age band

Age band of child	Witney Central CIA	West Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire
0-4 yrs	44 - 14%	544 - 9%	3,724 - 10%
5-10 yrs	76 - 16%	694 - 9%	5,071 - 10%
11-15 yrs	88 - 21%	722 - 10%	5,172 - 12%
Total 0-15 yrs	**208 - 17%**	**1,960 – 9%**	**13,967 -11%**

Source: DWP Stat Xplore, Children in relative low income families, rate uses ONS mid-year population estimate (for each age band) from Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk) see also Children in low income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

7.4   Free school meals

Pupils are eligible for Free School Meals if the household receives any of the below:
- *Income Support*
- *Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance*
- *Income-related Employment and Support Allowance*
- *Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*
- *The guaranteed element of Pension Credit*
- *Child Tax Credit (provided not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)*
- *Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit*
- *Universal Credit - household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits)*

As of January 2024, 29.4% (288 pupils) of primary and secondary pupils living in the Witney Central Community Insight area (CIA) were eligible for Free School Meals. This was roughly double the average for West Oxfordshire (14%) and Oxfordshire (15.7%).

Figure 23 Percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (all pupils) January 2024
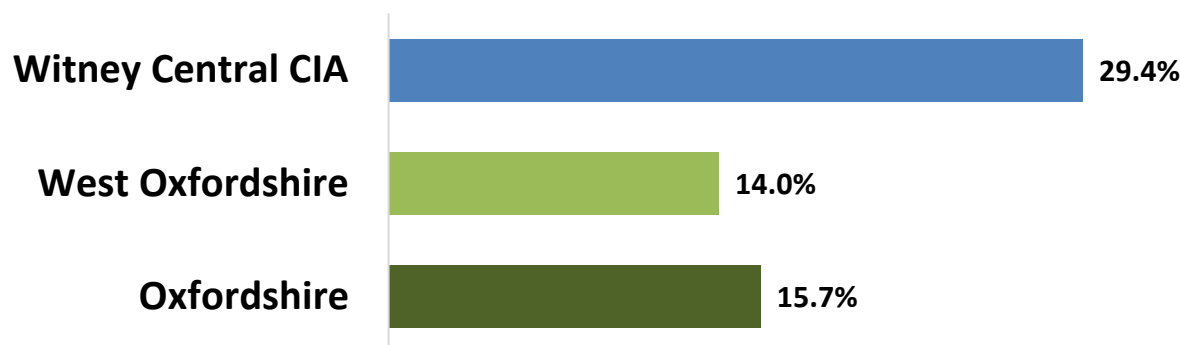
Source: Oxfordshire County Council (January 2024)

7.5 Fuel poverty

Fuel poverty in England is measured using the Low-Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator. Under this indicator, a household is considered to be fuel poor if:

- *they are living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or below*

and

- *when they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with a residual income below the official poverty line.*

The chart below shows that in 2022, Witney Central Community Insight area had a lower proportion of households in fuel poverty (8.8%) than the average for West Oxfordshire (9%) and Oxfordshire (9%).

However, LSOA[4] West Oxfordshire 009A has a higher proportion of households in fuel poverty at 12.4%

Figure 24 Proportion of households fuel poor in the Witney Central Community Insight area, 2022

Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2022 published April 2024

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[4] Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs)They comprise between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons.

7.6 Pension credit

Pension credit can be claimed by those aged 65 and over who reached state pension age before 5th April 2016 and have made some additional provision for their retirement, for example through private pension or savings (see Citizens Advice for full eligibility criteria).

As of November 2023, 8.2% of older residents (97) were claiming pension credit in the Witney Central Community Insight area (CIA), higher than the average for West Oxfordshire (5.3%) and Oxfordshire (6.2%).

Figure 25 Percentage of population aged 65+ claiming pension credit
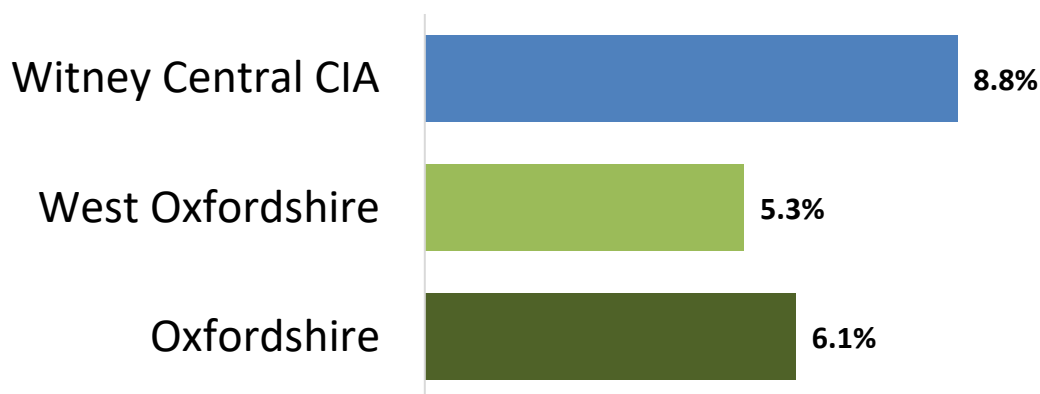
Source: Pension Credit from StatXplore; rate uses ONS mid-2022 population estimate (65+ years) from Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

8 Crime and community safety

In 2022 the overall rate of crime in Witney Central MSOA was 145 crimes per 1,000 residents, ranking the area 8th out of the 86 MSOAs in Oxfordshire. This was almost double the average rate of crime for Oxfordshire of 74.5.

The highest ranked crime in the area was *Violence and sexual offences* (43.1 crimes per 1,000).

Out of all the crime categories, Witney Central MSOA ranked the highest for the category *Other theft* (which includes theft by an employee, blackmail and making off without payment)*,* with a rate of 21.7 crimes per 1,000 residents, placing it 1st out of the MSOAs in Oxfordshire.

Figure 26 Overall rate of crime, rate of Violence and sexual offences and rate of other theft per 1,000 population for MSOAs in Oxfordshire (2022)

Overall rate of crime

Area	Offences	Rate	Change
Bicester South	1,854	214.7	+33.9%
Oxford Central	3,665	192.7	+12.5%
Banbury Grimsbury	2,411	188.8	+7.9%
East Central Oxford	1,950	171.0	+5.9%
Banbury Neithrop	944	156.6	-1.4%
Abingdon Town & ..	1,700	153.6	+7.7%
Blackbird Leys	949	145.0	-7.0%
Witney Central	1,570	145.0	+41.1%
Banbury Ruscote	1,164	131.6	+15.9%
Cowley South & Iffley	1,370	130.7	+8.6%
Littlemore & Rose H..	1,453	126.3	+7.3%
Osney, Jericho & P..	765	115.9	+0.7%
Churchill	792	103.1	-13.0%
Barton	856	101.3	-4.1%
Didcot West	985	98.7	+0.7%
Greater Leys	680	98.0	-15.0%

Violence and sexual offences

Area	Offences	Rate	Change
Banbury Grimsbury	946	74.1	+8.5%
Banbury Ruscote	592	66.9	+15.8%
Oxford Central	1,190	62.6	+24.8%
Banbury Neithrop	353	58.6	+0.1%
Abingdon Town & ..	631	57.0	+22.8%
Blackbird Leys	359	54.9	+0.1%
East Central Oxford	613	53.7	+14.9%
Littlemore & Rose H..	614	53.4	+13.1%
Bicester South	413	47.8	+15.3%
Greater Leys	324	46.7	-14.5%
Didcot South East	246	44.1	-18.2%
Witney Central	467	43.1	+17.7%
Cowley South & Iffley	428	40.8	+28.0%
Barton	341	40.4	-3.4%
Banbury Easington	363	39.5	-10.0%
Churchill	300	39.1	-7.1%

Other theft

Area	Offences	Rate	Change
Witney Central	235	21.7	+120.2%
Oxford Central	390	20.5	+89.1%
Banbury Grimsbury	244	19.1	+24.2%
Thame North	94	17.5	+20.4%
Bicester South	150	17.4	+28.6%
East Central Oxford	149	13.1	+32.5%
Begbroke, Yarnton ..	86	12.8	-5.0%
Wheatley & Great H..	70	10.4	-17.7%
Blackbird Leys	67	10.2	-7.9%
Headington	112	9.9	+22.3%
Caversfield, Ambros..	109	9.3	+3.2%
Cowley South & Iffley	91	8.7	-2.0%
Eynsham & Stanton..	48	8.1	-6.1%
Osney, Jericho & P..	52	7.9	+2.2%
Banbury Neithrop	47	7.8	-6.1%
Bicester West	66	7.5	+89.2%

Source: Recorded crime from Police UK data from Oxfordshire Crime dashboard Community [Oxfordshire SIA Crime Dashboard](#)

9 Access to green space

Mapping by Natural England shows that the Witney Central Community Insight area is surrounded by accessible natural green, public parks and activity spaces - some of these are just outside the Witney Central Community Insight area.

Figure 27 Natural England mapping of Green and Blue Infrastructure in the Witney Central Community Insight area
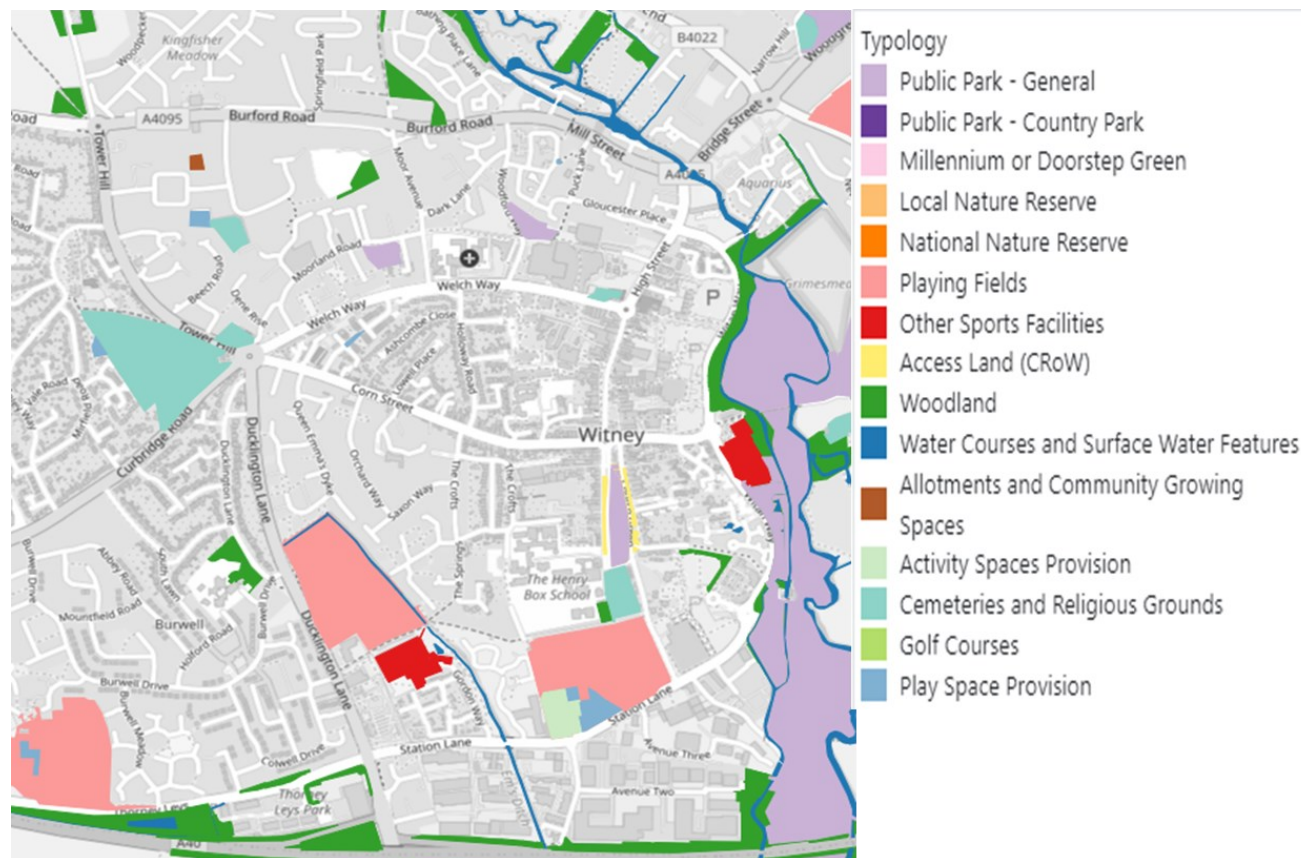
Source: [Green Infrastructure Map (naturalengland.org.uk)](naturalengland.org.uk)

10 Transport

10.1 Car ownership

According to the Census 2021, there was a higher proportion of households in the Witney Central Community Insight area that do not have any vehicles (22%) compared with the averages for West Oxfordshire (12%) and Oxfordshire (16%).

Figure 28 Percentage of households with cars or vans available for use
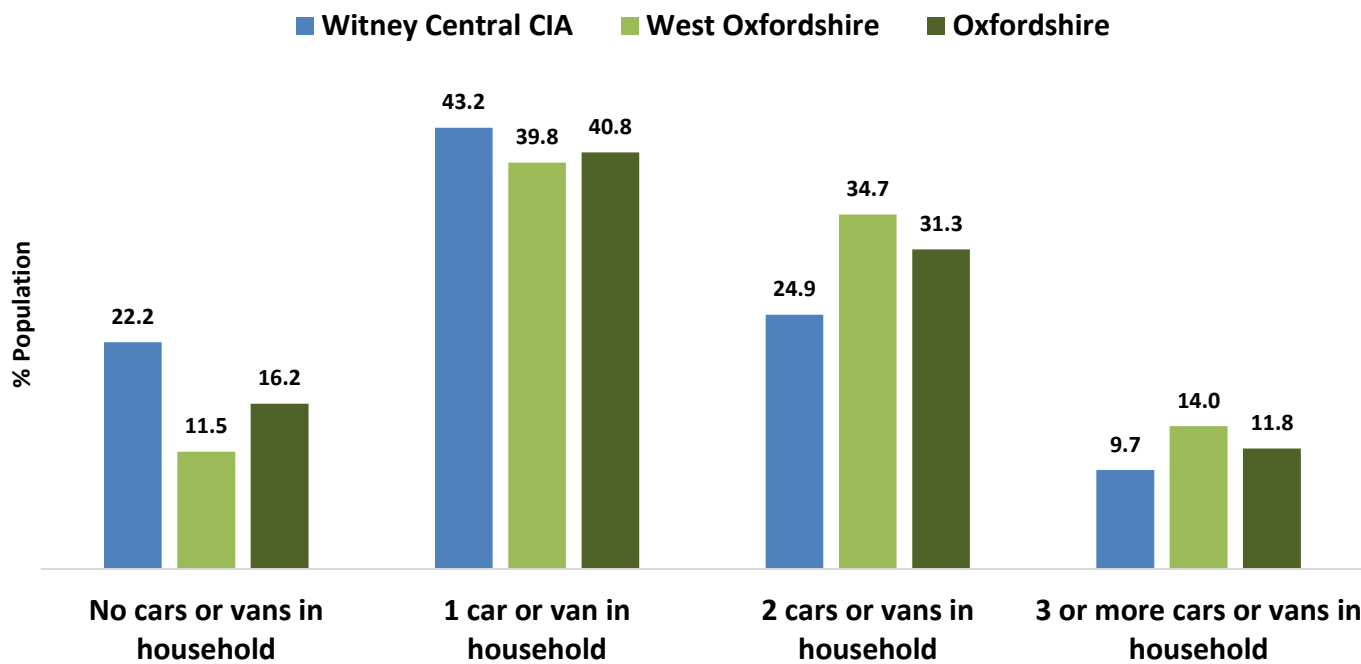
Source: ONS Census 2021 Table TS045 from https://www.nomisweb.co.uk

Annex 1: Additional Geographical Boundaries for the wider Witney area

New output areas were introduced in 2021 for LSOA West Oxfordshire 010B and 010F due to population increases.

Figure 29 Maps showing Witney Central CIA Output Areas boundaries for 2011 and 2022
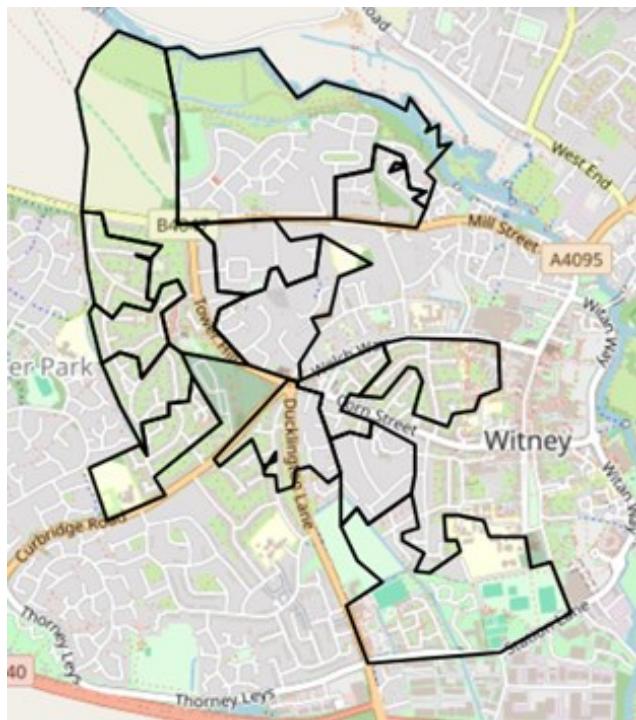
2011 Output areas
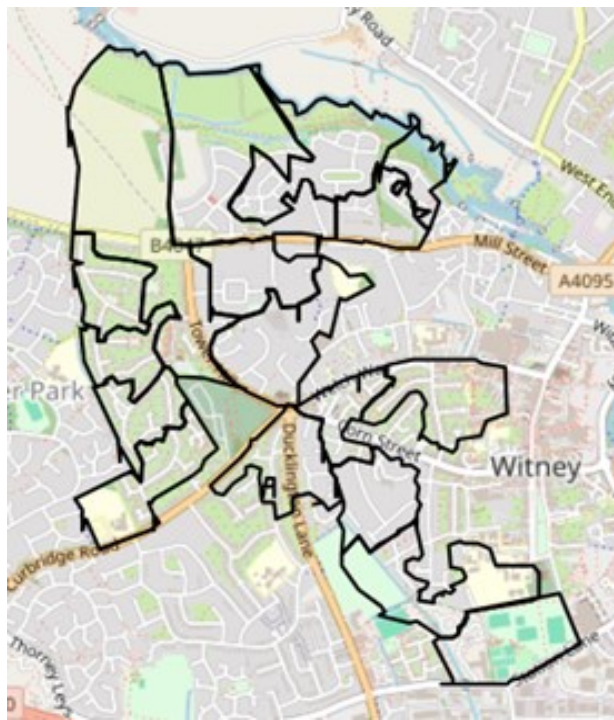
2022 Output areas

Maps from www.nomisweb.co.uk

Annex 2: Background to the Witney area used in this profile

Before starting work on this profile, the Oxfordshire County Council Public Health team consulted with local stakeholders in Witney about the extent of the geographical area to be used for selecting data for this profile.

Discussions highlighted priority areas using data and local intelligence that the stakeholders wanted the work to focus on. Although three smaller areas (Witney East 08B, Witney Central 09A and Witney South 10F) were identified as being within the 30-40% most deprived according to the IMD 2019, it was agreed that the CIP work would cover LSOAs West Oxfordshire 009A, 010B and 010F to complement existing work in Windrush Valley Estate (Smiths Estate) aimed at supporting some of the most deprived areas in Witney. It was agreed that witney east 08B would be excluded.

The map on the left shows the areas identified in the IMD 2019 and the map on the right shows the agreed the Witney Central Community Insight Profile area.

Figure 30 Maps showing areas identified in the IMD 2019 (right) and the final agreed the Witney Central Community Insight Profile area (left)
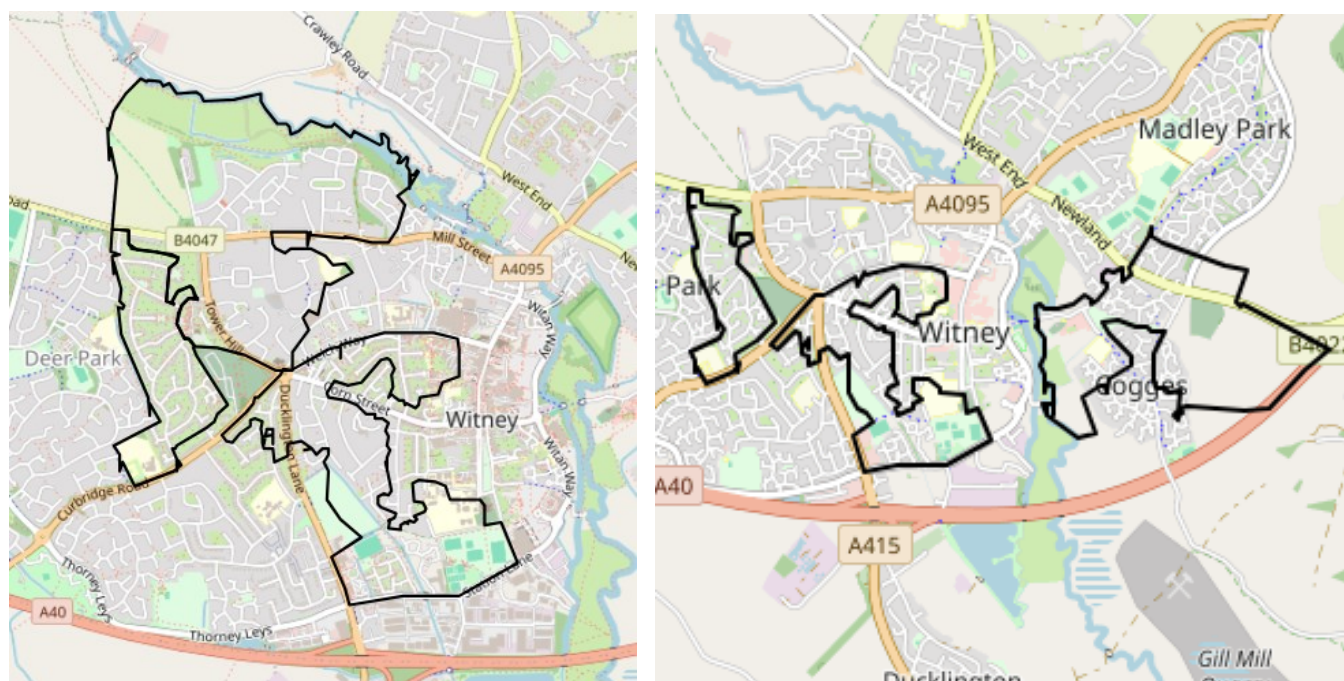
Maps from www.nomisweb.co.uk

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WITNEY CENTRAL COMMUNITY INSIGHT PROJECT: 2024

Appendix 2
Research Questions

Focus Groups

FG Process is semi-guided question but **BOLD = core questions to cover in all FGs**:

1. **What do you like about central Witney as a community?**
2. **Do you feel involved in decision-making locally and that you are listened to?**
3. **What do you do to keep healthy – mentally, emotionally and physically?**
4. **What kinds of things are most challenging for you living in central Witney that impact on your health and wellbeing?**
5. **Do you feel safe in the community?**
6. **What local groups, services, organisations, community spaces etc. do you find particularly helpful or useful to your health and well-being?**
7. **What do you think helps you/your family maintain healthy habits around food and eating and getting out and about, or what would help you?**
8. **Do you think the local community would benefit from additional initiatives to support health and well-being?**
9. **Would you be interested in joining with others to work on projects to support health and wellbeing?**
10. **What do you think would encourage more local people to create or take part in health and wellbeing initiatives?**

ADDITONAL QUESTIONS FOR LOCALLY-ACTIVE COMMUNITY GROUPS, AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

11. **What works well in getting residents involved in projects and initiatives, and what doesn't (barriers to involvement)?**
12. **In terms of the discussion and design of community-based projects and initiatives – what are the ingredients for success in the long term?**
13. **Have you noticed any cost-of-living impacts affecting residents locally?**
14. **Do you have any other observations about health and wellbeing in central Witney and how it could be improved?**

Focus Groups – children and young people

1. **What do you like and value about living in central Witney?**
2. **Do you feel listened to and have a say in what affects your life?**
3. **What do you do to keep healthy?**
4. **What do you find difficult about living in central Witney?**
5. **What do you think could be improved about central Witney?**

ADDITONAL QUESTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

6. **What helps you deal with difficult emotions (things like low mood, worry, anger, stress, sadness, fear, jealousy, feeling anxious)?**
7. **Who would you go to if you felt you needed support with these emotions?**
8. **Is there anything that might improve your health and well-being, yours or other people you know – is there anything in particular you would like to see happen?**
9. **Do you think there was any impact from the Covid-19 pandemic on your health and wellbeing?**

121s

Agency and organisation 121s

Questions:
1. **In your experience, what works well in getting residents involved in projects and initiatives, and what doesn't (barriers to involvement)?**
2. **In terms of the discussion and design of community-based projects and initiatives – what are the ingredients for success in the long term?**
3. **What are the key challenges you face as a community-based organisation/ what are the main challenges you think community-based organisations face – what would help solve them?**
4. **What do you think the main impacts of the pandemic were locally, and do you think any impacts are still being felt?**
5. **What worked well – locally- in terms of supporting the community through the pandemic, and what could be improved/ developed to help ensure the community is best equipped to deal with anything similar in the future?**
6. **Have you noticed any cost-of-living crisis impacts affecting residents locally?**
7. **Do you have any other observations about health and wellbeing in central Witney and how it could be improved?**

Resident 121s

1. **What do you like about central Witney as a community?**
2. **Do you feel involved in decision-making locally and feel that you are listened to?**
3. **What do you do, to keep healthy, mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?**
4. **What kinds of things are most challenging for you living in central Witney that impact on your health and wellbeing?** *(Not worrying about money; Job security; Good quality, affordable housing; Healthy and affordable food; Good local schools; Adult education and training opportunities; Good, locally-available services; Access to the internet; Getting exercise (walking, cycling or playing sport))*

5. **Do you feel safe in the community?**
6. **What local groups, services, organisations, community spaces etc. do you find particularly helpful or useful to your health and well-being?**
7. **What are the other local strengths and resources that support community health and wellbeing** *(such as community spirit, individual skills, passions, knowledge, green spaces etc.)*
8. **What do you think helps you/your family maintain healthy habits around food and eating and getting out and about, or what would help you?**
9. **Do you think you and the local community would benefit from additional initiatives to support health and well-being?**
10. **What do you think would encourage more local people to create or take part in health and wellbeing initiatives?**
11. **Would you be interested in joining with others (perhaps in a community group or project) to work on projects to support health and well-being?**

Health and Wellbeing in Central Witney - 2024 Community Survey

Why are you asking what I think?

West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council Public Health are working on a project with community partners to find out more about health and wellbeing in places across the county. One of these areas is in Central Witney. A charity, Community First Oxfordshire (CFO), has been asked to talk to local residents to find out more about the following:

1. What kind of things (like organisations, services, and people in the community) support health and wellbeing?
2. What causes the biggest problems to people's health and wellbeing and what would help improve these?

What do we mean by wellbeing?

Wellbeing is the state of being or feeling comfortable, healthy, or happy. It also includes other things, such as how satisfied people are with their life as a whole, their sense of purpose, and how in control they feel.

What happens next?

Your views and experiences will help to create a really useful picture of what people in central Witney think about health and wellbeing and how it can be improved. This will help West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, and others to plan better for the future and develop services and projects to improve things.

Important information about how we will process your responses

This survey is completely anonymised so that anyone who completes it cannot be identified. The analysis of your feedback will be undertaken on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council and the County Council by CFO. By completing this survey, you are consenting for your response data to be shared by these organisations. Your data will be processed by these organisations in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). Please see the back of the survey for links to data protection and privacy policies.

CFO will provide an anonymous summary report on survey findings for West Oxfordshire District Council and the County Council – this report will be publicly available.

You can complete the survey online by following this link or scanning the QR code:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WITNEYHEALTH

Or you can return a hard copy of your survey to Freepost Plus RTUH-ALLT-RAHZ, Community First Oxfordshire, South Stables, Worton Park, OX29 4SU

communityfirst oxfordshire 100 years
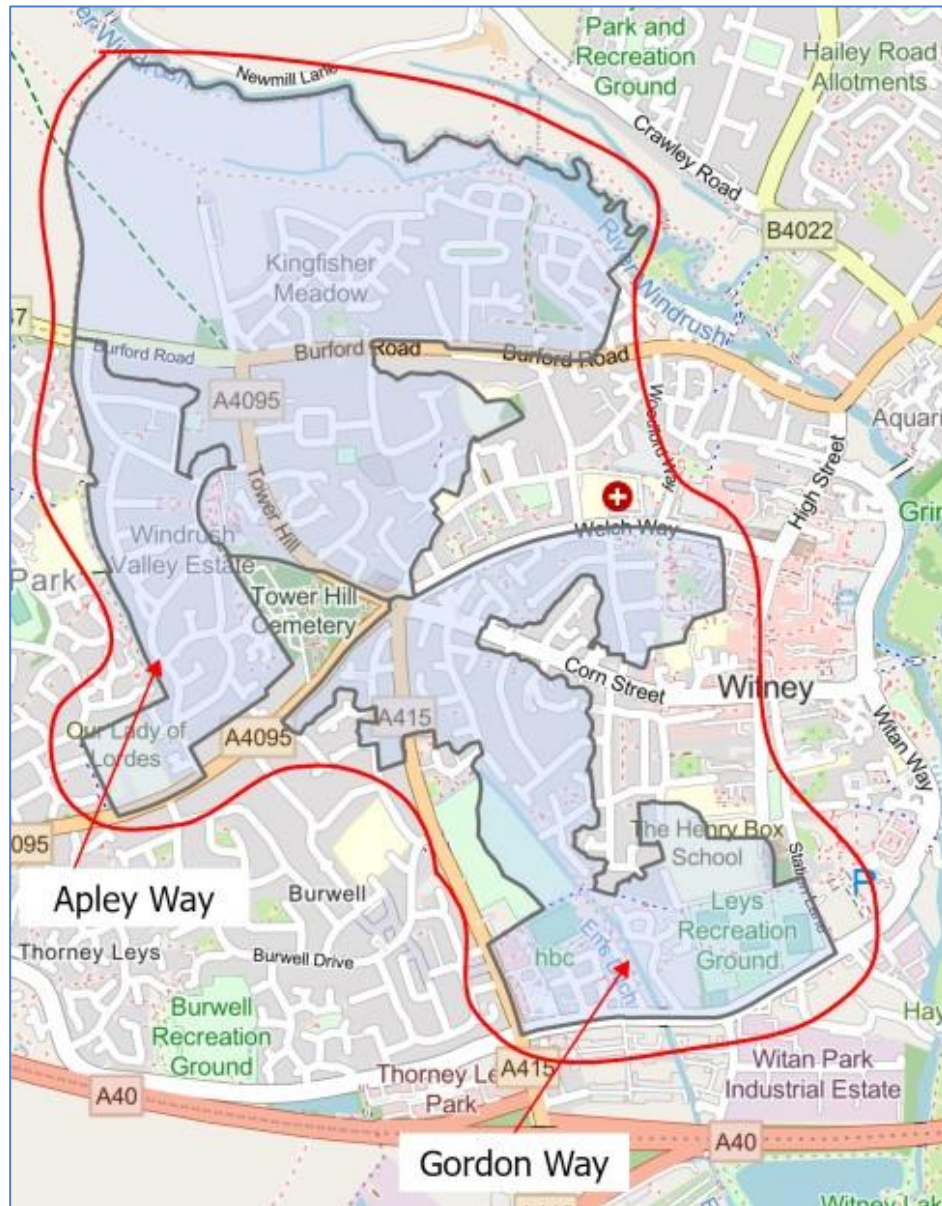
1 – Do you live inside the area outlined in red in the map above?	*Please tick one*
Yes – please go to Part 2	
No – PLEASE DO NOT COMPLETE THE SURVEY AS YOUR ANSWERS WILL NOT BE RECORDED	

TURN OVER FOR PART 2 OF THE SURVEY

2

PART 2 – ABOUT YOU

2 – What is your age?   *Please tick one*

This survey is for those aged 15+

15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54

55-59	60-64	65-69	70-74	75-79	80-84	85+	

3 – What gender do you identify as?   *Please tick one*

Male	
Female	
Describe myself in another way	
Prefer not to say	

4 - What is your ethnic group? *Tick one option that best describes your ethnic group/background*

White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British	
Other white background	
Mixed/ multiple ethnic group	
Asian/ Asian British	
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	
Other ethnic group	
Prefer not to say	

PART 3 – LIVING IN CENTRAL WITNEY

5 – What do you like about living in central Witney?   *Please tick all that apply*

Community feeling	
Local shops and services	
Schools (Henry Box, Tower Hill Community Primary School, West Witney Primary, Our Lady of Lourdes School, Queen Emma's Primary, The Batt School)	
Green and open spaces	
Playparks	
Sports and recreation facilities	
Community groups and organisations	
Other: *please tell us what*	

3

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6 – How satisfied are you about central Witney as a place to live on a scale of 1-5: 1 = not satisfied at all, 5 = very satisfied. *Please tick one*

1	2	3	4	5

7 – Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statements: 1 = do not agree at all, 5 = completely agree. *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
I feel involved in the decision making in central Witney					
I feel my views are listened to when asked about living in central Witney					
I participate in community consultations about central Witney					
I know where to get information about central Witney					
I feel I am part of the local community in central Witney					
I would like to be more involved in decision making and community consultations in central Witney					

8 – Have you contacted any of the following to seek assistance with an issue or to discuss a concern about living in central Witney? *Please tick all that apply*

Community group, organisation, or charity	
Council officer (Town, District or County)	
Local councillor (Town, District or County)	
Member of Parliament	
Other: *please tell us who*	

9 – How satisfied are you with your housing situation in each of these areas on a scale of 1-5: 1 = not satisfied at all, 5 = very satisfied. *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
Cost (rent or mortgage)					
Access to social (affordable) housing					
Location / neighbourhood					
Adequate size					
State of repair					
Other: *please tell us what*					

4

PART 4 – YOUR DAILY LIFE

10 – How often do you/ your household use these modes of transport?
Please select a frequency for each

	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Less than once a month	Never
Car						
Bus						
Train						
Taxi						
Motorbike/Moped						
E-scooter						
Bicycle						
Walking						
Wheelchair/ mobility aid						
Other: *please tell us what*						

11 – How easy do you find it to get around in and outside of central Witney on a scale of 1-5:
1 = not easy at all, 5 = very easy.   *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
To get around within central Witney					
To get from central Witney to other parts of the town					
To get from central Witney to other locations					

12 – Please tell us what would be helpful to you for getting around in central Witney?
Please tick all that apply

Improved bus frequencies or routes	
Increased parking options	
More cycle routes	
Improved pavements/ walking routes	
Other: *please tell us what*	

5

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13 – Which community groups, classes, or activities do you use in central Witney? *Please tick all that apply*	
Groups and activities specifically for BABIES AND TODDLERS	
Groups and activities specifically for CHILDREN	
Groups and activities specifically for TEENAGERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE	
Groups and activities specifically for OLDER PEOPLE	
Sport and exercise groups/activities	
Craft and hobby groups/activities	
Physical health support groups/activities	
Mental health support groups/activities	
Faith or religion-related groups/activities	
LGBTQ + groups/activities	
Other – *tell us what below*	
Please tell us specifically which groups etc. you use:	

14 – Which community spaces and places do you use or go to in central Witney and, if relevant, how often? *Please tick the relevant frequency for each*

In the comment box underneath each space/place, please tell us what you think about them: this could be a variety of things but could include ease of access, opening hours, state of repair, feelings of security, the range of events/ activities offered.

	Never use	Use occasionally	Use often
Community halls/ centres			
Thoughts - tell us which place you are commenting on:			
Witney Library			
Thoughts - tell us which place you are commenting on:			

6

	Never use	Use occasionally	Use often
Religious setting			
Thoughts – tell us which place you are commenting on:			
Shops			
Thoughts – tell us which place you are commenting on:			
Parks and playparks			
Thoughts – tell us which place you are commenting on:			
Other green spaces			
Thoughts – tell us which place you are commenting on:			
Other community spaces			
Thoughts – tell us which place you are commenting on:			

15 – How easy do you find it to access the following health services?

Please tick the relevant box for each

In the comment box underneath each service, please tell us more, including where you go and/or what could be improved.

	Never use	Difficult	OK	Easy
Health centre / GP				
Thoughts:				
Witney community hospital				
Thoughts:				

	Never use	Difficult	OK	Easy
Pharmacy				
Thoughts:				
Dental practice / services				
Thoughts:				
Oxford hospitals (e.g. JR, Churchill)				
Thoughts:				

16 – Tell us how safe you feel in the community at different times of day on a scale of 1–5: 1 = not safe at all, 5 = very safe. *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
Day-time					
Night-time					

17 – Tell us more about your feelings of safety (such as what you feel could improve safety or your experiences with safety issues).

18 – Which of the following statements do you agree with? *Please tick one*

I feel lonely all the time	
I feel lonely most of the time	
I feel lonely sometimes	
I rarely feel lonely	
Please tell us more, if you wish:	

8

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19 – Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: 1 = do not agree at all, 5 = completely agree. *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
I know where I can meet other people in central Witney					
There are places and spaces where people can meet in central Witney					
People from different backgrounds can mix in central Witney					

Please tell us more, if you wish:

20 – Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements: 1 = do not agree at all, 5 = completely agree. *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
I have the skills and/or qualifications to find employment					
There are local opportunities to learn new skills and/or gain qualifications					
I feel able to access local opportunities to learn new skills and/or gain qualifications					

PART 5 – YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

21 – How healthy do you consider yourself, both physically and mentally, on a scale of 1–5: 1 = not healthy at all, 5 = very healthy. *Please tick the relevant box for each*

	1	2	3	4	5
Physically healthy					
Mentally healthy					

If you feel comfortable, you are welcome to share details of your health situation:

9

22 – Do you have a long-standing illness or disability that affects day to day life? *Please tick one*	
Yes	
No	
If you feel comfortable, you are welcome to share details of your illness or disability:	

23 – Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any long-term impacts on your physical or mental health? *Please tick the relevant box for each*					
	A very negative impact	A somewhat negative impact	No particular impact	A somewhat positive impact	A very positive impact
Physical health					
Mental health					
If you feel comfortable, you are welcome to share details of the impact of COVID-19 on your health:					

24 – What do you do to look after your health/ yourself? *Please tick all that apply*	
Socialise with friends	
Attend groups and organisations	
Keep active (e.g. playing sport, exercising, gardening, cycling, walking)	
Spend time outside	
Maintain healthy habits around food and eating	
Go to a religious setting	
Other: *please tell us what*	

10

25 – What things have made it more difficult for you to look after yourself/ your household? *Please tick all that apply*	
Income	
Lack of access to healthcare when I need it	
Job insecurity	
Problems with housing situation	
Lack of time	
Access to healthy and affordable food	
Getting around/ transport	
Access to the internet	
Health condition (physical and/or mental)	
Access to exercise (e.g. costs of classes/ availability)	
Childcare (e.g. costs or availability)	
Other: *please tell us what*	

26 – What do you think supports health and wellbeing in central Witney? *Please tick all that apply*	
Community spirit/ relationships	
Volunteering	
Green spaces, parks, and playparks	
Community groups/ organisations/ charities	
Religious settings	
Other: *please tell us what*	

27 – What do you think would improve the health and wellbeing of people living in central Witney? *Please tick all that apply*	
More community-led activities focused on health and wellbeing	
Community events to encourage interest in health and wellbeing	
Free or reduced cost access to events and activities	
Taster sessions for activities	

11

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Activities at different times of the week/ day	
Activities that bring together people in different age groups	
Support groups for specific health issues	
Stronger community relationships	

Do you have any other thoughts about how to improve health and wellbeing? Do you have any specific ideas? This might be a new group or specific activities for people to do. Please tell us below!

28 – In relation to food, please tick whether you agree with the following statements.			
	Yes	Sometimes / maybe	No
I can access affordable and healthy food options			
I and/or my family maintain healthy habits around food and eating			
I would value information and support about healthy food and eating habits			
Please tell us more, if you wish:			

29 – Do you notice any of the following activities taking place in central Witney?		
	Yes	No
People smoking		
People drinking alcohol and/or alcoholic drink litter		
People taking drugs and/or drug litter		

30 – If you answered 'yes' to any of Q29, where do you see these things taking place? *Please tick all that apply*	Inside the home	School gate areas	Parks / green spaces etc.	Shops	Bus stops
People smoking					
People drinking alcohol and/or alcoholic drink litter					
People taking drugs and/or drug litter					
Other location: please tell us where					

PART 6 – YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING

31 – We would really like to find out a bit more about your personal experiences of health and wellbeing. This could be:

- – Your experience with a local service or project
- – How you overcame a personal challenge
- – Your personal or family experience during the COVID-19 pandemic
- – How you/ your family maintain healthy habits
- – Something different

Please write in the box underneath if you have something to share. Any information you provide will be anonymised but will be used as part of the report

32 – If you would be happy to be contacted about your story, please leave your contact details below.	
We will only use these details to contact you about your experience – they will not be shared with anybody else.	
PLEASE FILL IN THE DETAILS BELOW IF YOU CONSENT FOR COMMUNITY FIRST OXFORDSHIRE TO CONTACT YOU.	
Name	
Email	
Phone	

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR TIME!

PRIVACY POLICIES

- You can read Community First Oxfordshire's Privacy Policy at:
  https://www.communityfirstoxon.org/privacy-policy/.

- You can read West Oxfordshire District Council's Data Protection Policy at:
  https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/support/privacy-and-data/

- You can read Oxfordshire County Council's Privacy and Data policies at:
  https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-website/privacy-notice#paragraph-5977.

14

CENTRAL WITNEY INSIGHT PROJECT: 2024

APPENDIX 4: COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

1

Community Survey Findings

Q1 - Do you live in central Witney?
85 respondents

Yes: 36
No: 49
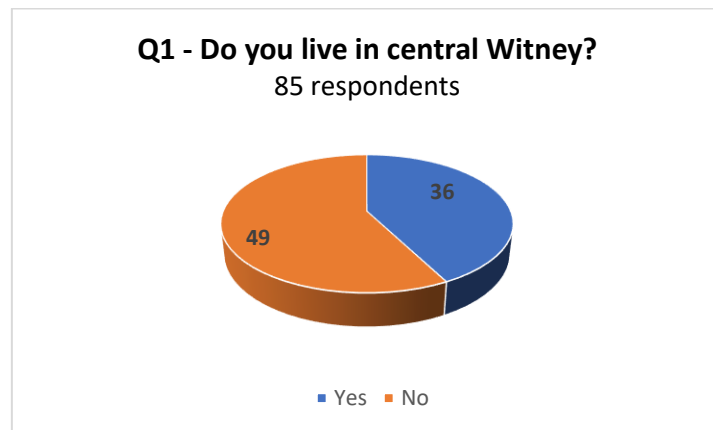
85 **residents** responded to the community survey overall. Only **36 respondents** answered that they lived in central Witney (using the map provided), so the remainder of the survey is out of 36 respondents. Where graphs total less than 36, respondents declined to answer the question.

About you

Q2 - What is your age?
32 respondents

Age	%
15-19	3%
20-24	3%
25-29	3%
30-34	6%
35-39	0%
40-44	0%
45-49	13%
50-54	3%
55-59	22%
60-64	16%
65-69	6%
70-74	6%
75-79	9%
80-84	6%
85+	3%

Q3 - What gender do you identify as?
32 respondents

Male: 22%
Female: 78%

2

Q4 - What is your ethnic group?
32 respondents

Category	Percentage
White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British	91%
Other white background	6%
Mixed/ multiple ethnic group	0%
Asian/ Asian British	3%
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	0%
Other ethnic group	0%

Living in central Witney

Q5 - What do you like about living in central Witney?
22 respondents

Category	Percentage
Local shops and services	91%
Community feeling	45%
Green and open spaces	45%
Community groups and organisations	23%
Playparks	14%
Schools	14%
Sports and recreation facilities	9%

Other (6 respondents):			
Nothing / not much anymore / losing services	3	Workplace	1
20mph speed limit and restricted traffic around Market Square, as cyclist	1	All are great but can't enjoy most due to limited walking ability	1

3

Q6 - How satisfied are you about central Witney as a place to live on a scale of 1-5?
26 respondents

Rating	Percentage
1 = not satisfied at all	8%
2	15%
3	35%
4	12%
5 = very satisfied	30%
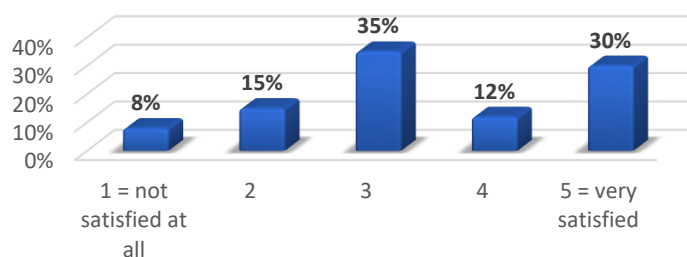
Q7 - Please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statements?
25 respondents

Statement	1 = do not agree at all	2	3	4	5 = completely agree
I feel involved in the decision making in central Witney	48%	20%	24%	4%	4%
I feel my views are listened to when asked about living in central Witney	32%	28%	24%	12%	4%
I participate in community consultations about central Witney	44%	12%	24%	12%	8%
I know where to get information about central Witney	20%	12%	40%	12%	16%
I feel I am part of the local community in central Witney	36%	20%	24%	12%	8%
I would like to be more involved in decision making and community consultations in central Witney	16%	8%	40%	12%	24%

Q8 - Have you contacted any of the following to seek assistance with an issue or discuss a concern about living in central Witney?
8 respondents

Contact	Percentage
Community group, organisation, or charity	13%
Council officer (Town, District or County)	50%
Local councillor (Town, District or County)	50%
Member of Parliament	25%

4
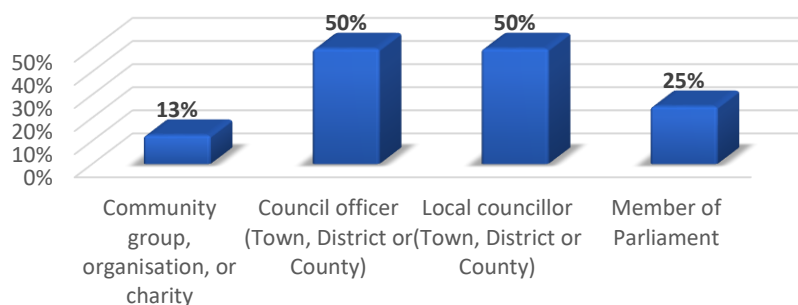
Q9 - How satisfied are you with your housing situation in each of these areas on a scale of 1-5, 1 = not at all satisfied, 5 = very satisfied?
26 respondents

Weighted average out of 5 (5 being most satisfied)

Area	Score
Adequate size	4
Location / neighbourhood	3.5
Cost (rent or mortgage)	3.3
State of repair	3.1
Access to social (affordable) housing	2.9
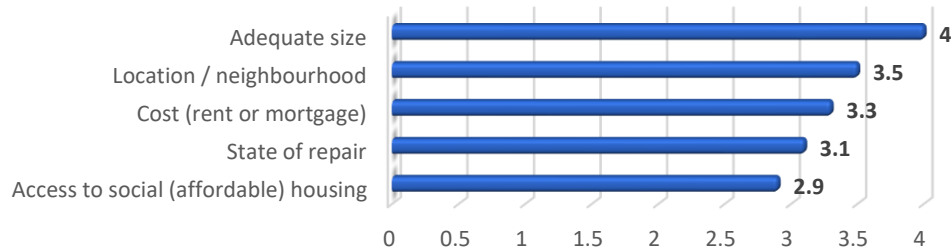
Your daily life

Q10 - How often do you/your household use these modes of transport?
25 respondents (chart shows actual numbers rather than %)

Mode	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Less than once a month	Never
Car	10	5			0	5
Bus	4	7	1	6	3	3
Train	0	0			11	8
Taxi	0	0			5	14
Motorbike/Moped	0	0				19
E-scooter	0					20
Bicycle	1	2		1	1	16
Walking	14	3	0		4	1
Wheelchair/ mobility aid	2	0				19

Legend: Daily, Weekly, Fortnightly, Monthly, Less than once a month, Never
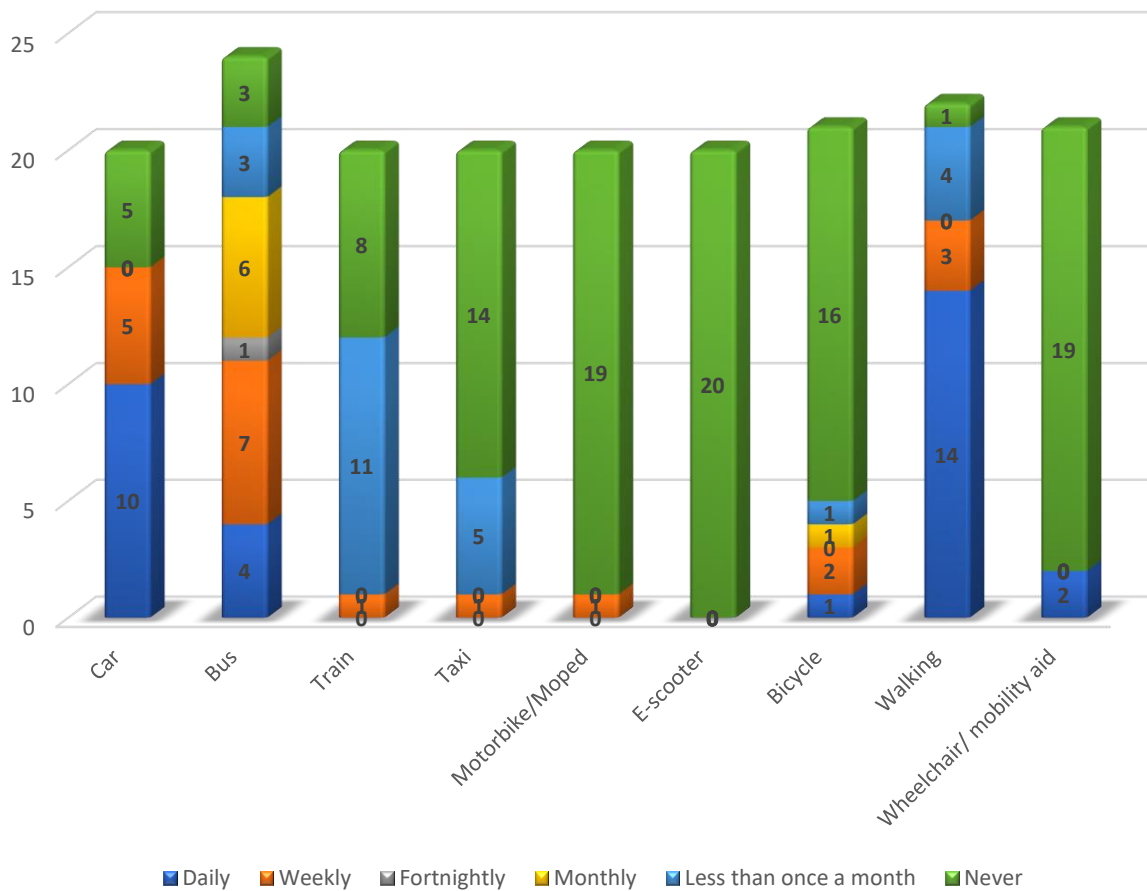
Q11 - How easy do you find it to get around in and outside of central Witney on a scale of 1-5, 1 = not easy at all, 5 = very easy
25 respondents

Weighted average out of 5 (5 being most easy)
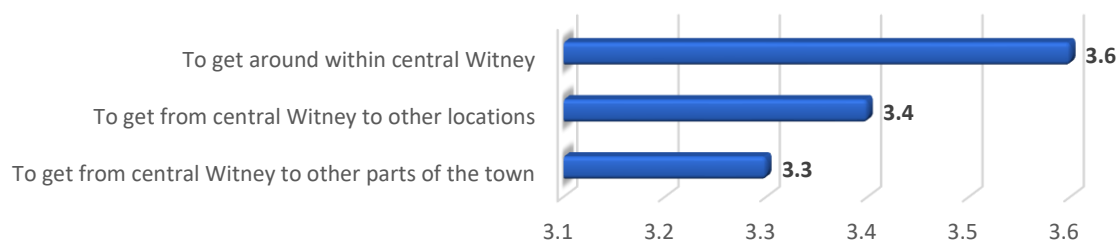
Category	Value
To get around within central Witney	3.6
To get from central Witney to other locations	3.4
To get from central Witney to other parts of the town	3.3

Q12 - What would be helpful to you for getting around in central Witney?
22 respondents

Category	Value
Improved bus frequencies or routes	59%
Improved pavements/ walking routes	55%
Increased parking options	45%
More cycle routes	23%
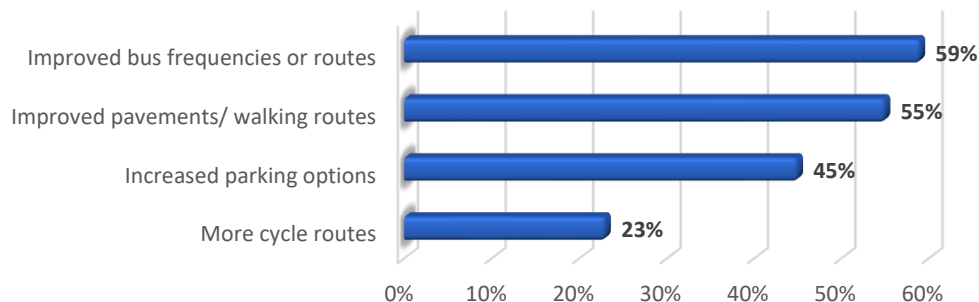
Other (7 respondents):			
Open up High Street	2	Higher speed limits / reverse 20mph speed limit	2
Enforcement of 20mph limit and restricted traffic area	1	Improved road infrastructure to allow local traffic to use centre of Witney	1
Less through traffic	1	Reduce cost of community bus	1
Better access for mobility scooters/ pushchairs	1	Reinstate train station at Witney	1

6

Q13 - Which community groups, classes, or acitivites do you use in central Witney?
12 respondents (chart shows actual numbers rather than %)

Category	Value
Sport and exercise groups/activities	4
Faith or religion-related groups/activities	4
Groups and activities specifically for OLDER PEOPLE	3
Craft and hobby groups/activities	3
LGBTQ + groups/activities	0
Mental health support groups/activities	0
Physical health support groups/activities	0
Groups and activities specifically for TEENAGERS AND…	0
Groups and activities specifically for CHILDREN	0
Groups and activities specifically for BABIES AND…	0

Other (4 respondents):			
Local church	2	U3A	1
Swimming group	1	Volunteering	1
Would like to use groups for adults but not aware of any	1		

Q14 - What community spaces and places do you use of go to in central Witney and how often?
24 respondents

	Never use	Use occasionally	Use frequently
Community halls/centres	64%	36%	0%
Witney Library	57%	29%	14%
Religious setting	73%	18%	9%
Shops	0%	13%	87%
Parks and playparks	35%	43%	22%
Other green spaces	26%	47%	26%
Other community spaces	72%	17%	11%

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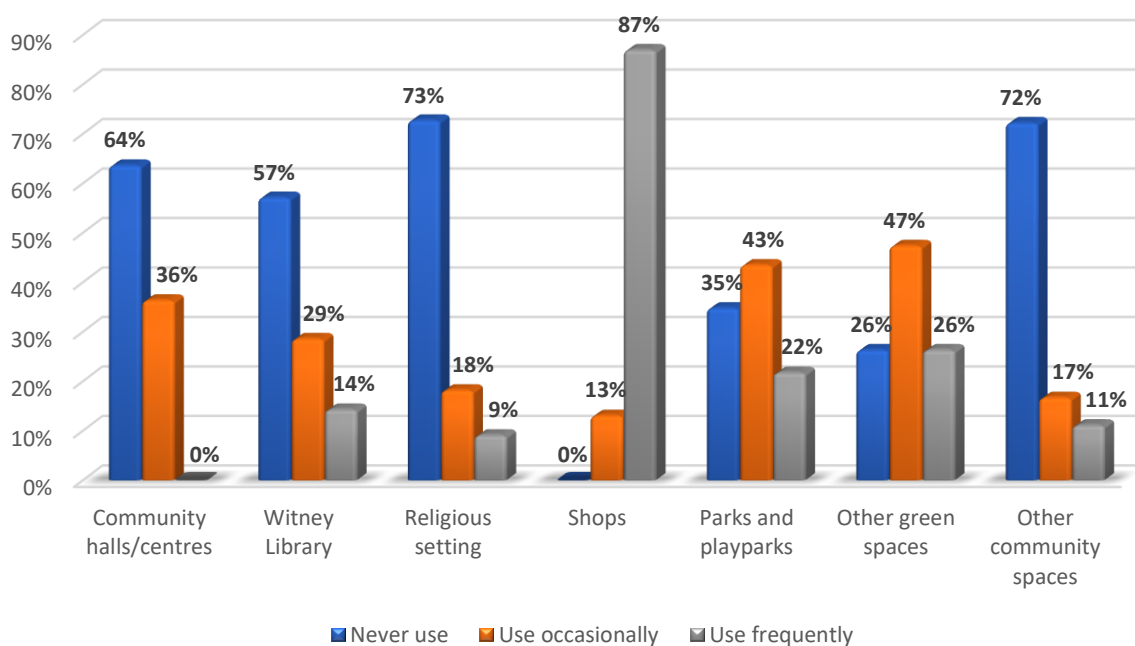
Community halls/centres comments (2 respondents):			
Ceewood Hall	1	Café/cinema/events at Corn Exchange	1
Library comments (2 respondents):			
Fantastic place which provides huge number of services for people of all ages and those struggling	1	Most valuable resource	1
Religious setting comments (2 respondents):			
St Mary's Church is very involved in the community	1	Davenport Road Methodist Church	1
Shops comments (5 respondents):			
Good to able to walk to shops / excellent shops within 10 min walk	2	Good variety of shops	1
Could do with retail park (ie, Home Bargains, The Range, Primark)	1	Smiths Estate	1
Parks and playparks comments (5 respondents):			
The Leys (lovely in summer / kids like splash park)	4	Smiths Estate	1
Other green spaces comments (3 respondents):			
Witney Lake and country park is a lovely nature reserve	1	Enjoy walking dog to Kingfisher Meadow, Windrush Place, Deer Park woodland	1
Woeful lack of community sports facilities for town of Witney's size	1		
Other community spaces comments (3 respondents):			
Enjoy walking through Tower Hill cemetery, well cared for	1	Local pubs for quiz night, music events	1
Used to use Windrush Leisure Centre but upkeep is terrible	1	Don't walk around the lake anymore as dog owners allow dogs off leash	1

Q15 - How easy do you find it to access the following health services?
25 respondents

8
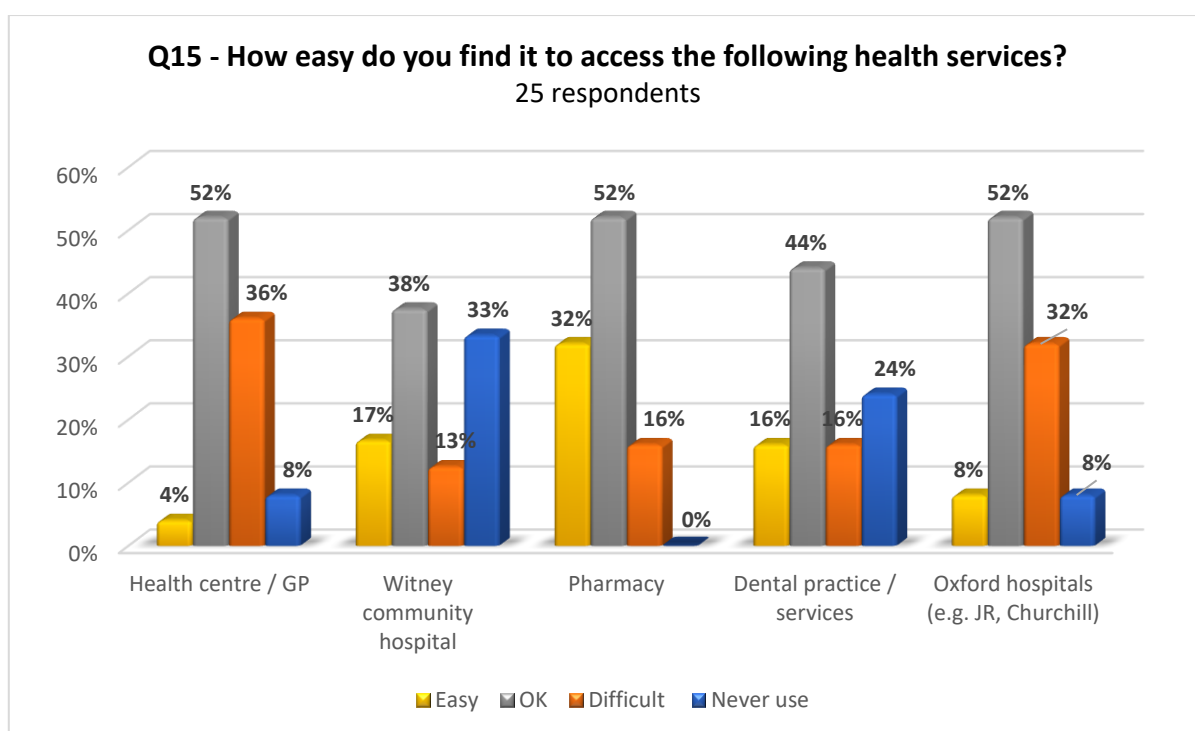
Health centre/GP comments (8 respondents):			
Difficult to get an appointment	3	Harder to get an appointment now with new/ online system	2
Able to get urgent appointment phoning at 8am but feel less able to bother doctor with general ailments	1	Waiting times unreasonably long	1
Very good local GPs at Nuffield Practice	1		
Witney Community Hospital comments (2 respondents):			
Wonderful facility and has saved on lengthy trips to Oxford	1	Waiting times unreasonably long	1
Pharmacy comments (2 respondents):			
Deer Park Boots – rarely have prescriptions ready	1	Easier to have prescriptions sent to Charlbury Pharmacy than wait for chemist in town to do them	1
Dental practice/services comments (7 respondents):			
Can't access NHS dentist / need more NHS dentists	5	Can't access one	1
Have local one now but had to use one in Oxford for years	1		
Oxford hospitals comments (8 respondents):			
H2 bus route is very useful	3	Need direct bus route to Churchill and/or Nuffield	2
Need bus from bus garage to JR / Churchill	1	Have looked after me well	1
Getting referrals is very difficult with rude staff and bad website	1	Access to Warneford particularly difficult and out of date facilities / regulations	1

Q16 - Tell us how safe you feel in the community at different times of day on a scale of 1-5: 1 = not safe at all, 5 = very safe

25 respondents

Weighted average out of 5 (5 being most safe)

9
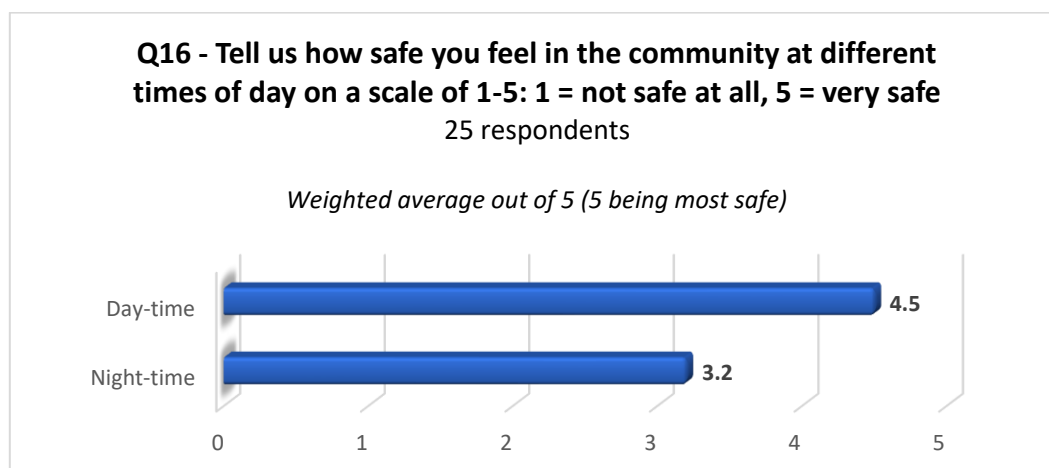
Q17 – Tell us more about your feelings of safety? Comments (8 respondents):			
Better street lighting and cameras	2	Witney has been getting more rough recently maybe due to lack of police	1
Drug dealing at Tower Hill cemetery so not happy walking through there	1	Don't like going to Tesco on Smiths Estate after dark due to amount of foreign people hanging around	1
Teenagers race up and down strip of parking near The Leys – dangerous and loud		As a woman I feel less safe at night. Maybe introduce a one-night-a-week curfew in town for men - women only night! Not a bad deal considering women are on effective curfew all the other nights of the week. (Not a complete joke!).	1
Feels fairly safe in general	1		

Q18 - Which of the following statements do you agree with?
24 respondents
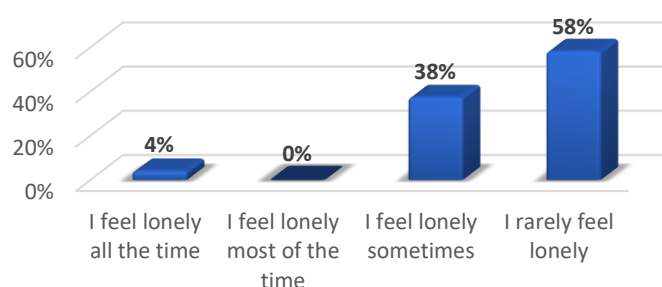
Comments (1 respondent):			
Work hard to maintain friendships	1		

Q19 - Tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale of 1-5: 1 = do not agree at all, 5 = completely agree
23 respondents

Weighted average out of 5 (5 being most agreed with)
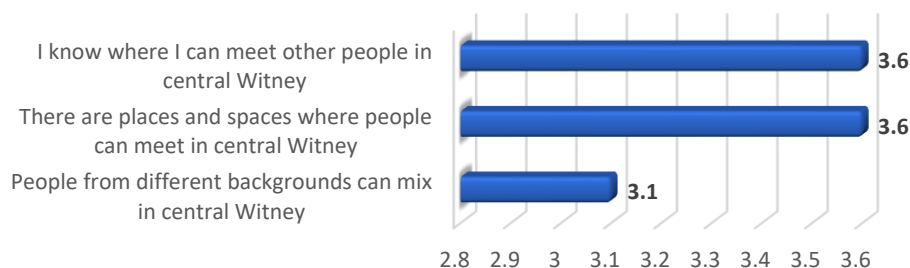
Comments (4 respondents):			
Would like to hear more about meeting people in Witney / don't really know of any	2	Let people know where to meet by letter – not everyone is online	1
People struggling with money might find it difficult to mix as most options involve buying a coffee etc.	1		

Q20 - Tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale of 1-5: 1 = do not agree at all, 5 = completely agree

20 respondents

Weighted average out of 5 (5 being most agreed with)

Your health and wellbeing

Q21 - How healthy do you consider yourself, both physically and mentally, on a scale of 1-5: 1 = not healthy at all, 5 = very healthy

24 respondents

Weighted average out of 5 (5 being most healthy)
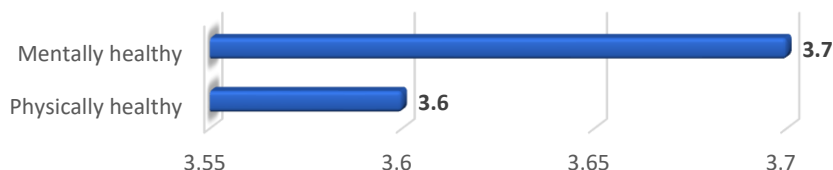
Comments (6 respondents):			
Have dissociative identity disorder, mental health services (local and Warneford) refuse to do anything and having to wait 1 year between appointments	1	Heart attacks and heart disease but due to cost of living and could not claim enough to pay mortgage, it's back to work I go	1
COPD, trapped nerve in spine	1	Health conditions are normal age-related ones	1
Mentally – struggling from sudden separation	1	Mentally – would like to find places to meet up with adults for coffee/chat	1

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Q22 - Do you have a long-standing illness or disability that affects day to day life?

24 respondents
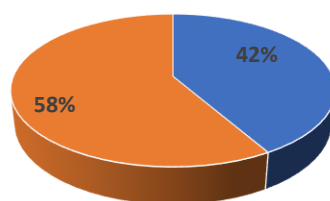
■ Yes ■ No

Comments (6 respondents):			
ADD	1	Diabetes	1
Fibromyalgia	1	Nerve damage	1
Arthritis	1	Dissociative identity disorder	1

Q23 - Has the COVID-19 pandemic had any long-term impacts on your physical or mental health?

24 respondents

■ Very negative impact ■ Somewhat negative impact ■ No particular impact
■ Somewhat positive impact ■ Very positive impact
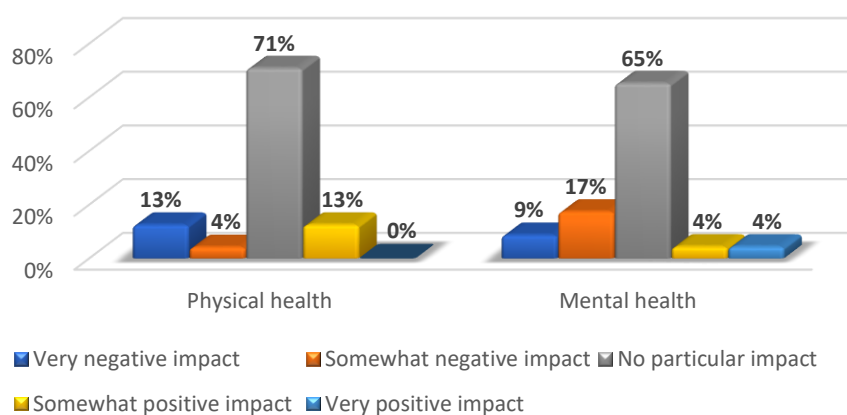
Other (5 respondents):			
Wife suffered badly from it	1	Anxious leaving house at times	1
Increased anxiety of getting ill and social anxiety in large crowds	1	Went to work all through pandemic so not restricted but also didn't get paid time off	1
Became more into fitness and have carried that on	1		

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Q24 - What do you do to look after your health/ yourself?
22 respondents

Keep active	73%
Socialise with friends	68%
Maintain healthy habits around food and eating	68%
Spend time outside	64%
Attend groups and organisations	36%
Go to a religious setting	14%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

Other (3 respondents):			
Play music in a band	1	Communal lounge	1
Activity is a bit restricted	1		

Q25 - What things have made it more difficult for you to look after yourself/ your household?
17 respondents

Income	53%
Health condition (physical and/or mental)	47%
Poor access to healthcare when I need it	29%
Poor access to exercise	29%
Lack of time	24%
Poor access to healthy and affordable food	24%
Getting around/transport	24%
Problems with housing situation	12%
Job security	6%
Poor access to the internet	6%
Childcare	6%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%
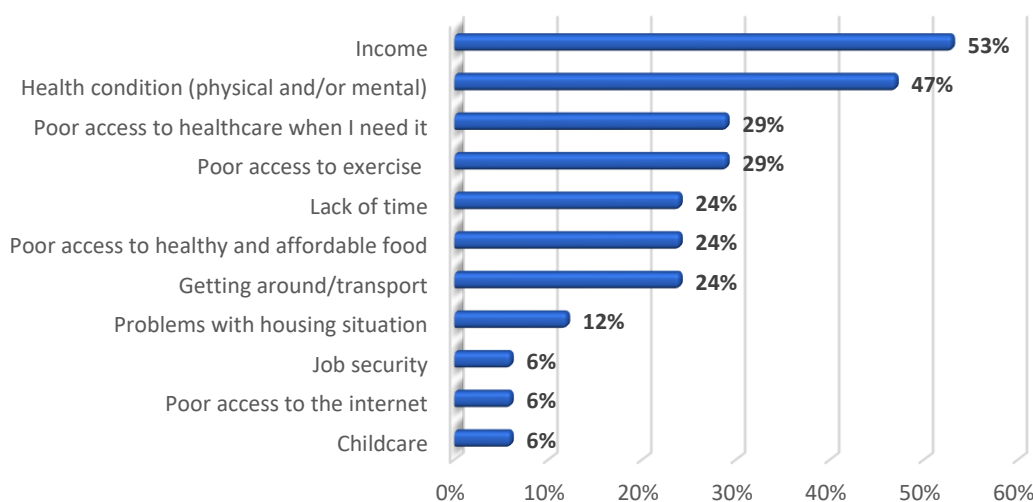
Other (3 respondents):			
Not knowing where to go	1	Trouble looking after large garden due to physical condition	1
Windrush Leisure Centre - pool, exercise rooms, changing rooms etc are really sub-par, pool and changing area too cold and dirty, most of centre in need of cleaning, water coming inside from the leaking roof	1		

13

Q26 - What do you think supports health and wellbeing in central Witney?

14 respondents

Category	Percentage
Green spaces, parks, and playparks	79%
Community groups/ organisations/ charities	54%
Community spirit/ relationships	50%
Volunteering	36%
Religious settings	36%
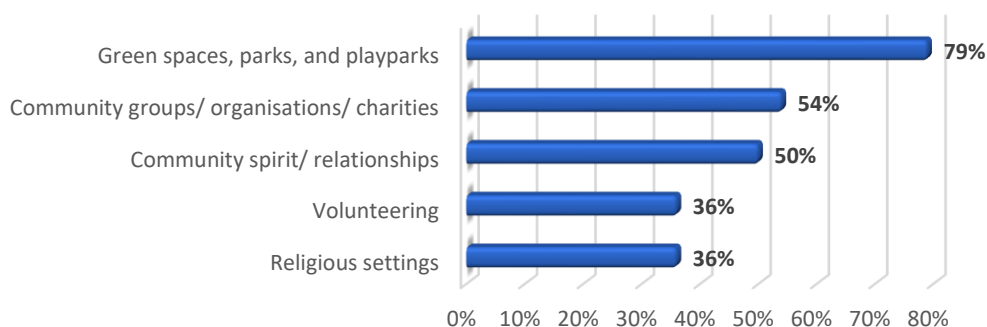
Other (4 respondents):			
Park Run	1	The Leys and the Lake	1
Making spaces/groups accessible to all people, not just affordable but at times that suit everyone and with good advertising	1	A functioning mental health service - all these distraction techniques don't work for complex and/or severe conditions	1

Q27 - What do you think would help improve the health and wellbeing of people living in central Witney?

19 respondents

Category	Percentage
Free or reduced cost access to events and activities	68%
Community events to encourage interest in health and wellbeing	47%
Support groups for specific health issues	47%
More community-led activities focused on health and wellbeing	42%
Activities at different times of the week/ day	42%
Activities that bring together people in different age groups	42%
Strong community relationships	42%
Taster sessions for activities	26%

Other (3 respondents):			
Variety of classes	1	Specific social groups for different mental illnesses/disorders	1
Comprehensive regular newsletter which brings together all the information about what's on, not just community led but also pubs, clubs, cinema	1		

14

Q28 - In relation to food, do you agree with the following statements?

24 respondents

Bar chart data:

	Yes	Sometimes/maybe	No
I can access affordable and healthy food options	71%	25%	4%
I and/or my family maintain healthy habits around food and eating	54%	42%	4%
I would value information and support about healthy food and eating habits	24%	28%	48%
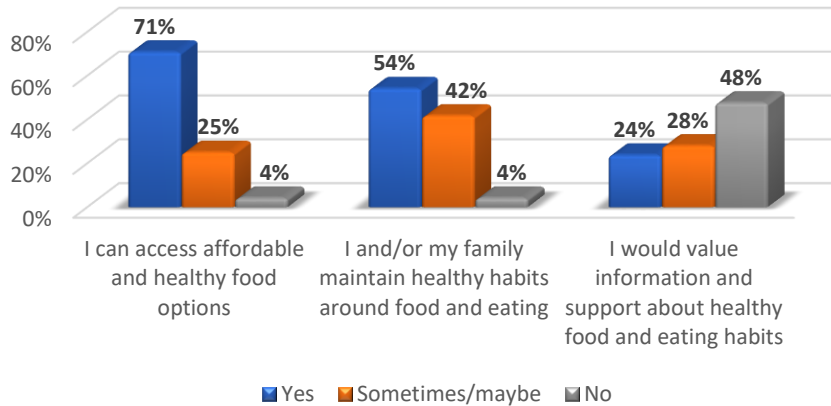
Other (3 respondents):			
I know but can't afford it all	1	Am aware but have issues around food	1
Full education for all, especially children, on what's healthy to eat and a total ban of unhealthy foods in schools/pre-schools and have young be involved in cooking their own school lunches and for adults, nutritionist/community-led [sessions] on what's healthy and what's not	1		

Q29 - Do you notice any of the following activities taking place in central Witney?

23 respondents

Bar chart data:

	Yes	No
People smoking	87%	13%
People drinking alcohol and/or alcoholic drink litter	78%	22%
People drug-taking and/or drug litter	61%	39%

15

Q30 - If yes, where do you see these things taking place?
21 respondents
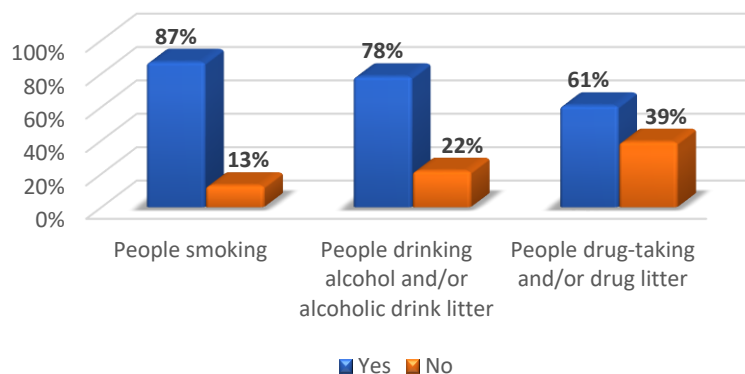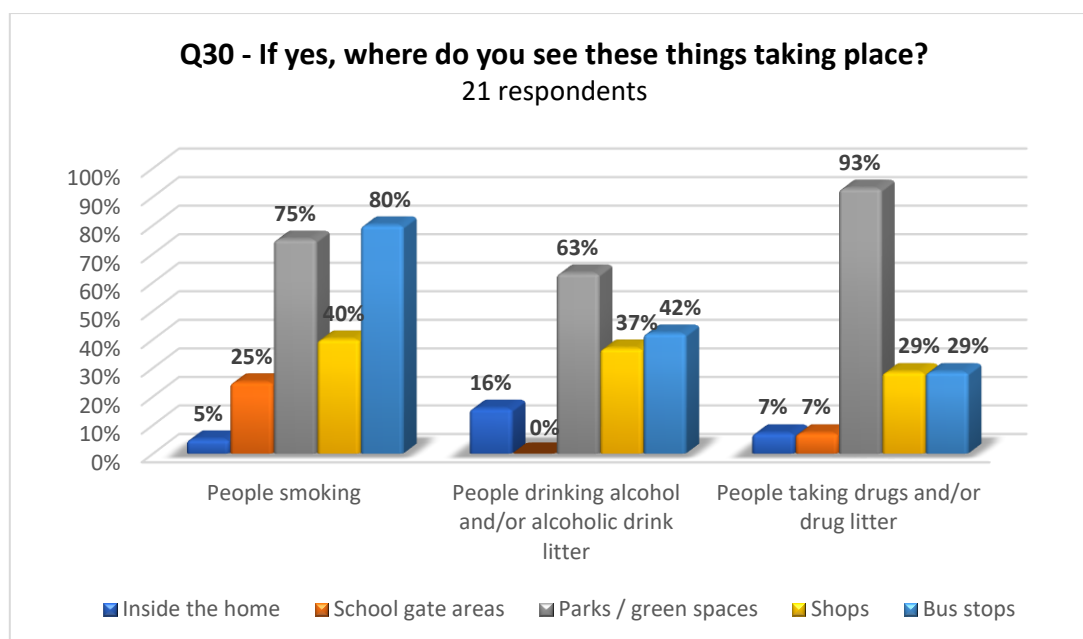
Other (8 respondents):			
Cannabis smoked everywhere / you can smell the drugs around	2	Other people's houses on Smiths Estate, you can smell the weed	1
Tower Hill cemetery	1	The Leys	1
Astroturf	1	Litter strewn everywhere, including Buttercross and playparks	1
Litter bad on footpath to McDonalds, often including shattered glass	1		

Your personal experiences of health and wellbeing

5 comments

- My personal experience with mental illness and the interactions with local services is not pleasant long story short I got fed up with the run around which lasted ten years i went to a private service which assessed and diagnosed me within a month from first contact to assessment never before had been treated with dignity and like a human being by any professional. The shock of the difference honestly made me emotional 🥺. Local mental health in fact national services need full strip down from top to bottom complete modernisation and overhaul.

- Very difficult to assess GP'S services.

- I am trying to reduce my weight. The GP Surgery have been very supportive, offering free sessions with Slimming World, which was very motivating.

- We decided to do without a car when we moved to Witney a year ago. Central Witney provides all we need for everyday living. Stress can be caused by the traffic on the A40 when we get the bus to Oxford!

- I would like more walking groups for people who don't want a long hike.

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	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 23 APRIL 2025**
Subject	**COTSWOLDS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025 - 2030**
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Hugo Ashton – Executive Member for Planning Email: hugo.ashton@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Chris Hargraves – Head of Planning Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Chris Hargraves – Head of Planning Email: chris.hargraves@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To consider and endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030.
Annex	Annex A – Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030 Annex B – Policy Summary Overview
Recommendations	That the Executive resolves to: 1. Note the content of the report; and 2. Formally endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030 attached at Annex A.
Corporate Priorities	• 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
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/	The management plan has been the subject of extensive consultation

Consultation	including with West Oxfordshire District Council. The plan has been finalised and adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Board and the Board is now seeking formal endorsement from all relevant local authorities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members will be aware that around one third of West Oxfordshire falls within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL[1]). It is a legal requirement for a National Landscape to have a management plan in place under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and such plans must be reviewed every 5 years or sooner.

1.2 The Cotswolds National Landscape Board have prepared a new management plan covering the period 2025 – 2030. It was formally adopted by the Board on 25 February 2025 and the Board is now seeking formal endorsement from relevant local authorities including West Oxfordshire District Council.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide a brief summary overview of the new management plan so that Members are able to make an informed decision as to whether they wish to formally endorse it or not.

1.4 A copy of the full management plan (note: this is an 'undesigned' version) is attached at Annex A and a summary overview of the plan's policies, prepared by WODC Officers, is attached at Annex B.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Cotswolds National Landscape, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), holds significant environmental, cultural, and economic value, contributing to biodiversity, heritage, and the overall quality of life for residents and visitors.

2.2 As a nationally protected landscape, it is imperative to maintain its special qualities, scenic beauty, and tranquillity, particularly in light of growing development pressures.

2.3 The management plan has a key role to play in this respect and contains a comprehensive summary of the key issues facing the Cotswolds National Landscape, and the management policies and actions needed to conserve and enhance it.

2.4 Although the Cotswolds National Landscape Board is responsible for preparing and publishing the management plan and clearly has an important role to play in its delivery, the success of that delivery is also dependent on a wide range of stakeholders, with the policies of the management plan intended to guide the work of others.

2.5 It is now a legal requirement for relevant authorities including West Oxfordshire District Council to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies, and targets of the management plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.

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[1] The re-branded name for the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with effect from November 2023

3. OVERVIEW - CNL MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025 – 2030

3.1 The management plan (hereinafter referred to as 'the plan') is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) for the period 2025-2030. A full copy of the plan is attached at Annex A.

3.2 In terms of structure, the core of the plan comprises four main components:

- Vision
- Key Issues
- Special Qualities
- Outcomes and Policies

3.3 The vision emphasises the importance of the creating an inclusive, accessible space that supports wellbeing, fosters connection with nature, and addresses environmental and social challenges. Through collaboration, innovation, and sustainable practices, it aims to ensure the landscape remains vibrant, resilient, and beneficial for both people and wildlife, inspiring future generations to care for it.

3.4 The vision has been drawn up in the light of three identified key issues; the climate emergency, nature's decline and the ecological crisis and health and societal changes. The plan explains that it is the impact of these key issues, amongst others, on the special qualities of the CNL that has informed the plan's outcomes and polices.

3.5 In terms of the special qualities of the CNL, these are the aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale.

3.6 These are usefully laid out and include its limestone geology, which shapes both the landforms and traditional buildings. Key features include the dramatic escarpment with expansive views, open high wolds, river valleys, dry stone walls, and ancient woodlands. The area is known for its tranquillity, dark skies, and rich biodiversity, including limestone grasslands. Distinctive settlements reflect the region's architectural heritage, while numerous trails offer opportunities for recreation.

3.7 Additionally, the Cotswolds has a deep cultural and historical legacy, with landmarks from prehistoric times to the Arts and Crafts Movement.

3.8 Drawing on the identified key issues and special qualities, the plan then sets out a broad range of outcomes and policies, arranged under three main headings:

- **Cross-cutting themes** – tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.
- **Conserving and enhancing** – influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.
- **Increasing understanding and enjoyment** – ensuring access, learning and well-being opportunities for everyone.

3.9   The outcomes express the desired state of the CNL and the policies outline how this can be achieved.

3.10   There are 14 outcomes in total. These focus on achieving net zero emissions, enhancing biodiversity, and conserving the area's distinctive character, tranquillity, and dark skies. They emphasise collaborative partnerships, sustainable land management and responsible development. Additionally, the outcomes promote improved water quality, preservation of cultural heritage, inclusive access, and sustainable tourism. The landscape is also envisioned as a space that supports public health, wellbeing, and a strong sense of local identity.

3.11   Supporting the 14 outcomes are 23 policies. These are set out in full at Annex A and are summarised in tabular form at Annex B.

3.12   The policies are the most important and utilised part of the management plan, serving five main purposes:

- They are the principles for how the CNL should be managed;

- They provide a framework for action by all stakeholders;

- They represent the policies of the CNL Board;

- They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making;

- Together with other guidance produced by the CNL Board, they are intended to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of the CNL.

3.13   It is important to note the inter-relationship and distinction between the policies of the CNL management plan and those set out in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

3.14   The Local Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for West Oxfordshire and under planning legislation, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with it unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.15   The CNL management plan does not form part of the statutory development plan and therefore does not carry the same weight in planning terms as the Local Plan. However, the current West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 confirms through Policy EH1 that the management plan and related guidance documents are a material consideration in decision-making relevant to the CNL.

3.16   As well as being an important material consideration in their own right, the CNL Board envisage the management plan policies helping to inform emerging Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans both in terms of providing supporting evidence as well as ideas for policy development.

4.   ENDORSING THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

4.1   Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies and targets of the plan is an important part of the District Council's legal obligation to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. The CNL Board has therefore written to the District Council seeking its formal endorsement.

4.2   In seeking the Council's endorsement, the Board has suggested that, in addition to helping to inform plan-making and planning decisions, the management plan can feed into more general Council strategies, policies and projects as well as the development and delivery of the Council's services and activities.

4.3   Having reviewed the Management Plan in its entirety, Officers are pleased to recommend to Members that the plan should be formally endorsed.

4.4   As set out in full at Annex A, the plan is comprehensive and covers a range of topical and relevant issues, many of which overlap with the priorities outlined in the current Council Plan.

4.5   As outlined in the plan itself, the most important and most utilised part of the plan is the policies themselves. A policy summary, prepared by WODC officers is attached at Annex B for ease of reference. There are 23 policies in total and these cover a range of salient issues including climate change, partnership working, nature recovery, agriculture and tourism.

4.6   Many of the policies already align with the current Local Plan and others provide a helpful basis for the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.

4.7   In some instances, some of the policies (e.g. Policy CE14: Major Development and CE15: Development Priorities and Evidence of Need) stray beyond national policy and don't fully align with the approach taken in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

4.8   The management plan acknowledges this and recognises that many of its policies are 'aspirational' and, in effect, sub-ordinate to the local plan and national policy.

4.9   As such, the fact that some of the policies are not fully aligned with the local plan or national policy, does not in itself present a significant concern and as such, the recommendation of Officers is that it is formally endorsed by Members.

5.   ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1   The District Council could choose not to endorse the CNL management plan, however, as explained in the report, it is now a legal requirement for relevant authorities including West Oxfordshire District Council to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies, and targets of the management plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The report raises no direct financial implications. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), the Council has a statutory obligation to make sure all decisions have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswold National Landscape.

6.2 In parallel with all other local authorities within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) the Council pays an annual subscription (2024-25 this was £11,453.40) to CNL to enable its functioning as the organisation with responsibility for conserving and enhancing this protected landscape within West Oxfordshire, and across the landscape as a whole, thereby fulfilling the Council's statutory obligation.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The report raises no direct legal implications.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 The report presents no significant risks.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 The report raises no particular issue in terms of the Equalities Act 2010 or the public sector equality duty.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The climate and ecological emergencies form a central component of the CNL Management Plan.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

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Cotswolds National Landscape: area of outstanding natural beauty

Management Plan 2025 – 2030

This title follows the format Defra are being consulted on by the National Landscapes Association.

This is the undesigned version. It is being made publicly available whilst the designed version is being developed.

Text in red is editorial narrative which will not be included in the designed version.

A note on terminology

In June 2020 the Cotswolds National Landscape Board decided to replace the term Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with National Landscape. All AONBs are now branded as National Landscapes.

This plan uses the name Cotswolds National Landscape for the area designated as the Cotswolds AONB. At times it is abbreviated to CNL. AONB is still the legal designation.

The name used for the organisation associated with the designation is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board. At times this is abbreviated to CNL Board or The Board.

The legal name of the organisation remains the Cotswolds Conservation Board but this name is no longer used in most circumstances.

'Principal Local Authorities' is used when referring to Unitary, County and District Councils, the term 'Local Authorities' is used to refer to Unitary, County, District, Parish and Town Councils.

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Contents at a glance

This table will be added at the design stage. The text below includes a footnote so has been included here to maintain the correct footnote numbering.

Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape[1]

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[1] In delivering purposes 1 and 2, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of people living in the National Landscape. This duty is addressed through relevant policies under the two purposes.

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Executive summary

The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Management Plan is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the CNL for the period 2025-2030. These are summarised in the table on the previous page.

The vision sets the overall context for the plan and was adopted in 2025 following consultation with stakeholders. The vison was drawn up in the light of three interlinked key issues:

1. The climate emergency

2. Nature's decline and the ecological crisis

3. Health and societal changes

The plan goes on to define the special qualities of the CNL. These are the aspects of the area's natural beauty which make it distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. It is the impact of these key issues, amongst others, on the special qualities that has informed the development of the plan's outcomes and polices.

The outcomes express the desired state of the CNL. They are arranged under three over-arching headings which reflect the CNL's purpose of designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) and the CNL Board's additional purpose (to increase understanding and enjoyment). These headings are illustrated further with three broad aims:

1. Cross Cutting Themes; Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.

2. Conserving and Enhancing Natural Beauty; Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.

3. Increasing Understanding and Enjoyment; Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.

When viewed together the outcomes paint a powerful picture of what the Cotswolds would be like if this plan's vision became a reality:

Outcome 1 – Climate action: By 2050 (or sooner), the Cotswolds National Landscape will have reached net zero (or better) through the collective efforts of stakeholders following a clearly defined pathway, while also building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Outcome 2 – Working together: Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the Cotswolds National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.

Outcome 3 – Landscape: The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood, and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.

Outcome 4 – Local distinctiveness: In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 5 – Tranquillity: Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the National Landscape.

Outcome 6 – Dark skies: Fewer areas of the Cotswolds National Landscape are affected by artificial light at night.

Outcome 7 – Historic environment and cultural heritage: The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.

Outcome 8 – Biodiversity and nature recovery: There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of characteristically Cotswolds habitats and species.

Outcome 9 – The water environment. Watercourses and bodies of water within the Cotswolds National Landscape have good ecological and chemical status supported by sufficient quantities of water.

Outcome 10 – Farming and land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape in ways which balance the needs of recovering nature, climate action, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.

Outcome 11 – Development and infrastructure: Development and infrastructure schemes positively contribute to the purpose of national landscape designation and also play a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local communities.

Outcome 12 – Health and wellbeing: The Cotswolds National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the wide range of people-who experience it.

Outcome 13 – Access and recreation: The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

Outcome 14 – Sustainable tourism: Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The policies outline in detail how these outcomes can be achieved and are perhaps the most important – and most utilised – part of the plan.

Although the CNL Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan, successful delivery is also dependent on all individuals and organisations with an interest in the Cotswolds.

The Management Plan identifies key actions for specific stakeholders. This is a plan for the place not the body. The Management Plan also identifies key indicators for each policy which will be used to gauge progress in its delivery. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 places a duty on relevant authorities to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes[2].

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[2] More details can be found in appendix 4.

Chair's foreword

The Cotswolds National Landscape Board has previously produced a Management Plan every five years. An interim review of the last plan, to cover the period 2023-25, was undertaken to align with the timeline of the government's 25-year Environment Plan and accommodate any changes in policy resulting from the 2019 Landscapes Review. This plan sees a return to the five yearly cycle.

The Management Plan is for the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), the place. It continues to address the many issues currently facing the CNL, and as the protected landscape body, the CNL Board is determined to make the Management Plan's Outcomes a reality. As such, we have identified the following priorities to help focus our efforts:

- Informing, encouraging, and guiding efforts to ensure that the Cotswolds plays its part in both mitigating climate change whilst also adapting to its impacts.

- Encouraging and supporting the recovery of nature across the Cotswolds - so that populations of wild species can flourish and successfully adapt to climate change by moving through the landscape.

- Broadening engagement and improving access in the CNL so that a wider range of people can access the mental, physical and emotional benefits this brings.

- Striving to ensure that all activities undertaken within the CNL and its setting conserve and enhance natural beauty and, in particular, the CNL's special qualities.

We recognise that addressing climate change whilst conserving and enhancing natural beauty will be one of our key challenges in the coming years.

Many of these demands are increasing but our understanding of their consequences is improving all the time. In our Vision for the Cotswolds, we acknowledge the need to constantly find new win-win solutions that conserve and enhance the landscape and serve the people who live, work, and visit here.

Working collaboratively, with partners both old and new, will be essential to help identify and implement these solutions. This new plan indicates how the Cotswolds National Landscape can endeavour to balance the needs of nature, people, climate – and how we all transition to a future that will surely be very different from now.

Brendan McCarthy
Chair, Cotswolds National Landscape Board
February 2025

1. Introduction

Management Plan – context

What is the Cotswolds National Landscape?

The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966, and extended in area in 1990. Although AONB is still the legal name of the designation it was rebranded as a National Landscape for most purposes in June 2020. At 787 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB – and the third largest protected landscape, including National Parks – in England. The CNL stretches from Bath and Wiltshire in the south, through Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire to Warwickshire and Worcestershire in the north. It cuts across 15 local authority areas.

Local Authority Boundaries

Local Authority	% AONB Area County and Unitary Authorities	% AONB Area District and Borough Authorities
Gloucestershire County Council	63.7	
Oxfordshire County Council	12.1	
Wiltshire Council	6.8	
South Gloucestershire Council	6.3	
Warwickshire County Council	5.1	
Bath & North East Somerset Council	3.6	
Worcestershire County Council	2.4	
Cotswold District Council		43.8
West Oxfordshire District Council		11.9
Stroud District Council		10.9
Tewkesbury Borough Council		8.5
Stratford-on-Avon District Council		5.1
Wychavon District Council		2.4
Cheltenham Borough Council		0.5
Cherwell District Council		0.2
	100%	83.3%

National landscapes are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them[3]. The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty[4].

Each national landscape has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views. Information on the 'special qualities' of the CNL is provided in Chapter 4.

Further information on national landscape designation is provided in Appendix 1 and information on 'natural beauty' is provided in Appendix 2.

What is the Cotswolds National Landscape Board?

The CNL Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004 as the Cotswolds Conservation Board and has two statutory purposes[5]:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
2. To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of people living in the National Landscape.

In circumstances where these purposes and duties are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL[6].

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by principal local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is delivered by a small team of employees, supported by volunteers including the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the CNL.

Further information about the Board can be found in Appendix 3 and on the Board's website: www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

What is the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

The CNL Management Plan ('the Management Plan') is a statutory plan[7], which sets out policies for the management of the CNL[8]. The CNL Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and for reviewing it at intervals of no more than five years. This is the sixth such document prepared by the Board.

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[3] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2015). Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Landscape Protection and Enhancement Support Scheme (England) 2015 – 17. Application to European Commission.
[4] Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).
[5] Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000), as amended by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006).
[6] This prioritisation of conserving and enhancing is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.
[7] Section 89 (1), Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the NERC Act (2006).
[8] Section 89, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) as amended by the NERC Act (2006).

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Although the Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the National Landscape or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in delivering the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

Why do we have a Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

The Management Plan is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities. The Management Plan is the only plan to guide the management of the CNL as a whole.

It is a legal requirement for a National Landscape to have a management plan under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and Conservation Boards are required to review their Management Plan before the end of a period of no more than five years.

Who will deliver the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan?

This plan is ultimately about partnership working to make the vision a reality.

The CNL Board will play an important role in delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. However, its successful delivery is also dependent on other stakeholders, including local authorities and other public bodies, land owners and land managers, non-government organisations, developers, businesses and individuals. Many of these stakeholders already make a significant contribution to delivering the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan. This is a plan for the place and all the bodies and individuals engaged in it.

It is a legal requirement for 'relevant authorities', including all public bodies, to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. This legal requirement is known as the 'seek to further' duty[9]. This duty applies to relevant authorities in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the CNL. Helping to deliver the outcomes, policies and targets of the Management Plan is an important component of fulfilling this duty.

The Defra guidance on the 'seek to further' duty states that:[10]

- *When seeking to further the purposes, relevant authorities should consider the information contained in a Protected Landscape's Management Plan.*
- *Relevant authorities should make efforts to understand the Management Plan and relate their functions to it.*

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[9] Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced a new duty on relevant authorities in relation to management plans. For national landscapes, this is enacted through Section 90A of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which states that:
The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision:
(a) requiring a relevant authority … to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review of a plan under section 89 relating to an area of outstanding natural beauty in England;
(b) setting out how such a relevant authority may or must do so.
These regulations are likely to be developed, consulted on and come into force during the lifetime of this Management Plan.
[10] Defra (2024) *Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes*.

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The Defra guidance also states that one of the questions that relevant authorities should consider is:

- *Do measures which would further the purposes align with and help to deliver the targets and objectives in the Protected Landscape's Management Plan?*

The National Landscape Association's guidance for local planning authorities on applying the 'seek to further' duty states that:

- *Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the specific AONB will normally mean, as a minimum:*
  - *conserving and enhancing the character components or special qualities identified in the Management Plan;*
  - *supporting the Management Plan Objectives, Policies and / or Principles (as applicable) as set out for each of these; and*
  - *following any Management Plan actions set out for each.[11]*

More information about the 'seek to further' duty is provided in Appendix 4.

How will the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan be delivered?

How the Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan itself, as well as encourage and support other stakeholders is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme.

Every individual and organisation with an interest in the CNL can help make this plan's vision and outcomes a reality by contributing to its delivery. The 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 5 provides an indication of the key measures that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver this plan.

How will the delivery of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan be monitored?

The Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its work programme. The 'State of the Cotswolds Report' – together with other local and national monitoring and surveys – will contribute to the provision of evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the National Landscape.

The Board will endeavour to monitor the key actions identified in the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 5. It will also endeavour to monitor compliance with the 'seek to further' duty (see Appendix 4).

Appendix 6 shows the key targets and monitoring indicators from the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework and additional local key indicators that will be used to monitor the delivery of the Management Plan. The monitoring indicators will demonstrate change over time. There are timed targets within supporting documents such as the Board's key performance indicators and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.

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[11] National Landscapes Association (2024) *Applying the CRoW Act section 85 duty to 'seek to further the purpose' in National Landscapes (AONBs) - Guidance for Local Planning Authorities*.

Management Plan – process

Much of the groundwork for the preparation of this plan has been undertaken in recent years. Throughout 2023 and 2024 research was commissioned taking a closer look at how the carbon footprint of the CNL could be developed into [a pathway towards net zero](#). A great deal of stakeholder engagement has also been undertaken by partners through the development of the six Local Nature Recovery Strategies coincident with the Cotswolds.

Consultations were undertaken internally and with our local authority and public sector partners over the summer of 2024 and a wider consultation was undertaken throughout November and December 2024. Throughout these consultations, 60 responses were received. Many more individuals contributed as several responses were compiled from across teams and partnerships.

Management Plan – structure and use

The core of the plan is made up of four components:

- Vision
- Key Issues
- Special qualities
- Outcomes and policies

The vision sets the overall context for the plan and was adopted by the CNL Board in June 2021 following consultation with stakeholders. The vison was drawn up in the light of three identified key issues:

1. The climate emergency
2. Nature's decline and the ecological crisis
3. Health and societal changes

The plan goes on to define the special qualities of the CNL. These are the aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. It is the impact of these key issues, amongst others, on the special qualities that has informed the development of the plan's outcomes and polices.

The outcomes and policies are arranged under three overarching headings which reflect the National Landscape's purpose of designation (to conserve and enhance natural beauty) and the National Landscape Board's additional purpose (to increase understanding and enjoyment). These headings are illustrated further with three broad aims:

1. **Cross cutting themes**
   Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships.
2. **Conserving and enhancing**
   Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.
3. **Increasing understanding and enjoyment**
   Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.

The outcomes are complementary and interrelated. They express the desired state of the CNL, and the policies outline how this can be achieved.

The supporting text for each outcome outlines the underlying issues that the policies are aiming to address. Each outcome is followed by a brief statement describing the primary relevant drivers for change. The outcomes have been derived from the vision and were used to establish the policies. They form the link between the long term vision and immediate action.

The policies are perhaps the most important – and most utilised – part of the Management Plan. They serve five main purposes:

1. They are principles for how the CNL should be managed in order to:
   a. conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the CNL;
   b. increase the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities;
   c. foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities;
   d. address issues that are having an adverse effect on the CNL;
   e. achieve the vision and outcomes of the Management Plan.

2. They provide a framework for action by all stakeholders with a role to play in the management of the CNL including the CNL Board.

3. They represent the policies of the CNL Board.

4. They are intended to guide, influence and be used by stakeholders in their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decision making.

5. Together with other guidance produced by the CNL Board, they are intended to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of the CNL.[12]

It is important that all of the policies should be considered in their entirety, particularly in relation to development and rural land management. For example, when a development is being proposed in the CNL, the developer and the local authority should have regard to all of the policies, not just to Policy CE13 (Development and Infrastructure – Principles).

One of the areas which the Management Plan policies relate to is in the policy-making and decision-making of local planning authorities (LPAs). For example, the CNL Board would encourage LPAs to have regard to the Management Plan policies when reviewing and developing their own policies, including those within their development plans. The same principle applies to parish or town councils in relation to the review and development of neighbourhood plans. The Management Plan policies are aspirational and as such, they might go further than current policies in individual development plans. It is intended that these aspirational policies will aid in helping to develop and evidence new local plan policies.

The Management Plan should be a material consideration in planning decisions. However, it is recognised that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the LPA's development plan (unless material considerations indicate otherwise).

Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act makes provisions for the Secretary of State to require relevant authorities to contribute to the preparation, implementation or review

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[12] The Management Plan and guidance documents produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board are the only publications that guide the management of the Cotswolds National Landscape as a whole. This is why the Board's guidance documents are specifically mentioned in several policies. The variation in local conditions and the importance of other plans and guidance that relate to specific parts of the National Landscape (i.e. individual local authorities) is also recognised.

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of national landscape management plans and to set out how a relevant authority may or must do so.[13] These provisions could potentially come into effect, via secondary legislation, by the end of 2026.

The policies of the Management Plan are consistent in the use of the verbs 'must', 'will' and 'should', as outlined below:

- '**Must**' is used where the relevant stakeholder has a statutory requirement to implement the policy.

- '**Will**' is used where the Board is the stakeholder with primary responsibility for applying and/or delivering the policy.

- '**Should**' is used where a stakeholder other than the Board has primary responsibility for applying and/or delivering the policy (although the Board would still play an active role in many of these).

The plan goes on to consider how it can be delivered and monitored. Further detail and evidence are then provided in appendices.

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[13] Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

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2. Vision

A Cotswolds vision: a National Landscape for everyone

A time of opportunity

The Cotswolds is good for us; we feel better when we are here and engaged with the natural beauty of the landscape around us. In recent years we have been reminded of the intrinsic relationship between ourselves and the natural world – and the condition it is in. We believe the Cotswolds National Landscape offers opportunities for optimism, regeneration, wellbeing, and inclusion.

Challenges lie ahead

We are in the midst of a global climate emergency and an ecological crisis. Our awareness of ongoing social and economic inequalities is heightened. In the Cotswolds, these concerns are as real for us too, and we face significant challenges: climate change; threats to wildlife and habitat; changes to the farming landscape and agriculture; finding ways to deliver opportunities for younger people and provide for an ageing population; and achieving access to, and involvement in, the countryside for everyone – in ways which help benefit the countryside and encourage a diverse range of people to appreciate and care for the Cotswolds. The timespan of this management plan is crucial to us beginning the process of turning the tide on these challenges whilst also being prepared for the uncertain future they are likely to bring.

What can we do, and how should we do it?

To address these issues and begin to make improvements, we need to challenge ourselves. We must avoid complacency, and not adhere doggedly to past beliefs – this will hold us back, and limit how much positive change we can introduce. Instead, we need to embrace new ways of thinking in order to find win-win solutions which both conserve and enhance natural beauty, and serve the people who are here. We will work hard, and in partnership – to find outcomes which offer the most positive benefits and the least negative impact. We will need to demonstrate collaboration and leadership. We will need to be energetic and proactive. We will need to be bold, brave, and confident. Above all, we will need to acknowledge that we can't do it all alone – we want to work with other organisations and individuals to achieve results which benefit all of us, and nature.

The future should be bright

The treasured landscapes which make the Cotswolds nationally and internationally important are diverse in character, as are the people who live, work, and visit here. There is no 'one size fits all' for the future – but we have a greater opportunity than ever before to pull together as communities across the Cotswolds, and to work with each other to harness our dedication and expertise to forge the future of the Cotswolds. This place, the Cotswolds National Landscape, is for everyone, from all walks of life. In sharing it and looking after it, we will continue to create a place that is vibrant, unique, welcoming, and truly special – for people and for nature. We will work towards ensuring that the Cotswolds stays a working landscape, where agriculture thrives and supply chains are secure. Our communities should be connected and diverse, but self-sustaining. Visitors should feel welcome to enjoy being here, confident about access, and motivated to give something back to help look after the landscape. This should be a place where the landscape, nature, and people work in harmony with each other.

The Cotswolds will be a place that will inspire generations of people to look after it – now and in the years ahead.

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3. Key issues

The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Board has identified three key issues that it considers to be having a significant effect on this plan's outcomes and in achieving its two purposes of:

- conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL; and
- increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the CNL.

The impact of these key issues on the natural beauty of the CNL were considered during the development of the vision and the outcomes. They can be summarised as follows:

Key Issue 1 - The climate emergency

Mitigating and adapting to climate change whilst conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

Climate change is an important driver of environmental change in the CNL, and the symptoms of a changing climate are already being felt. The UK Met Office's Climate Projections Headline Findings report (2022)[14] states that climate change trends projected for the 21st century show an increased chance of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers along with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extremes. These changes present a significant threat to the natural beauty and special qualities of the CNL. However, there is still a small window of opportunity where the CNL can play a vital role in mitigating its worst impacts, whilst building a resilient landscape for future generations.

The Landscapes Review[15] emphasised the importance of the role National Landscapes should play in mitigating and adapting to climate change, and the CNL is committed to ambitious climate action.

In November 2021 the CNL Board adopted a Climate Crisis Commitment in which it states that:

"It is our commitment to identify a scenario which allows us to endorse a path to net zero emissions (or better) by 2050 (or sooner)."

In line with the commitment that all national landscapes have made in the Colchester Declaration[16], this scenario will include clear, measurable targets to achieve net zero.

National Landscapes are also now required to embed climate adaptation plans within future Management Plans[17], and will be expected to contribute to climate change targets in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF).

The CNL Climate Change Strategy (adopted by the CNL Board in February 2022) summarises our current understanding of the climate change impacts on the Cotswolds and what stakeholders can do to both adapt to and mitigate these impacts. This strategy has been followed up with the investment in a consumption-based carbon assessment and a pathway to

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[14] Met Office (2022). *UK Climate Projections: Headline Findings,* version 4.

[15] Defra (2019) *Landscapes Review Final Report*

[16] A commitment to tackle the climate emergency and ecological crisis signed by all AONBs at a national conference in Colchester in 2019

[17] *Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3)* Annex 1: Climate risks and opportunities

net zero. These resources demonstrate the CNL's commitment to ambitious climate action and provide the framework for achieving net zero by 2050, or sooner.

Land use and management will be central to delivering this. Farming needs to adapt to focus on improving soil health to continue producing food, whilst reducing soil loss, sequestering carbon, protect water resources and providing better water quality and flood management; and tree cover needs to increase to capture carbon and provide shade and cooling. Wildflower grassland also helps to sequester carbon[18]. Other areas such as energy and transport, and food and drink will also need to be addressed, with much more of our energy needs met through low carbon energy technologies, buildings becoming more energy efficient and greater resilience built into our infrastructure; and community food networks being created to link farmers, businesses and consumers.

Some climate change mitigation and adaptation measures have the potential to adversely affect the natural beauty of the National Landscape, but with careful design and implementation, many of these measures can not only conserve but also enhance natural beauty. The challenge is to develop a pathway to net zero which also conserves and enhances natural beauty.

Key Issue 2 - Nature's decline and the ecological crisis

Enabling wildlife to recover, flourish and adapt to climate change through a robust nature recovery network which additionally provides us with clean air and water, and healthy soils.

The story of our loss of wildlife is well documented and understood. Habitat destruction and fragmentation is a well-recognised driver now combining with climate change to threaten the loss of our already diminished wildlife at an even greater scale and pace. The need for action is urgent if we are to avoid a mass extinction event. The Landscapes Review[19] found that an urgent need to do more for nature was a dominant theme:

> *In our call for evidence, the message was clear: more than any other single thing, people and organisations agreed that our landscapes should do more for nature.*

Nature is part of the uniqueness of the Cotswolds landscape and the CNL remains the last bastion for many, diminished habitats and rare species. We know what we have to do to allow our wildlife to recover, flourish and adapt to climate change. We need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. Such a nature recovery network is not only good for wildlife, it provides a range of 'ecosystem services' such as clean water or food or a beautiful place to get away from it all and enjoy some peace surrounded by nature. These ecosystem services are critically important to the wellbeing and economy of people living in and around the Cotswolds and beyond. Nature's recovery also involves nature-based solutions, playing an important role in delivering an adapted and resilient landscape.

The Landscapes Review proposed that:

> *National Landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries.*

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[18] https://www.plantlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Grasslands-as-a-Carbon-Store.pdf
[19] Defra (2019) *Landscapes Review Final Report*

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National landscapes collectively responded to the challenge of the Landscapes Review with the Colchester Declaration[2015] which contains commitments to produce nature recovery plans and restore habitats and populations of endangered species.

The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan was adopted as CNL Board guidance in October 2021. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds, and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change – in a timely manner.

We are entering a new era of collective and resourced action on delivering nature recovery. Now is the time to raise our ambition for what can be achieved. The international obligation that the government has signed up to of 30% of land and sea managed for nature by 2030 is an indication of this ambition.

New statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies have been or are being developed which identify and map nature recovery priorities and measures. They are a key tool for driving and directing resources towards the recovery of nature. Biodiversity Net Gain already uses them for targeting and other funders have indicated a willingness to do the same. There are six of these strategies coincident with the Cotswolds and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan has been used to influence their content.

The national statutory Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (Appendix 6) includes seven targets directly relevant to the recovery of nature in the Cotswolds. These are targets for the place and are owned by all stakeholders. When combined with the duties on public bodies to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to further the purposes of designation of protected landscapes they will help drive resources to the recovery of nature across the national landscape.

Key Issue 3 - Health and societal changes

Ensuring that livelihoods are maintained and that everyone within and around the National Landscape can realise the health and wellbeing benefits of accessing its natural beauty.

Wider societal changes continue to affect people living and working in the Cotswolds. These include increased costs of living and fuel poverty, worsening housing affordability, pressure on the agricultural sector and established hybrid and remote working patterns.

We face unprecedented environmental challenges in the form of the climate emergency and ecological crisis. We have to respond quickly and vigorously to address them and furthermore we have to do this in a way that supports livelihoods and communities. The solutions have to work in social and economic terms as well as environmental if they are to have a lasting impact.

It will be important to manage the national drive for economic growth. We are likely to see increased pressure from housing as well as energy and infrastructure, and it is important that growth is managed in a sustainable way, with the interests of people and nature in mind.

The mental and physical health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly understood and appreciated. The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people and crucially to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of

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[20] A commitment to tackle the climate emergency and ecological crisis signed by all AONBs at a national conference in Colchester in 2019.

accessing them too. A challenge that the Cotswolds National Landscape Board intends to address, building on current activity and continuing to work with stakeholders, old and new.

4. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape

The 'special qualities' of a national landscape are those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are considered valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for its conservation, enhancement and management are based. They bring out the essence of the national landscape as an evocative description of the area rather than as a statistical account.

The Cotswolds is a rich mosaic of historical, social, economic, cultural, geological, geomorphological[21][21] and ecological features. The special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) are:

- The unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material;

- The Cotswold escarpment, including views from and to the National Landscape;

- The high wolds – a large open, elevated predominately farmed landscape with commons, 'big' skies and long-distance views;

- River valleys, the majority forming the headwaters of the Thames; and an important water resource;

- Distinctive dry stone walls;

- Flower-rich grasslands including floodplain meadows and neutral grasslands and particularly limestone grasslands;

- Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment.

- Variations in the colour of the stone from one part of the National Landscape to another which add a vital element of local distinctiveness;

- The tranquillity of the area, away from major sources of inappropriate noise, development, visual clutter and pollution;

- Extensive dark sky areas;

- Distinctive settlements, developed in the Cotswold vernacular with high architectural quality and integrity;

- An accessible landscape for quiet recreation for both rural and urban users, with numerous walking and riding routes, including the Cotswold Way National Trail;

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[21] Geomorphology is the physical features of an area, strongly influenced by geology.

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- Significant archaeological, prehistoric and historic associations dating back 6,000 years, including Neolithic stone monuments, ancient drove roads, Iron Age forts, Roman villas, ridge and furrow fields, medieval wool churches and country estates and parks;

- A vibrant heritage of cultural associations, including the Arts and Crafts Movement of the 19th and 20th centuries, famous composers, and authors and traditional events such as the Cotswolds Olimpicks, [Levellers day](#) and woolsack races[22].

5. Cross cutting themes

Tackling 21st century issues through progressive partnerships

The climate emergency

Outcome 1 – Climate action:

Climate action: By 2050 (or sooner), the Cotswolds National Landscape will have reached net zero (or better) through the collective efforts of stakeholders following a clearly defined pathway, while also building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

This outcome reflects our shared ambition for the future of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), it sets out the desired state and provides a clear direction for collective action. Stakeholders will work collaboratively to define and implement a pathway that ensures meaningful reductions in emissions while increasing resilience to climate change.

The urgency of climate action is undeniable, and the CNL is not exempt from playing a full part. [Analysis shows](#) that emissions per person in the CNL are over 25% higher than the UK average, primarily due to greater carbon footprints from food and drink, electricity use, and significantly higher emissions from driving and flying. Tackling this requires decisive action, prioritising measures that deliver immediate benefits while being designed to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Cotswolds.

Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation

CC1.1. Climate change mitigation including the sequestration of carbon should be a key component of land management practices and Environmental Land Management, and rural development support mechanisms in the National Landscape. Examples include:
- Increase canopy cover through increased tree cover and woodland and hedgerow creation, restoration and enhancement.
- Measures that capture and store carbon in soil such as cover cropping, using herb-rich leys, minimising soil disturbance and wildflower grassland restoration.
- Measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from farming operations, such as minimising the use of synthetic fertilisers, improving energy efficiency, moving

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[22] A fuller list of heritage and cultural associations is in the [Conserving and Celebrating Cultural Capital in the Cotswolds National Landscape](#) position statement.

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to more extensive grazing systems and integrating extensive livestock systems with arable production.

CC1.2. Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through reducing energy demand in existing and new buildings and infrastructure by:
- o Improving energy efficiency, for example, by retrofitting existing buildings. Where traditional buildings including listed buildings are retrofitted and this effects the fabric of the building, this should, ideally be undertaken by historic building specialists and in a manner that is compatible with the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation[23];
- o Reducing embodied carbon through the use of sustainably sourced timber and secondary and recycled materials within all construction unless demonstrably unachievable on technical and practical grounds;
- o Utilising passive measures, for example the orientation of buildings, passive house design and the provision of high levels of insulation;
- o Additional glazing, solar panels, heating systems (e.g. heat pumps) and low carbon driveway materials such as locally sourced gravels and natural stone, should be considered.
- o Sustainable construction methods and management plans to reduce and manage construction waste should be implemented[24];
- o Supporting voluntary sustainability standards, where appropriate, for example BREEAM, Building with Nature, the UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard and One Planet Living principles.

CC1.3. Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through reducing emissions from both residents' and tourists' transport and travel by:
- o Reducing the need to travel, for example by encouraging home working (supported by suitable broadband provision) and affordable housing provision close to sources of employment, services and facilities;
- o Reducing car use for example, through increasing green and active travel including public transport (and accessible public transport) and increasing shared mobility through car sharing schemes;
- o Improving the sustainability of travel through for example; a comprehensive bus service linked to public transport hub promotion/integration and information.
- o Prioritise the provision of walking, cycling and public transport use, including adequate cycle parking and safe cycle routes.
- o Providing sufficient infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles, scooters and bikes;
- o Promoting messages aimed at minimising air travel by Cotswolds residents and visitors.
- o Developers should demonstrate how their development promotes the use of public transport and active travel, including features like cycle storage, staff facilities, car club provisions, enhanced EV charging points, and integration with other active travel networks.

CC1.4. Greenhouse gas emissions should be minimised through generating and distributing

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[23] Relevant guidance, in this regard, includes the Board's guidance on 'Traditional Cotswold Buildings - Saving Energy' and Historic England's guidance on 'Energy Efficiency and Retrofit in Historic Buildings'. Policy CE4 (Local Distinctiveness), below, is also relevant.

[24] This is backed up by CONFOR's 'The National Wood Strategy' and the 'Timber in Construction Roadmap''

energy from low carbon sources in a manner consistent with the purpose of National Landscape (AONB) designation, this plan and associated guidance including the CNL [Renewable Energy Position Statement](#) (June 2023):

- All developments, should be encouraged to have a net zero operational carbon balance and 100% energy provided by low carbon sources.
- Support community-led renewable energy production, in line with the CNL [Renewable Energy Position Statement](#).

CC1.5 Greenhouse gas emissions from food production should be reduced by supporting the development of community food networks, connecting farmers and businesses with consumers and promoting the purchase of locally produced food to help reduce food miles and enhance resilience. Small-scale vegetable growing in gardens and allotments should be encouraged.

CC1.6. Climate action should be undertaken in a way that is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

CC1.7. Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for climate change within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.

Target 6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

Target 8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline). The target for increasing tree canopy and woodland cover by 2050 across the CNL is 4.59% of the CNL (9,367 Ha). The target for 2030 is 0.92% of the CNL (1,873 Ha)

Policy CC2: Climate change – adaptation

CC2.1. The risks posed by the consequences of climate change should be reduced through a range of adaptation measures, including those identified in:

- relevant policies of this Management Plan. (including but not limited to; CE1, CE7, CE8, CE9, CE10, CE11, CE12, & CE13)
- [the CNL Climate Change Strategy (2022)](#)

CC2.2. Climate change adaptation should be a significant driver in the design of all new development, infrastructure and transport provision[25].

CC2.3. Climate change adaptation should be a key component of land management practices and Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms, in the National Landscape.

CC2.4. Further research into the predicted impacts of climate change on the CNL should be undertaken. This research should be used to advise and inform sustained behavioural change to adapt to climate change and conserve and enhance the National Landscape and its special qualities.

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[25] Additional measures not explicitly addressed in the Management Plan include protecting transport infrastructure from extreme weather events and ensuring that all new and retrofit development recognises the need to compensate for hotter summers and extreme weather events.

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Our climate is rapidly changing, driven by greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. We are already experiencing the dangerous impacts of a rapidly heating climate and many of the defining characteristics and special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) are threatened by climate change and potentially our responses to it. Even if we cut emissions to zero tomorrow, further warming is inevitable due to the legacy of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere that will take decades to decline to safe levels. However, a small window of opportunity remains for ambitious climate action to prevent its worst impacts, and to help people and wildlife adapt.

To do this, the CNL has invested in a consumption-based carbon assessment, to understand the extent and sources of current emissions in the landscape, whilst setting out a rough scenario to reach Net Zero. A series of workshops with stakeholders ran throughout the winter of 2023. The resulting report published in February 2024 set these findings in the context of the CNL. These investments provide a clear framework for setting out these policies for the CNL to reach Net Zero by 2050, or sooner (Appendix 7).

Land use and management changes should be a priority area for reducing emissions and sequestering carbon, but any changes must seek to further and be compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL. The CNL Board will look to achieve this by undertaking a range of actions, including:
- Creating a woodland, tree and hedgerow opportunity map in consideration of the core purposes of CNL and using this map to guide increased appropriate woodland and hedgerow creation. The potential for different tree species to be more resilient to climate change should be taken into consideration when choosing which species to plant[26].
- Quantify current emissions from farming and the potential contribution of regenerative agriculture to emissions reductions and climate mitigation. Use this to accelerate the uptake of regenerative agriculture practices in the CNL.

This Management Plan covers 20% of the remaining harvests before 2050. Accordingly, actions cannot be delayed, and so further analysis, opportunity mapping etc. must happen alongside encouraging changes now in land use and management.

One of the key actions to mitigate climate change and follow a pathway to net zero is to capture as much carbon as possible through increased tree canopy and woodland cover whilst ensuring the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.

The target included in policy CC1.7. is based on estimating the increase of tree canopy and woodland cover that can be accommodated within each Landscape Character Type (LCT).[27]

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[26] Details are in the Cotswolds National Landscape Tree Species and Provenance Position Statement.

[27] This was achieved through a three-step process.

1. An assessment of the area under each LCT where increasing tree canopy and woodland cover is constrained.

2. A landscape sensitivity assessment to increased tree canopy and woodland cover for each LCT.

3. The application of a % tree canopy and woodland cover increase to the areas without constraints. The % increase was derived from the landscape sensitivity assessment using a sliding scale from 1% to 5% centred around the 3%, national target. The target for 2030 is based on extrapolating steady progress towards the 2050 target. This work became available immediately before the adoption of this management plan. It is subject to further refinement so the target is tentative and may change as we learn more.

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A pro rata apportionment of the national 3% target across English protected landscape gave a figure of 6,123 Ha for the Cotswolds.[28] This is similar to the figures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (woodland + 1/3 of mixed habitat area). This new target is half as much again reflecting the need for increased woodland and canopy cover to help mitigate climate change in the light of the relatively high local carbon footprint.

A key principle of resilience planning is to prepare for a range of possible future changes to the CNL. To support this, the CNL Board is developing a Climate Adaptation Plan that considers future climate projections for the Cotswolds. The plan will assess the level of risk to each of the landscape's special qualities and identify targeted adaptation actions. It will also outline clear roles for stakeholders, ensuring a collaborative approach to building a resilient landscape. The full Climate Adaptation Plan should be published by the end of summer 2025.

Working together

Outcome 2 – Working together:

Through collaborative partnerships and a shared understanding, the purposes of the Cotswolds National Landscape and its Board are applied consistently across the whole area.

This Management Plan is a place-based plan for the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), not just the National Landscape Board – the Board is unable to deliver the plan by itself. The Plan helps inform the activity of a multitude of partners, stakeholders, landowners, communities and visitors in order to contribute to the purposes of the protected landscape designation.

Policy CC3: Compliance with section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act

CC3.1. Relevant authorities, including public bodies and statutory undertakers, must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL, in line with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

The legal requirement for relevant authorities to seek to further the purpose of National Landscape designation (the 'seek to further' duty) provides an important mechanism for conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape. Further information on the 'seek to further' duty is provided in Appendix 4.

Policy CC4: Working in partnership

CC4.1. Stakeholders should work in partnership to support the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. Stakeholders should also cooperate in fostering the economic and social wellbeing of communities in and around the National Landscape.

CC4.2. Communities and businesses within and around the CNL should be encouraged to value and celebrate being part of a nationally recognised landscape and to contribute to the purpose of national landscape designation.

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[28] Figures prepared for a Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework apportionment workshop by Land Use Consultants, September 2024.

CNL is an administratively complex area, extending across 15 principal local authorities and three geographical regions. This makes it very challenging to develop and deliver a consistent approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL including its special qualities and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. However, the potential benefits are huge, including better coordination of planning, development, Environmental Land Management schemes, nature recovery planning, tourism and recreation.

Taking a consistent approach, in this context, means being consistent in having regard to (and, ideally, being compatible with): the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape; national policy relating to national landscapes; the policies of the Management Plan; and the guidance and position statements published by the Board. However, this does not necessarily mean that decisions made or actions taken will always be the same across the whole of the National Landscape, as these will vary depending on local social, economic and environmental circumstances.

Guidance on what is meant by 'landscape- led' is provided in the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.

The new duty to seek to further the purposes of designation combined with a statutory targets and outcomes framework act as a powerful driver for relevant authorities, including public bodies, to continue working collaboratively towards the outcomes in the plan and to contribute even more.

Though there is generally a significant level of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape amongst communities and businesses in and around the CNL, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this are lacking. This reduces awareness of the need for the conservation and enhancement of the sense of place, its distinctive features and special qualities.

6. Conserving and enhancing

Influencing and delivering for landscape, nature and climate.

Landscape

Outcome 3 – Landscape:

The evolving landscape and much-loved character of the Cotswolds is better understood, and at the heart of all we do and the decisions we make.

Landscape changes over time. Such change is often perceived as slow or non-existent, but when a view or place is compared to its earlier self, even over a comparatively short time span, the change can be dramatic. Since national landscape designation in 1966 much has changed in the Cotswolds, driven to a large extent by government policies for farming, consumer demand for cheap food and global commodity markets supported by technological advances in agriculture.

Policy CE1: Landscape

CE1.1. Proposals that have the potential to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the landscape character of the location, as described by the CNL Board's Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines. There should be a presumption against the loss of key characteristics identified in the landscape character assessment.

CE1.2. Proposals that have the potential to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the CNL, should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the scenic quality of the location and its setting, views, including those into and out of the National Landscape and visual amenity.

CE1.3. Conserving and enhancing landscape character should be a key objective of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape.

CE1.4. Rural skills training and the utilisation of those skills – such as dry stone walling, stone-masonry, woodland creation and management and hedge laying – should be supported to ensure the long term retention, creation and management of the key features of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Environmental Land Management schemes and woodland grants, changes in the shooting and equestrian sectors, tree diseases, fluctuations in commodity prices, population growth and migration and changes in employment and communications, can all be influenced by Government policy and financial support. Continued change is inevitable and will have an impact on the landscape and the appearance of the Cotswolds in the future. Addressing the climate emergency, nature's decline and the ecological crisis will cause more change. This change needs to be managed and guided to ensure the Cotswolds retains its landscape character and special qualities.

It is important to consider the cumulative impact of changes on landscape character. This applies to both incremental building development, neglect and land use change, particularly equestrian development and horticultural production under polytunnels.

The surroundings and setting of the National Landscape are important to its landscape and scenic beauty. For example, the impact of development and land management outside the National Landscape on views from – and to – the National Landscape is an important consideration, as is the retention of key views.

Support mechanisms for farming, forestry and other land management sectors could impact the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and special qualities of the National Landscape. It could also lead to legislative changes in environmental protection and management impacting on the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape and its special qualities.

The loss of traditional skills is a significant issue for the future management of the landscape and the special qualities of the National Landscape.

In 2021 the National Landscape Board published a position statement on landscape-led development supported by appendices.

The CNL is significant for its geology and geomorphology with some features unique to the area. The geology influences the landscape, soils and biodiversity and has played a significant role in the National Landscape's industry and heritage. Survey work has also identified the Cotswolds as significant for tufa streams and springs. It is vital that this geological resource is protected, conserved, enhanced, promoted and better understood.

Policy CE2: Geology and Geomorphology

CE2.1. Proposals that have the potential to impact on the geological and geomorphological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of these features.

CE2.2. The geological and geomorphological features of the CNL should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.

CE2.3. Opportunities should be sought to promote awareness and understanding of the geological and geomorphological features of the CNL.

CE2.4. Exploration and research into the geology and geomorphology of the CNL should be continued in order to improve understanding of the landscape, and of the geological resource and its importance to inform the conservation and management of geological and geomorphological sites.

The Cotswolds represents the best-known section of the oolitic limestone band that arcs across England from Dorset to the Humber. The distinctive character of the Cotswolds and its special qualities are defined by this underlying limestone geology. It provides a unifying character with a visible presence in the landscape and use as a building material. The importance of geology in the CNL is illustrated by the designation of 36 geological Sites of Special Scientific Interest and over 85 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites.

Policy CE3: Natural and cultural capital – principles

The CNL has a wealth of natural and cultural capital (the stock of natural and cultural heritage assets) that provide goods and services, often called ecosystem services, that benefit wider society as a whole. These assets – and the services that they provide – are of local, national and, for some services, international importance. However, they are not fully understood or valued.

CE3. 1. The natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), and the services they provide, should continue to be assessed and evaluated.

CE3. 2. The use of natural and cultural capital accounting should be encouraged in order to fully understand the implications of investment, development and management decisions.

CE3.3. The financial and non-financial benefits of natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be promoted.

CE3.4. Proposals affecting the CNL should have regard to – and seek to conserve and enhance – the natural and cultural capital of the CNL and the services they provide.

CE3.5. Natural and cultural capital and the services they provide should be key components of

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Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the CNL.

Natural capital stock includes renewable and non-renewable natural resources e.g. geology, minerals, soils, water, air, plants, animals, habitats and ecosystems. The National Landscape's cultural heritage assets are equally rich, including the cultural-historical landscape, individual heritage assets, historic settlements and vibrant cultural activity.

Ecosystem services include; food and fuel provision, the regulation of climate including through carbon sequestration and storage, water supply, water purification and flood management, as well as wellbeing benefits to people through recreation and appreciation of nature.

The CNL Board published a Position Statement on 'Conserving and Celebrating Cultural Capital in the Cotswolds AONB' in 2019 and in 2021 the Board published 'A Natural Capital Evaluation of the Cotswolds National Landscape' and a 'Cotswolds Natural Capital Atlas'. In 2022 the Environment Agency undertook a Natural Capital accounting exercise for the CNL using their Natural Capital Register and Account Tool (NCRAT). This provides an estimate of the economic value of natural capital benefits. (Link to be added when report posted on website)

Local distinctiveness

Outcome 4 – Local distinctiveness:

In a world of constant and rapid change, the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape is valued, conserved and enhanced.

One of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape is the unifying character of the limestone geology – its visible presence in the landscape and its use as a building material. Development pressures could potentially erode this local distinctiveness, for example, through the use of inappropriate building materials and inappropriate design.

Policy CE4: Local distinctiveness

CE4.1. Proposals that are likely to impact on the local distinctiveness of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of this local distinctiveness. This should include:
- being compatible with the CNL Board's Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Strategy and Guidelines, Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change and any relevant position statement or guidance published by the Board.
- being designed to respect local settlement patterns, building styles, scale and materials and in accordance with design guidance prepared by local planning authorities;
- using an appropriate colour of Cotswold limestone to reflect local distinctiveness.

CE4.2. Innovative designs, compatible with the conservation of natural beauty – which are informed by local distinctiveness, character and scale – should be welcomed.

CE4.3. The development of design guidance – which is supported by a robust evidence base and which reflects relevant guidance published by the CNL Board – will be encouraged.

CE4.4. Provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order

to provide building materials that help maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the National Landscape. Any such mineral sites should be required to demonstrate that they do not have any significant adverse effects on the natural beauty of the National Landscape including its special qualities or the integrity of existing wildlife sites. This should include the consideration of cumulative impacts, including the impact of HGV movements. Any production of aggregate and agricultural lime should only be as by-product for local use and only for essential operational purposes, with sufficient material being left to deliver the agreed restoration plan (or a more natural landform) without relying on imported material. Opportunities should be sought to retain geological outcrops to promote awareness and understanding of the geological and geomorphological features of the CNL. The restoration of mineral sites should be addressed at the earliest opportunity and realise their potential to contribute to nature recovery networks. Consideration should also be given to the after use of quarries for solar energy and battery storage schemes, where appropriate.

All local planning authorities are required to '*prepare design guides or codes consistent with the principles set out in the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and which reflect local character and design preferences.*'[29] Addressing local distinctiveness is a key component of reflecting local character and is consistent with the National Design Guide and National Model Design Guide. For example, the National Design Guide states that '*well-designed places are influenced positively by … the local vernacular, including historic building typologies … characteristic materials and details*'.[30]

It will be important to maintain an adequate supply of locally sourced, appropriately coloured limestone as this varies across the Cotswolds and stone sourced from too far away will be intrusive and undermine local distinctiveness.

Local distinctiveness includes natural elements including but not limited to: woodlands, grasslands, species, the shape and scale of fields, and the character of field boundaries such as hedges and walls. These elements should guide the design of new green and blue infrastructure.

The elements that contribute to local distinctiveness are described in detail within the report Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change. They also include building walls, roofing and features.

Tranquillity

Outcome 5 – Tranquillity:

Noise pollution and visual disturbance are minimised to maintain tranquillity across the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Research undertaken by CPRE has identified a growing loss of tranquil areas in England, down from 75% of England in the 1960s to around 50% in 2007[31].

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[29] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *National Planning Policy Framework*
[30] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *National Design Guide*.
[31] CPRE (2007). Developing an Intrusion Map of England

Policy CE5: Tranquillity

CE5.1. Proposals that have the potential to impact on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of this tranquillity, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise noise and other aural and visual disturbance.

CE5.2. Measures should be taken to remove and where removal is not possible, minimise existing sources of noise and other aural and visual disturbance in order to enhance the tranquillity of the CNL.

CE5.3. Proposals that have the potential to impact on the tranquillity of the CNL should have regard to – and be compatible with – the CNL Board's Tranquillity Position Statement.[32]

Although the CNL has a relatively high level of tranquillity, the CNL is being increasingly affected by unwanted, man-made noise and by activity arising from developments. For example, the increasing demand for air transport is leading to expansion of controlled air space over the CNL. Additionally, the use of drones, both commercially and privately, is likely to increase, further reducing levels of tranquillity.

Tranquillity relates to issues of visual impact and light pollution as well as noise and other disturbance. However, given that Policy CE1 addresses visual impacts and Policy CE6 addresses light pollution, Policy CE5 has an emphasis on noise. This incorporates issues such as significant increases in traffic in the towns, villages, smaller settlements and across the wider countryside of the CNL, including increased traffic arising from developments outside of the CNL. [33] Increased use of electric vehicles will not help reduce traffic noise as most vehicle noise, when moving, is generated tyres and air noise.

The CNL Board published a position statement on tranquillity in 2019.

It is important to note that this policy is not intended to prevent the noise arising from normal working countryside operations such as operating power tools or farm machinery or non-mechanised quiet recreation.

Dark skies

Outcome 6 – Dark skies:

Fewer areas of the Cotswolds National Landscape are affected by artificial light at night.

The CNL has relatively dark, nighttime skies compared to other parts of England that are not in national landscapes, with these dark skies being one of the CNL's special qualities. For example, Cotswold District, which covers 44% of the CNL, ranks 13th for the quality of its dark skies out of all the districts, boroughs and unitary authorities in England. However, light pollution from surrounding urban areas and from market towns, larger villages, industrial and business

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[32] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2019). Tranquillity Position Statement.
[33] The Board's Tranquillity Position Statement identifies that, as a 'rule of thumb', if a proposed development would increase traffic movements (and / or HGV movements) on roads within and / or along the boundary of the CNL by 10% or more, this should be considered a significant increase.

premises and facilities such as sports pitches within the CNL does significantly and increasingly affect the dark skies of the CNL in those locations. 'Light pollution' of the night sky is an intrusion into the countryside at night, which can have harmful effects on the health of people and wildlife. With ever-increasing levels of new housing (and other lit development) in the CNL, light pollution is likely to get worse unless action is taken to address this issue.

Policy CE6: Dark skies

CE6.1.   Proposals that have the potential to impact on the dark skies of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of these dark skies, by seeking to avoid and where avoiding is not possible, minimise lighting.

CE6.2.   Measures should be taken to increase the area of dark skies in the CNL by removing and, where removal is not possible or appropriate, reducing existing sources of lighting.

CE6.3.   Proposals that have the potential to impact on the dark skies or dark landscapes of the CNL should have regard to and be compatible with:
  • The National Landscapes Board's Dark Skies & Artificial Light Position Statement.[34]
  • Cotswolds National Landscape Technical Lighting Design Guidance (link to be added when on website)
  • Best practice standards and guidance, in particular, that published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals.

CE6.4.   Consideration will be given to seeking a formal dark sky designation for those parts of the Cotswolds National Landscape that are least affected by light pollution.

The Cotswolds National Landscape has a significant and extensive area of naturally dark night skies and remains an area where the wonders of the night sky can be enjoyed as an integral part of its natural beauty. Dark night skies are important for landscape, heritage, wildlife, recreation and enjoyment and health and well-being. Minimising light pollution saves energy, reduces nuisance and helps conserve and enhance the CNL's landscape character and tranquillity. Dark skies are a Special Quality of the Cotswolds AONB but are under pressure from increasing light pollution from commercial and domestic security lighting, development and street lighting. The area of darkest night skies within the AONB has diminished since 1993 by more than 40%[35].

There are three main forms of light pollution: sky glow, glare and light trespass. It is also important to consider a fourth source of light pollution, which is 'presence'. Even if a lighting scheme were designed that avoided sky glow, trespass and glare, there still exists the possibility of significant residual impacts on dark and sensitive landscapes and wildlife due to the presence of the lights and the illuminance it provides.

It is recognised that there is a genuine need for artificial lighting for the purposes of ensuring safety and security, but that these needs can be met within proactive light management policies that are both sensitive and effective, using latest technology and other means to avoid, minimise and in many cases reduce unnecessary light pollution

The CNL Landscape Strategy and Guidelines seeks to address the issue of 'presence' by discouraging the introduction of lit elements into dark, night-time landscapes within the CNL.

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[34] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2019). Tranquillity Position Statement.
[35] This figure was derived by comparing the CPRE 2016 Night Blight Map with earlier mapping.

This is particularly relevant for isolated dwellings in the countryside and for other forms of lighting in isolated locations.

With any lighting installation, the aim should always be: the right light, in the right place at the right time with the right controls.

The CNL Board adopted and published a [Cotswolds Dark Skies & Artificial](#) [Light Position Statement](#) in 2019. It is supported by [the Cotswolds Night Lights Map](#) and CNL Technical Lighting Design Guidance (link to be added). The guidance provides advice and technical specifications for planning proposals with lighting elements within and in the setting of the CNL that may impact on the quality of the dark sky. It also provides advice on how to install lighting properly and to reduce and avoid light pollution for any installations whether new, existing or when replacing existing lighting.

Further guidance is provided by the [Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance note on The Reduction of Obtrusive Light](#).

Historic environment and cultural heritage

Outcome 7 – Historic environment and cultural heritage:

The historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape is better understood, conserved and enhanced.

The historic environment is complex, diverse and irreplaceable, and it is continuing to decline and be lost due to development, changes in land management and a lack of understanding and management particularly with regard to the wider historic landscape and the less visible and non-designated sites which have little or no protection. The historic environment also includes historic and cultural features of the wider landscape including but not limited to: field (enclosure) patterns and road and path networks.

Policy CE7: Historic environment and cultural heritage

CE7.1. Proposals that have the potential to impact on the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of these heritage assets and their setting. This should include respecting the historical elements of landscape character including features such as; buildings, sites, layout and context, including the relationship between the existing feature or settlement and the landscape.

CE7.2. Heritage and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments should be used to prevent or minimise harm when considering any change to a heritage asset and to influence decisions regarding the management of the historic environment and cultural heritage assets.

CE7.3. The historic environment and cultural heritage of the CNL, both designated and non-designated[36], should be conserved and enhanced through effective management.

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[36] 'Non-designated' covers the full spectrum of undesignated assets related to the historic environment, for example, ranging from archaeological sites to sites associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

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CE7.4. Designated historic environment sites, such as scheduled monuments and listed buildings, and non-designated heritage assets of equivalent significance, should be protected, in line with national policy and guidance.

CE7.5. Historic environment and cultural heritage should be a key component of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms in the CNL.

CE7.6. Opportunities should be sought to promote the awareness, understanding and use of Historic Environment Records, Conservation Area Appraisals, Historic Landscape Characterisation and Heritage Strategies and Action Plans. These should be used to influence decisions regarding the management of the CNL's historic environment and cultural heritage.

CE7.7. The cultural heritage of the Cotswolds should be better understood and celebrated in arts, cultural, and social activities across the National Landscape.

CE7.8. Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for heritage assets within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. Details of the indicators for monitoring this target are outlined in appendix 6.

> Target 10   Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in the CNL from a 2024 baseline of 62 to 52 in 2030 and 7 in 2050.

Our historic environment and cultural heritage is the result of a complex history of interaction between people and the natural environment. The historic landscape and natural environment form the foundations of our regional identity and local distinctiveness, contributing to the character and natural beauty of the area.

Cultural heritage in the Cotswolds runs deeper than associations made with established examples such as the Arts and Crafts Movement or the music of Vaughan Williams. It is more than how the landscape inspires people. It is intrinsically linked to our understanding of the landscape, the changing seasons, farming, and the natural world. Cultural heritage includes many intangible elements, for example; arts and crafts activities such as artist-blacksmithing, oral history, folklore, superstition, tradition and ritual. Without understanding and celebrating this rich cultural heritage, there is a risk it will be lost, and with it will go a key part of the local identity. The government ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in March 2024.

If historic buildings go out of use, they become at high risk of dereliction and potentially full loss. It is important to keep historic buildings in use, or adapt them appropriately for re-use wherever possible to prolong their lives and character.

Not all heritage assets[37] have currently been identified and it is likely that heritage assets of equal significance to designated sites such as listed buildings or scheduled monuments may survive within the Cotswolds.

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[37] A heritage asset is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework as: A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).

The need to understand and promote the connectivity of historic sites and their settings as part of the wider landscape character is vital in order to effectively conserve and manage the historic environment and Historic Landscape Character[38]31. Historic Environment Records (HER) of non-designated assets of local significance and Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), produced by principal local authorities need to be better promoted and used by all stakeholders. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is a method of identification and interpretation of the varying historic character within an area that looks beyond individual heritage assets as it brings together understanding of the whole landscape and townscape into repeating HLC Types. It can be used to help secure good quality, well designed and sustainable places.

Land management, farming practices, wildlife conservation and public access all impact upon the historic environment. Current agri-environment/ELM (Environmental Land Management) schemes have contributed to the management and conservation of historic features such as archaeological remains, registered historic parks and gardens, barns, dew ponds and walls in the wider landscape. It is essential that new support mechanisms play a significant role in encouraging investment in the National Landscape which conserves and manages the historic environment, this includes bringing archaeological remains out of arable cultivation. Environmental management schemes should be an important mechanism in reducing the number of heritage assets at risk.

New developments, by virtue of their scale and design, surrounding the historic cores of settlements can cause separation of historic cores from the wider landscape and have a detrimental effect on their distinctive character. The conversion or extension of historic buildings and farmsteads, the introduction of domestic clutter, lighting and landscaping resulting from development can harm the historic character of buildings and their setting, and their relationship to the wider landscape.

However, the historic environment can also act as the inspiration or catalyst for positive change through creative and sympathetic design. The NPPF (paragraph 196) states that plans should take into account "opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place "

Climate change is likely to increase the extremes of wetting and drying, leading to accelerated decay of stonework and an increased risk of subsidence. Increased flooding and erosion may cause damage to buildings and to archaeological sites. Policy CE7 should help to reduce the potential impacts of climate change on the historic environment. Additional measures relating to climate change are provided in Policies CC1 and CC2.

Nature recovery and biodiversity[39]

Outcome 8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity:

There is concerted unified action for a widespread recovery of nature – conserving, restoring and enhancing a connected mosaic of characteristically Cotswolds habitats and species.

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[38] More information on Historic Landscape Characterisation is available on the Historic England Website

[39] Biodiversity is commonly defined as the variety of life, including the number of species, their genetic variation, and how they interact in ecosystems. More recently abundance (number of individuals) has also been included. For the purposes of this plan nature recovery means an increase in the area of habitats and an improvement in their condition and connectivity, combined with an increase in biodiversity and the growth of populations of wild species.

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The internationally important habitats and species found across the Cotswolds have been declining significantly for decades. This greatly diminished wildlife now faces additional challenges resulting from climate change. We are now at a potential turning point where new funding mechanisms may help to achieve the recovery of nature, just before it is too late.

Policy CE8: Nature recovery and biodiversity

CE8.1. Biodiversity (including the abundance of wildlife) in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be conserved and enhanced by establishing a coherent and resilient nature recovery network across the CNL and in its setting. This should be achieved in accordance with the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs), and focus on the priority species and habitats listed in Appendix 8. The relevant LNRSs are:
    i.   Gloucestershire
    ii.   Oxfordshire
    iii.   Warwickshire
    iv.   West of England
    v.   Wiltshire
    vi.   Worcestershire

CE8.2. Policy and strategic documents that are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the CNL should have regard to the CNL Management Plan and guidance including the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and position statements. This includes but is not limited to, the following:
    i.   Local Plans
    ii.   Local Nature Recovery Strategies
    iii.   Neighbourhood Development Plans
    iv.   Green Infrastructure Strategies
    v.   Tree and Woodland Strategies
    vi.   Ecological Emergency and Climate Change Strategies

CE8.3. Proposals that have the potential to impact on the biodiversity of the National Landscape should seek to further the conservation and enhancement of this biodiversity. They should have regard to – and be consistent with – the CNL Management Plan and guidance including the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. This would include, but is not limited to, the following delivery mechanisms:
    i.   Environmental Land Management and other grant schemes and rural development support mechanisms
    ii.   Biodiversity Net Gain
    iii.   Payment for Ecosystem Services including but not limited to carbon sequestration and storage, flood management, water supply and water quality improvements

CE8.4. Stakeholders should work towards the delivery of the relevant targets for nature recovery within the national Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. The targets for the Cotswolds are:
Target 1.   Restore or create more than is 28,079 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline)
Target 2.   80% Percent of SSSIs in favourable condition by 2042
Target 3.   60% Percent of SSSIs assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028
Target 4.   Continue favourable management of all existing priority habitat already

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in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increase to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042

Target 5.   65% to 80% of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030

Target 8.   Increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 2050 across the CNL by 4.59% of the CNL (9,367 Ha). The target for 2030 is 0.92% of the CNL (1,873 Ha)

CE8.5. A mitigation hierarchy should be applied to development proposals whereby adverse impacts on biodiversity are: (i) avoided; (ii) mitigated; and (iii) compensated for. Development proposals should provide a net gain in biodiversity of at least 20% particularly with regard to the habitats listed in Appendix 8. Development should also deliver a net benefit to species using bespoke measures as appropriate, particularly with regard to the species listed in Appendix 8.

CE8.6. Damage or loss of irreplaceable habitat should be avoided. Irreplaceable habitat includes but is not limited to:
I.   Ancient and veteran trees
II.   Ancient woodland (continually wooded since 1600)[40]
III.   Ancient unimproved grassland (surviving since 1945)
IV.   Ancient hedgerows (present since before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840)

CE8.7. Development near the habitats listed in appendix 8 should secure significant gains in the form of enhancing existing habitat condition, buffering the habitat and improving greater connectivity between similar habitats.

CE8.8. Measures to conserve and restore biodiversity including the outcomes, priorities, targets and measures within the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan should be delivered in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

The story of our loss of wildlife is well documented and understood. Habitat destruction and fragmentation is a well-recognised driver now combining with climate change to threaten the loss of our already diminished wildlife at an even greater scale and pace. The need for action is urgent if we are to avoid a mass extinction event.

We know what we have to do to allow our wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change. We need to create a robust and resilient nature recovery network – a landscape rich in joined up and well managed habitats. The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan[41] was adopted as CNL Board guidance in October 2021. It represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change.

The current extent of wildlife rich habitats within the Cotswolds is 48,000 Ha which is 23% of the area of the National Landscape. The extent of these habitats needed to form a robust nature recovery network that will enable wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change is 82,000 Ha,

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[40] Note this includes ancient semi-natural woodland, ancient wood pasture and parkland, and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) Natural England and the Forestry Commission have published joint Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran Trees, (updated in January 2022). This Standing Advice can be a material consideration for planning decisions.
[41] Adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board.

40% of the area. The rationale for these figures is outlined in the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan. More detail on the targets in CE8.4 can be found in Appendix 6.

We may be entering a new era of collective and resourced action on delivering nature recovery. The next five years represent an opportunity set a course that can achieve the recovery of nature at the scale required to allow our wildlife to flourish and adapt to climate change. Now is the time to raise our ambition for what can be achieved. The international obligation that the government has signed up to of 30% of land and sea managed for nature by 2030 (30by30) is an indication of this ambition.

New statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) have been developed which identify and map nature recovery priorities and measures. They are a key tool for driving and directing resources towards the recovery of nature. Biodiversity Net Gain already uses them for targeting and other funders have indicated a willingness to do the same. There are six of these strategies coincident with the Cotswolds and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan has been used to influence their content. They should be followed as a means of delivering the Cotswolds Management Plan and Nature Recovery Plan.

Supporting LNRS delivery is one of the ways that public authorities, including the CNL Board, can demonstrate their compliance with the biodiversity duty[42] that the Environment Act 2021 introduced. Under this duty they "*must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England*."

LNRSs should be compatible with the CNL Management Plan and guidance (including the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan). This is one of the ways that the accountable bodies responsible for them can demonstrate compliance with their duty to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes[43].

The national statutory Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) (Appendix 6) includes six (out of 10) targets directly relevant to the recovery of nature in the Cotswolds. These are targets for the place and are owned by all stakeholders. When combined with the duties on public bodies to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity and to further the purposes of designation of protected landscapes they will help drive resources to the recovery of nature across the National Landscape. This will make a significant contribution to national ambitions for the recovery of nature. The criteria for 30by30 on land in England, published by Defra in October 2024 states;

"*Our Protected Landscapes will provide the backbone to 30by30 in England, contributing towards the target where they are effectively managed and delivering in-situ conservation. We recognise that we can, and must, go further within Protected Landscapes than other areas to meet our national environmental targets, including 30by30. This will be driven by the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, as well as further action to ensure that these special places are wilder and greener. Through their management plans, existing structures and strong partnerships, Protected Landscapes organisations can also play a convening role to champion, identify and support areas that meet, or have potential to meet, the 30by30 criteria.*"

"*It is important that Protected Landscapes deliver a significant contribution towards 30by30 in England. This is key to delivering landscape-scale nature conservation and realising our vision of a well-connected and ecologically representative 30by30 network.*"

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[42] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty. The requirement to comply with this duty also applies to Parish Councils.

[43] Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (legislation.gov.uk)

The guidance on apportioning national PLTOF targets[44] goes on to say; "*Successful delivery of the ten targets in the PLTOF will support Protected Landscapes' contribution to the 30by30 commitment.*"

In the wider countryside agri-environmental programmes are expected to be the most important single mechanism for developing a nature recovery network and Environmental Land Management schemes will play a critically important role. It is essential that they include the measures recommended in the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

Additional funding mechanisms are starting to play an increasingly significant role in supporting the recovery of nature particularly Biodiversity Net Gain as mitigation from development and Payments for Ecosystem Services. Water and carbon collection and storage are becoming increasingly valued as ecosystem services and their importance will continue to grow.

Although the national statutory requirement for net gain in biodiversity arising from development proposals is 10%, It should be 20% within the Cotswolds National Landscape. The justification for this enhanced net gain in biodiversity is outlined in Appendix 9. Local planning authorities may need to gather additional evidence when reviewing their Local Plans. For example, they may need to provide evidence that there are sufficient opportunities to deliver this additional BNG and assess impacts on viability for development.[45] Where there are exemptions to the legal requirement for 10% BNG, the delivery of BNG should still be encouraged.

The inclusion of species within the biodiversity net gain policy is aspirational and would take place outside of the formal development plan related biodiversity net gain process.

New development can have an impact on habitats by increasing access and the erosion, disturbance and litter that comes with it. This impact can be mitigated by providing good quality accessible green space, for example Stroud District Council have the Rodborough Common Recreation Mitigation strategy (2022) and the Cotswold Beechwoods Recreation Mitigation Strategy (2022), both of which seek to conserve these valuable sites from visitor pressures through careful management – using a range of measures including offsetting the impacts of increasing use.'

The priority habitats and species list in Appendix 8 is adapted from Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which lists the habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The habitats and species in appendix 8 are considered to be:

(i) characteristic of the Cotswolds; and/or
(ii) those for which the Cotswolds National Landscape is considered to a stronghold. There are other priority habitats and species within the National Landscape, which merit an appropriate level of protection, but which do not meet the two criteria outlined above. Habitats and species not on the NERC Act list but which have been identified, by the National Landscape Board and relevant stakeholders, as priorities for the Cotswolds National Landscape are also included.

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[44] Land Use Consultants (2024) *Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework Guidance on apportioning national targets*
[45] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain. Paragraph 006.

The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan defines ancient and veteran trees (based on a list of characteristics), ancient woodland (continually wooded since 1600) and ancient grasslands ("unimproved" and predating modern agricultural practices) as irreplaceable habitat. A wildflower grassland (calcareous, floodplain meadow or other neutral) present in 1945 at the end of the Second World War is likely to be ancient. This should be taken into account when considering proposals that are likely to impact on them.

Ancient hedgerows (present since before the Enclosure Acts, passed mainly between 1720 and 1840) are included as irreplaceable habitat and this should be taken into account when considering proposals that are likely to impact on them because:

- Hedgerows are a priority habitat
- Hedgerows are a key characteristic/feature of many of the landscape character types within the National Landscape's Landscape Character Assessment
- Ancient hedgerows are an important component of the historic environment and the cultural heritage of the area

Although Policy CE8 focuses on the National Landscape and its setting, consideration will also need to be given to ecological networks in the wider environment, for example, river corridor ecological networks where the rivers start in the National Landscape but extend well beyond its boundaries.

One of the ways wildlife adapts to climate change is to move northwards to a new 'climate space'. This means that we need to think about the National Landscape's future wildlife in addition to that currently present, particularly that currently found to the south of the Cotswolds. Big Chalk is a partnership programme aiming to improve ecological connectivity across and between the calcareous landscapes of southern England from the south coast to the midlands.

Water

Outcome 9 The water environment

Watercourses and bodies of water within the Cotswolds National Landscape have good ecological and chemical status supported by sufficient quantities of water.

None of the rivers in the Cotswold's achieve good chemical status and only 11.7% of their length achieve good ecological status[46]. Most of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) failures are linked to fish, macrophytes and phosphate. The water quality of the CNL's rivers is affected by pollution from:

- Wastewater and sewage
- Diffuse rural pollution from agriculture
- Diffuse pollution from towns, villages and roads

Water management needs to address a range of issues including quality, supply and flow in an integrated manner.

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[46] Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework 2024 data release.

Policy CE9: Water

CE9.1. Water resources should be managed and conserved to: improve water quality; ensure adequate aquifer recharge; protect future public water supply; ensure adequate river flows; and contribute to natural flood management systems.

CE9.2. Development (new and existing sites) should assess and minimise flood risk and implement Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), adopt high water efficiency standards in line with RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge and domestic water use targets, and water conservation measures, for example rainwater harvesting and/or water recycling and grey water systems.

CE9.3. New development that links to the sewerage system should not be commenced until the sewerage infrastructure (including the relevant sewage treatment works) has sufficient capacity to cope with the additional load, including future loads resulting from changing rainfall patterns. [47]

CE9.4. Sewage pollution from storm overflows and continuous outfalls should be minimised and be at least within legal and regulatory requirements.

CE9.5. Phosphorus treatment should be provided at all sewage treatment works to achieve good Water Framework Directive (WFD) status for phosphate.

CE9.6. Permit conditions relating to the provision of appropriate manure storage facilities for farming and/or equestrian sites, including disposal frequency and method etc. should be explored to help mitigate runoff and subsequent water contamination. Similar conditions can be imposed to septic tanks and cess pits, to prevent degradation and overflow and subsequent contamination.

CE9.7. Practical measures to improve water quality and quantity should be implemented including:
   I.   Preventing water from running onto roads and where it does remove it from roads before it enters watercourses at low points.
   II.   The restoration of river and wetland habitats. New wetland habitats should be sited to intercept runoff from roads and reedbeds can be created to filter potentially polluted water from settlements before it is discharged to rivers.
   III. Implementing natural flood management measures such as leaky dams and temporary pools to help manage high water flows.
   IV.   Minimising soil erosion and run off by implementing soil conservation measures including habitat creation.
   V.   Minimising pesticide and artificial fertiliser use and implementing measures to reduce pollution from agriculture such as minimal tillage, buffer strips, cover crops and riparian land use change to permanent grassland and trees.
   VI.   Promoting individual measures and behaviours in the home and workplace that protect water volume and quality in rivers.

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[47] This type of requirement is commonly referred to as a 'Grampian condition', after the case law established by Grampian Regional Council v City of Aberdeen District Council (1984) 47 P&CR 633. In planning, this would be a pre-commencement condition. Further guidance on pre-commencement conditions is provided here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/use-of-planning-conditions#the-use-of-pre-commencement-conditions

VII.   Citizen science programmes such as riverfly monitoring and water quality testing to monitor water quality and river naturalness surveys to measure their physical condition and habitats.

CE9.8. For proposals on sites incorporating or located adjacent to watercourses, opportunities should be sought through careful design and landscaping to re-naturalise the water courses where possible, including restoration of the bankside and instream habitats and leaving an undeveloped buffer zone of at least 10 metres width.

The proportion of pollutants from wastewater and sewage, agriculture, and towns villages and roads varies across and within the different river catchments. For example, within the Evenlode 85% of phosphate is derived from the water industry and the rest from mainly agriculture and a small percentage from urban sources. Consequently, the phosphate status for the whole of the River Evenlode is poor.

A significant issue caused by a combination of new development and lack of investment in waste water treatment is sewage treatment works operating beyond their designed capacity. The issue is exacerbated by groundwater and surface water ingress compounded by warmer and wetter winters caused by climate change. The result is storm overflow discharges releasing untreated sewage into the rivers.

There are also issues around urban creep from new developments leading to less permeable surfaces and more surface water running into the sewers. Reduction in storm overflows is complex, but sustainable urban drainage has a part to play to reduce overflows. Less permeable surfaces also increase the risk of flooding.

Storm overflows may run for a few hours or days but phosphorous from sewage treatment works, even during normal operation, is a constant. The technically achievable limit of phosphorus removal at sewage treatment works is 0.25 mg/litre and whilst a good target to aim for may not be required at all sites to achieve good status. Typically, good status for a waterbody is between 0.05 mg/l – 0.075 mg/l depending on waterbody characteristics such as altitude and alkalinity.

To help address this issue, some principal local authorities have imposed 'Grampian conditions' which prevent housing development (and other development that requires a connection to the sewerage system) from being occupied until the sewerage infrastructure has capacity to deal with the additional load.

Diffuse pollution from towns, villages and roads comes from runoff: commerce e.g. car washes, drainage misconnections e.g. domestic appliances connected to the surface water network, and inappropriate disposal of domestic materials.

Sewage and diffuse pollution contain nutrients, chemicals including heavy metals, pathogens, microplastics, oil and sediment resulting in eutrophication, loss of biodiversity, risks to human health, increased cost of water treatment and harm to tourism and recreation.

Redevelopment of sites incorporating/ adjacent to a watercourse present the valuable opportunity for ecological betterment. Through considered design and landscaping, opportunities should be sought to re-naturalise the watercourse, restore the bankside and instream habitats, leave an undeveloped buffer zone of at least 10 metres width and update and improve the site's surface water drainage infrastructure. In some cases, this may require reinstatement of the buffer zone on previously developed land. Upgraded drainage

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infrastructure should look to use natural strategies such as ecological swales and reedbeds to improve the quality of water discharged into the watercourse.

The water in the CNL is mainly from deep in the limestone aquifers. The Cotswolds is home to a large aquifer which supplies water to homes and businesses both inside and outside the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). There are 14 groundwater bodies in the CNL. 50% are rated good, and 50% as poor. The main sources of groundwater pollution are pesticides, herbicides and nitrates from agriculture. As a consequence, most of the CNL is designated as a Drinking Water Safeguard Zone and a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. It could, however, take decades for the pollutants to work through the aquifer.

The rivers in the CNL are important for water supply, recreation and biodiversity. They provide a range of habitats which are reliant on particular water flow and levels dependent largely on groundwater fed by the underlying limestone aquifers. However, some stretches of rivers in the Cotswolds are already prone to low flows and drought, resulting in damage to riverine habitat, concentration of pollutants and increasing their vulnerability to groundwater abstraction. Over-abstraction can have a detrimental impact on these factors. Summers are predicted to become drier, which would exacerbate this problem even further, and the water system as a whole needs to become more resilient to climate change. Good quality and diverse riverine habitats are essential for improving resilience to drought.

The CNL is not, at present, an area widely prone to flooding. However, in extreme rainfall events, such as that of July 2007, some towns and villages have been affected by flooding from rivers or as a result of limited drainage. Climate change is likely to increase the risk of flooding and the frequency of such extreme rainfall events.

The rivers that originate in the CNL flow downstream through larger towns and villages outside of the National Landscape which are more prone to flooding. As such, land management in the river valleys of the National Landscape can play a key role in helping to reduce flood risk downstream. Natural flood management works with natural processes to 'slow the flow' of flood waters. This helps to reduce the maximum water height of a flood (the 'flood peak') and/or delay the arrival of the flood peak downstream, increasing the time available to prepare for floods. Sustainable drainage systems, and ecological river restoration projects are important components of natural flood management.

With the anticipated drier summers and wetter winters, there is likely to be an increased demand for rainwater harvesting and storage.

The CNL is a distinct geographical and geological area important for its water in terms of supply, quality, landscape, natural beauty, biodiversity and economy. The CNL is, however, divided across seven catchments, four water companies (four of which supply water and three treat waste water) and three Environment Agency regions making managing water across the CNL complex. River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) describe the framework used to protect and improve the quality of waters in each river basin district. They are the strategic plans for water in England and include information on the current condition of waterbodies, reasons why they are not in good condition, objectives, and measures to achieve these. They are updated every six years, with the next update in 2027. This plan and supporting guidance, particularly the The Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan support measures within RBMPs and similarly the delivery of RBMPs should reflect this plan's policies and associated guidance.

There are three regional water resources planning groups that include parts of the CNL within their geographical areas, and there are opportunities via these regional groups to promote

catchment management schemes which may not deliver direct water supply benefits but could provide improved environmental resilience to drought through NBS.

Consideration should be given to developing an integrated water plan for the CNL with a primary goal of thriving plants and wildlife enhancing the beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment. This would be underpinned by goals such as improving environmental quality, using nature's resources sustainably and improving climate change mitigation.

Farming and land management

Outcome 10 – Farming and land management:

Farming and land management conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape in ways which balance the needs of recovering nature, climate action, food production, supporting livelihoods and public access.

The CNL is a farmed landscape, its landscape is largely a product of farming and will continue to be so. 87% of land in the CNL is agricultural land, 49% of which is arable and 43% grassland[48]. Farming is worth around £800 million annually to the National Landscape's economy, and in turn provides the landscape which supports the Cotswolds tourism industry (annually worth around £1 billion). In addition to these major and long-established economic drivers, farming and land management decisions are increasingly influenced by a far more diverse set of societal needs, such as carbon storage, nature recovery, clean energy and public access.

Policy CE10: Farming and land management

CE10.1. Farming and land management in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and in the setting of the CNL should be compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL. It should also help increase the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities.

CE10.2. Farming and land management in the CNL and in the setting of the CNL should be compatible with and seek to further the CNL Management Plan. It should also be compatible with and seek to further guidance produced by the CNL Board including the:
   i.   CNL – Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
   ii.   CNL – Landscape Character Assessment
   iii. CNL Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change
   iv.   CNL Board Position Statements
   v.   Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan
   vi.   CNL Pathway to Net Zero
   vii. CNL Climate Change Strategy

CE10.3. Woodland creation and tree planting proposals (including natural colonisation) should be compatible with and seek to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL in accordance with guidance produced by the CNL Board. In particular they should:
   i.   Work with the landscape character of their setting and compliment the open views that people enjoy from viewpoints, roads and public rights of way

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[48] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2015). *Farming, Forestry and the Equestrian Sector in the Cotswolds AONB, Update*

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ii.   Be located where they best meet the objectives of the nature recovery network, improving the connectivity of woodland habitats whilst avoiding damaging other habitats and their potential to be better connected

iii.   Avoid potential harm to the physical integrity of scheduled monuments and other historic heritage

iv.   Be located in accordance with the CNL canopy cover opportunity mapping

CE10.4. Farmers and land managers should have access to sound, clear and consistent sources of advice, guidance and support, including fair access to markets and payments for environmental services.

The two main aspects of rural land management are farming and woodland management.

Farming and land management in the UK is undergoing a period of significant change and disruption, largely driven by the market and changes to policy that have altered the way farmers can access public funding to support their businesses. This has involved a shift from an approach largely based on subsidising the cost of agricultural activities, to one that pays farmers for environmental goods and services (or 'public goods'). Managing this transition and maintaining a viable farm business can be very challenging.

In addition to the policy context, farmers are under increasing pressure to respond to many other factors that are influencing the way they use and manage land. For example, the climate crisis requires farmers to not only identify how they can reach net zero within their farm businesses and supply chains, but additionally find ways of sequestering and storing carbon in the landscape for the rest of society. They also have to achieve this without compromising food security and affordability by taking too much land out of production or failing to develop farming systems that are climate resilient. Additionally farming also has an essential role to play in nature recovery, as many of the distinctive Cotswold habitats are a result of farming activity, and farming operations such as grazing are necessary to manage and restore them. Nature friendly farming measures across the wider countryside are also critically important for the recovery of species. These combined challenges are complex and we need to seek ways of decision-making that achieves holistically optimal outcomes.

The continued development of more sustainable and regenerative farming practices, which may span conventional and organic systems, has an important role to play in delivering multiple social and environmental objectives whilst simultaneously producing food. A focus on improving landscape function can help inform any approach and lead to more holistically optimal outcomes. Landscape function considers underpinning resources and processes such as:

- The mineral/nutrient cycle
  Actions to minimise the use of artificial inputs and improve the natural fertility of agricultural soils, increasing the nutritional value of food produced from them.
- The water cycle
  Actions to increase soil infiltration rates, slowing the flow of water through farmed and managed land, improving drought resilience and reducing diffuse pollution.
- Energy flow
  Actions to increase the amount of solar energy being captured by plants and trees (including crops), sequestering more atmospheric carbon and driving food chains for people and wildlife.
- Biodiversity/community dynamics
  Actions to increase the diversity and abundance of plants and wildlife on farmland, supporting greater natural resilience to pests, disease and other environmental stresses.

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Farm businesses need to be economically viable and resilient to deliver everything we are asking of them. This requires continued public and private investment that is accessible and effective, as well as fair access to markets. For example, the success of publicly funded schemes, such as Environmental Land Management (ELM) and the Farming Investment Fund, supported by advice and guidance, is essential. Similarly, the rollout of privately funded green finance schemes needs to be effective in delivering both environmental outcomes and supporting farm businesses and livelihoods.

Wider societal changes are impacting on farming and land management. An ageing farm population, rising production costs and the rapid development of new technology both increases the risks of a loss of skills and land fragmentation and offers opportunities for the wider adoption of sustainable, regenerative and nature recovery practices.

Bringing woodlands back into management is a priority and can be more important than planting new woodlands. Actively managing woodland in a sustainable way helps the woodland become more resilient to the impacts of climate change including, pests, disease, storms and fire. It also benefits biodiversity and supports the rural economy. Lack of management is due to many factors, but especially the lack of appropriate markets for woodland products and the lack of management in the long-term has resulted in a lack of good quality timber. Ash dieback has prompted many woodland owners to bring woodland back into management but 38% of woodland, 10,158ha, in the CNL is still classed as unmanaged. Bringing ancient woodland back into management is particularly important for biodiversity and 9,218ha of ancient woodland (35% of the total woodland) is still classed as unmanaged.

To contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation the Government's target is to increase tree cover in England from 14.5% in 2023 to 16.5% by 2050. The CNL's canopy cover is around 18% but there is capacity to increase canopy cover through woodland creation and establishing trees outside of woods (by planting or natural regeneration). The latter includes wood pasture, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, in-field trees, agroforestry and trees in towns and villages, particularly in new development.

Woodland creation and tree establishment should consider its impacts on the landscape setting and, in particular, its effects on the open views that people enjoy from viewpoints, roads and Public Rights of Way. In some instances, tree establishment that is implemented to mitigate the visual impact of new development can also adversely affect landscape character. Design and use of open ground can help with woodland creation and tree establishment but it may not be appropriate for a particular site because of the value of the existing habitat, potential to create and link other priority habitats or landscape character, archaeological sites and their setting.

The creation of new woodland should occur where it best meets the objectives of the nature recovery network and it should be appropriately managed. Opportunities for natural colonisation should be looked for in concert with opportunities for planting, to assist this process.

'Right Tree, Right Place, Right Reason' principles should be applied when establishing trees. For example, the planting of 'privacy belts' around property is having a detrimental impact on landscape character and views, particularly from roads.

In woodlands where timber production is one of the main objectives, ecologically sound forestry practices such as continuous cover management regimes should be applied. These create a diverse woodland structure and bring a multitude of environmental benefits to the woodland whilst producing a sustainable timber source. Understanding of the local supply chain, and enhance connections between woodland owners/managers and timber markets should be

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increased. Woodlands should be managed according to the most recent version of the UK Forestry Standard.

Woodland creation and tree establishment, including restocking after felling, through woodland management operations or loss through pests and diseases, should seek to retain the character of existing Cotswold woodlands and treescapes outside of woodlands whilst considering species diversity, genetic diversity (provenance and origin), adaptation to climate change and pests and diseases

The CNL Board has commissioned an opportunity map to guide the creation of new canopy cover. If completed before the designed Management Plan is published add link.

Farming, woodland management and other rural land management practices that make a positive contribution to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape have been largely reliant on payments from agri-environment schemes. It is critical that Environmental Land Management Schemes maintain and build on what has been achieved to date. In addition, payments for carbon sequestration, nature recovery, nutrient neutrality and ecosystem services are areas that will grow.

Climate change is likely to lead to greater variability in quantity and quality of crop and grass yields, including crop failure. New management methods and new varieties and novel crops are likely to be adopted in response to warmer, drier conditions. There may be an increase in crops grown for energy and biofuels competing with land for food production and space for nature. The overall area of grassland is not expected to change significantly, but management may become more extensive. With regards to forestry, increased timber and biomass production can be expected, but with a reduction in quality, particularly timber. Some species, such as oak, are expected to fare better than others such as beech. Land management practices, together with Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms, will need to encompass and deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation measures appropriate to the National Landscape. Relevant measures to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, in relation to rural land management, are outlined elsewhere in this Management Plan, notably in policies CC1 and CC2.

Policy CE11: Problem species[49], pests and diseases

CE11.1. The population of grey squirrel and deer in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should continue to be controlled and managed. This should be undertaken and coordinated at a landscape scale.

CE11.2. National guidance – and guidance produced by the CNL Board – on Ash Dieback should be followed to ensure any measures implemented will conserve and enhance the qualities of the landscape.

CE11.3. National and local guidance – including guidance from Government Agencies and the Non-Native Species Secretariat – on invasive non-native species, pests and diseases should be followed and appropriate biosecurity measures promoted.

Increasing deer and grey squirrel populations and lack of coordinated management is having an adverse impact on the landscape of the CNL and on the quality of woodland, woodland biodiversity and timber. There is a need for more deer management groups and landscape scale

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[49] These species are not addressed in the Biodiversity section as they are not species that we are aiming to conserve and enhance (see Appendix 8).

coordination along with and a landscape scale coordinated approach to managing grey squirrels. Recolonisation by or reintroduction of pine martens would assist grey squirrel control.

There is an increasing prevalence of tree pests and diseases resulting from climate change, increased global trade, travel and the importation of diseased material. In particular, Ash dieback will continue to have an increasing impact on woodland and trees in the landscape during the life of this Management Plan. The active management of woodlands to create varied structure and species composition will increase woodland resilience to pests and diseases.

Invasive non-native species pose a serious risk to ecosystems, outcompeting native species, disrupting ecological processes and transforming habitats.

There are a number of invasive non-native species present in the CNL that are having a harmful impact, particularly on biodiversity. These include the American Signal Crayfish, Himalayan Balsam and New Zealand Pygmy Weed in rivers and ponds, and Holm oak and Cotoneaster on species rich grassland. Driven by climate change and globalisation, there is an increasing risk of further plant and animal pests and disease becoming established in the CNL and having a harmful impact on landscape, biodiversity and the economy. Ash dieback is a recent example.

Any activity (i.e., Development) that facilitates or fails to adequately mitigate the introduction and spread of invasive non-native species, can cause detrimental impacts on native biodiversity and the ecosystem functionality.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is a legal offense to introduce or encourage the proliferation of any species listed as invasive under schedule 9. Similarly, species classified as 'controlled waste' under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 must be handled in accordance with legal regulations. These species must be safely disposed of at a licensed landfill site to prevent further proliferation and environmental harm.

Control measures including check, clean, dry should be integral throughout all plans/ method statements of any formal work within or that interacts with the natural landscape (i.e., included but not limited to check, clean, dry).

Up to date, representative data of invasive populations is essential. The recording of invasive species activity/ presence (i.e., via citizen science) is a key strategy to inform management strategies.

Policy CE12: Soils

CE12.1. Soils should be managed to halt and reverse degradation. Soil health that supports resilient ecosystems and sustainable farming practices should be prioritised. Principles that inform beneficial land use and management decisions include:
   I.   Minimising soil disturbance (physical and chemical)
   II. Maintaining living roots and keeping the soil covered year-round
   III. Increasing biodiversity (above and below ground)
   IV. Mitigating compaction and improving soil aggregation
   V.   Integrating livestock and grazing

CE12.2. Soil management should be a key component of farm management plans, supported by agri-environment schemes and other funding and rural development support mechanisms in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL).

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A [recent study](#) estimated that soil is home to 90% of the world's fungi, 85% of plants, and more than 50% of bacteria – 59% of life on earth, overall. It is also widely acknowledged that we still know relatively little about our soils. Only about [1% of the microorganisms found in soil have been identified](#), yet [95% of food production relies on the soil](#).

Our soils are essential for:
- Food production and nutrient cycling
- Climate regulation and carbon storage
- Water filtration and flood control
- Biodiversity and habitat provision
- Erosion prevention and pollution detoxification

However, in 2023 the Environment Agency [reported](#) that in England and Wales almost 4 million hectares of soil are at risk of compaction, over 2 million hectares of soil are at risk of erosion, and arable soils have lost about 40 to 60% of their organic carbon. Soil degradation was calculated in 2010 to cost £1.2 billion every year.

Causes of soil degradation include; compaction, loss of soil organic matter, nutrient leaching, low fertility, erosion, poor water cycling, and biodiversity decline – all of which are exacerbated by climate change. For example, with a predicted 22% decrease in summer rainfall by 2080, the free draining Cotswold soils will become more prone to drought. Meanwhile, extreme weather events and a predicted 22% overall increase in winter rainfall could lead to more flooding and erosion of soils.[50]

Soil management is important in developing and maintaining healthy, functional ecosystems that can support productive, resilient farms.

There are many examples of farmers and land managers that are successfully taking action to reverse the trend of degradation by placing soil management at the heart of their operations. For example, through the regenerative agriculture movement farmers are seeking to observe and understand the processes that are happening in their soils, and how their actions influence them. Management decisions, such as tillage, agronomy and grazing practices, are then made, monitored and adapted accordingly, guided by a set of principles that help steer a path to regeneration. It's a journey – one that is different for every farm and farmer, and which can have a transformative effect on both them and the landscape.

Such farmers and land managers need supporting, so soil management must be an increasingly central aspect of land use and management planning, agri-environment schemes, green finance initiatives, and other sources of advice, guidance and support.

Development and infrastructure

Outcome 11 – Development and infrastructure:

Development and infrastructure schemes positively contribute to the purpose of national landscape designation and also play a key role in facilitating the economic and social wellbeing of local communities.

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[50] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2022). [Climate Change Strategy](#)

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The CNL is a living and working landscape in which the social and economic wellbeing of local communities is an important consideration. Maintaining vibrant and thriving local communities is essential to the long term future of the CNL. The provision of housing and services that meets local needs plays an important role in achieving these aspirations, as does the provision of necessary infrastructure, including transportation systems, communication networks and water and sewage infrastructure. However, these aspirations should be delivered in a way that is compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL.

Policy CE13: Development and infrastructure – principles

CE13.1. Development and infrastructure proposals in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and its setting should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL including its special qualities. In doing so, they should have regard to – and be compatible with the CNL Management Plan and guidance produced by the CNL Board, including the:
   (i)   CNL – Landscape Strategy and Guidelines
   (ii)   CNL – Landscape Character Assessment
   (iii)   Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan
   (iv)   CNL - Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change
   (v)   CNL Board Position Statements
   (vi)   CNL Pathway to Net-Zero
   (vii)   CNL Climate Change Strategy

CE13.2. Development and infrastructure proposals in the CNL should be delivered in a way that is compatible with and seeks to further the purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities. They should also contribute to the economic and social wellbeing of CNL communities, in a way that is compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL.

CE13.3. Development and infrastructure proposals in the CNL and its setting should comply with relevant national planning policy and guidance, particularly with regards to those paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that relate to national landscapes.

CE13.4. The purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL special qualities should be identified as strategic priorities in Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, Local Transport Plans and other relevant plans and strategies. These plans and strategies should explicitly identify the CNL Management Plan as a material consideration when considering development and infrastructure proposals.

CE13.5. The cumulative impacts of development proposals on the natural beauty of the CNL should be fully assessed.

CE13.6. A landscape-led approach should be applied to the planning, design and implementation of development and infrastructure proposals in the CNL and its setting, proportionate to the type and scale of development being proposed, whereby proposals:
   a)   Address the natural beauty of the CNL as primary consideration at all stages of the development process, from initial conception through to implementation
   b)   Address all of the factors that contribute to the natural beauty of the area
   c)   Address access to natural beauty including the character of the public rights of way network and its role within wider green infrastructure
   d)   Reflect and enhance the character of the local area

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    e)   Avoid adverse effects where possible and, if adverse effects can't be avoided, minimise them

    f)   Seek opportunities to enhance the natural beauty of the CNL and

    g)   Deliver more beneficial effects than adverse effects for the natural beauty of the CNL.[51]

This landscape-led approach is particularly important for major development[52].

This policy provides principles relating specifically to development and infrastructure. However, it is important to note that development and infrastructure proposals should have regard to the Management Plan policies as a whole. For example, Policy CE8 (Nature Recovery and Biodiversity), paragraph 5, relating to biodiversity net gain, would be a key consideration in development proposals.

Other important policies which have a significant bearing on development and infrastructure are CC1 Climate Change Mitigation and CC2 Climate Change Adaptation.

Policy CE13 refers to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for context, as this national policy underpins much of what Policy CE13 is seeking to achieve. However, Policy CE13 expands on this national policy by referencing relevant case law and best practice.

Planning legislation and policy affords the highest level of protection to National Landscapes in relation to landscape and scenic beauty – the same level of protection as for National Parks. Although some level of development may be required to meet local (CNL) housing needs, as determined by the local housing needs assessment, and to ensure that the vitality of CNL settlements is maintained and enhanced, development should not be at such scale that either individually or cumulatively, it erodes the natural beauty of the CNL. This would undermine the reason for the Cotswolds being designated as national landscape in the first place.

With regards to cumulative impacts, a particularly important consideration is where multiple, separate developments have been implemented or proposed in the same locality. Individually, they might not be particularly significant. However, collectively, their impacts could be significant.

In planning decisions, national landscape considerations will need to be weighted in the overall planning balance alongside other relevant considerations. In line with national planning policy, great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL. It is worth noting that case law has clarified that this great weight should also be applied in relation to the impact of development outside a national landscape on views from the national landscape. (i.e. development in the setting of the national landscape). More information on this issue is provided in the Board's position statement on Development in the Setting of the Cotswolds AONB.[53]

Increasing traffic volume and vehicle sizes on the National Landscape's roads can lead to congestion, noise and air pollution, damage to roadside verges (with consequent drainage and soil erosion issues), reduced safety for non-motorised road users and traffic 'rat-running' along minor roads and through villages. Measures to address these issues should be integral

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[51] This was a design principle for the A417 Missing Link Scheme – see Case Study 3 in _Appendix 1_ of the Board's _Landscape-led Development Position Statement_ for further details.

[52] 'Major development', in this context, equates to the definition provided in Footnote 67 of the _NPPF_. See also Policy CE11.

[53] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2017) _Development in the Setting of the Cotswolds AONB_

considerations in new developments and can include lowering speed limits, the provision of suitably designed speed reduction schemes, the provision of off-road routes for non-motorised users and the provision of appropriate signage. In line with the recommendations in the Board's Tranquillity Position Statement, if a development proposal would increase in traffic movements (or HGV movements) by 10% or more, this should, as a 'rule of thumb', be considered significant in terms of impact on tranquillity.[54]

The distinctive character of minor roads reflects and contributes to the character of the wider CNL and these roads are an important means for people to experience the CNL. Insensitive, over-engineered road schemes and excessive lighting can have a detrimental impact. Impacts on landscape character are addressed in Policy CE1 (Landscape).

The transport recommendations within Policy CC1 and the CNL Pathway to Net Zero should also be pursued.

Further information on what is meant by a landscape-led approach to development is provided in the Board's 'Landscape-led Development Position Statement'.[55] Appendix 3 of the Position Statement specifically addresses landscape-led principles for major development.

Policy CE14: Major development

CE14.1. In line with national planning policy, permission should be refused for major development within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), in the context of paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.[56]

CE14.2. Relevant stakeholders should fully assess relevant site allocations and development proposals to see if they constitute major development. In considering or deciding whether a proposed development constitutes major development, relevant stakeholders should have regard to the major development checklist in Appendix 5 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement. [57]

CE14.3. Local authorities and other relevant stakeholders should explicitly state whether they consider relevant allocations and development proposals to be major development [58].

CE14.4. The mandatory major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 190 of the NPPF should be rigorously applied and documented for all allocations and development proposals that are deemed to be major development.

CE14.5. When relevant stakeholders are considering or applying the major development 'tests' specified in paragraph 190 of the NPPF, it should be recognised that:

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[54] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2019) *Tranquillity Position Statement* (see Section 4.5).
[55] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) *Landscape-led Development Position Statement* and appendices.
[56] Paragraph 190 of the NPPF
[57] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) *Landscape-led Development Position Statement* and appendices.
[58] There are examples of case law where planning permissions have been quashed because the local authority (specifically, the planning committee) did not explicitly address the issue of major development and the related issue of 'exceptional circumstances' (e.g. R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council [2013] EHWC3684 (Admin).

- 'exceptional need' does not necessarily equate to 'exceptional circumstances';[59]
- no permission should be given for major development save to the extent the development was needed in the public interest, met a need that could not be addressed elsewhere or in some other way and met that need in a way that to the extent possible, moderated detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities.[60]

CE14. 6. When making decisions on major development proposals, local authorities (and/or other relevant decision makers) should not simply weigh all material considerations in a balance, but should refuse an application unless they meet the exceptional circumstances and public interest criteria.[61]

As with Policy CE13, Policy CE14 refers to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy (NPPF) for context, as this national policy underpins much of what Policy CE13 is seeking to achieve. However, Policy CE14 expands on this national policy by referencing relevant case law and best practice.

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF states that '*when considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest*'. Footnote 67 of the NPPF explains that '*whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined*' (footnote 67).

This definition of major development differs from the definition in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (or 'DMP' for short), which relates specifically to: minerals and waste development; housing developments of 10 or more dwellings or on sites having an area of 0.5 hectares or more; the provision of buildings where the floor space to be created is 1,000 square metres of more; or development on a site having an area of one hectare or more. However, the DMP definition is still a relevant consideration in relation to footnote 60 of the NPPF. There may be circumstances where a development that is larger than the DMP thresholds would not constitute major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. Equally, there may also be circumstances where a development that is smaller than the DMP threshold would constitute major development in the context of paragraph 190 of the NPPF. The policy would also be relevant in relation to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF specifically addresses the issue of major development in the context of planning permissions (i.e., as part of the development management process). However, legal opinion has stated that '*it would arguably amount to an error of law to fail to consider [paragraph 190] at the site allocations stage of plan making... The consequence of doing so would be to risk allocating land for major development that was undeliverable because it was incapable of meeting*

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[59] R (Advearse) v Dorset Council v Hallam Land Management Ltd [2020] EWHC 807. Direct quote from paragraph 35
[60] R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council [2013] EHWC 3684 (Admin), paragraph 51: 'The planning committee are required, not simply to weigh all material considerations in a balance, but to refuse an application unless they are satisfied that...'
[61] R (Mevagissey Parish Council) v Cornwall Council [2013] EHWC 3684 (Admin), paragraph 51: 'The planning committee are required, not simply to weigh all material considerations in a balance, but to refuse an application unless they are satisfied that...'

the major development test in the NPPF'[62]. As such, it is appropriate to address the issue of major development at the plan making stage as well as at the development management stage.

The 'Assessment of Site Allocations Against Major Development Considerations' undertaken by the South Downs National Park Authority in 2015[63] and 2017[64] as part of their Local Plan process is an excellent case study in this regard.

The major development checklist in the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement is not intended to set rigid criteria. Instead, it is intended to help guide the decision maker (and other stakeholders) through the process of assessing if a proposed development constitutes major development.

Due to their scale, major infrastructure and development projects, such as roads or energy developments, are likely to have a more significant impact on the natural beauty of the CNL than smaller-scale developments. There is an even stronger need for these projects to be exemplars for how they have regard to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL including its special qualities.

Further guidance regarding major development is provided in Appendix 10 of the Management Plan and in Section 7.3, Appendix 3 and Appendix 5 of the Board's Landscape-led Development Position Statement.[65]

Policy CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need

CE15.1. Housing delivery in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, particularly housing that is affordable in perpetuity such as social rented housing.[66]

CE15.2. When local planning authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to setting policies for affordable housing provision in the CNL that require:
  • at least 50% affordable housing in market housing developments
  • 100% affordable housing on Rural Exception Sites, with a lower percentage only being permitted in exceptional circumstances and the absolute minimum being 75%
  • on-site affordable housing provision for housing developments of five units or fewer

CE15.3. Priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing local community amenities and

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[62] Landmark Chambers (2017) *In the matter of the South Downs National Park and in the matter of paragraph 116 of the NPPF* (see paragraph 5).
[63] South Downs National Park Authority (2015) *South Downs Local Plan Preferred Options: Assessment of Site Allocations Against Major Development Considerations – Technical Report*.
[64] South Downs National Park Authority (2017) *South Downs Local Plan Pre-Submission: Assessment of Site Allocations Against Major Development Considerations – Technical Report*.

[65] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021) Landscape-led Development Position Statement and appendices.
[66] Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of the Board's Housing Position Statement and appendices provide additional context on this issue.

services and improving access to these amenities and services. Priority should also be given to supporting local employment opportunities.[67]

CE15.4. It should be recognised that:

a)   The housing need figure derived from the Government's 'standard method' for calculating housing need is an unconstrained assessment of housing need[68] and does not factor in relevant constraints. Whilst local planning authorities are expected to plan to meet their housing needs in full, there may be local constraints on land and delivery that justify a lower housing requirement figure.[69]

b)   The application of national planning policies relating to national landscapes may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs (OAN) in full in local authority areas that overlap with the CNL.[70]

(c)   The CNL is unlikely to be a suitable area for accommodating unmet needs from adjoining, non-designated areas.[71] In the context of the CNL, this includes unmet needs relating to adjacent settlements and unmet needs arising in neighbouring local authority areas that do not overlap with the CNL.

(d)   The scale and extent of development in the CNL should be limited.[72]

CE15.5. When the allocation of sites is being considered in the Local Plan process, regard should be given to the evidence of need specific to: (i) the settlement/parish where the allocation is being proposed; and (ii) the CNL 'sub-area' within which the allocation is being proposed.

CE15.6. Within the CNL, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining, or outside of, built up area boundaries (or equivalent) should only be supported where there is robust evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement.

CE15.7. Where choice-based lettings systems, such as Homeseeker Plus, are used as part of the evidence base for affordable housing need:[73]

•   the 'local connection' component of the choice-based lettings system should be applied consistently; and

•   data from the choice-based lettings systems should not be used explicitly as a measure of affordable housing need unless the data has been verified and there is a clear local connection to – and preference for – the settlement in question.

CE15.8. When local authorities are reviewing their Local Plans, they should give consideration to

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[67] Sections 5.4 and 5.5 of the Board's Housing Position Statement and appendices provide additional context on this issue.

[68] UK Government (202) Guidance on Housing and economic needs assessment. Paragraph 001.

[69] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *Government response to the proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system consultation*. 3. Planning for the homes we need: Advisory starting point and alternative approaches - Questions 1 and 2.

[70] Government Guidance on the Natural Environment. Paragraph 041. This reflects paragraph 11b of the National Planning Policy Framework

[71] See previous footnote. Section 5.3 of the Board's Housing Position Statement and appendices provide additional context on this issue.

[72] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). Paragraph 189.

[73] Sections 5.6 and 5.10 of the Board's Housing Position Statement and appendices provide additional context on this issue.

setting policies that ensure that new market housing is used as a principal residence rather than as a second home or holiday home.

Housing in the Cotswolds is amongst the most unaffordable in the country. Some types of "affordable housing" as defined by national planning policy are unaffordable in real terms to people that have a local connection to the Cotswolds.

With regards to paragraphs 1 to 3 of Policy CE15, Government guidance recognises that national parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing. Instead, *'the expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services'*. The same guidance requires national park authorities to work to *'ensure that… affordable housing remains so in the longer term'*.[74] National landscapes have the same level of protection as national parks, with regards to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty, and the scale and extent of development in both designations should be limited.[75] As such, it is logical to apply the same principles, outlined above for national parks, in national landscapes as well.

The targets in paragraph 2 of the Policy CE15 are based on what the Board would consider to be best practice within other protected landscapes. The Board acknowledges that these aspirations might exceed current policy in Local Plans. However, we consider that they are appropriate targets to aim for in a protected landscape, where the main focus for housing provision should be the provision of affordable housing. We acknowledge that these targets would be subject to viability assessments.

Paragraph 36 of the NPPF states that, in order to be sound, Local Plans should 'as a minimum, seek to meet the area's objectively assessed needs' (OAN). However, paragraph 11 of the NPPF allows for circumstances in which the OAN might not be met in full, including with regards to NPPF policies that relate to national landscapes. Government guidance explicitly states that the application of policies in the NPPF relating to the protection of national landscapes *'may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs in full through the plan-making process'*.[76] As such, it should be recognised that, in some circumstances, it might be appropriate for the housing requirement figure identified in development plans (that overlap with national landscapes) to be less than the OAN / "standard method" figure.

With regards to paragraph 5 of Policy CE15, the evidence base for affordable housing need relating to specific settlements / parishes includes rural housing need surveys and data from choice-based letting systems. The lack of a specific housing need figure, or housing requirement figure, for the AONB 'sub-area' within which an allocation is being considered could potentially make the allocation (and the Plan) unsound. This was the case in West Oxfordshire, where the Local Plan inspector concluded that *'in the absence of a housing need figure for the Burford – Charlbury sub-area… the allocation in the plan of housing sites, and the reliance on additional windfall housing development, in the Burford – Charlbury area, over and above existing completions and commitments, would not be sound'*.[77]

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[74] Defra (2010). *English National Parks and the Broads – UK Government Vision and Circular 2010*, Paragraphs 78 and 79.

[75] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2023) *National Planning Policy Framework*. Paragraph 189.

[76] Government Guidance on the Natural Environment. Paragraph 041.

[77] Planning Inspectorate (2018) *Report on the Examination of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031*. Paragraph 219.

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The wording of paragraph 6 of Policy CE15 is based on paragraph 5.39 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which states that: '*Within the Cotswolds AONB, windfall housing proposals on undeveloped land adjoining built up areas... will only be supported where there is convincing evidence of a specific local housing need such as needs identified through a neighbourhood plan or affordable housing needs specific to a particular settlement, for example through a rural exception site*'.[78]

There is concern that high levels of second home ownership, retirement homes and buy to let have removed housing from the market that could otherwise be made available to people who need a home within the Cotswolds that they can afford to buy or rent. This results in increased demand within a reduced pool of housing stock, which inflates house prices and makes housing less affordable. The Board is particularly concerned that that younger people, families, key workers, those who care for the landscape of the CNL and others who form part of the Cotswold communities are able to live within the Cotswolds. This is vital for sustaining community services such as schools and reducing long distance commuting form locations where housing is more affordable.

All of these issues, including relevant case studies, are addressed in more detail in the Board's Housing Position Statement. The recommendations in the Housing Position Statement are based on government guidance and on best practice in the Cotswolds and other protected landscapes. Many of these recommendations have now been incorporated into Policy CE15, although the Position Statement provides additional, useful context.[79]

Policy CE16: Waste management and the circular economy

CE16.1. Waste management should align with the following hierarchy, as set out in the Government's Waste Management Plan 2021:
   a. Prevention
   b. Prepare for reuse
   c. Recycling
   d. Other recovery
   e. Disposal

CE16.2. Measures that help to deliver a circular, or closed-loop, economy, in which waste generation is avoided, should be encouraged.

CE16.3. Proposals for new landfill sites and strategic waste facilities should not normally be permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), especially where they involve importing significant amounts of waste into the CNL (for example, waste generated in neighbouring urban areas).

CE16.4. Any waste management facilities that are permitted in the CNL should:
(i) be sited in such a way that adverse environmental impacts are minimised, in line with relevant permitting regimes; and (ii) be primarily to receive waste that arises within the CNL (within close proximity to the proposed facility).

CE16.5. The management or use of waste by way of depositing it to land as an inert 'recovery' operation, land raising and bunding or for further restoration of previous landfill operations, should only be allowed: (i) in very limited circumstances within environmental limits; (ii) where it can demonstrate a significant net-benefit for the conservation and

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[78] West Oxfordshire District Council (2018). *West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031*.
[79] Cotswolds National Landscape Board (2021). *Housing Position Statement *and appendices.

enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL; and (iii) where it complies with the policies of the relevant Waste Local Plan and relevant environmental regulations.

Communities and businesses within the Cotswolds produce a significant amount of waste which needs to be disposed of in an appropriate and safe manner. In future, efforts must concentrate on minimising waste and dealing with it in close proximity to where it is produced. The reduction of waste should be promoted by supporting policies and plans which result in re-use, reduction and recycling of waste materials and the efficient and effective collection of waste in a manner that will support its management as high up the waste hierarchy as is practicably possible.

Proposed activities including development, should proactively support the transition to a circular economy throughout the CNL. They should apply waste avoidance and reduction practices and adopt procurement strategies that favour the purchase of goods and services, which contribute to closing energy and material loops within supply chains.

The significant number of urban areas close to the CNL has the potential to create pressure to import waste into the CNL, particularly to former quarry locations. This can generate additional lorry traffic within the National Landscape, with associated negative impacts on communities, the rural road network and roadside verges. There are also implications for the groundwater resource due to the permeable nature of limestone.

Infilling with inert waste is sometimes proposed for quarries within the CNL. The need for infilling should be minimised by ensuring that a sufficient quantity of by-product is retained during the quarry operation to enable an appropriate restoration scheme to be achieved. Retrospective infilling may require a considerable number of HGV movements which can adversely affect the tranquillity of the CNL and result in unnecessary greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the potential benefits of restoring a former quarry to a more natural landform will need to be weighed in the balance against these potential adverse effects.

7. Increasing understanding and enjoyment

Ensuring access, learning and wellbeing opportunities are for everyone.

Health and wellbeing

Outcome 12 – Health and wellbeing:

The Cotswolds National Landscape plays a full part in improving the nation's health, benefitting the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the wide range of people who experience it.

The mental physical and emotional health benefits of accessing natural beauty are becoming increasingly understood and appreciated. The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people and crucially to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too.

Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing

UE1.1. Further opportunities for improving health and wellbeing in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be created, improved and promoted, particularly for communities experiencing health and social inequities. This should include, where appropriate, the provision of: green or blue spaces (e.g. rivers) within easy reach of communities, walking, cycling and riding routes, including routes for disabled people; opportunities to access and interact with nature, and volunteering and personal development opportunities.

UE1.2. All children and young people resident within and around the CNL should be provided with environmental education opportunities to experience the CNL through direct contact with the natural environment.

UE1.3. The health care and voluntary sectors should make greater use of the benefits that the National Landscape provides for the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors, for example, by actively promoting and supporting green prescribing initiatives in the CNL countryside and in green and blue spaces.

A lack of physical activity can lead to a variety of chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease which, combined with an ageing population, is contributing to a public health crisis. A lack of access to scenic, wildlife-rich green and blue (water) spaces and other open spaces can also adversely affect mental health. Many people, particularly children and young people, do not readily have opportunities to learn about the environment or to develop an understanding and appreciation of the Cotswolds countryside. The Cotswolds Outdoor Learning Network has drawn together Partner organisations to share best practice and funding opportunities within the Cotswolds and will be a great source for creating further learning opportunities with schools and community groups going forward. The new natural History GCSE will also help to further understanding of the natural environment and facilitate more involvement from the education sector and encourage future citizen scientists and connection to the Cotswolds and its wildlife.

The health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering in the countryside cannot be underestimated. Volunteering helps to improve physical health, and working and walking in the outdoors can also help with a variety of mental health challenges such as social isolation, bereavement and low confidence and self-esteem. Volunteer groups often struggle to attract those from underrepresented communities due to perceived and real-life barriers and so more support is needed for organisations to encourage and enable a more diverse range of volunteers. The variety of opportunities available across the National Landscape and wider partnership of organisations needs to be more clearly signposted.

There is a need to implement and develop a variety of approaches to address these issues, including the provision of outdoor activities and experiences. There is also a need to promote the link between physical and mental health and enjoying and understanding the special qualities of the National Landscape. This should include encouraging more partnership working between health and social care professionals and other stakeholders to implement measures such as 'green' prescriptions (for example, prescribing walks in the CNL). Where appropriate, links should be developed between these health and wellbeing aspirations and the enhancement of ecological networks and the provision of green and blue infrastructure.

Access and recreation

Outcome 13 – Access and recreation:

The Cotswolds is recognised as a welcoming place, where barriers to access are being removed and everyone feels connected to the landscape.

The Landscapes Review published by Julian Glover in 2019 challenged Protected Landscapes to do more to welcome people, and to do a lot more to ensure that people from currently underrepresented groups can enjoy the benefits of accessing them too. Two following reports published in 2022 built on these findings; Increasing Children's Engagement with Protected Landscapes[80] and Improving the Ethnic Diversity of Visitors to England's Protected Landscapes[81]

Policy UE2: Access and recreation

UE2.1.   Visitors, residents and local communities should be provided with opportunities to increase their understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the CNL.

UE2.2.   A priority for engagement in the CNL should be individuals who are not currently enjoying or engaged with the benefits of the landscape. These include those from within the CNL and from the surrounding urban areas, especially those from areas of high deprivation and those that are not traditional visitors to the Cotswolds.

UE2.3.   A safe, pleasant, accessible, clearly waymarked and well-connected public rights of way network that welcomes people of all abilities should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) and into surrounding communities.

UE2.4.   Improvements to access and recreation provision including public rights of way should

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[80] Defra (2022) *Increasing children's engagement with protected landscapes*
[81] Defra (2022) *Improving the Ethnic Diversity of Visitors to England's Protected Landscapes*

be undertaken in a way that is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of CNL. Innovative ways of providing named routes without introducing additional signage should be explored. This should be balanced with the needs of groups that lack confidence in exploring the countryside, sensitive sites and of landowners and farmers who need to keep people on designated routes.

UE2.5. Open Access Land and other land including country parks, that is open to public access[82] should be maintained, enhanced and promoted across the CNL. Where appropriate, more land should be made available for public access.

UE2.6. Sustainable funding for National Trails, including the Cotswold Way and Thames Path, should be secured in order to ensure they are maintained to national standards. Further uplift in this funding should be sought to continue to improve the Trails, making them more accessible.

UE2.7. Easily accessible online, downloadable and onsite resources for walking, cycling, horse riding, volunteering and educational activities should be provided in the CNL to help promote access to the area and promote understanding and appreciation of its special qualities.

UE2.8. Visitor facilities and routes that are accessible to those of all abilities should be provided.

UE2.9. Guided walks and activities for those who are not confident walking in the countryside should be provided to increase confidence and share knowledge of the CNL and its special qualities.

UE2.10. Arts and cultural experiences should be provided to encourage people to deepen their connection to the landscape and support the engagement of new and existing audiences.

UE2.12. The type and level of use access and recreational opportunities including public rights of way should be compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the CNL. Where recreational use is having or is likely to have, an adverse impact on the natural beauty of the National Landscape or on the integrity of existing wildlife and historic sites, steps should be taken to evaluate, prevent or mitigate these impacts. Such steps can include enhanced maintenance and wayfinding, onsite engagement, legal restrictions, and providing and promoting access and recreational opportunities in new alternative suitable locations.

UE2.11. The Countryside Code should be promoted to educate visitors and communities to behave responsibly in the countryside. This would help to improve understanding between visitors and those living and working in the area.

UE2.13. Where there is a conflict between (i) conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and (ii) public enjoyment of this natural beauty in the CNL, the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty should be given greater weight.

The use of the term "everyone" within the wording of this outcome is deliberate and is intended to promote equity, diversity and inclusion.

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[82] This includes access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (which includes commons) and where public access is permitted on land managed by landowners, non-government organisations and charities such as the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.

The extensive 3000 miles of public rights of way network provides a huge opportunity to enhance public enjoyment and appreciation of the CNL. For some people, there are both real and perceived barriers to accessing and enjoying this network. These could be financial, health, cultural or other reasons. These barriers should be broken down and access provision should be adapted and extended where possible to reach the widest demographic.

Partners including the National Landscape Board, Highway Authorities, parishes and landowners should work together to improve public rights of way furniture, surfacing and facilities for the benefit of everyone.

Digital platforms such as websites and social media should be used, alongside targeted communications in more underrepresented communities to promote a variety of activities that will appeal to multiple audiences.

Offering high quality arts and cultural experiences which encourage people to deepen their emotional connection to the landscape will be an important part of how new and existing audiences are engaged in the future. Weaving thought-provoking and inspiring arts and culture activity into access and recreation work has the potential to connect people with nature and the landscape. The Arts in the Landscape strategy, led by the National Landscapes Association and adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board in 2021, will support this work.

A current lack of long term and increasing funding from Natural England for National Trails makes long term planning, maintenance and promotion more challenging. Ongoing partnership working with the Cotswold Way Association (CWA) and the new National Trails Charity (NTUK) will be key to the long term sustainability of these internationally recognized flagship Trails.

New agri- environment schemes have the potential to create additional access to the Cotswolds and improve existing routes and should be encouraged.

The recreational use of the National Landscape should not be allowed to adversely affect the National Landscape's special qualities. For example, measures will need to be put in place to avoid, minimise and mitigate recreational pressure arising from new developments both inside and outside the National Landscape, especially where these developments are located close to sensitive locations, such as designated nature conservation sites and Scheduled Monuments. The provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) should be developed to protect designated sites. For example, the Cotswold Beechwoods Recreation Mitigation Strategy (2022) actively aims to educate and guide visitors to less sensitive areas of the Cotswolds Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation. This can include the provision of SANG areas funded through developer contributions and a range of other Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures.

The prioritisation of 'conserving and enhancing natural beauty' over 'public enjoyment' is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974. This principle is embedded in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, in relation to Conservation Boards.[83]

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[83] Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).

Sustainable tourism

Outcome 14 – Sustainable tourism:

Businesses and visitors have a shared commitment to contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

The natural beauty of the CNL is the foundation on which the tourism industry in the Cotswolds is based. This natural beauty is an asset which needs to be managed, conserved and enhanced. The tourism sector should, therefore, contribute to the conservation and enhancement of this natural beauty.

Policy UE3: Sustainable tourism

UE3.1. Tourism within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be delivered and managed in a way that is compatible with and seeks to further the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of CNL and should minimise the emission of greenhouse gases in accordance with policy CC1.

UE3.2. Visitors, residents, local businesses and communities should be provided with opportunities to directly contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL and improve access to the area through local individual, community and employee volunteering opportunities.

UE3.3. The 'Caring for the Cotswolds' visitor giving scheme will raise awareness of the CNL and generate funds from visitors to directly help to look after it by supporting projects which conserve habitats and species, look after heritage and landscape, improve access, and help provide education resources encouraging people to understand the landscape and nature better.

UE3.4. Visitors should be provided with a variety of accommodation options over a range of prices. The siting and design of visitor accommodation should be compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL including its special qualities.

UE3.5. Air travel arising from the Cotswolds as a destination should be minimised.

UE3.6. Existing sustainable and integrated transport initiatives should be supported and new initiatives developed to help facilitate the car free visitor experience.

UE3.7. The activity and impacts of tourism should be spread more evenly across the CNL.

New tourism products that increase the sustainable tourism offer should be encouraged. Further research and evidence are needed to better understand the impacts and patterns of tourism in the CNL to ensure it becomes sustainable. Updated visitor and tourism survey data would help to underpin Policies UE2 and UE3.

Visitors' emissions, including travelling to/from the Cotswolds, are equivalent to about half of total residents' emissions. Their emissions overwhelmingly come from travelling to/from the Cotswolds, rather than what they do, buy and eat while they are here. In particular, emissions

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from travelling are dominated by flying (48%) and road fuel (41%). Of the remaining 11%, while visitors are here, about half their emissions are due to food and drink.[84]

Though there is generally a significant level of appreciation for the Cotswolds landscape amongst visitors, awareness and understanding of its status as a protected landscape and the implications of this are lacking. This reduces awareness of the need for protection and enhancement of the sense of place and its distinctive features and special qualities.

Limited availability of low-cost accommodation, including camping, can exclude families and those on low incomes from staying in the area, reducing the diversity of visitors. Provision of such accommodation should be compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

The limited provision of public transport - and limited integration of this provision – restricts the scope for visitors (and residents) without a car to explore the Cotswolds resulting in a heavy reliance on car usage. Transport providers should be supported to increase and promote integrated travel initiatives in order to encourage a car-free visitor experience.

The distribution of tourism activity is very uneven across the Cotswolds with "honeypot" areas suffering from the impacts of very high tourism whilst other communities could better benefit from tourism. Any initiatives to widen the distribution of tourism activity must seek to do so in a manner compatible with the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty".[85]

Following the 2021 "*de Bois Review: an independent review of Destination Management Organisations in England*" and the government response, VisitEngland is currently creating a portfolio of nationally supported and strategic 'Local Visitor Economy Partnerships' (LVEPs). These LVEPs will provide strong local leadership and governance in tourism destination all over the country. In 2023 the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership was accredited by VisitEngland, and now provides strategic advice and direction to the following destination marketing organisations: Cotswolds Tourism (lead partner), Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism, Marketing Cheltenham, Visit Gloucester, Visit Gloucestershire. The Cotswolds Plus LVEP has a Management Board made up of strategic partners including Gloucestershire County Council and local authority representatives from the geographic area of the LVEP and is independently chaired by a representative of the Cotswolds National Landscape Board. The main themes of work are: Sustainability (transport and active travel); Sustainability (business practices and biodiversity); Accessibility and Inclusion; Skills and Training; Research and Data; Business Support; Travel Trade; and Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE).

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[84] Cotswolds National Landscape (2023). Creating a Pathway to a Climate-Friendly Cotswolds. A Layman's Guide to Small World Consulting's Carbon Baseline Assessment Technical Report.
[85] Section 87 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 states that, where there is a conflict between the Board's two purposes, greater weight should be given to the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty over the purpose of increasing understanding and enjoyment.

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8. Delivery and monitoring

Cotswolds National Landscape Board delivery

The Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Board will play an important role in delivering the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan. How the CNL Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme. Together these show how the vision, outcomes and policies of the Management Plan are translated into measurable actions for the Board.

Stakeholder delivery

Although the CNL Board is the body responsible for preparing and publishing the Management Plan and will play an important role in its delivery, the Board doesn't actually own or directly manage any of the land in the CNL or its setting. As such, the policies of the Management Plan are also intended to guide the work of other stakeholders in helping to deliver the Management Plan's vision and outcomes.

The detail of how other stakeholders contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is too complex to cover in this Management Plan, particularly given that the National Landscape cuts across 15 local authority areas. However, the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 5 outlines the key actions that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver the Management Plan. The actions and policies listed in the table are not intended to be exhaustive.

In essence, stakeholders are asked to:
- have regard to the Management Plan, including its vision, outcomes and, perhaps most importantly, its policies;
- incorporate the Management Plan's vision, outcomes and policies into their own plans, policies, proposals, work programmes and decisions, where appropriate.

Monitoring

The National Landscape Board will monitor and evaluate its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through the quarterly and annual review of its work programme. The 'State of the Cotswolds Report' – together with other local and national monitoring and surveys – will contribute to the provision of evidence, which is a crucial part of managing the National Landscape.

Where practicable the Board will monitor the key actions identified in the 'Stakeholder Delivery' table in Appendix 5 and compliance with the 'duty of regard' (see Appendix 4).

The delivery of the Management Plan will be monitored through the national Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework supplemented with local indicators. These targets are listed in appendix 6.

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9.   Appendices

Appendix 1: National Landscape (AONB) designation

The Cotswolds National Landscape was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966 and extended in area in 1990. At 787 square miles, or 2038 square kilometres, it is the largest AONB and the third largest protected landscape in England.

Although AONB remains the legal name of the designation, the Board of the Cotswolds Conservation Board decided in June 2020 to use the name National Landscape (NL) for the area designated as an AONB and the name Cotswolds National Landscape Board for the Cotswolds Conservation Board. All AONBs now use the name National Landscape.

This plan uses the term National Landscape for the designated area and National Landscape Board for the organisation.

AONBs are landscapes whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard them[86]. They have the same landscape status as national parks.

The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance their natural beauty[87]. AONBs are designated in law following a prescribed process which includes an objective appraisal of landscape quality, statutory assessments by the national conservation agencies and wide consultation with stakeholders including local landowners, residents and businesses[88].

Each AONB has been designated by reason of its 'special qualities'. These include the flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as landscape and scenic views, as outlined in Chapter 2 of the Management Plan.

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War. The primary, or enabling, legislation for the designation of AONBs was the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 subsumed and strengthened the AONB

provisions of the 1949 Act. It confirmed the purpose and significance of AONBs, clarified the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their designation, protection and management. The Act also provided for the establishment of Conservation Boards to manage AONBs – see Appendix 3.

AONBs are part of a family of protected areas recognised and classified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) throughout the world. IUCN recognises AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales as Category V Protected Landscapes – a protected area whose special qualities are the result of the interaction between people and nature. As such, they are an international designation as well as a national-level designation. They are managed mainly for landscape protection and recreation.

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[86] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2015) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Landscape Protection and Enhancement Support Scheme (England) 2015 – 17. Application to European Commission*.
[87] Section 82, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
[88] National Association of AONBs (2018) *AONB Management Plan Revision. Specimen text: policy and legal framework*.

Appendix 2: Natural beauty

The concept of natural beauty is one of the cornerstones of legislation to protect landscapes in the UK. It has been the basis for the designation of national landscapes (AONBs) and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act.

Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. It encompasses everything that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it[89]. It is widely accepted that natural beauty is, in part, due to human intervention, such as agriculture[90].

Natural England has developed a list of natural beauty criteria[91] to be used when assessing landscapes for designation as AONBs or National Parks, as outlined in the table below. It is Natural England's view that the practical application of the natural beauty criteria is identical for National Park and AONB designations, despite there being differences in the degree to which the criterion is clarified in the legislation[92]. So, for example, the extent to which wildlife and cultural heritage are factored into natural beauty assessments by Natural England is the same for both AONBs and National Parks. It is also the Government's formal position that the natural beauty required of an AONB and a National Park are the same[93].

The list is not intended to be exhaustive and other factors may be relevant in some circumstances. Not all factors will be relevant in every case.

Table of factors related to natural beauty[94][79]

Landscape quality
This is a measure of the current physical state or condition of the landscape and its features.

Scenic quality
The extent to which the landscape appeals to the senses (primarily, but not only, the visual senses).

Relative wildness
The degree to which relatively wild character can be perceived in the landscape and makes a particular contribution to sense of place.

Relative tranquillity
The degree to which relative tranquillity can be perceived in the landscape.

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[89] Countryside Agency (2001) *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans*. A guide. Countryside Agency Publications. West Yorkshire

[90] Natural England (2021) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

[91] Natural England (2021) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*. (see Table 3 and Appendix 1).

[92] Natural England (2021) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

[93] See Lords Hansard 20 Mar 2006 (Col 51) and Commons Hansard 13 June 2000 (Col 556W).

[94] Table extracted from the Natural England guidance Natural England (2011) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*.

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Natural heritage features
The influence of natural heritage on the perception of the natural beauty of the area. Natural heritage includes flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features.

Cultural heritage
The influence of cultural heritage on the perception of natural beauty of the area and the degree to which associations with particular traditions, people, artists, writers or events in history contribute to such perception.

The CNL's 'special qualities', outlined in Chapter 4, above, are the most significant components of the area's natural beauty. The key features / characteristics of the CNL's 19 landscape character types, as outlined in the CNL Landscape Character Assessment and in the CNL Landscape Strategy & Guidelines, are also an important component of the area's natural beauty.

Appendix 3: Cotswold National Landscape Board

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliamentary Order[95] in 2004. It was renamed as the Cotswolds National Landscape Board for most purposes in June 2020 (although the legal name remains unchanged). It has two statutory purposes, which it must seek to further[96]:

- The purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.
- The purpose of increasing the understanding and enjoyment, by the public of the special qualities of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

In fulfilling these purposes, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Landscape[97].

These purposes and duties are modelled on those of the National Park Authorities. In circumstances where the two purposes are irreconcilable, the Board must give priority to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape[98].

The Board consists of 37 members, of whom 15 are nominated by principal local authorities, eight by parish councils and 14 are appointed by government. The Board's work programme is administered by a small team of staff, supported by a network of Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who deliver a programme of practical projects and guided walks across the National Landscape. It is one of only two Conservation Boards in England, the other being the Chilterns Conservation Board.

The Board has a statutory responsibility, under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000, to draft and publish the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and to review it at least every five years. The Board's work programme for how it will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in the Board's separate, rolling, three-year Business Plan.

The Board has a series of functions or powers that it shares with the Local Authorities, as specified in the Board's Establishment Order.

As the only organisation with responsibilities for the Cotswolds National Landscape as a whole, the Board produces a variety of publications and guidance. This is to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach across the whole of the National Landscape, which puts the purpose of National Landscape designation at the heart of plans, proposals, decisions and work programmes affecting the National Landscape.

Board publications that are of particular relevance to the Management Plan – and which are referred to in some of the Management Plan policies and or supporting text – are outlined below:

- **Cotswolds National Landscape** – **Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)**: The LCA provides an assessment of the character, distinctiveness and qualities of the Cotswolds

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[95] The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Establishment of Conservation Board) Order 2004.
[96] Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.
[97] Section 87 of the CROW Act specifies that, *'a conservation board... shall for that purpose [i.e. fostering social and economic wellbeing] co-operate with local authorities and public bodies whose functions include the promotion of economic or social development within the area of outstanding natural beauty'*.
[98] This prioritisation of conserving and enhancing is known as the 'Sandford Principle', after Lord Sandford, who chaired the National Parks Policy Review Committee between 1971 and 1974.

National Landscape. It also identifies and describes the National Landscape's component landscape character types (LCTs). It identifies 19 different LCTs in the Cotswolds National Landscape.

- **Cotswolds National Landscape** – **Landscape Strategy and Guidelines**: The Landscape Strategy and Guidelines provides an overview of the forces for change that are influencing the landscape of the Cotswolds National Landscape and outlines a series of landscape and land management strategies to help guide change in a positive and sustainable way. It is intended to help developers, local planning authorities, land managers and other decision makers to make informed decisions about the suitability of proposed development – or other changes – within each of the LCTs.

- **Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan**. The Nature Recovery Plan represents a detailed look at the species and habitats of the Cotswolds and what should be done to enable their recovery and adaptation to climate change. It sets priorities and targets for natures recovery and describes the measures that can achieve it.

- **Position Statements**: The Board issues a number of Position Statements, which expand on specific policies in the Management Plan and on related issues. They contain further background information and recommended good practice. They are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

- **Cotswolds National Landscape Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change**[9984]: This document aims to assist a wide range of stakeholders to broaden their understanding of what makes the Cotswolds National Landscape special and different from other parts of the country.

- **The Cotswolds National Landscape Climate Change Strategy** (adopted by the National Landscape Board in February 2022).This summarises our current understanding of the climate change impacts on the Cotswolds and what stakeholders can do to both adapt to and mitigate these impacts.

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[99] Conservation Board (2003) *Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – Local Distinctiveness and Landscape Change*. Produced by Latham Architects for the Cotswolds AONB Partnership.

Appendix 4: The "seek to further" duty.

Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023[100] (LURA) introduced a statutory duty on relevant authorities[101] to seek to further the statutory purposes of protected landscapes[102] (the 'seek to further' duty). With regards to National Landscapes, this requirement has been incorporated into Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, which now states:

In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority other than a devolved Welsh authority must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.[103]

This replaces the previous version of Section 85 of the CROW Act, which required relevant authorities to have regard to the statutory purpose of national landscape designations (the 'duty of regard').

Section 245 of the LURA and Section 85 of the CROW Act also state that '*the Secretary of State may by regulations make provision about how a relevant authority is to comply with the duty*'. These regulations are likely to be enacted during the lifetime of this iteration of the CNL Management Plan.

However, the application of the duty is not dependent on these regulations.
The 'seek to further' duty is in force now, as it has been since 26 December 2023, and must be complied with.

Guidance and advice

Guidance on the 'seek to further' duty has been published by Defra[104] and the National Landscapes Association[105]. In addition, Natural England has provided advice on the 'seek to further' duty in relation to a nationally significant infrastructure project[106] and the Campaign for National Parks has obtained a legal opinion on the duty[107]. Other useful reference points include the Government's explanatory note on the Lords' amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill[108] and the Government's LURA press release[109].

This appendix pulls together key aspects of this guidance and advice, as outlined below (with references being provided for the relevant guidance / advice), in order to provide a coherent narrative.

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[100] Section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.
[101] As specified in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, 'relevant authority', in this context, includes any Minister of the Crown, public body, statutory undertaker or person holding public office.
[102] 'Protected landscapes' means national parks, the Broads and National Landscapes.
[103] Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
[104] Defra (2024) *Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes*.
[105] National Landscapes Association (2024) *Applying the CRoW Act section 85 duty to 'seek to further the purposes' in National Landscapes - guidance for local planning authorities*.
[106] Natural England (2023) *Letter from Natural England to the Planning Inspectorate regarding the application by National Highways for an order granting development consent for the Lower Thames Crossing*. Annex 2.
[107] Landmark Chambers (2024) *Re: section 245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023*. Instructed by the Campaign for National Parks.
[108] UK Parliament (2023) *Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill – Explanatory Notes on Lords Amendments*. Updated version, 12 October 2023. Page 35.
[109] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-speed-up-planning-build-homes-and-level-up

Strengthened duty

The 'seek to further' duty is a strengthened duty compared to the previous 'duty of regard'.[110] If 'have regard to' was the same as 'seek to further', then there would be no need for the amendment.[111] The duty is therefore clearly intended to impose new and more onerous requirements with respect to the statutory purposes than existed before.[112]

Outcome focussed

The 'seek to further' duty is intended to facilitate better outcomes for National Landscapes, which are in line with their statutory purpose (i.e. to conserve and enhance their natural beauty).[113] As stated in the Government's LURA press release, the duty '*will enhance our national network of beautiful, nature-rich protected landscapes that can be enjoyed right across the country*'.[114] In this context, natural beauty should be considered in its holistic sense and 'conserve and enhance' should be treated as a singular purpose. [115,116]

Active / pro-active duty

The 'seek to further' duty is an active duty, not a passive one.[117] This means that the duty should be pro-actively considered when exercising or performing any functions to which the duty applies.[118] For example, a relevant authority must factor in the duty before the adoption of a proposed policy and not merely as a 'rearguard action' following a concluded decision.[119]

Relevant authorities would be well-advised not treat the new duty as 'business as usual'.[120] 'Seek' and 'further' both imply demonstrable action in the form of assistance and promotion of the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty of National Landscapes. It is not enough that a decision simply does not conflict with that purpose: it must seek to further it.[121]

Reasonable and proportionate

A relevant authority should take all reasonable and proportionate steps to explore how the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes can be furthered.[122]

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[110] National Landscapes Association (2024), Landmark Chambers (2024) (paragraphs 6, 16d and 21), Government Explanatory Notes (2023).
[111] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 16d.
[112] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 6.
[113] Defra (2024), NLA (2024), Landmark Chambers (2024) (paragraph 17g).
[114] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-laws-to-speed-up-planning-build-homes-and-level-up
[115] National Landscapes Association (2024).
[116] Please refer to Appendix 2 for further information on natural beauty.
[117] Defra (2024), National Landscapes Association (2024), Natural England (2023), Landmark Chambers (2024) (paragraphs 2a, 16d, 17b, 19ii, 21).
[118] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 17b.
[119] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 17c.
[120] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 21.
[121] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 17c.
[122] Defra (2024), National Landscapes Association (2024), Natural England (2023).

Going beyond avoidance and mitigation of harm

As far as is reasonably practical, relevant authorities should seek to avoid harm and contribute to conserving and enhancing of the natural beauty of National Landscapes.[123]

This goes beyond mitigation and like for like measures and replacement. The proposed measures to further the statutory purpose of a National Landscape should explore what is possible in addition to avoiding and mitigating the effects of the development, and should be appropriate, proportionate to the type and scale of the development and its implications for the area and effectively secured.[124] Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of compensation measures.[125]

The setting of National Landscapes

As well as being applied within National Landscapes, the 'seek to further duty' also applies to functions undertaken outside of the designation boundary which affects land within a National Landscape.[126]

Management Plans

When seeking to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, relevant authorities should consider the information contained in a National Landscape's Management Plan.[127] Relevant authorities should make efforts to understand the Management Plan and relate their functions to it.[128]

Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the specific National Landscape will normally mean, as a minimum:
- conserving and enhancing the character components or special qualities identified in the Management Plan;
- supporting the Management Plan Objectives, Policies and/or Principles (as applicable) as set out for each of these; and
- following any Management Plan actions set out for each.[129]

Consideration should also be given to whether the measures being taken by the relevant authority align with and help to deliver the targets in the Management Plan.[130]

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

Relevant authorities should refer to the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcome Framework.[131]

Dialogue with the National Landscapes team

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[123] Defra (2024).
[124] Natural England (2023).
[125] Defra (2024).
[126] Defra (2024).
[127] Defra (2024).
[128] Defra (2024).
[129] National Landscapes Association (2024).
[130] Defra (2024).
[131] Defra (2024).

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Dialogue with the National Landscape team can assist the relevant authority[132] (i.e. in this instance, dialogue with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board).

Scenarios where there would be a neutral effect on the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty

If the measures taken by a relevant authority, in relation to the 'seek to further' duty, would have a neutral effect on the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, consideration should be given to what modifications would help to further this purpose.[133]

Scenarios where a relevant authority concludes that their decision / action would not seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty

If, having considered the implications of a decision, a relevant authority reaches the view that the decision does not 'seek to further' the purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, it would be hard to argue that the decision would, in fact, be open to the relevant authority. This is because it would appear to be in breach of the duty. In those circumstances, the decision would need to either be withdrawn or modified such that the relevant authority could confidently say that it did seek to further the relevant purpose. [134]

Scenarios where the natural beauty of a National Landscape would not be conserved and enhanced

The 'seek to further' duty does not preclude decisions that are 'net harmful' to the natural beauty of a National Landscape. If that were so, the duty would be to 'further the purpose' rather than to 'seek to further the purpose'. However, positive evidence is required to demonstrate that the relevant authority has, in all the circumstances, sought to further the purpose, not merely through mitigation of harm but by taking all reasonable steps to further the purpose.[135]

Evidence

A relevant authority should be able to demonstrate with proportionate, reasoned, and documented evidence that they have complied with the 'seek to further' duty. This evidence should include the measures that have been taken, or to which consideration has been given, to further the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of National Landscapes.[136]

If it is not practicable or feasible to take measures to further this purpose, the relevant authority should provide evidence to show why it is not practicable or feasible.[137]

Monitoring and Compliance

A relevant authority may consider it appropriate to instigate a formal compliance monitoring and reporting system to ensure adherence to the duty.[138]

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[132] Defra (2024).
[133] National Landscapes Association (2024).
[134] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 17g.
[135] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 17h.
[136] Defra (2024), National Landscapes Association (2024), Natural England (2023), Landmark Chambers (2024).
[137] Natural England (2023).
[138] Defra (2024).

Potential errors in law

A failure to consider the 'seek to further' duty, or a failure to understand its pro-active and mandatory nature, would be an error of law.[139],[140]

If a relevant authority makes a decision that engages the duty and it cannot demonstrate that it has done all it reasonably can to further the statutory purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty as part of the decision, that decision will be open to legal challenge.[141]

If a relevant authority applies the principles that are set out in this appendix conscientiously, it will be less open to a judicial review challenge on the basis of an alleged breach of the new duties.[142]

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[139] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 16e.

[140] An example of this 'error in law' is a case relating to works undertaken by Greater Anglia at Manningtree train station, in Dedham Vale National Landscape, in Essex. In this case, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government accepted that their failure to apply the 'seek to further' duty, when making an Environmental Impact Assessment screening decision, constituted an error in law and that the outcome might have been different if the duty been applied.

[141] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 20.

[142] Landmark Chambers (2024). Paragraph 18.

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Appendix 5: Stakeholder delivery – priority actions

National Landscape Board Delivery How the National Landscape Board will contribute to the delivery of the Management Plan is set out in a three yearly Business Plan Framework which in turn is delivered through an annual work programme.

Recommended Stakeholder Actions Every individual and organisation with an interest in the National Landscape can help make this plan's vision and outcomes a reality by contributing its delivery. Many of these stakeholders already make a significant contribution to delivery. This 'Stakeholder Delivery' table provides an indication of the key measures that the Board invites specific stakeholders to undertake in order to help deliver this plan.

Stakeholder	Key measure (i.e. 'if you do nothing else to support the implementation of the Management Plan, please do this')	Most relevant policies (not an exclusive list)
All 'relevant authorities'[143]	Seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). In doing so, have regard to and align with the CNL Management Plan and other National Landscape guidance. This should include helping to deliver the vision, outcomes and policies of the National Landscape Management Plan by: (i) addressing them – and, where appropriate, adopting them – in relevant plans, policies, proposals, work programmes, decisions and actions; and (ii) recognising them as priorities for investment.	All policies
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework where relevant.	All policies
Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	Promote guidance on the 'seek to further' duty.	All policies
	Develop secondary legislation on how relevant authorities should comply with the 'seek to further' duty.	All policies
	Develop secondary legislation on how relevant authorities should contribute to the production and implementation of protected landscape management plans and the delivery of the targets within the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework.	All policies
	Ensure that Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms contain measures appropriate for the Cotswolds National Landscape and are targeted towards the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies and the delivery of the targets within the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework, in particular targets 1,2,3,4,5,8 & 10.	CE1, CE4, CE7, CE8, CE9, CE10, CE11, CE12, UE2
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government	Publish new guidance, to accompany the National Planning Policy Framework, which clarifies and explains: • the meaning of 'highest status of protection'; • that development in AONBs should be limited; • what the development priorities should be for AONBs (i.e. affordable housing and improvement of services); • what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances' and 'in the public interest', in the context of major development.	CE13, CE14, CE15

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[143] As defined in Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which is explained in Appendix 4. Includes all public bodies and statutory undertakers.

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Natural England	Support the establishment and delivery of Environmental Land Management and rural development support mechanisms specifically for the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE1, CE4, CE7, CE8, CE9, CE10, CE11, CE12, UE2
	Provide funding for National Trails through three-year rolling funding streams, and provide cohesive national co-ordination	UE2
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, in particular targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 & 10	CE8, CE10, CE11
Forestry Commission	Develop and support land management and rural development support mechanisms appropriate for the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE8, CE10
	Ensure that publicly funded woodland creation schemes reflect Cotswolds National Landscape Board guidance including the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and the Nature Recovery Plan.	CE1, CE8, CE10
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, in particular targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, & 10.	
Environment Agency	Support the delivery of the Cotswold Nature Recovery Plan and the River Valleys Nature Improvement Area, for example, through appropriate policies and actions in River Basin and Catchment Management Plans.	CE8, CE9, CE10
	Lead on the delivery of actions to implement the Water Framework Directive.	CE8, CE9, CE10
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, in particular targets 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5.	
Historic England	Continue to make publicly available information on the historic character and heritage assets of the area, and to provide advice and guidance on a range of heritage related matters via the Historic England website, such as Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency: Historic England Advice Note 18 (2024)	CE7
	Provide advice to applicants for environmental land management schemes to ensure improvement to affected heritage assets (registered landscapes or scheduled monuments) can be secured.	CE7
	With other partners and landowners, support initiatives that improve the condition of the historic environment and heritage assets at risk contributing to the delivery of target 10 within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.	CE7
Health and Wellbeing Boards	Commission health walks and conservation activity as an adjunct or alternative to normal prescription treatment.	UE1
	Invest in programmes to help deprived communities, within the Cotswolds National Landscape and surrounding areas, overcome barriers preventing them from realising the mental and physical health benefits of enjoying the National Landscape.	UE1
Local Enterprise Partnerships	Support the development of funding mechanisms that leverage private finance to provide for payments for ecosystem services (Gloucestershire LEP roles and responsibilities transferred to Gloucestershire County Council from April 2024).	CE8, CE10, CE1, UE1
	Endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.	All policies

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Principal Local Authorities	Recognise the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan as a material consideration in Local Plans and in planning decisions.	CE13, CE14, CE15
	Include a policy specifically about the Cotswolds National Landscape in Local Plans, which specifies how the purpose of National Landscape designation will be achieved in the Local Plan area.	CE13, CE14, CE15
	Ensure that Local Nature Recovery Strategies take account of the outcomes, priorities and measures of the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.	CE8, CE9
	Prioritise the provision of affordable housing to meet identified local needs arising from within the National Landscape.	CE15
	Maintain and enhance public access, roads, public transport and countryside management, in line with the policies of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.	UE1, UE2, CE13,
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework where relevant.	All policies
	Undertake surveys to update the heritage at risk register	CE7
Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings	Use the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and Landscape Strategy and Guidelines to inform Neighbourhood Plans, Parish Plans and Village Design Statements and when considering planning applications.	CE1, CE4, CE8, CE13
Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings	Celebrate and promote the fact that the town or parish lies within the Cotswolds National Landscape by: • utilising National Landscape boundary markers; • incorporating 'within the Cotswolds National Landscape' text in village or town entry signs; • providing information about the Cotswolds National Landscape on information panels and displays in the town or parish.	UE1, UE2, UE3,
Conservation organisations	Help to halt and reverse declines in priority habitats and species.	CE8, CE9
	Help to establish and manage coherent and resilient nature recovery networks that join up across the National Landscape as outlined in the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.	CE8, CE9
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework where relevant.	
Historic environment and cultural heritage organisations	Support the conservation, enhancement, promotion and monitoring of the historical environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE7
	Contribute to the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, particularly target 10.	
Farmers, landowners, land managers and related organisations	Use the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan and guidance published by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, including the Landscape Strategy and Guidelines and Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan, to inform investment, development, and land management decisions and actions.	All policies

	Ensure that environmental land management and rural development support mechanisms support the Cotswolds National Landscape's policies and guidance and deliver Local Nature recovery Strategies.	CE8, CE10
	Support the delivery of targets within the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework where relevant.	All policies
Tourism organisations and tourism providers	Support the development of and contribute to the Caring for the Cotswolds visitor giving scheme.	UE3
	Support a coordinated approach to tourism across the whole of the Cotswolds.	CC6, UE2, UE3
Geology Trusts	Support the conservation and enhancement of geological and geomorphological features in the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE2
	Support the increased understanding and awareness of geological and geomorphological features in the Cotswolds National Landscape.	CE2
Developers and infrastructure providers (including utilities, rail and highways)	Avoid adverse impacts on the Cotswolds National Landscape resulting from development and infrastructure provision. Mitigate unavoidable impacts and, as a last resort, compensate for impacts that cannot be mitigated on site, for example, by enhancing visual amenity.	CE1, CE13, CE14
	Ensure that any major infrastructure projects that are permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape are 'landscape-led'[144].	CE13
Water companies or utilities	In addition to avoiding and mitigating adverse impacts, contribute to the management of water-dependent environments through delivering actions to support Water Framework Directive objectives.	CE9

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[144] See Policy CE10.6, paragraph 2, for more details on what 'landscape-led' means in this context.

Appendix 6: Monitoring indicators

Targets in the National Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF).

These are the indicators for national targets set by Defra within the PLTOF. Three of them, wildlife rich habitats restored or created, peat and tree canopy and woodland cover are currently being apportioned across all protected landscapes through a national process. The framework is new (the first data release being in 2024) so many of the targets and much of the baseline data are still being developed.

Abbreviations;
PLTOF – Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework
NLs – National Landscapes
NPs – National Parks
PLs – Protected Landscapes
TI – Target Indicator

Management Plan Outcomes and Policies	National PLTOF Target	Target indicator	Cotswolds baseline figure from the 2024 data release	Cotswolds Target 2030	Cotswolds Target 2050	Notes	Statistic Code
	7. Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.	Extent of peat under restoration in Protected Landscapes	0 Ha	0 Ha	0 Ha		TI_07
1. Climate action CC1: Climate change – mitigation	6. Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.	Level of greenhouse gas emissions within Protected Landscapes	1,090.32 kt CO2e	773.45 kt CO2e	0 kt CO2e (net)	Overall emissions are given as a single figure, measured in kilotons of carbon dioxide equivalent (KtCO2e), by weighting non-carbon dioxide gases by their global warming potential (GWP). The baseline figure is for 2022 (nearest available to 2024). Data is available from 2005 (2005 was 1740.2 a reduction of 649.88 to 2022). The 2030 figure was estimated by projecting forward the rate of reduction required to achieve 0 in 2050. The baseline and 2030 figures are not	TI_06

						net and will need adjusting as further work is required to establish the residual emissions that will be mitigated.	
1. Climate action CC1: Climate change – mitigation 8. Biodiversity and nature recovery CE8: Nature recovery and biodiversity	8. Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).	Extent of tree canopy and woodland cover in Protected Landscapes	35,903 Ha	37,776 Ha (+1,873 Ha)	45,270 Ha (+9,367 Ha)	Indicator is in development. Interim statistics provided for woodland cover & tree canopy. Woodland based on national forest inventory = 26,105 ha + trees outside woods based on trees outside woods and orchards maps of 9,798 ha. This target is based on estimating the increase of new tree canopy and woodland cover that can be accommodated within each Landscape Character Type (LCT). This was achieved through: 1. An assessment of the area under each LCT where increasing tree canopy and woodland cover is constrained. 2. A landscape sensitivity assessment to increased tree canopy and woodland cover for each LCT. 3. The application of a % tree canopy and woodland cover increase to the areas without constraints. The % increase was derived from the landscape sensitivity assessment using a sliding scale from 1% to 5% centred around the 3%, national target. This work is subject to further refinement so the target is tentative and may change.	TI_08
			17.62%	18.54% (+0.92%)	22.21% (+4.59%)		
2. Working together CC4: Working in partnership	9.Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.	Policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers	1	1	1	Equalities and Diversity Policy published December 2020. Note. Unlike the other targets, this target is not repeated under the relevant policy within the main body of the plan. This is because it relates to the CNL Board alone and not the CNL as a place.	TI_09i
7. Historic environment and cultural heritage CE7: Historic environment and cultural heritage	10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.	Number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk	62	52	7	Historic England were consulted on the development of this target. The agreed approach was to set a modest improvement for 20230 with further progress scaling up over time. Data subject to revision due to an inconsistency in the reporting of places of worship.	TI_10

	Target	Indicator				Notes	ID
	10. Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.	Number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk	0.56%	0.47%	0.06%	Historic England were consulted on the development of this target. The agreed approach was to set a modest improvement for 20230 with further progress scaling up over time. Data subject to revision due to an inconsistency in the reporting of places of worship.	TI_10
8. Biodiversity and nature recovery CE8: Nature recovery and biodiversity	1. Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).	Extent of wildlife rich habitat created or restored within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites	Not available CNRP (2021) 41,471 Ha	17,331 Ha	33,684 Ha	Indicator is in development. Interim targets based on Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan targets less hedgerows. Habitat definitions align with Environment Act habitat target - definitions and descriptions (April 2024) and Environment Act habitat target reporting data model and standard (December 2024). 2042 target is 28,079 Ha arrived at by adding 2/5 of the difference between 2040 & 2045 targets to 2040. Baseline is the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan existing habitat figures less hedgerows.	TI_01
	2. Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042	Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes in favourable condition	49%	59%	84%	Percentage of SSSI features in favourable condition. National baseline figures; NLs 41.3%, NPs 34.8%, PLs 38.6%, England 39.5%. Interim 2030 & 2050 targets estimated by calculating the average annual increase to meet the 2042 target assuming a steady rate (1.72%pa) & projecting that forward. Natural England were consulted on this target but did not comment.	TI_02
	3. For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.	Percentage of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition	14.4%	83.0%	100%	"Negative" refers to actions which have not been yet undertaken or which are resulting in a negative impact on the SSSI. National baseline figures; NLs 15.3%, NPs 10.8%, PLs 13.4%, England 14.1%. A feature can only be considered to have an 'action on track' if it has an up-to-date condition assessment. Many do not and so do not count as having 'actions on track'. When the assessments are updated, if they are still favourable, they will then count as having 'actions on track'. Interim 2030 target estimated by calculating	TI_03

	Indicator					
					the average annual increase to meet the 2028 target & (11.3%pa) & projecting it forward by 2 more years. Natural England were consulted on this target but did not comment.	
4. Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.	Extent of priority habitat within Protected Landscapes, outside of protected sites, in favourable management through agri-environment schemes	Not available	TBA	TBA	Indicator is in development.	TI_04
5. Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.	Percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on_ a percentage of their land	Not available	TBA	TBA	Indicator is in development.	TI_05
12. Health and wellbeing UE1: Health and wellbeing	9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all.	Number of volunteers active with the Cotswolds National Landscape Board	497	Figure is for 2023/24. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.		Local_01
		No of female Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens	96	Figure is for 2023/24. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.		Local_02
		Number of volunteer hours delivered through the Cotswolds National Landscape Board	52,971	Figure is for 2023/24. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.		Local_03
		Children/young people (<16) worked with by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board	1,727	Figure is for 2023/24. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.		Local_04
		Young people (16-25) worked with by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board	118	Figure is for 2023/24. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.		Local_05
		Schools worked with by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board	55	Figure is for 2023/24. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.		Local_06

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		Number of improvements made to the Public Rights of Way network by the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens	496	Figure is for 2023/24. Number of stiles, gates, bridges and waymarking posts installed or improved. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.	Local_07
13. Access and recreation UE2: Access and recreation	9. Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all.		78,593m	Figure is for 2023/24. Length of path cleared or surface improved. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.	Local_08
		Downloads of walking and exploring resources from the Cotswolds National Landscape Board website.	57,651	Figure is for 2023/24. 48,450 self-guided walks & 9,201 cycle route downloads. No target set as this is not a target under the PLTOF. It is a local indicator being used as a proxy whilst the national indicator is in development.	Local_09

Monitoring Indicators

There are an additional 24 data sets within the PLTOF and they are supplemented with additional local indicators. The PLTOF indicators have statistic codes starting with "Stat" and the supplementary indicators have codes starting with "Local". The PLTOF indicators will be monitored nationally with data cut to their boundaries provided to the protected landscapes. The local indicators will be monitored locally. The PLTOF is new (the first data release being in 2024) so many of the indicators and much of the baseline data are still being developed.

Management Plan Outcomes	Management Plan Policies	Description of statistic	Cotswolds baseline figure from the 2024 data release	Notes	Statistic Code
1. Climate action	CC1 – Climate change mitigation	Area, depth and percentage cover of peatland within Protected Landscapes	24.45 Ha	Deep peaty soils (= 0%). NLs 6.18% PLs 9.01%	Stat_06
1. Climate action	CC1 – Climate change mitigation	Estimate of the amount of carbon stored and sequestered by habitats within Protected Landscapes	42,783,399 tonnes of carbon (t C)	Sum of the median estimate for 0-150cm soil depth and the median estimate for biomass. % of England's total carbon; All National Parks 15.7%, All National Landscapes 17.2% All Protected Landscapes 32.8%	Stat_07
1. Climate action	CC1 – Climate change mitigation	Total predicted output from new renewable energy schemes permitted in the Cotswolds National Landscape each year.	0	Figure is for 2023/24. No records of solar or wind proposals permitted within recent years. This is the predicted output from planning	Local_10

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				applications which is frequently greater than the actual output.	
2. Working together	CC3 – Compliance with section 85 of the CRoW Act	% of planning decisions that are made in line with CNL Board recommendations (where the Board has objected).	56%	Figure is for 2023/24. When a local authority (or planning inspector) has reached a decision that is contrary to our recommendation it doesn't necessarily mean that they have failed to comply with the 'seek to further duty'.	Local_11
2. Working together	CC3 – Compliance with section 85 of the CRoW Act	% of decisions (for development management proposals that we have commented on) that explicitly refer to the S85 'seek to further' duty.	10%	The 'seek to further' duty was introduced at the end of Q3 in 2023/24. This data is for the 2024 calendar year. 11/114 = 10%	Local_12
2. Working together	CC3 – Compliance with section 85 of the CRoW Act	% of decisions (for development management proposals that we have commented on) that, in CNL opinion, adequately address the S85 'seek to further' duty.	6%	The 'seek to further' duty was introduced at the end of Q3 in 2023/24. This data is for the 2024 calendar year. 7/114 = 6%	Local_13
3. Landscape	CE1 – Landscape	National Character Areas which contain Protected Landscape(s), where changes to landscape and waterscape character is assessed as improving/no change/declining	Not available		Stat_10
3. Landscape 8. Nature recovery and biodiversity	CE1 – Landscape CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity	Length of hedgerows and other traditional field boundaries (drystone walls) within Protected Landscapes	13,100 km	Initial figures are for the length of hedgerow. Figures will be added for the length of dry-stone walls and shared in April 2025. Quite a lot of drystone walls are already included in the hedgerow data as the methodology could not differentiate walls with scrub or trees alongside them.	Stat_11
3. Landscape	CE2 – Geology	Number of geological and geomorphological SSSI unit features and percentage in favourable or recovering condition	40		Stat_15
3. Landscape	CE2 – Geology	Number of geological and geomorphological SSSI unit features and percentage in favourable or recovering condition	58%		Stat_15
5. Tranquillity	CE5 – Tranquillity	% of National Landscape recorded as 'most tranquil'	5.9% most tranquil.	0.96% of England is most tranquil. This is the most tranquil decile. Top 3 deciles	Local_14

				is 31.88% for the Cotswolds compared to 8.6% for England. Data from 2006	
6. Dark skies	CE6 – Dark skies	% of National Landscape affected by light pollution	26.9%	Affected by light pollution defined as >0.25 NanoWatts/cm2/sr. Data CPRE 2016	Local_15
7. Historic environment and cultural heritage	Policy CE7	Number of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes	11,112		Stat_09
8. Nature recovery and biodiversity	CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity	Extent of priority habitat and other habitats within Protected Landscapes	23,655 Ha	Statistics on 'other habitats' available in April 2025,	Stat_01
8. Nature recovery and biodiversity	CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity	Extent of priority habitat and other habitats within Protected Landscapes	13%	Statistics on 'other habitats' available in April 2025,	Stat_01
8. Nature recovery and biodiversity	CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity	Area of land within Protected Landscapes designated at international, national and local level for nature conservation	6,080.43 Ha	Excludes Local Wildlife Sites	Stat_02
8. Nature recovery and biodiversity	CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity	Area of land within Protected Landscapes designated at international, national and local level for nature conservation	3%	Excludes Local Wildlife Sites	Stat_02
8. Nature recovery and biodiversity 10. Farming and land management	CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity CE10 - Farming and land management	Area of woodland within Protected Landscapes under sustainable management	16,142 Ha		Stat_03
8. Nature recovery and biodiversity	CE8 – Nature recovery and biodiversity	Extent of ancient woodland within Protected Landscapes	9,353.1 Ha	Includes PAWS	Stat_04
9. Water	CE9 – Water	Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes	11.7%	% Length of rivers, canals & surface water transfers in good ecological status (no high in Cotswolds). NLs 17.26%, PLs 23.27%	Stat_05
9. Water	CE9 – Water	Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes	0%	% lakes in good ecological status (no high in the Cotswolds). NLs 1.02%, PLs 11.20%	Stat_05
9. Water	CE9 – Water	Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes	50%	% Groundwater bodies in good ecological status. NLs 20.35%, PL's 23.27%.	Stat_05

9. Water	CE9 – Water	Ecological status of watercourses and water bodies within Protected Landscapes	12.61%	% Waterbody catchments in good ecological status (no high). NLs 14.83, PLs 23.68	Stat_05
10. Rural land management	CE10 - Farming and land management	Total area of land managed under agri-environment schemes and total value of schemes within Protected Landscapes	64,500 Ha	Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive 2022, Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023 and Environmental Stewardship. All National Landscapes £595,900. All Protected Landscapes £1,185,200	Stat_12
10. Rural land management	CE10 - Farming and land management	Total area of land managed under agri-environment schemes and total value of schemes within Protected Landscapes	£14,001,800	Countryside Stewardship, Sustainable Farming Incentive 2022, Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023 and Environmental Stewardship. All National Landscapes £94,084,300. All Protected Landscapes £144,574,200.	Stat_12
10. Rural land management	CE10 - Farming and land management	Area of land under different agricultural land uses within Protected Landscapes and number of livestock	Not available	Not in data release	Stat_13
10. Rural land management	CE10 - Farming and land management	Area and distribution of main landcover types within Protected landscapes	Not available	Not in data release	Stat_14
10. Rural land management	CE10 - Farming and land management	Extent of agricultural businesses within Protected Landscapes (number and size of holdings, number of agricultural workers)	Not available	Not in data release	Stat_16
11. Development and infrastructure	CE13 – Development and transport principles	Number of adopted Local Plans with policy-level reference to the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan.	10	Figure is for 2023/24. Out of the 15 local planning authorities that overlap with the CNL (76%)	Local_16
11. Development and infrastructure	CE14 – Major development	Number of development proposals (that CNL have commented on), which have been permitted, that the Board considers to be major development	3	Figure is for 2023/24. In the context of paragraph 183 of the NPPF. 2023/24	Local_17
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Population estimates for Protected Landscapes	169,600		Stat_17
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Average age of the population living in Protected Landscapes	46		Stat_18

| 11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Proportion of the population within each ethnic group in Protected Landscapes	1%	Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh. All NLs 1%, All PLs 1%, England 10%	Stat_19
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Proportion of the population within each ethnic group in Protected Landscapes	0%	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean, or African. All NLs 0%, All PLs 0%, England 4%.	Stat_19
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Proportion of the population within each ethnic group in Protected Landscapes	2%	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups. All NLs 2%, All PLs 2%, England 3%.	Stat_19
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Proportion of the population within each ethnic group in Protected Landscapes	97%	White. All NLs 96%, All PLs 96%, England 81%	Stat_19
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Proportion of the population within each ethnic group in Protected Landscapes	0%	Other. All NLs 0%, All PLs 0%, England 2%	Stat_19
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Median earnings in Protected Landscapes	£2,350 pcm	All NLs = £2,300, All PLs = £2,300. Rural England = £2,300, England = £2,350	Stat_20
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	House price affordability ratios in Protected Landscapes	11x	Ratio of mean house purchase price to mean gross annual household income. All NLs = 11, All PLs = 11, Rural England = 8, England = 8	Stat_21
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Number of new housing units (i.e. dwellings) permitted through planning applications CNL has commented on.	16	Figure is for 2023/24	Local_18
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes	1,345	10+ employees. Cotswolds all sizes 12,855	Stat_22
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes	9,540	1-9 Employees. Cotswolds all sizes 12,855	Stat_22
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes	1,965	0 employees. Cotswolds all sizes 12,855	Stat_22

11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes	10%	10+ employees. NLs 11%, PLs 11%, Rural England 9%, England 10%	Stat_22
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes	74%	1-9 Employees. NLs 73%, PLs 71%, Rural England 74%, England 80%	Stat_22
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Registered businesses by size and type in Protected Landscapes	15%	0 employees. NLs 18%, PLs 18%, Rural England 17%, England 10%	Stat_22
11. Development and infrastructure 12. Health and wellbeing	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Proportion of the population living in each decile of deprivation in Protected Landscapes	Median decile = 8	NLs, PLs & rural England; 7. England 5.	Stat_23
11. Development and infrastructure	CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Number of pupils on the school roll (against total capacity) in Protected Landscapes	86%	Proportion of school capacity reached	Stat_24
11. Development and infrastructure	CE16 – Waste management and the circular economy	Number of landfill and strategic waste management sites permitted.	1	2023/24. Using a threshold of 50,000 tonnes per annum as a definition of 'strategic	Local_19
13. Access and recreation	UE2: Access and recreation	Length of National Trails within Protected Landscapes	163.4 km		Stat_08

Appendix 7: Pathway to net zero overview.
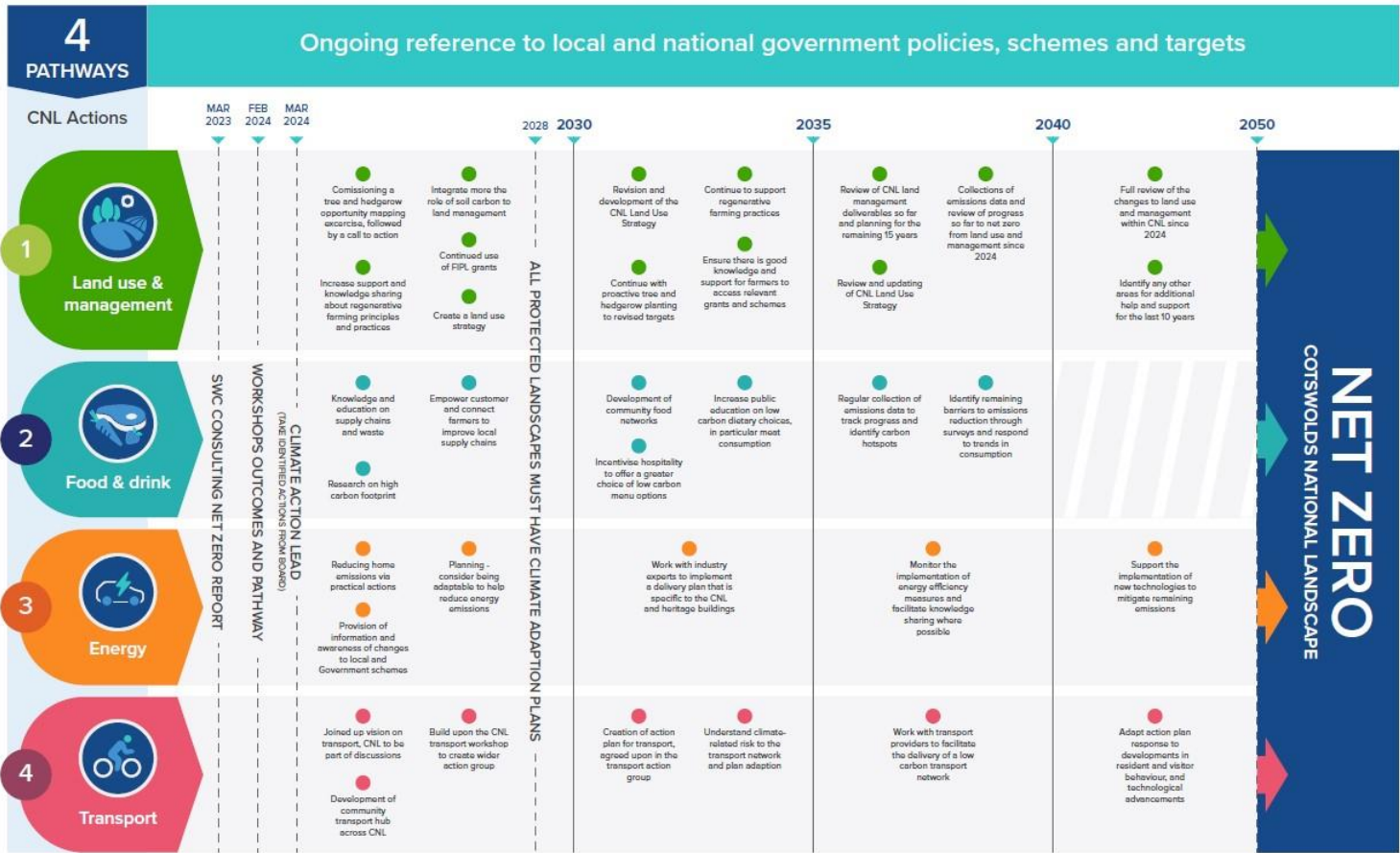
Appendix 8: Priority habitats and species

This list of priority habitats and species for the Cotswolds National Landscape is adapted from Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, which lists the habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The habitats and species listed below are considered to be: (i) characteristic of the Cotswolds; and/or (ii) those for which the Cotswolds National Landscape is considered to be a stronghold of those particular habitats or species. There are other priority habitats and species within the National Landscape, which merit an appropriate level of protection, but which do not meet the two criteria outlined above. Habitats and species with an asterisk (*) are not on the NERC Act list but have been identified, by the National Landscape Board and relevant stakeholders, as priorities for the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Habitats
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- Lowland beech and yew woodland
- Habitat mosaic including; wood pasture, parkland, veteran trees and large areas of tree, scrub and grassland mosaic
- Wildflower rich grasslands – lowland calcareous grassland, lowland meadows and other neutral grasslands.
- Flushes, streams and rivers
- Arable field margins important for birds and plant species
- Hedgerows
- Natural box scrub
- Areas important for bats ('batscapes') *
- Hard-water springs depositing lime*

Species
- Farmland birds, such as skylark, lapwing and corn bunting
- Pasqueflower
- Pearl-bordered fritillary
- Arable plants
- Juniper
- Cotswold pennycress
- Bats
- Dormouse
- Water vole
- Brown hare
- Limestone grassland butterflies
- Marsh fritillary
- Violet click beetle
- White clawed crayfish
- Native brown trout
- Bath asparagus*
- Common box*
- Rockrose pot beetle
- Rugged oil beetle
- Ancient woodland ground flora, such as helleborines and angular Solomon seal.
- Ancient grassland flora such as musk and fly orchid

Appendix 9: Why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Cotswolds National Landscape

Introduction
This appendix sets out why biodiversity is an important consideration in the Cotswolds National Landscape (including why a higher biodiversity net gain requirement would be appropriate in the Cotswolds National Landscape, compared to neighbouring, non-designated areas).

Statutory purposes, duties and powers The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The statutory purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of these areas.[145] Local authorities and other 'relevant authorities' have a statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.[146] Local authorities also have the statutory power to take action to accomplish this purpose.[147]

Public authorities also have a statutory biodiversity duty[148] introduced under the 2006 Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act and strengthened by the Environment Act 2021. Under this duty they "*must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.*"

Link between natural beauty and biodiversity
Natural heritage (including biodiversity) is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of AONBs.[149] As such, the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity is an important consideration when seeking to further the purpose of AONB designation.

Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that *'the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in [AONBs]'*.[150]

Biodiversity Net Gain and the Seek to Further Duty
Research by the Kent Nature Partnership (KNP) has identified that increasing biodiversity net gain (BNG) delivery from 10% to 20% doesn't significantly affect viability. [151]
A recent Wildlife and Countryside Link report on BNG refers to that KNP research.[152] It also states that Defra's own research[153] has shown that 10% BNG is the minimum that is required to ensure no net loss. So, it could be argued that in order to actually deliver a genuine gain in biodiversity, you need to have a BNG figure higher than 10%.

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[145] Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000.
[146] Section 85 of the CROW ACT 2000. Further information on the 'duty of regard' is provided in Appendix 4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2025-2030.
[147] Section 84 of the CROW Act 2000.
[148] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complying-with-the-biodiversity-duty
[149] Natural England (2021) *Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England*. Table 3, page 13, and Appendix 1, page 25.
[150] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework*. Paragraph 176, page 50.
[151] https://cieem.net/kent-assesses-20-biodiversity-net-gain-requirement/
[152] Wildlife and Countryside Link (2024) *Biodiversity Net Gain: more than a fancy offset?* (link).
[153] https://consult.defra.gov.uk/land-use/net-gain/supporting_documents/181121%20%20Biodiversity%20Net%20Gain%20Consultation%20IA%20FINAL%20for%20publication.pdf. The relevant section is 5.1.1, page 18.

The University of Kent's research into BNG outcomes for early adopter councils shows that certain loss of biodiversity is being traded for the promise of unverifiable gains at some point in the future.[154]

This is relevant to the new statutory duty to seek to further the purpose of protected landscapes designation (i.e. for national landscapes, to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the protected landscape). As outlined above, natural heritage / biodiversity is one of the factors that contributes to the natural beauty of a national landscape. If 10% BNG is the minimum that is required to ensure no net loss, then 10% BNG isn't necessarily enhancing the natural beauty of the area, in this regard, it is just ensuring no net loss. For actual enhancement of natural beauty (in relation to biodiversity), it could be argued that a BNG figure of more than 10% is necessary.

Landscapes Review, Government response and '30 by 30'
The Government-commissioned Landscapes Review Final Report[155] proposes that:
- national landscapes[156] should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries;[157]
- national landscapes should have a renewed mission to recover and enhance nature;[158]
- there should be stronger purposes in law for our national landscapes, including 'recover, conserve and enhance… biodiversity';
- strengthened [AONB] Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery.[159]

The Government's response to the Landscapes Review Final Report states that:
- Working with… AONBs in the coming years, we will ensure our protected landscapes boost biodiversity.[160]
- Our vision for protected landscapes is a coherent national network of… nature-rich spaces… Protected landscapes will drive forward nature recovery.[161]
  - The Prime Minister has committed to protect 30% of UK land for nature by 2030 (30 by 30)[162]…Achieving 30 by 30 will rely on improvements in how these areas are protected and managed for nature recovery.[163]
  - We will put our protected landscapes at the heart of delivering our nature recovery… policies.[164]

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[154] Zu Ermgassen, S.O.S.E., Marsh, S., Ryland, K., Church, E., Marsh, R., Bull, J. W. (2021). *Exploring the ecological outcomes of mandatory biodiversity net gain using evidence from early-adopter jurisdictions in England*. Conservation Letters. 14: e12820. https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12820
[155] Defra (2019) *Landscapes Review Final Report*.
[156] The phrase 'national landscapes' relates to AONBs and national parks.
[157] Proposal 4, page 52.
[158] Proposal 1, page 36.
[159] Proposal 3, page 43.
[160] Landscapes review: government response. Foreword.
[161] Landscapes review: government response. Introduction.
[162] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to- protect-30-of-uk-land-in-boost-for-biodiversity. This press release implies that the 30% figure includes the entirety of AONBs: *'Existing National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other protected areas already comprise approximately 26% of land in England. An additional 4%... will be protected to support the recovery of nature'*. However, the Government's response to the Landscapes Review states that *'at present, under their current statutory purposes, level of protection and management, protected landscapes cannot be said to contribute towards 30 by 30 in their entirety'*.
[163] Landscapes review: government response. Since the publication of the review - nature and climate.
[164] Landscapes review: government response. Chapter 2: Nature and climate.

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- Given their spatial scale, and track records in planning and delivering landscape-scale restoration projects, protected landscapes could play a particularly important role in the delivery of the Nature Recovery Network.[165]
- We will explore ways for protected landscapes to support responsible authorities in preparing [Local Nature Recovery Strategies].[166]
- By strengthening the first purpose [of protected landscape designation] for nature… we will ensure these areas can contribute to this ambitious commitment for biodiversity and our wider nature recovery ambitions.[167]
- We will strengthen this purpose [to 'conserve and enhance'], making it clear that we need to actively recover nature in these areas, rather than simply conserve what remains.[168]
- A core function of protected landscapes should be to drive nature recovery.[169]

The Government report 'Delivering 30by30 on land in England'[170] states that '30by30' will be delivered across three themes:
1. Strengthening.
2. Extending and creating.
3. Investing.

Measures identified under the 'strengthening' theme that relate specifically to protected landscapes include:

- Action through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act to enhance Protected Landscape management plans and place a stronger requirement on partners such as local authorities and public bodies to contribute to their delivery.
- The creation of a new partnership between the National Landscapes Association (formerly the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), National Parks England, National Trails UK and Natural England to deliver a range of exciting projects and programmes on nature recovery and widening access to nature. The partnership will also boost opportunities for private sector investment in our Protected Landscapes.
- A new outcomes framework for Protected Landscapes, which will set targets for their contributions to national environment and climate commitments, to be embedded in their management plans. We are also updating Protected Landscape management plan guidance to ensure consistency.
- Our response to the consultation on implementing the Landscapes Review, which sets out our action plan for Protected Landscapes.

Measures identified under the 'investing' theme that relate specifically to protected landscapes include:

- Committing to invest £100 million in thriving farming businesses through our successful Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme. More than 5,000 farmers and land managers have engaged with the programme, delivering projects that achieve outcomes for climate, nature, people and place.
- Investing in National Parks Partnerships and the National Landscapes Association to build the capacity to create a pipeline of projects to generate more private finance in Protected Landscapes.
- Pledging a further £15 million to support our existing National Parks and National Landscapes, helping to support our most iconic landscapes.

The report also states that protected landscapes will be at the heart of 30by30.

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[165] Landscapes review: government response. The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.
[166] Landscapes review: government response. The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.
[167] Landscapes review: government response. The Nature Recovery Network and 30 by 30.
[168] Landscapes review: government response. A stronger mission for nature recovery.
[169] Landscapes review: government response. A stronger mission for nature recovery.
[170] Department of Farming, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) (2024) *Delivering 30by30 on land in England* (link).

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As such, protected landscapes (including national landscapes) are clearly a vital component of delivering the 30by30 commitment (i.e., ensuring that 30% of land in England is managed for nature).

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework
The Government's Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework identifies several biodiversity-related targets, specifically for protected landscapes, that are relevant to the Cotswolds National Landscape:[171]

- **Target 1:** Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites, by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).[172]
- **Target 2:** Bring 80% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
- **Target 3:** For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- **Target 4:** Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
- **Target 5:** Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.
- **Target 8:** Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

It is important to note that the Target 1 figure of 250,000 hectares is half of the Government's target of creating or restoring 500,000 hectares in England by 2042[173]. So, protected landscapes are expected to deliver 50% of the national (England) target for habitat restoration / creation even though they only cover 25% of England. In other words, protected landscapes will be expected to restore / create three times as much wildlife-rich habitat, per unit area, as land outside protected landscapes.

[Colchester Declaration](link)
The 'Colchester Declaration', launched in 2019, is a formal commitment by the family of AONBs, under the umbrella of the National Association of AONBs (NAAONB), to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change.

The commitments include that, by 2030:
- At least 200,000ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in AONBs will be in favourable condition.
- At least 100,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/restored in AONBs.

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[171] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework

[172] This is half of the national target (including areas outside protected landscapes) of restoring or creating 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat, outside protected sites, by 2042 (link), even though protected landscapes only cover 25% of England.

[173] The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, in 2018, introduced a target to create or restore 500,000ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected landscapes network (link – page 26). This target was reiterated in the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan, in 2023, which specified that this target would be met by 2042 (link – page 31). This target became legally binding in the Environmental Targets (Biodiversity) (England) Regulations 2023 (link). This target is also reiterated in the Government's '30by30' policy paper (link – page 7).

- At least 36,000ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in AONBs following the principle of the right tree in the right place.

Considerations specific to the Cotswolds National Landscape
Two of the 'special qualities' of the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL)[174] are the:
- Flower-rich grasslands particularly limestone grasslands;
- Ancient broadleaved woodland particularly along the crest of the escarpment.

The special qualities of the CNL are those aspects of the area's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are valuable, especially at a national scale. They are the key attributes on which the priorities for the area's conservation, enhancement and management should be based.

In the 1930s, 40% of the CNL was covered in wildflower-rich grasslands. Sadly, agricultural intensification and changing land management practices have led to the loss of almost all of this wildflower grassland... less than 1.5% remains.[175]

In 2019, the CNL Board published the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan (CNRP)[176] which identifies that in order to form a robust nature recovery network, the extent of wildlife rich habitats withinthe CNL needs to expand from 48,000ha (23% of the CNL area) to 82,000ha[177] (40% of the CNL area), with the target being to achieve this by 2050. This is consistent with the current scientific evidence[178].

The highest priority habitats in the CNRP are:
- veteran trees;
- ancient woodland;
- ancient, unimproved, limestone grassland.

The CNRP states that achieving this target will require a farmer and land manager led approach to nature recovery, for example, through Environmental Land Management Schemes and Payment for Ecosystems. Biodiversity Net Gain mechanisms will also play an important role. It is also intended that the CNRP will feed into the forthcoming Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

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[174] Chapter 4 provides a full list of the National Landscape's special qualities.
[175] Cotswolds National Landscape. Glorious Cotswold Grasslands.
[176] Cotswolds Conservation Board (2021). *Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan*.
[177] The figure rises to over 190,000ha if arable fields containing environmental measures are included.
[178] Defining and delivering resilient ecological networks: Nature Conservation in England. Isaac. N.J. et al 2017. Journal of Applied Ecology

Appendix 10: Major development

Footnote 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) clarifies that:

- *'For the purposes of paragraphs 190 and 191 [*relating to protected landscapes, including national landscapes*], whether a development is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined'*.

As such, it is not possible or appropriate to apply a blanket definition for what should be treated as major development in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). Nevertheless, there are some key factors that help to define if a development is major, as outlined below.

The purpose for which the CNL has been designated is to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Therefore, the judgement as to whether or not a development is major development depends, to a large degree, on whether or not the development could have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty of the CNL. As outlined in Appendix 2, natural beauty incorporates a number of criteria, including landscape quality, scenic quality, tranquillity, natural heritage and cultural heritage. Within the context of the CNL, those aspects of the CNL's natural beauty which make the area distinctive and which are particularly valuable – the CNL's 'special qualities' – are listed in Chapter 2.

On this basis, a development should be considered 'major' if, by reason of its nature, scale and/or setting, it could have a significant adverse impact on any of the above criteria, including the CNL's 'special qualities'. As well as potential impacts within the CNL, consideration should also be given to impacts on these criteria within the setting of the CNL, particularly in the context of visual impact (i.e. views into and out of the CNL) and impacts on tranquillity.

As outlined in paragraph 190 of the NPPF, applications for such development should include an assessment of:
a. *'the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy'*;

The Board would expect any such development proposal be accompanied by a statement of need in the context of national considerations and, ideally, in the context of needs arising from within the CNL. The impacts of permitting or refusing the development should be clearly identified, including the social, economic and environmental impacts, with specific reference to the impacts upon the natural beauty of the CNL, and the economic and social needs (including housing needs) of the local communities affected. Such a statement should be based upon objective assessment and clear evidence.

b. *'the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way'*;

The Board would encourage any such development proposal to be accompanied by a report setting out a sequential approach to site selection. This should evidence the extent to which alternative sites have been assessed before the selection of sites within the CNL, and clearly identify why sites outside of the designated area could not be developed. The report should also identify and evidence why the need for the development could not be met in some other way. The report should include relevant evidence of the cost of developing outside of the CNL.

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c. *'any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated'*.

The Board would expect any such development proposal to be accompanied by a report identifying any detrimental effects upon the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities. Such a report should relate directly to the natural beauty of the CNL as a whole as well as those specific to the development site.

Any mitigation identified to moderate these impacts should be:
- clearly detailed, in line with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL,
- be compatible with the outcomes and policies of the CNL Management Plan, and
- be capable of realisation through robust planning conditions or obligation.

This Management Plan was adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board February 2025

Cotswolds National Landscape
New registered office address to be added here.

info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk
cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), managed and looked after by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board (The legal name is the Cotswolds Conservation Board)

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Policy	Summary
Policy CC1: Climate change – mitigation	Policy CC1 focuses on mitigating climate change in the Cotswolds National Landscape through sustainable land management, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and supporting renewable energy. Key actions include increasing tree and hedgerow cover, improving soil carbon storage, and encouraging low-carbon construction and energy-efficient building practices. It also promotes sustainable transport options, including active travel, public transport, and electric vehicle infrastructure. Additionally, the policy encourages reducing emissions from food production by supporting local food networks and minimising food miles, all while ensuring actions align with the conservation of the landscape's natural beauty. Stakeholders are expected to work towards achieving national climate targets, including net zero emissions by 2050 and increasing woodland cover.
Policy CC2: Climate change – adaptation	Policy CC2 emphasises reducing the risks of climate change in the Cotswolds National Landscape through adaptive measures in development, infrastructure, and land management. It promotes incorporating climate resilience into new projects, supporting sustainable land management, and using research to better understand and respond to climate impacts. Collaboration and informed decision-making are encouraged to ensure the landscape's special qualities are preserved and enhanced.
Policy CC3: Compliance with section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act	Policy CC3 requires public bodies and statutory undertakers to actively consider and support the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape, in accordance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
Policy CC4: Working in partnership	Policy CC4 encourages stakeholders, communities, and businesses to collaborate in conserving and enhancing the Cotswolds National Landscape, promoting its special qualities, and supporting local economic and social wellbeing. It also emphasises fostering pride in the area's national recognition and contributing to its preservation.

Policy CE1: Landscape	Policy CE1 emphasises conserving and enhancing the landscape character and scenic quality of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Proposals should align with the Landscape Character Assessment, avoiding the loss of key features. It also supports incorporating landscape conservation into land management practices and promoting traditional rural skills like dry stone walling and hedge laying to maintain the area's distinct character.
Policy CE2: Geology and Geomorphology	Policy CE2 focuses on conserving and enhancing the geological and geomorphological features of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Proposals should align with these goals, while management practices should support their protection. Additionally, efforts should promote public awareness and understanding, alongside encouraging further research to inform conservation and management.
Policy CE3: Natural and cultural capital – principles	Policy CE3 emphasises the importance of recognising, assessing, and valuing the natural and cultural capital of the Cotswolds National Landscape. It encourages the use of capital accounting to understand the impact of decisions, promotes awareness of the benefits these assets provide, and calls for their conservation and enhancement. Additionally, natural and cultural capital should be integral to environmental and rural development initiatives.
Policy CE4: Local distinctiveness	Policy CE4 promotes the conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds' local distinctiveness by ensuring new developments respect the area's landscape character, settlement patterns, and traditional building styles using appropriate materials like Cotswold limestone. It supports innovative, locally informed designs and encourages the creation of evidence-based design guidance. Additionally, limestone quarrying is permitted at a suitable scale for maintaining local character, provided it avoids significant environmental harm and supports site restoration for nature recovery or renewable energy use.
Policy CE5: Tranquillity	Policy CE5 aims to conserve and enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds National Landscape by minimising noise and visual disturbances. Developments should avoid or reduce negative impacts on tranquillity, while existing sources of disturbance should be addressed where possible. Proposals should align with the CNL Board's Tranquillity Position Statement.

Policy CE6: Dark skies	Policy CE6 focuses on conserving and enhancing the dark skies of the Cotswolds National Landscape by minimising light pollution. Developments should avoid or reduce lighting impacts, while efforts should be made to remove or reduce existing light sources. Proposals should follow relevant guidance and best practices, and consideration will be given to formally designating areas with minimal light pollution as dark sky zones.
Policy CE7: Historic environment and cultural heritage	Policy CE7 focuses on conserving and enhancing the historic environment and cultural heritage of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Proposals should respect the historical elements of the landscape and be assessed for potential impacts through Heritage and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments. Both designated and non-designated heritage assets should be protected, and effective management should be applied. Opportunities for promoting awareness and understanding of heritage assets should be pursued, and stakeholders are encouraged to work towards targets for reducing heritage assets at risk.
Policy CE8: Nature recovery and biodiversity	Policy CE8 focuses on conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) by establishing a nature recovery network. This involves aligning with local nature recovery plans and strategies, and prioritising species and habitats listed in relevant documents. Proposals impacting biodiversity should support conservation efforts, such as through Environmental Land Management, biodiversity net gain, and ecosystem services. Stakeholders are encouraged to meet specific biodiversity targets, including restoring wildlife-rich habitats and improving the condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
Policy CE9: Water	Policy CE9 focuses on the management and conservation of water resources in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). It aims to improve water quality, ensure adequate water supply, and contribute to flood management. New developments should assess and minimise flood risks, adopt sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), and implement water efficiency measures. The policy emphasises minimising sewage pollution, phosphorus treatment in sewage treatment works, and ensuring sufficient sewage infrastructure. It also promotes practical measures to improve water quality, such as restoring river habitats, reducing runoff, and implementing soil conservation techniques. Additionally, proposals near watercourses should aim to re-naturalise water features and create buffer zones.
Policy CE10: Farming and land management	Policy CE10 focuses on ensuring that farming and land management in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) contribute to the conservation and enhancement of its natural

	beauty and special qualities. It emphasises alignment with the CNL Management Plan and related guidance, including the CNL Landscape Strategy, Nature Recovery Plan, and Climate Change Strategy. Woodland creation and tree planting should complement the landscape and nature recovery network, avoid harming historic sites, and align with canopy cover goals. The policy also stresses the importance of accessible, clear advice and support for farmers and land managers, including fair access to markets and environmental service payments.
Policy CE11: Problem species, pests and diseases	Policy CE11 focuses on managing problem species, pests, and diseases within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). It highlights the need for coordinated control of grey squirrels and deer at a landscape scale. The policy also emphasises following national and CNL Board guidance on managing Ash Dieback to protect the landscape, as well as adhering to national and local guidance on invasive non-native species, pests, and diseases, with a focus on promoting biosecurity measures.
Policy CE12: Soils	Policy CE12 focuses on managing soils within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) to prevent and reverse degradation, prioritising soil health that supports resilient ecosystems and sustainable farming. Key principles for soil management include minimising disturbance, maintaining living roots, increasing biodiversity, mitigating compaction, and integrating livestock and grazing. Soil management should be incorporated into farm management plans and supported by agri-environment schemes and rural development mechanisms.
Policy CE13: Development and infrastructure – principles	Policy CE13 emphasises that development and infrastructure proposals in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should prioritise the conservation and enhancement of the area's natural beauty and special qualities. Proposals should align with the CNL Management Plan and relevant guidance, support the local community's wellbeing, and comply with national planning policies. A landscape-led approach is essential, addressing the natural beauty, local character, and access to green spaces throughout the development process. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape must be fully assessed, and opportunities to enhance the natural beauty should be sought.
Policy CE14: Major development	Policy CE14 establishes that major development within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) should be refused unless it meets exceptional circumstances and can be

	demonstrated as being in the public interest, as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Stakeholders must assess whether a development constitutes major development using the provided checklist and apply the NPPF's 'major development tests'. Local authorities should ensure that these tests are rigorously applied and document the reasoning. Development proposals must address exceptional need in a way that minimises environmental and landscape impacts, and applications should be refused unless they meet these strict criteria.
Policy CE15: Development priorities and evidence of need	Policy CE15 prioritises affordable housing in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), particularly for social rented housing. It encourages local planning authorities to set policies ensuring at least 50% affordable housing in market developments, 100% on Rural Exception Sites (with exceptions), and on-site affordable housing for small developments. The policy also emphasises the importance of supporting local community amenities, services, and employment opportunities. It acknowledges that national housing need assessments may not be fully applicable in the CNL due to local constraints, and that the area is unlikely to accommodate unmet needs from adjacent non-designated areas. Windfall housing should only be supported with strong evidence of local need, and policies should consider ensuring new market housing is used as a primary residence.
Policy CE16: Waste management and the circular economy	Policy CE16 focuses on waste management and the circular economy within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL). It emphasises the importance of following the waste hierarchy, prioritising waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. The policy discourages the establishment of new landfill sites or large-scale waste facilities in the CNL, especially those importing waste from urban areas. If waste management facilities are allowed, they must minimise environmental impact and serve local waste needs. Additionally, land-based waste recovery activities like land raising or bunding are only permitted in limited circumstances where they offer significant benefits to the CNL's conservation and comply with environmental regulations.
Policy UE1: Health and wellbeing	Policy UE1 focuses on enhancing health and wellbeing in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL), especially for communities facing health and social inequalities. It encourages the creation of accessible green and blue spaces, walking, cycling, and riding

	routes, and opportunities for nature interaction, volunteering, and personal development. The policy also advocates for environmental education for children and young people and encourages the healthcare and voluntary sectors to utilise the CNL's natural resources, particularly through green prescribing initiatives, to improve the health of residents and visitors.
Policy UE2: Access and recreation	Policy UE2 focuses on improving access and recreational opportunities in the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) while preserving its natural beauty. It encourages providing opportunities for residents, visitors, and local communities to engage with and enjoy the landscape, with a focus on reaching those who are less engaged, particularly from urban or deprived areas. The policy supports maintaining and enhancing a safe, accessible, and well-connected public rights of way network and promoting open access land. It also advocates for sustainable funding for national trails and accessible resources for various activities. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of ensuring that recreational use does not harm the landscape, wildlife, or historic sites, and promotes responsible behaviour through the Countryside Code.
Policy UE3: Sustainable tourism	Policy UE3 focuses on promoting sustainable tourism within the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) while conserving its natural beauty. It emphasises managing tourism in a way that minimises greenhouse gas emissions and supports local volunteering to help preserve the landscape. The policy encourages the *Caring for the Cotswolds* visitor giving scheme to raise funds for conservation and education efforts. It advocates for a variety of accommodation options that align with the natural beauty of the area and minimising air travel to the Cotswolds. Additionally, it supports sustainable transport initiatives and aims to spread tourism activity more evenly across the CNL.

	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	**EXECUTIVE – 23 APRIL 2025**
Subject	**DECISION TAKEN UNDER URGENCY POWERS: SPORTS ENGLAND FUNDING SPSF PHASE 2 (CARTERTON LEISURE CENTRE)**
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance Email: Alaric.Smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To report to the Executive on a decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer under urgency powers.
Annexes	Annex A – Urgent Decision Notice Annex B – Urgent Decision Report
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: 1. Note the decision taken as set out in Annex A.
Corporate priorities	• 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
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The urgent decision was taken in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Finance, the Executive Member for

	Leisure and Major Projects, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Director of Finance and the Director of Governance.

1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 This report is to notify the Executive of a decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer using urgency powers. The decision taken was to agree a funding application to Sports England.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1 The Council's Constitution (Part 5G) sets out the arrangements for key decisions to be taken in cases of special urgency. The Council Procedure Rules at Part 5A, Rule 30 require that:

"Every such decision shall be reported to the next available Ordinary Meeting of the Council, Executive or the Committee that would normally have taken the decision."

2.2 In this case the decision would have ordinarily been a decision for the Executive.

3. **URGENT DECISION**

3.1 The urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer, including the reasons for it and why it was treated as urgent, are set out in the decision notice attached at Annex A.

4. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

5. The alternative options considered are set out in the decision notice at Annex A.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The Financial Implications were set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The Legal Implications were set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

8. **RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 The risk assessment was set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

9. **EQUALITIES IMPACT**

9.1 There are no equality implications arising from this urgent decision.

10. **CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The climate and ecological emergencies implications were set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 None.

(END)

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Annex A: Decision Notice

This form is used to record any delegated decision which has been taken by officers under delegated authority.

Decision title	Sports England Funding SPSF Phase 2 for Carterton Leisure Centre Solar PV
Decision date	21 March 2025
Decision maker	Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service - Giles Hughes
Source of delegation (resolution or Constitution – please reference)	Constitution Part 5A RULE 30: Business of an Urgent Nature If having consulted both the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive is of the opinion that urgent action is required, in accordance with the Scheme of Officer Delegations, before a decision could be taken by Council, the Executive or a Committee that has the appropriate authority, they may take the decision in accordance with their urgency power as set out in the Part 4A of the Constitution (Officer Scheme of Delegations). If the decision is one which would normally be taken by the Council, the Chief Executive will consult with the Leader of the Council and all other Group Leaders, where practicable. If the decision is one which would normally be taken by the Executive, the Chief Executive will consult with the Leader. If the decision is one which would normally be taken by a Committee, the Chief Executive will consult with the Leader and the Chair of that Committee.
Decision taken	The Chief Executive, following consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Member for Finance and Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, resolved to: 1. Approve the funding application to Sports England.
Reasons for the decision	The Council was approached by Sports England who have offered to fund its 2nd claim, that was circa £350,000 from the Swimming Pool Funding Scheme, which was previously rejected due to oversubscription of the scheme.
Alternative options considered	Alternative option: To not accept the SPSF offered by Sport England due to tight timescales associated with the project. This is not the preferred option.
Key or non-key?	Key

Subject to urgency rules?	Yes – the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the taking of the decision in a case of special urgency and to the waiving of call in rights.
Affected wards	All
Details of consultation undertaken	Leader of the Council Executive Member for Finance Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Director of Finance Director of Governance
Lead officer	Phil Martin, Director of Place
List of documents considered	Decision report titled "Sports England Funding. SPSF Phase 2.

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	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	**CHIEF EXECUTIVE – 21 MARCH 2025**
Subject	**SPORTS ENGLAND FUNDING. SPSF Phase 2**
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance Alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Phil Martin - Director of Place Email: phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To provide an overview of the acceptance of funding offer from Sports England in the amount of £350k.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	That the Chief Executive resolves to: 1. Approve the funding application to Sports England following consultation with the Chairman of the Overviews and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Member for Finance and Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.
Corporate priorities	• 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
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Director of Finance, Director of Governance

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 On the 6th March 2025, Sports England notified the Council that it had sums of Swimming Poll Support Fund (SPSF) money unspent and that they could support the Council's 2nd claim from the funding scheme which was previously rejected as they had already agreed to fund the installation of solar PV panels on the Windrush Leisure Centre and could not support multiple claims from each Local Authority at that point in time.

1.2 The original claim was for the installation of solar PV to provide sustainable energy and shower flow reducers to conserve energy at Carterton Leisure Centre at a cost of circa £350k.

1.3 The key conditions associated with the funding is that the Council would have to take up the offer by the end of March 2025 and that the project must be complete by end of May 2025.

1.4 Since notification, a small project team have been exploring the feasibility of accepting the Sports England's funding offer, working through the challenges and risks associated with the extremely tight timescale.

1.5 The team have reviewed the findings and challenges from the comparable project that took place at the Windrush Leisure Centre and have been proactive in checking and testing the key project stages.

1.6 Areas that have been tested include:

Planning Permission	This is already in place following the previous PSDS project
DNO conditions and approval	The request has been sent and application for the appropriate certificate submitted
Legal requirements	Legal have been advised that the project may be about to go live and will be able to support in the HMLR registration application
Contractor Materials and availability	GSM have confirmed availability and have reserved engineer and installer time for the project. They have also confirmed that their supply chain can meet the deadline
Financial restrictions	There is no match funding for this grant, it is 100% of project funding which will be certified by supplying invoices and evidence of costs incurred
Roof Condition	Roof works are due for some areas at Carterton Leisure Centre. The Estates team and contractor have acknowledged that they can coordinate any work required to overcome any potential challenges in

	delivering this work. Due to the nature of the installation of the panels, they can be temporarily removed to provide access if any defects need to be repaired either during or after the panels are installed.
Leisure Operator co-operation and acceptance	Officers have liaised with GLL initially and will ensure that they are full on board with the project. As the ultimate aim of the funding is to reduce the costs of energy used for swimming pools this project will be in their benefit as well
Project Management resource	Officers have included the Project Management team in the initial discussions and they will have capacity to support the roof works as this was already in place. The Leisure Contract Lead Officer will support the solar PV installation as was the case for the Windrush LC installation.
Structural survey	This has been commissioned, but as there were no concerns at the PSDS stage this is more for good practice than an expectation that any structural requirements will not be met

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1   The Council may wish not to accept the SPSF offered by Sport England due to tight timescales associated with the project.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1   The Council has been approached by Sports England who have offered to fund its 2nd claim, that was circa £350,000 from the Swimming Pool Funding Scheme, which was previously rejected due to oversubscription of the scheme.

3.2   No match funding requirements have been set as a condition of the offer.

3.3   If the Council is unable to meet the deadline of the end of May 2025, the Council would be required to return the funding, however the risk of this has been mitigated by a number of actions outlined in Section 5 of this report. The project team will also complete all preparatory works and investigative works before committing to purchase the materials – thus allowing a walkaway point should any unforeseen critical matter arise.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1   The Council would enter into a funding agreement with Sports England, which would include acceptance of the deadline of the end of May 2025, however if due to unforeseen issues this could not be met the Council can return the funding without penalty.

4.2 The Council will enter a restriction to the site to confirm that Sport England will be notified should the Centre be put up for closure within the next 10 years

4.3 A JCT standard contract will be entered into for the works with the Solar PV contractor

5.   RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The key risk associated with the proposal to accept the SPSF funding being offered by Sports England is the very tight timescales for the completion of the project and drawing down of the funds. This has been mitigated by getting a commitment from the supplier who delivered both the Windrush and Elmfield solar PV projects that they are able to meet the deadline set of the 31st May 2025.

5.2 A walk-away point will also be established before a major investment in materials takes place.

6.   EQUALITIES IMPACT

6.1 There are no immediate equality implications arising from the report.

7.   CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are clear climate related benefits associated with the installation of solar PV panels on the Carterton Leisure Centre as these will deliver clean sustainable energy that will help to offset the use of fossil fuels currently used.

8.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None

(END)