

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Rural Strategy</b>	<b>Item 06</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1859	

**Purpose of Report:**

This report introduces a Rural Strategy for West Berkshire. It identifies the major issues affecting the rural communities of the district and puts forward a series of priority outcomes to help improve well-being in these areas.

**Recommended Action:**

1. Subject to comments approve the rural strategy with specific emphasis on the Rural Priority Outcomes.
2. Agree that the strategy be passed to the LSP for the identification of supporting key actions and targets.

**Reason for decision to be taken:**

The rural strategy is a specific action and target listed in the 2009/10 Council Plan

**Other options considered:**

None

**Key background documentation:**

- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Taylor Report "Living Working Countryside"
- South East Regional Economic Strategy
- Defra Rural Strategy 2004
- AONB Management Plan

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme:

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First

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**Implications**

- Policy:** The Rural Strategy establishes a Council approach to meeting the needs of the
- Financial:** There are no specific financial implications arising from this report
- Personnel:** There are no specific personnel implications arising from this report
- Legal/Procurement:** There are no specific legal/procurement implications arising from this report
- Property:** There are no specific property implications arising from this report
- Risk Management:** Risk Management of the outcomes identified in this report will need to be considered by the relevant council services and sub-partnerships of the LSP
- Equalities Impact Assessment:** Certain equalities, social inclusion and cohesion issues have been identified in the accompanying Rural Strategy. A full EIA will need to be developed in due course particularly as regards the development of the resultant action plan.

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Executive Summary and Report

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### 1. Introduction

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report introduces a proposed Rural Strategy for West Berkshire. It identifies the major issues affecting the rural communities of the district and puts forward a series of priority outcomes to help improve well-being in these areas.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 A draft rural strategy was approved for consultation by Management Board in 2008. The development of a rural strategy is a major objective within the Vibrant Villages Theme of the Council Plan. The purpose of the Strategy is to:

- Help realize the vision for the district as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Ensuring that the specific challenges faced in rural areas are recognised within the delivery of the key themes and priority outcomes.
- Identify the important issues, concerns and opportunities facing rural communities
- Coordinate actions across agencies on the critical challenges affecting the well being of rural communities.
- Provide an evaluation framework to ensure major decisions on policy, strategy and services take account of the impact they will have on rural areas.

- 2.2 The strategy has been subject to wide ranging consultation. Internally it has been circulated to all Directors, Heads of Service and other key officers for comment. Where these have been offered they have been incorporated into the strategy. In addition the strategy has been circulated to a wide range of stakeholders in the community including:

- Parish and Town Councils,
- LSP Partners
- VCS Organisations
- Local Schools
- GP surgeries

- 2.3 The Strategy consists of the following key sections

#### **Section 1: Background**

This section sets the scene for the rural strategy providing essential background to its development focusing specifically on the rationale for the strategy, why it has been developed, how it relates to the wider strategic and policy framework for the district and the aims and purpose of the strategy.

#### **Section 2: Key Influences Shaping the Rural Strategy**

This Section of the Strategy examines those issues and policies that have an important impact on the rural parts of the district. These operate at a number of levels and include European, national, regional and local influences. Specific matters covered include:

#### National Policy

- Defra Rural Strategy
- Planning Policy statements 4 (draft) and 7

#### Regional and sub-Regional

- The South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy

#### Local Level

- AONB Management Plan
- Local Development Framework

#### External and local funding regimes

Working with and influencing these policy drivers is an important part of the rural strategy.

### **Section 3: Local needs and views**

Section 3 looks at some of the key trends affecting rural areas. This includes information from the District Profile, Annual Satisfaction Survey, Parish Plans, national data sources and local research. Taken together these sources provide a picture of the crucial issues affecting the rural communities of West Berkshire these include:

- Improving the skills and qualifications of the rural workforce.
- The need for continued agricultural diversification.
- Improved opportunities and access to services including housing and health as well as activities for teenagers.
- Retaining key facilities and commercial services in rural communities
- Improving road safety.
- Improving Public Transport and road conditions.
- Retaining the essential character and scale of rural communities.
- Responding to climate change and sustainability.
- Protecting the landscape, wildlife and environment of rural areas

### **Section 4 – The Vision for Rural West Berkshire**

This section sets out a vision for how rural West Berkshire will develop up to 2026. It includes a series of priority outcomes to deliver the vision and address the major challenges facing rural communities.

### **Section 5 – Delivering the Rural Strategy**

This highlights how the rural strategy will be taken forward in large part through existing strategies, plans and partnership structures. It also sets out a process for rural proofing decisions so that the needs of rural communities are considered as a routine part of the policy development process.

### **Rural Proofing**

- 2.4 An important element of the strategy is the drive to “rural proof” key Council Policy and Strategy documents (eg Council Plan, Safer Communities Plan, District profile etc) to ensure that they recognise and address the needs of rural communities. This involves establishing a process which identifies the needs, concerns and aspirations of rural communities and ensuring that these are considered and integrated into mainstream policy and strategy development . Such a process would help ensure that the needs of rural communities, which make up over 40% of the population, are overtly incorporated into the authority’s and partner decision making processes.

### **Moving the Strategy Forward**

- 2.5 The complex and wide ranging nature of many of the issues addressed within the Rural Strategy means that it is vital that there is effective partner engagement and involvement in delivering against the Rural Priority Outcomes. .
- 2.6 The development of a detailed action plan to turn the Rural Priority Outcomes into actions is a key step in moving the strategy forward if this is to be truly effective it needs to be integrated into the action plans of the sub-partnerships of the LSP. It is therefore proposed that:
- the strategy is taken to the LSP Management Board,
  - the Stronger Communities sub-partnership be asked to own and champion the strategy across the wider LSP and
  - as part of this championing role the various sub-partnership of the LSP are asked to identify the key actions, targets and indicators that will deliver the Rural Priority Outcomes.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix A – Draft Rural Strategy

## **Consultees**

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- Local Stakeholders:** Wide range of local stakeholders consulted including Parish Councils, LSP Partners, Voluntary Sector etc
- Officers Consulted:** Heads of Service
- Trade Union:** Not consulted

## Rural Strategy for West Berkshire

### Executive Summary

This is the first Rural Strategy for West Berkshire. It sits, within a wider strategic framework for the district headed by the Sustainable Community Strategy "A Breath of Fresh Air". This is the pre-eminent strategic document for the district. It sets the agenda for the other major strategies and plans developed by public agencies in the district and guides the work of the West Berkshire Local Strategic Partnership.

The Community Strategy sets out a long term vision for West Berkshire up to 2026, which is focused around five key themes:

- Prosperous;
- Stronger;
- Greener;
- Safer, and;
- Healthy.

The Rural Strategy plays a vital role in supporting the delivery and implementation of this vision. It concentrates on the main issues affecting rural West Berkshire, painting a vision for the future of these rural areas delivered through a series of Rural Priority Outcomes linked directly to key themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

#### Summary of the key issues shaping the future of rural West Berkshire

The rural population of West Berkshire is expected to rise in coming years. This increase will be most prevalent amongst older age groups.

Analysis of the 2001 census and other data reveals that significant numbers of people in the rural workforce have no or only low level qualifications.

Rural West Berkshire is becoming a more diverse place as a result of increased migration to the area especially by people from Eastern Europe, who have come to work in the district, often in the agricultural and hospitality sectors.

The attractiveness of West Berkshire as a place to live and work is a major factor in encouraging people and companies to come to the area. This very positive aspect of life in the district does however, cause its own problems as it adds to the pressure for development in rural areas and helps to increase the cost of housing.

Due to increased competition and changes to subsidy regimes the agricultural sector in West Berkshire has seen considerable consolidation within the farming industry resulting in fewer but larger businesses.

Although people in rural areas of West Berkshire do generally enjoy a good standard of living there are areas and pockets that are not as well off. The rural areas that figure most significantly in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) are Lambourne Valley and Aldermaston. In addition against the Housing and Access to Services criteria within the IMD many of the rural areas fall within the 20% most deprived in the country. The issue of access to services and facilities particularly affects young people and those without their own transport

Road safety and traffic accidents are perceived as a concern in rural parts of the district.

Rural West Berkshire has significant "assets" which have an intrinsic value and need to be protected for future generations. These include; 3 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), 51 Sites of Special Scientific Interest and 500 Wildlife Heritage Sites (WHS).

### **A Prosperous Rural Community**

A vibrant and successful rural economy is vital to ensuring a prosperous rural community.

The rural economy of West Berkshire contains a diverse range of businesses. In addition to traditional farming and agriculture, the area has many small businesses which are the hub of rural employment. These cover a variety of sectors including small scale manufacturing, new technology, pubs, hotels and other hospitality and leisure companies, general service businesses and a large number of local shops and retail outlets. A developing phenomenon in rural villages is the emergence of an expanding home based business sector facilitated by improving broadband access. The district is also quite unusual in having a very well established and internationally renowned Race Horse Industry based around the town of Lambourn. This industry employs significant numbers of local people (a substantial number of whom are migrant workers) as well as bringing substantial monies into the district. Like many areas of the economy this industry is facing significant pressure as a result of the economic slowdown

### **Rural Priority Outcomes**

- Improve skills and qualifications in rural communities particularly for young people and those that are unemployed.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing for people in local communities.

- Provide support to unemployed people in rural communities to enter the labour market.
- Ensure a vibrant rural economy:
  - Support and encourage rural enterprise.
  - Promote and support the agricultural sector including where appropriate the diversification of agricultural businesses.
  - Support the expansion of sustainable tourism across rural West Berkshire
  - Promote and support Broadband in Rural Areas.

### **A Strong Rural Community**

A strong community is one where everyone is included and where people feel as though they belong and are able to contribute to their community. Everyone is able to enjoy similar life opportunities, strong and positive relationships are developed between individuals in the workplace, in school and within neighbourhoods.

The villages and market towns of West Berkshire are the heart of the district's rural community. They contain over 40% of the population and are the social and commercial hubs of the rural part of the district. Ensuring that these remain vibrant and sustainable is essential to a strong rural community. The rural communities of West Berkshire are very dispersed across the district and each has its own identity, needs and aspirations. This has been vividly illustrated in the diversity of priorities and issues raised in Parish Plans. The sparsity of the population in rural areas and the need to respond to local priorities poses significant challenges to public service providers.

West Berkshire's rural communities are, facing considerable change. This is due to a variety of factors including:

- Increasing in-migration from Eastern Europe as people move to take advantage of job opportunities particularly in the agricultural sector
- The loss of key local services and facilities from towns and villages
- Young people and families having to move away from their home communities due to a lack of affordable accommodation
- Demographic changes resulting in an ageing population
- Pressure on land for development
- Rising fuel costs disproportionately affecting rural communities and businesses

Access to services is a major problem for the rural areas of West Berkshire. National data suggests that the district has some of the greatest accessibility issues in the South East. Especially notable are the barriers to health services along with access to food, employment, education, training and leisure provision<sup>1</sup>. These access barriers are most significant in rural areas and particularly affect the younger and older age groups along with those that do not have or are not able to use a car.

The complexity of these (and the many other challenges) facing rural areas requires local communities and key public agencies to work well together if these issues are to be effectively addressed.

### **Rural Priority Outcomes**

- Work with rural communities and partners to identify and meet local priorities.
- Secure additional resources for projects in rural communities through funding bids.
- Reduce deprivation and improve community cohesion in the most deprived rural communities.
- Improve access to key services for people in rural areas.
- Ensure rural towns and villages remain vibrant and viable communities by promoting and protecting key services and facilities.
- Maximise the potential of extended rural schools as centres for learning, skills development and as a focus for community activities.

### **A Greener Rural Community**

West Berkshire has an enviable environment. The landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) adds significantly to the quality of life enjoyed by all residents and makes the area an attractive place to live and visit. It helps to shape the character of the district and supports the livelihoods (either directly or indirectly) of a significant number of local people.

The conservation and enhancement of the West Berkshire's countryside is a major strategic issue for the district. The balance between maintaining a thriving economy, meeting the housing and other needs of local people whilst protecting the area's heritage and natural resources is particularly complex.

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<sup>1</sup> West Berkshire Council Accessibility Strategy 2006

The need for more sustainable (and viable) approaches to transport is a particularly key issue for rural communities. The Local Transport Plan sets out a range of initiatives to improve transport in rural areas these include; improving rural bus routes, reducing the need for motorized transport by improving the network of cycle paths and footpaths, developing travel plans for businesses and schools that provide alternatives to the car, ensuring that HGV lorries do not use inappropriate routes through rural villages, developing innovative, community based initiatives to provide public transport to rural communities including the Handibus and Community car initiative.

### **Rural Priority Outcome**

- Conserve and protect the countryside, landscape and habitats of rural West Berkshire.
- Protect and enhance the historic buildings and heritage of the district's rural areas
- Reduce the amount of fossil fuels used in rural communities by decreasing overall energy usage, improving energy efficiency and developing renewable energy programmes in rural communities
- Reduce the amount of waste produced by rural communities.
- Increase the proportion of food consumed by local people produced by local farms and food producers.
- Increase the range and availability of sustainable travel solutions for rural communities including walking and cycling.

### **A Safer Rural Community**

Crime is a very high profile issue for local people. This is shown in the results from the annual satisfaction survey, where it is cited as a key factor affecting the quality of life enjoyed by residents. There are certain types of crime that are specific to rural areas including the theft of farm vehicles and equipment.

Work to tackle crime and the fear of crime in rural communities is being developed as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for West Berkshire. This highlights the critical issues as regards community safety in West Berkshire. The extension of Police Community Support Officers is already providing a more visible police presence in rural areas. This is helping to improve local confidence in policing and reduce fear of crime. Similarly the introduction of Neighbourhood Action

Groups, Country Watch and Farm Watch, will all help to increase public involvement in reporting and tackling crime.

Improving road safety is an important issue for many people in rural areas being a common theme in many parish plans and is a major Rural Priority Outcome identified in this strategy. The Local Transport Plan and Road Safety Strategy are the main documents which address road safety especially in the rural areas of West Berkshire. These identify a range of measures including improvements to the physical environment, action on speeding and driver education to reduce the number of road accidents that occur in West Berkshire.

#### **Rural Priority Outcomes**

- Reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in rural areas
- Reduce the incidence of crime and anti social behaviour in rural areas
- Improve road safety on the rural roads of West Berkshire

#### **Healthy Rural Communities and Individuals**

Access to health services across rural West Berkshire is a major problem for many local people. Allied to this is the need to respond to the demands posed by an ageing (and dispersed) elderly population will be a particular challenge for the Council, health services and voluntary care agencies.

Mental health issues can be a particular problem for people in rural communities.

Lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, smoking and alcohol consumption are all important factors in rural areas. It is vital that communities and individuals are supported to take responsibility for their own health, if future demands on health services are to be reduced.

#### **Rural Priority Outcomes**

- Improved the take up and accessibility of health services in rural areas
- Improve the provision and accessibility of mental health services for people in rural communities.
- Improved support for those with long term health and social care needs enabling them to maintain their independent living.
- Support individuals and people in rural communities to take control and responsibility for their health.

# **A Rural Strategy for West Berkshire**

**September 2009**

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# Rural Strategy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

West Berkshire covers 272 square miles and, perhaps surprisingly, despite being located at the Western end of the Thames Valley, some 90% of the district is rural in character. These rural areas contain approximately 64,000 people, or 44% of the total population (145,000). This rural population is dispersed across a large number of towns, villages and smaller settlements each of which has its own identity as well as its own specific needs and concerns.

This rural dimension is very important in shaping the character of West Berkshire, its communities, economy and environment. The importance of agriculture and rural businesses, the prominence of landscape and countryside, along with the small scale and dispersed nature of rural communities, all serve to pose challenges that are often very different and therefore require different approaches to the urban areas within the district. This is a vital consideration when developing effective public policy and service delivery in rural areas.

By contrast however, it is also important to recognise that the rural communities of West Berkshire do not exist in isolation from the rest of the district. Indeed there is a high level of mutual dependence and connectivity between rural and urban areas. For example, many people in rural communities have jobs in local towns such as Newbury and Thatcham, and use these centres to take advantage of the wider range of shopping, social and leisure facilities they provide. Similarly the rural environment of West Berkshire adds significantly to the quality of life enjoyed by all residents of the district and is a considerable asset for the area.

### **The Rural Strategy and the wider strategic framework for the district**

This is the first Rural Strategy for West Berkshire. It sits, within a wider strategic and policy framework of the district headed by the Sustainable Community Strategy "A Breath of Fresh Air". This is the pre-eminent strategic document for the district. It sets the agenda for all the other major strategies and plans developed by public agencies in the district and guides the work of the West Berkshire Local Strategic Partnership.

The Community Strategy sets out a long term vision for West Berkshire up to 2026, which is focused around five key themes:

- Prosperous;
- Stronger;
- Greener;
- Safer, and;
- Healthy.

The Rural Strategy plays a vital role in supporting the delivery and implementation of this vision. It concentrates on the main issues affecting rural West Berkshire, painting a vision for the future of these areas that will be delivered through a series of Rural Priority Outcomes that in turn, are linked directly to the key themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

### **The Purpose of the Rural Strategy**

The purpose of the Rural Strategy is to

- Help focus the vision for the district as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy ensuring it meets the specific needs and circumstances of rural communities.
- Identify the important issues, concerns and opportunities facing rural communities.
- Coordinate actions across agencies on the critical challenges affecting the well being of rural communities.
- Provide an evaluation framework to ensure major decisions on policy, strategy and services take account of the impact they will have on rural areas.

## 2. THE KEY INFLUENCES SHAPING THE RURAL STRATEGY

This section of the Rural Strategy sets out the major factors and influences shaping the rural communities of West Berkshire.

### **National Policy and Legislation**

**Defra Rural Strategy** - Although many central government policy initiatives and legislation impact either directly or indirectly on rural communities specific responsibility for rural affairs and the future of rural communities within central government falls within the Defra (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) portfolio. The rural whitepaper and subsequent Rural Strategy (2004) published by Defra sets out the Government's key priorities for rural areas, these are:

1. Economic and Social Regeneration - supporting enterprise across rural England, but targeting greater resources at areas of greatest need.
2. Social Justice for All - tackling rural social exclusion wherever it occurs and providing fair access to services and opportunities for all people in rural areas.
3. Enhancing the Value of our Countryside - protecting the natural environment for this and future generations.

Within these overall priorities government policy focuses specifically on making progress in the following key areas:

- Expanding the range of social enterprises
- Promoting rural enterprise and skills
- Improving public Access to the countryside
- Supporting the development of the horse industry
- Utilising EU Structural Funds to support projects that address locally identified needs

All of these issues have resonance for West Berkshire and feature in the Rural Priority Outcomes set out in this strategy.

A further major influence on national rural policy has been the recent Taylor Report "A Living Working Countryside". This set out some of the key issues facing rural towns and villages. In particular it concentrated on the need for planning, housing and economic development policies to change and adapt so that they helped support the actual needs and lives of people living there. This report is playing a significant role in shaping thinking within Planning Policy Statements from government and hence the development of such documents as the

Regional Economic Strategy, the South East Plan and the Local Development Framework.

**Spatial and Land Planning Policy** - The core principle underpinning the national approach to spatial planning is *sustainable development*. The government has set out four key aims of sustainable development<sup>1</sup>. These are:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment;
- The prudent use of natural resources; and,
- The maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

**National guidance** - At a national level planning policies are set out in Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG), Minerals Policy Statements (MPS) and Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPG), Circulars and Parliamentary Statements.

The national planning policy approach to development in villages and rural areas is mainly contained in:

- Planning Policy Statement 1: Sustainable Development (PPS1),
- Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3),
- draft Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (draft PPS4); and
- Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (PPS7).

Key guidance within the above documents includes:

- Most new development should be directed to existing towns and cities to help maximise accessibility to employment and services by walking, cycling and public transport;
- Within rural areas, most new development should be focused in or near to local service centres.
- There is a need to provide housing in villages in order to enhance or maintain their sustainability, while assisting people to live near their work and benefit from key services.
- New building development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development, should be strictly controlled - as the

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<sup>1</sup> ODPM (2005), Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

government's overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its landscape character, heritage, wildlife and recreational opportunities.

- Draft Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS3) which aims to bring together in one place all key planning policies relating to the economy, setting out a coherent set of policies designed to meet current and future economic challenges. The document emphasises the role of planning policies in economic recovery and prosperity, along with the key role of spatial planning in reacting to changes and trends in the economy.

In response to the Matthew Taylor review (Living Working Countryside, 2008) the draft PPS places a strong focus on rural communities and economic development in rural areas. The document highlights that 'there is no such thing as a separate rural economy', as the economies in urban and rural areas are similar and closely inter-related. The draft document sets out a proactive approach to farm diversification and new economic development in rural areas without compromising the environmental character and landscape. It highlights the need for village and local centre shops and services to be protected to ensure the strength of rural communities is maintained, along with supporting rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses and communities. These issues are all reflected in this strategy.

- Guidance within Planning Policy Statement 25: Development and Flood Risk (PPS25) is also an important consideration when identifying locations for development and any associated flood risk.

National planning guidance is then filtered down and applied at a regional level, through documents such as the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy, and locally through the Local Development Framework (LDF) for West Berkshire.

**The South East Plan** - At the regional level, the Regional Spatial Strategy (South East Plan) provides the overall spatial planning framework. This was prepared by the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) which has now been replaced by the South East England Partnership Board. The South East Plan provides a framework for the region to 2026. Its core objectives are to balance continuing economic and housing growth with rising standards of environmental management and reduced levels of social exclusion and natural resource consumption. Part of the role of the South East Plan is to set the overall housing allocation for West Berkshire up to 2026.

Rural issues have been treated as a core context of the Plan with the most directly relevant policies dealing with landscape and land use, rural settlements, rural economy, rural transport and rural tourism. An important issue highlighted within the South East Plan is the significant inequalities that can arise in rural areas. The Plan states that more can and should be done to foster a successful, diverse economy and address inequalities on issues such as affordable

housing and access to services. There is a clear expectation that local development plans will aim to address and rectify these problems.

In addition, as part of the South East Plan a sub regional strategy for the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley has been developed. The Thames Valley has international economic significance, and there is a need to provide sufficient affordable housing to ensure that economic growth continues without unreasonably increasing the pressure on resources and the natural environment.

As can be gathered, how the South East Plan is applied and delivered locally will have important implications for West Berkshire and its rural communities.

**District Level** - Planning policies at the local level will be delivered through the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the District which must be developed in accordance with national and regional planning guidance.

The Core Strategy is the lead document of the LDF. It sets out the overall spatial vision for how the District should develop in the future, to 2026, and sets out proposals for where development will go, and how this development will be built. The policies and proposals within the Core Strategy help to deliver some of the Sustainable Community priorities. The Core Strategy will also provide the basis for all other planning documents that the Council will produce as part of the LDF. A key objective of the Core Strategy will be to set out the policies for the management of development in the rural areas of the District in a way that best reflects their characteristics.

Consultation and other research carried out to date has identified the following general objectives for the Core Strategy:

- To deliver well designed, sustainable, energy efficient developments which contribute to an attractive, safe and convenient environment for all;
- To conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the built and natural environment in West Berkshire's towns, villages and countryside;
- To shape and safeguard patterns of development which both:
  - secure good access to education, employment and services; and
  - encourage walking, cycling and use of public transport whilst reducing the need to travel by car;
- To foster efficient use of land, energy and natural resources, giving priority to the appropriate re-use of previously developed land;
- To help maintain a strong, diverse and sustainable economic base in West Berkshire;

- To enable the effective and timely delivery of new homes needed to meet West Berkshire's requirements in a manner which promotes sustainable communities;
- To secure the provision of affordable housing to meet local needs;
- To make sure new development is matched by the necessary provision of, or improvements to, the infrastructure, services and amenities required to support it;

**Regional Economic Strategy** - The Regional Economic Strategy (RES) sets the government's economic agenda for the South East for the period 2006 - 2016 (RES) and sits alongside the adopted South East Plan.

The RES identifies three principle objectives for economic development in the Region these are:

- Improving Global Competitiveness of businesses in the South East.
- Fostering Smart Growth - this will be achieved by balancing improving productivity, technological innovation and skills development against the drive to preserve the environment and promote social and economic inclusion.
- Delivering Sustainable Prosperity - by preserving quality of life enhancing the competitiveness of the South East

The rural economy is seen as vital to the achievement of these objectives and the delivery of the wider RES. As such it is a major cross-cutting theme within the strategy. The priorities identified for the rural economy that have particular resonance for West Berkshire include:

- investing in the economic viability of market towns and villages;
- exploiting the potential of the knowledge economy including increasing the take up and effective use of Broadband;
- diversification of the food and farming sector;
- supporting the development of premium local products;
- investing in and promoting the area's cultural, heritage and landscape assets.

The Strategy plays an important role in shaping planning policy and the allocation of central government grants to support economic development. This is delivered at a sub regional and local level through the work of a new partnership, the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board.

**The Sub-Regional Agenda - Thames Valley and County Level** - at a sub-regional and county level West Berkshire needs to play an active role in ensuring that its voice is heard. The district shares with much of the sub-region a desire to promote continued economic prosperity whilst at the same time addressing the needs for more affordable housing and efficient and effective transportation.

Within the county the Berkshire Economic Strategy Board (BESB) is bringing together local authorities and other key agencies to deliver the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). This Board helps ensure that work across agencies is effectively coordinated and that, critically, the implementation of the RES takes account of the specific circumstances across Berkshire.

### **Key Partners in Rural Communities**

There are a number of specific partners and stakeholders who have a particular focus on the needs of rural communities and who need to be engaged if improvements to rural areas are to be delivered.

**North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** - The North Wessex Downs AONB is a nationally important and unique landscape that lies at the hub of the chalk landscapes of southern England. It covers a total area of 1,730 sq km, spanning six local authority areas and incorporating some 125,000 people. Within its boundaries are many well known places such as Hungerford, Marlborough, Watership Downs, Lambourn Valley and the Vale of Pewsey, the World Heritage Site at Avebury and the White Horse of Uffington. Large stretches of the Ridgeway National Trail and the Kennet and Avon Canal, are both key leisure routes through the area.

The AONB is managed by a multi-agency "Council of Partners". This is an advisory body whose primary purpose is to enhance and protect the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. The strength of the Council of Partners comes from the scale and breadth of its membership, which comprises 8 representatives drawn from the 8 local authorities and 16 from other agencies active in the area. The Council of Partners produces a joint Management Plan for the AONB, which is currently being reviewed to cover the period from 2009-2014. The current plan is built around the following themes:

- Conserving and enhancing landscape character and diversity
- Celebrating the past
- Conserving remoteness and tranquility
- Increasing biodiversity
- Sustaining natural resources
- Land-based economy as custodian of the landscape
- Promoting a low carbon economy
- Enjoyment as an economic driver
- Diversifying economic opportunities
- Developing appropriate skills for the future

- Supporting vibrant communities
- Encouraging sustainable travel
- Establishing common understanding
- Maintaining productive partnerships

Some 74% of West Berkshire falls within the North Wessex Downs AONB. As such the content of the management plan is a very significant influence on the rural areas of the District.

The success of the bid put forward under the auspices of the AONB for LEADER programme funding in 2008 will bring substantial monies (£2.5 million up to 2013) to the area. This money can be used for a wide variety of purposes with a wide range of organisations and groups being eligible for funding. More details on LEADER funding can be gained at the North Wessex Downs AONB web site - [www.northwessexdowns.org.uk](http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk)

**Community Council for Berkshire (CCB)** - CCB is a community development agency that plays a significant role in supporting rural communities across the County of Berkshire. Its aim is to help the residents of Berkshire, particularly those that are disadvantaged, to achieve a high quality of life by strengthening voluntary action and sustaining communities. CCB is very active in West Berkshire and major areas of work include:

*The Rural Housing Enabler* - CCB in conjunction with Defra and local authorities, including, West Berkshire, works with rural communities to identify housing need and deliver affordable rural housing projects in the district.

*Village Halls* - are vital facilities that provide venues for social and community events in rural communities. CCB provides advice and support to the groups that manage these facilities

*Local Transport* - is a major problem in rural areas especially for those who do not have their own car or are not able to drive. To help tackle this key issue CCB's Rural Transport Team has developed a series of successful grant bids, which have supported a variety of schemes, ranging from community bus projects to cycle storage facilities.

*Rural Towns* - CCB has supported 2 successful bids towns in West Berkshire (Pangbourne and Stratfield Mortimer) in successful bids to obtain SEEDA monies for local community projects.

*Parish Planning* - CCB has worked closely with West Berkshire Council and other members of the West Berkshire Partnership to help promote and develop parish plans in rural communities.

*Gypsy and Traveller Project* – People from gypsy and traveller communities have some of the poorest life chances of any group in the United Kingdom. CCB (funded by West Berkshire Council) has provided a supportive programme of education and personal development for these communities.

CCB have a key role to play in helping to bring communities together including those who are often socially excluded to tackle local problems, in obtaining monies for rural projects and in supporting the Rural Priority Outcomes set out in this strategy.

### **External Funding Regimes for Rural Areas**

External funding streams and grants provide essential resources for tackling rural issues. Sources of external funding including the National Lottery, European Union, Central Government departments, such as Defra and DCLG, sub-regional organisations as well as more local bodies, for example Greenham Common Trust and a wealth of other grant giving bodies and Charitable Trusts. The following paragraphs set out some of the key funding sources and issues.

**EU and Regional Economic Development Funding** – There are currently two main funding programmes for the rural areas of the South East running up to 2013, these are:

*The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) 2007-13* - This funding stream is devolved to the Regional Development Agencies for allocation across the country. West Berkshire Council worked closely with the North Wessex Downs AONB and the other local authorities within the AONB successfully bidding for “Leader” funding in 2008. This will bring some £2.5m to enhance the environment and improve services and skills across the AONB.

Projects within this programme will need to emerge from the community built on innovative partnership working across the community, addressing 4 main themes:

- improving the competitiveness & sustainability of farming and forestry,
- enhancing the environment and countryside,
- improving quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy (10%);  
The figures in brackets are % of the total RDPE budget devolved to SEEDA.
- Building local capacity for employment and diversification

*Rural Access to Services Programme* - In 2008 the Community Council for Berkshire (CCB) secured funding as part of the South East Economic Development Agency Rural Access to Services Programme. This will provide about £300k for the County for an initial period of three years up to 2011. The criteria for funding is based around two broad themes;

- Better service provision locally for rural people (reducing the need to travel by bringing services closer to people).
- Improving access to essential services that are not available locally, for the most disadvantaged (improving people's life chances).

An important source of projects will be those identified within Parish Plans. Ensuring that sufficient worthwhile projects come forward to draw down all this money will be a major challenge in the remaining two years.

*South East Rural Towns Programme (SERTP)* . - SEEDA has made £500,000 available to 21 Market Towns across Berkshire during the period 2004-12. To be eligible a Market Town must have completed its Parish Plan and also a SEEDA Health Check exercise which specifically looks at a range of social, economic and environmental issues. Only four market towns in Berkshire meet this criteria. To date projects in Old Windsor, Eton & Eton Wick, Pangbourne and Stratfield Mortimer have been approved and awarded a total of £215,000 of grant aid.

**Countryside, Landscape Management and Farming** - There are a range of grants available to support landscape management, biodiversity and the agricultural sector in rural areas, some of these are outlined below: (full information on these and other schemes can be found on the Defra website ([www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)))

*English Woodland Grant Scheme (EWGS)* - This is a suite of grants given by the Forestry Commission's suite designed to secure greater public benefits from England's woodlands.

*The Farm Diversification Grant (FDG) Scheme* - Enables the conversion of redundant farm buildings for a variety of uses including light industrial/workshops, office accommodation, self-catering and B&B accommodation, children's nursery and stables/ livery.

*Environmental Stewardship Scheme* - Provides provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England who deliver effective environmental management on their land.

Environmental stewardship has three elements:

Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) - is a 'whole farm' scheme open to all farmers and land managers who farm their land conventionally.

Organic Entry Level Stewardship (OELS) - is a 'whole farm' scheme, open to farmers who manage all or part of their land organically

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) - which will be combined with ELS or OELS options, aims to deliver significant environmental benefits in high priority situations and areas.

These grant funds provide vital resources that help to conserve the environment.

### **Local Funding Schemes**

At a local level the Council provides a number of grant funds to help support village communities including:

**Vibrant Village Programme.** - In May 2006 WBC made £35,000 available for a one year Vibrant Village programme to be run as a rural pilot project. The purpose of this fund was to help generate projects within localities that:

- met community needs, evidenced usually by parish planning outcomes;
- provided social and/or economic and/or environmental improvements;

In 2007 Greenham Common Trust become involved in the project supplementing Council resources resulting in the programme now having an annual budget of £70k. Successful projects need to show substantial local contributions on 50:50 basis, usually in cash, but some funding can be 'in-kind'. The matched funding requirement means that the grant funds available levered-in a minimum of another £70,000 of benefits annually since 2006 into villages across the district.

To date this programme has helped to fund over 40 projects in local villages (8 in 2006/07 and 16 in 2007/08 and 17 in 2008/09)

**Parish Planning Grants** - Communities that complete a Parish Plan are eligible for a £5,000 capital grant, to support projects identified within the Action Plan. Some of the grants awarded through the Parish Planning scheme are shown in the table in annex a.

**Planning Policy AONB Funding.** - The Planning Policy Service provides £10,500 p.a. direct to the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Board as core funding to the AONB Council of Partners.

### 3. Local Needs and Views

Information on needs and views for West Berkshire are contained in a range of documents, most particularly:

- The District Profile
- The State of the District Report
- Annual Satisfaction Survey

This strategy draws out those issues that are either different or have a particular resonance for rural areas.

#### Key Trends and Changes

Detailed below are some of the key trends shaping life in Rural West Berkshire:

- The rural population of West Berkshire is expected to rise in coming years. This increase will be most prevalent amongst older age groups. By contrast however, the numbers of younger people are forecast to decline. This will inevitably have major implications for services in terms of demand, the type of services needed and how they are delivered.
- West Berkshire has one of the lowest population densities of any local authority in the South East Region at 207 people per km<sup>2</sup> compared to 637 km<sup>2</sup> for Berkshire as a whole. The sparsity of the district's population has a significant impact on how services are provided by the Council (and others) resulting in, for example, increased costs for certain services and greater emphasis on outreach and dispersed provision.
- Analysis of the 2001 census and other data reveals that many people in the rural workforce have no or only low level qualifications. 22% of the economically active people have no qualifications at all whilst a further 51% having only low level qualifications. This poses a significant problem for future business growth and acts as a brake on rural economic development.
- Rural West Berkshire is becoming a more diverse place. This is as a result of increased migration to the area especially from Eastern Europe, as people come to work in the district, often in the agricultural and hospitality sectors.
- The attractiveness of West Berkshire as a place to live and work is a major factor in encouraging people and companies to come to the area. This positive aspect of the district does however cause its own problems, as it adds to the pressure for development and helps to increase the cost of housing, resulting in local people being unable to afford a property in their home communities.

- Due to increased competition and changes to subsidy regimes there has been considerable consolidation within the farming industry resulting in fewer but larger businesses.
- Although unemployment in rural areas remains low when compared nationally and regionally the past 12 months has seen a substantial rise. For example areas such as Pangbourne (660%), Downlands (383%) have seen very marked increase in the numbers claiming Job Seekers Allowance. The average increase across the rural part of the district is 211% (between June 2008 and May 2009) with over 1,000 people now being unemployed and receiving benefit.
- At an overall level the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows that West Berkshire is one of the least deprived areas in the country. The rural areas that figure most significantly in the IMD are Lambourne Valley and Aldermaston. However, against the Housing and Access to Services criteria within the IMD many of the rural parts of the district fall within the 20% most deprived parts of the country.
- Analysis of fuel poverty shows a concentration of problems around the rural parish of Compton, with fuel poverty scores ranging from 18% to 23% (Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2003). The surge in oil prices over the past 12 months is amplifying this problem and will be an increasingly significant factor affecting the lives of rural people.
- Road safety and traffic accidents are perceived as a concern in the rural parts of the district.
- The rural part of West Berkshire has significant "assets" which have an intrinsic value and need to be protected for future generations. These include:
  - 3 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) – the river Lambourn, the Kennet and Lambourn floodplains and Kennet Valley Alderwoods. SACs are seen as being of European Importance
  - 51 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These are designated by English Nature and seen as nationally important sites
  - 500 Wildlife Heritage Sites (WHS) which are of local importance to the biodiversity of West Berkshire

The combined area covered by the WHS and SSSI s amounts to 7,600 hectares which is 11% of the district.

- The district contains a wealth of historic buildings and monuments, many of which are in the rural areas. More than 1800 properties in West Berkshire feature in the English Heritage list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

## The Rural Communities of West Berkshire

The population of rural West Berkshire amounts to approximately 64,000 people. The rural population is dispersed across a large number of villages (the major settlements as identified in the Local Development Framework are shown below) each of which has its own identity as well as its own specific needs and concerns.

Aldermaston	Curridge	Pangbourne
Aldermaston Wharf	Donnington	Peasemore
Ashmore Green	Eastbury	Purley
Beenham	East Garston	Stockcross
Boxford	East Isley	Streatley
Bradfield	Enborne Row	Tadley/Pamber Heath
Bradfield Southend	Great Shefford	Theale
Brightwalton	Hampstead Norreys	Tidmarsh
Brightwalton Green	Hermitage	Tilehurst
Brimpton	Hungerford	Upper Basildon
Burghfield	Kintbury	Upper Bucklebury
Burghfield Common	Lambourn	West Isley
Burghfield Bridge	Leckhamstead	Wickham
Chieveley	Lower Basildon	Woolhampton
Cold Ash	Mortimer	Yattendon
Compton		

In addition to these communities there are many other smaller villages and hamlets that are an important part of the rural community of West Berkshire. In developing a strategy to improve life in rural areas it is vital to recognise this diversity so that it is effectively reflected in action plans and service delivery.

Research across West Berkshire (*Hierarchy of Rural Settlements in West Berkshire 2007*) as part of the work to support the LDF has classified towns and villages according to the services and facilities available within each community. These range from Leading Rural Service Centres (such as Hungerford; Pangbourne and Burghfield Common) which have good facilities and public transport links, to villages that have few if any services. Of concern is the fact that of the 82 villages surveyed 13 had no services/facilities (Burnt Hill, Combe, Enborne, Farnborough, Fawley, Marsh Benham, North Street, Padworth Common, South Fawley, Stanmore, Tutts Clump, Welford, Weston) and a further 17 had only 1.

The lack of such facilities and services has a number of significant implications, for example, it adds to social exclusion especially for those without access to a car. It results in added carbon emissions as people have to travel further to do their shopping, go to the pub or get money out from their bank. The recent large rise in fuel costs is also adding significantly to the cost of living for people in rural areas particularly those on low incomes.

## Parish Planning

The West Berkshire Partnership has been at the forefront nationally in supporting the development and implementation of Parish Plans and has been recognized for its work in this area by the award of Beacon status for "Improving Rural Services: Empowering Communities".

Many communities across West Berkshire and most especially in its rural areas have either already published or are in the process of writing a Parish Plan. These plans are produced by local people within each parish following wide-ranging consultation within each community. The plans set out the community's views on the priorities for the future of their localities.

Parish Plans provide a useful insight into the thoughts and aspirations of local communities and are an important influence on this Strategy. The main themes to emerge from these Plans over the past four years are the need to;

- Preserve the character and scale of rural communities
- improve, preserve and increase accessibility to public, youth and community amenities for all ages within the community;
- improve public transport;
- improve road safety through reducing and enforcing speed limits;
- retain village shops and facilities and enhance local business opportunities;
- improve availability and access to learning for all sectors of the community;
- improve cycle ways and footpaths;
- tackle the shortage of affordable housing
- protect and preserve the countryside and bio-diversity
- promote areas of historic and local interest to improve the economy;
- improve healthcare provision for the community;
- improve street cleansing and increase recycling;
- strengthen Neighbourhood Watch and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour;
- improve information for the community through websites, newsletters, booklets etc

Annex A of this strategy contains a profile of the communities of West Berkshire showing key facts for each parish, along with grants awarded for local projects.

**Survey of how young people spend their time 2008**

A survey of young people in 2008 highlighted the concerns and views they had about living in West Berkshire. It showed that 72% of those questioned who lived in rural areas thought that West Berkshire was a fairly or very good place to live. Only 8% rated it as a poor. It is noticeable that two thirds of the people in rural areas thought that it had got better over the previous 2 years.

The issues that young people from rural areas cited as needing most improvement included more/better shops (50%) , cleaner streets (47%), more and better activities for people of my age (37%), Less crime (36%)

**Place Survey 2008/09**

The Place Survey looks at the major issues affecting people's quality of life in the district including their views on those issues they see as being the most important and those in most need of improvement. The table below shows the five highest ranked issues across the district as a whole and within three Areas Forums that fall within the rural parts of the district.

**Most important issues** - The views of rural areas reflect to a large degree the views of the wider community particularly as regards the two most important issues for local people - crime and health. Clean streets are more important in the East of the district than in the more rural areas and housing is a particular priority in the Rural West. The provision of good quality education is also a prominent concern for rural communities.

Overall Score	Rural West	Rural East	East
Crime (61%)	Crime (63%)	Crime (62%)	Crime (66%)
Health (47%)	Health (49%)	Access to Nature (45%)	Health (49%)
Clean Streets (37%)	Access to Nature (39%)	Health (44%)	Clean Streets (42%)
Education (35%)	Housing (38%)	Education (36%)	Public Transport (41%)
Access to nature (32%)	Education (33%)	Clean Streets (36%)	Education (33%)

**Issues most needing improvement-** The views of rural areas reflect to a large degree the views of the wider community particularly as regards the five issues in most need of improvement. Although the scores do show some variation between areas and the ranking may also differ it is clear that activities for teenagers, road and pavement repairs and traffic congestion are all areas that people believe need to be improved in their localities. Public transport is also a major issue for improvement in the two more rural areas of the district.

Overall Score	Rural West	Rural East	East
Activities for Teenagers (49%)	Activities for Teenagers (57%)	Roads and pavement repairs (47%)	Activities for teenagers (48%)
Roads and pavement repairs (44%)	Roads and pavement repairs (48%)	Activities for Teenagers (44%)	Roads and pavement repairs (38%)
Level of Traffic Congestion (40%)	Public Transport (42%)	Public Transport (42%)	Traffic Congestion (37%)
Public transport (30%)	Affordable Decent Housing (33%)	Traffic Congestion (32.9%)	Crime (31%)
Level of crime (28%)	Traffic Congestion (29%)	Crime (22%)	Sports & Leisure Facilities (30%)

The map overleaf helps illustrate the spread of issues raised by people across the district

**Summary of Key Issues**

The various sources of information on needs, external influences and local opinion highlight the following issues as being critical for the rural areas of West Berkshire:

- Improving basic skills.
- Agricultural diversification
- Providing sufficient affordable, quality housing for people in rural communities
- Access to services including housing services, health activities for teenagers
- Retaining key facilities and commercial services in rural communities
- Improving public transport and the conditions of rural roads
- Retaining the character of rural communities and ensuring that they are vibrant, inclusive and cohesive
- Responding to climate change and sustainability
- Protecting the landscape, wildlife and sites of historical and scientific interest

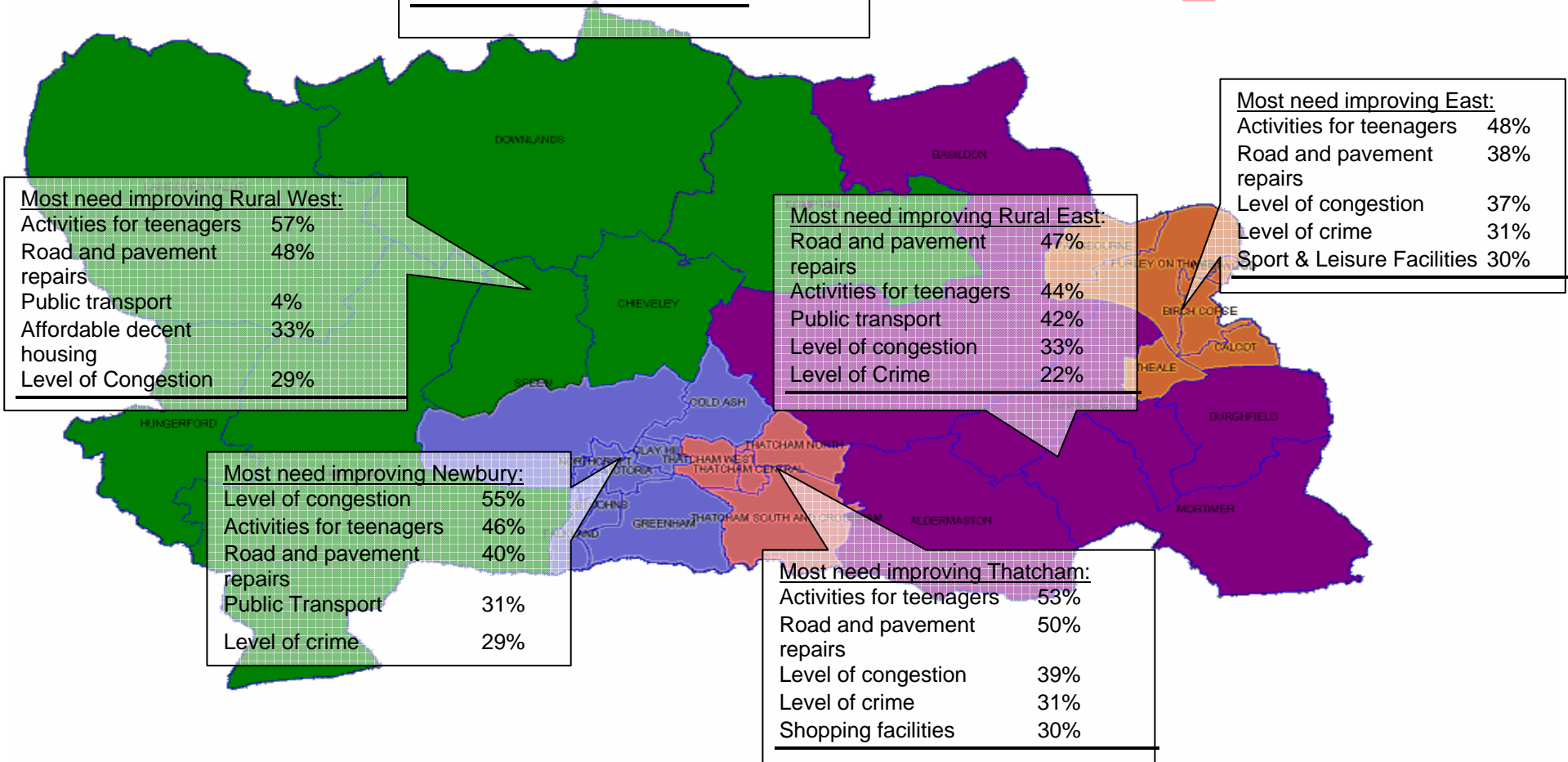
**Most need improving for whole district:-**

Activities for Teenagers	49%
Road and Pavement Repairs	44%
Levels of Congestion	40%
Public transport	30%
Level of crime	28%

— ward boundaries

Area Forum Boundaries

- Rural West
- East
- Rural East
- Newbury
- Thatcham



Map shows 'what most needs improving' by Area

#### 4. The Vision for Rural West Berkshire in 2026

*By 2026 the rural economy of West Berkshire will have been strengthened. This will have occurred, in part, through the further diversification of the economy, the growth of existing businesses and the attraction of new businesses to the area.*

*Tourism will have expanded in a sustainable manner, generating more local jobs in rural communities, supporting the survival of key local facilities such as pubs and shops. This will be coupled with a significant improvement in the quality and range of tourist accommodation.*

*All local communities will have fast broadband access enabling the continued growth of ICT and internet based businesses. Home working will have become a major facet of working life in West Berkshire.*

*As a crucial aid to business growth and the tackling of deprivation the numbers of people with no or only basic level qualifications will have been drastically reduced. This will have occurred as result of action taken by the Council working alongside government agencies and local employers.*

*Local first time buyers and families within villages will be able to find accommodation in or close to their communities due to the building of more affordable homes and by taking forward innovative solutions to housing problems.*

*Access to key public services for residents of rural communities will have been improved. This will have been achieved in a variety of ways including the increased use of the internet and electronic communications as well as improved mobile and outreach provision. Similarly every effort will have been made to ensure that rural communities retain a good range of local facilities such as pubs, shops and post offices whilst village schools will remain an important feature of the local community. Crucial to improvements in access will be greater coordination across public and voluntary agencies and by working with communities to develop solutions that meet specific local needs.*

*Residents in rural towns and villages will have greater opportunity to take part in leisure and cultural activities, Provision of facilities and activities for young people will have been improved as will transport to enable them to take advantage of a wider range of leisure and employment opportunities.*

*The provision and take up of sustainable public transport connections between rural communities and major centres such as Newbury will have improved. This will be the product of a range of measures including expanding the use of public transport, improved cycling provision, greater car sharing and innovative community and voluntary transport solutions.*

*Similarly, improvements in transport to local hospitals and health services will have been put in place.*

*The much valued landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will have been retained and the range of and diversity of local wildlife, fauna and flora will have been increased. The condition of historical monuments and buildings will have been improved and made more accessible to the community.*

*The introduction of sustainable transport solutions, increased recycling, renewable energy and local food initiatives will have all contributed to helping reduce carbon emissions in the district.*

*The focus in health will be on a range of preventative services, based around primary care, supporting those with long term conditions such as diabetes. People in rural communities will have better access to information on health and social care issues whilst there will be better support and information both for carers and those they care for. A greater proportion of those in need of health and social services support will be able to live in their own home through improved domiciliary care, adaptations to their properties and the introduction of new approaches such as telecare which uses new technology to help people maintain their independence.*

*Health inequalities in rural areas will have been reduced and rural people will be living healthier lifestyles. Outreach and proactive community health programmes will have reduced the numbers of people who are overweight, who smoke and who drink excessively.*

*Individual communities at a parish level will be active, engaged and inclusive, planning their own futures and working together with public agencies to help realise their aspirations. This will be supported by a vibrant and active voluntary sector.*

*Above all, the quality of life for those living and working in rural parts of West Berkshire will be higher than it has been before - not for some - not for the majority - but for all. The levels of deprivation in the most deprived parts of rural West Berkshire will have been significantly reduced. This improvement will be born out not only in official statistics but by what people say themselves, irrespective of race, culture, gender, ability or background.*

## The Rural Priority Outcomes

### Prosperous Rural Community

Improve skills and qualifications in rural communities particularly for young people and those that are unemployed .

Increase the supply of affordable housing for people in local communities.

Provide support to unemployed people in rural communities to enter the labour market.

Ensure a vibrant rural economy:

- Support and encourage rural enterprise
- Promote and support the agricultural sector including where the diversification of agricultural businesses.
- Support the expansion of sustainable tourism across rural West Berkshire
- Promote and support Broadband in Rural Areas.

### A Stronger Rural Community

Work with rural communities and partners to identify and meet local priorities.

Secure additional resources for projects in rural communities through funding bids.

Reduce deprivation and improve community cohesion in the most deprived rural communities

Improve access to key services for people in rural areas

Ensure rural towns and villages remain vibrant and viable communities by promoting and protecting key services and facilities.

Maximise the potential of extended rural schools as centres for learning, skills development and as a focus for community activities.

### A Greener Rural Community

Conserve and protect the countryside, landscape and habitats of rural West Berkshire.

Protect and enhance the historic buildings and heritage of the district's rural areas

Reduce the amount of fossil fuels used in rural communities by decreasing overall energy usage, improving energy efficiency and developing renewable energy programmes in rural communities

Reduce the amount of waste produced by rural communities.

Increase the proportion of food consumed by local people produced by local farms and food producers.

Increase the range and availability of sustainable travel solutions for rural communities including walking and cycling.

### A Safer Rural Community

Reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour in rural areas

Reduce the incidence of crime and anti social behaviour in rural areas

Improve road safety on the rural roads of West Berkshire

**A Healthier Rural Community**

Improved the take up and accessibility of health services in rural areas

Improve the provision and accessibility of mental health services for people in rural communities.

Improved support for those with long term health and social care needs enabling them to maintain their independent living.

## A Prosperous Rural Community

### Issues and Context for West Berkshire

A vibrant and successful rural economy is vital to ensuring a prosperous rural community.

The rural economy of West Berkshire contains a diverse range of businesses. In addition to traditional farming and agriculture, the area has many small businesses which are the hub of rural employment. These cover a variety of sectors including small scale manufacturing, new technology, pubs, hotels and other hospitality and leisure companies, general service businesses and a large number of local shops and retail outlets. A developing phenomenon in rural villages is the emergence of an expanding home based business sector facilitated by improving broadband access. The district is also quite unusual in having a very well established and internationally renowned Race Horse Industry based around the town of Lambourn. This industry employs significant numbers of local people (a substantial number of whom are migrant workers) as well as bringing substantial monies into the district. Like many areas of the economy this industry is facing significant pressure as a result of the economic slowdown.

As with most rural areas the proportion of people working in the agriculture sector in West Berkshire is significantly above the national average. However, this still only represents some 5% of the employees within the district. The impact of foot and mouth, increased competition and structural changes to funding regimes has led to widespread consolidation across the sector. This in turn has produced a smaller number of larger businesses and reduced the numbers of full time people employed in the industry as companies have striven to reduce costs and secure greater efficiencies. The loss of smaller farms which were/are often been owned by families for many generations is gradually changing the nature of rural communities.

In addition to agriculture West Berkshire the district has a very well established and internationally renowned Race Horse Industry based around the town of Lambourn. This industry employs significant numbers of local people (a substantial number of whom are migrant workers) as well as bringing substantial monies into the district. Like many areas of the economy this industry is facing significant pressure as a result of the economic slowdown

The critical opportunities and issues facing the agricultural sector and wider rural economy are outlined below:

- Skills Development - Significant numbers of people in rural communities have low level of basic skills. For example it is estimated that 40% of agricultural workers have no formal training. This serves to significantly hinder the career prospects and income potential of individuals concerned. Critically it also acts as a brake on the local businesses as they endeavour to grow and expand their operations. New qualifications such as 14 - 19

diplomas in land based subjects offer additional opportunities for young people to gain relevant skills and qualifications.

- Rural Broadband – Broadband is increasingly a prerequisite for the operation of modern businesses and is especially vital to the development of tourism, specialist retail sectors (eg antiques) and the expansion of home working. Some progress has been made in extending broadband facilities to rural communities through, for example, the Rural Hotspots programme, which has led to wireless broadband being installed in rural locations in the district. Significant parts of the district still have significant broadband access issues and/or only receive slow broadband services.
- Agricultural Diversification - Diversification is a vital component of rural well-being. Pressure on farming incomes has meant that there is an increasing need for farms and other agricultural business to diversify into new activities such as tourism and/or to develop new product ranges to cater for premium markets eg organic and high quality food. One impact of this trend is that farmers are often required to develop new skills such as marketing so that they can make a success of their investment in new business ventures.

The diversification of farming businesses into other areas provides additional and more varied employment opportunities in rural areas. It helps to provide greater local resilience to changes in economic conditions and helps ensure that farmers have the resources to undertake landscape management that is essential to the good running of the countryside. Although there has recently been rises in certain food prices the actual costs associated with food production especially transport are also rising dramatically which is significantly affecting profitability. Thus although there may well be a renewed focus on food productions by farmers the underlying need to expand the rural economy, provide employment and maintain rural incomes remains valid.

- Housing - Although house prices have fallen quite significantly over the past 18 months they still remain beyond the reach of many young people. In particular the the impact of the credit crunch has made it more difficult for prospective buyers to obtain a mortgage this, allied with the higher level of deposits required, are preventing many first time buyers and young families from being able to buy a home of their own. The consequences of the shortage of affordable housing in rural communities are that young people are forced to either remain with their parents or move away from their own area to find accommodation they can afford. The extent of this problem and the high cost of housing are such that it now affects those on middle as well as low incomes.

The lack of affordable housing is having a range of other impacts. It is affecting the ability of local businesses to attract employees and as such is a key factor in limiting business growth. It also leads to communities becoming increasingly out of balance in terms of their age profile with a loss of young families and a decline in key local services and facilities such as shops, post offices and pubs.

- **Increasing Cost of Living in Rural Communities** - The substantial rise in fuel prices over the past year is having a disproportionate impact on rural as opposed to urban communities. People in rural areas have to spend more money on transport as they have to travel further to obtain basic services. In addition many communities are not on mains gas and rely on fuel oil for heating. The cost of this has risen dramatically. The significant increases in costs that many families have experienced will inevitably hit the incomes of rural households hard. It is also important to note that rural businesses especially those in the tourist and hospitality sector such as country pubs are vulnerable to increased fuel costs which may lead to a decline in visitors to the area.
- **Tourism** - at present provision and facilities for tourism are under developed in West Berkshire especially when the attractiveness of the landscape and environment within the AONB area are taken into account. Growth in high value tourism can bring significant benefits to rural communities as regards employment and supporting the retention of key local services. It is important however, that any growth in tourism is managed sustainably, as it can have a negative impact on the environment and local communities through, for example, increased road traffic.
- **Woodland Management and Energy Diversification** - In the wake of concerns about climate change and rising energy prices, some of the larger farms and rural estates in West Berkshire, particularly those with significant woodlands, are now examining the feasibility of energy producing diversification schemes. This links closely to SEEDA and the EU's drive to optimise financial returns from woodland management schemes, through the development of alternative heating systems. The drive to expand alternative energy production is supported by the provision of grants through RDPE along with other government and EU grant schemes which can help with the capital infrastructure costs

### Summary of Key Issues

- **There is a need to improve skill levels across rural communities and ensure that relevant courses and qualifications are accessible and available for young people.**
- **There is an opportunity to expand tourism but this must be undertaken in a sustainable manner.**
- **There is a need to support rural economic development and agricultural diversification**
- **The lack of affordable housing in rural communities is a major concern**

## A Strong Rural Community

### Issues and Context for West Berkshire

A strong community is one where everyone is included and where people feel as though they belong and are able to contribute to their community. Everyone is able to enjoy similar life opportunities, strong and positive relationships are developed between individuals in the workplace, in school and within neighbourhoods.

The villages and market towns of West Berkshire are the heart of the district's rural community. They contain over 40% of the district's population and are the social and commercial hubs of the rural part of the district. Ensuring that these remain vibrant and sustainable is essential to a strong rural community.

A key characteristic of West Berkshire is that its communities are very dispersed across the district with each having its own identity, needs and aspirations. This has been vividly illustrated in the diversity of priorities and issues raised in Parish Plans. The sparsity of the population in rural areas and the need to respond to local priorities poses significant challenges to public service providers.

**The changing nature and profile of rural communities** - West Berkshire's rural communities are facing considerable change. This is due to a variety of factors including:

- Increasing in-migration from Eastern Europe (and other countries as people take advantage of job opportunities particularly in the agricultural sector. For example there is an emerging Polish community around the Lambourne area associated with the Horse Racing sector.
- The loss of key local services and facilities from towns and villages.
- Young people and families having to move away from their home communities due to a lack of affordable accommodation. This is having a number of impacts for example the reduced numbers of children and young people is posing a threat to the continued viability of some rural schools.
- Demographic changes resulting in an ageing population in many communities
- Pressure on land for development and from people moving to the area to take advantage of job opportunities.
- Rising fuel costs disproportionately affecting rural communities and businesses

**Developing inclusive and cohesive rural communities** - The complexity of the above challenges (and many other) facing rural areas requires local communities and key public agencies to work well together if they are to be effectively addressed. Key considerations that need to be taken into account in addressing these challenges; include:

- Understanding and tackling the needs of those groups and individuals in rural areas who are experiencing deprivation and social exclusion. Although much of rural West Berkshire is relatively affluent there are those who do not enjoy such a good standard of living and experience significant deprivation. This, in turn, is often reflected in a range of social issues such as; poor health, low educational attainment, poor quality housing and low skill/qualification levels of the individuals and families concerned. These groups and individuals can often be “hidden”, with their needs not being effectively addressed. It is important that services take account of the needs of the whole community so that everyone is able to enjoy a good quality of life.

Tackling the multi-faceted problems faced by deprived rural communities is an important Priority Outcome for the rural strategy.

- Ensuring that the work of public agencies in rural communities is better coordinated and that there is real and effective engagement with local people.
- Maintaining and strengthening community cohesion in the face of what can be quite considerable demographic change is an important challenge for local community leaders and public agencies. Allied to this it is important that the needs of migrant communities are understood by key public agencies so that they and their families are able to take a full part in local life. Community cohesion is an important and developing dimension to the school curriculum.
- Understanding the range of local voluntary and community organisations active within each rural community and how they can best be supported. These organizations can often be a key asset in tackling issues within rural communities as they have access to vital information and resources as well as a profile and credibility with local people and as such can play a crucial role in helping to develop and deliver solutions appropriate to local situations.
- Ensuring that small village primary schools have a viable and successful future and are able to provide a continuing high quality education to local rural communities.

**Empowering local people and communities** – Many of the rural communities of West Berkshire have either produced a Parish Plan or are in the process of developing one. Parish Plans enable local communities to discuss the issues that are important to them and identify priorities for action. The extensive consultation and involvement of local people in developing the Parish Plan helps create real local ownership for the document as it genuinely reflects the wishes and aspirations of local people. An important by-product of Parish Planning is that it can often serve to galvanise action by local people themselves, releasing resources to take forward projects and tackle local problems. The further development and implementation of Parish Plans is therefore a crucial part of our approach to developing strong and vibrant rural communities.

**Improving Access to Services** - Being able to easily obtain and access services is a major problem for many people living in rural areas. National data suggests that the district has some of the most challenging accessibility issues in the South East especially as regards health services, food, employment, education, training and leisure provision<sup>2</sup>. These barriers are most significant in rural areas and particularly affect younger and older age groups along with those that do not have a car. Some of the specific issues and ways forward in addressing the problems of access are set out below:

- The development of e-commerce and internet solutions is helping to overcome some of the problems of access and isolation faced by rural communities. For example the "all u need 2 know" project is a major internet based initiative, that provides information and advice on social care and support issues. In developing internet solutions it is important to acknowledge that a significant proportion of the population still do not have internet access and/or lack the knowledge and skills to use these facilities.
- Expanding the provision of mobile and outreach services. The Council and other public bodies already provide a number of services either through mobile outlets, such as the mobile libraries, through peripatetic and outreach services and via service based surgeries. These initiatives all help to provide remote access to isolated communities. Ensuring that these are well-publicised and effectively coordinated is essential. The Council's Social Care and Youth services will actively seek to provide their service as near to local communities as possible.
- West Berkshire has, like many rural areas, seen a steady decline in the range of commercial services available in rural towns and villages resulting in the loss of shops, pubs, petrol stations, post offices and other key facilities. The recent rise in fuel costs and the impact of the recession are serving to amplify this problem. These services are vital to the sustainability of local communities and are an important part of the social fabric of communities. To help address this West Berkshire Council working with Greenham Common Trust has developed its Vibrant Villages Grant programme to help communities retain important local services.

**Grants and External Funding** -EU and Central Government grant funds provide important resources for tackling problems in rural areas. West Berkshire Council, CCB and other organisations have been actively involved in putting forward bids that have attracted quite significant amounts of money to the district in recent years. This includes for example successful bids to the SEEDA Market Towns Programme.

West Berkshire Council, working with the AONB and other partners such as CCB has successfully bid for funding to the EU for LEADER programme monies. This will bring up to £2.5m over 6 years to tackle issues in the rural parts of the district. At a more local level

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<sup>2</sup> West Berkshire Council Accessibility Strategy 2006

there is a vast range of funding streams available to local organisations to help support projects in rural communities. The Council and Community Action West Berkshire have access to "Grantfinder" software which can be used to identify possible grant funding. Obtaining external funding is a crucial element in helping take forward initiatives to projects that will tackle important local issues and is an important part of the rural strategy.

These concerns are built into the Rural Priority Outcomes and Actions.

### Summary of Key Issues

- Rural Communities are facing significant demographic and social change as a result of in-migration and the impact of an ageing population.
- There are areas of rural West Berkshire that experience significant social inclusion and community cohesion issues which detract from the quality of life enjoyed by particular groups and individuals.
- Engaging with local communities and helping them develop a vision and action plan for the future through the parish planning process can play an important role in supporting cohesive vibrant communities, releasing local resources and producing improvements in services and facilities.
- Within many parts of rural West Berkshire there are only a limited range of social opportunities and activities for teenagers. This is a major issue that impacts on quality of life for younger people as well as being associated with anti-social behaviour, health and other matters
- Poor access to services and facilities is a key problem for rural communities. If this is to be successfully addressed it will require a range of diverse approaches as well as support from the community.
- External grant streams provide a potential opportunity to bring significant additional resources to tackle problems faced by rural areas.
- The extent of volunteering across West Berkshire including rural areas is a real strength that can provide resources and commitment to tackling local problems. Supporting and focusing volunteering efforts will add significantly to the capacity and cohesion of local communities.
- Small rural primary schools of high quality are critical to future provision and have further potential to support learning for all people in rural locations through the extended schools programme.

## A Greener Rural Community

### Issues and Context for West Berkshire

West Berkshire has an enviable environment in particular the landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) adds significantly to the quality of life enjoyed by all residents. The rural landscape of the district not only makes the area an attractive place to live (and visit) it also helps shape the character of the district and supports the livelihoods (either directly or indirectly) of a significant number of local people.

The conservation and enhancement of the West Berkshire's countryside is a major strategic issue. The balance between maintaining a thriving economy, meeting the housing and other needs of local people whilst protecting the area's heritage and natural resources is particularly complex. The designation of much of rural West Berkshire as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty does provide significant protection against development.

Serious threats to the environment of rural areas do remain however, these include:

- the potential impact of pollution affecting air and water quality,
- poor management and upkeep of key landscape areas, including common land and sites of special scientific interest,
- loss and damage to historic buildings and monuments ,
- loss or deterioration in wildlife habitats,
- pressure on land in the countryside to be used for development

Addressing these concerns and working to improve the landscape and countryside of West Berkshire can only be moved forward by bringing relevant agencies, local communities and land owners together to protect this valuable asset. To this end the Council and the North Wessex Downs AONB have put in place two key projects; the Historic Landscape Characterisation Project and the Historic Environment Character Zoning Project. The purpose of these is to develop a thorough understanding of the rural landscape. In addition projects to conserve nationally important archaeological monuments are supported by the Council through a management grant scheme in conjunction with English Heritage.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act requires Local Authorities to support the conservation and enhancement of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's). All West Berkshire SSSI's are managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS). This funds agreed conservation projects and currently accounts for more than £35,000 of income each year. This sum is likely to increase significantly as the sites improve and move from CSS status to the Environmental Steward Scheme (ESS).

West Berkshire Council has responsibility for a range of important open spaces and common lands. These include Snelsmore Common, the recently restored former military base at Greenham and Crookham Common. There are large areas of countryside with public access at Padworth, Bucklebury and Wokefield Commons. The district also has 700 miles of public rights of way that are overseen by the Council's Countryside Service. These provide access to the countryside for local residents as well as being an important "attraction" for visitors boosting tourism in rural areas.

The Council works with a range of partners including Parish Councils, landowners, residents, the Environment Agency, Natural England and others through countryside projects to promote a sustainable and integrated approach to countryside management. In particular these projects provide advice on conservation, waste management and diffuse pollution to the farming and land owning community.

Volunteer groups play an important part in helping to conserve the countryside of West Berkshire. Efforts to increase the number of volunteers taking part in environmental and countryside activities have proved very successful. This has brought real benefits to conservation and environmental improvement works, as well as enabling the local authority to meet its LAA1 target. Examples of volunteer activities include The Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers and the Bucklebury Heathland Conservation Group.

There are an expanding number of Farmers Markets in West Berkshire. These provide an important source of income for local farmers whilst also providing easy access to fresh, locally grown food. An important additional benefit arising from Farmers Markets is the reduction the number of miles that food travels from the farm to a person's plate helping to limit CO2 emissions.

The Berkshire Food Group is a key player in helping to support local food producers. Its role being to:

- support and promote the production and marketing of local food and drink for people in Berkshire, and
- to improve access to healthy locally-produced food for all.

Berkshire Food Group is supported by the 6 Berkshire local authorities and the South East Development Agency (SEEDA) and is seen as having an important role to play in addressing key aspects of the RES.

**Reducing West Berkshires Carbon Footprint** - The impact of climate change on the district is potentially very significant affecting the landscape, wildlife, and habitats of West Berkshire as well as posing an increased risk of flooding to local towns and villages. Reducing CO2 emissions and adapting to its impacts is therefore not only a national priority but an issue that has real local resonance. This will involve, amongst other matters, developing more sustainable approaches to transport; reducing fossil fuel consumption as well as the amount of waste produced within rural communities. The Climate Change Strategy developed by the

West Berkshire Partnership focuses on engaging partners and communities to limit the use of fossil fuels and hence reduce the amount of CO2 produced within the district.

**Sustainable Waste Management** - A further crucial "green issue" is the drive to increase recycling and reduce waste production. This is a particularly high profile issue for many rural communities and is raised regularly in Parish Plans. Many rural communities are working closely with the Council to improve recycling rates and address other related issues such as fly tipping and agricultural and commercial waste.

**Rural Transport and Access.** - The Local Transport Plan is the key document setting out the priorities for transport in West Berkshire covering the period 2006 -2011. Transport and access are key concerns for rural areas and as such this plan has a major influence on rural communities. Amongst the four concerns identified in the Plan three that have particular relevance to rural areas are:

- Poor accessibility in rural areas – particularly for disadvantaged sectors of the community.
- Improving road safety.
- The condition of local roads - This has been regularly cited in Parish Plans and the annual satisfaction survey as being an issue of significant concern to local communities.

The need for more sustainable approaches to transport is a particularly key issue for rural communities tackled within the Local Transport Plan. This sets out a range of initiatives to improve transport in rural areas these include:

- Improving rural bus routes, reducing the need for motorized transport by improving the network of cycle paths and footpaths.
- Developing travel plans for businesses and schools to provide alternatives to the car when travelling to school and work.
- Ensuring that HGV lorries do not use inappropriate routes through rural villages.
- Rural footpaths feature in the Local Transport Plan as an important element of a sustainable transport network. They are also a major civic amenity valued both by local people, and visitors to the area. The Council has therefore set aside £700k to deliver significant improvements to rural rights of way.
- A number of innovative measures have been introduced within West Berkshire to provide public transport to rural communities including the Handibus and Community car initiative. Low population density in rural areas means that the provision of public transport to many rural communities in the traditional sense is not financially viable without extremely heavy public subsidy.

The condition of the rural roads of West Berkshire is cited as a major problem by many local people, and is the issue which residents believe needs most improvement in the annual

satisfaction survey. It is also raised as a major problem in Parish Plans. Poor road conditions have a significant impact on road safety and can be a factor in causing traffic accidents. In response to this concern the Council has, over the past 4 years, invested significant amounts of money to improve roads in the district.

### **Moving Forward**

Both West Berkshire Council and the Local Strategic Partnership have responded very positively to the need to address the "green" agenda. The Council has established a specific member officer task group to see how the authority can improve its approach to environmental matters, waste management and the wider climate change agenda. Whilst from a partnership perspective the LSP established the Greener Sub-Partnership in January 2008 to drive actions across the district that will help promote a more sustainable future for West Berkshire.

### **Key Issues**

- The landscape, bio-diversity and cultural heritage of West Berkshire are key assets and responsibilities for the district. Protecting these for future generations is a major strategic issue for the Council and its partners.
- The problems of climate change and the need to reduce carbon emission have particular resonance for rural areas. This will involve amongst matter reducing dependency on fossil fuels, expanding the use of renewable energy, improving public transport and reducing the amount of waste produced.
- Many rural communities lack regular and effective public transport links to local towns and major facilities. This has a particularly detrimental impact on younger and older age groups as well those without access to a car. Improving public transport in a cost efficient manner will require communities, service providers and public agencies to develop innovative solutions that both better meet local needs and are affordable.

## A Safer Rural Community

### Issues and Context for West Berkshire

Crime in rural areas is, relative to the rest of the district, very low. Three quarters of all crime in West Berkshire is committed in urban communities. There are certain types of crime that are specific to rural areas including the theft of farm vehicles and equipment.

Crime does however, remain a very high profile issue for local people. This is shown in the latest results from the annual satisfaction survey, where it is cited, across all the rural areas, as a key issue affecting quality of life.

Work to tackle crime and the fear of crime in rural communities forms part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which highlights the critical issues as regards community safety in West Berkshire. The extension of Police Community Support Officers is already helping to provide a more visible police presence in rural areas, which in turn is helping to improve local confidence in policing and reduce the fear of crime. Similarly the introduction of Neighbourhood Action Groups, Country Watch and Farm Watch are all helping to increase public involvement in reporting and tackling crime.

Road safety in rural areas is seen as an important community safety issue in West Berkshire. Improving road safety is also a common theme in many parish plans and is a major Rural Priority Outcome identified in this strategy.

The Local Transport Plan and Road Safety Strategy are the main documents that address this issue setting out a range of measures including improvements to the physical environment, action on speeding and driver education, to reduce the number of accidents that occur in West Berkshire.

Lorry traffic through rural towns and villages also emerges as an issue for many rural communities being seen as having a detrimental impact on the quality of life of local people as well as having an adverse impact on the environment and, at the same time, constituting a road safety hazard. The Local Transport Plan includes actions to deter lorries from travelling through rural towns and villages and a HGV strategy has been developed to help ensure that lorry traffic around the district is managed in a safe and efficient manner.

### Summary of Key Issues

- Although crime in rural areas is relatively low it remains a key concern for many rural communities. Improving people's sense of security and reducing fear of crime is a major task for the Council and its partners.
- The problems of speeding traffic and road safety are particularly apparent in rural areas. Addressing these will be an important aspect of delivering a safer rural community

## A Healthy Rural Community

### Issues and Context for West Berkshire

Addressing health inequalities and ensuring that vulnerable people have the health care and support they need are important aspects of a strong vibrant local community.

A major factor shaping health provision in the rural parts of West Berkshire centres on the problems associated with providing services to a sparse population across a very large geographic area. This limits access for local people, generating health inequalities as well adding to the complexity and cost of service delivery. The Health and Well-Being Strategy details how outreach and internet based services will help improve health care and information for people in rural areas.

Mental health issues are an important problem in many rural areas. This is a result in part of the isolation and increasing commercial pressures that face farming communities. The Mental Health Commissioning Strategy (developed by the Mental Health Trust alongside West Berkshire Council) recognises the challenge and the need to provide services that are community focused and accessible across a large geographic area to a very dispersed population

In common with the rest of the district the age profile of rural communities is increasing. This is creating additional demands on health and social care services. A problem that is amplified by the dispersed nature of the local population and the fact that younger family members, who previously would have provided care and support to their parents, have often had to move outside their home town or village to find affordable accommodation.

An important objective within the Health and Well-Being Strategy is to enable older people to live independently at home where this is possible. In rural communities this will require investment in, for example, adaptations to people's homes. It will also place greater emphasis on the role of carers and the need for them to have the support, information and guidance they need to fulfill their roles. The service transformation agenda being developed in adult social care alongside the PCT and other service providers including the voluntary sector will be crucial in helping people get the support and services they need .

Small rural primary schools have a key role to play in providing high quality education for health and wellbeing matters as well as offering a point of access to other services.

### Summary of Key Issues

- **Access to health services across rural West Berkshire is a major problem for many local people. Allied to this is the need to respond to the demands**

posed by an ageing (and dispersed) elderly population will be a particular challenge for the Council, health services and voluntary care agencies.

- Mental health issues can be a particular problem for people in rural communities.

## 5. Delivering the Rural Strategy

The intention of this strategy is not to create unnecessary additional layers of bureaucracy. Many of the issues that affect rural communities fall within the scope of other major thematic strategies and plans such as the Local Development Framework, Health and Well-Being Strategy, Children's Strategic Plan and Safer Communities Strategy. The rural strategy identifies these crucial links and focuses work, through these strategies and plans to deliver improvements within rural communities.

### Rural Proofing

The size and significance of the rural areas of the district means that many of the decisions taken by partners within the West Berkshire Partnership will have an impact on rural communities. The needs and concerns of these communities are not as rule specifically identified or considered as part of the decision making process.

It is easy however, for such impacts to be overlooked by decision makers. The Rural Whitepaper "Our Countryside: The Future - A Fair Deal for Rural England" advocated that decisions on policy development and services should be subject to a process of rural proofing.

The aim of "rural proofing" is to ensure that as policy is developed and implemented policy makers should:

- think about whether there will be any significant differential impacts in rural areas;
- if there are such impacts assess what these might be;
- consider what adjustments/compensations might be made to fit rural circumstances

The adoption of such an approach at West Berkshire will help ensure that the needs of rural parts of the district are considered explicitly during the formulation of policies, strategies and service plans. This will require key information sources such as the district profile, annual satisfaction survey and others to incorporate specific analysis of the needs and conditions in rural communities and for key strategy documents to overtly identify and address the needs of the rural part of the district.

Profile of the Rural Communities of West Berkshire

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
Aldermaston	2005	Pop. 927	£5,000 – March 2006 Skateboard park £5,000 – April 2007 Record of special features of village £5,000 Aug 07 – Upgrade of facilities in Village Hall.
		0 – 4 year olds - 50	
		5 -15 year olds - 104	
		16 – 44 year olds - 328	
		45- 64 year olds - 292	
		65+ year olds - 153	
		No. of Households - 454	
		Household size - 2.12	
		3 or more cars - 54	
Economically active- 499			
Aldworth	No Plan	Pop. 308	
		0 – 4 year olds - 27	
		5 – 15 year olds - 50	
		16 – 44 year olds - 103	
		45 – 64 year olds - 94	
		65+ year olds = 34	
		No. of Households - 113	
		Household size - 2.7	
		3 or more cars - 20	
Economically active - 153			
Ashampstead	No Plan	Pop. 398	
		0 – 4 year olds = 28	
		5 – 15 year olds = 59	
		16 – 44 year olds = 139	
		45 – 64 year olds- 112	
		65+ year olds = 60	
		No. of Households - 159	
		Household size - 2.55	
		3 or more cars - 32	
Economically active - 198			
Basildon	Plan to be adopted April 2008	Pop. 1559	
		0 – 4 year olds = 93	
		5 – 15 year olds = 236	
		16 – 44 year olds = 491	
		45 – 64 year olds = 508	
		65+ year olds = 231	
No. of Households -607			

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		Household size - 2.6	
		3 or more cars - 121	
		Economically active - 729	
Beech Hill	No Plan	Pop. 311	
		0 - 4 year olds = 21	
		5 - 15 year olds = 43	
		16 - 44 year olds = 108	
		45 - 64 year olds = 94	
		65+ year olds = 45	
		No. of Households - 135	
		Household size - 2.32	
		3 or more cars - 26	
		Economically active - 163	
Beedon	No Plan	Pop. 393	
		0 - 4 year olds = 19	
		5 - 15 year olds = 42	
		16 - 44 year olds = 133	
		45 - 64 year olds = 124	
		65+ year olds = 75	
		No. of Households - 166	
		Household size - 2.38	
		3 or more cars - 22	
		Economically active - 198	
Beenham		Pop. 1175	
		0 - 4 year olds = 107	
		5 - 15 year olds = 132	
		16 - 44 year olds = 506	
		45 - 64 year olds = 306	
		65+ year olds = 124	
		No. of Households - 466	
		Household size - 2.53	
		3 or more cars - 86	
		Economically active - 667	
Boxford		Pop. 466	
		0 - 4 year olds = 28	
		5 - 15 year olds = 58	
		16 - 44 year olds = 154	
		45 - 64 year olds = 169	
		65+ year olds = 57	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		No. of Households - 193 Household size - 2.45 3 or more cars - 32 Economically active - 252	
Bradfield	Plan to be adopted in April 2008	Pop. 2172 0 - 4 year olds = 89 5 - 15 year olds = 468 16 - 44 year olds = 910 45 - 64 year olds = 512 65+ year olds = 193 No. of Households - 627 Household size - 2.64 3 or more cars - 140 Economically active - 868	
Brightwalton	2004	Pop. 322 0 - 4 year olds = 24 5 - 15 year olds = 40 16 - 44 year olds = 124 45 - 64 year olds = 104 65+ year olds = 30 No. of Households - 134 Household size - 2.54 3 or more cars - 30 Economically active - 177	£5,000 - Sept. 2005 - Construction of shelter for young people  £311.00 - 01/11/07 - Notice Boards  £1,300 - 08/01/2008 - Replacement of seats in playground
Brimpton	2003	Pop. 613 0 - 4 year olds = 30 5 - 15 year olds = 100 16 - 44 year olds = 213 45 - 64 year olds = 190 65+ year olds = 80 No. of Households - 234 Household size - 2.58 3 or more cars - 46 Economically active - 316	£5,000 - Oct. 2004 Kitchen improvements to village hall.  £2,500 - March 2006 Replacement of disabled ramp and additional ramp to kitchen.
Bucklebury	2006	Pop. 2066	£5,000 - 08/01/2008

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		0 - 4 year olds = 104 5 - 15 year olds = 331 16 - 44 year olds = 664 45 - 64 year olds = 654 65+ year olds = 313 No. of Households - 799 Household size - 2.62 3 or more cars - 174 Economically active - 971	Refurbishment of village hall
Burghfield	2003	Pop. 5894 0 - 4 year olds = 436 5 - 15 year olds = 900 16 - 44 year olds = 2496 45 - 64 year olds = 1451 65+ year olds = 611 No. of Households - 2263 Household size - 2.62 3 or more cars - 309 Economically active - 3133	
Catmore	No Plan	Pop. 28 0 - 4 year olds = No data 5 - 15 - No data 16 - 44 year olds = No data 45 - 64 - No data 65+ year olds = No data No. of Households - No data Household size - No data 3 or more cars - No data Economically active - No data	
Chaddleworth	No Plan	Pop. 482 0 - 4 year olds = 48 5 - 15 year olds = 83 16 - 44 year olds = 188 45 - 64 year olds = 121 65+ year olds = 42 No. of Households - 181	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		Household size - 2.71	
		3 or more cars - 21	
		Economically active - 246	
Chieveley	No Plan	Pop. 2710	
		0 - 4 year olds = 172	
		5 - 15 year olds = 486	
		16 - 44 year olds = 1118	
		45 - 64 year olds = 615	
		65+ year olds = 319	
		No. of Households - 948	
		Household size - 2.6	
		3 or more cars - 133	
		Economically active - 1307	
Cold Ash and Ashmore Green	2005	Pop. 3623	£2,250 - Oct. 2006 for Cinema Club and Welcome pack
		0 - 4 year olds = 172	
		5 - 15 year olds = 765	
		16 - 44 year olds = 1406	
		45 - 64 year olds = 853	
		65+ year olds = 424	
		No. of Households - 1177	
		Household size - 2.64	
		3 or more cars - 185	
		Economically active - 1621	
Combe	No Plan	Pop. 38	
		0 - 4 year olds = No data	
		5 - 15 year olds = No data	
		16 - 44 year olds = No data	
		45 - 64 year olds = No data	
		65+ year olds = No data	
		No. of Households - No data	
		Household size - No data	
		3 or more cars - No data	
		Economically active No data	
Compton	2005	Pop. 1521	£4,800 - Sept. 2005 Notice board, dog waste and litter bins.
		0 - 4 year olds = 111	
		5 - 15 year olds = 259	
		16 - 44 year olds = 635	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		45 - 64 year olds = 355	£4,600 - June 2006 New bus shelter  £5,000 - 14/12/2007 Skatepark facility
		65+ year olds = 161	
		No. of Households - 569	
		Household size - 2.69	
		3 or more cars - 63	
		Economically active - 777	
East Garston	Interest shown in starting a plan (March 2008)	Pop. 532	
		0 - 4 year olds = 27	
		5 - 15 year olds = 64	
		16 - 44 year olds = 186	
		45 - 64 year olds = 178	
		65+ year olds = 77	
		No. of Households - 240	
		Household size - 2.34	
		3 or more cars - 34	
		Economically active - 285	
East Ilsley	2003	Pop. 519	£5,000 - Sept. 2004 Leisure facilities  £1,315 - Jan 2006 Village pond clean up and Point of Interest board.  £5,000 - 01/11/2007 Cleaning village pond
		0 - 4 year olds = 31	
		5 - 15 year olds = 70	
		16 - 44 year olds = 209	
		45 - 64 year olds = 126	
		65+ year olds = 83	
		No. of Households - 224	
		Household size - 2.34	
		3 or more cars - 30	
		Economically active - 274	
Enborne	No Plan	Pop. 492	
		0 - 4 year olds = 22	
		5 - 15 year olds = 76	
		16 - 44 year olds = 173	
		45 - 64 year olds = 162	
		65+ year olds = 59	
		No. of Households - 191	
		Household size - 2.75	
		3 or more cars - 51	
		Economically active - 254	
Englefield	No Plan	Pop. 303	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		0 - 4 year olds = 16 5 - 15 year olds = 42 16 - 44 year olds = 105 45 - 64 year olds = 86 65+ year olds = 51 No. of Households - 131 Household size - 2.39 3 or more cars - 27 Economically active - 166	
Farnborough	No Plan	Pop. 100 0 - 4 year olds = 3 5 - 15 year olds = 11 16 - 44 year olds = 36 45 - 64 year olds = 37 65+ year olds = 14 No. of Households - 45 Household size - 2.22 3 or more cars - 9 Economically active - 59	
Fawley	No Plan	Pop. 172 0 - 4 year olds = 10 5 - 15 year olds = 15 16 - 44 year olds = 88 45 - 64 year olds = 44 65+ year olds = 16 No. of Households - 62 Household size - 2.61 3 or more cars - 10 Economically active - 107	
Frilsham	No Plan	Pop. 321 0 - 4 year olds = 14 5 - 15 year olds = 54 16 - 44 year olds = 108 45 - 64 year olds = 96 65+ year olds = 49 No. of Households - 131 Household size - 2.51 3 or more cars - 24 Economically active - 159	

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Date of Plan</b>	<b>Key Facts</b>	<b>Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date</b>
Great Shefford	2007	Pop. 896	£5,000 - 01/11/2007 Play area improvements
		0 - 4 year olds = 65	
		5 - 15 year olds = 115	
		16 - 44 year olds = 391	
		45 - 64 year olds = 227	
		65+ year olds = 98	
		No. of Households - 384	
		Household size - 2.42	
		3 or more cars - 54	
		Economically active- 484	
Greenham	Plan in development (March 2008)	Pop. 2712	
		0 - 4 year olds = 205	
		5 - 15 year olds = 528	
		16 - 44 year olds = 1089	
		45 - 64 year olds = 640	
		65+ year olds = 250	
		No. of Households - 1004	
		Household size - 2.74	
		3 or more cars - 128	
		Economically active - 1352	
Hamstead Marshall	2007	Pop. 276	£4,700 - 14/12/2007 Hall kitchen/display boards/play equipment
		0 - 4 year olds = 15	
		5 - 15 year olds = 39	
		16 - 44 year olds = 86	
		45 - 64 year olds = 110	
		65+ year olds = 26	
		No. of Households - 116	
		Household size - 2.46	
		3 or more cars - 26	
		Economically active - 155	
Hampstead Norreys	2008	Pop. 748	£2,727 - 08/01/2008 Dog litter bins/repairs to Millenium Notice Board/Village memories book
		0 - 4 year olds = 41	
		5 - 15 year olds = 112	
		16 - 44 year olds =	
		45 - 64 year olds = 184	
		65+ year olds = 93	
		No. of Households - 328	
Household size - 2.43			

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		3 or more cars - 44	
		Economically active- 410	
Hermitage	2003 amended 2005	Pop. 1154	
		0 - 4 year olds =63	
		5 - 15 year olds = 200	
		16 - 44 year olds = 274	
		45 - 64 year olds = 330	
		65+ year olds = 187	
		No. of Households - 454	
		Household size - 2.53	
		3 or more cars - 78	
		Economically active- 533	
Holybrook	2005	Pop. 7162	£5,000 - Sept. 2006 Festival, bins and youth provision.
		0 - 4 year olds = 450	
		5 - 15 year olds = 1168	
		16 - 44 year olds = 3333	
		45 - 64 year olds =1736	
		65+ year olds = 435	
		No. of Households - 2830	
		Household size - 2.55	
		3 or more cars - 258	
		Economically active - 4170	
Inkpen	2003	Pop. 877	£1,700 - April 2005 Notice boards, kissing gates.
		0 - 4 year olds = 445	
		5 - 15 year olds = 139	
		16 - 44 year olds = 281	
		45 - 64 - year olds =279	
		65+ year olds = 133	
		No. of Households - 359	
		Household size - 2.57	
		3 or more cars - 68	
		Economically active- 428	
Kintbury	2007	Pop. 2593	
		0 - 4 year olds = 136	
		5 - 15 year olds =344	
		16 - 44 year olds = 1049	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		45 - 64 year olds =682 65+ year olds = 382 No. of Households - 1045 Household size - 2.43 3 or more cars - 30 Economically active - 1337	
Lambourn	2005	Pop. 4017 0 - 4 year olds = 251 5 - 15 year olds = 480 16 - 44 year olds = 1683 45 - 64 - year olds =1079 65+ year olds = 524 No. of Households - 1738 Household size - 2.38 3 or more cars - 184 Economically active- 2276	£5,000 - March 2006 Skatepark
Leckhampstead	2006	Pop. 315 0 - 4 year olds = 9 5 - 15 year olds = 48 16 - 44 year olds = 89 45 - 64 year olds = 99 65+ year olds = 70 No. of Households - 138 Household size - 2.3 3 or more cars - 17 Economically active - 142	
Midgham	No Plan	Pop. 282 0 - 4 year olds = 6 5 - 15 year olds = 37 16 - 44 year olds = 80 45 - 64 year olds = 114 65+ year olds = 45 No. of Households - 123 Household size - 2.33 3 or more cars - 22 Economically active - 163	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
Padworth	No Plan	Pop. 548	
		0 - 4 year olds = 21	
		5 - 15 year olds = 46	
		16 - 44 year olds = 234	
		45 - 64 year olds = 167	
		65+ year olds = 80	
		No. of Households - 204	
		Household size - 2.22	
		3 or more cars - 45	
		Economically active - 257	
Pangbourne	2003 Refresh started 2008	Pop. 2981	£5,000 - Sept. 2004 Litter bins, dog bins and traffic calming gates.  £3,096.76 - 03/03/2008 Notice boards
		0 - 4 year olds = 147	
		5 - 15 year olds = 454	
		16 - 44 year olds = 1130	
		45 - 64 year olds = 749	
		65+ year olds = 501	
		No. of Households - 1213	
		Household size - 2.36	
		3 or more cars - 109	
		Economically active - 1379	
Peasemore	2003	Pop. 297	£5,000 - Sept. 2004 Sports equipment, notice boards, benches and swings.
		0 - 4 year olds = 13	
		5 - 15 year olds = 55	
		16 - 44 year olds = 101	
		45 - 64 year olds = 92	
		65+ year olds = 36	
		No. of Households - 118	
		Household size - 2.58	
		3 or more cars - 16	
		Economically active - 146	
Purley on Thames	2004	Pop. 4232	£5,000 - April 2005 Street lighting, litter bins, adventure trail  £5,000 - March 2006
		0 - 4 year olds = 220	
		5 - 15 year olds = 668	
		16 - 44 year olds = 1573	
		45 - 64 year olds = 1287	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		65+ year olds = 484 No. of Households - 1552 Household size - 2.73 3 or more cars - 218 Economically active- 3188	Ball Wall, parish website.
Shaw-cum-Donnington	No Plan	Pop. 1680 0 - 4 year olds = 101 5 - 15 year olds = 454 16 - 44 year olds = 594 45 - 64 year olds = 749 65+ year olds = 369 No. of Households - 1213 Household size - 2.36 3 or more cars - 109 Economically active - 1379	
Speen	No Plan	Pop. 2634 0 - 4 year olds = 159 5 - 15 year olds = 323 16 - 44 year olds = 927 45 - 64 year olds = 737 65+ year olds = 488 No. of Households - 1105 Household size - 2.39 3 or more cars - 127 Economically active - 1313	
Stanford Dingley	No Plan	Pop. 209 0 - 4 year olds = 7 5 - 15 year olds = 24 16 - 44 year olds = 69 45 - 64 year olds = 65 65+ year olds = 44 No. of Households Household size 3 or more cars Economically active	
Stratfield Mortimer	2004	Pop. 3584 0 - 4 year olds = 203 5 - 15 year olds = 528 16 - 44 year olds = 1256	£5,000 - 18/05/07

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		45 - 64 year olds = 984 65+ year olds = 613 No. of Households - 1501 Household size - 2.45 3 or more cars - 178 Economically active - 1771	Youth shelter
Sreatley	2006	Pop. 974 0 - 4 year olds = 57 5 - 15 year olds = 138 16 - 44 year olds = 194 45 - 64 year olds = 294 65+ year olds = 191 No. of Households - 407 Household size - 2.43 3 or more cars - 56 Economically active - 458	
Sulham	Included with Tidmarsh	Included with Tidmarsh	
Sulhamstead / Ufton Nervet	2006	Pop. 1248/321 0 - 4 year olds = 69/13 5 - 15 - year olds =160/43 16 - 44 year olds = 490/197 45 - 64 year olds = 336/118 65+ year olds = 193/44 No. of Households - 544/128 Household size - 2.44/2.55 3 or more cars - 82/25 Economically active- 638/177	£935.00 - 08/10/07 Development of Village Website £725 - 20/03/2008 Projector and screen for village hall
Tidmarsh with Sulham	2007	Pop. 391/80 0 - 4 year olds = 20/6 5 - 15 year olds = 42/10 16 - 44 year olds = 140/38 45 - 64 year olds = 147/15 65+ year olds = 42/12 No. of Households - 158/34 Household size - 2.51/2.35	£3,562.19 - 20/03/2008 Maps, notice boards/projector and screen for village hall.

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		3 or more cars - 31/4 Economically active - 213/42	
Ufton Nervet	Included with Sulhamstead	Included with Sulhamstead	
Wasing	No Plan	Pop. 55	
		0 - 4 year olds = 3	
		5 - 15 year olds = 4	
		16 - 44 year olds = 20	
		45 - 64 year olds = 15	
		65+ year olds = 13	
		No. of Households = 28	
		Household size - 2.12	
		3 or more cars = 7 Economically active = 34	
Welford	Plan in development (March 2008)	Pop. 522	
		0 - 4 year olds = 28	
		5 - 15 year olds = 61	
		16 - 44 year olds = 190	
		45 - 64 year olds = 160	
		65+ year olds = 83	
		No. of Households	
		Household size = 2.5	
		3 or more cars = 44 Economically active = 274	
West Ilsley		Pop. 340	
		0 - 4 year olds = 28	
		5 - 15 year olds = 48	
		16 - 44 year olds = 139	
		45 - 64 year olds = 88	
		65+ year olds = 37	
		No. of Households	
		Household size = 2.52	
		3 or more cars = 24 Economically active = 183	
West Woodhay	No Plan	Pop. 100	
		0 - 4 year olds = 5	
		5 - 15 year olds = 21	

Parish	Date of Plan	Key Facts	Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date
		16 - 44 year olds = 44 45 - 64 year olds = 17 65+ year olds = 13 No. of Households = 39 Household size 3 or more cars = 9 Economically active = 50	
Winterbourne		Pop. 206 0 - 4 year olds = 6 5 - 15 year olds = 22 16 - 44 year olds = 81 45 - 64 year olds = 65 65+ year olds = 32 No. of Households = 90 Household size = 2.63 3 or more cars = 19 Economically active = 103	
Wokefield	No Plan	Pop. 325 0 - 4 year olds = 23 5 - 15 year olds = 58 16 - 44 year olds = 125 45 - 64 year olds = 89 65+ year olds = 30 No. of Households = 123 Household size = 2.27 3 or more cars = 21 Economically active = 174	
Woolhampton	2006	Pop. 725 0 - 4 year olds = 23 5 - 15 year olds = 161 16 - 44 year olds = 198 45 - 64 year olds = 205 65+ year olds = 138 No. of Households - 295 Household size - 2.17 3 or more cars - 39 Economically active - 327	

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Date of Plan</b>	<b>Key Facts</b>	<b>Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date</b>
Yattendon	2005	Pop. 378	£5,000 - Dec. 2005 Village hall kitchen improvements
		0 - 4 year olds = 21	
		5 - 15 year olds =53	£5,000 - Aug. 2006 Disabled access to village hall
		16 - 44 year olds = 135	
		45 - 64 year olds =97	£,5000 - 06/09/2007 Upgrade of Village Hall
		65+ year olds = 72	
		No. of Households - 167	
		Household size - 2.32	
		3 or more cars - 25	
		Economically active - 192	

**Town Plans**

<b>Town Plans</b>	<b>Date of Plan</b>	<b>Key Facts</b>	<b>Parish Plan Grant Funding to Date</b>
Hungerford	2005	Pop. 5559	£4,200 - March 2007 Installation of SID
		0 - 4 year olds =299	
		5 - 15 - 673	
		16 - 44 year olds = 2286	
		45 - 64 - 1375	
		65+ year olds = 926	
		No. of Households - 1543	
		Household size -2.24	
		3 or more cars - 190	
		Economically active employed - 3069	

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan Review 2009-2014</b>	<b>Item 07</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1824	

**Purpose of Report:** To consider the adoption of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014 .

**Recommended Action:** That the Council adopts the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014 .

**Reason for decision to be taken:** To meet the Council's statutory requirements under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 for the adoption of the review of the Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

**Other options considered:** None

**Key background documentation:** North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2004-2009

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priorities:

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic recession** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP3 – Reduce West Berkshire's carbon footprint** – to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in West Berkshire and contribute to waste management, green travel, transportation and energy efficiency

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT12 - Including Everyone**
- CPT13 - Value for Money**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:  
working in partnership to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Alan Law - Tel (01491) 873614
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<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	29 July 2009

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Paula Amorelli
<b>Job Title:</b>	Principal Planning Officer
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519233
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### Implications

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<b>Policy:</b>	The Management Plan formulates this Authority's policies for the management of the North Wessex Downs AONB and for the carrying out of its functions in relation to it.
<b>Financial:</b>	None arising directly from the adoption of the Management Plan. The Council of Partners already receives an annual contribution from this Authority towards the core costs of the AONB.
<b>Personnel:</b>	None
<b>Legal/Procurement:</b>	The adoption of the Management Plan would meet the Council's statutory obligations under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to adopt and review a Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB every five years
<b>Property:</b>	None
<b>Risk Management:</b>	None
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment:</b>	The document has been prepared on the Council's behalf by the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners. It is anticipated that there will be no negative impact of policies on particular groups of people or disadvantaged groups. Some objectives and policies will have a positive impact e.g. through aiming to retain services within rural communities, encouraging all groups of people to celebrate and share their cultural heritage, and improving accessibility of rights of way for those with limited mobility or sensory impairments.

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:</p> <p>The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

## Executive Summary

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) requires local authorities to produce management plans for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) within their areas. The North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership discharges this obligation on behalf of its 9 local authority partners that have a presence in the North Wessex Downs.
- 1.2 A Management Plan has to be produced and reviewed at least every five years. It supports and complements the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework, setting out a spatial policy framework that reflects national and local issues to ensure the AONB's natural heritage, landscape and built character are conserved, the local economy is supported and use of the AONB for recreation is encouraged. As comprehensive as the current Management Plan is, since its publication in 2004, significant new initiatives, topics and policies have come into play which need to be taken into account in the new Plan.
- 1.3 The revised Plan for the next five years, 2009-2014, sets out the North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership's vision for the management of the Area, policies to implement the vision and a plan of action for its delivery. Its primary purpose is the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of this nationally important designated landscape, supported by vibrant rural economies and communities.

### 2. Proposals

- 2.1 It is proposed that the Council adopts the revised Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB 2009-2014.

### 3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Adoption of the new Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB would ensure that the Council complies with its statutory requirements under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000).

## 3.2 Executive Report

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Preparation of a Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs AONB (AONB) is a statutory requirement placed upon the constituent local authorities by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. The Management Plan should 'formulate the policies of the local authority for the management of the AONB and the carrying out of their functions in relation to it.' A review of the Plan is required every five years. The first Management Plan for the North Wessex Downs was adopted in 2004 and so was subject to review from January 2009.
- 1.2 As with the original Plan, the review has been undertaken by the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners. This Partnership was formed in July 2001 to oversee the future of the AONB. It includes not only the constituent local authorities of the North Wessex Downs but also representatives of the local communities, the farming and rural business community, and those representing nature conservation, heritage and landscape, and recreation interests, including members of government and voluntary agencies.

### 2. Preparation of the Management Plan

- 2.1 The review of the Management Plan included consultation with a range of organisations and stakeholders at various stages of the process. Management Plan Review workshops were held in the Autumn of 2008 and further consultation was undertaken, particularly with local authority partners, between April and June 2009. West Berkshire Council officers were engaged at each stage of the process and comments made as appropriate. Each Council's representative on the Council of Partners, in this Authority's case, Councillor Royce Longton, also had input into the preparation of the Management Plan.
- 2.2 There were initially some weaknesses in the review, in particular, the Delivery Plan needed some improvement and some sections needed updating to better reflect achievements of the past five years. The Plan therefore underwent further modification to incorporate these comments. In addition the AONB team will also facilitate some subject-specific workshops for partners to help further refine priorities which will be reflected in the annual Business Plan. With these changes, the Management Plan for 2009-2014 is now considered fit for purpose.

### 3. Content

- 3.1 The revised Management Plan 2009-2014 (Appendix A) is structured along a simple 'Golden Thread' that builds on a Vision founded in statutory purposes but which has been confirmed by consultation, to establish objectives that direct policies and actions.
- 3.2 The Vision is taken forward through a series of themes. Each thematic section (outlined below) contains a short description of its different aspects, followed by its special qualities and key issues:
  - Land management

- Biodiversity
- Historic environment
- Natural resources
- Development
- Vibrant communities
- Enjoyment and recreation

These lead to objectives, policies and actions presented in a Delivery Plan.

- 3.3 The Management Plan now presents an agreed agenda for the North Wessex Downs, setting out objectives and policies for AONB partners that are believed to be realistic and achievable in the next five years. Working together, the partners can realise these targets to the benefit of the landscapes and communities of this nationally designated area.
- 3.4 The Management Plan is accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). A formal SEA is a statutory requirement for new plans and programmes that are likely to have significant effects on the environment. SEA aims to provide protection of the environment at a strategic level and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development. An Environmental Statement (Appendix B) has been published which explains how the Plan has been influenced by the SEA process.
- 3.5 In addition, the Partnership has undertaken and published an Appropriate Assessment (Appendix C) of the potential impact of the objectives of the Management Plan on the conservation objectives of sites of European importance for nature conservation affected by the Plan. This is required by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006. Natural England has confirmed that the Assessment complies with legislative requirements.

#### **4. Delivery of the Plan**

- 4.1 Successful implementation of the Management Plan is beyond the resources of the Council of Partners and AONB team alone and will require the active collaboration and participation of all those involved in its scope. This is a plan for the geographic area of the North Wessex Downs and not for any single organisation within it. Implementation needs the support and involvement of the many organisations and individuals who play key roles in the future of the Area. Many of these have been involved in drawing up the Plan.
- 4.2 Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, it is a legal duty for all relevant authorities to “have regard to” the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the Area. These relevant authorities include all statutory bodies and all tiers of government, including parish councils and holders of public office. For

West Berkshire Council, active support for the implementation of this Plan will be key to satisfying our Section 85 duty.

4.3 The effectiveness of the Management Plan will be monitored and assessed by the AONB Council of Partners through:

- Outcomes - the extent to which the objectives are being achieved
- Outputs or activities - the extent to which the targets in the Delivery Plan are achieved.

## **5. Relationship to other plans and strategies in West Berkshire**

5.1 The Management Plan indicates how relevant national and regional strategies will be delivered within the AONB for the benefit of the primary purpose of its designation, natural beauty. In West Berkshire it also forms a complementary plan to the Sustainable Community Strategy and provides strategic context to more local activities such as parish plans.

5.2 The Management Plan does not set out to provide statutory planning policies for the District - that is the role of the South East Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework. It does, however, provide a strategic framework from which policies (including statutory planning policies) can be developed. As a statutory document in its own right it will be an instrument for securing consistency across the AONB in planning matters.

## **6. Adoption of the AONB Management Plan 2009-2014**

6.1 The Management Plan has now been formally approved by the AONB Council of Partners and is being recommended to each of the constituent local authorities for their formal adoption before it is submitted to the Secretary of State. In order to comply with the statutory process the Plan needs to be published and submitted to the Secretary of State by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix A – North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan – Adoption Draft (*due to the large size of this document this will be sent to Members by e-mail. A paper copy is also available in the Members Room*)

Appendix B – Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan (*due to the large size of this document this is available on request – please contact Paula Amorelli. A paper copy is also available in the Members Room*)

Appendix C – Appropriate Assessment of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan (*due to the large size of this document this is available on request – please contact Paula Amorelli. A paper copy is also available in the Members Room*)

**Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** As outlined in the report

**Officers Consulted:** As outlined in the report but including Duncan Coe, Jeremy Davy, Lee McQuade, Mark Harris, Stuart Souden, Paul Hendry, Gary Rayner, Christina Duckett, Elaine Cox, Jenny Noble, Bryan Lyttle, Liz Alexander

**Trade Union:** N/A

## Foreword

The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) includes within its 1730 sq.kms. some of the finest landscape in England - chalk downland, river valleys, ancient woodland, historic sites and much more besides.

The Council of Partners of the North Wessex Downs AONB advises its Local Authority members how best to discharge their statutory responsibility for conserving and enhancing that landscape, for increasing everyone's understanding and enjoyment of it, and for encouraging the social and economic well-being of those who live within it.

This Management Plan describes how that responsibility will be discharged over the next five years, and builds on the very real achievements of our first Management Plan, which covered the period from 2005 to 2009. It is wide-ranging, as it is required to be. It focuses principally on issues which relate directly to the North Wessex Downs AONB and on which we and our partners can have a real influence, but it includes some aims which require national action and in which the North Wessex Downs AONB can play only a supporting role.

Partnership in its widest sense is the key to the success of the new Plan, as it has been to the achievements of its predecessor. The Plan was born out of a wide consultation with all those of you with an interest in the future of the North Wessex Downs AONB, and it will be impossible to reach our new objectives without the continuing support and encouragement of you and others like you.

Lack of awareness of the North Wessex Downs AONB and its purposes, among those living and working within it, continues to be an issue; resolving that is one of the Plan's objectives, and you can help by spreading the word.

Like so much of this country, the North Wessex Downs have been shaped by thousands of years of human activity, and we humans of today have to work together to keep it in the best possible shape for future generations. We are immensely grateful for all the support we have received in the North Wessex Downs AONB's short life so far, and we are confident that all those of you who, like us, care deeply for its glorious landscape will help us equally generously in the future.



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## 1. Introduction

### North Wessex Downs Management Plan

This document is the statutory Management Plan for the nationally designated and protected landscape of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. It is a plan for all those that have a responsibility to look after this precious and treasured landscape.

The 2004-9 Management Plan was subject to review from January 2009. The revised draft plan was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment and to public consultation in April and May 2009. This plan has been formally approved by the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners and relevant local authorities. It has been published with the assistance of the partners responsible for much of the plan's delivery. This Management Plan, the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Landscape Character Assessment can all be found on the North Wessex Downs AONB website:

**[www.northwessexdowns.org.uk](http://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk)**

Enquiries about these documents can be made to the North Wessex Downs AONB team through the website or by telephone: 01488 685440.

### Where is the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

From its western tip at Calne in Wiltshire, the North Wessex Downs reach across the south west and south east of England in a broad arc through Swindon, Berkshire and Oxfordshire, adjoining the Chilterns AONB along the River Thames, before sweeping south, encircling Newbury, to encompass the northern reaches of the rolling chalk hills of the Hampshire Downs. It then reaches back towards Devizes, across the high chalk upland of Salisbury Plain and the low-lying Vale of Pewsey<sup>1</sup>.



The location of the North Wessex Downs

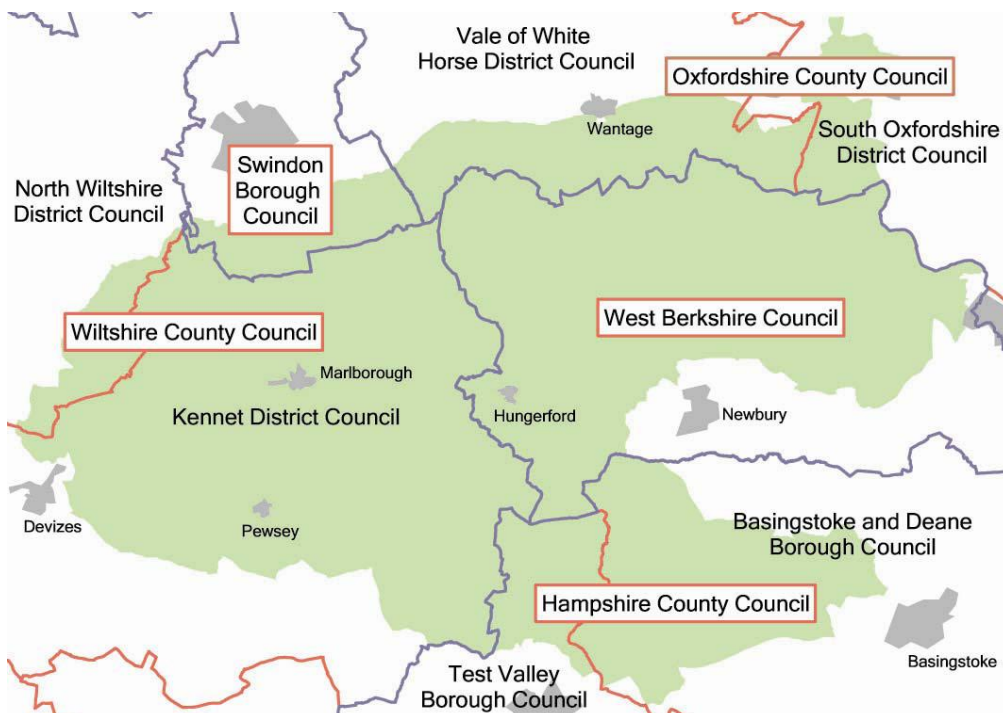
The AONB covers 1730 sq km (the third largest AONB nationally) but has a population of only 125,000 people. Hungerford and Marlborough are the two largest settlements, with a combined population of 14,000. Yet the AONB is surrounded by the significant urban centres of Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke, Andover, Swindon and Didcot, collectively providing a population of over 1.2 million within 20 minutes of the AONB. It is crossed east – west by the M4 and north – south by the A34.

<sup>1</sup> Countryside Agency (2002) The North Wessex Downs Landscape: A landscape assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CA7).



The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The North Wessex Downs encompasses 173 parishes. It straddles the boundaries of two counties, three unitary authorities and four district / borough councils. It is also bisected by the boundary between the South East and the South West Government Regions, with roughly half of the AONB falling into each region.



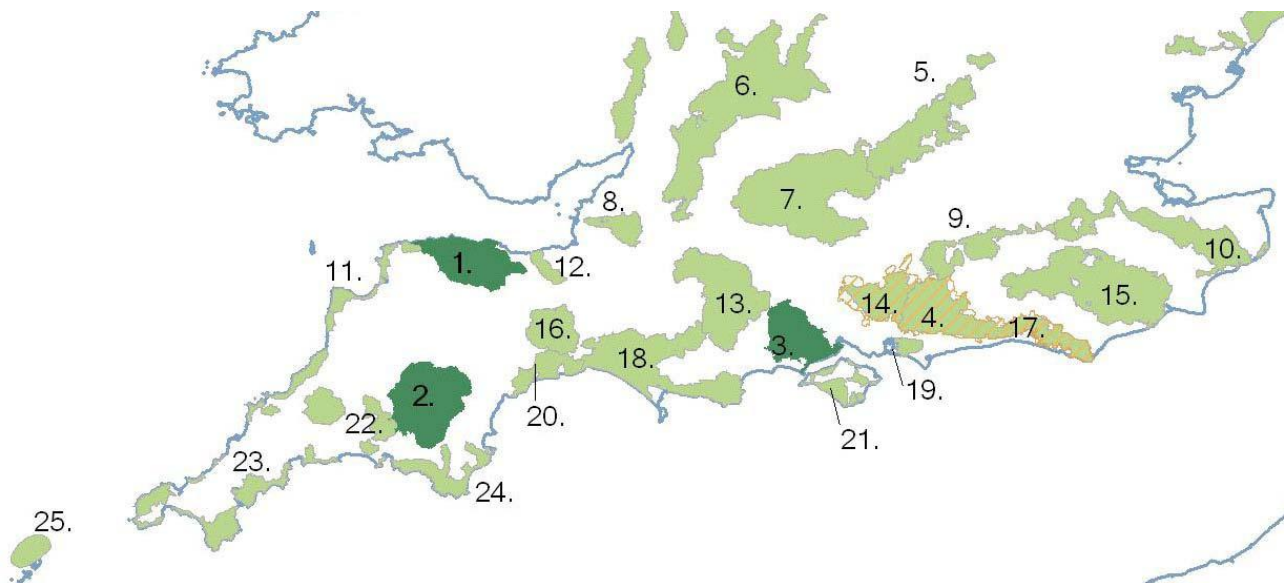
**(Temporary Graphic- revised boundaries)** Regional and Local Government boundaries

## What is the significance of AONB designation?

The North Wessex Downs was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1972 under the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949. Following the introduction of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the government confirmed that the landscape qualities of National Parks and AONBs are equivalent. The protection given by the land use planning system to natural beauty in both types of area should be equivalent.<sup>2</sup>

The AONB landscape is also of international importance, recognised as a Category V Protected Landscape by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It is an evolved cultural landscape, managed and nurtured by people over millennia. Those who manage the land are central to the future of this landscape. It is inevitable and appropriate that this cultural landscape will continue to develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its special qualities.

The North Wessex Downs AONB does not stand alone but forms one of a family of nationally protected landscapes across England made up of 37 AONBs and nine National Parks. In southern England, there are 23 AONBs and three National Parks. Together this family of protected landscapes covers over 35% of southern England.



National Parks	9. Surrey Hills	17. Sussex Downs
1. Exmoor	10. Kent Downs	18. Dorset
2. Dartmoor	11. North Devon	19. Chichester Harbour
3. The New Forest	12. Quantock Hills	20. East Devon
Proposed National Parks	13. Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs	21. Isle of Wight
4. South Downs	14. East Hampshire	22. Tamar Valley
AONBs	15. High Weald	23. Cornwall
5. Chilterns	16. Blackdown Hills	24. South Devon
6. Cotswolds		25. Isle of Scilly
7. North Wessex Downs		
8. Mendips		

Location of protected landscapes in the South of England

## What is the purpose of AONB designation?

The primary purpose of AONB designation is **'conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area'**<sup>3</sup>.

'In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities.

<sup>2</sup> Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, paragraph 21, HMSO 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, section 82

Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the demand for recreation should be met so far as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.<sup>4</sup>

## Definition of natural beauty

Section 114 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 states that “references to the preservation or conservation of the natural beauty of an area shall be construed as including references to the preservation or, as the case may be, conservation of its flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features”. This definition was further refined by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. In section 99 of that Act, it is stated that natural beauty can “include land used for agriculture or woodland, as a park or any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape”.

## Why is this Management Plan important?

Preparation of an AONB Management Plan is a statutory requirement placed upon local authorities by the CRoW Act 2000, with a review required every five years. This Management Plan presents an agreed agenda for the North Wessex Downs, setting out objectives and policies for AONB partners that are believed to be realistic and achievable in the next five years. Working together, the partners can realise these targets to the benefit of the landscapes and communities of this nationally designated area.

In addition, the European Landscape Convention was ratified by the UK on the 1 March 2007. The Convention is a Treaty devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The Convention seeks to ensure enhanced landscape planning, protection and management through quality objectives and an effective policy framework. The convention highlights the need to:

- recognise landscape in law;
- develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes; and
- establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies.

The Convention also encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy (including cultural, economic and social policies) and there is a particular emphasis on the need for co-operation in implementing programmes relating to landscapes that cross administrative and national boundaries. The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan is a significant contribution to the achievement of the aims of the Convention.

## Who has prepared this Management Plan?

The Plan has been prepared by the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners on behalf of the constituent local authorities of the AONB. This Partnership was formed in July 2001 to oversee the future of the AONB. It includes not only the constituent local authorities of the North Wessex Downs but also representatives of the local communities, the farming and rural business community, and those representing nature conservation, heritage and landscape, and recreation interests, including members of government and voluntary agencies.

## Who is this Management Plan aimed at?

Under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, it is a legal duty for all relevant authorities to “have regard to” the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the area. These relevant authorities include all statutory bodies and all tiers of government, including parish councils and holders of public office.

Successful implementation of this Management Plan is beyond the resources of the Council of Partners and AONB team alone and will require the active collaboration and participation of all those involved in its scope. This is a plan for the geographic area of the North Wessex Downs and not for any single organisation within

<sup>4</sup> Countryside Commission Policy Statement on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty 1991

it. Implementation needs the support and involvement of the many organisations and individuals who play key roles in the future of the area. Many of these have been involved in drawing up the plan.

For government, local authorities, other public bodies and other 'relevant authorities', active support for the implementation of this plan is the key to satisfying their 'Section 85' duty. Local parish councils, statutory agencies and regional bodies acting individually or collaboratively through Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements can all contribute to fulfilling the AONB vision.

### **Relationship to other plans and strategies**

This Management Plan forms part of an increasing web of plans and strategies being prepared at the national and regional level. National and local climate change policy is likely to affect most aspects of daily life, business and methods of land management. Sustainable development will continue to rise in importance. Agricultural support under the Common Agricultural Policy has moved away from subsidies for agricultural production and towards incentives for environmental management. Implementation of the Water Framework Directive will require significant changes to land management. Forestry policy now clearly focuses on supporting the wide range of benefits that woodlands can provide with a particular emphasis on the conservation of our ancient woodland resource.

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Natural England has been created as the government agency responsible for conserving and enhancing England's natural environment and raising public understanding and enjoyment of it<sup>5</sup>. Its policies and initiatives inform much of the policy development within the AONB.

As part of sustainable development, Government is placing increasing focus on maintaining mixed and vibrant communities and is strongly committed to making understanding and enjoyment of the countryside accessible to all, linked to agendas for health and education.

Methods of delivering policy are changing too. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004, the planning system was reformed and streamlined, with an emphasis on spatial planning. The statutory land use plan, or Development Plan, now consists of a Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The local planning authorities are producing their LDFs, which comprise a range of statutory Local Development Documents allocating land for development or containing planning policies by which planning applications are determined. Covering the North Wessex Downs are two adopted LDFs (with five in progress), four Minerals and Waste Development Frameworks and two Regional Spatial Strategies (the South West and South East plans). This Management Plan does not form part of the statutory Development Plan for any part of the AONB but, as a statutory document in its own right, should be a material consideration<sup>6</sup> in the planning process and an instrument for securing consistency across the AONB in planning matters.

The Highway Authorities must prepare Local Transport Plans to set out proposals for improving transport in their area and there are five covering the AONB. Local Authorities have a duty to prepare Sustainable Community Strategies for their areas. Within the AONB, all Authorities have set up Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and agreed Local Area Agreements that set out the priorities for a local area agreed between central government and a local area (the local authority and Local Strategic Partnership) and other key partners at the local level. With more communities undertaking Parish Plans, Village Appraisals, Village Design Statements and Community Plans, there are now increased opportunities for local people to influence what happens in their areas. There are other landscape strategies in place in the area that will inform the development of policy, such as the Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan (2005).

As appropriate, these and other plans and strategies are described in more detail under the individual Themes. Inevitably this policy context will change over time. Within the North Wessex Downs, such changes will need to be interpreted through the AONB objectives which will remain a constant throughout the life of this Management Plan.

<sup>5</sup> Natural England was formed in 2006 by merging the Rural Development Agency, English Nature and a part of the Countryside Agency (the Commission for Rural Communities also acquired some of the Countryside Agency's duties).

<sup>6</sup> South East Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy for South East England, May 2009 - Countryside and Landscape Management, Paragraph 11.8 – 'Within the AONBs statutory Management Plans provide a policy and action framework which should influence and help determine planning, decision making, advice and resource allocation priorities for local authorities, government agencies and statutory undertakers. In particular, they should provide an underpinning for the development of AONB specific policy in Local Development Frameworks'.

## Public Service Agreements 2008 - 2011

Since their introduction by the Government in the 1998 Comprehensive Spending Review, Public Service Agreements (PSAs) have played a vital role in galvanising public service delivery and driving major improvements in outcomes. The Government has now agreed in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 30 new PSAs. These set out the Government's highest priority outcomes for the period 2008 to 2011<sup>7</sup>. As a part of this initiative, a new local government performance framework has been established with a single set of 198 national indicators<sup>8</sup>. The national indicators will be the only measures on which central Government will monitor outcomes delivered by local government working alone or in partnership. The priorities for action by public bodies working within the North Wessex Downs will be set by the Comprehensive Spending Review targets.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a statutory process. A formal SEA is required for new plans and programmes that are likely to have significant effects on the environment. SEA aims to provide protection of the environment at a strategic level and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans with a view to promoting sustainable development.

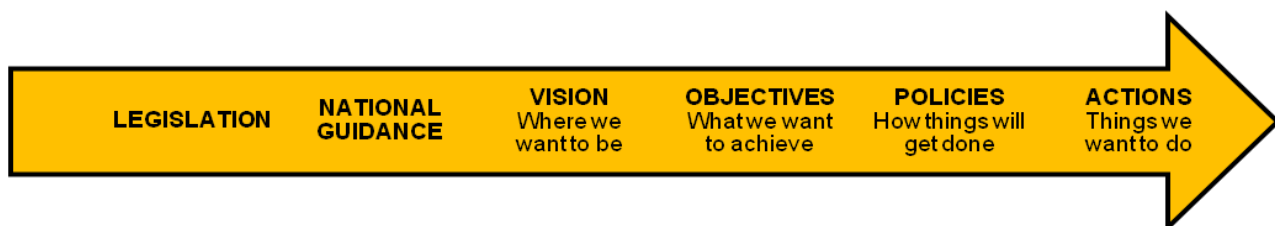
Preparation of our SEA has been undertaken in consultation with Natural England, the Environment Agency, English Heritage, the local authorities and partner organisations. An Environmental Report has been published along with this plan that assesses its environmental impact. An Environmental Statement has also been published which explains how the plan has been influenced by the SEA process

## Appropriate Assessment

The Partnership has undertaken and published an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impact of the objectives of the Management Plan on the conservation objectives of sites of European importance for nature conservation affected by the plan, as required by The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006. Natural England has confirmed that the assessment complies with the legislative requirements.

## The structure of this Management Plan

This Management Plan is structured along a simple 'Golden Thread' that builds on a Vision founded in the statutory purposes but confirmed by consultation, to establish objectives that direct policies and actions.



'Golden Thread' of the North Wessex Downs Management Plan

The Vision is taken forward through a series of themes. Each thematic section contains a short description of its different aspects, followed by its special qualities and key issues. These lead to the objectives, policies and actions presented in the Delivery Plan (section 12).



(Temporary Graphic – final will reflect publication design)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about\\_the\\_cabinet\\_office/publicserviceagreements.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about_the_cabinet_office/publicserviceagreements.aspx)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/>

## Monitoring strategy

Monitoring is needed to assess the effectiveness of this Management Plan. A distinction needs to be drawn between<sup>9&10</sup>:

- **Monitoring** which is the process of collecting data to describe condition and, when collected over time, change.
- **Indicators** which are the elements of data that are collected during a monitoring programme to focus the monitoring activity and measure change.
- **Evaluation** which is the consideration and use of the collected data to assess the effectiveness of the Plan and its delivery in meeting the AONB objectives and enhancing natural beauty.

The effectiveness of this Management Plan will be monitored against:

- **Outcomes:** i.e. the condition of the AONB and the extent to which the **objectives** are being achieved as they focus on whether the quality of the AONB is being maintained and enhanced.
- **Outputs or activities:** i.e. monitoring the extent to which the targets identified in the Delivery Plan are achieved. These measure the achievement of the **policies** and **actions** identified through this Management Plan. These are best monitored as an ongoing assessment of activity, which can be pulled together in quarterly or annual reports as a part of the AONB Business Plan.

Indicators to measure **outcomes or condition** need to be selected with care. In some cases they will be 'proxy indicators' i.e. measures that do not directly reflect the condition of the AONB but from which judgements about its condition can be inferred. Two examples might be: number of farms entered into agri-environment schemes, reflecting the management of semi-natural habitats, or the number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments reflecting the degree of protection afforded to valued cultural sites.

The indicators of outcomes or condition will be developed during 2009 as part of producing the State of the North Wessex Downs AONB report and will be then reported annually. Working groups are to be formed according to 'themes' contained in this Management Plan built upon the partnership and expertise of all the relevant groups working across the AONB, to scrutinise actions under their theme headings.

## 2. A 20 year Vision for the North Wessex Downs

A **vision statement** is an idealized description of the desired or intended future state for the area. It is our inspiration, the framework for all our strategic planning. Reflecting the disciplines of the '*Golden Thread*', we have:

**A vision of vast dramatic, undeveloped and locally distinct chalk downlands with extensive areas of semi-natural chalk grassland, contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable lands and intimate and secluded valleys, all rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage; a national landscape that stands apart from the increasing urban pressures that surround it; where people live, work and relax; and where visitors are welcomed and contribute to a vibrant rural economy.**

**And we seek to make the North Wessex Downs AONB:**

- A place where actions meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and where people have the skills and energy to adapt to change in ways that respect the unique qualities of the North Wessex Downs and deliver wider environmental, economic and social benefits.
- A place where the highest environmental quality is seen as a key economic driver and where all economic activity is in harmony with maintenance of the landscape.
- A place with thriving land based enterprises where the sustainability of the North Wessex Downs is core to the business, ensuring a countryside rich in wildlife and recreational opportunities while producing high quality products that are bought in the knowledge that the local economy and surrounding countryside benefit.

<sup>9</sup> Baker Associates (2003) East Devon AONB and South West Protected Landscapes Forum: Indicators for use in AONB Management Plan monitoring.

<sup>10</sup> Countryside Agency (2003) Developing Indicators for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Interim guidance note from the Countryside Agency.

- A place with high quality well managed habitats reflecting the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs, giving a species-rich landscape with interlinking wildlife corridors available for migration and adaptation in response to climate change.
- A place with a rich and conserved cultural landscape where iconic ancient monuments and intact historic landscapes remain as indelible footprints in an evolving scene, managed to the very highest standards.
- A place where the integrated management of land conserves unpolluted soils and high quality water resources whilst retaining the distinctive seasonal winterbourne flows.
- A place where development is low-impact and affordable with a distinctive but subtle vernacular building style that combines the best of the old with the best of the new and where the integrated approach to transport and travel satisfies local needs and minimises negative effects on the environment.
- A place with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity; where vast night skies can thrill the eye, unaffected by light pollution.
- A place with vibrant and balanced rural communities, with villages and market towns meeting the needs of local people and visitors where there is great local pride and positive local contribution to the management of the landscape.
- A place that is a nationally recognised centre for sustainable tourism and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside, developed and promoted in ways that are in harmony with the high environmental quality and community needs of the area, helping to underpin the land based and broader rural economy.

### 3. About the land

#### Introduction

The North Wessex Downs is a visibly ancient landscape of great diversity and size. It embraces the high, open arable sweeps of the Marlborough Downs with their beech-top knolls and narrow, sheltered chalk river valleys, the intimate and secluded wooded areas of Chute and Savernake Forest, and the low-lying land of the Thames Basin Heaths with a rich mosaic of woodland, pasture, heath and common land. It is a predominantly chalkland landscape with dramatic scarp slopes and moulded dip slopes that reflect the underlying chalk geology.

*“The slopes of the downs, if they have general form, are continually changing and interchanging in localities, assuming new and strange shapes, charming and surprising with their grace and exquisiteness, for ever reflecting the mood of the heavens” Alfred Williams 1877 – 1930.*

The Saxon name of Wessex reveals the area’s literary connections, revived by Thomas Hardy and used as the setting for his novel *Jude the Obscure*. More recently Richard Adams provided a vivid evocation of this area in *Watership Down*. An Historic Landscape Characterisation of the North Wessex Downs has been completed that helps to identify some of the oldest landscapes in the area and improves our understanding of the evolution of the landscape. This is discussed under the Historic Environment.

#### North Wessex Downs AONB Geodiversity Resource<sup>11</sup>

The majority of the AONB is underlain by chalk resulting in the beautiful gentle rolling topography which is so characteristic of the North Wessex Downs. The area records sedimentary deposition in the Wessex Basin which extended to the east (as far as London). The basin underwent periods of uplift and tilting which created the small anticlines (upward folds) of the Vale of Pewsey, Vale of Ham and Kingsclere Inlier, exposing the older Upper Greensand enclosed by younger Chalk. Overlying the chalk are patches of Palaeogene and Quaternary sediments which contrast with the chalk scenery by producing more acidic soils.

#### Lower Cretaceous (145 – 99 million years ago)

Only the top most part of the Lower Cretaceous (the Gault Clay and the Upper Greensand) are found in the AONB. The Gault Clay is restricted to a narrow band marking the foot of the Downs on the northern margin. This blue-grey mudstone has historically been extracted from the Swindon and Devizes area for brick making. The junction between the Gault Clay and the overlying Upper Greensand is marked on the northern

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from the Oxford Geology Trust, Draft Local Geodiversity Action Plan for the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, January 2007

edge of the AONB by a spring line which gave rise to the development of the villages such as Cherhill and Uffington. The sands and silts of the Upper Greensand are rich in a mineral called glauconite, giving them their green colour. As well as tracing the northern scarp of the AONB the Upper Greensand is also seen at the surface in the Vale of Pewsey, as a result of the uplift of the basin. Towards the top of the Upper Greensand is a bed known as the Malmstone. This is a hard sandstone composed of siliceous sponge spicules held together with a silica rich cement.

#### **Upper Cretaceous** (99 – 65 million years ago)

The Upper Cretaceous chalk dominates the solid geology of the AONB as well as much of its landscape. Although there is around over 200 m thickness of chalk in the AONB it is thought that as much again has been removed from the top as a result of erosion during the last 65 million years or so when the basin was uplifted and tilted. The formation of flint in the chalk is not well understood. It is thought that it forms as a result of the concentration of silica (dissolved from the skeletons of silicious animals such as sponges and some plankton).

#### **Palaeogene** (65 – 23 million years ago)

The deposits of the Palaeogene in the North Wessex Downs are unconsolidated sediments which provide no distinctive landscape feature other than the development of neutral to acidic soils leading to the establishment of heath type vegetation and are extremely poorly exposed. The most common of the Palaeogene rocks are the sarsens. These scattered blocks of hard sandstone are one of the most identifiable and well known aspects of the North Wessex Downs geodiversity. They are the remains of the unconsolidated Palaeogene sediments which have been variably cemented by silica.

#### **Quaternary Deposits** (2 million years ago to Present)

Although much of England was covered by advancing ice at some point during the last 2 million years, there is no evidence in the North Wessex Downs that the ice ever covered this part of southern England. There is evidence that the area suffered periglacial conditions. In the AONB there are three principal types of Quaternary deposit. There are the river terrace deposits, alluvium (modern day river sediments) and a deposit known as clay-with-flints.

It is thought that the river terrace sediments were deposited during the cold periods and not during the warmer interglacial periods of the Quaternary. As ice sheets grew, sea level fell. This rejuvenated rivers and increased their erosive power so they cut deep into the relatively soft bedrock. The terrace sediments are predominantly gravels with sand, though some clays and muds are also preserved. The terrace development reflects the successive cutting of ancient floodplains, the older terraces being the highest ones preserved. Terraces and their sediments have been preserved in all the major modern day river valleys in the AONB. Alluvium is the modern day deposits of rivers. It is mainly silt and clay but can also contain sand and gravels from flood events.

Unlike the terrace deposits and the alluvium, the clay-with-flints is not the result of river channel activity. It is thought more likely to be the remains of the Cretaceous chalk after the affects of intense weathering. It can often be mapped by the presence of woodland particularly in the central and southern parts of the AONB.

#### **Geomorphology and Landscape**

The steep scarp slopes of the Upper Greensand with their beautiful view points and the gentle rolling open plateau of the chalk are both parts of the landscape directly influenced by the underlying geology. One of the more impressive and obvious geomorphological features of the landscape are the dry valleys or coombes. These can be found all over the Cretaceous chalk plateau, often forming impressive, deep rounded valleys. They are the result of torrents of water flowing over the surface of the chalk during cold periods when permafrost (frozen ground) made the chalk impermeable. The coombes are often associated with terrace features along the valleys such as those at White Horse Hill in Oxfordshire. These are depositions resulting from the gradual movement downhill of frost shattered chalk during times of partial thaw. If large amounts of material is moved down the slope of the valley it accumulates in the valley bottom, forming a deposit known as head.

#### **Building Stone**

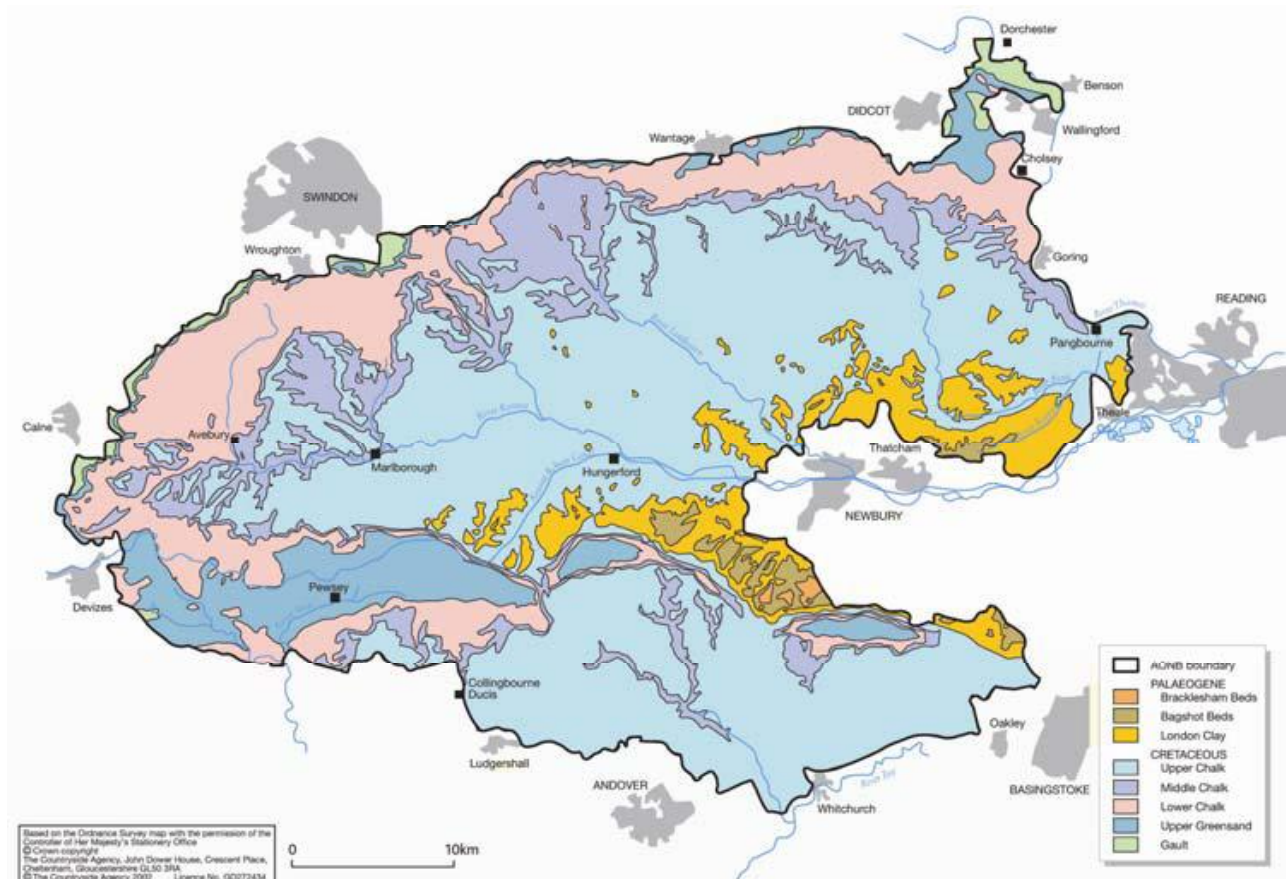
The only true building stones within the North Wessex Downs are the hard bands of the Melbourn Rock, the Chalk Rock and sarsen stones. The chalk is not ideal (as it not waterproof) and so foundations of flint, brick or occasionally hard bands within the Upper Greensand have been used to prevent damp. A thatch roof with overhanging eaves also helps to prevent rainwater dissolving away the walls. The chalk has also been used to create cob, a mixture of clay or chalk, water and straw which is built up in layers to create walls.

North Wessex Downs AONB  
Management Plan – 13 July 2009

Sarsens have been used as construction materials since Neolithic times. Their use can be seen all over the downs from the major ceremonial and religious sites of Avebury and Waylands Smithy to the footings in medieval and post medieval cottages and agricultural buildings.

The Gault Clay and London Clay have been used for brickmaking. Kintbury and Hermitage were major brick making areas in the 18th and 19th centuries, utilising Palaeogene clays. In the Kennet Valley there was a medieval tile and pottery industry also utilising the Palaeogene clays.

Flints have also been used in conjunction with brick to produce a more decorative feature and stronger structure. Flints have been used both in their natural state and have also been knapped to form a flatter surface.



The Geology of the North Wessex Downs

## Landscape character types

The overall diversity of landscape is revealed through the landscape assessment for the AONB published in 2002<sup>12</sup>. This recognises eight Landscape Character Types and a total of 35 Landscape Character Areas across the North Wessex Downs, each with their own distinct sense of place<sup>13</sup>. The study draws out the special qualities of the landscape, traces its evolution over the centuries and identifies the main issues which will need to be addressed to conserve its special character and outstanding qualities.

The eight Landscape Types are briefly described below. The 'Key Issues' and 'Key Management Requirements' are those proposed in the Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. Technical Report<sup>14</sup>. It is now proposed to review the issues and management actions by developing a Landscape Management Strategy.

<sup>12</sup> Countryside Agency (2002) *The North Wessex Downs Landscape: A landscape assessment of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (CA7)*.

<sup>13</sup> The relationship of these landscape types and character areas to those identified in adjoining areas is set out in the Technical Report that accompanies the landscape character assessment.

<sup>14</sup> Land Use Consultants (2002) *North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty: Integrated Landscape Character Assessment. Technical Report. Countryside Agency*.

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Management Plan – 13 July 2009



Landscape Character Types



**Downs Plain and Scarp** - The landscape of the Downs Plain and Scarp extends along the entire length of the northern boundary of the North Wessex Downs. The plain is formed by the eroded surface of the Lower Chalk, creating a low level surface extending as a wide ledge at the foot of the high Open Downland. The distinctive northern scarp plunges down from this chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a recognisable horizon when viewed from the north. This area is characterised by two of the most emblematic features of the North Wessex Downs – the Ridgeway – *the oldest road in England* – running along the top of the scarp and Avebury on the open Downs Plain, forming part of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site. The Downs Plain is characterised by vast arable fields, lack of surface water and a general absence of settlement. Conversely the dramatic scarp slope, cut by springs, creates a convoluted edge alternately under woodland and pasture, including significant areas of remnant chalk grassland.

### Key Issues

- in the past, agricultural intensification leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity archaeological features and landscape character;
- changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some marginal areas on the scarp slope no longer being grazed leading to scrub encroachment, most notably on the steeper scarp slopes;
- loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows. This is a particular concern on the Plain, where field boundary loss has resulted in some very large open landscapes;
- lack of appropriate woodland management particularly the small ancient and semi natural woodlands of the scarp formerly managed by coppicing;
- climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and requirement for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and intrusive infrastructure. Impact on woodland and parkland with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);
- Intensive recreational pressures around 'honeypot' sites;
- vulnerability to large scale development, particularly tall structures (e.g. masts or turbines) on the scarp summit and re-use of redundant military infrastructure on the Plains, with associated impacts, e.g. traffic generation;

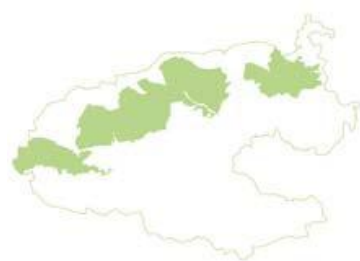
- pressures for housing and peripheral development of attractive springline villages along the scarp - potential loss of local vernacular character, and decline in rural services;
- impact of development of the edge of the AONB, for example at Wantage, Swindon, Harwell, Didcot - visual impact plus increased pressures on housing, roads, etc.;
- loss of rural tranquillity, resulting from the combination of the above.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the distinctive and contrasting character of the Downs Plain and associated Scarp. This includes:

- the distinct landform and clear skyline;
- the mix of landcover including woodland, pasture and historic parklands;
- the Ridgeway and unique collection of archaeological sites including management of recreational pressure around key sites;
- attractive spring line villages along the base of the scarp and the contrasting open, uninhabited plain;
- conservation of existing areas of chalk grassland and opportunities for habitat recreation to extend and link sites;
- restoration of landscape character by reinforcing the hedgerow pattern and considering opportunities for further woodland planting, particularly on the plain.

Consideration should also be given to the impact of development on the boundary of the North Wessex Downs on views from the higher ground of the Downs Plain and Scarp.



**Open Downland** - The Open Downland forms the backbone of the North Wessex Downs as an elevated plateau of the hard Middle and Upper Chalks. The landscape is of open smoothly rounded downland dissected by dry valleys and long sinuous steep scarps, devoid of surface water. Tree cover is limited to occasional linear shelter belts and distinctive beech clumps crowning summits. This is a landscape of panoramic views where the earth meets the sky. The dominant land use is vast sweeping arable fields with small remnant patches of chalk grassland on steeper slopes. Habitation is extremely sparse and limited to scattered farmsteads and race horse stables.

### Key Issues

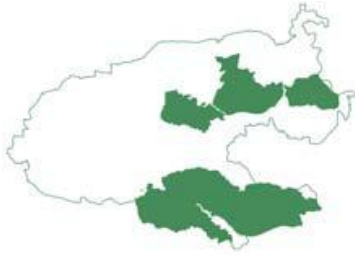
- in the past, intensification of farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity, archaeological features and landscape character through the creation of large fields;
- impacts of the intensive agricultural economy on the social character of the AONB - declining employment, fewer larger farms with pockets of rural deprivation masked by relative affluence of estates and larger farm units;
- future restructuring within agriculture - which in this landscape type is likely to result in the amalgamation of holdings with large areas being managed as a single block resulting in further homogenisation of the landscape plus requirement for large grain storage buildings;
- further reduction in livestock (impact of foot and mouth), so that there is no longer the means to maintain existing areas of pasture. Some marginal areas are regenerating with scrub;
- climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and possible future demands for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and infrastructure;
- impact of England Rural Development Programme Schemes (ERDP) – woodland planting and new types of crops, e.g. energy crops;
- requirements for new large scale farm buildings plus a other farm units becoming redundant with potential for conversion;
- future potential demand for chalk extraction;
- impact of tall structures - communications masts and transmitters plus future renewable energy developments (wind turbines) that will be particularly intrusive on the strong sweeping skylines and could have a major impact on the sense of remoteness.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management requirement is to conserve the character of the Open Downlands with their special sense of remoteness and isolation. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- surviving chalk grassland habitats, including opportunities for habitat restoration to extend and link isolated and fragmented sites;
- the unique collection of archaeological sites;

- sparse settlement pattern and absence of development;
- the clear ridges and strong skylines.



**Downland with Woodland-** This landscape is distinctly different from the Open Downland. It is of lower elevation and has a thick capping of clay with flints over the chalk. It has softer contours and considerably greater woodland cover. The scale is smaller with field patterns made up of a mixture of small irregular Medieval enclosures and larger regular Parliamentary enclosures. Hedgerows and a mosaic of woodland cover, notably on the clay summits and as sinuous hangers along steeper slopes, create a sense of containment. There are also considerable areas of wood pasture and parkland. Agricultural land use is more varied with an intermixing of arable and pasture. Small villages nestle in sheltered valleys or are strategically located on ridgetops with widespread scattered farmsteads.

### Key Issues

- in the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity archaeological features and landscape character;
- changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock so that some marginal areas of pasture may no longer be grazed leading to alternative uses, e.g. as horse paddocks or neglect/scrub encroachment;
- loss of hedgerow boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;
- lack of appropriate management of woodlands particularly ancient and semi natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of wood pasture;
- climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and requirement for irrigation of arable land - including possible future demand for construction of reservoirs and infrastructure. Impact on woodlands with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow) on dry chalk soils;
- localised visual intrusions notably tall structures including pylons and masts, plus
- potential future demand for wind turbines, on the downland summits and skylines, which may impact on the secluded rural character;
- increased traffic on the rural lane network, plus road improvements including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, in places, creates a more urban landscape;
- intense development pressures particularly for new housing - potential effect on the character of the small nucleated hamlets and villages, plus demand for housing stock leading to inflated prices and absence of affordable housing;
- decline in local services and facilities with many villages becoming 'empty' commuter villages by day;
- impact of all of the above leading to a loss of special qualities of tranquillity and peacefulness within this quiet rural landscape.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the secluded rural character of the Downland with Woodland landscape type and its special qualities of peacefulness and tranquillity. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- chalk grassland habitats with opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement;
- the pattern and character of woodland and hedgerows, through appropriate and
- sustainable management, including reintroduction of coppicing and hedgerow management and restoration of hedge boundaries;
- archaeological sites, historic field patterns, historic parkland, and the historic lane network, including the characteristic sunken lanes;
- the distinct character and pattern of settlement of small hamlets and villages assimilated within the landscape and scattered farms;
- the downland summits, strong skylines and open panoramic views, which are particularly vulnerable to large scale/tall infrastructure.



**Wooded Plateau** - Centred on the woodland tracts of Savernake Forest and West Woods, the extent of this largely wooded area reflects the bounds of the Medieval royal hunting forest of Savernake, established by the time of the Domesday survey. Throughout this gently dipping plateau a thick covering of clay with flints and Tertiary deposits mask the solid chalk and results in damp and heavy soils. Today the Forest consists of extensive tracts of semi-natural ancient woodland, wood pasture with majestic veteran trees, and 18th and 19th Century beech plantations, as well as more modern coniferous plantations. Reflecting its origins as a Royal hunting forest, settlement is limited to a concentration of villages in the valley of the River Dun – Great Bedwyn and Little Bedwyn.

### Key Issues

- in the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity archaeological features and creation of large open fields;
- need for woodland management, particularly areas of ancient and seminatural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and as wood pasture;
- loss of hedgerows boundaries and mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;
- climate change - potential impact on woodland and parkland including increase in non-native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);
- intense development pressures, notably for new housing in the villages in the eastern part of the area, which have good rail links to London - potential harmful effect on the character of the small nucleated hamlets and villages, plus demand for housing stock leading to inflated prices and absence of affordable housing;
- loss of tranquillity.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the character of the Wooded Plateau with its extensive woodlands and farmland mosaic, special qualities of peacefulness and seclusion, and wealth of sustainable recreation opportunities. Key features to be conserved and enhanced are:

- the extensive woodland blocks at Savernake Forest and West Wood, plus the numerous ancient and semi-natural woodlands of great biodiversity value;
- the corridor of the Kennet and Avon Canal and associated features;
- intimate mosaic of woodland and farmland created particularly the intact pattern of hedgerows and smaller woodland blocks;
- remnant areas of heathland, with opportunities for management and habitat restoration;
- areas of open access, woodland walks and recreational paths;
- historic parkland and formal designed landscapes of Tottenham Park and Littlecote Park, with their permanent pasture, parkland trees, avenues and rides;
- the distinct pattern and character of the settlement with a remote uninhabited western plateau and small hamlets and villages in the east;
- the quiet, rural character of the plateau, which in the more open areas is particularly vulnerable to large scale or tall infrastructures.



**High Chalk Plain** - This makes up the northern-most tip of Salisbury Plain. The open rolling landform of the Upper Chalk creates a bleak, spacious landscape devoid of settlement under arable production, with long views and a strong sense of remoteness and isolation. A dramatic escarpment forms the northern boundary, as at Pewsey Hill and Fyfield Down, and provides panoramic views across the Vale of Pewsey immediately to the north.

### Key Issues

- in the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets including biodiversity archaeological features and landscape character with creation of large 'prairie' fields;
- unsympathetic tree and woodland planting in the form of irregular blocks and linear plantations of ornamental species;

- climate change - potential impacts on chalk grassland habitats and requirement for irrigation of arable land - including potential future demand for construction of reservoirs and infrastructure;
- vulnerability to development, particularly large scale or tall structures and potential impact in views to the scarp top from the Vale of Pewsey.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the expansive character of the High Chalk Plain with its openness, isolation, remoteness and absence of settlement. Key features to be conserved and enhanced include:

- isolated fragments of chalk grasslands with opportunities for restoration to extend and link habitats;
- the field pattern, with opportunities to restore hedgerows;
- importance as a habitat for declining farmland bird species – with a mosaic of arable land and chalk grassland;
- the unsettled character, clear ridgelines and horizons and absence of development, particularly along the open scarp above the Vale of Pewsey.



**Vales** - The Vale of Pewsey separates the two main upland chalk blocks that dominate the North Wessex Downs. The towering shapes of the adjacent chalk scarps contain and enclose this Greensand Vale. Numerous streams issue from the chalk and Greensand where the water table comes to the surface and meander across the Vale floor. Rich loamy and alluvial soils create a productive agricultural landscape with a mix of arable and pasture now replacing a once predominantly pastoral scene important for dairying – hence the saying '*chalk and cheese*'. The concentration of settlements is a defining feature of the Vale, including compact nucleated villages and hamlets with widespread scattered farmsteads.

### Key Issues

- in the past, intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets particularly biodiversity with drainage and cultivation of the Vale floor pasture and widespread loss of hedgerows and archaeological features;
- potential changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some remaining Vale pastures no longer being grazed with scrub encroachment;
- loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;
- climate change - potential impacts including drying out of wetland habitats, requirement for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and intrusive infrastructure. Impact on woodland and parkland with potential increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);
- localised intrusion of roads, overhead power lines and pylons all of which are highly visible in the context of this flat low lying landscape;
- increased traffic on the rural lane network, plus road improvements including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, in places creates a more urban landscape;
- intense development pressures, particularly for new housing affect the character of the villages and their edges so that settlements are less assimilated into the landscape;
- impact of development of the edge of the AONB, for example at Devizes and Swindon - visual impact plus increased pressures on housing, roads etc.;
- vulnerability to impact of development (e.g. skyline structures) within the adjacent 'borrowed' landscape of the downland scarps which form prominent boundaries to the Vales.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the Vales with their rural, agricultural character. This includes the pattern of hedgerows, streams and remnant waterside pastures, wet meadows and woodlands and concentration of small compact settlements. There are opportunities for hedgerow restoration and re-creation of pasture and riparian woodlands alongside watercourses. The objective should be to maintain the pattern of discrete villages set within a quiet rural landscape, with opportunities for management of traffic on the rural lanes that connect the settlements. The views to the clear skylines of the surrounding downland slopes should be conserved.



**River Valleys** - The chalk rivers that cut through the chalk uplands form very distinct linear landscapes, characterised by a rich mix of grazed pastures, water meadows, wetland and woodland. The valleys are enclosed by steeply rising slopes, limiting views and creating an intimate and enclosed character. Historically, the main settlements of the chalk were concentrated in these river valleys (as the only source of accessible water in an otherwise dry downland landscape without the benefit of a capping of clay with flints). These settlements took a long linear form, following the bottom of the valley, and this remains the dominant pattern to this day. The chalk uplands are also cut by numerous dry valleys, which sometimes contain ephemeral 'winterbournes' which only flow when the chalk water table rises to the surface during the winter and early spring.

### Key Issues

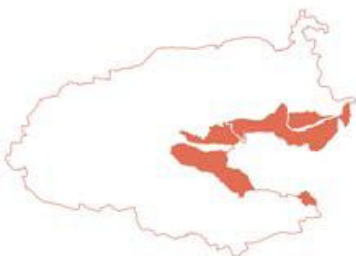
- in the past, low flows in the chalk rivers has been a major cause for concern, particularly with increased abstraction requirements. More recently flooding within the valleys has been an issue for local residents;
- maintenance of high water quality in the streams and rivers, particularly by the nutrient pollution from riverside arable land plus road and urban run-off;
- intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets particularly drainage and improvement of permanent pasture and water meadows on the floodplain and loss of riparian vegetation;
- potential changes in farming practices - including loss of livestock with some remaining valley pastures and meadows no longer being grazed with consequential scrub encroachment;
- maintenance of traditional valley features including watercress beds and historic features - water meadow systems, mills and leats;
- loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows;
- climate change - potential impacts including increased abstraction and low flows, as well as autumn/winter flooding, concentrated levels of water pollution and drying out of wetland habitats. Potential impacts on woodland and parkland include increases in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);
- localised intrusion of roads (M4 and A4), overhead power lines and pylons all of which are highly visible in the context of the small scale enclosed, intimate valley landscape;
- increased traffic on the road network, plus improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and new river crossings which, in places create a more 'urban' character;
- potential future demand for aggregate extraction altering the form and character of the valleys;
- development pressures, particularly for new housing affect the character of the small settlements - discrete villages may appear to coalesce along the valley side roads;
- loss of rural tranquillity, resulting from the combination of the above factors.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the River Valley landscapes with their intimate, pastoral and tranquil character. This includes:

- the chalk streams and rivers with their characteristically clear, fast-flowing waters;
- the adjacent seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, marsh, damp woodlands and historic parklands.

The small-scale character of the valleys mean that they are potentially sensitive to any development, including large scale farm buildings, new housing and communication infrastructure. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive pattern of settlement with discrete villages, hamlets and two market towns.



**Lowland Mosaic** - Concentrated around the 'Newbury bight' this is a landscape of largely Medieval origins. The varied geology of low lying clays, silts and sands gives rise to a diverse mix of soils and, in turn, a small-scale and intimate landscape with a mosaic of ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland areas. Lanes are frequently overhung by deep grassy and wooded banks, heightening the sense of seclusion. The network of ancient semi-natural woodland, connecting hedgerows, areas of parkland, including wood pasture and veteran trees, create considerable ecological interest. Former Medieval

deer parks are a particular feature as at Englefield, Highclere and Hampstead, with a number of these having been re-fashioned in the 18th Century as formal designed landscapes. This is one of the most densely inhabited areas of the North Wessex Downs with large manor houses, a network of hamlets, and lines of houses and villages that have grown along the network of lanes.

### Key Issues

- intensification in farming leading to loss of environmental assets particularly conversion of permanent pasture to arable;
- decline in the extent of heathland vegetation through conversion to forestry or lack of management with scrub invasion and development of woodland;
- potential changes in farming practices may include further loss of livestock with an increase in areas managed as 'hobby farms' or as horse paddocks - characterised by rank weedy grassland and poorly managed boundaries;
- lack of appropriate management of woodlands particularly ancient and semi natural woodlands formerly managed by coppicing and areas of wood pasture;
- loss of hedgerows boundaries and particularly mature hedgerow trees, plus poor management of remaining hedgerows by flailing so that hedgerow trees are often no longer present. Also need for management of adjacent grass verges;
- climate change - potential impacts on habitats including drying out of wet heathland and increased fire risk on dry heaths. Requirement for irrigation of arable land - including construction of reservoirs and intrusive infrastructure. Potential impacts on woodland and parkland include an increase in non native species and tree loss (drought/windthrow);
- localised intrusion of roads (M4, A34 and A343), which have a high impact in this quiet, rural landscape;
- increased traffic on the road network, plus road improvements to the lanes including kerbing, widening, signing and visibility splays which, in places creates a more 'urban' character;
- potential future demand for aggregate extraction altering the form and character of the valleys;
- development pressures, particularly for new residential development including suburbanising influence of built development and roads (fencing, signing, lighting and planting);
- decline in local services and facilities with many villages becoming 'empty' commuter villages by day;
- loss of tranquillity, resulting from a combination of the above.

### Key Management Requirements

The overall management objective is to conserve and enhance the distinctive small-scale and enclosed landscape of the Lowland Mosaic with its secluded, rural and tranquil character. This includes conservation and enhancement of the key assets, namely:

- the ancient and semi-natural woodlands;
- field patterns and hedgerows and particularly through ensuring appropriate management to allow regeneration of hedgerow trees;
- the hedgerows and grass verges which line the rural lanes;
- heathland;
- historic parkland.

There are opportunities for restoration of the fragile lowland heathland resource, through management and habitat restoration to extend and link isolated areas. The aim should be to maintain the distinctive patterns of settlement and prevent the gradual expansion, merging and coalescence that will result in a more suburban character. Consideration should be given to measures that could lessen the impact of the roads and reduce high traffic levels on the rural lanes.

## 4. Forces for Change

Five related external 'forces for change' will impact significantly across all aspects of the North Wessex Downs AONB:

1. Call for sustainable development
2. Call for sustainable consumption and production
3. Climate change
4. Call for environmental protection and enhancement
5. Desire for sustainable communities

### Call for sustainable development

Sustainable development lies at the heart of Government policy in which there is a clear expectation that the protected landscapes will make a strong contribution to both the local delivery of sustainable development and its wider promotion. The principles of sustainable development are woven into this Management Plan. The commonly accepted definition of sustainable development is:

'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'<sup>15</sup>

The UK Government expanded on this definition in 1990<sup>16</sup> :

'sustainable development means living on the earth's income rather than eroding its capital. It means keeping the consumption of renewable resources within the limits of replenishment. It means handing down to successive generations not only man made wealth ... but also natural wealth ...'

Under the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)<sup>17</sup>, caring for the environment is seen as a fundamental starting point of sustainable development, rather than attempting to deal with the consequences of environmental degradation. Living within environmental limits is a pre-requisite for the future. Within the North Wessex Downs AONB, working within environmental limits means:

- Working with a strong evidence base that provides a sound understanding of place and environmental limits.
- Ensuring that all decisions take account of climate change.
- Taking an integrated approach by thinking of the environment, economy and community together to identify, encourage and support those aspects of the local economy that can positively contribute to maintaining and enhancing natural beauty.
- Encouraging the integrated management of land that delivers multiple benefits such as protection of water resources, enhanced flood control, habitat creation, and landscape enhancement.
- Promoting landscape-scale responses to ensure that the protection of the environment permeates all aspects of land use rather than being considered on isolated sites.

Since the early 1990s, virtually all government environmental policy has been influenced and driven by the concept of sustainable development<sup>18</sup>.

As a contribution to sustainable development, the protected landscapes deliver a wide range of benefits essential for human survival and well-being, sometimes referred to as 'ecosystem services'. An ecosystem is an area of land or water with interacting living and non-living components. An ecosystems approach aims to treat the natural environment holistically, weighing the impact of society on the natural environment whilst seeking to ensure a supply of 'ecosystem services' from which society benefits. Those services are the wide range of benefits that a healthy natural environment provides for people, either directly or indirectly. The benefits range from the essentials for life, including clean air and water, food and fuel, to things that improve our quality of life and wellbeing, such as recreation and beautiful landscapes. But they also include natural processes, such as climate and flood regulation<sup>19</sup>. The most significant 'ecosystem services' provided by the North Wessex Downs include:

- clean drinking water, mainly drawn from the chalk aquifer;

<sup>15</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) 'Our Common Future'

<sup>16</sup> HMSO (1990) 'This Common Inheritance' White Paper

<sup>17</sup> Defra (2005) The UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy. Cm 6467

<sup>18</sup> see [www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government](http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government)

<sup>19</sup> For further information on ecosystems services see 'Securing a healthy natural environment - An action plan for embedding an ecosystems approach', Defra, 2007  
[www.Defra.gov.uk/wildlifecountryside/natres/pdf/eco\\_actionplan.pdf](http://www.Defra.gov.uk/wildlifecountryside/natres/pdf/eco_actionplan.pdf)

- food and fibre, primarily from cereals and sheep;
- flood protection, with water storage in the flood plains providing natural protection from fluvial flooding; and
- opportunities for exercise and spiritual refreshment.

## Call for sustainable consumption and production

Sustainable consumption and production requires us to achieve more with less. The earth's resources are unlikely to be sufficient to sustain equivalent 'western' standards of consumption for all nations. Some calculations suggest that three planets' worth of resources would be needed to achieve UK levels of consumption across the world. The landscape of the AONB is dominated by farmland and woodland and changes in these land uses have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area.

The reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the introduction of new agri-environment schemes in the UK are affecting farming, with a greater emphasis on wildlife conservation. The de-coupling of support payments from production is requiring farmers to respond more readily to world market conditions. Fluctuations in commodity prices and input costs are making future arable profitability hard to predict. Whilst further reform of the CAP will have an influence, market signals are liable to have a stronger influence in the short-term and may confound initiatives designed to improve natural resource protection and environmental enhancement. An example in the North Wessex Downs has been the difficulty in promoting arable reversion to chalk grassland under higher-level stewardship schemes in the light of fluctuating, and occasionally very high, cereal prices. Livestock farming, which is crucial to the management of special habitats like chalk grassland, has been in decline for some time.

The long term decline in the market for UK timber has had a pronounced effect on the area's woodlands, with many suffering from a lack of management. The ageing beech woodlands no longer produce significant volumes of timber and are more valuable as places for recreation than as a productive part of the rural economy. The promotion of wood as a renewable fuel may stimulate improved management of some woodlands.

Coupled with the drive for global sustainability, UK food and energy security considerations are likely to become major influences on land management over the next 20 years, with significant implications for landscape character and the scope for expanding wildlife habitats as the pressure grows for novel crops and farming systems. There may also be greater diversification into related activities, such as equestrian businesses and leisure.

## Climate change

A changing global climate, principally caused by the activities of man, is now regarded as an indisputable fact by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change<sup>20</sup>, the Government and local authorities. We are being encouraged by government to change the way we generate and use energy, and conduct other activities that release greenhouse gases<sup>21</sup>. The precautionary principle is promoted. There is a broad consensus on the likely changes to the climate of Southern England over the next few decades<sup>22</sup>. These changes will be gradual and may not be noticeable within the life of this plan but strategies are needed now because of the long lead-in time for actions to be effective. The likely changes are:

- summers will become warmer and drier
- winters will become milder and wetter
- extreme weather conditions will become more frequent

These changes have the potential to affect the landscapes, wildlife and communities of the AONB. Woodlands may be dominated by oak and ash which cope better than beech with the likely changes in climate. The range of crops grown by farmers will change and there may be more growing of bio-fuels. Water flows in rivers and streams could become more erratic. Habitats may expand, contract or migrate. New species may enter the area, some bringing disease or pests that may be detrimental to 'native' species. Tourism pressures could increase as more people decide to holiday in the UK. All of these factors

<sup>20</sup> The authoritative reference source for all climate change calculations and prediction is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) <http://www.ipcc-data.org>

<sup>21</sup> PSA 27 Lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change

<sup>22</sup> See Natural England, Character Area Climate Change Project NE116R - Responding to the impacts of climate change on the natural environment: Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase Character Area, March 2009 <http://naturaleland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/Product.aspx?ProductID=53b2e63b-7ebd-470e-8d60-d8fdccdd9a6f7>, this examines a similar character area to the North Wessex Downs.

would affect which flora and fauna can flourish in the area. The implications of climate change are profound and present **three challenges** for the North Wessex Downs:

1. **Research:** Developing a better understanding of the likely implications of climate change on the environment and economy of the North Wessex Downs
2. **Mitigation:** Mitigation requires the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane, from whatever source that can be managed. Mitigation measures include:
  - Better on-farm management of fertilizer and animal waste.
  - Increased reliance on renewable energies, biomass heating from local fuel stocks and appropriately scaled renewable energy generation.
  - Enhanced domestic and commercial energy efficiency.
  - Greater availability of alternative fuels for cars, commercial vehicles and plant machinery e.g. batteries, LPG, bio-fuels.
  - Improved availability and accessibility of sustainable modes of transport (bus services, cycling).
  - Greater use of timber in construction from sustainable woodland.
  - Carbon capture as an objective of habitat creation and management of woodlands.
  - Encouraging simple greenhouse gas and carbon accounting to monitor the effectiveness of changes.
3. **Adaptation:** Changing our behaviour to respond to the impacts of climate change is known as 'adaptation'. Adaptation measures include:
  - Dissemination of advice on bio-security and disease control in domestic and wild animals.
  - Modelling groundwater response to climate change as a part of planning policy development.
  - Increasing measures to manage the risk of flooding.
  - Securing future water resources by water storage and transfer schemes that reduce abstraction.
  - Encouraging water efficiency in homes and businesses and encouraging reuse.
  - Linking, extending and buffering fragmented habitats to improve opportunities for species migration and population stabilisation.

## Call for environmental protection and enhancement

The use of natural resources is vital for all sorts of human activity. In the context of natural resource protection, we must also consider those resources which we do not intend to use but which might become compromised or damaged as a result of our activities. Protection of eco-systems, even if they are far away from the activities which might damage them, is now recognised as a vital consideration. Protecting natural resources by operating in a way which minimises damaging impacts is, therefore, part of sustainable development. There is a need to conserve soil, geological deposits, water and clean air<sup>23</sup>.

## Desire for sustainable communities

Sustainable communities in the North Wessex Downs are places where people want to live and work, now and in the future<sup>24</sup>. Sustainable communities should be:

- Active, inclusive and safe - fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong local culture and other shared community activities.
- Well run - with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership.
- Environmentally sensitive - providing places for people to live that are considerate of the environment.
- Well designed and built - featuring a quality built and natural environment.
- Well connected - with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services.
- Thriving - with a flourishing and diverse local economy.
- Well served - with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all.
- Fair for everyone - including those in other communities, now and in the future

The UK population is projected to increase by 10% (5 million) by 2026<sup>25</sup>. Of this, a 750,000 increase is expected to be in the South West Region<sup>26</sup> (similar increases are expected in the South East). People are

<sup>23</sup> PSA 28 Secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future

<sup>24</sup> PSA 21 Build more cohesive, empowered and active communities

<sup>25</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy 2006.

living longer and the average size of households is decreasing with more single occupancy. Much of the increase in population in rural areas is the result of migration for lifestyle reasons, including retirement. The scale of development required to provide housing, employment and services to this expanding population will be considerable.<sup>27</sup>

- The towns which surround the AONB are all expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development in the next 20 years.
- Whilst housing and employment development within the villages of the AONB is likely to address only local needs, market towns such as Marlborough can be expected to accommodate significant new development.
- The increasing demand for quicker journey times between employment centres may lead to pressure for road widening and other 'improvement' schemes on roads in the AONB.
- Increased prosperity enjoyed by some people leads to other environmental impacts such as; more over-flights by aircraft of all kinds; the use of roads and rights of way for motorised leisure pursuits; and a demand for second homes.

### Social Inclusion

Social inclusion refers to the action that can be taken to address the problems of social exclusion. It includes what used to be called anti-poverty and social or community development work but it has the benefit of being broader in scope. Social inclusion is about tackling multiple deprivation. The Government's Social Inclusion Unit's definition of social exclusion is "what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown". There is a need within the AONB to ensure that communities are given the support needed to maintain sustainable communities (discussed under the Communities Theme).

### Skills and lifelong learning

The current fundamental changes in the AONB's land-based economy are requiring new skills and the re-learning of old skills. The Learning and Skills Council has overall responsibility for all training and education for people over 16 years of age in England. Within the North Wessex Downs, this responsibility is delivered through four local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) – the Wiltshire and Swindon LSC; the Berkshire LSC; the Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton LSC; and the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire LSC. Each work alongside the National Training Organisations (such as LANTRA representing the land-based sector), further education and training colleges, and representatives of community groups, to understand, define and then meet training and education needs.

Data from the 2001 Census show that 79% of people resident in the AONB are qualified to at least the equivalent of O/CSE/GCSE level (any grade), more than in the South East (76.1%) and the South West (73.8%) and more than any of the towns surrounding the North Wessex Downs AONB, excluding Tidworth. The most noticeable difference is in those with a first degree or equivalent, where the figure for the AONB of 27.2% is 5.5% higher than that for the South East and 8.4% higher than in the South West. It would appear that the North Wessex Downs AONB enjoys a relatively low level of deprivation in education<sup>28</sup>.

There is a need for at least seven types of rural skills learning within the North Wessex Downs<sup>29</sup>:

- Relearning of traditional land-based skills such as woodland management, animal husbandry and hedge laying.
- Keeping up to date with current agricultural best practice and environmental legislation (e.g. pesticide use) amongst the farming community.
- Encouragement of traditional building skills including thatching, flintwork and green oak construction.
- Obtaining necessary business management skills such as IT, book keeping and accountancy.
- Obtaining the skills necessary for new business development from hospitality training to food hygiene.
- Developing entrepreneurship and recognising diversification opportunities.
- Raising awareness and skills in implementing environmental management for rural business.

It is essential that AONB communities have sustainable access to training – a key issue for social inclusion.

<sup>27</sup> Housing allocation is set by the Regional Spatial Strategy. A significant increase in new dwellings is proposed Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke, Andover, Swindon and Didcot.

<sup>28</sup> Tantram, D. Craven A. (2007) Evidence for North Wessex Down Leader Bid prepared on behalf of the Local Action Group

<sup>29</sup> These skills needs, especially those associated with entrepreneurship and business development, were picked up in Lantra's Skills Check for the South East of England – Lantra (2002). Action Plan for Farming. Skills Check Report.

**Health**

The percentage of people suffering from a limiting long-term illness<sup>30</sup> (11.2%) is lower in the North Wessex Downs AONB than the South East (13.9%) and the South West (16.4%). The AONB figure is lower than those for all of the surrounding towns except Tidworth<sup>31</sup> (Tantram et al 2007). Natural England's 'Walking the way to Health' initiative<sup>32</sup> encourages people to enjoy their local natural spaces and benefit their health by taking part in health walks. The aim of the scheme is to encourage people who participate in very little exercise to start walking more and gain the confidence to continue exercising on a regular basis, either in a group or on their own. The physical benefits of an active lifestyle and the mental health gains that come with physical activity are widely recognised. Exercise in the North Wessex Downs can have positive effects on many aspects of health. People can be encouraged to be more active by providing facilities to walk, cycle and play; being in nature also helps to reduce stress and generally improve mental health.

**Key Issues**

- Loss of affordable housing, reducing the social mix within settlements and leading to a loss of essential rural skills.
- Shift towards contract and casual working, lessening the opportunity to 'learn on the job'.
- Government requirements that businesses running apprenticeship schemes must have business premises (many traditional land-based contractors do not have formal business premises).
- Lack of business management and marketing skills amongst potential rural business entrepreneurs.
- Lack of adult education courses within the AONB and transport to gain access to further and tertiary education either inadequate or too expensive.
- Some skills gaps not covered by local courses.
- Lack of willingness to recognise the business links that can be made to high environmental quality

**Conclusion**

Unless effectively managed, all of these pressures will work individually and cumulatively to impact adversely on both the landscape character and special qualities of the area. The Partnership's role is to ensure that the conservation and enhancement of the landscape is a key issue, effectively addressed in strategies and plans produced by other agencies.

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<sup>30</sup> Limiting long-term illness is defined as those with a long-term illness which limits daily activities or the work that can be done, including problems arising from old age.

<sup>31</sup> Tantram, D., Craven A. (2007) Evidence for North Wessex Down Leader Bid prepared on behalf of the Local Action Group

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.whi.org.uk/>

## 5. Land management

### Introduction

Three industries dominate the Land Management sector:

- Agriculture;
- Horse Racing;
- Forestry.

### Agriculture

The North Wessex Downs AONB covers 1730 km<sup>2</sup> and approximately 84% of the land within it is classified as farmland with over 60% under arable cultivation. This means that agriculture is the dominant land use and the major influence determining landscape character and quality. 2002 data indicate that the North Wessex Downs had 2,787 people working in agriculture (total farm labour) at that time, representing 5.9% of the total workforce. The average proportion for the South East region was 1.3%. The North Wessex Downs is the most strongly agricultural of the South East AONBs (Tantram et al 2005<sup>33</sup>).

Agricultural statistics since 1990<sup>34</sup> show that the area of land in agricultural management appears to be fairly constant, with a slight net loss over time. This could be to development but also changes in holding distributions may represent a move to other land uses not classified as agricultural. The AONB lost approximately half its full time farmers between 1990 and 2005. The number of holdings in private ownership has consistently risen, the agricultural area is declining very slowly and the number of small holdings is increasing; so it can be concluded that land holdings are breaking up into smaller privately held units (Tantram et al 2007<sup>35</sup>).

Defra define farm types for a holding as the crop or livestock enterprise or group of enterprises that contributes more than two thirds of the total standard gross margin for the holding. The North Wessex Downs AONB has quite large areas of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land but despite this there is little horticulture. The most common farm type is *other* followed by *cereals* with some *cattle and sheep* (grazing livestock). Farm profitability varies significantly by farm type, and also by farm size within farm type. The AONB has a large proportion of large holdings and a large quantity of cereal farms. Relatively speaking, these are liable to remain profitable under current conditions although the proportion of farms specialising in cereals has been declining slowly as has the proportion of dairy. Pigs and poultry have increased (doubling between 2000 and 2005) but still representing a low level (c.4%). The proportion of 'other' farms has increased greatly, probably reflecting increased levels of specialisation and diversification but also representing non-classifiable holdings. This category may be growing through an increase in specialist horses or specialist forage to support the horse racing industry in the area – but this cannot be demonstrated from the data. (Tantram et al 2007).

Since the 1990s, the cereals sector has contracted as it comes under increased pressures from European Union Common Agricultural Policy changes. Intervention prices, export subsidies and direct support have decreased. Decreasing subsidies mean a greater dependence upon trade and sensitivity to market prices and exchange rates. The high level of mechanisation in this sector also makes it vulnerable to increasing oil prices. The dairy sector is also under pressure from declining rates of subsidy. The trend suggests that dairy farm numbers will decline with a move over to lowland cattle and sheep to make use of existing infrastructure. As with other sectors, consolidation will lead to larger farms and larger herd sizes to seek increases in efficiency.

Climate change may affect the types and varieties of crops that can be grown with implications for sowing dates, irrigation, pests, diseases and soil erosion. Arable farming may expand into the floodplains and valleys in response to longer growing seasons and new crop varieties, with potentially negative impacts on grassland and wetland wildlife, landscape character, buried archaeology and access. More rain will fall in winter deluges, when the ground is already saturated. An increase in soil erosion can be expected, resulting in damage to historic features and more silt, nutrients and pesticides washing into rivers. These inputs come predominantly from arable farmland and already have a significant impact on water quality and freshwater biodiversity.

A detailed presentation of socio-economic data associated with agriculture in the AONB is found in Tantram et al (2007).

<sup>33</sup> Tantram, D, Shorten, J, Fecht, D, Briggs, D, Cole, L & Deane, R. (2005). Socio-economic profiles for protected landscape areas in South East England. Report to Countryside Agency. Terra Consult, Guildford.

<sup>34</sup> Defra agricultural census - estimates are based on a sample survey and are therefore subject to a degree of sampling error.

<sup>35</sup> Tantram, D., Craven A. (2007) Evidence for North Wessex Down Leader Bid prepared on behalf of the Local Action Group

**Horse Racing Industry**

The Lambourn area and North Wessex Downs AONB is second in its importance as a centre of activity for the horseracing industry only to Newmarket. It is a significant industry that attracts visitors and businesses to the area. A survey in 2007<sup>36</sup> identified 103 businesses within the AONB that were directly involved in the horseracing industry. A further 49 businesses were identified as being or wanting to be associated with the racing industry. About 10% of Britain's racehorse trainers and approximately 3,700 racehorses are located in the AONB. It is a significant employer and economic contributor to the local economy. The core businesses employ approximately 1,370 Full-Time Equivalent staff, just over 20% of employment in the agriculture and entertainment sectors in the Area. It is estimated that the horseracing industry contributes £16-38 million per annum of direct Gross Value Added to the economy; however the total economic output of the industry in this area is up to £70 million per annum. A detailed presentation of the issues associated with Horse Riding in the AONB is found in Smiths Gore (2007).

**Forestry**

The area of woodland within the AONB is estimated to be approximately 23,300 hectares, or 13.5% of the AONB's area. The Wooded Plateau Landscape Type, which roughly follows the historic bounds of the Medieval royal hunting forest of Savernake, has 28% woodland cover, while the Lowland Mosaic Landscape Type has 25% woodland cover, reflecting the Medieval origins of these landscapes. Conversely, the open downlands typically have around 3.5% woodland cover and the Vale of Pewsey only 2.5% cover – although prior to the onset of Dutch Elm disease this landscape would have been characterised by a checkerboard of hedgerows with mature Elm, creating a distinctly treed landscape.

The Government's Strategy for forestry seeks to provide a resource of trees, woods and forests in places where they can contribute most in terms of environmental, economic and social benefits now and for future generations. The wish is to make existing and newly planted trees, woods and forests resilient to the impacts of climate change and also contribute to the way in which biodiversity and natural resources adjust to a changing climate. Opportunities are to be found to protect and enhance the environmental resources and the cultural and amenity values of trees and woodland. The contribution that trees, woods and forests make to the quality of life for those living in, working in or visiting England is to be increased. There is also a move to improve the competitiveness of woodland businesses and promote the development of new or improved markets for sustainable woodland products and ecosystem services where this will deliver identifiable public benefits, nationally or locally, including the reduction of carbon emissions<sup>37</sup>.

Just under a half of the woodland in the AONB has some form of wildlife designation and a little over a third is Ancient Woodland. Broadleaf trees dominate (62%). Little is known regarding the amount of woodland management within the AONB, nor the objectives and the quality of management being practiced. During 2005, a survey of local woodland professionals indicated that some 10,230 hectares (or 44%) of the woodland area was being managed. The rest was unmanaged. The timber quality of a lot of the woodland area within the AONB is not high and many of the woodlands are extremely small, making the economics of forestry operations problematic and a number of the woodlands comprise crops for which there is no longer a viable market. There are unlikely to be high timber prices for the foreseeable future and support must come from a number of small initiatives rather than a single 'big idea'. One recent big idea has been the use of wood as a fuel in line with government initiatives to meet targets for emissions of greenhouse gases under the 'renewables' programme. There is a role for energy production in helping to manage small woodlands<sup>38</sup>.

The main focus of resources should be directed towards the existing woodland resource rather than the establishment of new woodland areas. Any new woodland should be sited to meet the objectives of the North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy. All woodlands designated for their nature conservation interest and all ancient and semi-natural woodland will be particularly valued and efforts made to improve their management, to buffer them with additional woodland and wherever possible to seek to link them together. The AONB will support the accreditation of woodlands under the United Kingdom Woodland Assurance Scheme. A detailed presentation of issues associated with woodland in the AONB is found in Matthews R. (2005)<sup>39</sup>.

Climate change may lead to drought and lower summer rainfall. This is likely to affect the North Wessex Downs woodlands. For example, the shallow rooting beech does not thrive on dry soils and is likely to decline but small leaved lime needs warmth to set seed and will probably increase. Veteran trees of all species are more likely to be felled by storm force winds. However, in woods the impact of these storms can

<sup>36</sup> Smiths Gore (2007) A study of the key effects of the horseracing industry on the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

<sup>37</sup> Forestry Commission (2008), England's Trees, Woods and Forests - Delivery Plan 2008-2012.

<sup>38</sup> Forestry Commission (2007), A woodfuel Strategy for England

<sup>39</sup> Matthews, R (2005) North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy, Land and Landscape Management Ltd for the NWD AONB, September 2005

be positive, creating glades that species adapted to sunlight can occupy. The recreational value may increase as people seek shade in the hottest months.

## Special Qualities

- The North Wessex Downs is quintessentially an agricultural landscape and the most strongly agricultural of the South East AONBs
- The open downlands are characterised by large regular fields, largely the product of 18th Century parliamentary enclosure, with more recent boundary removals creating vast fields, as on the Marlborough Downs.
- By contrast, the Vale of Pewsey in the south west of the AONB is the product of Medieval clearance which created numerous, small, irregularly-shaped fields or assarts.
- A typical AONB farm is larger than the regional average.
- The North Wessex Downs has a significant concentration of ancient woodlands (total 8,592 hectares) and is ranked sixth amongst all AONBs in England and Wales in terms of its total area of ancient woodland.
- Although oak and ash are the main forest canopy species there is a wide range of stand types including hornbeam coppice, oak/ash stands, hazel/oak stands, birch and ash/wych elm coppice.
- The 'Valley of the Racehorse' in the Lambourn area has established a unique landscape type that attracts visitors and businesses.

## Key Issues

### Agriculture:

- Against the background shown by the statistics, farming has generally become less profitable in recent years and together with market conditions, this has influenced the mix of farming types and farm sizes.
- Market forces and policy reform will continue as major factors in the future together with technology, climate risks and energy prices. Food security, biofuels and increasing localisation will also have effects.
- Volatile markets result in uncertainty regarding land management in the AONB.
- Local community plans show the demand for locally produced food and drink. There is already some activity in marketing and producing local food in the North Wessex Downs.
- Climate change is increasingly being identified by farmers in the North Wessex Downs AONB as a key threat and opportunity for the future. Farmers recognise that there is an opportunity to undertake activities both to adapt to climate change and to contribute towards its mitigation.

### Horse Racing Industry:

- Small scale changes to the smooth, rolling landform around new buildings, which cumulatively have an adverse effect on the character of the AONB.
- The loss of biodiversity by the creation of new fields and paddocks on open chalk downland.
- A change in landscape character by the replacement of hedgerows with fencing, leading to the 'suburbanisation' of landscape.
- Pressure to widen and straighten minor roads to improve vehicle access leading to 'suburbanisation' and loss of sense of place.
- Loss of integrity of historic settlements/hamlets/farmsteads.

### Forestry:

- By and large, smaller woodlands receive less management than larger ones and many woodland areas are effectively unmanaged;
- Even on large wooded estates the poor economics mean that the level of woodland management (in particular thinning broadleaved woodlands) is significantly less than the desirable level;
- The lack of management is leading to a relatively evenly aged high forest with a consequent perceived reduction in biodiversity value;
- The battle to control the grey squirrel population is being lost;
- Deer numbers are continuing to rise and are inhibiting the natural regeneration of some woodland areas. Deer Management Groups are helpful but are insufficient on their own to control deer numbers.

## 6. Biodiversity

### Introduction

The North Wessex Downs spans five of Natural England's Natural Areas: Berkshire and Marlborough Downs, South Wessex Downs, Hampshire Downs, Thames and Avon Vales, and London Basin. The AONB forms part of the delivery for the regional biodiversity targets for the South East and South West regions and the County Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) for Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Wiltshire; and Berkshire<sup>40</sup> (the targets for Swindon are included in the Wiltshire BAP). All actions in proposed in this management plan support BAP policies. It also has the potential to contribute to Defra's Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for farmland birds and favourable management of wildlife sites<sup>41</sup>.

The varied geology of the North Wessex Downs is reflected in the breadth of ecological diversity. Within the AONB, there are seven Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), part of the internationally important network of European Natura 2000 sites. Both Pewsey Downs SAC and Fyfield Downs SSSI are also National Nature Reserves with an outstanding chalk grassland flora and fauna that includes nationally important populations of rare species, including the endemic Early Gentian. The North Wessex Downs contains 66 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) covering 3,330 hectares (or 2% of the area of the AONB) of which 29 have a chalk component amounting to 1,421 hectares (0.8% of the AONB area). In addition, there are a total of 249 locally important wildlife sites (known by various names, for example County Wildlife Sites, Conservation Target Areas and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) that have a chalk grassland component. The total area of these sites amounts to 2,163 ha or 1.3% of the AONB area. Unfortunately the absolute figure for chalk grassland within the local sites cannot be calculated, as this information is not available.

The most ecologically important habitats within the AONB are the remnant chalk grasslands, semi-natural broadleaf woodlands and wood pasture, chalk rivers and associated wetlands, and arable farmland managed for conservation. A wide variety of other habitats characterise particular areas within the AONB, from remnant heathland on river gravel deposits in the east, including areas of seminatural acidic grassland in the area around Inkpen, to the wide grassy verges of the droveways crossing the downs. At a local level the hedgerow network, springs, remnant cressbeds, road verges and dew ponds also provide important refuges and habitats – with chalk cuttings having magnificent displays of Primrose and Cowslip each year.

Changes to climate will alter the composition of the natural communities that are characteristic of chalk downland, woodland, streams and arable fields. Diverse natural communities of plants and animals are most likely to survive on soils and in streams with low nutrient status and in large patches of habitat.

### Chalk grassland

Since the publication of the last Management Plan, the AONB Partnership has commissioned a study of chalk grassland within the AONB (Tom Cairns et al 2005)<sup>42</sup>. Chalk grassland is one of the most biologically rich and diverse habitats in the UK with over 40 species of flowering plants recorded from a single square metre of the best quality turf. Just under 9% of the UK's chalk grassland resource lies within the AONB. Traditionally grazed by sheep, cattle and rabbits, the AONB's chalk grassland supports important populations of the Early Gentian, a scheduled protected species, and one of Britain's few endemic plants. Unimproved chalk grassland is also important for the survival of many scarce invertebrate species such as the Wart-biter Cricket and the internationally threatened Marsh Fritillary Butterfly. Other scarce chalk grassland butterflies include the Adonis Blue, Chalkhill Blue and Small Blue whilst bird species include the Skylark.

The area of chalk grassland was probably at its most extensive during the 16th Century, with the chalklands forming sheep and corn country. The sheep, run on the open downs by day, were folded overnight on the arable land. The latter benefited both from the sheep's dung and from the consolidation of the light soils. Today the areas of chalk grassland are a shadow of their extent in the 1900s. Between 1966 and 1980 there was a 30% decline in the area of chalk grassland nationally<sup>43</sup>. In the North Wessex Downs this trend has

<sup>40</sup> Oxfordshire Habitat Action Plans produced by the Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum; Hampshire Habitat Action Plans and Species Action Plans produced by the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership; Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2008) produced by the Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan Forum; and Berkshire Habitat Action Plans produced by the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum.

<sup>41</sup> PSA3: "Preserve biological diversity by reversing the long term decline in the number of farmland birds by 2020, as measured annually against underlying trends" and "bring into favourable condition by 2010 95% of all nationally important wildlife sites"

<sup>42</sup> Tom Cairns et al (2005), North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Chalk Grassland Strategy Report, Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre, May 2005

<sup>43</sup> Blackwood, J. W. & Tubbs, C. R. A Qualitative Survey of chalk grassland in England Biological Conservation Vol.3 No. 1 October 1970.

been mirrored by a 32% decrease in the area of (all) grassland between 1968 and 1998<sup>44</sup>, supplemented by increasing fragmentation of remaining areas.

Today small isolated blocks of chalk grassland are largely restricted to the steep scarp slopes, dry valleys and areas maintained as pasture around archaeological sites. The total area of remaining chalk grassland within the AONB is not known but it is estimated that the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs Natural Area (14) (which covers roughly two-thirds of the AONB) supports at least 1,250 hectares or 3 – 5% of the total English resource of chalk grassland. More recent work on the Ridgeway corridor within the AONB (defined as 2.5km to either side of the Ridgeway) suggests that there is a total of 1,545 hectares of chalk grassland within the corridor that has either been notified as an SSSI (653 hectares) or designated as a non-statutory nature conservation site (893 hectares). This indicates that the Natural Area description may be an underestimate.

### **Ancient semi-natural woodland**

Since the publication of the last Management Plan, the AONB Partnership has commissioned a study of woodland within the AONB (Matthews, R 2005)<sup>45</sup>. The North Wessex Downs has a significant concentration of ancient woodlands (total 8,592 hectares) and is ranked sixth amongst all AONBs in England and Wales in terms of its total area of ancient woodland. Overall, just over 45% of the woodland area in the AONB has some form of wildlife designation. According to the Woodland Trust<sup>46</sup> the North Wessex Downs contains two nationally important 'major concentrations'<sup>47</sup> of ancient woodland, centred on the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs and the Hampshire Downs; and areas of forest such as Savernake. Less than 0.1% of the woodland area is designated as a National Nature Reserve, 0.5% is designated as Special Areas for Conservation, 7.5% is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and 42.3% is designated as County Wildlife Sites or Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Woodlands on the Wooded Plateau character type are the most highly protected with the Vales landscape character type having the smallest percentage of designated woodlands. Ancient Semi Natural Woodland forms a significant proportion of the woodland resource of the AONB. Overall the 8,646 hectares of ASNW represents some 37.1% of the total area of woodland. It should be noted that the inventory of ASNW prepared by Natural England is still provisional.

The diverse woodland types that make up these ancient woodlands include significant areas of wood pasture and support a wide range of species, with roosting sites for a number of bat species. Of particular importance are the calcareous woodlands which support a range of rare plants including Herb-Paris and Green Hellebore and provide home to a high proportion of the world's population of Bluebells.

### **Chalk streams and rivers**

The spring-fed fast flowing streams and rivers of the North Wessex Downs support an extremely diverse range of plant and animal communities. Pea Mussel, freshwater White Clawed Crayfish and internationally rare floating vegetation of River Water-dropwort can be found along their reaches. In turn, the rivers irrigate adjacent areas creating the distinctive valley landscape of remnant fens, water meadows and carr. The Summer Snowflake, a Red Data Book species, survives in seasonally flooded sites along the River Kennet. In recognition of their outstanding nature conservation value the Lambourn, Kennet and Hampshire Avon are all designated SSSIs within the AONB, while the River Lambourn, the Hampshire Avon, and the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain (a series of discrete sites supporting the Desmoulin's whorl snail) are SACs.

Strategies are in place to support the good management of these waters, with a recent update to the County BAPs. The 'England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative' is a partnership between Defra, Natural England and the Environment Agency that aims to reduce the pollution of surface-water bodies caused by farming operations. Local initiatives also exist, such as 'Action for the River Kennet' whose members include local people who enjoy having a healthy river as part of their living environment; tourists and visitors who enjoy walking by and fishing in the Kennet; and environmentalists who want to see a valuable chalk stream protected.

### **Arable farmland**

Arable cultivation is the dominant land management activity in the AONB (see chapter on Land Management). The North Wessex Downs supports a wide range of nationally and regionally important species associated with arable farmland. They are adapted to colonise disturbed land achieved through tillage. This includes farmland birds such as Stone-curlew and Tree Sparrow, rare arable plants such as Corn Buttercup and Shepherd's Needle, and mammals such as Brown Hare and Harvest Mouse. Many of

<sup>44</sup> RSPB (January 2001) Agricultural Change in the North Wessex Downs AONB between 1968 and 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Matthews, R (2005) North Wessex Downs AONB Woodland Strategy, Land and Landscape Management Ltd for the NWD AONB, September 2005

<sup>46</sup> Woodland Trust (2002) Space for Nature: Landscape-scale action for woodland biodiversity.

<sup>47</sup> defined as situations where ancient woodland in neighbouring 5km squares exceeds 5% cover over 250 sq km. These major concentrations cover 10% of England.

these species are listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. An Arable Strategy was prepared in 2008 to help protect and enhance the nationally important arable biodiversity found within the North Wessex Downs (S Smart et al 2008)<sup>48</sup>.

### Habitat mosaics

Although the downlands are essentially a large-scale landscape, traditional areas of mixed farming, responding to the underlying geology, have resulted in a range of habitats (grassland, scrub and arable lands) co-existing in close proximity. This interlinking range of habitats provides some of the most favourable conditions for the characteristic birds and mammals of the North Wessex Downs, such as the Brown Hare, Skylark, Lapwing, Tree Sparrow, Corn Bunting, Linnet and Grey Partridge. Increased cover, nesting opportunities and a wider abundance of food supply occur where arable margins meet up with wildflower and insect rich downland and scrub. This allows bird and other species typical of arable and unimproved grassland to be present together. Certain species respond very well, such as Lapwing which often nest on tilled arable land and walk their chicks onto grazed pasture to feed, and the Skylark which in a mosaic of different vegetation structures can make multiple nesting attempts. Given the pressures of climate change and the need for species migration, habitat corridors along rights of way and habitat networks are of increasing value. The habitat mosaic is mapped as Biodiversity Opportunity Areas by regional groupings. This shows the regional priority areas of opportunity for restoration and creation of BAP habitats.

### Special Qualities

- A nationally significant area of chalk grassland
- A nationally significant area of ancient woodland
- Internationally important, high quality spring-fed fast flowing streams and rivers
- Nationally important populations of rare flora and fauna<sup>49</sup>

### Key Issues

- General lack of knowledge about the full biological resource of the North Wessex Downs and how to manage it most effectively for biodiversity, including the management of sites that may support BAP target species.
- The vulnerability of fragmented habitats and species at the edge of their southern range to the effects of climate change.
- Loss of wildlife corridors with the increasing scale and intensity of agriculture.
- The implication of CAP reform and whether this will lead to agricultural extensification or land abandonment on less productive land and intensification elsewhere.
- Uncertainty over the future of agri-environment schemes and their ability to deliver significant biodiversity improvements for the North Wessex Downs, including support for the appropriate management of existing valued habitats.
- A continuing trend in the shift from spring sown to winter sown arable crops.
- The continuing use of non-selective herbicides on arable crops, contributing to a steady decline in Corn Buttercup, Corn Cockle and Corn Bunting.
- Lack of management of existing habitats due to fluctuations and uncertainties in farm incomes.
- Lack of grazing livestock to manage remaining areas of semi-natural chalk grassland.
- Problems, where grazing is still practiced, from recreational pressures including dog worrying and trespass.
- Increasing erosion of remnant areas of chalk grassland as a result of recreational activities.
- Lack of management of the ancient woodland resource.
- Inappropriate management of road verges that ignores their value for biodiversity.
- Erosion of byway verges by increased traffic use.
- Change from the use of grass gallops (some of which retain remnant areas of chalk grassland) to artificial surfaces in the horse racing industry.
- Need for access restrictions to areas important for ground nesting species, such as Stone Curlew.

<sup>48</sup> S Smart et al 2008, An Arable Strategy for the North Wessex Downs AONB prepared by Black Sheep Countryside Management and Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, March 2008

<sup>49</sup> Nationally important mammal populations such as species of bat, hares; bird populations such as stone curlews, turtle doves, corn buntings, lapwings, grey partridge, yellow wagtail, tree sparrow; and significant areas of chalk grassland habitats (75% of UK total) supporting rare and notable plants including burnt orchid *Orchis ustulata*, slender bedstraw *Galium pumilum*, field fleawort *Senecio integrifolius* and the nationally scarce British endemic early gentian *Gentianella anglica*. Also invertebrate populations and species of fritillary butterfly.

## 7. Historic environment

### Introduction

The North Wessex Downs is an ancient man-made landscape. This cultural heritage makes a fundamental contribution to the present-day landscape. But it also tells us something about how we relate to it, as summed up in this pertinent extract by Bill Bryson in the introduction to the book *The English Landscape* (2000):

*“What is truly remarkable about the White Horse [at Uffington, within the AONB] is not that people at some time in the ancient past took the trouble to cut it into the hillside... but that continuously for over twenty centuries others have made the effort to maintain it. Whatever religious or ritualistic significance the White Horse may have had to its creators has long since faded away. For most of its existence – through plague, war and famine... the White Horse has been preserved simply because people liked it. I think that is splendid.”*

Since these ancient times, the landscape has changed immeasurably, creating a patina of features and historic elements as evidence of the different stages in its evolution which contribute a real sense of time-depth to the present day scene. Past human influence is etched in every facet of the landscape – in the fields and woods, tracks and lanes, villages and hamlets. The impact of changing land use and lifestyles over thousands of years has created the landscape of today and left ingrained reminders of different points in history.

### The historic environment resource

The historic environment resource is comprised of a wide range of features of varying scale, presence or significance. Many have been recognised nationally, or even internationally: the complex of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Monuments (centred on Avebury, but including Silbury Hill, West Kennet Long Barrow, the causewayed enclosure on Windmill Hill, hundreds of Bronze Age barrows and many more important sites) is of such significance that it has been inscribed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

There are over 520 Scheduled Monuments across the North Wessex Downs AONB. These include many Bronze Age barrow cemeteries and isolated barrows such as at Lambourn Seven Barrows; the Uffington White Horse and its adjacent Iron Age hillfort, one of several major late prehistoric defensive sites that occupy prominent positions on the higher downs; the small Roman town at *Cunetio* near Mildenhall; and the medieval motte and bailey castles at Hamstead Marshall and Marlborough College.

The built environment makes a fundamental contribution to the landscape. The North Wessex Downs contains over 4,000 Listed Buildings. Over 250 of these are listed at Grade I or II\*, the two highest levels of importance. Buildings protected through listing include a wide ranging collection of structures. As well as the grand country houses of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the large town houses of wealthy merchants in the market towns and the many splendid medieval parish churches, listed buildings in the North Wessex Downs also include some spectacular and very early barns; locks and other structures associated with the Kennet and Avon Canal; milestones, roadside pumps and signs related to turnpike roads; and pill boxes built as part of the planned Defence of Britain in the early phase of the Second World War.

The North Wessex Downs includes 15 Registered Parks and Gardens. One of these, Highclere Castle, is registered at Grade I, and four examples, Tottenham House, Purley Hall, Ashdown House and Inkpen House, are registered at II\*.

One Registered Battlefield is included within the North Wessex Downs; Roundway Down, near Devizes was the location of a major encounter fought in July 1643 when a Parliamentary army was heavily defeated by a significantly smaller Royalist force.

In addition to the designated archaeological features mentioned, the local Historic Environment Records (HERs) maintained by the County Councils in Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire and by West Berkshire District Council, contain records of over 11,000 sites, monuments and findspots of archaeological and historic interest that lie within the AONB. Many of the sites recorded are of national importance but have yet to be considered for designation; many more are of local significance and make a real contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. All of the information contained on the HERs is a vital part of the jigsaw of information that allows us to understand how our communities have developed and our landscapes evolved over several millennia.

As with the archaeological resource, there are many local buildings and structures that make a contribution to the landscape or to our understanding of historic events or processes but that remain unprotected through the listing mechanism. Some of these lie within the 109 Conservation Areas designated by local authorities in settlements of particular historic character or significance. Many more, especially isolated structures or farm buildings receive little or no recognition or protection.

## Historic Landscape Character

One of the priority actions for the first management plan was the undertaking of a Historic Landscape characterisation (HLC) project for the North Wessex Downs. This project has been completed and has provided new insights in to the evolution of the landscape and the historic processes that have influenced the countryside we see today.

HLC is a way of analysing and recording how several millennia of human interaction with the land has produced the rural landscape we experience today. It is recognised as a means for understanding and managing the entire landscape and not just the archaeological sites and buildings traditionally protected by scheduling or listing.

Whilst confirming that the landscape has remained predominantly rural it has begun to show how the character has changed. A particularly significant statistic is that whereas approximately 18% of the North Wessex Downs could be characterised as chalk downland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this has reduced to around 3% today. The rate of agricultural change is also illustrated by the fact that around 75% of pre-18th century enclosures have been lost during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that some two thirds of medieval assart enclosures have been lost or significantly modified in the same time.

## Settlement pattern

The pattern and distribution of settlement within the AONB has evolved over millennia of human occupation, although most of the current towns, villages, hamlets and farms are likely to have originated in medieval or post-medieval times. One of the most characteristic features of the Downland and Downland with Woodland landscape character areas is the long linear settlements of the river valleys – the main concentrations of population in otherwise open uninhabited downland. These are characteristically loosely strung along a road on the first contour above the winter flood level with the winterbourne or river forming an integral feature of the village as in St Mary Bourne in Hampshire, Collingbourne Kingston in Wiltshire and Hampstead Norreys in Berkshire.

By contrast, the pattern in the Lowland Mosaic landscape character area is distinctly different reflecting its medieval origins with a network of hamlets, lines of houses and villages along roads. Some villages have a clear nucleus, typically associated with a village green or church, while others have a more dispersed pattern typical of post-medieval squatter settlements. This pattern is also reflected in the Downland with Woodland Landscape Type which has small clustered hamlets and villages sheltering in folds in the chalk, as in the Chutes in Wiltshire, or exposed on ridgetops, as at Faccombe in Hampshire. Evidence from the Domesday Survey of 1086 suggests that many of these settlements were created during the Early Medieval (Saxon) period.

Another distinct settlement type of the North Wessex Downs is the string of attractive, small, springline villages along the base of the lower north facing scarp, such as at Clyffe Pypard, Clevancy, Liddington, Letcombe, Ashbury and Bishopstone. All combined, these provide a significant variation in settlement form.

## Special Qualities

- Significant visible archaeological evidence of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> millennia BC funerary and ritual practices.
- Internationally important Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monumental landscape at Avebury.
- Prominent later prehistoric hillforts overlooking the main scarp slopes.
- A variety of ancient settlement patterns.
- Distinctive medieval market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford with their planned wide market places.
- Communication corridors such as The Ridgeway that “.....commands vast soaring and diving grounds for the delighted eyes, among solitary slopes of green and white hills, of turf and cloud.” Edward Thomas<sup>50</sup>
- The Kennet and Avon Canal, an example of late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century engineering.
- Distinctive and ancient settlement patterns.
- Great country houses and their associated parks and gardens such as Basildon Park, Highclere Castle and Tottenham House.

## Key Issues

- Lack of knowledge about the broader cultural landscape of the North Wessex Downs – the landscape speaks eloquently of its cultural history, but this needs to be better understood and applied to management objectives.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas, E (1997) Collected Poems. Faber and Faber.

- Many undiscovered archaeological sites and little knowledge of their location, including woodland archaeology.
- Lack of designation or protection for many important archaeological and historic sites – although there are many Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings within the North Wessex Downs, this is not a designation-rich or well protected historic landscape.
- Insufficient understanding of the historical evolution of individual settlements and how this should influence their future.
- Need for more consistent approach to the designation and management of Conservation Areas, in particular the approach used for Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.
- Development pressure threatens to traditional market towns.
- Poorly sited and designed new development that fails to reflect the historic form of settlements and building groups, their character and setting.
- Infilling and over-expansion on small plots which erode the traditional mixed character of individual settlements.
- Loss of local vernacular architecture with the insensitive conversion of historic buildings including traditional agricultural buildings.
- Loss of grazing animals which is threatening the continued grazing of important archaeological sites (grazing is a valuable management tool preventing scrub encroachment).
- Poorly managed recreational access to sensitive archaeological/cultural sites.
- Continued deep ploughing over archaeological sites and remains.
- Biomass planting in areas where this threatens the historic environment.
- Impact of tree planting, either its direct impact on archaeological features, or its impact on the character of the historic landscape through poor design and siting.
- Impact of modern farming practices on the character of the historic landscape.

## 8. Natural resources

### Introduction

Natural resources are vital to our existence. A community's health and well-being is closely linked to the quality of our air, water, soils and biological resources (see the chapter on Biodiversity for biological resources). The economy is reliant on functioning ecosystems. Many people believe that natural resources have their own intrinsic value regardless of their functional value. There is a need to consider ecosystems as a whole, taking into account social, economic and environmental objectives. To do this there needs to be a better understanding of how ecosystems work, their resilience and vulnerability, how they are affected by cumulative and combined pressures, and the benefits essential for human survival and well-being that they provide. This includes establishing where environmental limits exist (as defined in the Forces for Change Section). While resources such as biodiversity and soils are thought of as 'renewable', they can be exploited to the extent that long-term irreversible damage will be caused. Protecting natural resources by operating in a way which minimises damaging impacts is, therefore, part of sustainable development. There is a need to conserve soil, water and clean air as these resources sustain life and support biological resources on which we depend<sup>51</sup>. The actions proposed in this management plan complement the national soil protection review and other diffuse pollution land management projects.

### Soils

Chalk forms the underlying structure to the North Wessex Downs but the overlying soils have had a profound influence on vegetation cover and agricultural activity. Soils are of five main types:

- The thin chalk soils of the open downland, now primarily under arable production but also supporting the remnant areas of chalk grassland.
- The capping of Quaternary Clay with Flints over the chalk found as pockets of reddish brown clay containing flint pebbles. These areas are distinctly associated with the more wooded areas of the downs and are particularly characteristic of the Downland with Woodland and Wooded Plateau Landscape Types.
- Quaternary Coombe deposits found where accumulated frost-weathered debris was carried down slope by melt waters at the end of the last glaciation. These have created till deposits in the dry valleys of the downs providing richer pockets of soil, often under arable production.
- Deep well-drained loamy soils over Greensand and river alluviums in the Vale of Pewsey, traditionally under pasture with large areas forming winter flood meadows.
- A mixed soil mosaic to the east of Newbury with nutrient-poor acidic soils over plateau gravels intermixed with fertile loamy soils overlying the London Clay, characterised by the Medieval landscape of the Lowland Mosaic Landscape Type.

### Air Quality

A variety of air pollutants have known or suspected harmful effects on human health and the environment. In most areas of Europe, these pollutants are principally the products of combustion from space heating, power generation or from motor vehicle traffic. Pollutants from these sources may not only prove a problem in the immediate vicinity of these sources but can travel long distances, chemically reacting in the atmosphere to produce secondary pollutants such as acid rain or ozone<sup>52</sup>. The nearest monitoring site to AONB is at Harwell. Other sites are in Reading Town Centre, Bath and Oxford. In both the South East and South West rural areas, pollution is considered low.

### Watercourses

The main rivers of the AONB – the Pang, the Lambourn and the Kennet – drain eastward to the Thames. In addition, the separate catchments of the Hampshire Avon and the Test flow southward, draining the Vale of Pewsey and Hampshire Downs respectively (the Bourne Rivulet, a tributary of the Test, is the only water course of the Test catchment within the AONB boundary). Species associated with winterbourne habitats include; Kingfisher, mayfly, brown trout and water crowfoot.

Climate change may give rise to more rain fall in winter deluges, when the ground is already saturated. An increase in soil erosion can be expected, resulting in damage to historic features and more silt, nutrients and pesticides washing into rivers. These inputs come predominantly from arable farmland and already have a significant impact on water quality and freshwater biodiversity. Drought and lower summer rainfall is likely to result in a contraction of the chalk stream network. Freshwater species will be lost from some of the winterbournes while some perennial streams will become seasonal winterbournes. There may be an increase in the popularity of streamside recreation as people seek shade in the hottest months.

<sup>51</sup> [www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/)

<sup>52</sup> [www.airquality.co.uk](http://www.airquality.co.uk) and Defra, Air Quality Strategy 2007

**Water abstraction and levels**

In terms of flows, the rivers of the chalk are a contradiction. In winter there may be localised flooding of villages in the river valleys, often more associated with rising groundwaters and springs than with river flooding, while in summer some rivers suffer from lack of flows as a result of water abstraction which, in turn, may lead to a reduction in water quality and ecological diversity (through lack of dilution and silt deposition).

The waters of the chalk aquifers and rivers are a major source of potable water. Ground waters from within the river catchments are abstracted for public water supply (the main source of demand) and for industry, agriculture and aquaculture (water cress and fish farms). However, the level of abstraction and effect on river flows varies. The Lambourn has a near natural flow regime with minimal abstraction<sup>53</sup>. Conversely, in the 1980s the Pang was one of 40 rivers in England identified as suffering from low flows caused by over abstraction (from a groundwater source at Compton). Despite abstraction ceasing in 1997 (as a result of increased nitrate levels), the Environment Agency is continuing to monitor the flow characteristics of the river<sup>54</sup>.

In the case of the Kennet, there are numerous groundwater abstractions but, over the catchment as a whole, these only amount to 5% of the available resource. The largest single abstraction adjacent to the river is at Axford (between Marlborough and Hungerford), with 70% of the water exported out of the catchment. Modelling indicates that this abstraction is having a detrimental impact on river flows. Currently, abstraction is at 13.1MI/d (peak). Progressive tightening of the licensing conditions resulted in reversion to the 'base' abstraction level (11.09MI/d average up to March 31st 2011; 9.34MI/d thereafter). However, it is the view of the Environment Agency and Natural England that even the base abstraction licence has a detrimental effect on river flows<sup>55</sup> and 6MI/d (peak) is proposed.

At the same time, the operational requirements of the Kennet and Avon Canal have an effect on the Kennet. Between Bath and the summit at Crofton Pumping Station the Canal is fed by the Bristol Avon; between the summit and Kintbury by the River Dun (a tributary of the Kennet); and between Kintbury and Reading by the Kennet. In-flows into the Canal from these river sources can result in less than optimum flows in the rivers, particularly in the summer months and in drier years. This also has a severe effect in reducing the water quality of the river, particularly by increasing the turbidity (Environment Agency 2000). However, it is a clear objective of British Waterways to optimise the use of water resources in the Canal and to use back-pumping to conserve water in the 'artificial' section between Bath and the Canal summit.<sup>56</sup>

**The Nitrates Directive and Water Framework Directive**

There is a need to work within the demands of European Directives. Under the Nitrates Directive (Council Directive 91/676/EEC) introduced in December 2002, the majority of the North Wessex Downs is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. Within these zones, farmers are required to limit the application of manures and nitrogen fertilisers, subject to a closed season for the application of certain manures, and required to keep records of cropping, stocking and the application of nitrogen fertilisers and manures.

Control of diffuse pollution is further reinforced under the Water Framework Directive (Implementation) (England and Wales) Regulation 2003. The Water Framework Directive is an example of the move towards an ecosystems approach. This legislation requires river basins to be managed as an entity to deliver good environmental outcomes in both surface and groundwater. This requires the preparation of River Basin Management Plans, which may introduce further measures to reduce the impacts of agriculture and other land uses, especially in terms of diffuse pollution of ground and surface water. Agriculture is one of the main sources of diffuse pollution and Defra<sup>57</sup> wishes to encourage Catchment Sensitive Farming<sup>58</sup> - managing land in a way that is sensitive to the ecological health of the water environment. Farming is not the sole cause of these problems, but it does contribute approximately 60% of nitrates, 25% of phosphorus and 70% of sediments entering our waters, amongst other pollutants.

<sup>53</sup> The Lambourn catchment contributes to the West Berkshire Groundwater Scheme – 33 abstraction boreholes operated by the Environment Agency within the Lambourn and Pang catchments. This is an emergency resource designed to supplement stream flows during times of extreme drought.

<sup>54</sup> Environment Agency (2000) Kennet and Pang Local Environment Agency Plan Periodic Review.

<sup>55</sup> English Nature and the Environment Agency River Kennet SSSI – Conservation Strategy.

<sup>56</sup> British Waterways (2000) Kennet and Avon Canal Conservation Plan.

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf/index.htm>

<sup>58</sup> Defra – "Catchment Sensitive Farming is land management that keeps diffuse emissions of pollutants to levels consistent with the ecological sensitivity and uses of rivers, groundwaters and other aquatic habitats, both in the immediate catchment and further downstream. It includes managing appropriately the use of fertilisers, manures and pesticides; promoting good soil structure and rain infiltration to avoid run-off and erosion; protecting watercourses from faecal contamination, sedimentation and pesticides; reducing stocking density; managing stock on farms to avoid compaction and poaching of land; and separating clean and dirty water on farms".

## Special Qualities

### Rivers

All have very distinctive characteristics which contribute to the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs (<sup>59</sup>, <sup>60</sup>, <sup>61</sup>, <sup>62</sup>, <sup>63</sup>):

- Shallowly sloping banks.
- Often a complex pattern of river channels (as on the Kennet downstream of Marlborough) reflecting the past use of the river to supply water to an extensive network of water meadows and mills, most of which are now disused.
- Fed by natural springs which issue in the valleys of the chalk dip slope at the point where the water table comes to the surface.
- Clear sparkling water, resulting from the filtration of groundwater as it percolates through the chalk.
- Fairly regular flows throughout the year (except where channels have been severely modified).
- Limited fluctuations in water temperature throughout the year.
- Clean shallow 'washed' river gravel beds (riffles) contrasting with deeper shaded pools.
- Upper winterbourne sections and winterbourne tributaries, flowing only during winter and spring when groundwater levels are at their highest.
- Highly valued game fishing – supporting the native brown trout.
- High diversity of aquatic plants, and invertebrate species including those that are nationally scarce, such as the white-clawed crayfish, and important habitats (e.g. reed beds on the Kennet) supporting nationally and locally scarce bird species and nationally declining mammals such as the water vole.
- Flowing water vegetation including water crowfoot – forming snowy carpets across the water surface in summer.

In recognition of these unique characteristics and high biodiversity value, the Lambourn, Kennet and Hampshire Avon are all designated SSSIs within the AONB, while the Lambourn and the Hampshire Avon are also SACs.

### Key Issues

#### Research

- There is no agreement on the levels of acceptable environmental limits within the AONB.
- The need to raise awareness of water quality issues.

#### Soils

- The key issue is erosion, especially on steeper slopes and under 'open' arable crops, such as maize.

#### Air

- Air quality is currently good but activities outside of the AONB can have a significant effect across the area.

#### Water

The key issues relate to management, water abstraction and pollution:

##### Management

- Loss of river habitats as a result of historical land drainage and channel modifications associated with past flood alleviation works and past industry (although some man-made features (e.g. mill leats) are of considerable historical importance).
- Loss of once common species of chalk streams and rivers such as the water vole and the white-clawed crayfish (both BAP target species).
- Decline in fish stocks and quality of fisheries.
- Excessive removal of bankside vegetation (on occasion associated with fisheries management).
- Weed cutting and river clearance to reduce downstream flooding (although this is carefully regulated by the Environment Agency).
- Loss of winterbourne channels through agricultural cultivation.

##### Water abstraction and loss

- Increasing water demand during the summer months as a result of climate change and changing lifestyles.

<sup>59</sup> English Nature (2003) River Avon cSAC Conservation Strategy.

<sup>60</sup> English Nature and the Environment Agency River Lambourn SSSI – Conservation Strategy.

<sup>61</sup> English Nature and the Environment Agency River Kennet SSSI – Conservation Strategy.

<sup>62</sup> Environment Agency (2000) Thames (Benson to Hurley) Pang and Wye LEAP.

<sup>63</sup> Environment Agency (2000) Kennet and Pang Local Environment Agency Plan Periodic Review.

- Increasing water demand for crop irrigation as a result of climate change and more erratic weather patterns resulting in prolonged dry periods and intense summer rainfall events.
- The influence of climate change on groundwater recharge patterns and overall water availability.
- Increasing water demand as a result of major development in the urban areas around the North Wessex Downs, such as Swindon, leading to export of water out of the catchments of the North Wessex Downs.
- Increasing lock movements on the Kennet and Avon Canal taking water from the Kennet and its tributaries.

**Pollution**

- Pollution of rivers from point sources, including public and private domestic sewerage systems (with phosphorus discharges a particular problem), agriculture, commercial watercress beds, and fish farms.
- Diffuse sources of pollution include run-off from roads, houses and commercial areas, run-off from farmland, and seepage into groundwater from developed landscapes of all kinds. Diffuse sources are often individually minor but collectively significant. Increases in nutrient levels can result in toxic algal blooms, resulting in adverse impacts on the food chain which supports fish, animals and birds.
- Pollution pressure on the River Kennet generated by poor water quality and boat traffic on the Kennet and Avon Canal.

## 9. Development

### Introduction

The North Wessex Downs is a sparsely populated landscape a population density of 72 people per square kilometre (compared to an average for West Berkshire of 205 people per square kilometre). The open, uninhabited uplands retain a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity – a very special perceptual characteristic within this densely populated part of southern England. Attractive villages nestle in the river valleys of the Pang, Bourne, Kennet and Lambourn and cluster in the low-lying land to the east of the AONB. Appropriate economic regeneration and development is essential to support sustainable communities. High environmental quality is recognised as making strong direct and indirect contributions to the wider regional economy<sup>64</sup>. There is a need to manage development pressures with sensitivity both within and in the setting of the AONB in order to maintain a balance in promoting economic and social viability whilst retaining the character of the North Wessex Downs. Communities need to be economically viable and have adequate housing, amenities and facilities. However, the primary purpose of designation of the AONB needs to be paramount when considering such issues.

### Remoteness and tranquillity

The sense of remoteness and tranquillity associated with the North Wessex Downs is fundamental to the character of the AONB and are vital to the enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape. These special perceptual qualities are a fragile resource and under threat from a combination of factors, including major development, such as wind turbines, intruding into the open downland. Darkness at night is one of the things that defines the countryside and makes it so different from surrounding urban areas. Darkness allows the majesty of the skies and stars to be seen away from the orange glow that now spreads for miles outside towns and cities blotting out the sight of thousands of stars. Ambient noise associated with transport networks and machinery can further erode this special quality.

### Sensitivities and constraints of the landscape to wind turbines

The North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners commissioned Land Use Consultants to prepare a draft study to identify the particular sensitivities and constraints of the landscape to wind turbines. The Study reveals that all landscapes within the North Wessex Downs are constrained to turbine development to a degree, with specific sensitivities and values that would be adversely affected by such forms of development. There are four landscape types that are considered to be highly constrained to turbine development, namely the Open Downland, High Chalk Plain, Scarp and River Valleys. These are the landscapes where sensitivities to this form of development are high and any wind turbine is likely to have adverse impacts. There are four landscapes which are considered to be moderately – highly constrained to wind turbine development, namely the Downland with Woodland, Wooded Plateau, Downs Plain, Vales and Lowland Mosaic. Within these landscapes, there may be fewer or lesser sensitivities to some forms of wind turbine development, notably those of lower height classes. The particular landscape characteristics and configuration of these four landscape types means that it may be possible to find locations that are less constrained to some types of turbine development, although these locations are likely to be limited<sup>65</sup>.

As a response to climate change, there is an imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and concerns over security of energy supplies are likely to lead to an increase in renewable energy generation. There will be an increased pressure to favour wind turbine development.

### 'Green infrastructure'

'Green infrastructure' (GI) is the physical environment within and between the towns and villages. It is a network of multi-functional open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. There is an opportunity for new development to secure and enhance the AONB's GI. This will support the sustainable management of land and water resources, including production (e.g. energy and food crops), pollution control, climatic amelioration and increased porosity of land cover. Biodiversity is supported by ensuring the connectivity of habitats. Public health and well-being is enhanced with the recreational development of greenways and the use of non-car routes<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> Land Use Consultants, SQW, and Cambridge Econometrics (2002) The Environmental Economy of the South East of England, SEEDA.

<sup>65</sup> North Wessex Downs AONB (2006), A Study of Landscape Sensitivities and Constraints to Wind Turbine Development Approved by the North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners March 2006

<sup>66</sup> From EU Green infrastructure Planning Guide - <http://www.greeninfrastructure.eu>

**Urban fringe**

A number of sizable and expanding towns lie just outside the AONB. In the west, the most notable is Swindon and a strategy has been prepared, the Swindon Urban Fringe Action Plan, which includes a part of the North Wessex Downs. It notes that the agricultural economy close to Swindon is under pressure as a result of uncertainty over the future, marginal viability, and urban pressures, including vandalism and litter dumping. It concludes that with carefully guided support it could become an area of immense opportunity and multiple use, but without specific focus much of that which is most valued could be squandered and the great potential of the area, both as the gateway to the North Wessex Downs AONB and to Swindon, and as the bridge between town and country, could be lost<sup>67</sup>.

**Built environment**

The appropriate and sympathetic design and siting of all new developments, reflecting local landscape character, architecture and the use of local materials, is vital to ensuring that development maintains the essential character of the AONB and the settlements within it. The development of individual settlements should be guided by an assessment of local landscape character that takes account of the historical evolution, architecture and current community needs of individual settlements, including those for affordable housing. Within the AONB there is previously developed land where developers may seek a new use. The impact on the character of the AONB by the reuse of these sites can be significant if for residential or industrial use. Change of use of existing buildings can have an impact on adjoining properties and the wider countryside, as well as bringing a potential increase in traffic movements. In addition, it may bring the potential for loss of services such as pubs, shops, garages, etc through conversion to residential properties. In the North Wessex Downs, the authorities will take a strategic approach to requests for major developments with the support of planning briefs and sub-regional strategies.

**Special Qualities**

- The sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
- All landscapes sensitive to change.
- Distinctive and ancient settlement patterns.
- Architectural styles vary throughout the AONB, dependent on availability of building materials.
- The built environment forms an integral part of local character and distinctiveness and adds to the diversity of the AONB landscape as a whole.

**Key Issues**

- Expansion of the main urban areas just beyond the boundary of the North Wessex Downs, including the main centres of Swindon, Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke and Andover, creating urban fringe pressures on the boundaries of the AONB.
- New large free-standing houses as replacement dwellings in open countryside and insensitive farm diversification activities and associated signage.
- Unsympathetic incremental expansion of the settlements of and adjacent to the AONB, detracting from the surrounding countryside.
- Potential for major development to intrude onto open downland, including masts, pylons, major wind turbine developments, and mineral extraction and waste management, threatening the senses of remoteness and tranquillity.
- The future use of redundant 'brown field' sites within the North Wessex Downs, especially redundant airfields and military sites (as at Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape.
- The pressure for new developments at junctions of the M4 and A34.
- Development needs of the racing industry and the landscape impact of new gallops and facilities.
- Lack of knowledge about the 'boundaries' of the current pools of tranquillity and dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs and the implications of light spillage from development in and around the AONB.
- Light spillage from development in and around the AONB.
- Lack of understanding of the value and role of green infrastructure networks.
- Noise associated with some recreation pursuits, including that from trail bike courses and from shooting schools.
- The dumping of rubbish within the North Wessex Downs.

<sup>67</sup> An Action Plan for the Southern Urban Fringe of Swindon prepared by Land Use Consultants for North Wessex Downs, March 2006

## 10. Communities

### Introduction

The North Wessex Downs encompasses 173 parish councils and there are the two market towns (Marlborough and Hungerford). The overall population of the AONB is 125,000 and the economically active population is estimated to be approximately 90,000 (72%). There has been a 2.5% rise in people over 60 between 2000 and 2007<sup>68</sup>. Approximately 30% work within the AONB and 60% commute to the surrounding urban areas and London (assisted by good rail connections). As many villages in the AONB are now largely occupied by those commuting out of the area to work, this has stimulated rapidly rising house prices with very significant pressure placed on the affordable housing stock. Equally, the emphasis on out commuting leaves villages with a significantly reduced population during the day, challenging the viability of remaining village services such as post offices, pubs and doctors' surgeries. There is a need for a broad mix of housing to maintain sustainable communities and support village services.

The majority of the population within North Wessex Downs AONB suffer from poor access to services when compared to regional averages;

- 87.9% live over 2km from a GP premises (South East Region (SE) = 23% and South West Region (SW) = 29%).
- 42.6% live over 2km from a Primary School (SE = 6.7% and SW = 9.5%).
- 67.2% live over 2km from a Post Office (SE = 8.5% and SW = 9%).
- 84.9% live over 2km from a Supermarket or convenience store (SE=21% and SW=26.6%)

With the lack of access to services it is hardly surprising that the percentage of households without a car is less in the AONB (10.7%) when compared with the SE (19.4%) and SW (20.2%)<sup>69</sup>.

Natural England has devised a process for assessing the viability of market towns. The market town health check process<sup>70</sup> is primarily a tool leading to a local action plan that guides and plots regeneration activity. In addition, there is scope for the process itself to be used to involve communities and strengthen relationships. Communities use the health check to identify their town's strengths and weaknesses then determine how to address them. Each health check results in a local plan of action, endorsed by a regional partnership of organisations which can offer funding to support practical and imaginative projects. They are community focussed and often include innovative solutions. A market town health check has been completed for Hungerford, complete with a Town Plan. Marlborough could also benefit from this process. There may be scope for developing the initiative for use in smaller communities.

Only 5% of the economically active population of the North Wessex Downs is directly involved in agriculture. The majority of the North Wessex Downs' economy is part of a larger 'urban economy' though many businesses benefit from the area's high landscape quality to either attract staff or customers<sup>71</sup>. Where farm buildings have been re-used as part of economic diversification activities, many of these uses relate to high-tech industries driven by the surrounding urban economies. In turn, small village industrial estates, such as that at Inkpen, are dominated by businesses whose employees in-commute from surrounding areas. This is also true of employees in the horse racing industry.

### Travel and transport

While transport planning per se is not the concern of AONB management, its effects are. Major road schemes – the M4 and A34 – have had a profound effect on the AONB, cutting swathes of intense noise and light through the heart of open downland. In turn, the main A-roads of the AONB are experiencing rapid traffic growth, further undermining the tranquillity of the AONB. Yet it is essential that local communities and visitors do have sustainable access to services – a key issue for social inclusion.

The North Wessex Downs is within easy reach of three mainline railways:

- The Waterloo to Exeter line with stations at Basingstoke, Overton (in the AONB), and Whitchurch and Andover just to the south of the AONB.
- The Paddington to Penzance line with stations at Kintbury, and Hungerford, Bedwyn and Pewsey (with a rail-bus link from Marlborough to Bedwyn).

<sup>68</sup> Key Populations and Vital Statistics 2000 and 2007, Office for National Statistics.

<sup>69</sup> Tantram, D., Craven A. (2007) Evidence for North Wessex Down Leader Bid prepared on behalf of the Local Action Group

<sup>70</sup> Rogers A. (2002), The market towns healthcheck: Getting more from the process – stories from three towns in the South East, by Countryside Agency, Cheltenham, September 2002

<sup>71</sup> Land Use Consultants (2003) Planning for Sustainable Rural Economic Development: A strategy for planning for sustainable rural economic development for the South East SEERA, GOSE, SEEDA and the Countryside Agency.

- The Paddington to Bristol and South Wales line with stations at Pangbourne, Goring, Cholsey, and Didcot.

The two main trunk roads crossing the North Wessex Downs, the M4 (London to Wales) and the A34 (Southampton to Oxford and M40), form the main arteries in a wider network of A-roads crossing the AONB. Yet the overall impression is of a relatively sparse road network underlining the historical and current lack of settlement on the open downlands. The only part of the AONB to have a dense network of winding rural lanes, is the well wooded Hampshire Downs and the lowlands to the north east of Newbury – both areas with a Medieval settlement pattern.

Outside the main towns that ring the North Wessex Downs, bus services are limited. Although the distribution of bus routes suggests that rural areas are well served, many of these services run only infrequently. However, a number of innovative and flexible bus schemes are operating within the North Wessex Downs. These include the Ridgeway Explorer Bus, the Cango Bus Service and the Dial-a-bus running between Pangbourne and Newbury.

## Special Qualities

- Dispersed and small population spread over a large area.
- Community spirit is strong in many settlements.
- Villages and small towns with a strong sense of identity
- High level of community interaction and closeness
- Safer areas with low level of antisocial behaviour compared with national averages
- Active and resourceful community groups
- Sense of links to previous generations, heritage and the land

## Key Issues

- Loss of affordable housing, reducing the social mix within settlements and leading to a loss of essential rural skills.
- Social exclusion.
- Aging population requiring increased community support.
- Lack of residential accommodation and sheltered housing for vulnerable groups.
- The trend of commuting to higher paid jobs outside the AONB whilst living in the area is resulting in rising house prices.
- High demand for traditional buildings to convert to residential use, so reducing the opportunities for business conversions.
- A buoyant economy masking areas of local deprivation.
- Business opportunities perceived to be limited for businesses in inaccessible locations.
- Communications and flexible working across the AONB.
- Low employment participation rates for women in rural areas.
- Lack of adult education courses within the AONB and transport to gain access to further and tertiary education either inadequate or too expensive.
- Closure of key facilities in rural areas including village shops, surgeries, post offices and pubs.
- Lack of access to essential services for those without access to a car.
- A fear of rising crime and erosion of community trust.
- Lack of funding for town and parish councils to participate in partnerships and community activities.
- Infrequency of conventional public transport provision serving rural communities, including the requirement for improved waiting and interchange facilities.
- Lack of understanding of the impacts of daily life style decisions on the environment of the North Wessex Downs – from individual travel decisions to the use of water as an unlimited natural resource.
- Increased volumes of traffic on main roads fuelling further 'improvement' of roads crossing the North Wessex Downs, including the M4 and A34.
- Increasing volume of HGVs, delivery vans and commuter traffic on rural lanes.
- Rat running on minor lanes to escape congestion on the main arterial roads.
- Increased lighting associated with road improvements especially along the M4 and A34 but also at more minor road junctions, such as the Burbage roundabout.
- Urbanisation from standard highway design, management and maintenance protocols.

## 11. Leisure and tourism

### Introduction

The North Wessex Downs is a landscape rich in historic sites and natural features. This magical landscape has attracted naturalists, antiquarians and travellers throughout history. The North Wessex Downs can be an area for green tourism, with easily accessible information about its wildlife, culture and history, and with many opportunities to explore, walk, cycle and ride. The North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2004 highlighted the lack of understanding amongst residents of the potential benefits that tourism can bring if appropriately managed, the lack of identity of the North Wessex Downs and the opportunities for quiet recreation and green tourism that it can offer. This remains true. While certain of the issues facing the North Wessex Downs are clearly understood by different sectors, there is not always shared understanding of how these issues interrelate and how solutions could and should be developed to provide mutual benefit. There is general agreement that a better understanding needs to be developed of how lifestyle choices affect the environment of the AONB – seeking to encourage everyone to develop more sustainable lifestyles.

Access to the countryside is an important part of the lives of people who live in the AONB and also for visitors as a tourism asset. Natural England's 'Walking the way to Health' initiative<sup>72</sup> aims to encourage people who participate in very little exercise to start walking more and gain the confidence to continue exercising on a regular basis, either in a group or on their own. The importance of using and enjoying woodlands and green spaces as part of an everyday healthy lifestyle has been demonstrated by Forestry Commission research<sup>73</sup>. Exercise in the North Wessex Downs can have positive effects on many aspects of health. There needs to be a programme of events and information to realise this benefit, such as the circular walks developed by North Wessex Downs team in partnership with the Ridgeway National Trails Officer. Features such as green lanes, including the Ridgeway, form an important part of the landscape. The lack of convenient public transport imposes limits on the benefits and use of the resource.

However, access must be balanced with land managing interests, as well as other issues such as conservation. Greater and improved access should be encouraged where this can be achieved without undue cost to conservation or the landowner's use of the land. The provision of access, including improving accessibility of CRoW Open Access land, provides a valuable opportunity to increase public enjoyment of the countryside and to raise awareness of the work farmers do to protect and enhance the environment.

### Access Land

The CRoW Act established access land which the public has the right to enjoy under certain conditions. There are 1189 hectares of open access land and 694 hectares of registered commons within the AONB. In addition, there are 100 hectares of National Trust land to which there is access. An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East<sup>74</sup> in February 2007 found that the North Wessex Downs has the smallest percentage of accessible natural greenspace (4%) of all of the SE Protected Landscapes.

Of that accessible natural greenspace, 59% was woodland. In general woodlands with open or partial access are owned by the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust or the National Trust. A surprising 69% of the woodland area has a public right of way either running through the woodland or along one edge of the woodland. The figures fall dramatically for open access to woodland, the total area of open access woodland is only 14% of the total woodland area.

### Rights of Way

One of the most important resources of the North Wessex Downs is its extensive rights of way network, providing access to some of the most spectacular views and secluded valleys in southern England. Not only does it underpin the recreational and tourism sectors but also affords some opportunities for sustainable and safe journeys to school and work. Important national and regional walking routes within the North Wessex Downs include (the length within the AONB): the Ridgeway National Trail (88km); the Thames Path National Trail (14km); the Test Way (22km); the Wayfarers Walk (27km); the Lambourn Valley Way (29km); and the towpath of the Kennet and Avon Canal which is a National waterways Link and one of the busiest paths in the British Waterways Network. In addition, a very large number of other paths are promoted as recreational walking routes by the National Trust, the constituent local authorities, and the Ramblers Association.

Route 4 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network also runs for 47 km through the North Wessex Downs, part following the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath. In addition, there are a large number of advertised cycle

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.whi.org.uk/>

<sup>73</sup> Forestry Commission (2005), Trees and woodlands: Nature's health service Liz O'Brien, Social Research Group, Forest Research.

<sup>74</sup> McKernan P & Grose M (2007) An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the South East

routes (on and off road) that pass through the AONB, taking advantage of the low trafficked lanes. At the same time the Three Downs Link horse riding route offers huge potential for recreational riders linking the Ridgeway with the Hampshire Downs and South Downs, along with a number of advertised shorter riding routes that utilise the Ridgeway and link with the much wider multi-use network of the AONB.

The CRoW Act requires every county/unitary authority to set out their plans for improvement of the Rights of Way network through the production of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIPs). These plans, which cover the 5 year period, 2006-2011, identify opportunities for improving and promoting access to the countryside and as such could help maximize the benefits of access on arable land. This is supported by the findings of the North Wessex Downs Arable Strategy<sup>75</sup>. In the section on access, opportunities for permissive routes across arable land were identified. The target completion date for RoWIPs was November 2007. So far Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire have completed their Plans.

## Tourism

Tourist attractions of national renown within the North Wessex Downs include Avebury World Heritage Site (taking in Avebury Village, the Avebury Henge complex, as well as Silbury Hill and the West and East Kennet long barrows); the White Horse at Uffington; the route of the Ridgeway; and the Kennet and Avon Canal providing a strategic waterways link between the Thames and Bristol Channel. But it is the spectacular scenery, highly attractive villages, and sense of isolation that are the primary recreational and tourism attractions of the area.

The AONB also has considerable opportunities for angling, including fly fishing on the Kennet, Lambourn and Pang, with wild stocks of brown trout and grayling supplemented in many lengths by hatchery reared trout. Coarse fishing takes place on the Kennet and Avon Canal and on a number of stocked reservoirs and lakes, such as at Barton Court Fishery at Barton Court near Kintbury.

Although not large in number, there are a range of paying visitor attractions within the North Wessex Downs, from Basildon Park, Lower Basildon (run by the National Trust) and Highclere Castle, near Newbury (owned by the Earl of Carnarvon), to the Crofton Beam Engine and Pumping Station on the Kennet and Avon Canal at Great Bedwyn and the Living Rainforest environmental centre at Hampstead Norreys.

Tourism provision in the AONB is fragmented and poorly coordinated, with a low number of jobs and income. Despite its close proximity to major areas of population, the North Wessex Downs is not well used as a place for quiet enjoyment. If managed the right way, green and sustainable tourism offers enormous opportunities for the North Wessex Downs and a financial rationale for the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. There may be opportunities for the tourism sector to support investment in rights of way improvements and the provision of facilities and information. However, there is a lack of any strategic marketing of the area as a possible tourism destination. Evidence provided by Tourism South East<sup>76</sup> highlights the lack of a comprehensive web facility that publicises tourism facilities or providers either in the North Wessex Downs or its Local Authority areas.

At present, visitors directly support only about 2,200 full time jobs. The majority of overnight stays in hotels and guest houses are by business people and of all visitors, only 18% are from overseas, most of whom are business related, staying on a single night, Monday to Thursday. Nearly half of all visitors to the area stay with family or friends. Well over 90% of all foreign visitors are either business or family related. The average length of stay by UK visitors is 2 days. It is estimated that a visitor only spends an additional £27 in the North Wessex Downs. More than half of all serviced accommodation providers are un-graded in terms of quality standards. There is considerable potential for the performance of the AONB as a short break destination to be improved. The area would appeal particularly to affluent young and older couples from London and the Home Counties and would bring real benefits to the rural economy (pubs, local food, village shops etc)<sup>77</sup>.

## Special Qualities

- Some of the finest landscape in England - chalk downland, river valleys, ancient woodland, historic sites and much more besides.
- A legacy of historical associations with past human influence etched in every facet of the landscape.
- A diversity of tourism destinations such the great country houses, the Avebury World Heritage Site and the Kennet and Avon Canal.
- Despite a sparse road network there is good access from the surrounding conurbations.
- The extensive Rights of Way network, including the Ridgeway National Trail.
- The attractive villages and bustling market towns of Hungerford and Marlborough.

<sup>75</sup> S Smart et al 2008, An Arable Strategy for the North Wessex Downs AONB prepared by Black Sheep Countryside Management and Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust, March 2008

<sup>76</sup> Report from Roger Budden, Tourism South East (2007)

<sup>77</sup> LAG (2008) Local Development Strategy North Wessex Downs Leader, January 2008

**Key Issues**

- A poor perception of tourism amongst residents of the North Wessex Downs and a failure to recognise that association with a landscape of national importance can bring real economic benefits, especially in the areas of tourism and local and locality foods.
- Lack coordinated marketing of the North Wessex Downs and poor understanding amongst the wider population of the opportunities that it offers for quiet recreation and green tourism.
- Lack of accessible natural greenspace.
- Increased popularity of a few 'honeypot' locations with resulting sprawl of car parking, wear and tear on paths, litter and lower enjoyment, and potentially intrusive traffic management measures – although the number of such sites is currently small.
- Infrequent and unreliable public transport links to key attractions and access points.
- Inadequately funded management and maintenance of the rights of way and poor connectivity of the rights of way network in some areas for circular walks and rides.
- Increased use of the rights of way network by motorised vehicles, of particular concern along the route of the Ridgeway.
- Noise associated with some recreation pursuits, including that from trail bike courses and from shooting schools.
- General lack of facilities for the non-horse owner to gain access to the recreational riding opportunities of the North Wessex Downs.
- Lack of information and provision for the less able and other disadvantaged groups to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs.
- A failure to understand that conservation and enhancement of this national landscape is a product of all decisions affecting its future.

## 12. Delivery Plan

This section sets out the actions required to deliver the policies and objectives of the management plan. Each year, the North Wessex Downs AONB will develop a delivery plan which sets out who is doing what; the role of the North Wessex Downs AONB team in the action, identifies the lead body and the outcomes delivered.

The North Wessex Downs AONB team may have one of the following roles:

- Things we do ourselves and take full responsibility for: Deliverer
- Things we take forward in partnership (or co-ordinate): Facilitator
- Things we make happen by raising awareness: Influencer
- Things we help others to do: Supporter

### 'Golden Thread' of the North Wessex Downs Management Plan



**A VISION of vast dramatic, undeveloped and locally distinct chalk downlands with extensive areas of semi-natural chalk grassland, contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable lands and intimate and secluded valleys, all rich in biodiversity and cultural heritage; a national landscape that stands apart from the increasing urban pressures that surround it; where people live, work and relax; and where visitors are welcomed and contribute to a vibrant rural economy.**

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
<b>About the Land</b>		
1. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs.	1.1. Use the AONB Landscape Character Assessment study to inform policy and strategy development within the North Wessex Downs (as measured using national and local indicators).  1.2. Maintain the integrity and value of the special qualities	Prepare and publish a Landscape Management Strategy by 2014, to develop and support landscape management strategies for each landscape character type.  Raise the <b>policy</b> profile of the North Wessex Downs locally, regionally and nationally to secure the co-ordination of policies and programmes for the benefit of the AONB.  Engage with other AONBs through the exchange of information and experience and the development of joint initiatives. Developing unified responses to specific types of intrusive development such as power lines.  Explore the potential impacts of climate change and explore the role of the North Wessex Downs

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
	of the area.	<p>in mitigation and adaptation strategies.</p> <p>Promote the role of the North Wessex Downs in providing ecosystem services and assess their likely value.</p>
	1.3. Develop up-to-date information on the North Wessex Downs linked to other relevant data sets at national and regional level	<p>Promote the use of GIS and other tools to interpret and present information.</p> <p>Create a report on the 'State of the North Wessex Downs' and use this to inform monitoring and evaluation activities.</p> <p>Develop knowledge about the assets, processes and activities of the North Wessex Downs and how these contribute to landscape character.</p> <p>Identify, support and promote research projects that develop a more detailed understanding of the landscape and the forces for change within it.</p>
2. To raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs AONB.	2.1. Identify and promote the special qualities and features that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the North Wessex Downs.	<p>Promote the AONB Team as a central source of information on the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Ensure that relevant national and regional research programmes help contribute to a better understanding of the North Wessex Downs and its resources.</p> <p>Encourage land managers and the wider business community to promote the environment as a business opportunity.</p> <p>Explore the concept of landscape as an inspiration for the arts, and its associations with local folklore and traditions.</p> <p>Promote outreach and education activities that raise awareness of the North Wessex Downs to residents and visitors.</p>
<b>Land management</b>		
3. To encourage initiatives that facilitate sustainable land management.	3.1. Work with land managers and other organisations to ensure sustainable practices enhance the landscape.	<p>Co-ordinate joint working and expansion of existing land management projects to assist in the delivery of the AONB objectives.</p> <p>Encourage the development of policy and grant aid schemes that</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
		<p>support the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities and features of the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Promote best land and business management practices that secures the purposes and objectives of AONB designation by the provision of co-ordinated advice.</p> <p>Co-ordinate and promote a series of best practice sites and events that demonstrate sustainable land and business management practices appropriate to the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Encourage national, regional and local land management policies to be consistent with the purpose of AONB designation and that land coming out of agricultural production can positively assist in meeting Management Plan objectives.</p>
<p>4. To encourage diverse and viable agriculture, forestry, horseracing and other land based enterprises that support the delivery of a wide range of public benefits, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the conservation and enhancement of the area's special qualities and features;</li> <li>• the provision of access opportunities; and</li> <li>• support for local markets.</li> </ul>	<p>4.1. Support sustainable farm diversification and multi-purpose woodland management where it achieves North Wessex Downs Management Plan objectives and accords with planning policy.</p>	<p>Manage sites in public and tenanted ownership within the North Wessex Downs as best practice examples in the delivery of the AONB objectives.</p> <p>Co-ordinate efforts across the North Wessex Downs to reduce unsustainable populations of species where these threaten the sustainable management of woodland and woodland regeneration.</p> <p>Promote environmental assurance schemes in land-based production and other business enterprises where these are able to bring clear environmental benefits.</p> <p>Develop co-ordinated and integrated advice to farmers and non-farming land-owners that fully reflects the objectives for the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Use whole farm / enterprise planning as a means of delivering and acting upon integrated advice at the farm / enterprise level.</p> <p>Ensure that there are a sufficient number of advisors with the necessary range of skills to</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
		<p>deliver the required advice across the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Identify future land use options that are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the AONB, including biomass planting.</p> <p>Seek fiscal incentives in support of bio-fuel crops that reflect the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Encourage the active use of woodland resources for viable products that help enhance biodiversity.</p>
<p>5. To create a diverse rural skills base to support traditional and emerging land based enterprises that enhance the special qualities and features of the North Wessex Downs.</p>	<p>5.1. Identify and develop the skills required to care for the landscape and its special qualities, with opportunities for all to acquire such skills.</p>	<p>Develop a register of local traditional land-based skills.</p> <p>Ensure the local availability of practical training in traditional land management and the skills necessary for adding value and land-based diversification activities, including business planning, IT skills, accountancy, and food hygiene.</p> <p>Ensure training providers understand the AONB objectives and sell the benefits to businesses of being located within a nationally important landscape.</p> <p>Ensure that local authority programmes that tackle skill shortages and training take into account the specific skill shortages and training needs to ensure appropriate land management within the AONB. Develop initiatives with local business support organisations to develop business skills within the land-based sector.</p>
<b>Biodiversity</b>		
<p>6. To ensure that the characteristic habitats and species of the North Wessex Downs are conserved and enhanced.</p>	<p>6.1. Ensure the coordinated management of species and habitats.</p>	<p>Secure management agreements for sites of high landscape, cultural and / or biodiversity importance across the AONB.</p> <p>Encourage innovative use of initiatives such as Environmental Stewardship schemes to deliver biodiversity benefits.</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
		<p>Support the delivery of biodiversity action plans, other landscape strategies, catchment management and forestry plans to ensure effective management of all priority habitats and species</p> <p>Assess progress with the delivery of these plans. Identify further action, where necessary, to create, update, or progress these plans.</p> <p>Progress recommendations made by NWD publications and research, such as the Chalk Grassland Strategy and Woodland Strategy.</p> <p>Encourage and support projects that seek to identify the extent of spread and damage caused by non-native invasive species; that eradicate and/or control non-native species; and that restore habitats and wildlife populations damaged by such species.</p>
	<p>6.2. Secure readily accessible baseline biodiversity data across the North Wessex Downs.</p>	<p>Support the County Biological Record Centres and Sites and Monuments Records serving the North Wessex Downs as the main repositories for information on the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the AONB.</p>
	<p>6.3. Safeguard and enhance the biodiversity of the North Wessex Downs by identifying, creating and enhancing habitat networks to ensure ecological diversity and connectivity.</p>	<p>Ensure a co-ordinated programme of work is in place to restore, recreate, link and buffer UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species throughout the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Identify key biodiversity sites within the AONB and the opportunities to enlarge and link these as part of a broader programme at the regional level.</p> <p>Extend existing conservation grazing initiatives to cover all the main grassland areas of the AONB.</p>
<b>Historic environment</b>		
<p>7. To enhance the protection, management and setting of the archaeological and historic features, sites and</p>	<p>7.1. Ensure that sites, features and landscapes of historical importance are appropriately identified, recorded and</p>	<p>Co-ordinate with English Heritage state of the Historic Environment reporting to develop the use of Heritage at Risk Register.</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
landscapes that characterise the North Wessex Downs.	managed.	<p>Promote a review of designated sites across the North Wessex Downs AONB to ensure that the lists are current and appropriate.</p> <p>Work closely with the WHS groups to ensure shared objectives and joint actions.</p> <p>Promote the production and publication of 'local lists' of historic environment features.</p> <p>Support initiatives that seek to provide long term sustainable management of important historic environment assets.</p> <p>Support a settlement characterisation project for the AONB.</p> <p>Support the production of a joint design guide for the North Wessex Downs</p> <p>Identify opportunities to include the historic environment in community-generated Village Design Statements, linked where appropriate to Conservation Area Appraisals.</p>
8. To promote an increased level of awareness, use and enjoyment of the historic and cultural fabric of the North Wessex Downs.	8.1. Create tools and projects to promote and investigate the Historic Environment.	<p>Develop and promote an Historic Landscape Characterisation of the North Wessex Downs, to increase knowledge about the area's historical environment and to inform policy making and planning decisions.</p> <p>Support a programme of interpretation and promotion of the historic environment for residents and visitors.</p> <p>Encourage partners to coordinate events celebrating the historic environment.</p>
9. To realise the potential value of the Historic Environment data.	9.1. Promote research and advice from Historic Environment experts.	<p>Ensure that HLC data is used in the development and updating of other strategies, i.e. the landscape management strategy, the woodland strategy, the chalk grassland strategy, etc.</p> <p>Promote an integrated understanding of the historic environment resource through Historic Environment Character Zoning and through the development of Historic Environment Action Plans.</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
<b>Natural resources</b>		
<p>10.To conserve and improve the quality and depth of soils in the North Wessex Downs.</p>	<p>10.1. Resist further losses impoverishment and pollution, particularly in the case of the thin chalk soils of the downland.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate actions to maximise environmental benefits.</p> <p>Promote guidance on soil conservation measures.</p> <p>Ensure that soils are used sustainably by maintaining a range of land uses that minimises pollution and loss through erosion.</p>
<p>11.To ensure that the water environment, including fisheries is sustainably managed.</p>	<p>11.1. Coordinate research, projects and cooperation of those partners that influence watercourses and catchments.</p>	<p>Develop a better understanding of the nature of river flows and demand for water across the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Introduce demand management of water use in those settlements that draw on the aquifers of the North Wessex Downs, and monitor and reduce water wastage.</p> <p>Ensure no water is abstracted from catchments that are classified as 'no water available', 'over licenced' or 'over abstracted' under the Environment Agency's Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy.</p> <p>Take water demand fully into account in any future decisions regarding planning, changes to land use or cropping patterns within the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Examine the sources of diffuse and point pollution within the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with existing diffuse pollution projects to promote ways to reduce diffuse pollution in soils and watercourses.</p> <p>Ensure the local distinctiveness, character and quality of the North Wessex Downs are fully recognised in the development and implementation of river basin strategies.</p>
	<p>11.2. Promote and coordinate remedial actions through the Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative and other partnership schemes to restore and enhance</p>	<p>Survey and assess river networks and channels.</p> <p>Ensure that no new abstraction licences are granted within the North Wessex Downs which</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
	<p>degraded river sections within the North Wessex Downs.</p>	<p>export water out of the catchments of the AONB.</p> <p>Promote flood alleviation works which maximise all-round benefits, e.g. through restoration of traditional water meadow systems or shallow winter flooding in the floodplain of benefit to wildlife.</p> <p>Promote river restoration to further biodiversity / amenity objectives – re-creating natural river channels and re-linking rivers with their floodplains where this would not damage artificial channels of historic / cultural importance.</p>
	<p>11.3. Ensure the sustainable use of water resources.</p>	<p>Reduce and re-use water in the Kennet and Avon Canal, so as to minimise any effects on flows and water quality in all rivers, catchments and other watercourses.</p>
<b>Development</b>		
<p>12.To encourage appropriate development that meets the economic and housing needs of the AONB and surrounding communities</p>	<p>12.1. Encourage the adoption of guidance that is sustainable and enhances the special qualities of the AONB.</p>	<p>Encourage high standards of design, traditional building styles, energy conservation and innovation that respects traditional settlement patterns and the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Assess the need for Supplementary Planning Documents and other policies to address issues such as local character, materials and historic structure and scale of settlements.</p> <p>Prepare Parish Plans /Village Design Statements / Town Design Statements to inform the future development of individual settlements and their landscape setting, taking account of the historic evolution of each settlement, its characteristic architecture and use of materials.</p>
<p>13.To ensure that the formulation and implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs takes full account of the purposes of designation and the character</p>	<p>13.1. Ensure the purposes and objectives of AONB designation are fully recognised in the development and local, regional and national planning policies.</p>	<p>Secure the coherent and consistent implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Provide training / guidance for planners, elected members on planning committees and others</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
<p>and quality of the AONB and its setting.</p>		<p>involved in the planning process with the AONB.</p> <p>Promote a better understanding of the extent of tranquillity, remoteness and dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs and the factors that impact on them.</p> <p>Promote the use of Landscape Visual Impact Assessments for developments, including for those outside of but visible from the AONB, in order to maintain the area's distinctive character and setting.</p> <p>Adopt consistent AONB-wide approaches to the construction of telecommunication masts and other intrusive structures.</p> <p>Resist noise-generating developments and sports both within the AONB and its setting.</p> <p>Reduce light pollution, including control of lighting schemes or other developments that threaten the integrity of dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Support appropriate and sustainable farm diversification activities where planning applications are supported by a whole farm plan and linked to design guidance.</p> <p>Encourage the use of planning briefs which guide developments within and on the edge of the North Wessex Downs and take account of AONB purposes.</p>
	<p>13.2. Work with the private sector, local planning authorities and other bodies.</p>	<p>Encourage local planning authorities to use powers available to them under Section 106 of Town &amp; Country Planning Act until (or its replacement) to achieve the North Wessex Downs Management Plan objectives and activities.</p>
	<p>13.3. Encourage the preservation and provision of adequate 'Green Infrastructure'</p>	<p>Develop strategies and integrated projects to manage the pressures and opportunities presented by the AONB's close proximity to its surrounding urban centres.</p> <p>Ensure that 'green infrastructure'</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
		(new or enhanced biodiversity assets) is incorporated within the area of all medium or large-scale developments, both within and near the AONB.
	13.4. Work with communities to increase capacity and involvement in development processes	Support communities to engage with local, regional and national planning policies.  Encourage local communities to identify local needs and assist in the conservation and enhancement of local distinctiveness through the preparation and development of Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and other initiatives.
14.To promote a sustainable rural economy	14.1. Encourage economic growth and diversification of the local economy	Support economic activities that embrace sustainable development principles at a scale and nature compatible with the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.  Establish networks to support small businesses in the AONB and identify opportunities for further assistance.  Support initiatives that seek to add value to land-based products sympathetic to the natural beauty of the AONB.  Encourage collaboration between local businesses and the promotion of local purchasing to maximise returns to the local economy and minimise the travel of raw materials and goods.  Develop training courses to encourage businesses within the North Wessex Downs to adopt sustainable approaches consistent with AONB objectives.
<b>Communities</b>		
15.To enable vibrant communities to develop sustainably in the North Wessex Downs by stimulating economic prosperity and local culture.	15.1. Provide support for communities and opportunities to develop their capacity.	Provide advice and support to local and community services to improve their ability to respond to customers.  Develop demonstration projects to promote community use of renewable energy sources consistent with AONB objectives.  Secure reliable data on community activity and quality of life in the North Wessex Downs,

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
		and a better understanding of the range of cultural activities available.
<p>16. To encourage an enhanced sense of ownership and respect for the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs amongst local people</p>	<p>15.2. Encourage different approaches to retaining rural services, including the combining of rural services where this will improve their viability</p>	<p>Assess the range and scale of economic diversity within the North Wessex Downs and determine the opportunities and constraints associated with these activities.</p> <p>Secure affordable broadband and mobile telephone connections throughout the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect the special qualities of the area.</p>
	<p>16.1. Encourage and support local communities to engage in the planning and conservation of their local environment, enhancing the sense of local pride and ownership.</p>	<p>Support the development of partnerships to make housing more affordable in and around the North Wessex Downs and ensure schemes respect local landscape and settlement character.</p> <p>Prepare Parish Plans / Town Design Statements / Village Design Statements to enable local communities to identify their own needs, especially in terms of affordable housing, community energy sources, access to local services, and employment needs, to guide future community provision.</p>
<p>17. To provide transport that is more sustainable and meets the needs of residents and visitors of the North Wessex Downs</p>	<p>16.2. Encourage community groups to record, maintain, celebrate and share their cultural heritage through community based projects, events, festivals and activities.</p>	<p>Promote good practice examples of community approaches that have responded to locally identified needs as an inspiration to others (e.g. the establishment of local housing trusts, support for new village shops, community transport schemes, or community energy schemes).</p>
	<p>17.1. Ensure the purposes and objectives of the North Wessex Downs are fully recognised in the development and implementation of transport planning and management</p>	<p>Ensure that Local Transport Plans and other transport plans, strategies and programmes protect the tranquillity and special qualities of the landscape and reduces transport impacts on the environment.</p> <p>Promote an integrated passenger transport scheme co-ordinated across the North Wessex Downs and serving the needs of local people and visitors.</p> <p>Provision of simple and easily accessible information on</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
		<p>passenger transport provision within the AONB.</p> <p>Secure Travel Plans for new developments with significant traffic generation within the North Wessex Downs to encourage sustainable access solutions.</p>
	<p>17.2. Develop a consistent approach to the design, provision and maintenance of highways that is sympathetic to the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs.</p>	<p>Identify measures to improve road safety and the quality of the environment for both road users and non-users, especially on lanes used for recreational purposes.</p> <p>Identify methods of reducing the noise and visual impact of the M4 and A34 within the North Wessex Downs.</p>
<b>Leisure and tourism</b>		
<p>18.To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and enjoy the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs while minimising the impacts of visitors</p>	<p>18.1. Increase accessibility to the North Wessex Downs for users of all abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well being.</p>	<p>Identify spinal and circular routes to be promoted in AONB literature that are supported by the recreation and tourism infrastructure e.g. bicycle hire, farmhouse B&amp;B / bunk barns and recreational bus links.</p> <p>Increase provision and management of accessible greenspace.</p> <p>Develop tools to monitor the impacts of visitors and consider management approaches that reduce pressure on sensitive habitats.</p>
	<p>18.2. Manage and improve the network of public rights of way.</p>	<p>ensure that local authority Rights of Way Improvement Plans take full account of the local distinctiveness, character and quality of the North Wessex Downs and its setting, in their development and delivery of access to the area.</p> <p>Create new permissive and definitive routes that link existing routes and circular routes to take recreational walkers, cyclists and riders off busy roads.</p> <p>Support positive and consistent AONB-wide control of inappropriate use of the byways of the North Wessex Downs and along the Ridgeway.</p>
<p>19.To promote a recreation and</p>	<p>19.1. Develop research, tools</p>	<p>Develop a sustainable tourism</p>

OBJECTIVES	POLICIES	ACTIONS
<p>tourism sector that is well managed, sustainable and adding value to the local economy whilst respecting the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.</p>	<p>and projects which supports the development of a thriving recreation and tourism sector.</p>	<p>strategy for the North Wessex Downs.</p> <p>Contribute to a promotional strategy for the tourism sector of the South East and Southwest AONBs which includes consideration of branding and quality assurance.</p> <p>Establish a coordinated marketing initiative to support the provision and promotion of tourism services and operations.</p> <p>Research into the demand and current provision of transport, accommodation and attractions for residents and visitors to the AONB.</p> <p>Deliver training to tourism providers on enhancing the quality of accommodation, catering, transport, access and quiet recreation. Encourage sustainable tourism certification.</p>

**Appendices****Transfer of Objectives from the Original Management Plan to Consultation Draft**

This Consultation Draft is an update of the Original North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan, rather than a completely new plan. The major change is the structure. The Original Management Plan placed objectives and policies in different places. To help navigate the change, we have provided a table below that sets out the transfer of objectives between the old and new plans. We have done the same for policies, which follows.

<b>Location in original plan</b>	<b>Comment and location in new plan</b>
Objective 1: To maintain and enhance the fundamental differences in the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs and celebrate the strong sense of place of individual localities.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 1
Objective 2: To understand better what local people and visitors value in the landscape and explore ways of retaining and enhancing these features.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 3
Objective 3: To encourage the highest standards of management of characteristic sites and features within the North Wessex Downs.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 2
Objective 4: To influence land management and resource usage to bring about enhancement of the wider landscape.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 2
Objective 5: To develop a better understanding of the landscape evolution of the North Wessex Downs in order to identify, conserve and enhance important cultural landscapes.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 3
Objective 6: To develop a better understanding of settlement structure and architecture to ensure a better standard in future development, in sympathy with the historic character and setting of settlements within the North Wessex Downs.	In Development as recast in New Objective 14
Objective 7: To enhance the protection and appropriate management of archaeological and historic features, sites and landscapes as central to the character of the North Wessex Downs and to enhance the setting of those that contribute to landscape character and identity.	In Historic Environment recast in Objective 8
Objective 8: To resist intrusive and unsympathetic development and practices within key views to and from the AONB and within the AONB where these threaten the sense of remoteness.	In Development recast in New Objective 12
Objective 9: To maintain and enhance the open and remote character of the North Wessex Downs.	In Development recast in New Objective 12
Objective 10: To retain and enhance the profound senses of isolation and tranquillity that characterise large areas of the North Wessex Downs.	In Development recast as a policy under New Objective 12
Objective 11: To conserve and positively increase the integrity of dark night skies over the North Wessex Downs.	In Development recast as a policy under New Objective 12
Objective 12: To protect, restore and appropriately manage all existing areas of semi-natural chalk grassland and achieve a landscape-scale increase in the extent of this habitat, focusing on expanding and linking existing areas	In Biodiversity recast in New Objectives 6 and 7
Objective 13: To protect, appropriately manage and re-link existing semi-natural ancient woodlands, achieving significant expansion in the Landscape Character types where woodland is a characteristic feature.	In Biodiversity recast in New Objectives 6 and 7
Objective 14: To protect, appropriately manage and expand the other key semi-natural habitats of the North Wessex Downs, including wet meadows, chalk rivers and their winterbournes, neutral and acidic grasslands, and the Thames Valley heathlands.	In Biodiversity recast in New Objective 6
Objective 15: To encourage interlinking swathes of semi natural habitat, diversity within individual habitats, and the location of different habitats and farming types	In Biodiversity recast in

in close proximity to maximise opportunities for biodiversity.	New Objective 7
Objective 16: To maintain and increase the populations of protected priority wildlife species which are highly characteristic of (i), and important in (ii), the North Wessex Downs.	In Biodiversity recast in New Objective 6
Objective 17: To identify hotspots of arable biodiversity and encourage measures to maintain, enhance and extend them.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 18: To conserve and improve the quality and depth of soils in the North Wessex Downs, resisting further losses, impoverishment and pollution, particularly in the case of the thin chalk soils of the downland.	In Natural Resources recast in Objective 10
Objective 19: To safeguard the existing quality of groundwaters within the chalk aquifers and significantly improve the quality of the surface waters within the North Wessex Downs through reduction in point source and diffuse impacts.	In Natural Resources recast in Objective 11
Objective 20: To achieve naturalised flows in the winterbournes and rivers of the North Wessex Downs free from human influences.	In Natural Resources recast in Objective 11
Objective 21: To maintain and restore natural river channels (while retaining structures and courses associated with historic methods of river management) with fully functioning flood plains acting to regulate river flows and support floodplain habitats.	In Natural Resources recast in Objective 11
Objective 22: To promote sustainable and viable agriculture and woodland management that contributes positively to the environment of the North Wessex Downs.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 23: To promote a more diverse land-based economy centred around a structure of viable mixed farms and estates where the emphasis is on long term management objectives.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 24: To support new land uses responding to climate change which bring positive environmental improvements and reflect the landscape qualities of the North Wessex Downs.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 25: To ensure that the racehorse industry in the North Wessex Downs is recognised and supported as culturally and economically important.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 26: To promote the responsible management of field sports to enhance the landscape and contribute to the diversity of habitats and viability of the economy of the North Wessex Downs.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 27: To focus on community-led bottom-up renewable energy initiatives serving the needs of the locality first.	In Communities recast as a policy under New Objective 15
Objective 28: To maximise the production of sustainable energy from land uses traditional to the North Wessex Downs (e.g. management of the existing woodland resource) in preference to uncharacteristic land uses.	Deleted
Objective 29: To identify and reduce the outputs of major greenhouse gases in the North Wessex Downs (e.g. carbon monoxide and ammonia) and maximise carbon sequestration through land uses and management practices sympathetic to the landscape character of the AONB.	Deleted
Objective 30: To promote and manage sustainable recreation and tourism, accessible to all, that add value to the local economy and improve social opportunity, whilst conserving the natural beauty and tranquillity of the North Wessex Downs.	In Enjoyment and Recreation recast in New Objective 17
Objective 31: To improve and broaden the quality of sustainable recreation and tourism provision across the North Wessex Downs, focussing particularly on activities that support the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty.	In Enjoyment and Recreation recast in New Objective 19
Objective 32: To ensure the highest standards of sustainable management and presentation of key recreation and tourism sites in ways that are unobtrusive and	In Enjoyment and Recreation recast in

in character with the remoteness of the AONB.	New Objective 17
Objective 33: To encourage the provision of infrastructure that assists in adding value to land-based products of the North Wessex Downs and, in so doing, helps conserve and enhance its natural beauty.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 4
Objective 34: To support the development and marketing of products and services from the North Wessex Downs which are clearly linked to the maintenance of its high environmental quality.	In Communities recast in New Objective 15
Objective 35: To promote sustainable rural economic development, including support for local businesses, that provide employment for local people and help retain and develop the skills base of the North Wessex Downs.	In Communities recast in New Objective 15
Objective 36: To support innovation and entrepreneurship that recognise the economic potential of the high environmental quality of the North Wessex Downs, and seek to retain and enhance it through sound business decisions.	In Communities recast in New Objective 15
Objective 37 To recreate a diverse rural skills base to address both traditional and new land management needs and emerging opportunities.	In Land Management recast in New Objective 5
Objective 38: To ensure that local people have the opportunity to be involved in identifying their own needs.	In Communities recast in New Objective 16
Objective 39: To ensure that development in the towns and villages of the North Wessex Downs contributes to the sustainability of that and adjoining settlements.	In Development recast in New Objective 12
Objective 40: To ensure access to, and viability of essential services.	In Communities recast in New Objective 15
Objective 41: To encourage the provision of affordable housing for local people and key workers associated with the land-based economy.	In Communities recast in New Objective 15
Objective 42: To support a safe environment for residents and visitors to the North Wessex Downs.	Deleted
Objective 43: To understand the cause and effects of transport growth in the North Wessex Downs and to promote transport policies which discourage reliance on the private car.	Subsumed in Development by New Objective 13
Objective 44: To maximise opportunities for sustainable and integrated access, encouraging alternative modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public/private partnerships, and public transport.	Subsumed in Development by New Objective 13
Objective 45: To manage and reduce traffic and its threats in the countryside and on the communities in the North Wessex Downs.	Subsumed in Development by New Objective 13
Objective 46: To create understanding and awareness of the natural beauty, cultural heritage, biodiversity and natural processes of the North Wessex Downs, amongst local people, visitors and the wider population.	Subsumed in Introduction by New Objective 3
Objective 47: To raise awareness and understanding of the links between lifestyle choices and the environment of the North Wessex Downs amongst local people, visitors, those living in the surrounding areas and all those whose decisions affect the future of the AONB.	Deleted
Objective 48: To raise awareness of the management needed to maintain the essential qualities of the North Wessex Downs amongst local people, visitors, those living in the surrounding areas and all those whose decisions affect the future of the AONB.	In Communities recast in New Objective 16
Objective 49: To make the North Wessex Downs relevant to local people, visitors, and those living and working in surrounding areas and encourage them to act as champions of it.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 3
Objective 50: To raise awareness and understanding of the wide-ranging benefits arising from association with a landscape of national importance.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 3
Objective 51: To co-ordinate and integrate delivery of national, regional and local	In Introduction recast in

policies to ensure that within the North Wessex Downs all are geared to achieving the objectives for the North Wessex Downs.	New Objective 2
Objective 52: To encourage local communities to participate actively in decisions affecting the future of the North Wessex Downs.	In Introduction recast in New Objective 3

**Transfer of Policies from the Original Management Plan to Consultation Draft**

This Consultation Draft is an update of the Original North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan, rather than a completely new plan. The major change is the structure. The Original Management Plan placed objectives and policies in different places. To help navigate the change, we have provided a table below that sets out the transfer of policies between the old and new plans. We have done the same for objectives, which precedes this table.

Objective numbers refer to the Original Management Plan.

<b>Location in Original management Plan</b>	<b>Comment/Location in new management plan</b>
IUI Tailoring national and regional research programmes and priorities: Ensuring that relevant national and regional research programmes, from those dealing with biodiversity and cultural heritage to rural economic performance, help contribute to a better understanding of the North Wessex Downs and its resources.	In Introduction as an action under Policy 3.1
IU2 Celebrating local character: Identification of those features and characteristics of the landscape that are most valued by people and are regarded as important in defining local character.	Remove as repetition of Objective 2.
IU3 The landscape of the North Wessex Downs as an inspiration to the arts: Development of a better understanding of how the landscape of the North Wessex Downs has inspired and been interpreted by the arts, and the associations of the landscape with local folklore and traditions.	In Introduction recast as Policy 3.1
IU4 The impact of non-farming landowners: Development of a better understanding of the impact of non-farming landowners on the landscape of the North Wessex Downs, particularly their willingness and ability to manage their land in environmentally sensitive ways.	Deleted
IU5 Historic Landscape Characterisation: Development of an Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of the North Wessex Downs, to increase knowledge about the area's cultural evolution and the historical and current role of key features within it (e.g. droveways and commonland) – following guidance prepared by English Heritage to ensure consistency.	In Historic Environment recast as Policy 9.1
IU6 Archaeological and historical resources of the North Wessex Downs and their contribution to landscape character: Development of knowledge about, and the condition of, the archaeological and historical resources of the North Wessex Downs and their importance to landscape character, within a recording framework established by English Heritage.	In Historic Environment recast as policy 8.1
IU7 Settlement pattern and evolution: Development of a better understanding of settlement pattern and evolution within the North Wessex Downs, seen within the national framework provided by An Atlas of Rural Settlements in England, (2001) prepared by Wrathmell and Roberts (see also PP1).	Remove – repeat of Objective 7
IU8 Extent and influences over the senses of tranquillity and remoteness and dark night skies: Development of a better understanding of the extent of tranquillity, remoteness and dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs and the factors that impact on them, with special reference to intrusive developments, noise and light pollution.	In Development recast as Policy 12.5
IU9 Extent and condition of the key habitats within the North Wessex Downs: Development of a robust information base on the extent, condition and potential for expansion of the main semi-natural habitats of the AONB and use of this knowledge to inform habitat management (see also IU11), creation and linkage with ongoing identification of trends over time	In Biodiversity recast as Policy 6.3
IU10 Building a picture of the wider biodiversity resource and trends over time: Development of knowledge about the wider biological resource of the AONB, including habitats and characteristic and important species (in particular populations of nationally declining farmland birds and hot spots of arable weed populations), through co-ordinated wildlife surveys to a common	In Biodiversity recast as Policy 6.3

format and the development of trend data over time.	
IU11 Availability of grazing livestock: Ongoing evaluation of the requirement for and supply of grazing livestock for the maintenance of the landscape and habitats of the AONB.	Deleted
IU12 Building a picture of the geodiversity resource of the North Wessex Downs: Development of knowledge about the geodiversity of the North Wessex Downs and how this contributes to landscape character.	Deleted
IU13 Developing a better understanding of water quality and flows within the winter bournes and chalk rivers of the North Wessex Downs: Development of a better understanding of the sources of diffuse pollution and the nature of river flows within the North Wessex Downs.	In Natural Resources as an Action under Policy 11.1
IU14 Identification of new and novel crops which are in sympathy with the landscape of the North Wessex Downs: Identification of the future land use options which are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the AONB, including biomass planting.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
IU15 Understanding the environmental effects of the horse-racing industry: Development of a better understanding of the contribution of the horse racing and breeding sector to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the AONB.	Removed as achieved – see actions in Land Management
IU16 Accurate picture of existing economic activity: Development of an accurate picture of the economic diversity within the North Wessex Downs and the opportunities and constraints associated with these activities, including an updated picture of the economic contribution of the horse-racing sector.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 15.2
IU17 Infrastructure and value addition: Identification of the infrastructure available and needed to support value-addition to the land-based products of the AONB.	In Land Management subsumed as an Action under Policy 4.2
IU18 Potential for further economic activity in support of sustainable land management: Identification of the opportunities to develop local and locality markets for land-based products from the North Wessex Downs and the role of branding within this.	In Land Management subsumed as an Action under Policy 4.2
IU19 Tourism and recreation provision: Research into the demand and current provision of transport, accommodation and attractions for residents and visitors to the AONB.	In Enjoyment and Recreation subsumed as an Action under Policy 19.1
SK1 Development of a central compendium of information on the North Wessex Downs: With the use of GIS and linked databases, development of updateable geographic information on the North Wessex Downs linked to other relevant data sets at national and regional level, potentially achieved via LaMIS78.	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 1.1
SK2 Sharing information on the North Wessex Downs: Ensuring that all data on the AONB is easily accessible.	Remove – placed above
SK3 The AONB Team as a signpost to information on the North Wessex Downs: Promotion of the AONB Team as a central source of information on the North Wessex Downs and other relevant information sources.	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 3.1
SK4 Biological Record and other Centres: Support of the County Biological Record Centres and Sites and Monuments Records serving the North Wessex Downs as the main repositories for information on the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the AONB.	In Biodiversity as an Action under Policy 6.3
AW1 Raising the political profile of the North Wessex Downs: Raising the profile of the AONB at regional, national and international levels to assist, support and influence the co-ordination of policies and programmes for the	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 1.1

benefit of the AONB.	
AW2 Collaboration between AONBs: Engaging fully with other AONBs through the exchange of information and experience and the development of joint initiatives, including developing a unified response to specific types of intrusive development such as power lines.	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 1.1
AW3 Raising the local policy profile of the North Wessex Downs: Raising the policy profile of the North Wessex Downs at the local level to assist, support and influence the co-ordination of local policies and programmes for the benefit of the North Wessex Downs.	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 1.1
AW4 The identity(s) of the North Wessex Downs: Exploration of the different identities of the North Wessex Downs and identification of the identity(s) that might be best used in raising awareness of the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs (see also IU18 & TP2).	In Introduction subsumed by Policy 1.1
AW5 Encouraging understanding and appreciation of the North Wessex Downs: Encouraging understanding and appreciation of the very special qualities, sensitivities and fragilities of this national landscape, and how lifestyle choices can affect them, amongst local communities and businesses, those living in surrounding areas, public utilities, and visitors and tourists to the AONB (see also TP2).	Remove – repeat of Objective 47
AW6 Interpretation of the natural and cultural wealth of the North Wessex Downs: Interpretation of the natural and cultural wealth of the North Wessex Downs to local communities and visitors in ways that convey complex information in a simple, exciting and readily understood fashion.	Deleted
AW7 Links to education establishments: Forging links between schools/educational institutions and land managers/farmers as a means of raising awareness of rural land management issues within the North Wessex Downs.	Deleted
AW8 Business associations with high environmental quality: Working with land managers and the wider business community, including tourist operators, to promote the benefits of business solutions which help underpin the high environmental quality of the AONB.	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 3.1
P1 Development of general planning guidance: Joint working between all the constituent local planning authorities of the North Wessex Downs to identify, over time, issues where joint planning guidance for the whole AONB, or parts of it, could bring particular benefits in helping to deliver the AONB objectives. Such guidance might appropriately be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).	In Development recast in Policy 14.1
P2 An objective-led approach to planning in the North Wessex Downs: Use of the AONB visions and objectives to frame pro-active approaches to sustainable rural development within future Development Plans and Local Development Frameworks of the constituent local authorities of the AONB.	In Development recast in Policy 12.1
P3 Retaining the quality of views from and to the North Wessex Downs: Adoption of consistent AONB-wide approaches to resist intrusive development within the main views from and to the AONB.	In Development subsumed by Policy 12.2
P4 Intrusive and unsympathetic developments within the North Wessex Downs: Adoption of consistent AONB-wide approaches that strongly resist intrusive and unsympathetic developments within the AONB, especially where these impinge on the open downland and have visual influence over a wide area.	In Development subsumed by Policy 12.2
P5 Telecommunication masts that adversely affect the tranquillity and remoteness of the North Wessex Downs: Adoption of consistent AONB-wide approaches addressing telecommunication masts and other highly intrusive structures.	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.2
P6 Wind turbines that adversely affect the tranquillity and remoteness of the North Wessex Downs: Identification of areas of the North Wessex Downs	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.3

where the landscape character would not be adversely affected through the development of small-scale and community led wind turbine developments.	
P7 Noise-generating developments that adversely affect the tranquillity of the North Wessex Downs: Adoption of consistent AONB-wide approaches resisting noise-generating developments within the AONB (including noisy sports both within and around the periphery of the AONB), with special reference to identified oases of tranquillity	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.2
P8 Retention of dark night skies: Adoption of co-ordinated AONB-wide approaches to the reduction of light pollution including control of lighting schemes or other developments that threaten the integrity of dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs, especially in identified pools of darkness	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.2
P9 Preparation of development briefs for major developments within and on the fringes of the North Wessex Downs: Encouragement of the use of planning briefs to guide major developments within and on the edge of the AONB, identifying the scope to meet AONB objectives.	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.3
P10 Farm diversification: Adoption of approaches that pro-actively support appropriate and sustainable farm diversification activities which assist in maintaining the economic viability of farm units and high standards of land management, where the proposals are in keeping with the objectives of the AONB, with planning applications supported by a whole farm plan and linked to design guidance.	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.2
P11 Necessary infrastructure for the land-based economy: Adoption of pro-active approaches supporting necessary infrastructure for adding value to land-based products (e.g. abattoirs, wood processing and storage facilities) where these can be accommodated with minimal impact. Re-use of buildings for these purposes should be encouraged.	In Land Management subsumed in Actions under Policy 4.2
P12 Travel plans: Promotion of Travel Plans for new developments with significant traffic generation within the North Wessex Downs and more general encouragement for groups of activities within the AONB to have Travel Plans which encourage sustainable access solutions.	In Development as an Action under Policy 13.1
P13 Environmental improvements as part of new developments: Seeking environmental improvements that meet the AONB objectives as part of any significant developments within the AONB.	In Development subsumed by Policy 12.3
P14 Local materials and energy efficiency: Encouragement of the use of local materials and energy efficiency in renovation work and new developments within the North Wessex Downs, including the promotion of renewable energy sources.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 15.1
P15 Design guidance for the North Wessex Downs: Preparation of comprehensive design guidance for the North Wessex Downs reflecting landscape character and local vernacular styles.	In Development subsumed by Policy 14.1
P16 A community-led approach to settlement planning: Encouragement of the evolution of individual settlements to reflect their historic origins, current character, and their environmental and socio-economic needs, as identified by local communities (see Parish Planning).	In Development as an Action under Policy 14.1
P17 Planning for key workers: Recognition of the importance of providing and retaining affordable housing in the AONB for sustainable communities and key workers in the land-based sectors.	In Communities recast in Policy 15.3
P18 Retention of workspace: Placing clear planning policy emphasis on retaining an economic use for sites and buildings within and on the edge of settlements where the building or site previously provided a service or employment function.	Deleted – See Development Policy 12.1
PPI Settlement planning: Pursuing the preparation of Parish Plans /Village Design Statements / Town Design Statements to inform the future development of individual settlements and their landscape setting, taking account of the historic evolution of each settlement, its characteristic	In Development as an Action under Policy 14.1

architecture and use of materials.	
PP2 Meeting local needs: Pursuing the preparation of Parish Plans / Town Design Statements / Village Design Statements to enable local communities to identify their own needs, especially in terms of affordable housing, community energy sources, access to local services, and employment needs, to guide future community provision.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 15.3
PP3 Good practice examples of community working: Identification of good practice examples of community approaches that have responded to locally identified needs as an inspiration to others, such as the establishment of local housing trusts, community support for a new village shop, a community transport scheme, or a community energy scheme.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 16.1
ISM1 Keeping abreast of changes in agricultural policy: Working with Defra and representatives of the farming community to ensure that changes in national agricultural and environmental policy are to the benefit of the North Wessex Downs, and that land coming out of agricultural production can positively assist in meeting the objectives for the AONB.	In Land Management subsumed as an Action under Policy 4.1
ISM2 Design and development of future agri-environment approaches: Working with local and regional stakeholders and with Defra to ensure that future agri-environment approaches maximise the opportunities to achieve the AONB objectives (potentially reflecting the different Landscape Character Types within the North Wessex Downs).	In Land Management subsumed as an Action under Policy 4.1
ISM3 Focused funding: Identification of additional funding sources and commercial opportunities to ensure that particular objectives for the AONB are achieved by plugging gaps in mainstream funding sources (e.g. providing funding for the sustainable management of non-agricultural land in line with the AONB objectives) and providing on-going support for established projects that can help deliver the AONB objectives	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 2.1
ISM4 Biofuel crops: Seeking fiscal incentives in support of biofuel crops that reflect the landscape character of the North Wessex Downs (see also IU14 and CP3).	In Land Management subsumed in an Action under Policy 4.2
ISM5 Carbon sequestration and carbon dioxide emissions: Seeking fiscal incentives in support of carbon sequestration and farming methods that reduce CO2 emissions.	Deleted
ISM6 Design and development of future woodland incentives: Working with local and regional stakeholders and the Forestry Commission to develop woodland incentives that reflect the distinctive Landscape Types of the AONB, maximise the multiple benefits of woodland, and help deliver the wider objectives for the North Wessex Downs.	In Land Management subsumed by Policy 4.1
SLM1 Management of sites in public ownership: Management of sites in public ownership within the North Wessex Downs as best practice examples in the delivery of the AONB objectives, ensuring that this best practice is also reflected in the management of tenanted land in public ownership.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
SLM2 Conservation and improvement projects: Development of specific land management projects which, within focused geographical areas, seek to deliver a range of integrated benefits that reflect the AONB objectives, achieved through close partnership working.	In Land Management subsumed in Actions under Policy 4.2
SLM3 Managing the impact of surrounding urban areas: Development of multi-disciplinary partnerships to develop strategies and integrated projects to manage the pressures and opportunities presented by the AONB's close proximity to its surrounding urban centres.	In Development as an Action under Policy 12.2
SLM4 Promotion of management agreements: Development of a programme of management agreements for those sites of high landscape, cultural and / or biodiversity importance across the AONB – especially those that contribute to landscape character and identity and form part of specific land management projects.	In Biodiversity as an Action under Policy 6.1

SLM5 Close working with existing initiatives and projects: Co-ordination (to avoid duplication), joint working and expansion of existing land management projects within the AONB to assist in the delivery of the AONB objectives.	In Introduction as an Action under Policy 2.1
SLM6 Brokerage service for conservation grazing: Dependent on the outcome of Policy IU11, extension of existing conservation grazing initiatives to cover all the main grassland areas of the AONB – initially focusing on those sites of high biodiversity and / or cultural significance.	In Biodiversity as an Action under Policy 7.1
SLM7 Control of fly tipping: Promotion of detection, prosecution and change of public behaviour to reduce radically the dumping of rubbish within the North Wessex Downs.	Deleted
SLM8 Controls in support of woodland management: Co-ordination of efforts across the North Wessex Downs to reduce deer and grey squirrel populations where these threaten the sustainable management of woodland and woodland regeneration.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
B1 Updating of County BAPs: When the County Biodiversity Action Plans are updated they should reflect the considerably more ambitious biodiversity objectives established within the North Wessex Downs, especially with regard to chalk grassland and woodland creation.	In Biodiversity modified as Policy 6.2
B2 Re-building biodiversity: Identification of key biodiversity sites within the AONB and the opportunities to enlarge and link these as part of a broader programme of Re-building Biodiversity being taken forward at the regional level	In Biodiversity recast as Policy 7.1
CP1 Resisting new abstraction licences: Working with the Environment Agency and Water Companies to ensure that no new abstraction licences are granted within the North Wessex Downs which export water out of the catchments of the AONB.	In Natural Resources as an Action under Policy 11.2
CP2 Demand management: Giving strong encouragement to demand management of water use in those settlements that draw on the aquifers of the North Wessex Downs, combined with a reduction in water pipe leakage.	In Natural Resources as an Action under Policy 11.1
CP3 Water demand for future land uses within the North Wessex Downs: Working with the Environment Agency, NFU / CLA and land managers to ensure that water demand is fully taken into account in any future decisions on changes to land use or cropping patterns within the North Wessex Downs.	In Natural Resources as an Action under Policy 11.1
CP4 Sustainable water use on the Kennet and Avon Canal: Support for the sustainable use of water resources by the Kennet and Avon Canal including measures to reduce and re-use water in the Canal, so as to minimise any effects on flows in the Rivers Dun and Kennet.	In Natural Resources as Policy 11.3
CP5 Identification of vulnerable river sections: Working with the Environment Agency and Water Companies to identify the most vulnerable river sections where a review of existing licences and other remedial works may be required.	In Natural Resources recast as Policy 11.2
CP6 Whole catchment response: Development of a whole catchment response to address issues such as diffuse pollution and biodiversity planning - linking relevant actions between different organisations and land managers, and between different catchments to maximise environmental benefits.	In Natural Resources recast as Policy 11.1
CP7 Flood alleviation: Promotion of flood alleviation works which maximise all-round benefits, e.g. through restoration of traditional water meadow systems or shallow winter flooding in the floodplain of benefit to wildlife.	In Natural Resources as an Action under 12.2
CP8 River restoration: Promotion of river restoration to further biodiversity / amenity objectives – re-creating natural river channels and re-linking rivers with their floodplains where this would not damage artificial channels of historic / cultural importance.	In Natural Resources as an Action under 12.2

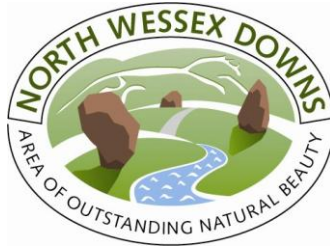
SRE1 Design and development of future rural development schemes under the ERDP <sup>79</sup> : Working with local and regional stakeholders and with Defra to ensure that future changes to the rural development schemes under the England Rural Development Programme maximise and simplify opportunities to deliver the AONB objectives.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.1
SRE2 Adding value to land-based products: Strong support for individual and collective initiatives that seek to add value to land-based products sympathetic to the natural beauty of the AONB.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
SRE3 Infrastructure needs for adding value: Providing support for the development of small-scale infrastructure needed to allow the adding of value to land-based products, such as low throughput abattoirs and cutting plants.	In Land Management subsumed in Actions under Policy 4.2
SRE4 Collaboration between businesses: Encouragement of collaboration between local businesses and the promotion of local purchasing to maximise returns to the local economy and minimise the travel of raw materials and goods.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
SRE5 Environmental assurance and potential branding: Promotion of environmental assurance schemes in land-based production and other business enterprises where these are able to bring clear environmental benefits and the potential development of a locality brand if this can bring economic and environmental benefits.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
SRE6 Community-led renewable energy schemes: Provision of strong support for community-led bottom-up renewable energy initiatives that fit within the landscape and meet local needs (e.g. wind and methane generation, wood and straw heat, and micro-hydro) (see also PP2).	In Communities as an Action under Policy 15.1
SRE7 Demonstration projects in renewable energy: Development of a number of demonstration projects positively promoting community use of renewable energy sources.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 15.1
SRE8 Increasing viability of local services: Encouraging different approaches to retaining rural services, including the combining of rural services where this will improve their viability.	In Communities subsumed in Actions under Policy 15.1
SRE9 Marketing support to local services: Provision of advice and support to local and community services to improve their ability to respond to customers.	In Communities subsumed in Actions under Policy 15.1
SRE10 Investment in IT infrastructure: Ensuring the needs of rural businesses for affordable Broadband connections are understood and acted upon, so long as any necessary masts do not compromise the landscape quality of the AONB.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 15.2
IA1 Integrated advice to farmers other land managers, and diversified rural businesses: Development of co-ordinated and integrated advice to farmers and non-farming land-owners, that fully reflects the objectives for the North Wessex Downs and is clearly accessed via identified gateways.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
IA2 Whole farm / enterprise planning: Use of whole farm / enterprise planning as a means of delivering and acting upon integrated advice at the farm / enterprise level (also potentially applicable to non-farming landowners).	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 4.2
IA3 Accreditation of advice: Clear accreditation and badging of advice which seeks to meet the AONB objectives.	In Land Management subsumed in an Action under Policy 4.2
IA4 Adequate range of advisors: Ensuring that there are a sufficient number of advisors with the necessary range of skills to deliver the required advice across the North Wessex Downs.	In Land Management unchanged
IA5 Best agricultural and land-management practice: Promotion of best agricultural and land management practices that help meet the environmental	In Introduction subsumed in

<sup>79</sup> England Rural Development Programme

objectives for the AONB (including landscape, cultural heritage, biodiversity, natural resources and access) through the provision of co-ordinated advice to land managers.	an Action under Policy 2.1
IA6 Best practice in field sports: Promotion of best environmental practice in the management of field sports (game and fish) and integration of this management into wider environmental objectives.	In Introduction subsumed in an Action under Policy 2.1
IA7 Best practice in horse-pasture management: Promotion of best environmental practice in the management of horse pasture and the boundaries to horse paddocks.	In Introduction subsumed in an Action under Policy 2.1
IA8 Environmental management of racing gallops: Promotion of best environmental practice in the management of racehorse gallops through the provision of conservation advice.	In Introduction subsumed in an Action under Policy 2.1
IA9 Promotion and delivery of agri-environment approaches: Promotion of current and future of agri-environment approaches within the North Wessex Downs to land managers, focusing on delivering the environmental objectives for the AONB.	In Introduction subsumed in an Action under Policy 2.1
IA10 Promotion of sustainable woodland management: Promotion of sustainable woodland management through the provision of co-ordinated advice to woodland owners, including the identification and promotion of potential markets.	In Land Management subsumed by Policy 4.2
IA11 Benchmarking environmental practices in land management: Encouragement of a network of farmers and land managers able to compare successes and learn from each other in terms of overall environmental performance in land management activities.	Deleted
IA12 Innovation networks in high environmental performance: Encouragement of a network of other businesses (especially focused on the tourism sector) committed to high environmental performance who can compare successes and learn from each other.	Deleted
IA13 Demonstrating environmental best practice: Co-ordination and promotion of a series of best practice sites and events that demonstrate sustainable land and business management practices appropriate to the North Wessex Downs.	In Introduction subsumed in an Action under Policy 2.1
TP1 Strategy for sustainable tourism provision: Preparation of a sustainable tourism strategy for the North Wessex Downs.	In Enjoyment and Recreation as Policy 19.1
TP2 Plan to promote tourism: Contribution to a promotional strategy for the tourism sector of the South East and Southwest AONBs which includes consideration of branding and quality assurance.	In Enjoyment and Recreation as an Action under Policy 19.1
RA1 Control of off-road vehicular use: Strong support will be offered for positive and consistent AONB-wide control of off-road vehicular use of the byways of the North Wessex Downs.	In Enjoyment and Recreation as an Action under Policy 18.1
RA2 Control of motorised traffic on the Ridgeway: In particular, strong support will be offered for the control of off-road vehicular use on the Ridgeway combined with a major programme to improve surfacing.	In Enjoyment and Recreation as an Action under Policy 18.1
RA3 Co-ordination of Rights of Way Improvement Plans: Co-ordination of the Rights of Way Improvement Plans across the AONB to deliver consistent AONB-wide improvements to the rights of way network, including signage and information to enable people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups to easily access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs.	In Enjoyment and Recreation recast as Policy 18.1
RA4 Development of a good network of recreational routes: Development of a good network of recreational footpaths, cycle routes, and bridleways, potentially involving the creation of new permissive and definitive routes that link existing routes and create new circular routes and take recreational walkers, cyclists and riders off busy roads. Such networks may also include the designation of Quiet Lanes.	In Enjoyment and Recreation as an Action under Policy 18.1

RA5 Promotion of key recreational routes: Identification of a set of spinal and circular routes which will be promoted in AONB literature and which will be positively supported by other aspects of recreation and tourism infrastructure e.g. bicycle hire, farmhouse B&B / bunk barns and recreational bus links (dependant on the outcome of the tourism strategy T1).	In Enjoyment and Recreation as an Action under Policy 17.1
T1 Influencing strategic transport decisions: Ensuring that strategic transport decisions taken at national and regional level take full account of the objectives for the North Wessex Downs.	In Development recast as Policy 13.1
T2 Input to Local Transport Plans and transport planning: Ensuring that the AONB objectives are fully addressed in Local Transport and Travel Plans and that there is clear co-ordination in activity across the AONB.	In Development recast as Policy 13.1
T3 Influencing road hierarchies: Influencing and promoting the development of road hierarchies, traffic management, and travel plans, to meet the objectives of the AONB and underpin protection of tranquillity.	In Development recast as Policy 13.1
T4 Road safety: Identification of measures to improve road safety and the quality of the environment for both road users and non-users, especially on lanes used for recreational purposes.	In Development as an Action under Policy 13.2
T5 Integrated passenger transport schemes: Promotion of an integrated passenger transport scheme co-ordinated across the North Wessex Downs and serving the needs of local people and visitors.	In Development as an Action under Policy 13.1
T6 Improved information on passenger transport provision within the North Wessex Downs: Provision of simple and easily accessible information on passenger transport provision within the AONB.	In Development as an Action under Policy 13.1
T7 Reduction in the noise and visual impact of the main trunk roads: Working with the Highways Agency to identify methods of reducing the noise and visual impact of the M4 and A34 within the North Wessex Downs.	In Development as an Action under Policy 13.2
T8 Sensitive design and management of the rural lanes network: Adoption of consistent AONB-wide policies on road improvements on minor roads – ensuring that changes to the highway do not detract from their rural character, especially minor lanes, that road lighting schemes take full account of the objective to retain and extend the areas of dark night skies, and adoption of an AONB-wide policy on the conservation management of road verges.	In Development recast as Policy 13.2
TS1 Training needs analysis for the land-based sector: Provision of training needs analysis of the land-based sector of the North Wessex Downs, exploring the main areas of training need, relevant to the AONB objectives.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 5.1
TS2 Training in land management skills: Ensuring the availability of practical training to individuals and businesses in traditional land management skills, including animal husbandry, shepherding, hedge laying, hedge and woodland coppicing, and thatching and in simple environmental recording.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 5.1
TS3 Register of land-based skills: Development of a register of local traditional land-based skills.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 5.1
TS4 Training to assist in adding value to land based products: Ensuring the local availability of training in the skills necessary for adding value and land-based diversification activities, including business planning, IT skills, accountancy, and food hygiene.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 5.1
TS5 Sustainable businesses: Development of training courses to encourage businesses within the North Wessex Downs, including tourism businesses, to adopt sustainable approaches that reflect the AONB objectives.	In Communities as an Action under Policy 5.1
TS6 Raising the quality of tourism provision: Delivering training to tourism providers on enhancing the quality of accommodation, catering, transport, access and quiet recreation.	In Enjoyment and Recreation as an Action under Policy 19.1

TS7 Training of training providers: Training of the training providers to understand the AONB objectives and sell the benefits to businesses of being located within a nationally important landscape.	In Land Management as an Action under Policy 5.1
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# Environmental Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan

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June 2009

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## Executive Summary

Under the SEA Directive the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014 is subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This process requires that the key environmental aspects of the North Wessex Downs AONB are identified and a baseline assessment be made of these attributes. The environmental impact of the proposed Management Plan must then be assessed, and indicators for monitoring of the Management Plan must be formulated. The key environmental issues and proposed baseline measures were identified in the SEA Scoping Report published in July 2008. This Environmental Report fulfils the baseline and assessment requirements of the Directive.

The baseline data was gathered for a total of 33 indicators in total across the 15 SEA Objectives. Current trends and relevant comparisons were included where available and appropriate. The full baseline information has been included in Appendix C.

For the environmental assessment the 19 proposed objectives under the 8 Management Plan themes were each individually assessed to measure their impact on the 15 SEA Environmental Objectives, a total of 285 individual assessments. A six point scale of effects was employed, as recommended by Natural England. No negative or uncertain effects were noted, though just over a third of the objectives had neutral effect. The remaining had a positive effect, with just over a fifth scoring 'strongly supports'.

A second assessment was conducted to test the level of positive effects on each of the 15 SEA Objectives by the cumulative effects of the 19 Management Plan Objectives taken together, and to assess whether there were any significant omissions in terms of positive environment effects from the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan Objectives.

The results show that nine SEA Environmental Objectives each have a score of over the average for the combined positive effects. Two objectives, EO 1 (landscape character) and EO 14 (life and health) each have a score of over 80% for the combined positive results. Objective EO 15 (interrelationships) has a 100% score for the combined positive result. Six objectives each have a score of less than the Average though objective EO 12 (use natural resources) is just below the midpoint. Objective EO 8 (catchment processes) received the lowest score. No SEA Environmental Objectives received negative scores, the balance is made up of neutral effect scores.

A technical review of the data was conducted in order to assess the current quality of the individual indicators and to indicate how effective these are likely to be for the required monitoring purposes. Each of the 33 baseline and monitoring indicators was assessed against a five point scale ranging from 1, ('Fit for purpose') to 5 ('No available data'). The overall assessment of the baseline data is that it is weak. This has already been identified by the Council of Partners and steps are in hand to address the issue.

As there is a significant shortfall of data to support the chosen indicators, there is an urgent need for a data collection and assessment strategy. The opportunity should be taken to reassess the range and focus of the chosen indicators in order to concentrate only on those that will assist with the long term management of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

## 1. Context

### Introduction

- 1.1. The review and refresh of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan is subject to a process of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This Environmental Report sets out the findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The SEA followed the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>1</sup> and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004<sup>2</sup>. The objective of the SEA Directive is to:
- “provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development”. (2001/42/EC Article 1).
- 1.2. Article 2(b) of the Directive defines “environmental assessment” as a procedure comprising:
- Preparation of an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects of the draft plan or programme
  - Consultation on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying Environmental Report
  - Taking into account the Environmental Report and results of consultation in decision making
  - Provision of information when the plan or programme is adopted and showing how the results of the environmental assessment have been taken into account.
- 1.3. The methodology used for this assessment is based on the SEA of AONB Management Plan guidance published by Natural England in 2007<sup>3</sup>. It has also been informed by the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.4. The Assessment runs alongside the development of the Management Plan and is to ensure that proposed policies are subjected to a strategic level assessment of options and alternative courses of action, in order to avoid or mitigate any adverse effects.

### The SEA process

- 1.5. The SEA process has been developed in parallel with the revision of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan. The timetable for the Management Plan review can be found at Appendix A, showing how the SEA process matches that review. The Management Plan Scoping Review was published for consultation in April 2008. Following this consultation the SEA process started in July 2008, using the following stages:
1. Screening whether plan is likely to have significant effects
  2. Setting the context and objectives, establishing baseline and deciding on the scope
    - Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives
    - Collecting baseline information
    - Identifying environmental problems
    - Developing SEA Environmental Objectives
    - Consulting on the scope of SEA
  3. Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects
    - Testing the plan objectives against the SEA objectives
    - Developing strategic alternatives

- Predicting the effects of the plan, including alternatives
  - Mitigating adverse effects
  - Proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of plan implementation
4. Preparing the Environmental Report
  5. Consulting on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report
    - Consulting the public and Consultation bodies on the draft plan and the Environmental Report
    - Assessing significant changes
    - Making decisions and providing information
  5. Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan on the environment
    - Developing aims and methods for monitoring
    - Responding to adverse effects
- 1.6. The SEA Scoping Report (Stage 2) was published for consultation in July 2008. This Draft SEA Environmental Report fulfils Stages 3 and 4 of the SEA process. SEA Scoping Report consultation responses were received from two of the Statutory consultees, Natural England and English Heritage. The responses received referred specifically to issues within the Scoping Report. Consultation responses have been considered and used to inform relevant sections of the SEA Environmental Report (this document). In particular, an additional indicator has been added<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.7. In order to guide the scope of the environmental assessment, the SEA Scoping Report was required to examine the Environmental Topics and Key Issues of concern within the North Wessex Downs AONB, along with an assessment of the potential issues and impacts likely to arise. These have been considered in the context of the relevant national, regional and local Policies and Plans which impact upon the environmental quality of the North Wessex Downs. (A list of the relevant Policies and Plans is available in Appendix B).
- 1.8. Twelve key Environmental Topics were identified:
1. Landscape character and land management
  2. Habitats and species
  3. Historic features and landscapes
  4. Geodiversity
  5. Soils
  6. Water quality and levels
  7. Population
  8. Air quality
  9. Climate
  10. Energy
  11. Access, recreation and tourism
  12. Built environment
- 1.9. The key Environmental Issues and Constraints associated with these Topics within the North Wessex Downs AONB were then identified. Table 1 contains a summary of these.

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<sup>1</sup> Under EO6: Use of land, by ALC grade, for new development.

<b>Table 1: SEA Environmental Topics and key Environmental Issues and Constraints</b>	
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Key Issues or constraints</b>
Landscape character and land management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss/lack of management of characteristic features</li> <li>• Land use change (e.g. woodland planting/energy crops/horticulture)</li> <li>• Changes in land ownership</li> <li>• Renewable energy developments</li> <li>• Impact of development (including farm diversification)</li> <li>• Impact of infrastructure (including telecommunications)</li> <li>• Noise and light pollution</li> <li>• Impact of recreation and associated infrastructure</li> </ul>
Habitats & species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of climate change</li> <li>• Incomplete data</li> <li>• Market forces v financial incentives</li> <li>• Management issues, including grazing, labour and infrastructure</li> <li>• Need to enhance UK BAP and UK/EU protected species</li> <li>• Fragmentation of habitat</li> <li>• Impact of non-native species</li> <li>• Impact of recreation</li> <li>• Impact of development</li> <li>• Impact of air and water pollution</li> </ul>
Historic features and landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damage/lack of management</li> <li>• Incomplete data</li> <li>• Recreation pressure</li> <li>• Changes in land use (e.g. energy crops)</li> <li>• Impact of climate change</li> <li>• Impact of development</li> <li>• Impact from cultivation</li> </ul>
Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geodiversity Action Plan</li> </ul>
Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts from cultivation/compaction</li> <li>• Impacts of recreation</li> <li>• impacts of new development</li> <li>• impacts of climate change</li> </ul>
Water quality and levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diffuse and point source pollution</li> <li>• River modification</li> <li>• Catchment and flood management</li> <li>• Extraction</li> <li>• Impacts of recreation</li> <li>• impacts of new development</li> <li>• impacts of climate change</li> </ul>
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access to services and facilities</li> <li>• Lack of public transport</li> <li>• Need for opportunities for access to natural green space, particularly in nearby urban centres and urban fringe areas</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of aging population on communities and services</li> <li>• Impact of new development and associated light and noise pollution on quality of life</li> <li>• Impact of climate change</li> <li>• Lack of affordable housing</li> <li>• Impact of out commuters on communities, traffic and local services</li> </ul>
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atmospheric pollution</li> </ul>
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of data</li> <li>• Impact of carbon emissions</li> </ul>
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of renewable energy developments</li> <li>• Use of non-renewables</li> </ul>
Access, recreation and tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on landscape and biodiversity</li> <li>• Impact of/opportunities through development</li> <li>• Conflicts with land management (e.g. grazing)</li> <li>• Pressure on heritage features</li> <li>• Impact on communities</li> <li>• Impact of traffic and other development</li> <li>• Lack of public transport and other facilities</li> <li>• Damage/lack of management</li> <li>• Lack of data/understanding/identity</li> <li>• Needs of emerging Destination Management Organisations</li> </ul>
Built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding of settlement form, character and local vernacular</li> <li>• Impact of development on settlement character and landscape setting</li> <li>• Damage or decay of listed buildings and conservation areas</li> <li>• Impact of infilling – loss of greenspace</li> <li>• Associated impacts of lighting, noise, pollution</li> <li>• Loss of traditional shops and services</li> <li>• Impact of farm diversification on tradition farmsteads and their landscape setting</li> <li>• Need for provision of green infrastructure as part of new development</li> </ul>

1.10. From this, the SEA Environmental Objectives were developed against which the Management Plan Objectives have been assessed. These objectives have been chosen to represent environmental concerns and are written to reflect the fact that in an environment assessment there is a need to explore whether the Management Plan Objectives, (or their absence), create adverse impacts on the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs AONB identified as Key Environmental Topics.

1.11. The SEA Environmental Objectives are:

- EO 1 To conserve and enhance landscape character and diversity
- EO 2 To conserve and enhance remoteness and tranquillity
- EO 3 To conserve and enhance biodiversity (habitats)
- EO 4 To conserve and enhance the full range of species which are characteristic of the area

- EO 5 To conserve and enhance archaeological, historic and cultural features, sites and landscapes and their setting
- EO 6 To conserve and enhance geo-diversity and soil quality
- EO 7 To safeguard the environmental quality of water resources
- EO 8 To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems
- EO 9 To safeguard the environmental quality of air
- EO 10 To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability to the effects of climate change
- EO 11 To maintain and enhance opportunities for sustainable access to, and enjoyment of the countryside
- EO 12 To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable manner
- EO 13 To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment
- EO 14 To safeguard quality of life and human health
- EO 15 To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships

### **Summary of the draft North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan**

- 1.12. The Management Plan sets out a framework that gives guidance and direction towards achieving the long term (twenty year) Vision for the North Wessex Downs AONB. The Management Plan, and progress towards the Vision, is underpinned by a set of thematic aims. The Management Plan establishes a set of objectives, policies and actions to guide progress towards the Vision within the five year lifespan of the plan. The Management Plan objectives are presented under eight themes developed from the Aims:
- Landscape
  - Land management
  - Biodiversity
  - Historic Environment
  - Natural Resources
  - Development
  - Communities
  - Leisure and Tourism
- 1.13. The Draft Management Plan contains 19 objectives across the thematic chapters. A full list of these objectives is contained in the SEA Assessment Matrix.
- 1.14. For each of the Management Plan Objectives a set of Policies and Actions has been developed to outline how the Management Plan Objectives will be put into effect over the 5 year lifespan of the plan. The full list of Management Plan Objectives and Action Points are published in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-14 Consultation Draft 2009<sup>5</sup>.

## **2. Environmental Baseline Information**

- 2.1. The SEA Directive requires detailed baseline information to be gathered as part of the assessment process. Information must be gathered on “relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan” and the “environmental characteristics of the areas likely to be significantly affected” (Annex I (b) (c)).
- 2.2. The baseline data is also required to highlight “any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC (Birds Directive) and 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive)” (Annex I (c)).
- 2.3. The baseline indicators were selected to represent the Key Environmental Topics defined at the Scoping Report stage and are intended to provide a snapshot of the

current state of the North Wessex Downs AONB along with providing the means for long term monitoring of the environmental impacts of the Management Plan objectives.

- 2.4. The full table of baseline information can be found in Appendix C. It shows the individual indicators that have been selected to monitor change over the period of the Management Plan. Where available, details of trends and relevant comparators are included. Appendix D presents 33 key indicators, grouped under the 15 SEA Environmental Objectives, to bring together groups of individual indicators found in the base-line table.
- 2.5. As far as possible all the data has been taken from original sources and is the most recent data currently available. In many cases it has proved not possible to gather the required information due to a lack of source data, while in other cases the data that does exist does not conform to the North Wessex Downs AONB boundaries. The Council of Partners is aware of this deficiency and is reviewing the situation and will confirm the relevant data set in the coming year. Brief comments have been included in the baseline data table on the source and quality of the data, and where required data is currently unavailable. More detailed discussion of issues of data quality and availability can be found in the Monitoring and Technical Review chapter of this report.

### **3. Environmental Assessment of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan**

#### **Assessment methodology**

- 3.1. The Management Plan Objectives were subjected to a systematic two stage assessment against the SEA Environmental Objectives identified in the Scoping Report. For the first stage, each of the Management Plan Objectives (along with each of the policies and actions outlined for the delivery of the particular Objective) was individually assessed against the 15 SEA Environmental Objectives. The assessment of the impact of the individual Objectives on the environment was quantified according to the six point scale recommended by the Natural England guidance.
- 3.2. For the purposes of this SEA the six point scale was as follows:
  - Strongly supports the SEA Environmental Objective
  - Supports the SEA Environmental Objective
  - Is neutral in effect
  - Potentially works against the SEA Environmental Objective
  - Strongly works against the SEA Environmental Objective
  - Effects uncertain
- 3.3. This assessment followed four key steps –
  - i. Defining the likely environmental outcomes arising from the Management Plan.
  - ii. Identifying the Key Environmental Topics and Issues likely to be affected.
  - iii. Identifying the baseline indicators likely to be affected.
  - iv. Subjective qualitative assessments of the Management Plan Objectives on the relevant SEA Environmental Objectives.

There is a weakness in step iii, as the set of baseline indicators is not complete. As a result, greater weight was put on a subjective assessment of the implications of implementing the stated policies and actions for each objective. This assessment identified the effects of the individual objectives within the Management Plan on the environmental issues underlying the SEA Environmental Objectives.

- 3.4. A second stage assessment was applied because AONB Management Plans are presumed to be beneficial to the environment and are unlikely to show negative effects. In order to test for possible omissions from the Management Plan and to examine whether its positive environmental effect is too limited, a second assessment was carried out on the cumulative impacts of all 19 Management Plan Objectives on each of the 15 SEA Environmental Objectives. For this the total impact on each of the SEA Environmental Objectives, taken from the first stage assessment, was summarised and assessed. The results of each Management Plan Objective was combined under their respective themes and the score for each theme under each SEA Environmental Objective was calculated and expressed as a percentage of the total.
- 3.5. The guidance suggests that a third stage test should be applied, namely an assessment as to the projected impact on the environment of not proceeding with the plan or programme. There is a statutory duty to produce the Management Plan and, under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, it is a legal duty for all relevant authorities to “have regard to” the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB in exercising or performing any functions affecting land in the area. These relevant authorities include all statutory bodies and all tiers of government, including parish councils and holders of public office.
- 3.6. There is a risk that the partners will choose not to adopt the Management Plan as presented. That risk is low, given the process of consultation and partnership deployed in drawing up the plan. A full analysis has not been undertaken because of the low risk and because there are a range of other plans and strategies that support actions in the area (see Appendix B). It would be a significant task to test each of these strategies against the SEA Environmental Objectives. However, should the Management Plan be set aside then there would be a significant gap in the coordination of action, given that that was the underlying purpose of establishing the AONB Partynership.

### Overall assessment results

- 3.7. The full results for the assessment of each of the individual Management Plan Objectives are shown in the SEA Assessment Matrix found in Appendix E. The assessment matrix of the 19 Management Plan Objectives against the 15 SEA Environmental Objectives shows in total:

- 27% of the entries strongly supporting the SEA Environmental Objective;
- 38.3% supporting the SEA Environmental Objective; and
- 34.7% having a neutral effect.

There were no negative or uncertain effects noted. Overall, just over 65% of the entries were assessed as having a level of positive environmental benefit.

- 3.8. The results of the secondary assessment are shown in Table 2 below. These show that the cumulative effect of all 19 Management Plan Objectives on the individual SEA Environmental Objectives is broadly positive.

SEA Environmental Objective	Strongly Supportive	Supportive	Combined Supportive	Neutral	Against	Strongly Against	Uncertain
EO 1 landscape character	57.9%	31.6%	89.5%	10.5%	0	0	0
EO 2 remoteness and tranquillity	21.1%	52.6%	73.7%	26.3%	0	0	0

EO 3 biodiversity (habitats)	15.8%	52.6%	68.4%	31.6%	0	0	0
EO 4 full range of species	21.05%	21.05%	42.1%	57.9%	0	0	0
EO 5 historic and cultural	36.8%	42.1%	78.9%	21.1%	0	0	0
EO 6 geo-diversity and soil	15.8%	31.6%	47.4%	52.6%	0	0	0
EO 7 water resources	15.8%	26.3%	42.1%	57.9%	0	0	0
EO 8 catchment processes	5.2%	21.1%	26.3%	73.7%	0	0	0
EO 9 quality of air	10.5%	31.6%	42.1%	57.9%	0	0	0
EO 10 emissions and climate change	26.3%	47.4%	73.7%	26.3%	0	0	0
EO 11 access and enjoyment	31.6%	42.1%	73.7%	26.3%	0	0	0
EO 12 use natural resources	26.3%	31.6%	57.9%	42.1%	0	0	0
EO 13 built environment	42.1%	36.8%	78.9%	21.1%	0	0	0
EO 14 life and health	21.1%	63.1%	84.2%	15.8%	0	0	0
EO 15 interrelationships	57.9%	42.1%	100%	0	0	0	0
		Average =	65.26%				

- 3.9. The Average % point for the combined positive results is 65.26%. The results show that 9 SEA Environmental Objectives each have a score of over the average for the combined positive effects. Two objectives, EO 1 (landscape character) and EO 14 (life and health) each have a score of over 80% for the combined positive results. Objective EO 15 (interrelationships) has a 100% score for the combined positive result.
- 3.10. Six objectives each have a score of less than the Average. Objective EO 12 (use natural resources) narrowly misses the midpoint with a score of 57.9%. Objective EO 8 (catchment processes) received the lowest score (26.3% for combined positive results).
- 3.11. No SEA Environmental Objectives received negative scores, the balance is made up of neutral effect scores.
- 3.12. Table 3 sets out a comparison of the supportive and neutral contributions each Management Theme makes to the achievement of the SEA Environmental Objectives (in total). The Average % point for the combined positive results is 65.65%. There are no negative contributions. The most positive actions are to be found under the Land Management, Landscape and Development Themes and these three are the only themes above the average. The most neutral contribution comes

from the Historic Environment, closely followed by Biodiversity and Natural Resources Themes.

MP Theme	Strongly Supportive	Supportive	Combined Supportive	Neutral	Against	Strongly Against	Uncertain
Landscape	23.3%	53.4%	76.7%	23.3%	0	0	0
Land Management	28.9%	53.3%	82.2%	17.8%	0	0	0
Biodiversity	20%	33.3%	53.3%	46.7%	0	0	0
Historic Environment	31.1%	9%	40.1%	48.9%	0	0	0
Natural Resources	20%	33.3%	53.3%	46.7%	0	0	0
Development	37.8%	37.8%	75.6%	24.4%	0	0	0
Communities	26.7%	33.3%	60%	40%	0	0	0
Leisure & Tourism	16.7%	43.3%	60%	40%	0	0	0
		Average =	62.65%				
<b>Combined Scores</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>65.3%</b>	<b>34.7%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

### Commentary of the assessment results

#### BY ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE:

##### General

- 3.13. Table 4 sets out the percentage for each SEA Objective of the total score achieved, ranked from the highest to the lowest. If all the objectives had received equal scores then the percentage for each would be 6.6%. Eight of the fifteen objectives received more than this, with EO 15 (interrelationships) receiving the greatest score (11.7%). EO 8 (catchment processes) received the lowest (2%).

Rank	SEA Environmental Objective	% of total SEA Objective score
1	EO 15 interrelationships	11.7
2	EO 1 landscape character	10.4
3	EO 13 built environment	9.2
4a	EO 5 historic and cultural	8.1
4b	EO 11 access and enjoyment	8.1
4c	EO 14 life and health	8.1
5	EO 2 remoteness and tranquillity	7.6

6	EO 10 emissions and climate change	7.2
7	EO 3 biodiversity (habitats)	6.4
8	EO 12 use natural resources	6
9a	EO 4 full range of species	4
9b	EO 6 geo-diversity and soil	4
10a	EO 7 water resources	3.6
10b	EO 9 quality of air	3.6
11	EO 8 catchment processes	2
		100

### **EO 15 interrelationships**

3.14. This objective secured the greatest score. It figured prominently throughout the Management Plan Themes, which is a reflection of the prime purpose of the document; to co-ordinate actions across the area.

### **EO 1 landscape character**

3.15. This objective shows the second highest score (10.4%), reflecting the central role of landscape in a Management Plan for an AONB.

### **EO 13 built environment and EO 5 historic and cultural**

3.16. EO 13 (built environment) came third (9.2%), reflecting the significance given to the planning system in the area. The strength of this objective compliments the score achieved under EO 5 (historic and cultural) (8.1%), as there is some duplication between them.

### **EO 11 access and enjoyment and EO 14 life and health**

3.17. As with EO 5 (historic and culture), these two objectives each scored 8.1%, suggesting a significant contribution across the plan for these objectives.

### **EO 2 remoteness and tranquillity**

3.18. E) 2 (remoteness and tranquillity) scored above the average at 7.6%.

### **EO 10 emissions and climate change**

3.19. With a score of 7.2%, this shows a response to the forces for change identified in the Management Plan. Climate change was highlighted as an issue and this is rightly reflected in the policies and actions.

### **EO 3 biodiversity (habitats)**

3.20. EO 3 (biodiversity) is the first objective to lie below the average, though at 6.4% it is only just below the line. This score is influenced by EO 4 (full range of species), a fairer reflection may be achieved by combining their score. The objectives as drafted are quite narrow but a higher score could have been expected.

### **EO 12 use natural resources**

- 3.21. A score of 6% is indicative of a topic treated narrowly within the management plan. Some of the actions are shared with EO 7, EO 8 and EO 9 (all of which get low scores).

#### **EO 4 full range of species and EO 6 geo-diversity and soil**

- 3.22. These objectives each have a score of 4%. They are only addressed in a few of the Management Plan Themes. This is a reflection of their narrow definition and specialist nature combined with the comment above (under EO 3). Therefore the relatively low score is not unexpected.

#### **EO 7 water resources and EO 9 quality of air**

- 3.23. These objective shows a score of only 3.6%. EO 9 (quality of air) is an ambitious objective to set for a plan with the primary purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty. Primary actions to safeguard air will be taken by agencies outside the North Wessex Downs AONB and the score assigned to this objective may be a realistic assessment of what can be expected of a landscape management plan.
- 3.24. EO 7 water resources may be better combined with EO 8 as discussed in the next paragraph.

#### **EO 8 catchment processes**

- 3.25. Catchment processes and hydrological systems (EO 8) have the lowest percentage score (2%). They are an important element in the North Wessex Downs and deserve recognition within the Management Plan but it is possible that the actions are picked up under EO 7 (quality of water resources). It may be that there is duplication between these two SEA Environmental Objectives and they could usefully be amalgamated.

#### **BY THEME:**

##### **General**

- 3.26. Table 5 sets out the percentage for each Management Plan Theme of the total score for SEA Objectives achieved, ranked from the highest to the lowest. If all the objectives had received equal scores then the percentage for each would be 12.5%. Four of the eight themes received more than this, four received less. The Development Theme received the greatest score (21.7%), the Biodiversity Theme secured the least (4.4%).

<b>Rank</b>	<b>MP Theme</b>	<b>% MP Theme score of total for SEA Objectives</b>
1	Development	21.7
2	Communities	16.1
3	Historic Environment	14.9
4	Land Management	12.9
5	Landscape	12
6	Leisure & Tourism	9.2
7	Natural Resources	8.8
8	Biodiversity	4.4

	100
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### Development

3.27. This theme scored the highest at 21.7% of the total score. But there were 2 SEA Environmental Objectives to which it made no positive contribution (EO 4 full range of species and EO 8 catchment processes). It was highest in EO 2 (remoteness and tranquillity) at 26.3%; EO 3 (biodiversity) at 31.25%; EO 12 (use natural resources) at 33.3%; and EO 13 (built environment) at 26%. This reflects the importance of the planning system in the management of the AONB. It was joint-highest for EO 5 (historic and cultural) at 30% with Historic Environment; EO 10 (emissions and climate change) at 27.8% with Communities. These scores are not unexpected, given the nature of the theme.

### Communities

3.28. This theme scored 16.1%. Five SEA Environmental Objectives are marked as receiving no impact (EO3 biodiversity; EO 4 full range of species; EO 6 geo-diversity; EO 7 water resources; and EO 8 catchment processes) but this is not unexpected given the nature of the topics. It was highest for EO 9 (air quality) at 44.4% and EO 14 (life and health) at 30%; coming joint-highest for EO 10 (emissions and climate change) at 27.8%, equal with Development. This reflects the links through to actions with local people.

### Historic Environment

3.29. Ranked third, this theme scored 14.9% of the total for the SEA Environmental Objectives. Six objectives are marked as receiving no impact (EO 4 full range of species; EO 6 geo-diversity; EO 7 water resources; EO 8 catchment processes; EO 9 air quality; and EO 10 emissions and climate change). Given the specify nature of these objectives, it is not surprising that they are not picked up under the Historic Environment Theme. The theme scored the highest for EO 1 (landscape character) at 23%; EO 11 access and enjoyment at 25%; and EO 15 interrelationships at 20.7%. It was joint-highest for EO 5 (historic and cultural) with Development at 30%.

### Land management

3.30. This theme scored 12.9%, close to the average, showing that it contributes to all SEA Environmental Objectives. It scored highest for EO 4 (full range of species) at 30% and joint-highest for EO 6 (geo-diversity and soil) at 30% with Natural Resources.

### Landscape

3.31. Landscape scored 12%, just below the average. The theme showed no impact upon three SEA Environmental Objectives (EO 8 catchment processes; EO 9 air quality; and EO 12 use of natural resources). Surprisingly, the theme did not score the highest under any SEA Environmental Objective. This may be because the landscape theme underpins all of the other themes and that the actions are presented under them.

### Leisure and Tourism

3.32. This theme was received 9.2% of the score. Four SEA Environmental Objectives are marked as receiving no impact (EO 6 geo-diversity; EO 7 quality of water resources; EO 8 catchment processes; and EO 12 use natural resources). The theme did not score highest under and SEA Objective.

### Natural Resources

- 3.33. Natural resources scored 8.8% of the score. There were five SEA Objectives upon which it made no impact (EO 1 landscape character; EO 2 remoteness and tranquillity; EO 5 historic and cultural; EO 9 air quality; and EO 13 built environment. With the exception of EO 9, these are unexpected given the nature of the theme. The strength of this theme lies under EO 8 (catchment processes), receiving by far the highest score (60%). It was highest for EO 7 (water resources) at 33.3%. The theme was joint-highest for EO 6 (geo-diversity and soil) at 30% with Land Management.

### **Biodiversity**

- 3.34. Biodiversity only scored 4.4% of the total with no impact recorded for seven of the SEA Environmental Objectives (EO 2 remoteness and tranquillity; EO 5 historic and cultural; EO 9 air quality; EO 11 access and enjoyment; EO 12 use natural resources; EO 13 built environment; and EO 14 life and health). The low score reflects the narrow interpretation of the theme.

### **Considerations of alternatives**

- 3.35. SEA guidance requires that where there are potentially adverse effects arising from the plan or policy, these must be subject to a process of review to establish whether there are viable alternative courses of action that could be taken to remove the threat of any adverse effect on the identified environmental assets of the area.
- 3.36. The assessment has not identified any adverse effects arising from the Management Plan Objectives and so no consideration of alternatives was completed.
- 3.37. Just over a third (34.7%) of the Management Plan Objectives are marked as having a neutral effect upon the SEA Environmental Objectives. This is probably reasonable, given the specific nature of some of the objectives. Thought could be given to combining some of the SEA Environmental Objectives as some areas are very tightly defined so as to exclude some theme area. Enhancing these elements may secure more positive scores. A strengthening of actions in response to climate change, globalisation and social issues should be considered during the consultation stage. This may increase the positive scores for EO 4 (full range of species), EO 6 (geo-diversity and soil), EO 8 (catchment processes) and EO 9 (quality of air).

## **4. Monitoring and Technical Review**

### **Quality of existing baseline data**

- 4.1. The prime purpose of the SEA process is to review the potential impacts of the Management Plan on the key environmental aspects of the North Wessex Downs AONB but there is also a requirement to monitor the implementation of the Management Plan and its impact on the environment over time. The SEA helps set a framework to monitor the effectiveness of the Management Plan policies and activities.
- 4.2. The baseline indicators (see Appendix C) have been selected with this in mind. As well as providing a baseline 'state of the environment' report, they will be developed into an effective set of monitoring data. As far as possible the indicators selected during the SEA Scoping Report stage and amended following consultation have been chosen to represent robust and available data sources that are likely to be available throughout the lifetime of the Management Plan and beyond.
- 4.3. Many of the required data sets are not currently available or are of poor quality. A 5-point quality scale has been used to assess the quality of each indicator (Table 6). It identifies where required data is weak or absent, so providing a framework for future data collection.

		<i>Comment</i>
1	Fit for purpose	
2	Adequate	Some minor improvements desirable
3	Indicative only	Not considered accurate
4	Inadequate	Little relevance to North Wessex Downs AONB
5	Absent	No available data

4.4. Table 7 shows the assessment of each of the indicators against the five point scale:

<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Quality Assessment</b>	<b>Comment</b>
EO 1	To conserve and enhance landscape character and diversity	Change in land use and management patterns	2	Range of data available, no trends plotted.
		Change in locally distinctive landscape features (incl. condition)	5	No data currently exists.
		Changes in key strategic views	5	No data currently exists.
EO 2	To conserve and enhance remoteness and tranquillity	Proportion of tranquil areas	5	No data on noise and engineering. No mapping.
		Change in extent of dark night skies	2	Maps for 1993 & 2000 exist
EO 3	To conserve and enhance biodiversity (habitats)	Change in BAP habitats	5	No data presented
		Change in extent and condition of designated wildlife sites	1	
		Change in extent and condition of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland/PAWs	1	
EO 4	To conserve and enhance the full range of species which are characteristic of the area	Changes to populations of priority species and/or associated habitats	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party.
EO 5	To conserve and enhance archaeological, historic and cultural features, sites and landscapes and their setting	% SAMs in favourable condition	2	Numbers not presented but held by a third party.
		% Parks and Gardens at risk	5	No data presented but is held by a third party.
		% Battlefields at risk	5	No data presented but is held by a third party.

				party.
		Condition of historic routeways	5	No data presented
		No. sites/area of historic landscape under ES/CSS agreements	5	No data presented but is held by a third party.
EO 6	To conserve and enhance geo-diversity and soil quality	Change in condition of RIGS or SSSIs with geological importance	5	No data presented. SSSIs included above – needs dissemination, RIGS data may be held by a third party.
		Change in levels of diffuse pollution	5	No data presented
		Use of land, by ALC grade, for new development	5	No data presented
EO 7	To safeguard the environmental quality of water resources	Change in condition/extent of river/catchment SSSI	5	No data presented but will be included in data above – needs dissemination.
		Number of pollution incidents	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party. NWD AONB boundary may be an issue.
		Change in levels of diffuse pollution	5	No data presented
EO 8	To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems	Annual river flows	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party. NWD AONB boundary may be an issue.
		No. of flood incidents	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party. NWD AONB boundary may be an issue.
		Water licensed for abstraction/uptake of licences	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party. NWD AONB boundary may be an issue.
EO 9	To safeguard the environmental quality of air	Air quality data/pollution incidents	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party. NWD AONB boundary may be an issue.
		Changes to distances travelled to work and to key services	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party.
		Changes to traffic volumes	5	No data presented, will be held by a third

				party.
EO 10	To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability to the effects of climate change	Number, type and capacity of renewable energy projects	5	No data presented, will be held by third parties.
		Change in area under biomass/bio-fuel crops	5	No data presented
		Implementation of Green Infrastructure/ecological framework strategies	5	No data presented, may be held by third parties.
EO 11	To maintain and enhance opportunities for sustainable access to, and enjoyment of the countryside	% PRoW in favourable condition	5	No data presented, will be held by third parties.
		Extent and quality of access to natural green space	5	No data presented, may be held by third parties.
EO 12	To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable manner	Number, type and capacity of renewable energy projects	5	No data presented, will be held by third parties.
		% waste recycled	5	No data presented, will be held by third parties but NWD AONB boundary an issue.
EO 13	To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	% Listed buildings at risk	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party.
		Housing	5	No data presented and it is not clear what is to be measured.
		% Conservation Areas at risk	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party.
		Number of conservation area appraisal completed or reviewed in the last 5 years	5	No data presented, may be held by a third party.
EO 14	To safeguard quality of life and human health	Size and nature of population	5	No data presented – Census Data available down to Parish level (not a clear match to NWD AONB boundary)
		Proportion of tranquil areas	5	No data on noise and engineering. No mapping.
		Extent and quality of access to natural green space	5	No data presented, may be held by third parties.
		Changes to distances travelled to work and to key services	5	No data presented, will be held by a third party.

EO 15	To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships			
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### **Commentary on baseline data and recommendations for actions to improve data for ongoing monitoring purposes**

- 4.5. Only the first 5 of the 15 Environmental Objectives (EO1-EO5) have indicators where data has been presented. The remaining 10 Environmental Objectives have not yet been populated with data. The Council of Partners is aware of this deficiency and is undertaking a study during the coming year to confirm which indicators can be brought to bear. Many organisations already collect data and there will be opportunities to secure material relevant to the North Wessex Downs.
- 4.6. EO1 (landscape character) – There is a reasonable data set available for land use and land use changes, though no trend data has been presented. No data is presented for changes to the distinctive features or strategic views within the North Wessex Downs. Proposed work on a landscape assessment for the area could help address this shortfall, as could a development of the Historic Landscape Characterisation monitoring programme. Overall, the data set is weak.
- 4.7. EO2 (remoteness and tranquillity) – The data for night skies is strong, made up of a set of night light maps. There is a need to add the surface area of the North Wessex Downs AONB covered by each map to assess changes in light emissions. Other aspects of tranquillity (such as noise and power-lines) have not been presented; and may not be readily available. The highway authorities may have the appropriate modelling tools based upon their traffic data. Other aspects need a desk top study. Overall, the data set is weak.
- 4.8. EO3 (biodiversity) – The data presented for statutory sites is strong. A weakness lies with other sites and habitats. Material may be held by local authority ecologists and the County Wildlife Trusts. Data will be available for BAP habitats. This may vary between counties and there may be a need for additional updated phase 2 surveys so there is consistent data across the AONB. Notwithstanding this short fall, the data is strong enough to monitor effectiveness, assuming that the statutory sites are representative of the area.
- 4.9. EO4 (full range of species) – No data is presented for this objective. Material is held by a range of bodies such as, Biological Records Centres, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, RSPB and local authorities but species data will vary depending on the sources/records of information available through bodies. The AONB needs to agree a list of priority species relevant to the area which can be monitored easily. Overall, the data set is weak.
- 4.10. EO5 (historic and cultural) – Only limited data is presented, though it is known that English Heritage and the local authorities do hold material needed to support the indicators. The condition of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments is presented but not the number or area of the North Wessex Downs covered. Natural England has data on historic sites under Environmental Stewardship/Countryside Stewardship. There is scope for enhancing the data set by using material from the Historic Landscape Characterisation. This is being considered by the Council of Partners. Overall, the data set is weak but can quickly be strengthened.
- 4.11. For the remaining Environmental Objectives, the work required to secure data has not been completed. The data is not held by the AONB Team and they will need the support of the statutory agencies and key stakeholders if the indicators are to

become meaningful. Much of the data is held by third parties but is readily available. Some effort will be required to fit the data sets to the North Wessex Downs AONB boundary. In many cases, a 'near-fit' (such as parish boundary) will be quite acceptable, provided that this is noted and used consistently over time.

### **Conclusion**

- 4.12. The overall assessment of the baseline data is that it is weak. As there is a significant shortfall of data to support the chosen indicators, there is an urgent need for a data collection and assessment strategy. The opportunity should be taken to reassess the range and focus of the chosen indicators in order to concentrate only on those that will assist with the long term management of the North Wessex Downs AONB.

## APPENDICIES

## Appendix A: Timetable

North Wessex Downs AONB - Management Plan Review Timetable																								
	2008												2009											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Notification to NE of MP review																								
Notification of SEA/SA																								
Review SEA/SA scoping report																								
Review of current Man Plan																								
<b>EXECUTIVE</b> - review report of current Man Plan and SEA																								
<b>COUNCIL OF PARTNERS</b>																								
External consultation on review report																								
External consultation on and amendments to SEA/SA report																								
<b>EXECUTIVE</b> - consider revised SEA and review plan following consultation responses																								
<b>COUNCIL OF PARTNERS</b>																								
Draft SEA/SA assessment report																								
Appropriate Assessment																								
Write draft Plan																								
Write draft SEA/SA environmental report																								
<b>EXECUTIVE</b> - submit final SEA report and draft plan																								
<b>COUNCIL OF PARTNERS</b>																								
Consultation - on draft review and SEA/SA report																								
Schedule of Modifications developed																								
<b>EXECUTIVE</b> - Approval of final reports and consultation																								
<b>COUNCIL OF PARTNERS</b> - Approval of Plan																								
<b>Adoption by Local Authorities</b>																								
Plan to Secretary of State																								
Launch of Plan / Local Auth Seminar																								

## Appendix B: Relevant Legislation, Plans and Programmes

Relevant International, National, Regional and Local Legislation, Plans and Programmes
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>
<b>Agenda 21</b> (1992) <a href="http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2742">http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2742</a>
<b>The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</b> (Adopted December 1997)
<b>Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage</b> (adopted by UNESCO in 1972).
<b>EUROPEAN</b>
<b>Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe</b> (revised) (Valletta, 1992) <a href="http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/conventions/Heritage/valletta_en.asp#TopOfPage">http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/conventions/Heritage/valletta_en.asp#TopOfPage</a>
<b>EC DIRECTIVE 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information</b> (2003)
<b>The Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)</b> (1979) <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/nature_conservation/eu_nature_legislation/birds_directive/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/nature_conservation/eu_nature_legislation/birds_directive/index_en.htm</a>
<b>The Environmental Noise Directive (2002/49/EC)</b> (2002) <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/home.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/home.htm</a>
<b>The European Landscape Convention</b> (entered force March 1 <sup>st</sup> 2004)
<b>The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)</b> (1992) <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/nature_conservation/eu_nature_legislation/habitats_directive/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/nature_conservation/eu_nature_legislation/habitats_directive/index_en.htm</a>
<b>The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC)</b> (2001) <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/home.htm</a>
<b>The Waste Framework Directive (75/442/EEC)</b> (October 2000) <a href="http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/consleg/pdf/1975/en_1975L0442_do_001.pdf">http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/consleg/pdf/1975/en_1975L0442_do_001.pdf</a>
<b>The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)</b> (2000) <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html">http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html</a>
<b>UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters 'The Aarhus Convention'</b> (June 1998)
<b>NATIONAL</b>
<b>LEGISLATION</b>
<b>Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW)</b> Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (2000) <a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000037.htm">http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/20000037.htm</a>
<b>Heritage Protection Bill (Draft)</b> DCMS (2008) <a href="http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2008/pub_draftpb.htm?contentid=%7bE1CC8501-8793-4EF9-AD40-0BB73D05A11D">http://www.culture.gov.uk/Reference_library/Publications/archive_2008/pub_draftpb.htm?contentid=%7bE1CC8501-8793-4EF9-AD40-0BB73D05A11D</a>
<b>Housing Act</b> (2004) <a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2004/20040034.htm">http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2004/20040034.htm</a>
<b>Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006</b> , Section 40 which requires that "every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".
<b>Secure and Sustainable Buildings Act</b> (2004)

<a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040022.htm">http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/20040022.htm</a>
<b>Sustainable Energy Act</b> Department for Trade and Industry (2003) <a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2003/20030030.htm">http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2003/20030030.htm</a>
<b>Traffic Management Act</b> (2004) <a href="http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2004/20040018.htm">http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2004/20040018.htm</a>
<b>Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended)</b> (1981) <a href="http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3614">http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3614</a>
<b>Planning Policy</b>
<b>PPG 13: Transport</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2001) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144014">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144014</a>
<b>PPG 14: Development on Unstable Land</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (1990) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144025">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144025</a>
<b>PPG 15: Planning and the Historic Environment</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (1994) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144041">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144041</a>
<b>PPG 16: Archaeology and Planning</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (1990) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144057">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144057</a>
<b>PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2002) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144066">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144066</a>
<b>PPG 24: Planning and Noise</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (1994) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144098">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144098</a>
<b>PPG 5: Simplified Planning Zones</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (1992) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1143961">http://www.communities.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1143961</a>
<b>PPG 8: Telecommunications</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2001) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143963">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143963</a>
<b>PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2005) (Supplement to PPS1 Planning and Climate Change (December 2007)) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143804">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143804</a>
<b>PPS 10; Planning for Sustainable Waste Management</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2005) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501865">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501865</a>
<b>PPS 11: Regional Spatial Strategies</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2004) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143839">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143839</a>
<b>PPS 12: Local Spatial Planning</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/pps12ldf">http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/pps12ldf</a>
<b>PPS 22: Renewable Energy</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2004) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143908">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143908</a>
<b>PPS 23: Planning and Pollution Control</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2004) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143916">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143916</a>
<b>PPS 25: Development and Flood Risk</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/">http://www.communities.gov.uk/</a>
<b>PPS 3: Housing</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504592">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1504592</a>
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<b>PPS 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation</b> Department for Communities and Local Government (2005) <a href="http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501970">http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501970</a>
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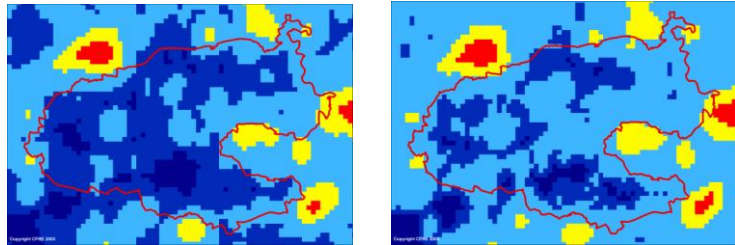
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## Appendix C: Baseline Environmental Data

Key to quality of data assessed against a five point scale		
		Comment
1	Fit for purpose	
2	Adequate	Some minor improvements desirable
3	Indicative only	Not considered accurate
4	Inadequate	Little relevance to North Wessex Downs AONB
5	Absent	No available data

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source		
Landscape						
Landscape character	Land use cover	Data from the Land Cover Map 2000.  The data is a survey carried out in 2000. No North Wessex Downs AONB-wide survey has been completed since.	2	Description	Area (km2)	
				Unassigned	134	
				Broadleaved/mixed Woodland	20,515	
				Coniferous Woodland	3,424	
				Cereals	46,560	
				Horticulture/non- cereal	39,155	
				Not annual crop (ley, set-a-side)	256	
				Improved grassland	45,299	
				Setaside grass	2,341	
				Rough grass	809	
				Calcareous grass	6,603	
				Acid grass	42	
				Dwarf shrub heath	86	
				Open shrub heath	85	

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source										
				<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Fen, marsh, swamp</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Water</td> <td>241</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inland bare ground</td> <td>5,750</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Suburban/ rural development</td> <td>4,302</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Continuous urban</td> <td>1,341</td> </tr> </table> <p>Source: Land Cover Map 2000</p>	Fen, marsh, swamp	4	Water	241	Inland bare ground	5,750	Suburban/ rural development	4,302	Continuous urban	1,341
Fen, marsh, swamp	4													
Water	241													
Inland bare ground	5,750													
Suburban/ rural development	4,302													
Continuous urban	1,341													
	Change c.f underlying character (CQC et al)		5											
	Current extent and character of distinctive landscape features		5	No data currently exists. Need to address this as part of the State of North Wessex Downs Report										
	Key ridgelines and views		5	No data currently exists. Need to address this as part of the State of North Wessex Downs Report										
	Tranquillity/dark night skies (including air traffic data?)	Reduction in dark skies area. A partial measure, % change not calculated, no data on tranquillity mapping (noise and engineering elements).	2	 <p>Dark night skies image – 1993    Dark night skies image - 2000</p>										

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source
	Extent and distribution of woodland types	13.5% of North Wessex Downs AONB is woodland, which is 23310Ha.	2	<p><b>Figure 2. Woodland Composition for Each Landscape Character Type</b></p> <p>Source: Woodland Strategy 2005 from the Inventory of Forest Types (Forestry Commission), Ancient Woodland (Natural England) WGS and Mastermap.</p>
	Extent of woodland under management	44% of woodland managed	2	Source: Woodland Strategy 2005
	Extent of Woodland eligible for WGS	Roughly 84% of the NIWT woodland area is eligible for support through WGS. In 1999 approximately 11% was covered by an agreement; in 2003 the	2	Source: CQC Analysis for the AONBs of England. D. Cheshire & R Haines-Young. January 2009

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source
		equivalent figure was 14%. The proportions for Ancient Woodland Sites for these periods were 16% and 16% respectively. Before 1999 new planting through WGS was approved for an area equivalent to 3% of the woodland area; the equivalent figure for 2003 was 3%.		
Land management	Area under agri-environment schemes	Countryside Stewardship Agreement Boundaries – 576km <sup>2</sup> Environmental Stewardship Holding - 737 km <sup>2</sup>	2	Source: Defra 2008

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source										
	Farm type	Since 1990 the data shows little change in the numbers of farms engaged in cereals, general cropping, pigs and poultry and horticulture. There has been 53% decline in the number of dairy farms and a 41% decline in mixed farms. There has been 34% increase in grazing livestock. The increase in farms classed as Other has risen steeply as in 2000 small units were recorded as other.	1		Farm type - Cereals	Farm type - General Cropping	Farm type - Mixed	Farm type - Dairy	Farm type - Grazing Livestock (LFA)	Farm type - Grazing Livestock (lowland)	Farm type - Pigs and Poultry *	Farm type - Horticulture	Farm type - Other	Grand Total
				1990	331	36	137	86	0	145	48	35	193	1011
				1995	313	36	149	78	0	154	40	26	177	973
				2000	334	26	122	50	0	168	54	27	342	1123
				2001	325	21	112	53	0	179	70	30	411	1201
				2002	328	21	106	52	0	197	68	29	473	1274
				2003	338	17	104	51	0	195	62	26	501	1294
				2007	356	27	82	41	0	219	57	35	667	1484
				Source: Defra Agricultural Census										
	Cattle and sheep numbers	2003 to 2007 number of cattle has fallen by 16% and sheep by 8.5%.	2 No targets	No.	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007					
				Cattle	46523	45964	42588	39203	39982					
				Sheep	114334	110421	106468	108767	105318					
				Source: Defra Agricultural Census										

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source																							
Biodiversity																											
Habitats	Extent and nature of UK BAP habitats																										
	Designated sites – number, extent, condition	Decline of 4.8% in number of sites in target condition from 2003-2008. Target condition is sites in favourable and unfavourable condition improving. National target of 95% of sites to be in favourable or improving condition by 2010	1	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th colspan="2">Percentage of SSSI in target condition</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1<sup>st</sup> April 2003</td> <td>63.5%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1<sup>st</sup> April 2004</td> <td>57.6%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1<sup>st</sup> April 2005</td> <td>60.4%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1<sup>st</sup> April 2006</td> <td>55.0%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1<sup>st</sup> April 2007</td> <td>56.0%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>1<sup>st</sup> April 2008</td> <td>58.7%</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>© Natural England 2008</p>				Percentage of SSSI in target condition		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2003	63.5%		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2004	57.6%		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2005	60.4%		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2006	55.0%		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2007	56.0%		1 <sup>st</sup> April 2008	58.7%	
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1 <sup>st</sup> April 2008	58.7%																										
	Ancient Semi-natural woodland/PAWS	37.1% (8646 hectares) of the total woodland in the North Wessex Downs AONB is Ancient Semi Natural Woodland	1	Woodland Strategy, North Wessex Downs AONB, 2005																							
	Habitat potential maps																										
Species	Presence of UK BAP priority species																										
Historic environment																											
Historic features	WHS		1	WHS Avebury Management Plan has its own monitoring criteria which include aspects of landscape, land management, tourism and biodiversity.																							
	SAM's – number and condition		2	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Stable</th> <th>Declining</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hampshire</td> <td>64%</td> <td>36%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Stable	Declining	Hampshire	64%	36%															
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Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source												
				<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Oxfordshire</td> <td>77%</td> <td>23%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Berkshire</td> <td>76%%</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wiltshire</td> <td>NA</td> <td>NA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Average</td> <td>72%</td> <td>28%</td> </tr> </table>	Oxfordshire	77%	23%	West Berkshire	76%%	24%	Wiltshire	NA	NA	Average	72%	28%
Oxfordshire	77%	23%														
West Berkshire	76%%	24%														
Wiltshire	NA	NA														
Average	72%	28%														
	Listed buildings at risk		5	© English Heritage 2008												
	Condition of historic routeways		5													
Historic landscapes	No. sites/area of historic landscape under ES/CSS agreements		5													
	Registered Parks and Gardens	There are at present 15 registered parks and gardens within the North Wessex Downs AONB.	5	No data was available on their condition. © English Heritage												
	Battlefield sites	There is 1 registered battlefields in North Wessex Downs AONB.	5	No data was available on its condition. © English Heritage												
<b>Geodiversity/soils</b>																
<b>Geodiversity</b>																
	RIGS sites, number, extent and condition		5													
	SSSI with geological importance, number, extent and condition		5													
Soils	Soil classification		5													
	Soil erosion risk areas		5													

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source
	Data on diffuse pollution		5	
Water				
Water quality				
	Extent/condition of SSSI Rivers/Catchments		5	
	Reported pollution incidents (to EA)		5	
	NVZs			
	Catchment sensitive land			
Water levels	Annual river flow data.		5	
	No of flood incidents		5	
	Water licensed for abstraction/uptake of licences		5	
Population				
Population				
	Population no	93,709	2 No target	Census of population 2001, National Statistics, table KS02 – Age Structure
	Population within 10km of boundary	Approx 1million	2 No target	Source: Evidence for Leader Bid, Terra Consult 2007.
	Population density	0.54 people per km <sup>2</sup>	1	
	Age structure			
	Health index			
	Housing			
Air				
Air quality				
	Air quality		5	

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source
	(NETCEN)			
	No of pollution incidents		5	
	Changes to travel to work & travel to services distances		5	
	Changes to traffic volumes		5	
Climate				
Climate				
	Average annual precipitation			
	Average temperatures			
	Area of land under biomass crops			
	Implementation of Green Infrastructure / ecological framework strategies			
Energy	Number, type and capacity of renewable energy projects			
	Change in area under biomass/bio-fuel crops			
	% waste recycled			
Access and recreation				
Access				
	% PRow in favourable condition			

Resource	Baseline data	Key trends	Quality	Key Facts - Data Source
	National Trails, Cycle routes and long distance trails			
	Extent of open access land			
	Forestry Commission land			
	Extent of access to natural green space			
Recreation/ Tourism	Day visits			
	Visitor spend			
Built environment				
Built environment				
	Conservation areas			Local authority records
	Listed buildings at risk			English Heritage and Local Authorities

### Appendix D: SEA Environmental Objectives and Indicators

<b>SEA Environmental Objectives and Indicators</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>		<b>Indicators</b>	
EO 1	To conserve and enhance landscape character and diversity	i 1	Change in land use and management patterns
		i 2	Change in locally distinctive landscape features (incl. condition)
		i 3	Changes in key strategic views
EO 2	To conserve and enhance remoteness and tranquillity	i 4	Proportion of tranquil areas
		i 5	Change in extent of dark night skies
EO 3	To conserve and enhance biodiversity (habitats)	i 6	Change in BAP habitats
		i 7	Change in extent and condition of designated wildlife sites
		i 8	Change in extent and condition of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland/PAWs
EO 4	To conserve and enhance the full range of species which are characteristic of the area	i 9	Changes to populations of priority species and/or associated habitats
EO 5	To conserve and enhance archaeological, historic and cultural features, sites and landscapes and their setting	i 10	% SAMs in favourable condition
		i 11	Number of archaeological sites/buildings at risk
		i 12	Condition of historic routeways
		i 13	No. sites/area of historic landscape under ES/CSS agreements
EO 6	To conserve and enhance geo-diversity and soil quality	i 14	Change in condition of RIGS or SSSIs with geological importance
		i 15	Change in levels of diffuse pollution
		i 16	Use of land, by ALC grade, for new development

EO 7	To safeguard the environmental quality of water resources	i 17	Change in condition/extent of river/catchment SSSI
		i 18	Number of pollution incidents
		i 15	Change in levels of diffuse pollution
EO 8	To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems	i 19	Annual river flows
		i 20	No. of flood incidents
		i 21	Water licensed for abstraction/uptake of licences
EO 9	To safeguard the environmental quality of air	i 22	Air quality data/pollution incidents
		i 23	Changes to distances travelled to work and to key services
		i 24	Changes to traffic volumes
EO 10	To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability to the effects of climate change	i 25	Number, type and capacity of renewable energy projects
		i 26	Change in area under biomass/bio-fuel crops
		i 27	Implementation of Green Infrastructure/ecological framework strategies
EO 11	To maintain and enhance opportunities for sustainable access to, and enjoyment of the countryside	i 28	% PRoW in favourable condition
		i 29	Extent and quality of access to natural green space
EO 12	To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable manner	i 25	Number, type and capacity of renewable energy projects
		i 30	% waste recycled
EO 13	To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	i 31	Listed buildings at risk
		i 32	Housing
EO 14	To safeguard quality of life and human health	i 33	Size and nature of population
		i 4	Proportion of tranquil areas
		i 29	Extent and quality of access to natural green space
		i 23	Changes to distances travelled to work and to key services
EO 15	To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships		

## Appendix E: SEA Assessment Matrix

The assessment matrix provides the mechanism to measure the assumed impact of each of the 19 Management Plan Objectives against the 15 SEA Environmental Objectives.

Key to SEA Environmental Objectives		Key to 6 point scoring system		value
<b>EO 1</b>	To conserve and enhance landscape character and diversity	Strongly supports SEA Objective	++	2
<b>EO 2</b>	To conserve and enhance remoteness and tranquillity	Supports SEA Objective	+	1
<b>EO 3</b>	To conserve and enhance biodiversity (habitats)	Neutral in effect	0	0
<b>EO 4</b>	To conserve and enhance the full range of species which are characteristic of the area	Potentially works against SEA Objective	-	-1
<b>EO 5</b>	To conserve and enhance archaeological, historic and cultural features, sites and landscapes and their setting	Strongly works against SEA Objective	--	-2
<b>EO 6</b>	To conserve and enhance geo-diversity and soil quality	Effects uncertain	?	x
<b>EO 7</b>	To safeguard the environmental quality of water resources			
<b>EO 8</b>	To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems			
<b>EO 9</b>	To safeguard the environmental quality of air			
<b>EO 10</b>	To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vulnerability to the effects of climate change			
<b>EO 11</b>	To maintain and enhance opportunities for sustainable access to, and enjoyment of the countryside			
<b>EO 12</b>	To use natural resources/material assets in a sustainable manner			
<b>EO 13</b>	To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment			
<b>EO 14</b>	To safeguard quality of life and human health			
<b>EO 15</b>	To avoid significant adverse effects between the above interrelationships			

Theme	Management Plan Objective	SEA Objective	EO1	EO2	EO3	EO4	EO5	EO6	EO7	EO8	EO9	EO10	EO11	EO12	EO13	EO14	EO15	% MP Theme score of total SEA Objectives	
LANDSCAPE	1. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs.		++	++	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	0	++	+	++		
	2. To raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs AONB.		++	++	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	+	0	+	+	++		
		→30	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	3	2	4		12
		%→	13.3	13.3	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.7	0	0	6.7	3.3	0	10	6.7	13.2		
		%↓	15.4	21	12.5	20	10	20	22.2	0	0	11.1	5	0	13	10	13.8		
LAND MANAGEMENT	3. To encourage initiatives that facilitate sustainable land management.		++	+	++	++	++	++	++	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	+		

Theme	Management Plan Objective	SEA Objective	EO1	EO2	EO3	EO4	EO5	EO6	EO7	EO8	EO9	EO10	EO11	EO12	EO13	EO14	EO15	% MP Theme	
	4. To encourage diverse and viable agriculture, forestry, horseracing and other land based enterprises that support the delivery of a wide range of public benefits, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the conservation and enhancement of the area's special qualities and features;</li> <li>the provision of access opportunities; and</li> <li>support for local markets.</li> </ul>		++	0	++	++	+	++	+	0	+	++	+	++	+	+	++		
	5. To create a diverse rural skills base to support traditional and emerging land based enterprises that enhance the special qualities and features of the North Wessex Downs.		+	+	+	+	+	+	0	+	0	0	+	+	+	+	+		
		→32	3	1	3	3	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	12.9
		%→	9.4	3.15	9.4	9.4	6.2	9.4	3.15	3.15	3.15	6.2	6.2	9.4	6.2	6.2	6.2	9.4	
		%↓	11.5	5.3	18.75	30	10	30	11.1	20	11.1	11.1	10	20	8.7	10	10.3		
<b>BIODIVERSITY</b>	6. To ensure that the characteristic habitats and species of the North Wessex Downs are conserved and enhanced.		+	0	++	++	0	+	++	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	+		

Theme	Management Plan Objective	SEA Objective	EO1	EO2	EO3	EO4	EO5	EO6	EO7	EO8	EO9	EO10	EO11	EO12	EO13	EO14	EO15	% MP Theme
		→11	1	0	2	2	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	4.4
		%→	9.1	0	18.2	18.2	0	9.1	18.2	9.1	0	9.1	0	0	0	0	9.1	
		%↓	3.8	0	12.5	20	0	10	22.2	20	0	5.6	0	0	0	0	3.4	
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT	7. To enhance the protection, management and setting of the archaeological and historic features, sites and landscapes that characterise the North Wessex Downs.		++	+	0	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	+	+	++	+	++	
	8. To promote an increased level of awareness, use and enjoyment of the historic and cultural fabric of the North Wessex Downs.		++	+	0	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	++	+	++	
	9. To realise the potential value of the Historic Environment data.		++	+	+	0	++	0	0	0	0	0	++	0	++	+	++	
		→37	6	3	1	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	6	3	6	14.9
		%→	16.2	8.1	2.7	0	16.2	0	0	0	0	0	13.6	2.7	16.2	8.1	16.2	
		%↓	23	15.8	6.25	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	25	6.7	26	15	20.7	
	NATURAL RESOURCES	10. To conserve and improve the quality and depth of soils in the North Wessex Downs.		0	0	+	0	0	++	+	+	0	+	0	++	0	0	+
11. To ensure that the water environment, including fisheries, is managed			0	0	+	++	0	+	++	++	0	0	+	++	0	+	+	

Theme	Management Plan Objective	SEA Objective	EO1	EO2	EO3	EO4	EO5	EO6	EO7	EO8	EO9	EO10	EO11	EO12	EO13	EO14	EO15	% MP Theme
	sustainably.																	
		→22	0	0	2	2	0	3	3	3	0	1	1	4	0	1	2	8.8
		%→	0	0	9.1	9.1	0	13.6	13.6	13.6	0	4.55	4.55	18.25	0	4.55	9.1	
		%↓	0	0	12.5	20	0	30	33.3	60	0	5.6	5	26.7	0	5	6.9	
DEVELOPMENT	12. To encourage appropriate development that meets the economic and housing needs of the AONB and surrounding communities.		++	+	+	0	++	0	0	0	+	++	+	+	++	+	++	
	13. To ensure that the formulation and implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs takes full account of the purposes of designation and the character and quality of the AONB and its setting.		++	++	+	0	++	0	+	0	+	+	++	++	++	+	++	
	14. To promote a sustainable rural economy.		+	+	+	0	++	+	0	0	+	++	0	++	++	++	+	
		→54	5	5	5	0	6	1	1	0	3	5	3	5	6	4	5	21.7
		%→	9.3	9.3	9.3	0	11	1.8	1.8	0	5.6	9.3	5.6	9.3	11	7.4	9.3	
		%↓	19.2	26.3	31.25	0	30	10	11.1	0	33.3	27.8	15	33.3	26	20	17.2	

Theme	Management Plan Objective	SEA Objective	EO1	EO2	EO3	EO4	EO5	EO6	EO7	EO8	EO9	EO10	EO11	EO12	EO13	EO14	EO15	% MP Theme Score of
COMMUNITIES	15. To enable vibrant communities to develop sustainably in the North Wessex Downs by stimulating economic prosperity and local culture.		+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	++	++	+	+	++	++	+	
	16. To encourage an enhanced sense of ownership and respect for the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs amongst local people		+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	++	+	
	17. To provide transport that is more sustainable and meets the needs of residents and visitors of the North Wessex Downs.		++	++	0	0	+	0	0	0	++	++	++	0	+	++	++	
		→40	4	4	0	0	3	0	0	0	4	5	4	2	4	6	4	16.1
		%→	10	10	0	0	7.5	0	0	0	10	12.5	10	5	10	15	10	
		%↓	15.4	21	0	0	15	0	0	0	44.4	27.8	20	13.3	17.4	30	13.8	
LEISURE & TOURISM	18. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and enjoy the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs while minimising the impacts of visitors.		++	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	+	+	++	0	+	+	++	
	19. To promote a recreation and tourism sector that is well managed,		+	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	+	++	0	+	+	++	

Theme	Management Plan Objective ⬇	SEA Objective ⬇	EO1	EO2	EO3	EO4	EO5	EO6	EO7	EO8	EO9	EO10	EO11	EO12	EO13	EO14	EO15	% MP Theme score of
	sustainable and adding value to the local economy whilst respecting the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs.																	
		→23	3	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	4	0	2	2	4	9.2
		%→	13	8.7	4.3	4.3	4.3	0	0	0	4.3	8.7	17.5	0	8.7	8.7	17.5	
		%↓	11.5	10.5	6.25	10	5	0	0	0	11.1	11.1	20	0	8.7	10	13.8	
<b>Total score for SEA Objectives 249↑</b>			26	19	16	10	20	10	9	5	9	18	20	15	23	20	29	
<b>% of total SEA Objective score per SEA Objective→</b>			10.5	7.6	6.4	4	8	4	3.6	2	3.6	7.2	8	6	9.2	8	11.7	

## References

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<sup>1</sup> European Directive 2001/42/EC “on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment”, known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive.

<sup>2</sup> The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (Statutory Instrument 2004 No.1633)

<sup>3</sup> Guidance to English AONB Partnerships and Boards on Strategic Environmental Assessment of AONB Management Plans, Natural England April 2007

<sup>4</sup> A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: London, ISBN 1851127887 September 2005

<sup>5</sup> North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-14 Consultation Draft, Council of Partners, March 2009

## **North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan Consultation Appropriate Assessment Baseline**

### **Introduction**

The process of undertaking a review of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan includes a requirement to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the impact of policies contained in the revised Management Plan on any European designated sites within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The European sites identified are:

- Hackpen Hill SAC - (Oxfordshire)
- River Lambourn SAC - (West Berkshire)
- Little Wittenham SAC - (Oxfordshire)
- Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC - (West Berkshire)
- Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC - (West Berkshire)

The policies of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan will be implemented in the context of pressure for increased development, as directed by the Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks which are, themselves, subject to Appropriate Assessment. The revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan does not propose any development or expansion of the built environment; its policies promote conservation and sustainable use of the natural environment and, if implemented, will have a positive effect on the five European sites.

### **Analysis of the Management Plan**

Although the revised Management Plan encourages countryside recreation, policies encourage environmentally sustainable access, minimising car use wherever possible and encouraging visits to countryside close to home. There are no policies in the plan designed to promote or increase visits to the European Protected Sites. Each site is detailed in Appendix A (attached) and assessed against the policies of the revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan.

### **Conclusion**

The policies (alone and in combination) in the revised Management Plan are considered to have no adverse effects on the European Protected Sites for a number of reasons, both general and site specific. It is determined that a full appropriate assessment of the revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan is not needed.

### **General Issues**

The purpose of the North Wessex Downs AONB is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB. Policies and actions relating to this purpose will have only positive or neutral effects on the European Protected Sites. These include policies to support:

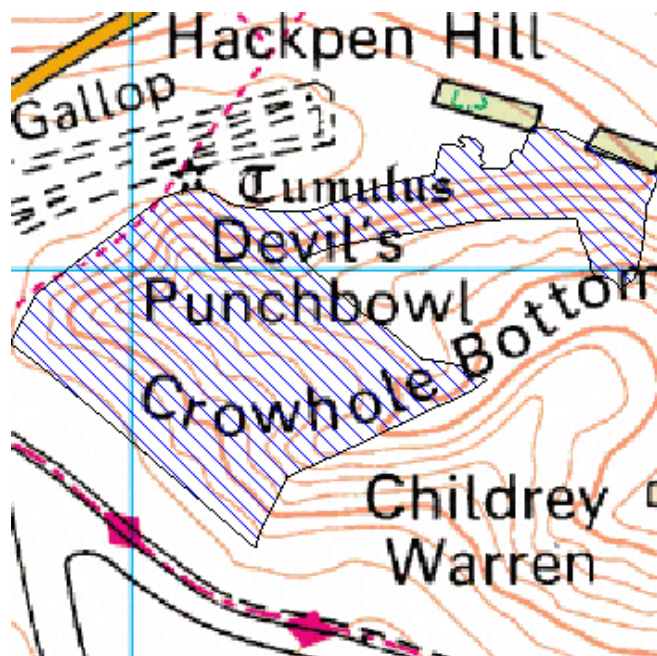
- The delivery of BAP targets
- The management and protection of all designated wildlife sites and European protected species to maintain favourable status
- Monitoring of the impact of visitor pressure and climate change on key habitats and species.
- Encouraging non-car use – including walking, cycling, horse riding
- Encouraging people to contribute to the area's conservation

Minimal air pollution is a Key Environmental Condition to support site integrity at all but one of the sites (Little Wittenham).

Although the revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan encourages countryside recreation, its policies encourage environmentally sustainable access, minimising car use wherever possible and encouraging visits to countryside close to home. There are no policies in the plan designed to encourage increasing number of visitors or visits to the European Protected Sites.

### **Site Specific Issues**

#### **1. Hackpen Hill, Vale of White Horse**



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The site, which is in private ownership, has a variety of aspects and gradients, with the grassland dominated by red fescue *Festuca rubra* and upright brome *Bromus erectus*. The herb flora includes a significant population of early gentian *Gentianella anglica*, as well as autumn gentian *Gentianella amarella*, fragrant orchid *Gymnadenia conopsea*, frog orchid *Coeloglossum viride*, horseshoe vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*, common rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium* and dwarf thistle *Cirsium acaule*.

#### Qualifying Feature

Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*)

#### Environmental status and Trends

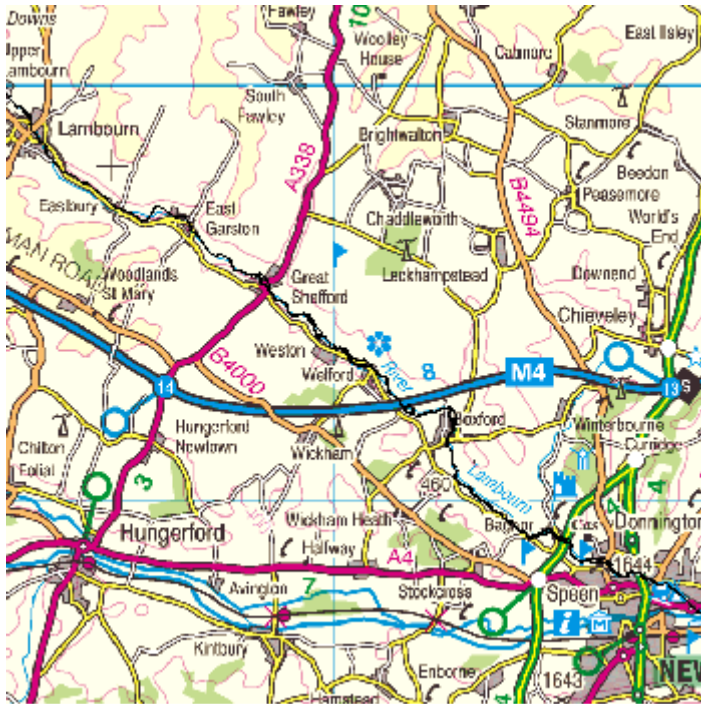
Hackpen Hill is an extensive area of unimproved chalk grassland in the Downs. A grazing regime which maintains suitable conditions for early gentian is supported financially through Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) funding under a Natural England management agreement. Nevertheless, the site is subject to periodic damage by rapid fluctuations in rabbit numbers. Means of reducing the threat from this source are being investigated.

This area is a designated area of Open Access Land under Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and subject to the right of access in perpetuity. There are also HLS access measures in place that connect the site to the surrounding public rights of way network, promoted through Natural England's Countryside Walks website as well as the County Council's Access land web-pages. Under the Leisure and Tourism section of the North Wessex Downs Management Plan access land is mentioned in the context of its value in increasing people's enjoyment of the countryside. Hackpen therefore forms a part of the countryside access resource to be promoted.

#### Conservation Objectives

To maintain, in favourable condition, the unimproved calcareous grassland, with particular reference to semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (CG3 & 5 grasslands).

## 2. River Lambourn



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The River Lambourn is considered to have one of the least modified catchments in southern England and has one of the lowest levels of abstraction. The majority of its length is in private ownership with limited or no public access

### Qualifying Feature

Bullhead fish *Cottus Gobio*

### Environmental status and Trends

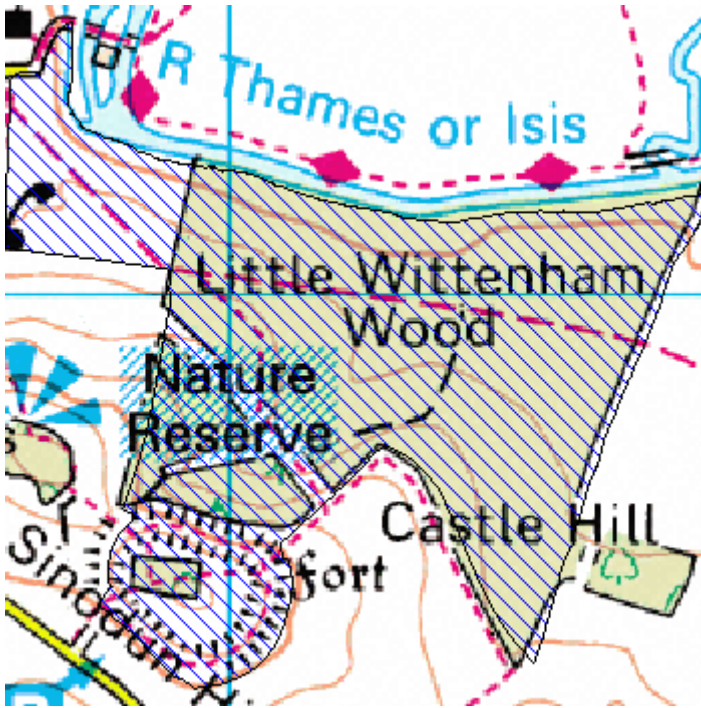
Water quality, water quantity and habitat quality are all considered to be high. However, localised higher water nutrient levels and siltation problems are associated with sewage treatment works though phosphate nutrient levels are being reduced by phosphate stripping. There are issues associated with diffuse pollution from agricultural land. Measures to reduce these problems are being investigated through the AMP5 water company investment programme.

River Lambourn is in unfavourable condition. Natural England and the Environment Agency have produced an agreed protocol for dealing with issues affecting the river.

### Conservation Objectives

To reach unfavourable recovering status for habitats for the population of Bullhead fish *Cottus Gobio*

### 3. Little Wittenham, South Oxfordshire



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The site is managed by the Northmoor Trust as a nature reserve. The areas which are most important to the population of great crested newts have restricted access which is designed to prevent conflicts between the visiting public, the newts and their habitat.

The revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan contains no proposals to encourage visits to Little Wittenham SAC.

#### Qualifying Feature

Great Crested Newt - *Triturus cristatus*

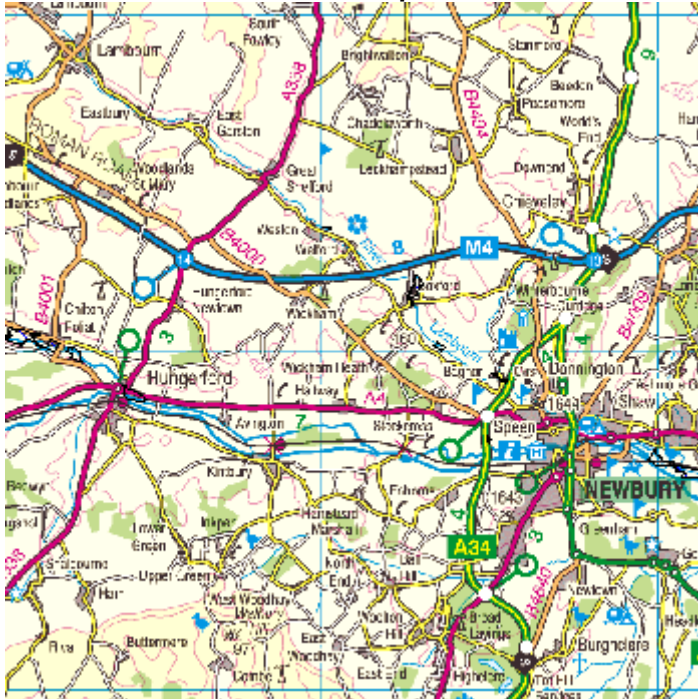
#### Environmental status and Trends

The site is comprised of a single unit which was considered in favourable condition at last assessment in August 2004

#### Conservation Objectives

Subject to natural change, to maintain in favourable condition the habitat for the Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*.

#### 4. Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain



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The site is comprised of inland water bodies (standing water, running water) (1%) Bogs; Marshes; Water fringed vegetation. Fens (59%) Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (40%).

The revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan contains no proposals to encourage visits to the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC.

#### Qualifying Feature

Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana*

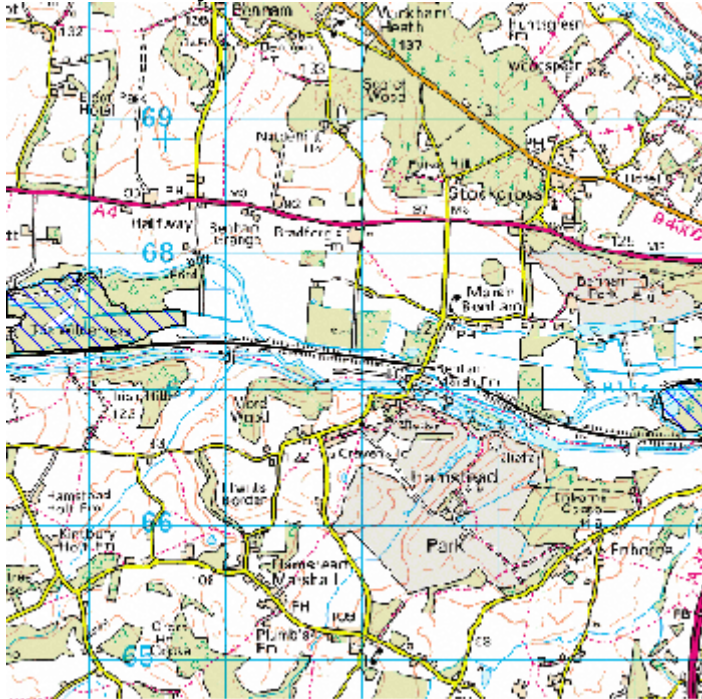
#### Environmental status and Trends

Within the entire site, current management practises are maintaining the required open, unshaded conditions. The management of one component part is supported by Countryside Stewardship grant-aid and two units are part of Higher Level Stewardship agreements (South East region only). *Vertigo moulinsiana* is critically dependent upon an adequate supply of high quality water. The Environment Agency and Natural England are working together to ensure that all parts of the site have appropriate water levels, through measures such as the production of water level management plans and regular monitoring of water quality.

#### Conservation Objectives

The cluster of sites selected in the Kennet and Lambourn valleys supports one of the most extensive known populations of Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* in the UK and is one of two sites representing the species in the south-western part of its range in the important chalk stream habitat. Integrity of the population is being maintained by taking measures, including habitat creation, to safeguard populations. The habitat occupied at this site differs from the Fenland sites in East Anglia in that it is predominantly reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* swamp or tall sedges at the river margins, in ditches and in depressions in wet meadows.

## 5. Kennet Valley Alderwoods



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These, the largest fragments of alder-ash woodland on the Kennet floodplain, lie on alluvium overlain by a shallow layer of moderately calcareous peat. The wettest areas are dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa* over tall herbs, sedges and reeds, but dryer patches include a base-rich woodland flora with much dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and also herb-Paris *Paris quadrifolia*. The occurrence of the latter is unusual, as it is more typically associated with ancient woodland, whereas the evidence suggests that these stands have largely developed over the past century.

The revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan contains no proposals to encourage increased access to the Kennet Valley Alderwoods SAC.

### Qualifying Feature

Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) \*  
Priority feature

### Environmental status and Trends

The conservation interest of the site is critically dependent upon maintenance of constantly high groundwater levels. There are, however, no known threats to groundwater levels. The site is subject to low levels of intervention and natural processes are allowed to prevail to a large extent. A WGS scheme is in place which favours the maintenance of the characteristic alder woodland composition.

### Conservation Objectives

To maintain habitats in favourable condition.

Appendix A

**Special Areas of Conservation within the North Wessex Downs AONB assessed for significant adverse effects of the revised North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan**

Name	Location	Area (ha)	Qualifying Features	Comments on Nature Conservation Importance	Key Environmental Conditions to Support Site Integrity	Possible Impacts Arising From Plan	Risk of Significant Effect?	Other Plans To Be Considered in Combination	Risk of Significant Effect In Combination?
Hackpen Hill	Vale of White Horse District Oxfordshire	35.83	<b>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies: on calcareous substrates</b> ( <i>Festuco-Brometalia</i> )	Hackpen Hill is an extensive area of unimproved chalk grassland in the Downs. The site has a variety of aspects and gradients, with the grassland dominated by red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i> and upright brome <i>Bromus erectus</i> . The herb flora includes a significant population of early gentian <i>Gentianella anglica</i> , as well as autumn gentian <i>Gentianella amarella</i> , fragrant orchid	A grazing regime which maintains suitable conditions for early gentian is supported financially through Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) funding under a Natural England management agreement. Nevertheless, the site is subject to periodic damage by rapid fluctuations in rabbit numbers. Means of reducing the threat from this source are being	This area is a designated area of Open Access Land under Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and subject to the right of access in perpetuity. There are also HLS access measures in place that connect the site to the surrounding public rights of way network, promoted through Natural England's Countryside Walks website as well as the County Council's Access land web-pages. Under the Leisure and Tourism section of the North Wessex Downs Management Plan, access land is mentioned in the context of its value in increasing people's enjoyment of the	No	Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF).	No Although RSS and LDFs propose housing growth, they will be subject to Appropriate Assessment themselves, and the revised Management Plan policies specifically encourage environmentally sustainable access.

				<p><i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>, frog orchid  <i>Coeloglossum viride</i>, horseshoe vetch  <i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>, common rock-rose  <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i> and dwarf thistle <i>Cirsium acaule</i></p>	investigated.	<p>countryside. Hackpen therefore forms a part of the countryside access resource to be promoted. But the Management Plan only promote sustainable access.</p>			
River Lambourn	West Berkshire	27.27	<p><b>Bullhead</b>  <b>Cottus</b>  <b>Gobio</b></p>	<p>The Lambourn represents <b>Bullhead Cottus gobio</b> (a bottom-living fish) populations inhabiting chalk streams in central southern England. Good water quality, coarse sediments and extensive beds of submerged plants again provide excellent habitat for the species. The community is characterised by pond water-</p>	<p>The River Lambourn is considered to have one of the least modified catchments in southern England and has one of the lowest levels of abstraction. Water quality, water quantity and habitat quality are all considered to be high. However, localised higher water nutrient levels and siltation problems are</p>	<p>No negative impacts. The plan actively promotes management of sites to meet conservation objectives.</p>	No	<p>Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF).</p>	<p>No Although RSS and LDFs propose housing growth, they will be subject to Appropriate Assessment themselves, and the revised Management Plan policies specifically encourage environmentally sustainable access.</p>

				<p>crowfoot  <i>Ranunculus peltatus</i> in spring-fed headwater streams (winterbournes), stream water-crowfoot  <i>R. penicillatus</i> ssp.  <i>pseudofluitans</i> in the middle reaches, and river water-crowfoot  <i>R. fluitans</i> in the downstream sections.  <i>Ranunculus</i> is typically associated in the upper and middle reaches with <i>Callitriche obtusangula</i> and <i>C. platycarpa</i>.                  (Source: Joint Nature Conservation Committee)</p>	<p>associated with sewage treatment works though phosphate nutrient levels are being reduced by phosphate stripping. There are issues associated with diffuse pollution from agricultural land. Measures to reduce these problems are being investigated through the AMP5 water company investment programme. River Lambourn is in unfavourable condition. Natural England and the Environment Agency have produced an agreed protocol for dealing with issues affecting the river.</p>				
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Little Wittenham	South Oxfordshire District Oxfordshire	68.76	<b>Great crested newts</b> <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	One of the best-studied great crested newt sites in the UK, Little Wittenham comprises two main ponds set in a predominantly woodland context (broad-leaved and conifer woodland is present). There are also areas of grassland, with sheep grazing and arable bordering the woodland to the south and west. The River Thames is just to the north of the site, and a hill fort to the south. Large numbers of great crested newts <i>Triturus cristatus</i> have been recorded in the two main ponds, and research has revealed that	Little Wittenham is managed primarily for nature conservation and environmental education. The great crested newt population has been the subject of intensive research and ongoing management includes the provision of new ponds and the creation of hibernation sites. The great crested newt population appears to be relatively stable and is not considered to be under any known threat. (Source: Natura 2000 Standard Data Form – Joint Nature Conservation	No negative impacts. The plan actively promotes management of sites to meet conservation objectives.	No	Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF).	No Although RSS and LDFs propose housing growth, they will be subject to Appropriate Assessment themselves, and the revised Management Plan policies specifically encourage environmentally sustainable access.
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				they range several hundred metres into the woodland blocks.	Committee [JNCC]).				
Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain	West Berkshire	114.47	<b>Desmoulin's whorl snail</b> <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>	The majority of the Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> populations within the site are not considered to be under threat. Two of the component parts of the site lie immediately adjacent to the Newbury bypass. The road design has incorporated features to reduce possible impacts, such as spray and run-off. These measures are intended to prevent direct damage or habitat change to populations adjacent to the road. Monitoring is in place to determine the	The cluster of sites selected in the Kennet and Lambourn valleys supports one of the most extensive known populations of Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> in the UK and is one of two sites representing the species in the south-western part of its range in the important chalk stream habitat. Integrity of the population is being maintained by taking measures, including habitat creation, to safeguard populations.	No negative impacts. The plan actively promotes management of sites to meet conservation objectives.	No	Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks (LDF).	No Although RSS and LDFs propose housing growth, they will be subject to Appropriate Assessment themselves, and the revised Management Plan policies specifically encourage environmentally sustainable access.

			<p>status of the populations potentially most at risk from impacts arising from the new road. The results of monitoring to date indicate that conditions for the species are favourable.</p> <p>Within the entire site, current management practises are maintaining the required open, unshaded conditions. The management of one component part is supported by Countryside Stewardship grant-aid and two units are part of Higher Level Stewardship agreements (South East region only). <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> is critically</p>	<p>The habitat occupied at this site differs from the Fenland sites in East Anglia in that it is predominantly reed sweet-grass <i>Glyceria maxima</i> swamp or tall sedges at the river margins, in ditches and in depressions in wet meadows.</p>				
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				<p>dependent upon an adequate supply of high quality water. The Environment Agency and Natural England are working together to ensure that all parts of the site have appropriate water levels, through measures such as the production of water level management plans and regular monitoring of water quality. (Source: Natura 2000 Standard Data Form – Joint Nature Conservation Committee [JNCC]).</p>					
Kennet Valley Alderwoods	Bath and North East Somerset and West Berkshire	56.77	<b>Alluvial forests</b> with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-</i>	These, the largest fragments of alder-ash woodland on the Kennet floodplain, lie on	The conservation interest of the site is critically dependent upon maintenance of	No negative impacts. The plan actively promotes management of sites to meet conservation objectives.	No	Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) and Local Development Frameworks	No Although RSS and LDFs propose housing growth, they will be subject

			<p><i>Padion</i>,  <i>Alnion</i>  <i>incanae</i>,  <i>Salicion</i>  <i>albae</i>)                  * Priority                  feature</p>	<p>alluvium overlain by a shallow layer of moderately calcareous peat. The wettest areas are dominated by alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> over tall herbs, sedges and reeds, but dryer patches include a base-rich woodland flora with much dog's mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> and also herb-Paris <i>Paris quadrifolia</i>. The occurrence of the latter is unusual, as it is more typically associated with ancient woodland, whereas the evidence suggests that these stands have largely developed over the past century.</p>	<p>constantly high groundwater levels. There are, however, no known threats to groundwater levels. The site is subject to low levels of intervention and natural processes are allowed to prevail to a large extent. A WGS scheme is in place which favours the maintenance of the characteristic alder woodland composition. (Source: Natura 2000 Standard Data Form – Joint Nature Conservation Committee [JNCC]).</p>			<p>(LDF).</p>	<p>to Appropriate Assessment themselves, and the revised Management Plan policies specifically encourage environmentally sustainable access.</p>
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<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Financial Performance Report - Quarter 1</b>	<b>Item 08</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	01 July 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1847	

**Purpose of Report:** To make Executive aware of the latest financial position of the Council.

**Recommended Action:** To note the report.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** To ensure that Executive is aware of the financial and performance issues facing the Council.

**Other options considered:** None

**Key background documentation:** Budget monitoring returns held in Accountancy

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Theme:

**CPT13 - Value for Money**

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Keith Chopping - (0118) 983 2057
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	kchopping@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	24 August 2009

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Andy Walker
<b>Job Title:</b>	Head of Finance
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### **Implications**

**Policy:** None

**Financial:** As set out in the report

**Personnel:** None

**Legal/Procurement:** None

**Property:** None

**Risk Management:** None

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** None.

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:</p> <p>The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

## Executive Summary

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the first report brought to Executive as part of the 2009/10 budget monitoring programme. Reports will be presented to Executive on a quarterly basis throughout the 2009/10 financial year.
- 1.2 The budget monitoring timetable is designed to give Executive financial information as quickly as practicably possible after the end of the month, whilst ensuring that the financial information is robust. Every month, budget holders are asked to report their forecast for their individual cost centre for the end of the financial year, taking into account known changes to their service, and using historical financial information where useful. The Accountancy section and Senior Management then review these predictions before they are finalised in this report.
- 1.3 As at the end month 3, the Council is forecasting an overspend of £580k for the 2009/10 financial year. Further detail is provided in appendix 1. Appendices 2a to 2d highlight reasons for significant variances from budget by each directorate.

### 2. Proposals

- 2.1 For Executive to note this report

### 3. Conclusion

- 3.1 The current position is a forecast overspend of £580k at the end of the 2009/10 financial year.

## Executive Report

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The budget monitoring timetable has been designed to ensure that decision makes receive robust financial information as soon as practicably possible after the end of each month. Budget holders are asked to forecast their year end position on a monthly basis, and these forecasts are then reviewed by senior management before being presented to Executive.

### 2. The current forecast position

- 2.1 At present, the Council is forecasting an overspend of £580k.
- 2.2 The directorate with the most significant overspend prediction is Environment, with a prediction of £391k overspent by the end of the financial year. Further analysis of this is provided in appendix 2c. The majority of this predicted overspend relates to a forecasted loss against income targets, primarily from planning and on street parking enforcement income. The Community Services directorate is forecasting an overspend of £198k, and commentary on this is presented in appendix 2b.

## Appendices

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Appendix 1 – Summary of forecasts by service and directorate  
Appendix 2a to 2d – Directorate commentary

## Consultees

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### Local Stakeholders:

**Officers Consulted:** Management Board; Corporate Board

**Trade Union:**

**2009/10 Budget Monitoring  
Period 03**

**Appendix 1**

**Amended Consolidated Replies**

	<b>Cum. Budget to 30/06/2009</b>	<b>Cum Exp/Inc to 30/06/2009</b>	<b>Actual Variance to date</b>	<b>Outstanding Commitment for the year</b>	<b>Expenditure Budget for 2009/10</b>	<b>Under/Over</b>	<b>Forecast Expenditure</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT	71,880,359	63,830,864	-8,049,495	743,003	-567,010	0	-567,010
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CYP	61,513	45,926	-15,587	3,427	295,060	0	295,060
CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONING & QUALITY	246,605	82,601	-164,003	7,409	1,229,490	-23,000	1,206,490
EDUCATION SERVICES	4,389,573	-2,682,645	-7,072,218	3,504,604	13,808,220	-17,142	13,791,078
CHILDREN'S SERVICES	2,124,446	2,345,623	221,177	638,597	11,557,400	-45,000	11,512,400
CUSTOMER SERVICES	211,242	245,749	34,507	2,923	996,920	34,430	1,031,350
<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE</b>	<b>78,913,738</b>	<b>63,868,119</b>	<b>-15,045,620</b>	<b>4,899,962</b>	<b>27,320,080</b>	<b>-50,712</b>	<b>27,269,368</b>
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - CS	109,504	-1,065,463	-1,174,967	1,455	421,390	-200,000	221,390
HOUSING & PERFORMANCE	813,459	976,767	163,308	96,708	2,189,270	48,000	2,237,270
OLDER PEOPLES SERVICES	3,492,069	4,122,732	630,664	491,349	19,856,040	73,572	19,929,612
COMMUNITY CARE & WELL BEING	2,154,581	4,659,420	2,504,839	72,210	13,467,040	274,344	13,741,384
CULTURAL SERVICES	1,087,733	1,005,813	-81,920	374,446	4,546,760	2,650	4,549,410
SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION	-15,871	24,590	40,461	1,040	18,400	0	18,400
<b>COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE</b>	<b>7,641,473</b>	<b>9,723,858</b>	<b>2,082,385</b>	<b>1,037,207</b>	<b>40,498,900</b>	<b>198,566</b>	<b>40,697,466</b>
CORPORATE DIRECTOR - ENV	-199,361	37,765	237,126	18	-68,080	0	-68,080
COUNTRYSIDE & ENVIRONMENT	2,821,339	3,532,464	711,125	309,466	16,870,380	9,400	16,879,780
HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT	1,495,331	1,645,469	150,138	3,444,204	10,182,020	250,000	10,432,020
PLANNING AND TRADING STANDARDS	278,185	632,483	354,298	47,636	2,218,840	132,000	2,350,840
<b>ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE</b>	<b>4,395,494</b>	<b>5,848,181</b>	<b>1,452,687</b>	<b>3,801,324</b>	<b>29,203,160</b>	<b>391,400</b>	<b>29,594,560</b>
CHIEF EXECUTIVE	158,296	136,361	-21,935	1,602	662,500	0	662,500
HUMAN RESOURCES	307,241	123,523	-183,718	85,764	1,252,870	-5,000	1,247,870
ICT	525,551	813,218	287,667	210,253	2,853,670	20,000	2,873,670
LEGAL & ELECTORAL	167,149	254,832	87,683	32,712	887,530	30,000	917,530
POLICY AND COMMUNICATION	781,624	714,922	-66,702	200,285	3,804,800	-8,940	3,795,860
PROPERTY	169,428	506,040	336,612	259,308	1,383,680	0	1,383,680
BENEFITS AND EXCHEQUER	-3,189,764	-2,887,254	302,511	72,696	1,276,550	0	1,276,550
FINANCE	508,788	98,952	-409,836	57,671	2,785,090	4,200	2,789,290
<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>-571,686</b>	<b>-239,406</b>	<b>332,280</b>	<b>920,290</b>	<b>14,906,690</b>	<b>40,260</b>	<b>14,946,950</b>
<b>LEVIES AND INTEREST</b>	<b>-2,760,125</b>	<b>-3,150,029</b>	<b>-389,904</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>957,730</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>957,730</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>87,618,895</b>	<b>76,050,723</b>	<b>-11,568,172</b>	<b>10,658,784</b>	<b>112,886,560</b>	<b>579,514</b>	<b>113,466,074</b>

## **Q1 2009/10 - BUDGET MONITORING FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE DIRECTORATE**

The quarter 1 forecasting is predicting a Directorate underspend of £51k at year end. Savings of £45k are identified in Children's Services, savings of £17k in Education and £23k in Children's Commissioning and Quality but against these there is an overspend of £34k predicted in Customer Services.

### **Children's Services**

Savings have been identified in In-house Fostering Services due to there being fewer children in foster care than budgeted for the first couple of months of this financial year. However, approximately 7 to 8 "new" children have come into care in June / July. The predicted saving does include some flexibility for further new placements later in the year.

### **Education**

It is expected that there will be a pressure on Home to School Transport costs but currently it is too early to quantify this.

### **Customer Services**

An overspend of £34k is predicted because the establishment is currently stable and therefore does not allow for the achievement of the Managed Vacancy target.

### **Children's Commissioning and Quality**

The underspend is likely to reduce as outstanding invoices from Family Group conferencing Co-ordinators are received. It also includes an underspend for serious case reviews which will be used should any such reviews become necessary following death or significant harm to a child.

### **Proposed Action**

Limitations have been placed on staff recruitment and other expenditure, with all commitments having to be agreed at Head of Service level as part of the Directorate Budget Action Plan.

The main high risk or volatile budgets are being closely monitored in the following areas:

Children's Placements (in both Education and Social Care)

Recoupment

Early Years funding to the Private, Voluntary & Independent Sector

School Meals

Home to School Transport costs

Most of the high risk areas are within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). This is a ring fenced grant, and any under or over spends against this grant are carried forward and are not against Council Funds. The DSG is monitored through the School's Funding Forum.

**COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT  
BUDGET MONITORING: Q1 2009/10**

The Directorate is reporting a projected overall position of £198,566 overspent at quarter 1

**Emerging Issues**

Monthly budget monitoring processes are aligned with savings monitoring, which is particularly important in relation to progress of the adult social care system transformation programme. Changing in-house home care to focus on reablement will realise long term benefits, but has been slower to achieve initial efficiency targets. This is largely due to the need to ensure a well managed transition of clients to external providers to minimise disruption to individuals. This process is being carefully overseen by managers and our specialist contracts team.

As demand on resources increase across the whole health and social care economy, pressures are emerging in learning disability services as a result of NHS reviews of existing clients. Across Berkshire, the impact of 'continuing care' reviews are reducing the allocation of NHS contributions and increasing the social care funded elements of individual care packages.

A new approach to managing risk in adult social care budgets is being implemented in 09/10, with some of this year's investment monies being held centrally by the Corporate Director, to be deployed as specific pressures emerge.

**Emerging budget pressures**

The most significant budget pressure is in Learning Disability services and is largely attributable to the impact of continuing care reviews as outlined above.

In Older Persons Services there is some pressure on home care budgets due to initial savings anticipated through the move to a reablement service being slower to realise than expected.

**Proposed action**

The impact of continuing care reviews is a problem for adult social care across the whole of Berkshire and is being discussed with the PCTs.

Adult social care system transformation is a formally managed programme, through which risks can be identified, highlighted and managed at an early stage.

The Directorate will continue with stringent monitoring and continuous review of existing spending commitments.

**ENVIRONMENT SERVICE GROUPING  
DIRECTOR'S REPORT  
BUDGET MONITORING: Q1 2009/10**

### **Emerging Budget Pressures**

The forecast outturn for the Directorate at the end of quarter 1 is £29.6 million, a forecast overspend of £391,000 which is due to two main factors:

1. Income from development control is significantly below budget. Vacancies are being actively managed and some staffing savings have been achieved, but these are not sufficient to meet both the shortfall in income and the managed vacancy target, leading to a forecast overspend of £150,000. The reduction in income is only partly because of an overall reduction in the number of applications, the majority of the shortfall arises as a result of fewer major applications. The reduction in workload is not therefore in line with the reduction in income.
2. There is a further forecast pressure of £150,000 because parking income is also forecast to be below target. This is mainly due to income from on street parking enforcement being lower than expected in the first quarter.

### **Emerging Issues**

There are potential costs arising from planning appeals and the unavoidable use of consultants as part of the Development Control process. In recent years these costs have been covered from salary savings and additional income, so this may add to the predicted overspend.

### **Proposed actions**

A review of workload, income targets and potential savings is being undertaken in development control. Similarly, a full review of parking income is underway. Following consultation with the Environment Portfolio Members a cross directorate action plan with options for reducing the overspend will be brought forward.

2009/10

Chief Executive

Quarter 1

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE**  
**BUDGET MONITORING: Q1 2009/10**

**Emerging issues**

Nothing of significance. The recession is continuing to suppress Land Charges income and this is showing an anticipated £30k deficit at outturn.

**Emerging budget pressures**

Pressures exist in Land Charges and ICT although savings are being identified elsewhere within the Directorate. It is anticipated that the predicted outturn position of an overspend of £40k will be bought down. Good progress is being made in delivering the Managed Vacancy Factor and securing the required savings for 2009/10.

**Proposed action**

Nothing specific other than continued monitoring and ongoing rigour regarding spending and income generation.

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Capital Programme Monitoring Report</b>	<b>Item 9</b>
	<b>Month 3 - Financial Year 2009/10</b>	
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1850	

**Purpose of Report:** To report the progress on the Capital Programme for the first three months of Financial Year 2009/10.

**Recommended Action:** To note the report and any remedial action that is being taken.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** NA - Information report

**Other options considered:** None

**Key background documentation:** Capital Strategy and Programme 2009/10 – 2013/14

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priorities:

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic recession** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce West Berkshire’s carbon footprint** – to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in West Berkshire and contribute to waste management, green travel, transportation and energy efficiency

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPT1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPT2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPT3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPT5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPT10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPT13 - Value for Money**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:  
 Ensuring the Council's available Capital Financing is utilised in the most efficient manner in order to maximise the benefit to the West Berkshire community and in line with the agreed Council Themes and Outcomes.

**Portfolio Member Details**

<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Keith Chopping - (0118) 983 2057
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	kchopping@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	22 July 2009

**Contact Officer Details**

<b>Name:</b>	Simon Freeman
<b>Job Title:</b>	Finance Manager
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519249
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	sfreeman@westberks.gov.uk

**Implications**

**Policy:** The Capital Programme is developed and approved to align with the Council's policies and priorities.

**Financial:** Budget Managers report that the overall Capital Programme is predicted to outturn within the set budget by year end.

**Personnel:** None

**Legal/Procurement:** None

**Property:** None

**Risk Management:** The Capital Programme represents a significant element of Council expenditure, which should be monitored and controlled accordingly.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** Not required

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# Executive Report

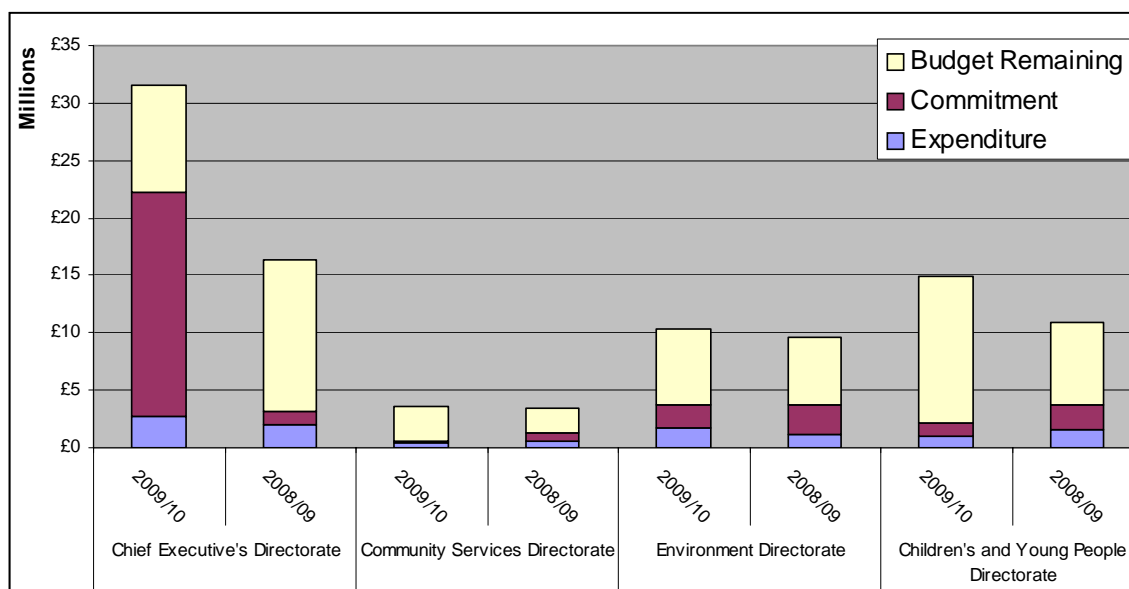
## 1. Background

1.1 This report highlights the progress that has been made with implementing the Council’s Capital Programme for 2009/10. It relates to the first three months of the financial year and encompasses the following:

- a budget summary for all projects by Directorate (Appendix A);
- summary reports from each of the Directorates (Appendices B1-B4);
- a summary of the Asset Disposal Programme (Appendix C).

## 2. Summary of Performance

2.1 The total budget for 2009/10, which includes funding carried over from 2008/09, is currently set at £60.229m. To date (30<sup>th</sup> June 2009) £5.852m (9.72%) has been spent compared to £5.320m (12.04%) at the same period last year. A further £22.711m has been committed (orders placed on the Council’s procurement system, but not yet delivered and paid for).



2.2 Each Directorate has provided a summary report, and these are at Appendices B1-B4.

2.3 Attached at Appendix C is the current Asset Disposal and Acquisition summary and programme.

## Appendices

- Appendix A - Capital Budget Monitoring - Summarised by Service Area.
- Appendix B - Directorate Reports for Capital Programme to Period 3.
- Appendix C – Asset Disposal and Acquisition Summary as at 30 June 2009.

**Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** Not consulted

**Officers Consulted:** All Capital Budget Managers, Corporate Board

**Trade Union:** Not consulted

**West Berkshire Capital Programme: 2009/10 Budget Monitoring**

**Appendix A**

**Month 3 - period ending 30th June 2009 - Summary by Service Area**

02/07/2009

Service Area	Budget for 2009-10	Expenditure 2009-10 to date	Committed (order placed, not yet paid)	Budget Remaining to be Committed 2009-10	%age of Budget remaining to be committed
<b><u>Chief Executive's Directorate</u></b>					
Property	1,450,530	436,411	595,609	418,510	28.85%
Special Projects	20,977,830	2,067,237	18,852,148	58,444	0.28%
ICT	1,143,040	115,742	43,993	983,305	86.03%
Finance	7,616,020	62,020	0	7,554,000	99.19%
Policy & Communication	326,250	27,403	0	298,847	91.60%
<b>Total for Chief Executive's Directorate</b>	<b>31,513,670</b>	<b>2,708,814</b>	<b>19,491,751</b>	<b>9,313,106</b>	<b>29.55%</b>
<b><u>Community Services Directorate</u></b>					
Community Care	85,420	0	0	85,420	100.00%
Housing & Performance	2,477,480	284,986	23,773	2,168,721	87.54%
Cultural Services	1,010,890	90,055	136,789	784,046	77.56%
<b>Total for Community Services Directorate</b>	<b>3,573,790</b>	<b>375,041</b>	<b>160,561</b>	<b>3,038,187</b>	<b>85.01%</b>
<b><u>Environment Directorate</u></b>					
Countryside & Environment	909,850	413,656	126,302	369,892	40.65%
Highways & Transport	9,326,360	1,337,099	1,866,033	6,123,228	65.66%
Planning & Trading Standards	38,190	2,974	0	35,216	92.21%
<b>Total for Environment Directorate</b>	<b>10,274,400</b>	<b>1,753,729</b>	<b>1,992,335</b>	<b>6,528,336</b>	<b>63.54%</b>
<b><u>Children's and Young People Directorate</u></b>					
Education Services	13,415,900	923,699	970,314	11,521,887	85.88%
Children's Services	1,292,240	91,165	95,695	1,105,380	85.54%
Customer Services	159,090	0	0	159,090	100.00%
<b>Total for Children's and Young People Directorate</b>	<b>14,867,230</b>	<b>1,014,864</b>	<b>1,066,010</b>	<b>12,786,356</b>	<b>86.00%</b>
<b>Council Totals</b>	<b>60,229,090</b>	<b>5,852,448</b>	<b>22,710,657</b>	<b>31,665,986</b>	<b>52.58%</b>
		9.72%	37.71%		

Notes :

Budget remaining to be committed in the Finance Service relates to the Accommodation strategy and Members Bids. It is expected that commitments against these schemes will be agreed in Period 4

Budget remaining to be committed in Housing and Performance relates to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and Temporary Accommodation Refurbishment. DFG will be allocated during the year and the delays in the Temporary Accommodation projects have been highlighted in the Directors report

In the Highways and Transport programme there are a number of major schemes planned to start later in the current year which will significantly reduce the budget remaining. At the end of the first quarter nearly 35% of the programme has been spent or committed.

The Education programme will see increased spend during the summer period as works in schools are carried out during the Summer holiday period. The major schemes may need some reprofiling after project briefs have been refined as outlined in the Directors report

**Chief Executive**  
**Director's Report**  
**Capital Budget Monitoring 2009/10 : Period 3**

**Overview**

At Period 3 capital projects in Chief Executive's Directorate are as planned in the capital programme.

**Project Issues**

**Timelord** – The ICT Capital Programme in 2009/10 comprises mainly Timelord Programme costs which will be spent in year. It is also anticipated that the Corporate Replacement Programme allocation will also be spent in year but there is likely to be more expenditure on back-end servers and on Telecoms equipment upgrades to support the move to Mobile and Flexible Working (MFW) and less on pcs than in previous years.

ICT expects to spend all of its capital budget allocation and expects to make bids against the Corporate Allocation to cover the GCSx and Business Continuity issues.

**Finance** capital budgets will be spent as planned particularly after the Members bids panel has met later this month and current accommodation proposals have been completed.

**Fire risk - remedial works.** The current budget is under significant pressure. The work to Denefield has escalated beyond initial estimates following results of the more detailed survey and this is becoming typical for other buildings being inspected. Some smaller remedial projects may need to be deferred.

**Parish Planning/Vibrant Villages** – spend here is dependent upon the number of applications made by Parish Councils linked to their approved Parish Plans. Budget expected to be spent.

**Special Projects** – The major area of expenditure in the current financial year relates to the St Barts project and the construction of the new school is progressing well.

**Proposed Action**

The costs associated with the Denefield School are being looked at in more detail and alternative funding sources explored. Should this be successful further progress can be achieved with the wider fire remedial work programme.

**Community Service**  
**Director's Report**  
**Capital Budget Monitoring 2009/10 : Period 3**

**Overview**

The current year programme covers spend associated with housing grants, the completion of the Shaw House Project, the planned maintenance programme for the Community Services property portfolio, and the ongoing modernisation programme in Adult Social Care. Additional funds are also allocated within the scheme to complete the refurbishment of council owned temporary accommodation.

**Project Issues**

There are ongoing issues associated with identifying a suitable alternative site for the owner of a parcel of land currently housing the SSE Pole store, which is an essential prerequisite for Phase 2 of the Shaw House Project to commence.

Estimates for the total cost of the all planned maintenance works across the Community Services' portfolio of properties are likely to result in the need for some works being reprogrammed for the next financial year.

The final phase of the programme for refurbishment of temporary accommodation is currently delayed due to the need to wait for planning decisions and for other projects to complete before refurbishment works on one site can commence later in this current financial year.

**Proposed Action**

Officers in the Estates Team of the Council's Property Services are working closely with Cultural Services to investigate potential sites for the relocation of the pole store and two options have been identified at the time of writing this report, one involving a long lease arrangement and one involving land purchase to accommodate the store.

Community Services are in the process of agreeing the PMP programme priorities to ensure that services are safeguarded in buildings that are fit for purpose, while remaining within the planned annual budget allocation.

**Children And Young People**  
**Director's Report**  
**Capital Budget Monitoring 2009/10 : Period 3**

**Overview**

The 2009/10 capital programme budget is approximately £9.5m, of which approximately £3.5m is council funded. Based on current information there are five projects within the 2009/10 programme that are over £3m, two live projects (Chieveley and Theale Green schools) currently in the design phase and a further three in feasibility (The Winchcombe, The Downs and John O'Gaunt).

There are two very large education projects; St Bartholomew's rebuild which is being managed and reported on by Special Projects and St Finian's rebuild which is being managed jointly by the Portsmouth Diocese and the school.

Following extensive investigation works the proposed co-location of schools as part of the Tilehurst Learning Campus project will not be achievable as originally envisaged. However, work is underway to establish new project briefs that will deliver significant capital investment across the two school sites at Denefield and Brookfields.

The other significant projects within the capital programme are Castle Special School Post-16 co-location (which is in design), and Speenhamland, Kennet, Kintbury St Mary's, Compton, Kennet Valley, Burghfield St Mary's, Lambourn, The Willows and Springfield that are all in feasibility.

**Project Issues**

There are also some projects within the programme where there are some issues around budget and delivery, namely:

- **Theale Primary** – the revised feasibility costing exercise is almost complete and as previously reported the budget has been re-profiled to 2010/11 and 2011/12. Discussions will need to be held once again, during the capital programme refresh, with the agents for the developers of the South Lakeside site to establish likely timescale for development. Previous discussions have indicated that the developer is in no hurry to progress this development and there is the potential that the budget will need to re-profiled further into the future.
- **St Finian's** – land acquisition negotiations are continuing but due to current market conditions establishing an agreed land value might be problematic. A planning application for the new school building has been submitted and was considered by committee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The committee referred the decision on this application to the District Wide Planning Committee and at its meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August the application was approved. DCSF have stated that approaches to them for funding should be made upon a successful planning application.
- **The Porch PRU** – the proposed disposal of The Priory site means that the PRU requires re-location. An alternative site/accommodation is still being sought but potential properties are very few and far between. There is one property currently under consideration but this has some significant condition issues,

which are being investigated further. It has also become clear that the current budget of £250k is insufficient to provide a facility that meets the requirements. However, recently, the Schools Forum have agreed a contribution of £350k from the DSG underspend in 2008/09.

- **Castle school Post-16 co-location** – size of building and site has increased during the refinement of the project brief and review of previous feasibility study. Estimated impact on budget currently being established.

### **Proposed Action**

- **Theale Primary** – further discussions with agent for the developer to establish likely timescales for the South Lakeside development. Possible reprofiling of the budget further into the future or, given the possible impact on capital funding as a result of the economic climate, it might be necessary to reallocate the non-s.106 element of the budget, (c.£1.4m), to another project. All of the above to be carried out during the capital programme refresh.
- **St Finian's** – continued work around land acquisition and continued support to the school and Diocese with rebuild project. Possible representation to DCSF required for funding should Diocesan approach not be successful. Work underway to establish impact and accommodation requirements if no DCSF funding agreed. Only funding for land acquisition currently in capital programme.
- **The Porch PRU** – further investigation into the condition issues at property under consideration. Given shortage of appropriate accommodation the search has been expanded in terms of geographic location and budget. Work underway to look at potential and impact of ceasing function should accommodation not be found within timescales.
- **Castle School Post-16 co-location** – likely that additional funding will be found within existing education capital programme with limited to no impact on 2009/10 projects.

**Environment**  
**Director's Report**  
**Capital Budget Monitoring 2009/10 : Period 3**

**Overview**

The 2009/10 programme covers spend associated with delivery of highway projects and maintenance works as outlined in the Local Transport Plan ( LTP2 ), land drainage and flood prevention works as detailed in the Flooding Review Action Plan and the Enabling Works Contract associated with development of the Padworth Sidings Waste Transfer Station.

**Project Issues**

**Waste Management** - Work has commenced on site clearance of the Padworth IWMF site and all the enabling works planning conditions have been signed off. Works will start on the off-site highway works during July.

**Surface Water Management Plan, Thatcham** -During May, a Draft Surface Water Management Plan SWMP for Thatcham was submitted to DEFRA. This is one of 5 pilot SWMP's in the country and will provide an essential insight into the causes and preventative measures associated with the flooding in 2007.

**Water Relief Sewer, Thatcham** - Work completed on 5<sup>th</sup> June to lay 570m of 375mm diameter surface water relief sewer in Park Lane, Thatcham between Park Avenue and Floral Way.

**Highways Maintenance Programme** - The £2.3m extended highway maintenance programme is up and running and on schedule with schemes now complete on the A4 in Hungerford, Speen and in Newbury.

**A339/Bear Lane** - A commission has been placed with consultants WSP to review the operation of the A339/Bear Lane with a view to using a similar operating system as the 'Robin Hood' junction. Consideration will also be given to linking the junctions to improve flow along the A339

**A4/Harts Hill Road, Thatcham** - A major improvement to the junction of the A4 and Harts Hill Road started in June and will be completed in August. This includes a redesign of the signal junction and improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, along with general environmental improvements to complement the aims of the Thatcham Vision. Resurfacing of the A4 between The Moores and Floral Way will also be incorporated into the project as part of the planned extended maintenance programme.

**Newbury Town Centre** - Designs have been finalised on improvements within Newbury Town Centre with both the Market St/Cheap St and Broadway Enhancement Schemes programmed to start on 20<sup>th</sup> July. The Market St/Cheap St scheme will enhance the environment, provide a new taxi rank and improve pedestrian access to the new cinema. The Broadway scheme will create a vibrant, pedestrian friendly space to the north end of

Northbrook Street; these improvements will include a paved space at the Broadway Clock Tower with bench seating, cycle racks and an avenue of trees.

**Pangbourne traffic and road safety scheme** - In June, a traffic and road safety scheme for Pangbourne was approved by the Highways Portfolio Holder; this commenced in August. The scheme involves a number of road safety measures and improvements for pedestrians including the provision of a 20mph zone throughout the village centre. As with the Harts Hill scheme we will take the opportunity to combine this project with planned maintenance to minimise disruption to the travelling public.

**Lambourn Traffic Study** - Work is continuing to implement the proposals from the Lambourn Traffic Study. A scheme to improve road safety at the Hare & Hounds junction on the B4000 Ermin Street has been implemented and well received by the Parish. A full programme of works from the study is also planned for the year.

**Hungerford Foot Bridge** - A number of design options to construct a footbridge over the canal in Hungerford were presented at a Public meeting in June. The scheme, in principle, generated much positive debate and a consultation exercise is now underway to gain views on the general design of the structure. Following conclusion of this preliminary consultation exercise, a further round of consultation will take place on two or three detailed options.

**Bridge inspection** - The annual bridge inspection programme of 450 structures has commenced and will continue throughout the Summer.







<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Council Plan Outcomes 2009/10: Quarterly Performance Update – Item 10 Quarter One</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3 September 2009
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX 1741

**Purpose of Report:** 1) To report quarter one performance against each of the outcomes identified in the 2009/10 Council Plan.

2) To report remedial action being taken, where targets are no projected to be met by year end.

**Recommended Action:** 1) To note performance against each of the outcomes identified in the 2009/10 Council Plan.

2) To note and approve remedial action being taken, where targets are not projected to be met by the end of the financial year.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** The Council Plan sets out the purpose and ambition of West Berkshire Council. It defines the Council's main focus of activities and the measures of performance against which it will assess itself.

Monitoring and managing performance within each of these main areas of work is key in making sure the Council delivers what it has set out to achieve - and where this has not happened, in ensuring that appropriate action is taken to mitigate the impact of the target not being met.

**Other options considered:** n/a

**Key background documentation:**

- 1. Performance data contained within the performance portal.
- 2. Council Plan 2007-2011 - 2009/10 refresh.

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Plan Priorities:

- CPP1 – Support our communities through the economic recession** – to alleviate the impact on different communities and individuals who find themselves out of work and/or disadvantaged
- CPP2 – Raise levels of educational achievement** – improving school performance levels
- CPP3 – Reduce West Berkshire’s carbon footprint** – to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in West Berkshire and contribute to waste management, green travel, transportation and energy efficiency

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPO1 - Better Roads and Transport**
- CPO2 - Thriving Town Centres**
- CPO3 - Affordable Housing**
- CPO4 - High Quality Planning**
- CPO5 - Cleaner and Greener**
- CPO6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPO7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPO8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPO9 - Successful Schools and Learning**
- CPO10 - Promoting Independence**
- CPO11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**
- CPO12 - Including Everyone**
- CPO13 - Value for Money**
- CPO14 - Effective People**
- CPO15 - Putting Customers First**
- CPO16 - Excellent Performance Management**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Themes and Outcomes by:

Effectively communicating what is planned and what has been achieved and the setting and maintaining of minimum standards of service in key areas.

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Anthony Stansfeld - Tel (01488) 658238
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	astansfeld@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	6 August 2009

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Jason Teal
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<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519102
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**Implications**

- Policy:** Any policy implications will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.
- Financial:** Any financial implications will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.
- Personnel:** Any personnel implications will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.
- Legal:** Any legal implications will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.
- Property:** Any implications for property will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.
- Risk Management:** Any implications for risk management will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.
- Equalities Impact Assessment:** Any implications for equalities will be highlighted in the individual exception reports.

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Executive Summary

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### 1. Introduction

1.1 This report sets out quarter one performance against our targets / key activities in the 2009/10 West Berkshire Council Plan.

1.2 In total, there are 119 targets or key activities spread over the 16 different themes around which the Council Plan is organised.

1.3 For quarter one, 12% (14) have been returned as 'amber' - that is to say there has been some slippage in undertaking the action, but that we expect it still to be completed by the end of the financial year

1.4 For quarter one, 2 have been returned as 'red' – that is to say we will not meet targets by the end of the financial year. These are:

- **NI 90:** In partnership with Newbury College and 2 secondary schools, introduce the 14-19 ICT Diploma programme from September 2009. (Successful Schools and Learning)

*Reason for Red – This has slipped from 2 to 1 school as Trinity School has withdrawn from the original delivery group leaving The Downs and Newbury College to work in partnership to introduce the diploma in 2009. Trinity School has withdrawn due to issues of capacity both at subject and leadership level since the available resources are being concentrated on removing the school from National Challenge as a priority.*

- **CP13VFM16:** Review shared service arrangements:- Undertake a value for money review of all existing shared services. (Value For Money)

*Reason for Red – The number of existing shared service arrangements has been significantly under estimated and, whilst a register will be established, the target of undertaking a VFM review on each one is not achievable within the year.*

1.5 Exception reports are provided for each of these indicators flagged as 'red'. These provide a description of why the indicator is 'red', as well as appropriate actions which are being taken to mitigate the issue.

1.6 2 indicators are still being reported as 'Grey', i.e. data has not yet been provided:

- Reduce drug-related crime by getting 71% of drug using offenders into treatment. (Safer and Stronger Communities)

*Comment: Data currently being ratified but new provider confirms increase and are confident that target is on track. Recruitment to 'The Edge' (the young people's substance misuse service) is currently suspended.*

- Increase the number of adults with disability and older people receiving reablement services to 800 (Promoting Independence)

*Comment: Currently checking integrity of Q1 data*

**2. Proposals**

2.1 Proposed remedial actions are contained within individual exception reports.

**3. Conclusion**

3.1 None.

**Appendices**

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Appendix A – West Berkshire Council Plan Qtrly Performance Update Report – Quarter One 2009/10.

**Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:** n/a

**Officers Consulted:** All service heads, IPG, Council Plan outcome owners, EPMG, Corporate Board and Management Board.

**Trade Union:** n/a



# **Council Plan Outcomes 2009/10**

## **Quarterly Performance Update Report**

### **Quarter 1**

**Compiled by:**  
**Research, Consultation & Performance Team**  
**Policy and Communication**  
**July 2009**

## Overview

Each year West Berkshire Council updates and publishes its Council Plan. This sets out the purpose and ambition of the Council and - in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy - defines the Council's main focus of activities and the measures of performance against which it will assess itself.

The plan as a whole is framed within 16 themes. Within each theme there are a number of key, strategic activities or targets that the Council is working to achieve over the coming two years. This report therefore sets out progress by the Council against each of these actions for 2009/10.

The Council Plan in full can be downloaded from [westberks.gov.uk/councilplan](http://westberks.gov.uk/councilplan) or is available upon request from Policy and Communication.

In total, there are 119 actions listed in the Council Plan for 2009/10 spread over the 16 different outcomes. These cover the range of activities of the authority.

12% (14) of actions are reported as 'amber' - that is to say there has been some slippage in undertaking the action, but that we expect it still to be completed by the end of the financial year. Supporting commentaries for each of these actions are provided on the accompanying spreadsheet.

For quarter one, 2 actions have been returned as 'red' - that is to say we will not meet the targets by the end of the financial year. These are:

- **NI 90** In partnership with Newbury College and 2 secondary schools, introduce the 14-19 ICT Diploma programme from September 2009. (NI 90)
- **CP13VFM16** Review shared service arrangements:- Undertake a value for money review of all existing shared services

Full details for these actions are contained in the supporting exception reports in the next section of this report.

Some indicators are classifiable as 'projects' – i.e. commence construction of St. Bart's School. The outturns of these targets are therefore reported as such. In these cases, the target for the indicator will be 3 (=green). The outturn (or result) is therefore reported as being either 3 (green), 2 (amber) or 1 (red).

## Explanation of detailed performance report

The GREEN / AMBER / RED traffic light system of reporting performance is defined as follows:



**Green performance** is measured as being on or exceeding the target (or delivery of the project by its planned end date) and is expected to remain on target to the end of the financial year (or project end date).



**Amber performance** is measured as not yet achieving the target (or delivery of the project by its planned end date) but where that performance will be recovered by the end of the financial year (or project end date).



**Red performance** is measured as failing to achieve the target (or delivery of the project by its planned end date) and where that performance will not be recovered by the end of the financial year (or project end date).

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In addition,



**Blue performance** represents an annual indicator that can only be reported at a set period in time - for example when performance is measured by an annual survey, or SAT results.



**Grey performance** denotes an indicator where performance is currently unavailable.

**Full details of any 'red' indicators are contained in the relevant exception report** – Some indicators are classifiable as 'projects' or 'activities' – i.e. commence construction of Trinity Sports Hall. The outturns of these targets are therefore reported as such. In these cases, the target for the indicator will be 3 (green). The outturn (or result) is therefore reported as being either 3 (green), 2 (amber) or 1 (red).

**Supporting commentary for 'amber' indicators are provided in the right hand column of the table.**

This report should be used in reference with the supporting set of performance reports produced by West Berkshire Council:

- Monthly Budget Report
- Monthly Establishment Report
- Quarterly Strategic Risk Register Report
- Quarterly Emergency Planning Report
- Quarterly Risk Management Report

- Quarterly Local Area Agreement Report for the West Berkshire Partnership
- Quarterly performance reports for each service grouping
  1. Red book – Children’s Services’ report
  2. Green book – Adult Services’ report
  3. Yellow book – Chief Executive’s report
  4. Purple book – Environment’s report
  5. Orange book – Cultural Services’ report
- [West Berkshire District Profile](#)
- [Annual resident surveys](#)
- [Annual Survey for West Berkshire Parish Councils](#)
- [Annual Performance Report](#)
- Annual West Berkshire Complaints Report












## Exception Reports












<b>PI Owner</b>	Ian Pearson		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description of Indicator</b>		
NI 90	In partnership with Newbury College and 2 secondary schools, introduce the 14-19 ICT Diploma programme from September 2009. (NI 90)		
<b>Period</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Service Impact</b> (High/Medium/Low)
Q1 Apr-June	1	3	Medium
<p><b>REASON FOR RED:</b>                  While the main thrust of the PI will be met, ie the ICT Diploma will be successfully introduced in 2009, the reason for the PI being reported as red is because one of the delivery partner schools has withdrawn from the delivery partnership. Trinity school has withdrawn from the original delivery group leaving The Downs and Newbury College to work in partnership to introduce the diploma in 2009. Trinity school has withdrawn due to issues of capacity both at subject and leadership level since the available resources are being concentrated on removing the school from National Challenge as a priority.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>                  - Pupils at Trinity wishing to undertake the ICT diploma in 2009 can do so by accessing the provision at either The Downs or Newbury College.                  - There will be other, similar, ICT programmes available at Trinity (as currently) for pupils to choose as alternatives to the diploma; namely programmes taken from the Edexcel Dida suite.</p> <p><b>IMPACT OF ACTION:</b>                  Any pupil at Trinity wishing to undertake the ICT Diploma programme will still be able to do so.</p> <p><b>RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW REMEDIAL ACTIONS:</b>                  The risk of pupils not being able to access the ICT Diploma is low, as courses are being run at Newbury College and The Downs School.</p>			












<b>PI Owner</b>	Steve Duffin		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Description of Indicator</b>		
CP13VFM16	Review shared service arrangements:- Undertake a value for money review of all existing shared services		
<b>Period</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Service Impact</b> (High/Medium/Low)
Q1 Apr-June	1	3	Medium
<p>REASON FOR RED: The number of existing shared service arrangements has been significantly under estimated and, whilst a register will be established, the target of undertaking a VFM review on each one is not achievable within the year.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED ACTION: Once the register is complete, a decision will be taken by the VFM Group on those arrangements to be reviewed. Priority will be given to those areas where significant council spend is involved.</p> <p>IMPACT OF ACTION: There will be no significant impact of this change.</p> <p>RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW REMEDIAL ACTIONS: On the assumption that the risks were assessed by each service prior to entering into a shared service arrangement, the risks of the proposed change should be minimal.</p>			









**Council Plan Theme and Outcomes 2009/10 - Quarter One Outturns**











Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
<b>01 SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS AND LEARNING</b>					
Establish / designate all 10 Children's Centres across the district	G				
Commence construction of St. Bartholomew's School.	G				
Provide access and signposting to childcare in all West Berkshire primary schools, from 8.00am to 6.00pm five days per week, 48 weeks per year, in accordance with their communities' needs	G				
Ensure that all West Berkshire schools deliver the extended services full core offer: access to childcare, vary menu of activities, parent support	G				
Provide a programme of support to schools in special measures so that external monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectors judges that good progress has been made.	G				
Ensure that all parents - where it is reasonably practicable - have access to affordable childcare that meets their needs.	G				
Ensure that 25% of 3-4 year olds in the district receive fifteen hours of free entitlement of childcare and early education, 38 weeks of the year.	B				Results available Q3
Provide and open a new 6th Form block at Denefield School	G				
Finalise the plans for a new 6th form block at Theale Green Secondary School and seek planning approval	G				
Commence the remodelling and expansion of Chieveley Primary School	G				











Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
81% achievement at level 4 or above in both English and Maths at Key Stage 2 (Threshold) PSA 10					Results available Q3
In partnership with Newbury College and 2 secondary schools, introduce the 14-19 ICT Diploma programme from September 2009. (NI 90)					
<b>02 CLEANER AND GREENER</b>					
In partnership with others, implement 3 cross-cutting biodiversity initiatives, meeting the duties under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act					
Ensure two schools achieve Eco-School green flag status					
In partnership with others, hold a programme of six sustainability events aimed at providing individuals with the knowledge to make informed decisions about sustainable lifestyle choices and actions.					
Install 'smart metering' technology in at least five council buildings					The post to deliver the project is being established and recruited to.
Install 'voltage optimisation' technology in five council buildings					The post to deliver the project is being established and recruited to.
Increase the percentage of household waste recycled and composted to at least 38%					
<b>03 INCLUDING EVERYONE</b>					
Ensure that Pathways to Employment (P2E) provides 50 work placements					
Ensure the percentage of learners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds taking part in adult and community learning programmes to 6%					
Produce and commence delivery by October 2009 of an Including Everyone Strategy, to advance the equality, social inclusion and community cohesion agendas.					










Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Produce and commence delivery of a Rural Strategy by September 2009 to co-ordinate actions across agencies on the critical challenges affecting the well being of rural communities					
Increase to 46.5%, the proportion of the population using libraries. (NI 9)					Data available in Februray 2010
<b>04 BETTER ROADS AND TRANSPORT</b>					
Ensure that 99% of schools have an approved Travel Plan					
Complete highway drainage improvements at Church Way and The Croft, Hungerford					
Resurface five sections of the A4 in Hungerford, Thatcham and Newbury					
Install flashing warning signs at a further ten West Berkshire schools					
Ease congestion and assist traffic flow by completing the junction improvements at the Bull Crossroads, Streatley					
Complete the Thatcham Surface Water Management Plan Pilot Study					
Reduce the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on West Berkshire's roads to no more than 84 (NI 47)					
Maintain improvement in the condition of West Berkshire's principal road network in the upper national quartile					Data available Q4.
<b>05 THRIVING TOWN CENTRES</b>					
Complete an environmental enhancement scheme for the Broadway and northern part of Northbrook Street in Newbury by December 2009					












Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Facilitate the opening of the cinema in Newbury by the end of 2009 and carry out improvements at the junction of Cheap Street and Market Street					
Maintain footfall within our main town centres at a level greater than both the regional and national averages					Data available Q4.
Publish a strategy for the redevelopment of the London Road Industrial Estate (Business Quarter)					
Seek to complete a project agreement for the redevelopment of the Market Street site in Newbury					
Finalise and publish plans for the future of the West Berkshire Museum in Newbury					
Submit a planning application for the community building as part of the Wharf development					
Pilot Sunday opening in Newbury Library					
Provide £250,000 to assist with the funding of projects identified in the Thatcham town centre design brief. (specific projects will be tied in as they are agreed)					
Consult on an updated vision for Newbury and the town centre					
<b>06 AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b>					
Facilitate a total annual provision of 80 new affordable housing units - with 25% of this total as new units in rural areas					
Prevent 340 people from becoming homeless through early intervention					

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Award 85 new grant loans to bring properties up to a safe and decent standard					
Maximise use of existing housing stock in the district by providing an incentive for the return to use of 20 empty homes, at least 4 of which must be as a result of grant funding					Data available Q2.
Assist 15 applicants with mortgage difficulties by offering relevant advice and assistance through Money Advice, Court Desk Service and the Mortgage Rescue scheme to enable them to remain in their own homes					
Help 160 applicants into the private rented sector through the Threshold Loan Scheme					
<b>07 HIGH QUALITY PLANNING</b>					
Ensure that the number of upheld appeals is less than the national average of 35%.					Slightly below expected but envisage green by year end.
Check 40% of new development sites on commencement to ensure compliance with conditions attached to planning permissions					
Publish for consultation, the Council's preferred Core Strategy as part of the production of the Local Development Framework					
Using the Government's Planning Customer Satisfaction Survey, achieve a customer satisfaction score of at least 64% for West Berkshire Council's Planning Service					Data available Q4.
Ensure that 80% of 'major' planning applications are determined within 13 weeks (NI 157a)					Slightly below expected but envisage green by year end.
Ensure that 80% of 'minor' planning applications are determined with 8 weeks (NI 157b)					Slightly below expected but envisage green by year end.
Ensure that 80% of 'other' planning applications are determined with 8 weeks (NI 157c)					

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
<b>08 VIBRANT VILLAGES</b>					
Grant aid a minimum of 7 projects to improve the social, economic or environmental well being in villages.					
Assist in staging an annual Parish Plan Conference					
Work with two parishes undertaking a Parish Plan to help them to establish a working group to produce a conservation plan for a site of local conservation interest					
Work with parish councils to recruit ten new volunteers who will help to develop and sustain improved cultural activity programmes for residents in rural communities					
Hold four 'Parish Plan Surgeries' and two 'Meet the Expert' evenings to assist parish planners in developing their plans					
Undertake a survey of parish planning groups to rate their satisfaction with the parish plan process and establish how support can be improved in the future					
Assist three communities in actively developing their parish plans					
<b>09 SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES</b>					
Reduce drug-related crime by getting 71% of drug using offenders into treatment.					Data currently being ratified but new provider confirms increase and are confident that target is on track. Recruitment to 'The Edge' (the young people's substance misuse service) is currently suspended.
Further extend the coverage of permanent monitored CCTV cameras to include areas in Theale, Pangbourne and Lambourn					
Implement a communications strategy to provide community safety related information via editorials in A Great Place to Live, monthly Safer Communities Partnership team newsletters, monthly updates on partnership websites and monthly news releases on key initiatives.					







Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Develop - and have started implementing - with five flood prone town and parish councils, a local flooding / major incident response plan					Discussions have taken place with a number of parishes who expressed an interest, some are already considering local emergency plans through the Parish Planning process and we are confident that target can be achieved by 31st March.
Increase the number of home fire safety checks by 15% from the previous year					
Reduce the serious acquisitive crime rate by 3% compared to the 2007/8 baseline of 2,071 offences. (NI 16)					There has been a considerable increase in serious acquisitive crime during quarter 1, particularly dwelling burglaries, thefts from motor vehicles and theft of vehicles. Remedial actions have been put in place, however it is not possible to predict if this indicator will be on target by year end.
Reduce the assault with injury crime rate by 5.6% compared to the 2007/8 baseline of 841 offences. (NI 20)					Reported assault with less serious injury has increased during Q1. A large amount of analysis has been carried out to date with no patterns identified in relation to the victim, the offender or the location. Remedial actions have been put in place, however it is not possible to predict if this indicator will be on target at year end.
Reduce the re-offending rate of prolific and priority offenders by 19% compared to the 2007/8 baseline of 105 convictions. (NI 30)					
Reduce the rate of alcohol-related hospital admissions to 1,122 per 100,000 (NI 39)					Data available in February 2010.
Support young offenders by ensuring that 67% are engaged in suitable education, employment or training (NI 45)					This PI relates to small numbers. Reasons for this return include: more high risk cases closing in this quarter than usual; the recession which has particularly impacted on young people; and a waiting list for Connexions Intensive. Expect to be green by the year end.
<b>10 A HEALTHIER LIFE</b>					
Deliver 'Activity for Health' sessions to 300 people					There was a 25% reduction in the number of people referred to the programme compared with the same quarter last year. This is accounted for by the reduction in the number of people graduating from Phase III Cardiac rehab into the New Hearts sessions.
Increase to 70% the proportion of schools achieving the Healthy Schools status					
Provide a specific programme of sporting activity for 500 young people per week in the school summer holidays.					

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Provide reparation activities within countryside and environment for 10 young people referred through the Youth Offending Team.					Although to date there have been no referrals to work with Countryside on conservation tasks, discussions have been held with the YOT and our regular conservation volunteers. Reparation referrals will be placed with Countryside from next month and target will be achieved by 31st March. We hope to work with a local production company in order to secure grant aid for a project which will record volunteering opportunities and the experience of young people engaged on conservation tasks. This project will involve referrals through the Youth Offending Team.
Increase the number of qualified Personal Social and Health Education teachers across West Berkshire to 30					
Increase by 10% the number of mental health clients accessing healthy living groups.					
Decrease the number of mental health clients who smoke by 20% by offering and encouraging them to attend smoking cessation support groups run by Newbury Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs).					
Introduce free swimming for people over 60 years of age					
Increase to 23.5%, the proportion of the population participating in 30 minutes of moderately strenuous exercise at least 3 times a week. (NI 8)					Data available Q3.
Decrease from 2,010 to 1,900 the number of households receiving income-based benefits living in the most energy inefficient homes (i.e. a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of less than 35). (NI 187a)					Data available Q3.
<b>11 PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE</b>					
Increase the numbers of known carers and carers who are supported to 1,600					
Provide Family Group Conferences for 70 families					

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Increase the numbers of older people and adults with a disability accessing low level care support services to 1,550					Data available Q3.
Support an advocacy service for people with care needs to provide a service for 50 individuals					Data on number of individuals accessing advocacy service currently unavailable.
Increase the number of service users with Self Directed Support to 350					
Increase the number of adults with disability and older people receiving reablement services to 800					Currently checking integrity of Q1 data.
Increase the income of 200 people who receive either attendance allowance or pension credit					
Support 3,750 older people to live in their own homes, through providing a range of care services (NI 136)					
<b>12 PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE</b>					
Co-ordinate 100 Safeguarding Adults meetings					New recording system in progress, currently ensuring all data is transferred to the new data base incurring a time delay in reporting information. This should be resolved by Q2.
Increase to 98%, the number of young people with special educational needs / disabilities who have an appropriate transition plan in place at 15 years of age					
Achieve 75% of core assessments for children being carried out within 35 working days of their commencement (NI 60)					Performance on this indicator is being closely monitored, and on target for achieving performance by year end.
Combat the rising number of young people not in education, employment or training at the age of 16 and prevent it rising above the current Berkshire average of 6.9% (NI 117)					
Increase to 65% the proportion of people who successfully move from high needs Supporting People services into independent living. (NI 141)					
<b>13 VALUE FOR MONEY</b>					

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Maintain the Audit Commission's Use of Resources assessment of the Council as 'performing well' (score of 3)	G				
Review any service that, based on the Audit Commission's annual value for money report, appears to be high cost and (a) report the findings of all reviews and identify options for cost reduction and (b) ensure that where services remain high cost the reasons can be clearly aligned with the Council's stated priorities	G				
Deliver efficiency savings of £986,000 as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy	G				
Review shared service arrangements:- Establish a register of all shared services	G				
Review shared service arrangements:- Undertake a value for money review of all existing shared services	R				
Review shared service arrangements:- Identify if a shared service arrangement is a cost effective option for services that remain high cost following a value for money review	G				
<b>14 EFFECTIVE PEOPLE</b>					
Achieve a 5 percentage point increase in employee satisfaction over the 2007 baseline, as measured by responses to the second biennial employee attitude survey in summer 2009.	B				Data available in Q2
Produce an action plan to improve employee satisfaction across the authority based on the results of the second biennial employee attitude survey.	G				
Achieve re-accreditation Investors in People (IIP) in March 2010	B				Data available in Q4

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Implement a new training and development scheme aimed at encouraging more female employees to apply for senior management positions in the Council.	G				
Implement an action plan to reduce turnover to equal or below the local authority average in specified service areas.	G				
Run at least 3 in-house smoking cessation workshops.	G				
Introduce mobile and flexible working for at least 25% of the Council (non school) workforce, under the Council's Timelord programme.	G				
Having signed up to the Skills Pledge, put into place a programme to encourage all relevant employees to gain basic Skills / Level 2 qualifications, with at least 20 employees embarking on new qualifications in the first year	G				
<b>15 PUTTING CUSTOMERS FIRST</b>					
Achieve an 85% good or excellent rating for services delivered by Customer Services	G				
Achieve a satisfaction rating of 80% of users of the Council's website.	G				
Undertake a review of Customers Service's Community Information Centres to ascertain whether improvements in terms of usage and efficiency could be enhanced.	G				
Answer 85% of telephone calls to Customer Services within 30 seconds	A				High call volumes and difficulty in relation to having vacant post replacement approved have impacted on performance in the first quarter. To mitigate this the Management Team are proactively pursuing the multi-skilling of existing staff to provide additional call handling capability.
Ensure that less than 4% of telephone calls made to Customer Services are abandoned.	G				

Council Plan Theme and Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Supporting commentary for 'ambers'
Reduce the instances of 'avoidable customer contact' with the Council by 5 percentage points from the 2008/9 baseline of 25% (NI 14).					Data available Q4.
<b>16 EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT</b>					
Develop and drive forward a programme of continual improvement as a result of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)					
Ensure all strategic (level one) performance information is collated into the executive cycle in a consistent manner on a quarterly basis					
Monitor, manage and report on all National Indicator returns through the performance portal through the corporate Improvement Planning Group.					
Effectively manage the performance management timetable cycle (including the Council Plan refresh) across the Council.					
Establish a partnership-wide performance management group to look at inter-organisation performance management issues in relation to CAA.					



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>The Protection of Children in England: Lord Laming's Action Plan and the Government's Response</b>	<b>Item 11</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1857	

**Purpose of Report:** To provide an update for the Executive on the recommendations of Lord Laming's report, the government's response to these, and the current situation in West Berkshire.

**Recommended Action:** That the recommendations in the Laming report be noted, and the Council's Action Plan agreed.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** All Councils are required to respond to the recommendations of the Laming report on child protection services.

**Other options considered:** As set out in the report

**Key background documentation:**

- The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report The Lord Laming, March 2009
- The Protection of Children in England: an action plan
- The Government's response to Lord Laming, May 2009
- Child Protection services in West Berkshire, report to CYP PDC, 16<sup>th</sup> January 2009

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPT7 - Safer and Stronger Communities**
- CPT8 - A Healthier Life**
- CPT11 - Protecting Vulnerable People**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:  
ensuring local child protection services safeguard children robustly.

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**Implications**

- Policy:** As outlined in the report
- Financial:** These cannot be quantified at this stage, but will be revised once the revised Working Together has been issued in the autumn.
- Personnel:** As outlined in the report
- Legal/Procurement:** There are no legal implications in the report
- Property:** There are no property implications in the report
- Risk Management:** The protection of children relies on effective management of risk and the report highlights key areas for consideration
- Equalities Impact Assessment:** Protecting children requires careful consideration of each child's individual needs within the context of their family. Hence is integral to the work. At this time no EIA is required until any future substantive change of policy is determined

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council		<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position		<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months		<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>

## Executive Summary

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Lord Laming was asked by the government to review the state of child protection services in England, following the death of a child in Haringey. This report outlines his main findings and primary recommendations alongside the government's response to these, and sets out West Berkshire Council's proposed Action Plan.

### 2. Proposals

- 2.1 The Action Plan describes the main actions it is considered we need to take locally, including general ongoing improvements in safeguarding and child protection practice across the board. Reviews of practice in a number of areas will be undertaken, including the Council's referral and access points. Arrangements between the Children and Young People's Trust and LSCB will be considered, alongside social work career progression and training. There will also be a need to further consider the Council's Action Plan as revisions to other key documents, legislation and regulation arrive.
- 2.2 Some resource issues are highlighted, for example the need for additional administrative support to social workers and training resources, and the need to maintain a range of early intervention services to support families and children. There may be further resource pressures once the Government issues the revised version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. These will need to be the subject of other reports which will outline in greater detail what is needed.

### 3. Conclusion

- 3.1 It is recommended that the West Berkshire Action Plan be adopted by the Council.

## Executive Report

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2008, following public disquiet about the death of a child in Haringey, Lord Laming was asked to prepare an independent report of progress on safeguarding arrangements nationally. This report was published in March of this year, and contained 58 recommendations. In May the government published its response to these recommendations. Both reports contained a number of actions for government to implement nationally, as well as actions for local authorities and their partners within Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs). In addition to these two reports, there have been two Serious Case Reviews published into the death of Baby P, and a Joint Area Review of Children's Services in Haringey. These further reports indicate a number of areas that each Council would do well to review for itself.
- 1.2 This report summarises the main findings of Lord Laming's review and compares his core recommendations with the current situation in West Berkshire. Appendix A sets out all 58 recommendations, the Government's response and the position in West Berkshire at present, and Appendix B forms the Action Plan for the Council.

### 2. Lord Laming's Report

- 2.1 The Laming report begins "The death of a child already identified as being at risk of significant harm is a reproach to us all." In the situation which prompted his review, Lord Laming notes that once again a child already known to the authorities has died while in the care of his parents, and whilst being monitored by social services. The report examines the progress that has been made in safeguarding children since the death of Victoria Climbié, and looks to further action that both government and Councils need to take to ensure that all children are kept safe. This paper describes the main findings and recommendations of Lord Laming's review, and outlines the current position in West Berkshire.
- 2.2 The report notes that while central and local government are about half way through implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda, and good progress has been made, a number of challenges still remain. These include intelligent and effective use by social workers and other professionals of the sound practices set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*; staff having adequate time, knowledge and skill to properly understand the children and families with whom they are working; better joint working across agencies; better feedback when professionals raise concerns about a child; better quality training – including specialist child protection training - and support for front line staff; sufficient social work resources to ensure manageable case loads and more effective challenge and support for improvement across all agencies.
- 2.3 A crucial component of the safeguarding system is that **local authorities understand the scale and complexity of need in their area.**

"Safeguarding is not only about very young children or indeed issues of class, but it extends across society and through the teenage years. In 2005, the last time national data was collected, 235,000 of the 11 million children in England were described as being 'in need'. The scale of need amongst children and young people, and the social,

emotional and financial consequences of not improving their well-being and keeping them safe at an early stage in their lives, dictate that resolving these challenges should be one of the highest priorities for central and local government. To effect a step-change in services, and to transform outcomes for children and young people, the priority given to safeguarding must be achieved through **strong and effective leadership, early intervention, adequate resources, and quality performance management, inspection and support.**"

### 3. Leadership and accountability

- 3.1 Leadership and accountability apply at both a national and local level. Nationally, explicit priorities are to be set for the protection of children and young people. Locally, **Council Leaders and Lead Members "must be committed to sustaining a high profile for the importance of safeguarding children"**. They can do this by receiving regular reports on the profile of children and young people in their area, illustrating the level of need locally, together with the quality and effectiveness of services designed to protect children from harm. **Members should regularly scrutinise key management information**, and the Director of Children's Services should report on service delivery and outcomes for children and young people locally. Lead members are to receive specific training on their role and responsibilities.
- 3.2 In West Berkshire, the following arrangements are in place with regard to regular reporting on safeguarding issues:
- (1) CYP Trust – the Lead Member and opposition spokesman are both Members of the CYP Trust Board, and regular reports are received here from the independent LSCB Chair. These cover the work of the LSCB locally, and pan-Berkshire; management and performance information; national matters requiring attention and any issues that the Chair wishes to bring to the attention of the Board.
  - (2) LSCB - Our Lead Member has not hitherto been a member of the LSCB, in line with the guidance in *Working Together*, but will become so from September 2009.
  - (3) Director briefings - These meetings, with both the Lead Member and the Opposition spokesperson, take place regularly and cover any specific safeguarding issues as and when these arise.
  - (4) Head of Service briefings - These take place with the Lead Member and Shadow monthly, and include highlighting of any current case issues.
  - (5) Need to Know briefings - These written briefings occur on an as-and-when basis regarding individual high-profile cases.
  - (6) Management Information - On Safeguarding, Looked After Children, Children in Need and other activity in Children's Services – information and analysis of performance is available monthly on-line, and quarterly in hard copy.

- (7) Council-wide briefing on safeguarding issues - A quarterly briefing note is now issued to Corporate Board and all Members – gives numbers of cases, comparative trends, allocation rates of cases to Social Workers and highlights any pertinent specific issues.
- (8) Corporate Parent Panel - Meets quarterly, chaired by Lead Member. Primarily focussed on Looked After Children, but addresses safeguarding issues regularly. All Members invited, large numbers often attend.

3.3 The role of the **LA Chief Executive** in relation to safeguarding is seen to be equally as important as that of the Director of Children’s Services, and they are encouraged to pay attention to the **quality of services delivered to the front door**, and take a **personal and visible interest** in these services. It is also suggested that an annual report be published on safeguarding practice jointly with the police and PCT.

3.4 In West Berkshire, we have a number of systems in place currently that address some of these issues, but further review is required to ensure that our overall accountability framework is as robust as it can be.

#### 4. Early Intervention

4.1 Lord Laming is clear that **“local services must recognise the importance of early intervention, and ensure that they support children as soon as they are recognised as being in need, averting escalation to crisis.”** His report goes on as follows:

“The definition of ‘children in need’ is deliberately wide to ensure that every child receives the support needed to stay with his or her family and to secure their proper development ... In recent years the term ‘threshold’ has been increasingly used amongst professionals (as) an attempt to limit access to services either because of finance or staffing constraints. **Thresholds have no statutory basis** and are not part of the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. **Despite this ... thresholds act as gateways to restrict services for children, are inconsistent, and are too high.** As a result, local authorities are missing opportunities to intervene and support families at an earlier stage and avoid situations progressing on a downward spiral. This undermines the very purpose of Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, which is to provide early support to children and families. **Local authorities that adopt very high threshold criteria run the risk of legal challenge.** Children who fall just short of needing a child protection plan are placed at particular risk of suffering harm when services are not provided for them. **Councils must address this issue urgently and ensure they are providing the range and level of services and support that children in need require.**

If a child is identified as being ‘in need’, their circumstances should be monitored to ensure they do not change for the worse.... This is particularly important in cases of child neglect where often there is no single event that ‘triggers’ matters escalating to an application for a court order.”

- 4.2 In West Berkshire we already have high thresholds for intervention, and we will need to review these in the coming year against a local audit of the numbers of children 'in need', to ensure that some children locally do not fall through the gap between universal and targeted services.
- 4.3 Local authorities are required to have in place **a range of evidence-based early intervention programmes that can support vulnerable children and their families**. These range from Family Intervention programmes which support parents when their relationships come under strain, to parenting programmes, some aimed at parents of young children and others to families with adolescents, to NHS funded Family Nurse Partnerships which have been successful in providing intensive support for the most vulnerable parents.
- 4.4 In West Berkshire we do have a range of parenting and family support services in place already, although the reach of these is limited by resource constraints; the audit of children in need referred to above will help to determine whether this range is sufficiently broad, and reaching all those children who are at some risk.

## 5. **Funding safeguarding and child protection**

- 5.1 **Adequate resourcing of child protection social work** is a crucial component of safe child welfare systems.

“Those making decisions on the safeguarding of children at national and local level should ensure that **sufficient resources are in place to support early intervention and preventative services** in addition to ensuring that **child protection work is properly resourced**. These two very critical functions of any children's services department should not be in competition for resources.” Laming also makes the point that whilst schools funding is provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant, no similar ring-fence arrangement exists for the purposes of keeping children safe from harm, and proposes that this should be put in place nationally.

- 5.2 In respect of social work staffing, Laming notes that

“Front line social workers and managers are under an immense amount of pressure. Low staff morale, poor supervision, high case-loads, under-resourcing and inadequate training each contribute to high levels of stress, and recruitment and retention difficulties.”

- 5.3 His report highlights concerns that the pressure of high case loads for children's social workers means that staff often do not have the time needed to undertake a rigorous assessment or to maintain effective contact with children and their families. National guidelines setting out **maximum case loads of children in need and child protection cases**, supported by a weighting mechanism to reflect case complexity, are recommended.
- 5.4 Within West Berkshire we have our own case load weighting system that is used by managers to allocate cases, and we will continue to use this until national guidance is issued.

- 5.5 Alongside the need for adequate resourcing of social work, the key issue remains paying the most **rigorous attention to high quality, effective practice**. The first task of the social worker in relation to a new referral is to undertake an assessment.

“Fundamental to understanding the extent of a child’s need is a child-centred, sensitive and comprehensive assessment, which should involve gathering a full understanding of what is happening to a child in the context of their family circumstances and the wider community, using a variety of sources of information. Time needs to be spent making sense of this information, involving the family where appropriate. Assessment processes should build up an increasingly clear understanding of a child’s situation over time, building up a picture of continuous neglect or cumulative concerns about abuse where this exists. Research undertaken between 2005-07 identified that professionals had ‘a tendency towards justification and reassurance that all was well, rather than more objective consideration and investigation of what had occurred, and that sympathy for parents can lead to expectations being set too low’. All assessments of need for children and their families must include evidence from all the professionals involved in their lives, take account of case histories and significant events and above all must include direct contact with the child.”

- 5.6 In West Berkshire we undertake regular audits to ensure compliance with good practice in assessment, and address specific issues directly with social workers in supervision. Our practice overall is considered to be good, but we still have room for improvement, and lack of time to spend on each of their cases can on occasions be a limiting factor for our social workers.
- 5.7 Lord Laming also recommends that **newly qualified social work graduates should be required to undertake at least a year of practice-based work experience, with limited caseloads and a high level of supervision** to ensure that they are adequately skilled to perform the role. Creating a Newly Qualified status would place social workers on a par with teachers and many other professionals, perhaps culminating in the issuing of a licence to practice after the post-qualifying year. Sufficient supervision should also be provided to allow for a gradual progression towards a full caseload by the end of the “newly-qualified” period. Graduates would therefore gradually embed the theory learnt during their course into their standard practice, as is the case with Newly Qualified Teachers.
- 5.8 The capacity of first line managers to support and supervise their practice development, a failure by employers to incorporate this as part of their workforce planning and the perception of relative stress and risk in different areas can have a massive impact on newly-qualified social workers. In some local authorities, newly qualified staff may be more likely to be involved in short term and highly risky activity, with more experienced staff gravitating to more planned work. If crisis management and child protection is to be improved we must stop it being staffed by predominately inexperienced social workers who not have the skills to deal with very delicate cases. This requires **protection for newly qualified social workers** as outlined, but also action on the **career paths available to more experienced professionals to attract them to stay at the frontline** and develop their skills in this area. Laming notes that the introduction of teaching assistants and advanced skills teachers have overcome similar issues in education, and that **skilled**

**administrative support allows social workers to focus on their areas of expertise.** There is also an emphasis on the need for Continuing Professional Development for all social workers – albeit that there is no national framework for this, and no specific funding available.

- 5.9 In West Berkshire we do attempt to ensure that newly qualified workers have protected caseloads, but sickness or vacancy absence in small teams can prohibit this from time to time. Regular supervision audits are conducted to make sure that all staff are being supervised appropriately, and the office layout is designed to ensure that social workers have ongoing access to their managers. However, access to sufficient administrative support remains problematic.
6. **Improvement and challenge**
- 6.1 Laming highlights a pressing need to improve practice in child protection across all agencies, and to **strengthen the inspection processes of each of the services responsible for the safety of children.** In response to events in Haringey, Ofsted have already announced changes to the inspection of safeguarding, including annual unannounced on-site inspections of the quality and effectiveness of arrangements for contact, referrals and assessment processes for safeguarding and child protection work. A full, announced inspection will take place every three years to evaluate the work of all partners and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Children's Trust in improving safeguarding outcomes. These inspections will include analysis of local audits of need and their role in driving services as well as on-site visits to scrutinise practice, case-loads, training and support for staff, management oversight, the impact of the LSCB and the Children's Trust, and the views of children and young people and of stakeholders. Further recommendations are made in relation to Serious Case Reviews (SCRs), which include setting up independent SCR Panels, recruiting independent authors and making Executive Summaries public. We are working to ensure that we will be as prepared as possible for an unannounced inspection, and the LSCB will need to recruit independent SCR Panel Chairs in future.
- 6.2 Ofsted have been asked to construct their new inspection regime for safeguarding arrangements to 'evidence failure' – in response to criticisms of the previous methodology which failed to identify inadequate services. This means that the previous 'good' criteria are now being used to describe 'adequate' performance. West Berkshire safeguarding services have previously been judged as good – the new inspection framework may well mean that they cannot be judged better than adequate in the present climate. The Council needs to be aware that an 'inadequate' rating for safeguarding would both demonstrate that our current arrangements are not safe enough, and effectively limit any overall performance rating we obtain. Furthermore, if a Serious Case Review is undertaken and subsequently judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted, this too will have a limiting effect on any other performance judgements.
- 6.3 Locally, as a small authority, we must always pay particular attention to the need for **independent challenge of social work practice.** It is advised by Lord Laming that this function should always be managed separately from the remainder of children's social care services. In West Berkshire we do have an Independent Reviewing Officer team, reporting to the Head of Children's Quality and Commissioning, which is responsible for checking the quality of practice and quality of outcomes for children. The Joint Area Review in Haringey identified a lack of independence in this

regard to be a particular problem, with too much focus on quantitative rather than qualitative measures. Our Children & Youth Service has in place a local Quality Assurance and Auditing Strategy with a planned programme of case audits that cover the whole range of its key practice area.

## 7. Record Keeping

- 7.1 A key issue for all local authorities remains **the ICT systems** used to record work with a family, which have to conform to the national specification for the Integrated Children's System (ICS) set out by the government. Some authorities have adopted a deliberate policy of employing unqualified staff for some of this inputting. In West Berkshire we are working to improve the usability of the ICS; however, it is still considered by social workers to be unnecessarily burdensome.
- 7.2 Records of social work with children and their families are, of necessity, much more complex, much longer, more analytical and requiring much more direct oversight than any other social work record. **Significant amounts of time are spent by social workers recording what they do**, and these records have to be regularly overseen by managers and audited by senior staff. It is essential that these records contain an **exploration and analysis of risk in child protection cases**, and this is updated over time. Because they can form a record of a child's early life and duration in care, they must also meet the requirements of later requests for access to records or for associated legal action. It is therefore essential that the **child's case record is full, analytical rather than simply descriptive, and regularly kept up to date**. This ensures that case records support reflective practice rather than undermine it.
- 7.3 The RAISE ICT system used by social workers in West Berkshire is generally acknowledged to be better at holding all the necessary information than many systems used by other local authorities, and we have adapted it locally to take account of some of the concerns. Nevertheless problems remain, and any changes to the utility of our system as part of the national review recommended by Lord Laming, are to be welcomed.

## 8. The impact of the Haringey case on services locally

- 8.1 Nationally there have been significant ramifications for child protection work following the events in Haringey. Children's Services have seen significant increases in referrals from both professionals and concerned members of the public – in some areas this increase has been as high as 30%. In West Berkshire we did see an initial increase in referrals, (of 116%), and this has now plateau'd. The increase in referrals then leads to an increase in the numbers of children with Child Protection Plans (63 currently, up from 35 in October 2008), and could lead to an increase in the numbers of children becoming Looked After, although this has not occurred to date. However, there are early signs of an increase in possible care proceedings currently. Costs for children looked after have a 'childhood through to adulthood' element, in that many are not able to return to their own families, and therefore require support and services from the local authority as their Corporate Parent through to adulthood.
- 8.2 Many other local authorities in the south east have seen significant increases in the numbers of young (aged 1-4) children becoming looked after, in payment on Court Fees (budgets devolved from central government last year), plus many more

decisions being taken by the Courts to refer young children and their parents for assessments in residential family centres (these can cost upwards of £150,000 per year, with an order usually made for period of between 3 and 6 months ). We have not seen similar increases in West Berkshire, but this is probably due to a number of factors:

- (1) We have **relatively low levels of deprivation locally** compared to many other areas, so we would expect that our numbers of children at risk or becoming looked after would be lower;
- (2) Alongside this, however, there are some areas of significant stress locally, and we do need to be aware that we **have relatively high levels of substance misuse and domestic violence – both of which significantly increase the overall levels of risk to children**. There are a number of individual cases locally where the risks posed by these issues are high, and the children concerned are being pro-actively monitored and their parents supported – but these are high risk cases which require high quality social work input over lengthy periods of time.
- (3) We have a **long history of early intervention and prevention** services locally, based at Greenham House, York House and the YOT, which go some way towards providing the intensive support that high-risk families need, together with early intervention when risks first begin to emerge. Whilst these services are limited in their reach, without these in place it is likely that we would have many more children in the care system. There is a ‘lifetime’ cost of an insufficiency of supportive early intervention services – without them, not only do more children enter care, but greater numbers of families cease to cope, with concomitant financial effects on the school, youth justice, welfare and housing systems.
- (4) The Schools Forum has agreed **significant levels of Dedicated Schools Grant investment in Family Support workers in schools**, who pick up on concerns about children very early on, and can often work to resolve these within the school setting, without referral to Children’s social care.
- (5) Our **Sure Start Children’s Centres and Young Families groups** are working with young families and providing support to them, strengthening both resilience in children and the coping abilities of parents.

8.3 Laming recommended that the government should ensure that child protection work, together with early intervention and prevention, should be adequately resourced. The government response to this was that Children’s Trusts need to ensure that adequate funding is available locally. It remains a fact that local authorities draw their thresholds for intervention within the overall funding envelope available to them, and West Berkshire is no different. In addition, as one of many floor authorities in the south east, additional funding from government does not necessarily make its way into our budgets. We will therefore remain responsible for resourcing child protection and early intervention work locally.

## 9. Next Steps

- 9.1 The Action Plan attached as Appendix B sets out the work we have already identified as needed locally, and this will be added to as further work on the recommendations is completed nationally.

### Appendices

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Appendix A – Lord Laming’s Recommendations, Government response and current situation in West Berkshire

Appendix B – West Berkshire Council’s Action Plan

### Consultees

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**Local Stakeholders:** Will be shared with the LSCB

**Officers Consulted:** Margaret Goldie, Ian Pearson, David Hogg

**Trade Union:** Not consulted

## APPENDIX A: The Protection of Children in England – A Progress Report & Action Plan

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
1.	<p>The Home Secretary and the Secretaries of State for Children, Schools and Families, health, and Justice must collaborate in the setting of explicit strategic priorities for the protection of children and young people and reflect these in the priorities of frontline services.</p>	<p>The four Departments are committed to working together on strategic priorities for the front line and will ensure effective co-ordination through a new Ministerial sub group and the new cross Government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit (see Rec 2).</p>		<p>This is a high priority for us already with a focus on maintaining explicit strategic priorities and these are reflected in the front line of the services offered Is already well embedded within the Children’s Trust (CT) and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) However the work of the four govt departments includes the introduction of the new ‘more rigorous inspection framework’ and we will need to prepare for this</p>	<p>To await developments as they are announced from the new National Safeguarding Delivery Unit  To prepare for the new inspection framework</p>
2	<p>A National Safeguarding Delivery Unit be established to report directly to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Families, Children and Young People. It should have a remit that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ working with the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Families, Children and Young People to set and publish challenging timescales for the implementation of recommendations in this report;</li> <li>➤ challenging and supporting every Children’s Trust in the country to implement</li> </ul>	<p>DCFS announced on 12 March the appointment of Sir Roger Singleton to the new role of Chief Adviser on the Safety of Children. Sir Roger will advise the Government on the effective implementation of policy and report annually to Parliament on safeguarding progress, including the delivery of the recommendations from Lord Laming’s report as set out in this action plan. Sir Roger took up this new role, which is a three year appointment, on 1 April 2009. He will submit his first report to</p>		<p>Whilst we will await news from the new Government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit we will carefully monitor any emerging developments and may well pre-empt final recommendations where it is practicable to do so. Some actions as outlined by Laming are already priorities within WBC or the LSCB and are noted in the action column.</p>	<p>Await news from the new unit and:</p>

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	<p>recommendations within the agreed timescales, ensuring improvements are made in leadership, staffing, training, supervision and practice across all services;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ raising the profile of safeguarding and child protection across children's services, health and police;</li> <li>➤ supporting the development of effective national priorities on safeguarding for all frontline services, and the development of local performance management to drive these priorities;</li> <li>➤ leading a change in culture across frontline services that enables them to work more effectively to protect children;</li> <li>➤ having regional representation with expertise on safeguarding and child protection that builds supportive advisory relationships with Children's Trusts to drive improved outcomes for children and young people;</li> <li>➤ working with existing organisations to create a shared evidence base about effective practice including evidence-based programmes, early intervention and</li> </ul>	<p>Parliament in April 2010. To assist him in his new role, Sir Roger is establishing a new Chief Adviser's Expert Group.</p> <p>The Chief Adviser will work with Government to establish a cross Government National Safeguarding Delivery Unit (NSDU) to give strong, co-ordinated national leadership across the system.</p>		<p>A positive culture across frontline services is well evidenced in WB, however it is wise not to be complacent and this is carefully monitored through a range of activities that report to the LSCB regularly</p> <p>We understand that training on Serious Case Reviews (SCR)</p>	<p>The CT and LSCB already work to raise the profile of safeguarding and child protection across all the statutory services and have recently also set up a Working Group to look at how information is circulated and disseminated more effectively through its website and public information.</p> <p>Quality &amp; Monitoring Audit programme to continue</p> <p>Ensure appropriate WB staff attend SCR training</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ preventative services; supporting the implementation of the recommendations of Serious Case Reviews in partnership with Government Offices and Ofsted, and put in place systems to learn the lessons at local, regional and national level;</li> <li>➤ gathering best practice on referral and assessment systems for children affected by domestic violence, adult mental health problems, and drugs and alcohol misuse, and provide advice to local authorities, health and police on implementing robust arrangements nationally; and</li> <li>➤ commissioning training on child protection and safeguarding and on leading these services effectively for all senior political leaders and service managers across those frontline services responsible for safeguarding and child protection</li> </ul>			<p>will shortly be started. We await news on the systems to be put in place for regional learning</p> <p>Await news</p> <p>Await news, although locally we ensure staff have access to a suitable training programme</p>	<p>and to contribute to the learning activity once it is known how this will happen</p> <p>Await news</p> <p>Await news</p>
3.	<p>The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Families, Children and Young People should ensure that all government departments that impact on the safety of children take action to create a comprehensive approach to children through national strategies, the organisation of their central services, and the</p>	<p>The Cabinet Sub Committee will take regular reports on safeguarding and the new Ministerial sub group (see Recommendation 2) will meet quarterly, with the Chief Adviser, to provide an even stronger focus</p>		<p>To be welcomed and we await news</p>	<p>None for WBC</p>

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	models they promote for the delivery of local services. This work should focus initially on changes to improve the child-focus of services delivered by the Department of Health, Ministry of Justice and Home Office.				
4.	The Government should introduce new statutory targets for safeguarding and child protection alongside the existing statutory attainment and early years targets as quickly as possible. The National Indicator Set should be revised with new national indicators for safeguarding and child protection developed for inclusion in Local Area Agreements for the next Comprehensive Spending Review.	The Government has brought forward amendments to the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill to allow for the Secretary of State to amend the set of statutory targets which apply to all areas. The current set of statutory targets covers early years and school attainment targets and the proposed amendment to the Bill will extend this to a number of safeguarding targets within the revised list of indicators. The precise number of statutory targets will be decided in the light of further discussion with partners.		Await news; this is to be welcomed if it maintains the focus on safeguarding across all partner agencies.	Await Government proposals
5.	The Department of Health must clarify and strengthen the responsibilities of Strategic Health Authorities for the performance management of Primary Care Trusts on safeguarding and child protection. Formalised and explicit performance indicators should be introduced for Primary Care Trusts.	Work with NHS Chief Executives to clarify accountabilities and management arrangements has already begun, following David Nicholson's 1 December 2008 letter to the NHS. We shall build on this in alignment as far as possible with work in response to Recommendation 4, to develop new statutory targets and their indicators.		ditto	ditto

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6.	<p>Directors of Children's Services, Chief Executives of Primary Care Trusts, Police Area Commanders and other senior service managers must regularly review all points of referral where concerns about a child's safety are received to ensure they are sound in terms of the quality of risk assessments decision making, onward referrals and multi-agency working.</p>	<p>To be developed as part of revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.</p> <p><i>NB: 'Working Together' is shorthand for 'Working Together to Safeguarding Children. A guide to inter-agency work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' HM Government 2006</i></p>		<p>Our referral service was last formally reviewed two years ago and we now need to re-do this in the light of the Laming report. We will also need to consider changes once the amendments to 'Working Together' are known</p> <p>Regular practice audits already occur on sample cases in R&amp;A and other teams</p> <p>Case study A page 26 of the Laming report 'Concept of never doing nothing' will be useful feedback to referrers, and for governance arrangements and audit arrangements</p>	<p>Review the overall referral service by April 2010</p> <p>Continue to implement the audit programme of cases entering the service.</p>
7.	<p>All Directors of Children's Services who do not have direct experience or back-ground in safeguarding and child protection must appoint a senior manager within their team with the necessary skills and experience.</p>	<p>This will be included in revised statutory guidance on Lead Members and DCSs and reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.</p> <p>The DCFS report also announced that they are to extend the National College of Leadership programme to include DCS's. The first intake will take place in the autumn of 2009</p>		<p>Our DCS has experience in social care and safeguarding as does the Head of Children and Youth Service</p> <p>The DCS has asked to be part of the first intake of the new programme</p>	<p>No action required</p> <p>If accepted into the first intake the DCS will attend the programme</p>
8.	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families should</p>	<p>C4EO extended programme to include an additional strand on</p>		<p>The National Conference have been announced by the DCFS</p>	<p>Ensure attendance at the national conference.</p>

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	organise regular training on safeguarding and child protection and on effective leadership for all senior political leaders and managers across frontline services.	<p><i>Protecting children living in families where they are at high risk of abuse, harm or neglect for delivery.</i></p> <p>Research briefings will be published in early June 2009 on C4EO's website and findings will be disseminated through four national workshops, to take place in June with 600 places available to: Chief Executives, DCSs, Lead Members, Chairs of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Assistant Directors (Safeguarding); and senior leaders from the Children's Trust partners, such as health and the police. C4EO will also extend the scope of regional workshops planned for November 2009. Following C4EO's programme detailed here, DCSF and the NSDU will discuss with the Improvement and Development Agency and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives the extent to which this meets the needs of their members and will develop further training as appropriate.</p>		and will be attended, as other developments emerge we will circulate and respond.	Circulate research briefings when available
9.	Every Children's Trust should ensure that the needs assessment that informs their Children and Young People's Plan regularly reviews the needs of all children and young people in their area,	To be developed in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance and reflected in NSDU work programme in which an early priority is expected to be the development of	Ofsted noted the need to strengthen the relationship between their Children's Trust, LSCB and their young peoples consultative committee	JSNA underway but not robust enough for Laming's intended purpose.	DCS to consider with the CT when the revised Working Together guidance is provided.

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	<p>paying particular attention to the general need of children and those in need of protection. The National Safeguarding Delivery Unit should support Children's Trusts with this work. Government Offices should specifically monitor and challenge Children's Trusts on the quality of this analysis.</p>	<p>exemplars of needs analyses which draw out clearly the implications for safeguarding children and the impact on services that need to be provided.</p> <p>The DCSF also noted in the comments section of the report that both the DCS and Lead Member should always be members of the LSCB That every year as part of the Children's Trust annual report the Chief executive and the Leader of the Council should make an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnership arrangements. That LSCB should be open to wider public scrutiny through the appointment of two lay members drawn from the local community.</p>	<p>Arrangements for scrutinising performance across the council (Haringey) were insufficiently developed and fail to provide systematic support and</p>	<p>We need a local more detailed analysis to add to the current one which is limited.</p> <p>To date the DCS &amp; lead Member have not sat on the LSCB (as per guidance in the current version of <i>Working Together</i>. However actions have already been taken to enable them to sit on the Board prior to the legislative changes.</p> <p>The CT annual report is already shared with the CEO</p> <p>Lay members are not currently members of the LSCB.</p> <p>It is considered that there are good systems in place internally to WB reference performance management although this could perhaps be strengthened across our partners. The LSCB has a quality audit programme but this has often been dominated by audits of</p>	<p>More detailed work on the extent of local need to be undertaken by March 2010</p> <p>The DEC &amp; Lead member to join the LSCB from September 09</p> <p>The CEO &amp; Leader of the Council to consider how they may strengthen this process as outlined.</p> <p>Lay Members on the Board to be appointed once DCFS guidance is issued</p> <p>Children's Trust to consider how it can further strengthen (alongside the LSCB) scrutiny on performance and challenge. What each agencies arrangements are for</p>

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			<p>appropriate challenge. It also noted that there needed to be established rigorous arrangements for management performance across all agencies, which ensure that the quality of practice is evaluated and reported regularly and reliably and is accountable.</p> <p>Ofsted noted that the Local Authority with its partners must establish more secure assessment and earlier intervention strategies.</p>	<p>local authority performance and not necessarily cross agency. WB Children's Services has an internal quality monitoring programme that reports to its own management group on the findings.</p> <p>WB CT has strategies in place that have been agreed between partners however they would benefit from a review and consideration of areas for improvement</p>	<p>management of performance.</p> <p>Children's Services to report its internal audits through to at least SMT level.</p> <p>WBCT to review its early intervention and assessment strategies.</p>
10.	Ofsted should revise the inspection and improvement regime for schools giving greater prominence to how well schools are fulfilling their responsibilities for child protection	Ofsted have designed the new school inspection framework which will apply from September 2009 so that it will have a stronger focus on safeguarding. The current inspection framework already includes a judgement about whether safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory but this will be strengthened in the new framework with a grading on a scale from 1(outstanding) to 4(inadequate) for a school's safeguarding arrangements. Any school which receives a grade of 4 will also be likely to be awarded an inadequate grade for its overall performance and will need		<p>Practice is variable across some schools in WB, there is recognised improvement but still work to do. Through the DSG schools have funded an Increased capacity 0.6 post for an additional schools safeguarding worker. A schools safeguarding action plan already exists and has been developed over the past year.</p> <p>The Head of Children &amp; Youth Services and Head of Education work closely together to ensure that opportunities to further enhance schools performance in safeguarding are taken and used effectively.</p>	Monitor the effectiveness of the Schools Safeguarding Worker and continue to identify opportunities to support schools fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities

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		therefore to make urgent improvements. These arrangements will 'raise the bar' about the importance of safeguarding for schools and will also facilitate the identification and dissemination of best practice.			
11.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families should revise <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> to set out clear expectations at all points where concerns about a child's safety are received, ensuring intake/duty teams have sufficient training and expertise to take referrals and that staff have immediate, on-site support available from an experienced social worker. Local authorities should take appropriate action to implement these changes.	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance  Due December 2009		All referrals are initially received at the Contact Centre and staff are trained to recognise when they need to pass over the referral but we will review it. At all times the R&A team have a duty senior officer available. Staff in R&A have personal development plans that address their particular needs.	As point 6. Review the overall referral service by April 2010  Continue to implement the audit programme of cases entering the service.
12.	The Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families must strengthen current guidance and put in place the systems and training so that staff in Accident and Emergency departments are able to tell if a child has recently presented at any Accident and Emergency department and if a child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan. If there is any cause for concern, staff must act accordingly, contacting other professionals, conducting	We shall work with the College of Emergency Medicine, representatives of other A&E staff and other key stakeholders to take forward work to ensure systems, guidance and training arrangements are in place so that all A&E departments are playing their full part in identifying and dealing appropriately with children at risk. In doing so, we shall consider the information technology options within the Department of Health Informatics		There are already in place agreed protocols between The Royal Berkshire Hospital Trust and WB C&YP, a further protocol with the John Ratcliff has just been finalised and work is underway to do likewise with Basingstoke.	To ensure effective protocols are working, finalise the Basingstoke protocol and where appropriate support A&E services to fulfil any revised guidance to be set out in Working Together.

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	further medical examinations of the child as appropriate and necessary, and ensuring no child is discharged whilst concerns for their safety or well-being remain.	Directorate and coordinate this work with our broader look at safeguarding training of health professionals and with the Government's revision of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> .			
13.	Children's Trusts must ensure that all assessments of need for children and their families include evidence from all the professionals involved in their lives, take account of case histories and significant events (including previous assessments) and above all must include direct contact with the child.	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.		Regular audits undertaken to ensure compliance with good practice in assessments, such as chronologies, analysis, direct visiting and talking to children and giving social workers 'permission' to be persistently inquisitive with families causing concern.	Continue social work practice quality audit programme. Review the way social work training is provided and ensure the training programme further equips social workers to be excellent practitioners
14.	Local authorities must ensure that 'Children in Need', as defined by Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, have early access to effective specialist services and support to meet their needs.	To be developed further and feed into the revision of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance		WB has a good quality Family Resource Service in place but is very limited in their 'reach' across the District Locality Networks- good progress being made with partnerships of schools and other partners which work with child and their families early. Early Intervention has been seen as a political priority by Members who have understood the importance of early intervention preventing longer term and more costly later interventions. However funding constraints are now bringing these services under considerable pressure	Continue to try and expand the range and reach of early intervention services. Review level of funding
15.	The Social Work Task Force should	We have already introduced	Assure competence of service	A clear supervision policy exists	Findings from supervision



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	<p>case planning, constructive challenge and professional development.</p>	<p>supervision, as part of the revision of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>, and on the advice of the Task Force, the Government will consider the best place for that guidance. In addition, through the comprehensive reform programme for social work the Government wants to ensure that high quality supervision is supported by training and development, standards and the structure and the capacity of the workforce. It will set out how it will do this in the light of the Task Force's further advice.</p>			
17.	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families should undertake a feasibility study with a view to rolling out a single national Integrated Children's System better able to address the concerns identified in this report, or find alternative ways to assert stronger leadership over the local systems and their providers. This study should be completed within six months of this report.</p>	<p>We will work with local authorities to reform the ICS and to reflect the Social Work Task Force's advice that there should be locally owned, locally led systems on the basis of a greatly simplified set of national requirements. The Government's approach will be to remove unnecessary and prescriptive national requirements from the ICS, while providing more effective support to local authorities and professionals in commissioning and developing high quality local systems.</p>	<p>Ofsted noted concerns about the quality of case recording, evidence of mgt oversight of case files and evidence of analytical and reflective practice. Not all case files had chronologies. Extreme delays in some cases of circulation of minutes of key meetings.</p>	<p>Locally we have already adapted ICS to take account of some of the concerns. However it will be good to have further assurances from DCSF that this approach is acceptable and we will continue to make the system more fit for purpose. Members aware of issues as they were briefed in the recent PDC meetings. Case work recording is heavily reliant on an accessible ICS system and this has proved to be particularly challenging. Work continues with the software company to introduce adaptations and amendments to the system to improve</p>	<p>Head of Children &amp; Youth Services to lead a working group of practitioners to adapt the ICS exemplar forms to be more fit for purpose and the Raise team to continue to work through systems issues with the software supplier.</p> <p>Overall case work recording could be further improved with additional administrative resources</p> <p>To ensure and monitor the existence of chronologies in all cases</p>

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				<p>functionality.                      One critical factor that does not aid social worker recording of minutes of meetings is that there is no administrative support for social workers.</p> <p>Case recording is audited to monitor compliance and improvements have been made.                      Chronologies are an expectation of every case but not all do have them, this can be a time consuming job for workers and as yet no ICS software system has found a way to develop them.                      Meeting minutes are generally circulated by social workers themselves and usually go out in a timely fashion however there is still room for considerable improvement</p>	<p>and look at ways to help get notes taken of meetings and minutes circulated that does not rely on a busy social worker doing so.</p>
18.	<p>Whether or not a national system is introduced, the Department for Children, Schools and Families should take steps to improve the utility of the Integrated Children's System, in consultation with social workers and their managers, to be effective in supporting them in their role and their contact with children and families, partners, services and courts, and to ensure appropriate transfer of essential information</p>	<p>We will take immediate action to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ free up national requirements in relation to the ICS. We will authorise local authorities and suppliers, in discussion with professionals, to remove or revise forms and exemplars in local ICS systems, giving them more flexibility to use their professional judgement in deciding how they will comply with statutory</li> </ul>		As above	As above

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	<p>across organisational boundaries.</p>	<p>requirements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ support local authorities in implementing Phase 1C of the ICS, while relaxing the deadline to allow them to focus on fixing problems with local systems that they regard as a priority; and</li> <li>➤ improve support to local authorities through carrying out a usability review of each ICS product, providing procurement support and issuing guidance on how the ICS can be used to support practice. We agree with the Social Work Task Force that, over time, the ICS should be reformed to reflect the Task Force's forthcoming advice on professional roles, practice and support in social work. We will therefore work closely with the Task Force to ensure that happens</li> </ul>			
19.	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families must strengthen <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>, and Children's Trusts must take appropriate action to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ all referrals to children's services from other professionals lead to an initial assessment, including direct</li> </ul>	<p>To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.</p>		<p>Whilst we await the revised <i>Working Together</i> a number of things are already in place or underway:</p> <p>Where it is considered a referral is appropriate we do already expect an IA to be conducted. There are some discrepancies between rec's by Laming here</p>	<p>Await revised <i>Working Together</i> and take appropriate action at that time as well as:</p> <p>Continue to monitor monthly the thresholds for IA are sound.</p>

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	<p>involvement with the child or young person and their family, and the direct engagement with, and feedback to, the referring professional;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ core group meetings, reviews and casework decisions include all the professionals involved with the child, particularly police, health, youth services and education colleagues. Records must be kept which must include the written views of those who cannot make such meetings; and</li> <li>➤ formal procedures are in place for managing a conflict of opinions between professionals from different services over the safety of a child.</li> </ul>		<p>Ofsted noted in Haringey that thresholds for accessing social care were clear but sometimes applied inconsistently and that referrers were not always informed of outcomes in writing</p> <p>Ofsted reported that Haringey</p>	<p>though as not every referral would or could lead to an IA. We await further clarification. Whilst WB has a clear threshold document and partners do not report inconsistencies in application we have not always succeeded in getting outcomes to referrers in writing. This occurs largely around pressure times in the front line or due to lack of administrative support.</p> <p>This is already a local requirement and a recent Core Group audit found that overall practice is sound, guidance is also provided to staff. One considerable challenge however in relation to core groups is the expectation by some partner agencies that social workers can both Chair, minute and support parents through the same meetings. There are resource issues here.</p> <p>There are no local written processes in place other than whistle blowing. This will be referred to the Pan Berkshire LSCB procedures group.</p> <p>Standards have been</p>	<p>To continue to ensure partners awareness of thresholds and how to report any concern. To further work on ensuring 100% compliance with written responses to referrers'. (Link to the need for additional administrative support)</p> <p>Await revised guidance but continue to raise awareness across agencies of the need to share tasks in core groups</p> <p>The Pan Berkshire LSCB procedures group to consider the development of a 'conflicts of opinions protocol'</p> <p>To circulate the standards</p>

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			should make explicit to all staff and elected members the expectations and standards required of front line child protection practice.	developed for front line child protection teams however they have not been shared with elected members or the wider children's workforce	expected in a way accessible to the audience.
20.	All police, probation, adult mental health and adult drug and alcohol services should have well understood referral processes which prioritise the protection and well-being of children. These should include automatic referral where domestic violence or drug or alcohol abuse may put a child at risk of abuse or neglect.	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.		This process is already in place in WB for domestic abuse. An automatic referral with regards to mental health concerns is not stated in our Pan Berkshire procedures and there is no local protocol. Although links between mental health services are in place. Similar can be said for drug and alcohol services.	The Pan Berkshire LSCB procedures group to consider the need to further develop an expectation of automatic referral for mental health or substance misuse issues although this may have considerable resource implications for our referral and assessment team.
21.	The National Safeguarding Delivery Unit should urgently develop guidance on referral and assessment systems for children affected by domestic violence, adult mental health problems, and drugs and alcohol misuse using current best practice. This should be shared with local authorities, health and police with an expectation that the assessment of risk and level of support given to such children will improve quickly and significantly in every Children's Trust.	The NSDU will publish its work programme by September 2009 and we expect this guidance to be identified as an early priority		Await DCFS/NSDU actions	Await DCFS/NSDU actions
22.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families should establish statutory representation on Local Safeguarding Children Boards from schools, adult mental	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance. Mental Health Trusts are already statutory members of LSCBs		This is already in place in WB for schools, mental health and adult services.	Await revised Working Together guidance to ensure we are compliant in terms of LSCB membership.

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	health and adult drug and alcohol services.				
23.	Every Children's Trust should assure themselves that partners consistently apply the Information Sharing Guidance published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Communities and Local Government to protect children.	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance		Information sharing protocols and guidance are widely available in WB, however there are occasionally still concerns raised at front line practitioner level which usually relate to staff who have less frequent need to use the safeguarding process. Hence managers and practitioners at all levels need to ensure they continue to promote the information sharing principles.	Continue to promote information sharing principles in all related training and practice based development activities. Ensure IS guidance is clear in all relevant documentation and e-copy locations.
24.	<p>The Social Work Task Force should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ develop the basis for a national children's social worker supply strategy that will address recruitment and retention difficulties, to be implemented by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This should have a particular emphasis on child protection social workers</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is committed to developing a supply strategy for social workers in both children and families social work, and this will form a critical part of the comprehensive reform programme to be set out in the autumn. In the immediate term, the Government is already taking a number of actions to address recruitment and supply challenges in the workforce, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ a national marketing and recruitment campaign to launch later this year;</li> <li>➤ a Return to Social Work Scheme to support former social workers back into the profession;</li> </ul>		<p>WB has succeeded in recruiting to social worker posts through a wide variety of tactics. Retention levels are also reasonable however as previously reported we have a large number of inexperienced workers who need constant support. We have ensured we have been included in the graduate trainee scheme and newly qualified workers scheme.</p> <p>The recommendations are to be welcomed and we await national developments to support us locally.</p>	<p>Continue to partake in the graduate trainee scheme and newly qualified social worker scheme. Await news of national developments and support as appropriate. Continue to report to members regularly on staff vacancies.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ work with the Children's Workforce Development Council and other partners to implement, on a national basis, clear progression routes for children's social workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ a Graduate Recruitment Scheme to sponsor high quality graduates to undertake social worker training;</li> <li>➤ recruitment and retention pilots in two regions with high vacancy and turnover rates.</li> </ul> <p>We have already committed to creation of a new role of Advanced Social Work Professional in children and families' social work which will be implemented as part of a full career framework for children and families' social workers. This will be in place in the autumn to enable experienced social workers to stay in frontline practice. We expect that this role should form part of a full career structure for social workers, which includes practice focused as well as managerial progression routes. The Government will work with employers to implement clear progression routes for social workers in both adult and children's services as part of its comprehensive reform programme for social work. This will be based on the advice of the Task Force about how clearer progression routes can</p>		<p>This is to be welcomed, we await news on national expectations</p> <p>A role of advanced social worker is to be welcomed as a way of retaining experienced social workers, rather than then feeling that career progression necessitates becoming a manager of moving out the front line of social work altogether. However there is currently no job role within our existing grade structure and will need to be considered with HR</p>	<p>Await news</p> <p>Further develop the recruitment and retention strategy and address the need for advanced social work practitioners.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ develop national guidelines setting out maximum case-loads of children in need and child protection cases, supported by a weighting mechanism to reflect the complexity of cases, that will help plan the workloads of children’s social workers; and</li>   <li>➤ develop a strategy for remodelling children’s social work which delivers shared ownership of cases, administrative support and multi-disciplinary support to be delivered nationally.</li> </ul>	<p>best support social workers in developing their careers and improving the service they provide.</p> <p>The Government is committing to take steps, based on the advice of the Social Work TaskForce, to ensure that social workers have manageable case loads which enable them to work effectively and efficiently to secure the best possible outcomes for service users. It looks to Social Work Task Force to ensure, through its recommendations, that the steps take to do this – including guidelines on appropriate caseloads – can be implemented effectively in ways that will improve practice and not lead to unnecessary bureaucracy.</p> <p>We are already exploring a number of different approaches to remodelling in social work, including through CWDC’s current Remodelling the Delivery of Social Work pilots and the Social Work Practices pilots. We will set out our plans in relation to remodelling as part of the comprehensive reform</p>		<p>To be welcomed and we await further national guidance from the social work task force. In WB we have our own caseload weighting system that is monitored throughout the management line.</p> <p>Whilst the national pilots etc are to be welcomed adequate administrative support is an issue in WB, teams have very limited support for anything other than basic phone and team cover. This is highlighted in other areas in this plan where admin functions also impact on</p>	<p>Continue to use the local caseload weighting system until national guidance is issued at which time review local processes.</p> <p>To consider the need for additional administrative support (and ways this might be provided) to enable a greater focus by social workers on the social work task.</p>

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		programme we will bring forward in the autumn, based on the advice of the Social Work Task Force.		social work duties	
25.	Children's Trusts should ensure a named, and preferably co-located, representative from the police service, community paediatric specialist and health visitor are active partners within each children's social work department.	To be reflected in the revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance	Ofsted noted that attendance at child protection conferences was not monitored by the LSCB	This has been raised with the TVP re CAIU staff and they have agreed that for part of the time a PC could be based in the R&A team. The PCT have co-located a HV already and will be asked to consider the issue of a community paediatric specialist.  Attendance is monitored by the LSCB In WB however attendance by GP's is consistently an issue and the CAIU on occasion.	To continue to raise with TVP the need for a permanently co-located and preferable West Berkshire located CAIU service. To ask the PCT to co-locate a community paediatric specialist.  The LSCB will need to continue to challenge non-attendance by any professional group
26.	The General Social Care Council, together with relevant government departments, should:  ➤ work with higher education institutions and employers to raise the quality and consistency of social work degrees and strengthen their curriculum's to provide high quality practical skills in children's social work;	The Government will consider radical reforms of the social work education system if this is what the Task Force recommend. The Secretaries of State for Health and Children, Schools and Families look to the Social Work Task Force, with the support of GSCC and working closely with employers and HEI s, to advise on the improvements necessary to social work degrees and post graduate training, and the system which provides them. The Government currently spends approximately £160 million each		This is to be welcomed, there is concern across a range of social work employees about the social work training programmes which can be of variable quality.	Await national developments. Continue to press for national developments to improve the quality of social work graduates.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ work with higher education institutions to reform the current degree programme towards a system which allows for specialism in children's social work, including statutory children's social work placements, after the first year; and</li> <li>➤ put in place a comprehensive inspection regime to raise the quality and consistency of social work degrees across higher education institutions</li> </ul>	<p>year on funding and bursaries for initial social work training. It is critical that this resource supports high quality university education which effectively prepares student social workers for their future roles. Universities, employers and the General Social Care Council must be able to work together to secure this.</p> <p>The Government will implement Lord Laming's recommendation in the light of the Task Force's recommendations about how and when social workers should be able to specialise in their training in order to ensure that they are fully effective in practice.</p> <p>The Government will implement Lord Laming's recommendations about inspection of higher education in the light of the Task Force's recommendations.</p>		<p>As above</p> <p>As above.</p>	
27.	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills should introduce a fully-funded, practice-focused children's social work postgraduate qualification for experienced children's social</p>	<p>We have committed to development of a Practice based Masters programme for social workers, which will be implemented as part of the comprehensive reform programme. To support the professional</p>		<p>Whilst the commitment is welcomed it should be noted that actual funds for local training have been significantly reduced through the ABG. Also of concern is the recent confirmed closure of the Reading School of Social Work.</p>	<p>Continue to lobby for improved national training developments. Review local training arrangements for social worker, ensuring we maximise the opportunity for local and post</p>

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	workers, with an expectation they will complete the programme as soon as is practicable.	development of all social care staff, including social workers, Government already allocates £18 million a year through the area based grant. This recommendation further cements Government's commitment to the professional development of social workers and the new practice based Masters in social work will be implemented in the light of the Task Force's recommendations.			graduate training wherever possible.
28.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families, working with the Children's Workforce Development Council, General Social Care Council and partners should introduce a conversion qualification and English language test for internationally qualified children's social workers that ensures understanding of legislation, guidance and practice in England. Consideration should be given to the appropriate length of a compulsory induction period in a practice setting prior to formal registration as a social worker in England.	Social workers coming into this country need to meet the highest standards, and also to be well supported. From September, all those joining statutory and third sector children's services will be able to access the "newly qualified social worker" support package which includes induction and protected time for training and supervision. We will take forward Lord Laming's recommendations about conversion qualifications and language tests in the light of the advice of the Social Work Task Force about the qualifications and basic skills requirements which should be in place for English as well as overseas trained social workers.		WB already has a comprehensive local induction programme in place and stringent recruitment process and will consider a work shadowing programme. However these developments nationally are to be welcomed	Consider ways to extend a work shadowing programme
29.	Children's Trusts should ensure that all staff who work with children	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard</i>		In WB the 'Common Core' induction process in place, a	Review once Working Together guidance has

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	receive initial training and continuing professional development which enables them to understand normal child development and recognise potential signs of abuse or neglect	<i>Children</i> guidance and in the NSDU's work programme		number of training initiative are also in place but we will review them to ensure a coherent programme for all staff working with children	been re-issued through the CT the way with which the children's workforce receive initial training, CPD and child development etc.
30.	All Children's Trusts should have sufficient multi-agency training in place to create a shared language and understanding of local referral procedures, assessment, information sharing and decision making across early years, schools, youth services, health, police and other services who work to protect children. A named child protection lead in each setting should receive this training.	To be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance and in the NSDU's work programme		A range of initiatives are already in place in WB- this has included training for Head Teachers on social work processes, the implementation of the Integrated children workforce development strategy and we have a local Integrated training programmes for all staff working directly with children	None needed as yet, await national guidance and then double check
31.	The General Social Care Council should review the Code of Practice for Social Workers and the employers' code ensuring the needs of children are paramount in both and that the employers' code provides for clear lines of accountability, quality supervision and support, and time for reflective practice. The employers' code should then be made statutory for all employers of social workers.	We agree with the Social Work Task Force that there should be a Code of Practice for Social Work which is distinct from wider social care. We will work with GSCC to develop in this in the light of the Task Force's work on describing social work roles and purpose. The DCSF and DH will support GSCC in reviewing the Code of Practice for Employers and will seek to legislate appropriately at the earliest opportunity.		Await further national developments	None at this time
32.	The Department of Health should prioritise its commitment to promote	The Action on Health Visiting programme was agreed at a joint		Await and monitor developments within the PCT	Await and monitor developments within the

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	<p>the recruitment and professional development of health visitors (made in <i>Healthy lives, brighter futures</i>) by publishing a national strategy to support and challenge Strategic Health Authorities to have a sufficient capacity of well trained health visitors in each area with a clear understanding of their role.</p>	<p>Department of Health/ Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA) summit on 5 May. It will be taken forward in partnership with the CPHVA and other stakeholders. Action will be prioritised to increase workforce capacity and capability and to clarify the contribution of health visitors to the Healthy Child Programme, to working with vulnerable children and families and to safeguarding.</p>			<p>PCT</p>
33.	<p>The Department of Health should review the Healthy Child Programme for 0–5-year-olds to ensure that the role of health visitors in safeguarding and child protection is prioritised and has sufficient clarity, and ensure that similar clarity is provided in the Healthy Child Programme for 5–19-year-olds</p>	<p>The universal Healthy Child Programme (HCP) is key to the prevention of child abuse and neglect and the early identification of safeguarding concerns. This is reflected in the updated programme published by the Department of Health in March 2008. To strengthen the contribution of the HCP to safeguarding, we shall clarify the role and responsibility of the health visitor in the HCP through the Action on Health Visiting Programme, and work with the service to promote the commissioning and implementation of the HCP across England. The HCP is now being extended to cover 5-19 year olds. It will be an early intervention and</p>		<p>Await and monitor developments within the PCT</p>	<p>Await and monitor developments within the PCT</p>

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		<p>public health programme setting out the good practice framework for the delivery of services for 5-19 year olds and their families to promote optimal health and well being. It will include a universal service that is offered to all families with additional services for those with specific needs and risks. The safeguarding needs of children and young people will be fully embedded within this extended HCP.</p> <p>At the same time, we shall expand the Family Nurse Partnership programme in England to 70 test sites by 2011. Evidence suggests that this intensive preventive programme from early pregnancy to 2 years has the potential to prevent child maltreatment and improve the outcomes of vulnerable, first time young parents and their children.</p>			
34.	<p>The Department of Health should promote the statutory duty of all GP providers to comply with child protection legislation and to ensure that all individual GPs have the necessary skills and training to carry out their duties. They should also take further steps to raise the profile and level of expertise for child protection within GP practices, for example by working with the</p>	<p>Sheila Shribman (National Clinical Director for Children, Young People and Maternity Services) and David Colin Thome (National Director for Primary Care) will consider, with the Royal College of General Practitioners and other key primary care stakeholders, joint work on effective ways to enhance GP training and development. We shall coordinate</p>		<p>Locally GP's have been offered training etc. but there has been concern re take up, the CT is acting to address this.</p>	<p>The CT to act to address the need to ensure GP's are adequately training and understand their statutory duties</p>

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	<p>Department for Children, Schools and Families to support joint training opportunities for GPs and children's social workers and through the new practice accreditation scheme being developed by the Royal College of General Practitioners.</p>	<p>this work with our broader look at safeguarding training of health professionals. The Department of Health is already supporting the College in developing the practice accreditation scheme, which will include standards for safeguarding.</p> <p>We shall also build on other initiatives in <i>Healthy lives, brighter futures</i> to support greater involvement of GPs in children's health, including engagement on Children's Trust Boards.</p> <p>We are going beyond promoting "the statutory duty of all GP providers to comply with child protection legislation" by proposing to amend the Performers List Regulations to ensure that primary care contractors cannot be included in a performers list (and therefore perform primary medical, dental, or optical services) unless they have had a Vetting and Barring Scheme check. By the terms of their contract, GPs will need to ensure that any staff they engage to carry out regulated activity have had similar checks.</p>			
35.	<p>The Department of Health should work with partners to develop a national training programme to improve the understanding and</p>	<p>Sheila Shribman (National Clinical Director for Children, Young People and Maternity Services) will work closely with NHS and</p>		National developments awaited.	

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	<p>skills of the children's health workforce (including paediatricians, midwives, health visitors, GPs and school nurses) to further support them in dealing with safeguarding and child protection issues.</p>	<p>professional leaders to ensure the children's health workforce benefits from high quality training and support. As a first step, this will involve a stock take of current training programmes to get a clear picture of what is currently being delivered and where the gaps are. The Department of Health is sponsoring the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to develop further components of its child protection training, and is also working with the College to scope work to develop clinical networks for child protection within the NHS.</p>			
36.	<p>The Home Office should take national action to ensure that police child protection teams are well resourced and have specialist training to support them in their important responsibilities.</p>	<p>Working with the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Police Authorities, and the National Police Improvement Agency the Home Office will be developing a new Strategic Framework for delivering Protective Services that will, for the first time, provide a clear structure for driving the delivery of all protective services – those services which are not so visible to the public but are crucial to ensuring that local communities are protected from a wide range of potential threats such as organised crime or major crime. Child Protection</p>	<p>Ofsted in Haringey noted that the majority of strategy discussions only involved staff from the Police and Social Care which they noted was</p>	<p>WB is supported by a Child Abuse investigation Unit based in Reading that works across three local authority areas. There is concern locally that the team is under resourced to meet the demands and these concerns are being raised.  Therefore we welcome the recommendation and will also await national action.  In many cases strategy meetings are multi-agency however there is some pressure when the Police have to travel 25 miles to Newbury to</p>	<p>The CT and Head of Children &amp; Youth Service to continue to raise resource concerns.</p>

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		<p>will be one of the first priorities for implementation of the new Framework, making clear that nationally the Police Service, including every Police Force, must ensure that they have the right arrangements and the right levels of resource in place locally to protect children and young people from abuse.</p> <p>Lord Laming also recommended that the Home Office must ensure that child protection teams have specialist training to support them in their work. The National Police Improvement Agency will continue their development of the Specialist Child Abuse Investigators' Development Programme. The Programme is being updated to take account of the new ACPO Guidance on Investigating Child Abuse and <i>Working Together</i> Guidance. The updated Programme will be available to Police Forces by December 2009. This training programme ensures that those police officers working in child protection have access to detailed, accredited training that prepares them for this difficult and complex area of policing. In addition to the specialist training for those in child protection</p>	<p>pragmatic in urgent cases but not for others and subsequent-where there needed involvement of the other agencies.</p>	<p>hold the strategy discussion over the phone only with social care. Whilst this is resisted where possible there have been occasions when this has happened and hence other agencies have not been involved. Having the Police more locally based would prevent this.</p>	

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		<p>teams, NPIA will also develop new training modules for child protection supervisors and Senior Investigating Officers dealing with child homicides to ensure that Police Forces have access to training for officers at all levels.</p>			
37.	<p>The Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary and HMI Probation should review the inspection frameworks of their frontline services to drive improvements in safeguarding and child protection in a similar way to the new Ofsted framework</p>	<p>The Care Quality Commission's Annual Health Check of all NHS trusts in England includes assessing the quality of safeguarding arrangements against core standards criteria. By 1 May, all NHS bodies had declared compliance or otherwise with a set of Standards including C2, specifically relating to child protection arrangements. These declarations include where possible a commentary for the LSCB for each trust providing support or further information relating to the organisation's performance in this area. CQC will be rigorous in its assessments of services and will take follow up action taken against non-compliance where necessary. From 2010, the new regulatory framework established by the Health and Social Care Act 2008 takes effect, which includes all of the independent healthcare sector, adult social care and the NHS, and covers children, young</p>		To be welcomed	None specific

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
		<p>people and adults. The secondary legislation setting out the arrangements that a registerable service must have in place to become registered is supported by compliance guidance being produced by CQC, which explains what this means in practice for specific services. There is a major section on safety and safeguarding, which will be refined to accommodate the recommendations of the Laming review and form the basis of a robust CQC assessment and enforcement model. A 3-year Ofsted-led rolling programme of safeguarding inspections commences in June 2009, under the Comprehensive Area Assessment arrangements. These inspections also include assessment of the arrangements for care of looked after children – a particularly vulnerable group often linked to safeguarding concerns. The CQC is committed to working in partnership with Ofsted to inspect and assess the health related elements of this programme and thus provide leverage alongside SHAs to improvement of practice and outcomes.</p> <p>HMIC is currently reviewing its</p>			

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
		<p>inspection methodology and is moving to Rounded Assessment. A Rounded Assessment of every force will be conducted throughout the year on a regular basis to provide for judgements and narratives across five domains. Child abuse investigations and safeguarding children will fall under one of these domains – Protection from Serious Harm. Rounded Assessment will identify key areas of vulnerability which may, in turn, trigger separate, dedicated inspections – for example, on either a force or ‘thematic’ basis. Fieldwork for Rounded Assessment is due to commence July/August this year with graded judgements produced by 30 November 2009.</p>			
38	<p>Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, HMI Constabulary and HMI Probation should take immediate action to ensure their staff have the appropriate skills, expertise and capacity to inspect the safeguarding and child protection elements of frontline services. Those Ofsted Inspectors responsible for inspecting child protection should have direct experience of child protection work.</p>	<p>Ofsted will ensure that inspectors have appropriate skills and expertise to inspect the safeguarding and child protection elements of frontline services. CQC is working to ensure that all staff inspecting children’s services are suitably experienced and qualified by setting clear criteria for their involvement. HMIC currently has a small number of specialist staff across a range of specialist areas (Including safeguarding and child</p>		To be welcomed	None specific

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
		<p>protection).                      When inspections require particular skills and expertise, HMIC secures this from external sources, including police forces. For example, a dedicated specialist team was put together to conduct the inspections of counter terrorism. As part of its response to the recent Police Green Paper, HMIC is seeking to build its capacity in this area through the development of more flexible staffing models. Historically, HMIP has used inspectors on secondment from Ofsted and there is an existing agreement in principle for Ofsted to assist with safeguarding for newly appointed HMIP staff.</p>			
39.	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families should revise <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> so that it is explicit that the formal purpose of Serious Case Reviews is to learn lessons for improving individual agencies, as well as for improving multi-agency working.</p>	<p>The Government will publish a revised Chapter 8 of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> for consultation by July 2009 so that these important improvements can be put in place as quickly as possible.</p>		<p>This is very much welcomed. In a SCR conducted in 2008 the LSCB tried to ensure that the focus was on learning however the national processes made this more difficult.</p>	<p>To partake in the consultation when it is issued in July 2009</p>
40.	<p>The Department for Children, Schools and Families should revise the framework for Serious Case Reviews to ensure that the Serious Case Review panel chair has access to all of the relevant documents and staff they need to</p>	<p>The Government will publish a revised Chapter 8 of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> for consultation by July 2009 so that these important improvements can be put in place as quickly as possible</p>		<p>The LSCB considers it complied with this in its SCR</p>	<p>None at this time</p>

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
	conduct a thorough and effective learning exercise.				
41.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families should revise <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> to ensure Serious Case Reviews focus on the effective learning of lessons and implementation of recommendations and the timely introduction of changes to protect children.	The Government will publish a revised Chapter 8 of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> for consultation by July 2009 so that these important improvements can be put in place as quickly as possible.		The LSCB considered that this was complied with and will monitor this through LSCB	None at this time
42.	Ofsted should focus its evaluation of Serious Case Reviews on the depth of the learning a review has provided and the quality of recommendations it has made to protect children.	Ofsted are convening a partners' discussion in May about revising the Serious Case Review Evaluation framework. This will be developed and consulted alongside the review of Chapter 8 of <i>Working Together</i> so that there is a consistent end to end set of arrangements with clear roles and responsibilities for all partners published by the end of July 2009.		This is to be welcomed as was a criticism that the LSCB had of the evaluation process into the local SCR.	None at this time
43.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families should revise <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> to underline the importance of a high quality, publicly available executive summary which accurately represents the full report, contains the action plan in full, and includes the names of the Serious Case Review panel members.	The Government will publish a revised Chapter 8 of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> for consultation by July 2009 so that these important improvements can be put in place as quickly as possible.		There is concern that if parts are not kept confidential the move will be to engender a 'blame' culture rather than one of learning. Hence we would advocate for Laming's approach however this may not be the ultimate DCF recommendations	Await national developments and try to influence the direction of travel.
44.	Local Safeguarding Children	To be reflected in revised		Our one SCR historically did	To ensure the LSCB

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
	Boards should ensure all Serious Case Review panel chairs and Serious Case Review overview authors are independent of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and all services involved in the case and that arrangements for the Serious Case Review offer sufficient scrutiny and challenge.	<i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.		not have an Independent chair but did have an independent author. Hence will need to ensure this is acted on in future assuming the DCSF agree this	appoints both an independent chair as well as author for any future SCR.
45.	All Serious Case Review panel chairs and authors must complete a training programme provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families that supports them in their role in undertaking Serious Case Reviews that have a real impact on learning and improvement.	This will be an early priority for the new NSDU		To be welcomed	To ensure staff locally are trained.
46.	Government Offices must ensure that there are enough trained Serious Case Review panel chairs and authors available within their region.	This will be an early priority for the new NSDU		This would be welcomed as Government Offices have been reluctant to pursue this to date.	Await national developments.
47.	Ofsted should share full Serious Case Review reports with HMI Constabulary, the Care Quality Commission, and HMI Probation (as appropriate) to enable all four inspectorates to assess the implementation of action plans when conducting frontline inspections.	Ofsted will share copies of Serious Case Reviews in confidence with partner Inspectorates so that the implications for frontline inspections and for joint safeguarding inspections can be fully assessed and learned.		To be welcomed	None locally

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
48.	Ofsted should share Serious Case Review executive summaries with the Association of Chief Police Officers, Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities to promote learning.	Ofsted will include a website link so that all interested organisations can easily access the published executive summaries of Serious Case Reviews. The revised version of Chapter 8 of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> will reinforce the importance of all relevant organisations making arrangements to draw to the attention of relevant staff the importance and availability of executive summaries as learning tools, together with Ofsted's regular summary and thematic reports		To be welcomed Already in place locally through local contacts.	Local arrangements already in place
49.	Ofsted should produce more regular reports, at six-monthly intervals, which summarise the lessons from Serious Case Reviews.	Ofsted have confirmed that they will produce regular six monthly reports covering the lessons of Serious Case Reviews. One of these each year will be a summary report covering all SCRs in the year and will consider the format of the second interim report to enable more in depth analysis where this would be beneficial.		Await regular reports and disseminate as appropriate	Local arrangements already in place
50.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families must provide further guidance to Local Safeguarding Children Boards on how to operate as effectively as possible following the publication of the Loughborough university research on Local Safeguarding	An interim report on the Loughborough University research will be published in June 2009. Practice guidance will be developed in light of its findings	Ofsted noted that the LSCB in Haringey failed to provide sufficient challenge to its members.	Await Loughborough report and act as appropriate.  The LSCB is chaired independently and the Chair attends the Children Trust. She reports positively that members do offer challenge both within	Await Loughborough report and act as appropriate however this would likely include a review of the way the WB LSCB offers challenge and records evidence of the same.

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
	Children Boards later this year.			the Board and between partners	
51.	The Children's Trust and the Local Safeguarding Children Board should not be chaired by the same person. The Local Safeguarding Children Board chair should be selected with the agreement of a group of multi-agency partners and should have access to training to support them in their role.	To be reflected in revised regulations and revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.	Ofsted also noted that as well as the Independent Chair that the Independent Reviewing Officers (who chair Looked after children reviews and Child Protection Conferences) were insufficiently independent of operational line management ins social care	Already compliant  The Independent Reviewing Officers are managed outside the line management of 'social care' in WB however this could be further strengthened through the development of an SLA between the services	Local arrangements already in place  To develop an SLA with the IRO service
52.	Local Safeguarding Children Boards should include membership from the senior decision makers from all safeguarding partners, who should attend regularly and be fully involved as equal partners in Local Safeguarding Children Board decision making.	To be reflected in revised regulations and revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance	Ofsted noted the need to ensure that the LSCB could evidence the impact they were having, had good multi-agency attendance, follow-up on issues and agreed actions was rigorous and paid attention to the quality of individual case work practice and Board members provided sufficient independent challenge	Compliant already albeit we need to revisit rep for adult mental health and Drug and alcohol rec 22. Overall it is considered the Board offers challenge, has good attendance and does consider case work. However there is always room for improvement and this is carefully monitored by the Chair and Exec	As per action 22.  New Chair of the LSCB to further consider the Ofsted findings in relation to practice in WB's Board
53.	Local Safeguarding Children Boards should report to the Children's Trust Board and publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in the	The Government has brought forward amendments to the ASCL Bill to require LSCB's to produce annual reports. Subject to Parliamentary approval, this will		This is already in place in WB LSCB How 'robust challenge' is enacted is an area to be developed locally (as nationally) and we await guidance on how	Already compliant in general terms but will need to review the revised guidance once out and act appropriately.

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
	local area. Local Safeguarding Children Boards should provide robust challenge to the work of the Children's Trust and its partners in order to ensure that the right systems and quality of services and practice are in place so that children are properly safeguarded.	be reflected in revised <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance.		the government sees this being done.	(see also point 9)
54.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health, and the Home Office, together with HM Treasury, must ensure children's services, police and health services have protected budgets for the staffing and training for child protection services.	Children's Trusts will prepare their annual assessments of need on which the financial contributions made by local partners to jointly funded safeguarding initiatives will be based, taking account of other local priorities. These will be set out each year in the Children and Young People's Plan. Government Offices will challenge the quality of local needs analysis, the alignment of that analysis with local children and young people plan priorities and the adequacy of what is then commissioned in respect of support for all children, children 'in need' and those in need of protection. The NSDU, as one of its early priorities will explore the scope for disseminating comparative information on the pattern of local spend on children's services.		In broad terms WBC have been mindful of the need not to seek to achieve saving that might have an adverse impact on child protection. This is likely to be a severe pressure in the coming 2-3 years as the need for budget reductions increases	To ensure members are advised of possible impacts on safeguarding and child protection services of any service disinvestments and are advised of the need for investments to strengthen early intervention.
55.	The Department for Children, Schools and Families must sufficiently resource children's services to ensure that early	It is the responsibility of all partners on Children's Trusts to assess the adequacy of their funding on children's services		Early Intervention is the overarching strategy of the CT and C&YP however resources are insufficient to meet needs	As above

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
	intervention and preventative services have capacity to respond to all children and families identified as vulnerable or 'in need'.	(see response to rec. 54). Under the new arrangements for statutory targets on safeguarding, the Government will closely monitor the trend in outcomes through indicators and targets and the quality of services through Ofsted's new inspection arrangements. The NSDU will also explore the scope for benchmarking and disseminating comparative information on the pattern of local spend in children's services (see rec. 54).		and could be further enhanced to reduce further the need for statutory interventions	
56.	A national annual report should be published reviewing safeguarding and child protection spend against assessed needs of children across the partners in each Children's Trust.	The Chief Adviser will present his first annual report in April 2010.		Fully support	Await the national report
57.	The Ministry of Justice should lead on the establishment of a system wide target that lays responsibility on all participants in the care proceedings system to reduce damaging delays in the time it takes to progress care cases where these delays are not in the interests of the child.	The Ministry of Justice is working closely with the Department for Children, Schools and Families to establish a system wide target for reducing delays that draws in all participants within the care proceedings system. Whilst the detail is yet to be finalised with the relevant key partners, the intention is to have an overarching objective, related to the timetable for the completion of proceedings for an individual child, supported by a suite of Key Performance Indicators owned by individual participants in the		To be welcomed. We have locally experienced delay in cases that were not down to local practice issues.	Monitor

No	Lord Laming Recommendation	DCSF Comments	Haringey Ofsted Joint Area Review Report (practice points if not addressed in either Laming report or DCFS)	West Berkshire Status	Action Needed
		<p>system. This will include commitments to continuous performance improvement in order to avoid unnecessary delay by Her Majesty's Courts Service, the Legal Services Commission, and the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service. Improvement and success will be measured in a Balanced Scorecard.</p>			
58.	<p>The Ministry of Justice should appoint an independent person to undertake a review of the impact of court fees in the coming months. In the absence of incontrovertible evidence that the fees had not acted as a deterrent, they should then be abolished from 2010/11 onwards.</p>	<p>In response to Lord Laming's recommendation, the Ministry of Justice has appointed Francis Plowden to conduct a review of court fees, and to establish whether or not court fees act as a deterrent when local authorities decide whether or not to commence care proceedings. Francis Plowden has already commenced work and is expected to present his findings to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice by mid September 2009. Appropriate steps would then be taken to implement changes which Mr Plowden might recommend.</p>		<p>We have not allowed court fees to determine decisions about court proceedings in WB However the impact of the fee introduction did mean we overspent by £20k on legal fees. This undoubtedly has an impact then on overall services.</p> <p>We would therefore welcome the abolition of fees</p>	<p>Seek to influence nationally</p>

**APPENDIX B:**

**West Berkshire Council's Protection of Children Action Plan June 2009**

No	Area for Action	Actions Needed	Lead Officer	By when	Comment/progress
<b>LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</b>					
1	Ensure procedures are compliant with <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTTSC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Contribute to requests from DCSF for comments on WTTSC revisions between June and December 2009</li> <li>➤ Revisions due out in Dec 2009 – monitor and scrutinise when available, identify work needed and who to lead</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y  Head of C&Y	Dec 2009  Dec 2009	
2	Prepare for the new Inspection Regime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Raise awareness of the new inspection regime within council and with key partners (PCT, Police etc)</li> <li>➤ Ensure Referral &amp; Assessment Team, Locality Teams and DCT are aware in detail of what they may be required to provide for an unannounced inspection</li> <li>➤ Prepare background papers 'e-copy' required for LAC &amp; safeguarding inspection</li> <li>➤ Prepare resources and background papers required for unannounced inspection of R&amp;A</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y & DCS  Locality Manager East  Head of CC&Q  Locality Manager East	Immediate – Dec 2009  Immediate – July 2009  Sept 2009  End July 2009	
3	Ensure strategies and actions are compliant with requirements set by the new National safeguarding Delivery Unit (NSDU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Contribute to requests from NSDU for comments on their work as it emerges</li> <li>➤ Ensure WBC responds to any new requirements as they are announced</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y  Head of C&Y	Unknown  April 2010	

No	Area for Action	Actions Needed	Lead Officer	By when	Comment/progress
4	Ensure the Children's Trust (CT) and Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) are raising the profile of safeguarding effectively and are working effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure linkages between the CT &amp; LSCB are as effective as possible</li> <li>➤ Ensure appropriate and regular attendance at the CT the LSCB and the LSCB sub-groups</li> <li>➤ Ensure the Quality and Monitoring Audit programme continues</li> </ul>	<p>DCS</p> <p>DCS &amp; Head of C&amp;Y</p> <p>Head of C&amp;Y</p>	<p>Immediate and review in April 2010</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p>Immediate and review 6 monthly</p>	
5	The Children's Trust to ensure that the local needs assessment which informs the C&YP Plan is robust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Joint Strategic Needs assessment is underway but needs further work to ensure is more robust</li> </ul>	DCS	March 2010	
6	Implement the DCSF view that both the DCS and Lead Member should be members of the LSCB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ DCS &amp; Lead Member to be invited to the Board and Inducted</li> </ul>	Chair of LSCB	July 2009	
7	Children's Trust Annual Report to make an assessment of the effectiveness of local governance and partnership arrangements for safeguarding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ CEO &amp; Leader to receive the report through Corporate Board and Management Board</li> </ul>	DCS & CEO	Dec 2009	
8	Strengthen the practice in local Accident and Emergency services with regards to access to Children subject to child protection plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review working protocols with Royal Berkshire &amp; John Radcliff Hospitals</li> <li>➤ Develop a working protocol with Basingstoke Hospital</li> <li>➤ Further consider access to 'e' held records for hospitals Pan-Berkshire</li> </ul>	<p>Locality Safeguarding Manager</p> <p>Locality Safeguarding Manager</p> <p>DCS</p>	<p>Dec 2009</p> <p>Jan 2010</p> <p>April 2010</p>	John Radcliff completed June 09

No	Area for Action	Actions Needed	Lead Officer	By when	Comment/progress
9	Explicit Standards are in place for key teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Finalise team standards and publicise</li> </ul>	Service Managers	Jan 2010	
<b>PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT</b>					
10	Ensure social care practice is as good as it can be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain a programme of regular practice audits and dissemination of learning</li> <li>➤ Report audit findings through CSMT/ SMM &amp; SMT</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y /Service Managers  Head of C&Y	Annual programme  As audits report	
11	Ensure practice in front line duty is of a high standard and thresholds are applied consistently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure regular checking of referrals and oversight by managers</li> </ul>	Locality Safeguarding Manager	Already underway	2 weekly reporting
12	Ensure social workers caseloads are manageable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to implement and monitor the workload weighting system</li> </ul>	Team Managers	Immediate and ongoing	
13	Schools safeguarding arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Monitor the effectiveness of the new schools safeguarding workers post</li> </ul>	PEWO	August 2009	
14	Ensure the Integrated Children's System is fit for purpose and aids good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review ICS Exemplars and revise as appropriate</li> <li>➤ Develop local strategy as 'permissions' are given to do so from DCSF</li> <li>➤ Develop a single 'issues log' that records RAISE issues and clearly tracks progress and actions</li> <li>➤ Revise Social Workers case recording policy and procedures, agree an implementation plan and monitor</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y  Head of CQ&C  Raise Service Manager  East Locality Manager	Dec 2009  Sept 2009  July 2009  Dec 2009	Working Group underway and some work already completed

No	Area for Action	Actions Needed	Lead Officer	By when	Comment/progress
15	All cases have the right documentation available on file to enable good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review a sample of cases to ensure they all have the correct basic data, chronologies, evidence of recent audit/ oversight</li> </ul>	Service Managers	Oct 2009	
<b>ORGANISATION AND FINANCE</b>					
16	Ensure effective referral and duty work systems in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review the overall referral service giving due consideration of the revised Working Together Guidance</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y	By April 2010	
17	Local Authorities and their partners must establish secure assessment and earlier intervention strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to expand the range of early interventions services and review the level of funding for such services</li> </ul>	DCS & CT	Dec 2010	
18	Social Workers have access to the right tools to do their job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Explore the need for administrators to social workers, quantify and report on findings.</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y	Dec 2009	
19	Ensure the Independent Reviewing service is sufficiently independent and of good quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop a Service Level Agreement between the DCS and IRO service</li> <li>➤ To ensure the IRO service report regularly on performance of their team and the performance of the agencies they come into contact with</li> </ul>	DCS Head of CQ&C	Jan 2009 Jan 2009	
<b>INTER-AGENCY WORKING</b>					
20	Local Authorities and their partners must establish secure assessment and earlier intervention strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Children's Trust to review its early Intervention and Assessment Strategies</li> <li>➤ Continue to expand the range of early interventions services and review the level of funding for such services</li> </ul>	DCS DCS & CT	April 2010 Dec 2010	

No	Area for Action	Actions Needed	Lead Officer	By when	Comment/progress
21	Ensure partner agencies are referring when needed, understand the role of social work and are able to constructively challenge if concerned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Continue to meet with partner agency forums on a regular basis</li> <li>➤ LSCB to review the 'conflicts of opinion protocol'</li> <li>➤ Written materials are kept up to date, and are accessible</li> <li>➤ Ensure agencies understand their shared responsibilities in Core Groups</li> </ul>	All managers  C&R Manager  Public Information Manager  Locality Safeguarding Manager	Ongoing  Sept 2009  Nov 2009  ongoing	
22	Ensure that adult mental health services and adult drug and alcohol services understand the referral process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To consider the need to further develop the Pan-Berkshire procedures to develop an expectation of automatic referral when appropriate</li> <li>➤ Raise awareness in these teams of their child protection and safeguarding duties (link to the Think Family programme already underway)</li> </ul>	C&R Manager  C&R Manager	Jan 2010  underway	
23	Information is shared in an effective and timely way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Information Sharing Protocols and guidance are disseminated widely</li> <li>➤ Revised guidance if required with new Working Together Guidance</li> </ul>	C&R Manager  Head of C&Y	Underway  Dec 2009	
24	Explore the possibility of co-located police, community paediatric specialist and health visitor within the social work service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To continue to raise with Thames Valley Police</li> <li>➤ To ask the PCT to co-locate a community paediatric specialist</li> <li>➤ To raise the concerns about the resourcing of CAIU locally and endeavour to get more 'protected' resources</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y & DCS Head of C&Y & DCS  Head of C&Y & The CT	Underway Oct 2009  Underway	

No	Area for Action	Actions Needed	Lead Officer	By when	Comment/progress
<b>WORKFORCE</b>					
25	Directors of Children's Services to attend the new DCS leadership programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Nominate for programme</li> <li>➤ Feed back learning</li> </ul>	DCS	Complete Ongoing	DCS on first intake in 2010
26	Ensure effective social care training plan in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Review the way that social workers training is provided to ensure the programme further equips social workers to be excellent practitioners</li> <li>➤ Review quality of recent social worker inductions</li> <li>➤ Continue to work with the DCFS on the Newly Qualified Social Worker programme</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y  Head of C&Y  W/C Locality Manager	Dec 2009  Oct 2009  underway	
27	Ensure social workers get good quality supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Audit the frequency of supervision to social workers</li> <li>➤ Conduct a further qualitative audit of supervision for the entire C&amp;Y Service (consider need for additional levels of supervisions)</li> </ul>	Service Managers  Head of C&Y	In place & July 2009 & ongoing  Report July 2009	
28	Ensure effective supply of social workers to West Berkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure full use of the DCSF Graduate Social Work Training Programme</li> <li>➤ Revise and update the Social Workers recruitment &amp; retention Strategy</li> <li>➤ Consider the viability of an Advanced Social Workers structure in West Berkshire</li> <li>➤ Lobby for national developments in social worker recruitment, supply and employment support</li> </ul>	Head of C&Y  Head of C&Y  Head of C&Y  DCS & head of C&Y	Underway  Underway  April 2010  ongoing	



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Treasury Management Annual Report 2008/09</b>	<b>Item 12</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1794	

**Purpose of Report:** To consider an Annual Report on the Treasury Management Function, reviewing the previous year's activities and performance of the fund for the year.

**Recommended Action:** To note the previous year's treasury management activities and performance of the Fund.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** To ensure compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services 2002 and in accordance with Best Practice.

**Other options considered:**

**Key background documentation:** Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2002  
Annual Investment Strategy 2008/09  
Annual Investment Strategy 2009/10

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPT13 - Value for Money**
- CPT16 - Excellent Performance Management**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:

Detailing the activity of the Treasury management function and the significant contribution it makes to the Council's annual budget at minimum risk to the security of the monies invested.

<b>Portfolio Member Details</b>	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Keith Chopping - (0118) 983 2057
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	kchopping@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	22 July 2009
<b>Contact Officer Details</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Simon Freeman
<b>Job Title:</b>	Finance Manager
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 519249
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	sfreeman@westberks.gov.uk

**Implications**

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**Policy:** Treasury Management policy agreed at Council on 4th March 2008.

**Financial:** The Treasury function is responsible for the daily cashflow management of the Council. Investment income generated from the Treasury Management function forms a significant contribution to the Council's annual budget

**Personnel:**

**Legal/Procurement:**

**Property:**

**Risk Management:** The strategy endorsed by the Council in March 2008 aims to ensure the maximisation of interest receipts with the minimum risk taken on the security of monies invested - risk minimisation will always take priority over the maximisation of returns.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:**

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## **Executive Summary**

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### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services, revised in April 2002, and formally adopted by the Executive on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2002, requires the Section 151 Officer to provide an annual report to the Executive after the year end which reviews the Treasury Management activity and performance for the previous year.

### **2. Proposals**

- 2.1 To review for the financial year 01 April 2008 to 31 March 2009:
- Economic conditions
  - Treasury Activity during the year
  - Performance of the fund
- 2.2 To note the Treasury Policy and Strategy for the financial year 2009-2010.
- 2.3 To take note of the briefing information on the current situation regarding the Financial Markets and Banking Sector and the interim Treasury policy being adopted to minimise risk and exposure to the current volatility of the markets.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 Treasury Management Activity and Performance of the Fund for the previous year should be noted.

# Executive Report

## 1. Introduction

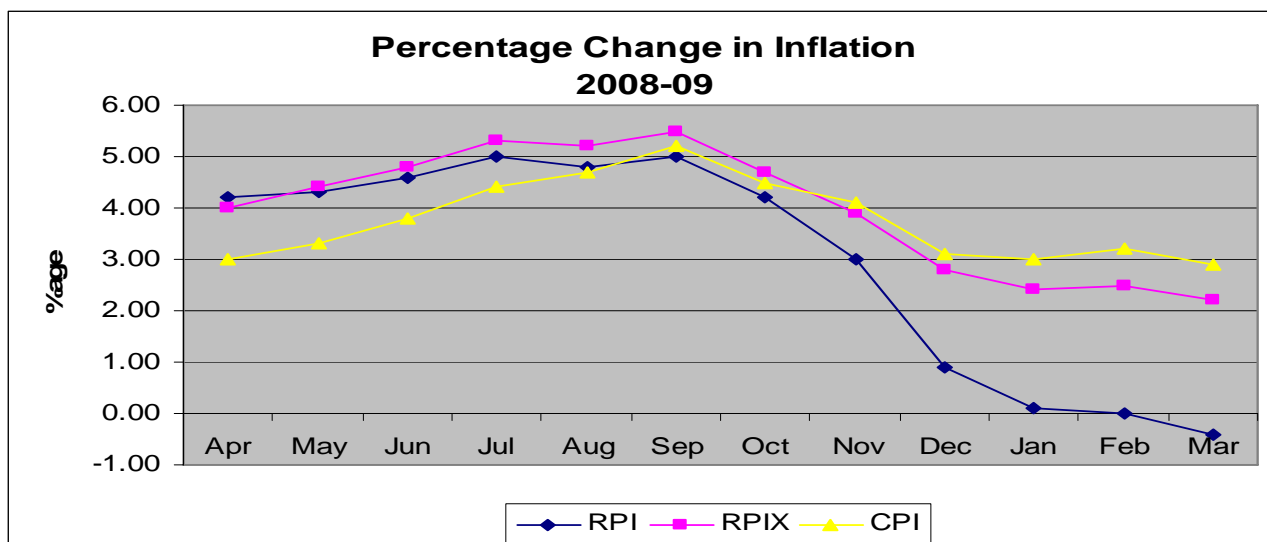
1.1 The CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services, revised in April 2002 and formally adopted by the Executive on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2002, requires the Section 151 Officer to provide annual reports to the Executive before the start and after the year end. Before the start of the financial year, the strategy and plan to be pursued in the forthcoming year is reported, and after the close of the financial year, an annual report reviewing the Treasury Management activity and performance for the previous year is provided.

1.2 The strategy endorsed by the Council in March 2009 aims to ensure the Council's cashflow is managed to ensure sufficient fiscal resources are maintained to allow continued operation on a daily basis. Surplus funds are to be invested to generate the most beneficial interest receipts whilst complying with the policy to ensure minimum risk exposure in relation to the security of monies invested. The Treasury Management Group (TMG), (consisting of Head of Finance, Finance Manager, Group Accountant Capital and Treasury Management, Group Accountant Finance Policy, Treasury Accountant and Accountancy Manager), meet regularly to review performance and determine the details of policy.

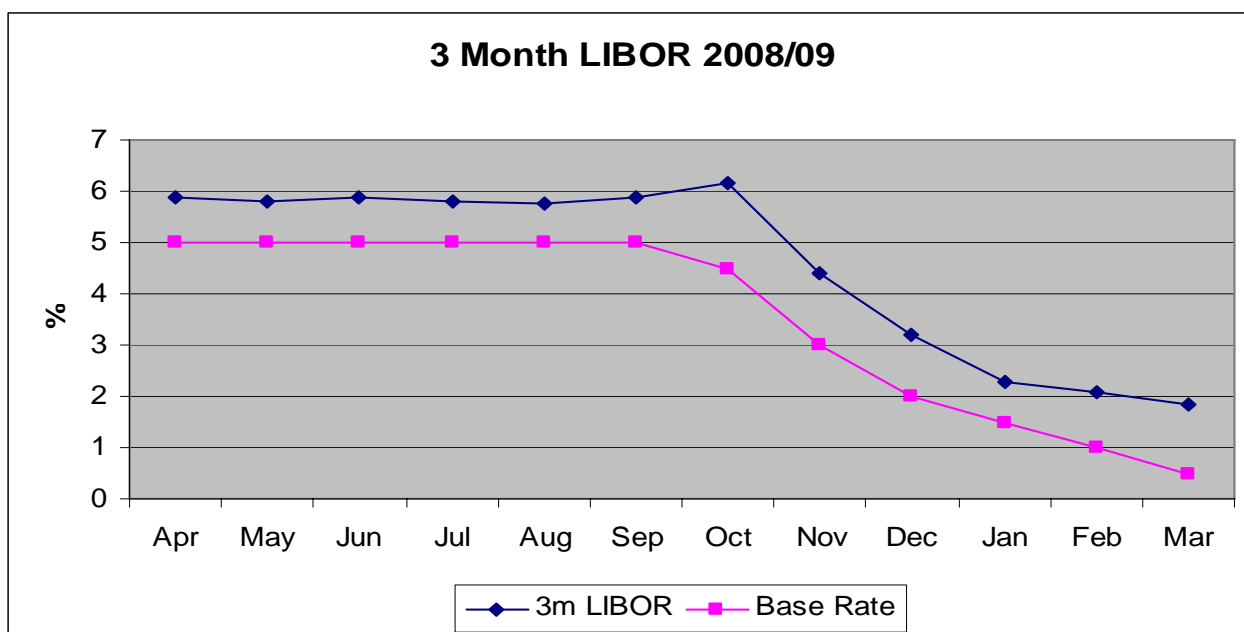
## 2. Economic conditions

### UK Economic data and events

2.1 The Financial Year 2008/09 has proven to be an extraordinary year for both the UK and the Global financial economy. The Bank of England base rate of interest (base rate) started the year at 5.25% with expectations that there would be further decreases during the year. As expected, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) lowered the base rate by 0.25% in early April 2008 to 5%. Further reductions were expected but did not materialise as inflation had been steadily increasing and was at 4.7% in August, well above the MPC target rate of 2%. However, inflation concerns were replaced by the effect of the global financial crisis and further cuts in the base rate were necessary. In October 2008 the base rate was lowered to 4.5% and eventually reduced down to a record low of 0.50% in March 2009.



- 2.2 In September 2008 Lehman Brothers, a US investment bank, was allowed to file for bankruptcy in the absence of any other financial institution willing to take on its high levels of debt. This event caused a shock wave in world financial markets which threatened to destabilise them. In October 2008 the Icelandic governments took control of their banks and this was followed by the UK government pouring a massive £37bn into RBS, HBOS and Lloyds as liquidity in the markets was slowing. The focus had changed from concerns about inflation to concerns about recession and deflation.
- 2.3 Despite the reductions in the Base Rate, CPI still rose to 3.2% in February 2009, resulting in the Bank of England’s Governor writing an open letter to the Chancellor in March 2009 to decrease the base rate to 0.50%. However, this alone was not going to keep the inflation target at 2% and it was clear that other policy measures would be needed. The aim has been to boost the supply of money in the economy and hence raise the outlook for spending and inflation. To trigger this spending the Bank of England has initiated a programme of ‘quantitative easing’, purchasing financial assets from financial institutions to help stimulate lending – target at present stands at £125bn. The bank rate has since remained at 0.50% with no further changes expected at the moment.
- 2.4 The most recent statement from the Governor of the Bank of England is that the recession has been deeper than expected and the timing and strength of a recovery is "highly uncertain"; he also said "the economy will eventually heal, but the process may be slow".
- 2.5 The key three-month sterling London Inter-Bank Offer Rate or LIBOR (this is the rate at which International banks are prepared to lend to each other) was marginally above 5.5% in January 2008 - broadly equal to the base rate. It then climbed higher as the extent of the credit crunch emerged. It peaked at 6% in early April, despite the base rate falling to 5% by that month, and then drifted down throughout the summer to a low of 5.7% on 12 September. A worsening of the crisis sent it up to 6.3% on 30 September (a 130-point gap with the base rate). It has since plunged to base rate + 1.45 points (on the day after the Bank Rate reduction to 0.5% in March). Since the start of FY 2009/10 the gap between LIBOR and Base rate has continued to close.



### 3. Review of Activity during the Year

- 3.1 Guidance on Local Government Investments in England gives priority to security and liquidity and the Council's aim is to achieve a yield commensurate with these principles. The Council manages its investments in-house and only invests with the institutions listed in the Council's approved lending list. The Council invests for a range of periods from overnight up to 364 days (and occasionally longer periods), dependent on the Council's cash flow requirements, its interest rate view and the interest rates on offer.
- 3.2 During the year, 45 temporary investments were placed (excluding money market fund and deposit account transactions), and 11 temporary loans were raised. Money was subscribed with the Council's Money Market Fund (MMF) on 75 occasions. Due to the fluctuating level of the Fund, the emphasis during the year has been on financing cash flow needs on a monthly basis and minimising the need to borrow. A proportion of the fund has been invested in periods of over 6 months to take account of beneficial interest rates. The remainder of the fund has been invested in short term periods (under one month) to cover the Council's daily cash flow.
- 3.3 The Council took over the direct management of the ex BCC loan debt from Reading Borough Council on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2005 (valued at £28,917,991) and this totalled £22,880,491 at the end of 2008/09. This debt is wholly with the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) and is regularly reviewed by the TMG and forms part of the approved Prudential Borrowing Limits set for 2008/09 set out in the Annual Investment Strategy, and also in the Capital Strategy. On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007 the PWLB introduced a separate set of discount rates alongside the borrowing rates, the discount rates being set at a margin below the reference gilt yield and the borrowing rates at a margin above. The effect of this has been to remove much of the flexibility of the PWLB, to dramatically increase the cost of early loan repayment, and to reduce opportunities for debt rescheduling. The margin between borrowing and restructuring rates which varies between 0.25% and 0.45%, with the higher figure applying to longer-dated loans, is considered (by advisors and practitioners) as the least equitable change in PWLB arrangements for at least the last decade. Nevertheless, the Council's portfolio continues to be reviewed for debt restructuring opportunities.
- 3.4 The following table details compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices relating to the operation of the fund and the cash flow during the year:

<b><u>Compliance</u></b>	<b><u>Target</u></b>	<b><u>Actual</u></b>	<b><u>Explanation</u></b>
Credit limit with counterparties not to be exceeded	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	RBS MMF had a balance marginally in excess of the £5m limit on 17 of the 365 days. This was due to interest being applied at source and not notified until later in the accounting period. The average excess was 0.18% of the approved limit and the fund is AAA rated.
Counterparties to be on approved lending list	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	
All investments to be approved investments	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

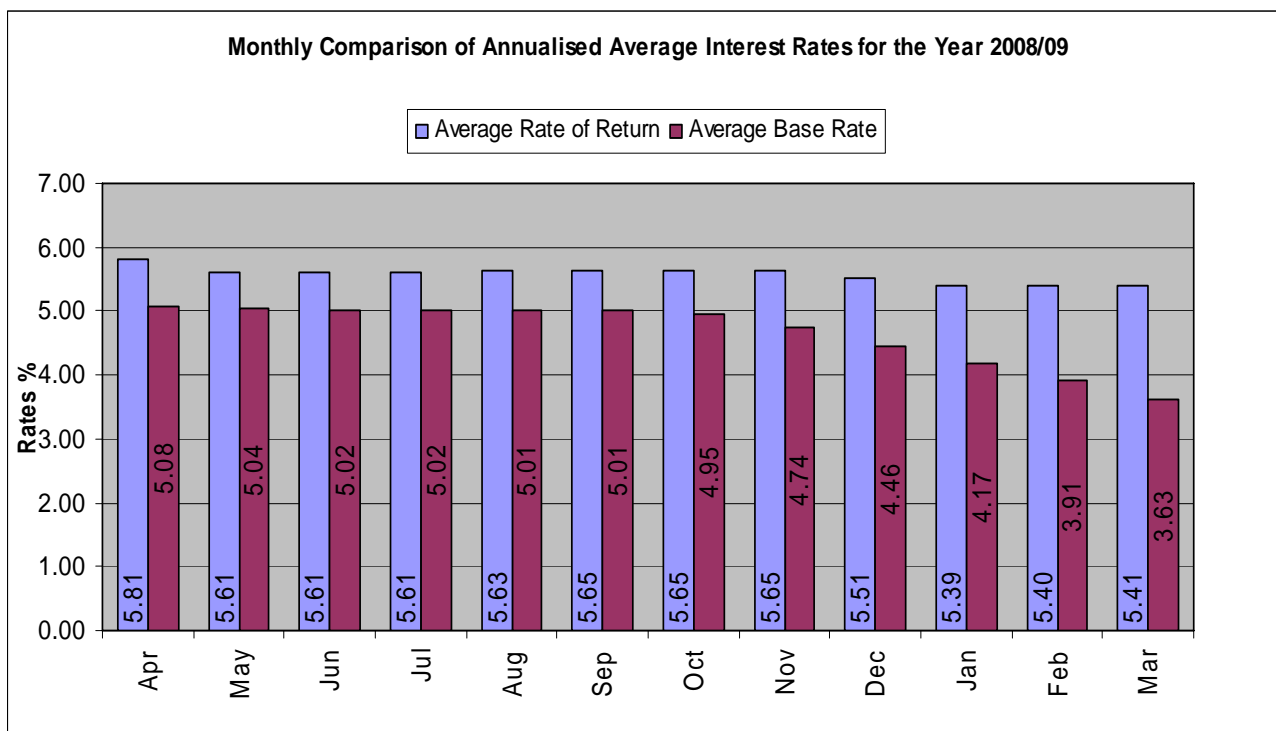
Segregation of duties to be complied with	100%	100%	
Daily balance within +/- £100k of estimate	100%	88%	Unplanned transactions on 32 out of 255 days
Operational boundary for external debt of £15m not to be exceeded (ex BCC debt not included here)	100%	100%	Maximum borrowed £8,500,000

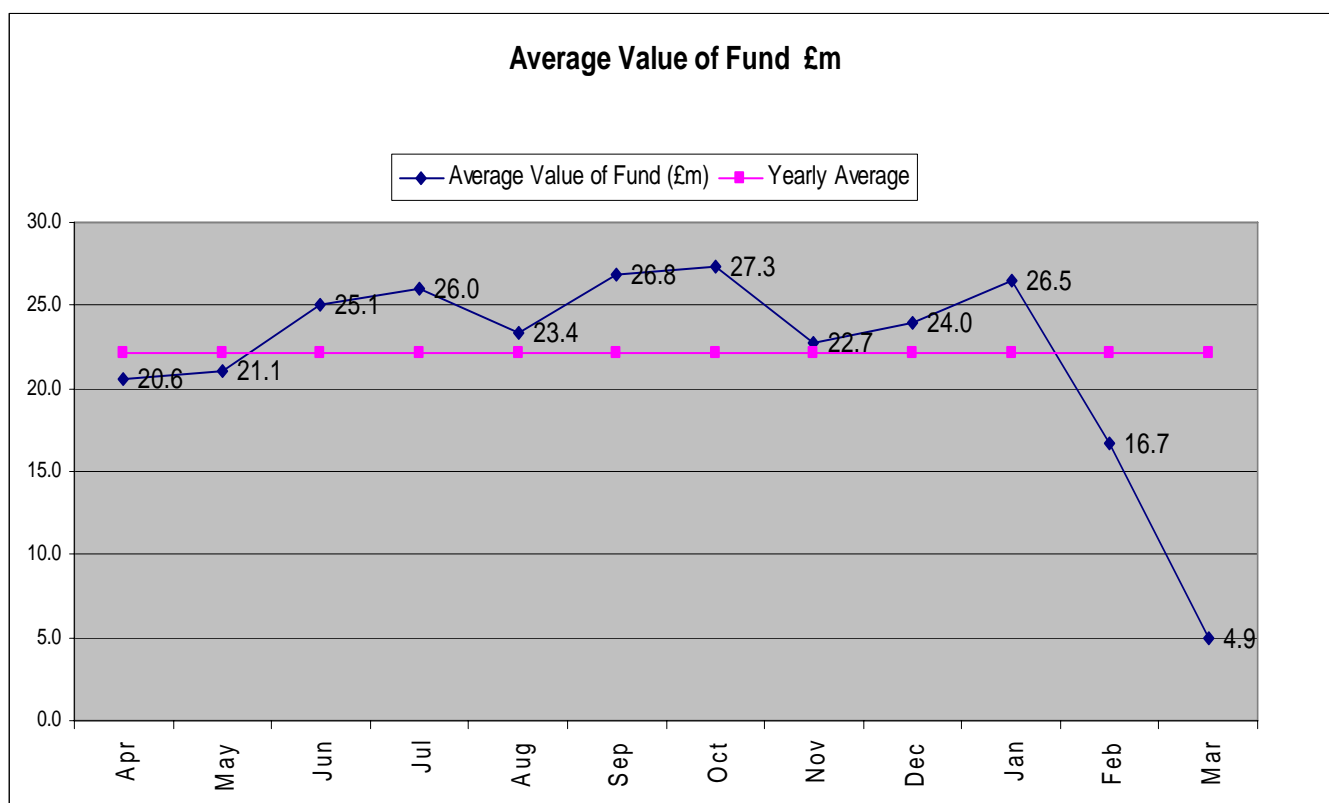
**4. Performance of the Fund for the Year**

4.1 The net value of the fund (excluding the long term debt from PWLB) at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 was £3.2m (compared to a balance of £18.1m on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008). This was made up entirely from the excess of temporary investments over temporary borrowings. The average value of the Fund during the year was £22.1m compared to £16.0m in 2007/08.

4.2 Interest earned on investments during the year totalled **£1,198,066** net of interest paid for borrowing, and before the allocation of interest on internal balances held in respect of schools, contractor deposits and capital contributions which amounted to £138,867. This level of income based on the average fund value of £22.1m equated to an average rate of return of **5.41%**. This compares to the average bank base rate for the year of 3.63%.

4.3 The following charts show the West Berkshire average rate of return on the fund for each month for the year to date compared with the average bank base rate, for the same period. The second chart shows the monthly average value of the fund. From these it is obvious that the rate of return has a strong correlation with the available funds for investing. Traditionally the value of the fund will reduce during February and March, when there is little or no income from council tax receipts.





## 5. Policy and Strategy for 2009/10

- 5.1 The Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for the 2009/10 financial year was approved by Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2009. The Local Government Act 2003 introduced the new Prudential Capital Finance System which has been applied from 1 April 2004. It replaced the requirements under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The strategy recommends that if market conditions are favourable, investments may be arranged up to 12 months in advance of the date of the investment (“forward dealing”). In order to maintain the liquidity of investments the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed does not normally exceed 12 months.
- 5.2 The main element of the Treasury Management function is to manage the Council’s cash flow through temporary investments and borrowing in line with the Council’s Treasury Management Policy and Practices (as required by the CIPFA code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services 2002). The Treasury Management Group will continue to meet quarterly to review and determine the details of the strategy.
- 5.3 Due to changes in the cashflow requirements, the amount of money held “on call” may need to be increased during the year. Therefore the Treasury Management Group is considering options on a second deposit account (Alliance & Leicester Base Rate Beater), which allows a shorter term investments, and is currently offering better rates than the money market without the tie-in periods normally associated with fixed term investments. Another option, offering liquidity and security is a second Money Market Fund; these funds are, by their nature, ‘AAA’ scored by the ratings agencies and generally offers a rate of return that compares well with the market standard.

**Appendices**

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There are no appendices to this report.

**Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:**

**Officers Consulted:** Treasury Management Group

**Trade Union:**



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>West Berkshire Parish and Town Council Charter</b>	<b>Item 13</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX1920	

**Purpose of Report:** To build upon the working relationships with West Berkshire Town and Parish Councils and West Berkshire Council.

**Recommended Action:** That the Town and Parish Charter be adopted.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** To approve a Town and Parish Charter.

**Other options considered:** Not to adopt a charter.

**Key background documentation:** N/A

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

- CPT6 - Vibrant Villages**
- CPT15 - Putting Customers First**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Priorities and Themes by:  
Building on our relationship with town and parish councils.

<b>Portfolio Member Details</b>	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Graham Jones - Tel (01235) 762744
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	gjones@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	24 August 2009

<b>Contact Officer Details</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Andy Day
<b>Job Title:</b>	Head of Policy and Communication
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<b>E-mail Address:</b>	aday@westberks.gov.uk

**Implications**

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**Policy:** None  
**Financial:** None  
**Personnel:** None  
**Legal/Procurement:** None  
**Property:** None  
**Risk Management:** None  
**Equalities Impact Assessment:** Not required

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:</p> <p>The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

## Executive Summary and Report

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The West Berkshire Parish and Town Council Charter has been drafted around the effective collaborative working between West Berkshire Council and parish and town councils. The aim of the Charter is to facilitate good working relationships between the different tiers of local government within West Berkshire.
- 1.2 In developing the charter it was first discussed with the town and parish councils at the District Parish Conference in October 2008. At this meeting the Charter was presented to delegates with 'break out' sessions being held to get initial feedback.
- 1.3 Following comments received at the October Parish Conference the Charter was further circulated to officers and parish and town councils prior to it being presented at the May 2009 Parish Conference. Following this parish and town councils were given until June 2009 to make any further representation.
- 1.4 All comments received by both officers and parish and town councils have been incorporated into the charter attached as appendix A.

### 2. Proposals

- 2.1 That the Executive adopt the West Berkshire Parish and Town Council Charter.

### Appendices

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Appendix A – West Berkshire Town and Parish Charter

### Consultees

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**Local Stakeholders:** Town and Parish Councils

**Officers Consulted:** All heads of service and Corporate Board

**Trade Union:** N/A

**Appendix A**

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**Draft Parish Charter**  
**INTRODUCTION**

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1. This Charter has been drafted to build on the already effective collaborative working between West Berkshire Council and the parish and town councils.
2. The overall aim of the Charter is to facilitate good working relationships between the tiers of local government in West Berkshire, paying particular attention to improving consultation and communications about policies and decisions that may affect communities.
3. There are 64 parishes within West Berkshire, all playing a valuable role in the fabric of local life. Parish councillors and clerks possess unique knowledge that can help the planning and decision-making process.
4. This Charter has the full approval and commitment of West Berkshire Council, parish and town councils of West Berkshire and the West Berkshire Association of Local Councils.
5. This Charter will be monitored and evaluated with a view to making appropriate amendments as necessary.

## Appendix A

### 1. Local Governance and Communication

- 1.1 Our staff will endeavour to make themselves available to parish or town council clerks and councillors by phone, email or in meetings. Except in the case of emergencies, where a request to attend a meeting is made it should wherever practicable be made with reasonable notice (preferably one month).
- 1.2 We shall hold a number of district / parish conferences each year. When setting the conference agenda consideration will be given to suggested topics taken from the District Parish Survey and by asking Parish Councils for their ideas on a regular basis.
- 1.3 We shall help organise the administration of parish and town council elections. The respective authorities will work together to limit the cost of such elections.
- 1.4 We shall email a weekly information bulletin to town / parish councils.
- 1.5 We shall offer training in relation to Code of Conduct and Planning, as well as offer assistance in identifying and helping meet training needs.
- 1.6 Appropriate District Councillors will endeavour to attend parish and town council annual meetings and other meetings wherever practical, and will let the organiser know if they cannot be present. If District Councillors cannot attend regularly, they will endeavour to make arrangements to meet the Chair at an alternative and mutually convenient time.
- 1.7 West Berkshire Council and parish / town councils will adopt codes of conduct to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. There will be a parish / town council representative on the Standards Committee.

### 2. Community Planning and the Local Strategic Partnership

- 2.1 We shall ensure that parish and town councils are consulted and involved in the development and direction of community policies as they affect the local communities they represent, and that they have the opportunity to take an active part in appropriate discussions via a number of forums.
- 2.2 The West Berkshire Partnership will seek to involve and consult in the process of preparing and implementing community and partnership strategies (via Parish Conferences and formal consultations processes) as and when they affect the local communities they represent
- 2.3 The Council will provide advice for the development of village design statements and town design statements. Where applicable the design statements will be adopted by the Council and used as a material consideration in planning decisions. The same support and advice will also be available to parishes / communities developing parish plans.
- 2.4 The Council will provide advice to communities wishing to undertake a community regeneration health check in support of the development of parish plans.

## Appendix A

- 2.5 We shall engage with parish and town councils, at their request or invitation, in providing support and guidance when a parish or town is seeking to develop a parish plan or undertaking a Market Town Health Check.
- 2.6 We shall also consider parish plan proposals in community strategies and respond, where appropriate. In terms of parish plans a separate “Community Plan Agreement” has been developed, outlining the shared responsibilities between the community and West Berkshire Council to deliver “quality” parish plans.

### 3 Consultation

- 3.1 Statutory matters: these are matters in which West Berkshire Council has a statutory requirement to consult with parish and / or town councils, for example amendments to Public Rights of Way.
- 3.2 Non-statutory matters: these are matters in which there is no statutory requirement to consult but West Berkshire Council recognises that the views of its stakeholders and partners are essential to effective decision making.
- 3.3 A list of the different types of matters is set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 Notification of planning applications and consultations on development plans, for instance, are covered by different national regulations, which set out different timetables for notification or consultations about matters affecting areas. The period for consultation can differ at different stages in the process and will be clearly set out in material sent to parish and town councils.
- 3.5 When looking at planning applications determined by West Berkshire Council, the parish or town council will be invited to attend any site visits by the area planning committee and given an opportunity to point out site-related issues that they consider important to councillors. Representatives of parish or town councils are permitted by provisions contained in the Council’s Constitution to make a short address before the committee debates the proposal. When a parish or town council respond to a statutory planning consultation or an application notification, the planning authority will take full consideration of their views. The final decision of West Berkshire Council will be communicated back to them at the end of the process.
- 3.6 Non-statutory matters: there is more flexibility on non-statutory consultations. On these issues, we shall provide a copy, on request, of any public report and background papers on the items on which consultation is taking place.
- 3.7 We shall aim to provide parish and town councils with a consultation period of at least 6 weeks to encourage good working relationships and allow sufficient opportunity to discuss and respond, before West Berkshire Council makes a decision that affects its local community.
- 3.8 We shall let parish and town councils know, when approached, when an appropriate committee decision will be taken by West Berkshire Council. They will be invited to attend and, at the Chair’s discretion, to speak.

## Appendix A

- 3.9 Where a parish or town council has been consulted, we shall aim to inform it of the outcome within five working days of the decision having been taken also giving the reason behind the decision. In some instances this time period may need to be extended to take account of prevailing circumstances.
- 3.10 We shall accurately report parish and town council views (in formal reports) to those district councillors and officers making decisions.

### 4 Practical Support

- 4.1 The Council, where practical and if resources permit, will offer to parish councils' access to its support services at a mutually agreed fee. Services available include legal matters, committee and procedural arrangements, property management, human resources, ICT and procurement.
- 4.2 Parish Councils can access the Councils approved list of contractors and get advice on procurement matters.
- 4.3 In addition the Council will where practicable and resources permit be willing to help in a number of ways such as displaying information in libraries and council buildings, providing advice on health and safety, helping meet training needs, giving advice on recycling and providing advice on community enhancement projects.
- 4.4 The Council will provide support on emergency planning arrangements within the area.
- 4.5 We will actively support parish and town councils in developing their own local speed campaigns and associated local activities. Hand-held radar equipment and Speed Indicating Devices (SIDs), for instance, will be made available, free of charge, to allow elected members or their representatives to carry out local traffic speed surveys and develop local campaigns and publicity. Training and guidance will be provided by our Road Safety Group.

### 5. Delegation of Responsibility for Service Provision

- 5.1 We recognise that parish and town councils with 'Quality Parish' status have enhanced powers. Where a parish or town council (or group of parish or town councils) wish to take on delegated responsibility for the delivery, management or monitoring of services provided by us, we will discuss and support opportunities for devolution where this is lawful and represents best value (taking account of cost, quality, local preferences and practicability).
- 5.2 Section 2 of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 also allows for the transfer of powers to another public body where that request seeks to promote the sustainability of local communities. Request for any proposed transfer of powers should be made to the Chief Executive.

## Appendix A

### 6. Financial Arrangements

- 6.1 Where the provision of a service is devolved or transferred to a parish or town council, funding is also transferred with the amount involved being agreed by us and the parish or town council. Functions that may be offered to parish and town councils by us are covered in Appendix 2.

### 7. Information and Complaints

- 7.1 When we consult with parish and town councils, we shall provide them with sufficient information to enable them to reach an informed view on a matter.
- 7.2 We shall acknowledge all written communications from parish and town councils (including letters, faxes and emails) and provide a substantive reply to all written communications that need a reply as follows:
- We will aim to answer all phone calls within 15 seconds.
  - We will acknowledge all letters within five working days and provide a full response within 20 days, unless there are special circumstances which we will explain in the acknowledgement.
  - We will acknowledge all external emails within five working days, and provide a full response within 20 days.
  - Representatives of parish / town councils visiting the council will be seen by the right person within 10 minutes of an appointment. We shall see callers who drop in within five minutes, and call the right person to see them within 30 minutes.
- 7.3 We shall aim to resolve any breach of the Charter by early and constructive dialogue. If something goes wrong, we will act quickly and efficiently to put it right, and if a resolution cannot be agreed, we will help partners to use our formal complaints procedure. (See contact details – Complaints Procedure).
- 7.4 We shall provide advice and guidance on producing a Publication Scheme as required under the Freedom of Information Act.

### 8 Sustainability

- 8.1 West Berkshire Council will work in partnership with parish and town councils to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development via the Parish Plan process for the benefit of local communities, whilst seeking not to compromise the quality of life of future generations of West Berkshire residents and workers.

### 9 Equality of Opportunity

- 9.1 We are committed to eliminating discrimination in all its forms and providing equality of opportunity to all the communities we serve. Equality is at the heart of all that we do and believe in, and we will work to ensure that we promote equality of opportunity and work towards the elimination of discrimination.

**Appendix A**

Appendix 1

Issues that West Berkshire Council will refer to parish and town councils for information and consultation

<b>Statutory</b>	<b>Non-statutory (and other consultations in parish or town councils are stakeholders)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bridge maintenance, closure and diversion</li> <li>• Pedestrian crossings</li> <li>• Public Rights of Way – proposals for permanent legal change</li> <li>• Regional Spatial Strategies that are likely to affect parishes</li> <li>• Roads new and improved, i.e. the need for them, their alignment and the standard of road under consideration (consultation from the earliest stages)</li> <li>• School closure</li> <li>• Traffic regulations (e.g. speed limits, waiting orders, weight restrictions, one-way streets, parking restrictions)</li> <li>• Local Transport Plan This is subject to the provisions of specific regulations which will override the consultation provisions set out in this Charter</li> <li>• Local Development Framework. This is subject to the provisions of specific regulations which will override the consultation provisions set out in this Charter</li> <li>• Planning applications received by West Berkshire Council.</li> <li>• Waste and minerals proposals and the council's own development applications. These proposals and applications are subject to the provisions of specific regulations which will override the consultations provisions set out in this Charter</li> <li>• Waste and Minerals Local Development Framework. This is subject to the provisions of specific regulations which will override the consultation provisions set out in this Charter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to Children's and Young People/Community and Adult Care services</li> <li>• Changes to on-street parking enforcement</li> <li>• Complaints procedure changes</li> <li>• Customer services standards</li> <li>• Derelict land reclamation and landscaping schemes</li> <li>• Design of Improvement Schemes (e.g. traffic calming, cycle routes, safety schemes)</li> <li>• Highway Improvement Programmes</li> <li>• Landscape projects</li> <li>• Libraries – mobile routes, opening hours, buildings issues</li> <li>• Registration service changes</li> <li>• Winter maintenance (changes to treatment routes)</li> </ul>

**Appendix A**

## Appendix 2

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Functions that may be offered to parish and town councils following agreement between West Berkshire Council and parish/town council

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## Functions:

- Some aspects of mobile library planning (e.g. regarding mobile library sites and integration of library services with other local services)
- Information access point provision
- Grass cutting
- One-stop shops

**Appendix A**

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**PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL COMMITMENTS TO WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL**

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**1. Local Governance**

- 1.1 The parish and town council will endeavour to inform West Berkshire councillors of the dates of meetings as soon as they are set and will provide them with a copy of the agenda for each formal meeting, plus a copy of the last parish/town council meeting's minutes, three clear days before the meeting. Any parish or town council that requests an officer from West Berkshire Council to attend a meeting should do so one month beforehand.
- 1.2 The parish or town council will provide a space on its meeting agenda for the District Councillor to provide a relevant report. It should be noted, however, that if the parish or town council resolves to exclude the press and public for an item, this will include the district councillor unless specifically invited to remain.

**2. Community Planning**

- 2.1 Parish and town councils may respond to community planning consultations and invitations to participate either individually or collectively.

**3. Consultation and Communication**

- 3.1 Parish and town councils will endeavour to inform the District Council (see contact details – Highways Maintenance), when emergency action is needed (e.g. dangerous or fallen trees, non-functioning and displacement of traffic signals, road flooding, potholes, loose or uneven flagstones and kerbs, bollard knock-downs and fallen or unsafe lighting columns). Once reported the District Council will endeavour to fix or make safe the problem within 24 hours.
- 3.2 Parish and town councils will endeavour to report the following to West Berkshire Council: damage to traffic signs and other street furniture, street lighting failures and non-functioning lights in traffic signs, blocked gullies and broken gully grids or manholes, loose cat's-eyes and road studs. Once reported the West Berkshire Council will endeavour to fix or make safe the problem within 48 hours.
- 3.3 Parish and town councils will nominate flood wardens and other voluntary emergency contacts and responders and inform West Berkshire Council of any changes.
- 3.4 The parish or town council will respond to consultations by West Berkshire Council on planning and any other matters within the time limit specified in the consultation documents. It will put in place mechanisms such as delegation to a committee or the convening of extra council meetings to meet the consultation deadline.

**Appendix A**

- 3.5 Parish and town councils will endeavour to inform their district councillor of meetings in the parish or town, where decisions to be made may be relevant to West Berkshire Council.
- 3.6 The parish or town council will provide West Berkshire Council with the contact details of the clerk to the council. Bearing in mind that the clerk may only be employed by the parish or town council on a part-time basis, the clerk will inform the West Berkshire Council of the most convenient times/days when contact can be made.

**4. Information**

- 4.1 The parish or town council will endeavour, through the Clerk, to facilitate the use of its notice boards by the district council for the publicity of issues and information of local interest and concern.
- 4.2 The parish or town council will inform West Berkshire Council when it is undertaking a community planning process such as a parish plan or market town health check.
- 4.3 The parish or town council will inform West Berkshire Council when it is working towards achieving 'Quality' status.

## Appendix A

**WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>West Berkshire Charter</b>	Andy Day 01635 519459
<b>Complaints procedure</b>	Sue Broughton 01635 519747
<b>Trading Standards</b>	01635 519930
<b>Public Rights of Way</b>	Jon Thomas – 01635 519611
<b>Council Direct</b> for general council enquiries	01635 42400
<b>Streetcare</b>	01635 519080



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Planning Service response to the recession - Developer Contributions and BREEAM Planning Policies</b>	<b>Item 14</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Executive	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	03 September 2009	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	n/a	

**Purpose of Report:**

To respond to the requests made regarding the "Planning function" of the Council during the recession.

To consider possible action the Council could take through Planning to help the development Industry during the recession.

**Recommended Action:**

The Executive is asked to approve the following recommendations;

a) That the requirement for new development to be built to Sustainable Homes Level 3 / BREEAM Excellent is continued with no changes.

b) That no refunds are given in respect of S106 financial contributions where an agreement has been signed or an undertaking given and policies have now changed.

c) That the requirement to mitigate against the harm of development remains but developers will not be required to pay the S106 contributions until 6 months after commencement of development unless other site specific terms are agreed.

d) That the Head of Planning and Trading Standards be given delegated authority to review these options in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Housing at regular intervals not exceeding six months.

**Reason for decision to be taken:**

To respond to concerns expressed that the authority is not supporting the development industry during the recession.

**Other options considered:**

As outlined in the report.

**Key background documentation:**

West Berkshire Partnership 19th February 2009  
Overview and Scrutiny 24th March 2009  
Representations from developers

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Plan Themes:

**CPT4 - High Quality Planning**

Portfolio Member Details	
<b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>	Councillor Alan Law - Tel (01491) 873614
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	alaw@westberks.gov.uk
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	3 July 2009

Contact Officer Details	
<b>Name:</b>	Bryan Lyttle
<b>Job Title:</b>	Planning Officer
<b>Tel. No.:</b>	01635 5192638
<b>E-mail Address:</b>	blyttle@westberks.gov.uk

**Implications**

**Policy:**

**Financial:** Any reduction in Section 106 receipts will impact upon the Council's Capital programme. Works that mitigate the impact of developments that would normally be funded by Developer Contributions may have to be funded from the Council funded element of the programme either at the expense of other projects or at an additional revenue cost to raise the unsupported borrowing required.

Secondly, there would be an impact upon the Council's cashflow if contributions were to be delayed - in some cases there may be a borrowing cost if the Council had to "front - fund" mitigation works, prior to a Section 106 receipt.

**Personnel:**

**Legal/Procurement:**

**Property:**

**Risk Management:**

**Equalities Impact Assessment:**

<b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Executive Summary and Report

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### 1. Introduction

- i) The Council has been approached by the Chamber of Commerce and a number of developers seeking support for the development industry during the recession. As a key stakeholder in the local development industry the Council is very aware of the impact the recession has had on the local economy.
- There was a 9.9% drop in the number of planning applications received in the last 12 months. The Planning & Trading Standards Service has reduced its resource by 3 posts as a direct result of the economic slowdown.
  - In developing this paper due consideration has been given to the actions requested by both the Chamber of Commerce and members of the development industry. Views of the industry has been gathered from a number of sources including written representations, round table dialogue and a session at the recent Developer Seminar attended by over 100 members of the industry. Representatives of the development industry have identified the following 4 priority actions:
    - Priority 1: Set up a Council / Private Sector shared equity scheme.
    - Priority 2: Relax or amend Planning Policy requirement for all new development to achieve Code 3 and BREEAM Excellent.
    - Priority 3: A number of planning appeal decisions have identified errors in the formula on which the level of developer contributions are sought. Historic payments based on the incorrect formula should be repaid.
    - Priority 4: The Council recently changed the timing of the payment of Developer Contributions. Now all payments must be made at the commencement of development.
- ii) In addition to the above there are a number of other actions sought and in some cases already implemented including; viability assessments, time to process applications, prioritisation and discharge of conditions.
- iii) This paper looks at action already taken and considers the implications of suspending the Code for Sustainable Homes /BREEAM policy and increasing the flexibility around developer contributions, sought under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (S106).
- iv) Priority 1, the creation of a shared equity scheme will be considered in a paper being prepared by the Council's Housing Service.

### 2. Initiatives in Place to Help Developers during the Recession

- 2.1 In addition to the issues associated with BREEAM and S106 addressed in this paper, the Planning and Trading Standards has been assisting the development industry in other ways.

- Viability. Viability is a material planning consideration and so must be weighed against the importance of the site and any policy or contribution that is to be reduced or not complied with. A process to assess viability has existed for over 12 months and includes an open book assessment of the proposed development.
- Trading Standards and Building Control have both proactively engaged with the recent change relating to the switch from CORGI to the registered gas fitters scheme. This has included supporting developers and informing the public.
- A recent Planning & Trading Standards Service *Developer's Seminar* was held with over 550 invites sent to developers, agents, land owners and other professions associated with the development industry. The event attracted 100 delegates who entered into active dialogue and debate with officers. One of the sessions was dedicated to the recession.
- Since Government change to the Planning Applications registration and validation legislation 70% of all planning applications submitted have been found to be invalid. This was addressed at the Seminar by identifying the main reasons applications are invalid and suggesting ways this could be overcome. Easy to use guidance notes and a customer submission checklist have also been prepared and are available on the Council's web site.
- A "Developers Panel" is to be created. This will allow early dialogue with the representatives of industry on a range of issues including policy, process and customer service.
- The authority has been asked to process applications quickly. The Council's performance in relation to the time taken to determine applications is currently in the top quartile nationally. Applications are processed as quickly as possible but care is taken not to adversely impact on the quality of decision made or the community's opportunity to engage.
- Developers have said the time taken to discharge planning conditions can delay work commencing on site. This is acknowledged and so a new streamlined, structured process has been introduced. The process includes target dates for determination, performance monitoring and site monitoring by the Planning Compliance Officer. There is a nationally set fee for the process.

### **Development Industry Priority 2 - Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 and BREEAM Excellent**

- 2.2 The Council introduced the requirement that all new development achieved EcoHomes/BREEAM or equivalent "excellent" rating following consultation in January 2007. This was introduced in advance of a national requirement that all new development was to be built to enhanced sustainability and energy efficient standards as a response to tackling Climate Change.
- 2.3 Since the introduction of the policy the Council has revised the standard relating to residential development (August 2007) to reflect the national move from BREEAM EcoHomes to Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH).

- 2.4 Research by the Council suggests that in order to meet the current requirement for Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, developers will pay approximately an extra 10% on development costs but at the same time reduce the overall ongoing energy consumption by approximately 25% when compared to a similar new build using 2006 Part L of the Building Regulations. These estimates are based on single dwelling and do not assume any purchasing discounts or economies of scale.
- 2.5 The Council has received a limited number of letters from many small scale developers stating that they are either unable to source the products needed to reach a code level 3 standard or that the cost is prohibitive for them. In addition, others are suggesting that since other neighbouring authorities do not yet require new buildings to conform to CSH /BREEAM standard they will develop there rather than West Berkshire. It should be noted that Housing Associations and a number of the volume house builders are already building to Code level 3 and some to Code level 4, which is one level higher.
- 2.6 While it might be true that developers build costs are higher in West Berkshire for the small to medium developer because of the early adoption of the need to build more sustainable housing, it is also true that the cost of materials used to meet these standards is also declining (photovoltaic panels have reduced by 30% in the past year – Guardian Money 09.05.09) as more and more builders seek to build more sustainable houses.
- 2.7 Furthermore, at the beginning of May (2009) the Secretary of State published the South East Plan which contains numerous policies (CC2: Climate Change, CC3: Resource Use, CC4: Sustainable Design and Construction and NRM11: Development Design for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy) to promote the type of policy which West Berkshire introduced in 2007. This means that all authorities in the South East will need to introduce policies similar to that already adopted by West Berkshire.
- 2.8 Finally, the Government made mandatory the need for all new residential developments to have a rating from the CSH/BREEAM from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 (this includes a Nil rating) and required that all Government Funded schemes must be Code Level 3 from the same date (27<sup>th</sup> February 2008 Communities and Local Government). Furthermore, all new homes must be Code Level 3 from 2010, Code Level 4 from 2013 and Code Level 6 from 2016, although the exact method of implementing this has yet to be determined.

### **BREEAM Options**

- 2.9 The following BREEAM options in Table 1 summarise the more detailed options considered to be available to the Council relating to CSH/BREEAM.

Table 1 Options for Increased Flexibility in Code for Sustainable Homes/BREEAM (CSH/B)

	<b>Option</b>	<b>Implication</b>	<b>Impact</b>
A	Removal of or suspension of CSH/B – Blanket approach for a given period of time.	The removal/suspension of CSH/B until 2010, would mean that increased numbers of planning permissions might be refused for unacceptable development (contrary to South East Plan) unless it can be shown that the development is not economically viable with the requirements.	<p>Developers no longer have to find the additional costs.</p> <p>Developments may become more economically viable.</p> <p>The Council is challenged over existing planning permissions for “unreasonable conditions” with increased resource implications.</p> <p>All applications not meeting CSH/B are contrary to South East Plan (policies CC2, CC3 and CC4)</p> <p>As developers build non eco friendly dwellings the Council is unable to meet its’ LAA targets on CO2 reduction in line with the Cleaner and Greener objectives in the Council Plan.</p>
B	Removal of or suspension of CSH/B – application by application prior to determination	The removal/suspension of CSH/B until 2010, might mean that increased numbers of planning permissions might be refused for unacceptable development (contrary to South East Plan) unless it can be shown that the development is not economically viable with the requirements.	<p>Increased appeals (Sec 73’s) by developers who already have planning permissions with a requirement to meet CSH/BREEAM.</p> <p>New applications might automatically seek an Open Book examination to demonstrate viability issues at increased cost to the authority. (These Open Book examinations are tested by an independent consultant).</p>
C	Removal of or suspension of CSH/B – application by application following determination	This could only be done via an appeal against a condition on the grounds on unreasonableness, or by a S73 application to change the requirements of the conditions.	<p>Increased number of appeals/applications as developers seek to remove conditions.</p> <p>Increased costs associated with Open Book examination process</p>
D	Reduce the CSH/B standard or grade to level 1	This option would have the same implications and impacts as	Developers would still have to appoint accredited assessors

	or 2	option A	with the associated costs.
E	Maintain CSH/B	The viability of some developments may be reduced as the Council maintains its commitment to tackling Climate Change. It will be mandatory for all new residential development to be Code Level 3 from 2010	<p>Increased number of appeals/applications as developers seek to remove conditions.</p> <p>Council is unable to meet its LAA target on housing delivery. (LAA154 – 750 over three years)</p> <p>Council is unable to meet its South East Plan Annual housing requirement. (Policy H1 - 525 dwellings per annum)</p> <p>Small and Medium sized developers are forced out of developing in West Berkshire for the duration of the recession.</p>

**Recommendation**

2.10 Following Corporate Board and for the reasons set out in paragraphs 1.6, 1.7 and 1.8 above, officers recommend that no change be made in relation to the requirement that new developments in West Berkshire are built to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 or BREEAM excellent.

**Development Industry Priority 3 - Repay contributions previously paid or agreed based on a system that has now been amended.**

2.11 West Berkshire Delivering Investment from Sustainable Development (Developer Contributions) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 04/2004 was adopted, following consultation, in 2004. The SPG consists of a core paper and a series of topic papers for covering service areas like Education, Open Space and Transport. To provide clarity for the industry the starting point for most of the contributions was based on a standard calculation. Since its introduction there have been various amendments and updates some based on inflation and others following an appeal decision.

2.12 Although the vast majority of appeal decisions have either supported / praised the Council’s approach, a number have identified weaknesses. In some cases overpayments have resulted from errors in the method of calculation. It is the industry view that if an appeal decision identifies an overpayment all previously agreed contributions based on that error should be repaid.

2.13 There are a number of considerations here in addition to the above:

- There is generally accepted principle that changes in legislation, guidance and policy are not applied retrospectively. Should increases in contributions as well as reductions be applied to previously determined applications?
- Contributions are sought through legal “agreements”; i.e. contracts entered into by all parties on a voluntary basis.
- Developers have the right to resubmit planning applications in order to change the agreed level of mitigation. Applications are assessed having regard to the relevant policies in place at the time of resubmission.

### Recommendation

2.14 Following Corporate Board and for the reasons set out in paragraph 1.13 above, officers recommend that no change be made in relation to refunds.

### Development Industry Priority 4 - Increased Flexibility around Section 106 Contributions

2.15 The development industry is making representations to the Council about the viability of projects because of the level of developer contributions and the time it has to be paid.

- The industry is saying that due to reduced house prices the level of developer contributions is now a significant proportion of the costs particularly where land was purchased at a high, pre-recession price.
- Since the start of the banking crisis in 2008, the banks now require developers to front fund development before any additional funding can be drawn from banks (Source a number of local developers). This together with the requirement to pay developer contributions on commencement is stopping development.

2.16 In dealing with planning applications, local planning authorities must consider each application on its merits and reach a decision based on whether the application accords with the relevant development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where applications do not meet these requirements, they may be refused. However, in some instances, **it may be possible to make acceptable development proposals which might otherwise be unacceptable**, through planning obligations (or developer contributions).

2.17 Planning Obligations can only be sought where they meet all of the tests set out in Circular 05/2005. As such a planning obligation must be:

- a) Relevant to planning;
- b) Necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms;
- c) Directly related to the proposed development;
- d) Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and
- e) Reasonable in all other respects.

- 2.18 Annex B to the Circular recognises that in some instances it may not be feasible for the proposed development to meet all the requirements set out in local policies and still be economically viable. In such cases, and where the development is needed to meet the aims of the development plan, it is for the local authority and other public sector agencies to decide what is to be the balance of contributions made by the developer. The Circular gives the example that if a local planning authority wishes to encourage development, it may wish to provide the necessary infrastructure itself, in order to enable development to be acceptable in planning terms and therefore proceed.
- 2.19 The Council's adopted developer contributions SPG 04/2004 confirms that contributions will be sought in accordance with the Circular advice from both residential and commercial development and that they will be based on the Council's assessment of the needs created by the development.
- 2.20 It must be stressed that S106 contributions are only sought to make an unacceptable development acceptable and therefore a reduction in contribution requirements or the temporary set aside of the adopted SPG requirement for seeking contributions would have significant ramifications.
- 2.21 There are certain contributions that are essential and therefore unavoidable, these tend to be associated with health and safety matters. A good example of this are contributions that relate to highway safety, a planning application could not reasonably be approved if the highway danger caused by the development was not mitigated and it is only reasonable for the developer to pay for such mitigation.
- 2.22 There are however contributions sought for infrastructure and services that do not have health and safety implications but are services or infrastructure required as a direct result of the particular development. An example of this is school places for children of school age. Residential development will result in the additional need for school places and in some catchments schools have no capacity to provide for the children generated by new development. In such cases if contributions are not provided by the developer, the funding of these additional places would have to be met by the Council.
- 2.23 Reducing or removing the need to provide contributions would not only affect the submission of new planning applications. There are many unimplemented planning permissions with requirements to pay contributions. If a decision was made to relax the current approach for seeking contributions there is no doubt that applicants would resubmit applications or seek a variation of current S.106 requirements to benefit from any reduced requirement.
- 2.24 A removal or reduction in the need to pay contributions may not stimulate construction immediately as developers having achieved a reduction may sit on the permission until the economic climate improves thereby reaping the benefit of a reduced contribution package at some future date. This could possibly be overcome by placing strict timescales on the permissions and within the agreements to ensure the permissions were implemented in a timely fashion or the introductions of claw-back if a certain profit level is achieved by the developer. The S106 could require full contributions to be paid if the developer failed to complete a development within a particular timeframe.

- 2.25 The need for S106 contributions to be only sought to make an unacceptable development acceptable was reaffirmed by the Chief Planning Officer at Government’s Department for Communities and Local Government in a letter to all authorities on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009. It states “Ultimately, section 106 agreements are contractual agreements between developers and local authorities to deliver what is necessary to make a development acceptable in order to obtain planning consent”.
- 2.26 There has not been a change to the time when the Council seeks contributions to be paid. The principle that contributions are required to mitigate the harm of development and so should be paid as soon as development commences remains the starting point for discussions with developers.

**S106 Options**

- 2.27 The options considered to be available to the Council relating to increasing the flexibility around Section 106 contributions are shown in table 2 below:

	Option	Implication	Impact
A	Removal of or suspension of SPG – Blanket approach for a given period of time.	<p>The removal/suspension of the adopted SPG would mean that increased numbers of planning applications will be refused for unacceptable development (Harm cannot be mitigated).</p> <p>Developers with approved planning permissions together with signed S106 agreements might seek to renegotiate.</p>	<p>Developers no longer have to find the additional capital at the start of the project.</p> <p>Developments may become more economically viable.</p> <p>More applications are refused.</p> <p>Increased burden on Council resources as the mitigation of harm now falls to the Council to resolve.</p> <p>If harm is not mitigated pressure on infrastructure will increase – cars on the road leading to congestion or lack of educational places in school leading to over crowding in class rooms.</p>

<p>B</p>	<p>Removal of or Reduction of SPG – application by application prior to determination</p>	<p>If an applicant claims a development proposal would not be viable or is no longer viable then the developer must provide evidence, on an “open book” basis, to support their proposals to remove/reduce S106 contributions</p>	<p>Increased burden on Council resources as the mitigation of harm now falls to the Council to resolve.</p> <p>If harm is not mitigated pressure on infrastructure will increase – cars on the road leading to congestion or lack of educational places in school leading to over crowding in class rooms.</p> <p>Increased burden associated with “open book” process and the variation of S106 agreements.</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>Removal of or Reduction of SPG – application by application following determination</p>	<p>If an applicant claims a development proposal would no longer be viable due to the cost of S106 obligations. The developer must provide evidence, on an “open book” basis, to support their proposals to remove/reduce S106 contributions.</p> <p>Council can approve if development felt so important to its’ vision / strategy that benefit will outweigh the harm caused.</p>	<p>Increased burden on Council resources as the mitigation of harm now falls to the Council to resolve.</p> <p>If harm is not mitigated pressure on infrastructure will increase – cars on the road leading to congestion or lack of educational places in school leading to over crowding in class rooms.</p> <p>Increased burden associated with “open book” process and the variation of S106 agreements.</p>

D	<p>Greater Flexibility in contributions sought or payment terms</p>	<p>In the event that owners/developers are experiencing difficulties in meeting their obligations at the appropriate time. The owner/developer may suggest delayed payments to be agreed by the appropriate development control committee.</p> <p>Council can approve if development felt so important to it's' vision / strategy that benefit will outweigh the harm caused.</p>	<p>The owner/developer no longer has to find the additional capital at the start of the project.</p> <p>Increased burden on Council resources as negotiations will need to be conducted as to why the Legal Agreement is being changed.</p> <p>If harm is not mitigated pressure on infrastructure will increase – cars on the road leading to congestion or lack of educational places in school leading to over crowding in class rooms.</p> <p>Delay in obtaining the funding to mitigate “harm” might cause additional problems to service areas.</p> <p>Loss of interest to the Council.</p> <p>Public Perception</p>
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**Conclusions relating to S106 and BREEAM**

- 2.28 There is no indication of how long the “Credit Crunch” will last in the country or if the recession will be last. Commentators appear equally divided on the issue. (The Economist April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009, National Institute of Economic and Social Research 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009)
- 2.29 With regards to the relaxation of the requirement to build new residential development to Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3, while it might help developers in the very short term with their build costs it might prove to be a burden when the national requirement to build to Code Level 3 is introduced. For example developers could find themselves in a situation where the residential development is complete but no purchaser is willing to buy a property which does not comply with the new standards or able to find a mortgage as the lenders survey shows the development does not comply with the new standards.
- 2.30 Evidence of this already exists nationally, in the affordable housing sector, with a number of Registered Social Landlords and Housing Associations being offered new built open market houses at just above cost price but the RSL and HA having to refuse due to the fact that they where not built to Code Level 3 and thus contrary to the Governments May 2008 statement.

- 2.31 Subsequently, Officers recommend no change to policy.
- 2.32 In relation to the flexibility surrounding S106 payments, it would appear that the authority's procedures might already be regarded as best practice. However, Officers recommend the adoption of a more flexible approach to payments. It is recommended that the requirement to mitigate against the harm of development remains but payment of S106 contributions can be delayed until 6 months after commencement of development unless other site specific terms are agreed. This approach is to be reviewed and extended on a rolling six monthly basis by the Head of Planning and Trading Standards in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Housing.

## Appendices

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There are no Appendices to this report

## Consultees

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**Local Stakeholders:** Not consulted

**Officers Consulted:**

Liz Alexander	Planning Policy Team Leader
Mel Brain	Housing Strategy Manager
Andy Day	Head of Policy and Communications
Les Gaulton	Head of Special Projects
David Holling	Head of Legal
Lee Mcquade	Beacon Peer Support Project Officer
Gary Rayner	Development Control Manager
Caroline Walsh	Developer Contributions Officer
Bob Watson	Group Accountant Capital and Treasury Management

**Trade Union:** Not consulted