WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

West Oxfordshire District Council

ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011

December 2011

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ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. The timetable for West Oxfordshire's emerging Core Strategy, as shown in the published Local Development Scheme (LDS), will need to be revised following significant changes to the planning system at the national level, in particular the proposed revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategies, the draft National Planning Policy Framework and the introduction of the Localism Bill. At present, it seems likely that the Core Strategy will be formally published in spring 2012, with submission of the document likely to be in the summer.

1.2. Despite the recent recession, West Oxfordshire's economy has remained relatively buoyant. Nearly 40,000m^2 of additional employment floorspace was completed in the reporting year, compared to less than 600m^2 in 2009/10. Although over half of this related to the new hangar and offices at RAF Brize Norton (24,200m^2), the remaining 15,000m^2 (approx) compares favourably with the average annual completion rate of 13,000m^2 since 1996. Employment also remains at a strong level, with an employment rate of 79.1% for the District. Although there has been an increase of 0.2%, to 1.4%, in the number of persons claiming Job Seekers Allowance, this is still much lower than the regional and national rates of 2.6% and 3.7%, respectively.

1.3. Similarly, West Oxfordshire's town centres have remained quite buoyant and recent surveys of the main town centres (summer 2011) have found a healthy range of successful shops and services and low vacancy rates. Over 2,000m^2 of floorspace, for town centre uses, has outstanding planning permission in Witney and Chipping Norton.

1.4. However, against this positive background, the District is under pressure from other nearby labour markets, such as the Oxford and Swindon areas, and a significant proportion of West Oxfordshire's local workforce commutes to higher paid jobs within these zones. Another possible threat to the current favourable economic climate is the District's ageing population which may contribute to a decline in overall economic activity in West Oxfordshire.

1.5. The completion of 424 additional homes, in the reporting year, has contributed to an average completion rate of 612 dwellings per year for the first five years of the South East Plan period (2006 – 2026), leaving an average annual requirement of 283 homes for the remaining 15 years. West Oxfordshire can currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and these will be supplemented by further sites which will come forward through the new Core Strategy document.

1.6. During the reporting year,

- just over 60% of all homes were completed on previously-developed land - just under 60% of all homes with outstanding planning permission (at 1st April 2011) will be built on such land
- 80% of the homes completed in 2010/11 were on land in the District's larger, Group C, settlements - 83% of all homes with extant planning permission (at 1st April 2011) will be completed in Group C settlements
- 62% of completions in the reporting year were on previously unidentified sites – 75% of all outstanding permitted homes will be completed on such non-allocated sites

1.7. Although household projections show diminishing household sizes, the number of smaller (1 and 2 bed) properties completed in 2010/11 was at its lowest point since 2004/5 and, at only 50%, the proportion of smaller homes granted permission in 2010/11 was at its lowest since 2003/4.

2. ABOUT WEST OXFORDSHIRE

2.1. West Oxfordshire covers an area of approximately 71,500 hectares and, with a population density of about 1.5 persons per hectare, is one of the most sparsely populated areas in the South East Region. In addition to the third of the District that falls within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, another 1,610 hectares forms part of the Oxford Green Belt, both contributing to a special and distinctive landscape character. 3,200 listed buildings, 50 conservation areas, 16 parks and gardens of special historic interest and the world heritage site of Blenheim Palace complement that unique landscape to form one of the country's most significant areas for national and international tourism.

2.2. Around 40% of West Oxfordshire's residents live within the two larger towns of Witney (about 27,000) and Carterton (about 16,000). Between them, these two towns cover an area of less than 1,200 hectares, resulting in a population density of less than one person per hectare for the remainder of the District. Although the households living within the remaining 130 towns and villages are connected through a fairly comprehensive network of roads and bridleways, many of these are in a poor state of repair and public transport, vital in such a rural environment, is very limited.

2.3. The national road network connects the District to nearby large towns and cities – Oxford to the east, Cheltenham to the west, Swindon to the south and Banbury to the north – and the Cotswold and Cherwell Valley railway lines pass through West Oxfordshire, connecting residents to larger cities, such as London and Birmingham, further afield. A number of rivers, such as the Thames and the Windrush, whilst also offering opportunities for travel to other centres outside of the District, also perform an important tourism role. ***Figure 1*** shows the locations of West Oxfordshire's main character areas, settlements and transport network.

2.4. Although the District's economy is both robust and diverse, the majority (nearly 80%) of West Oxfordshire employees work within the service sector, with nearly 6,000 in tourism related jobs, generating an estimated £248m local business turnover in 2009/10. However, West Oxfordshire still includes a relatively high proportion of manufacturing workers (about 14% of all employee jobs) and is renowned for its innovative contributions to motorsport and for other high performance engineering applications. A measure of the strength of the District's economy is the proportion of working age people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). In West Oxfordshire this rate has risen by 0.2%, over last year's figure, to 1.4% and this is probably linked to the recent recession. However, this low figure compares favourably with a national figure of 3.7%.

2.5. With an ageing population, West Oxfordshire has a higher proportion of residents of retirement age than any of the other Oxfordshire districts. The number of people over 65 is expected to rise by over 66% between 2006 and 2026 (an increase of 11,359) and the 75+ age group is expected to rise by over 82% (a further 6,983) in the same period. Life expectancy is 2.4% better than the England average for men and 2.2% for women. Although the rate of obesity in West Oxfordshire adult residents is slightly lower than the average for England, it is higher than all other Oxfordshire authorities, apart from Cherwell, which is 0.5% higher. At 13.7%, obesity in children (%age of school children in Year 6), in West Oxfordshire, is well below the England average of 18.7% and the County average of 15.1%.

2.6. The average price for a home in West Oxfordshire, £270,061, is higher than the national average and the District's cheapest (lower quartile) housing is over 9 times the lowest (lower quartile) annual wage. There are approaching 46,000 dwellings in West Oxfordshire and around 12% of these are affordable homes, managed by registered social providers.

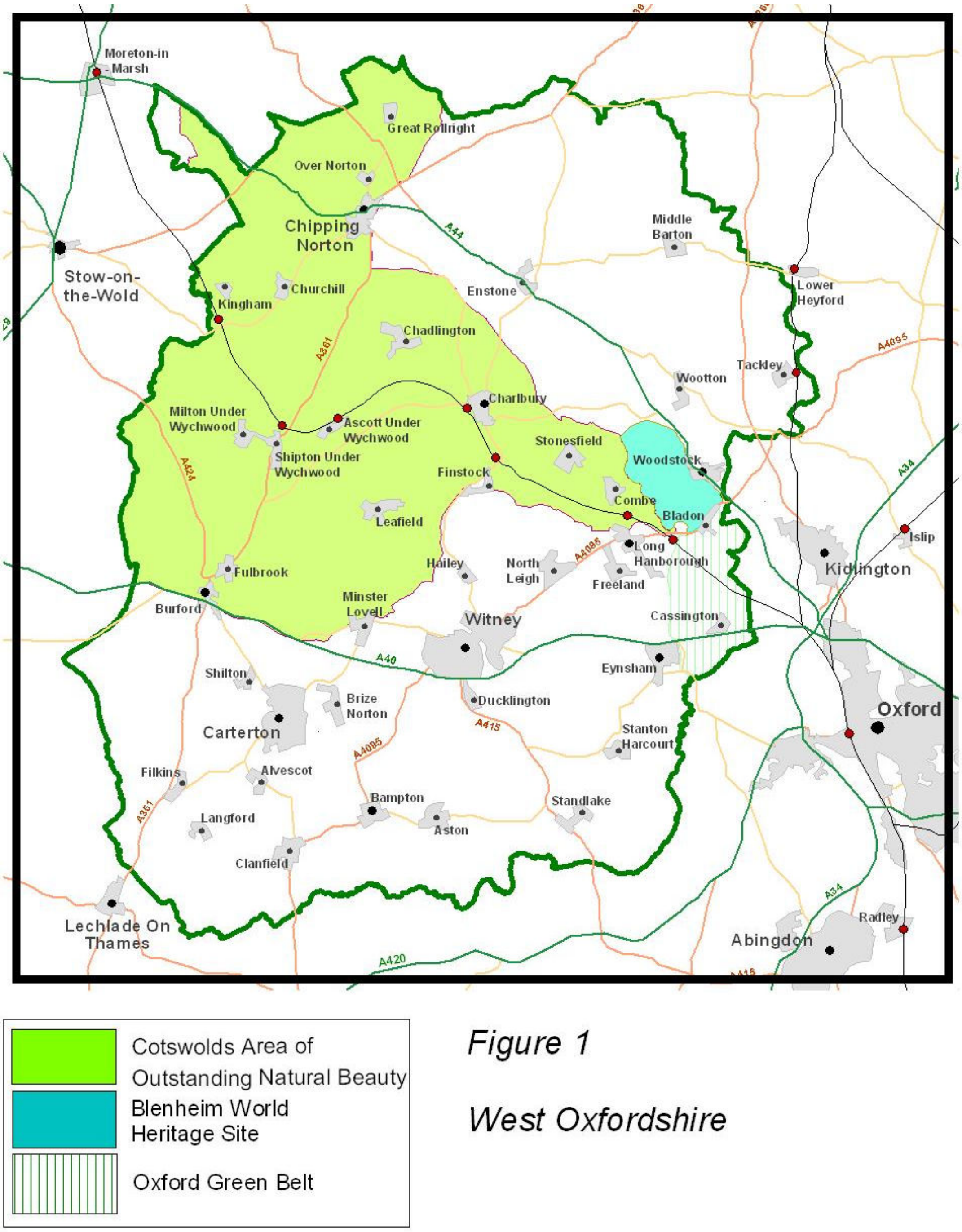


Figure 1

West Oxfordshire

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. Government guidance (*Local Development Framework Monitoring: A Good Practice Guide (2005) and Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Framework: Core Output Indicators (2008)*) which set out the specific indicators against which AMRs should provide information, were withdrawn in March 2011 and, instead, local authorities were given the freedom to decide what to include within their monitoring reports, whilst 'ensuring that they are prepared in accordance with relevant UK and EU legislation'.

3.3. In an attempt to simplify the collection and reporting of information, the Government has produced a 'Single Data List', http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/xls/1886056.xls which is a 'catalogue of all the datasets that local government must submit to central government in a given year. Many of these datasets, such as the Annual Green Belt and National Land Use database returns, are provided through other, existing processes but some, such as 'Developments in flood risk areas' and 'Local nature conservation/biodiversity' are more conveniently reported through the AMR.

3.4. Although there is no longer a requirement to report against all of those previously imposed indicators, many of them were relevant as measures of the effectiveness of policies included within the local development plan and this AMR follows a similar format to that used in previous years, to consider those appropriate indicators. As part of our ongoing appraisal of this document, West Oxfordshire has been considering the future role of the AMR through discussions with neighbouring Oxfordshire authorities and it is hoped that these discussions will offer the prospect of a set of common, County-wide, indicators.

3.5. An update of the progress and timetable of the Local Development Framework documents is provided in Section 4.0 below. This is followed at Section 5.0 by a report on the effects of implementation of the Local Plan policies during the reporting year (1st April 2010 – 31st March 2011).

4. MONITORING OF PLAN PREPARATION

4.1 The Council is currently preparing a number of planning documents that will help to guide future development in West Oxfordshire over the next 15 years. The most important document is the Core Strategy which will set out an overall strategy for the District.

4.2 The Council has in place a project plan known as a 'Local Development Scheme' or LDS. This sets out which documents will be produced and when so that local communities and businesses are able to get involved at the appropriate time.

4.3 In this section of the AMR we set out the progress made by the Council in producing its planning documents and explain why some timescales have not been achieved.

4.4 The Council's most recent project plan (LDS) was approved in September 2009. It identifies the production of two main planning documents, the Core Strategy and a separate Site Allocations and Development Management document.

Core Strategy

4.5 The table below sets out the originally proposed dates for preparing the Core Strategy taken from the 2009 LDS and the current likely replacement dates (although these are subject to potential change depending on future progress and changes to national policy). As can be seen there has been a slippage in the timetable of 16-18 months.

Core Strategy Key Stages	Date in 2009 LDS	Likely Replacement Date
Publication	July – September 2010	March 2012
Submission	October 2010	May 2012
Pre-Examination Meeting	December 2010	July 2012
Examination	Feb-March 2011	Aug/Sept 2012
Inspector's Report	June 2011	Nov/Dec 2012
Adoption	September 2011	Dec/Jan 2013

4.6 There are a number of reasons for this slippage in particular changes at the national level including the introduction of the Localism Bill, the proposed abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and the draft National Planning Policy Framework. This has necessitated additional consultation and the consideration of potential revisions to the Core Strategy to ensure it is 'sound' and fit for purpose.

4.7 It should be noted that the replacement dates set out above represent the Council's best estimate as to when future key stages will be met. The dates from submission onwards are based on standard timescales provided by the Planning Inspectorate and assume that a pre-examination meeting is needed and that the examination will last no longer than 8 days. A longer hearing will push on the date of adoption as it will delay receipt of the Inspector's report.

Site Allocations and Development Management

4.8 In addition to the Core Strategy, the 2009 LDS includes the preparation of a separate 'Site Allocations and Development Management' document which would sit underneath the Core Strategy and deal with smaller site allocations (e.g. housing) and development management policies (policies used to help guide day to day planning decisions).

4.9 Initial consultation on the site allocations document took place in March 2008 and July 2008. The 2009 LDS suggests that further consultation will take place in February 2012 with formal publication in July 2012 and submission in October 2012.

4.10 These dates will not be achieved because at the present time, all preparatory work on this document has ceased. The reasons are as follows:

- All available resources are being focused on the Core Strategy,
- The draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) suggests that apart from the Core Strategy 'any additional development plan documents should only be used where clearly justified',
- There are uncertainties surrounding the role, content and likely number of Neighbourhood Plans which could potentially overlap with the preparation of a site allocations document

4.11 Once the Localism Bill has been enacted and the National Planning Policy Framework brought into place, a decision will be taken by the Council whether and when to pursue the site allocations and development management document. By that stage further progress will also have been made with the Core Strategy and potentially local Neighbourhood Plans, which will also help to inform the decision.

4.12 The LDS will be revised in due course to reflect the revised programme set out above and will be made available to the local community.

5. MONITORING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

HOUSING

Provision and delivery over the plan period

5.1. In assessing an appropriate level of housing, and identifying an associated flexible supply of land, local authorities are expected to take account of the level of housing provision set out in the relevant Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Although it is the current Government's intention to abolish these strategies, the South East Plan (SEP) was still the relevant plan during the reporting year (2010/2011). This identified a minimum provision of 7,300 new homes, within West Oxfordshire, for the period 2006 to 2026 (an annual average of 365 units). At the start of this period (2006-2008) development was still taking place on two large Local Plan allocated sites (Shilton Park, Carterton and Madley Park, Witney) and, between them, they provided 45% of the 1,675 dwellings built over the two years. In addition, three redundant commercial sites came forward (two in Witney and one in Chipping Norton) and contributed a further 24% towards that two year total.

5.2. As planned, overall residential development decreased over the next two years and by 1st April 2010, 2,637 dwellings had been built. Residential completions during 2010/11 bring this total to 3,061. This leaves 4,239 of the SEP minimum requirement to be completed over the remaining 15 years of the plan period – an annualised average of 283 homes. It should be noted that in preparation for the proposed revocation of RSSs, the Council is reviewing its future housing requirement but it is likely that the future annual requirement will be similar to that noted above, i.e. about 280 per annum. ***Chart 1*** shows this first 5 years' development, along with the contribution that identified sites (i.e. sites that either have extant planning permission or land that has been allocated or reserved in the Local Plan) are expected to make in coming years. As part of the LDF process, a number of sites have been suggested for future residential development and it is anticipated that some of these will be allocated under the new Core Strategy document. These sites will then contribute to the continuing 15 year supply of housing in forthcoming trajectories.

5.3. Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) requires local authorities to identify a supply of developable land, for housing, for at least a 10 year period and to further demonstrate a supply of 'sufficient specific **deliverable** sites to deliver housing in the first five years'. ***Table 1*** summarises West Oxfordshire's supply of deliverable sites over the 5 year period from 1st April 2011 and shows a proportion of deliverable dwellings of 108%, using the National Indicator 159. To show a figure of 100% or more for this indicator is considered best practice.

5.4. PPS3 sets a national annual target requiring a minimum of 60% of new housing to be provided on previously developed land (PDL), although it should be noted that the draft National Planning Policy Framework moves away from this prescriptive approach and will encourage local authorities to assess land for its suitability, locally, without feeling bound by a national target. In recognition of the District's particularly rural character, the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan sets a more appropriate target of 40-45% of residential development on

PDL. However, during the reporting year, 257 new homes (just over 60% of total completions) were provided on such land, with relatively high proportions of this 257 coming from the redevelopment, conversion and subdivision of existing residential buildings (30%) and from existing commercial premises or car parks (40%). ***Chart 2*** shows the split of development on greenfield and previously developed land since 2001. In June 2011, a revision to PPS3 removed undeveloped private residential gardens from the PDL definition and, using this new criteria, the percentage developed on PDL, in the reporting year, would drop to 53%. Just under 60% of outstanding permitted homes, in West Oxfordshire, will be built on previously developed land.

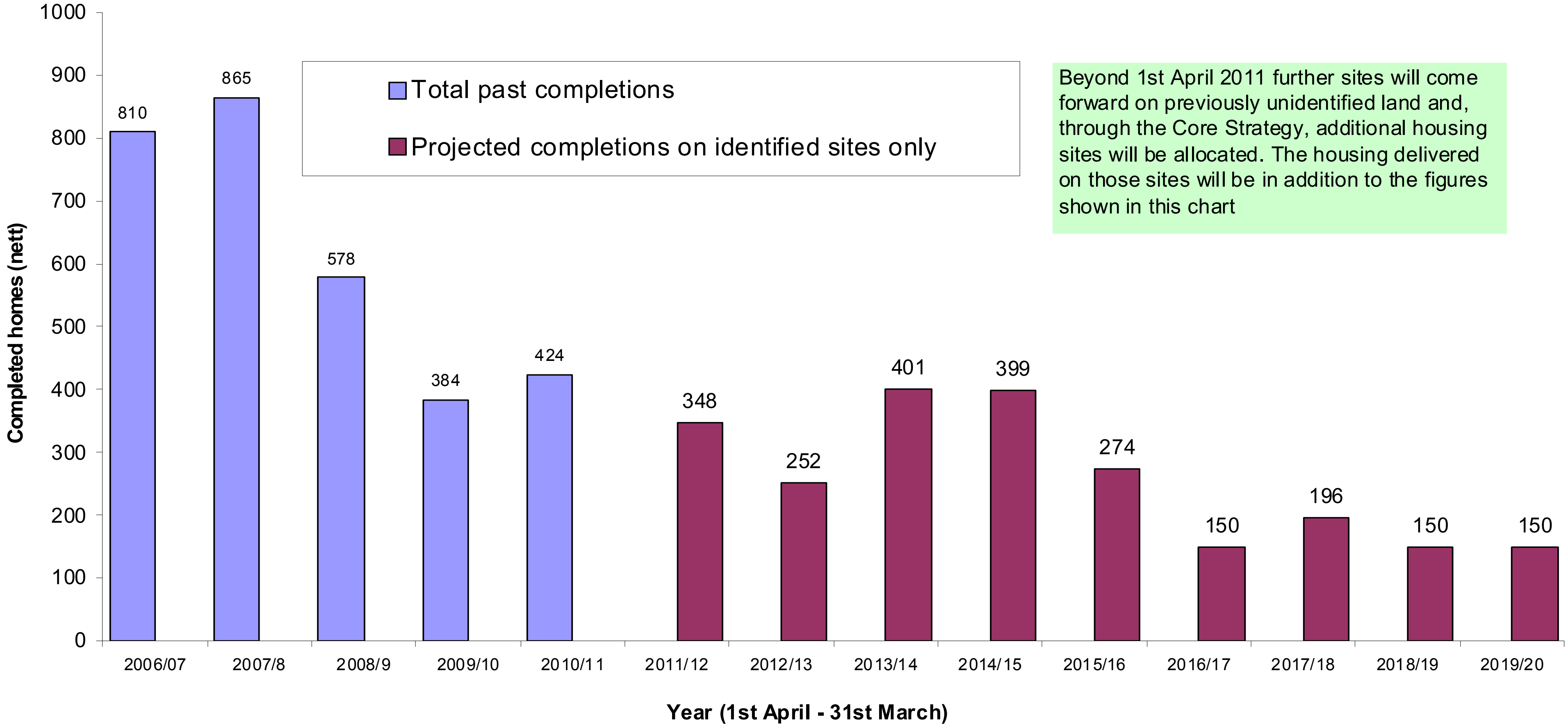


***Chart 1** – Projected housing completions 2006-2020 on identified sites only (those sites that benefit from extant planning permission or land that has been allocated/reserved in the Local Plan)*

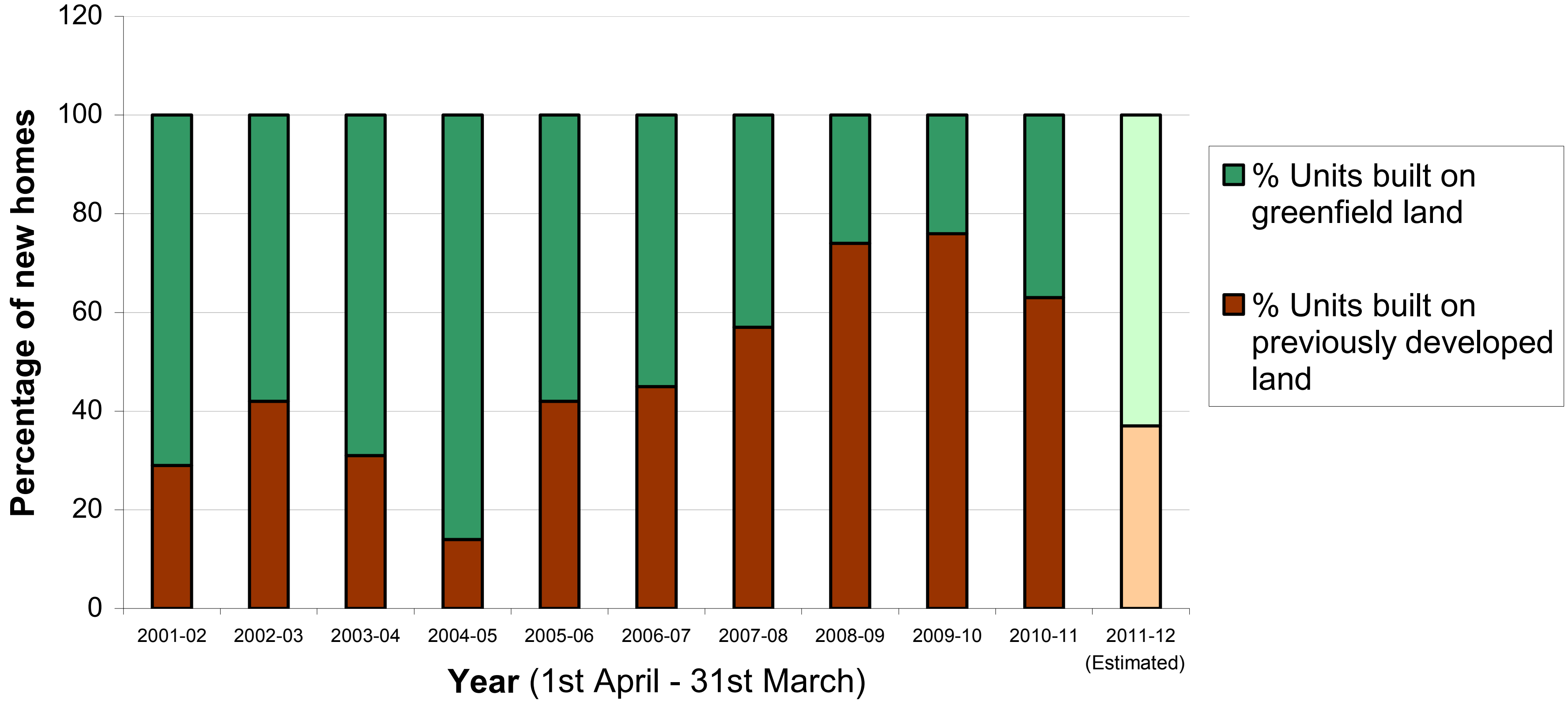


Chart 2 *- Proportion of new homes completed on previously developed and greenfield land in West Oxfordshire*

	SOURCE	HOMES	NOTES
A	Total SE Plan provision 2006-2026	7,300	
B	Homes completed 1/4/06–31/3/11	3,061	
C	Remaining provision required 1/4/11–31/3/26	4,239	A - B
D	Plan period years remaining 1/4/11-31/3/26	15	
E	Annualised requirement 1/4/11-31/3/26	283	C ÷ D
F	Requirement for next 5 years (2011/12-2015/16)	1,415	E x 5
G	Deliverable homes on allocated sites with planning permission from 1/4/11	238	See https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/8417-4444.pdf for details of these sites
	Deliverable homes on exception sites with planning permission from 1/4/11	84	
H	Deliverable homes on sites with planning permission which were previously unidentified/ unallocated	574	Those sites which have not yet started are discounted by 7.5% to allow for possible lapses[1]
I	Deliverable homes on sites allocated in the Local Plan but without planning permission	330	This figure excludes the Cogges allocation (46 homes) which may not be deliverable within the 5 year period
J	West Witney Strategic Development Area (North Curbridge)	300	This mixed use site is expected to deliver approximately 50 homes in 2013/14, 100 in 2014/15 and then 150 homes per annum from 2015/16
	Total deliverable dwellings	1,526	G + H + I + J

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

The formula for calculating the proportion of dwellings that are deliverable (NI 159) is:-

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

i.e. 1,526 ÷ 1,415 x 100 = 108%

[1] Since 2001, about 7.5% of dwellings permitted on small previously unidentified sites have lapsed.

Spatial Strategy

5.5. With less than 1.5 persons per hectare, West Oxfordshire is one of the most sparsely populated authority areas in the South East Region, with about a quarter of the District's population living outside of the three main towns. Although over a half of West Oxfordshire's residents live in Witney and a further 20% in Carterton and Chipping Norton, much of the District suffers from inadequate transport infrastructure and poor public transport availability. The Local Plan's locational policies attempt to address this issue by steering the bulk of new development towards the more sustainable service centres. Over a third of the 424 homes completed in 2010/11 were located in the largest town, Witney, with well over another third being completed in Carterton, Eynsham and Woodstock. Only 20% of the new homes were provided outside of Group C settlements (as listed in Figure 5.2: Hierarchy of Settlements in the Local Plan). 83% of the new homes, covered by extant planning permissions, will be completed in Group C settlements.

5.6. Between 2001 and 2011a little under two thirds of all housing completions (3,638 of 5,832), in West Oxfordshire, have taken place on sites allocated through the development plan process. However, many of the Local Plan allocations have now been completed, or are nearing completion, and during the reporting year nearly two thirds of the 424 homes were completed on previously unidentified sites. Just under 75% of all homes with unimplemented planning permission (at 1st April 2011) are to be built on previously unidentified sites. However a comprehensive mixed use site, expected to provide around 1,000 new homes, was reserved for future development in the Local Plan (Proposal 8 - North Curbridge Development Area, Witney) and a planning application for this development is imminent. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of all homes built in the District (on average well over 200 homes each year) have been provided on previously unidentified sites and it is expected that a number of dwellings will continue to be built on such sites.

5.7. The trajectory, *Chart 1*, shows the known and expected annual delivery of housing, on sites with existing planning permission or identified in the Local Plan, between 2006 and 2020. ***Table 2***, overleaf, details the identified sites that are expected to come forward to realise that delivery. The table shows only sites that benefitted from planning permission at 1st October 2011 or sites identified within the adopted Local Plan. Although a number of sites have been put forward through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process, none are included within this table. The figures shown against non-allocated small sites include only those previously unidentified sites that have outstanding planning permissions.

All sites with development of 10 or more units and not completed before 1st April 2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Total
WITNEY – With permission											
118a Burwell Drive – 08/0358 (Remainder of site)	1										**1**
West of Woodford Way – W//1158/06					50						**50**
1a Crawley Road – 07/1355				14							**14**
5 Welch Way – 06/1599				14							**14**
Beech House, Ducklington Lane – 10/1805				13							**13**
Springfield School – W//403/05	12										**12**
New Leys Farm – 07/1970		13									**13**
102b Woodstock Road – 11/0048				21							**21**
Allocated											
Buttercross Works (Proposal 5)			50								**50**
Cogges (Proposal 7) (46 dependent upon Cogges Link Road)							46				**46**
Strategic Development Area (Proposal 8)			50	100	150	150	150	150	150	100	**1,000**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	20	23	36	19	4						**102**
Sub-total	**33**	**36**	**136**	**181**	**204**	**150**	**196**	**150**	**150**	**100**	**1,336**
CARTERTON – With permission											
53 Burford Road – 09/1473	13										**13**
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	9	5	9	11							**34**
Sub-total	**52**	**38**	**59**	**111**	**50**						**310**
CHIPPING NORTON – With permission											
The Mill, Station Road – 11/0686				24							**24**
Allocated											
Local Plan Proposal 1		30	50								**80**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	13	11	16	11	9						**60**
Sub-total	**13**	**41**	**66**	**35**	**9**						**164**
REMAINDER OF DISTRICT – With permission											
CHADLINGTON – Quarry Road – 09/1353	12										**12**
EYNSHAM – Eynsham East – 08/1341	73	25									**98**
HANBOROUGH – Myrtle Farm – 09/1275	24										**24**
MILTON – Langston House – 10/0255		10									**10**
STANTON HARCOURT – 16 Blackditch – 08/1730	16										**16**
WOODSTOCK – 10 Oxford St (Young's Garage) 11/0153			33								**33**
Hensington Farm – 07/1808	16										**16**
East of Marlborough School – 09/0901	27										**27**
Estimate of completions on non-allocated small (less than 10 units) sites with permission	82	102	107	72	11						**374**
Sub-total	**250**	**137**	**140**	**72**	**11**						**610**
TOTAL	**348**	**252**	**401**	**399**	**274**	**150**	**196**	**150**	**150**	**100**	**2,420**
Units on previously developed land	129	117	216	157	70						**689**
Units on greenfield land	219	135	185	242	204	150	196	150	150	100	**1,731**
Percentage on previously developed land	37%	46%	54%	39%	26%						**28%**
Percentage on greenfield land	63%	54%	46%	61%	74%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	**72%**

	Previously developed		Greenfield

***Table 2** – Estimated year of completion of residential units on identified sites (at 1/10/2011) in West Oxfordshire*

Housing Type and Densities

5.8. PPS3 expects local planning authorities to consider their area's demographic profile, as well as the range of needs of individuals, households and groups, in planning an appropriate mix of accommodation. Oxfordshire's constituent authorities commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to better understand this need and the individual authorities have also carried out Housing Needs Assessments (HNA). West Oxfordshire's last HNA was carried out in 2008 http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/publications/6626-462.pdf, although this is in the process of being updated (October 2011).

5.9. Although the SHMA highlighted a number of issues, it saw the inability of so many residents to afford to buy normal market housing, locally (around a half of all first-time buyers), and the anticipated growth of smaller households and the need from older residents (65 and over) as particularly significant. Despite the fact that the average West Oxfordshire property price has fallen by about 3.4% over the last 3 years, to the current £270,000, this is still higher than the national average property price and the 2011 HNA update is expected to show that over 80% of concealed households[2] earn less than the entry level £28,200 income required to purchase a one bed flat in the District's cheapest market area. It is worth noting that although house sales in the District have fallen by 22.2% since the first quarter of 2008, this compares with a figure of 24.9% in the South East Region and a national average of 30%.

5.10. Through Local Plan policies H11 and H12, 578 new-build affordable homes have been provided, within the District, over the last five years (see *Table 3*). The Council's affordable housing target was revised during the year 2009/10 and was set as a minimum of 110 dwellings for the reporting year (2010/11). In fact, 163 new build units were completed during the year, in addition to 6 that were provided through a shared equity project. Over 80 of the new build homes were provided on Rural Exception Sites, which cater for specific local housing needs on sites that would not normally be released for residential development (*Table 4*). Both of these policies are further supported by Council guidance in the form of the '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 .

5.11. Although the Council aims to complete at least 30% of new affordable homes in the more rural areas of the District, and between 2006 and 2011 an average 27 were completed each year, the majority were provided within the three larger settlements of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, as part of significant development on allocated sites or through the redevelopment of large commercial premises. Over this period around 23% of all new affordable units were completed elsewhere within West Oxfordshire. However, during the reporting year, 54% of the new affordable homes were delivered outside of the three main towns and almost 80% of the 220 new affordable units, covered by extant planning permissions, will be provided in these more rural areas. Over a third (84) of these outstanding, permitted homes have been achieved through the rural exception policy (H12).

[2] Concealed households refer to those persons living within a household, wishing to move to their own accommodation and form a separate household (eg adult children living with their parents)

5.12. In response to the findings of past housing need and market studies, the Council seeks to achieve an overall tenure mix, within new affordable housing developments, of 70% for social rent and 30% intermediate. During the reporting year, just over 100 of the 163 new build properties were provided for social rent and since 2006 about 62% of new affordable homes have been provided for this form of tenure. Where the tenure is known (195 of the 220 units), nearly three quarters (74%) of affordable homes with outstanding permission will be for rent. Just over 60% of the outstanding units will be houses, with the remaining 86 being flats. About 55% of the total number of houses and flats will be 2 bedroom homes.

Site	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	Totals
Cheatle Crescent, Burford					13	**13**
Shilton Park, North East Carterton		38	38	17	40	**133**
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**
Crossways, Enstone					4	**4**
Filandic, Enstone		2				**2**
Merton Close, Eynsham *					40	**40**
Fairspear Road, Leafield *	10					**10**
Choicehill, Over Norton*			6			**6**
Akeman Street, Ramsden*				5		**5**
Malthouse Farm, Standlake					2	**2**
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**
Marriotts Walk, Witney					20	**20**
Valance Crescent, Witney					11	**11**
Wadards Meadow, Witney					4	**4**
Banbury Road, Woodstock *					16	**16**
Marlborough School, Woodstock					13	**13**
TOTALS	**113**	**186**	**94**	**22**	**163**	**578**
* Sites developed under the Local Plan's Rural Exception Policy						

***Table 3** - Locations of new-build affordable housing completed 2006/07 – 2010/11*

Parish	Number of dwellings	Year(s) completed
Ascott-under-Wychwood	6	1997
Bampton	31	1992
Burford	13	2010
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	31	1993, 2010
Wootton	7	2001

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

5.13. Within its projected population increase from 110,300 (2011) to 117,700 by 2026, the GLA Demographic Projections for West Oxfordshire (reviewed in May 2011), https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/8367-4452.pdf shows an associated reduction in household size, District-wide, from the existing 2.44 occupants (2011) to 2.37 by 2026. However, paradoxically, the proportion of smaller (1 and 2 bed) properties built during the reporting year has fallen for the first time since 2006 with 68% being completed, compared to 74% in the previous year. ***Chart 3*** shows the breakdown of residential completions, by number of bedrooms, since 2006. There has also been a reduction in the proportion of 1 and 2 bed properties granted planning permission during the reporting year, with only half of them being for 1 and 2 bed properties (see ***Table 5***).

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%
2010/11	50%	32%	18%

Table 5 *- Annual residential permissions by bedroom numbers*

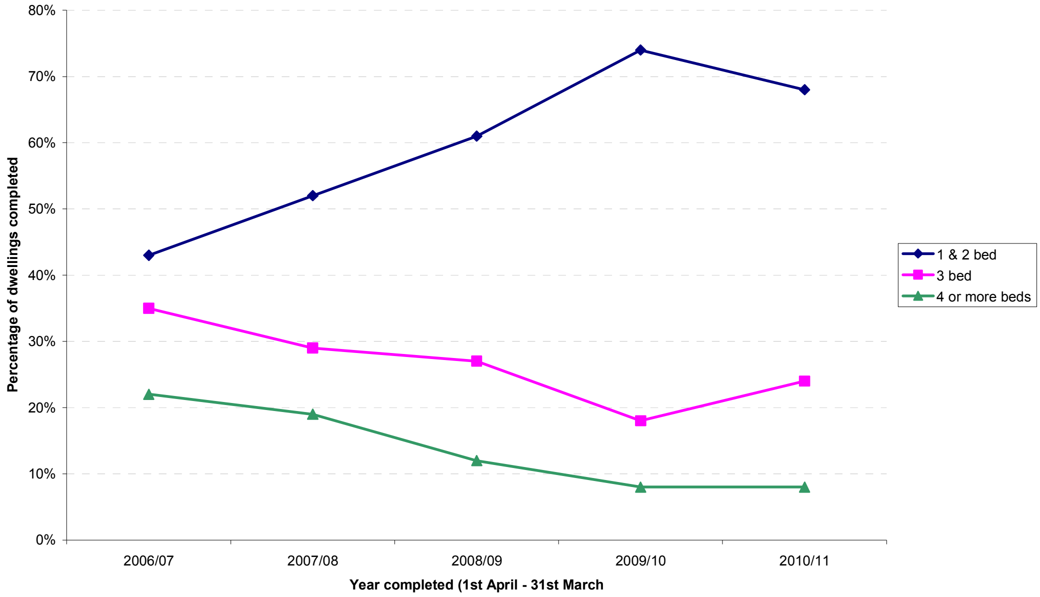


Chart 3 *- Number of bedrooms in completed dwellings*

5.14. In response to earlier government guidance, past AMRs have reported on the general densities of completed housing sites, within the District. However, the revised PPS3, published in June 2011, suggests that local planning authorities should develop housing density policies based on local circumstances and criteria, rather than just the efficient use of land. As noted earlier, West Oxfordshire is a particularly rural district and a range of densities are appropriate in particular locations. The West Oxfordshire Design Guide http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/DesignGuide.cfm provides useful advice in this respect, as does Local Plan policy H3, which notes that when considering the future development of a site, 'The quality of the future environment remains the overriding consideration'. The average density of larger residential sites (10 or more dwellings), completed in 2010/11, was 41 dwellings per hectare, ranging from about 30dph on the periphery of Eynsham, to 100 dph on a site for new flats in Witney.

5.15. As well as the overall increases in population and households, the GLA Demographic Projections also show a significant growth in the numbers of older people, with the over 64 age group showing a 66% increase between 2006 and 2026 and an 82% increase in those aged 75 and over, in the same period. To cater for the increased need for accommodation for older residents, a number of residential care homes have been granted planning permission over recent years, some of which have been completed. In addition, the Oxfordshire Extra Care Housing Strategy http://portal.oxfordshire.gov.uk/content/publicnet/council_services/health_social_care/general/strategy/ECHstrategy.pdf was set up by Oxfordshire County Council, working with the constituent authorities, to formulate a strategy whereby the increasing demand for extra care housing could be met. West Oxfordshire has been set a target of 940 such homes, to be delivered by the year 2031.

Gypsy and Traveller Pitches

5.16. National and local studies (http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/7587-4065.pdf, and http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/publications/6217-456.pdf) have identified a significant shortage of suitable sites for travelling communities and the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs assessment (GTAA) for the Thames Valley suggested that an additional 12 permanent pitches were required to meet the shortfall in West Oxfordshire, between 2006 and 2011.

5.17. The emerging West Oxfordshire Core Strategy will address this need by safeguarding and, where appropriate, augmenting existing sites and by providing new sites (either through the development plan process or through submitted planning applications). Since 2006, 10 planning permissions have been granted for an additional 26 pitches, bringing the District total of authorised pitches to 87. ***Table 6***, below, lists the permissions since 2006.

5.18. Two of the pitches granted planning permission in the reporting year were sites for named gypsy families (Churchill Road, Kingham and Oxford Road, Eynsham) and one planning permission was for the change of use to a site for 5 pitches for gypsy families.

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
The Heyes, Churchill Road, Kingham	1	15/07/2010
Little Willow, Oxford Road, Eynsham	1	22/07/2010
Land adjacent to A40, Barnard Gate	5	24/01/2011

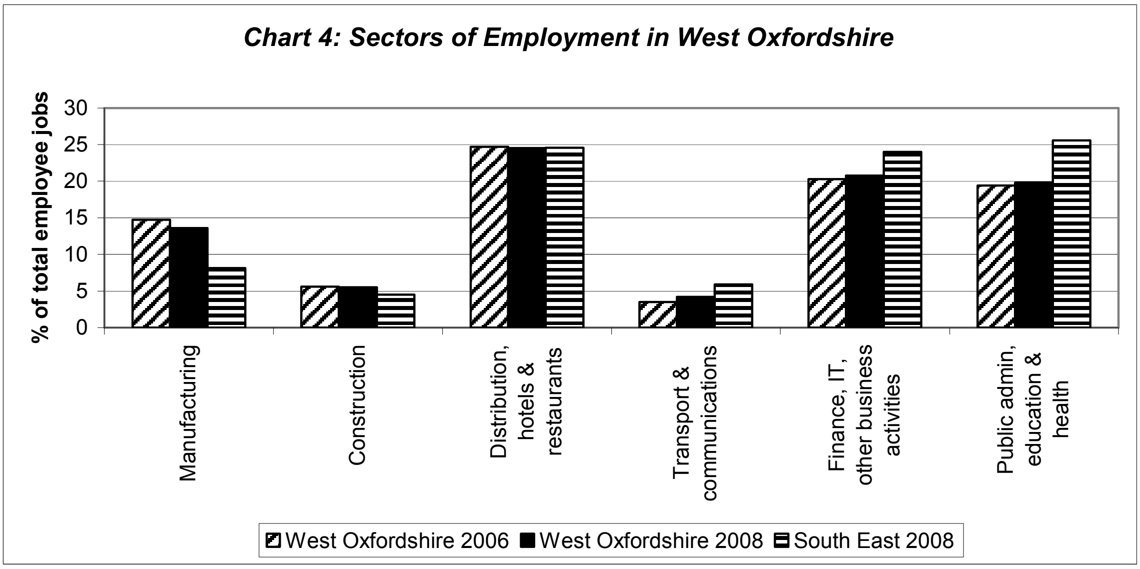
Table 6 *- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Plots/Pitches added since 1st April 2006*

EMPLOYMENT

The Local Economy

5.19. 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.

5.20. The most recent data indicates that there were 48,000 jobs in total in West Oxfordshire, a jobs density of 0.75[3]. 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.



5.21. In the rural area[4] 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[5]. Completions of employment development floorspace during the monitoring period totalled 39,029m^2 with 33,826m^2 accounted for in rural areas. The majority of this was in non specific B uses but a large proportion was also B8 (storage and distribution). 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 enterprises in West Oxfordshire are generally above average[6].

5.22. Tourism and the visitor economy remains an important sector, with total local business turnover from tourist activity estimated at over £248m in 2009, a rise

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[3] Jobs Density (2009) www.nomisweb.co.uk
[4] Using standard rural-urban definitions the rural area includes all of the District excluding Witney and Carterton
[5] Understanding Rural Oxfordshire –The Rural economy, Oxfordshire Economic Observatory 2007
[6] ONS, http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

of 7.2% over 2008[7]. Tourism related jobs continued to grow between 2005 and 2008 and accounted for 12.4% of total jobs, much higher than the rest of the region at 8.2%. The tourism strategy for the District aims to persuade visitors to stay longer and spend more, in addition to attracting more visitors.

5.23. 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

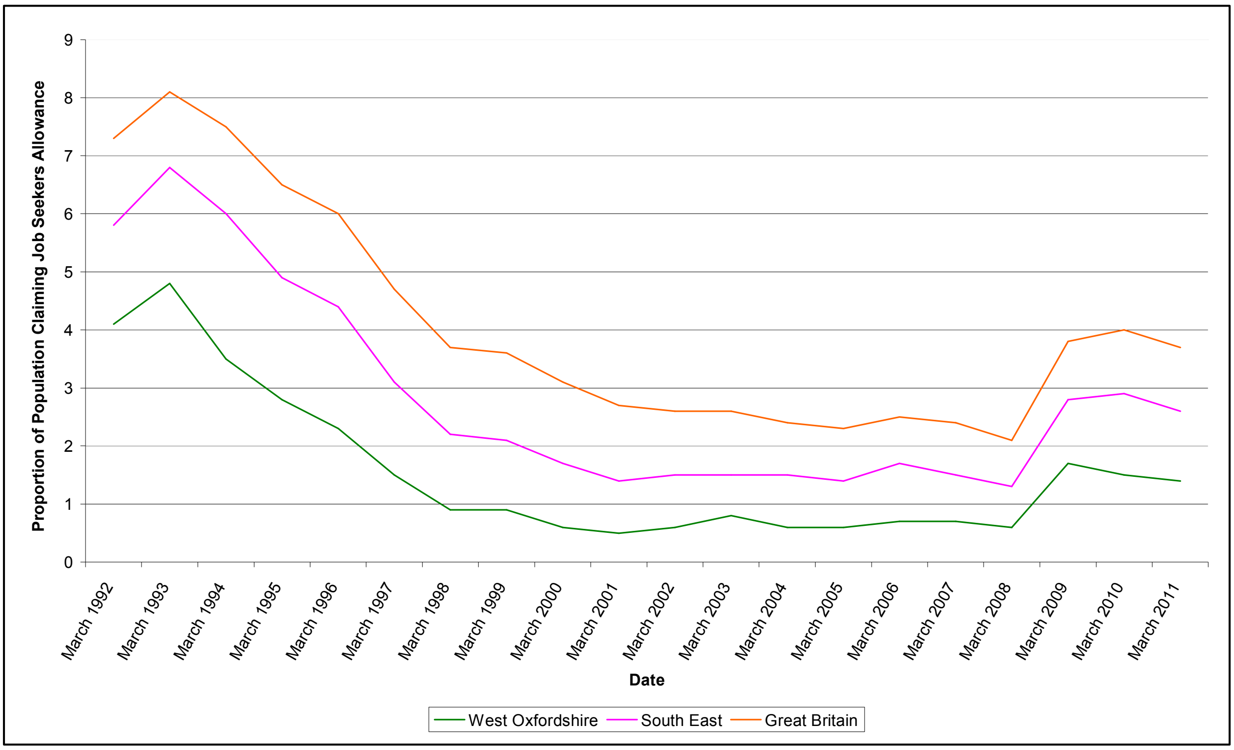

Chart 5 *– Unemployment JSA claimants since 1992*

5.24. 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.

5.25. Unemployment claimant counts[8] in March 2011 stood at 1.4%, an increase of 0.2% over August 2010 as recorded in last year's AMR. The rate remains considerably higher than 2008 when the proportion of the working age population claiming JSA fell to 0.6%. It remains lower than the regional and national averages (2.6% and 3.7% respectively). Modelled unemployment rates stand at 3.9% of the economically active working age population which is significantly lower than the south east (5.8%) and Great Britain (7.6%). Economic activity (proportion of working age available for work) at 80.9%[9], and the employment rate (the proportion of the workforce in employment) at 79.1% are above regional and national averages. Employment rates have improved on last

[7] Tourism South East Research Services (November 2010) The economic impact of tourism, West Oxfordshire 2009
[8] Defined as the proportion of working age people claiming Job Seekers Allowance
[9] As at March 2011 defined as proportion of those people of working age (16-64)

year when they fell below regional and national averages. This may be an indication that the economy in West Oxfordshire is better placed to weather the effects of the economic downturn than elsewhere.

5.26. The average wage of those working in West Oxfordshire, at £488 per week[10], is lower than for those living in the District, at £599 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 2010 was 9.3[11] – indicating that lower quartile house prices were over 9 times higher than lower quartile earnings. The disparity between earnings and house prices has increased since the last monitoring period, indicating that house price increases have outstripped wage increases in the district. High house prices combined with lower wages can make staff recruitment and retention difficult. However, according to the Oxfordshire Employer Skills Survey (2010) 90% of West Oxfordshire employers were satisfied with Oxfordshire as a business base and the labour market was reported as stable. This is despite the fact that 21% of employers in the district report skills gaps compared with 12% in 2008. This may be the result of softer 'impact skills' taking on a greater importance than technical skills during the recession.

5.27. Recent population projections[12] forecast that economic activity rates are set to decline in the future up to 2026. These projections continue to indicate an ageing population within the district. Despite a projected decline in the labour supply over this period and current low unemployment, significant capacity exists to 'claw back' a proportion of out-commuters in order to expand the local workforce.

The local property market

5.28. 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 Ind.**	**B2 General Industry**	**B8 Storage & Distribution**	**Use within B Class not specified**	**Total**
Witney	808		-110	466	-2503	-116	-1,455
Chipping Norton	461						461
Carterton	629			56	900	4,702	6,287
Remainder of District	9,313		196	-4687	13,684	15,230	33,736
Total	11,211	0	86	-4165	12,081	19,816	39,029

***Table 7** - Net employment floorspace completed (m²) - 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2011*

5.29. A significant amount of employment floorspace was completed in the last monitoring year, a net addition of 39,029m². The largest proportion of this was the completion of a new development at RAF Brize Norton comprising 24,200m²

[10] Earnings by workplace (2010) www.nomis.co.uk
[11] Table 576 Ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings by district. www.communities.gov.uk
[12] GLA Intelligence unit (November 2010) West Oxfordshire Demographic Projections

floorspace. This is a much higher level of employment land completion compared to the previous year when only 582m^2 was completed. In 2008/09, floorspace completions were 7,750m^2, and over the last 15 years the average has been about 13,000m^2 per annum, so this year represents a significant uplift in employment completions, despite the recession

5.30. A small proportion of employment land has been changed 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.

<u>Potential supply of employment premises and land</u>

5.31. There is a large amount of permitted employment floorspace within the District that remains unimplemented (42,582m^2). The decline in permitted floorspace this year, down from 76,443m^2 during the last monitoring period is the result of the large scale completion at RAF Brize Norton (hangar and office development).

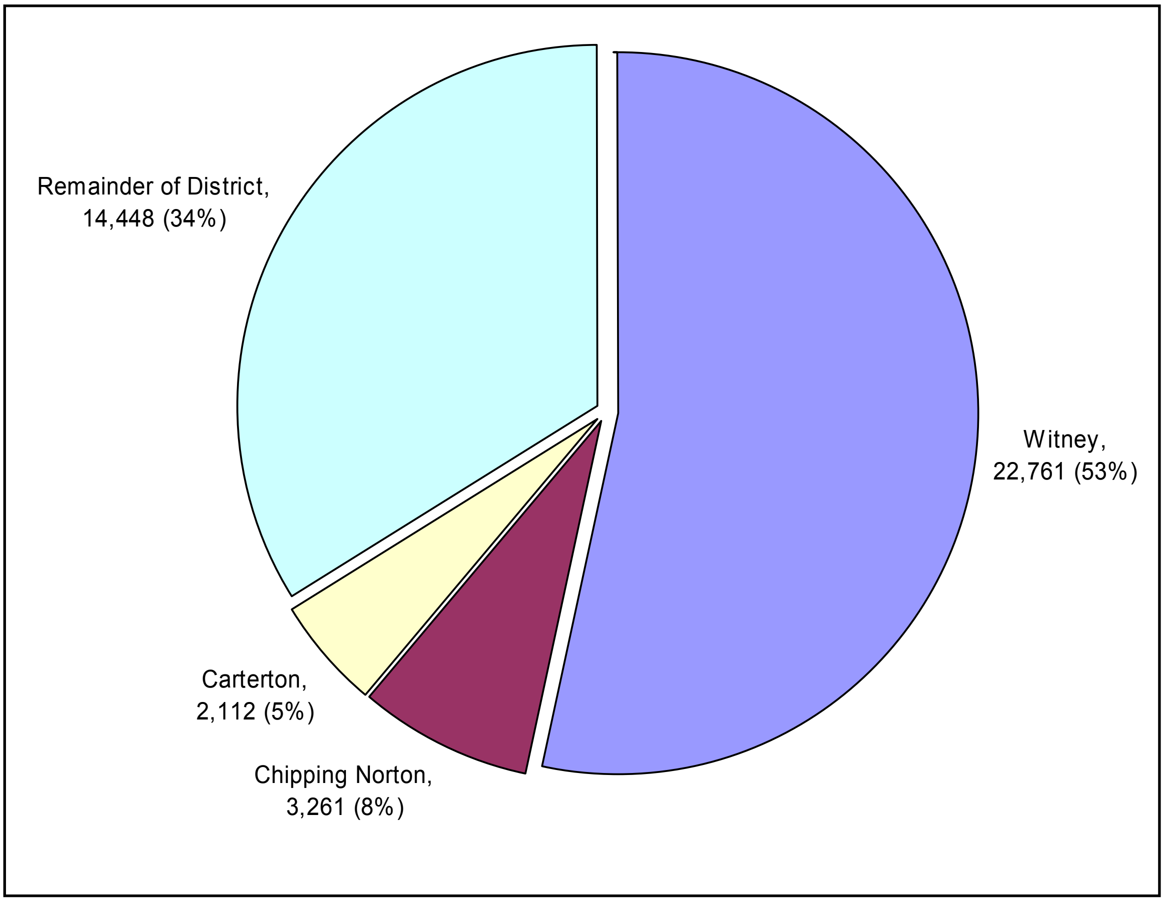

Chart 6: *Location of Permitted Employment Floorspace (m^2)*

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	-94	0	529	-734	2,409	20,651	**22,761**
Chipping Norton	3,553	0	0	-339	-263	310	**3,261**
Carterton	-172	282	0	-408	-134	2,544	**2,112**
Remainder of District	1975	0	4,658	3,712	3,443	660	**14,448**
Whole District	5,262	282	5,187	2,231	5,455	24,165	**42,582**

Table 8: *Location and type of permitted employment floorspace (m^2) at 1st April 2011*

5.32. The monitoring data indicates that there is a significant supply of employment floorspace throughout the district, particularly in Witney. 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.

5.33. Excluding the unspecified B class uses, the majority of permitted floorspace is fairly evenly spread between B1(a), B1(c) and B8 uses. There has been a significant increase in the availability of B1(c), light industry due to permission for 3,194m^2 at Stanton Harcourt Industrial Estate. A large proportion of the permitted distribution floorspace relates to an outstanding permission at 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.

5.34. 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.

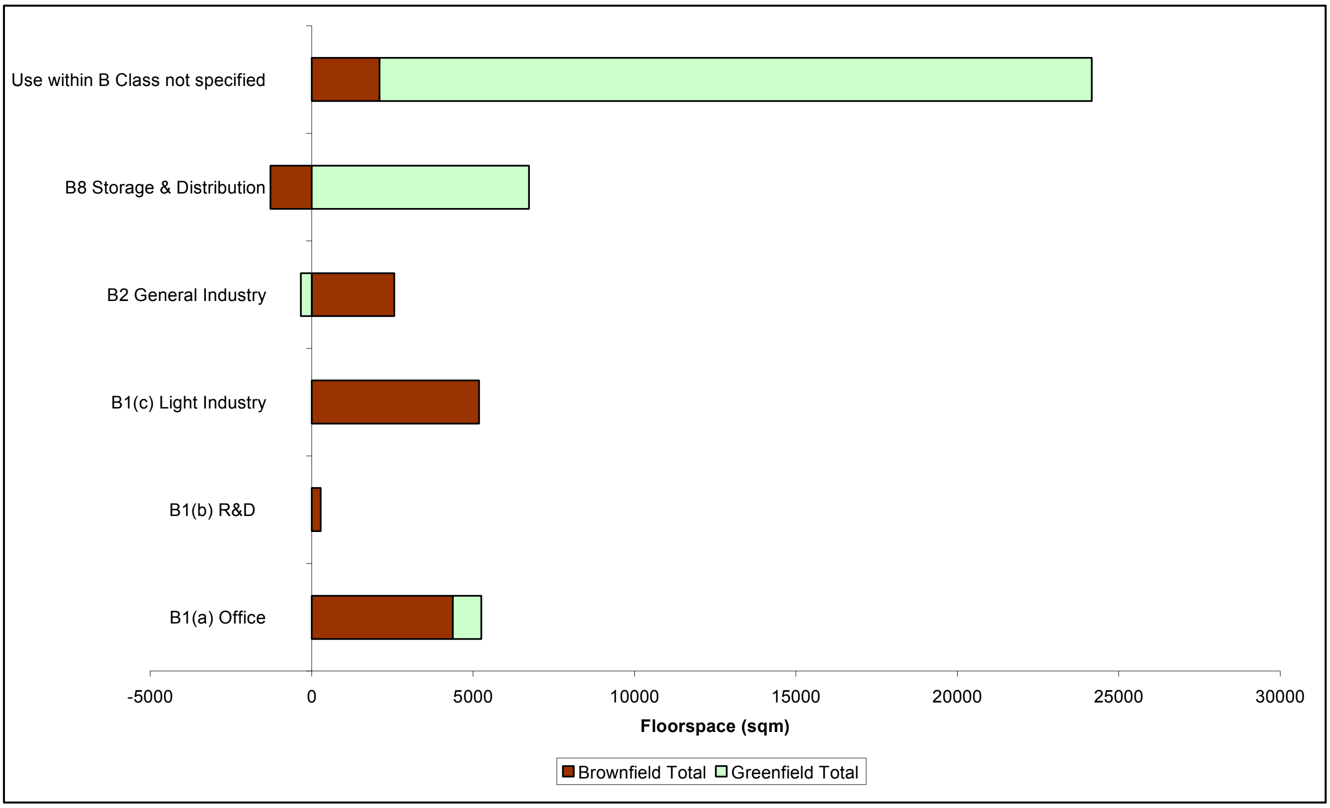

***Chart 7:** Permitted Employment Floorspace by Type*

Witney

5.35. The majority of available employment land lies to the west of Witney, to the east and west of Downs Road, on land allocated in the Local Plan. There is approximately 2.28 ha of employment floorspace with permission for new development and approximately 3.7 ha of allocated land remaining for employment uses in the town. Total estimated land available for employment uses is 9.74 ha.

5.36. The Council's vacant commercial property register (October 2011) identified:

- A large volume of office space available in a range of locations, particularly throughout the town centre and in the vicinity of Station Lane to the south of the town centre
- Limited number of small vacant retail units available in the town centre and at Madley Park neighbourhood centre
- Industrial and warehouse units of a range of sizes at Station Lane and the West Witney employment areas.

Carterton

5.37. All remaining allocated employment land in Carterton has now been granted permission for new development with 0.2 ha of employment floorspace currently with outstanding planning permission in the town. The total estimated land area available for employment is 7.95 ha including 5.4 ha of land with permission but without specific floorspace detail. The majority of completions in the town over the past year, over 4,702m^2 of floorspace have been for unspecified B uses, particularly on the West Oxon Business Park. This was one of the last remaining areas of allocated employment land in Carterton.

5.38. The Council's vacant property register (October 2011) identified:

- A number of new build light industrial and warehouse units at Ventura Park.
- Several new build small and medium sized retail units as part of mixed use development at West Oxfordshire Retail Park
- Limited office space availability throughout the town
- Opportunities for design and build B1, B2 and B8 units at West Oxfordshire Business Park.

Chipping Norton

5.39. In Chipping Norton there is a total estimated land area of 2.93 ha available for employment. 2.53 ha of land currently has permission for development comprising a total of 0.3 ha of employment floorspace , predominantly in B1(a) uses, a large proportion of which is on the Chipping Norton Business Park, London Road. A further 0.4 ha remains allocated for employment at the former depot adjacent to Cromwell Park

5.40. The Council's vacant property register (October 2011) identified:

- That the majority of available property is office space in a range of locations throughout the town.
- Limited space for other business uses

Remainder of West Oxfordshire

5.41. 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 2011) also identified:

- Several small office and retail units available in Eynsham, with some medium and larger office and industrial units available at Old Station Way and Oakfield Industrial Estate.
- Numerous small and medium sized office units at Blenheim Office Park and Hanborough Business Park.
- Several small to medium sized industrial and office units available throughout the rural areas of the district

Town Centres

5.42. 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.

5.43. 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.

5.44. 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.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	C1	D1	D2	B1(a)	**Total**
Total amount (m2) of floorspace for 'town centre uses'	**1,717**	**39**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**467**	**0**	**11,211**	**13,437**

Table 9: *Additional floorspace (m^2) completed for town centre uses 2010/11*

5.45. There was a notable decline in the level of floorspace completions for town centre uses during 2010/11 compared to the previous monitoring period. Completions for A1 units in particular were down from 11,906 in 2009/10 to 1,717m^2 this year. This considerable drop can be accounted for by the fact that a significant town centre extension was completed during 2009/10 at Marriotts Walk in Witney and nothing on this scale has occurred during the current monitoring period. Regard should be given to the large volume of permitted floorspace in Witney however, as this includes floorspace at the Woolgate shopping centre which was due for completion shortly after the end of this monitoring period. The most significant area of A1 development during this period was an 800m^2 Lidl food store at Ducklington Lane to the south west of Witney town centre.

Location	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	C1	D1	B1 (a)	**Total**
Witney	1192	-	-	-	-	-	132	748	**2072**
Witney Town Centre		-	-	-	-	-	-	*60*	*60*
Carterton	*39*	39	-	-	-	-	-	629	***707***
Carterton Town Centre	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		**-**
Chipping Norton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	461	**461**
Chipping Norton Town Centre	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Remaining areas of the District	486	-	-	-	-	3	335	9,313	**10,137**
Total	**1,717**	**39**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**467**	**11,211**	**13,437**

Table 10 *- Locations of additional floorspace (m^2) completed for town centre uses 2010/11*

5.46. The above ***Table 10*** highlights the broad areas in which town centre uses were developed. The largest proportion of town centre uses was comprised of B1(a) units although only a small proportion was developed within a defined town centre boundary. This development was within the defined town centre of Witney, with none within Carterton and Chipping Norton defined town centres.

Location	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	C1	D1	D2	B1(a)	Total
Witney	3,923	65	63	946	0	0	10,247	1,577	-94	**16,727**
Carterton	2,056	0	0	0	0	0	522	0	-172	**2,406**
Chipping Norton	1,244	0	129	0	0	0	420	0	3,553	**5,346**
Remainder of District	84	67	0	0	62	2,457	1,508	35,626	1975	**41,779**
Whole of District	**7,307**	**132**	**192**	**946**	**62**	**2,457**	**12,697**	**37,203**	**5,262**	**66,258**

Table 11 *- Permitted floorspace (m²) for town centre uses 2010/11*

5.47. There are 66,258m² of town centre uses with outstanding planning permissions (at 31st March 2011). Only a small proportion of this falls within defined town centres however, with 1,244m² outstanding in the centre of Chipping Norton and 860m² at the Woolgate Centre in Witney. The 2,457m² of C1 (hotel) floorspace remaining outstanding throughout the rest of the district is accounted for by a hotel development a Minster Lovell Mill. The large volume of floorspace permitted for D2 (Leisure) development is predominantly made up of new sports pitch provision at Witney Rugby Club.

Town Centre Surveys

5.48. Surveys of the main town centres have been completed throughout 2010/11to determine 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

5.49. The survey identified 241 properties within the town centre, with the largest proportion of these (60%) occupied by shops (A1 uses). Professional Services (A2) the next most dominant use class occupy 12% of groundfloor space. Witney has a thriving town centre and as such experiences low vacancy rates. In 2011, there were only 10 vacant units representing 4% of the total ground floor space within the town centre, despite the economic downturn impacting on town centres in other areas. A town centre extension to Marriots Walk opened in 2009 and is now almost fully occupied. The town centre boundary will be re-drawn to incorporate this development.

Carterton

5.50. There are a total of 76 units in Carterton town centre, of which 34 are classified as shops (45%). Vacancy rates remain steady compared to last year's AMR at 2 units.

5.51. During the monitoring year, a planning application for an out of centre Sainsbury's store at the West Oxon Business Park was refused, for reasons including the availability of a development site in the town centre. Recently, Morrisons have publicly expressed interest in developing a foodstore in the town centre although a planning application has yet to be received.

Chipping Norton

5.52. The 2011 survey identified 102 properties within the town centre. Just under half of these (49%) are retail units (A1) and 12% are professional services (A2). There has been an increase in the number of restaurants and cafes in the town from 5 to 7. There has been virtually no change in provision across use classes between 2007 and 2009 although vacancy rates have climbed from 2 to 5 units, possibly as a result of the economic downturn.

ENVIRONMENT

5.53. 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

5.54. Water management is a serious issue in West Oxfordshire. The District's main rivers (Thames, Windrush and Evenlode) form extensive floodplains and can pose a significant risk of flooding, such as occurred in the summer of 2007. In contrast, there are parts of West Oxfordshire, with a relatively high water requirement, which have a much more limited supply with which to meet that demand.

5.55. In 2009 the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was published http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/files/download/6706-3603.pdf. As well as assessing the longer term impact of climate change on the District's water resources, the document also identifies the main sources of potential flooding, allowing the Council to make informed decisions on planning proposals, within such areas, and to implement recommended mitigation measures.

5.56. Since 2007, along with the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Water, the Council has been carrying out work to try to reduce the flood risk in the parts of the District which are under threat. One element of this partnership working has been the updating of local flood maps. The Council is able to use these, in conjunction with expert advice from the Environment Agency (EA), to assess the suitability and the impact of planning proposals in sensitive or high risk areas. Through the ongoing consultation process with EA, during the reporting year only three objections to planning applications were received, relating to absent or unsatisfactory flood risk assessments. None were granted planning permission, contrary to that advice.

Biodiversity

5.57. The many and varied habitats that contribute to West Oxfordshire's special landscape character sustain an abundance of diverse species of plants and animals. Many of these are relatively hardy and can coexist quite comfortably with the District's human residents. However, some of the habitats are more fragile and national and local policies have been designed to try to offer these areas extra protection. Some of this protection is afforded through the use of particular habitat designations and management plans. An important tool that West Oxfordshire and many other local authorities use, to monitor the success of these policies and plans, is the national network of Local Environmental Records Centres. The Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre (TVERC) is our local member of this network and, through their work with local recorders and partner organisations, they maintain datasets relating to the boundaries and conditions of designated areas along with the health of various species of flora and fauna. They provide West Oxfordshire with an update report each year and the detail of the 2010/2011 report follows.

Changes in areas of biodiversity importance

5.58. ***Table 12*** provides details of the areas of the sites designated for their biodiversity importance. There has been no change in area in some of these sites between the AMR figures produced in 2010 and this year's report, as changes to them are infrequent. The analysis of the changes in area of Local Wildlife and Geological Sites is really a measure of the survey activity of that year (as determined by the subsequent site selection panel decisions); the figures for 2010 contained within the table below are the outcomes from the April 2011 site selection panel meeting (at which point the 2010 surveyed sites designated as LWS or LGS, or de-selected, were confirmed).

5.59. The amount of Local Wildlife Sites within West Oxfordshire increased by 5.1ha in 2010 as a consequence of decisions made by the site selection panel. Swinford Watercress Beds Valley had a net increase of 5.37ha. Other minor amendments to boundaries of LWS account for the remainder of the increase, with a decrease of 0.44 hectares in Carterton Grassland, and an increase in Grime's Meadow (0.13 hectares) and a very minor increase in the area of Dean Bottom in Fulbrook.

5.60. The Local Geological Site project site selection panel also met during 2011 to assess surveys of sites undertaken in 2010. The overall county resource was re-calculated; there was an increase in the West Oxfordshire resource attributable to the designation of sites at Asthall Meander, The Devil's Quoits at Stanton Harcourt and Whitehill Quarry. The calculations of % of designated sites within both West Oxfordshire and the County as a whole are based on GIS determinations of geographic areas as follows:

- Area of West Oxfordshire: 71,235 hectares
- Area of Oxfordshire: 259,846 hectares

The following table identifies the areas of sites designated for their environmental value within West Oxfordshire. A colour coding system has been used:

(red)	A reduction in the resource
(amber)	No significant change in the resource
(green)	An increase in the resource

Designated site	Area in hectares (2010)	Oxon Area in hectares (2010)	Area in hectares (2011)	As % of West Oxon	Oxon Area in hectares (2011)	As % of Oxon
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	1118.6	4465.17	1118.6	1.57%	4465.17	1.72%
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	7.0	576.9	7.0	<0.01%	576.9	0.22%
Local Wildlife Sites	1420.6	5373.9	1425.7	2.00%	5380.4	2.07%
Sites of Local Interest for Nature (SLINCS)*	n/a	202.5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Local Nature Reserves	2.8 (2 sites)	50.2	2.8 (2 sites)	<0.01%	50.2	0.02%
Local Geological Sites	258.5	472.55 (plus 4 unmapped sites)	332.36	0.47%	583.07 (plus 3 unmapped sites)	0.22%

***Table 12** – Areas of sites of biodiversity and geological importance*

Note: Local Wildlife Sites were previously known as County Wildlife Sites

- *The status of SLINCs is the subject of review by Oxford City Council. Those of Local Wildlife Site standard are now counted within the figures for that site designation*

Change in number of UKBAP priority species

5.61. This indicator uses records of UK BAP priority species which have been reported in West Oxfordshire during the period 1990 – 2010. Anything prior to this data is thought unlikely to now be present in the district. The changes in the numbers of BAP species in West Oxfordshire are given in ***Table 13***.

5.62. There has been an overall decrease in the number of BAP species from TVERC record sources. Records for three species date back to 1989 and so these have been removed from the 2010 count. One bird species was double-counted in 2009 and this too was removed. Finally, a 1995 record of a BAP bird species, red-necked phalarope, has been obtained from one of the county's recording groups and so has been added to the total of BAP species. The county figure also increased in 2010 due to a number of BAP bird species being recorded for the first time.

	West Oxon (2009)	Oxfordshire (2009)	West Oxon (2010)	Oxfordshire (2010)
Numbers of BAP priority species	136	231	133	234

Table 13 *- Change in numbers of UKBAP Species*

Changes in area of UKBAP priority habitat

5.63. ***Table 14*** provides details of the UK BAP priority habitats which have been identified within West Oxfordshire. There have been no changes in the values provided in the report in 2010. Digital habitat data from site surveys (including West Oxfordshire sites) and a review of digital mapping in parts of the county have been undertaken by TVERC, but the new data have yet to be consolidated within the overall digital resource. This is planned to be carried out by the end of the 2011/12 business year, but too late for the District Council's Annual Monitoring Review requirements this year.

UK BAP priority habitat type	Area (hectares) 2009-10	County context 2009-10	Area (hectares) 2010-11	County context 2010-11
Arable field margins	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	1783.78	4750.90	1783.78	4750.90
Eutrophic standing water	570.30	933.20	570.30	933.20
Hedgerows	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known
Lowland beech and yew woodland	13.84	777.36	13.84	777.36
Lowland calcareous grassland	180.08	732.71	180.08	732.71
Lowland dry acid grassland	14.41	48.75	14.41	48.75
Lowland Fens	30.64#	142.96#	30.64#	142.96#
Lowland heathland	0.0	2.96	0.0	2.96
Lowland meadows	195.51	1081.27	195.51	1081.27
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	1516.67	4518.41	1516.67	4518.41
Open mosaic habitats on	Not known	Not known	Not known	Not known

UK BAP priority habitat type	Area (hectares) 2009-10	County context 2009-10	Area (hectares) 2010-11	County context 2010-11
previously developed land				
Ponds	2.18	3.79	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	53.30	326.21	53.30	326.21
Wet woodland	23.93	137.94	23.93	137.94
Wood pasture and parkland	635.66	1858.82	635.66	1858.82
Total area of BAP priority habitat	**5027.38**	**15329.37**	**5027.38**	**15329.37**

Table 14 *– UKBAP priority habitat resource in West Oxfordshire*

Combined figure for Fen and Reedbed resource

Condition of SSSIs

5.64. Natural England undertakes periodic visits to Sites of Special Scientific Interest to determine the ecological condition of the individual units associated with those sites. Natural England's focus is on liaising with landowners and site managers to achieve the aim of all units in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition. The sites which are visited are part of a programme of monitoring surveys throughout the county. However, not all SSSI units are visited in any one year. For example, in the 2010-11 year, only 4 of the possible 52 West Oxfordshire SSSI units were visited. The ecological condition of SSSI units as at March 2011 (i.e. the condition at the end of the AMR year of analysis) is as follows:

Condition	No. of units or part units 2010	Sum of hectares 2010	% of West Oxon resource 2010	% of Oxfordshire resource 2010
Favourable	32	413.47	37.0	47.24
Unfavourable declining	0	0.00	0.00	0.17
Unfavourable no change	0	0.00	0.00	0.29
Unfavourable recovering	21	705.36	63.0	52.10
No data	0	0.00	0.00	0.0
Destroyed	0	0.00	0.00	0.17
TOTAL	53	1118.83	100	100

Table 5 *- SSSI unit ecological condition data, 2010-11*
Note: based on 29 whole or partial sites within West Oxfordshire

5.65. All of the SSSI units in West Oxfordshire are now either in Favourable or Unfavourable recovering condition. This is an improvement on the 2009 data, with two previously less favourably managed units - in Glyme Valley and Alvescot Meadows SSSIs – now under improved management regimes. The West Oxfordshire position betters that of the overall county position of 99% and meets Natural England's national public service agreement target of 100% of SSSI units in favourable or unfavourable recovering condition.

Sustainable Design and Construction

5.66. Although one significant element of sustainable development is its location, another, equally important, factor is the actual design of the building(s), along with the materials and components used and where they are sourced from. There is a wealth of advice available, relating to sustainable construction, and the Council's website provides access to a number of documents that offer guidance to users, from householders to large developers. The 'West Oxfordshire Design Guide' (http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/DesignGuide.cfm) is supported by more detailed advice in a number of leaflets such as West Oxfordshire's 'Sustainable construction interim planning advice', and various renewable energy generation guides at http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/planning/MicroRenewableEnergy.cfm

5.67. The 2009/2010 AMR noted examples of housing developments with strong sustainability credentials, such as the Rural Exception Sites at Bens Close in Woodstock and at Blackditch in Stanton Harcourt. As well as using such elements as air source heat pumps and sustainable materials in their construction, both schemes were also Lifetime Homes compliant. Lifetime Homes are designed to have the flexibility to meet the demands of a changing household and include such elements as wheelchair access, provision for the future installation of equipment such as stair lifts and bath handrails and electrical switches and sockets positioned to be convenient for all. Both of these developments were completed during the reporting year along with a number of other larger, similarly sustainable developments, such as the Rural Exception Site off Merton Close in Eynsham and the affordable housing site off Blackthorn Avenue in Shilton Park. In addition to these recent developments, there are several other sites, meeting the Code for Sustainable Homes level 3 or 4, already under construction or awaiting implementation.