WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

West Oxfordshire District Council

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

1st April 2009 – 31st March 2010

December 2010

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2010

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. As forecast in last year's report, the annual dwelling build rate fell again, to 384, the lowest level in 10 years. However, this reduction in delivery followed a five year period where the development of two large allocated housing sites resulted in an average annual completion rate of over 720 homes including, in one year, a 20 year high of 865 units.

1.2. The lower supply in 2009/10 is more representative of the expected building rate over the next few years as shown in ***Chart 1.*** The Council can still demonstrate (***Table 1***) a healthy supply of ready-to-develop housing sites under the South East Plan target. Over three quarters of the homes built in 2009/10 were on sites within the three largest settlements of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton and a similar proportion (75%) were built on previously developed land.

1.3. In common with much of the Country, the Council's ability to meet its target for affordable housing delivery was restricted by the economic recession and our target wasn't reached until later on in 2010. Nevertheless 52 additional affordable homes (22 of them new-build) were completed during the reporting year and, at 1st April 2010, there were outstanding permissions for a further 300 homes (100 on rural exception sites). Almost three quarters of all the homes completed in the reporting year had one or two bedrooms only. The average density of all new housing development was just under 50 dwellings per hectare (dph).

1.4. The year 2009/10 also saw an important step towards the future of sustainable design and construction with planning permissions being granted for affordable homes in Stanton Harcourt and Woodstock. These incorporate renewable sources of energy in their design and make use of locally produced, renewable materials for their construction.

1.5. The dramatic fall in the amount of new employment floorspace, completed in 2009/10, compared to that completed in the previous year, was undoubtedly due to the recession. However, very little of the existing employment space was lost to other uses and the District's unemployment claimant count (1.2% compared to a national rate of 3.8%) reflects West Oxfordshire's continued economic stability. At 1st April 2010, a large amount of permitted employment floorspace still remained to be developed. About a third of this related to the construction of a new hangar and associated offices at RAF Brize Norton. This has since been completed.

1.6. The amount of floorspace developed for A1 (retail), in the reporting year, was much higher than in 2008/09 and was mainly delivered at the new Marriott's Walk development, in Witney. This scheme also included a large amount of D2 floorspace, in the form of a multiplex cinema. This development is now complete. At 1st April 2010, there were still well over 30,000m^2 of 'town centre uses' with unimplemented planning permission. A survey of the existing uses within the District's main towns was carried out in 2009, confirming their continuing vitality and viability.

1.7. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was completed for the Council in 2009, considering the potential impact of climate change as well as identifying possible future sources of flooding. Although little change occurred in the sizes of sites designated for their biodiversity importance, during the reporting year, there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of SSSIs in 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition, from 94% to 99%.

2. ABOUT WEST OXFORDSHIRE

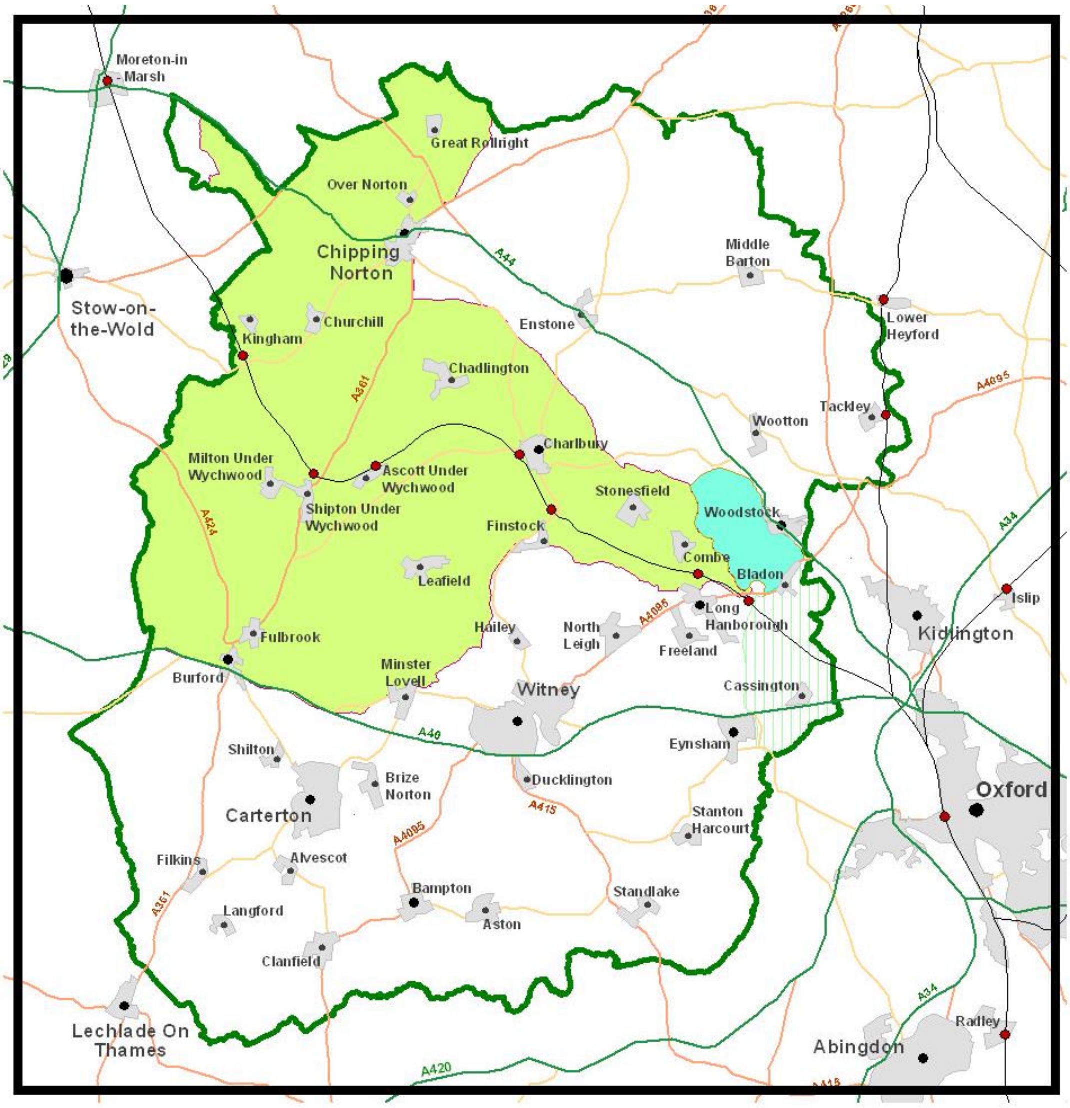
2.1. West Oxfordshire is a largely rural district to the west of Oxford and adjoining Gloucestershire. More than a third of the District's 71,494 hectares, to the north west of the District, fall within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A small area (1,610 hectares) to the east forms part of the Oxford Green Belt. The District's special landscape and distinctive settlements include 3,200 listed buildings, 50 conservation areas, 16 parks and gardens of special historic interest and the world heritage site of Blenheim Palace. West Oxfordshire is well served by a strong network of footpaths, bridleways and rivers, such as the Thames, the Windrush and the Evenlode. As well as the opportunities for leisure and recreation that these various routes offer, they also support a rich biodiversity.

2.2. With a population of about 102,500[1], West Oxfordshire's density, of just 1.43 persons per hectare, makes it one of the most rural districts in the south east of the country. Although there are about 130 separate settlements, over 40% of the population lives in the two largest towns of Witney (approx 27,000) and Carterton, towards the south of the District (about 16,000).

2.3. Larger towns and cities, such as Oxford, Cheltenham, Swindon and Banbury are relatively accessible, using main roads that pass through the District (see ***Figure 1***), although the A40 becomes heavily congested, especially on the approach to Oxford. Travel further afield (e.g. London and Birmingham) is catered for by the Cotswold and Cherwell Valley railway lines. However, about a quarter of the District's inhabitants live within rural areas that are ranked within the worst 10%, in England, for accessibility to services. In consultation, residents have expressed concerns about the lack of adequate transport infrastructure, problems with public transport availability and associated increasing levels of traffic congestion. One of the Council's priorities is to work in partnership to improve access to services and facilities.

2.4. The picturesque villages and historic buildings, set within a rolling countryside, give West Oxfordshire a unique and a special character and its protection and enhancement is particularly important. In consultation, 85% of respondents said that they were satisfied with the local area as a place to live (this is higher than the average for Oxfordshire and other districts). However, such environments can be fragile and are under threat from the effects of climate change. Within West Oxfordshire, electricity and gas use in homes, as well as CO_2 emissions, are above average. At the same time, recycling rates are lower than the County average. Another of the Council's priorities is to keep West Oxfordshire clean and beautiful, whilst protecting the environment and trying to reduce the causes and effects of climate change.

[1] ONS Mid-2009 figures



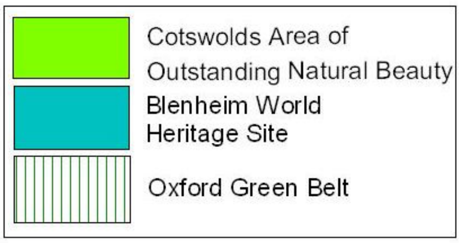


Figure 1

West Oxfordshire

2.5. West Oxfordshire's economy is relatively strong and diverse and the District enjoys a very low level of unemployment (just 1.2% JSA[2] claimant count compared to a national rate of 3.8%)[3]. Although West Oxfordshire's is a many-faceted economy, ranging from individual craftspeople to high-technology industry, nearly 80% of the District's employees work within the service sector. The efforts of nearly 5,000 tourism sector employees help to inject about £225 million into West Oxfordshire's economy, each year.

2.6. The proportion of residents of retirement age is greater than any of Oxfordshire's other districts and higher than the average for the south east of the Country. This proportion is expected to increase over the next few years, at a significantly higher rate than that of children under 15 years of age. Life expectancy is generally higher than average, although the levels of obesity in residents who are 16 years old or over, are higher than in any of Oxfordshire's other districts.

2.7. In West Oxfordshire, the cost of the cheapest (lower quartile) housing is about 8 times the lowest (lower quartile) annual wage[4]. In April 2009, there were a little over 45,000[5] dwellings in West Oxfordshire and about 85% of these were owner-occupied or privately rented. Over 5,250 of the total number of dwellings are affordable homes, managed by registered social providers. There are around 2,000 households on the Council's common waiting list for affordable accommodation.

2.8. The Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/5110-2761.pdf noted that the lack of availability of both affordable housing and rented accommodation was worse within more rural areas. This can make it difficult for younger people and families to find suitable accommodation to allow them to remain in the home area. With an ageing population, some communities may find it difficult to maintain their vitality and prosperity.

2.9. Residents and visitors, alike, benefit from a high quality environment with a rich architectural and historic heritage and there are no major social problems. However, although West Oxfordshire's crime figures are amongst the lowest in the Country, there is a fear of crime in some areas, particularly at night.

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[2] JSA claimant count records the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance
[3] NOMIS June 2010 – a proportion of resident working age population of the area
[4] Table 576 DCLG Live Tables
[5] Key Facts: West Oxfordshire – www.gos.gov.uk

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1. Under Section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all local planning authorities are required to submit an annual report to the Secretary of State, recording the progress of development plan documents being prepared and set out in their Local Development Schemes (LDS). This report should also document the progress against local policies and targets and any relevant national targets.

3.2. The good practice guide 'Local Development Framework Monitoring' included several Core Output Indicators which authorities were required to monitor. The data thus collected was then passed to regional planning bodies to enable them to measure and report, to the Government, on regional trends. However, the data required by many of these indicators was either time consuming or difficult to collect and, often, related poorly to any local policies or targets. Although this list of indicators was updated in 2005 and, again, in 2008 (see Appendix 1) they were still of limited value to the local monitoring process and many have been abandoned.

3.3. When the Regional Spatial Strategies are revoked and no longer form part of the Development Plan, local authorities will have the ability to formulate more relevant and meaningful indicators which will demonstrate, much more clearly, the effectiveness of their strategies and associated policies.

3.4. Although this is West Oxfordshire's 6th Annual Monitoring Report, it is no longer bound by centrally imposed targets and indicators. Instead, it is shaped by local needs and aspirations and the Council's policy approach in dealing with these issues. The Council spends considerable time and effort in seeking the views of its resident population to test and adapt that policy approach, where necessary. One form of consultation, which is carried out on a triennial basis, is the survey of West Oxfordshire's parish and town councils. Such a survey was carried out during 2010, and the main issues identified by the respondents form Appendix 2 of this report.

3.5. Following an update of the timetable and milestones relating to the local development documents under preparation, this report considers the effects of implementation of our Local Plan policies. Section 5 monitors Housing, Employment and Environment policies in turn.

4. MONITORING OF PLAN PREPARATION

4.1 As forecast in last year's report, the year 2009/10 saw a reduction in the previously high residential building rate to a level closer to the South East Plan target applying at the time. The more recent building rate reflects not only the national economic downturn but also the completion of the large Greenfield urban extensions at Witney and Carterton.

4.2 Despite the recession Witney town centre has remained relatively buoyant with completion of the Marriotts Walk shopping and entertainment facilities and, more recently, expansion of the Woolgate centre.

4.3 At Carterton plans to expand the nearby RAF Brize Norton (with closure of RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire) have been a key feature of LDF plan preparation and consultation. Uncertainties about the impact of development at the airbase and the timing of redevelopment of poor quality military housing estates, along with the significant increase in personnel anticipated, continue to influence local decisions.

4.4 In February 2010 the Council published for consultation its Core Strategy Preferred Approach, the Sustainability Appraisal and assessment of housing potential (SHLAA - Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment). The technical assessments concluded that:

- there is only limited potential within existing built-up areas to accommodate further housing (other than on small sites)
- most new housing on sites of 10 or more dwellings will be on Greenfield sites on the fringe of existing towns and villages
- the main development site options for the future are severely constrained, particularly in relation to inadequate infrastructure and their landscape impact.

4.5 The Preferred Approach contained proposals for strategic development sites at Witney (west) and Chipping Norton (east). The consultation document also asked for comments on

- whether a second strategic development area should be identified to the north of Witney
- whether Carterton should continue to expand through a strategic development area either to the east or west of the town.

The Council is currently considering the way forward along with the appropriate local housing target to be pursued (to replace the South East Plan target).

4.6 All consultation responses to the Preferred Approach were published on the Council's website http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/CoreStrategy.cfm

4.7 The timetable for plan preparation in West Oxfordshire was agreed with the Government Office in September 2009. The Council aimed to submit the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State in October 2010 with an Examination in early 2011. The full timetable (Local Development Scheme) can be viewed at http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/LDF.cfm

4.8 Slippage in the plan preparation timetable has been inevitable due to the changes being brought about by the new Coalition Government, in particular the proposed revocation of the South East Plan and its housing targets. The Council now aims to consult on the full Core Strategy and its local housing target in early 2011 with an Examination later in the year. Updates of the Sustainability Appraisal and SHLAA will also be available.

4.9 The preferred strategic development area to the west of Witney includes land reserved for longer term development under the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan. A consortium of landowners and developers has been pursuing pre-application consultation with a view to seeking planning permission and commencing construction of the new urban extension as soon as possible. Associated with this development is construction of a new junction to connect the western side of the town with the A40 dual carriageway.

4.10 Elsewhere in Witney a final decision is awaited on whether the long-planned Cogges Link Road will be built (scheduled for 2013/14). Although the scheme has planning permission its delivery has been delayed by a town green application on its route and opposition from landowners directly affected. The provision of a new road crossing of the River Windrush is an essential prerequisite to environmental improvements in the central area and to any further development on the northern/eastern side of the river.

5. MONITORING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

HOUSING

Supply and Type of Site

5.1. During the reporting year (2009/2010) the housing requirement, within West Oxfordshire, was dictated by the South East Plan which set a housing requirement of 7,300 additional homes between 2006 and 2026. A total of 384 additional homes were completed during the year. By 1 April 2011 it is anticipated that about 3,000 new homes will have been built since 1 April 2006. The housing trajectory, ***Chart 1***, shows our current assessment of annual completions over the next 10 years on identified sites. When the Regional Spatial Strategies have been revoked by the Government, the onus is on each local authority to determine an appropriate level of housing to be delivered during a specific time period (at least 15 years). The Council is reviewing its target as part of the LDF process; the information in ***Chart 1*** will input to that review.

5.2. As well as identifying sites and broad locations that will provide, at least, a 15 year supply of housing, local authorities are also expected to identify 'sufficient specific deliverable sites' to provide a source of housing for the first five years of that period. This requirement is measured by National Indicator 159 (Supply of ready to develop housing sites). ***Table 1*** shows the housing land supply position as at 1st April 2010 and demonstrates a healthy level of available sites at that time (about 115% against NI 159). The table reflects the housing target of the former South East Plan.

5.3. Over 75% of all dwellings completed in the reporting year were built on previously-developed land (as defined by PPS3 at 1st April 2010). ***Chart 2*** shows how the proportion of completions on such land has increased as the two large, greenfield, development areas (Madley Park, Witney and Shilton Park, Carterton) have come to a close. The national target, set out in PPS3, requires 60% of all new housing to be developed on previously-developed land. However, reflecting the District's very rural character, the Local Plan sets a more realistic and appropriate target of 40-45%. Two thirds of the unbuilt homes, with planning permission, at 1st April 2010, will be built on previously developed land.

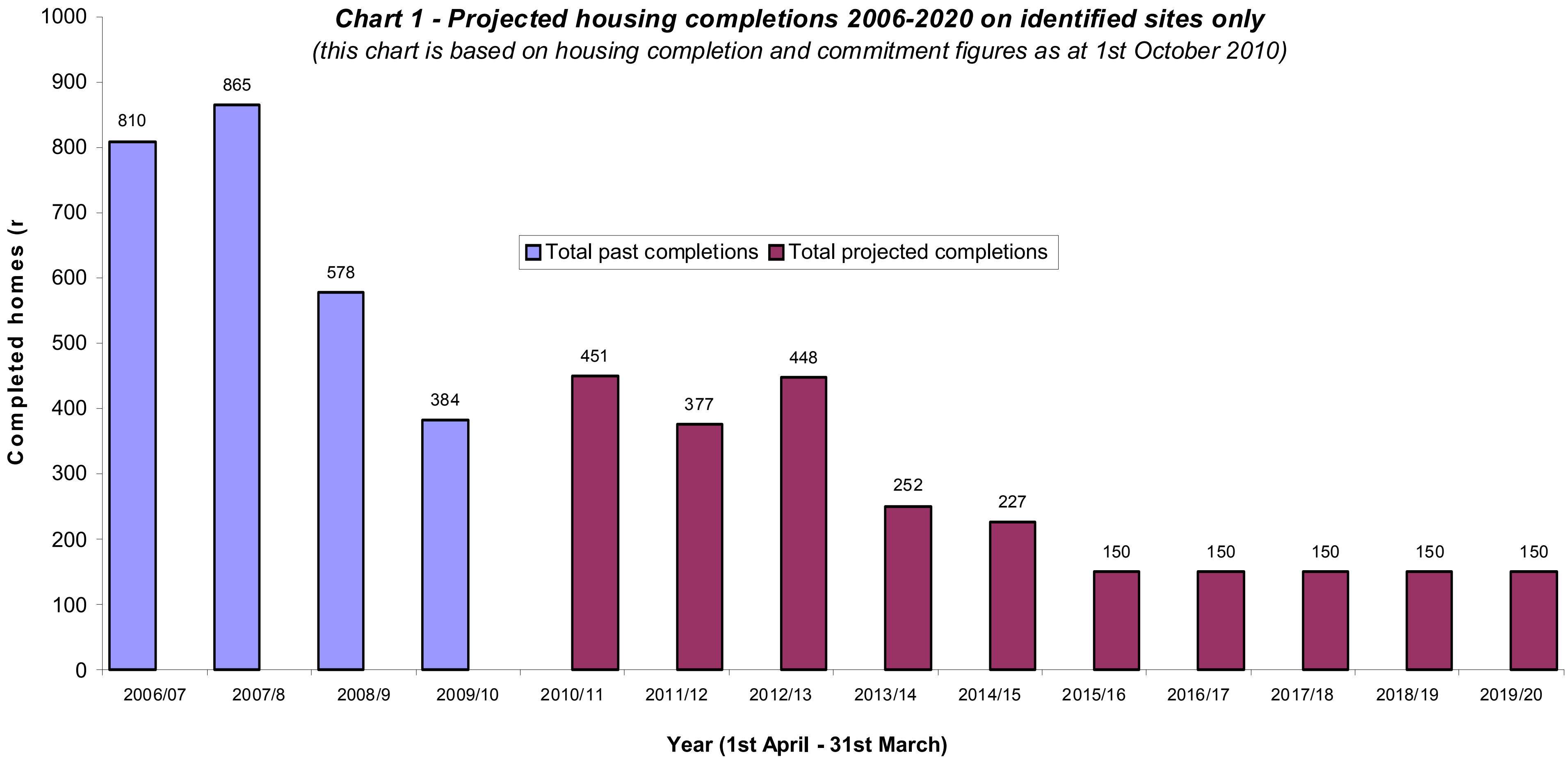
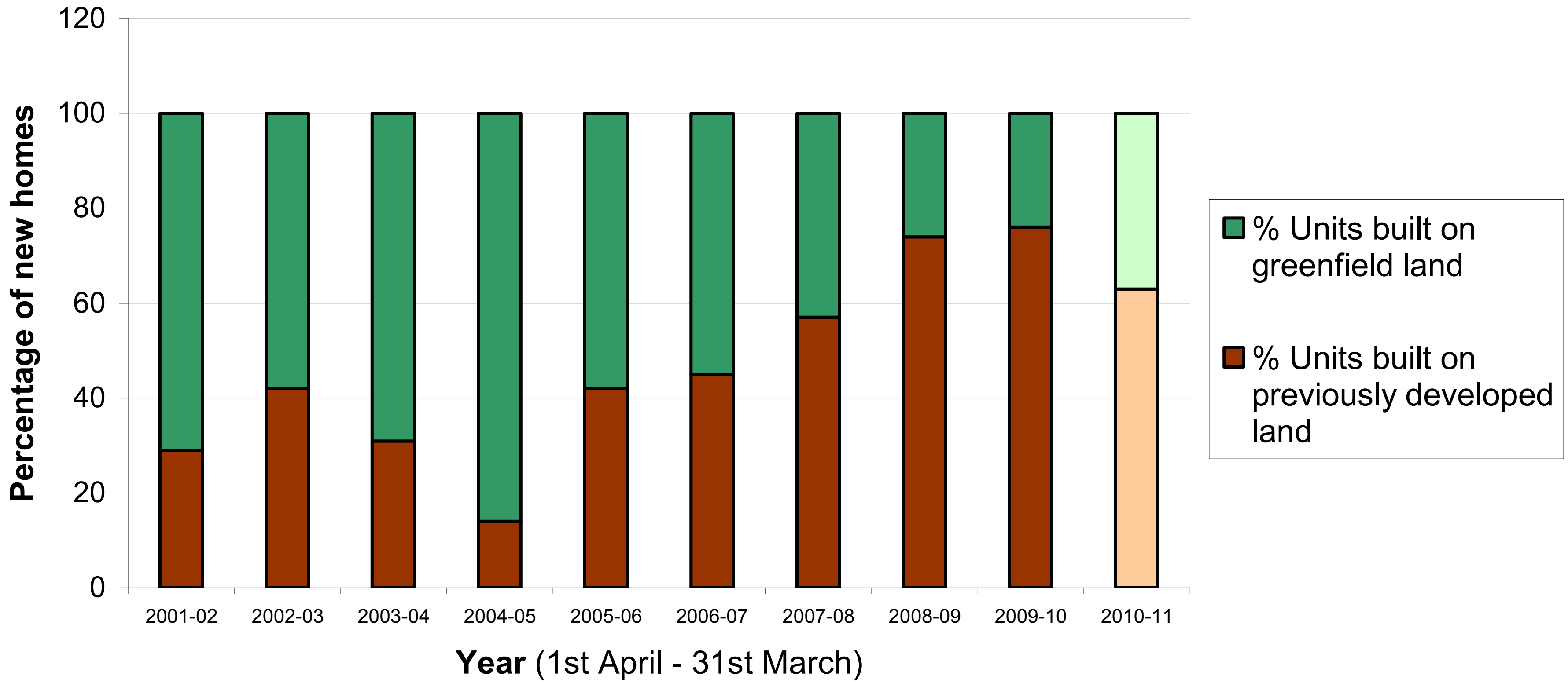


Chart 1 - Projected housing completions 2006-2020 on identified sites only
(this chart is based on housing completion and commitment figures as at 1st October 2010)
Completed homes (r
Total past completions
Total projected completions
0
100
200
300
400
500
600
700
800
900
1000
810
865
578
384
451
377
448
252
227
150
150
150
150
150
2006/07
2007/8
2008/9
2009/10
2010/11
2011/12
2012/13
2013/14
2014/15
2015/16
2016/17
2017/18
2018/19
2019/20
Year (1st April - 31st March)

Chart 2 - Proportions of new homes completed on previously developed and greenfield land in West Oxfordshire



	SOURCE	HOMES	NOTES
A	Total SE Plan provision 2006-2026	7,300	
B	Homes completed 1/4/06–31/3/10	2,637	
C	Remaining provision required 1/4/10–31/3/2026	4,663	A - B
D	Plan period years remaining 1/4/10-31/3/26	16	
E	Annualised requirement 1/4/10-31/3/26	291	C ÷ D
F	Requirement for next 5 years (2010/11-2014/15)	1,455	E x 5
G	Deliverable homes on allocated sites with planning permission from 1/4/10	391	See http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/7594-4071.pdf for details of these sites
	Deliverable homes on exception sites with planning permission from 1/4/10	100	
H	Deliverable homes on sites with planning permission which were previously unidentified/ unallocated	672	Those sites which have not yet started are discounted by 6% to allow for possible lapses[6]
I	Deliverable homes on sites allocated in the Local Plan but without planning permission	290-330	This figure excludes the Cogges allocation (46 homes) which is not considered deliverable within the 5 year period
J	West Witney Strategic Development Area (North Curbridge)	200	This mixed use site is expected to deliver approximately 50 homes in 2013/14 and then 150 homes per annum from 2014/15
	Total deliverable dwellings	1,653-1,693	G + H + I + J

***Table 1** Summary of supply of deliverable sites*

The formula for calculating the proportion of dwellings that are deliverable is:-

$$\frac{\textit{The number of dwellings that can be built on deliverable housing sites}}{\textit{The housing supply requirement}} \times 100$$

i.e. between (1653 ÷ 1455) x 100 = <u>114%</u> and (1693 ÷ 1455) x 100 = <u>116%</u>

[6] Since 2001, about 6% of dwellings permitted on small previously unidentified sites have lapsed.

5.4. The objectives of the Local Plan's housing strategy recognise the special rural character and environmental quality of West Oxfordshire and endeavour to locate new development where there is the best access to services and facilities and where it will have the least adverse impact upon the District's character and resources. Since 2006, the Plan's locational policies have been very effective, with over three quarters (78%) of all new housing being delivered within the three larger service centres of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. During the reporting year (2009/10) over 50% of the 384 new homes were built in the main town of Witney, with a further 26% being completed in Carterton and Chipping Norton. At 1st April 2010, just over 44% of all outstanding permitted dwellings were on sites in these three larger service centres.

5.5. Although 381 of all unbuilt homes with planning permission (as at 1st April 2010) are to be built on allocated land, the majority (68%) will be completed on previously unidentified sites. Since 2001, nearly 2,000 of all additional homes (over a third) have come from non-allocated sources and it is expected that a significant proportion of new homes, in West Oxfordshire, will continue to come forward from such sites.

5.6. Since 2001 an average of 108 homes have been completed each year on windfall[7] sites of less than 10 units. As noted in the Council's Position Statement on Housing Land Supply April 2010 http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/7593-4070.pdf , there is likely to be a reduction in the supply of dwellings from some sources in future years.

5.7. ***Table 2*** shows the expected delivery of homes on identified sites over the next 10 year period (with planning permission at 1 October 2010 or identified in the Local Plan). It does not include expected delivery from additional sites yet to be identified through the LDF process, further windfalls nor sites covered in the SHLAA assessment.

[7] As defined in PPS3 prior to June 2010

All sites with development of 10 or more units and not completed before 1st April 2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	Total
WITNEY – With permission											
118a Burwell Drive – 08/0358	10										**10**
Marriott's Close – 09/0220	74		50								**124**
1a Crawley Road – 07/1355			14								**14**
5 Welch Way – 06/1599				14							**14**
44 Moorland Road – 07/0390	1										**1**
Springfield School – W//403/05		12									**12**
New Leys Farm – 07/1970			13								**13**
Valence Crescent – 07/2123	11										**11**
Allocated											
Buttercross Works (Proposal 5)			50								**50**
Cogges (Proposal 7) (46 dependent upon Cogges Link Road)											
Strategic Development Area (Proposal 8)				50	150	150	150	150	150	150	**950**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	27	27	27	27	27						**135**
Sub-total	**123**	**39**	**154**	**91**	**177**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**1,334**
CARTERTON – With permission											
39 Burford Road – 08/0253	6										**6**
53 Burford Road – 09/1473		13									**13**
Shilton Park AH5 – 09/0818	40										**40**
Lincresta and Hawthorns – 04/2055		30	33								**63**
Allocated											
North East Development Area			50	100	50						**200**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	15	15	15								**45**
Sub-total	**61**	**58**	**98**	**100**	**50**						**367**
CHIPPING NORTON – Allocated											
Local Plan Proposal 1			30	50							**80**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	11	11	11	11							**44**
Sub-total	**11**	**11**	**41**	**61**							**124**
REMAINDER OF DISTRICT – With permission											
BURFORD – Cheatle Crescent – 09/1562	13										**13**
ENSTONE – Crossways, Tew Road – 08/0187	10										**10**
CHADLINGTON – Quarry Road – 09/1353	12										**12**
EYNSHAM – Eynsham East – 08/1341	25	50	25								**100**
Merton Close – 08/1265	40										**40**
HANBOROUGH – Myrtle Farm – 09/1275		24									**24**
MILTON – Langston House – 10/0255			10								**10**
STANTON HARCOURT – 16 Blackditch – 08/1730		16									**16**
WOODSTOCK – Banbury Road – 09/0414	16										**16**
Hensington Farm – 07/1808		16									**16**
East of Marlborough School – 09/0901	20	43									**63**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	120	120	120								**360**
Sub-total	**256**	**269**	**155**								**680**
TOTAL	**451**	**377**	**448**	**252**	**227**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**150**	**2,505**
Units on previously developed land	287	198	310	52	27						**874**
Units on greenfield land	164	179	138	200	200	150	150	150	150	150	**1,631**
Percentage on previously developed land	64%	52%	69%	21%	12%						**35%**
Percentage on greenfield land	36%	48%	31%	79%	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	**65%**

	Previously developed		Greenfield

Table 2 *– Estimated year of completion of residential units on identified sites in West Oxfordshire*

Housing Type and Densities

5.8. It is important that, as well as delivering sufficient numbers of housing to meet the overall local target set by the Council, suitable mixes of housing types, sizes and tenures are delivered in appropriate locations. The Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment highlighted a number of issues that need to be considered. In particular, it saw the growth of both smaller households and households with older residents (65 and older) as key demographic drivers and noted that, although there is a significant variation in house prices across the County, there 'is no evidence of low price areas'. The report estimates that around a half of all first-time buyers cannot access the local housing market without some form of subsidy.

5.9. The West Oxfordshire Housing Needs Assessment 2008 http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/publications/6626-462.pdf noted that an income of £29,200 would be required to purchase the cheapest 1-bed flat in West Oxfordshire. More than 90% of the District's concealed households earned less than this figure. Clearly, there is a significant need for affordable housing within the District and the assessment suggested that an estimated annual supply of some 567 affordable units (after allowing for the re-letting of existing rented accommodation and the re-sale of shared ownership properties) would be required to meet this need.

5.10. Policies H11 and H12 in the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan are intended to maximise affordable housing delivery under a variety of development scenarios. These policies are supported and expanded upon by two additional publications (*Affordable Housing SPD* http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/AffordableHousingSPD.cfm and *Affordable Housing on Rural Exception Sites* http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/publications/5792-255.pdf). The emerging Core Strategy will continue to develop and refine this policy approach.

5.11. During the reporting year (1/4/09 – 31/3/10) 52 additional affordable homes were provided, 22 of which were new-build. In the four years since the 1st April 2006, 415 new affordable homes were built (***Table 3***). In addition, a further 58 units were provided through conversions and purchases. In common with other house-building programmes, nationally, the Council's target of at least 340 new build affordable homes, between April 2007 and April 2010, suffered the effects of the economic recession and this total is not likely to be reached until later on during 2010. On the 1st April 2010 there were outstanding planning permissions for 300 affordable homes, a third of which will be delivered on Rural Exception Sites[8]. Between 1992 and 2010, over 200 new affordable homes have been completed on such sites and the numbers built in particular parishes are shown in ***Table 4***.

[8] These are sites released specifically to meet identified local housing needs in accordance with Local Plan Policy H12 and PPS3

Site	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	Totals
Shilton Park, North East Carterton		38	38	17	**93**
Queens Road, Carterton		9			**9**
Parker Knoll, Chipping Norton	40	13			**53**
Rock Hill, Chipping Norton	13				**13**
Furlong Row, Clanfield	3				**3**
Mill Lane, Clanfield*			6		**6**
Queen's Crescent, Clanfield	5				**5**
Ducklington Mill, Ducklington			8		**8**
Filandic, Enstone		2			**2**
Fairspear Road, Leafield *	10				**10**
Choicehill, Over Norton*			6		**6**
Oxford Downs CC, Standlake		2			**2**
Early's of Witney	10	1			**11**
Dark Lane, Witney		15	33		**48**
Madley Park, North East Witney	14	47	3		**64**
Tower Hill Works, Witney	18	6			**24**
Bridge Street Mill, Witney		53			**53**
Akeman Street, Ramsden*				5	**5**
TOTALS	**113**	**186**	**94**	**22**	**415**
* Sites developed under the Local Plan's Rural Exception Policy					

***Table 3** Locations of new-build affordable housing completed 2006/07 – 2009/10*

5.12. The Council's affordable housing target was reviewed during the reporting year and a revised target of 110 new affordable homes (minimum) was set for 2010/11. In addition, the Council is seeking at least 30% of all new affordable homes to be provided in the rural areas of West Oxfordshire (i.e. outside of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton). Although only around 20% of the affordable homes completed in 2008/09 and 2009/10 fell within this category, well over 60% of the new dwellings planned for delivery during 2010/11 will be provided in these rural areas. Around half of the homes planned for 2010/11 will be built on Rural Exception Sites.

Parish	Number of dwellings	Year(s) completed
Ascott-under-Wychwood	6	1997
Bampton	31	1992
Charlbury	44	1994, 2003
Clanfield	6	2009
Enstone	8	1992
Fulbrook	12	1993
Hailey	12	2000
Kingham	13	1998, 2002
Langford	8	1995
Leafield	10	2006
Over Norton	6	2008
Ramsden	5	2009
Shipton-under-Wychwood	10	1995
Stonesfield	8	2005
Tackley	16	1995, 1998
Woodstock	15	1993
Wootton	7	2001

Table 4 *– Rural Exception Sites completed by parish since 1992*

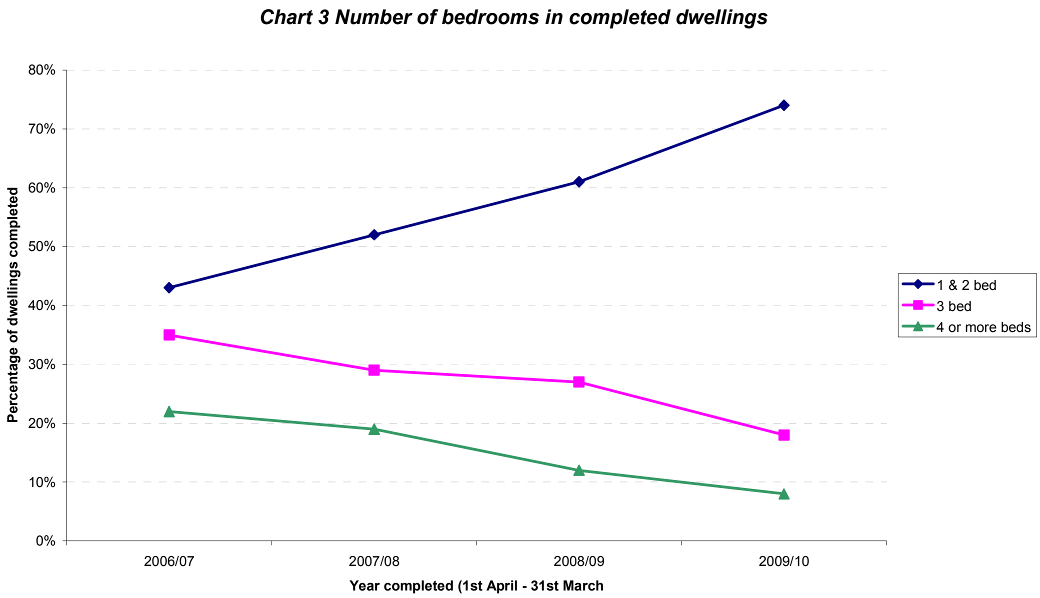
5.13. Within the provision of new affordable housing,, the Council seeks a broad tenure mix of about 70% for social rent and 30% as intermediate. Between 1st April 2006 and 31st March 2009 62% of the new affordable dwellings built were for social rent and 38% for intermediate market housing. The proportions completed during 2009/10 were similar at 64% for rent and 36% intermediate. Affordable housing covered by outstanding planning permissions, where the tenure is known (258 of the 300 permitted units), will provide 71% rented and 29% intermediate. Nearly three quarters (73%) will take the form of houses or bungalows, with the remainder being flats.

5.14. Within Oxfordshire, a trend has been noted towards smaller household sizes, with occupation rates forecast to decline from 2.34 persons in 2006 to 2.20 by 2026[9]. Although the Housing Needs Assessment identified a demand, from more than a third of existing households who were planning to move, for three-bed properties, it also noted that a further 45% of movers were seeking smaller one or two-bed homes. Well over half of all concealed households planned to move into flats, although only a little over 5% of existing households already in accommodation were looking for this type of property. During 2009/10, almost three quarters of the homes completed had one or two bedrooms only. This continues the upward trend from 2006 (see ***Chart 3***). There was a slight drop in the proportion of new permissions for one and two bed properties, during 2009/10. Nevertheless, ***Table 5*** shows a fairly consistent level of provision of these properties over a number of years.

[9] Oxfordshire Population and Household Forecasts 2010

DETAILED PLANNING PERMISSIONS GRANTED BY YEAR			
Year	1 & 2 bed	3 bed	4 or more beds
2006/07	58%	31%	11%
2007/08	57%	31%	12%
2008/09	61%	22%	17%
2009/10	57%	29%	14%

Table 5 *Annual residential permissions by bedroom numbers*



5.15. Although PPS3 reminds us that the efficient use of land 'is a key consideration in planning for housing', it also points out the fact that, amongst other things, varying characteristics within a plan area may influence the choice of densities in different localities or neighbourhoods. Local Plan Policy H3 provides more detailed local guidance on efficient land use and advises that, in such a rural district, higher densities are more likely to be appropriate in the existing urban areas, rather than within the more sparsely populated countryside. However, as PPS3 notes, even in such locations 'more intensive development is not always appropriate'. During the reporting year, the density on sites of 10 or more homes has varied from 26 dwellings per hectare (dph) (a 12 house development on Swinbrook Road in Carterton) to 108 dph in Chipping Norton (flats on Churchill Road). The overall density for all sites of 10 or more dwellings, over the year, was just under 50 dph.

5.16. As noted earlier in this document, West Oxfordshire is home to a relatively high proportion of older residents, with those in the 75 years plus age group expected to increase by 72% between 2006 and 2026. The Housing Needs Assessment identified a significant need for sheltered/extra care accommodation. This may be delivered not just from new build development, but from the adaptation of existing housing stock. During September 2010, permissions were granted (subject to the applicants first entering into legal agreements) for new

build sheltered/extra care schemes for the elderly at the Vernon House site in Chipping Norton (21 apartments) and to the rear of Shipton Road in Milton-under-Wychwood (44 apartments). The Oxfordshire Extra Care Housing Strategy is being delivered by a partnership of the Districts and the County Council.
http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/council_services/health_social_care/general/strategy/ECHstrategy.pdf

Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

5.17. In recognition of the fact that, nationally, there are insufficient sites to meet the needs of the population of Gypsies, Travellers and travelling showpeople, West Oxfordshire, in conjunction with a number of other councils in the Thames Valley Region, commissioned assessments of the accommodation and support needs of these groups within the District. These reports, available on our website at http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/7587-4065.pdf and http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/publications/6217-456.pdf, demonstrate a need, within West Oxfordshire, for additional permanent plots and pitches.

5.18. It is proposed that the Council's emerging Core Strategy will meet this identified need through a two-pronged approach. Existing sites will be safeguarded and, where appropriate, may accommodate further plots or pitches through site extensions. Any additional sites, put forward, will be measured against need and locational criteria. If, however, it becomes apparent that the need cannot be met through this approach, then specific sites may be identified through the development plan process.

5.19. In 2006, there were 77 authorised pitches in West Oxfordshire and since then 19 additional pitches/plots have gained planning permission (see ***Table 6*** below). In the reporting year (1/4/09 - 31/3/10), 3 pitches were permitted for Gypsy and Traveller households and 6 plots were permitted for travelling showpeople.

Location	Pitches/Plots	Granted date
Little Acorn, Cogges Lane, Stanton Harcourt	1	19/12/2007
Ting Tang Lane, Asthall Fields, Minster Lovell	8	27/05/2008
The Ark, off B4020, Nr Alvescot	1	09/02/2009
Cuckoo Wood Farm, Eynsham Road, Freeland	6	06/04/2009
The Paddocks, Weald Street, Bampton	1	17/06/2009
Home Farm, Barnard Gate	1	04/09/2009
Green Acres, Scrubs Lane, Shilton	1	22/10/2009

Table 6: *Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Plots/Pitches added since 1st April 2006*

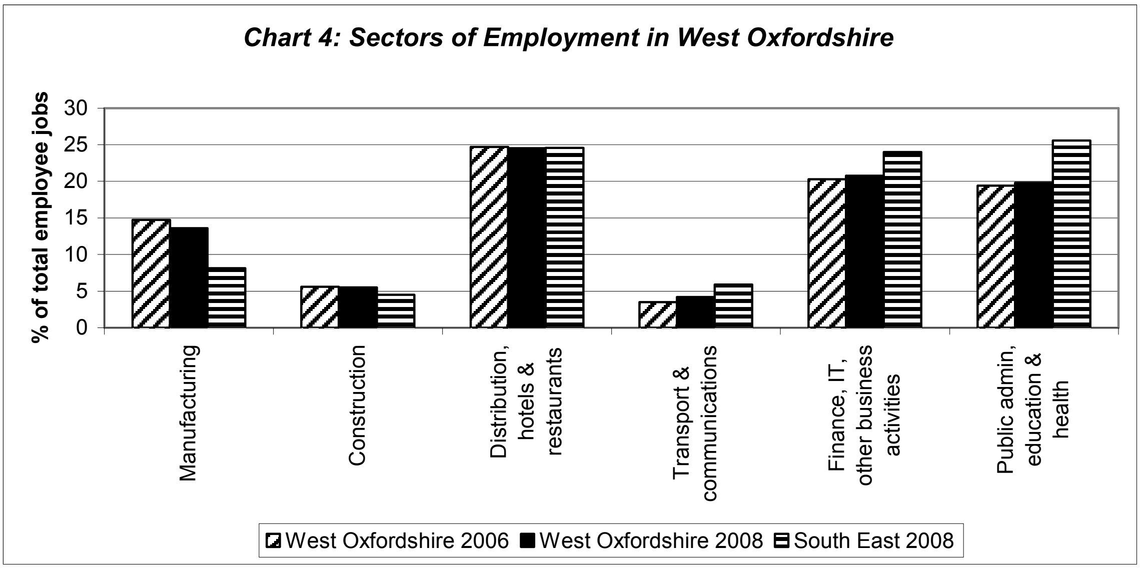
EMPLOYMENT

The Local Economy

5.20. West Oxfordshire has a relatively strong and healthy local economy with a wide and diverse range of businesses. The Local Plan employment policies seek to support and contribute to this prosperity by ensuring that a wide range of land, sites and premises, together with supporting infrastructure, is available to meet the needs of businesses.

5.21. Within the previous AMR (08/09) the effects of the recession and its impact on the economic climate had not been fully reflected in the data at that time.

5.22. The most recent data (2008) indicates that there were 53,000 jobs in total in West Oxfordshire. This included 38,900 employee jobs of which the service sector is the largest employer with 78.5% of employee jobs. Manufacturing retains an above average presence in the local economy (14% of employee jobs) remaining steady against a national picture of decline in this sector. The District has notable specialisms in motorsport and high performance engineering, medical and optical equipment, technical consultancy and biotechnology.



5.23. In the rural area[10] whilst employment in agriculture has declined it is still an important sector economically and for landscape management. Otherwise in rural areas the types of businesses are similar to those in urban areas, with a high proportion of service based activities[11]. Businesses in rural areas tend to be smaller and there is more home-working and self employment. Recent Business Demography data indicates that the survival rates of new businesses in West Oxfordshire is generally above average[12].

5.24. Tourism and the visitor economy remains an important sector, estimated in 2008 to be worth £229m to the local economy. Tourism related jobs continued to grow between 2005 and 2008 and accounted for 12% of total jobs. The

[10] Using standard rural-urban definitions the rural area includes all of the District excluding Witney and Carterton

[11] Understanding Rural Oxfordshire –The Rural economy, Oxfordshire Economic Observatory 2007

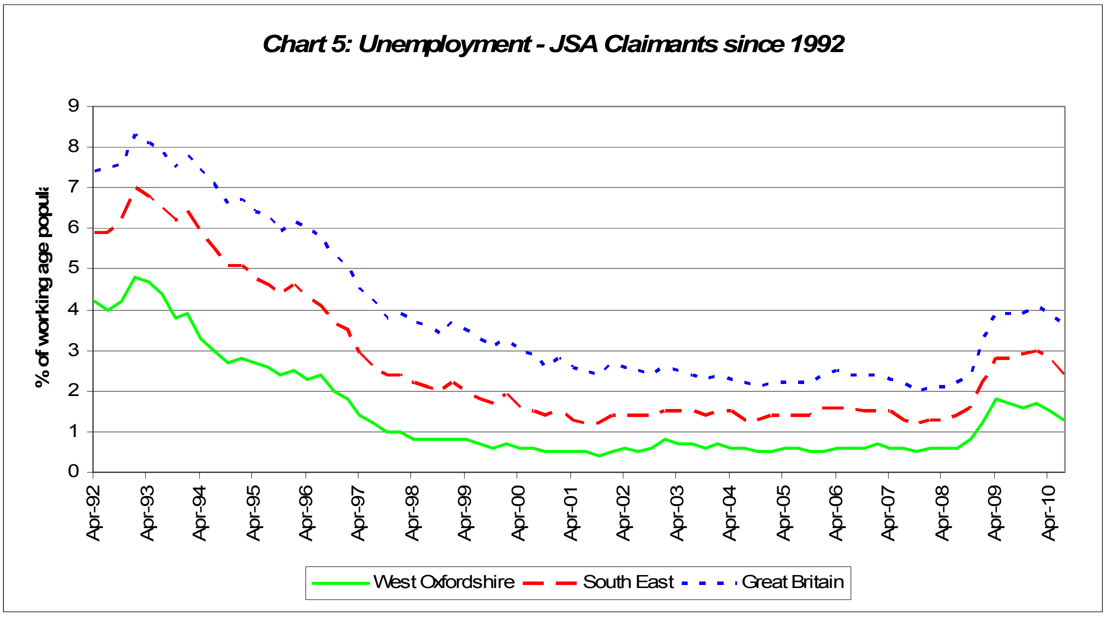
[12] ONS, http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=15186

tourism strategy for the District aims to persuade visitors to stay longer and spend more, in addition to attracting more visitors.

5.25. Indications are that the retail sector is fairing relatively well. The District's town centres are relatively vibrant with low vacancy rates. Further information on town centre development follows in the town centres section.

The local labour market

5.26. Historically there have been fewer jobs in West Oxfordshire than workers with significant levels of out-commuting to Oxford and other employment centres. The 2001 Census highlighted the fact that 64% of people lived and worked in the District while around 18,000 people commuted out of the District and 10,000 workers commuted in to the District to work.



5.27. Unemployment claimant counts[13] in August 2010 stood at 1.2%, a slight decline since August 2009, but still double the rate at August 2008. It remains lower than the regional and national averages (2.6% and 3.8% respectively). Modelled unemployment rates are higher at 4.4%, reflecting that not all of those unemployed are claiming benefits. Economic activity (proportion of working age available for work) at 78%[14], and the Employment rate (the proportion of the workforce in employment) at 74% are uncharacteristically below regional and national averages. This may be a consequence of the recession although it is not reflected in unemployment rates suggesting a proportion of the working age population leaving the workforce.

5.28. The average wage of those working in West Oxfordshire, at £495 per week[15], is lower than for those living in the District, at £539 per week – a consequence of commuting to higher paid jobs outside of the District. The house price to earnings ratio (also known as an affordability ratio) in 2008 was 7.88 – indicating that lower quartile house prices were almost 8 times lower quartile earnings. High house prices combined with lower wages can make staff recruitment and

[13] Defined as the proportion of working age people claiming Job Seekers Allowance
[14] As at March 2010 defined as proportion of those people of working age (16-64)
[15] Full time workers gross weekly pay, 2009 figures

retention difficult. However, according to the Oxfordshire Employer Skills Survey (2008) West Oxfordshire employers were slightly more satisfied with their location and the labour market was reported as more stable with employers not recruiting or identifying skills gaps. A mismatch was however identified between what learners and businesses are offered and what employers are seeking. West Oxfordshire employers, however, are less likely to have funded or arranged training for staff.

5.29. Recent population forecasts[16], incorporating the housing figures in the South East Plan, indicated low projected growth in the labour supply to 2026. These projections continue to indicate an ageing population with a 60% increase in those 65 years and over. Despite low projected growth in the labour supply and low unemployment, significant capacity exists to claw back out-commuters to expand the local workforce.

The local property market

5.30. The Local Plan strategy has been to focus employment growth in the main towns to meet the economic needs of the area whilst encouraging small scale employment development in the rural areas.

Location	B1(a) Office	B1(b) R&D	B1(c) Light Industry	B2 General Industry	B8 Storage & Distribution	Use within B Class not specified	Total
Witney	210				-43		167
Chipping Norton							0
Carterton							0
Remainder of District				525		-110	415
Total	210	0	0	525	-43	-110	582

Table 7: *Net employment floorspace completed (m^2) - 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010*

5.31. A very small amount of employment floorspace was completed in the last monitoring year, a net addition of only 582m². The bulk of this floorspace was the completion of a new workshop at Hopcroft's Holt service station (525m²), and as such 100% was completed on previously developed land. This is a very low level of floorspace completion compared to previous years, reflecting the recent recession. In 2008/09, floorspace completions were 7,750m², and over the last 15 years the average has been about 13,000m² per annum.

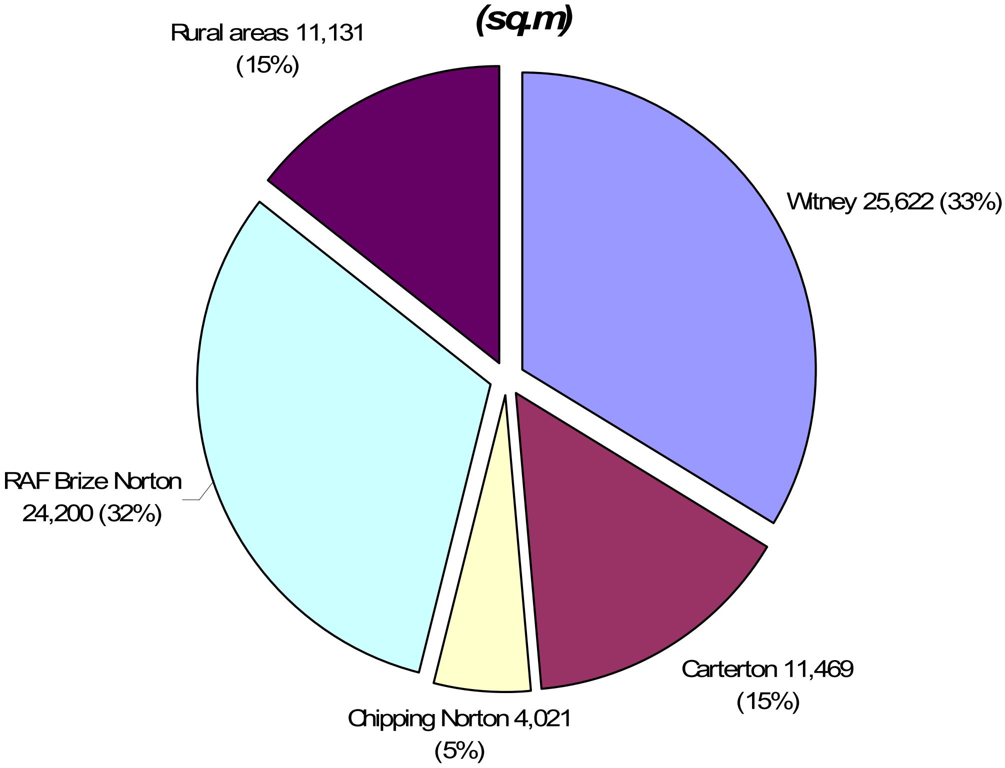
5.32. Although only a small amount of floorspace has been completed, very little appears to have been lost to other uses. Local Plan policy seeks to resist the loss of existing employment sites in urban and rural areas where there is some prospect for their continuing use. This policy helps to maintain a flexible supply of employment sites in the main towns and rural areas. In the current economic climate, when commercial property vacancy rates are higher, there is pressure for the redevelopment of employment sites, mainly to residential use. The retention of existing employment sites is critical to ensuring that the local economy is prepared for the eventual upturn in economic performance.

[16] Oxfordshire County Council September 2009

Potential supply of employment premises and land

5.33. There is a large amount of permitted employment floorspace within the District that remains unimplemented. This is a similar position to the previous year and is further indicative of the recession, demonstrating that extant planning permissions are not being implemented and minimal new permissions are coming through.

Chart 6: Location of permitted employment floorspace (sq.m)



Location	B1(a) Office	B1(b) R & D	B1(c) Light Industry	B2 General Industry	B8 Storage & Distribution	Use within B Class not specified	Total
Witney	718	0	183	656	3000	21,065	25,622
Chipping Norton	1,362	282	0	-212	1278	8,759	11,469
Carterton	4,014	0	0	-275	0	282	4,021
RAF Brize Norton	8,120	0	0	16,080	0	0	24,200
Remainder of District	3,755	0	1,481	-596	5,695	796	11,131
Whole District	**17,969**	**282**	**1,664**	**15,653**	**9,973**	**30,902**	**76,443**

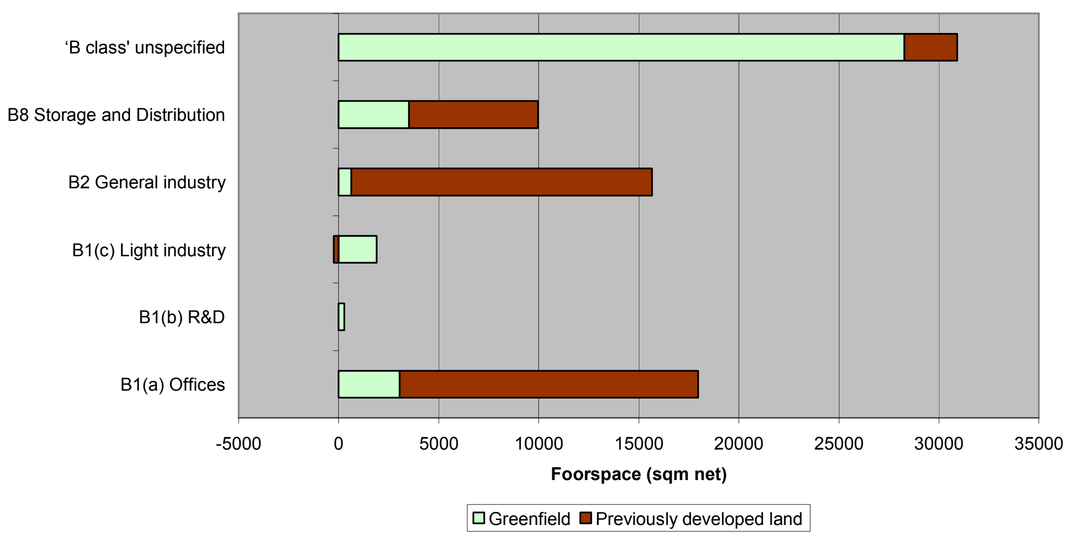
Table 8: *Location and type of permitted employment floorspace (m^2) at 1st April 2010*

5.34. The monitoring data indicates that there is a significant supply of employment floorspace in the main towns and at RAF Brize Norton. The majority of permitted floorspace is for unspecified 'B' Class uses and is indicative of speculative proposals on greenfield sites, allocated in the Local Plan for employment purposes – mainly on land at Windrush Park, Witney and Ventura Park, Carterton. At RAF Brize Norton the construction of a new hangar and related offices accounts for a third of permitted employment floorspace and whilst under construction during the reporting year (2009/10), is now complete.

5.35. Excluding developments at RAF Brize Norton, much of the permitted floorspace is office (B1a) and distribution (B8), each with potential gains of around 10,000m². Much of the permitted office floorspace is at Cromwell Park and the Parker Knoll site in Chipping Norton, but other schemes include new offices at Blenheim Sawmill, Combe and Hanborough Business Park. About half of the permitted distribution floorspace relates to the conversion of the former Oxford Instruments building in Eynsham but there are other significant schemes permitted at Enstone, Ventura Park, Carterton and Windrush Park, Witney. ***Chart 7*** shows the amount of floorspace permitted for each of the 'B' Use Classes, split between previously developed and greenfield land.

5.36. In addition to schemes with planning permission land remains allocated in the Local Plan without planning permission and currently there are significant amounts of vacant commercial property. The following paragraphs provide a summary of available employment land for the main towns and the rural area, bringing together the data on planning permissions, remaining local plan allocations, and information from the Council's vacant commercial property register.

Chart 7: Permitted employment floorspace by type



Witney

5.37. The majority of available employment land lies to the west of Witney, east and west of Downs Road, on land allocated in the Local Plan. Around 10ha of land remains in this area, split over several plots and the majority has planning permission. Elsewhere in Witney a limited amount of floorspace has planning permission.

5.38. The Council's vacant commercial property register (October 2010) identified:

- Several small serviced business start up offices in West End, Station Lane and West Witney employment areas.
- Limited number of small vacant retail units available in the town centre, particularly in Corn Street
- Numerous small office units available, particularly in the town centre (generally under 100 sqm), but a limited supply of larger vacant office units (mainly at Des Roche Square).
- Industrial and warehouse units of a range of sizes at Station Lane and the West Witney employment areas.

Carterton

5.39. Significant areas of employment land were allocated in earlier Local Plans to the north east of Carterton, now known as the West Oxon Business Park and Ventura Park. Ventura Park has seen steady take up of land for a mix of uses such as an MOT station, van hire, fencing contractors and offices, including a number for the RAF Air Tanker project. About 1ha of this area remains undeveloped although there is a further 1ha where units have been built but remain vacant. Several industrial, office and retail (non-food) units have been developed at the West Oxon Business Park although most are vacant. Much of this area, approximately 4.5ha, remains undeveloped,. In total about 8ha of employment land remains available in Carterton.

5.40. The Council's vacant property register (October 2010) identified:

- Flexible newly built office space and several small to medium sized newly built industrial units available at Ventura Park
- Several small to medium sized newly built retail and business units at West Oxon Business Park
- Limited small business units and serviced yard space available at Carterton South Industrial estate
- Limited vacant town centre shops or offices, although there are vacant shop units at the Shilton Park local centre (Centrum Square)

Chipping Norton

5.41. In Chipping Norton there are approximately 3ha of employment land available. This includes 2ha of land with permission on the former Parker Knoll site, and 1ha at the former depot site, adjacent to Cromwell Park. It is known that Sainsbury's are investigating out-of-town centre foodstore development on the Parker Knoll site. There is also potential for a further 2ha of employment development, on land allocated for mixed use adjacent to Cromwell Park where a hospital and care home are being constructed.

5.42. The Council's vacant property register (October 2010) identified:

- Small serviced business start-up office space available in the town centre and at Cromwell Park
- Small workshops, storage and industrial units at Elmsfield and Greystones Industrial Estate
- Small office units available in the town centre and at Cromwell Park

Remainder of West Oxfordshire

5.43. Land at Lakeside Industrial Estate, Standlake (1.9ha) is allocated in the Local Plan for industrial or storage/distribution uses. The Council's vacant commercial property register (October 10) also identified:

- Several small office and retail units available in Eynsham, with some medium and larger office and industrial units available on the edge of the village, at Oasis Park and Oakfield Industrial Estate.
- Numerous small and medium sized office units at Long Hanborough Business Park, including serviced offices and development opportunities
- Several small to medium sized industrial and office units available throughout the rural areas, particularly at Standlake, Charlbury, Milton-under-Wychwood, Shipton-under-Wychwood, Kingham and Bampton.

Town Centres

5.44. National Policy defines 'town centre uses' as – retail, financial and professional services, offices and leisure facilities. Existing national policy places great importance on strengthening town centres whilst providing for consumer choice. A key objective of the Local Plan is to maintain and improve the range and quality of shopping facilities within the town centres, whilst resisting proposals that would damage the vitality and viability of existing centres.

5.45. Within West Oxfordshire the main retail centres are Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton. These centres are generally vibrant and throughout the economic recession have remained healthy with continued investment.

5.46. There is very little out of centre shopping in West Oxfordshire, and this has helped to strengthen the vitality and viability of the town centres. One of the strengths of the centres is the mix of town centre uses with residential accommodation.

Total amount of floorspace completed for 'town centre uses'

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	D2	B1(a)	**Total**
Total amount (m2) of floorspace for 'town centre uses'	**11,906**	**0**	**1,131**	**0**	**154**	**1,924**	**210**	**15,325**

Table 9: *Additional floorspace (m^2) completed for town centre uses 2009/10*

5.47. The level of new development in 2009/10 for A1 (shopping) floorspace was high: almost 9 times that developed in the previous year (2008/09). This was due to the completion of retail units at the new Marriott's Walk development on the edge of the then defined Witney town centre (8,835m²). There was also a notable increase in the development of D2 floorspace, also a result of the Marriott's Walk development, which included the development of a multiplex cinema (1,924m²). This scheme also included 167m² of B1(a) office floorspace and accounted for a large volume of the new café/restaurant floorspace (A3), with the remaining being a result of change of use development. However, overall, B1(a) office development was limited, with a noticeable decline in provision of new floorspace compared to 2008/09.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	D2	B1 (a)	**Total**
Witney	10,301	-	963			1,924	210	**13,398**
Witney Town Centre	*116*	-	*176*			-	*43*	*335*
Carterton	930	-			154	-	-	**1,084**
Carterton Town Centre	-	-				-	-	
Chipping Norton	-	-				-	-	
Chipping Norton Town Centre	-	-				-	-	
Remaining areas of the District	675	-	168			-	-	**843**
Total	**11,906**	**0**	**1,131**	**0**	**154**	**1,924**	**210**	**15,325**

Table 10: *Locations of additional floorspace (m²) completed for town centre uses 2009/10*

5.48. The above ***Table 10*** highlights the areas in which development took place. Only 159m² of floorspace for town centre uses was completed within a defined town centre. All of this development was within the defined town centre of Witney (currently being amended through the LDF), with none within Carterton and Chipping Norton defined town centres. The majority of the development at Carterton was at the new Shilton Park neighbourhood centre. Although the majority of town centre use development completed in 2009/10 was for A1 floorspace (92%), only 116m² of this development took place within a town centre, as part of a mixed use development, on land to the rear of the Methodist Church and 54 High Street, Witney. This accounts for around 1% of all town centre use completions, markedly down on last year's reported figure of around 50%.

Outstanding planning permissions for 'town centre uses'

Ref	**A1**	**A2**	**A3**	**A4**	**A5**	**D2**	**B1(a)**	**Total**
Witney	4,748	30	63	77	0	1,407	885	7,210
Carterton	4,859	0	0	0	0	0	1,362	6,221
Chipping Norton	-193	0	129	0	92	0	4,014	4,042
Remainder of District	1,417	60	950	0	71	1,563	11,875	15,936
Whole of District	10,831	90	1,142	77	163	2,970	18,136	33,409

Table 11: *Permitted floorspace (m²) for town centre uses 2009/10*

5.49. There are 33,409m² of town centre uses with outstanding planning permissions (at 1 April 2010). Of these extant permissions, only 3,033m² or 9% of the remaining floorspace is to be developed actually within town centres; the most notable permission is for an Aldi foodstore on Alvescot Road, Carterton of 1,310m² floorspace. B1(a) office uses are defined as town centre uses (all permissions for office uses are included in Table 11), however only 50m² of the outstanding 18,136m² B1(a) floorspace falls within a town centre boundary. The main area of permitted B1(a) floorspace was at RAF Brize Norton (8,120m²) – now completed.

5.50. Although now completed, the extension of the Woolgate Shopping Centre, Witney for an additional 2,188m² of retail (A1) floorspace, accounted for a large amount of Witney Town Centre retail permissions.

Town Centre Surveys

5.51. In 2007, and again in 2009, the Council conducted surveys of the three main town centres. These surveys included a street by street, visual assessment of the different types and patterns of uses currently found within the centres. The survey analysis focuses on ground floor level uses, within the town centres as defined in the Local Plan.

Witney

5.52. The 2009 survey identified 235 properties within the town centre. The results show that shops (A1 uses) take up 56.8% of the total ground floor space within Witney Town Centre, with Professional Services (A2) the next most dominant use class. In 2009 Witney had a very low level of vacancy; there were only nine vacant units representing 2.4% of total ground floor space within the town centre. This is a slight increase on the 2007 survey results, when vacancy levels represented 0.7%, or four units. The survey in 2009 was undertaken just before the opening of the Marriott's Walk development and recent survey information indicates that vacancy within the town centre has declined with vacant units being refurbished and re-occupied.

Carterton

5.53. The 2009 survey identified 78 units within the town centre, of which 36 are classified as retail units. Vacancy rates remain virtually unchanged; up from one to two, representing 5% of available ground floor space.

Chipping Norton

5.54. The 2009 survey identified 95 properties within the town centre. Over half of these (55%) are retail units (A1) and 11% are professional services (A2). There has been virtually no change in provision across use classes between 2007 and 2009. But, encouragingly, vacancy rates have halved from four to two, representing only 1.2% of ground floor space.

ENVIRONMENT

5.55. The high quality of both the built and the natural environments, within West Oxfordshire, provides a unique and special character. Although there are several Local Plan policies designed to ensure that development respects and enhances the local environment, many of them, such as those concerning renewable energy, air quality, the water environment and tourism can have significant influence outside of the District.

Water Resources

5.56. PPS25 recognises that, over the next few decades, climate change is likely to result in 'increased and new risks of flooding within the lifetime of planned developments'. West Oxfordshire's extensive floodplains are associated with the rivers Evenlode, Windrush and Thames. The District falls within the Upper Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMPs are produced by the Environment Agency). The Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/6706-3603.pdf , produced by Scott Wilson in 2009, considers the potential impact of climate change over an extended period, as well as identifying local sources of potential flooding. It notes that 'the predominant risk of flooding….is due to flooding from rivers and watercourses' and in the summer of 2007 West Oxfordshire experienced severe and widespread flooding, with over 1,600 homes and more than 70 businesses being directly affected.

5.57. In response to the flooding in 2007, and to meet the increased flood risk identified in the SFRA and other studies, a number of measures have been taken to try to lessen the impact of such events in the future. As well as working closely with the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Water, to identify likely sources of flood water, the Council is also ensuring that all ditches under its control remain clear. At the same time, it is endeavouring to identify the owners of other problem ditches and seeking their help in keeping them clear. The local flood maps have been updated, using data from the Environment Agency, Thames Water and local knowledge and existing flood defence structures have been detailed on settlement plans.

5.58. The Council reviews all relevant planning applications to ensure that adequate flood prevention measures, such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), are included, where appropriate. It also consults the Environment Agency for an expert view on development proposals that may have an adverse impact on the District's water resources or increase the risk of flooding.

Biodiversity

5.59. West Oxfordshire includes a variety of habitats that support a rich diversity of species of flora and fauna. In conjunction with national and local 'Biodiversity Action Plans' (BAPs), the Local Plan includes numerous policies intended to safeguard and, where possible, to improve these habitats. The success of that policy approach is monitored, primarily, with the help of the Thames Valley Record Centre (TVERC), a partnership organisation that records and examines data relating to the natural environment. TVERC is part of a national network of Local Environmental Records Centres.

5.60. The sizes of sites designated for their biodiversity importance (around 4% of the District's total area) change little from year to year and ***Chart 8*** shows the relatively minor changes in area of Local Wildlife Sites (previously known as County Wildlife Sites) and Local Geological Sites (previously Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites) over the last year. The increase in LWS area relates to a site extension at *Taston Brook and Springs* near Spelsbury, boundary changes at *Priory Wood* near Heythrop and *Acrey Pits* near Cassington and the new designation of *Dane's Bottom* near Great Rollright. The following links show the locations of LWSs within West Oxfordshire: http://www.tverc.org/LWS/West%20LWS%20map%20June%202010.pdf (map), http://www.tverc.org/LWS/West%20LWS%20June%202010.pdf (list). As a result of surveys undertaken, during 2009, the LGS selection panel decided to de-select two of the existing sites within West Oxfordshire: *Tangley Crossroads Quarry* (0.21ha) and *Worsham Quarry* (8.48ha), resulting in a net decrease within the District.

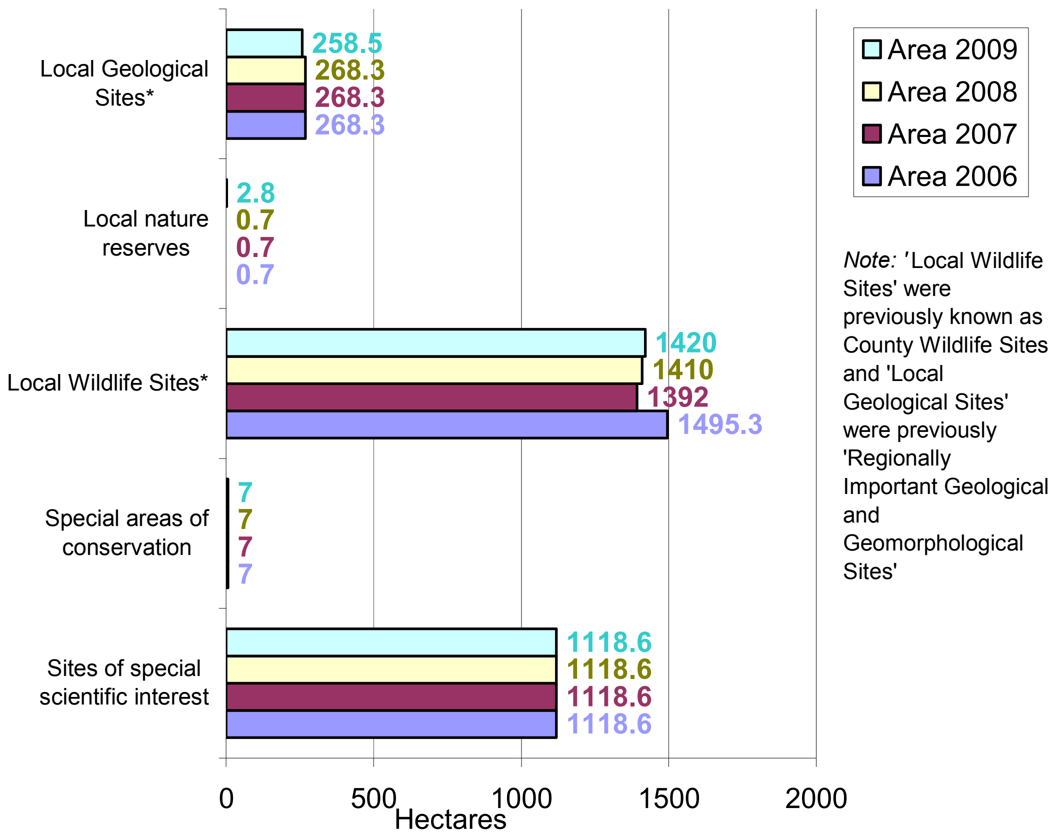


Chart 8*: Areas of sites designated for their intrinsic environmental value*

5.61. Although the area of land designated as SSSIs, within the District, has not altered, change has been noted in the overall condition of these sites. SSSIs are visited, periodically, by specialists from Natural England. During the reporting year (1/4/09 – 31/3/10) the proportion of SSSIs in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering', in West Oxfordshire rose from 94% (2008/09) to 99%.

5.62. ***Table 12*** shows the changes in the areas of UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) priority habitats. Although the table shows an apparent increase in the total habitat area, as noted in previous AMRs, this is the result of improvements in methodology and increasing knowledge of the existing assets rather than the establishment of new habitats.

5.63. The TVERC annual report for 2009/10 also shows a net increase of two priority species within West Oxfordshire. The local indicator uses records of UK BAP priority species that have been reported within the District over a rolling 20 year period (1989 – 2009 in this instance). However, six species have not been recorded since 1989 and have dropped from the list (narrow small reed, wood calamint, Figure of Eight moth, a ground beetle, Dark Spinach moth and a freshwater mussel). It should be noted that the removal of a species from this list does not necessarily indicate extinction within the area, but rather that recorders have failed to report it during that period.

UK BAP priority habitat type	Area (hectares) 2009	County context 2009	Area (hectares) 2010	County context 2010
Arable field margins	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	0.0	355.33	1783.78	4750.90
Eutrophic standing water	570.3	931.91	570.30	933.20
Hedgerows	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Lowland beech and yew woodland	13.84	792.14	13.84	777.36
Lowland calcareous grassland	180.02	733.36	180.08	732.71
Lowland dry acid grassland	14.65	49.01	14.41	48.75
Lowland Fens	30.39#	142.89#	30.64#	142.96#
Lowland heathland	0.0	2.96	0.0	2.96
Lowland meadows	190.23	1081.22	195.51	1081.27
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	1492.38	4602.91	1516.67	4518.41
Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Ponds	Not known	Not known	2.18	3.79
Purple moor grass and rush pastures	7.08	14.09	7.08	14.09
Reedbeds	1.66	25.82	1.66	25.82
Rivers	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Traditional Orchards	52.38	324.11	53.30	326.21
Wet woodland	22.92	138.69	23.93	137.94
Wood pasture and parkland	633.81	1860.50	635.66	1858.82
Total area of BAP priority habitat	3208.0	11029.12	5027.38	15329.37

Table 12: *UK BAP Priority habitat resources in West Oxfordshire*

Sustainable design and construction

5.64. In addition to the efforts made to safeguard Britain's wealth of wildlife and flora, there is a growing emphasis being placed upon the need to use our dwindling, often irreplaceable, natural resources prudently. One way to do this is to choose alternative, renewable, sources of energy for our homes and businesses and another, is to use sustainable, locally produced materials for new developments.

5.65. Examples of these approaches can be seen in new housing developments at Bens Close in Woodstock and at Blackditch in Stanton Harcourt. Bens Close, a Rural Exception Site of 16 houses built to the Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) Level 3, incorporates air source heat pumps to provide hot water and heating and is built to Lifetime Homes Standard. Started in June 2009, the development was completed in June 2010. The scheme at Blackditch, which commenced in June 2010, is one of the first projects using construction materials mainly from renewable sources, to receive funding from the Homes and Communities Agency. To be eligible for the funding, this affordable housing scheme, on another Rural Exception Site, has to achieve CSH Level 4 or above, and use components such as timber frames, natural insulation and timber windows. Once again, the majority of the homes will be Lifetime Homes compliant.

5.66. Confronting and dealing with the issues raised by climate change is a crucial component of Government policy and there are a number of publications providing relevant advice and good practice guidance. These are noted in the Council's Sustainable Construction Interim Planning Advice document which can be found on our website: Sustainable Construction Interim Planning Advice. This document has been published in order to offer interim advice, locally. It is an evolving document and will be updated as further policies and guidance are approved, at both local and national levels. In addition, the Council's Climate Change Management Board is considering the feasibility of a range of sustainability targets that may be applied within West Oxfordshire.

Appendix 1

Local Development Framework Core Output Indicators – Update 1/2005

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

1a Amount of floorspace developed for employment by type

1b Amount of floorspace developed for employment by type, in employment or regeneration areas

1c Amount of floorspace by employment type, which is on previously developed land

1d Employment land available by type

1e Losses of employment land in (i) employment/regeneration areas and (ii) local authority area

1f Amount of employment land lost to residential development

HOUSING

2a Housing trajectory showing:

- *(i)* net additional dwellings over the previous five year period or since the start of the relevant development plan document period, whichever is the longer
- *(ii)* net additional dwellings for the current year
- *(iii)* projected net additional dwellings up to the end of the relevant development plan document period or over a ten year period from its adoption, whichever is the longer
- *(iv)* the annual net additional dwelling requirement; and
- *(v)* annual average number of net additional dwellings needed to meet overall housing requirements, having regard to previous years' performance

TRANSPORT

3a Amount of completed non-residential development within UCOs A, B and D complying with car-parking standards set out in the local development framework

3b Amount of new residential development within 30 minutes public transport time of: a GP; a hospital; a primary school; a secondary school; areas of employment; and a major retail centre(s)

LOCAL SERVICES

4a Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development

4b Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development in town centres

4c Amount of eligible open spaces managed to Green Flag award standard

FLOOD PROTECTION AND WATER QUALITY

7 Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence grounds or water quality

BIODIVERSITY

8 Change in areas and populations of biodiversity importance, including:

- (i) change in priority habitats and species (by type); and
- (ii) change in areas designated for their intrinsic environmental value including sites of international, national, regional, sub-regional or local significance

RENEWABLE ENERGY

9 Renewable energy capacity installed by type

Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Framework Core Output Indicators- Update 2/2008

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TOWN CENTRES

BD1 Total amount of additional employment floorspace – by type

BD2 Total amount of employment floorspace on previously developed land – by type

BD3 Employment land available – by type

BD4 Total amount of floorspace for 'town centre uses'

HOUSING

H1 Plan period and housing targets

H2(a) Net additional dwellings – in previous years

H2(b) Net additional dwellings – in the reporting year

H2(c) Net additional dwellings – in future years

H2(d) Managed delivery target

H3 New and converted dwellings – on previously developed land

H4 Net additional pitches (Gypsy and Traveller)

H5 Gross affordable housing completions

H6 Housing Quality – Building for Life Assessments

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

E1 Number of planning permissions granted contrary to Environment Agency advice on flooding and water quality grounds

E2 Change in areas of biodiversity importance

E3 Renewable energy generation

Appendix 2

Parish Survey 2010

Since 1975, the District Council has, periodically, distributed a questionnaire to Parish and Town Councils, asking for their help in monitoring the changes in services and facilities within the rural area.

The last survey was carried out in 2007, with a further survey needed this year. During the months of August and September 2010 forms were sent out to all of West Oxfordshire's Parish and Town Councils, apart from the larger service centres of Carterton, Chipping Norton and Witney. 76 responses were received out of the 80 questionnaires delivered; a response rate of 95%.

One of the key outputs of the survey is to be able to update the characteristics of our towns and villages in our published settlement matrix. This provides a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of the service/facility provision within the District's parishes. http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/LDFsustapprevidbase.cfm

Each Parish Clerk is asked to provide a summary of the main changes noted in their parish since the last survey. The following summarises the main changes recorded between 2007 and 2010:

- A number of Councils have reported a loss of local services, including local shops and post offices, in most cases suggesting the economic recession has been a major contributing factor. The loss of shops, and employment generally, was a concern noted by: Bampton, Charlbury, Churchill, Ducklington, Freeland, Over Norton and Shipton-under-Wychwood . Eynsham, although noting no loss in business numbers, did however note a shift towards smaller, service-related firms
- In a large number of cases the loss of a Post Office has been identified as the major change. This was recorded by: Chadlington, Curbridge, Ducklington, Enstone, Rollright, Swinbrook and Wootton.
- The lack of locally available affordable housing has been noted by a number of Councils as a cause for concern for local residents: Combe, Salford, Long Hanborough, Standlake and Steeple Barton.
- Some villages and settlements commented that they are becoming commuter dormitories, with many residents now working outside the parish they live in. This has had knock-on effects for local affordability and access to the housing market. This was identified by: Combe, Fawler, Kelmscott, Leafield and Shipton-under-Wychwood
- Brize Norton, Crawley, Enstone, Lyneham, Minster Lovell, Stanton Harcourt, Steeple Barton and Taynton identified the increase in road traffic as the major change since 2007.
- Church Hanborough identified the increased pressure on parking as a major change.
- The loss of Public Houses is a concern nationally and this was reflected in the Parish Clerk returns. Broadwell, Curbridge and Milton-under-Wychwood noted losses in their parishes .However, Cassington andChurchill identified the opening of public houses as positive changes.

Alongside these less favourable changes, there have been a number of recorded positive changes within some of the parishes:

- The opening of a community shop serving Ascot-under-Wychwood; described as a multi award winning development
- Aston noted the development of a new playground scheme and improvements to the village hall.
- Cassington has also seen the re-building of the village hall, including a housing development.
- Burford Town Council commented there has been an increase in affordable housing provision.
- Long Hanborough identified the construction of the new Co-op supermarket, enlarged surgery and new pharmacy, affordable housing development and improved rail station and rail timetable as positive changes; but alongside associated concerns over the strain on rail parking provision and traffic pressure.
- North Leigh identified the new village hall which includes a public library, youth centre and new post office as a positive addition to the village.
- The addition of a community surgery in Shipton-under-Wychwood, relocated from Milton
- New affordable housing developments in Stonesfield
- Provision of a community shop in Tackley
- A new community run shop and eight affordable housing units under construction in Wootton

This list of changes is by no means exhaustive or representative of the whole picture of change in West Oxfordshire, but it picks out the significant issues raised by Parish Clerks.