



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 FEBRUARY 2026
Subject	SALT CROSS AREA ACTION PLAN (AAP)
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Cllr 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
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Summary/Purpose	To consider the formal adoption of the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP).
Annexes	Annex A – Schedule of Main Modifications – March 2023 Annex B – Schedule of Main Modifications – January 2026 Annex C – Schedule of additional modifications – January 2026 Annex D – Composite draft AAP including main and additional modifications – circulated separately
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to recommend to Council to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Accept the Inspectors' recommendations regarding the Main Modifications required to make the AAP sound as set out at Annex A and Annex B;2. Agree the incorporation of the additional modifications as set out at Annex C;3. Adopt the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) attached at Annex D as a development plan document, incorporating all of the Main Modifications recommended by the Inspectors at Annex A and Annex B, together with the additional modifications at Annex C, in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012;4. Authorise the Head of Planning in consultation with the Executive

	<p>Member for Planning, prior to the publication of the adopted Salt Cross AAP, to correct any minor spelling, grammatical or typographical errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective including paragraph and policy numbering;</p> <p>5. Note that the adoption of the Salt Cross AAP will supersede certain aspects of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 insofar as they relate to Salt Cross with immediate effect, specifically; Figure 3.2 of the AAP updates Figure 9.5e of the Local Plan, AAP Policy 16 supersedes Local Plan Policy T4 in respect of car parking standards and AAP Policy 25 supersedes Local Plan Policy H5 in respect of custom and self-build housing.</p>
Corporate priorities	<p>The formal adoption of the AAP aligns with the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All • Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife • Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The Salt Cross AAP has been subject to extensive public consultation throughout its preparation as well as independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 identifies land to the north of the A40 near Eynsham as a Strategic Location for Growth (SLG) with around 2,200 new homes and 40 hectares of business land to be taken forward in the form of a new Garden Village.
- 1.2** The Local Plan requires that the development of the Garden Village is guided by a separate Area Action Plan (AAP).
- 1.3** Following independent examinations in 2021/22 and 2024/25, the Council is now in a position to be able to formally adopt the AAP.
- 1.4** Once adopted, the AAP will form part of the statutory development plan for West Oxfordshire, alongside the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, and any adopted Neighbourhood Development Plans, including the Eynsham Neighbourhood Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Initial work on the AAP began in 2018 and following extensive public consultation, the proposed submission draft version was published in October 2020 and submitted for examination in February 2021.
- 2.2** A series of examination hearing sessions took place in June/July 2021, following which, the Inspector wrote to the Council to 'pause' the examination and allow for additional work on a number of matters including the phasing of infrastructure.
- 2.3** Subsequently, the Inspector wrote to the Council in May 2022 to confirm that the AAP is capable of being found sound and adopted, subject to a number of Main Modifications.
- 2.4** Consultation on those modifications took place from September to November 2022 and the Inspector's final report was received in March 2023.
- 2.5** Importantly however, after the Inspector's report was received, a legal challenge was submitted by a third party organisation called Rights Community Action. The challenge focused on the conclusions reached by the Inspector in relation to the soundness of AAP Policy 2 – Net Zero Carbon Development.
- 2.6** The case was heard in the High Court in November 2023 and the written judgement was handed down on 20 February 2024. A subsequent agreed draft order dated 4 March 2024 confirmed that the Inspector's report and proposed Main Modifications were quashed insofar as they related to Policy 2.
- 2.7** As a result, the District Council wrote to the Planning Inspectorate in April 2024 to request that the examination be re-opened on a focused basis to re-consider Policy 2.
- 2.8** A new Inspector was appointed and, following the completion of new evidence by the Council, a revised version of Policy 2 was put forward and considered at a virtual hearing session held on 30 June 2025.

- 2.9** On 1 August 2025, the Inspector issued a post-hearing note to the Council which concluded that the revised Policy 2 approach put forward by the District Council is legally compliant and consistent with national policy and whilst unsound, is capable of being made sound through Main Modifications.
- 2.10** Consultation on those Main Modifications took place from 3 October – 14 November 2025 and responses were received from 12 individuals and organisations.
- 2.11** Taking account of the representations received, the Inspector’s Report was published on 7 January 2026, outlining her overall conclusions regarding Policy 2 and the Main Modifications needed to make the policy sound.

3. RECOMMENDED MAIN MODIFICATIONS

- 3.1** As outlined above, the first Inspector’s Report of 1 March 2023 included a series of Main Modifications that are required in order for the AAP to be found sound. With the exception of the recommendations relating to Policy 2, those Main Modifications remain valid and are attached to this report at Annex A.
- 3.2** The second Inspector’s Report of 7 January 2026 includes a series of Main Modifications specific to Policy 2 and its supporting text in order for it to be found sound. These are attached to this report at Annex B.
- 3.3** Taken as a whole, the two schedules (Annex A and Annex B) set out the entirety of the Main Modifications needed for the AAP to be found sound and formally adopted.
- 3.4** It is important to note that these recommendations are binding on the Council and must either be accepted in whole or not at all.

4. ADDITIONAL MODIFICATIONS

- 4.1** Whilst the Inspectors’ Main Modifications in Annex A and B are binding, the Council does have discretion to make more minor changes to the AAP provided they do not materially affect its content.
- 4.2** A schedule of minor additional modifications is attached at Annex C. These additional modifications are proposed to ensure alignment and consistency with the Inspectors’ recommended Main Modifications throughout the AAP and to address minor presentational, typographical and grammatical issues.
- 4.3** For ease of reference, a composite version of the AAP is attached to this report at Annex D. This incorporates all of the main and additional modifications set out in Annexes A, B and C.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1** Subject to the approval of Council, in accordance with Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the adopted Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) will be published and made available together with an adoption statement, the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report and adoption statement and details of

where the AAP is available for inspection and the places and times at which the document can be inspected.

- 5.2 A copy of the AAP adoption statement will be sent to all those who have requested to be notified and also to the Secretary of State.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The District Council could choose not to formally adopt the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) but this would mean there would be no detailed planning policy framework in place against which to consider any current or future planning applications pertaining to Salt Cross Garden Village.
- 6.2 This would create a significant degree of uncertainty and lead to further delays with delivery.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The most significant financial implications are associated with the preparation and examination of the AAP including Officer time, the cost of supporting evidence and technical advice, public consultation and legal and professional fees including those of the Planning Inspectorate.
- 7.2 Those costs have already been incurred and accounted for.
- 7.3 There are some minor additional costs associated with the preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal adoption statement and also formatting the final adoption version of the AAP.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The report raises no direct legal implications. The AAP has been prepared, submitted and examined in accordance with legislative requirements and is intended to be formally adopted in accordance with those requirements.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Any decision to not adopt the AAP at this stage of the process would create a policy vacuum leading to uncertainty and further delay.
- 9.2 There is a risk of legal challenge upon adoption of the AAP under Section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 on the ground that the document is not within the appropriate power or a procedural requirement has not been complied with.
- 9.3 Any such legal challenge must be made within 6 weeks of the AAP being formally adopted.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

10.1 The examination of the AAP has been considered in the context of S149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Tackling the climate and ecological emergency is a core component of the Salt Cross AAP, exemplified by the approach towards net zero carbon development outlined in Policy 2.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.