

## **B.3 Theme Three: Policies for Ensuring Sustainable Development**

### **Introduction**

- B.173** To maintain as well as maximise the quality of living in Cherwell District we need to value our environment and find ways to reduce our impact upon it. This includes taking steps to progressively reduce our reliance on meeting our energy needs from fossil sources.
- B.174** Critical to achieving progress towards a lower carbon economy is the provision of quality employment in the district and public transport options for rail and bus to reduce the need to travel, hence the importance of Theme One: Securing a Sustainable Local Economy. But we also need to manage development to ensure that the quality of our environment is valued and sustained.
- B.175** The Local Plan will help to ensure that growth and development does not take place at the expense of the very features which make Cherwell unique. For example, we will require clear green boundaries to be established as buffers at the edge of where growth occurs to avoid coalescence between the areas for strategic development and neighbouring villages.
- B.176** This Theme sets out how development impact is managed by the need to respect the local environment, the need to meet rising building standards and the need to maintain a high quality natural and built environment.
- B.177** This Theme also includes provision for protecting important heritage assets such as the Oxford Canal and for ensuring that what is built whether housing or commercial development is to the highest quality of design as possible.

### **Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change**

- B.178** The 2009 UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) set out some key projections of climate change across the UK over the 21st Century. Projected changes by the 2080s, based on a 50% probability level, include:
- Increases in summer mean temperatures, particularly ~~so~~ in southern England where increases of 3.9 degrees are projected
  - Decreases in summer precipitation, again particularly ~~so~~ in southern England where decreases of 23% are projected
  - Increases in winter precipitation in southern England of 22%
- B.179** Changes as small as a 2°C global temperature rise will have serious impacts:
- Rising sea levels
  - Extreme events such as droughts and heavy rainfall, leading to disruption to natural and man-made habitats.
  - Communities across the UK may struggle to cope with the effects of warmer summers and wetter winters.
- B.180** A Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) has been undertaken to better understand the impact of extreme weather in Cherwell and on the Council itself. The LCLIP reviewed extreme weather events experienced over a five

year period (2003 – 2008), finding that within Cherwell flooding was by far the most significant event, with significant flooding occurring 6 times in a 5 year period, 2 of the events being serious and widespread (2003 and 2007). Heatwaves were found to have been infrequent in the ~~ate last~~ 5 years period, but if they were to recur on the scale of 2003 this would have significant impacts on health, biodiversity and infrastructure (including damage to buildings by tree and drought related subsidence, roads, drainage systems and business closures).

**B.181** There is increasing recognition that reducing carbon emissions is important in reducing and adapting to the impacts of climate change. The Climate Change Act 2008 has an objective of an 80% reduction (from 1990 baseline) in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050. This can be achieved by, for example, reducing dependence on private cars and locating new development in sustainable, accessible, locations, increasing energy efficiency, or by increasing the use of renewable or low carbon energy sources. It is particularly important to reduce carbon emissions from dwellings and business through increasing energy efficiency. Similarly it is important to ensure that we adapt to the inevitable changes to future climate. This applies to the built development, its location, design, layout and proposed land uses, as well as the natural environment, by seeking to reduce exacerbated habitat fragmentation by increasing landscape permeability and connectivity (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment, Policy ESD16 Built and Historic Environment and Policy ESD 18: Green Infrastructure).

**B.182** Mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change are an important priority for the District and have been recognised in the following:

- The Cherwell Sustainable Community Strategy 'Our District Our Future'
- The Council's Environmental Strategy for a Changing Climate
- The Council's signing of the Nottingham Declaration.

**B.183** Consequently this Local Plan and its strategic objectives are focused on delivering sustainable development. Specifically, Strategic Objective 10 (see Section Strategy for Development in Cherwell) relates to climate change mitigation and adaptation (to reduce the intensity of climate change and to adapt to its effects) and this will be achieved through policies ESD 1 - 7. Additional information on policies ESD 1-ESD 5 is contained in a Background Paper available as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

**B.183a** The most sustainable locations for growth in the district are considered to be Banbury, Bicester and the larger villages as identified in Policies Villages 1 and Villages 2 as these settlements have a range of services and facilities, reducing the need to travel by car. Well designed and connected schemes which promote pedestrian movement can also assist in meeting this objective. (See Policy ESD 16 The Character of the Built and Historic Environment) The Council will develop a sustainability checklist to aid the assessment of the sustainability of development proposals, which will be included in the Sustainable Buildings SPD.

## **Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change**

Measures will be taken to mitigate the impact of development within the district on climate change. At a strategic level, this will include:

- Distributing growth to the most sustainable locations
- Delivering development that seeks to reduce the need to travel and which encourages sustainable travel options including walking, cycling and public transport to reduce dependence on private cars
- Designing developments to reduce carbon emissions and use resources more efficiently, including water (see Policy ESD 3 Sustainable Construction)
- Promoting the use of decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy where appropriate. (see Policies ESD 4 Decentralised Energy Systems and ESD 5 Renewable Energy)

The incorporation of suitable adaptation measures in new development to ensure that development is more resilient to climate change impacts will include consideration of the following:~~Development proposals should demonstrate that the following key considerations in terms of climate change adaptation have been taken into account:~~

- Taking into account the known physical and environmental constraints when identifying locations for development.
- Considering design approaches that are resilient to climate change impacts including the use of passive solar design for heating and cooling
- Minimising the risk of flooding and making use of sustainable drainage methods, and
- Reducing the effects of development on the microclimate (through the provision of green infrastructure including open space and water, planting, and green roofs).

Adaptation through design approaches will be considered in more locally specific detail in the Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

## Policy ESD 2: Energy Hierarchy

**B.184** Whilst we need to promote renewable energy where appropriate (see Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction), it would be counter-productive to encourage generation of renewable energy if energy is being wasted by inefficiency. As such Policy ESD2 below expresses our support for an 'energy hierarchy', as used in the London Plan, available to view at <http://www.london.gov.uk/publication/londonplan>.

**B.185** An Energy Statement will be required for proposals for major developments (over 10 dwellings, or 1000 sqm of non residential floorspace) to demonstrate how the energy hierarchy below has been applied. The Energy Statement can form a standalone document or be part of the Design and Access Statement. The Council ~~is will~~ ~~produc~~~~ing~~ a template for use in preparing energy statements.

Carbon emissions reductions can be achieved through a range of “allowable solutions”; measures which secure carbon savings off site. These have yet to be defined by the government but could potentially include investment in off

site low and zero carbon technologies. The concept is relatively new and is seen as a way to enable developments to become carbon neutral where it is not possible to deal with all carbon emissions through on site measures. [It will not always be cost effective or technically feasible to meet the zero carbon standard through on site measures and the government is therefore proposing that the zero carbon standard could be achieved by mitigating the remaining emissions off-site through the use of allowable solutions.](#) At the present time there is uncertainty over the implementation of allowable solutions at national level, but it is intended that Cherwell's approach will be developed in the Development Management DPD and the Sustainable Buildings SPD.

## **Policy ESD 2: Energy Hierarchy**

**In seeking to achieve carbon emissions reductions, we will promote an 'energy hierarchy' as follows:**

- **Prioritise being LEAN - use less energy, in particular by the use of sustainable design and construction measures**
- **Then CLEAN - supply energy efficiently and give priority to decentralised energy supply, and**
- **Then GREEN - use renewable energy.**

**The Council's approach to the use of allowable solutions will be developed through the Development Management DPD and the Sustainable Buildings SPD.**

**B.186** The detailed application of the energy hierarchy in assessing proposals will be explained in the Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell SPD.

**B.187** Policies on all three elements of the energy hierarchy are set out in order below.

## **Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction**

**B.188** Policy ESD 3 sets out the Council's approach to implementing the first step of the energy hierarchy in [Policy ESD 2 Energy Hierarchy](#) above; specifically, its encouragement for the use of sustainable design and construction measures.

**B.189** The delivery of sustainable development is a fundamental theme of the [Cherwell](#) Local Plan and the Council places a high priority on the achievement of sustainable construction. The requirements of the policy go beyond what is currently required under the Building Regulations but are considered justified because of the findings of evidence base documents and the [particular](#) circumstances of the district, [including traditionally high levels of carbon emissions and energy consumption and being located in an area of serious water stress.](#) The Council is also mindful of the government's intention for all new homes to be zero carbon from 2016 and the possible extension of this to include other buildings from 2019. The justification for the requirements of Policy ESD 3 is set out in more detail in a Background Paper (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base).

**[B.189a](#)** ~~However, t~~he expectations in Policy ESD 3 will be applied flexibly. The onus will be on the developer to demonstrate (with robust evidence) why the

requirements cannot be met, for example where the application of the policy would conflict with other policy objectives, or where it can be satisfactorily shown that implementing the standards would not be feasible or financially viable, undermining delivery of the development. Negotiations will take place to ensure that sustainable construction is achieved as far as possible and we encourage discussion with the Council in the early stages of any development proposal. This policy will be subject to monitoring and review to ensure the standards and guidance remain appropriate and relevant. Any new national standards will need to be reflected in revisions to the local policy.

**B.190** Sustainable design and construction issues will be considered and illustrated in more local detail in the Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell SPD. There is however much information already widely available regarding achieving and being assessed against the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM standards. See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/sustainability/codesustainablehomes/> and <http://www.breeam.org/>

### **Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction**

**All new homes will be expected to meet at least Code Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes with immediate effect, unless exceeded by the standards set for NW Bicester Eco Town (See Policy Bicester 1).**

**Achieving higher Code levels in the water and energy use categories will be particularly encouraged.**

**All new non-residential development will be expected to meet at least BREEAM 'Very Good' with immediate effect.**

**On the strategic sites allocated for development in this Local Plan, the Council expects to see the achievement of higher levels of on-site “carbon compliance” (carbon emissions reductions through energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy) than required through national building regulations.**

**Proposals for conversion and refurbishment will be expected to show high quality design and high environmental standards, demonstrating sustainable construction methods including but not limited to:**

- **Minimising both energy demands and energy loss**
- **Maximising passive solar lighting and natural ventilation**
- **Maximising resource efficiency**
- **Incorporating the use of recycled and energy efficient materials**
- **Reducing waste and pollution and making adequate provision for the recycling of waste**
- **Making use of sustainable drainage methods**
- **Reducing the impact on the external environment and maximising opportunities for cooling and shading (by the provision of open space and water, planting, and green roofs, for example); and**
- **Making use of the embodied energy within buildings wherever possible and re-using materials where proposals involve demolition or redevelopment.**

Should the promoters of development consider that individual proposals would be unviable with the above requirements, 'open-book' financial analysis of proposed developments will be expected so that an in house economic viability assessment can be undertaken. Where it is agreed that an external economic viability assessment is required, the cost shall be met by the promoter.

#### Policy ESD 4: Decentralised Energy Systems

**B.191** This policy sets out the Council's support for decentralised energy systems, the second step of the energy hierarchy in Policy ESD 2: Energy Hierarchy.

**B.192** The national Heat Strategy aims to ensure there is affordable, secure and low carbon heating in a nation where 70% of all heat currently comes from natural gas, a fossil fuel. Nearly half the energy we use in the UK is used for heating of one sort or another and 52% of natural gas consumed in the UK in 2011 was used to provide heat for buildings and industry (Heat Strategy, DECC, 2013). Our 'Renewable Energy and Sustainable Construction Study' (See Appendix 3: Evidence Base) found that District Heating and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) will have an important role in delivering low carbon and renewable power and heat in the district. A focus on efficient heat generation, supply and use is particularly important given that the vast majority of heat is produced from burning fossil fuels, and heating is responsible for a third of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions (Draft Heat Strategy, DECC, 2012). More of the energy consumed in the UK is used for heating (46%) than for electricity or transport, and of this 46%, around three quarters is used by households and in commercial and public buildings (Draft Heat Strategy, DECC, 2012). The Government's Draft Heat Strategy (2012) and the Carbon Plan (2011) both emphasise the urgent national need to decarbonise our heat supply in order to meet commitments to reduce carbon emissions reductions commitments in the (Climate Change Act 2008). The Cherwell Local Plan seeks to tackle this by increasing thermal efficiency through better insulation of buildings (Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction) and through, in this pPolicy, ESD 4, by encouraging efficient heat delivery systems.

**B.193** Briefly, District Heating involves the distribution of heat (for space heating and hot water) from a decentralised energy centre connected to local customers via a private heat distribution network, meaning that systems can be more efficient, avoiding losses over larger transmission and distribution networks. Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems involve the utilisation of are where the 'waste' heat produced when fuel is burnt to generate electricity. is used, rather than lost (trigeneration, (supplying chilled water for cooling), is also possible).

**B.194** The fuel source in both DH and CHP systems can be either non renewable or renewable (renewable heat installations will of course contribute to meeting national renewable energy targets). In the UK most DH networks are linked to a gas fired CHP system or use waste heat generated from industrial processes. Some parts of rural Cherwell are without mains gas ('off-gas



areas') and here biomass powered DH/CHP could be appropriate. The renewable energy map at Appendix 5 'Maps' shows the broad potential for decentralised heat supply in the district, illustrating any potential waste heat sources, the existing DH/CHP schemes in the district that could be extended, the off-gas areas in the district, and the typical major users of heat that could anchor a district heating system. This map should be used in combination with the DECC's mapping of areas of high heat demand density to inform more detailed feasibility assessments of the potential for DH/CHP in new developments in Cherwell. The Council ~~is in the process of~~ will produce guidance and a template for use in preparing feasibility assessments.

#### **Policy ESD 4: Decentralised Energy Systems**

**The use of decentralised energy systems, providing either heating (District Heating (DH)) or heating and power (Combined Heat and Power (CHP)) will be encouraged in all new developments.**

**A feasibility assessment for DH/CHP, including consideration of biomass fuelled CHP, will be required for:**

- All residential developments for 400 dwellings or more
- All residential developments in off-gas areas for 50 dwellings or more
- All applications for non domestic developments above 1000m<sup>2</sup> floorspace

**The feasibility assessment should be informed by the renewable energy map at Appendix 5 'Maps' and the national mapping of heat demand densities undertaken by the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base).**

**Where feasibility assessments demonstrate that decentralised energy systems are deliverable and viable, such systems will be required as part of the development unless an alternative solution would deliver the same or increased benefit.**

#### **Policy ESD 5: Renewable Energy**

**B.195** This policy sets out the Council's support for renewable energy where appropriate, the third step in the energy hierarchy of Policy ESD 2: Energy Hierarchy, in order to contribute to national carbon emissions reductions and renewable energy generation targets. The Council ~~is in the process of~~ will produce guidance and a template for use in preparing feasibility assessments. Planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy will be considered against Policy ESD 5 in addition to current government advice (Planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy: July 2013).

**B.196** Mapping of spatial opportunities for renewable energy has been undertaken in The Cherwell Renewable Energy and Sustainable Construction Study (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base) which sets out the potential for different types of renewable energy development in the district and maps the broad spatial

opportunities for renewables. We have not allocated specific spatial opportunities for large scale renewable energy in this Local Plan, primarily because very few opportunities have been identified and even these are subject to constraints which require detailed investigation. We have however mapped the broad potential for district heating opportunities in Cherwell (see Policy ESD 4: Decentralised Energy Systems).

- B.197** Based on local evidence available at the current time (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base) opportunities for large scale wind generation are considered to be limited and uncertain, although there is potential for scattered single turbines or small clusters. Policy ESD5 below will apply to all proposals for wind turbine development including monitoring masts. In line with the UK Renewable Energy Strategy, the community ownership of wind power and other renewable energy schemes is encouraged within Cherwell.
- B.198** Impacts on residential amenity are particularly pertinent in relation to wind turbines and wind farm development. To minimise adverse impacts on residential amenity, the Council will apply minimum separation distances between turbines and dwellings. Further guidance on separation distances is set out in the Council's "Planning Guidance on the Residential Amenity Impacts of Wind Turbines Development" document (2011).
- B.199** There is increasing interest in the development of large scale solar PV arrays in Cherwell. The issues of local significance set out below will be relevant considerations in the determination of such proposals as well as the need to protect the district's high quality agricultural land (Grades 1 and 2).
- B.200** Policy in relation to renewable energy generation in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is set out in the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, produced by the Cotswolds Conservation Board, which has been adopted by this council as supplementary planning guidance.

### **Policy ESD 5: Renewable Energy**

**The Council supports renewable and low carbon energy provision wherever any adverse impacts can be addressed satisfactorily. The potential local environmental, economic and community benefits of renewable energy schemes will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.**

**Planning applications involving renewable energy development will be encouraged provided that there is no unacceptable adverse impact, including cumulative impact, on the following issues, which are considered to be of particular local significance in Cherwell:**

- **Landscape and biodiversity including designations, protected habitats and species, and Conservation Target Areas**
- **Visual impacts on local landscapes**
- **The historic environment including designated and non designated assets and their settings**
- **The Green Belt, particularly visual impacts on openness**
- **Aviation activities**
- **Highways and access issues, and**
- **Residential amenity.**



**A feasibility assessment of the potential for significant on site renewable energy provision (above any provision required to meet national building standards) will be required for:**

- All residential developments for 400 dwellings or more
- All residential developments in off-gas areas for 50 dwellings or more
- All applications for non-domestic developments above 1000m<sup>2</sup> floorspace

Where feasibility assessments demonstrate that on site renewable energy provision is deliverable and viable, this will be required as part of the development unless an alternative solution would deliver the same or increased benefit. This may include consideration of 'allowable solutions' as Government Policy evolves.

### **Policy ESD 6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management**

**B.201** The risk of flooding from rivers and watercourses across the district is high, with large extensive floodplains a feature of our rural landscape. The district falls within three major river catchments. The River Cherwell forms part of the larger Thames catchment, which comprises about 80% of the district's total area covering much of the urban and rural development in the district. During flood conditions the River Cherwell also largely co-joins with the adjacent Oxford Canal. The Great Ouse catchment covers approximately 15% of the district's total area and the Warwickshire Avon catchment approximately 5%. Groundwater and sewer flooding have also occurred at various locations in the district. Flooding events are detailed in the Council's Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and further information is also provided in the Council's Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) (See Appendix 3: Evidence Base).

**B.202** Properties at risk of flooding are dispersed across the district but there are clusters of properties at risk of flooding in Banbury and Kidlington (more than 100 properties in total) in Banbury and Kidlington. The SFRA also highlights that some rural settlements are potentially affected by fluvial flooding.

**B.203** Construction work commenced in February 2011 on a Flood Alleviation Scheme for Banbury to protect the town centre and surrounding businesses from flooding and the scheme is now complete. The project was funded by the Environment Agency supported by Cherwell District Council and contributions from local landowners.

**B.204** The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 assigns local authorities with a responsibility for managing flood risk. In Cherwell district, Oxfordshire County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), with the district council having an important supporting role to play as a Risk Management Authority. The probability of flooding can be reduced through the management of land, river systems and flood defences, and the impact reduced through influencing the type of development located in flood risk areas. The following policy will be used to manage and reduce flood risk in the district.

### **Policy ESD 6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management**

The Council will manage and reduce flood risk in the district through using a sequential approach to development; locating vulnerable developments in areas at lower risk of flooding. Development proposals will be assessed according to the sequential approach and where necessary the exceptions test as set out in the NPPF. Development will only be permitted in areas of flood risk when there are no reasonably available sites in areas of lower flood risk and the benefits of the development outweigh the risks from flooding.

In addition to safeguarding floodplains from development, opportunities will be sought to restore natural river flows and floodplains, increasing their amenity and biodiversity value. Building over or culverting of watercourses should be avoided and the removal of existing culverts will be encouraged.

Existing flood defences will be protected from damaging development and where development is considered appropriate in areas protected by such defences it must allow for the maintenance and management of the defences and be designed to be resilient to flooding.

Site specific flood risk assessments will be required to accompany development proposals in the following situations:

- All development proposals located in flood zones 2 or 3
- Development proposals of 1 hectare or more located in flood zone 1
- Development sites located in an area known to have experienced flooding problems
- Development sites located within 9m of any watercourses.

Flood risk assessments should assess all sources of flood risk and demonstrate that:

- There will be no increase in surface water discharge rates or volumes during storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year storm event with an allowance for climate change (the design storm event)
- Developments will not flood from surface water up to and including the design storm event or any surface water flooding beyond the 1 in 30 year storm event, up to and including the design storm event will be safely contained on site.

Development should be safe and remain operational (where necessary) and proposals should demonstrate that surface water will be managed effectively on site and that the development will not increase flood risk elsewhere, including sewer flooding.

**B.205** The above policy reflects government planning guidance on sustainable flood risk management set out in the NPPF. The suitability of development proposals will be assessed according to the sequential approach and where necessary the exceptions test as set out in the NPPF. Defended areas should be sequentially tested as though the defences are not there. Applications will also be assessed against the Environment Agency's standing advice on flood risk.

**B.206** The Council's Level 1 SFRA (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base) provides the framework for applying the sequential and exception tests in the district. The SFRA identifies and maps the risk of flooding across the district based on a

range of data and taking into account predicted climate change impacts, and is a useful source of information in undertaking site specific flood risk assessments particularly in relation to specific locations across the district. The SFRA also highlights the biodiversity opportunities associated with the use of sustainable flood risk management techniques, for example in enhancing or creating priority habitats such as grazing marsh, wet grassland, wetlands and aquatic habitats (particularly so in the Conservation Target Areas - see Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas).

**B.207** Level 2 SFRA's have also been carried out to assess the level of flood risk for strategic site allocations in more detail (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base). The assessments provide site specific guidance for flood risk assessments, policy recommendations and SuDS guidance. The findings of the assessments will be taken into account in the final determination of planning applications at the strategic sites.

**B.208** Site specific flood risk assessments (FRAs) will be required in accordance with the NPPF and the accompanying technical guidance. The FRA should identify and assess the risks of all forms of flooding to and from the development and demonstrate how these flood risks will be managed, taking climate change into account. Fluvial flood events up to and including the 1 in 100 year event with an allowance for climate change should be considered. For major developments in Flood Zone 1, the FRA should identify opportunities to reduce the probability and consequences of flooding. The FRA should also include investigation of the use of sustainable drainage systems (see [Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems \(SuDS\)](#) below).

**B.209** Briefly, there are 3 levels of FRA, as follows:

- Level 1- Screening: identify if a development site has flood risk issues
- Level 2- Scoping: qualitative assessment to determine how flood sources affect the site and options available for mitigation
- Level 3- Details: where the quality and/or quantity of information is insufficient to enable a robust assessment of the flood risks, further investigation will be required potentially involving hydraulic modelling.

**B.210** An FRA does not need to go through every stage (i.e. if it is known that detailed modelling will be required, just a Level 3 FRA can be carried out). The Council's SFRA makes the following recommendations for FRAs undertaken in particular locations across the district, as follows:

Location	Site Specific FRA Requirement
Wherever applicable	Where a site is in close proximity of the Oxford Canal, the Level 3 FRA should include breach analysis.
Wherever applicable	Flood defended areas will require a FRA to include assessment of risk from catastrophic failure of defences.
Banbury	A detailed level 3 FRA is required for development within the River Cherwell Floodplain to include flood compensation.  Groundwater risk to be highlighted at Crouch Hill.

North East Bicester	A level 2 FRA using existing data can be applied.
South East Bicester	A level 3 FRA including hydraulic modelling will be required in the vicinities of these watercourses.
Kidlington	Where EA modelled data is available a level 2 FRA can be completed using existing modelled flood levels. Where no data is available a Level 3 FRA including hydraulic modelling may be required for sites in close proximity to the Rowell Brook or the River Cherwell.  A level 2 FRA to include detailed assessment of groundwater flood risk should be included at all sites.
Rural Areas	There are village specific recommendations contained in the SFRA

**B.211** Additional recommendations are included in the Level 2 SFRA for the proposed strategic site allocations, ~~though some of this analysis is currently on-going.~~

**B.212** We will work actively with the Environment Agency, the Local Lead Flood Authority, other operating authorities and stakeholders to ensure that best use is made of their expertise and so that spatial planning supports existing flood risk management policies and plans, River Basin Management Plans and emergency planning.

### **Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)**

**B.213** Policy ESD 7 sets out the Council's approach to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Potential flooding and pollution risks from surface water can be reduced by reducing the volume and rate of water entering the sewerage system and watercourses. Managing drainage more sustainably in this way can ensure that developments are better adapted to the predicted impacts of climate change in the South East, which include more intense rainfall events. Policy ESD 7 is supported by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 which presumes that SuDS will be used for all new developments and redevelopments in order to prevent surface water run-off from increasing flood risk, and sets out that national standards be published to address SuDS design, construction, operation and maintenance issues at a national level.

**B.214** SuDS seek to manage surface water as close to its source as possible, mimicking surface water flows arising from the site prior to the proposed development. Typically this approach involves a move away from piped systems to softer engineering solutions. SuDS are considered to be suitable for use in association with developments across the district. Where site specific Flood Risk Assessments are required to be submitted to accompany development proposals these should be used to investigate how SuDS can be used on particular sites and to design appropriate systems.

**B.215** In considering SuDS solutions, the need to protect ground water quality must be taken into account, especially where infiltration techniques are proposed.

Where possible, multiple benefits including for recreation and wildlife should be delivered. Proposals must include an agreement on the future management, maintenance and replacement of the drainage structures.

**B.216** All relevant organisations should meet at an early stage to agree on the most appropriate drainage system for the particular development. These organisations may include the Local Authority, the Sewage Undertaker, Oxfordshire County Council as the LLFA and Highways Authority, and the Environment Agency. Highways SuDS will be adopted by Oxfordshire County Council but must be located on the most appropriate land, requiring consideration of the need to provide access for maintenance purposes, and topographical factors. Non-highway SuDS draining two properties or more will be adopted by the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) after Schedule 3 of the 2010 Act comes into force.

**B.217** Advice on SuDS and their various techniques is provided in the Council's Level 1 SFRA (August 2008). All areas of the district are suitable for SuDS in one form or another but the SFRA contains maps of a range of geological and ground condition data which can be used to identify the general permeability of the underlying ground conditions (bedrock, superficial deposits and soil) and the vulnerability of the groundwater resources (aquifers), to determine which SuDS system might be suitable. However the SFRA's mapping of SuDS opportunity does not provide a detailed and definitive investigation at site specific level, and so further assessment may be required to further investigate SuDS opportunities on individual sites. The Level 2 SFRAs contain additional guidance relating to the use of SuDS on the proposed strategic site allocations.

### **Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)**

**All development will be required to use sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water run-off.**

**Where site specific Flood Risk Assessments are required in association with development proposals, they should be used to determine how SuDS can be used on particular sites and to design appropriate systems.**

**In considering SuDS solutions, the need to protect ground water quality must be taken into account, especially where infiltration techniques are proposed. Where possible, SuDS should seek to reduce flood risk, reduce pollution and provide landscape and wildlife benefits. SuDS will require the approval of Oxfordshire County Council as LLFA and SuDS Approval Body, and proposals must include an agreement on the future management, maintenance and replacement of the SuDS features.**

### **Our Core Assets**

### **Policy ES8: Water Resources**

**B.218** In considering development proposals, the Council will use Policy ESD 8 together with Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction, Policy ESD 6: Sustainable Flood Risk Management and Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to reduce the impact of development on the water environment, maintain water quality, ensure adequate water resources and

promote sustainability in water use. This will assist in contributing to the objectives of the Water Framework Directive which seeks to protect and enhance the quality of water bodies, and indicates that development should not result in any deterioration in the status of surface water bodies. Some development can remediate contaminated land which ~~can have~~ may be having an adverse impact on controlled water and human health. These policies together with ESD 8 are also intended to help deliver the actions contained in the Thames River Basin Management Plan. These actions highlight the importance of development proposals contributing to an improved water environment, through the use of sustainable design and construction techniques for water efficiency, water quality and sustainable flood management, and the incorporation of appropriate green infrastructure and biodiversity improvements.

**B.219** ~~Cherwell district lies within an area of serious water stress, with the~~ Research carried out by the Environment Agency and set out in the Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMs) shows that Cherwell district lies within an area of serious water stress and ~~in 2005 indicating that~~ the Upper Cherwell area (including Banbury) ~~has been~~ was over abstracted. ~~Resources in this area are being reassessed, with results expected at the end of 2012.~~ Policy ESD 8 below will be used to ensure that new development is located in areas where adequate water supply can be provided from existing and potential water supply infrastructure. In addition Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change and Policy ESD 3: Sustainable Construction will ensure new development incorporates water efficiency measures, reducing demand.

### **Policy ESD 8: Water Resources**

**The Council will seek to maintain water quality, ensure adequate water resources and promote sustainability in water use.**

**Water quality will be maintained and enhanced by avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment. Development proposals which would adversely affect the water quality of surface or underground water bodies, including rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs, as a result of directly attributable factors, will not be permitted.**

**Development will only be permitted where adequate water resources exist, or can be provided without detriment to existing uses. Where appropriate, phasing of development will be used to enable the relevant water infrastructure to be put in place in advance of development commencing.**

### **Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment**

**B.220** Conserving biodiversity is an important element of sustainable development. Government guidance in the NPPF indicates that in delivering sustainable development local authorities should enhance as well as protect biodiversity and natural habitats. It is also recognised that the distribution of habitats and species will be affected by climate change. This reinforces the importance of considering climate change impacts in seeking to avoid habitat fragmentation. Following an initiative in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011, a Local Nature Partnership for Oxfordshire (ONP) was set up with the aim of encouraging all sectors to consider the natural environment in decision



making and recognise the wider social and economic benefits biodiversity brings. The Council will have regard to the views of the ONP in ensuring sustainable development.

- B.221** Cherwell District contains many areas of high ecological value including sites of international and national importance, as outlined below. While the district is predominantly rural, its urban centres, parks and open spaces are just as much part of the local environment and provide important habitats for wildlife. The policies to protect and enhance the natural environment and biodiversity in urban and rural areas are set out below.
- B.222** Cherwell contains one site of European importance; part of Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located in the south west corner of the district (indicated on the Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5 Maps)). The SAC receives statutory protection under the Habitats Directive (Directive 92/42/EEC), transposed into national legislation in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Habitats Regulations).
- B.223** The proposals in this document have been informed by Habitats Regulations Assessments undertaken in accordance with Regulation 21 of the Habitats Regulations. An HRA was carried out to determine whether the proposals in the Core Strategy Options for Growth paper (2008) were likely, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, to have a significant effect upon European sites. An HRA of the Draft Core Strategy (February 2010) was also undertaken. Copies of both assessments are available on the Council's website (see Appendix 3: Evidence Base).
- B.224** Appropriate measures as recommended by the HRA have been incorporated to avoid or minimise the effect of the plan proposals on the SAC in relation to water quality, natural groundwater flow, air quality and recreational use. A revised HRA ~~was being~~ undertaken (2012) to accompany the [Proposed Submission Local Plan](#) to ensure that the plan proposals will not result in adverse effects on the SAC. [An Addendum to the HRA was published to accompany the focused consultation on proposed changes to the Plan \(March 2013\) which confirmed that there would be no likely significant effects on any Natura 2000 Sites as a result of the proposals within the Plan. A further Addendum to the HRA accompanies the Submission Plan.](#)
- B.225** However, as the proposals in the Local Plan are strategic by nature, any more detailed proposals that are identified in the Local Neighbourhoods Development Plan Document will also be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine if they are likely to have a significant impact. Similarly, if a proposed development submitted as a planning application could have a likely significant effect on Oxford Meadows SAC then consideration and assessment would need to be undertaken (see Policy ESD 9: Protection of the Oxford Meadows SAC and Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment below).
- B.226** One of the recommendations arising from the HRA was the need to ensure groundwater flows and water quality at the SAC are not affected by development. Policy ESD9 (below) will be used to ensure that this is the case.

### **Policy ESD 9: Protection of the Oxford Meadows SAC**

**B.227** The Oxford Meadows SAC has been designated for European protection due to the lowland hay meadow habitats it supports. The site includes vegetation communities that are considered to be potentially unique in the world (due to the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting). The site has been traditionally managed for several centuries and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function. It is also designated as a European site as it supports creeping marshwort - one of only two known sites in the UK that support this plant species. The River Thames flows through the centre of the site and the hydrological regime makes an important contribution to the integrity of the site in supporting these habitats and species.

**B.228** The HRA identified two potential significant impacts relating to water and water quality:

- The SAC receives groundwater supplies from the River Cherwell and the River Thames (and their catchments). Alteration to adjacent rivers or obstruction of natural groundwater flows may alter the flooding regime of the SAC and lead to a degradation of the internationally important habitats and biodiversity that it supports. However the current groundwater recharge could be maintained using Sustainable Drainage Systems, including porous surfacing, which maintain infiltration of groundwater without exacerbating flood risk (see Policy ESD 7): [Sustainable Drainage Systems \(SuDS\)](#).
- If new development is situated next to watercourses that flow into the River Thames upstream of the SAC, it is possible that there could be a decrease in water quality flowing through the SAC during the construction and the operation of development. This could potentially alter or prevent the nutrient enrichment of the habitats and species that the SAC supports, leading to degradation or loss.

**B.229** Policy ESD 9 below aims to prevent any obstruction of groundwater flows and to preserve water quality, in order to maintain the stability of the hydrological regime within the SAC and therefore its integrity as a site of international importance. The policy will be applied to development proposals likely to impact on groundwater flows or watercourses that flow into the River Thames upstream of the SAC.

#### **Policy ESD 9: Protection of the Oxford Meadows SAC**

**Developers will be required to demonstrate that:**

- **During construction of the development there will be no adverse effects on the water quality or quantity of any adjacent or nearby watercourse**
- **During operation of the development any run-off of water into adjacent or surrounding watercourses will meet Environmental Quality Standards (and where necessary oil interceptors, silt traps and Sustainable Drainage Systems will be included)**
- **New development will not significantly alter groundwater flows and that the hydrological regime of the Oxford Meadows SAC is maintained in terms of water quantity and quality**
- **Run-off rates of surface water from the development will be maintained at [gGreenfield](#) rates.**

## Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment

**B.230** Development proposals likely to affect a site of international ecological importance will need to be accompanied by a thorough Habitats Regulations Assessment of the potential effects of the development on that site of international importance, to enable the Council to determine whether the development would result in significant adverse effects on the integrity of the site. Any development that is unable to demonstrate that it would not have a significant adverse effect upon the integrity of a European site, having taken account of proposed mitigation, will be refused. This is in accordance with the precautionary principle enshrined in the Habitats Directive. Where there are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest and the Council is unable to conclude no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC, the authority will notify the Secretary of State to allow the application to be called in for determination. In these situations compensatory measures to protect the site must be put in place.

**B.231** Sites of national importance comprise Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves. Cherwell District has 18 SSSIs but does not contain any National Nature Reserves.

**B.232** Sites of regional/local importance comprise Local Geological Sites (LGSs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), non-statutory nature reserves and other sites of importance for nature conservation including Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs- formerly known as County Wildlife Sites), ancient woodland, aged or veteran trees and UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats (habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity under Section 41 of the NERC Act). Cherwell contains 13 LGSs, 3 LNRs, 843 Local Wildlife sites (completely or partly within the district), 126 proposed LWSs and 78 proposed LWS extensions (as of May 2012)/August 2013). The sites are indicated on the biodiversity map at Appendix 5: Maps, but it must be acknowledged that the number and location of sites changes over time as surveys and re-surveys take place. A living list of Local Wildlife Sites and associated maps are available at <http://www.tverc.org> [http://www.tverc.org/html/local\\_wildlife\\_sites.html](http://www.tverc.org/html/local_wildlife_sites.html). Sites of regional/local importance also include the habitats of those species of principal importance for biodiversity (as identified in Section 41 of the NERC Act).

**B.233** It is not just designated sites that are of importance to the biodiversity resource of the district. Areas adjacent to designated sites can be of value as they can form part of the overall ecological unit and may provide important linkages. Also landscape features such as hedgerows, woods, trees, rivers and riverbanks, ponds and floodplains can be of importance both in urban and rural areas, and often form wildlife corridors and stepping stones. Similarly it is not just greenfield sites that can be of value; previously developed land can also make an important contribution to biodiversity. Some development can remediate contaminated land which may be having an adverse impact on ecology. It is important that any features of value are identified early in the planning process so that adequate measures can be taken to secure their protection. Developers will be expected to incorporate and enhance such features within a site wherever possible and adequate measures should be taken to protect them from damage during construction.

Networks of habitats will be protected from development and where possible strengthened by it.

**B.234** Relevant habitat and species surveys and associated reports will be required to accompany planning applications which may affect a site of known biodiversity value or the biodiversity/natural environment of the local area. A biodiversity survey and report will also be required where it is likely that previously unrecorded biodiversity interest may be present which could be affected by the development. All developments around Bicester will require surveys carried out for the brown hairstreak butterfly. Surveys should include consideration of the site's value as a wildlife corridor and the contribution it makes to ecological networks. In addition to identifying biodiversity impacts, biodiversity surveys and reports should identify opportunities to deliver biodiversity enhancements.

**B.235** There are a number of features which can be incorporated into developments to encourage biodiversity including green roofs and walls, SUDs, using native and locally characteristic species in landscaping schemes, using landscaping to link up existing areas supporting biodiversity and including features such as bird and bat boxes. The Council is compiling further guidance on the incorporation of features to encourage biodiversity which will form part of the Sustainable Buildings in Cherwell SPD.

**B.236** Consideration will be given to the introduction of a tariff based approach to securing biodiversity improvement through development. Further information on the use of planning obligations to secure contributions from development towards biodiversity will be contained in the final Developer Contributions SPD.

### **Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment**

**Protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment will be achieved by the following:**

- In considering proposals for development, a net gain in biodiversity will be sought by protecting, managing, enhancing and extending existing resources, and by creating new resources
- The protection of trees will be encouraged, with an aim to increase the number of trees in the district
- The reuse of soils will be sought
- Ensuring that development proposals are assessed against the avoidance-mitigation-compensation hierarchy set out in paragraph 118 of the NPPF. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then development will not be permitted.
- Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of international value will be subject to the Habitats Regulations Assessment process and will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no likely significant effects on the international site or that effects can be mitigated
- Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of national importance will not be

permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site and the wider national network of SSSIs, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity

- Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity or geological value of regional or local importance including habitats of species of principal importance for biodiversity will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated to achieve a net gain in biodiversity/geodiversity
- Development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity, and retain and where possible enhance existing features of nature conservation value within the site. Existing ecological networks should be identified and maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation, and ecological corridors should form an essential component of green infrastructure provision in association with new development to ensure habitat connectivity
- Relevant habitat and species surveys and associated reports will be required to accompany planning applications which may affect a site, habitat or species of known or potential ecological value
- Air quality assessments will also be required for development proposals that would be likely to have a significantly adverse impact on biodiversity by generating an increase in air pollution
- Planning conditions/obligations will be used to secure net gains in biodiversity by helping to deliver Biodiversity Action Plan targets and/or meeting the aims of Conservation Target Areas. Developments for which these are the principal aims will be viewed favourably
- A monitoring and management plan will be required for biodiversity features on site to ensure their long term suitable management.

### **Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas**

**B.237** Conservation Target Areas in Oxfordshire have been mapped by the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) in consultation with local authorities and nature conservation organisations in Oxfordshire. The Target Areas have been identified to focus work to restore biodiversity at a landscape scale through the maintenance, restoration and creation of UK BAP priority habitats, and they therefore have a major role to play in achieving Strategic Objective 15 (Section A: Strategy for Development in Cherwell). Addressing habitat fragmentation through the linking of sites to form strategic ecological networks can help species adapt to the impact of climate change, and therefore Conservation Target Areas can also contribute to the achievement of Strategic Objective 11. Conservation Target Areas represent the areas of greatest opportunity for strategic biodiversity improvement in the District and as such development will be expected to contribute to the achievement of the aims of the target areas through avoiding habitat fragmentation and enhancing biodiversity.

**B.238** Ten Conservation Target Areas lie wholly or partly within Cherwell District. The boundaries of the Conservation Target Areas are indicated on the Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5: [Maps](#)).

**B.239** General targets for maintenance, restoration and creation of habitats have been set for each area, to be achieved through a combination of biodiversity



project work undertaken by a range of organisations, agri-environment schemes and biodiversity enhancements secured in association with development. These targets are in the process of being made more specific in terms of the amount of each habitat type to be secured within each Conservation Target Area. Habitat improvement within each area will contribute towards achieving County targets, which in turn will contribute towards regional biodiversity targets identified by the South East England Biodiversity Forum. A lead partner has been appointed for several of the Conservation Target Areas to co-ordinate action.

- B:240** Biodiversity enhancements sought in association with development could include the restoration or maintenance of habitats through appropriate management, new habitat creation to link fragmented habitats, or a financial contribution towards biodiversity initiatives in the Conservation Target Area. Biodiversity enhancement within the Conservation Target Areas will be considered through the review of the current Draft Planning Obligations SPD and the funding of infrastructure through CIL or other tariff system. More detail will be set out in the Developer Contributions SPD. ~~Consideration will be given to the introduction of a tariff based approach to biodiversity enhancement within the Conservation Target Areas, through the development of our CIL proposals to enable development throughout the district to contribute to the areas with the greatest opportunity for strategic biodiversity improvement.~~ Biodiversity offsetting is being explored at national level through a number of pilot projects, as a way of compensating for biodiversity loss in an effective way. If this initiative proves successful the approach could be used to secure strategic biodiversity improvement.

### **Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas**

**Where development is proposed within or adjacent to a Conservation Target Area biodiversity surveys and a report will be required to identify constraints and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement. Development which would prevent the aims of a Conservation Target Area being achieved will not be permitted. Where there is potential for development, the design and layout of the development, planning conditions or obligations will be used to secure biodiversity enhancement to help achieve the aims of the Conservation Target Area.**

### **Policy ESD 12: Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

- B:241** Cherwell contains one area of national landscape importance - the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). National designations including AONBs are to be prioritised for landscape protection as set out in national planning guidance, with the NPPF indicating that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in those areas.
- B:242** Only a small part of Cherwell District, around the village of Epwell, is included in the Cotswolds AONB, as shown on the Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5: Maps). The area of AONB straddles the boundary of Sibford and Wroxton wards.
- B:243** Proposals for development in the AONB should be small-scale and sustainably located and designed. Proposals which support the economies and social well-being of the AONB and its communities, including affordable



housing schemes, will be encouraged provided they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.

**B.244** The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan was prepared by the Cotswold Conservation Board and was adopted by the Council for use as supplementary guidance. [The Management Plan was updated and adopted by the Board in March 2013.](#) The main principles are that development within the AONB will:

- Be compatible with the distinctive character of the location as described by the relevant landscape character assessment, strategy and guidelines
- Incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the above, respecting the local settlement pattern and building style
- Be designed to respect local building styles and materials
- Incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs
- ~~Maintain or improve the existing level of~~ [Have regard to the impact on tranquillity, including dark skies](#)
- Not have an adverse impact on the local community amenities and services and access to these
- Protect, or where possible enhance, [landscape and](#) biodiversity
- Be in accordance with a more sustainable pattern of development, reducing dependence on car travel.

#### **Policy ESD 12: Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**

**High priority will be given to the protection and enhancement of the Cotswolds AONB and the Council will seek to protect the AONB and its setting from potentially damaging and inappropriate development. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan will be used as supplementary guidance in decision making relevant to the AONB.**

**Development proposals within the AONB will only be permitted if they are small scale, sustainably located and designed, and would not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area.**

#### **Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement**

**B.245** The Cherwell Local Plan 1996 identified ~~areas of~~ Area of High Landscape Value - land of particular environmental quality - where the Council would seek to conserve and enhance the environment. This Local Plan [adopts a character-based approach to](#) seeks to conserve and enhance the countryside and landscape character of the whole district, and so ~~specific local designations are~~ [Areas of High Landscape Value are](#) not proposed [to be retained](#). Policy ESD 13 below therefore seeks to conserve and enhance the distinctive and highly valued local character of the entire district. The Council will use the CPRE's Tranquillity Map of Oxfordshire [available at](#) <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1835> as a guide in assessing areas of tranquillity. Further guidance will be contained within the Development Management DPD.

**B.246** Opportunities for landscape enhancement can also be provided by land in the Council's ownership, and on other land by agreement.

**B.247** The relationship between the district's towns and the adjoining countryside and the avoidance of an abrupt transition from built development to open farmland requires special attention to the landscaping of existing and proposed development. This interface is important in determining the relationship between the urban areas and on the character of the countryside. Where new development will extend the built up limits of the towns the Council will seek a masterplan and well-designed approach to the urban edge. This could incorporate the enhancement of existing hedgerows and woodlands and new areas of woodland planting and hedgerows to be incorporated as part of the development, to ensure the satisfactory transition between town and country (see also Policy ESD 15: Green Boundaries to Growth below). These considerations can equally be applied where extensions to villages are required. Landscape mitigation for the proposed strategic sites will be negotiated on a site by site basis.

**B.248** In order to understand the local landscape character of Cherwell a Landscape Assessment was undertaken in 1995. The findings of this assessment informed the Non Statutory Cherwell Local Plan policy and the Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance. These documents identified four distinct character areas - the 'Cherwell Valley', 'Ironstone Downs', 'Ploughley Limestone Plateau' and 'Clay Vale of Otmoor'. The guidance states how development can complement the most important aspects of the character of that part of the District. More recently the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) looked in detail at the landscape types across the district as well as the biodiversity resource. It identifies the 'forces for change' in a particular location and includes landscape/biodiversity strategies which set guidelines for how developments can contribute towards landscape character. Further landscape assessment work has been undertaken to inform the Local Plan and the Masterplans being prepared for Bicester and Banbury (See Appendix 3: Evidence Base)

**B.249** One of the most important elements of the landscape which can add to the character and identity of an area are natural landscape features. Such features include Muswell Hill, Crouch Hill, Madmarston Hill, the River Cherwell and Otmoor, which all make those areas distinct and create a sense of place. Many form local landmarks valued by the local communities. The Council's Landscape Evidence Base documents identify the key landform and landscape features of value which include the following features around Banbury and Bicester:

- The open and agricultural setting and identity of the outlying villages surrounding Banbury and Bicester, many with [locally distinctive](#) historic cores ~~of local vernacular~~
- Ironstone ridges and valleys
- The historic villages and parkland of Hanwell and Wroxton
- Broughton Castle and Grade II Registered Park
- Crouch Hill: an important landmark overlooking Banbury and the surrounding area
- The landscape to the east of the motorway at Banbury which retains a distinct historic pattern
- Salt Way and its setting
- The Sor Brook Valley
- The setting of the Oxford Canal and River Cherwell corridor

- Specific features at Bicester noted for their value include those showing notable 'time depth' including ~~RAF Bicester~~[Former RAF Bicester](#), Wretchwick deserted medieval village, Bignell Park and the ~~R~~oman roads.
- Graven Hill and Blackthorn Hill which contrast with the relatively flat surrounding landform
- The River Ray floodplains

**B.250** The Council will seek to retain woodlands, trees, hedges, ponds, walls and any other features which are important to the character or appearance of the local landscape as a result of their ecological, historic or amenity value. Proposals which would result in the loss of such features will not be permitted unless their loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures to the satisfaction of the Council.

**B.251** In order ~~for that~~ development ~~to conserve~~ and ~~enhance~~ the character of the countryside, the Council will carefully control the type, scale and design of development, including the materials used, taking into account the advice contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary SPG and the OWLS.

**B.252** In addition to this policy, many villages have conservation areas and in considering development proposals within or adjacent to them, special attention will be given to the preservation or enhancement of their character and appearance under Policy ESD 16: The Character of the Built Environment.

### **Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement**

**Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.**

**Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:**

- **Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside**
- **Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography**
- **Be inconsistent with local character**
- **Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity**
- **Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or**
- **Harm the historic value of the landscape.**

**Development proposals should have regard to the information and advice contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS), [and be accompanied by a landscape assessment where appropriate.](#)**

### **Policy ESD 14: Oxford Green Belt**

**B:253** Part of the district falls within the Oxford Green Belt. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. The Oxford Green Belt was designated to restrain development pressures which could damage the character of Oxford City and its heritage through increased activity, traffic and the outward sprawl of the urban area. Similarly, the character of Oxford in a rural setting cannot be maintained without the protection of the spatial relationship of Oxford with nearby settlements and the maintenance of the character of the intervening countryside.

**B:254** The outer boundaries of the Oxford Green Belt were approved in 1975 and the inner boundaries within Cherwell have been carried forward since the Central Oxfordshire Local Plan of 1992. The general extent of the Oxford Green Belt is shown on the Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5: Maps). A number of villages are washed over by the Green Belt and the villages of Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke (east) are surrounded by the Green Belt but excluded from it. The villages of Bletchingdon, Merton, Murcott and Weston on the Green lie partly within and partly outside the Green Belt. The boundary of the Green Belt is shown on the Proposed Submission Policies Map (Appendix 5: Maps).

**B:255** Work undertaken for the ~~now~~-revoked South East Plan did not identify a need for strategic review of the Green Belt boundaries in Cherwell District. The plan indicated that selective review should take place to the south of Oxford and stated that if the initial area of search to the south of Oxford did not prove a suitable candidate for review, a wider review across the area could take place. A legal challenge to this section of the South East Plan was issued on the grounds that proper environmental assessment of the proposals and reasonable alternatives had not taken place. The Treasury Solicitor conceded the legal challenge but the issue was not finally resolved before revocation of the plan.~~The outcome of the legal challenge was not resolved.~~

~~The revised housing figures contained in the Local Plan are in accordance with those that were contained in the South East Plan and the Local Plan's development strategy can be achieved without the need for a strategic review of the Green Belt in the district.~~

**B:256** The Local Plan's housing requirements and development strategy can be achieved without the need for a strategic review of the Green Belt in the district. At the current time it is ~~neither~~ ~~or~~ considered that the 'exceptional circumstances' required by government policy exist to justify a small scale local review of the Green Belt to meet local housing needs. Small scale affordable housing schemes to meet specifically identified~~Exceptional~~ local housing needs, ~~if demonstrated,~~ may be met through the release of rural exception sites as part of the development control process, in accordance with Policy ~~for~~ Villages 3: Rural Exception Sites. Kidlington's local housing needs ~~are will being~~ examined in more detail through the preparation of a Kidlington Framework Masterplan which will provide evidence for the Local Neighbourhoods DPD ~~and, potentially, a Neighbourhood Plan.~~ ~~A~~The recent Employment Land Review (2012) identified a need for additional employment land in the Kidlington area. It is not anticipated that this land can be accommodated on sites outside of the Green Belt. A specific need has also been identified for the Science Park at Begbroke Therefore, exceptional circumstances are considered to exist to justify~~to meet this need it is~~

~~proposed to undertake~~ a small scale local review of the Green Belt ~~to meet employment needs~~ (see Policy Kidlington 1: [Accommodating High Value Employment Needs](#)~~Langford Lane Technology Park~~).

**B.257** It is essential that the impact on the Green Belt is minimised, therefore priority will be given to locations that lie adjacent to existing development, avoid the coalescence of settlements, protect the vulnerable Kidlington Gap and otherwise have the least impact possible on the Green Belt.

#### **Policy ESD 14: Oxford Green Belt**

The Oxford Green Belt boundaries within Cherwell district will be maintained in order to:

- Preserve the special character and landscape setting of Oxford
- Check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl
- Prevent the coalescence of settlements
- Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Proposals for residential development will be assessed in accordance with policies Villages 1 and Villages 3. All other development proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed in accordance with government guidance contained in the NPPF. Development within the Green Belt will only be permitted if it maintains the Green Belt's openness and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities.

~~Small scale local review of the Green Belt boundary will only be undertaken where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.~~ A small scale local review of the Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of Langford Lane Kidlington and Begbroke Science Park will be undertaken as part of the Development Management [or Local Neighbourhoods](#) DPD, in order to accommodate employment needs (See Policy Kidlington 1). [Further small scale local review of the Green Belt boundary will only be undertaken where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.](#)

#### **Policy ESD 15: Green Boundaries to Growth**

**B.258** All developments at the edge of Banbury and Bicester will need to address how they face out into the open countryside and present a well-designed green edge to development and its rural setting. Key landscape design principles specific to the strategic allocations are contained within the site specific policies in Section C: Policies for Cherwell's Places. More detailed landscape assessments will need to accompany planning applications for each development, to inform landscaping proposals to ensure a soft edge to the development and ensure that development is sympathetically assimilated into its context and relates well to the rural settings of the towns. Assessments should also inform the provision of green infrastructure which will enhance the rural/urban fringe and facilitate access to the countryside.

**B.259** In addition, green buffers have been identified adjacent to the existing/planned edge of Banbury and Bicester to:

- Maintain Banbury and Bicester's distinctive identity and setting
- Protect the separate identity and setting of neighbouring settlements which surround the two towns
- Prevent coalescence and protect the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements to keep them free from built development that would harm the character of the Green Buffers
- Protect the identity and setting of valued features of landscape and historical importance that contribute to the identity and setting of the two towns
- Protect important views

The definition of Green Buffers is seen as being consistent with the provisions of paragraph 157 of the NPPF, which indicates that Local Plans should indicate where development would be inappropriate.

**B.260** The boundaries of the Green Buffers are shown on the Proposals Map. The buffers do not negate the need for green infrastructure provision within the strategic allocation sites. They are intended to define the limits to built development (including associated green infrastructure) and protect the gaps between the existing/planned edge between Bicester and the villages of Ambrosden, Bucknell, Caversfield, Chesterton, Launton, Stratton Audley and Wendlebury, and the gaps between the existing or planned edge of Banbury and the villages of Adderbury, Bodicote, Drayton, Hanwell, Little Bourton, Nethercote, North Newington and Wroxton. Additional buffers are shown on the south east edge of Banbury to protect the prominent landscape feature Crouch Hill and historic Salt Way and their settings.

**B.260a** - Additional information on the methodology used to identify the boundaries and justification for the Green Buffers is contained in the Banbury and Bicester Green Buffer Reports (See Appendix 3 Evidence Base). Green buffer boundaries adjacent to the villages identified in Policy Villages 2 may need to be modified following the allocation of village development sites through the Local Neighbourhoods Development Plan Document/ Neighbourhood Plans, where a compelling case for development is made. When considering essential infrastructure proposals within the green buffers the Council will assess whether the benefits of the proposals outweigh the impact the development would have on the objectives of the green buffers. Any such proposals will be expected to include appropriate mitigation strategies to reduce any potential adverse effects that may occur to the green buffer designation and wider landscape.

**B.261** In most cases land within the buffers will remain in existing agricultural use. The intention of the buffers is that they are kept free from built development that would conflict with the purposes of the buffer as outlined above. ~~In some cases, w~~Where appropriate and where the opportunity exists, woodland planting may take place within a green buffer, e.g in the form of community woodland between SW Bicester Phase 2 (Policy Bicester 3: South West Bicester Phase 2) and Chesterton. In other locations woodland planting may not be appropriate in landscape or ecological terms. Where woodland planting is appropriate the proposals will need to be accompanied by secure arrangements for long term management and maintenance.



## Policy ESD 15: Green Boundaries to Growth

Proposals for development on the edge of the built up area must be carefully designed and landscaped to soften the built edge of the development and assimilate it into the landscape by providing green infrastructure that will positively contribute to the rural setting of the towns. Existing important views of designated or attractive landscape features will need to be taken into account. Proposals will also be considered against the requirements of Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement.

In addition, Green buffers as indicated on the Proposals Maps will be maintained to:

- Maintain Banbury and Bicester's distinctive identity and setting
- Protect the separate identity and setting of neighbouring settlements which surround the two towns
- Prevent coalescence and protect the gaps between the existing/planned edge of the towns and surrounding settlements
- Protect the identity and setting of landscape and historic features of value that are important to the identity and setting of the two towns
- Protect important views

Development proposals within the green buffers will only be permitted if they would not conflict with these objectives.

## Policy ESD 16: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

**B.262** Conservation of the historic environment and securing high quality urban design are very important in protecting and enhancing the character of the district and ensuring that Cherwell is an attractive place to live and work. Cherwell District is composed of four landscape character areas, which each display distinct, settlement patterns, building materials and styles of vernacular architecture to create a rural environment that is strongly locally distinctive. Each of the three urban areas also displays its own unique character.

**B.263** The following features contribute to the distinctive character, appearance and high quality environment of Cherwell District:

- Over 2,200 listed buildings and many others of local architectural and historical interest.
- Currently 60 conservation areas
- 36 Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- 5 registered Historic Parks and Gardens and a Historic Battlefield, and 6 Historic Parks and Gardens considered as non-designated heritage assets
- Three urban centres - Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington – with quite distinct characters, retaining their medieval street patterns
- The Oxford Green Belt (see Policy ESD 14: Oxford Green Belt)
- The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north-west of the district (see Policy ESD 12: Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB))
- The district's waterways, in particular the River Cherwell and the Oxford Canal

- Sites of ecological importance including [18](#) Special Areas for Conservation (see Policy ESD 9: Protection of the Oxford Meadows SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

**B.264** We will protect our historic environment; it is a major resource contributing to the local distinctiveness of the District. Conservation Areas and other heritage assets (including both designated and undesignated assets) form part of the historic fabric of the district and contribute to the character of the area and will be maintained. We will protect our Conservation Areas and other heritage assets from harmful growth as these help to define how the area looks and feels, both in the towns and villages. The Council has a rolling programme of conservation area Appraisals and review. We will maintain a local register of Buildings at Risk and use Article 4 Directions to maintain the character of our [historic villages and towns](#). A Register of non-designated heritage assets is also being compiled. Further information on these measures is contained in the Design and Conservation Strategy for Cherwell.

**B.265** The Council will protect and enhance the special value of these features individually and the wider environment that they create. The strategic policy on landscape protection can be found under Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement. It is also important, however, to provide a framework for considering the quality of built development and to ensure that we achieve locally distinctive design which reflects and respects the urban or rural landscape and built context within which it sits.

**B.266** We will ensure that the new developments, area renewal and town centre expansions are safe places to live, work and visit through design standards by using tools such as 'secured by design', also through requiring CCTV where appropriate.

**B.267** Design standards for new development whether housing or commercial development are equally important. High design standards are critical in the town and village centres where Conservation Areas exist, but more generally in ensuring development is appropriate and secures a strong sense of place and clear sense of arrival at points of entry into the towns and villages. Particular sensitivity is required where development abuts or takes place within designated Conservation Areas.

**B.268** It is also important to take into account heritage assets located outside of the District which may be affected by development inside the district such as Blenheim Palace, a World Heritage Site.

### **Policy ESD 16: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment**

**Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the district's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.**

**New development proposals should:**

- Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions
- Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions
- Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density / development intensity
- Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting
- Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged
- Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages
- Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette
- Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features
- Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed
- Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space
- [Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation](#)
- Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including [Secured by Design](#) and Building for Life, [and achieve Secured by Design accreditation](#)

- Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout
- Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy)
- Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 18 Green Infrastructure ). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality
- Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.

The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Development Management DPD.

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. CLG Circular 01/06 sets out the matters to be covered and further guidance can be found on the Council's website.

[The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites.](#) For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. [Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site. The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites.](#)

**B.269** The appearance of new development and its relationship with its surrounding built and natural environment has a significant effect on the character and appearance of an area. Securing new development that can positively contribute to the character of its local environment is therefore of key importance. This policy identifies a number of key issues that need to be addressed in the design of new development.

**B.270** These issues are as relevant in urban areas as in rural locations and also in recent development as in historic areas. The policy seeks to protect, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated 'heritage assets'. The NPPF defines these as 'A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest'. Heritage assets with archaeological interest will require the submission of relevant assessment. In sensitive locations

severe constraints may direct the design approach, but in many cases the Council will not wish to prescribe a specific design solution. Designs need to be sensitive and complimentary to their surroundings but this does not require merely replicating existing styles and imitating architectural details; modern interpretation is possible if informed by a full contextual analysis and proposals promote and reinforce local distinctiveness.

- B:271** Our urban areas will see significant growth during the period of the Local Plan, and will need to adapt and respond to these pressures both within existing boundaries and beyond, while retaining their unique character and heritage. A balance will need to be struck between making best use of land and respecting established urban character and creating new and vibrant sustainable neighbourhoods. Applicants should also have regard to national guidance and best practice advice on design, including on public space, street design, trees in the street scene, public buildings, housing, work environments inclusive design, tall buildings and eco-towns, e.g. guidance published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment CABI (now merged with the Design Council). English Heritage has also published much guidance on integration of development into the historic environment. Applicants will also need to have regard to policies from Oxfordshire County Council, such as the Parking Policy.
- B:272** Our rural areas will need to accommodate new development which reinforces the locally distinctive character by being sensitive in its location, scale, materials and design, reflecting the traditional pattern of development within the settlement, balancing making best use of land with respect for the established character and respecting open features that make a positive contribution. A large proportion of rural settlements fall within conservation areas, where the quality and special interest of the area is protected. Council publications, such as its Countryside Design Summary, which analyses settlement types, and Appraisals of the district's Conservation Areas, which analyse the special qualities and identify those features that make a positive contribution to the character of the place, will assist in understanding a settlement. National guidance includes Natural England's guidance on undertaking Village Design Statements.

### **Policy ESD 17: The Oxford Canal**

- B:273** The Oxford Canal is an iconic historic structure running the length of the district through the attractive valley of the River Cherwell, and is of historic, ecological and recreational significance. Following an appraisal, the length of the canal through Cherwell District was designated as a Conservation Area in October 2012. The conservation area boundary has been drawn to include the towpath and towpath hedge, canal related earthworks and features including historic wharfs and locks, and woodland. The biodiversity value of the canal is reflected in a number of statutory and non statutory designations along the length of the canal. In terms of recreation, the canal is popular for boaters and anglers. A public footpath runs the length of the canal and a section of the route is a public bridleway. The canal and towpath is owned and maintained by the Canal and River Trust, but the responsibility for planning matters lies with the District Council. This policy for the Oxford Canal draws on the recent Design and Conservation Strategy (2012) and reflects its status as a conservation area.

**B.274** Policy ESD 8 Water Resources, Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment, Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement and Policy ESD 18: Green Infrastructure will be used to protect and enhance water quality and the contribution that the canal makes to the district's landscape, ecological and recreational resource, for its entire length through the district. Policy ESD 16: The Character of the Built Environment will also be used to ensure that works to existing structures are sympathetic to the historic context and that any new development is sensitively sited and designed to ensure that the special character is preserved or enhanced. The southern section of the Oxford Canal lies within the Green Belt and Policy ESD 14 will therefore be relevant to proposals in that area. Inappropriate development [proposals](#) in the Green Belt will only be permitted if very special circumstances can be demonstrated, as set out in the NPPF. The approach to residential canal moorings [and boater's facilities](#) on the Oxford Canal will be set out in the Development Management DPD.

### **Policy ESD 17: The Oxford Canal**

**We will protect and enhance the Oxford Canal corridor which passes south to north through the district as a green transport route, significant industrial heritage, tourism attraction and major leisure facility through the control of development. The length of the Oxford Canal through Cherwell District is a designated Conservation Area and proposals which would be detrimental to its character or appearance will not be permitted. [The biodiversity value of the canal corridor will be protected.](#)**

**We will support proposals to promote, transport, recreation, leisure and tourism related uses of the Canal where appropriate, as well as supporting enhancement of the canal's active role in mixed used development in urban settings. We will ensure that the towpath alongside the canal becomes an accessible long distance trail for all users, particularly for walkers, cyclists and horse riders where appropriate.**

**Other than appropriately located small scale car parks and picnic facilities, new facilities for canal users should be located within or immediately adjacent to settlements. The Council encourages pre-application discussions to help identify significant issues associated with a site and to consider appropriate design solutions to these and we will seek to ensure that all new development meets the highest design standards.**

### **Policy ESD 18: Green Infrastructure**

**B.275** Green infrastructure comprises the network of green spaces and features in both urban and rural areas including the following: parks and gardens (including historic parks and gardens), natural and semi-natural green space, green corridors (including cycleways and rights of way), outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space, children's play space, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, accessible countryside in urban fringe areas, river and canal corridors, [woodlands](#), nature reserves, green roofs and walls.

**B.276** Securing adequate green infrastructure is an important component of achieving sustainable communities. Green Infrastructure networks can deliver both environmental and social benefits including conserving and enhancing biodiversity, recreation, landscape, water management, social and



cultural benefits to underpin individual health and well-being, contributing to local distinctiveness and helping communities to be more resilient to the effects of climate change. Policy ESD 18 will be used to secure an adequate green infrastructure network in Cherwell District.

**B.277** Many sites which contribute to the district's green infrastructure network are not in the Council's ownership or control and partnership working will therefore be required to plan, provide and manage the network to achieve the objectives of the policy.

**B.278** Within Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington the key components of green infrastructure are areas of open space, sport and recreation, sometimes linked by public rights of way. Public rights of way are protected in law and comprise four types: footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic (BOAT). The County Council has responsibility for Public Rights of Way, and as such publishes a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and promotes routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders in order to encourage sustainable access to the countryside. In recognition of the health benefits of walking, cycling and horse riding this Council also promotes a number of circular walks and rides. Elsewhere in the District the dominant strategic features include the River Cherwell and Oxford Canal corridors, statutory designated sites such as Local Nature Reserves, and other areas such as RSPB Otmoor reserve and BBOWT reserves. The Conservation Target Areas (indicated on the Proposed Submission Policies Map) are the most important areas for biodiversity in the district where targeted conservation action will have the greatest benefit, and form an important component of the green infrastructure network of the district which can be enhanced over the period of the plan.

**B.279** Assessments of open space, sport and recreation provision highlighted various deficiencies in both urban and rural areas of the District, as detailed in Section C 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'. In addition an assessment by Natural England and the Forestry Commission indicated a lack of accessible natural green space provision in the district compared to their standards, with 72% of Cherwell's households meeting none of its requirements. This reflects the relatively low numbers of country parks and common land in the district; however there are a number of smaller areas of open space, and countryside which is accessible solely by Public footpaths Rights of Way, which was not taken into account in the initial Natural England analysis. The district has developed its own local standards of provision in accordance with government advice, which differ from those advocated by Natural England. Other than provision in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington there are few accessible large areas of green space within the district; however parks such as Blenheim, Rousham and Stowe are located in close proximity to it. The Council's proposed country park to the north of Banbury will also help to address this issue.

**B.280** Protection and enhancement of open space, sport and recreation sites and sites of importance to nature conservation will assist in maintaining the green infrastructure network. Green corridors consist of canals, river corridors and hedgerows, together with public rights of way. These can provide areas for walking, cycling and horse riding and also provide opportunities for wildlife migration, which on a strategic scale can help to address the impact of climate change on biodiversity. Development proposals will be expected to

retain and enhance existing green corridors, and maximise the opportunity to form new links between existing open spaces.

**B.281** Development proposals, particularly on larger sites, can offer the opportunity to improve the green infrastructure network. Policy BSC 11 usually requires open space provision on site and biodiversity enhancements secured by Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment can contribute to the network by maintaining existing habitats and reducing fragmentation. The incorporation of sustainable urban drainage systems can contribute to green infrastructure provision and can perform dual roles of helping to alleviate flooding and being beneficial to biodiversity. New landscaping areas, particularly in the case of the strategic sites, will be required to assimilate development into the landscape and assist in the transition between the urban edge and rural areas. Effective links in these areas can enable the urban fringe to provide a recreational resource, providing accessible countryside within walking distance of urban dwellers. Proposals should include details of management and maintenance of green infrastructure to ensure areas are secured in perpetuity. Further guidance on green infrastructure provision is provided in the South East Green Infrastructure Framework - from Policy to Practice (<http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/pages/green-infrastructure.html>)

**B.282** In Banbury and Bicester successive local plans have sought to establish a series of open spaces in the towns, and this plan includes proposals for a new country park in Banbury (Policy Banbury 14: [BanburyCherwell](#) Country Park). Additional detail is contained under Section C: 'Policies for Cherwell's Places'. The key open space components of existing green infrastructure provision in Banbury and Bicester are shown on the maps for each town (Appendix 5: Maps). Green infrastructure provision will be examined in more detail and progressed through the town masterplans and the Local Neighbourhoods DPD. A county level Green Infrastructure Strategy is also being formulated with the District Council being represented on the stakeholder working group.

**B.283** South of the Canalside development (Policy Banbury 1: [Banbury Canalside](#)) the opportunity exists to turn part of the existing floodplain of the River Cherwell into a managed habitat. This will be explored in more detail through the preparation of the Banbury Masterplan.

## **Policy ESD 18: Green Infrastructure**

**The district's green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced through the following measures:**

- **Pursuing opportunities for joint working to maintain and improve the green infrastructure network, whilst protecting sites of importance for nature conservation**
- **Protecting and enhancing existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network and improving sustainable connectivity between sites in accordance with policies on supporting a modal shift in transport (Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections), open space, sport and recreation (Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision), adapting to climate change (Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change), SuDS (Policy ESD 7:**

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), biodiversity and the natural environment (Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment), Conservation Target Areas (Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas), heritage assets (Policy ESD 16) and the Oxford Canal (Policy ESD 17)**

- **Ensuring that green infrastructure network considerations are integral to the planning of new development. Proposals should maximise the opportunity to maintain and extend green infrastructure links to form a multi-functional network of open space, providing opportunities for walking and cycling, and connecting the towns to the urban fringe and the wider countryside beyond**
- **All strategic development sites (Section C: 'Policies for Cherwell's Places') will be required to incorporate green infrastructure provision and proposals should include details for future management and maintenance.**