

# **Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2024-2035**

**A report to South Oxfordshire District Council on  
the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan  
Review**

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## **Executive Summary**

- 1 I was appointed by South Oxfordshire District Council in August 2024 to carry out the independent examination of the review of the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood area on 21 August 2024.
- 3 The Plan is an excellent example of a neighbourhood plan review. It seeks to bring the Plan up-to-date. It includes a variety of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In addition, the review has been prepared in short order.
- 4 The Plan has been underpinned by community support and engagement. All sections of the community have been engaged in its preparation.
- 5 Subject to a series of recommended modifications set out in this report, I have concluded that the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum. I recommend that the referendum area coincides with the neighbourhood area.

**Andrew Ashcroft**  
**Independent Examiner**  
**19 November 2024**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan Review 2024-2035 ('the Plan').
- 1.2 The Plan was submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) by Wallingford Town Council (WTC) in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2023. The NPPF continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 The role of an independent examiner is clearly defined in the legislation. I have been appointed to examine whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions and Convention Rights and other statutory requirements. It is not within my remit to examine or to propose an alternative plan, or a potentially more sustainable plan except where this arises because of my recommended modifications to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions and the other relevant requirements.
- 1.5 A neighbourhood plan (and a review of a plan) can be narrow or broad in scope and can include whatever range of policies it sees as appropriate to its designated neighbourhood area. The submitted Plan has been designed to be distinctive in general terms, and to be complementary to the existing development plan. It seeks to provide a context in which the neighbourhood area can maintain its character and setting in the wider landscape. It includes a built-up area boundary and proposes a revision to the details of one of the major housing sites.
- 1.6 Within the context set out above, this report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the basic conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.

## **2 The Role of the Independent Examiner**

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by SODC, with the consent of WTC, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both SODC and WTC. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have 41 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level, and more recently as an independent examiner. I have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral System.

### *Examination Outcomes*

- 2.4 The examination process for the review of a 'made' neighbourhood plan is set out in Section 3 of this report.
- 2.5 The outcome of the examination is set out in Section 8 of this report.

### *Other examination matters*

- 2.6 In examining the Plan, I am required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
  - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
  - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.7 I have addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.6 of this report and am satisfied that they have been met.

### 3 Procedural Matters

3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement.
- the SEA/HRA screening report.
- the WTC Modification Statement.
- the SODC Modification Statement.
- the representations made to the Plan.
- WTC's responses to the two clarification notes.
- the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (2011-2035).
- the emerging Joint Local Plan (South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts)
- the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023).
- Planning Practice Guidance.
- relevant Ministerial Statements.

3.2 I visited the neighbourhood area on 21 August 2024. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I concluded that the Plan could be examined by written representations. I was assisted in this process by the comprehensive nature of many of the representations and the professional way in which the Plan has been developed.

*The examination process for the review of a neighbourhood plan*

3.4 The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 identifies the circumstances that might arise as and when qualifying bodies seek to review 'made' neighbourhood plans and introduces a proportionate process to do so based on the changes proposed.

3.5 There are three types of modification which can be made to a neighbourhood plan or order. The process will depend on the degree of change which the modification involves and as follows:

- minor (non-material) modifications to a neighbourhood plan or order which would not materially affect the policies in the plan or permission granted by the order. These may include correcting errors, such as a reference to a supporting document, and would not require examination or a referendum; or
- material modifications which do not change the nature of the plan or order and which would require examination but not a referendum. This might, for example, entail the addition of a design code that builds on a pre-existing design policy, or the addition of a site or sites which, subject to the decision of

the independent examiner, are not so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the plan; or

- material modifications which do change the nature of the plan or order would require examination and a referendum. This might, for example, involve allocating significant new sites for development.

- 3.6 In the submitted Modification Statement, WTC consider that the proposals represent material modifications to the 'made' Plan, but they are not considered so significant or substantial as to change the nature of the 'made' Plan.
- 3.7 SODC has also undertaken a separate assessment of the issue. It takes the same view as WTC on the scale and nature of the modifications to the policies in the 'made' Plan.
- 3.8 I have considered the Modification Statements very carefully. I agree with WTC and SODC that most of the changes to the 'made' Plan fall into the first two categories. However, I note that Policy WS3.1 proposes the designation of a built-up area boundary, and that this approach will have clear implications on the use of land in the neighbourhood area. In these circumstances, I have concluded that the submitted Plan includes material modifications which change the nature of the Plan and require both an examination and a referendum
- 3.9 I advised WTC and SODC of this conclusion. WTC subsequently confirmed that it was content for the examination of the Plan to proceed. In these circumstances, I have examined the Plan in accordance under Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The remainder of this report sets out the findings of the examination.
- 3.10 Section 7 of this report assesses each policy in turn and identifies any modifications required to ensure that the policy meets the basic conditions. My recommendation is then set out in Section 8.

## 4 Consultation

### *Consultation Process*

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such, neighbourhood plans need to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended), WTC prepared a Consultation Statement. It is proportionate to the neighbourhood area, its policies and the issues addressed in the review. In the round, it is a good example of a Statement of this type. It sets out key findings in a concise report which is underpinned by a series of more detailed tables and appendices.
- 4.3 Paragraph 3.1 of the Statement records the various activities that were held to engage the local community. This process reflects the nature of the review of the 'made' Plan. The Statement also provides specific details on the consultation processes that took place on the pre-submission version of the Plan (February to April 2024).
- 4.4 Appendices C and D of the Statement provide details about how the Plan was refined because of this process. This helps to explain the way in which the Plan was refined after that consultation exercise.
- 4.5 I am satisfied that consultation has been an important element of the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation. From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. SODC has carried out its own assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

### *Consultation Responses*

- 4.6 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by SODC. It ended on 25 July 2024. This exercise generated representations from the following organisations:
  - Cholsey and Wallingford Railway
  - Wallingford Medical Practice
  - Thames Water
  - Natural England
  - Oxfordshire County Council
  - Mobility Issues Group Wallingford
  - L&Q Estates
  - Croudace Homes
  - South Oxfordshire District Council
  - David Wilson Homes
  - Nicholas King Homes

- Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board
- Berkeley Homes (Oxford and Chiltern) Limited
- Girlguiding Wallingford

4.7 Several representations were also received from residents.

4.8 I have taken account of all the representations in preparing this report. Where it is appropriate to do so, this report refers to representations on a policy-by-policy basis.



## 5 The Neighbourhood Area and the Development Plan Context

### *The Neighbourhood Area*

- 5.1 The neighbourhood area consists of the parish of Wallingford. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 1 May 2015. Its population in 2011 was 7542 persons living in 3432 houses. In 2021 the population had risen to 8455 persons.
- 5.2 Wallingford is located approximately five miles to the east of Didcot. It is strategically located to the immediate west of the River Thames. It is largely surrounded by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the Chilterns National Landscape to the west and to the east respectively.
- 5.3 Wallingford is a market town of considerable historic importance. The core of the town is defined by the Alfredian burh ramparts and ditches inside which much of the Anglo-Saxon grid layout remains. They are the best-preserved Saxon defences and street grid in England. The historic character of Wallingford in the Anglo-Saxon, medieval and (in some parts of the town) later has been that of a developed core with open space lying between the core and the defensive circuit. These open spaces, known as The Kinecroft and Bull Croft, are of considerable heritage significance. On the north east burh boundary are the substantial remains of the great castle dating back to the immediate aftermath of the Norman Conquest. The town has retained its character, status, and function over the years. It is one of a series of market towns in the District settlement hierarchy. In this context it offers an attractive town centre for its own residents and those in its immediate hinterland. The town is naturally constrained to the east by the River Thames. It has however expanded over the years to the south and to the west. The A4130 to the west of the built-up area largely provides a bypass of the town for longer distance east-west traffic.

### *Development Plan Context*

- 5.4 The South Oxfordshire Local Plan was adopted in December 2020. It sets out the basis for future development in the District up to 2035. Wallingford is identified as one of the four towns in the settlement hierarchy. Policy STRAT1 comments that the roles of Wallingford, along with Thame and Henley-on-Thames will be supported by maintaining and improving the attractiveness of their town centres through a variety of measures. Policy WAL1 sets out a specific strategy for Wallingford. At its heart is an approach which supports development proposals to consolidate the economic, the social and the environmental aspects of the town's role as an important market town. Policy H3 of the Plan sets out housing requirements for the three market towns. Wallingford is expected to deliver at least 1070 homes in the Plan period. This includes the delivery of the committed site to the west of the town.
- 5.5 The following other policies are particularly relevant to the submitted Plan:
- |    |                      |
|----|----------------------|
| H1 | Delivering New Homes |
| H9 | Affordable Housing   |

H11	Housing Mix
H16	Infill Development
H22	Loss of Existing Residential accommodation in town centres
EMP7	New employment land at Wallingford
EMP11	Tourism
EMP13	Retention of Visitor Accommodation
ENV7	Listed Buildings
ENV8	Conservation Areas
DES1	High Quality Development
TC5	Primary Shopping Areas
CF1	Safeguarding Community Facilities

5.6 The submitted review of the Plan has been prepared within this development plan context. In doing so, it has relied on up-to-date information and research that has underpinned existing planning policy documents. This is good practice and reflects key elements in Planning Practice Guidance on this matter. In the round the submitted review of the Plan seeks to add value to the different components of the development plan and to give a local dimension to the delivery of its policies. This is captured in the Basic Conditions Statement.

5.7 Whilst the examination was taking place, SODC and the Vale of White Horse District Council published the Joint Local Plan (JLP) for consultation. It covers both administrative areas, and its Plan period runs up to 2041. SODC's Local Development Scheme (September 2024) advises that the Plan will be submitted for examination in December 2024, and that adoption is anticipated in December 2025.

5.8 The consultation version of the JLP identifies Wallingford as a Tier 1 Settlement. The town is addressed specifically in Policy SP8. Paragraph 5.35 of the Plan advises that 'the strategy for Wallingford sets out a high-level delivery framework, based on our evidence and consultation feedback, outlining what we could improve or should protect within the town. Without being overly detailed or prescriptive, this policy allows town or parish councils or other neighbourhood planning groups the freedom and flexibility to steer future development in their local area.' Policy SP1 (11) comments about role of neighbourhood plans as follows:

*'We will support our communities with the preparation of neighbourhood plans that will reinforce the achievement of this spatial strategy, and we will support ambitious neighbourhood plans that may want to achieve something specific. Thame has an outstanding identified housing requirement of at least 143 homes. All other designated neighbourhood areas have a zero outstanding requirement, although communities can choose to exceed this when preparing neighbourhood development plans and neighbourhood development orders.'*

*Visit to the neighbourhood area*

5.9 I visited the neighbourhood area on 21 August 2024. I approached it from the east via Benson and Crowmarsh Gifford. This helped me to understand the town's position in the wider landscape in general and its accessibility to the strategic road network.

- 5.10 I looked initially at the town centre. I saw its continued vibrancy and attractiveness. I walked to the River Thames and looked at the land off Lower Wharf in relation to the way in which the proposed built-up area boundary had been drawn.
- 5.11 I then looked at the progress which was being made on the two significant housing sites to the west of the town.
- 5.12 I then looked at the various sites which featured in the representations on the Plan from the development industry. Throughout the visit I looked at the proposed built-up area boundary.
- 5.13 I left the neighbourhood area by driving to Brightwell-cum-Sotwell to the north and west. This part of the visit highlighted the way in which the town related to its surrounding landscape, the A4130 and the surrounding villages.

## 6 The Neighbourhood Plan and the Basic Conditions

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped in the preparation of this section of the report. It is an informative and well-presented document.
- 6.2 As part of this process, I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the basic conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
  - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area;
  - not breach, and otherwise be compatible with, the assimilated obligations of EU legislation (as consolidated in the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 (Consequential Amendment) Regulations 2023; and
  - not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

I assess the Plan against the basic conditions under the following headings.

### *National Planning Policies and Guidance*

- 6.3 For the purposes of this examination the key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF).
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are particularly relevant to the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan Review:
- a plan-led system - in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the South Oxfordshire Local Plan;
  - building a strong, competitive economy;
  - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving local communities;
  - taking account of the different roles and characters of different areas;
  - highlighting the importance of high-quality design and good standards of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings; and
  - conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance.

- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic

needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.

- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the recent ministerial statements.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance subject to the recommended modifications in this report. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the neighbourhood area. It includes a series of policies on a range of development and environmental matters. In addition, it seeks to update the 'made' Plan to take account of changes in national policy since it was made.
- 6.8 At a more practical level, the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraph 16d). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance. Paragraph ID: 41-041-20140306 indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise, and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. Most of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

*Contributing to sustainable development*

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes towards achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social, and environmental. I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development in the neighbourhood area. In the economic dimension, the Plan includes policies for residential development (Policies WS2, WS3 and WS4), for employment activity (Policies EE1 to EE3), and for town centre activities (Policies TC1 to TC7). In the social role, it includes policies on community facilities (Policy CF1 and CF2), on local green spaces (Policy CF2), for the Riverside (Policy CF3), and for local services (Policies CF6 and CF7). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively seeks to protect its natural, built, and historic environment. It has specific policies on design (Policies HD1 and HD2), on the historic environment (Policies HA1 and HA2), and on green spaces and a wider Green Network (Policies EV1 and EV2). WTC has undertaken its own very impressive assessment of this matter in the submitted Basic Conditions Statement.

*General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan*

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in South Oxfordshire in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.

- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan. Subject to the recommended modifications in this report, I am satisfied that the submitted Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

*Strategic Environmental Assessment*

- 6.13 The Neighbourhood Plan General Regulations 2015 require a qualifying body either to submit an environmental report prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 or a statement of reasons why an environmental report is not required.
- 6.14 In order to comply with this requirement, SODC undertook a screening exercise in May 2024 on the need or otherwise for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be prepared for the review of the Plan. The report is thorough and well-constructed. It concludes that the Plan is unlikely to have a significant effect on the environment and therefore does not require a Strategic Environment Assessment.

*Habitats Regulations Assessment*

- 6.15 SODC also prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan at the same time. It assesses the potential impact of the Plan's policies on the following protected sites:
- Little Wittenham SAC;
  - Hartslock Wood SAC;
  - Aston Rowant SAC;
  - Chiltern Beechwoods SAC; and
  - Cothill Fen SAC.
- 6.16 The HRA concludes that the neighbourhood plan will not give rise to likely significant effects on these protected sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- 6.17 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination, I am satisfied that a proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. None of the statutory consultees have raised any concerns about neighbourhood plan obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of neighbourhood plan regulations.

*Human Rights*

- 6.18 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On this basis, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

### *Summary*

- 6.19 On the basis of my assessment of the Plan in this section of my report I am satisfied that it meets the basic conditions subject to the incorporation of the recommended modifications contained in this report.

## 7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the policies in the Plan. It makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 The recommendations focus on the policies in the Plan given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is distinctive and proportionate to the neighbourhood area. The wider community and WTC have spent time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that they wish to be included in the review of the Plan. This sits at the heart of the localism agenda.
- 7.4 The Plan has been designed to reflect Planning Practice Guidance (ID:41-004-20190509) which indicates that neighbourhood plans should address the development and use of land. It also includes a series of Community Aspirations (in Chapter 10).
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted Plan.
- 7.6 For clarity, this section of the report comments on all the policies in the Plan.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

### *The initial parts of the Plan (Chapters 1 and 2)*

- 7.8 The initial parts of the Plan set the scene for the range of policies. They do so in a proportionate way. The Plan is presented in a professional fashion. It makes very effective use of well-selected photographs and maps. It is a real credit to those who have written the Plan and to those who have been responsible for its design and layout. A very clear distinction is made between its policies and the supporting text. It also highlights the links between the Plan's objectives and its resultant policies. If the Plan review is made it will comfortably sit within the wider development plan for South Oxfordshire and continue the approach taken in the made Plan.
- 7.9 Chapter 1 addresses the background to neighbourhood planning. It comments about how the Plan has been prepared and the need for it to comply with the basic conditions. It includes an effective map of the designated neighbourhood area (Map 1). Paragraph 1.3.1 identifies the Plan period. Paragraph 1.1.2 comments about the role and purpose of the review of the Plan.
- 7.10 Chapter 1 also describes the neighbourhood area in a very effective fashion. It sets out the details of the various consultation exercises that have taken place. The Plan's Journey on page 6 is a simple and effective way of describing the work which has been undertaken so far. This report is one of the identified final stages of that journey.
- 7.11 The initial part of Chapter 2 sets out a comprehensive vision and related objectives for the Plan. It incorporates a five-point vision underpinned by four objectives. The vision



and objectives are distinctive to the neighbourhood area. It is also clear that the policies flow from the evidence base and the supporting text. This approach also highlights the very detailed and thorough way in which the Plan has been prepared.

- 7.12 Section 2.2 of the Plan sets out eight key themes of the Plan. They have been promoted with community support. They usefully provide the basis for the remainder of the Plan and act as a basis for the themed groups of policies.
- 7.13 The remainder of this section of the report addresses each policy in turn in the context set out in paragraphs 7.5 to 7.7 of this report.

*General comments on the Plan and the format of its policies*

- 7.14 The Plan is an excellent example of a review of a neighbourhood plan. It helpfully consolidates the review of the Plan into the structure of the 'made' Plan. This results in a series of revised policies and the retention of unchanged policies from the 'made' Plan.
- 7.15 For the purposes of this report, I do not comment in any detail on the unchanged policies other than where they have been affected by updates to national planning policy.
- 7.16 Several developers question the need for the review of the Plan and its timing. In several cases, the two points are connected in the representations. On the first matter, developers consider that most of the issues included in the review of the Plan are minor and could be addressed through the development management process. On the second matter, developers contend that the review of the Plan is premature given the ongoing preparation of the emerging JLP. As I have outlined in paragraph 5.8 of this report, that Plan was published for consultation whilst this examination was taking place.
- 7.17 I have considered these comments carefully and assessed them against the contents of Planning practice guidance (ID:41-009-20190509) which comments about the relationship between emerging local plans and emerging neighbourhood plans and the adopted development plan. Taking account of all the information, I am satisfied that there are no process issues which restrict WTC's ability to review the Plan. This acknowledges that national legislation provides considerable flexibility on both the frequency and the timescales for a qualifying body to review its Plan. In addition, in my judgement, the emerging plans are consistent in the way in which they address development in the town. Furthermore, it is best practice for a qualifying body to keep its Plan up-to-date and to respond to changing circumstances.
- 7.18 Paragraph 11.1.8 of the made Plan advises that 'the Town Council will ensure that the Plan is reviewed in a parallel way with the eventual review of the recently-adopted Local Plan. In general terms this process will ensure that the different elements of the development plan continue to be complementary. In particular it would allow the strategic delivery of new housing in the town to be readjusted if necessary. It would also allow an ongoing assessment of the way in which housing delivery in the town was directly addressing local housing needs'.

- 7.19 Plainly the review of the neighbourhood plan is now ahead of the review of the adopted Local Plan (now the emerging JLP). Nevertheless, I am not convinced that this is a reason to delay its examination. WTC has taken account of the emerging JLP in its preparation of its submitted Plan, and this process responds positively to the element of Planning practice guidance as highlighted in paragraph 7.18 of this report. In reaching this judgement, I have also noted that SODC (as the local planning authority) does not object to the timing of the review of the Plan.
- 7.20 Nevertheless, within this broader context I recommend that the Plan comments about the potential need for a further review of its contents once the JLP has been adopted. This would allow the strategic delivery of new housing in the town to be readjusted if necessary.

*At the end of paragraph 1.1.2 add:*

*'The Town Council acknowledges that the Joint Local Plan will be submitted for its own examination later this year. That Plan covers the period up to 2041 and addresses the strategic delivery of housing across South Oxfordshire District and the Vale of White Horse District. The Town Council will assess the need for a further review of the Neighbourhood Plan within six months of the adoption of the Joint Local Plan.'*

WS1 The Local Strategy for Wallingford

- 7.21 This policy is carried forward from the made Plan with additional wording added to WS1.1(b). The additional wording relates to limiting greenhouse gas emissions, and the relationship between the health and wellbeing of the local community and the provision of accessible open spaces.
- 7.22 L&Q Estates question if WTC has given due consideration to the Written Ministerial Statement (Planning: Local Energy Standards) issued in December 2023 which sets out that the government does not expect plan-makers to set local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned buildings regulations. I have considered this matter carefully. I have concluded that the policy has regard to the Written Ministerial Statement. It has a general rather than a specific approach and does not require that any specific building efficiency standards are met (beyond the requirements of the Building Regulations). Nevertheless, I recommend that this new element of the policy is modified so that it acknowledges that its approach will not always be practicable. Otherwise, this element of the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.
- 7.23 I am satisfied that the second new part of the policy meets the basic conditions.
- 7.24 I am also satisfied that the unchanged elements of the policy continue to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

**At the beginning of the first bullet point of WS1.1 (b) add: 'where practicable,'**

## WS2 The Land Allocation for Housing in Wallingford

- 7.25 This policy is carried forward with additional policy wording relating to the delivery of a medical centre on site. Work on Site E, known as Winterbrook Meadows, began during 2023 and first occupancy is expected at the end of 2024. The land allocated for a school is no longer required for that purpose, and Policy WS2.2 now proposes to allocate that site for a medical centre. The Plan advises that since Spring 2024, GPs from Wallingford Medical Practice are working with Berkeley Homes to prepare a joint planning application for that part of the overall site.
- 7.26 By way of context, the Plan advises that the Wallingford Medical Practice is a hub facility with doctor and nurse practitioners, and related community medical services and primary care providing for both Wallingford and many surrounding villages. The current medical centre is at capacity, and the GPs indicate they will be unable to meet the medical needs of the committed new homes in Wallingford and surrounding areas on the existing site. There is a clear and urgent need for the medical practice to expand with space for more consulting rooms and for supporting services. The 'Relocation Rationale' provided by the GPs on this matter is included in the Plan as its Appendix G.
- 7.27 The Plan advises that it is essential that the design of the new medical centre is sufficient to meet the long-term needs of the local area. It also advises that the design should allow space for a hub facility for the delivery of medical and health services for people in this part of South Oxfordshire and for possible expansion to meet longer term needs
- 7.28 In assessing the way that the policy meets the basic conditions, I have considered the following three matters:
- the extent to which it needs to be retained in the Plan;
  - the detailed revised wording, and the relationship of the medical centre to new housing; and
  - the location of the proposed medical centre within the site.
- 7.29 On the first matter, I am satisfied that the retention of the policy in the Plan is entirely appropriate. Whilst the overall site has planning permission, it is in its early stages of development. In this context, it is perfectly normal for developers to submit further planning applications to revise layouts and/or house types as the development proceeds. As such, the retention of the policy will provide clear guidance to SODC as it determines any such proposals. In addition, the revisions to the policy to deliver a medical centre is a good example of such changes. It is an approach which is regularly applied in other neighbourhood plans. In reaching this conclusion I have considered carefully the representations made on this matter by developers/housebuilders.
- 7.30 The second matter highlights the differing approaches to the details of the delivery of the medical centre expressed by WTC and the developers of the overall housing site (Berkeley Homes). On the one hand, Berkeley Homes supports the principle of the development of a medical centre with associated homes. However, on the other hand, it raises several detailed issues as set out in its representation below:

*'whilst Berkeley are working with Wallingford Medical Centre to support the delivery of a new facility, it is essential that additional housing is delivered on the remaining 3.5 acres of this land, in order to ensure it is viable for Berkeley to transfer, at nil cost, 1.5 acres of developable land to the Medical Centre. In addition to the loss of developable land, Berkeley will also deliver key infrastructure to support the Medical Centre, including the access junction and services, incurring significant costs. As such, we are proposing an additional 60-70 homes on the land, to allow us to continue supporting the delivery of the Medical Centre. Due to the sufficient supply of specialist housing, identified in paragraph 2.9.2 of the draft plan, the delivery of further specialist housing here would create a risk to the generation of funds, due to a potential lack of demand. It is important that any housing brought forward on this parcel of land is delivered as traditional housing, to ensure we are able to sell the homes and reinvest the monies into key infrastructure for the Medical Centre. Delivery of these homes will help provide much needed housing within a District'*

7.31 In its response to these points, WTC commented that:

*'It is likely that if there is a need there should be a demand. Until we know what the SODC Housing Needs Assessment shows we cannot agree that there would be a lack of demand. Any housing on the site whether for the elderly or for others will contribute to the 5-year housing supply. A viability assessment should be included to demonstrate the investment required for the medical centre. It is currently not clear what infrastructure is required or how it will be funded.'*

7.32 In its more general response to the questions in the clarification note, WTC commented that:

*'the policy relates to the general need for housing for older and disabled people. We are currently waiting for SODC to publish the Joint Housing Needs Assessment Report which will include a section on specialist housing. Policy H13 of the Local Plan 2035 encourages developments which include the delivery of specialist housing for older people in locations with good access to public transport and local facilities. This land adjacent to the proposed doctor's surgery is just such a site. The County Council's representation supports land prioritised for specialist housing.'*

7.33 I have considered these different views very carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I recommend that the relevant element of the policy is modified so that it acknowledges that the development of the Medical Centre will need to be accompanied by a package of associated housing which will allow the developer (Berkeley Homes) to transfer developable land to the Medical Centre at nil cost. In this context, the precise mix and type of housing to be delivered as part of the overall package will be a matter for the development partners and SODC to determine based on the evidence available at the time that a planning application is submitted. The recommended modifications to the policy comment about the potential appropriateness of the incorporation of homes which meet the specialist housing needs for older and disabled people within the overall delivery of additional housing on the site associated with the development of a medical centre.

- 7.34 I also recommend consequential modification to the supporting text (in paragraph 2.6.6) including those based on WTC's response to the helpful comments from the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (in paragraph 2.6.3).
- 7.35 The third matter is one of detail rather than substance. Nevertheless, the Plan offers no guidance (either in the text or in map form) about the location of the site which was previously reserved for the development of a school and which is now proposed for the development of a Medical Centre. I recommend that this matter is remedied by the inclusion of an additional map within the Plan (and referenced in Policy WS2.2).
- 7.36 Otherwise, the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development. For clarity, I am satisfied that the other elements of the policy continue to meet the basic conditions.

**Replace WS2.2 with:**

**'The 2.2ha of land previously identified for a school on Site E (as shown on Map Insert Number) is allocated for a medical centre and associated housing development. Where it is both practicable and financially viable to do so, the associated residential development should incorporate homes which meet the specialist housing needs for older and disabled people in the neighbourhood area. Any proposals for the site should:'**

*Replace paragraph 2.6.3 with:*

*'It is essential that proposals for the site should be operationally and financially viable, and the design of the new medical centre is sufficient to meet the long-term needs of the local area, as agreed with NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire Integrated Care Board or other such appropriate body prior to any formal submission of planning applications. The design should allow space for a hub facility for the delivery of medical and health services for people in this part of South Oxfordshire and for possible expansion to meet longer term needs. Access to the site should encourage walking, cycling, and wheeling, and there should be vehicle and cycle parking for staff and patients, including EV charge points for cars and cycles.'*

*Replace paragraph 2.6.6 with:*

*'Policy WS2 recognises that housing allocations meet the housing requirement for Wallingford as advised by the District Council and set out in the Local Plan 2035, and that it exceeds the local requirement as identified in the Wallingford HNA. The Town Council is conscious of the requirement in Local Plan Policy H13. In Policy WS2.2 it seeks to meet these requirements by commenting that any future housing on the land previously allocated for a school at Site E should incorporate specific housing to meet the needs of older people where the delivery of such homes would be both practicable and viable. In addition, the care facility on Site E should be designed to take account of specific needs of the elderly and disabled as identified in the District Council's housing assessment.'*

*Include an additional map within the Plan to clarify the location of the site proposed for the Medical Centre.*

#### WS3 Development within the Built-up Area

- 7.37 This policy is carried forward from the made Plan with the addition of a built-up area boundary (BUAB) for the town. Paragraphs 2.7.2 and 2.7.3 provide a context and purpose for the policy as follows:

*‘Defining the Built-up Area Boundary is a logical way of applying Government advice and strategic policy at the local level. The principle of settlement boundaries is consistent with the NPPF 2023 which expects planning to take account of the character of different areas recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, provided the boundary is not preventing the delivery of a supply of housing. 2.7.3 The Built-up Area Boundary and related policies provide the basis for development management decisions to: define those areas within which planning permission will normally be granted for new development, subject to other planning policies; ensure new development is sustainable; enable the best use to be made of existing and future services; provide a useful tool to protect and preserve Wallingford’s important and sensitive setting by protecting the surrounding countryside from inappropriate development.’*

- 7.38 The definition of the proposed BUAB has been underpinned by the criteria in Appendix H of the Plan.

- 7.39 In assessing the way that the policy meets the basic conditions I have considered the following three matters:

- the extent to which the definition of the BUAB meets the basic conditions in general, and is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan;
- the mechanisms used to define the boundary, and the way in which the development industry was involved; and
- the details of the proposed boundary of the BUAB.

- 7.40 On the first point, several developers contend that the definition of a BUAB will restrict the supply and delivery of new homes in the neighbourhood area and frustrate the need for new homes in the District. In their different ways, the developers concerned highlight the sustainability of the town and its ability to accommodate further growth. In some cases, they promote sites for housing development.

- 7.41 In its response to the clarification note, WTC commented that:

*‘Whilst Wallingford is identified as a higher tier settlement, many facilities are at capacity. Until these issues are resolved, further development than already committed would be unsustainable. The town is also surrounded closely by National Landscape designations which limit the suitability of certain areas for further development.’*

*Wallingford has made provision for at least 1,431 new homes against a minimum requirement of 1,019, this is a 40% increase above the minimum requirement, this is*

*a considerable contribution to sustainable development and to the requirements of the South Oxfordshire Development Strategy. Additional housing will come forward through small-scale windfall developments.'*

- 7.42 I have considered these matters very carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. In reaching this conclusion, I have paid particular attention to the extent to which it has regard to the following strategic policies in the adopted Local Plan:

Policy STRAT1 (The Overall Strategy) – I am satisfied that the submitted policy is in general conformity with this policy. It recognises the role which Wallingford plays in delivering the overall strategy (v) and protects the countryside around the town (ix).

Policy WAL1 (The Strategy for Wallingford) – I am satisfied that the submitted policy is in general conformity with this policy. It does not prevent the delivery of new homes as set out in Policy H3 (see below) and the Local Plan is clear that the town has already exceeded its strategic housing delivery target.

Policy H1 (Delivering New Homes) – In general terms, I am satisfied that the submitted policy is in general conformity with this policy. The submitted Plan acknowledges the existing housing commitments in the town and offers a positive approach towards the delivery of a mix and range of new housing. The fourth element of Policy H1 comments that ‘the residential development of previously developed land will be permitted within and adjacent to the existing built-up areas of Towns, Larger Villages and Smaller Villages. The Council will also support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.’ Whilst Policy WS3.2 does not conflict with this element of Policy H1, I recommend that it is modified so that it more clearly embraces this element of a strategic policy in the development plan.

Policy H3 (Housing in Market Towns) - I am satisfied that the submitted policy is in general conformity with this policy. It does not prevent the delivery of at least 1070 homes in Wallingford. It also supports the delivery of a range of house types. In relation to the fourth part of the policy (on the development of a neighbourhood plan), WTC has comfortably met its requirements.

- 7.43 On the second matter, Appendix H sets out the way in which WTC has defined the BUAB. Sections H6 and H7 advise that:

*‘Guidance places emphasis on the strength and permanence of existing boundaries, and the physical and functional relationships between buildings and the features and land around them. It also notes the need to take account of outstanding planning permissions. Other local parishes have interpreted the guidance according to context, with Crowmarsh and Cholsey taking particular account of functional relationships and tightness to the built form where landholdings are extensive.’*

- 7.44 The Plan advises that the following parcels of land are included in the BUAB:

- the main residential and/or commercial areas;
- areas on the edges of the town where planning permission has already been granted for housing; and

- other land on which housing may be acceptable.

7.45 The Plan then advises that the following parcels of land are not included in the BUAB:

- school playing fields, recreation grounds and allotments where these adjoin the rural area;
- groups of isolated houses or other buildings where infilling or intensification of development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the rural area or setting of the National Landscapes and would be inappropriate;
- land within the curtilage of houses which adjoin the rural area where back-land development would be inappropriate;
- green buffer and land which falls outside of the curtilage of houses; and
- land within flood zone 3 and/or within 10m of a main river.

7.46 In general terms, I am satisfied that the approach taken in Appendix H is appropriate. It sets out a robust way in which to define a BUAB in a consistent fashion. Subject to the comments on the third matter (in paragraphs 7.50 to 7.52 of this report), I am satisfied that WTC has applied the principles in Appendix H in a proper and responsible way.

7.47 Nicholas King Homes comment that Appendix H was included in the Plan at the submission stage, and contend that it was prepared to justify the BUAB as proposed in the pre-submission Plan. I have considered this matter very carefully. On the balance of the evidence, I am satisfied that WTC has acted in a proper way. The preparation of Appendix H responded to the comments received at the pre-submission stage, and has sought to provide clarity to all concerned. Furthermore, section H19 of the Appendix demonstrates that the work on defining criteria resulted in refinements to the definition of the BUAB elsewhere in the town.

7.48 Nicholas King Homes also comments that it was not engaged in the process of defining the BUAB. In its response to the second clarification note, WTC commented that:

*'(the) WNP Review Steering Group followed the statutory process for consulting interested parties, including developers, landowners, the community, and statutory consultees. All landowners were given equal opportunities to contribute to the statutory consultation process. No landowners or developers were excluded from the WNP Review consultation process. Nicholas King Homes was invited, along with other developers with an interest in Wallingford, to take part in both (the pre-submission and submission) consultation processes, and submitted their representations on both occasions.*

*Plan preparation inevitably impacts both landowners, developers, and the community, so to have involved a landowner or developer without the community could have demonstrated a bias in the process.'*

7.49 I have considered carefully all the relevant information. I am satisfied that WTC has approached this matter in an appropriate way. All developers have had (and have taken) the opportunity to comment on this element of the Plan. In addition, the direct involvement of landowners/developers in this process would have been complicated



and/or impracticable. WTC also advises that it had taken account of the two recent refusals of planning permission on the Purely Plants site (as being promoted by Nicholas King Homes).

- 7.50 On the third matter, I looked carefully at the land between Lower Wharf and St Lucian's Lane (as raised in the representation from Williams Gallagher). In its response to the clarification note, WTC provided a map showing the relationship of the site to the proposed BUAB and commented that:

*'(all) residential buildings will be included in the Built-up Area Boundary. The Oxford University Boathouse, with its small ancillary buildings, will not be included in the Built-up Area. This is because primary use is for boat storage and training facilities with access directly to the river and the large areas of surrounding open land. It is clearly a river-related use. The site is not suitable for residential use or other development due to its position in the floodplain.'*

- 7.51 I agree with WTC's conclusion on this matter. For clarity, I recommend that the BUAB is drawn as shown on the map in Appendix A of this report.
- 7.52 This specific site highlights the wider matter of the lack of clarity on the precise boundary of the BUAB caused by the scale of Map 3. In its response to the clarification note, WTC acknowledged this matter and committed to revising the mapping work in the Plan. I recommend accordingly.
- 7.53 Otherwise, I am satisfied that the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development

**Replace Policy WS3.2 with:**

**'Proposals for development outside the built-up area will not be supported unless they are appropriate to a countryside location or are on brownfield land adjacent to the built-up area, and are otherwise consistent with development plan policies and national policy.'**

*Revise the BUAB in the Lower Wharf area as shown on the map in Appendix A.*

*The replacement of Map 3 with a revised high-resolution version.*

**WS4 Affordable Housing and Housing Mix**

- 7.54 This policy is moved from Chapter Three into Chapter Two. Otherwise, it remains unchanged.
- 7.55 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**HD1 Design**

- 7.56 This policy carried forward with minor wording amendments.
- 7.57 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

## HD2 Sustainable Design

- 7.58 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.59 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. Its non-prescriptive format ensures that it has regard to the Written Ministerial Statement (Planning: Local Energy Standards) which was published in December 2023. The policy will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development

## HD3 Avoidance of Light Pollution

- 7.60 This policy is carried forward with minor wording amendments.
- 7.61 In general terms, I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. However, I recommend a modification to the second part of the policy to address the impact of light pollution on National Landscapes as recommended by SODC and as agreed by WTC in its response to the clarification note. Otherwise, the policy will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace HD3.2 with: ‘Development proposals should be designed to minimise the detrimental impact of glare and light spill on sensitive locations including National Landscapes, housing, local amenity, wildlife, highway, and waterway users.’**

## HA1 The Historic Environment

- 7.62 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.63 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

## HA2 Effects of development on Historic and Heritage Assets

- 7.63 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.64 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

## HA3 Views and Vistas

- 7.65 The policy wording of this policy remains unchanged. However, an additional view is identified on Map 5.
- 7.66 In general terms, I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. The additional view is appropriate to be incorporated into the policy. Nevertheless, I recommend a modification to the second part of the policy to address the historic panoramic view from the mote towards the Berkshire Downs as recommended by SODC and as agreed by WTC in its response to the clarification note. Otherwise, the policy will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**At the end of HA3.2 add: ‘Development proposals should have appropriate regard to the historic panoramic view from the motte towards the Berkshire Downs identified on Map 5.’**

#### EV1 Green Spaces and Green Corridors

- 7.67 This policy carried forward with minor wording amendments.
- 7.68 In general terms, I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. Nevertheless, I recommend a modification to one of the criteria in the policy so that its structure and format properly explain its purpose. This was suggested by SODC, and agreed by WTC in its response to the clarification note. Otherwise, the policy will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

**Replace EV1.1(d) with:**

**‘respect and protect the setting of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes, the River Thames and its floodplain, to enhance:**

- **the water quality for human health;**
- **the ecological and natural capital value of the river, its banks, the Thames Path National Trail; and**
- **the use of the river for formal and informal recreation and to promote tourism.’**

#### EV2 Protect Existing Amenity Spaces and Wallingford Green Network

- 7.69 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.70 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### EE1 Safeguard Existing Local Employment Sites for Class B Uses

- 7.71 This policy is carried forward with minor wording amendments.
- 7.72 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the economic and the social dimensions of sustainable development.

#### TC1 Primary Shopping Area

- 7.73 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.74 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the economic and the social dimensions of sustainable development.

#### TC2 New Uses for Buildings within the Town Centre

- 7.75 This policy remains unchanged.

- 7.76 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. The vibrancy of the town centre suggests that the policy has been effective. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### TC3 Regal Site

- 7.77 This policy is carried forward with amended text to reflect current situation.
- 7.78 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### TC4 Improve the Visitor Economy

- 7.79 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.80 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### TC5 Public and Private Car Parks

- 7.81 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.82 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### TC6 Preservation of Visitor Accommodation

- 7.83 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.84 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### MC1 Impact of development proposals on the public highway network and parking provision

- 7.85 This policy carried forward from the made Plan with title change and minor wording amendments.
- 7.86 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### MC2 Access to Public Transport

- 7.87 This policy is carried forward from the made Plan with minor wording amendments.
- 7.88 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### MC3 Cycling

- 7.89 This policy is carried forward from the made Plan with title change and minor wording amendments.

- 7.90 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### MC4 Safe Active Travel

- 7.91 This policy is carried forward from the made Plan with minor wording amendments.
- 7.92 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### MC5 Vehicle Parking

- 7.93 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.94 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

#### MC6 Cholsey and Wallingford Railway Corridor

- 7.95 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.96 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of each of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In reaching this conclusion I have considered the representation from the Railway.

#### MC7 Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Points

- 7.97 This policy remains unchanged. As the supporting text of the made Plan had anticipated, the provision of electric vehicle charging points is now captured in the Building Regulations. Part S of the Regulations was introduced in December 2021 and was subsequently updated in April 2023. In this revised context neighbourhood plans do not need to address the delivery of charging points.
- 7.98 However, as submitted, the policy's focus is on the design of new residential developments (so that they can deliver charging points) rather than a mechanical or mathematical approach to delivery. As such, I am satisfied that, with modifications, the policy continues to meet the basic conditions and supplements the approach taken in the Building Regulations. I recommend more detailed modifications to the supporting text so that it now reflects the implementation of Part S of the Building Regulations.
- 7.99 Otherwise the policy meets the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### **Replace the policy with:**

**'New residential developments should be designed and arranged to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles (as required by Part S of the Building Regulations) in safe, accessible, and convenient locations.'**

*Replace paragraph 8.3.18 with:*

*'Policy MC7 recognises that vehicle technologies are changing, and promotes and facilitates more sustainable travel. The Town Council wishes to ensure that the policy*

*is sufficiently general to ensure that it is future-proofed throughout the Plan period. It acknowledges changes in technology and the government's wider ambitions to move away from motor vehicles powered exclusively by either petrol or diesel engines. The delivery of charging points is now controlled by Part S of the Building Regulations. However, the Town Council wishes to ensure that vehicle charging facilities are comfortably and sensitively accommodated in new residential developments.'*

#### CF1 Support for New Formal and Informal Sport and Community Facilities

- 7.100 This policy is carried over with title change and minor wording amendments.
- 7.101 I am satisfied that the policy continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### CF2 Local Green Spaces

- 7.102 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.103 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### CF3 Wallingford's Riverside

- 7.104 This policy carried over with title change and minor wording amendments.
- 7.105 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### CF4 Local Amenity Provision

- 7.106 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.107 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### CF5 Health & Wellbeing Service Provision

- 7.108 This policy remains unchanged.
- 7.109 I am satisfied that it continues to meet the basic conditions. It will contribute to the delivery of the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

#### Community Aspirations

- 7.110 The review of the Plan continues to include a package of Community Aspirations. They are set out in a separate part of the Plan. The Aspirations are unchanged from those in the made Plan. I am satisfied that they continue to be appropriate and distinctive to the neighbourhood area.

#### Other Matters - General

- 7.111 This report has recommended a series of modifications both to the policies and to the supporting text in the submitted Plan. Where consequential changes to the text are

required directly because of my recommended modification to the policy concerned, I have highlighted them in this report. However other changes to the general text may be required elsewhere in the Plan because of the recommended modifications to the policies. Similarly, changes may be necessary to paragraph numbers in the Plan or to accommodate other administrative matters. It will be appropriate for SODC and WTC to have the flexibility to make any necessary consequential changes to the general text and other elements of the Plan. This includes factual modifications to Sections H14 and H19 of Appendix H based on the recommended modification to the BUAB in Policy WS3.2. I recommend accordingly.

*Modification of the general text and Appendix H (where necessary) to achieve consistency with the modified policies and to accommodate any administrative and technical changes.*

#### Other Matters – Specific

7.112 SODC has made a series of helpful comments on the Plan. I have included them in the recommended modifications on a policy-by-policy basis where they are required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.

7.113 I also recommend other modifications to the text of the Plan based on SODC's comments insofar as they are necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. In the main they will bring the Plan up-to-date. Other matters relate to the more general parts of the Plan. They have been agreed by WTC. For convenience I list them using the relevant reference numbers in the SODC representation.

*Modification of general text to update the Plan and to refine the wording used (SODC References 1/2/3/5/6/8/9/12).*

7.114 Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) proposes a series of revisions to the Plan. In most cases, they comment on policies and supporting text which are unchanged from the made Plan. In addition, whilst most of the suggested changes would refine the Plan to good effect, they are not necessary to ensure that it meets the basic conditions.

7.115 I recommend a modification to the text of paragraph 10.1.8 based on OCC's comments. It has been agreed by WTC.

*Revise the text to paragraph 10.1.8 based on WTC's response to OCC's comments in the response to the first clarification note.*

## 8 Summary and Conclusions

### *Summary*

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2035. It is thorough and distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community.
- 8.2 Following the independent examination of the Plan, I have concluded that the Wallingford Neighbourhood Development Plan Review meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.
- 8.3 This report has recommended a range of modifications to the policies in the Plan. Nevertheless, it remains fundamentally unchanged in its role and purpose.

### *Conclusion*

- 8.4 On the basis of the findings in this report, I recommend to South Oxfordshire District Council that, subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report, the Wallingford Neighbourhood Plan Review should proceed to referendum.

### *Referendum Area*

- 8.5 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. In my view the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by the District Council on 1 May 2015.
- 8.6 I am grateful to everyone who has helped in any way to ensure that this examination has run in a smooth and efficient manner. The Town Council's responses to the two clarification notes were both comprehensive and timely.

**Andrew Ashcroft**  
**Independent Examiner**  
**19 November 2024**



# Appendix A: Map of Built Up Area Boundary

