

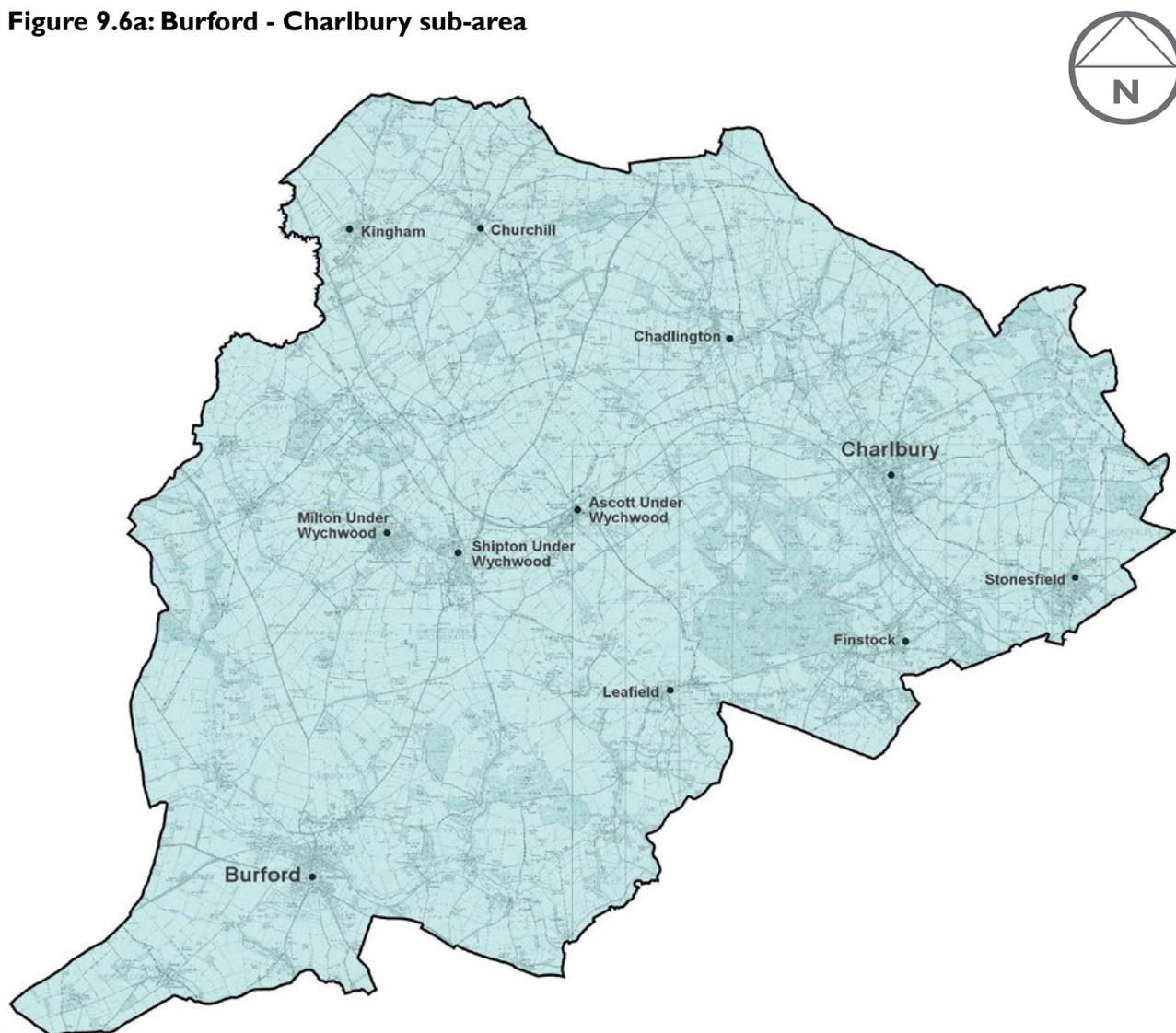


Burford - Charlbury sub-area

Burford

9.6.1 This is the largest of the sub-areas covering an area of almost 22,000 hectares. It has a predominantly rural character and is relatively sparsely populated with just 13,000 residents. The area includes a network of small and medium sized towns and villages, none larger than 3,000 residents. The vast majority of the area is within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and many of the towns and villages have extensive conservation areas and numerous listed buildings.

Figure 9.6a: Burford - Charlbury sub-area



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9.6.2 There are two designated rural service centres within this sub-area; Burford and Charlbury. With a population of 1,300 Burford is the smallest of the District's service centres but has a level of services which belies its size and is one of West Oxfordshire's most popular tourist attractions. With a population of just under 3,000, Charlbury lies in the centre of West Oxfordshire on the Cotswolds rail line.

9.6.3 Other larger settlements in this area include the villages of Milton under Wychwood and Shipton under Wychwood (population of 1,500 and 1,300 respectively). Stonesfield has a population of about 1,500 and has a thriving community spirit, with a range of local services and facilities. It is popular with walkers and cyclists being a focus of rural footpaths and bridleways, including the Oxfordshire Way.

Housing

9.6.4 The existing housing stock in this sub-area is relatively evenly distributed with no single major large settlement. In Burford, there have been no sites allocated for residential development since the late 1980s. The environmental quality of the town makes it a desirable place to live but restricts the availability of suitable sites for new housing. These factors combine to make housing in Burford particularly expensive.

9.6.5 Charlbury remained largely unchanged until the 20th century with three quarters of the houses in the town having been built since 1900 and well over half since 1950. From 1981 to 1996 almost 200 new homes were built and since then a further 100 homes have been added to the town including 44 affordable homes. Housing affordability is a key issue in this area.

9.6.6 Milton under Wychwood has seen the addition of more modern development than its neighbour Shipton under Wychwood and although dispersed at its edges, the main part of the village is relatively densely developed. At Shipton, former dispersed hamlets have now been largely consolidated by linear infill and modern estate development. The settlement therefore has a relatively dense core but is dispersed at its edges, open spaces between forming key parts of the settlement character.

9.6.7 Stonesfield has seen considerable consolidation of development in the past with redevelopment of farmyards and conversion of barns for housing primarily during the 1980s. There has been only limited new build in recent years as few opportunities remain for residential intensification.

Employment

9.6.8 As a predominantly rural area, employment opportunities in this sub-area are relatively limited but there are a number of small industrial estates and offices, many in converted buildings and within or on the edge of the towns and larger villages. A significant isolated employment site exists at Leafield Technical Centre with a long association with motorsport.

9.6.9 At Charlbury, there are now few employment sites within the built up area although some local employment is provided nearby, for example adjacent to the railway station and within Cornbury Park. Shipton and Milton under Wychwood both have small employment areas with a number of small business units.

9.6.10 This sub-area provides around 6,000 jobs, 12.5% of the District total. The resident workforce is highly skilled with a large proportion in professional occupations or holding managerial positions. The area is characterised by high-levels of home working with around 35% of workers working at or mainly from home. This helps to keep a reasonable job/workforce balance. Compared to the eastern parts of the District, there is less commuting to Oxford and adjoining areas.

- 9.6.11 Key road links in this area include the A40 which runs along the southern edge of Burford, the A361 linking Burford with Swindon and Chipping Norton and the A424 linking Burford with Stow on the Wold. At Burford, HGV transport is a significant concern for local people as freight traffic travels through the town along the A361.
- 9.6.12 This sub-area is the best served in terms of rail services with the Cotswold line running along the Evenlode Valley and passenger stations at Kingham, Shipton under Wychwood, Ascott under Wychwood, Charlbury and Finstock. In their Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Oxfordshire County Council identify the Cotswold line as a strategic priority including further capacity and service enhancements. Charlbury is identified as the busiest station on the line with passenger numbers up 30% since 2002. The strategy identifies the potential for further growth with the introduction of an hourly service in December 2018. It identifies a number of specific improvements to Hanborough Station and more general improvements along the rest of the line include further redoubling at the eastern and western ends of the line, ensuring appropriate levels of car parking are available and improving bus and cycle links to encourage multi-modal travel.
- 9.6.13 The availability and frequency of bus services is variable. Services through Charlbury are good, with hourly direct services to Woodstock, Oxford, Witney and Chipping Norton. Bus services in Burford are less well developed, although there is a service to Woodstock via Witney and Long Hanborough Station.
- 9.6.14 There are many opportunities for active travel in the sub area with an extensive network of paths, bridleways and quiet roads providing routes for walking, cycling and riding. There are however, safety issues on fast and busy roads which could be addressed through improved infrastructure.

- 9.6.15 There are retail and leisure opportunities across the sub-area including in particular Burford town centre which has a relatively high number of shops, hotels, pubs and restaurants catering for the tourist and visitor market and meeting the everyday needs of local residents. The town has very low vacancy rates and whilst evidence⁵⁹ suggests there is no need to plan for new retail development in Burford, it recommends that the loss of existing shops is resisted to protect its vitality and viability. The availability of car parking to support the town centre is another key issue.
- 9.6.16 Charlbury also has a variety of leisure and social activities for its residents and a range of shops and local services and facilities. The range of shopping and employment in the town has however diminished over time, despite a growth in the town's population.
- 9.6.17 The Wychwoods each have a reasonable range of services and facilities and share some services such as the purpose-built GP surgery, located in Shipton, and the primary school located between the two villages. Each village has a post office and several shops, community hall and recreation ground. Stonesfield also has a range of local services and facilities.

Environment and heritage

- 9.6.18 This area is particularly environmentally sensitive being covered almost entirely by the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Burford falls within the Upper Windrush Valley Landscape character area which has been described as an area that is highly attractive, remarkably unspoilt and with a rural character. The Upper Windrush is rich in biodiversity and is designated a Conservation Target Area. Wychwood Forest (part National Nature Reserve) is the basis of an extensive project⁶⁰ to restore the landscape character and mix of habitats associated with this former royal hunting forest.

59 Retail Needs Assessment Update (2012)

60 www.wychwoodproject.org

- 9.6.19 Charlbury has a very strong landscape and environmental setting, lying as it does in the Cotswolds AONB and the Wychwood Project Area. With Charlbury lying in the catchment area for the River Evenlode, and with a number of spring-fed tributaries of the Evenlode flowing through or close to the town, the exceptional rainfall experienced during summer 2007 resulted in flooding within the area.
- 9.6.20 This is an area particularly rich in biodiversity with Stonesfield Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the south and west. The village of Shipton under Wychwood sits within a sensitive valley side context within an extensive conservation area and within the Cotswolds AONB. The northern part of the village is subject to significant flooding constraints.
- 9.6.21 The area is also significant in terms of the historic environment. Much of Burford is covered by a Conservation Area and is home to a number of listed buildings. There is evidence of settlement in the Charlbury area since Neolithic and Bronze ages and an extensive Conservation Area covers the built-up area of the town, plus its immediate setting. Many of the Cotswold stone buildings are listed for their architectural or historic interest.
- 9.6.22 Shipton is designated a Conservation Area and contains many listed structures and unlisted vernacular buildings. Much of Stonesfield has been built in the Cotswolds vernacular with stone walls and slate roofs and has been designated a Conservation Area.

Infrastructure

- 9.6.23 Despite being predominantly rural, this sub-area is reasonably well served by infrastructure which meets primarily local needs. There is a range of shops and services available in Burford, Charlbury, Stonesfield and the Wychwoods as well as in some of the other smaller villages including Kingham.
- 9.6.24 The main considerations appear to be improvements to public transport including bus and rail and primary education provision where pressure on school capacity is expected to continue in most schools in this area.

Scope for further expansion

- 9.6.25 Although it is environmentally sensitive, this area has good transport links and a range of existing infrastructure which meets primarily local needs. It is appropriate that some growth takes place here during the plan period. However, it must be recognised that opportunities for development are relatively limited and the planned scale of growth therefore needs to be appropriate. This is consistent with national policy which applies a more restrictive approach to development in designated areas such as the Cotswolds AONB.

9.6.26 Drawing on the brief profile outlined above we can identify a number of key issues and challenges to be addressed in relation to the Burford - Charlbury sub-area. These include:

- This is a geographically large, predominantly rural area, characterised by a network of small and medium towns and villages.
- There are two designated service centres including Burford and Charlbury. Burford whilst relatively small in population offers a good range of services and facilities and is a vitally important tourist destination for West Oxfordshire.
- The area is highly environmentally sensitive with most of it falling within the AONB and including a number of other designations such as the large area of ancient woodland to the south west of Charlbury.
- The area is also historically important with several historic parks and gardens and many settlements covered by conservation areas and characterised by a number of listed buildings.
- There has been relatively little past housing delivery compared to other parts of the District, reflecting the environmentally sensitive nature of the area and poor connectivity of some parts.
- There are very limited opportunities for significant housing development in this area.
- This is an important area in terms of employment with a large proportion of people employed in professional and managerial positions and accommodating 12.5% of the District's job opportunities.
- The focus tends to be small industrial estates and offices, many in converted buildings and within or on the edge of the towns and larger villages.
- The area is characterised by high levels of home working and less commuting towards Oxford compared to the eastern parts of the District.
- The area includes a number of key road links including the A40, A361 and A424. A particular issue is the movement of HGVs through the historic centre of Burford which causes a number of problems including noise and vibration.
- Rail services are good with a number of settlements located along the Cotswold line although a number of enhancements are identified including redoubling between Hanborough and Wolvercote as well as improving access to stations and the availability of facilities including adequate car parking capacity.
- Bus services are variable with better provision at Charlbury compared to Burford.
- There are good opportunities for active travel with a network of rural footpaths and bridleways including the Oxfordshire Way.
- In terms of retail and leisure a number of the settlements in this area have facilities to meet the needs of local residents. Burford has a particularly strong retail offer geared towards tourists as well as local residents. Evidence suggests there is a need to resist the loss of shops in Burford and also address the issue of parking capacity in order to sustain the vitality and viability of the town.
- Pressure on primary school capacity is an important consideration for this area.

Strategy

- 9.6.27 Having regard to the profile and key issues outlined above, the strategy for the Burford - Charlbury sub-area is set out below. Regard will also be given to any adopted (made) Neighbourhood Plans in the sub-area.

Housing

- 9.6.28 In recognition of the fact that the Burford - Charlbury sub-area is covered largely by the Cotswolds AONB, a more restrictive approach to new housing development will be applied than in the other four sub-areas. As set out in Policy H1, the amount of housing proposed for this sub-area in the plan period to 2031 (774 homes) is based on past completions and existing commitments only. No allowance is made for future speculative 'windfall' development (an allowance for which has been made in the other sub-areas).
- 9.6.29 This does not mean that no further housing development will be permitted within the Burford – Charlbury sub-area but proposals will be considered on a case by case basis. It will need to be convincingly demonstrated that a scheme would give rise to benefits to the specific settlement or the sub-area (eg meeting identified local housing needs) and which would clearly outweigh any likely harms (eg heritage, landscape, impact on local services). Proposals will also need to accord with other relevant plan policies, in particular OS2, H1, H2 and EH1. Housing proposals which constitute 'major development' will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest.
- 9.6.30 In accordance with the overall strategy, housing development is likely to be focused primarily at Burford and Charlbury as designated rural service centres.
- 9.6.31 The anticipated housing delivery for this sub-area is 774 homes in the period 2011 – 2031. It is anticipated that this will be met through a combination of homes already completed and existing commitments as summarised in the table right.

Table 9.6b: Anticipated housing delivery in the Burford - Charlbury sub-area

Homes already completed (2011 – 2017)	233
Existing large planning commitments at 1 April 2017 (10 or more units): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Old Brewery, Priory Lane, Burford (10) • Land west of Shilton Road, Burford (169) • Land south of Forest Road, Charlbury (37) • Land north of Little Lees, Charlbury (22) • Land at rear of 15 and 16 Woodstock Road, Charlbury (11) • Land south of Church Street, Kingham (16) • New Road, Kingham (10) • Land south of High Street, Milton under Wychwood (62) • Land south of Milton Road, Shipton under Wychwood (44) • Charity Farm, Woodstock Road, Stonesfield (27) • Land east of Farley Corner, Farley Lane, Stonesfield (13) 	421
Existing small planning commitments at 1 April 2017 (less than 10 units)	120
Total anticipated housing delivery	774

Past completions and existing commitments

9.6.32 In the first six years of the plan period (2011 – 2017) a total of 233 homes have already been completed in the Burford - Charlbury sub-area. As of 1 April 2017 a further 541 homes already benefit from planning permission or resolution to grant permission subject to Section 106. This comprises 421 units on larger sites of 10 or more dwellings and 120 on smaller sites of less than 10. Total anticipated housing delivery within this sub-area in the period 2011 – 2031 is therefore 774 homes.

Employment

9.6.33 This is an important area in terms of employment, catering for 12.5% of the District's job opportunities. There are however few large employment sites and the emphasis is on relatively small-scale industrial estates and offices, many in converted buildings and within or on the edge of the towns and larger villages.

9.6.34 The proposed strategy is essentially to maintain the status quo. No specific sites have been identified for additional business land provision but there is an expectation that small-scale opportunities will continue to come forward over the period of the Local Plan on an organic basis both through the conversion of existing buildings and through small-scale development within or adjacent to the rural service centres and villages.

9.6.35 Where new buildings are proposed in rural locations it will need to be demonstrated that the business need cannot be met through the conversion of existing buildings or through the use of existing premises or land in more sustainable locations including designated service centres.

9.6.36 In accordance with Policy E1, proposals to improve the effectiveness of existing business sites will be supported where commensurate with the scale of the town or village and the character of the area. Existing sites will be safeguarded and non-business uses only permitted where a number of criteria can be met.

9.6.37 The current high levels of home-working in this area are recognised and will be supported further by ensuring that all new development has access to superfast broadband. Well-conceived farm diversification projects will be supported in principle subject to the requirements of Policy E2.

Transport

9.6.38 There are a number of transport issues to address in this area. In terms of the local highway network, a key issue to address is the impact of HGV movements through Burford which sits on the A361 and is thus a key through-route for freight traffic.

9.6.39 In this regard, the County Council intends to conduct a review of environmental weight restrictions across the County with a particular focus on those locations which are subject to high and significant levels of HGV traffic and do not have any current restrictions in place including Burford. We will therefore work with the County Council, Town and Parish Council and other partners to further investigate measures that may be necessary to alleviate the impact of HGV traffic through Burford.

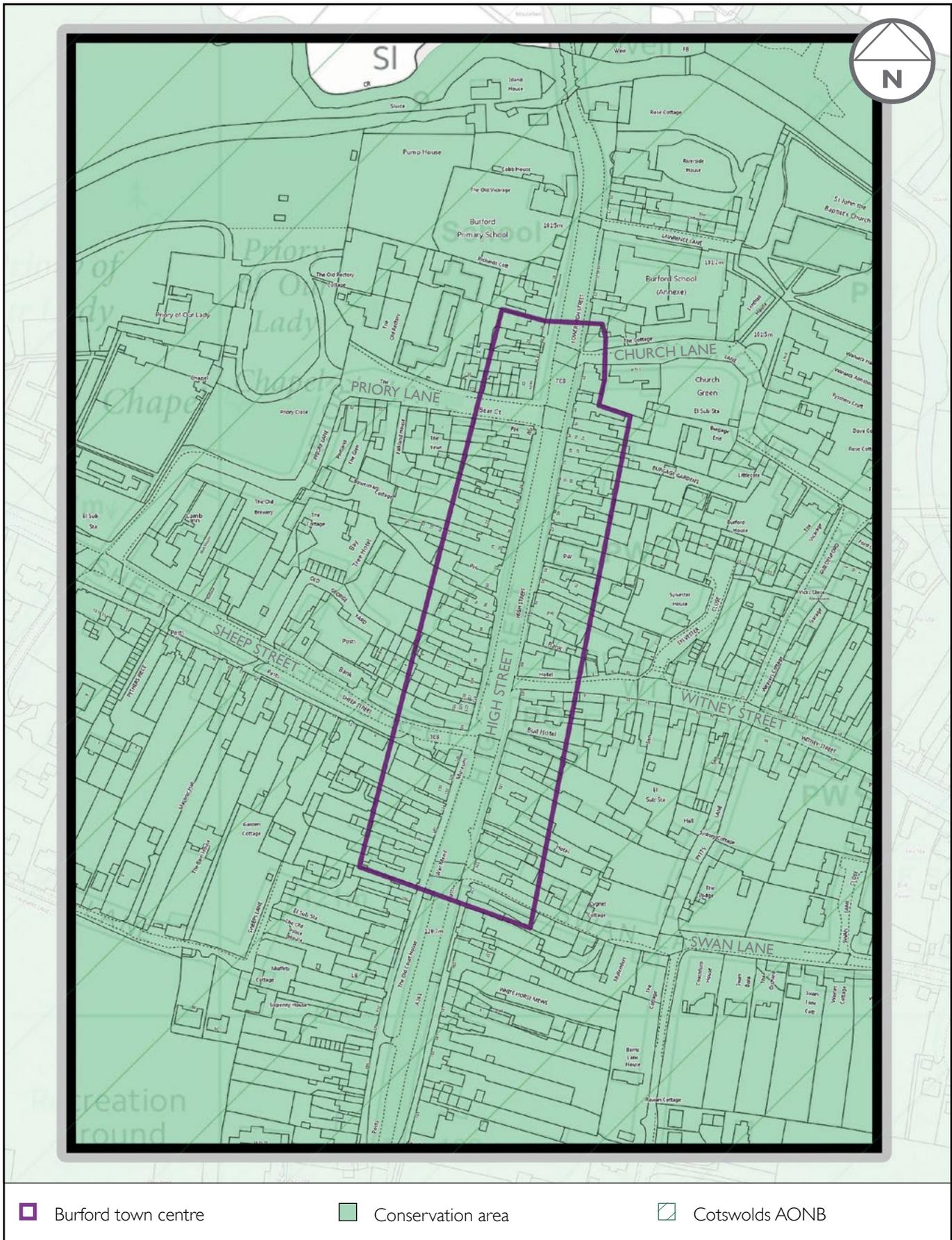
9.6.40 In terms of rail, we will work in partnership with the County Council and other partners including Network rail and train operators to implement the aims and objectives of the rail strategy embedded in LTP4. A particular focus will be on ensuring adequate parking capacity is available and that connections to stations and the facilities available are improved wherever possible.

- 9.6.41 With regard to bus services, again we will work with the County Council, to deliver improvements to the range and frequency of bus services available in this area and will seek developer contributions towards these improvements. We will also look at the quality of waiting facilities available including the availability of cycle parking.
- 9.6.42 In terms of active travel, we will seek to maintain and enhance the extensive network of paths, bridleways and quiet roads which currently provide routes for walking, cycling and riding in this area. Necessary measures to improve safety will be sought where appropriate including through developer funding.
- 9.6.43 The availability of public parking will be further considered through the Council's emerging parking strategy. At Burford where there is a known capacity issue, opportunities to improve the efficient use of available car parking and increase capacity will be taken where appropriate.

Retail and leisure

- 9.6.44 In terms of retail, the key focus will be Burford. A Town Centre boundary has been defined (see Figure 9.6c) and development resulting in the loss of shops and other town centre uses within the centre will be refused unless the criteria set out in Policy E6 can be met in full. Opportunities to enhance retail provision within the town will be supported in principle subject to Policy E6.
- 9.6.45 Elsewhere in the sub-area, local retail uses and other community facilities will be safeguarded in accordance with Policy E5.

Figure 9.6c: Burford town centre (inset map)



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Environment and heritage

- 9.6.46 This is an environmentally sensitive area, the vast majority of which falls within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Other sensitivities include the Wychwood Project Area, Conservation Target Areas, and several areas of ancient woodland.
- 9.6.47 Proposals within or affecting the AONB will be determined in accordance with Policy EH1 and the NPPF. Any proposed development within the AONB will be expected to conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty and major developments will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest.
- 9.6.48 The Council will work with partners in relation to Conservation Target Areas and where appropriate, development will be expected to make a positive contribution either directly or through a financial contribution.
- 9.6.49 This is an important area in terms of heritage and in accordance with national policy and Policy EH9 all new development will be expected to conserve or enhance the special character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire's historic environment and conserve or enhance the District's heritage assets and their significance and settings.

Infrastructure

- 9.6.50 Infrastructure capacity is an important issue for this area. In addition to the transport related requirements outlined above the other key issue for this area appears to be primary school capacity. Like the rest of the District, there is also need for more affordable housing and housing for older people.
- 9.6.51 Some infrastructure improvements will be provided directly as part of new developments whilst others will be provided indirectly through developer contributions and other potential sources of funding. The IDP seeks to quantify the infrastructure improvements that will be needed to support the planned level and distribution of growth set out in the Local Plan.
- 9.6.52 This will form the basis upon which future decisions regarding the provision of new or improved infrastructure will be made along with the Council's CIL regulation 123 list once introduced. CIL revenues passed to local communities will be able to be spent on locally identified infrastructure priorities.
- 9.6.53 In accordance with Policy OS5, we will seek to ensure that all new development within the Burford - Charlbury sub-area is supported by appropriate and timely provision of essential supporting infrastructure.

POLICY BCI:

Burford – Charlbury sub-area strategy

The focus of new development will be Burford and Charlbury.

Burford and Charlbury are relatively constrained by their AONB location and are suitable for a modest level of development in accordance with Policy OS2. Development in these rural service centres will therefore be of an appropriate scale and type that would help to reinforce the existing service centre role.

Development elsewhere will be limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages.

Proposals for development in the sub-area should be consistent with the strategy which includes:

- delivery of about 774 new homes* to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.
- conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- conservation and enhancement of the historic environment and heritage assets
- protection and enhancement of the Upper Windrush Valley and Wychwood Project Area
- maximising opportunities for enhancements within the Conservation Target Areas (CTAs).
- enhancing public transport and pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure together with managing car parking to reduce car use for short journeys
- avoiding development which will increase the risk of flooding and working with partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures

- support for additional small-scale employment opportunities including sustainable tourism and rural diversification
- ensuring development has access to superfast broadband to facilitate home-working
- seeking the retention and development of local services and community facilities throughout the sub-area and ensuring Burford Town Centre remains vibrant through resisting the loss of shops and other town centre uses, and promoting an increase in the availability and efficient use of parking provision in appropriate locations
- ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for essential supporting infrastructure, including new transport, education, health, green infrastructure and other community facilities in accordance with the IDP.

The Council will work in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to consider appropriate measures to mitigate the impact of HGV traffic on Burford.

* Note: In accordance with Policy HI, the figure of 774 homes is not an absolute target or a maximum ceiling to development.