OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action

Thursday, 13 November 2025 at 2.30 pm
Room 3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this Live Stream Link.
However, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Items for Decision

The items for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers are listed overleaf, with indicative timings, and the related reports are attached. Decisions taken will become effective at the end of the working day on 18 November 2025 unless called in by that date for review by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

Copies of the reports are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

These proceedings are open to the public

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

November 2025

Committee Officer: ***Email: committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk***

Note: Date of next meeting: 11 December 2025

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Items for Decision

1. Declarations of Interest

See guidance below.

2. Questions from County Councillors

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am three working days before the meeting, ask a question on an item on the agenda.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to present a petition must be submitted no later than 9am ten working days before the meeting.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting.

Requests should be submitted to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

There are no previous meetings, and therefore minutes, of Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action for the Chair to approve.

5. Local Aggregate Assessment 2024 (Pages 1 - 84)

Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action
Forward Plan Ref: 2025/142
Contact: Helen Gosnell-Whyman, Principal Planner – Minerals and Waste Policy (Helen.Gosnell-Whyman@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Report by Director of Economy and Place (**CMDPECA5**).

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

a) **Approve the Local Aggregate Assessment presented herewith;**

b) **Authorise the Director for Economy and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action to make any revisions and publish the Oxfordshire Local Aggregate Assessment for the calendar year 2024 on the Council website.**

6. North Wessex National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030

(Pages 85 - 196)

Cabinet Member: Place, Environment and Climate Action
Forward Plan Ref: 2025/224
Contact: Haidrun Breith, Technical Lead – Landscape and Green Infrastructure (Haidrun.Breith@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Report by Director of Environment and Highways (**CMDPECA7**).

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

a) **Adopt the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 at Annex 1.**

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.
Other registrable interests include:

a) Any unpaid directorships

b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:
Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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Divisions Affected – N/A

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

13 November 2025

LOCAL AGGREGATE ASSESSMENT 2024

Report by Director of Economy and Place

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

a) **Approve the Local Aggregate Assessment presented herewith;**

b) **Authorise the Director for Economy and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action to make any revisions and publish the Oxfordshire Local Aggregate Assessment for the calendar year 2024 on the Council website.**

Executive Summary

1. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Mineral Planning Authorities should prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA). The NPPF states that the LAA should 'forecast future demand, based on a rolling average of 10 years' sales data and other relevant information, and an assessment of all supply options.'

2. The annual Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA) sets the level of mineral provision for the County Council as the Minerals Planning Authority, to ensure an appropriate supply for Sand and Gravel and Crushed Rock. This provision level, known as the Aggregates Provision Rate (APR) is based on an assessment between the supply and demand of aggregates in Oxfordshire and forecast demand.

3. The data is gathered through annual Aggregates Surveys of mineral operators within Oxfordshire.

4. The LAA provides the most up to date information and evidence to inform mineral planning within Oxfordshire. The latest LAA (Annex 1) covers the calendar year 2024.

5. By supporting the recommendation to adopt the latest LAA, the County Council is endorsing the provision levels as set out in paragraph 9, for use as evidence

for the provision of mineral working in the future Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, and for calculating the Oxfordshire landbank as of the end of 2024.

Summary of Main Findings

6. Table 1 provides a summary of the main findings in relation to sales, reserves and landbank of Primary Won Aggregates as set out in the LAA for 2024. The arrows indicate an increase or decrease from the findings of the LAA for 2023. For a full summary of Key Data including average 10-year sales and 3-year sales, please see Appendix 1, or for full historic records see the Appendix of the LAA for 2024 (Annex 1).

	LAA (for calendar year 2024) (mt- million tonnes)	
Sharp Sand and Gravel Sales	0.934mt	
Sharp Sand and Gravel Reserve	6.177mt	
Sharp Sand and Gravel Landbank* (7 years or more)	6.3 years	
Soft Sand Sales	0.132mt	
Soft Sand Reserve	3.021mt	
Soft Sand Landbank* (7 years or more)	13 years	
Crushed Rock Sales	0.981mt	
Crushed Rock Reserve	3.359mt	
Crushed Rock Landbank* (10 years or more)	3.5 years	

Table 1: Summary of mineral findings 2024
*The landbank is calculated by dividing the mineral reserve by the LAA provision rate

7. Detailed assessments of supply and demand were carried out. These assessments also included evidence of sales figures, economic forecasts, infrastructure requirements and population and housing. Also considered were the latest mineral imports and exports figures for 2023, which were published in 2025 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the British Geological Survey (BGS).

8. Following these considerations, it is proposed that the Aggregates Provision Rates are kept the same as the 2023 LAA for Sharp Sand and Gravel, Soft Sand and Crushed Rock. Therefore, the APRs for the 2024 LAA are:

- **Sharp Sand and Gravel – 0.986mtpa**
- **Soft Sand – 0.235mtpa**
- **Crushed Rock – 0.964mtpa**
- **Recycled and Secondary Aggregates - 0.926mtpa**

9. The Core Strategy, Policy M2, sets out the amount of minerals to be provided over the Plan Period. This was based on the LAA 2014 Aggregates Provision Rates. Table 2 sets out the remaining mineral requirements to meet the Core Strategy Requirements.

	Core Strategy remaining Requirements identified through LAA
Sharp Sand and Gravel	3.022mt
Soft Sand	0
Crushed Rock	0

Table 2: Core Strategy Remaining Mineral Requirements (mt- Million tonnes)

10. As the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, the County Council has a duty under the NPPF to "plan for and maintain a steady and adequate supply of minerals". This is measured through the LAA and our landbank provision.

11. Our current landbank for Soft Sand is above the 7-year requirement in the NPPF, however upon completion of the 2024 LAA, the Sharp Sand and Gravel landbank has now fallen below the 7-year requirement to 6.8 years, and the Crushed Rock landbank remains significantly below the 10 years required, and at the end of 2024 it was 3.5 years.

12. This is the sixth consecutive year Crushed Rock has fallen below the required level. A trigger was reached for a policy review of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (2017) in 2019, particularly Policy M2 for Crushed Rock. This policy review will be addressed through a new Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Local Aggregate Assessment

Sales

Primary won aggregate

13. Appendix 1 of the LAA for 2024 sets out the sales figures for Sharp Sand and Gravel, Soft Sand and Crushed Rock from 2003-2024, alongside the 10-year and 3-year sales averages for each mineral type.

14. In 2024, both Crushed Rock and Soft Sand saw a decrease in their sales compared with 2023, of 2.1% and 35% respectively. There has been an increase in the sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel of 7% compared to 2023. There has been a decrease in the 3-year average sales across all aggregate types, and in the 10-year average sales for Soft Sand and Crushed Rock. There was a small increase in the 10-year average sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel.

Recycled and Secondary Aggregates

15. In 2023 estimated sales in Recycled and Secondary Aggregate were 0.447mt. The Survey response from recycled and secondary operators to the 2024 survey was once again poor, with a 7% return rate. Therefore, as in the LAA for 2023, the recycled and secondary aggregate figure within this LAA is calculated from the Environment Agency's Waste Data Interrogator (WDI), and the latest available data at the time of preparing the LAA is for 2023. 2024 data will be included with the LAA for 2025.

Rail Depots

16. There are three railhead depots in Oxfordshire used for importing aggregates, these are safeguarded in the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Core Strategy. These depots import mainly Crushed Rock, with minimal Sharp Sand and Gravel and it is understood that this is mostly from the South West. There is planning permission for a further railhead aggregate depot at Shipton on Cherwell, but this has not yet been developed. There is also a depot at Hinksey Sidings, Oxford but this is used solely by the rail industry to bring in rail ballast for internal use on the rail network; it is currently operational.

17. Oxfordshire figures for imports of aggregate by rail are confidential because they are derived from returns for only two companies. However, due to a number of planning decisions in 2021, Oxfordshire's rail depot capacity increased to at least 3.5million tonnes and it is considered that imports and sales remain significant through rail depots in Oxfordshire.

Supply

18. Oxfordshire is a mineral rich county which currently has 21 quarries with 8 active Sharp Sand and Gravel permissions, 8 active Soft Sand permissions and 12 active Crushed Rock permissions (some sites produce more than one variety of mineral types within them). We are one of the major mineral producers in the Region, even nationally, and we have more Crushed Rock producing sites than the rest of the South East combined.

Sand and Gravel

19. At the end of 2024, Oxfordshire had eleven Sand and Gravel quarries, eight of which were active.

20. Total permitted reserves of Sharp Sand and Gravel in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 6.177mt.

Soft Sand

21. In Oxfordshire, at the end of 2024, there were eight sites with planning permission for Soft Sand extraction.

22. Total permitted reserves for Soft Sand in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 3.021mt.

Crushed Rock

23. At the end of 2024, there were fourteen sites with planning permission for Crushed Rock extraction, twelve of which are active.

24. Total permitted reserves for Crushed Rock in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 3.359mt.

Recycled and secondary material sites

25. At the end of 2024, permitted capacity taken from planning decisions, application statements and previous survey finding was 1.493 million tonnes.

Rail Depots

26. Oxfordshire has four permitted rail depots, three of which are operational. From permissions it is known that currently Oxfordshire has rail depot capacity of over 3.5 million tonnes.

Imports and Exports

27. Every county in the UK has to import aggregates because none possess the geology necessary to produce all the types of aggregate required. All sales which reflect supply and demand are tracked in the four or five yearly national aggregate surveys.

28. The most recent, the 2023 Aggregates Minerals Survey for England and Wales (AM2023), was undertaken by British Geological Survey (BGS) under a contract with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and published August 2025. The AM2023 sets out aggregate movements at a sub-regional level.

29. The AM2023 highlights that Oxfordshire is a net exporter of sand and gravel but has shifted from a net exporter of crushed rock in previous surveys to being a net importer in 2023.

30. In 2023, Oxfordshire experienced a notable increase in crushed rock imports. This surge is believed to be associated with the construction of the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) national infrastructure project, which passes through and lies in close proximity to parts of the county. Given the scale and significance of HS2, and its active construction phase within the area during 2023, this trend warrants close monitoring in future surveys to determine whether it represents a sustained pattern or a temporary spike.

Demand

31. The NPPF requires that the level of future provision within the LAA should be based, in part, on the rolling average of 10 years' sales figures. it also requires "other relevant local information" to be taken into account.

32. Therefore, detailed assessments of supply and demand were carried out. These assessments included evidence of sales figures, economic forecasts, infrastructure requirements, and population and housing. Also considered were levels of inflation, and Central Government growth agenda alongside the details of the 2023 mineral imports and exports figures from MHCLG and BGS.

33. The evidence available suggests that economic forecasts, major infrastructure projects/key development and population growth and housing are all expecting some form of growth and that demand would continue for the foreseeable future.

Aggregate Provision Rates

34. Following all of these considerations, it is proposed that the Aggregates Provision Rates are kept the same as the LAA for 2023 for Sharp Sand and Gravel, Soft Sand, Crushed Rock and Recycled and Secondary Aggregate. Therefore, the APRs for the LAA for 2024 are:

- **Sharp Sand and Gravel – 0.986mtpa**
- **Soft Sand – 0.235mtpa**
- **Crushed Rock – 0.964 mtpa**
- **Recycled and Secondary Aggregates- 0.926mtpa**

Landbank

35. Using the Aggregates Provision Rate above and the reserves available, the landbanks as at the end of 2024 are:

- **Sharp Sand and Gravel – 6.3 years**
- **Soft Sand – 13 years**
- **Crushed Rock – 3.5 years**

Mineral Requirements

Core Strategy

36. The Core Strategy sets out requirements for Sharp Sand and Gravel, Soft Sand and Crushed Rock for the Plan Period based upon the LAA2014 provision rates.

37. Taking into account the sales since 2014 and the minerals available to be worked over the Plan Period, the remaining required minerals to meet the Core Strategy are set out below:

	Core Strategy Requirements (2014-	**Remaining Core Strategy Requirements**

	2031) (Mt – Million tonnes)	identified through LAA
Sharp Sand and Gravel	18.27mt	3.022mt
Soft Sand	3.402mt	0
Crushed Rock	10.512mt	0

Table 4: Core Strategy Requirements

Landbank

38. Identifying the 3.022 million tonnes of Sharp Sand and Gravel, will potentially increase the Sharp Sand and Gravel requirement of 7 years, however it will not address the issue of the Crushed Rock landbank being significantly below 10 years required by the NPPF, at 3.5 years. This will need to be addressed, along with any other policy changes required, in a new Minerals and Waste Plan for Oxfordshire. A new Plan will consider mineral requirements for all aggregates over the new Plan period during its preparation.

39. Mineral requirements within the adopted Core Strategy will be replaced with the mineral requirements as set out in the new Minerals and Waste Plan upon adoption. Until that time, the Core Strategy remains in place as the adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan for Oxfordshire.

Conclusion

40. The purpose of an annual LAA is to review the latest information available, in order to forecast future demand as well as analysing all aggregate supply options and assessing the balance between supply and demand.

41. To ensure that supply continues to meet demand, the Aggregates Provision Rate (APR) included within the LAA are**:**

- **Sand and Gravel – 0.986mtpa**
- **Soft Sand – 0.235mtpa**
- **Crushed Rock – 0.964mtpa**
- **Recycled and Secondary Aggregates- 0.926mtpa**

42. Using these APRs and the Oxfordshire reserves at the end of 2024, the landbanks have been calculated as:

- **Sand and Gravel – 6.3 years**
- **Soft Sand – 13 years**
- **Crushed Rock – 3.5 years**

43. To meet the identified Core Strategy mineral requirements, we need to provide the following additional mineral over the Plan Period.

- **Sand and Gravel - 3.022 million tonnes.**

44. To ensure we meet NPPF and landbanks requirements, the future Minerals and Waste Local Plan will review all mineral requirements over a new Plan

period (at least a 15-year period) and identify the amount of mineral required and the ways in which this will be met.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

45. The LAA contributes to the corporate policy on climate change, the vision for thriving communities and thriving economy. It sets out the requirements for the raw materials required for growth following a full review of various factors. By recording and reviewing the supply and demand for minerals, it ensures we plan for future development well related to its need and based on the principles of sustainable development.

Financial Implications

46. The Minerals and Waste Plan is included within the Economy and Place Directorate and is in part being progressed within the existing base budget for the council's minerals and waste policy function. The LAA forms part of this work-stream and it does not raise any additional financial or staff implications.

Comments checked by:

Rob Finlayson, Strategic Finance Business Partner
Rob.Finlayson@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Legal Implications

47. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the NPPF, the council is required to prepare, monitor and, as necessary, review a minerals and waste local plan. An annual LAA, as required by the NPPF, is an essential part of the evidence base for a "sound" minerals and waste local plan and is also needed to enable the plan to be monitored. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to meet the duty to cooperate in the preparation of local plans and related activities in relation to strategic matters.

Comments checked by:

David Mytton, Solicitor
David.mytton@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

48. The Local Aggregate Assessment is included within the work of the Economy and Place Directorate.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

49. None have been specifically identified.

Sustainability Implications

50. The LAA sets out findings and conclusions on aggregates in Oxfordshire as at the end of 2024, based upon significant facts and figures. This is in accordance with the NPPF.

51. The LAA does not set out where mineral sites will be and the sustainability implications for these. The future Minerals and Waste Local Plan will address the mineral requirements, and this will be subject to an Equality and Climate Change Assessment, as well as a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment or Environmental Outcomes Report. In addition, any future Planning applications will also consider sustainability implications.

Risk Management

52. Having an up to date and robust LAA in place is necessary for the effective monitoring of the adopted Core Strategy and the preparation of the new Minerals and Waste Local Plan. It will also be an important factor in the determination of planning applications for mineral working where the size of the landbank is a material consideration.

Consultations

53. The NPPF requires the Council to consult and take into account the advice of the South East England Aggregate Working Party (SEEAWP); the draft Oxfordshire LAA for the year 2024 (Appendix 1) will be considered by SEEAWP in December 2025. Comments received at the December meeting will be fed back to the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action, and the Director for Economy and Place, and any amendments made.

54. There is no requirement for wider consultation on LAAs. This is a technical document that will form part of the evidence base of future Plan preparation and as such will be published alongside the Core Strategy Review and Site Allocations Plan.

Robin Rogers
Director for Economy and Place

Annex: Annex 1: Local Aggregate Assessment for 2024

Contact Officers: Helen Gosnell-Whyman, Principal Planner – Minerals and Waste Policy
Email: helen.gosnell-whyman@oxfordshire.gov.uk

October 2025

Appendix 1

1.Oxfordshire Summary of Key Data 2024

Summary – Oxfordshire County Council 2024 (million tonnes)									
Quarry Sales	**2024 Sales (Mt) & Trend**	**Average (10-yr) Sales & Trend**	**Average (3-yr) Sales & Trend**	**Annual Provision Rate (APR) (Mt)**	**Reserve (Mt)**	**Landbank (years)**	**Allocations (years)**	**Production Capacity (Mtpa)**	**Comments**
Soft Sand	⇩ 0.132	⇩ 0.226	⇩ 0.188	0.235	⇩ 3.021mt	13.0	N/A	0.299	LAA rate remains at 0.235mtpa. Landbank above 7-year requirement
Sharp Sand & Gravel	⇧ 0.934	⇧ 0.868	⇩ 0.928	0.986	⇩ 6.177	6.3	N/A	1.652	LAA rate remains at 0.986 Landbank fallen below 7 year requirements
Crushed Rock	⇩ 0.981	⇩ 0.956	⇩ 1.043	0.964	⇩ 3.359	3.5	N/A	1.704	LAA rate remains at 0.964. Landbank remains below 10-year requirement
Recycled / Secondary Aggregates	0.447	0.413	0.470	0.926	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.493	These are for 2023. 7% of operators surveyed responded to the 2024

									RSA survey. Average sales is 9 years not 10
Rail Depot Sales (Sand & Gravel	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	Due to commercial confidentiality, we are unable to share these figures
Rail Depot Sales (Crushed Rock)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	Due to confidentiality, we are unable to share these figures

General Comments

The reduction in sales Oxfordshire saw in 2023 continued in 2024 for soft sand and crushed rock, but there was a small increase for sharp sand and gravel.

The 2024 LAA Aggregate Provision Rate for Soft Sand remains 0.235, the 10 year average, following a review of demand, consumption, imports and exports and other local factors such as economic growth, population and housing.

The 2024 LAA Aggregate Provision Rate for Sharp Sand and Gravel remains at 0.986mtpa following a review of demand, consumption, imports and exports and other local factors such as economic growth, population and housing.

The 2024 LAA Aggregate Provision Rate for Crushed Rock remains at 0.964 following a review of demand, consumption, imports and exports and other local factors such as economic growth, population and housing.

Using the Crushed Rock LAA Rate, we are still below the required 10-year landbank for the seventh consecutive year. Using the Sharp Sand & Gravel LAA Rate, we are below the required 7-year landbank. Issues with the Landbanks will be considered within the preparation of the new Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The Recycled and Secondary Aggregate figures are for 2023 and have been calculated using the Waste Data Interrogator for 2023 as 7% of operators responded to 2024 survey.

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OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL AGGREGATE ASSESSMENT (Calendar Year 2024)

November 2025

Prepared by Oxfordshire County Council (including information provided in 2014 by LUC and Cuesta Consulting Ltd)

Contents

1.Oxfordshire Summary of Key Data 2024

Summary – Oxfordshire County Council 2024 (million tonnes)									
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Soft Sand	⇩ 0.132	⇩ 0.226	⇩ 0.188	0.235	⇩ 3.021mt	13.0	N/A	0.299	LAA rate remains at 0.235mtpa. Landbank above 7-year requirement
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Rail Depot Sales (Sand & Gravel	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	Due to commercial confidentiality, we are unable to share these figures
Rail Depot Sales (Crushed Rock)	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	Due to confidentiality, we are unable to share these figures

General Comments

The reduction in sales Oxfordshire saw in 2023 continued in 2024 for soft sand and crushed rock, but there was a small increase for sharp sand and gravel.

The 2024 LAA Aggregate Provision Rate for Soft Sand remains 0.235, the 10-year average, following a review of demand, consumption, imports and exports and other local factors such as economic growth, population and housing.

The 2024 LAA Aggregate Provision Rate for Sharp Sand and Gravel remains at 0.986mtpa following a review of demand, consumption, imports and exports and other local factors such as economic growth, population and housing.

The 2024 LAA Aggregate Provision Rate for Crushed Rock remains at 0.964 following a review of demand, consumption, imports and exports and other local factors such as economic growth, population and housing.

Using the Crushed Rock LAA Rate, we are still below the required 10-year landbank for the seventh consecutive year. Using the Sharp Sand & Gravel LAA Rate, we are below the required 7-year landbank. Landbanks will be considered within the preparation of the new Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The Recycled and Secondary Aggregate figures are for 2023 and have been calculated using the Waste Data Interrogator for 2023 as 7% of operators responded to 2024 survey.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 (NPPF) states that mineral planning authorities should prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA).

2.2 The LAA is required to:

- Forecast the demand for aggregates based on average 10 years' sales data and other relevant local information;
- analyse all aggregate supply options and;
- assess the balance between demand and supply.

2.3 This is the thirteenth LAA for Oxfordshire and includes the 2024 aggregate sales and reserves data for the County. The 10-year period covered by this LAA is 2015 to 2024 and the three-year period is 2022 to 2024.

2.4 The primary aggregate figures within this LAA are taken from the 2024 Aggregates Minerals Survey (AM2024) undertaken by the County Council on behalf of the South East England Aggregate Working Party (SEEAWP).

Demand

Sharp Sand and Gravel

2.5 Sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel increased in 2024 to 0.938mt. This is a 7% increase on 2023 sales, and 4% below the Aggregate Provision Rate for 2023 of 0.986mt.

2.6 There was a 4% increase in the 10-year sales average (0.869mt from 0.839mt), which is 12% below the current Aggregate Provision Rate. The 3-year sales average of Sharp Sand and Gravel decreased by 7% to 0.928mt, which remains higher than the 10-year average, but 6% lower than the Aggregate Provision Rate for 2023.

2.7 Having considered the sales trends and other relevant information contained within this report, it is not considered necessary to change the Aggregate Provision Rate for Sharp Sand and Gravel and it will remain at 0.986mt per annum.

Soft Sand

2.8 Sales of Soft Sand in 2024 decreased to 0.132mt, a decrease of 35% on 2023 sales and 44% below the Aggregate Provision Rate for 2023 of 0.235mt.

2.9 The 10-year sales average decreased 4% to 0.226mt from 2023, which is also 4% below the Aggregate Provision Rate (APR) for 2023 of 0.235mtpa. The 3-year sales average decreased 19% on the previous year to 0.188mt which is 20% lower than the Aggregate Provision Rate for 2023.

2.10 Having considered the sales trends and other relevant information contained within this report, it is not considered necessary to change the Aggregate Provision Rate for Soft Sand and it will remain at 0.235mt per annum.

Crushed Rock

2.11 Sales of Crushed Rock in 2024 decreased to 0.981mt, a decrease of 2% on 2023, though 2% above the Aggregate Provision Rate of 2023 of 0.964mt.

2.12 The 10-year sales average decreased 1% to 0.956mtpa compared with 2023, which is 1% above the Aggregate Provision Rate for 2023. The 3-year sales average decreased 8% to 1.043mt on the previous 3-year period, this is 8% higher than the Aggregate Provision Rate for 2023.

2.13 Having considered the sales trends and other relevant information contained within this report; it is not considered necessary to change the Aggregate Provision Rate for Crushed Rock and it will remain at 0.964mt per annum.

Rail Depots

2.14 There were returns from two operators on sales from Rail Depots for 2024. However, due to the need to maintain confidentiality, we are unable to publish these figures. Due to a number of planning decisions in 2021, Oxfordshire has increased its rail depot capacity to over 3.5million. It is known that the increased capacity at Hennef Way Banbury is temporary to provide material for HS2, and Appleford Sidings added two more rail sidings. This site now has a planning condition limiting it to 1.5million tonnes per annum.

Recycled and Secondary Aggregates

2.15 To ensure a consistent picture of the availability of secondary and recycled aggregates over time which could result in sales, this LAA uses an approach from the published Guidance on Assessing Levels of Recycled Aggregates[1].

2.16 Due to the Environment Agency's data on CDE in the Waste Data Interrogator for 2024 not being released at the time of report writing, we are unable to estimate the Recycled Waste findings for 2024. This will be published in future LAA's. Using 2023 data, estimated Recycled and Secondary aggregates was estimated to be 0.447 million tonnes.

2.17 The LAA APR figure for recycled and secondary aggregate should be maintained as the provision figure set in the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 – Core Strategy 2017, Policy M3 which is 0.926mtpa.

Supply

Sand and Gravel

2.18 In Oxfordshire at the end of 2024, there were eleven sharp sand and gravel quarries within Oxfordshire, eight of which are active. The permission at Stonehenge Farm quarry expired at the end of 2023 and therefore the

[1] Recycled Aggregates Data: Guidance on Assessing Levels of Recycled Aggregates April 2022

permitted 1.5million tonnes was removed from the landbank. There were four Sharp Sand and Gravel planning applications outstanding at the end of 2024.

2.19 Total permitted reserves of Sharp Sand and Gravel in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 6.177mt. Using the Aggregates Provision Rate figures of 0.986 mtpa, this gives a landbank of 6.3 years. This is below the NPPF requirement of a landbank of at least 7 years.

Soft Sand

2.20 In Oxfordshire, at the end of 2024, there were 8 sites with planning permission for Soft Sand extraction. No planning applications for Soft Sand were granted in 2024. There was one Soft Sand planning application outstanding at the end of 2024.

2.21 Total permitted reserves for Soft Sand in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 3.021mt. Using the Aggregates Provision Rate figure of 0.235 mtpa, this gives a landbank of 13.0 years. This is in accordance with the NPPF requirements of a landbank of at least 7 years.

Crushed Rock

2.22 At the end of 2024, there were 14 sites with planning permission for Crushed Rock extraction, 12 of which were active. No permissions for Crushed Rock were granted in 2024. There were three planning applications for Crushed Rock outstanding at the end of 2024.

2.23 Total permitted reserves for Crushed Rock in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 3.3594mt. Using the Aggregates Provision Rate of 0.964. mtpa this gives a landbank of years 3.5 years which is below the requirements of the NPPF of at least a 10-year landbank. Some operators re-evaluated their reserves and returned figures that were lower than had been anticipated.

Recycled and secondary material sites

2.24 Due to the Environment Agency's data on CDE in the Waste Data Interrogator for 2024 not being released at the time of report writing, we are unable to estimate the Recycled and Secondary aggregate figures for sales in Oxfordshire for 2024. This will be published in future Local Aggregate Assessments.

2.25 At the end of 2023, Oxfordshire's estimated recycled and secondary aggregate available to be sold was recorded as approximately 0.447mt. However, permitted capacity taken from planning decisions, application statements and previous survey findings at the end of 2024 was 1.493mt.

Rail Depots

2.26 Oxfordshire has four permitted rail depots, three of which are operational. Two returns for the sales from the Depots were submitted for 2024.

Relationships with other MPA's

2.27 Every county in the UK has to import aggregates because none possess the geology necessary to produce all the types of aggregate required. All sales

between Authority areas which reflect supply and demand are tracked in the approximately four-year national aggregate surveys.

2.28 The most recent is the 2023 Aggregates Minerals Survey for England and Wales[2] (AM2023), undertaken by British Geological Survey (BGS) under a contract with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The AM2023, which was published August 2025, sets out aggregate movements at a sub-regional level.

2.29 It states that Oxfordshire is a net exporter of sand and gravel but has shifted to being a significant net importer of crushed rock.

Factors affecting supply and demand

2.30 2024 has seen a continued decrease in sales of Soft Sand and Crushed Rock compared to 2023. There has been an increase in Sharp Sand and Gravel sales.

2.31 However, there are major infrastructure projects, as well as local housing and transport projects continuing to take place during the Plan period. Further, the Government has made a strong commitment to growth, and the Construction Products Association (CPA) is anticipating a period of increased growth[3].

Executive Summary Conclusion

2.32 The purpose of an annual Local Aggregates Assessment is to review the latest information available, to forecast future demand as well as analysing all aggregate supply options and assessing the balance between supply and demand.

2.33 To ensure that supply continues to meet demand, the **Aggregates Provision Rate (APR)** for 2024 onwards will be maintained from the LAA for 2023, as follows:

- **Sand and Gravel – 0.986mtpa**
- **Soft Sand – 0.235mtpa**
- **Crushed Rock – 0.964 mtpa**
- **Recycled and Secondary Aggregates- 0.926mtpa**

2.34 Using these APRs and the Oxfordshire reserves at the end of 2024, the Landbank can be calculated as:

- **Sand and Gravel – 6.3 years**
- **Soft Sand – 13 years**
- **Crushed Rock – 3.5 years**

2.35 To meet the current Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2017) Policy M2 requirements, we will need to identify Sharp Sand and Gravel sites to meet the following mineral requirements over the Plan Period.

[2] Aggregate minerals survey for Great Britain, 2023 - GOV.UK
[3] CPA Releases Summer Forecasts 2025

There would be no further need to identify any further Soft Sand and Crushed Rock.

- **Sand and Gravel – 3.022million tonnes**.
- **Soft Sand – 0 million tonnes**
- **Crushed Rock – 0 million tonnes**

2.36 However this will not address the issue of the Crushed Rock landbank being below the at least 10 years requirement by the NPPF. This will be addressed in the New Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

2.37 Mineral requirements within the Core Strategy will be replaced with the mineral requirements as set out in a new Minerals and Waste Plan upon adoption.

3. Demand

Land Won Aggregate

Sharp Sand and Gravel Past Sales

3.1 Sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel from quarries in Oxfordshire for the period 2015 – 2024 are shown in Table 3.1. These figures are taken from two sources: The annual Aggregates Minerals Survey for England and Wales undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of SEEAWP (South East Aggregates Working Party) and the historic four/five yearly British Geological Survey (BGS) under a contract with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	10-year average	Last 3-year average
0.768	0.651	0.703	0.796	0.994	0.830	1.157	0.972	**0.877**	**0.934**	**0.868**	**0.928**

Table 3.1: Sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel 2015 – 2024 (million tonnes) (Sources: SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys)

3.2 Sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel increased 7% in 2024 compared with 2023.

3.3 There was a 15% fall in sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel from quarries in Oxfordshire from 2015 to 2016. Most of this decrease was accounted for by sales at one quarry - Bridge Farm, Sutton Courtenay. The fall in sales at this quarry in 2016 was caused primarily by a break in production whilst the determination and issue of the planning permission to work the full depth of gravel in Phase 4b at Bridge Farm was awaited; the permission was issued on 17 May 2016.

3.4 The shortfall in supply from Bridge Farm during this time was made up by imports of marine dredged material, delivered by rail from East London into Appleford Sidings, Sutton Courtenay Depot. Crushed Rock (limestone) was also imported by rail into this depot, from Somerset, and used to substitute sand and gravel.

3.5 In 2017 sales of sand and gravel extracted from Bridge Farm, Sutton Courtenay Quarry returned to the 2015 level; and overall sales of Sharp Sand and Gravel in Oxfordshire increased again.

3.6 In 2020, due to the impact of the Global Covid pandemic there was a fall in sales. In addition, Hatford was awaiting a determination for their western extension, which was submitted in 2019.

3.7 In 2021, developments and strategic projects both in Oxfordshire and neighbouring Authorities commenced again following the lockdowns of 2020. Also, production at New Barn Farm, following the 2018 permission became established and there was permission for an extension at Hatford that enabled production on the site to continue in 2021.

3.8 In 2022, there was a slight decrease in sales compared with 2021, but this was considered to be settling after the unusual years in 2020 and 2021. 2022 also saw rises in inflation and the energy crisis, along with an increase in the cost of materials. This could have potentially impacted on sales.

3.9 2023 saw another drop in sales, down 9.8% from 2022, however 2024 sales are up by 7% from 2023, showing consistency with sales from 2022. This could be attributed to recovery in the building and construction sector, combined with regional projects such as HS2. Further, a number of operator returns reflected a reassessed mineral reserve, which reflects the difference in 2023 sales and the 2024 reserve.

3.10 All these factors have had implications for the 10-year average and 3-year average.

3.11 The 10-year average is currently 0.868tpa, which includes the time period following the recession (2015-2017) and the Covid pandemic which impacted the reduced sand and gravel sales over this time.

3.12 The 3-year average is 0.928tpa.

3.13 Based on linear trend analysis shown in Figure 3.1, the average rate of increase over the period 2015 to 2024 in Oxfordshire was 0.326mtpa, with four intervals of decline.

3.14 There has been a 4% increase in the 10-year period and a 7% decrease in the 3-year period. The 3-year sales average of Sharp Sand and Gravel is 7% higher than the 10-year average.

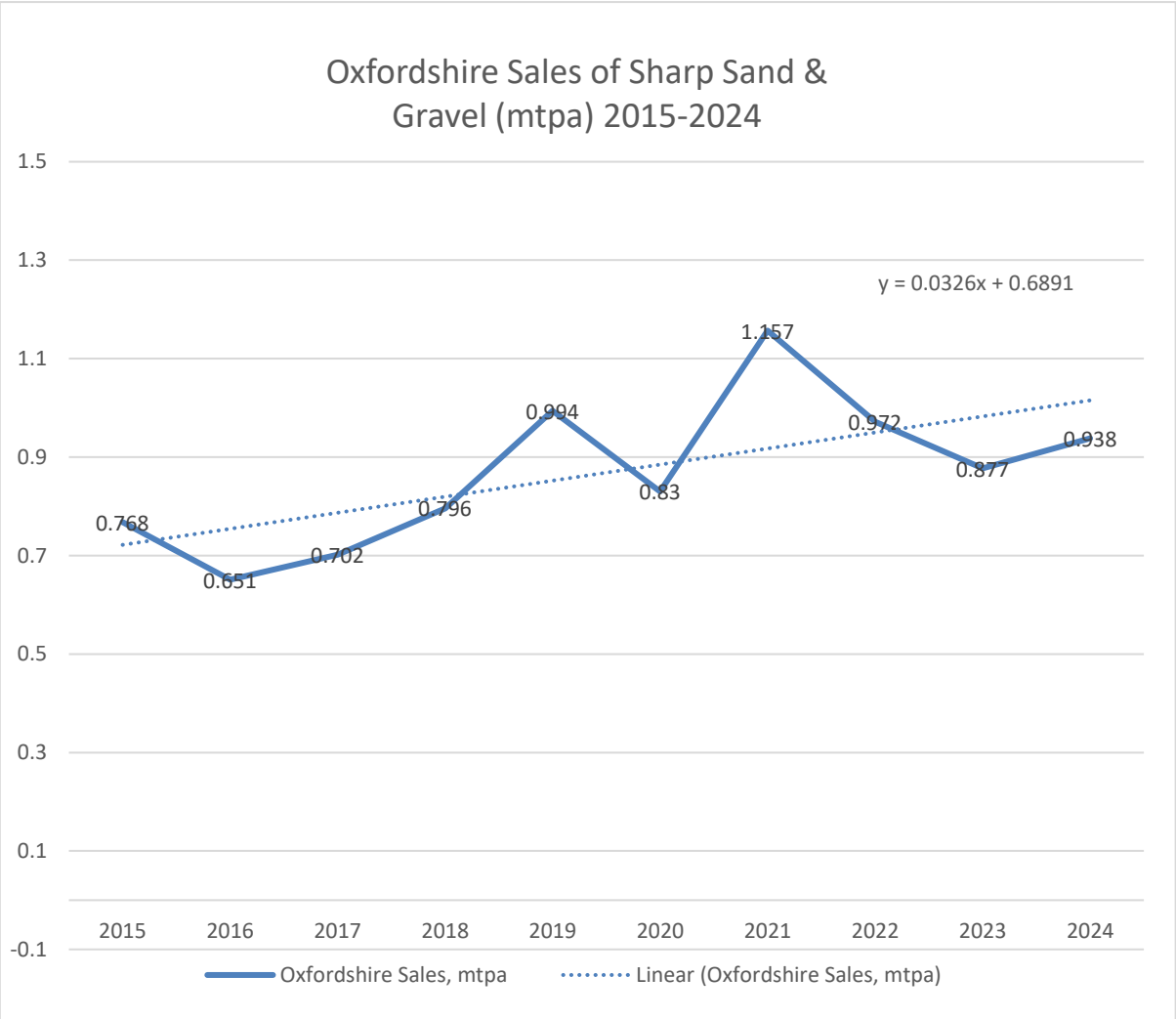

Figure 3.1 Linear trend analysis - Sharp Sand and Gravel sales (mtpa) 2015-2024

Soft Sand Past Sales

3.15 Sales of Soft Sand from quarries in Oxfordshire 2015–2024 are shown in Table 3.2. These figures are taken from two sources: The annual Aggregates Minerals Survey for England and Wales undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council on behalf of SEEAWP and the historic four/five yearly British Geological Survey (BGS) under a contract with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	10-year average	3-year average
0.233	0.227	0.251	0.252	0.254	0.210	0.264	0.229	0.203	**0.132**	**0.226**	**0.188**

Table 3.2: Sales of Soft Sand 2015 – 2024 (million tonnes) (Sources: SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys)

3.16 Sales of Soft Sand showed steady recovery from 2015, following the impact of the recession, until the Covid pandemic in 2020.

3.17 Hatford quarry gained permission in early 2021 which enabled production to continue on site. Planning permission for Shellingford was issued at the end of 2020 and production resumed on site in 2021. Along with the post COVID surge in developments, this caused a sharp increase in the sales in 2021.

3.18 Sales have been decreasing since 2022, with sales in 2024 having decreased by 35% from 2023.

3.19 2024 sales are the lowest sales for Soft Sand since 2013. This could be due to less demand, or it could be due to the geology of the sites. Soft Sand is often located with other primary aggregate reserves such as Crushed rock, and if more alternative aggregate has been available and extracted from this site over 2024 due to this geology, this may have caused an impact on our Soft Sand sales for this year. The decrease in soft sand sales however does seem to be consistent across operators in Oxfordshire. Further, there are a number of sites coming to the end of their permission. This will be closely monitored in future Local Aggregate Assessments.

3.20 The 10-year average sales have now decreased by 4%, and 2024 sales significantly impacting the 3-year average sale figure to be 19% lower than in 2023.

3.21 Linear trend analysis (Figure 3.2) over the period 2015 to 2024 now reveals an average rate of decrease of 0.0072mtpa for Oxfordshire (with five periods of decline) over the baseline period.

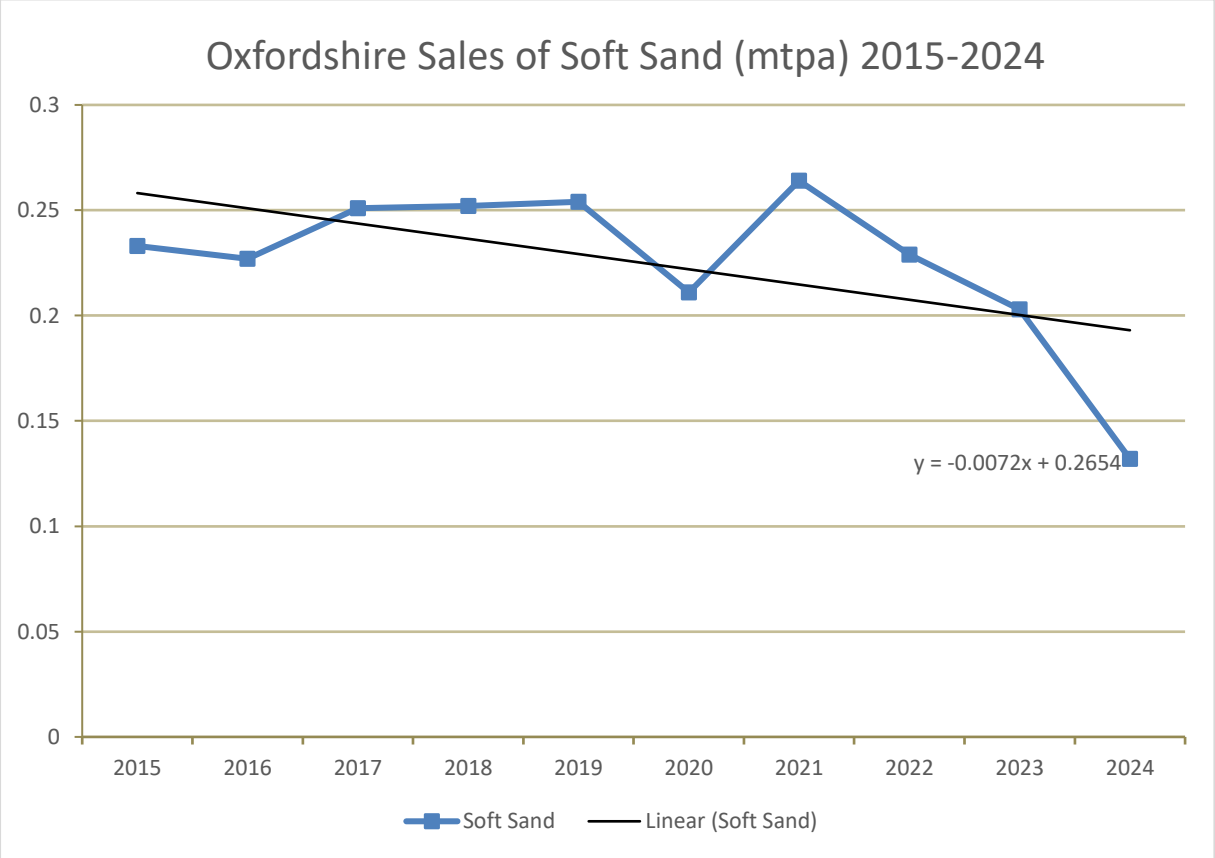

Figure 3.2 Linear trend analysis – Soft Sand sales 2015-2024

Overall sand and gravel sales

3.22 Oxfordshire saw a 6% increase in Sharp Sand and Gravel and a 35% decrease in Soft Sand in 2024, giving an overall decrease of 1% in all Sand and Gravel, which is higher than the Mineral Products Associations (MPA) reported figure of a decline of 7.9% sales of Sand and Gravel nationally[4].

Crushed Rock Past Sales

3.23 Sales of Crushed Rock from quarries in Oxfordshire for the period 2015– 2024 are shown in Table 3.3. These figures are taken from the Aggregates Monitoring Survey by SEEAWP and the BGS Survey.

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	**2024**	**10-year average**	**3-year average**
0.914	0.715	0.867	0.751	0.843	1.087	1.254	1.146	1.002	**0.981**	**0.956**	**1.043**

Table 3.3: Sales of Sharp Crushed Rock 2015- 2024 (million tonnes) (Sources: SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys)

3.24 The sales for 2024 decreased by 2% compared with 2023, a decrease for the third consecutive year.

3.25 The Minerals Products Association[5] records that across the UK crushed rock sales fell by 0.4% in 2024.

3.26 It is believed HS2 was still demanding mineral in 2024. There was an application for 2.7 million tonnes of material at Finmere submitted in 2020 which was specifically for HS2, with the work programme anticipated from the end of 2022 to 2025, however this was withdrawn. Construction of HS2 continues though, the materials for which could be being drawn from our Crushed Rock quarries, impacting on our sales.

3.27 There are a number of sites coming towards the end of their permission, additionally there are a number of outstanding planning applications to be determined for the working of crushed rock.

3.28 In 2024 there was a less than 1% decrease on the previous 10-year average period. The three-year average decreased by 8% on the previous 3-year period.

3.29 Linear trend analysis of Crushed Rock sales (Figure 3.3) over the period 2015 to 2024 reveals an average rate of increase of 0.0349mtpa for Oxfordshire with (5 periods of decline).

[4] MPA Quarterly Sales Volumes Survey
[5] MPA Quarterly Sales Volumes Survey

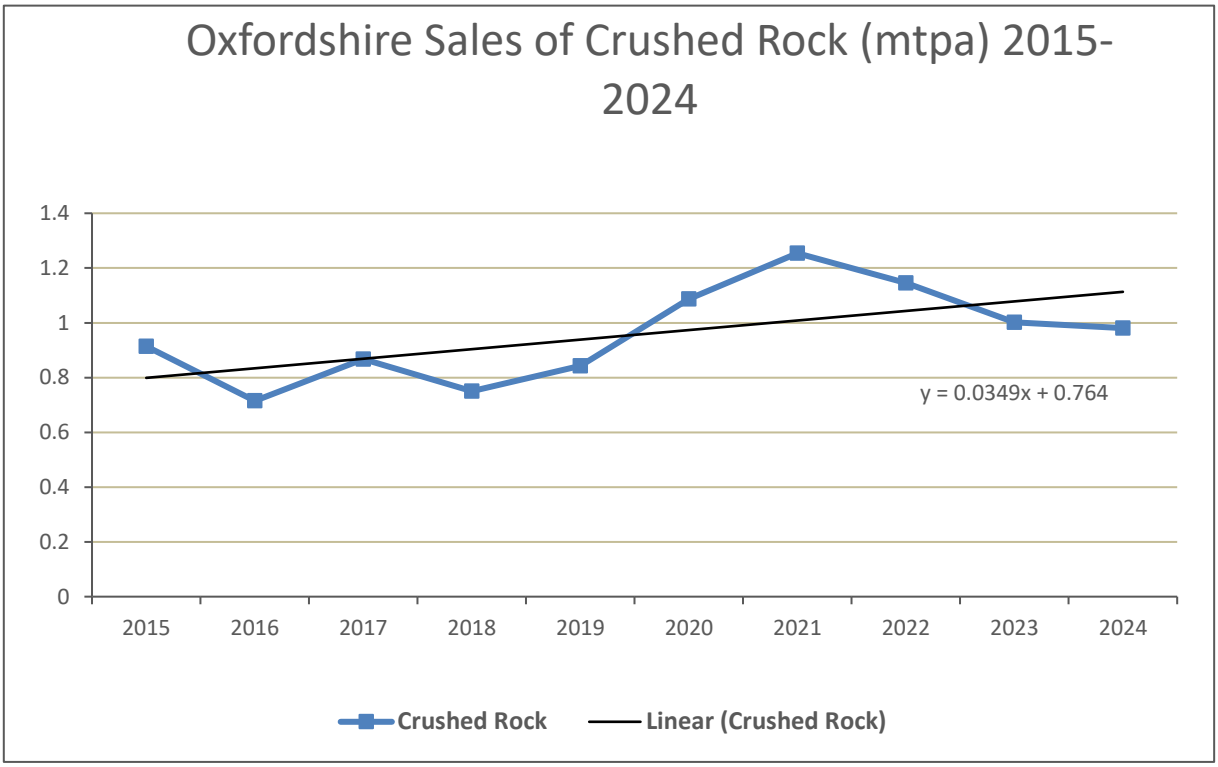

Figure 3.3 Linear trend analysis – Crushed Rock sales

Secondary and Recycled Aggregate

3.30 Whilst reasonable data on recycling capacity is available for Oxfordshire through Decision Notices and Planning Statements, robust data on arisings and sales of construction, demolition and excavation waste (CD&E) is difficult to obtain and a standard methodology has not been adopted nationally.

3.31 Past aggregates monitoring surveys, for example, have not produced a full response from secondary and recycled aggregates site operators and returns are getting less each year as Operators also have to supply the information to the Environment Agency. The 2024 survey had a 7% response rate. This is a recognised issue across Minerals and Waste Planning Authorities.

3.32 In 2021, due to poor returns the approach was taken to use survey returns where these were received, and where not, then a 50% average of material received into a CDE recycling site was taken from the WDI received figures for that site, as this was the recommended approach by our regional group SEWPAG at this time.

3.33 In 2022, the National Waste Technical Advisory Board and Aggregate Working Party Chairs produced a Guidance note[6]. This details the various options

[6] Recycled Aggregates Data: Guidance on Assessing Levels of Recycled Aggregates April 2022

available for the collation of data to estimate arisings and sales of Recycled Aggregate.

3.34 Therefore, in light of the publication of this guidance and the continued reduction in operator responses, a methodology has been applied. This methodology uses the WDI for “Waste received” data into CDE sites (using CDE waste codes as set in the guidance) for recycling, recovery and transfer. Material used in landfill and on/in land is not considered.

3.35 Then using the WDI for “Waste removed”, (with the same CDE codes) any waste removed from the sites that received waste is identified and removed from the “waste received” data for each site.

3.36 This provides an estimate of material that was received into Oxfordshire sites, which was not removed as waste. Therefore, considered material that potentially could be sold.

3.37 It is recognised that there may be a number of limitations with this methodology such as an element of overestimating/double counting associated with the use of data from the WDI, where waste is handled at more than one facility. In addition, waste recorded as being received by mobile plant in the WDI has been excluded because this data is not available for most years and also as mobile plant are only listed in the WDI based on the registered address of the company, which is not necessarily where the mobile plant is actually used.

3.38 However, due to the consistent poor Recycled and Secondary Aggregate Returns, a lack of national methodology and any further detailed evidence, this approach will provide a consistent approach to be able to collate, review and monitor estimated potential recycled aggregate for sale from sites within Oxfordshire over a period. Within this LAA this methodology has also been applied retrospectively to previous years (Table 3.4 below) to be able to view these estimates over time. This will be explored in further detail when we prepare a New Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

3.39 As the WDI for 2024 had not been released at the time this report was written, this LAA is unable to calculate the Recycled Aggregate for 2024. This will be reported in future LAAs.

3.40 For Secondary Aggregate sites, an estimate is made using averages from previous returns and any other information we may have available.

3.41 Using the Recycled Aggregate methodology with the secondary estimate for 2023 the Recycled and Secondary Aggregate figure for sales is estimated to be 0.447mt.

3.42 It is likely that these estimated 2023 figures are significantly less than the total actual production.

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	9-year average	3-year average
0.389	0.439	0.283	0.316	0.435	0.444	0.516	0.443	**0.447**	**0.413**	**0.470**

Table 3.4: Sales of Secondary and Recycled Aggregate 2015-2023 (Sources: SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys)

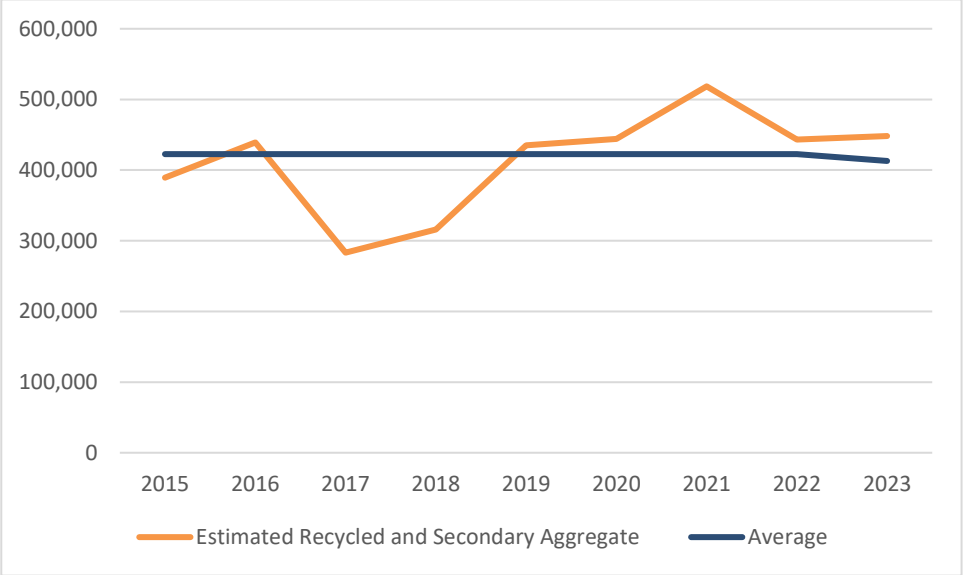

Figure 3.4 Recycled and Secondary Aggregate Sales against 9-year average of 0.413

3.43 Due to the correction of a historic administrative error relating to 2017, the 9 year and 3-year average figures have been adjusted to take this into account. Estimated sales have been moderately consistent since 2019, with a larger increase in 2021.

3.44 Within the Mineral Products Association report *"Construction Aggregates Supply in Great Britain: Primary, Recycled and Secondary Aggregates"* [7] it is reported in 2023, total recycled and secondary aggregates are estimated to have accounted for 31% of total aggregates supply in Great Britain.

3.45 If this percentage was rolled over to Oxfordshire's total Aggregate sales for 2024, it could be estimated that 0.635million tonnes of recycled and secondary aggregate were sold in 2024.

Imports of Secondary Aggregates

3.46 No known secondary aggregates are currently transported into Oxfordshire. This is largely due to the costs of transporting the material and because the

[7] Resource Use

exemptions from the aggregates levy, which gave secondary aggregates a cost advantage over primary aggregates were withdrawn in April 2014.

Rail Depots

3.47 There are three railhead depots in Oxfordshire used for importing aggregates, namely at Banbury, Kidlington and Sutton Courtenay, and these are safeguarded in the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 Core Strategy. These depots import Crushed Rock aggregates from the South-West (Somerset) and the East Midlands (Leicestershire). There is planning permission for a further railhead aggregate depot at Shipton on Cherwell, but this has not yet been developed. There is also a depot at Hinksey Sidings, Oxford but this is used solely by the rail industry to bring in rail ballast for internal use on the rail network; it is currently operational.

3.48 Figures for imports of Crushed Rock by rail collected by Oxfordshire County Council are only available from 2007 onwards. Prior to that year, only the regional totals were available.

3.49 In addition, Oxfordshire figures are confidential because they are derived from returns for only two companies.

3.50 However, due to a number of planning decisions in 2021, Oxfordshire's rail depot capacity increased to over at least 3.5million tonnes.

3.51 It is known that the increased capacity at Hennef Way Banbury is temporary for 5 years, to October 2026, to provide material for HS2, and Appleford Sidings has added two more rail sidings. Appleford site now has a condition limiting it to 1.5million tonnes per annum.

3.52 Due to the latest aggregate returns and the demand for additional capacity it can be considered that imports and sales remain significant through Rail Depots in Oxfordshire.

Consumption

3.53 In 2023 the British Geological Survey (BGS) undertook the Aggregates Survey alongside Oxfordshire County Council, and this survey included asking operators for imports and exports of minerals between Mineral Planning Authorities, alongside asking for reserve and sales data.

3.54 The survey results set out how much mineral Oxfordshire imports and how much is exported[8] and how much Oxfordshire Land Won Aggregate Oxfordshire consumed in 2023. Sharp Sand and Gravel and Soft Sand are combined within the BGS Survey.

[8] Aggregate minerals survey for Great Britain, 2023 - GOV.UK

3.55 The full summary is shown in Appendix 2. The consumption figures have been summarised in Table 3.6. This also includes the information for the comparative years of 2014 and 2019. Figures for 2009 are available in Appendix 2.

	Sand and Gravel 2014	Crushed Rock 2014	All Oxfordshire Aggregate 2014	Sand and Gravel 2019	Crushed Rock 2019	All Oxfordshire Aggregate 2019	Sand and Gravel 2023	Crushed Rock 2023	All Oxfordshire Aggregate 2023
Total Consumed within Oxfordshire (Mt)	0.765	1.501	2.266	0.900	0.617	1.517	**0.677**	**3.218**	**3.895**

Table 3.6: Mineral consumed within Oxfordshire 2014, 2019 and 2023 (BGS Surveys)

3.56 The table shows that in 2023, Oxfordshire consumed 0.677mt of sand and gravel, a decrease of 25% from 2019.

3.57 For crushed rock, Oxfordshire consumed 3.218mt in 2023. This is an increase of 422% from 2019.

3.58 It should be noted that for some minerals within the survey it is not clear where they were consumed. These minerals are identified as sold within the Southeast or Unallocated. The consumption rates within Oxfordshire do not include any of the quantities from these two categories, so there is potential for these figures to be higher.

3.59 For more information on Imports and Exports see Chapter 6 and Appendix 2 of this report.

4.Factors affecting demand

4.1 The NPPF requires that the level of future provision within the LAA should be based, in part, on the rolling average of 10 years' sales figures, and that "other relevant local information" to be taken into account (NPPF 2024, paragraph 226a).

4.2 We need to consider whether or not the historical 10-year average for land-won primary aggregate production can be relied upon as a guide to future levels of provision, or whether this needs to be changed in order to reflect other factors which may influence either the supply (availability) and/or the demand for aggregates produced within Oxfordshire, in future years.

The Economy and Growth

4.3 In considering economic growth on the supply and demand of aggregates, several national forecasts have been considered. To consider economic forecasts this section considers Gross Domestic Product (GDP) along with construction rates.

4.4 The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is only available at UK level, but it does provide a background indicator as to the relative changes in economic activity likely to be experienced in Oxfordshire over time. Table 4.1 below shows the annual GDP year on year growth for the UK as a whole for the 10-year baseline period[9]. The GDP growth rate has varied significantly over the period 2015 to 2024, but 2024 shows a modest increase from 2023.

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
2.2%	1.9%	2.7%	1.4%	1.6%	-10.3%	8.6%	4.8%	0.4%	1.1%

Table 4.1: Changes in UK Real GDP over the baseline period (Office for National Statistics)

4.5 The growth forecasts are set out in Table 4.2 below, from the Office for Budget Responsibility as of March 2025[10]. It forecasts growth accelerating to 1.9% in 2026 and then averaging at 1.8% across the rest of the forecast. The 2023-2029 average remains at 1.8%, the same average for the period 2022-2028.

[9] Gross Domestic Product: Year on Year growth: CVM SA % - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
[10] Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2025 - Office for Budget Responsibility

	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030 – 2032	2023-2028 average
UK	0.4%	0.9%	1.0%	1.9%	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%	*Not yet forecast*	**1.8%**

Table 4.2: Real GDP Growth Forecasts

4.6 There are also more recent assumptions for GDP Growth[11] which are taken from a range of independent predictions. A comparison of 14 forecasts for 2025 shows 1.1% growth and 1% for 2026, compared to the prediction of 1% for 2025 and 1.9% for 2026 set out in the table above.

4.7 In addition, inflation could be considered, as this impacts on costs for raw materials, energy and labour, including the minerals sector. The UK inflation rate, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index, rose almost continuously from under 1% in early 2021 to 9.2% in November 2022. The inflation rate then declined, dropping to 4.2% in November 2023. The inflation rate has been relatively stable since then, and in July 2025 was 4.2%[12] (the most recent figure available at the time of writing).

4.8 The Construction Products Association forecasts[13] that construction output is due to rise by 1.9% in 2025 and 3.7% in 2026, likely in part in response to the Government's commitment to growth. This growth is anticipated to be driven by the three largest sectors of construction: private housing new build, private housing repair and maintenance, and improvement and infrastructure.

4.9 According to the Mineral Products Association Regional overview of construction and mineral products markets in Great Britain report[14], private housing, which is a key driver of mineral products demand, saw an 11.9% drop in new housing output in 2023, with a further anticipated 2.9% decline in construction output in 2024.

4.10 This is supported by the findings of the Office for Budget Responsibility, who forecast net additions of new homes in 2025-2026 to be 192,000 compared to 265,000 for 2023-2024. This is driven by the lagged impact of the fall in private housing construction, the fall itself a result of higher interest rates and higher costs of building homes[15].

4.11 However, both the Mineral Products Association and the Office for Budget for Responsibility anticipate recovery from 2025 driven by housing recovery and growth in infrastructure, with net forecast additions reaching 238,000 in 2029-30.

[11] Forecasts for the UK economy: July 2025 - GOV.UK
[12] CPIH ANNUAL RATE 00: ALL ITEMS 2015=100 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
[13] Construction Industry Forecasts - Summer 2025
[14] MPA_Regional_overview_of_construction_and_mineral_products_markets_in_GB_2024.pdf
[15] Economic and fiscal outlook – March 2025 - Office for Budget Responsibility

4.12 The same report also states that the construction outlook in the South-East will rise around 2.7% per annum in 2024-2028, due to private housing growth, but this includes large developments in Kent at Otterpool Park and Wycombe Film Studios. The report does not go down to Authority level.

4.13 It would be beneficial if consideration could be given to any indicators of more local economic growth. Oxfordshire does have a growth agenda, as set out in the 2023 Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan[16] and in the Oxfordshire Growth Board's Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS)[17] but forecasting economic growth at the regional level is challenging and there is limited quantitative data.

Economic Forecast Conclusion

4.14 Although some uncertainty remains regarding the economy, it is anticipated that there will be recovery and growth, particularly in light of the Government's growth agenda.

4.15 It is possible that future levels of economic growth could be less than anticipated, or there are unforeseen events that could result in reduced demand for construction aggregate in the future. This will be kept under close review in future LAA's.

Major Infrastructure Projects/Key Development

4.16 Major infrastructure projects, including those at the national scale, and key developments throughout Oxfordshire, should be considered alongside housing and associated infrastructure development in terms of their likely influence on the future demand for construction aggregates.

4.17 Oxfordshire's Local Industrial Strategy[18] 2020 highlights that the infrastructure projects within Oxfordshire that are critical to the Investment Plan total £1,117.5million.

4.18 Across Oxfordshire developments, including infrastructure, includes:

- Allocated sites for development in the current District Local Plans.
- Housing Infrastructure Funded projects – HIF1 in Didcot and HIF2 on the A40.
- HS2
- Various highways improvements throughout Oxfordshire, including works to A34 and A40
- Proposed Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), including East West Rail, SESRO and OxSRFI

[16] Strategic Economic Plan | Enterprise Oxfordshire
[17] Local Growth Fund Projects | OxLEP (oxfordshirelep.com)
[18] The Oxfordshire Investment Plan - August 2020.pdf (oxfordshirelep.com)

- Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal[19]: Provides £60m for affordable housing and £150m for infrastructure improvements, including road and rail. Supports the ambition of building 100,000 new homes across Oxfordshire between 2011 and 2031 to address the county's severe housing shortage and expected economic growth.
- OxRail 2040 – including proposed new and improved railway stations and passenger services on the Cowley Branch Line.
- Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine, which includes Science Vale, Oxford and Bicester
- Science Vale area - the largest concentration of research and development in Europe with 20,000 new jobs and around 20,000 new homes.
- Oxford Cambridge Arc
- Proposed Puy Du Fou Development
- Upper Heyford New Town nomination
- Oxford United Football Club Stadium

4.19 It is difficult to assess the overall impact of this infrastructure and major development proposals in terms of their demand for construction aggregates. Some projects that were previously mentioned such as the Harwell Satellite Test Centre have now been built, whilst others such as HS2, East West Rail and growth within Bicester and the south of the county are currently underway, with a few yet to commence or to be approved.

4.20 In 2024, the Labour Government were elected and have made a commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over this parliament. It has also been announced that the largest number of major infrastructure projects have been 'green-lit' in the first year of a Parliament including an expansion of Gatwick Airport[20]. This could have a significant impact on demand for aggregate over the next few years.

Major Infrastructure Projects/Key Development Conclusion

4.21 Whilst it is difficult to quantify, evidence suggests that planned infrastructure and major development both within and outside the county will continue. Demand on minerals is therefore expected to be maintained, if not increased, whilst these progress.

Population and Housing Growth

4.22 In considering the future projections we also need to consider population growth and local authority housing forecasts.

4.23 Adopted District Local Plans in Oxfordshire indicate the major sites for new homes

[19] Oxfordshire housing deal - GOV.UK
[20] Record number of major infrastructure projects green-lit - GOV.UK

- Cherwell – concentrated around Bicester, Banbury and the former RAF site at Upper Heyford, plus growth around Begbroke, Kidlington and Yarnton to meet Oxford's unmet need.
- Oxford City – concentrated at Barton Park, Northern Gateway and Oxpens.
- South Oxfordshire – concentrated around Chalgrove Airfield and the Didcot Garden Town in conjunction with Vale of White Horse, with further strategic land at the edge of Oxford
- Vale of White Horse – concentrated around the Didcot Garden Town, Wantage and Abingdon (the Science Vale)[21]
- West Oxfordshire - concentrated at Salt Cross Garden Village Eynsham, Witney and Chipping Norton.

4.24 Population figures are published by the Office of National Statistics[22](ONS). There has been a steady population increase between 2011 and 2024.

4.25 In the 2021 Census, the population of England and Wales grew by more than 3.5 million (6.3%) since 2011[23].

4.26 Unlike aggregate sales there was not a dip in population at the start of the baseline period, at least not at a county level, or on the scale associated with year-on-year variations. It is hard to draw a correlation between population figures and aggregate demand.

4.27 Over the 10-year period to 2024 there was an overall growth in the population of Oxfordshire of 80,647 people (an average of 1.25% per year).

4.28 Looking to the future, Oxfordshire County Council population forecasts predict a total population in Oxfordshire of 814,749 by 2032. Whereas the ONS have population forecast of 816,697 by 2032 (Appendix 4).

4.29 Whilst there is no statistical justification for assuming that rates of population growth will correlate with changes in demand for aggregates, they do at least provide a mechanism for looking further ahead than the current economic forecasts. They suggest that there will be continued pressure for new housing and associated infrastructure development which is likely to be reflected in an increase in the demand for construction aggregates.

4.30 This can be examined further by considering data on rates of house completion (Appendix 4).

4.31 Using the District Authority Monitoring Reports for housing completions, for the 10-year baseline period (2014/15-2023/24) the average housing completion rate in Oxfordshire was 4,665 homes, with 4,001 completions in the monitoring period 2023/24[24]. This is a notable drop (27%) from 5,492 from the

[21] http://www.sciencevale.com/
[22] www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/
[23] Population and household estimates, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
[24] District Authority Monitoring Reports.

previous monitoring year 2022/23 and is consistent with the national trend of decreasing housing completions as discussed above.

4.32 However, if we took the last 3 years average from the same data, as a baseline period (2023/24-2021/22), the average housing completion rate in Oxfordshire is 4,816, a 5% decrease on the previous 3-year baseline of 5,064 homes (2020/21-2022/22).

4.33 Looking forward, the District Authority projections for housing growth for 2024 onwards can be seen in Appendix 4. For the period 2024/25-2032/33 it is projected that 40,060 houses will be built.

4.34 In the LAA for 2023, it was projected that 33,761 homes would be built between 2023/24 and 2030/31, the figures for 2024/25/2032/33 shows a 19% increase over an eight-year period. This in part could be accounted for by some of the planned developments commencing from 2031.

4.35 In 2024, the Labour Government were elected and have made a commitment to deliver 1.5 million homes over this parliament. In December 2024 the housing need assessment methodology was updated, and other Planning Reforms were introduced, with more expected by the end of the year. This is likely to impact future housing projections and completions over the next few years and will need to be monitored in future LAA's.

Population and Housing Growth Conclusion

4.36 It is clear that we need to continue to consider the implications of population and housing growth on the minerals provision over the plan period.

Conclusion

4.37 The evidence available suggests that Economic Growth, Major Infrastructure Projects/Key Development and Population Growth and Housing within Oxfordshire will continue into the foreseeable future. The impact of government policies, planning reforms, and commitment to housing growth will continue to be explored in future LAA's.

5. Aggregate Provision Rates

5.1 The NPPF[25] states that Minerals Planning Authorities should plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates. One of the ways to do this is to prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment to forecast future demand, based upon a rolling average of 10 years sales data and any other relevant local information. To forecast and ensure that supply continues to meet demand, the Aggregates Provision Rate (APR) for each aggregate is set within the annual Local Aggregate Assessment.

Sharp Sand and Gravel Aggregate Provision Rate

5.2 For Sharp Sand and Gravel, the Core Strategy included a provision figure of 1.015mtpa, which was set in the LAA 2014 on the basis of the 10-year sales average at that time.

5.3 This figure was updated in the LAA2022 to 0.986mtpa and maintained in 2023 to reflect the level of demand and following review of other evidence to ensure a steady and adequate supply.

5.4 Sales in 2024 of sharp sand and gravel have increased 7% in 2024 compared with 2023 (from 0.877mtpa to 0.934mtpa), with continued demand anticipated from the construction industry from 2025.

5.5 The 10-year sales average increased 4% (from 0.839mtpa to 0.869mtpa), but the 3-year sales average (0.929mtpa) decreased by 7% compared to the previous 3-year sales average of 1.002mtpa. The current 3-year sales average is 7% higher than the 10-year average. Sales in 2024 are still the 4th highest in the last 10 years.

5.6 Our 10-year rolling average for sales data is 0.869mtpa, however as set out within Section 3 Demand, the 10-year baseline period for sand and gravel includes the impact of economic recession at the start of the period and the effects of the Covid pandemic.

5.7 Figure 5.1 shows actual Sharp Sand and Gravel sales compared with the 10 year and 3-year average sales (mtpa), the Aggregates Provision Rate and the Core Strategy Provision rate over the last 10 years.

[25] National Planning Policy Framework (publishing.service.gov.uk)

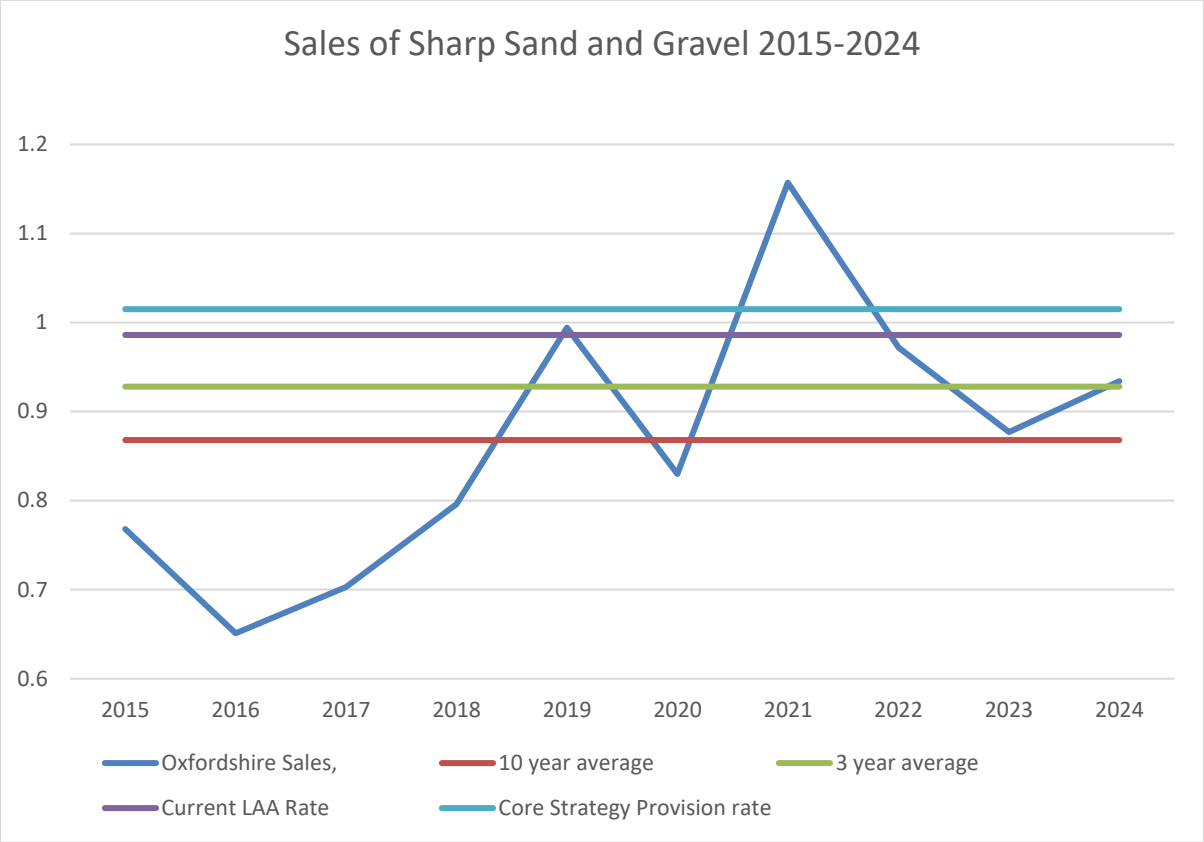

Figure 5.1 Comparison of actual sharp sand and gravel sales compared with the average sales and the current LAA Aggregates Provision Rate (APR) and Core Strategy Provision levels (mtpa).

5.8 Taking into account sales and Oxfordshire's consumption and exports alongside all the evidence, at this time there is no justification for a change in the Aggregates Provision Rate for Sharp Sand and Gravel, and it will remain at the current level of 0.986mtpa.

Soft Sand

5.9 For soft sand, the Core Strategy included a provision figure of 0.189mtpa, which was set in the LAA 2014 on the basis of the 10-year sales average at that time.

5.10 This figure was updated in the LAA2019 to 0.243mtpa to reflect the consistently higher level of demand and following review of other evidence.

5.11 This figure was reduced in the LAA2023 to 0.235mtpa.

5.12 Sales in 2024 decreased significantly from 0.203mt in 2023 to 0.132mt, a 35% decrease and the lowest in the last 10 years. The 3-year sales average (0.188mtpa) saw a 19% decrease compared with the previous 3-year sales

average (0.232mtpa) and a 4% decrease in the 10-year sales average (from 0.235mtpa to 0.226mtpa).

5.13 The current 10-year average is 4% lower than the current APR of 0.235, a3-year 3-year average is 20% lower.

5.14 This reduction in sales is consistent across a number of operators within Oxfordshire in 2024 and this could be due a number of reasons, including less demand, or the geology of the site areas excavated during the year. Soft Sand is often located with other primary aggregate reserves such as Crushed Rock, and if the alternative aggregate has been available and extracted from this site over 2024, this may have caused an impact on our Soft Sand sales for this year. Further, there are a number of sites coming to the end of their permission (See Section 7). This will be closely monitored in future Local Aggregate Assessments. However, this significant drop in sales will be closely monitored in future Local Aggregate Assessments.

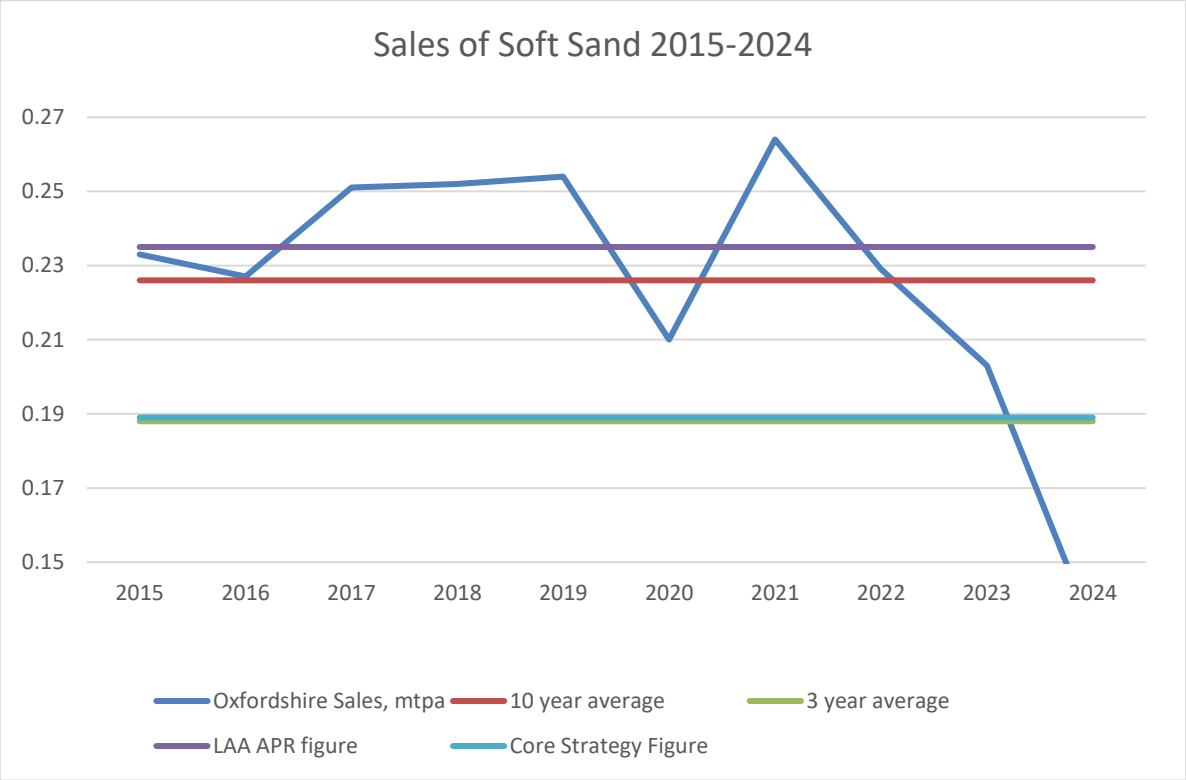

Figure 5.2 Comparison of actual Soft Sand sales compared with the average sales and the current LAA APR and Core Strategy Provision levels (mtpa).

5.15 2024 was an unusual year for Soft Sand sales within Oxfordshire, with the lowest sales in the last 10 years, therefore in light of all the other factors considered, such as economic growth, and housing projections alongside Oxfordshire's imports and exports, and all other evidence, it is considered that at this time, to maintain the current Aggregates Provision Rate of 0.235mtpa to enable us to ensure a steady and adequate supply of soft sand. However, sales of soft sand will be closely monitored, and the Aggregate Provision Rate will continue to be assessed in future LAAs.

Crushed Rock

5.16 For crushed rock, the Core Strategy provision level figure of 0.584mtpa was set in the LAA 2014 on the basis of an upward adjustment of the 10-year sales average at that time.

5.17 This figure was updated in the LAA2019 to 0.778mtpa, in the LAA for 2021 to 0.824mtpa, in the LAA for 2022 to 0.914mtpa and again in the LAA 2023 to 0.964. These reflected the consistently higher level of demand and the review of other evidence.

5.18 Sales in 2024 saw a 2% decrease from 1.002mt to 0.981mt, with sales dropping below 1 million tonnes a year for the first time since 2019.

5.19 The 3-year sales average (1.043mtpa) was 8% lower than the previous 3-year sales average (1.134mtpa) and the 10-year average decreasing 1% from 0.964mtpa to 0.956mtpa. The 3-year sales average is 8% higher than the current LAA 2023 APR of 0.964mtpa, and the 10-year average just below (0.956mtpa).

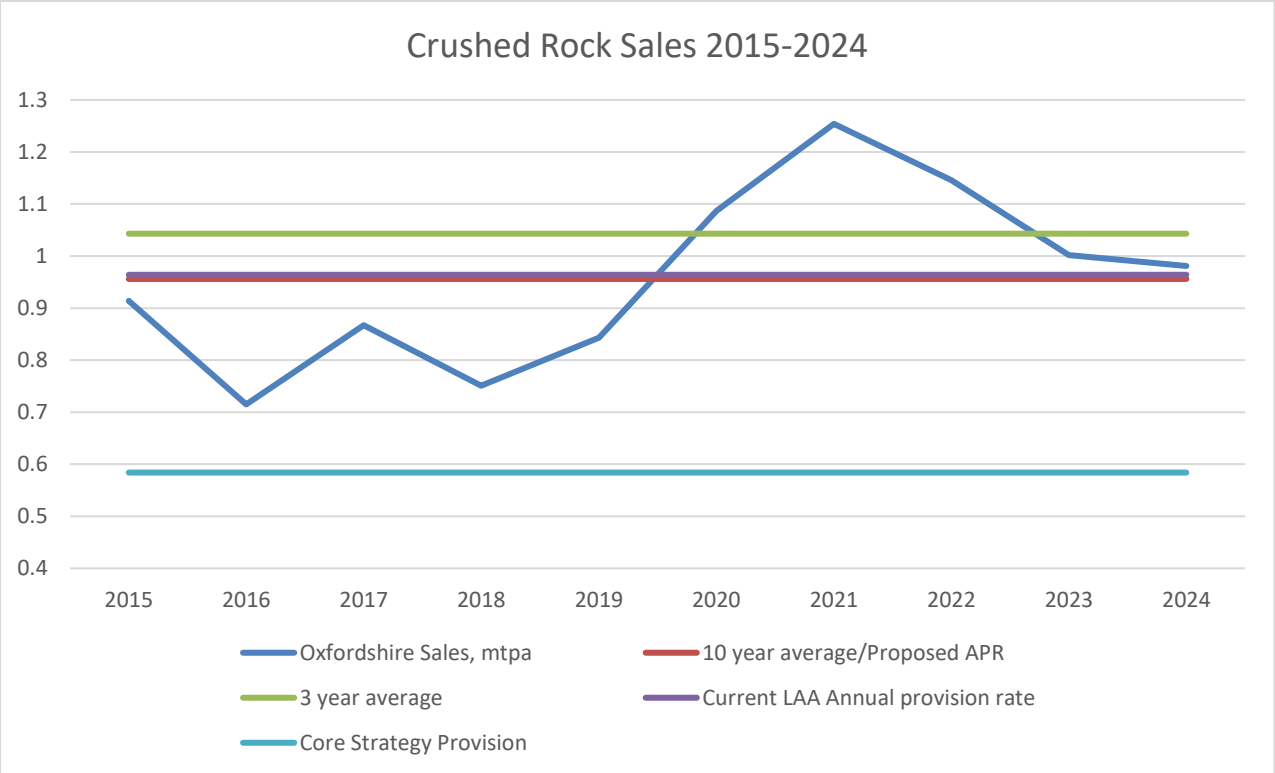

Figure 5.3 Comparison of actual Crushed Rock sales compared with the Aggregates Provision Rate/10-year average, 3-year average and Core Strategy Provision levels (mtpa).

5.20 Available evidence, especially in terms of large infrastructure project demand, indicates that demand for crushed rock is likely to continue.

5.21 Therefore, alongside this evidence, taking into account sales, Oxfordshire's consumption, imports and exports, and national infrastructure projects, it is considered that at this time, there is no justification for a change in the Aggregates Provision Rate and it will remain at 0.964mtpa to enable us to provide a steady and adequate supply of crushed rock.

Recycled and Secondary Aggregate & Rail Depots

5.22 In addition to setting provision level figures for local land-won aggregates, the LAA should also include provision levels for other relevant sources of aggregates supply to ensure that future demands are met. In the case of Oxfordshire these are recycled and secondary aggregates and aggregate rail depots.

5.23 In the case of recycled and secondary aggregates, the appropriate figure to maintain in this LAA is the provision rate set in the Oxfordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan: Part 1 – Core Strategy (2017) policy M3. This is 0.926mtpa.

5.24 In the case of aggregate rail depots, due to confidentiality, we are unable to provide a LAA provision figure at this stage.

Conclusion for LAA Aggregate Provision Rates

Sharp Sand and Gravel	**0.986mtpa**	**Unchanged from 2023**
Soft Sand	**0.235mtpa**	**Unchanged from 2023**
Crushed Rock	**0.964mtpa**	**Unchanged from 2023**
Recycled and Secondary Aggregate	**0.926mtpa**	**Unchanged from 2023**

Table 5.1 – APR Rate for LAA for 2024

6.Supply

Oxfordshire Supply

6.1 Oxfordshire is rich in mineral resources. Those which are used for primary aggregate production comprises extensive alluvial sand and gravel resources along the River Thames and its tributaries; smaller deposits of glacio-fluvial sand and gravels in the northeast of the county; deposits of Soft Sand mainly in the southwest; and extensive areas of limestone in the north west and of ironstone in the north.

6.2 Oxfordshire also produces some secondary aggregates and a wide range of recycled aggregate materials. Further detailed information of the geological resources of Oxfordshire can be found in the LAA2014[26] (LUC and Cuesta Consulting Limited).

Recycled and Secondary Aggregate

6.3 As discussed within the Demand section of this LAA, estimations of recycled and secondary aggregate have been made.

6.4 As the WDI for 2024 had not been released at the time of writing, this LAA is unable to calculate the Recycled and Secondary Aggregate figures for 2024, and latest figures are based upon 2023.

6.5 Using the Recycled Aggregate methodology with the secondary estimate for 2023, the Recycled and Secondary Aggregate figure for sales is estimated to be 0.447mt.

6.6 It is likely that these estimated 2023 sales figures are significantly less than the total actual production. Similarly, the actual capacity figures are likely to be significantly higher than the reported figures.

6.7 Table 6.1 below presents a fuller picture, showing the estimated[27] capacity for the production of recycled and secondary aggregates at each site at the end of 2024, sub-divided between operational and non-operational sites.

6.8 Of a total capacity of approximately 1.523mtpa, 1.458mtpa is at operational facilities and 0.035mtpa is currently non-operational. Of the operational capacity, that which is at sites with planning permission to the end of the plan period (2031) or beyond is 1.075mtpa, whereas the capacity of sites with permissions that expire before the end of 2031 is 0.382mtpa.

Facility Name	Operator	Planning Life	Production Capacity (tpa)

[26] https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/environment-and-planning/planning/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-policy/minerals-and-waste-documents#paragraph-10820
[27] Taken from Survey responses, Planning Decisions and Planning Application Statements.

Operational Recycled Aggregate Production Facilities with Permanent consent or Time Limited Consent to end of Plan Period (2031)			
Drayton	Oxfordshire Highways	Permanent	75000
Ferris Hill Farm	Banbury Plant and Skip Hire (incorporating NL Matthews)	Permanent	24999
Grove Industrial Park	Aasvogel	Permanent	40000
Hundridge Farm	G.D. Parker Instant Skip Hire	Permanent	5000
Lakeside Industrial Park	Micks Skips and Recycling Ltd.	Permanent	2000
New Barn Farm	Grundon	2037	10000
New Wintles Farm	O Malley Haulage	Permanent	170000
Newlands Farm	Smiths of Bloxham	Permanent	32000
Playhatch Quarry	Grabloader Ltd.	Permanent	70000
Rear of Cemex Batching Plant (Hardwick)	Fergal Contracting	Permanent	20000
Rumbolds Pit	Richard Hazel (Hazel & Jefferies)	Permanent	20000
Sandfields Farm	K J Millard Ltd.	Permanent	12000
Shipton Hill	Hickman Bros	Permanent	12600
Stonepitt Barn	SCB Oxford Ltd	Permanent	75000
Worton Farm (Cresswell Field)	M&M Skip Hire	Permanent	60000
Swannybrook	NAP Grabhire	Permanent	75000
Chilton Waste Transfer Site/Prospect Farm	Collard Environmental	2032	75000
Gill Mill	Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd.	2044	150000
Ewelme No. 2	Grundon Waste Management	2032	12000
Shellingford Quarry	Earthline Ltd.	2044	60000
Total Operational Production Capacity at Recycled Aggregate Production Facilities available through the Plan Period.			**1,000,599**

Operational Recycled Aggregate Facilities with Time-Limited Consent ending before end of Plan Period (2031)			
Dix Pit Complex	Sheehan's	2028	175000
Shipton Quarry	Earthline Ltd.	2025	75000
Dix Pit	D&M Plant Hire	2028	20000
Total Operation Production Capacity at Recycled Aggregate Facilities with Time limited consent ending before end of Plan Period (2031)			**270,000**

Facility Name	Operator	Planning Life	Production Capacity (tpa)

Operational Secondary Aggregate Facilities with Permanent or Time-Limited Consent to end of Plan Period (2031)			
Ardley ERF (IBAA) Facility	Raymond Brown Minerals and Recycling	2049	75000
Operational Secondary Aggregate Facilities with Time Limited Consent ending before end of Plan Period (2031)			
Sutton Courtenay Block Recycling	Hanson (reject building blocks & Concrete used in block making)	2030	62500
Sutton Courtenay Asphalt Recycling Plant	Heidelberg	2030	50000
Total Operational Secondary Aggregate Capacity			**187,500**

Overall Total Operational Capacity at 'Permanent' Facilities (facilities available throughout the Plan Period)	**1,075,599**
Overall Total Operational Capacity at Time Limited Facilities (facilities with consent ending before end of 2031)	**382,500**
Overall Total Operational Capacity	**1,458,099**

Non-Operational Facilities

Facility Name	Operator	Planning Life	Production Capacity (tpa)
Upwood Quarry	Hills Quarry Products Ltd.	2029	15000
NW Corner of TW Depot	Clancy Docwra	Permanent	20000
Total Non-Operational Capacity			**35000**

Operational and Non-Operational Facilities

Total Operational and Non-Operational Capacity 2024 (tpa)	1,493,099

Table 6.1 Recycled and Secondary Aggregates Permissions at end of 2024

Imports and Exports

6.9 Every county in the UK has to import aggregates from elsewhere because the geology means that no single county area produces exactly the profile of different types of aggregate in the exact amounts or proportions consumed therein. As part of the Local Aggregate Assessment, we should consider demand and supply factors from other MPAs.

6.10 All sales of aggregate are the result of commercial decisions by both buyers and sellers, and the resulting movements reflect the relative locations of supply and demand. Where these movements cross a county boundary, they are tracked in the four (or five) yearly national aggregates monitoring surveys (AM Survey), these have been 2005, 2009, 2014, 2019 and most recently 2023. The AM2023 data was published in 2025, and the survey is known as AM2023.

6.11 The figures within this Imports and Exports section of the LAA for 2024 were taken from the AM2023 which shows movement of minerals at a sub-regional and Minerals Planning Authority level. These are set out in detail in Appendix 2.

Sand and Gravel

6.12 AM2023 stated that total sales of primary aggregates produced in Great Britain, including marine dredged sand and gravel, but not imports of aggregates from outside Great Britain, were 164.9 Mt in 2023. Total sales decreased by about 2% between 2019 (168.9 Mt) and 2023 (164.9 Mt).

6.13 In England and Wales, land won Sand and Gravel sales in England decreased by 10% between 2019 and 2023, whilst Crushed Rock sales increased 4% and marine dredged sand and gravel increased by 25% over the same period.

6.14 Total primary aggregate sales within Oxfordshire have decreased by 4% since 2019, however the Southeast as a whole has seen an overall increase of 8%.

6.15 Some neighbouring MPAs have limited resources of their own. These authorities therefore rely on Oxfordshire to supply some of their needs. Other MPAs also supply aggregates into Oxfordshire; Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Derbyshire have provided Crushed Rock in 2023 to supplement the county's own production and to cater for higher specification requirements from harder rock resources.

6.16 The AM2023 sets out the sales of primary aggregates by MPA and principal destination sub region in 2023. These findings are shown in Table 6.2. As the table shows Oxfordshire was responsible for 22% of the Southeast Region's Land Won Sand and Gravel Sales and 42% of the Crushed Rock sales in 2023. This is similar to the 20% for Sand and Gravel in 2019 and remains at 42% for Crushed Rock. Detailed figures are set out in Appendix 2.

However, our Crushed rock exports decreased from 69% in 2019 to 22% in 2024, despite an increase in sales.

(thousand tonnes)

Destination	Land won sand and gravel	MPA%	AWP%	Crushed Rock	MPA	AWP%
Oxfordshire	624	58%		785	78%	
Southeast	315	29%		89	9%	
Elsewhere	141	13%		128	13%	
	1,080	100%	22%	1002	100%	42%

Table 6.2 Sales of primary aggregates and principal sub regions 2023 (Exports)

6.17 The AM2023 also sets out Oxfordshire's imports in 2023. A summary of the import findings is shown in Table 6.3. The table also shows as a percentage, of the Southeast total, Oxfordshire's imports.

(thousand tonnes)

Total Imports	Land won Sand and Gravel	Marine Sand and Gravel	Total Sand and Gravel	Crushed Rock	Total Primary Aggregate
Oxfordshire	50	4	54	2432	2486
Southeast Total	1559 (3%)	2620 (0.15%)	4179 (1%)	9148 (27%)	13326 (19%)

Table 6.3 Imports of primary aggregates and its relationship with the Southeast Imports Total

6.18 In 2023 Oxfordshire was responsible for importing 27% of the Southeast total crushed rock, compared with the 0.6% it imported in 2019, demonstrating a significant increase. Land won Sand and Gravel saw a drop of 3% imported from 6% to 3%, whilst marine won sand and gravel remained similar at under 1%.

6.19 The AM Survey 2023 (Tables 6.2, 6.3 and Appendix 2) show that Oxfordshire remains a net exporter of Land won Sand and Gravel, whilst in 2024 it changed to be a net importer of Crushed Rock, when in 2019 we were a net exporter for primary aggregate.

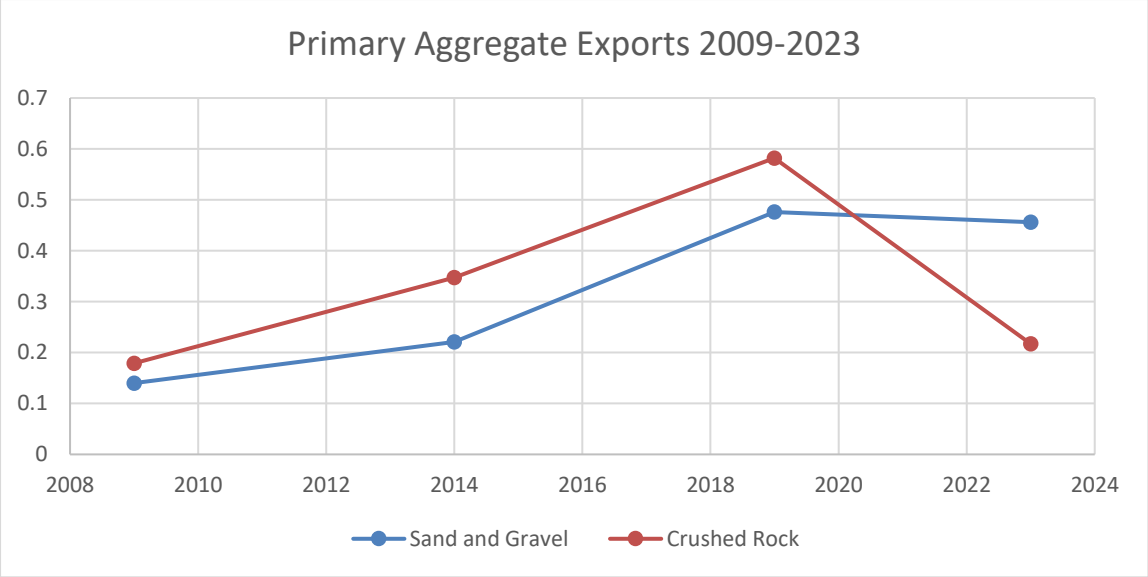

Figure 6.1 Exports of primary aggregates from Oxfordshire 2009-2024 (million tonnes)

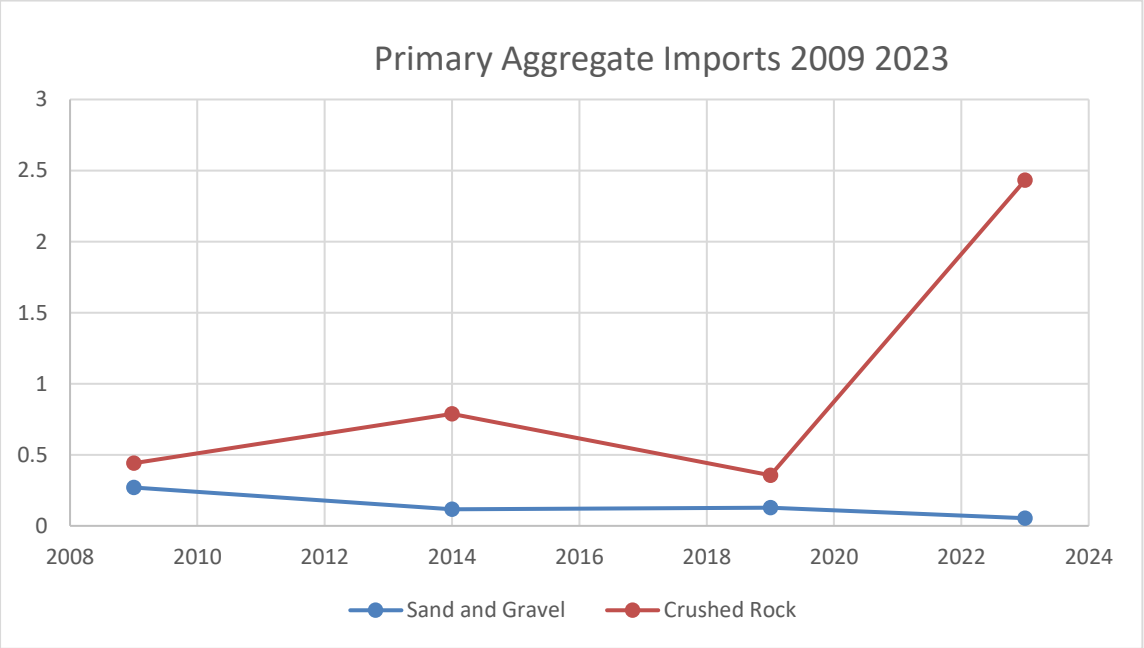

Figure 6.2 Imports of primary aggregates to Oxfordshire 2009-2024 (million tonnes)

Sharp Sand and Gravel

6.20 The AM2023 does not differentiate between Soft Sand and Sharp Sand and Gravel. They are combined into Land won Sand and Gravel.

6.21 Comparison of the AM2009, AM2014, AM2019 and AM2023 results show that Oxfordshire continues to be a net exporter of sand and gravel since 2014.

Exports

6.22 Exports have significantly increased since 2009 as shown in Figure 6.1. From 140,000 tonnes in 2009, doubling to 221,000 tonnes in 2014, and in 2019 doubling again to 476,000 tonnes. In 2023 Sand and Gravel exports dropped slightly by 4% to 456,000 tonnes, though this is still significantly higher than 2009 and 2014 export figures.

6.23 The AM 2023 survey sets out that Oxfordshire consumed 58% of the sand and gravel produced in the county. Exports make up approximately 42%[28] of Oxfordshire's total sand and gravel sales. The majority of exports to within the Southeast but authority unknown (29%). Therefore, there is the potential for Oxfordshire's own consumption to be higher, whilst 13% are known to have gone elsewhere.

6.24 As set out in Appendix 2 the figures from the AM2023 show that Central and Eastern Berkshire, Hertfordshire, East London and Hampshire were the main authorities that Oxfordshire exported Sand and Gravel to. We contributed up to 20% of East London's and Central and Eastern Berkshire's total consumed sand and gravel.

Imports

6.25 Whilst we exported 456,000 tonnes of Land won Sand and Gravel, Oxfordshire only imported 54,000 tonnes, (Figure 6.2) a decrease of 58% since 2019 when 128,000 tonnes was imported. Our largest import was from Cambridgeshire and data on all imports can be seen in Appendix 2. Therefore, we are a net exporter of land won sand and gravel.

6.26 We did import 4,000 tonnes of marine sand and gravel from Bristol, as we do not have this aggregate type within Oxfordshire. However, our consumption rates of marine won sand and gravel, only make up 0.10% of total aggregate consumption within Oxfordshire.

Crushed Rock

Exports

6.27 Table 6.3 shows that exports make up approximately 22% of Oxfordshire's total sales. The majority of exports were to destinations within the Southeast (9%) whilst 13% went elsewhere.

6.28 Our exports decreased from 582,000tonnes in 2019 to 217,000 tonnes, a reduction of 63%.

6.29 As set out in Appendix 2 the figures from the AM2019 show that Gloucestershire was one of the main Authorities that Oxfordshire exported Crushed Rock to, along with Buckinghamshire, Warwickshire and Wiltshire and Swindon.

[28] The figures include the exports that were identified as being consumed within the Southeast only in their return and therefore some of these sales may have stayed within Oxfordshire.

Imports

6.30 Appendix 2 demonstrates that Oxfordshire became a net importer of crushed rock in 2023.

6.31 Crushed rock imports recorded in 2023 were significantly higher than in any previous Aggregates Monitoring Survey, representing an increase of approximately 583% compared to 2019 — rising from 0.356 million tonnes to 2.432 million tonnes.

6.32 In addition, the imports in 2023 were approximately two and a half times higher than Oxfordshire's own production/sales. These imports were from Somerset, Derbyshire, along with Caerphilly, Peak District and South Gloucestershire.

6.33 In 2023, HS2 was understood to be in a peak phase of development within Oxfordshire and its immediate vicinity. It is considered highly likely that some of the imported materials may have supported this major national infrastructure project. However, the specific destinations of these imports within Oxfordshire remain unknown as the survey is not site specific.

6.34 Future National Aggregates Monitoring surveys will be closely observed to determine whether this scale of imports continues in subsequent years, or whether it was specific to the HS2 infrastructure project, which is anticipated to have progressed beyond Oxfordshire by the time of the next survey,

6.35 These shall be monitored under Duty to Cooperate and, if necessary, Statements of Common Ground between Authorities will be entered into.

7.Quarries

Sharp sand and gravel

7 In Oxfordshire, at the end of 2024, there were eleven sites with planning permission for Sharp Sand and Gravel extraction, of which eight are active.

7.2 There were no permissions granted in 2024 for Sharp Sand and Gravel extraction. There was an extension of time granted in 2024 for Bridge Farm to permit extraction until the end of 2025.

7.3 At the end of 2024 there were five outstanding planning permissions; Oxfordshire Flood Alleviation scheme (MW.0027/22) for 12,300 tonnes (incidental and not to be sold off site), Finmere Quarry extension (MW.0069/20) for 370,000 tonnes, Land at Thrupp Lane, Radley (MW.0041/23), which is for a reactivation of dormant planning permission for 1 million tonnes, Sonning Quarry for 2,500,000 tonnes (MW.0063/24) and Gill Mill for 1,000,000 (MW.0057/24). There was also an appeal outstanding at White Cross Farm for 500,000tonnes (MW.0115/21)

7.4 Information on permitted sites is summarised in Table 7.1, including the operator and a summary of the current status of each site.

Quarry Site	Operator	Status at end of December 2024
Caversham	Lafarge Tarmac	Active
Finmere	AT Contracting	Active
Gill Mill, Ducklington	Smiths of Bletchington	Active
Hatford	Earthline	Active
Sutton Courtenay (Bridge Farm)	Hanson Aggregates	Inactive
Sutton Wick	H Tuckwell & Sons	Ceased in 2024
Thrupp Lane, Radley	H Tuckwell & Sons	Inactive: Estimated 1 million tonnes confirmed as a permitted reserve but under ROMP procedure has gone into suspension and cannot be worked until new conditions have been approved; therefore, not currently included as part of permitted reserve or landbank. A ROMP application was received in 2023 and is awaiting determination.
Wroxton Quarry	Earthline	Active
Faringdon Quarry	Grundon Sand & Gravel	Active
New Barn Farm, Cholsey	Grundon	Active:
Shellingford	Earthline	Active

Table 7.1 Permitted Sharp Sand and Gravel Extraction Sites in Oxfordshire, including Operators and Status at end of 2024 (Source: OCC)

7.5 Total permitted reserves of Sharp Sand and Gravel in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 6.177mt, as shown in Table 7.2 below. This is taken from the AM2024 survey calculated using annual operator returns. The actual operator returns for individual quarries cannot be presented due to confidentiality.

7.6 A number of operator returns reflected a reassessed mineral reserve, which reflects the difference in 2023 sales and the 2024 reserve.

7.7 Production capacity is also relevant, as a large amount of reserve in a quarry with only a low production rate will make a smaller contribution to annual supply than equivalent reserves in a high producing quarry and in addition large reserves in control of one operator can impact mineral production. The 2024 Annual Monitoring Survey did not request production capacity; therefore, production capacity has been established through responses to previous surveys, planning permissions and submitted planning statements.

7.8 At the end of 2024 total estimated permitted production capacity for sharp sand and gravel was 1.652mtpa.

Sharp Sand and Gravel Permitted Reserves at 31/12/2024
6.177mt

Table 7.2: Sharp Sand and Gravel Permitted Reserves at 31/12/24 (million tonnes)

Soft Sand

7.9 In Oxfordshire, at the end of 2024, there were eight sites with planning permission for Soft Sand extraction. The operator and current status of each site is provided in Table 7.4.

7.10 No planning permissions were granted for soft sand sites in 2024.

7.11 At the end of 2024 there was one outstanding planning permission at Barn Farm, Tubney for 900,000 tonnes (MW.0037/24).

Quarry Site	Operator	Status at end of December 2024
Bowling Green / Chinham Farm	Hills Quarry Products	Active
Duns Tew	Smiths Bletchington	Active
Hatford	Earthline Ltd	Active
Shellingford	Earthline Ltd	Active
Upwood	Hills Quarry Products	Active: sand & limestone.
Finmere	AT Contracting	Active
Gill Mill	Smiths Bletchingdon	Active
Wroxton	Earthline Ltd	Active

Table 7.3 Active and Permitted Soft Sand Extraction Sites in Oxfordshire, including Operators and Status as at end of 2024.

7.12 Total permitted reserves of Soft Sand in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 3.021mt, as shown in Table 7.4 below. This is taken from the AM2024 survey,

calculated using annual operator returns. The actual operator returns for individual quarries cannot be presented due to confidentiality.

7.13 However, total production capacity is also relevant, as a large amount of reserve in a quarry with only a low production rate will make smaller contribution to annual supply than equivalent reserves in a high producing quarry, in addition large reserves in control of one operator can impact mineral production. The current reserves are currently spread across a number of operators and current estimated permitted production capacity at the end of 2024 is estimated at 0.291mtpa.

Soft Sand Permitted Reserves at 31/12/24
3.021 mt

Table 7.4: Soft Sand Permitted Reserves at 31/12/24 (million tonnes)[29]

Crushed Rock

7.14 In Oxfordshire at the end of 2024, there were fourteen sites with planning permission, twelve of which were active. The operator and current status of each site is provided in Table 7.5.

7.15 An extension of time was granted in 2024 for Land at Quarry Farm to permit extraction until October 2024.

7.16 There were three applications for Crushed Rock outstanding at the end of 2024; Whitehill Quarry (MW.0157/22) for 3 million tonnes, Wroxton Fields for 754,000 (MW.0063/24) and a retrospective application for 500,000 tonnes at Shipton on Cherwell (MW.0077/2).

Quarry Site	Operator	Status at end of December 2024
Dewars Farm	Smiths Bletchington	Active
Burford	Smiths Bletchington	Active
Chinham Farm (Bowling Green)	Hills Quarry Products	Active
Land at Quarry Farm North, Enstone	Heritage	Active
Duns Tew	Smiths Bletchington	Aftercare
Faringdon Quarry	Grundon Sand and Gravel	Active
Hatford	Earthline	Active
Rollright Quarry Phase 1	Oxfordshire Quarries Group	Active

[29] SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Survey 2024

Quarry Site	Operator	Status at end of December 2024
Rollright Quarry Phase 2	Smiths Bletchington	Restoration in progress
Shellingford	Earthline	Active
Shipton on Cherwell	Earthline	Planning permission expired 30th September 2019. Appeal outstanding for extension to site MW.0046/18
Upwood	Hills Quarry Products	Active
Whitehill	Smiths Bletchington	Active
Wroxton	Earthline	Active

Table 7.5 Active and Permitted Crushed Rock Extraction Sites in Oxfordshire, including Operators and Status at end of December 2024

7.17 Total permitted reserves of Crushed Rock in Oxfordshire at the end of 2024 were 3.359mt, as shown in Table 7.6 below. This is taken from the AM2024 Survey, calculated using annual operator returns. The actual operator returns for individual quarries cannot be presented due to confidentiality.

7.18 However, total production capacity is also relevant, as a large amount of reserve in a quarry with only a low production rate will make a smaller contribution to annual supply than equivalent reserves in a high producing quarry, and large reserves in control of one operator could also impact mineral production. Total permitted production capacity for crushed rock at the end of 2024 was 1.704mtpa.

7.19 Permitted reserves of Crushed Rock in Oxfordshire, as reported in the SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Survey 2024, are shown in Table 7.6 below.

Crushed Rock Permitted Reserves at 31/12/24
3.359mt

Table 7.6: Crushed Rock Permitted Reserves at 31/12/24 (million tonnes)[30]

Rail Depots

7.20 In 2024, there were two returns from operators on sales from Rail Depots. This information is confidential for commercial reasons.

7.21 In 2021 Oxfordshire's rail depot capacity was increased to over 3.5million. It is known that the increased capacity at Hennef Way Banbury is temporary to provide material for HS2, and Appleford Sidings has added two more rail

[30] AM2024 Survey

sidings. This site now has a condition limiting it to 1.5million tonnes per annum.

Landbanks

7.22 Based on the Aggregates Provision Rates set out in Section 5 that have been determined for this LAA and the permitted reserves as of 31 December 2024, as set out above, the landbanks at the end of 2024 can be seen below in Table 7.7.

Permitted Reserves at 31.12.2024. by mineral type	Landbank (LAA Aggregates Provision Rate)
Soft Sand 3.021m. tonnes	13 years at 0.235mtpa
Sharp Sand & Gravel 6.177m. tonnes	6.3 years at 0.986mtpa
Crushed Rock 3.359m. tonnes	3.5 years at 0.964mtpa

Table 7.7 Oxfordshire Landbank at 31/12/2024

7.23 As can be seen the Landbank for Soft Sand has the 7-year requirement however, Sharp Sand and Gravel has fallen below the 7-year requirement and the Crushed Rock landbank is below the 10-year requirement for the seventh consecutive year.

8. Core Strategy Mineral Requirements

8.1 The Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (Policy M2) sets out the total provision requirement of minerals for the Plan Period 2014-2031. These are:

- 18.27 million tonnes of Sharp Sand and Gravel
- 3.402 million tonnes of Soft Sand; and
- 10.512 million tonnes for Crushed Rock

Sharp Sand and Gravel

8.2 Taking into account sales in 2014 – 2024 (9.325 million tonnes) and estimated reserves that are available to be worked during the plan period (5.923 million tonnes), the remaining Core Strategy Requirement over the Plan Period is 3.022 million tonnes. See Appendix 3 for calculations.

Soft Sand

8.3 Taking into account sales of Soft Sand in 2014 – 2024 (2.485 million tonnes), and reserves that are available to be worked during the plan period (3.021 million tonnes), there are no more requirements for additional Soft Sand to meet Core Strategy Requirements over the Plan Period. See Appendix 3 for calculations.

Crushed Rock

8.4 Taking into account sales in 2014 – 2024 (10.621 million tonnes), and reserves that are available to be worked during the plan period (2.917 million tonnes), there are no more requirements for additional Crushed Rock to meet Core Strategy Requirements over the Plan Period.

8.5 Therefore, to meet the Core Strategy Requirements, we will need to identify sites to meet the following:

- **Sand and gravel – 3.022 million tonnes**
- **Soft Sand - 0 million tonnes**
- **Crushed Rock - 0 million tonnes**

9. Conclusion

9.1 In concluding this year's Oxfordshire's LAA, based upon consideration of all the available evidence, the Aggregates Provision Rates are:

- **Sand and Gravel – 0.986 mtpa**
- **Soft Sand – 0.235mtpa**
- **Crushed Rock – 0.964mtpa**
- **Recycled and Secondary Aggregates- 0.926mtpa**

9.2 To meet the Core Strategy Requirements as set out in Policy M2, we will need to identify sites to meet the following need:

- **Sand and Gravel – 3.022 million tonnes**
- **Soft Sand - 0 million tonnes**
- **Crushed Rock - 0 million tonnes**

9.3 To ensure we maintain a steady and adequate supply over the Plan Period, we need to consider these LAA Provision Rates with the permitted reserves as of 31 December 2024[31] and the implications for the Authorities landbank.

9.4 Our landbank for Soft Sand is above the 7-year requirement. However, for Crushed Rock the landbank is at 3.5 years, below the NPPFs 10-year requirement and for Sand and Gravel the landbank is at 6.3 below the NPPFs 7-year requirement.

9.5 The future Minerals and Waste Local Plan will review all mineral requirements over a new Plan period (at least a 15-year period) and identify the amount of mineral required and the ways in which this will be met.

9.6 Mineral requirements within the adopted Core Strategy will be replaced with the mineral requirements set out within the new Minerals and Waste Plan upon adoption.

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[31] Appendix 2

List of Definitions and Acronyms

The Local Aggregate Assessment uses the following terminology throughout this report:

- **Alternative aggregates** - A general term which can be used to refer to anything other than primary, land-won aggregates. It can include secondary, recycled and sometimes marine aggregates.
- **Landbank** - Landbank is a measure of the stock of permitted reserves expressed in terms of the number of years that these would allow production for at a given average rate of extraction. It is a theoretical measure of the life of the reserves if these were to be worked at a consistent annual rate.
- **Land-won aggregates** - Primary aggregates extracted from land.
- **Marine aggregates** - Primary aggregates dredged from the sea, almost exclusively sand and gravel.
- **Primary aggregates** - These are aggregates produced from naturally occurring mineral deposits, extracted specifically for use as aggregate and used for the first time. They are produced either from rock formations that are crushed to produce 'crushed rock' aggregates, from naturally occurring sand and gravel deposits, or solid formations to produce soft sand.
- **Aggregate Provision Rate (APR)** - the quantity of aggregate for which provision needs to made in plans within each Mineral Planning Authority in order both to satisfy local needs and to contribute fairly towards National expectations of future demand
- **Recycled aggregates** - Aggregate materials recovered from construction and demolition processes and from excavation waste on construction sites.
- **Secondary aggregates** - Aggregates derived as a by-product of other quarrying and mining operations or industrial processes, including colliery spoil, china clay waste, slate waste, power station ashes, incinerator bottom ashes and similar products.
- **Sharp Sand and Gravel -** Sharp sand tends to be relatively coarse and the component grains are more angular than soft sand (see below). Such sands are typically deposited within river channels, rather than in oceans, and are generally found, as part of a sequence of mixed sand & gravel, within river floodplains, river terraces, and (in areas which have been glaciated) within other types of deposit. As the name implies, they have a sharper texture than soft sands and, although they can be used as building sand, they are generally not preferred for that purpose because they produce less 'workable' mortars, unless special additives are included in the mix, adding to the cost. They are better suited to use within concrete products, not least because they usually occur in conjunction with gravels which provide the coarse aggregate component of the concrete mix.
- **Soft Sand** - Soft Sand is generally fine-grained sand in which the individual grains are well-rounded, imparting a relatively soft texture and free-flowing nature to the sand. Such sands are commonly deposited in marine environments, where constant movement by the sea results in the rounding,

polishing and sorting of the grains. The characteristics of such sands lend themselves especially to products which are required to 'flow' or be easily 'workable' by hand when they are being used - particularly mortars, but also plaster, in the case of very fine-grained sand. These are collectively known as 'building sand'. Soft Sand may also be used in asphalt products where it is used to stiffen the bitumen binder, and in concrete products - although sharp sand is more commonly used for that purpose.

The Local Aggregates Assessment uses the following acronyms throughout this report:

- **AMRI** – Annual Minerals Raised Inquiry Surveys
- **APR** – Aggregate Provision Rate
- **AWP** – Aggregate Working Party
- **BGS** – British Geological Survey
- **CLG –** Communities and Local Government (See MHCLG below)
- **DLUHC** – Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- **GDP –** Gross Domestic Product
- **LAA** – Local Aggregates Assessment
- **MASS** – Managed Aggregates Supply System
- **MPAs** – Mineral Planning Authorities
- **Mt** – Million tonnes
- **mtpa** – Million tonnes per annum
- **MHCLG –** Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- **MWLP** – Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- **NPPF** – National Planning Policy Framework
- **OCC** – Oxfordshire County Council
- **PPG** – Planning Practice Guidance
- **RAWP** – Regional Aggregate Working Parties
- **ROMP** – Review of Old Mineral Permissions
- **SEEAWP** – South East of England Aggregate Working Party
- **SHMA –** Strategic Housing Market Assessment

Appendix 1

Total Oxfordshire Sand and Gravel Sales (including Soft Sand)
(Source: AM Surveys and SEEAWP Surveys)
The AM2019 did not include a separate England total for Soft Sand for 2019, therefore for comparative purposes we have combined the historical records for Sharp Sand and Gravel and Soft Sand to be able to compare the 2019 figure with previous years.
Data for sharp sand and gravel and soft sand sales as individual percentage of England's minerals sales were last available in 2014[32].

	Oxfordshire Sharp Sand & Gravel Sales (million tonnes)[33]	Oxfordshire Soft Sand Sales (million tonnes)[34]	Total Oxfordshire Land won Sand and Gravel (million tonnes)	England Total Land Won Sand and Gravel (million tonnes)	Oxfordshire's sales as a percentage of England's sales [35]
2003	1.372	0.234	1.479	59.974	2.47%
2004	1.184	0.295	1.289	62.735	2.05%
2005	1.090	0.199	1.166	58.926	1.98%
2006	0.983	0.183	1.059	56.148	1.89%
2007	0.893	0.166	0.78	54.512	1.43%
2008	0.629	0.151	0.627	50.134	1.25%
2009	0.462	0.165	0.597	37.81	1.58%
2010	0.455	0.142	0.69	36.723	1.88%
2011	0.489	0.201	0.714	36.589	1.95%
2012	0.559	0.155	0.566	33.229	1.79%
2013	0.401	0.165	0.869	35.855	2.42%
2014	0.639	0.230	1.001	38.785	2.58%
2015	0.768	0.233	0.878	2015 figures not available	n/a
2016	0.651	0.227	0.954	2016 figures not available	n/a
2017	0.703	0.251	1.048	2017 figures not available	n/a
2018	0.796	0.252	1.133	2018 figures not available	n/a
2019	0.994	0.254	1.248	39.708	3.14%

[32] Previous years LAA's contain these figures if required
[33] Source: SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys
[34] SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys
[35] Figures include data for marine dredged material. This data is allocated to the county in which the port of landing is situation.

	Oxfordshire Sharp Sand & Gravel Sales (million tonnes)[33]	Oxfordshire Soft Sand Sales (million tonnes)[34]	Total Oxfordshire Land won Sand and Gravel (million tonnes)	England Total Land Won Sand and Gravel (million tonnes)	Oxfordshire's sales as a percentage of England's sales [35]
2020	0.830	0.210	1.040	2020 figures not available	n/a
2021	1.157	.264	1.421	2021 figures not available	n/a
2022	0.972	0.229	1.201	2022 Figures not available	n/a
2023	0.877	0.203	1.008	38.712	**2.60%**
2024	**0.934**	**0.132**	**1.066**	2024 Figures not available	**n/a**
Rolling 10-year annual average, 2003 - 2012	0.812	0.182	0.891	40.433	2.01%
Rolling 10-year annual average, 2004 - 2013	0.715	0.176	0.839	38.629	1.85%
Rolling 10-year annual average, 2005 - 2014	0.660	0.179	0.812	36.853	1.79%
Rolling 10-year annual average, 2006 – 2015	0.628	0.184	0.787	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average, 2007 – 2016	0.595	0.192	0.778	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average, 2008 – 2017*	0.576	0.202	0.822	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year average 2009 – 2018	0.592	0.230	0.923	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year average 2010 – 2019	0.646	0.211	0.857	n/a	n/a

	Oxfordshire Sharp Sand & Gravel Sales (million tonnes)[33]	Oxfordshire Soft Sand Sales (million tonnes)[34]	Total Oxfordshire Land won Sand and Gravel (million tonnes)	England Total Land Won Sand and Gravel (million tonnes)	Oxfordshire's sales as a percentage of England's sales [35]
Rolling 10-year average 2011 – 2020	0.683	0.218	0.901	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year average 2012 – 2021	0.750	0.224	1.016	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year average 2013 – 2022	0.791	0.232	1.023	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year average 2014 – 2023	0.839	0.235	1.074	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year average 2015 – 2024	0.868	0.226	1.094	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2014 – 2016	0.686	0.230	0.95	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2015 – 2017	0.707	0.237	0.717	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2016 - 2018	0.717	.243	0.96	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2017- 2019	0.831	.252	1.083	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2018- 2020	0.873	.239	1.112	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2019- 2021	.994	0.243	1.237	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2020- 2022	.986	0.234	1.221	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2021- 2023	1.002	0.232	1.234	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2022- 2024	0.928	0.188	1.116	n/a	n/a

Sales of Crushed Rock 2003 – 2024 (million tonnes)

(Sources: SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys, and AMRI Surveys)

	Oxfordshire Crushed Rock Sales (million tonnes)[36]	**England Crushed Rock Sales (million tonnes)[37]**	**Oxfordshire's sales as a percentage of England's sales.**
2003	0.629	83.957	0.75%
2004	0.557	85.653	0.65%
2005	0.564	80.593	0.70%
2006	0.495	83.722	0.59%
2007	0.717	82.922	0.86%
2008	0.543	75.179	0.72%
2009	0.363	59.666	0.61%
2010	0.272	50.115	0.54%
2011	0.322	57.744	0.56%
2012	0.242	52.980	0.46%
2013	0.502	53.417	0.94%
2014	1.061	63.835	1.66%
2015	0.914	*2015 figures not available*	n/a
2016	0.715	*2016 figures not available*	n/a
2017	0.867	*2017 figures not available*	n/a
2018	0.751	*2018 figures not available*	n/a
2019	0.843	83.015	1.02%
2020	1.087	2020 figures not available	n/a
2021	1.254	2021 figures not available	n/a
2022	1.146	2022 figures not available	n/a
2023	1.002	78.485	2.55%
2024	**0.981**	**2024 figures not available**	**n/a**
Rolling 10-year annual average 2003 - 2012	0.470	71.253	0.66%
Rolling 10-year annual average 2004 - 2013	0.458	68.199	0.67%
Rolling 10-year annual average 2005 - 2014	0.508	66.017	0.77%

[36] SEEAWP Aggregates Monitoring Surveys
[37] Source: BGS 2014, 2019 and 2023 survey

	Oxfordshire Crushed Rock Sales (million tonnes)[36]	England Crushed Rock Sales (million tonnes)[37]	Oxfordshire's sales as a percentage of England's sales.
Rolling 10-year annual average 2006 - 2015	0.543	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2007 - 2016	0.565	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2008 – 2017	0.580	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2009 – 2018	0.601	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2010 – 2019	0.649	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2011 – 2020	0.730	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2012 – 2021	0.824	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2013 – 2022	0.914	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2014 – 2023	0.964	n/a	n/a
Rolling 10-year annual average 2015 – 2024	**0.956**	**n/a**	**n/a**
Average of last 3 years 2014 – 2016	0.897	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2015 – 2017	0.832	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2016 – 2018	0.778	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2017 – 2019	0.820	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2018 – 2020	0.894	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2019 – 2021	1.061	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2020-2022	1.162	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2021-2023	1.134	n/a	n/a
Average of last 3 years 2022-2024	**1.043**	**n/a**	**n/a**

Appendix 2

Imports and Exports

Imports, Exports and Consumption of Primary Aggregates in Oxfordshire

2009, 2014, 2019 and 2023 imports and exports (millions of tonnes) (Source: Collation of the Results of the 2023, 2019, 2014 and 2019Aggregates Minerals Survey for England and Wales)

	Sand and Gravel 2009	Crushed Rock 2009	All Primary Aggregates 2009	Sand and Gravel 2014	Crushed Rock 2014	All Primary Aggregates 2014	Sand and Gravel 2019	Crushed Rock 2019	All Primary Aggregates 2019	Sand and Gravel 2023	Crushed Rock 2023	All Primary Aggregates 2023
A. Production / Sales in Oxfordshire	0.628	0.363	0.991	0.869	1.061	1.93	1.248	0.843	2.091	1.08	1.002	2.082
B. Exported out of Oxfordshire	0.14	0.179	0.319	0.221	0.347	0.568	0.476	0.582	1.058	0.456	0.217	0.673
C. Produced and consumed in Oxfordshire (A – B)	0.487	0.184	0.672	0.648	0.714	1.362	0.772	0.261	1.033	0.624	0.785	1.409
D. Imported into Oxfordshire	0.27	0.441	0.711	0.117	0.787	0.904	0.128	0.356	0.484	0.054	2.432	2.972
E. Total Consumption in Oxfordshire (C + D)	0.757	0.625	1.383	0.765	1.501	2.266	0.9	0.617	1.517	0.677	3.218	3.895

The equivalent figures for 2005 are not available because Oxfordshire was grouped with Buckinghamshire and Berkshire in the AM2005 Report.

No equivalent information can be derived from the earlier AM2001 Survey report, because all results are presented on a regional basis and there are no local figures.

Destinations

Destinations of Sand & Gravel Produced in Oxfordshire 2023

Destinations of Sand & Gravel Produced in Oxfordshire 2023 (Source: BGS/MHCLG Survey 2023)

Total Oxfordshire Land won Sand and Gravel (Including soft sand) (S&G) exported destinations in 2023 0.456mt		
Destination MPA	**Proportion of the destination MPA total consumed S&G**	**Range* (millions of tonnes)**
Buckinghamshire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Buckinghamshire	Between 0mt and 0.010mt
Central and Eastern Berkshire	Between 10% and 20% in Central and Eastern Berkshire	Between 0.041mt and 0.081mt
East London	Between 10% and 20% in East London	Between 0.032mt and 0.064mt
Gloucestershire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Gloucestershire	Between 0.004mt and 0.036mt
Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, New Forest National Park, and part of the South Downs National Park	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Hampshire	Between 0.006mt and 0.059mt
Hertfordshire	Less than 1% of total consumed in Hertfordshire	Between 0mt and 0.082mt
Milton Keynes	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Milton Keynes	Between 0.002mt and 0.018mt
Surrey	Less than 1% of total consumed in Surrey	Between 0 and 0.002mt
Warwickshire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Warwickshire	Between 0.004mt and 0.036mt
West London	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in West London	Between 0.002mt and 0.024mt
Wiltshire and Swindon	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Wiltshire and West London	Between 0.005mt and 0.047mt
Worcestershire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Worcestershire	Between 0.002mt and 0.023mt
Unknown in the Southeast	Between 20% and 30% of total consumed in the Southeast	Between 0.163mt and 0.244mt
Unknown in the West of England	Between 10% and 20% of total consumed in the West of England	Between 0.002mt and 0.024mt

*This is the highest and lowest percentage taken from the Authorities total Sand and Gravel consumed.

Destinations of Crushed Rock Produced in Oxfordshire 2023

Total Crushed Rock (CR) exported destinations in 2023 0.217mt		
Destination MPA	**Proportion of the destination MPA total consumed CR**	**Range* (millions of tonnes)**
Bedfordshire (Central, Beds and Luton)	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Bedfordshire	Between 0.007mt and 0.067mt
Buckinghamshire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Buckinghamshire	Between 0.011mt and 0.113mt
Gloucestershire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Gloucestershire	Between 0.021mt and 0.212mt
Milton Keynes	Between 10% and 20% of total consumed in Milton Keynes	Between 0.017mt and 0.034mt
Northamptonshire	Less than 1% of total consumed in Northamptonshire	Between 0 and 0.010mt
Warwickshire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Warwickshire	Between 0.015mt and 0.153mt
West Berkshire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in West Berkshire	Between 0.006mt and 0.012mt
Wiltshire and Swindon	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Wiltshire and Swindon	Between 0.009mt and 0.090mt
Worcestershire	Between 1% and 10% of total consumed in Worcestershire	Between 0.004mt and 0.039mt
Unknown in the Southeast	Between 50% and 60% of total consumed in the Southeast	Between 0.021mt and 0.025mt
Unknown in the West of England	Less than 1% of total consumed in the West of England.	Between 0 and 0,009mt

*This is the highest and lowest percentage taken from the Authorities total Crushed Rock consumed.

Destinations of Sand & Gravel Produced in Oxfordshire 2009 and 2014

(Source: Oxfordshire County Council Aggregates Monitoring Survey 2009 and 2014)

Destination	**2009 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand)** Tonnes	**2009 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand)** %	**2014 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand)** Tonnes	**2014 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand)** %
Oxfordshire	487,260	77.6	648,282	74.60
Berkshire	20,785	3.3	99,259	11.42

Destination	2009 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand) Tonnes	2009 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand) %	2014 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand) Tonnes	2014 Sand and Gravel (including soft sand) %
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes	13,663	2.2	9,712	1.11
Rest of Southeast & London	15,565	2.5	4,642	0.81
Wiltshire, Swindon & Gloucestershire	68,203	10.9	95,089	10.94
Northamptonshire & Warwickshire	4,993	0.8	9,674	1.11
TOTAL	627,783	100	866,658	100

Destinations of Crushed Rock Produced in Oxfordshire 2009 and 2014

(Source: Oxfordshire County Council Aggregates Monitoring Survey 2009 and 2014)

Destination	2009 Crushed Rock Tonnes	2009 Crushed Rock %	2014 Crushed Rock Tonnes	2014 Crushed Rock %
Oxfordshire	180,867	49.8	663,463	62.56
Berkshire & Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes	23,081	6.4	254,223	23.97
Rest of Southeast & London	0	0	5,755	0.55
Wiltshire, Swindon & Gloucestershire	29,694	8.2	14,308	1.35
Northamptonshire & Warwickshire	118,788	32.7	121,258	11.43
TOTAL	362,839	100	1,060,573	99.86

The AM2005 survey report combined figures for the destinations of aggregates sold in Oxfordshire with the destinations of sales in Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. It is therefore not possible to derive equivalent figures for 2005.

Destinations of Sand & Gravel Produced in Oxfordshire 2019

(Source: BGS/MHCLG AM2019 Survey)

For 2019, we do not currently have the exact amounts of mineral produced in Oxfordshire that were consumed by other areas.
The AM2019 set out the % of the amount of sand and gravel consumed in each destination that was produced from Oxfordshire in relation to the Authorities own total demand of sand and gravel. The table then indicates the lowest and maximum amount of sand and gravel produced from Oxfordshire based on these percentages.

Destination of Oxfordshire's produced Land won Sand and Gravel (Including soft sand) in 2019 (1.248mt)

Destination	Proportion	Range* of tonnages produced in Oxfordshire (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	62% of total sand and gravel consumed in Oxfordshire	0.772mt**
Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Between 10% and 20% of total sand and gravel consumed in Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Between 0.095mt and 0.189mt came from Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	Between 1% and 10% of total sand and gravel consumed in Berkshire	Between 0.014mt and 0.138mt came from Oxfordshire
Berkshire	Between 1% and 10% of total sand and gravel consumed in Berkshire	Between 0.007mt and 0.074mt came from Oxfordshire
Wiltshire and Swindon	Between 1% and 10% of total sand and gravel consumed in Wiltshire and Swindon	Between 0.005mt and 0.052mt came from Oxfordshire
West of England (Avon)	Between 10% and 20% of total sand and gravel consumed in West of England	Between 0.002mt and 0.006mt came from Oxfordshire
Surrey, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Somerset and Exmoor National Park, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Scotland and West London	Less than 1% of each MPAs total sand and gravel was sourced from Oxfordshire	Max .043mt came from Oxfordshire
Unknown in the Southeast	Between 40 and 50% sand and gravel consumed in the Southeast	Between 0.172mt and 0.216mt came from Oxfordshire
Unknown Destination	Between 1%-10% of the total sand and gravel consumed that went to unknown destinations.	Between 0.014mt and 0.142mt came from Oxfordshire

*This is the highest and lowest percentage of sand and gravel from Oxfordshire taken from the importing Authorities total Sand and Gravel consumed. (Other than Oxfordshire)

** Known figure from AM2019

Destinations of Crushed Produced in Oxfordshire 2019

(Source: BGS/MHCLG AM2019 Survey)

The AM2019 set out the % of the amount of Crushed Rock consumed in each destination that was produced from Oxfordshire, in relation to the Authorities own total demand of sand and gravel. The table then indicates the lowest and maximum amount of sand and gravel produced from Oxfordshire based on these percentages. Total Crushed Rock exported destinations in 2019 (0.582mt)

Source	Proportion	Range* (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	31% of total Consumed Crushed Rock in Oxfordshire	0.261mt*
Northamptonshire	Between 1% and 10% of total Crushed Rock consumed in Northamptonshire	Between 0.017mt and 0.165mt came from Oxfordshire
Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	Between 10%and 20% of total Crushed Rock consumed in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes	Between 0.070 and 0.141mt came from Oxfordshire
Warwickshire	Between 1% and 10% of total Crushed Rock consumed in Warwickshire	Between 0.011mt and 0.107mt came from Oxfordshire
Berkshire	Between 1% and 10% of total Crushed Rock consumed in Berkshire	Between 0.009mt and 0.089mt came from Oxfordshire
Unknown somewhere in the Southeast	Between 50% and 60% of total Crushed Rock destination in the Southeast unknown	0.256mt and 0.307mt came from Oxfordshire
Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, Hertfordshire, Surrey	Less than 1% of each MPAs total Crushed Rock was sourced from Oxfordshire	Max 0.043mt came from Oxfordshire

*****This is the highest and lowest percentage of sand and gravel from Oxfordshire taken from the importing Authorities total Crushed Rock consumed. (Other than Oxfordshire)

** Known figure from AM2019

Destinations of Sand and Gravel Produced in Oxfordshire 2005, 2009 and 2014 (Source: AM2005, and AM2009, 2014)

Destination (Source MPA – Oxfordshire)	Sand and gravel (millions of tonnes) 2005	Sand and gravel (millions of tonnes) 2009	Sand and gravel (millions of tonnes) 2014
Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire	0.304	0.520 of which 0.487 in Oxfordshire	0.757 of which 0.648 in Oxfordshire
Elsewhere in Southeast	0.418	0.015	0.012
Elsewhere	0.550	0.090	0.100
Unallocated	0.017	0	0
Total	1.289*	0.627*	0.869*

*Totals may not match sub totals due to varying categories

Destinations of Crushed Rock Produced in Oxfordshire 2005 and 2009

Destination (Source MPA – Oxfordshire)	Crushed Rock (millions of tonnes) 2005	Crushed Rock (millions of tonnes) 2009	Crushed Rock (millions of tonnes) 2014
Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire	0.277	0.184 all in Oxfordshire	0.919
Elsewhere in Southeast	0.134	0.025 incl. Berkshire & Buckinghamshire	0.010
Elsewhere	0.152	0.154	0.130
Total	0.564*	0.363	1.061

*May not match sub totals due to varying categories.

This data comparison is not currently available for AM2019.

Sources

Sources of Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2023

Sources of land won sand and gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2023 (Source: BGS)

Total Land won Sand and Gravel (Including soft sand) consumed in Oxfordshire in 2023 0.677mt		
Source	Proportion	Tonnage range (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	90-100%	0.624mt*
Cambridgeshire	1% -10%	Between 0.007mt and 0.067mt**
Central Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, New Forest National Park, and part of the South Downs National Park, Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire	<1%	Between 0 and 0.006mt***

* Exact figure taken from AM Survey 2023

** The lower number represents 1% of total consumed and the higher represents 10% of total consumed.

*** A maximum of 1% was taken for each Authority that exported Minerals to Oxfordshire

Sources of Marine Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2023

Sources of Marine Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2023 (Source: BGS)

Total Marine Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire in 2023 0.004mt		
Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Bristol City	100%	0.004%

Sources of Crushed rock consumed in Oxfordshire 2023

Sources of Crushed Rock consumed in Oxfordshire 2023 (Source: BGS)

Total Crushed Rock consumed in Oxfordshire in 2023 3.218mt		
Source	Proportion	Tonnage Estimates (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	20-30%	0.785mt*
Somerset	30-40%	0.965mt – 1.287mt**
Derbyshire	10-20%	0.322mt – 0.644mt**
Caerphilly County Borough Council. Peak District and South Gloucestershire	1-10%	0.032mt – 0.322mt**
Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Merthyr Tydfill, North Somerset, Powys, Rhondda, Shropshire, Warwickshire	<1%	0.032mt***

* Exact figure taken from AM Survey 2023

** The lower number represents lower % of total consumed and the higher represents higher % of total consumed.

**** A maximum of 1% was taken for each Authority that exported Minerals to Oxfordshire

Sources of Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2019

(Source: BGS)

Total Land won Sand and Gravel (Including soft sand) consumed in Oxfordshire in 2019 (0.900mt)

Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	80-90%	0.772mt*
Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire and Wiltshire	Between 1% and 10% from each area of total consumed within Oxfordshire	Between 0.036mt and 0.363mt**
Leicestershire, Buckinghamshire Bristol City, Central Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Portsmouth	Less than 1% from each area	Max .081mt***

* Exact figure taken from AM Survey 2019

** The lower number represents 1% of total consumed and the higher represents 10% of total consumed.

*** A maximum of 1% was taken for each Authority that exported Minerals to Oxfordshire

Sources of Crushed Rock Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2019

(Source: BGS)

Total Crushed Rock consumed in Oxfordshire in 2019 (0.617mt)

Source	Proportion	Tonnage Estimates (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	40-50%	0.261mt*
Gloucestershire, Leicestershire, Somerset	10-20%	Between 0.185 and 0.370**
North Somerset, Powys, Rhondda Cynon Taf (Taff), Shropshire, South Gloucestershire	Between 1% and 10% from each area of total consumed within Oxfordshire	Between 0.031mt and 0.308mt***
Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire	Less than 1% from each area	Max .024mt****

* Exact figure taken from AM Survey 2019

** The lower number represents 10% of total consumed and the higher represents 20% of total consumed.

*** The lower number represents 10% of total consumed and the higher represents 20% of total consumed.

**** A maximum of 1% was taken for each Authority that exported Minerals to Oxfordshire

Sources of Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2014

(Source: BGS)

Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	80-90%	0.612 - 0.6885
Wiltshire, Windsor & Maidenhead, Cambridgeshire, Leicestershire	1-10%	0.00765 – 0.0765
Devon, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, West Berkshire, Central Bedfordshire,	<1%	<0.00765

Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Essex, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire.		

Sources of Crushed Rock consumed in Oxfordshire 2014

(Source: BGS)

Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	40-50%	0.6 – 0.75
Somerset	30-40%	0.45 – 0.6
Leicestershire	10-20%	0.15 – 0.3
Gloucestershire	1-10%	0.015 – 0.15
North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Cambridgeshire, Shropshire, Powys	<1%	<0.015

Sources of Sand and Gravel consumed in Oxfordshire 2009

(Source: BGS)

Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	64%	0.474
Gloucestershire	25%-20%	0.145- 0.185
Warwickshire, Bristol (marine), Hampshire, Berkshire and Leicestershire (in descending order)	Between 5% and 1% from each area	n/a
Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire (includes Bedford Borough), Kent, Cambridgeshire, Staffordshire, Buckinghamshire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Solihull (includes Walsall) and Hertfordshire (in descending order)	Less than 1% from each area	n/a

Sources of Crushed Rock consumed in Oxfordshire 2009

(Source: BGS)

Source	Proportion	Tonnage where known (millions of tonnes)
Oxfordshire	29%	0.181
South Gloucestershire	30%-25%	0.187- 0.156
Somerset	25% - 20%	0.156- 0.125
Leicestershire	15%-10%	0.093- 0.063
Rhondda, Cynon, Taf (Taff), Gloucestershire and Powys (in descending order)	Between 5% and 1% from each area	n/a
Shropshire, North Somerset and Caerphilly/Merthyr Tydfil (merged for confidentiality) and Derbyshire (in descending order)	Less than 1% from each area	n/a

Appendix 3

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy Mineral provision requirements over the Plan period.

This section sets out the requirements to meet the Core Strategy Provision requirements as set out in Policy M2

Sand and Gravel Provision required over plan period 2014 – 2031
(As of Dec 2024)

	Sharp Sand & Gravel (million tonnes)
A. Annual Provision (from policy M2 / LAA)	1.015
B. Requirement 2014 – 2031 (policy M2) (A x 18 years)	18.270
C. Sales in 2014 – 2024	9.325
D. Remaining requirement (B – C)	8.945
E. Permitted Reserves at end 2024	6.177
F. Estimated permitted reserves available to be worked during remainder of plan period (from beginning 2025 to end 2031)	5.923
G. Remaining requirement to be provided for in Plan (D – F)	**3.022**

Notes:

1. Permitted Reserves at end 2024 (Row E) do not include approximately 1.0 million tonnes of Sharp Sand and Gravel at Thrupp Farm Quarry, Radley (South), which were previously included. Under 'ROMP' procedure the planning permission for this site has gone into suspension, and is currently dormant, and the site cannot be worked until there has been a review of the planning conditions attached to the planning permission. An application (MW.0041/23) has been submitted. Consequently, in accordance with national Planning Practice Guidance, the 'reserves' at this site should not currently be included as permitted reserves and they do not form part of the landbank.

2. Stonehenge Farm permission expired at the end of 2023. This reserve has now been removed from the landbank, and this has impacted on total mineral available to be worked over the Plan period.

3. A number of sites have limited production capacity and at these current rates, will not be able to extract all the mineral required by the end of the planning permission.

Soft Sand provision required over the Plan period 2014-2031
(As of Dec 2024)

	Soft Sand Core Strategy Requirement (Million Tonnes)
A. Annual Provision	0.189 (Policy M2)
B. Requirement 2014 – 2031	3.402
C. Sales in 2014 – 2024	2.485
D. Remaining requirement (B – C)	0.917
E. Permitted Reserves at end 2024	3.021
F. Estimated permitted reserves available to be worked during remainder of plan period (from beginning 2025 to end 2031)	1.388
G. Remaining requirement to be provided for in Plan	**0**

Notes:

1. A number of sites are due to continue to be worked after 2031. This impacts on the amount able to be worked over the plan period.

Crushed Rock provision required over the Plan period 2014-2031
(As of December 2024)

	Core Strategy Requirement
A. Annual Provision (from policy M2 / LAA)	0.584
B. Requirement 2014 – 2031 (policy M2) (A x 18 years)	10.512
C. Sales in 2014 – 2024	10.621
D. Remaining requirement (B – C)	0
E. Permitted Reserves at end 2024	3.359
F. Estimated permitted reserves available to be worked during remainder of plan period (from beginning 2025 to end 2031)	2.917
G. Remaining requirement to be provided for in Plan	**0**

Appendix 4

Population

The table below presents the population figures for Oxfordshire for the 10-year period (2015 to 2024)

Table 1: Oxfordshire population figures for the 10-year period (2015 to 2024 [38])

Year	Population
2015	682,571
2016	690,541
2017	696,188
2018	702, 259
2019	708,513
2020	714,766
2021	726,727
2022	737,795
2023	750,230
2024	763, 218

Population forecasts for Oxfordshire up to 2031

Year	Population Forecast[39] (ONS)	Population Forecast [40] (OCC)
2025	773,130	762,929
2026	778,869	769,910
2027	784,525	775,544
2028	790,608	782,769
2029	797,209	790,787
2030	803,837	798,465
2031	810,364	806,604

Housing Completion Figures (taken District Authority Monitoring Reports (AMRs)

New Build Housing completions by year in Oxfordshire[41]

Year	Oxfordshire Total Completions from AMRs
2011/12	1,797
2012/13	1,576
2013/14	1,881
2014/15	3,012
2015/16	3,858

[38] Population mid-year estimate (MYE) Office for National Statistics (ONS)
[39] 2022 based population statistics ONS
[40] 2023 based housing led population forecasts, Oxfordshire County Council
Oxfordshire Data Hub – Population – Future Population
[41] District Authority Monitoring Reports (Combined by the M&W Policy Team)

2016/17	4,370
2017/18	4,818
2018/19	5,287
2019/20	6,114
2020/21	4,746
2021/22	4,956
2022/23	5,492
2023/24	4,001

Planned housebuilding[42]

Year	Planned housebuilding
2024/25	3,213
2025/26	4,120
2026/27	3,975
2027/28	4,677
2028/29	4,841
2029/30	4,637
2030/31	4,883
2031/32	4,912
2032/33	4,982

[42] District local plans, District Planning Officers, Oxfordshire County Council Data Team

Divisions Affected – Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds; Cholsey & The Hagbournes; Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury; Shrivenham; Wallingford; Wantage West

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

13 November 2025

NORTH WESSEX DOWNS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-2030: ADOPTION

Report by Director of Environment & Highways

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:

a) Adopt the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 at Annex 1.

Executive Summary

1. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Council of Partners has finalised and approved the statutory Management Plan for the period 2025-2030. The Council of Partners has requested that local authority partners adopt the plan, which will be formally launched at the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) Annual Forum (12th November 2025).

2. The Management Plan sets out objectives and policies that direct the activities of the NWDNL team, and guides the activities of partners, organisations and individuals. The Management Plan covers various themes comprising landscape, farming & land management, biodiversity & nature recovery, historic environment, natural resources & climate change, planning & development, communities, access recreation & tourism, summary of activities and protected landscape targets. The new plan gives a greater emphasis to climate change, climate adaptation and nature recovery compared to the existing Management Plan. These additions are welcomed and are complimentary to the publication and adoption of Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the council's Biodiversity Action Framework and Climate Action Framework.

Background

3. The National Landscape designation protects some of Britain's finest landscapes of distinctive character and natural beauty. Oxfordshire has three National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty): the Cotswolds, the Chilterns, and the North Wessex Downs (NWD). Together these cover around 26% of the county.

4. National Landscapes are governed by one of two mechanisms:

   (a) Conservation Boards – a managing body for the large administratively complex Cotswolds and Chilterns National Landscapes.

   (b) Partnerships of local authorities, community groups and associations, governed by a Council of Partners (CoP). The NWD National Landscape is such a partnership.

5. The council's interests are represented on the CoP by an elected member, supported by the council's Landscape and Green Infrastructure Technical Lead officer. The current representative on the NWD Council of Partners is the Member for Cholsey & The Hagbournes Division.

6. Section 85 of the CRoW 2000 Act (as amended by the *Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023*) requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affect National Landscapes in England, to "*seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*."

7. All public bodies including Oxfordshire County Council have a statutory duty under that Act *'to further'* to the purposes of the National Landscapes when undertaking their work.

8. The preparation of a Management Plan for National Landscapes is a statutory requirement under s.89 of the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW)*. It is intended to guide the activities of all who live and work in the National Landscape to help conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty. The plan for the North Wessex Downs is prepared on behalf of this council and the other constituent local authorities by the North Wessex Downs Council of Partners.

9. The Management Plan is a review of the existing Management Plan 2019 – 2024, and it was developed in consultation with partners including the council. The council responded to the public consultation on the draft management plan

in April 2025. The final Draft (July 2025) has been amended to take on board comments submitted by the partners. It should be noted that the draft Management Plan is substantively complete and the only changes that will be made in the final publication version will be non-substantive content, e.g. design graphics, acknowledgements and glossary.

10. The Plan helps the council demonstrate compliance with our statutory duties *to further* the purposes of the National Landscapes under s.85 of the *CRoW 2000 Act* (as amended). The plan aligns with the council's Strategic Plan 2025-2028 priorities for a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire.

The NWD Management Plan 2025 - 2030

11. The NWD Management Plan sets out a vision and strategic priorities for the North Wessex Downs and is split into eight key themes designed to better focus the delivery of objectives. The themes are Landscape, Farming & Land Management, Biodiversity & Nature Recovery, Historic Environment, Natural Resources & Climate Change, Planning and Development, Communities and Access Recreation and Tourism. Each chapter covering the themes consists of a list of key issues, priorities for the plan period and policies to guide and inform the delivery of the plan.

12. The plan policies are designed to be delivered by a wide range of stakeholders and partners (including local authorities) in the National Landscape. The core National Landscape unit co-ordinates the monitoring and delivery of the plan policies and are directly responsible for the delivery of certain work areas.

13. National Landscape Management plans have to be produced every five years, and the new Management Plan provides an update to the previous plan. Changes include amongst other things an expanded chapter on Natural Resources and Climate Change, more detail on the strengthened s.85 duty *to further* on public bodies and a chapter on Protected Landscape Targets, which will assist the council in meeting its objectives in furthering nature recovery and climate resilience in Oxfordshire.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

14. The adoption of the Management Plan contributes to the council's Strategic Plan 2025-2028 priorities for a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire.

15. Chapter 7 of the NWD Management Plan sets out a series of policies that will be delivered by members of the partnership that are aimed at delivering action on climate change within the NWDNL.

16. Chapters 5 and 10 of the NWD Management Plan set out objectives, policies and actions that are aimed to deliver on nature recovery and to improve access to the NWDNL for people of all backgrounds and abilities.

17. The plan is also complimentary to Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the council's Biodiversity Action Framework and Climate Action Framework.

Financial Implications

18. Adoption of the Management Plan does not commit Oxfordshire County Council to additional financial expenditure. However, as a member of the Council of Partners, the council has signed up to the Partnership Agreement (Revised 2024) and makes an annual contribution to the NWDNL.

19. Oxfordshire County Council's contribution to the NWD National Landscape in 2025/26 is £8,862. This annual contribution is allowed for and met from existing budgets. The contributions from the nine local authority partners enable the NWD to draw-down substantive match-funding and in-kind support towards the implementation of the management plan. Funding for the NWD National Landscape is 75% from DEFRA and 25% from local authorities.

Comments checked by:
Filipp Skiffins, Assistant Finance Business Partner,
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Legal Implications

20. The preparation of a Management Plan for National Landscapes is a statutory requirement under s.89 of the CRoW 2000 Act. The preparation of the plan was delegated to the Council of Partners in accordance with the Partnership Agreement, but each constituent council is required to formally adopt the plan.

21. The adoption of the 2025-2030 Management plan satisfies the statutory duty of the council to produce a management plan to govern the management of this area of National Landscape.

Jennifer Crouch, Principal Solicitor (Environment)
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Staff Implications

22. There are no additional implications for staff resources through adoption of this Plan. Resources to deliver on commitments can be met from existing members of staff (Member and officer attendance at partnership meetings, officer contact).

Equality & Inclusion Implications

23. The management plan is considered to have a positive impact on equalities overall (see Annex 2). The document contains measures to improve the level of engagement from under-represented groups or those for whom barriers may exist to accessing and benefitting from the National Landscape.

24. Adopting the North Wessex Downs Management Plan could have positive implications on Equalities as policies in Chapter 10 specifically mention the need for greater accessibility to the NWDNL for users of all backgrounds and abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well-being.

Sustainability Implications

25. A Climate Impact Assessment, at Annex 3, has been carried out and indicates a positive climate and ecological impact of the Plan.

26. The Management Plan sets out a strategic vision and a set of policies that will act as a framework to further the purposes of the designation of the National Landscape over the next five years. Chapter 7 includes objectives and policies that are specifically aimed at delivering action on climate change within the NWDNL, but climate change adaptation and mitigation is also a common thread running throughout the majority of the Plan.

27. The Plan is considered to align well with the council's commitment for climate action and nature recovery.

Risk Management

28. Risks associated with adopting the plan are very low considering the changes that have been made to the current Management Plan. The main risk to the council is of reputational damage, caused by not adopting or unduly delaying adoption of this plan.

29. Furthermore, the opportunities presented by adopting the new plan, which incorporates desirable additions around nature recovery and climate action, which directly contribute to other council priorities.

Consultations

30. The NWDNL Team carried out an extensive consultation with partners including the council, the public, external organisations and interest groups when drafting the plan. Within the council, comments from various teams were collated and submitted to NWDNL for consideration and inclusion in the Management Plan. Council responses have informed the final version of the NWD Management Plan.

Paul Fermer
Director of Environment and Highways

Annex:	Annex 1: North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030 (pre-publication version). Annex 2: Equalities Impact Assessment. Annex 3: Climate Impact Assessment.
Background papers:	North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2019-2024

Link:https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/NWDAONB_Management_Plan_2019-24_low_res_32Mb.pdf

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November 2025

North Wessex Downs
NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Management Plan 2025 – 2030

Cover image to be updated

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

Produced on behalf of the Council of Partners

Our partners

Basingstoke and Deane

Hampshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council

South Oxfordshire District Council
Listening Learning Leading

Swindon Borough Council

Test Valley Borough Council

Vale of White Horse District Council

West Berkshire Council

Wiltshire Council

Contents

Foreword

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Protected Landscapes are our most iconic and inspiring places. They were created from 1949, with post-war Britain recognising everyone has a right to access the countryside – from Northum-berland's dark skies to the South Downs' Seven Sisters. 75 years on, the needs are greater than ever, with nature underpinning our health, economy and climate. That's why this government will empower Protected Landscapes to become greener, wilder and more accessible.

Covering 25% of England, but half of our priority habitats, Protected Landscapes are essential to nature's recovery. This government understands that we will not achieve our Environment Act tar-gets or commitment to protect 30% of nature by 2030 without Protected Landscapes.

Recovering this natural capital is essential to ensure sustainable economic growth. Protected Landscapes are fundamental to strengthening the nation's economic health by looking after the natural resources we depend on. Through nature's recovery, Protected Landscapes protect com-munities from flooding, fight climate change, enable sustainable food production and create green jobs. They also have a vital role in connecting diverse communities with nature - underpinning the nation's mental and physical health and reducing the strain on our NHS.

This incredible potential is beginning to be set out in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Out-comes Framework. However, it will only become reality through the work of Protected Land-scapes teams in collaboration with local communities, land managers, public bodies and other partners.

Protected Landscape Management Plans provide the focal point for all partners to agree a local ambition and a pathway to deliver it, shaping the future of our most special places, and therefore the country. It is vital that all partners work together to develop and implement Management Plans. To support this collaboration, we have issued guidance on the Protected Landscapes duty which requires relevant authorities to seek to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes.

In recognising their importance to the nation, this government has committed to reinvigorating Protected Landscapes with new legislation, resources and tools. I look forward to developing this with you and other partners because it is only together that we can protect and enhance these re-markable places for generations to come.

Yours sincerely

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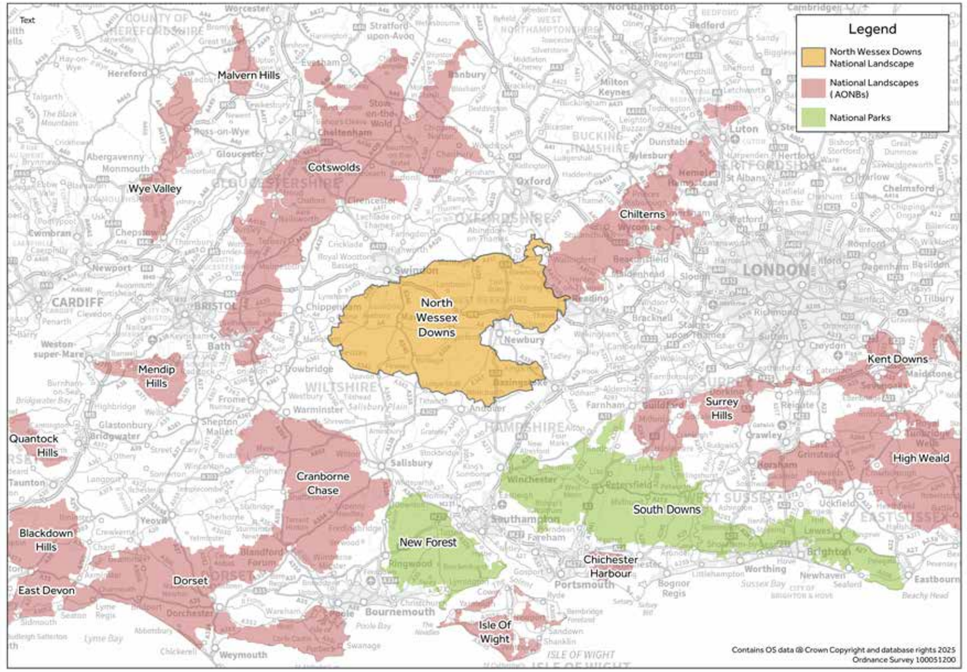

Figure 1. Regional context of the North Wessex Downs AONB with other protected landscapes.
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Introduction

By Sarah Nichols, outgoing Chair of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Council of Partners.

It has been an immense privilege to serve as Chair of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership during the past four years. As we look ahead to the 2025–2030 Management Plan, I reflect with pride on the progress made under the 2019–2024 Plan (extended to 2025), during which we strengthened our commitment to conserving and enhancing this extraordinary landscape for future generations.

One of the most exciting developments of my tenure has been our work to seek International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Green Listing accreditation—an internationally recognised standard for well-managed protected areas. This ambitious undertaking has required rigorous evaluation of our conservation efforts, governance, and community engagement, ensuring that the North Wessex Downs meets the highest global benchmarks. The process has fostered stronger partnerships and deeper collaboration, reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and biodiversity.

Over the past four years, we have faced both challenges and opportunities. There is widespread recognition that climate change and biodiversity loss require decisive action across all sectors, and new initiatives in regenerative agriculture, nature recovery, and heritage conservation have enhanced the resilience of our landscapes. We have also strengthened our engagement with communities, landowners, and policymakers, ensuring a shared vision for the future.

As I step down, I do so with confidence in the dedication of the Partnership, the staff team and our many stakeholders. The 2025–2030 Management Plan builds upon our achievements and sets an ambitious course for the future. I look forward to seeing the North Wessex Downs thrive in the years ahead.

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Sarah Nichols
Outgoing Chair, North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership

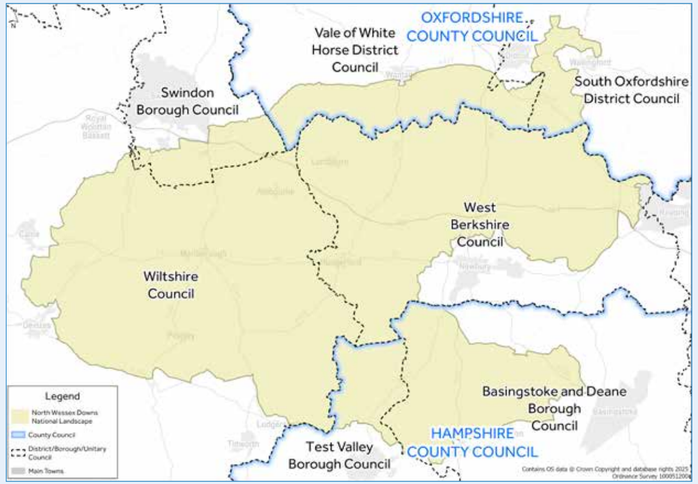

Figure 2. The partners of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2019. Ordnance Survey 100051200.

By Gill Haggarty, incoming Chair of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Council of Partners

The only constant is Change - we must fully embrace it and the challenges and opportunities it presents, in order to enhance and protect our outstandingly beautiful landscape

I step into the chairmanship of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) Council of Partners at an exciting and challenging time as the accelerating pace of change will materially influence NWDNL and all other National Landscapes.

This, the fifth Management Plan to be published since the formation of the NWDNL Partnership, continues to build upon the successes and achievements of the previous Plans. It sets out strategic priorities for the next five years which must be carried out with ever-increasing impetus in order to ensure that we conserve and enhance this landscape as a place of natural beauty in which both wildlife and communities thrive. To do this we must engage with a wide audience and set ambitious targets.

A summary of the Partnership's activities and achievements during the last Plan period may be found elsewhere in this document.

Nationally, the Government enacted many important changes during the last Plan period which included strengthening of targets, adoption of 30by30* and a review of the first Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). A significant output of the updated EIP was that the Government recognised the national importance of protected landscapes, as highlighted in the 2019 Glover Review, and in November 2023 all designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales became rebranded as National Landscapes. The duty of relevant authorities under Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 was greatly strengthened: it now says they "must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty" of the National Landscape.

During the upcoming Plan period even more change is anticipated to environmental schemes and targets, funding, policies and governance; for example, the current review of local government organisation may reduce the current nine local authorities. This underlines the importance of interactions between the NWDNL and its local authorities to support them to deliver their strengthened s.85 Duty.

The biggest current threat to our habitats and species is climate change. The NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan (available on the NWDNL website) identifies habitat vulnerability to climate change and measures that will help our key habitats to be more resilient in the face of increasing global temperatures and changing weather patterns. The NWDNL Climate Adaptation Plan will be published during the Plan period.

The attainment of the IUCN Green Listing accreditation during this Plan period will be an important milestone, as the NWDNL will create the template for other National Landscapes to achieve Green Listing and this framework will provide the benchmarks by which we will measure our progress against both future targets and historic baselines, as set out in the Partnership's Business Plan.

This Management Plan is the culmination of the inputs from many teams and sources and has been widely consulted upon. It is owned by everyone and can only be achieved through close collaboration and partnership with the local authorities, businesses, farmers, communities and individuals who live, work and visit the NWDNL - together we can make a difference.

I look forward to working with all the partners of the NWDNL and I would like to thank Sarah Nichols for her chairmanship during the last Plan period as well as all the people that have contributed to the delivery of past achievements and to the development of this new Plan.

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Gill Haggarty
Chair of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership

**The UK has committed to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 (30by30), to support the global 30by30 target agreed at the UN Biodiversity Summit (COP15) in 2022. Our commitment to this international target is enshrined within the 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan.*

A Vision for the North Wessex Downs

The vision for the North Wessex Downs National landscape is a place of vast dramatic, undeveloped and distinct chalk downlands with nationally significant areas of semi-natural chalk grassland, contrasting with well-wooded plateaux, arable farmland, heathland, chalk streams and intimate and secluded valleys, all rich in wildlife and cultural heritage; a high quality landscape of national and international significance which persists despite increasingly urbanised surroundings; a place where people live, work and relax; where visitors are welcomed and contribute to a vibrant rural economy; and access to which supports the health and wellbeing of local residents and visitors alike.

The long-term goal is that the North Wessex Downs National Landscape will be a place:

1 where land use, management and development are driven by an overarching principle of long-term stewardship of the protected landscape; where people have the imagination, skills and energy and resources to accommodate and adapt to change in ways that respect the unique qualities of the North Wessex Downs and deliver wider environmental, economic and social benefits

2 where the highest environmental quality is seen as a key economic driver; where all economic activity is in harmony with maintenance of the landscape and its valued qualities; where new buildings and other forms of development display high design quality worthy of one of England's designated finest landscapes

3 with thriving land-based and other rural enterprises that prioritise conserving and enhancing the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs. This will ensure a countryside rich in wildlife, heritage, and recreational opportunities, while producing high-quality products through sustainable farming practices that benefit both the local economy and the surrounding countryside

4 with high quality habitats reflecting the distinctive character of the North Wessex Downs and stable and recovering populations of key species; landscapes that are protected, expanded, linked by nature recovery networks, under beneficial management and increasingly resilient to the pressures of climate change

5 with a rich and conserved cultural landscape where the pervasive historic landscape character is understood, appreciated and informs future change; where iconic monuments, both designated and undesignated heritage areas, archaeological sites, buried archaeology and historic landscapes and historic settlements and their settings remain as indelible and visible footprints in an evolving scene, managed to the very highest standards

6 where the integrated management of land conserves and improves high quality healthy soils and water resources whilst retaining the distinctive seasonal winterbourne flows and the nationally and internationally significant chalk streams of the National Landscape

7 where beautiful views delight and inspire all those who experience the landscape, and its visual, scenic and aesthetic qualities are recognised, valued and maintained

8 where a sense of remoteness and tranquillity predominates and where vast night skies can thrill the eye, unaffected by light pollution; where these valued qualities are recognised in development decisions within the setting of the National Landscape, so that the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs is protected

9 where the landscape's potential to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change is realised in ways that conserve and enhance its natural beauty: reducing emissions, storing more carbon and building resilience

10 where development responds to genuine local need and where new buildings show continuity with the past, respecting and complimenting the beauty of the landscape and the character of local vernacular building materials and styles, while embodying high quality contemporary design and sustainable construction

11 where an integrated approach to transport and active travel meets local needs and minimises negative effects on the environment; where the dominance of roads and highway clutter are reduced

12 with vibrant rural communities, where villages and market towns meet the needs of local communities and visitors; where there is great local pride in the landscape and positive local contribution to the stewardship of its valued qualities

13 that is a nationally recognised centre for responsible tourism and enjoyment of the countryside, developed and promoted in ways that are in harmony with the high environmental quality and local community, helping to underpin the broader rural economy

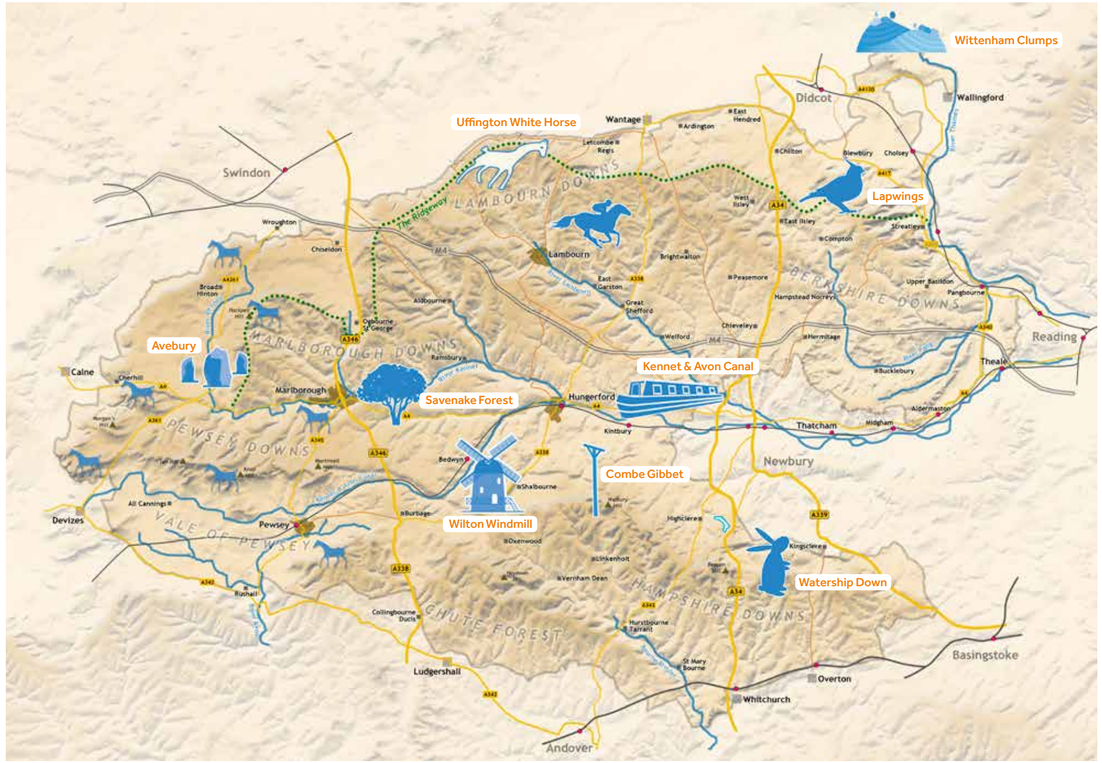
14 that is recognised as a vital community resource, welcoming to local residents and visitors of all backgrounds and abilities, with benefits for physical and mental wellbeing arising from access to nature and the countryside, to a tranquil environment, and to the opportunities it presents for social interaction and volunteering

15 where there is wide public recognition of the protected status and valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs among communities in and around the National Landscape; where all responsible bodies understand and respect the protected status of the area and their active duties towards the National Landscape in their plans and proposals.

CHAPTER 1

Context & Framework

Icons of The North Wessex Downs National Landscape



Setting the Scene

1.1 The first three chapters of the 2025-30 National Landscape Management Plan present a vision and long-term ambitions for the North Wessex Downs; set out overarching principles for the Plan's implementation; summarise the priorities for this Plan period; address implementation and monitoring; suggest how all stakeholders can contribute to achieving the Plan priorities; and describe the legal and policy framework for the Plan.

1.2 This is followed by thematic chapters which describe and explain how the valued qualities for which the landscape is designated, set out in detail in the North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment, relate to different themes: Landscape, Farming and Land Management, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, Natural Resources, Historic Environment, Planning and Development, Communities, and Access, Recreation and Tourism. In each thematic chapter is a list of Key Issues relating to the theme; Priorities for the Plan period; and Policies to guide and inform delivery of the Plan and the purpose of designation.

1.3 The Management Plan is owned by the local authorities whose areas include part of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape; it is their Plan. However, its implementation is the responsibility of everyone whose policies, decisions and actions affect the natural beauty of the National Landscape and its setting.

1.4 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership has identified Partnership Goals and Strategic Objectives that support delivery of the Management Plan. These guide the work of the National Landscape staff unit on the Partnership's behalf. The governing Council of Partners monitors progress against the agreed Business Plan, which is regularly reviewed and rolled forward.

About the North Wessex Downs

1.5 From their western tip near Devizes in Wiltshire, the North Wessex Downs reach across central southern England in a broad eastward arc south of Swindon, through Oxfordshire to the western end of Berkshire. They abut the Chilterns National Landscape along the River Thames in the Goring Gap north-west of Reading, dipping south and then sweeping west along the Kennet valley, then south to encircle Newbury, encompassing the northern reaches of the rolling chalk hills of the Hampshire Downs. They then stretch back across the northern fringes of the high chalk upland of Salisbury Plain and the low-lying Vale of Pewsey.

1.6 The North Wessex Downs is the third largest National Landscape in the country. This protected landscape extends to 668 square miles / 1,730 square km, an area equivalent to a medium-sized English county. Its resident population is just over 100,000 people[1] (an average density across the National Landscape of 58.3 residents/square km); the two largest settlements inside the National Landscape boundary, Hungerford and Marlborough, have a total population of 14,702[2].In contrast, in the immediate setting of the North Wessex Downs lie the significant urban centres of Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke, Andover, Swindon and Didcot, with a combined population of 720,483[3]. 1.23 million residents live within 10 km of the National Landscape boundary[4].

1.7 Two major highways, the M4 and A34, pass through the area, aligned east-west and north-south respectively. The A4 runs straight through the National Landscape, as does the Berks and Hants railway line from London towards the south west, following, successively, the Kennet, Dun and Avon river valleys. The Great Western Railway route towards Bristol and South Wales cuts through the north-eastern extremity of the area along the Thames valley, then follows the northern boundary, outside the National Landscape but within its setting and clearly visible from the northern scarp. The South Western main line runs along the southern reaches of the National Landscape between Basingstoke and Andover.

1.8 The North Wessex Downs was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) 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.

1.9 In 2023 all AONBs in England and Wales became known as National Landscapes, reflecting their national importance and a consistency of approach across all the National Landscapes. The North Wessex Downs remains formally designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan is legally an AONB Management Plan.

1. Office for National Statistics: Population Estimates for National Landscapes in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2022. Available at www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/lationestimates//2094populationestimatesfornationallandscapesinenglandandwalesbysingleyearofageandsexmid2021andmid2022.

1.10 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape contains all or part of 173 parishes, straddling the boundaries of two county councils, three unitary authorities and four district/borough councils. It sits on a regional divide, with roughly half of the area in [south east and half in south west England,] occupying a central position along the line of chalk-dominated landscapes from the Dorset coast to the northern edge of the Chiltern Hills.

1.11 The North Wessex Downs is one of a family of nationally protected landscapes across England comprising 34 National Landscapes and ten National Parks. Together, these finest, most outstanding English landscapes cover around 25% of the country. The importance of these designated landscapes is also recognised at international level, and the North Wessex Downs is recognised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as one of the UK's Category V Protected Landscapes. The IUCN defines a Category V Protected Landscape as:

> ***A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.*** [i]

1.12 The IUCN Green List is the internationally recognised standard for well-managed protected areas. In 2022 the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership embarked on an intensive process of internal review covering governance, design and planning, effective management and conservation outcomes with the aim of achieving Green List accreditation.[ii] In early 2025, the IUCN accepted the North Wessex Downs as an applicant for Green List status, piloting the standard in the UK. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership is committed to completing this process during this Management Plan period.

2. Hungerford:5,869, Marlborough 8,833, from: https://citypopulation.de/en/uk/southwestengland/wiltshire/E63005127__marlborough/

https://www.hungerford-tc.gov.uk/stats

3. Reading: 174,200 - https://www.reading.gov.uk/about-reading/borough-profile/. Newbury: 42,260 - https://citypopulation.de/en/uk/southeastengland/west_berkshire/E63005168__newbury/. Basingstoke: 185,200 - https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/census#:~:text=The%202021%20Census%20population%20of,since%202011%2C%20approximately%2010.4%25. Andover: 50,815 - https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/southeastengland/admin/test_valley/E04012839__andover/. Swindon: 233,410 - https://citypopulation.de/en/uk/southwestengland/admin/E06000030__swindon/

4. ONS op. cit.

Why is this Management Plan important?

1.13 This National Landscape Management Plan presents an agreed agenda for the North Wessex Downs for the next five-year period, 2025-2030. It sets out priorities and policies for all those whose activities affect the National Landscape which support the long-term goals set out in the Vision Statement. Working together, the partners can realise these targets to the benefit of the landscapes and communities of this nationally designated, and internationally recognised, protected landscape.

1.14 Responsible local authorities are required to prepare an AONB (National Landscape) Management Plan and review the Plan no less than every five years. The North Wesse Downs Council of Partners has prepared this plan on behalf of the relevant local authorities of the National Landscape.

1.15 The Partnership comprises representatives of the constituent local authorities; the local communities; the farming and rural business community; nature conservation, heritage and recreation interests; Natural England; and the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust.

1.16 As detailed below, *"in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty"* all relevant authorities *"must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty [National Landscape]"* and not merely have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area. "Relevant authorities" include all statutory bodies and all tiers of government, including parish councils and holders of public office.

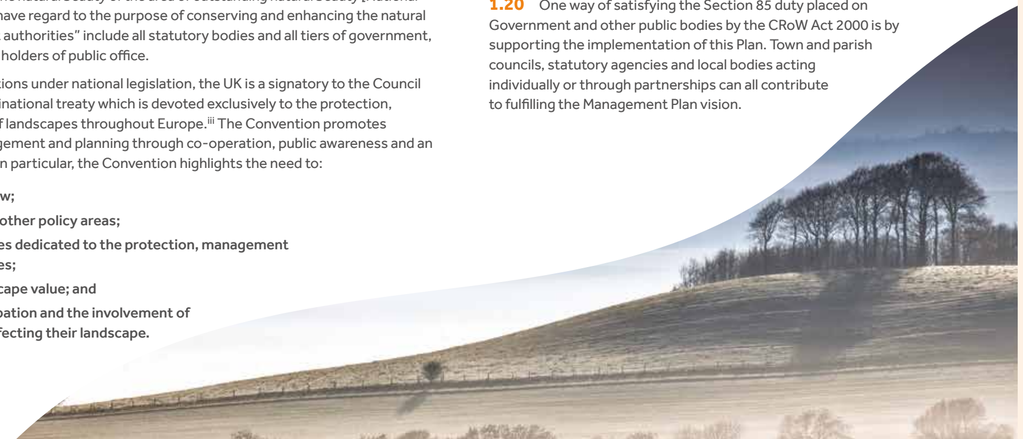
1.17 In addition to obligations under national legislation, the UK is a signatory to the Council of Europe Landscape, a multinational treaty which is devoted exclusively to the protection, management and planning of landscapes throughout Europe.[iii] The Convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning through co-operation, public awareness and an effective policy framework. In particular, the Convention highlights the need to:

- **recognise landscape in law;**
- **integrate landscape into other policy areas;**
- **develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and creation of landscapes;**
- **raise awareness of landscape value; and**
- **encourage public participation and the involvement of the public in decisions affecting their landscape.**

1.18 The Convention encourages the integration of landscape into all relevant areas of policy, including cultural, economic and social policies, with a particular emphasis on the need for co-operation when administrative boundaries are crossed. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan is a significant contribution to the UK's implementation of the Convention.

1.19 Successful implementation of this Management Plan is beyond the resources of the Council of Partners and National Landscape staff unit alone. It requires the active collaboration and participation of all those involved in its scope. This is a Plan for the North Wessex Downs in its entirety; it is not for any single organisation within it. Implementation requires the support and involvement of the many organisations and individuals who play key roles in the future of the area, many of whom have been involved in preparation of the Plan.

1.20 One way of satisfying the Section 85 duty placed on Government and other public bodies by the CRoW Act 2000 is by supporting the implementation of this Plan. Town and parish councils, statutory agencies and local bodies acting individually or through partnerships can all contribute to fulfilling the Management Plan vision.



Context and Collaboration

1.21 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership does not work in isolation: the National Landscape is part of the national network of protected landscapes that includes National Parks, National Trails and other National Landscapes. The National Landscapes Association represents National Landscapes at national level, and leads or guides collaborative initiatives. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape actively participates in ambitious collaborative programmes and initiatives that look far beyond our boundaries. Some current examples are described below.

Mend the Gap

1.22 Network Rail planned and carried out the Great Western Route Modernisation project in the mid-2010s, electrifying the Great Western main line through the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes. Network Rail's failure to have regard for the purposes of protected landscape designation, as required by its duty under s. 85 of the CRoW Act 2000, caused a public outcry from communities nearby and has done major harm to the Thames valley landscape shared by the two protected landscapes between Reading and Didcot. After several years of discussion which did not result in any mitigation of the landscape impact, Network Rail agreed to fund the Mend the Gap programme, which has been run jointly by the two National Landscapes and the community-led Railway Action Group since 2020.

Mend the Gap consists of two principal elements: tree/hedge planting and management to mitigate the visual impact of the electrification, and a larger landscape enhancement programme. The latter prioritises chalk grassland, arable and wetland habitat enhancements; and improved knowledge, access and enjoyment of the landscape between Reading and Didcot. The Programme has transformed the two National Landscapes' approaches to the Thames valley from viewing it as two unconnected boundary zones to a coherent, connected single landscape providing the focus for active community engagement, nature recovery and landscape enhancement. The Mend Gap programme is expected to run until 2028.

Strategic context in relation to the London global city region

1.23 The South East and East Protected Landscapes group (SEEPL) brings together the National Landscapes and National Parks which surround London. These provide the basis for an interconnected network of valuable green spaces stretching from central London across south east and eastern England, and an opportunity to collaborate at an appropriate scale to care for and promote the enjoyment of, these diverse, treasured landscapes by the growing population of the London city region.

1.24 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership is a partner in SEEPL, sharing the seven key objectives in the group's 25-year vision for the protected landscapes of the London city region to:

- **conserve and enhance their intrinsic value;**
- **recognise and increase their ecosystem value;**
- **maintain natural buffers;**
- **improve access and connections;**
- **promote appropriate jobs and industry;**
- **support physical and mental health and wellbeing; and**
- **engage stakeholders, working together.**

Big Chalk

1.25 One of the ways wildlife adapts to climate change is to move northwards to a new 'climate space'. This means that we need to think about the National Landscape's future wildlife in addition to that currently present, particularly that currently found to the south of the North Wessex Downs. Big Chalk[iv] is a hugely ambitious partnership programme that aims to improve ecological connectivity across and between the calcareous landscapes of southern England from the south coast to the midlands.

1.26 Covering 19% of England, Big Chalk has the primary objective of building a robust nature recovery network over a vast area. This will be achieved by identifying opportunities to transform these landscapes by the application of the Lawton principles on a hitherto unimagined scale. Thriving chalk landscapes can deliver an array of public goods including sustainable employment and products, carbon sequestration, water supply (to tens of millions of people) and quality, flood management and soil stabilisation. Restored species-rich landscapes can also support public health and wellbeing, giving access to beautiful open spaces and connections to our past, for example through chalk carvings, and ancient monuments and byways.

1.27 Due to their history and the character of the underlying geology, these calcareous (chalk and limestone) landscapes in the south of England are the most species-rich habitats in the UK. When combined across the whole landscape, these habitats make it the best place to allow wildlife to recover and adapt to climate change. Given the rarity of chalk geology on a world scale, this is a programme of global importance.

Legal and Policy Framework for the Management Plan

National Landscape purpose and the meaning of 'Natural Beauty'

1.28 The primary purpose of AONB (National Landscape) designation is set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 as "conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area". The Act elaborates on this primary purpose, stating that any reference "to the conservation of natural beauty of an area includes a reference to the conservation of its flora, fauna and geological and physiographic features."[vi]

1.29 In 2023, the CROW Act 2000 was amended by s.245 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act. The s.85 duty on public bodies, which had required that "a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty" was much strengthened. The s.85 duty now requires that "a relevant authority ... must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty [National Landscape]".

1.30 The legislative amendments also give the Secretary of State the power to:

- **make provision through regulations about how a relevant authority is to comply with the strengthened duty, including things that the authority may, must or must not do to comply with it; and**
- **make regulations requiring protected landscape Management Plans to contribute to the meeting of any target set under Chapter 1 of Part 1 of the Environment Act 2021, including setting out how they will do so, and setting out how "any plan under section 89 relating to an area of outstanding natural beauty in England" must further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of that area.**

[i] (4 IUCN –officially the 'International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources'– is a global intergovernmental organisation. The IUCN maintains a database of the world's protected areas, categorised using definitions based upon management objectives.

[ii] https://iucngreenlist.org/standard/components-criteria/

[iii] (9 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is a treaty of the Council of Europe. The UK's participation in the ELC is unaffected by its withdrawal from the European Union.

[iv] https://www.big-chalk.org/

[v] (5 Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, Section 82.

[vi] (6 CRoW Act 2000; Section 92.

[vii] (7 Countryside Commission (1991): Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a policy statement. CCP 356; p. 5.

[viii] (8 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006, Section 99.

1.31 These changes have implications for all aspects of local authorities' activity where they affect the protected landscape and its setting, requiring an active commitment to furthering the purpose of designation. Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework complements the Duty by stating that "great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, which have "the highest status of protection".

1.32 Natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value. The natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs is a function of the relationship between people and place over time. It encompasses everything that makes the area distinctive: the area's geology and landform, its climate, soils and rivers, its wildlife and ecology; the rich history of human settlement and land use over millennia, its archaeology and buildings, cultural associations; the people who have occupied the area in the past and those who live and work here now.

1.33 This relationship is encapsulated in a policy position set out by the Countryside Agency in 1991, stating that *"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. 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."*[vii] More recent legislation in defining 'Natural beauty in the countryside' establishes that *"land used for agriculture or woodlands, ... as a park ... or whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention ...* [may be] *treated as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty)."*[viii]

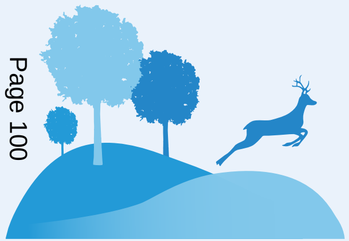
1.34 The North Wessex Downs is thus an ancient, evolved cultural landscape, managed and nurtured by people over time. Those who manage the land are central to the future of this landscape. The North Wessex Downs Partnership is committed to long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values in the protected landscape, contributing to a wider network of protected areas. It is inevitable and appropriate that this cultural landscape will continue to change and develop but this needs to be in ways that conserve and enhance its valued qualities.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape

totals

1,730km
(668 square miles)
4 COUNTIES
9 LOCAL AUTHORITIES
173 PARISHES

102,000 INHABITANTS
1.23 million within 10 km of the NATIONAL LANDSCAPE BOUNDARY



66 Sites of **SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST (SSSIs)** totalling 3,330 ha

2 NATIONAL NATURE RESERVES (NNRs) at Pewsey Downs and Fyfield Down

9 Special **AREAS OF CONSERVATION (SACs)** protecting chalk grassland, wetland and woodland habitats

The **MAIN RIVERS** flowing through the Downs are the **PANG**, the **LAMBOURN** and the **KENNET**

Chalk streams support a huge range of plants and animals like pea mussels, water voles and river water-dropwort

27,688 ha
OF WOODLAND
(just under 16% of land cover.)
About one-third is ancient woodland

Holds **9%** of the UK's remaining **chalk grassland**

THERE ARE 4 RIVER CATCHMENTS IN THE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

478 SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

15 REGISTERED PARKS AND GARDENS

1 REGISTERED BATTLEFIELD

4,069 LISTED BUILDINGS

Agriculture is the dominant land use in the National Landscape with **84%** of the **LAND CLASSIFIED AS FARMLAND**

15% of the area enjoys **PRISTINE NIGHT SKIES**

73% of the area is in the **TWO DARKEST NIGHT SKY CATEGORIES***

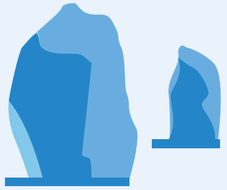
"Vast, dramatic, undeveloped and distinct chalk downlands, rich in wildlife and cultural heritage"

2,858 km (1,776 miles)
OF RIGHTS OF WAY

102 km (64 miles)
OF NATIONAL TRAILS

47 km (29 miles)
OF CANALS

UNESCO World Heritage Site
Stonehenge and Avebury is the **ONLY PREHISTORIC World Heritage Site** in England. Listed in 1986, it includes the world's largest prehistoric stone circle at Avebury



CHAPTER 2

Principles, Policies & Implementation

Overarching Principles

1.1 In using and implementing the Management Plan, relevant authorities and other stakeholders should apply the following Overarching Principles.

1. All change should be landscape-led, seeking to conserve and enhance natural beauty and landscape character.
2. Management and change should respect the cultural landscapes and the communities of the North Wessex Downs.
3. Decisions about future landscape change should always be informed by an understanding of the past, using tools such as historic environment characterisation.
4. No major development should take place either in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape or where it would harm the setting, except where it has been demonstrated through supporting evidence that exceptional circumstances exist which clearly override the highest level of protection.
5. Farming, forestry and other land management systems should be environmentally sustainable and nature-friendly.
6. Nature recovery should be pursued hand in hand with economically viable farming and land management.
7. Nature recovery should aim to restore ecological connectivity, contributing to the Nature Recovery Network to build and support resilient wildlife populations in the face of climate change.
8. Land management should support climate mitigation and adaptation, using nature-based solutions that deliver multiple benefits and respect landscape character.
9. The importance of engagement, outreach and landscape accessibility for all, including underrepresented communities, removing physical, cultural and perceptual barriers and creating equitable opportunities to connect with the landscape and be active partners in its stewardship, should be recognised.
10. The value of the landscape for access, education, health and well being should be realised in ways that resolve, remove and prevent conflicts between access and biodiversity and the historic environment.
11. Change should not further exceed environmental limits of natural resources, e.g. demand for water must not exceed levels that threaten the ecology of chalk streams.
12. Actions within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape should take place with an awareness of the wider context, including the landscape setting and the geography of Big Chalk.

Summary of Priorities by Theme

1.2 The Management Plan identifies a set of Priorities for the Plan period under each chapter theme. All the priorities are listed here for ease of reference, and to emphasise the interlinked nature of the thematic chapters.

Landscape Priority

1. Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, tranquillity and distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.

Farming & Land Management Priorities

1. Focus, facilitate and support landscape-scale conservation and land management initiatives that support the purposes of National Landscape designation.
2. Promote National Landscape priorities for targeting and investment in rural land management and appropriate development to take advantage of changes arising from the agricultural transition following Brexit.
3. Support the restoration of ancient woodland and creation and restoration of wood pasture, improved management of unmanaged and under-managed woodland across the North Wessex Downs, promoting multiple benefits, including landscape character, wildlife, local economy and skills, recreation and climate change mitigation.
4. Support traditional and emerging land-based enterprises and their markets that respect and promote the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.
5. Promote and support sustainable best practice initiatives for farming, woodland management and all country sports.
6. Encourage Government to provide agri environment support programmes (e.g. ELMS) and encourage and support farmers and land managers to take them up in ways that support National Landscape objectives.

Biodiversity & Nature Recovery Priorities

1. Collaborative action to implement the NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan, aligned with Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
2. Action to meet DEFRA targets and contribute towards 30x30, as set out in this Plan.
3. Develop an expanded and connected nature recovery network in the North Wessex Downs which helps improve resilience to the impacts of climate change and supports the movement of habitats and species throughout the landscape and beyond.
4. Foster a more equitable partnership between people and their natural environment, ensuring land use decisions respect nature, farming practices share space with nature and recreation is effectively managed to protect vulnerable habitats and species.
5. Enable landscape-scale initiatives that respond to the central position of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape within the geography of the Big Chalk.

Historic Environment Priorities

1. Increase the knowledge and enjoyment of the North Wessex Downs heritage and culture by local residents, visitors and the wider public, and inspire a greater understanding and appreciation of heritage to wider parts of society.
2. Seek new discoveries of unknown heritage assets and improve understanding of those already identified, to reveal the significance of the historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape.
3. Develop a better understanding of the current condition of heritage assets of the National Landscape, beyond the Heritage Risk Register.
4. Promote wider use and understanding of Historic Landscape Characterisation to inform and guide strategic planning, development decisions, land management practices and other forces for change.
5. Secure greater protection for archaeological and historic features, sites, and their landscape settings in the face of inappropriate development or management practices, or forms of access that can cause damage.

Natural Resources Priorities

1. Action to ensure that chalk rivers and streams in the National Landscape achieve and are maintained at good ecological status including, for example, appropriate riparian planting to mitigate elevated water temperatures predicted as a consequence of climate change.
2. Collaborative landscape-scale action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, for example through nature-based solutions (NbS).
3. Develop a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape
4. Ensure that all landscape interventions recognise and address the implications of climate change for the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs.
5. Secure full recognition by decision makers of the importance of the North Wessex Downs landscape for the value of its natural capital and the environmental goods and services it provides to the economy and society as a whole, including heritage, water quantity and quality, healthy soils, food production, wildlife, flood management, carbon storage, recreation, health and well-being.

The North Wessex Downs National Landscape is a visibly ancient landscape of great beauty, diversity and size

Planning & Development Priorities

1. Ensure that the formulation and implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs take full account of relevant authorities' statutory duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape designation, conserving and enhancing the character and the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.
2. Ensure that all development proposals, including allocations at Local Plan stage, are landscape-led and development is based on identified need to sustain the vitality of local communities in ways that conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs.

Communities Priorities

1. Support the development of the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust in pursuit of its charitable purposes to promote actions which underpin the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape.
2. Support and facilitate community-led initiatives that help deliver National Landscape purposes and Management Plan objectives.
3. Encourage an enhanced sense of respect and pride in the North Wessex Downs amongst local people and their increased participation in activities that raise the understanding and profile of the National Landscape.
4. Assist the development of connectivity, based on principles of planning and integrating multi-functional green infrastructure assets, from neighbouring urban areas and within the area, facilitating active and sustainable access to and around the National Landscape to make it easier for communities to experience and benefit from the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs.

Access, Recreation & Tourism Priorities

1. Facilitate opportunities for more people of all backgrounds and abilities to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect and promote the valued qualities of the National Landscape and its setting.
2. Greater awareness of the value and benefits of access and enjoyment of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for public health and well being.
3. Develop a strategic framework to guide the use of funding provided to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for access enhancements.
4. Co-ordinated promotion of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape by the tourism and recreation sector as a destination for responsible access that respects and promotes the valued qualities of the protected landscape and its setting.

Implementation

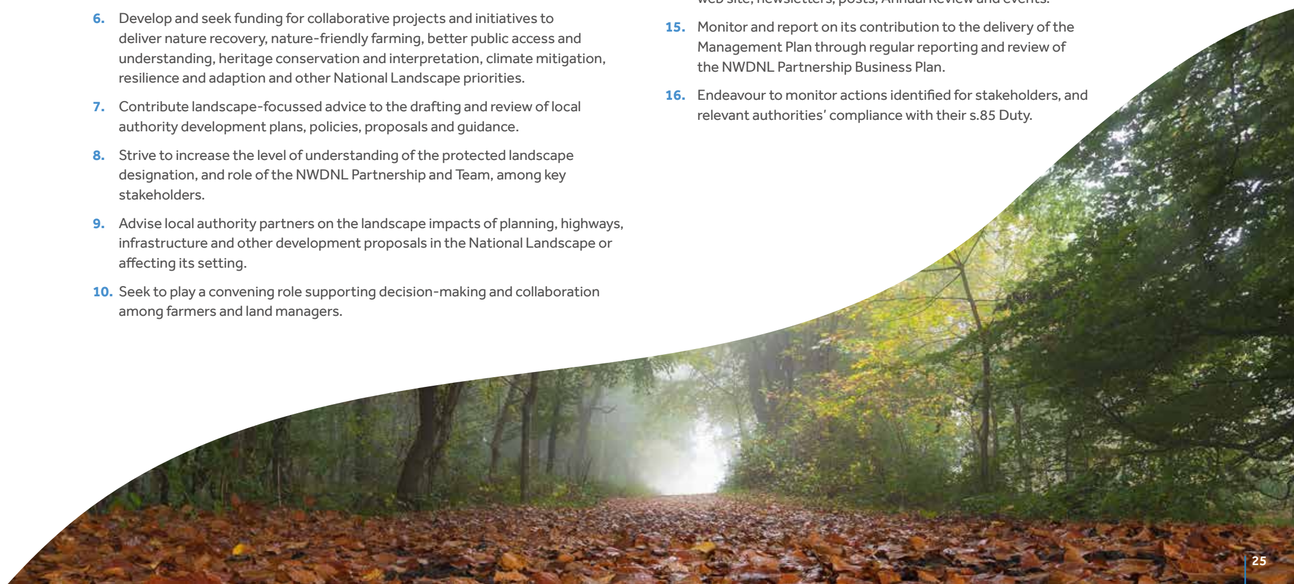
1.3 Everyone can play a role in looking after the National Landscape through the Management Plan. Some partners will be able to do more than others because of the nature of their role.

1.4 This Management Plan belongs to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership, and most of all to the local authority partners which have a statutory duty to produce it. It is not an end in itself: success requires implementation. Implementation is not the sole preserve of the NWDNL Partnership; rather, it is the responsibility of everyone whose activities affect the valued qualities of the landscape. Central among these are all the bodies which, under s.85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended have a statutory Duty to seek to further the purposes for which the landscape was designated: to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.

North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership Commitments

1.5 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership will:

1. Promote, encourage, facilitate, enable and support implementation of the Management Plan and other activities to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.
2. Support development of a shared understanding of landscape character, condition and opportunities across the National Landscape to facilitate informed decision-making.
3. Produce and disseminate supporting information, strategies, position statements and other resources to help everyone understand what their responsibilities to the National Landscape mean in practice and contribute to the purposes of designation.
4. Directly contribute to implementation of the Management Plan, guided by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership Goals, Strategic Objectives and Business Plan.
5. Conserve and enhance the National Landscape and its setting through delivery of initiatives such as Mend the Gap, Partnerships for Nature, Farming in Protected Landscapes, Access for All and other funded projects and programmes.
6. Develop and seek funding for collaborative projects and initiatives to deliver nature recovery, nature-friendly farming, better public access and understanding, heritage conservation and interpretation, climate mitigation, resilience and adaption and other National Landscape priorities.
7. Contribute landscape-focussed advice to the drafting and review of local authority development plans, policies, proposals and guidance.
8. Strive to increase the level of understanding of the protected landscape designation, and role of the NWDNL Partnership and Team, among key stakeholders.
9. Advise local authority partners on the landscape impacts of planning, highways, infrastructure and other development proposals in the National Landscape or affecting its setting.
10. Seek to play a convening role supporting decision-making and collaboration among farmers and land managers.
11. Contribute landscape-focussed advice to the drafting and review of Neighbourhood Plans and other community-led documents.
12. Advise landowners, applicants and agents on the landscape aspects of activities and proposals.
13. Play its part in regional and national collaboration among National Parks and National Landscapes, including through the Big Chalk, South East and East Protected Landscapes, and the National Landscapes Association.
14. Publicise National Landscape projects and activities through the NWDNL web site, newsletters, posts, Annual Review and events.
15. Monitor and report on its contribution to the delivery of the Management Plan through regular reporting and review of the NWDNL Partnership Business Plan.
16. Endeavour to monitor actions identified for stakeholders, and relevant authorities' compliance with their s.85 Duty.



Stakeholder Responsibilities

1.6 The following table lists some of the main stakeholders with responsibility for the protected landscape, indicates some of the opportunities for them to contribute to its conservation and enhancement, and gives examples of actions they should or could take to implement the Management Plan and, where applicable, fulfil their s.85 Duty. This is by no means an exhaustive list and we welcome suggestions for further partners or examples of how these groups can help to deliver the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025-30.

STAKEHOLDERS	PRINCIPAL OPPORTUNITIES	EXAMPLES OF IMPLEMENTATION
Chambers of commerce	• Funding streams to support management of the landscape as a tourism asset • Local producers and services • NWDNL profile in tourism marketing	• Collaboration to promote NWDNL tourism • Raise the NWDNL profile in Great West Way tourism marketing • Promote the NWDNL in member information and events • Support local suppliers and networks • Develop visitor payback scheme/s that support landscape conservation and enhancement
Consultants & agents	• Awareness, understanding and recognition of the character, valued qualities and sensitivities of the NWDNL	• Raise awareness of the protected landscape and Management Plan among clients. • Take a landscape-led approach to developing and refining proposals that shows sensitivity to the heritage, natural environment, local economy and communities of the NWDNL
Educational institutions	• Awareness, deeper understanding and pride in the landscape among pupils/students and staff • Opportunities for nature recovery in school grounds management	• Engage with the North Wessex Downs landscape through the curriculum, research, collaborative projects, field trips, farm visits, outdoor classrooms, Forest Schools etc. • Manage grounds for nature • Reduce, direct and control outdoor lighting: follow the NWDNL good lighting guide • Use opportunities and resources presented by the North Wessex Downs landscape to support educational aims
Energy sector, including OFGEM, National Grid & energy companies	• Climate mitigation • Energy conservation • Landscape conservation/enhancement	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Adopt a landscape-led approach to infrastructure planning, design and management • Offer customers energy conservation advice and a support • Support and/or deliver undergrounding of powerlines or actions to mitigate their landscape impact • Support appropriate renewable energy generation compatible with National Landscape purposes
Farmers & land managers	• Climate change mitigation and adaptation • Enabling responsible access • Green tourism • Improved natural resource management • Landscape and nature restoration • Local food production and marketing • Nature- and heritage-friendly farming techniques • Protecting and improving soil health • Raising public awareness and understanding • Wildlife habitat management	• Consider appropriate diversification projects • Consider farm-scale renewable energy generation compatible with National Landscape purposes • Consider scope for carbon sequestration and use of nature-based solutions • Enable opportunities for permissive access • Maintain public rights of way • Offer farm visits • Protect and improve healthy soils, e.g. through regenerative farming techniques such as changes to tillage and rotations • Implement catchment-sensitive farming measures • Put land into ELMS • Reduce, direct and control outdoor lighting: follow the NWDNL good lighting guide • Set up, join or contribute to farmer-led groups and other partnership conservation initiatives • Support the suggested priorities for land management set out in this Plan • Undertake baseline farm carbon audits)

Health sector, inc. commissioning bodies, GPs, support groups	• Access to the landscape for mental and physical health and well being benefits • Access improvements • Active/public transport improvements	• Consider the NWDNL as a resource for green social prescribing • Consider conservation volunteering among health and well being options • Develop landscape health and well being projects aimed at specific groups e.g. dementia sufferers; • Promote and enable walking for health initiatives
Highways, including National Highways and local highway authorities	• Better layout and design of new and re-development • Climate change mitigation • Enabling green and active travel/access • Green tourism • Landscape restoration • Light pollution reduction • Local transport planning • Restoration or improvement of ecological connectivity e.g. removal of barriers to species migration • Road decluttering • Road noise reduction to enhance tranquillity • Sensitive rural road management • Verge management for wildlife	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Adopt a landscape-led approach to management of the rural minor road network, prioritising the needs of walkers, cyclists and riders • Avoid new severance of habitats and ecological networks and consider opportunities to remove existing barriers to connectivity. • Conduct signs audits and remove unnecessary highway clutter • Foster community collaboration e.g. on highway clutter, speed enforcement, public transport • Make wildflower restoration and management an aim of road maintenance and safety programmes • Respect the Valued Qualities of the NWDNL in the design and management of all highways within the National Landscape and its setting • Take opportunities for traffic noise reduction wherever possible • Use sympathetic highway designs, measures and materials in the NWDNL, including within settlements

Individuals & families	• Action on climate change Conserving and enhancing settlement character • Conserving natural resources • Heritage and nature conservation • Preventing/reducing light pollution • Protecting tranquillity • Reducing water consumption • Supporting local producers	• Buy local products and services, support local shops and businesses • Choose to walk, cycle or use public transport instead of driving • Comment on local and neighbourhood plans and planning applications • Follow the Countryside Code when out in the landscape • Generate your own energy, e.g. through roof-top solar panels Keep dogs on leads during the nesting season (March-July) • Make space for nature at home, e.g. nesting/roosting spaces for birds and bats and wildlife-friendly gardening • Participate in local conservation or heritage projects • Put a bell on your cat's collar • Reduce, direct and control outdoor lighting: follow the NWDNL good lighting guide • Reduce your personal/household carbon footprint • Save water and use less energy • Take dangerous chemicals for safe disposal - don't pour them down the drain • Use locally sourced wood fuel instead of fossil fuels
Landscape-scale conservation initiatives	• Community engagement • Climate change mitigation and resilience • Ecosystem goods and services • Landscape and nature conservation and restoration	• Consider opportunities for climate action, e.g. nature-based solutions, in project design and delivery • Engage the public, private and voluntary sectors in collaborative protection and enhancement of the landscape • Help young people and communities appreciate the benefits of the natural environment • Identify and complement local nature recovery networks

Local authorities, including planning authorities	• Access and rights of way improvement • Affordable housing provision Economic diversification Historic • Environment conservation and interpretation • Landscape and nature conservation • Maintaining settlement character • Profile of the NWDNL • Protecting dark skies • Protecting tranquillity • Public awareness and understanding • Reducing water abstraction • Valuing and supporting ecosystem goods and services.	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Adopt a landscape-led approach to development plans, policy and decision-making, using the support of NWDNL officers • Avoid land use changes that will lead to increased abstraction from chalk aquifers • Fulfil duties specified by the NERC Act 2006 • Impose planning conditions in support of National Landscape purposes and ensure prompt enforcement against breaches • Produce supplementary planning guidance to support National Landscape purposes • Protect and maintain rights of way • Protect wildlife habitats and species and support nature recovery • Require green travel plans for relevant developments • Resist development proposals that would fail to further National Landscape purposes • Take full account of NWDNL planning advice • Use the NWDNL Landscape Character Assessment, Management Plan and additional guidance when considering options and making decisions
Local businesses	• Dark skies • Climate change • Green tourism • Local products • Natural resources • NWDNL profile	• Minimise waste • Practise energy and water conservation • Promote green/active travel in the NWDNL • Promote the NWDNL in tourism and product marketing • Reduce, direct and control outdoor lighting: follow the NWDNL good lighting guide • Source products and services locally

Government agencies including: – Environment Agency – Forestry Commission – Historic England, National Highways – Natural England	• Supporting the valued qualities of the NWDNL • Conserving the historic environment • Facilitating landscape restoration and nature recovery • Protecting and extending tranquillity • Protecting rivers and improving water quality • Providing and supporting ecosystem goods and services • Reducing the landscape impact of infrastructure	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Take a landscape-led approach, respecting the Valued Qualities of the NWDNL, to: land-use planning proposals; green and blue infrastructure; use of environmental land management schemes; provision of land management advice; natural capital assessments; partnership conservation projects, e.g. farmer-led groups; provision of woodland management advice, support and marketing; preparation of River Basin Management Plans; use and review of Conservation Area Appraisals; Catchment Management Plans and the work of Catchment Partnerships; development of Route Management Strategies; and use of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan, where they may affect NWDNL or its setting
Non-governmental organisations including: – countryside, wildlife, heritage, river recreation trusts & groups	• Conserving settlement character • Enabling affordable housing • Landscape, heritage and nature conservation and restoration • Managing tourism • Monitoring landscape condition and change • Preventing diffuse pollution • Promoting responsible access • Protecting and extending tranquillity • Protecting dark skies • Providing ecosystem goods and services • Raising awareness of the NWDNL • Reducing water abstraction	• Conserve and enhance the Valued Qualities of the NWDNL in estate management • Enable and encourage green/active travel to sites • Feature the NWDNL in recreation marketing and management • Highlight the NWDNL priorities and activities in member/supporter communications • Partner with the NWDNL in collaborative projects • Refer to the NWDNL in public information and interpretation • Support implementation of the Management Plan in organisations' own projects and activities • Take a landscape-led approach to planning and design in the NWDNL and its setting

North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust	• Community engagement in the landscape • Education about the NWDNL • Landscape, heritage and nature conservation projects • NWDNL profile and marketing • Promotion of the landscape as a source of health and well being Protecting tranquillity and dark skies • Public awareness, understanding, pride in and care for the landscape • Tourism promotion	• Champion the natural beauty and tranquillity of the NWDNL among communities and decision-makers • Enable community projects that support National Landscape purposes • Facilitate landscape projects and activities that further the purposes of designation • Raise awareness of the NWDNL through public communications, presentations, visits, events, publications sand signage. • Support neighbourhood planning with input relating to the NWDNL
Parish & town councils	• Community identity and pride; Community understanding and engagement in the landscape • Encouraging green tourism • Conserving the historic environment • Decluttering (e.g. road signs) • NWDNL profile/marketing • Protecting and extending tranquillity • Protecting dark skies • Protecting settlement character • Supporting or doing landscape and nature conservation	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Adopt a landscape-led approach to parish / town / neighbourhood planning • Champion the natural beauty and tranquillity of the NWDNL among communities and decision-makers • Ensure actions and decisions that affect buildings and settlement character are informed by an understanding of historic landscape character • Initiate or support community projects that foster pride in the NWDNL and support the purposes of designation • Promote public enjoyment of the Landscape through publications (e.g. walks leaflets, web resources) • Raise awareness of the NWDNL through public communications and events • Recognise and support the role of communities in climate change mitigation and adaptation • Reduce, direct and control outdoor lighting: follow the NWDNL good lighting guide • Support and promote community transport • Support nature recovery as part of grounds management • Support local producers and businesses through local sourcing if possible

Rights of way & countryside access forums & groups	• Improving access to and within the NWDNL • Green infrastructure networks • Making links to landscape, heritage and nature conservation • Promoting green tourism • Raising the profile and marketing the NWDNL	• Consider options such as the Walkers are Welcome initiative Contribute to collaborative marketing and tourism initiatives in the NWDNL • Encourage responsible access by residents and visitors • Ensure recognition of the NWDNL in Rights of Way Improvement Plans. • Identify access-related opportunities for heritage conservation and nature recovery, e.g. scheduled monument management or wildflower verges • Identify needs and opportunities for access improvements • Include reference to the NWDNL in communications (e.g. web sites) and distribute Discover the NWDNL leaflets
Statutory undertakers, including energy, highways, railway infrastructure, telecoms & water companies	• Facilitating landscape restoration and improving ecological connectivity • Reducing the landscape impact of infrastructure • Supporting the valued qualities of the NWDNL	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Adopt a landscape-led approach to network planning, construction and management
Tourism sector, including Local Visitor Economy Partnerships & other marketing bodies	• Landscape/heritage/nature/farm tourism • Local products and services • NWDNL profile/marketing • Opportunities for green/active travel	• Build the NWDNL into destination marketing strategies • Consider visitor payback schemes that support landscape conservation and enhancement • Develop and support local supplier networks • NWDNL tourism promotion • Promote the NWDNL in collaborative initiatives, e.g. Great West Way • Support National Trail partnerships

Transport operators including train & bus companies	• Green travel • Improved public transport access • NWDNL profile/marketing • Sustainable tourism • Tranquillity	• Build the NWDNL into business and marketing strategies • Develop or support collaborative initiatives with local businesses and communities • Improve and promote access from public transport routes into the NWDNL • Install NWDNL signage and information e.g. at stations and on buses and trains • Support collaboration by operators with National Trail partnerships, rights of way authorities and access groups
Water sector, including OFWAT & water companies	• Improving water quality • Promoting catchment-sensitive farming • Reducing water abstraction and consumption • Supporting habitat conservation and enhancement • Tackling diffuse water pollution	• Take action to conserve and enhance the NWDNL under the s.85 Duty (CRoW Act 2000, as amended), and monitor and report on it • Build NWDNL aims into estate management • Engage with the NWDNL and local partners to develop and support collaborative projects to improve natural resource management • Inform customers about NWDNL impacts in public information and advice • Reduce, direct and control outdoor lighting: follow the NWDNL good lighting guide • Seek to further National Landscape purposes in Water Resources Management Plans • Support demand management measures • Take a landscape-led approach to abstraction licensing

"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, forever reflecting the mood of the heavens"

ALFRED WILLIAMS (1877–1930)

CHAPTER 3

Landscape

"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, forever reflecting the mood of the heavens"

ALFRED WILLIAMS (1877–1930)

3.1 The North Wessex Downs is a visibly ancient landscape of great beauty, diversity and size. It embraces the high, open arable sweeps of the chalk downs and dramatic scarp slopes with their prehistoric monuments and beech knolls, the moulded dip slopes, sheltered chalk river valleys; intimate and secluded wooded areas and low-lying heaths with a rich mosaic of woodland, pasture, heath and commons. The North Wessex Downs form a surprisingly remote, expansive and tranquil landscape in the heart of southern England.

3.2 The depth of history can still be seen in these landscapes, including the World Heritage Site of prehistoric Avebury; the royal hunting forest of Savernake, the Uffington White Horse, and the Ridgeway – the oldest road in England. The built environment makes a strong contribution to the beauty of the landscape, with historic towns and villages, churches, spectacular barns, manor houses with their parks and gardens, and the industrial heritage of the Kennet and Avon Canal. The Saxon name of Wessex reveals the area's literary connections, revived by Thomas Hardy and used as the setting for many of his novels. Around a century later, Richard Adams provided a vivid evocation of this area in Watership Down.

Geology, Landform and Land Use

3.3 Geology, landform and the uses that humans have made of the land have together created the distinctive and beautiful landscapes of the area. The chalk forms an arc of high ground – the northern, western and southern parts of the National Landscape, cut through by the Vale of Pewsey to the west, and including, at Walbury Hill, the highest chalk hill in southern England. From this great rim, the land generally falls down the dipslope of the chalk, to the central basin of the east-flowing Rivers Kennet, Lambourn and Pang.

3.4 The greater part of the area is underlain by chalk, resulting in the dramatic scarps and beautiful gentle rolling topography so characteristic of the North Wessex Downs. The steep scarp slopes of the chalk and Upper Greensand, with their expansive viewpoints, and the gentle rolling open chalk plateau are very obviously influenced by the underlying geology. These chalk landscapes were traditionally in sheep grazing – the wool being the source of much of England's historic wealth. However, much of the chalk grassland has since been ploughed, and the resulting extensive, open arable land is now the most frequent land use and landscape of the chalk downs. Herb-rich chalk grassland remains in fragments on the steeper scarps.

3.5 Where the chalk has a thick capping of clay-with-flints, the topography is softer, with smaller hedged fields and much greater woodland cover – a very different, enclosed and intimate, landscape from the open sweep of the downs. Overlying the chalk are patches of more recent sediments, particularly in the lower part of the basin. These contrast with the chalk scenery by producing more acidic soils, with their associated heathland landscapes.

3.6 Some of the more impressive features of the landscape are the dry valleys or coombes, found across the chalk plateau and often forming 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 result from the movement downhill of frost-shattered chalk during times of partial thaw. Large amounts of material moving down

the slope of the valley can accumulate in the valley bottom, forming a deposit known as head. Sarsen stones are one of the most identifiable and well-known features of the North Wessex Downs, forming the great stone circle and avenues at Avebury and the fields of 'grey wethers' (because they look like sheep) at Fyfield Down. Sarsens are silica-cemented sand or pebble deposits, often moved by natural processes a considerable way from their source.

3.7 Whilst many of the chalk valleys are dry, some have characteristic 'bournes', generally dry, but flowing when the ground water is high. England has 85% of the world's chalk streams[1] and a large proportion of this resource is located within or near the North Wessex Downs. These have a rich and highly characteristic ecology,and frequently support rich biodiversity.

3.8 Settlement is also strongly related to the underlying physical setting. The high, dry chalklands have no water to support settlement, so have remained open, remote, and tranquil, with farmsteads and villages on the spring lines and in the more sheltered and fertile valleys. Traditional building materials include bricks from local clays, flints, Melbourn Rock, Chalk Rock (not the soft chalk), cob, sarsens, thatch, and timber from the forests.

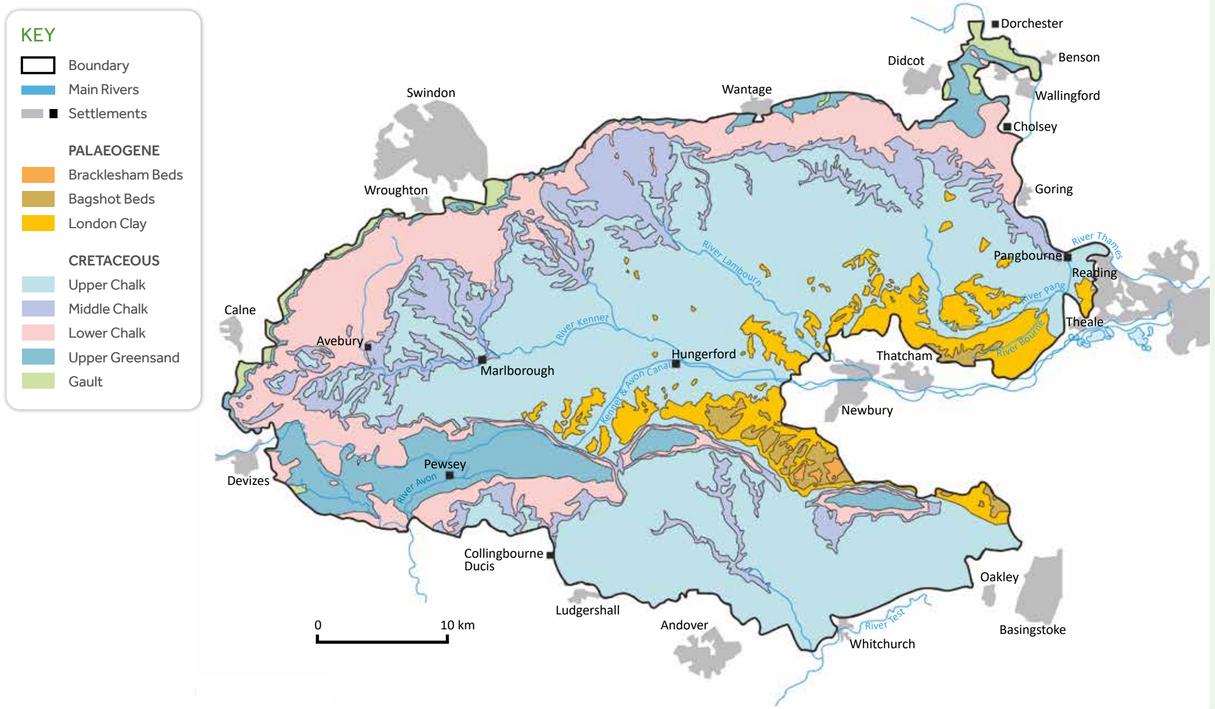
3.9 Designation as a National Landscape recognises the character, value and quality of the North Wessex Downs. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in December 2024, gives the highest status of protection to the overall diversity of landscape and scenic beauty of the area[2]. This means that these areas are given special consideration in planning decisions. The North Wessex Downs are of high scenic quality and with their wildlife and cultural heritage an integral part of their character and value. Although almost entirely a chalk landscape, the character differs markedly across the National Landscape, depending on local surface geology, soils, landform, land use, vegetation and settlement patterns. The greatest contrast, for example, is between the open arable chalk downs and the acid heathlands of the lower river valleys.

3.10 Natural England has set out a landscape character assessment (LCA) methodology to formally identify what it is that makes one landscape different from another. The landscape character assessment for the North Wessex Downs identifies the overall diversity of the landscape, recognising eight 'Landscape Types' across the National Landscape, each with its own distinct sense of place. These eight Landscape Types can be further subdivided into Landscape Character Areas: there are a total of 33 Character Areas across the National Landscape. Landscape character assessment draws out the valued qualities of the landscape, traces its evolution over the centuries and identifies the main issues that will need to be addressed to conserve its special character, its outstanding qualities and its natural beauty.

[1] CaBA: https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/chalk-stream-strategy/ Retrieved 12 June 2025

[2] Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: National Planning Policy Framework (2024), paragraph 189. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2. Retrieved 12 June 2025.

Figure 3. The geology of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.



North Wessex Downs National Landscape Types

Landscape Type: *Open Downland*

3.11 Open Downland extending from Roundway Down near Devizes to Lardon Chase overlooking the Thames at Streatley is dissected by dry valleys and long steep scarps, with limited tree cover and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity.

3.12 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, and is devoid of surface water. Tree cover is limited to distinctive Beech clumps crowning summits and occasional linear shelter belts.

3.13 This is a remote, tranquil landscape of panoramic views where the sky forms a key part of the landscape, including the effect of cloud shadows on the ground and the wind creating swells through the crops. The dominant land use is of vast sweeping arable fields with small remnant patches of chalk grassland on steeper slopes. Settlement is extremely sparse and limited to scattered farmsteads and racing stables.

Landscape Type: *Downland with Woodland*

3.14 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.

3.15 The scale is smaller, with field patterns a mixture of small irregular medieval enclosures and larger regular Parliamentary enclosures.

Landscape Type: *Wooded Plateau*

3.16 Centred on Savernake Forest and West Woods, the Wooded Plateau 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 recent coniferous plantations.

3.17 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.

3.18 Today, reflecting its origins as a royal hunting forest, the countryside remains undeveloped, with settlement limited to villages in the valley of the River Dun – Great and Little Bedwyn.

Landscape Type: *High Chalk Plain*

3.19 At the northernmost tip of Salisbury Plain, the open rolling landform of the High Chalk Plain creates a bleak, spacious landscape under arable production and devoid of settlement, with long views and a strong sense of remoteness and isolation.

3.20 A dramatic escarpment forms the northern boundary, as at Pewsey Hill and Fyfield Down, and provides panoramic views across the Vale of Pewsey to the north.

Landscape Type: *Downs Plain and Scarp*

3.21 The distinctive northern Downs Plain and Scarp plunges down from the chalk plain to the Vale of White Horse, creating a dramatic recognisable horizon when viewed from the north.

3.22 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. .

3.23 This area is characterised by some of the most emblematic features of the North Wessex Downs: The Ridgeway, the oldest road in England – running along the top of the scarp; the Uffington White Horse on the scarp face; and Avebury on the open Downs Plain, forming part of the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site.

3.20 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. 3.24 This is a landscape that feels as though it has hardly changed over the centuries, although it is increasingly affected by development at its foot, outside the National Landscape boundary.

Landscape Type: *Vales*

3.25 The Vales of Pewsey and sections of the Thames Valley floor adjoining the Chilterns National Landscape offer productive loamy and alluvial soils where springs issue from the chalk and compact settlements contrast with scattered farmsteads.

3.26 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 springs issue from the chalk and Greensand boundary where the water table comes to the surface, their streams meandering across the Vale floor.

3.27 Rich loamy and alluvial soils create a productive agricultural landscape with a mix of arable, orchards and pasture now replacing a once predominantly pastoral scene important for dairying – hence the saying 'chalk and cheese', identifying the very different landscapes of the downs and the vale. The concentration of settlements is a defining feature of the Vale, including compact nucleated villages and hamlets, with widespread scattered farmsteads. The Vales character type also occurs at the north-eastern edge of the North Wessex Downs, with the sections of the Thames valley floor that lie within this National Landscape. The eastern part of the Thames valley floor here lies within the adjoining Chilterns National Landscape.

Landscape Type : *River Valleys*

3.28 The River Valleys of the Kennet, Lambourn, Pang and Bourne 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.

3.29 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. 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 (in other character areas) are also cut by numerous dry valleys, which sometimes contain ephemeral 'winterbournes' only flowing when the chalk water table rises to the surface during the winter and early spring.

Landscape Type : *Lowland Mosaic*

3.30 The Lowland Mosaic is the lowest part of the 'bowl' curving around Newbury and the lower Kennet valley. This landscape, of largely Medieval origins, has a varied geology of clays, silts and sands giving rise to a diverse mix of soils and, in turn, a mosaic of ancient semi-natural woodlands, plantations, remnant heathland and more open farmland areas where sunken lanes heighten the sense of seclusion.

3.31 This is a small-scale and intimate landscape, where lanes are frequently overhung by deep grassy and wooded banks, heightening the sense of seclusion. There are some limited longer views, as at Bucklebury Upper Common. The network of ancient semi-natural woodland, connecting hedgerows, areas of parkland, including wood pasture and veteran trees, create considerable ecological interest.

3.32 Former mediaeval 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

1 OPEN DOWNLAND	
1A	Marlborough Downs
1B	Lambourn Downs
1C	Horton Downs
1D	Blewbury Downs
2 DOWNLAND WITH WOODLAND	
2A	Brightwalton Downs
2B	Ashampstead Downs
2C	Lambourn Wooded Downs
2D	Walbury Hill – Watership Down Scarp
2E	Chute Forest – Faccombe
2F	Litchfield Downs
2G	Hannington Downs
3 WOODED PLATEAU	
3A	Savernake Plateau
4 HIGH CHALK PLAIN	
4A	Salisbury Plain
5 DOWNS PLAIN AND SCARP	
5A	Avebury Plain
5B	Chiseldon – Wanborough Plain
5C	Hendred Plain
5D	Moreton Plain
5E	Clyffe Pypard – Badbury Wooded Scarp
5F	Uffington – Letcombe Open Scarp
6 VALES	
6A	Vale of Pewsey
6B	Shalbourne Vale
6C	Wanborough Vale
6i	??????
6Di	Thames Floodplain – Benson
6Dii	Thames Floodplain – Moreton
6Diii	Thames Floodplain – Streatley and Basildon
7 RIVER VALLEYS	
7A	Kennet Valley
7B	Lambourn Valley
7C	Bourne Valley
7D	Pang Valley
8 LOWLAND MOSAIC	
8A	Hermitage Wooded Commons
8B	Winterbourne Farmland
8C	Wickham Wooded Heath
8D	Hungerford Farmland
8E	Highclere Parklands
8F	Ewhurst Parklands

Figure 4. Landscape Character Types and Areas in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

The Landscape: Key Issues

Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Valued Qualities:

a) Intense pressure for development throughout the National Landscape and its setting that threatens the character and quality of its landscape and risks merging of small settlements, expansion and encroachment by larger settlements, renewable energy and other infrastructure, and changes to the scale and nature of development boundaries.

b) The potential for development beyond the National Landscape boundary, in the setting, to harm the protected landscape visually or in other ways, undermining the valued qualities of landscape character areas.

c) The need to achieve progress towards extremely ambitious national and North Wessex Downs targets for nature recovery.

d) The challenges and opportunities relating to the National Landscape's role in effecting climate change mitigation and adaptation.

e) The need for viable agriculture, forestry and equine management to continue, and to contribute more to National Landscape purposes.

f) Availability of sufficient resources for management and understanding of archaeological sites.

g) The need to manage the Ridgeway National Trail and other rights of way to maximise enjoyment by responsible users protect wildlife and cultural heritage and minimise conflicts.

h) The dominance of roads, in particular the impact of traffic noise, external lighting, road signs, insensitive materials and clutter on landscape character and people's experience of the landscape as they travel through it.

i) The need to protect remaining dark sky areas and extend them by reducing light pollution, minimising and controlling external lighting in the landscape.

j) The need for the landscape to be adaptable and resilient, conserving and enhancing natural beauty in the face of ongoing physical, economic and cultural change.

k) The need to maintain, connect and extend chalk grassland habitat wherever possible.

l) The need to conserve and enhance the remoteness and expansive openness of the downland landscape.

m) The need to conserve and enhance the remote, secluded and relatively undeveloped character of more enclosed and intimate landscapes, including the character of the lanes.

n) The need to ensure woodland creation, new hedges, agro-forestry and other tree planting respect and reinforce landscape character and nature recovery priorities, and the need for appropriate woodland management, including the viable use of timber products..

o) The need to encourage restoration of wood pasture landscapes, husbandry and ecology and ensure future veteran tree succession.

p) The need to maintain the pattern of discrete villages set within a quiet rural landscape, ensuring that interconnectivity with the surrounding landscape is maintained and views to the surrounding dramatic scarps are undamaged.

q) The need to ensure continued improvement of water quality and water resources in chalk streams and rivers, supporting river managers and riparian landowners in river restoration and enhancement projects for wildlife, fisheries and flood management.

r) The need to maintain and enhance and restore adjacent seasonal flood meadows, grazed pastures, fen, damp woodlands and historic parkland.

s) The need to conserve and enhance the small-scale, secluded and rural character of the lowland mosaic, including the fragile lowland heaths.

t) The need to protect and enhance historic sites, buildings and landscapes and their setting.

u) The need to protect visual amenity, in particular significant views and panoramas within, from and towards the protected landscape.

v) The significant impact on the characteristic habitats in the National Landscape resulting from climate change, including increased extreme weather events, risk of wild fires and a potential increase in pests and diseases.

The Landscape: Priority

P.01 Conserve and enhance the natural beauty, tranquillity and distinctive landscape character of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.

The Landscape: Policies

LA 01	Encourage all partners and other stakeholders to seek to further National Landscape purposes across all relevant policies, programmes, activities and decision..
LA 02	Recognise and respond to the main factors that threaten the valued qualities of the National Landscape: e.g. built development; light pollution; water abstraction; agricultural practices including diffuse pollution of watercourses; climate risk; lack of woodland management; damage to historic sites; and poorly managed access, seeking to avoid, minimise, mitigate and reverse them whenever possible.
LA 03	Use the North Wessex Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment to inform policy and decision making across the National Landscape and its setting.
LA 04	Support and promote a landscape-led approach across all sectors that conserves and enhances the character and qualities of the North Wessex Downs landscape.
LA 05	Support and encourage efforts to conserve and interpret the rich heritage of the North Wessex Downs.
LA 06	All development in or affecting the setting of the National Landscape should conserve and enhance the character, valued qualities and heritage of the North Wessex Downs landscape.

CHAPTER 4

Farming & Land Management

Overview:

- A landscape under the influence of **agricultural management** with typically large farmed estates, over 50% of which are currently engaged in agri-environment agreements.
- **Varied field patterns:** 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 National Landscape is the product of Medieval clearance which created numerous, small, irregularly-shaped fields or assarts.
- A growing forestry sector and different **types of woodland**, many with public access. Although oak and, historically, ash are the main forest canopy species, there is a wide range of stand types including hornbeam coppice, oak/ash stands, hazel/oak stands, and birch and ash/wych elm coppice. The long-term impact of ash die-back on the landscape is still unclear.
- **Equestrian activity**, including the 'Valley of the Racehorse' in the Lambourn area that attracts visitors and businesses.
- Significant land management for **field sports**, including highly valued game fishing which supports the native brown trout.

> "I like to look at the winding side of a great down, with two or three numerous flocks of sheep on it, belonging to different farms; and to see, lower down, the folds, in the fields, ready to receive them for the night."
>
> WILLIAM COBBETT (1763-1835)

Farming and Land Management in the North Wessex Downs

3.1 Farmland and woodland dominate the landscape of the North Wessex Downs. Changes in these land uses have a major influence on the natural beauty of the area. Additionally, equine activities and field sports are significant in terms of land use and management. Land-based enterprises play a significant role in acting as stewards of the landscape and contributing to an economic balance for communities.

Agriculture

3.2 With 84% of the North Wessex Downs classified as farmland, of which in 2024 about 53% was under arable cultivation[1], agriculture is the dominant land use and the major influence on landscape character and quality. In 2024, the agricultural workforce totalled 2,346.

3.3 Annual farm census statistics since 1990 indicate land in the National Landscape in agricultural management appears to be fairly stable, with a slight net loss over time. This could be due to development but also changes in holding distributions may represent a move to other land uses not classified as agricultural. The Total number of farms has slightly increased, by 4% over the last five years. 43% of farms in the NWD exceed 100 ha in size, nationally over 50% of farms are larger than 100 ha. There has been a significant increase of 18% in the number of farms between 20-50 ha over the last five years. DEFRA defines 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 has seen a 33% increase in horticultural crops over the last 5 years. Statistical data from DEFRAs survey of Agriculture and Horticulture 2024 indicates that most farms fall in the 'cereals' and 'lowland grazing livestock' categories.

3.4 Sustainable agriculture can help to protect and enhance the natural resources that have created the rich diversity and natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. Supporting farmers in adopting Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) and other agri-environment approaches and working with farmer-led groups are vital strategies for securing landscape management, as demonstrated through the DEFRA-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

3.5 Analysis of trends indicates a decline in livestock farming and greater sensitivity of arable production to prices of inputs. Total cattle numbers have fallen by 14%. Sheep by 22% - however poultry has risen by 84% in the last 10 years.[2] In some instances the reduction of numbers could be due to efficiencies. For example, by harnessing new technologies with support from the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund, dairy farmers are able to reduce herd size while maintaining or even increasing production. The Fund has also supported sheep farmers in subsidising electronic identification (EID) readers, allowing farmers to better identify unproductive ewes and remove them from flocks. There have also been positive changes driven by the implementation of targeted agri-environment schemes.

3.6 'Conventional' farming is predominant in the National Landscape. There are also a number of organic farms and some biodynamic farms. The closure of Elm Farm Organic Research Centre during the last Management Plan period was a significant loss to the area. There is an increasing interest in 'regenerative agriculture', which promotes minimising soil disturbance, maximising crop diversity, keeping the soil covered, maintaining a living root system and integrating livestock.

3.7 The evolution of ELMS (Environmental Land Management Schemes) and other agri-environment measures is a key driver to help deliver conservation for wildlife, soils and water quality. Over half of the North Wessex Downs farmed land is entered into one or more of the schemes and there is a strong commitment by farmers to utilise these schemes. Farmers' willingness to apply for funding and deliver public goods that support National Landscape aims has also been demonstrated by the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (FiPL), with land managers covering more than 54% of the farmed landscape having engaged with the programme by March 2025. The need for farmers to deliver 'public goods for public money' has also required farmers to respond more readily to world market conditions. Fluctuations in commodity prices and input costs are increasing uncertainty for future arable profitability. There is a risk that such market influences could thwart 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 context of fluctuation in cereal prices.

3.8 Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) have been designed to support the rural economy while achieving the goals of the Government's Environmental Improvement Plan and a commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050[3]. Climate change is likely to be a key consideration in terms of the types and varieties of viable crops that are grown in on the North Wessex Downs in the future. Farmers and landowners also need to consider flood mitigation and, where possible, consider adopting natural flood management, which is also being supported through ELMS. At the other extreme, planning for increasing water scarcity is likely to require greater water storage capacity on-farm. There are implications for sowing dates, irrigation, pests, diseases, water availability and soil erosion. Increased productivity needs careful management to maintain landscape character and realise the opportunities to expand wildlife habitats. There may also be diversification into novel crops and farming systems, or change of use from agriculture to other land uses, such as equestrian businesses and leisure.

3.9 Soils are increasingly being recognised as one of our most valuable resources (see the Natural Resources chapter). Farmers and land managers being encouraged, through ELMs, to preserve and protect soils as much as possible, for example through incorporating herbal leys to ensure the soil is covered at all times, while adding organic matter. Minimum or no tillage to limit soil disturbance is also being supported through other grants, such as the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund. Through increasing soil organic matter, soils can sequester more carbon, reduce nitrogen inputs and help farmers/land managers mitigate against climate change issues such as flooding and periods of drought.[4] Private finance companies are also emerging, further supporting efforts to increase soil organic matter for carbon credits.

3.10 Since around 2017, there has been an explosion of interest and activity relating to collaborative farmer-led groups (also known as farmer clusters) in and around the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. From two - the pioneering Marlborough Downs Space for Nature and the Pewsey Downs Farner Group, by 2025 the number had grown to at least 13 active groups in the area. Several of these have been set up with the support and encouragement of the National Landscape and most have received National Landscape funding to develop and deliver their aims. By collaborating among themselves and with other groups, these farmer and land managers can achieve benefits, e.g. for nature recovery, on a genuinely landscape scale.

[1] Total cereals + all other arable crops

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/structure-of-the-agricultural-industry-in-england-and-the-uk-at-june

[3] The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019, SI 2019/1056

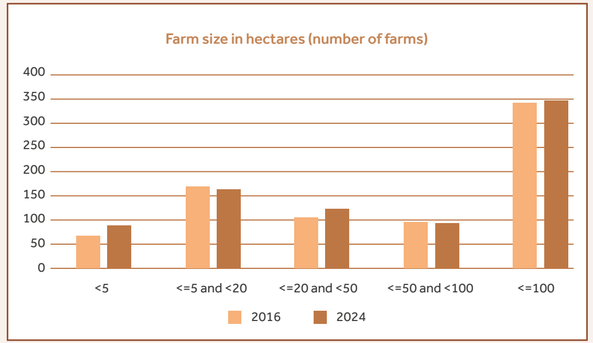
[4] Reference Soil Association: Soil Association (2019). To plough or not to plough: Policy briefing.

Table 1: Number of Farms by Type

Total holdings	Farm types (number of farms)						
	Cereals	General Cropping	Horticulture	Specialist Poultry	Dairy	Grazing Livestock (lowland)	Mixed
818	289	154	12	16	23	258	54

Table 2: Number of Farms by Size of Holding

Total holdings	Farm size in hectares (number of farms)				
	<5	<=5 and <20	<=20 and <50	<=50 and <100	<=100
818	90	162	124	95	347



% change is available from Chapter 3 Statistics JS.

Trees and Woodland

3.11 Trees, woodland, wood pasture and hedges are a valuable and important feature of parts of the North Wessex Downs landscape. The Forestry Commission's National Forest Inventory data show that the area of woodland within the North Wessex Downs stands at 21,190.28ha (12.57% of the total National Landscape area). Broadleaf trees dominate, at just over 70% of all woodland.well over a third 8,823.9 ha, or 41.8% is Ancient Woodland, of which 3,908 ha, or 18%, is Plantation on Ancient Woodland sites (PAWS). Despite an increasingly healthy market for timber and wood fuel, much woodland in the National Landscape still suffers from a lack of management, often due to difficulty of access. The ageing beech woods 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 continued promotion of wood as a renewable fuel may stimulate improved management of some woodlands. There are now ELMS options that include woodland management plans, as well as the availability of grants to assist with some of the associated cost of ash die-back.

3.12 The National Forest Inventory indicates that managed woodland within the National Landscape recorded as being managed has continued to increase from 50% in 2013, 62% in 2017,to 66% in 2024. This is a positive change which probably reflects the increasing demand for wood fuel in particular. The timber quality of much of the woodland area within the National Landscape is not high; many of the woods are extremely small, and a number of them comprise crops for which there is no longer

a viable market. Consequently, the economics of forestry operations are problematic. There is a role for energy production in helping to manage small woods. Previously, progress was made in supporting the North Wessex Downs forestry sector through initiatives such as the EU-funded LEADER programme, but since that ended there has been less activity.

3.13 Owing to the landscape, heritage and biodiversity characteristics for which much of the North Wessex Downs is designated, scope for new woodland planting varies greatly across the area depending on local landscape character and the associated valued qualities. Some Landscape Character Types and Areas are not suitable for significant expansion of tree cover. However, in suitable areas there is significant scope for more trees and shrubs in the landscape, including: extending, buffering and linking ancient woodland habitat, hedge restoration, increasing the population of large hedge trees, management of scrub as part of an open habitat mosaic, reintroduction of important species such as disease-resistant elm, restoration and creation of wood pasture habitat, promoting new generations of veteran trees, riparian planting for shade in response to higher temperatures, and sensitively located and designed agro-forestry. Any new planting should meet the objectives of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan and tree guidance. The priority is to maintain and improve management of existing woodland, particularly that designated for its nature conservation interest and all ancient and semi-natural woodland. New woodland can act as a buffer to protect this resource and create wildlife corridors between woods, and which may in turn benefit natural flood management and water quality. The National Landscape Partnership encourages woodland owners to produce management plans in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard.

3.14 The dangers to trees from pests and diseases are growing, with ash die-back (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus, also known as Chalara) and oak processionary moth (*Thaumetopoea processionea) being two recent examples. Ash die-back is likely to have a major impact in woodland across England, including in the North Wessex Downs, and it will be prudent to consider promoting measures to mitigate the consequences of the loss of this important tree species for wildlife and the landscape. Damage to woodland from* increasing deer populations and from squirrels is an ongoing problem, especially since it makes growing native broadleaved trees for timber difficult in spite of strong market demand. Overgrazing by deer can also dramatically reduce the value of woodland for other wildlife. This highlights the need for collaborative landscape-scale protection of woodland.

3.15 Climate change may lead to frequent drought and reduced summer rainfall, which could significantly impact the woodland of the North Wessex Downs. For instance, beech trees, which have shallow roots and struggle in dry soils, are likely to decline. In contrast, small-leaved lime trees, which require warmth to set seed, may thrive and become more prevalent. Veteran trees of all species are more likely to be felled by storm force winds. However, in woods the impact of these storms can be positive, creating glades that species adapted to sunlight can occupy. The impact of higher autumn and winter rainfall may be partly mitigated by planting, for example reducing soil run-off to rivers by hedge planting and management to interrupt overland flows. The recreational value of woodland may increase as people seek shade in the hottest months.

Racing and Equestrian

3.16 Horse owning and riding is a popular activity across the south of England. The North Wessex Downs is recognised as a nationally important horse-racing centre, second only to Newmarket, and the Lambourn area and other racing yards in the National Landscape make a significant contribution to the local economy. The non-racing equestrian sector is estimated to have contributed £5 billion of consumer spending to the national economy in 2023 (statistics-0225.pdf), an increase from £4.3bn in 2015. The contribution of the non-racing equestrian sector in Hampshire, an area part covered by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, was estimated at £330 million supporting many small businesses in the county (source: Hampshire Countryside Access Forum Equestrians-in-Hampshire.pdf). It should also be noted that:

- **the input of the non-racing equestrian sector in West Berks in 2022 has been estimated at £38 million per annum, but we believe this has not been published;**
- **in a report dated 2019[5], the racing sector in the Lambourn Valley was estimated to contribute £23 million per annum.**

3.17 The North Wessex Downs is home to a range of important non-racing equestrian events, such as the annual Barbury Horse Trials. While there are no statistics to quantify horse ownership and riding in the National Landscape, it is evident that the network of bridleways and routes linked to The Ridgeway National Trail are popular and well-used.

3.18 How horses are cared for and the developments associated with keeping and training horses can have a significant impact on the character and quality of the National Landscape, and horse owners have an important role to play in maintaining the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. The North Wessex Downs Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has included well-received events providing advice to help ensure equine care and management makes a positive contribution to the landscape.

[5] *https://jockeyclubestates.co.uk/news/report-highlights-the-value-of-the-valley-of-the-racehorse*

Farming and Land Management: Key Issues

Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Farming and Land Management Valued Qualities:

a) The need to manage resources to achieve sustainable consumption and production.

b) Potential for significant investment of public funding to promote diversification and micro-enterprise in the land management sector that aligns with National Landscape objectives.

c) the need for support and co-operation from famers and land managers to achieve nature recovery in the North Wessex Downs.

d) The need to sustain and expand collaborative action among farmers to achieve National Landscape objectives.

Agriculture

e) Opportunities are continuing to arise to invest in the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape, for example through agri-environment measures such as Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) to deliver public goods with public funds. Private funding opportunities are also beginning to emerge.

f) Market forces and major policy changes, such as demand for increased food security or biofuels, resulting in uncertainty regarding land management, influencing the mix of farming types and farm sizes.

g) Impacts of changes in farming technology, and energy and fertiliser prices.

h) Shortage of livestock needed to graze downland pasture.

i) Harnessing demand for locally produced food and drink in line with National Landscape objectives, with increasing interest in producing and marketing local food in the North Wessex Downs.

j) Climate change risk (increasingly identified by farmers in the North Wessex Downs as a key threat and opportunity for the future) and the opportunities for land managers to invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Flooding continues to have a significant impact on land management, with crops becoming waterlogged.

k) Potential for improved availability, co-ordination and consistency in the provision of agricultural land management advice to achieve National Landscape objectives.

l) Poor agricultural land management practices, including in livestock grazing and arable production, resulting in flooding from surface water run-off and detrimental impacts on watercourses from nutrient run-off and silt pollution, sometimes as a result of livestock damage to river banks.

m) Soil management plays a key role in sustaining the landscape, with best practices in maintaining, conserving and improving soils crucial in mitigating against climate change and providing long term sustainability for arable production.

n) Risk to agriculture from diseases such as bovine tuberculosis, avian influenza and bluetongue.

Trees and Woodland

o) Scope for more and better management of woodland in the National Landscape, especially smaller woods, to improve habitat for wildlife and provide an economic return.

p) Risk of harmful impacts on wildlife, archaeology and recreation from increasing exploitation of woodland to meet demand for timber, if not done in an environmentally sensitive way.

q) Opportunities for better co-ordination of forestry with agricultural land management under new environmental management schemes.

r) Widespread threats from pests and disease (e.g. Phytophthora and Chalara).

s) Rising deer numbers inhibiting the natural regeneration of some woodland and suppressing the ground flora. Deer Management Groups are helpful but are insufficient on their own to control deer numbers.

Racing and Equestrian

t) Small-scale changes to the smooth, rolling landform around new buildings, which cumulatively have an adverse effect on the character of the National Landscape.

u) Opportunities to support the racing industry, ancillary businesses and local communities through diversification, e.g. in responsible tourism.

v) Need to avoid soil erosion, overgrazing and loss of biodiversity arising from the creation of new fields and paddocks on open chalk downland by promoting opportunities for landscape enhancement through equine habitat management, such as creation of wildflower-rich grassland.

w) Change in landscape character by the replacement of hedgerows with fencing, leading to the suburbanisation of landscape.

x) Pressure to widen and straighten minor roads and tracks to improve vehicle access, leading to erosion of landscape character and sense of place.

y) Loss of integrity of historic settlements/ hamlets/farmsteads.

Farming and Land Management: Priorities

1. Focus, facilitate and support landscape-scale conservation and land management initiatives that support the purposes of National Landscape designation.
2. Promote National Landscape priorities for targeting and investment in rural land management and development to take advantage of changes arising from the agricultural transition following Brexit.
3. Support the restoration of ancient woodland and creation and restoration of wood pasture, improved management of unmanaged and under-managed woodland across the North Wessex Downs, promoting multiple benefits, including landscape character, wildlife, local economy and skills, recreation and climate change mitigation.
4. Support traditional and emerging land-based enterprises and their markets that respect and promote the special qualities of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.
5. Promote and support sustainable best practice initiatives for farming, woodland management and all country sports.
6. Encourage and support farms/estates to take up ELMS and other agri-environment measures in ways that support National Landscape objectives.

Farming and Land Management: Policies

FLM 01	Encourage national, regional and local land management policies to be consistent with the purpose of National Landscape designation.
FLM 02	Encourage and support farmer-led groups and other joint working, and expansion/replication of existing landscape-scale nature recovery and land management projects, both within and beyond the National Landscape, to assist in the delivery of National Landscape and Big Chalk objectives.
FLM 03	Support sustainable farm diversification and multi-purpose woodland management where it achieves National Landscape objectives and accords with planning policy.
FLM 04	Support efforts to identify future land use options that are best able to assist farm viability and reflect the environmental objectives of the National Landscape.
FLM 05	Support local markets for local produce and the development of local supply networks.
FLM 06	Encourage management of sites in public and tenanted ownership within the North Wessex Downs to be examples of best practice in the delivery of National Landscape objectives.
FLM 07	Support and promote efforts across the North Wessex Downs to reduce invasive, non-native species or unsustainable populations of species where these threaten the biodiversity and sustainable management of woodland, watercourses and other habitats.
FLM 08	Encourage the active and environmentally sensitive use of woodland resources for viable products, helping to enhance biodiversity.
FLM 09	Support and help guide publicly funded investment in rural development.
FLM 10	Support investment in new agricultural infrastructure and redevelopment of farm buildings where it increases the sustainability of local businesses and aligns with National Landscape purposes.
FLM 11	Encourage awareness of the special qualities of the National Landscape among local businesses to help them understand and embrace their responsibilities alongside running a profitable enterprise.
FLM 12	Support improved availability, quality, co-ordination and consistency in provision of land management advice across the National Landscape.
FLM 13	Support efforts to identify and develop the skills required to care for the landscape and its valued qualities, with opportunities for all to acquire such skills.
FLM 14	Encourage and support the local provision of practical training in traditional land management and the skills necessary to deliver enhanced rural land management and business diversification with clear landscape benefits.
FLM 15	Encourage good agricultural land management practices and adherence to good practice to contribute to resource protection, such as healthy soil management, preventing flooding from surface water run-off and safeguarding watercourses from nutrient run-off and silt pollution.
FLM 16	Support the provision of advice on integrated management of grassland to enhance biodiversity as part of equine land management practices.
FLM 17	Support initiatives such as better routes to market, working with game processors, to achieve sustainable deer populations across the National Landscape through collaborative measures and other stakeholders.
FLM 18	Encourage and support landowners to develop whole estate plans where suitable to enable long-term, integrated landscape management.
FLM 19	Encourage and support farmers and land managers to adopt practices that sequester carbon, minimise soil carbon loss and support climate mitigation and adaptation through nature-based solutions aligned with National Landscape purposes.

Farming and Land Management Support: Priorities for funding and advice by Landscape Character Type

3.22 National Landscape Management Plans have a role to play as the framework within which publicly and privately funded support mechanisms and other land management initiatives can be focussed and adapted to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated landscapes and their settings. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan provides the lens through which national objectives for farming and nature recovery can be applied to the landscapes and valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs

3.23 To support this role, the priorities set out in the following Table identify broad priorities for environmental land management in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and its setting.

3.24 The first column in the Table sets out a series of generic measures which could apply to more than one Landscape Character Type; subsequent columns set out measures which are aimed specifically at each of the eight Landscape Character Types (as described in Chapter 2).

Priorities for farming and land management support to conserve and enhance the valued qualities of the National Landscape by Landscape Character Type

Generic aims applicable to more than one Landscape Character Type in the National Landscape	Aims specific to National Landscape Character Types	
	Open Download	Download with Woodland
• Support a landscape-scale approach to restoring, managing, buffering, extending and connecting currently fragmented, locally characteristic habitats. These include species-rich chalk grassland, arable field habitats, wet pasture and native riparian woodland in river valleys, heathland and common land, chalk rivers and streams, traditional orchards, ancient woodland (especially Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites) and wood pasture. • Protect archaeological sites and features, including through removal from cultivation, reducing cultivation depth, scrub management, sympathetic woodland management and protection from livestock damage as necessary. • Adopt catchment-sensitive farming techniques across chalk river and stream catchments to reduce both diffuse and point-source pollution, minimise sediment run-off into watercourses and improve water quality.	• Restore and enhance unmanaged relict grassland and encourage greater diversity though sympathetic management, e.g. small areas of scrub/grassland mosaic. • Maintain, and enhance existing chalk grassland habitats. • Maintain and enhance the value of arable land and chalk grassland for priority farmland bird and arable plant species e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, pollen, nectar and seed mixes. Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges), wherever possible linking a range of different habitats. • Increase the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, especially where adjacent or close to unimproved grassland.	• Restore and enhance unmanaged relict grassland and encourage greater diversity though sympathetic management, e.g. small areas of scrub/grassland mosaic. • Maintain, and enhance existing chalk grassland habitats. • Maintain and enhance the value of arable land and chalk grassland for priority farmland bird and arable plant species e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, pollen, nectar and seed mixes. Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges), wherever possible linking a range of different habitats. • Increase the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, especially where adjacent or close to unimproved grassland.
• Restore and maintain a coherent network of habitat corridors though sympathetic management of, in particular, the huge ecological resource represented by road verges and banks, public rights of way and National Trails across the National Landscape, harnessing their potential to form links between wildlife sites and other important habitat patches. • Facilitate responsible public access to the landscape in places and in ways that are compatible with maintaining and promoting the valued qualities of the National Landscape. • Encourage and support more wildlife-friendly management of public and private open spaces, including recreation, sports and school grounds, parks, playgrounds, golf courses, greens, allotments and commons.	• Extend, link and buffer chalk grassland habitats e.g. through targeted arable reversion (linking existing grassland areas along ridgelines in particular), wildflower restoration of semi-improved grassland, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting. • Maintain the open, expansive, open landscape character by avoiding new tree and hedge planting, including small areas which can cumulatively erode the valued qualities of openness and sweeping views. • Protect archaeological sites and features, including through removal from cultivation, reducing cultivation depth, scrub management and protection from livestock damage as necessary. • Wherever possible create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, track and byway verges) across intensively managed arable and grassland, linking a range of different habitats including unimproved and semi-improved grassland and woodland. • Support specific advice and options for sympathetic management of land used to keep and train racehorses to enhance its value for wildlife.	• Extend, link and buffer chalk grassland habitats e.g. through targeted arable reversion (linking existing grassland areas along ridgelines in particular), wildflower restoration of semi-improved grassland, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting. • Maintain the open, expansive, open landscape character by avoiding new tree and hedge planting, including small areas which can cumulatively erode the valued qualities of openness and sweeping views. • Protect archaeological sites and features, including through removal from cultivation, reducing cultivation depth, scrub management and protection from livestock damage as necessary. • Wherever possible create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, track and byway verges) across intensively managed arable and grassland, linking a range of different habitats including unimproved and semi-improved grassland and woodland. • Support specific advice and options for sympathetic management of land used to keep and train racehorses to enhance its value for wildlife.

Aims specific to National Landscape Character Types		
Wooded Plateau	**High Chalk Plain**	**Downs Plain and Scarp**
• Conserve and enhance the intimate mosaic of woodland, farmland and hedges that surrounds and connects Savernake Forest and West Woods. • Manage existing ancient woodland sympathetically to increase structural diversity e.g. by restoring coppice, controlling deer numbers and promoting natural regeneration. • Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to conserve and enhance local landscape character and biodiversity. • Conserve existing veteran and ancient trees with careful management and support succession of veteran tree habitat for lichens and invertebrates in particular, (e.g. by pollarding, including creation of maiden pollards) and identification and management of future veterans). • Restore, conserve and enhance designed landscapes, other historic parkland and wood pasture. • Encourage restoration of historic hedge boundaries and restore and enhance existing boundaries through sympathetic hedge management, creation of buffer strips and promotion and management of hedgerow trees. • Restore, expand/link and sympathetically manage remaining areas of heathland.	• Maintain, and enhance existing chalk grassland habitats. • Restore and enhance unmanaged relict grassland, encouraging greater diversity though sympathetic management. • Increase the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, especially where adjacent or close to unimproved grassland. • Extend, link and buffer chalk grassland habitats (e.g. through targeted arable reversion, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting). • Maintain and enhance the value of the mosaic of arable land and chalk grassland for priority farmland bird and arable plant species (e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, pollen, nectar and seed mixes). Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges), wherever possible linking a range of different habitats.	• On the Plain, encourage restoration of historic hedge boundaries and enhance existing boundaries through sympathetic hedge management, creation of buffer strips and promotion and management of hedgerow trees. • On the Plain, consider opportunities for sympathetic, small-scale tree-planting integrated within a network of well-managed hedges. • On the Plain, improve the value of the arable landscape for priority farmland birds, pollinators, arable plants and other wildlife (e.g. through spring sowing and winter stubbles, nesting plots, uncropped headlands, unsprayed field margins, pollen, nectar and seed mixes). Create and maintain wildlife corridors (e.g. buffer strips, beetle banks, track and byway verges) wherever possible linking a range of different habitats. • Along the Scarp, maintain and enhance the diversity and wildlife value of the farmland/woodland/chalk grassland/historic parkland mosaic. • Along the western Scarp, promote sympathetic management of the varied and distinctive linear wooded hangers and wooded combes. • Conserve, enhance and restore the ecological value of drove roads and tracks linking to Open Downland through sympathetic management of banks and verges. • Support realisation of the potential for The Ridgeway National Trail to serve as a conservation corridor through the landscape, encouraging ecological enhancement of land adjacent and close to The Ridgeway. • Conserve and enhance the monumental landscape of the Avebury World Heritage Site and its setting, including through targeted arable reversion, increasing the diversity of semi-improved permanent grassland, scrub management and removal of inappropriate woodland planting.

CHAPTER 5

Biodiversity & Nature Recovery

Overview:

Designated wildlife sites that are home to rare habitats and species, including:

- A nationally significant area of chalk grassland including rare flora such as field fleawort, bastard toadflax, musk orchid and burnt orchid, early gentian, chalk eyebright, Chiltern gentian, dwarf mouse ear, tuberous thistle and round-headed rampion; invertebrates such as the wart-biter cricket and important butterfly populations including: Adonis blue, silver studded blue, marsh fritillary, chalkhill blue, small blue, silver spotted skipper and Duke of Burgundy fritillary.
- Substantial areas of broadleaved woodland and wood pasture, including a significant concentration of ancient woodlands, which provide roosting and/or feeding sites for bats species including Bechstein's bat, barbastelle, greater horseshoe bat and noctule; long rotation hazel coppice provides important habitat for mammals such as dormice; concentrations of calcareous bluebell woods; and a number of nationally scarce moss species.
- Rare chalk streams and rivers with a high diversity of aquatic plants, and invertebrate species including those that are nationally scarce, such as the white-clawed crayfish; supporting nationally and locally scarce bird species; mammals including otters and nationally declining water voles; and healthy fish populations including brown trout, salmon, grayling, perch, chub and dace.
- Arable habitats which are home to rare and colourful arable wildflowers, such as dense-flowered fumitory, slender tare and shepherd's needle, which are dependent on a regular cropping regime. Arable land use also provides feeding and breeding habitat for a number of rare and declining farmland birds including skylarks and stone-curlews.
- A rich mosaic of associated wetland habitats creating distinctive valley landscapes including fens, floodplains, water meadows, carr and wet woodland. As an example, the Red Data Book plant summer snowflake survives in seasonally flooded woodlands along the Kennet Valley.
- Opportunities for landscape scale conservation projects, working across a significant area and administrative boundaries.

The Ecology of the North Wessex Downs

4.1 The breadth of ecological diversity in the North Wessex Downs reflects its varied landscape character, shaped by centuries of human influence and active management. The area includes seven Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are part of the Natura 2000 ecological network, established under the EU Habitats Directive to protect habitats and species threatened at a European level. The Pewsey Downs SAC is also a National Nature Reserve. It has an outstanding chalk grassland flora and fauna, including nationally important populations of rare species, such as the endemic early gentian. The North Wessex Downs contains 66 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) covering 3,344 hectares, which is approximately 1.9% of the area. An estimated 19,772 ha, or 11.4% of the National Landscape, is classed as Priority Habitat. Nearly three-quarters of this, an estimated 14,459 ha, is deciduous woodland[1].

4.2 The most important habitats for nature conservation in the North Wessex Downs are the remnant areas of chalk grassland; semi-natural broadleaf woodland and wood pasture; chalk rivers, streams and associated wetlands, including wet woodland; and arable farmland managed for conservation.

4.3 Other significant habitats within the National Landscape include remnant heathlands on river gravel deposits in the east, such as Bucklebury Common, areas of semi-natural acidic grassland around Inkpen, lowland dry acid grassland and lowland meadow habitats around Highclere, and the wide grassy verges of the droveways crossing the Downs. Locally, the hedgerow network, springs, remnant watercress beds, road verges and dew ponds serve as important refuges and habitats. Chalk cuttings have magnificent displays of primroses and cowslips each year. This habitat mosaic is especially important for bats, as some species commute 20 to 30 kilometres from their roosts in old trees or outbuildings to forage across insect-rich habitats like wetlands, farmland, wood pasture and grassland.

Chalk Grassland

4.4 Chalk grassland is among the UK's most biologically rich and diverse habitats, with over 40 species of flowering plants found in just one square metre of high-quality turf. Approximately 9% of the UK's chalk grassland is located within the North Wessex Downs. The chalk grassland in the area supports significant populations of the early gentian, a scheduled protected species and one of Britain's few endemic plants. Unimproved chalk grassland is crucial for the survival of many scarce invertebrate species such as the wart-biter bush cricket and the internationally threatened marsh fritillary butterfly. Other scarce chalk grassland butterflies include the Adonis blue, Duke of Burgundy, chalkhill blue and small blue. This habitat also supports good populations of skylarks.

4.5 Twenty-nine SSSIs within the North Wessex Downs feature chalk grassland, covering a total of 1,421 hectares, which is nearly half of the total SSSI area and 0.8% of the National Landscape. Additionally, 249 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) include a chalk grassland component, covering 2,163 hectares (1.3% of the National Landscape). However, the exact area of chalk grassland within the LWS network is not known. Other, non-statutory, identified sites such road verges also hold chalk grassland habitat.

4.6 Nationally, chalk grassland areas have significantly diminished from their extent in the 1900s. In the North Wessex Downs, chalk grassland declined by 32% between 1968 and 1998. The remaining chalk grassland areas are becoming increasingly fragmented. Currently, small, isolated blocks are mainly confined to steep scarp slopes, dry valleys, and pastures around archaeological sites. The total area of lowland calcareous grassland in the North Wessex Downs is estimated at 3,942 ha[2]. It is estimated that the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs National Character Area, covering about two-thirds of the National Landscape, supports at least 1,250 hectares, which is approximately 3-5% of England's total estimated area of lowland calcareous grassland.

Woodland

4.7 The National Forest Inventory shows 21,109 ha of the North Wessex Downs as wooded[3], Tree and canopy cover outside woodland is estimated to cover a further 6,579 ha[4], making a total of 27,688 ha, or just under 16% of the National Landscape area. Of this, 8,824 ha is estimated to be ancient woodland (including plantations on ancient woodland sites)5. According to the Woodland Trust, the North Wessex Downs contain two nationally important major concentrations of ancient woodland, centred on the Berkshire and Marlborough Downs and the Hampshire Downs; and areas of forest such as Savernake.

4.8 In the North Wessex Downs National Landscape:

- **less than 0.1% of the total woodland area is designated as a National Nature Reserve;**
- **0.5% is designated as Special Areas for Conservation (SAC);**
- **7.5% is designated as Site of Special Scientific Interest;**
- **42.3% is designated as a Local Wildlife Site.**

4.9 The diverse woodland types that make up these ancient woodlands include significant areas of wood pasture. They support a wide range of species, including woodland birds and important roosting sites for a number of bat species. Of particular importance is the calcareous woodland that supports a range of rare plants including herb paris and green hellebore and provides home to substantial populations of native bluebells (for which Britain has a global responsibility, supporting about half the world's bluebell population).

Chalk Rivers and Streams

4.10 The spring-fed chalk streams and rivers of the North Wessex Downs support an extremely diverse range of plant and animal communities. Pea mussels 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 with its remnant fens and water meadows. 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 rivers are all designated SSSIs, while the Lambourn, the Hampshire Avon, and the Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain – a series of discrete sites supporting the globally vulnerable Desmoulin's whorl snail – are Special Areas of Conservation.

Enclosed Farmland

4.11 Arable cultivation is the dominant land management activity in the area. The North Wessex Downs support a wide range of nationally and regionally important species associated with arable farmland and adapted to colonise land disturbed through tillage. They include farmland birds like 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 these species are listed as Species of Priority Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and are targets for the Government's strategy to implement commitments under the global Convention on Biological Diversity. An Arable Biodiversity Strategy has been prepared for the NWDNL to help conserve and enhance the nationally important arable biodiversity found within the North Wessex Downs.

4.12 Although the downs 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 complex of interlinked habitats provides some of the most favourable conditions for the characteristic birds and mammals of the North Wessex Downs, including 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 supports an important community of ground-nesting birds and other species typical of arable and unimproved grassland which has been lost from many areas of arable farmland.

4.13 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. Given the pressures of climate change and the need to protect and enhance a nature recovery network that enables species migration, habitat corridors along rights of way and habitat networks are of increasing value.

Nature Conservation and Recovery

4.14 A review of England's wildlife sites and its ecological network, chaired by Sir John Lawton and published in 2010, identified Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as having great potential 'to establish a coherent and resilient ecological network'. The key message from this report, which was adopted in policy through the 2011 Natural Environment White Paper, was that to safeguard the country's wildlife habitats and species it was essential to 'make space for nature'. It advocated that this could be most readily achieved by making existing sites that are important foar wildlife 'bigger, better, and joined up' and by creating more such sites. The aim of this is to create a sustainable, resilient and more effective ecological network for England.

25-Year Environment Plan

4.15 The UK Government Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published a 25-Year Environment Plan (25YEP) in 2018. Among the commitments made in the Plan were to commission a review of protected landscapes and develop a nature recovery network[6].

The 25YEP set out 10 goals for the environment:

- **GOAL 1:** Thriving plants and wildlife
- **GOAL 2:** Clean air
- **GOAL 3:** Clean and plentiful water
- **GOAL 4:** Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides
- **GOAL 5:** Maximise our resources, minimise our waste
- **GOAL 6:** Using resources from nature sustainably
- **GOAL 7:** Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- **GOAL 8:** Reduced risk of harm from environmental hazards
- **GOAL 9:** Enhancing biosecurity
- **GOAL 10:** Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

Environmental Improvement Plan

4.16 The Environment Act 2021 commits the Government to refresh the 25 Year Environment Plan every five years. The first review was published as the Environmental Improvement Plan in January 2023. This retained the 10 Goals set out in the 25YEP and set out an "apex goal" of improving nature, which is supported by all the other goals. Following the General Election in 2024, the Government initiated a review of the Environmental Improvement Plan.

4.17 In January 2024, DEFRA published the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), which outlines the targets from the Environmental Improvement Plan that Protected Landscapes bodies, relevant authorities and partners are expected to prioritise. These include Goals 1, 7 and 10 on the previous page.

0.00004.18 Some targets are action focused, while others set a clear numerical target for how much Protected Landscapes are expected to contribute as areas to the national targets. The paper adds that "targets should be seen as a minimum contribution rather than a limit on a Protected Landscape's ambition".

4.19 It is important to emphasise that the PLTOF states: "The targets are for the Protected Landscapes as places (the geographic area covered by the designation). Action will be coordinated by Protected Landscape bodies through their statutory management plan. It will be the responsibility of all stakeholders, partners and land managers in the area to support their delivery" and that "the framework will empower Protected Landscape bodies, relevant authorities, farmers, land managers and other organisations to work together in planning and targeting resources and activity.[7]"

30 by 30

4.20 In 2019, under the umbrella of the National Landscapes Association, the family of National Landscapes launched the Colchester Declaration. This is a formal commitment to redress declines in species and habitats within the context of a wider response to climate change. The commitments include that, by 2030:

- **at least 200,000 ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in National Landscapes will be in favourable condition;**
- **at least 100,000 ha of wildlife-rich habitat outside of protected sites will have been created/restored in National Landscapes; and**
- **at least 36,000 ha of new woodland will have been planted or allowed to regenerate in National landscapes following the principle of the right tree in the right place.**

4.21 National Landscapes also pledged to publish Nature Recovery Plans with priorities in their areas for achieving these national commitments.

4.22 The independent Landscapes Review was commissioned by the Government as an action from the 25YEP and chaired by Julian Glover. The Glover Review recommended that "National landscapes should form the backbone of Nature Recovery Networks – joining things up within and beyond their boundaries", and that they "should be at the centre of coordinated action to integrate effective ecological networks with landscape objectives and other uses, including farming, education, recreation, tourism and the provision of other ecosystem services."

4.23 Internationally, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted in 2022 at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. This Framework supports the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and sets out targets for 2030 and Goals for 2050. The UK is a signatory to the Convention and has adopted the target to conserve 30% of land, waters and seas 2030, often referred to as 30 by 30.

4.24 In a document published in October 2024, the Government stated that "Delivering the UK's 30 by 30 target on land in England requires urgent and significant action to drive nature's recovery. This will require a strategic approach, to address the scale of action needed, and ensure a diverse and well-connected network of 30by30 areas. This approach also supports our wider objectives for nature's recovery, food security, and beyond.[8]"

4.25 It is expected that the primary focus of T1 will be enhancement, restoration and creation of species-rich calcareous grassland, which is the top priority habitat in the NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan. Other contributions will come from chalk stream restoration, floodplain meadows and grazing marsh and lowland fen, arable field margins and other in-field measures, restoration of Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS), and heathland restoration/creation. At the time of writing, information for the area of wildlife-rich habitats within the North Wessex Downs National Landscape outside protected sites (Target T1) was not yet available.

Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework: Apportioned EIP Targets for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape

National Target	North Wessex Downs National Landscape	
	Increase (ha) by 2030	Increase (ha) by 2042 (T1) by 2050 (T8)
T1 Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline of 0).	3,000	14,000
T8 Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from a 2022 baseline of 0).	400	1,750

4.26 Target T8 is more challenging in terms of landscape character, given almost 16% of the landscape already has tree canopy or woodland cover and important landscape character types such as Open Downland are not suitable for new woodland planting. Constraints include the open character of much of the designated landscape; the impact planting would have on historic monuments and landscape character; conflicts between tree-planting and priority habitats and species such as calcareous grassland, arable wildflowers and ground-nesting birds; and the loss of productive arable land. However, because the target goes beyond conventional afforestation, relating instead to all kinds of tree canopy cover, there is significant scope for well-considered expansion without conflicting with landscape character and the area's valued qualities. In particular, there are opportunities buffering and linking ancient woodland sites, restoration and creation of wood pasture landscapes, restoring and creating new traditional orchards, promoting many more large hedgerow trees, street trees within settlements and sensitively designed agro-forestry, It should be noted that the canopy will take some years to develop and the relatively low target for 2030 should be read with the understanding that a larger area will need to be addressed by then for the 2050 target to be met.

4.27 It should be noted that some of the 10 targets are not applicable to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, while others require further guidance and clarification from DEFRA.

Nature Recovery Plan

4.28 Through the Colchester Declaration we pledged to produce a Nature Recovery Plan for the North Wessex Downs. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Nature Recovery Plan[9] was informed by wide consultation and launched in 2023.

4.29 The Nature Recovery Plan sets out the National Landscape Partnership's priorities for nature, working with partners, stakeholders and community groups. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but sets out the status of key habitats and identifies species occurring within the National Landscape that are of particular significance. It identifies actions, targets and practical opportunities to reverse the declines and losses we have witnessed over recent decades.

4.30 The biggest current threat to our habitats and species is climate change. The Nature Recovery Plan, informed by the Climate Change Adaptation Manual 2020, identifies habitat vulnerability to climate change and suggests measures that will help our key habitats to be more resilient in the face of increasing global temperatures and changing weather patterns. Other threats include intensive agriculture, intensive game shooting, urbanisation, pollution and the spread of invasive non-native species.

4.31 In tandem with an urgent need to tackle climate change and other threats, we need to do more to allow nature and wildlife to recover and to support natural processes to function. Ill-considered actions to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change can have an adverse impact on biodiversity, as well as the landscape character and natural beauty for which the National Landscape is designated. Nature recovery must be planned, hand in hand with climate change actions, in ways that conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty in line with its national and international status as an IUCN Category V Protected Landscape.

4.32 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership encourages activities that:

- **improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management;**
- **increase the size of current wildlife sites;**
- **join, or enhance connections between, sites, either through physical corridors or through 'stepping stones';**
- **create new sites;**
- **reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider environment, including through buffering wildlife sites.**

4.33 These actions are designed to help establish a Nature Recovery Network that meets the needs of wildlife and people today, and one that is more resilient to the future pressures, including climate change. There are trade-offs between these actions: the more we do to improve the quality of existing sites or to enhance the wider environment, the less we will need to do to create new sites. Our actions need to be adaptive, adjusting to what works as we progress.

Biodiversity Duty on Public Authorities

4.34 The Environment Act 2021 strengthened the biodiversity duty on public authorities. The duty requires them to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity, agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration, and act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

4.35 Under the Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs sets out the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs). The Government has appointed 48 responsible authorities to lead on preparing LNRSs for England. There are four LNRSs covering parts of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape: Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, including Swindon. Each LNRS must agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities. Every strategy must contain a) a habitat map of the most valuable areas for wildlife, b) a list of opportunities to improve nature in the future and c) a written statement of biodiversity priorities. Responsible authorities are expected to work with other organisations and partners in their area to agree what should be included in their LNRS. At the time of writing the LNRSs are at various stages of development. The priorities in the NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan have informed the preparation of the LNRSs. It will be important to ensure that the agreed LNRSs reflect the Nature Recovery Plan for the NWDNL and that the latter is aligned with and complements the LNRSs. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape will act as a delivery partner, convening partners, encouraging collaborative action across the National Landscape, developing projects and facilitating or supporting delivery.

National Planning Policy and Legislation

4.36 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out measures to conserve and enhance the natural environment, including protecting and enhancing sites for biodiversity, minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity including by establishing coherent ecological networks. Further, it makes clear that Local Plans should "take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries. Green infrastructure is a "network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities" and it helps address and mitigate the impacts of climate change, providing for recreation, biodiversity, health and wellbeing. On a detailed level, the NPPF highlights the importance in development of incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

4.37 The Environment Act 2021 created a new biodiversity net. gain (BNG) condition for planning permissions. All applicable developments are now required to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was before. A biodiversity metric is used to calculate the BNG of a development. As an incentive to focus nature recovery actions in the most strategic locations, development projects that create, enhance or recover habitat in locations which are mapped in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (see below) are given a higher biodiversity value than they would receive elsewhere.

Recording

4.38 The Biological Record Centres and Historic Environment Records Centres serving the North Wessex Downs play an important role as the main repositories for information on the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the National Landscape and its setting. In addition to gathering data and evidence from specialists, there is scope for greater use of citizen science, engaging the public in biological recording/monitoring of key species and habitats, including the presence of invasive non-native species.

"At length the snow ceases and the wind drops to a whisper; then over the hill-top the lapwings start up again and wheel in phantom flight, shrieking their weird night call."

EDWARD THOMAS (1878-1917)

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery: Key Issues

Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Biodiversity and Nature Recovery Valued Qualities:

a) Recording – significant gaps in our understanding of the distribution and abundance of habitats and species across the National Landscape and how to manage it most effectively for biodiversity.

b) Habitat fragmentation degrading ecosystem functionality. Dispersal and colonisation potential of wildlife populations is constrained, leading to loss of genetic diversity and risk of local extinctions.

c) Climate change - impacts of flooding, winterbournes, watercourses, carbon sequestration, vulnerable habitats, changes in the climatic range of species (both losses and gains). The resilience and response of species, such as shifts in distribution, will be strongly influenced by habitat availability and connectivity.

d) Continuing uncertainty over future UK land management patterns, in particular the future role of protected landscapes in farming and the potential for environmental land management schemes (ELMs) to deliver significant biodiversity improvements across the farmed landscape, and retain improvements secured through past land management support schemes.

e) Direct and indirect effects of agricultural intensification and land management changes having continued negative impacts on farmland habitats and species.

f) Lack of management and other pressures leading to the loss and degradation/decline of priority habitats and species.

g) Nesting success and productivity is often insufficient to reverse declines or even to sustain current populations of many ground-nesting birds.

h) Negative impacts of invasive non-native species on native wildlife and habitats.

i) Economic fragility of low input/extensive farming systems and cost of replacement infrastructure (fencing, water supplies etc.) leading to loss or deterioration of semi-natural habitats through poor management.

j) Need for grazing - lack of livestock to manage remaining areas of semi-natural chalk grassland and restored or newly created grassland, movement restrictions, recreational pressure, bovine tuberculosis testing and movement regulations.

k) Degradation and loss of river and wetland habitats through inappropriate management, development, increasing water demand, pollution, eutrophication, past human engineering, shading and climate change.

l) Lack of or poor management of much woodland, including ancient woodland, and hedges causing a decline in biodiversity.

m) Existing green infrastructure network - erosion of lane and byway verges by increased traffic use and larger vehicles, lack of resources and management to maintain biodiversity and secure enhancements.

n) Change from the use of grass gallops (some of which retain remnant areas of chalk grassland) to artificial surfaces in the racing industry.

o) Increased recreational pressure, with dog-worrying of livestock, disturbance to vulnerable ground-nesting birds, and erosion of chalk grassland and other fragile habitats..

p) Development within the NWDNL and its setting - direct loss of habitat and wildlife and creation of obstacles to nature recovery networks through built development, and indirect impacts, e.g. increased recreational pressure from bigger human population, increasing population of domestic pets, domestic lighting affecting invertebrates and bats.

q) Pesticides in the environment adversely impacting terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates (inc. pollinators).

r) Lack of reliable, coherent long-term resources necessary to recover nature at scale, e.g. to meet 30x30 challenge.

s) Dearth of experienced and skilled advisors with agri-ecological skills to advise farmers and land managers.

t) Threat of smaller, family farms that may support more biodiversity having to be sold and absorbed by bigger, highly commercial agri-businesses.

u) Green finance and markets still evolving with challenges for farmers and landowners to understand opportunities and find trustworthy viable partners.

v) Nature poverty, people not having, or not understanding how to have, access to nature.

w) Plastics polluting the environment especially streams/rivers, including micro plastics and plastics used in farming.

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery: Priorities

1. Collaborative action to implement the NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan, aligned with Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
2. Action to meet DEFRA targets and contribute towards 30x30, as set out in this Plan.
3. Develop an expanded and connected nature recovery network in the North Wessex Downs which is resilient to the impacts of climate change and allows the free movement of habitats and species throughout the landscape and beyond.
4. Foster a more equitable partnership between people and their natural environment, ensuring land use decisions respect nature, farming practices share space with nature and recreation is effectively managed to protect vulnerable habitats and species.
5. Enable landscape-scale initiatives that respond to the central position of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape within the geography of the Big Chalk.

Biodiversity and Nature Recovery: Policies

BNR 01 Support the delivery of NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan priorities and targets in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. To ensure effective management of all priority habitats and species in the National Landscape.

BNR 02 Resist proposals which will lead to the direct or indirect degradation or loss of nationally or locally designated wildlife sites, priority habitats or populations of protected and priority species.

BNR 03 Encourage a co-ordinated and consistent approach by Local Nature Recovery Strategies to nature recovery networks, aligned with North Wessex Downs priorities, across the National Landscape and its setting.

BNR 04 Support farmers and land managers in restoring, creating and maintaining a resilient network habitats with thriving populations of key species, guided by the Nature Recovery Plan and LNRS priorities.

BNR 05 Support efforts to understand and respond to the localised impacts of climate change on vulnerable habitats and species within and surrounding the North Wessex Downs, to improve resilience and adaptation.

BNR 06 Encourage and support landscape-scale action for habitat management, restoration and creation.

BNR 07 Support and encourage actions to enable grazing on all the main grassland areas of the National Landscape.

BNR 08 Support the development of initiatives to safeguard and develop habitat corridors and ecological networks throughout the National Landscape, and in particular to enhance the ecological value of road verges and similar linear features such as public rights of way and National Trails.

BNR 09 Support Catchment Partnerships and other key stakeholders including water companies to promote and deliver projects to conserve, restore and enhance chalk streams, rivers and other waterbodies to achieve good ecological status.

BNR 10 Encourage and support restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites and protection and management of woodland generally for nature recovery, as well as its recreational, carbon storage and economic value.

BNR 11 Encourage the greater connection between people and the natural environment, promoting responsible access to nature in appropriate locations, and effectively communicate its value to people.

BNR 12 Support the County Biological Record Centres and Historic Environment Records Centres serving the North Wessex Downs as the main repositories for information on the biodiversity and cultural heritage of the National Landscape and support initiatives to engage the public in biological recording/monitoring.

BNR 13 Support research, including to understand the causes of declines in key species such as ground-nesting birds and support appropriate action to rebuild populations, and use of tools such as citizen science to monitor the impact of habitat restoration and improved management practices in the National Landscape.

BNR 14 Secure maximum biodiversity gain and protection of ecosystem goods and services through innovative use of emerging environmental mechanisms including Environmental Land Management schemes, natural capital, carbon markets, biodiversity net. gain etc.

BNR 15 Resist proposals which have a likely significant effect (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects) upon a European designated site unless it can be ascertained following an appropriate assessment that they will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site concerned.

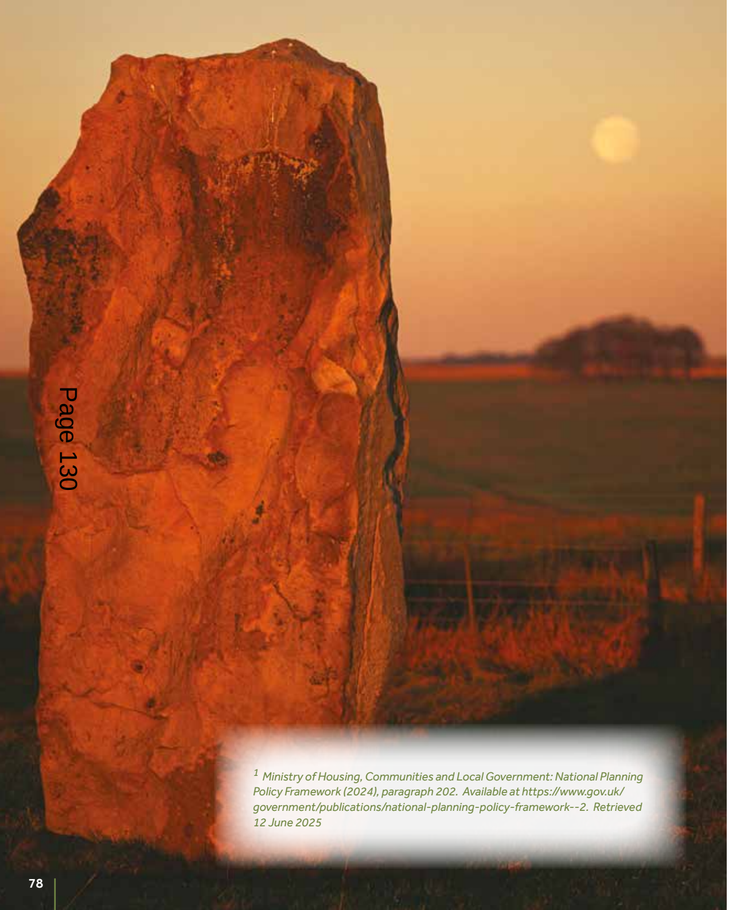
BNR 16 Realise the potential for actions that align nature recovery with the rich cultural heritage of the North Wessex Downs, e.g. hedge restoration and management, arable reversion to grassland on historic monuments, sensitive woodland management etc..

CHAPTER 6

Historic Environment

Overview:

- **Neolithic and Bronze Age ritual and funerary monuments** including Knap Hill and Windmill Hill causewayed enclosures, West Kennet and Wayland's Smithy chambered tombs, Silbury Hill, Avebury stone circle and its surrounding ceremonial landscape, and Bronze Age round barrows including Seven Sisters and Seven Barrows groups. Also other features such as the Ridgeway.
- **Iron Age, Roman and post-Roman defences and settlements**, including hillforts at Oldbury, Barbury Castle and Uffington Castle, the Roman town of Cunetio (Mildenhall), Littlecote villa, the Roman road through Savernake Forest, Fyfield and Overton Down field systems and the linear earthworks of the Wansdyke, Grim's Ditch and Devil's Ditch.
- **Mediaeval and post-mediaeval settlements and buildings,** including castle earthworks, tithe barns, parish churches, and the layouts and historic buildings of Marlborough, Hungerford, Ramsbury and many smaller villages.
- **Country houses and landscaped parks and gardens** such as at Basildon Park, Highclere Castle, Tottenham House and Ramsbury Manor and Savernake Forest, many originating as mediaeval deer parks.
- **Post-mediaeval buildings and infrastructure** including the Kennet and Avon Canal, extant and former railway lines and tunnels, watermills, windmills, pumping stations, water meadows, 18th–19th-century planned farmsteads, historic trackways and paths, and First and Second World War airfields, pillboxes, ammunition dumps and practice trenches.



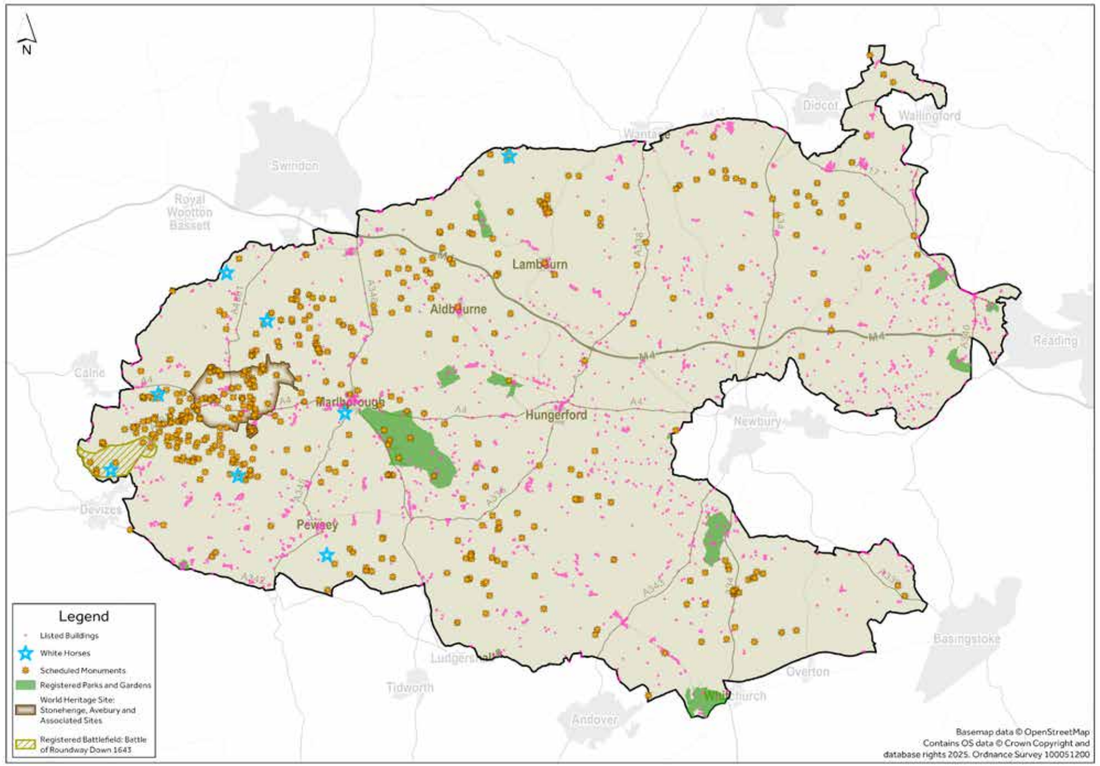
[1] *Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government: National Planning Policy Framework (2024), paragraph 202. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2. Retrieved 12 June 2025*

5.1 The North Wessex Downs is an ancient landscape, shaped by human hands. This cultural heritage makes a powerful and fundamental contribution to the present-day landscape and to our own lives, as Bill Bryson neatly describes. Evidence of human influence on the area extends back at least 5,000 years when the long barrows at Avebury were constructed.

5.2 In the three thousand years since the Uffington White Horse was sculpted, the landscape of the North Wessex Downs has been continually shaped to serve the changing needs of the successive generations of the people who have lived and worked here. What we see today is a rich and many-layered patchwork of features that demonstrate the different stages in its evolution. Together these features contribute an irreplaceable sense of time and character to the present-day scene. Past human influence is etched in every facet of the landscape – in the shape of fields and woods, the alignment of tracks and lanes, the form and texture of villages and hamlets, even the courses of streams and rivers. In years to come, the landscape of the North Wessex Downs will continue to evolve, but, it is to be hoped, in ways that will allow the underlying reminders of its past to add meaning and value to the lives of its future residents and visitors.

5.3 The importance of the historic environment is clearly recognised in the planning system. The National Planning and Policy Framework (NPPF) confirms that significance of heritage assets lies not only in their interest and value to people today but also to future generations.[1] That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. The significance of an asset derives not only from physical presence, but also from its setting – in other words, its relationship to nearby historic places and within the wider landscape.

5.4 Furthermore, the NPPF states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource which deliver wide social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits. Change is inevitable and so in the face of mounting threats, careful management is needed. There is a deficit in the understanding not only the historical evolution of individual settlements and how this should influence their future development, but also in the overall quantity of archaeological assets in the NWD, particularly in woodland areas. Where it is available, LiDAR data and its analysis can greatly help as a first step in understanding archaeological assets in woodland.



Features of the North Wessex Downs

5.5 A wide range of features of differing scale, visibility and significance make up the historic environment. Many of the area's archaeological sites have national or international recognition. The landscape that includes the complex of Neolithic and Early Bronze Age monuments around Avebury (and including Silbury Hill, West Kennet long barrow, the causewayed enclosure on Windmill Hill, dozens of Bronze Age barrows and many other important sites) is of such global significance that it has been inscribed on the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site.

5.6 There are 478 Scheduled Monuments in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, one of the densest concentrations in the country. These include:

- **Neolithic long barrows at Wayland's Smithy high on the chalk ridge overlooking the Thames Valley and at Adam's Grave above the Vale of Pewsey.**
- **Bronze Age barrow cemeteries such the Lambourn Seven Barrows and the Windmill Hill complex (barrows comprise over 60% of the scheduled monuments in the NDWNL).**
- **The Uffington White Horse and its adjacent Iron Age hillfort, (one of a string of major late prehistoric monuments that occupy prominent positions on the higher downs).**
- **The small Roman town at Cunetio near Mildenhall and Roman settlements such as Maddle Farm and the villa at Littlecote.**
- **The mediaeval motte and bailey castles at Hamstead Marshall and Marlborough College.**

5.7 One Registered Battlefield is included within the National Landscape: Roundway Down, near Devizes. This site was the location of a major encounter fought in July 1643 when a Parliamentarian army was heavily defeated by a significantly smaller Royalist force.

5.8 In addition to designated archaeological features, the local Historic Environment Records (HERs) maintained by the County Councils in Hampshire and Oxfordshire and the unitary authorities in Wiltshire, Swindon and West Berkshire, are estimated to contain records of close to 12,000 sites, monuments and finds of archaeological and historic interest within the boundary of the North Wessex Downs. Whilst these features may not be designated as scheduled monuments, many of these sites are of national importance. Many others are of local or regional significance and make a substantial contribution to local distinctiveness and sense of place. 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 have evolved over several thousand years.

5.9 Another important aspect of the local heritage is the extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and byways, including the ancient ridgeway paths along the Marlborough Downs to the Chilterns and beyond. These historic communication and trade routes are a characteristic feature of the North Wessex Downs and, in addition to being a legacy of human activity, they are now a valuable recreational resource.

5.10 The built environment also makes a fundamental contribution to the landscape. The North Wessex Downs contain 4,088 Listed Buildings. More than 250 of these are listed at Grade I or II*, the two highest levels of importance. Buildings protected through listing take many different forms and reflect nearly a thousand years of human settlement. As well as grand country houses, the market towns in the National Landscape are peppered with town houses of wealthy merchants and the villages are host to splendid mediaeval parish churches. Listed buildings in the North Wessex Downs also include very early farm buildings and barns, as well as locks and other structures associated with the Kennet and Avon Canal. Listed milestone markers, roadside pumps, and signs related to turnpike roads tell the story of moving about the post mediaeval landscape, and pillboxes built during the early phase of the Second World War illustrate the North Wessex Downs' part in the planned defence of Britain against expected invasion.

5.11 The North Wessex Downs include 15 Registered Parks and Gardens. One of these, Highclere Castle, is registered Grade I, and four examples, Tottenham House, Purley Hall, Ashdown House and Inkpen House, are registered as II*. Many other areas of designed landscape, including historic parkland, gardens and cemeteries, whilst not on the National Register, nonetheless add significant local value.

5.12 As with the undesignated archaeological resource, many local buildings and structures remain unprotected through the listing mechanism. Even so, they contribute both to our understanding of historic events or processes, and to the overall narrative of the National Landscape. Some of these lie within the Conservation Areas designated by local authorities in settlements of particular historic character or significance. Many others, however, particularly isolated structures or farm buildings, receive little or no formal protection.

5.13 A further heritage asset, often overlooked in terms of importance to the historic landscape, is managed woodland. This can include deer parks, hunting forests, irreplaceable ancient woodland, as well as ancient and veteran trees, historic pollard trees and coppice stools. These areas, managed sensitively, can play a significant role in protecting archaeological earthworks from damage from cultivation.

Historic Landscape Character

5.14 Defining and mapping the Historic Landscape Character Areas for the North Wessex Downs has provided new insights into the evolution of the landscape and the historic processes that have influenced the countryside. Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) is a way of analysing and recording how several millennia of human interaction with the land produces the rural landscape of today. It is nationally recognised as a means for understanding and managing the entire landscape and not just the individual and often isolated archaeological sites and buildings traditionally protected by scheduling or listing. Written in the Land is a publicly available resource which draws on HLC data to provides an insight into the archaeology and history of the North Wessex Downs, and can be accessed via the North Wessex Downs website.[2]

5.15 A greater appreciation of how the landscape has evolved in relation to its underlying geology, human interventions and activities, and changing socio-economic circumstances is vitally important. The HLC methodology brings together a wealth of information, including semi-natural and living features (e.g., woodland, hedges, waterways) as much as archaeological features, with a clear recognition of the dynamic nature of the landscape, interpreting landscape on the basis of its 'time-depth' – the natural and cultural history that has produced the landscapes we find in the North Wessex Downs today.

5.16 The HLC process facilitates a fuller understanding of the whole protected landscape, not only raising awareness of the unique cultural heritage of the North Wessex Downs among local communities, visitors and the wider population, but also providing a tool for the integrated management of the area's historic environment. The resource informs planning decisions and provides a framework for policy-making and research, whilst improving the county-based Sites and Monument Records (SMRs) and Historic Environment Records (HERs).

5.17 HLC has confirmed that the landscape of the North Wessex Downs has always been predominantly rural, but it has also illustrated how its detailed character has changed over time. One of the most significant statistics concerns the loss of open chalk downland. Of the 18% of the area that could be characterised as unploughed pasture in 19th century, barely 3% survived in the early 21st century[3].

5.18 The rate of agricultural change is also evidenced by the fact that nearly 75% of pre-18th century field enclosures have been lost during the 20th century. In addition, some two-thirds of mediaeval assart enclosures (woodland clearances) have been lost or significantly modified in the same period.

"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."

BILL BRYSON (INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE, 2000)

Settlement Pattern

5.19 The pattern and distribution of settlement within the North Wessex Downs has evolved over millennia of human occupation. However, most of the current towns, villages, hamlets, and farms are likely to have originated in mediaeval or post-mediaeval times. Some of the most characteristic features of the 'Downland' and 'Downland with Woodland' landscape character areas are the long linear settlements of the river valleys – the main concentrations of population in otherwise open uninhabited downland. Characteristically, these are 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. Examples are at St Mary Bourne in Hampshire, Collingbourne Kingston in Wiltshire and Hampstead Norreys in Berkshire.

5.20 The pattern in the Lowland Mosaic landscape character area is distinctly different. This reflects its mediaeval origins in 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-mediaeval 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 the creation of many of these settlements was during the Early Mediaeval (Saxon) period.

5.21 Another distinct settlement type of the North Wessex Downs is the string of small, spring-line villages that developed along the base of the lower north-facing scarp. Examples of these aesthetically attractive villages are Clyffe Pypard, Clevancy, Liddington, Letcombe, Ashbury, and Bishopstone.

[2] *https://www.historicnorthwessexdowns.org.uk/*

[3] *Wyvern Heritage and Landscape Consultancy for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership: North Wessex Downs National Landscape Historic Landscape Characterisation report 2012, page XX.*

Historic Environment: Key Issues

Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Historic Environment Valued Qualities:

Development pressure

a) Inappropriately sited or poorly designed new development that fails to reflect the historic fabric and visual character of traditional market towns and villages.

b) Insensitive conversions, inappropriate siting of agricultural buildings or infrastructure for renewable energy and transport.

c) Erosion of traditional mixed character of settlements from infilling and over-expansion on small plots.

d) Limited consistency in the designation and management of Conservation Areas, in particular the systematic use of Conservation Area appraisals and management plans.

Land management practices

e) A decline of traditional agriculture and industry leading to changes in land and woodland management.

f) Loss of grazing animals, threatening archaeological sites with damage from uncontrolled scrub encroachment.

g) Uncontrolled or inappropriate scrub management makes archaeology more vulnerable to burrowing animals.

h) Deep ploughing over archaeological sites and remains.

i) Negative impacts to buried and undesignated archaeology from planting trees or biomass crops directly on archaeological features.

j) Some modern farming practices impact on the overall character of the historic landscape.

k) Inappropriate tree planting and wetland creation as a response to national targets and green finance incentives threaten both archaeological sites and visual landscape character.

Poor understanding and limited engagement

l) Poor or incomplete understanding of some aspects of heritage in the North Wessex Downs, particularly woodland.

m) Limited data for condition monitoring of sites at risk.

n) Narrow audience demographic engaged with heritage in the landscape.

o) Insufficient accessibility to the heritage of the wider landscape to enhance people's enjoyment and understanding of the North Wessex Downs.

p) Inappropriate or illegal use of off-road motorised vehicles, which places sensitive sites at risk.

Historic Environment: Priorities

1. Increase the knowledge and enjoyment of the North Wessex Downs heritage and culture by local residents, visitors and the wider public, and bring a love of heritage to wider parts of society.
2. Seek new discoveries of unknown heritage assets and improve understanding of those already identified, to reveal the significance of the historic environment and cultural heritage of the National Landscape.
3. Develop a better understanding of the current condition of heritage assets of the National Landscape, beyond the Heritage Risk Register.
4. Promote wider use and understanding of Historic Landscape Characterisation to inform and guide strategic planning, development decisions, land management practices and other forces for change.
5. Secure greater protection for archaeological and historic features, sites, and their landscape settings in the face of inappropriate development or management practices, or forms of access that can cause damage.

Historic Environment: Policies

HE 01 Encourage and facilitate work to improve the condition of designated heritage assets that are on Historic England's Heritage At Risk register and explore the designation or greater protection of other heritage assets through work with local Historic Environment Records, Historic England and Natural England.

HE 02 Encourage and support collaborative activity on poorly understood aspects of the local historic environment, involving professional and voluntary sectors, such as research and advice from historic environment experts and use of citizen science.

HE 03 Work closely with the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site Partnership and other groups to develop shared objectives and deliver joint actions in support of the World Heritage Site Management Plan.

HE 04 Encourage and support the production and publication of local lists of heritage assets.

HE 05 Encourage owners of designated heritage assets to create Conservation/ Heritage Management Plans and manage/restore assets appropriately.

HE 06 Promote opportunities to include the historic environment in community-generated Village Design Statements, Parish and Neighbourhood Plans etc., linked where appropriate to Conservation Area Appraisals.

HE 07 Promote and encourage the use of Historic Landscape and Historic Settlement Characterisation to inform land management, policy making and planning decisions.

HE 08 Support more, better, and joined-up explanation, interpretation and promotion of the historic environment for residents and visitors.

HE 09 Encourage the sensitive restoration of historic buildings for new uses, where appropriate and in alignment with National Landscape purposes, to ensure their long-term survival.

HE 10 Encourage improvements in agricultural practice to remove or mitigate the threat to archaeological sites from arable cultivation, e.g. through ELMS.

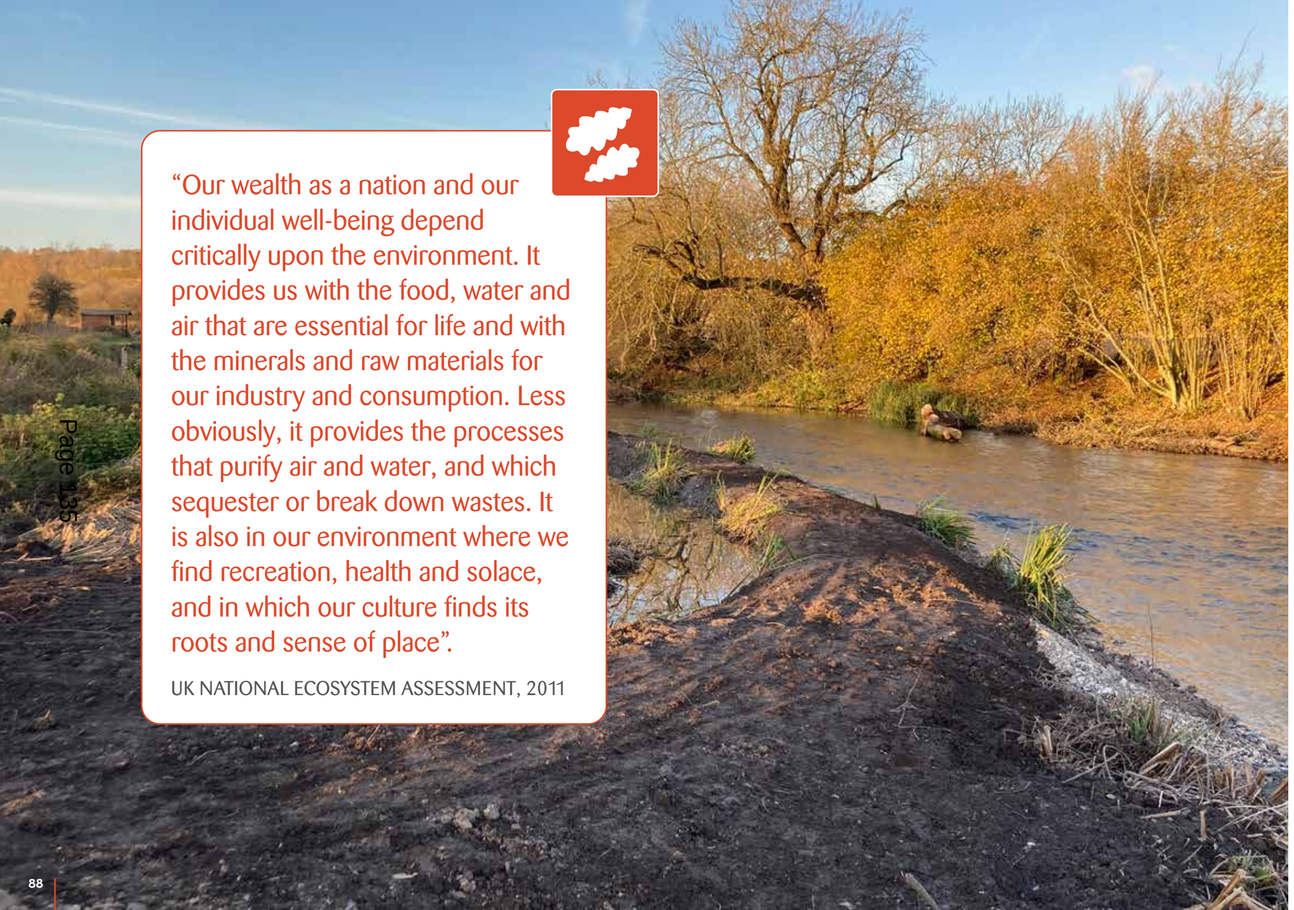
HE 11 Encourage the consistent use of Conservation Area appraisals and management plans as important considerations to inform planning decisions.

CHAPTER 7

Natural Resources & Climate Change

Overview:

- Cretaceous, Tertiary and Quaternary **geological history**, with features such as Sarsen Stones.
- This geology in turn influences the main **soil types** of the North Wessex Downs:
  - Thin chalk soils of the open downland, now primarily under arable production.
  - The capping of Quaternary Clay with Flints over the chalk found as pockets of reddish-brown clay containing flint pebbles. These areas 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.
- Carbon storage in the characteristic habitats of the North Wessex Downs such as chalk grassland and broadleaved woodland.
- Rivers with shallow sloping banks, clean shallow 'washed' **river gravel beds** (riffles) contrasting with deeper shaded pools.
- 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. Upper winterbourne sections and winterbourne tributaries, flowing only during winter and spring when groundwater levels are at their highest.
- **Clear natural water** fed from the chalk aquifer by springs which issue in the valleys of the chalk dip slope at the point where the water table comes to the surface. Limited fluctuations in water temperature throughout the year, resulting from the filtration of groundwater as it percolates through the chalk.



> “Our wealth as a nation and our individual well-being depend critically upon the environment. It provides us with the food, water and air that are essential for life and with the minerals and raw materials for our industry and consumption. Less obviously, it provides the processes that purify air and water, and which sequester or break down wastes. It is also in our environment where we find recreation, health and solace, and in which our culture finds its roots and sense of place”.
>
> UK NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT, 2011

Accounting for Natural Benefits

6.1 **Wh**ether we live in towns or in the countryside, we are dependent on ecological systems (ecosystems) for our health and well-being. The components of the natural environment that provide us with these benefits are known as natural capital. The benefits which society derives from natural capital assets (ecosystem services) are commonly grouped into four core categories of services:

- **Supporting services (for example the processes which form soil, cycle nutrients and the essential photosynthetic process in plants).**
- **Provisioning services (for example, woodland that provides timber for fuel, construction and manufacturing; plant communities which sustain populations of insects to pollinate crops).**
- **Regulating services (for example, soils and aquifers that absorb rainfall reducing flooding, and filtering water to give us healthy rivers and clean drinking water).**
- **Cultural services (for example, landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage that give us a sense of identity, support tourism, offer recreational and learning opportunities, assist our physical and mental well-being and delight the soul).**

6.2 The UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA 2011) identified that inadequate consideration in decision-making of the full range of natural benefits and services that we derive from the natural environment is a significant factor contributing to the degradation of ecosystems. The Follow-on report (2013) (NEAFO 2013) emphasised that “the natural world, its biodiversity and its constituent ecosystems are critically important to our well-being and economic prosperity, but are consistently undervalued in conventional economic analyses and decision-making”[1] and concluded that embedding knowledge of our ecosystems and their services into project, programme and policy appraisals, is critical for decision-making. While we pay for some ecosystem services, like food and fibre, we are often unaware of the importance of others, such as natural purification of water and air, and the attenuation of flood water. The cost of providing these artificially is considerable. In the years after the highly technical UK NEA reports were published, the environmental campaigner and writer Tony Juniper explained ecosystem services in an accessible and readily understandable format using a series of examples from around the world (in What has Nature Ever Done for Us?) and from around the UK (in What Nature does for Britain). These illustrate clearly the tendency to under-estimate the value of natural processes and the services and benefits we derive from the natural world. This leads to poorly informed decisions on how to safeguard these functions and utilise natural resources sustainably. The result is pollution, depletion of biodiversity, degraded ecosystems and substantial damage to the processes which are vital to life on Earth. There is a significant financial cost to restore ecosystem functionality or, if it is feasible to do so, to replace such functions with artificial alternatives.

6.3 Just as there are costs to restoring degraded ecosystems, there are benefits and savings from a healthy and naturally functioning environment. Degraded ecosystems present risks to businesses in terms of security of raw materials, waste disposal, insurance rates and brand image. In the North Wessex Downs, there are obvious direct links between ecosystems and the business activities of land-based industries such as farming and forestry (where soil health clearly underpins ecosystem function and the products from the land) and rural tourism. Associations can be less obvious or indirect for other businesses and relate, for example, to supply chains and investment choices.

6.4 In the rural landscape, sustainable agriculture and forestry could deliver widespread positive effects on ecosystems in the area. Grants, subsidies and advice can support and promote sustainable approaches to land use among farmers, foresters and other land managers.

[1] UK National Ecosystem Assessment Follow-on – Synthesis of the Key Findings, UNEP-WCMC 2013.

Conserving Resources and Maintaining Ecosystem Function

6.5 Protecting natural resources and the natural benefits arising from them by operating in a way that minimises damaging impacts is part of sustainable development. There is a particular need to conserve soil health, manage water and maintain clean air.

Soils

6.6 Soils are cultivated to produce essential items of food, clothing and fuel. Soils also deliver natural benefits, influencing water flows; storing carbon, and supporting wildlife habitats and nutrient cycling. The Government's strategy for soils in the DEFRA Environmental Improvement Plan sets out a case for improving soil health and protecting peatland by addressing factors such as erosion, compaction and decline of organic matter. The stated policy objective is that *"By 2028 we will bring at least 40% of England's agricultural soil into sustainable management through our new farming schemes, increasing this to up to 60% by 2030."*[2] Healthy soils are one of the indicators chosen to monitor and evaluate progress.

6.7 Chalk forms the underlying surface geological structure of the North Wessex Downs but the overlying soils influence vegetation cover and land use. Each soil type in the area has its own management requirements.

Sustaining Water Resources

6.8 The main rivers flowing through the Downs – the Pang, the Lambourn and the Kennet – drain eastwards to the River Thames. Watercourses flowing off the northern escarpment into the vales also feed the Thames catchment. The separate catchments of the Hampshire Avon and the Test flow south, draining the Vale of Pewsey and Hampshire Downs respectively. The escarpment in the west around Calne falls into the Salisbury Avon catchment, flowing west.

6.9 The status and condition of both surface waters and groundwater in terms of quality, availability and flow is important to people and to habitats and species in the National Landscape. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership is committed to supporting the work of Catchment Partnerships, water companies, local planning authorities and other interested groups to help assess, protect and enhance these important assets.

6.10 One in four residential and commercial properties in England is at risk from flooding. Flooding costs the UK economy £2.2 billion a year, with projections indicating a 27% increase by 2050. In the North Wessex Downs, localised flooding of villages in the river valleys in the winter is regular, and climate models indicate that flooding at the scale experienced in January 2024 is likely to be more frequent and have greater impact. The most severe flooding has been caused by a combination of high groundwater, surface water and river flooding. Flood risk management may include the provision of sustainable measures to alleviate future flood risk, for example Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) incorporating biodiverse rain gardens, attenuation basins and wetlands and Natural Flood Management (NFM) schemes involving attenuating surface water runoff from agricultural land, river restoration, river floodplain enhancement and the creation of wetlands. The NFM approach delivers sustainable flood resilience, biodiversity gains, improvements in water quality, carbon capture, and enhanced health and wellbeing for communities. Groundwater flooding is a challenge particular to chalk landscapes and NFM is not usually a solution to this type of flooding, although it can reduce surface water flooding.

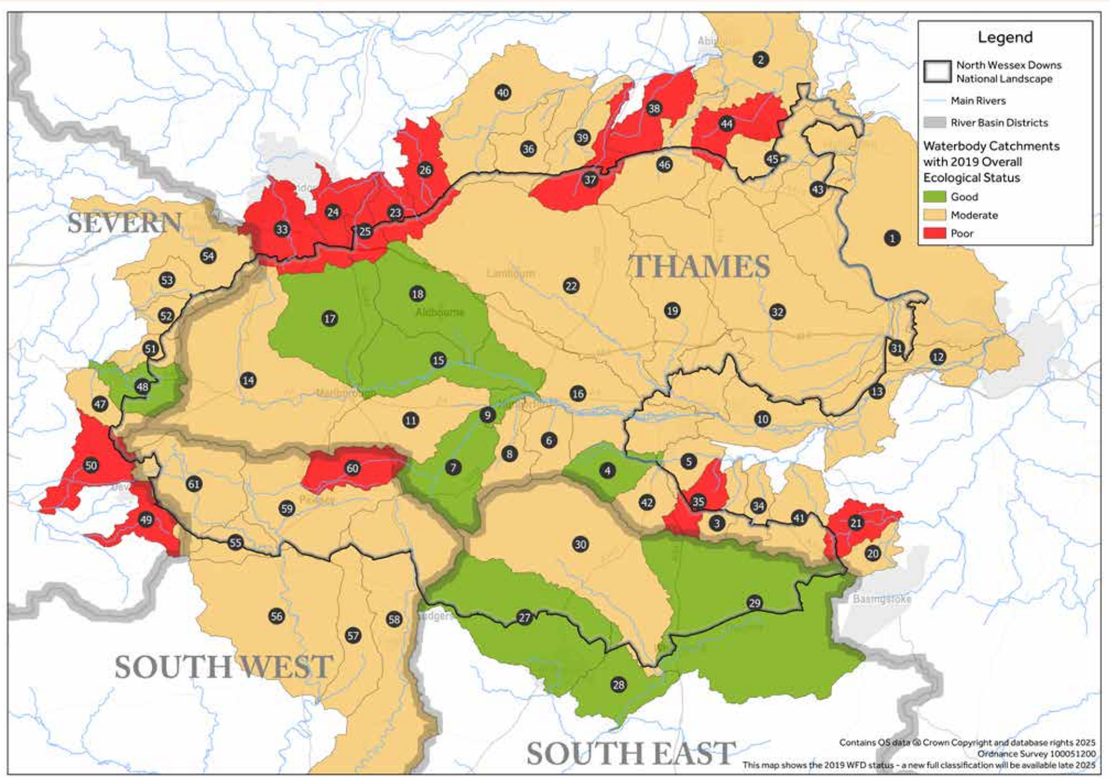
6.11 In summer, some rivers suffer from lack of flows because of water abstraction. At its most extreme it leads to dry river beds and the death of aquatic life, but more subtly it leads to ***a deterioration in water quality and ecological diversity caused, for example, by*** reduced capacity to dilute inflows downstream from sewage treatment works or to transport silt resulting in its deposition. Pressure for abstraction from the chalk aquifers that feed these rivers is directly related to the rising demand for water, including from new development. Drainage structures and other features modify natural flow regimes. Climate change, the deterioration of assets, as well as continuing pressure to build in areas of high risk flood zones, will contribute to increased risk of flooding affecting local communities. Gradual urban creep from paving gardens, tarmacking tracks and infill development can significantly increase volumes of storm water runoff, leaving drainage networks unable to manage.

6.12 The waters of the chalk aquifers and rivers are a major source of potable water. Ground waters from within the river catchments are abstracted to meet demands for public water supply and for industry, agriculture and aquaculture (watercress and fish farms). The level of abstraction and effect on river flows varies across the area.

6.13 Groundwater abstraction points in the Kennet valley are numerous, The Chalk Stream Restoration Strategy expresses abstraction as a percentage of recharge (A%R) and considers 10% to be a sustainable level. Across the North Wessex Downs abstraction varies from 1.1% of recharge on the Pang to 33% of recharge on the Enborne., A long-running programme of investigations and licence changes to make groundwater abstractions more sustainable across the National Landscape is still under way, with low flow investigations on the Kingsclere Brook and Upper Kennet in progress. All licence reductions are still dependent on other sources of supply being available. Overall, pressure on rivers from abstraction has reduced in the last 20 years, but it is critically important that new development should not be allowed to reverse these hard-won gains.

[2] *Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - First revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan, DEFRA 2023*

No.	Waterbody name	Ecological status
1	Thames Wallingford to Caversham	Moderate
2	Thames (Evenlode to Thame)	Moderate
3	Ecchinswell Brook (source to Enborne)	Moderate
4	Enborne (Source to downstream A34)	Good
5	Enborne (downstream A34 to Burghclere Brook)	Moderate
6	Inkpen Stream (source to Kennet)	Moderate
7	Upper Dun	Good
8	Shalbourne (source to Kennet at Hungerford)	Moderate
9	Kennet and Avon Canal and Dun above Hungerford	Good
10	Kennet (Lambourn confluence to Enborne confluence)	Moderate
11	Froxfield Stream	Moderate
12	Holy Brook	Moderate
13	Lower Kennet (Sheffield Bottom to Reading)	Moderate
14	Upper Kennet to Marlborough	Moderate
15	Middle Kennet (Marlborough to Hungerford)	Good
16	Middle Kennet (Hungerford to Newbury)	Moderate
17	Og	Good
18	Aldbourne	Good
19	Winterbourne	Moderate
20	Vyne Stream	Moderate
21	Bow Brook (Pamber End to Bramley)	Poor
22	Lambourn (Source to Newbury)	Moderate
23	Lenta Brook, East of Swindon	Poor
24	Cole (source to Lenta Brook)	Poor
25	Liden Brook, Swindon	Poor
26	Tuckmill Brook and tributaries	Poor
27	Anton - Upper	Good
28	Test - Bourne Rivulet to conf Dever	Good
29	Test (Upper)	Good
30	Bourne Rivulet	Moderate
31	Sulham Brook	Moderate
32	Pang	Moderate
33	Ray (Wiltshire) source to Lydiard Brook	Poor
34	Kingsclere Brook (Source to Enborne)	Moderate
35	Earlstone Stream and Burghclere Brook (source to Enborne)	Poor
36	Stutfield Brook (source to Ock)	Moderate
37	Letcombe Brook	Poor
38	Cow Common Brook and Portobello Ditch	Poor
39	Childrey and Woodhill Brooks	Moderate
40	Ock (to Cherbury Brook)	Moderate
41	Baughurst Brook	Moderate
42	Penwood Stream	Moderate
43	Cholsey Brook and tributaries	Moderate
44	Moor Ditch and Ladygrove Ditch	Poor
45	Mill Brook and Bradfords Brook system, Wallingford	Moderate
46	Ginge Brook and Mill Brook	Moderate
47	Willow Brook (Bristol Avon and North Somerset)	Moderate
48	Marden - source to conf Cowage Bk	Good
49	Worton Str - source to conf Semington Bk	Poor
50	Summerham Brook	Poor
51	Abberd Bk - source to conf R Marden	Moderate
52	Hoppingstone Stream	Moderate
53	Cowage Bk - source to conf unnamed trib	Moderate
54	Brinkworth Brook	Moderate
55	Hampshire Avon (West)	Moderate
56	Hampshire Avon (Upper) u/s Nine Mile River confl	Moderate
57	Nine Mile River	Moderate
58	Bourne (Hampshire Avon)	Moderate
59	Hampshire Avon (East) and Woodborough Stream	Moderate
60	Hampshire Avon (East) and Deane Water	Poor
61	Etchilhampton Water	Moderate

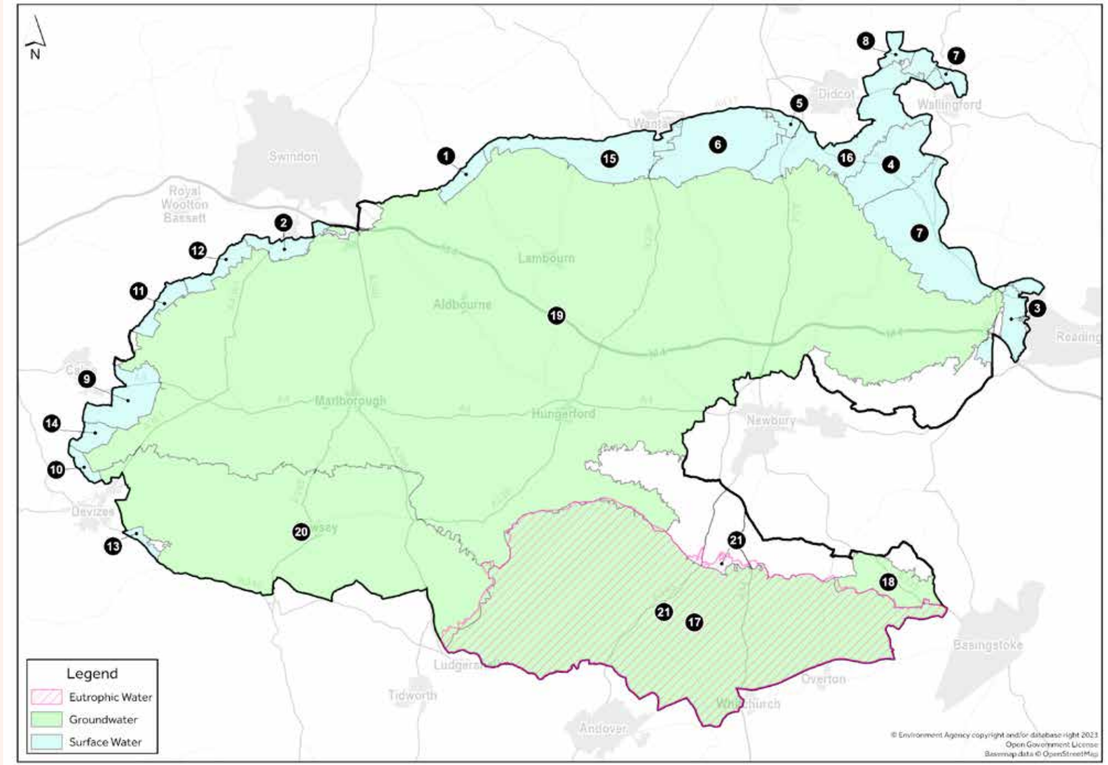


6.14 At the same time, the operational requirements of the Kennet and Avon Canal have an effect on the Kennet. Between Bath and the summit at Crofton Pumping Station the Canal is fed by the Bristol Avon; between the summit and Kintbury by the River Dun, a tributary of the Kennet; and between Kintbury and Reading by the Kennet. There has been significant progress amongst the various parties to minimise the impacts of the Canal on the river and vice versa. Under the Kennet Water Level Management Plan, examples of where action has been taken to optimise flows in the river channels are the diversion of the Froxfield Stream under the Canal to flow directly into the Dun, and the better management of Sherman's Hatches to augment important flushing flows in the Kennet during high flow (previously, more winter flow was siphoned off the Kennet into the Canal via the Kintbury feeder, bypassing long sections of braided river channel). As a result, loss of flow from reaches of the Kennet to the Canal is currently deemed not to be significant in terms of impacts. . There remain issues with water quality, especially where the Canal and river come together. Small tributaries including the Pear Tree Bottom and Inkpen Streams are known to bring high volumes of sediment into the slow-moving canal., Actions to address water quality pressures have included the construction of bypass weirs at canal locks west of Hungerford to reduce canal water spilling over into the River Dun. Wet winters in 2024 and 2025 have tested these beyond their design limits and canal overflows remain a challenge for the river. It is a clear objective of the Canal and River Trust 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. It is a clear objective of the Kennet Catchment Partnership to minimise the impact of the canal on water quality in the river.

6.15 Under the Nitrates Directive, the majority of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape is designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ). 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. They are also required to keep records of cropping, stocking and the application of nitrogen fertilisers and manures. As a consequence of post-war farming practices, nitrate level in groundwater is high across the North Wessex Downs, which has ecological impacts and renders some groundwater sources of drinking water unuseable without treatment or dilution.

6.16 Further control of diffuse pollution is a requirement of the Water Framework Directive. There is an obligation to manage river basins to deliver good environmental outcomes in both surface waters and groundwater. Agriculture is recognised as one of the main sources of diffuse pollution of water courses and groundwater. DEFRA encourages Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) as a key approach to resolving this by managing land in a way that is sensitive to the ecological health of the water environment. While farming is not the sole cause of diffuse pollution, it does contribute approximately 60% of nitrates, 25% of phosphorus and 70% of sediments along with other pollutants which enter our surface waters.

No.	NVZ Name	NVZ Type
1	Tuckmill Brook and tributaries	Surface Water
2	Thames (Churn to Coln)	Surface Water
3	Sulham Brook	Surface Water
4	Cholsey Brook and tributaries	Surface Water
5	Moor Ditch and Ladygrove Ditch	Surface Water
6	Ginge Brook and Mill Brook	Surface Water
7	Thames Wallingford to Caversham	Surface Water
8	Thames (Leach to Evenlode)	Surface Water
9	R Marden - source to conf Abberd Bk	Surface Water
10	Summerham Bk - Poulshot Str to conf Semington Bk	Surface Water
11	Cowage Bk - conf unnamed trib to conf R Marden	Surface Water
12	Brinkworth Bk- Hancocks Wtr to conf R Avon (Brist)	Surface Water
13	Worton Str - source to conf Semington Bk	Surface Water
14	Willow Brook (Bristol Avon and North Somerset)	Surface Water
15	Ock and tributaries (Land Brook confluence to Thames)	Surface Water
16	Mill Brook and Bradfords Brook system, Wallingford	Surface Water
17	Hampshire Chalk	Groundwater
18	Kingsclere and Greywell	Groundwater
19	Berkshire Downs	Groundwater
20	South Wessex	Groundwater
21	Hamble Estuary Eutrophic (TraC)	Eutrophic Water



6.17 Sewage treatment works serving communities in the North Wessex Downs discharge both treated and untreated sewage effluent into our rivers. Marlborough Sewage Treatment works was the first in the country to benefit from phosphate-stripping, and the long-term data show the benefit in reducing phosphate levels in the Kennet as a consequence. Across the North Wessex Downs there are more than 100 storm overflows, which spill untreated sewage into rivers for tens of thousands of hours every year when groundwater is high or after rain. Chalk streams have been prioritised in water companies' storm overflow reduction programmes but no real improvement is expected until 2030. Some rural communities within the National Landscape are served by private septic tanks, which do not provide a reduction in phosphate and require management and maintenance to function effectively.

6.18 Untreated run-off from roads drains into rivers in the protected landscape. For example, the M4 motorway drains directly to both the Lambourn and the Pang. This storm water carries complex chemicals known as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), as well as hydrocarbons which both bioaccumulate and are carcinogenic. There is little research and no regulation regarding these pollution but it is an emerging threat to the health of rivers and communities.

Maintaining Air Quality

6.19 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 but can travel long distances, chemically reacting in the atmosphere to produce secondary pollutants such as acid rain or ozone. The nearest monitoring site to the North Wessex Downs is at Harwell. Other sites are in Reading town centre, Newbury, Thatcham, Bath and Oxford. Pollution is low but there may be local issues such as environmental quality relating to traffic pollution.

Climate Change

6.20 There is clear and mounting evidence that global climate change is accelerating, primarily due to human activity, including use of fossil fuels for transport and energy, deforestation, changes in land use and industrial processes. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (2021) confirms that human influence has unequivocally warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land, with significant consequences for biodiversity, agriculture, water resources, and communities. In response, the UK Government has committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008 (amended 2019).

6.21 The UK Climate Projections 2018 (UKCP18) provide the most up-to-date assessment of expected climatic shifts. For southern England,
these include:

- **hotter, drier summers, increasing risks of drought and water scarcity;**
- **milder, wetter winters, leading to greater flood risks and soil erosion; and**
- **more extreme and unpredictable weather events, including storms, heatwaves, and seasonal shifts.**

6.22 These changes will affect land use, biodiversity, water resources, ecosystems and community resilience in the North Wessex Downs. While some shifts may be gradual, many impacts require urgent action due to the time needed for implementation.

6.23 Based on the UK Climate Projections 2018 (UKCP18), the UK's third Climate Change Risk Assessment (published in 2022) and the National Adaptation Programme 2023-2028 are key initiatives that define climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. The North Wessex Downs Partnership is keen to refine its understanding of the impacts of climate change and develop strategies for adaption to these effects.

6.24 Making Space for Nature outlined four key ways that we can adapt our ecological networks to a changing climate:

- **Ensure that all parts of the network are in the best possible management.**
- **Increase the population sizes of vulnerable species.**
- **Reduce the risks of local extinction.**
- **Provide colonists for new sites.**

6.25 The Making Space for Nature principles remain relevant, with the Environment Act 2021 and the Environmental Improvement Plan (2023) further emphasising the need for nature recovery and increased ecological resilience.

Impacts on the North Wessex Downs

1. Water Resources and Hydrology

- Increased winter rainfall may cause more flooding and soil erosion, damaging historic landscapes and increasing sediment and nutrient runoff into rivers.
- Drought conditions in summer will contract the chalk stream network, with some perennial streams becoming seasonal winterbournes, threatening freshwater biodiversity.
- Changes in rainfall patterns will affect groundwater recharge, putting additional pressure on water availability for agriculture, wildlife, and local communities.

2. Biodiversity and Habitat Shifts

- Warmer temperatures and changing conditions will alter tree species composition, with the impact of ash die-back continuing, oak showing some resilience to climate change, whilst beech, which remains vulnerable to drought and storms associated with climate change, may decline. More drought-tolerant species like sweet chestnut and sycamore may become more prominent.
- Species distributions will shift, with some populations contracting, expanding, or migrating in response to climate pressures.
- The increased prevalence of invasive species and diseases (e.g. ash die-back, oak processionary moth, bluetongue virus) has the potential to threaten native species and ecosystems

3. Agriculture and Land Use

- Farmers may adapt their crop choices, incorporating drought-resistant varieties and possibly increasing biofuel cultivation.
- Livestock may face greater risks from heat stress and emerging diseases, requiring changes in herd management and pasture practices.
- Soil degradation risks will increase due to heavier winter rainfall and drought-stressed soils, necessitating better land management practices.
- Whilst renewable energy sources are essential, the integration of wind turbine and solar technology needs careful consideration to avoid negative visual impacts on the landscape, natural beauty, and ecological assets of the North Wessex Downs

4. Recreation and Tourism

- Warmer summers may increase visitor pressure on sensitive landscapes, particularly waterways and shaded woodland areas.
- Seasonal patterns of tourism may shift, requiring adaptive management to balance conservation and public access.

6.26 The North Wessex Downs Partnership is committed to refining its understanding of climate change impacts and developing effective adaptation strategies, in line with the latest scientific evidence and national policy frameworks.

6.27 To do this we must:

- **Allow species to adapt by shifting their distributions naturally to stay within their preferred 'climate envelope' through increasing connectivity (habitat patches and corridors and a network of protected sites to provide a more permeable landscape).**
- **Enhance the opportunities for species to stay within their climate envelope through small-scale local movements (as opposed to being forced into long-distance dispersal) by promoting landscape level heterogeneity within the National Landscape.**
- **Promote nature-based solutions, such as habitat restoration and connectivity and wetland restoration/creation.**
- **Enhance soil health and regenerative farming practices to reduce erosion and carbon loss.**
- **Increase tree canopy cover and hedgerow restoration/planting where they align with landscape character and National Landscape purposes, to mitigate temperature extremes and capture carbon.**
- **Improve water conservation measures and encourage sustainable land management.**
- **Strengthen biodiversity networks through the principles of Making Space for Nature, ensuring species have the ability to adapt and migrate as needed.**
- **Value the crucial role the extensive grasslands of the North Wessex Downs play in carbon sequestration and maintaining water quality, further supporting the vital ecosystem services within the landscape.**
- **Prioritise nature-based solutions to climate change..**
- **Prioritise climate change mitigation and adaptation responses that are landscape-led and enhance the characteristics, valued qualities, and distinctiveness of the North Wessex Downs**

6.28 In accordance with the UK government's third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3), the North Wessex Downs National Landscape will develop a dedicated Climate Change Adaptation Plan by 2028. This plan will be embedded within and directly linked to this Management Plan. It will outline specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely actions and objectives designed to adapt the National Landscape to the impacts of climate change, encompassing nature, people, and place. This Adaptation Plan will be reviewed and updated on a five-yearly cycle, aligning with future iterations of the Management Plan, ensuring a proactive and adaptive approach to climate change resilience.

Natural Resources and Climate Change: Key Issues

6.29 Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Natural Resources Valued Qualities:

a) Lack of agreement on the levels of acceptable environmental limits within the National Landscape.

b) The need to raise awareness of water quality issues.

c) Accelerated water run-off and soil erosion, especially on steeper slopes and under 'open' arable crops, such as maize.

d) Opportunities to encourage minimum tillage and careful application of inputs,

e) Overall air quality is generally good but activities outside the National Landscape can have a significant effect across the area; impacts of air pollution from road traffic and agriculture on ecosystem health is of concern.

f) Over abstraction of groundwater.

g) Increasing water demand, especially during the summer months, as a result of climate change and changing lifestyles.

h) 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.

i) The influence of climate change on groundwater recharge patterns, overall water availability and elevated temperatures in chalk streams.

j) Increasing water demand as a result of major development in the urban areas in and around the North Wessex Downs, also sometimes leading to export of water out of the National Landscape catchments.

k) 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).

l) Need to maintain wild fish stocks and quality of fisheries.

m) Excessive removal of bankside vegetation (on occasion associated with fisheries management).

n) Watercourse maintenance to conserve habitat, and a need for a change in emphasis from dredging to slowing the flow.

o) Loss of winterbourne channels through agricultural cultivation, or destruction of character of winterbourne channels by dredging.

p) Increasing lock movements on the Kennet and Avon Canal taking water from the River Kennet and its tributaries.

q) 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.

r) Impacts on ecology of rivers from diffuse sources of pollution - often individually minor but collectively significant - including run-off from roads, houses and commercial areas, run-off from farmland, and seepage into groundwater from developed landscapes of all kinds, resulting in raised nutrient levels and toxic algal blooms.

s) Pollution pressure on the River Kennet generated by poor water quality and boat traffic on the Kennet and Avon Canal.

t) Domestic pet flea treatments as a source of pollutant harm to water quality and river ecology.

Natural Resources and Climate Change: Priorities

1. Action to ensure that chalk rivers and streams in the National Landscape achieve and are maintained at good ecological status including, for example, appropriate riparian planting to mitigate elevated water temperatures predicted as a consequence of climate change.
2. Collaborative landscape-scale action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, for example through nature-based solutions (NbS).
3. Develop a Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the North Wessex Downs National Landscape
4. Ensure that all landscape interventions recognise and address the implications of climate change for the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.
5. Secure full recognition by decision makers of the importance of the North Wessex Downs landscape for the value of its natural capital and the environmental goods and services it provides to the economy and society as a whole, including heritage, water quality, healthy soils, food production, wildlife, flood management, carbon storage, recreation, health and well-being.

Natural Resources and Climate Change: Policies

NR 01 Support co-ordinated action, guidance and measures on soil health issues.

NR 02 Promote and encourage initiatives for the sustainable management of soil by farmers and other land managers to minimise soil degradation through erosion, compaction, pollution and impoverishment, particularly in the case of the thin chalk downland soils.

NR 03 Support landscape awareness and understanding among catchment partnerships in and around the North Wessex Downs, and encourage collaborative research, projects and management to protect and improve watercourses and catchments.

NR 04 Encourage all partners to take water demand and its consequences for landscape, ecology and fisheries fully into account in decisions regarding development, changes to land use or cropping patterns within the North Wessex Downs.

NR 05 Support the introduction of demand management measures for water use in those settlements that draw on the aquifers of the North Wessex Downs, and measures to monitor and reduce water wastage.

NR 06 Encourage action to identify and address the sources of diffuse and point pollution within the North Wessex Downs.

NR 07 Encourage co-ordinated remedial action through the Catchment Sensitive Farming programme and other partnership schemes to restore and enhance degraded river sections within the North Wessex Downs.

NR 08 Support measures to reduce abstraction and help businesses adopt new mitigation measures.

NR 09 Promote well designed Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), taking into account unique characteristics of the chalk geology and groundwater levels, which benefit water quality, water quantity, biodiversity and amenity in urban areas. Promote natural flood management initiatives, particularly upstream in the catchment, to maximise multiple benefits to benefit people and wildlife.

NR 10 Promote restoration and continued maintenance of rivers and river corridors to further biodiversity and amenity objectives – re-creating natural river channels and re-linking rivers with their floodplains where this would not damage artificial channels of historic and cultural importance.

NR 11 Develop a better understanding of the likely implications of climate change on the environment and economy of the North Wessex Downs.

NR 12 Support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane, from all possible sources.

NR 13 Support climate mitigation measures including nature-based solutions, energy efficiency improvements, better on-farm management of fertiliser and animal waste, biomass heating from local fuel stocks and small-scale renewable energy generation consistent with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the landscape.

NR 14 Engage with opportunities to improve the availability and accessibility of sustainable modes of transport (e.g. bus and rail services, cycling) recognising in particular the health benefits of active modes (walking, cycling, riding etc) and promote use their use.

NR 15 Encourage greater use of timber from sustainable woodland, and in particular short local supply chains to support forestry, woodland and wood products businesses in the National Landscape.

NR 16 Promote carbon sequestration as an objective and benefit of habitat creation and management of woodland and permanent grassland.

NR 17 Encourage and support simple greenhouse gas and carbon accounting to monitor the effectiveness of changes.

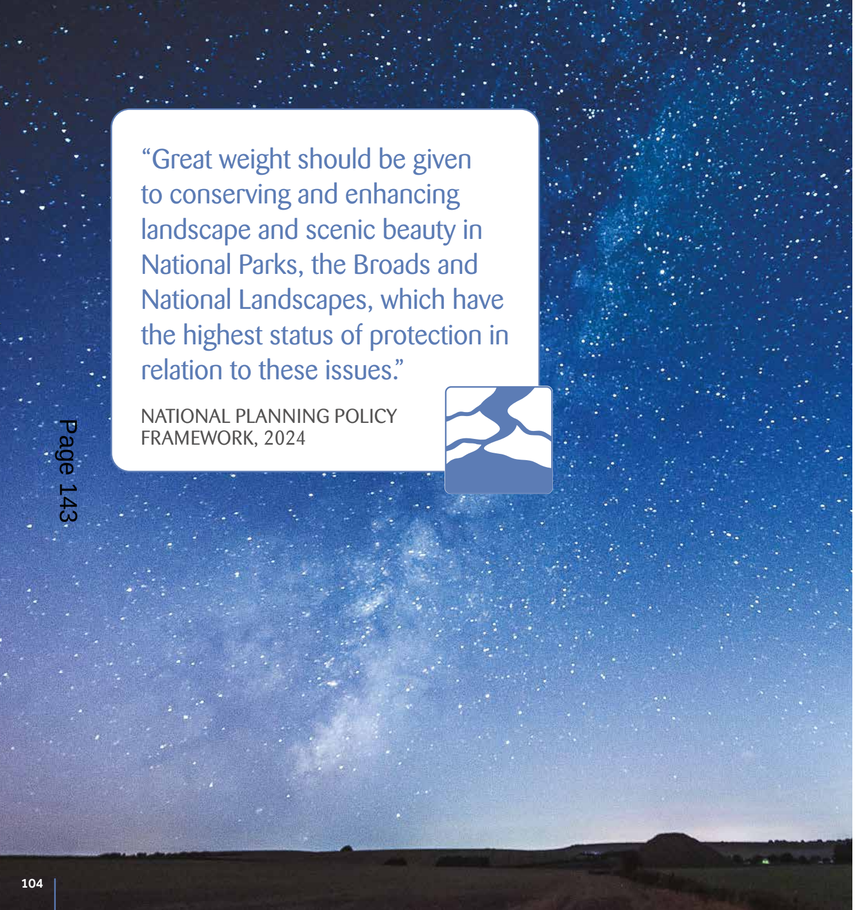
NR 18 Encourage and support knowledge exchange among landowners and farmers to adapt to the impacts of climate change, e.g. including sustainable farming practices, soil health, circular water economy principles (reduced usage, grey water re-use, increased resilience to water shortages), and micro-generation of renewable energy compatible with National Landscape purposes.

CHAPTER 8

Planning & Development

Overview:

- The sense of **remoteness and tranquillity** that comes from an undeveloped and rural quality with only limited human intervention, containing typically modest villages with distinctive and ancient settlement patterns:
- The **Open Downlands**, **Downland with Woodland** and **High Chalk Plateau** areas are generally very sparsely populated, containing scattered isolated farms, equestrian establishments or small hamlets sheltering in the dry valleys and folds of the chalk upland.
- **Wooded Plateau** contains a distinct pattern of settlement comprising a remote, largely uninhabited western plateau, smaller settlements such as Froxfield and a concentration of villages in the east of the area, in the valley of the River Dun.
- In the **Downs Plain and Scarp** character area, attractive spring-line villages cluster along the base of the Northern ridge or along the valley of Avebury Plain. 20th century military installations, including Wroughton Airfield and a First World War camp near Draycot Foliat, are dominant and defining features of the area.
- The Vales are settled landscapes with a concentration of compact small towns, clustered villages, hamlets and many dispersed residential and farm buildings, while the **River Valleys** display a concentration of nucleated and linear settlement including tiny hamlets clustered around a church, many small villages and market towns.
- The **Lowland Mosaic** remains one of the most densely settled landscape types, with a diverse range of settlements ranging from large manor houses, villages, numerous hamlets and lines of houses along the roads and lanes.
- **Distinctive architectural styles** that vary throughout the North Wessex Downs but within specific areas create a sense of place and vernacular local character due to the availability of local building materials and traditional building styles. This includes traditional knapped flint and brick, timber framed farm buildings, thatch and tiled roofs, use of sarsen stone, blue flint and tile and clunch and cobb walls.
- **Dark Skies** add to the beauty, tranquillity, and sense of remoteness of a place that connects all landscapes. In the North Wessex Downs you can find areas as dark as any in the country. Looking up at a starry sky or across a moonlight landscape in this special place is a memorable and magical experience.
- A **sparse and intimate road network** connecting settlements and landscape, but there is good access from a number of economically significant towns such as Swindon, Andover, Whitchurch, Basingstoke, Reading, Devizes, Newbury and Didcot, resulting in an economy that is largely outward looking towards these boundary towns and beyond.
- Within the North Wessex Downs, the **traditional land-based** and **rural economy** contrasts with a growing high tech and creative sector.



"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues."

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK, 2024

7.1 The North Wessex Downs are a sparsely populated landscape with a population density of 59residents per km2 across the National Landscape[1][ii] . The open, largely uninhabited downlands retain a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, a very special perceptual characteristic within this otherwise 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 National Landscape. The quality of this valued landscape makes strong direct and indirect contributions to the wider regional economy.

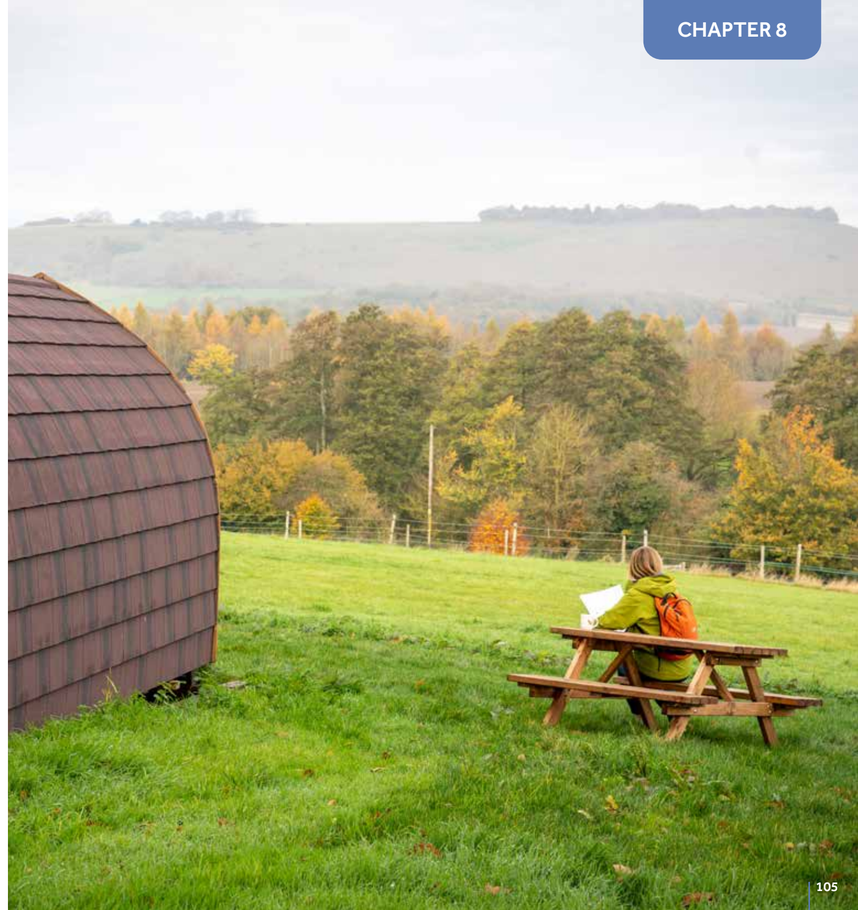
7.2 Despite the relatively low population density, there are development pressures on the North Wessex Downs. This is due to its location within south east England and its proximity to London, which makes it an attractive place to live, work and visit. There is a need to manage these pressures with sensitivity both within and in the setting of the National Landscape in order to maintain 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, and longstanding guidance states that "Particular regard should be paid to promoting sustainable forms of economic and social development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment."[2] However, the primary purpose of the designation - to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape - needs to be paramount when considering such issues.

7.3 There is also a need to ensure a consistent approach across the North Wessex Downs. The National Landscape currently extends across parts of nine different local authority areas, although proposals for local government reorganisation could reduce this during the Plan period. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Management Plan is a statutory document therefore, the North Wessex Downs looks to its constituent local authorities to adopt the Management Plan and use it to 'formulate their policy for the management of the area and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it'[iii].

7.4 In protected landscapes even more than elsewhere, a strong planning system is the unsung hero of environmental conservation and enhancement. Its value is often overlooked and underappreciated. Good planning provides certainty to landowners and investors, ensures consistency, enforces standards and supports community confidence. The process itself also has value in securing accountability for decisions, encouraging a degree of consensus about land use change and through scrutiny and discussion, often delivering better outcomes than would have otherwise resulted.

[1] ONS (2024) Population estimates for national landscapes in England and Wales by single year of age and sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022

[2] Countryside Commission: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: a policy statement CCP 356, 1991, p.5.



Relationship with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

7.5 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that planning policies and decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside[iv]. Paragraphs 189 and 190 provide specific guidance for plan makers and decision takers in relation to National Landscapes. It states that 'great weight' should be given to conserving their landscape and scenic beauty and that these designated areas have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues[v]. It further states that the scale and extent of development in these areas should be limited. In particular, major development should be refused in National Landscapes, except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest. As stated in the NPPF[vi] 'whether a proposal is major development is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined'. The NPPF makes clear that land within the setting of the National Landscape is as important as the land inside the protected landscape boundary. The NPPF must be read alongside the supporting National Planning Practice Guidance which provides a basis for plan making and decision taking. This states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not automatically apply within National Landscapes[vii] and that applying policies relating to National Landscapes may mean that it is not possible to meet objectively assessed needs for housing and other development in full[viii].

7.6 A key element of the NPPF's 'environmental objective' (supporting the defined purpose of the planning system to contribute to achieving sustainable development) is the protection and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment. To support the overarching purpose and objectives, Local Plans should allocate land for development with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in the NPPF. The strategic policies in Local Plans should set out an overall strategy, and sufficient provision for, the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.[x]

7.7 The NPPF provides specific guidance on measures to protect, restore and enhance biodiversity assets and to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity, setting out principles to avoid a significant harm to biodiversity.[xi] Local Plan policies should clearly differentiate between land within and outside National Landscapes. Recognition of the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs by local authority partners will strengthen Local Plans.

The Approach to Development

7.8 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership supports pre-application discussions from applicants (the NWDNL staff unit offers a chargeable service) and with the relevant Local Planning Authorities. The protected landscape is a 'sensitive area' as defined under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and as such some forms of development may require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

7.9 The Environment Act 2021 introduced 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as a mandatory requirement for new development. The preference for on-site provision reduces the likelihood of large-scale BNG funding for nature recovery within the National Landscape. However, the North Wessex Downs is a protected landscape, and where BNG does apply the national status of the designation means there is a strong case for a higher BNG target which aims to deliver the priorities of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape's Nature Recovery Plan and Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

7.10 The North Wessex Downs is a living and working landscape. The North Wessex Downs supports the provision of affordable housing that meets evidenced local need (right development, right place) which meet the purposes of the National Landscape to conserve and enhance natural beauty. To achieve this, Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and development proposals within the National Landscape and its setting must be landscape-led. Allocations and development proposals should demonstrate an understanding of and respond to local context and natural beauty with the aim of encompassing a sense of place throughout the process. The North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment along with landscape sensitivity assessments and landscape visual impact assessments are essential tools in achieving a landscape-led approach.

7.11 The cumulative impact of development needs to be fully assessed. This is so as to avoid potential harm and erosion of the valued qualities of the National Landscape. This includes suburbanisation due to settlement extensions and smaller intrusions including changes to residential curtilages, extensions and outbuildings allowed as permitted development, street clutter/signage, increased traffic, noise and lighting.

Local Economy and Rural Business

7.12 The North Wessex Downs Partnership believes that promoting and supporting local enterprise is a key part of conserving and enhancing the character and valued qualities of the National Landscape. Local businesses are likely to:

- **employ local people;**
- **provide services to improve the local quality of life;**
- **spend money locally;**
- **promote community cohesion; and**
- **have a smaller environmental footprint (by reducing the transportation of goods from across communities).**

7.13 People like to live in a high quality environment. This attracts some businesses as it helps them retain staff. Support for small local businesses will provide local jobs and enhance the rural economy. For example, fast broadband is crucial for a healthy rural economy and we will work with relevant agencies to secure such infrastructure.

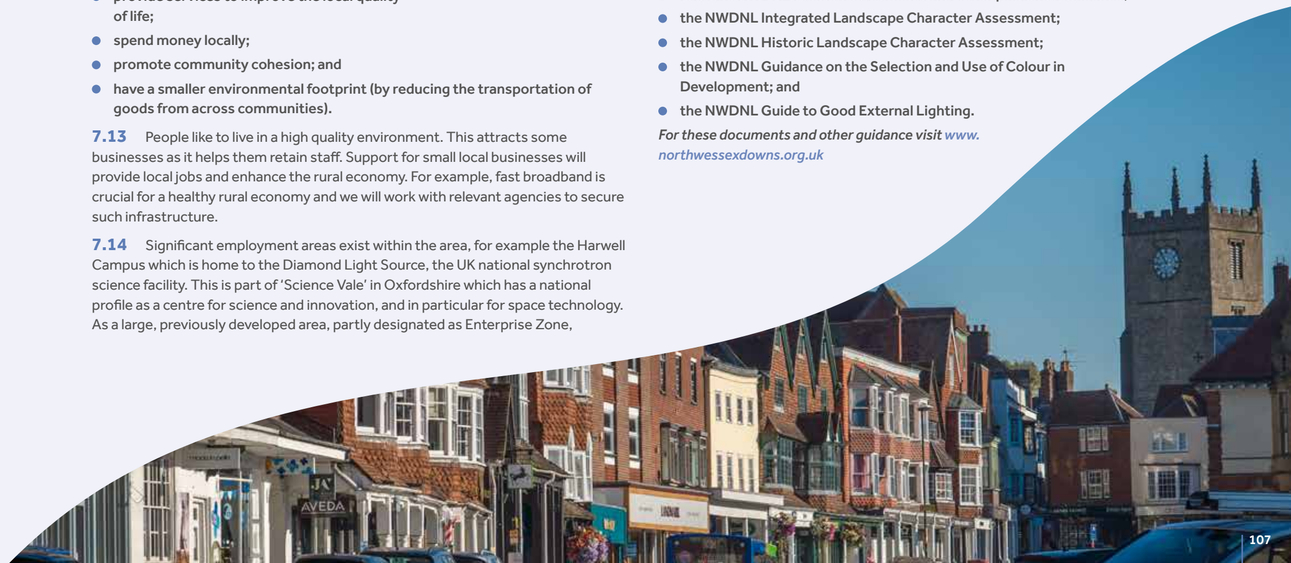
7.14 Significant employment areas exist within the area, for example the Harwell Campus which is home to the Diamond Light Source, the UK national synchrotron science facility. This is part of 'Science Vale' in Oxfordshire which has a national profile as a centre for science and innovation, and in particular for space technology. As a large, previously developed area, partly designated as Enterprise Zone, opportunities exist here for redevelopment and careful intensification of the site. Where such development occurs, it is important to recognise the purposes of the National Landscape designation and minimise any potentially adverse impacts on the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs.

Additional Guidance

7.15 When preparing plans and planning applications, those responsible should make reference to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan and all other relevant North Wessex Downs National Landscape guidance. This includes, but is not confined to, the following North Wessex Downs National Landscape documents:

- **the NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan**
- **relevant NWDNL Position Statements and other published Guidance;**
- **the NWDNL Integrated Landscape Character Assessment;**
- **the NWDNL Historic Landscape Character Assessment;**
- **the NWDNL Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour in Development; and**
- **the NWDNL Guide to Good External Lighting.**

For these documents and other guidance visit www.northwessexdowns.org.uk



Planning Conditions, Community Infrastructure Levy and Mitigation

7.16 It may be possible to overcome a planning objection to a development proposal by imposing a condition on the planning permission or by entering into a planning obligation (a Section 106 Agreement). Where this is appropriate, we may recommend planning conditions or a legal agreement to secure control over development and/or forms of mitigation. This will align with tests as set out in National Planning Policy Framework and supporting Planning Guidance and will be secured by our local authority Partners in forming decisions on planning applications.

7.17 We will seek financial or other contributions through Section 106 Agreements where possible to mitigate harmful impacts on the valued qualities of the National Landscape arising from new developments. We will also seek to access Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds from local authority partners to support identified landscape, nature recovery, community, green infrastructure and other environmental projects. A previous example of this is the IKEA development at Calcot in West Berkshire.

Remoteness and tranquillity

7.18 The sense of remoteness and tranquillity is core to rurality and the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs. It is central to the enjoyment and appreciation of the landscape and a key characteristic in all landscape character areas. Dark night skies in the National Landscape contrast dramatically with surrounding urban areas providing a sense of remoteness and wilderness. The widespread absence of artificial light allows the full wonder of the night skies and stars to be appreciated unimpeded by the night-time glow of our major urban areas. 'Artificial light at night has revolutionised the way we live and work outdoors, but it has come at a price. When used thoughtlessly, lighting disrupts wildlife, damages human health, wastes money and energy, contributing to climate change, and it blocks our view of the starry sky'[xii]. In some parts of the area there is already an ambient level of noise associated with transport networks and machinery. A certain level of activity and noise will always be expected within a largely farmed landscape and within larger settlements.

7.19 These valued perceptual and scenic 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. Concerns raised by local residents and users of the landscape over loss of these valued perceptual qualities will inform decisions on particular development proposals. New uses or new developments that individually or cumulatively result in a material increase in lighting, noise and/or activity in the countryside should be resisted. Dark skies add to the beauty, tranquillity and sense of remoteness of a place. As well as being integral to the valued qualities of the National Landscape, dark skies are important for the health of people, wildlife and heritage. The North Wessex Downs has areas as dark as any in the country. One long-term goal for the National Landscape is to be a place: Where a sense of remoteness and tranquillity predominates and where vast night skies can thrill the eye, unaffected by light pollution; where these valued qualities are recognised in development decisions within in the setting of the National Landscape, so that the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs is protected.

Sensitivities and constraints of the landscape to wind turbines

7.20 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership commissioned a study to identify the sensitivities and constraints of the landscape to wind turbines.[xiii] This work reveals that all Landscape types within the area are constrained to a degree. There are specific sensitivities and values that would be adversely affected by such forms of development.

7.21 Four landscape types (Open Downland; High Chalk Plain; Downs Plain and Scarp; and River Valleys) are considered to be highly constrained in relation to wind turbine development, where sensitivities to this form of development are high and any wind turbine is likely to have adverse impacts.

7.22 The remaining Landscape Types (Downland with Woodland; Wooded Plateau; Vales; and Lowland Mosaic) are considered to be moderately to highly constrained in relation to wind turbine development. The particular landscape characteristics and configuration of these Landscape Types is such 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 very limited.

Other Renewable Energy Projects

7.23 As a response to the climate crisis, there is a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The security of energy supplies is also a concern. These factors are likely to lead to an increase in renewable energy generation. There are already many well established and sensitively located forms of renewable energy projects across the area. These include:

- **micro-generation on individual residential and commercial properties;**
- **photovoltaic installations (some up to 1 ha in area);**
- **on farm bio-digesters;**
- **wood-fuel boilers; and**
- **hydro-electric generation projects within water courses.**

7.24 Large scale photo-voltaic arrays across farmland not only reduce the area of productive farmland but can have a significant effect on landscape character, shifting from a rural to industrial landscape which urbanises and unbalances the scenic quality, tranquillity and sense of place. To help meet net zero targets set by our local authority partners, the North Wessex Downs would support the installation of roof-based PV installations and small-scale solar arrays that are compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

7.25 Further information concerning the likely acceptability of differing forms of renewable energy projects is contained with the North Wessex Downs Position Statement on Renewable Energy.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

7.26 Green infrastructure (GI) is the network of multi-functional open spaces and other environmental features, including parks and gardens, woodland, green corridors, public rights of way, watercourses and water bodies ('blue spaces'), street trees and open countryside. There is an opportunity for new development to secure and enhance the area's GI network, including through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This will support the sustainable management of natural resources; the delivery of sustainable development; biodiversity enhancement through habitat connectivity; local flood management; and the provision of opportunities to improve health and well-being through access to green and blue spaces. Schemes that improve links, including in particular public rights of way, for walkers, cyclists, riders, and carriage drivers, as well as securing biodiversity and landscape enhancements will be supported. Where appropriate, new and existing GI features should provide the greatest range of functions possible to maximise benefits for people and wildlife.

Urban fringe and Setting

7.27 A number of sizeable and expanding towns lie just outside the North Wessex Downs, including Swindon, Wantage/Grove, Didcot, Newbury, Thatcham, Reading, Basingstoke, Andover and Calne. The agricultural economy on these urban fringes is under pressure due to uncertainty over the future, marginal viability and suburban pressures including vandalism and litter dumping. There is scope for such areas to become places of environmental and community opportunity, with and multiple uses. However, targeted action is required to deliver this potential.

7.28 The setting of the North Wessex Downs does not have a defined geographical boundary but it should be addressed as the area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials or design, can be considered to have an impact, either positive or negative, on the natural beauty and valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

7.29 The potential for harm on the setting of the area from large-scale urban extensions is substantial. The area within the setting of the North Wessex Downs forms part of a transitional corridor. In some areas, particularly the northern boundary, long-distance views in and out of the National Landscape can be significant as the intervisibility between landscapes enhances the sense of openness and tranquillity. Any new uses or development proposed outside but within the setting of the area should be guided by the North Wessex Downs Position Statement on Setting. Proposals should include detailed measures to mitigate against harm on and into the area. Forms of mitigation may include strategic landscape buffers, use of colour in building materials, careful design and restrictions on lighting, restrictions on building heights, care over massing and scale, care over roofscape design, or avoidance of development in the most exposed locations.

Built Environment and New Housing

7.30 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership's approach to the provision of new housing is set out in the North Wessex Downs Housing Position Statement. This emphasises that strategic levels of new housing within the National Landscape should be avoided except in exceptional circumstances, in line with national planning policy.[xiv] Land of least environmental or amenity value situated outside the protected landscape and its setting should be the first choice for development. Only where it is necessary to meet appropriate local needs should new housing be considered. This should be landscape-led within existing settlements, preferably on previously developed sites. Excellent design and siting of all new developments in the North Wessex Downs is essential. They should reflect the intrinsic character of the local landscape and avoid generic pastiche architecture that can have a suburban effect. New development will become part of the landscape's future cultural heritage and design should recognise and reflect this while sustainably meeting the needs of the present. A positive design approach (site capacity, layout, scale, materials and landscaping) that understands the site and surrounding landscape will improve the ability of a development to better integrate into the landscape.

7.31 Housing may also be delivered through the Neighbourhood Plan process. Such provision should still be in general conformity with any Local Development Plan and be appropriate in terms of landscape character and nature.

7.32 The replacement of small dwellings in the countryside with more grand houses can significantly alter the character of a site and local street scene, which can have a suburbanising effect on the rural character of the site and local area. It also reduces the supply of smaller rural dwellings. A replacement dwelling, when clearly disproportionate to the original, can be tantamount in its impact to a new dwelling, which is some areas would contradict national and local policy. Even where a site is well screened there is a wider concern to maintain the essential rural nature and qualities of the area. Large extensions on small dwellings also have the potential to erode local rural character.

Highways Infrastructure

7.33 The M4 (London to Wales) and the A34 (Southampton to Oxford) form the main arteries in a wider network of A-roads crossing the North Wessex Downs. Yet the overall impression is of a relatively sparse road network underlining the historical and current lack of settlement on the open downland. The only part 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 of ancient countryside with a Mediaeval settlement pattern.

7.34 More needs to be done to find imaginative and sensitive solutions to the maintenance of the existing highway network and the design of new roads. These should be sympathetic to the character and valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs landscape. Many rural lanes have a rich character of their own. The challenge is to retain that character whilst meeting modern highway safety needs. Particular problems occur when urban solutions are imposed on the rural setting. This is sometimes the result of safety guidelines Highway Authorities have a duty to comply with, but results in a loss of local character and the addition of lighting and clutter. The North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership will collaborate with the Highways Authorities to improve the existing highway environment and seek improvements to proposed new schemes. Examples could include better use of passing places and sensitive edge protection on lanes to prevent erosion of historic banks and species-rich verges. The development of new private driveways should retain rural character and to reflect the historic qualities of settlements.

7.35 The North Wessex Downs Unit has contributed to work that is helping to reduce the impact of highways infrastructure, such as through the Avebury World Heritage Site Transport Strategy.

Rail Electrification

7.36 Rail electrification has potential to cause widespread harm to landscape character and natural beauty. The failure of Network Rail to have regard for the purposes of protected landscape designation, as required by its duty under s. 85 of the CRoW Act 2000, when electrifying the Great Western main line in the mid-2010s led to a swathe of unnecessarily intrusive infrastructure in the Thames valley between Reading and Didcot through the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes. The Mend the Gap programme that resulted from that project is leading mitigation and enhancement work within the affected landscapes to soften and reduce the impact of the infrastructure on natural beauty.

7.37 The other main line that runs through the North Wessex Downs, the Berks and Hants route from Newbury towards Westbury and the south west, has also been proposed for electrification. It will be important for any future major infrastructure work to be landscape-led, with reference to the strengthened s.85 duty on all relevant bodies.

Minerals and Waste

7.38 It is national policy to avoid landbanks of non-energy minerals in National Landscapes. Mineral schemes that are major developments within the area should be refused planning permission unless it can be demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances and that the development is in the public interest.[xvi]

7.39 Waste proposals should substantially be meeting local needs. They should be of a scale relevant to the proposal and avoid greenfield sites. Any new facilities should be consistent with an up-to-date Local Plan, as defined in the National Planning Policy for Waste.

Planning and Development: Key Issues

7.40 Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the North Wessex Downs Development Valued Qualities:

a) The threat of expansion of the main urban areas just beyond the boundary of the North Wessex Downs, including the main centres of Swindon, Wantage, Didcot, Reading, Newbury, Basingstoke, Andover, and Devizes for example, creating urban fringe pressures and impact on the setting of the National Landscape.

b) New large free-standing dwellings as replacement dwellings in the open countryside.

c) The change of use of land from agriculture which has the potential to harm landscape character

d) The erosion of rural character through suburbanising influences from new development (new fencing, lighting, excessive glazing, signage, parking areas, paved footpaths, loss of native hedgerows and creation of new garden areas).

e) New housing developments on greenfield sites.

f) The threat of incremental housing development outside settlements from conversions, redevelopments or rural workers accommodation which are not clearly justified to be beneficial.

g) Impact on dark skies and tranquillity from external lighting (commercial, domestic and agricultural), especially where poorly directed or in an exposed location (not usually subject to planning control).

h) Potential for certain forms of development to intrude on the wider landscape, including telecommunications masts, pylons, wind turbine developments, photovoltaic schemes, and minerals and waste schemes, threatening the senses of remoteness and tranquillity, and landscape quality and heritage assets.

i) Unsuitable development of redundant previously developed and part-developed sites within the North Wessex Downs, especially redundant airfields and military sites (e.g. as at Wroughton), and the impact upon landscape quality and heritage assets.

j) New developments at the junction of the M4 and A34 or along their corridors which spread the impact from development yet further into the undeveloped parts of the National Landscape.

k) Impact from the racing industry from new gallops and facilities where inappropriately located and or designed.

l) Impact from equestrian uses and structures generally where new development is expansive in area, in greenfield locations, poorly designed and/or located on exposed sites.

m) Substantial new farm buildings and residential extensions where unjustified, poorly designed and or located in exposed locations that are deemed Permitted Development.

n) Development that results in a material loss of tranquillity and / or impact on the dark night skies within the North Wessex Downs or its setting.

o) New noise-creating activities, for example from quad or bike courses, microlight or other airstrips, shooting schools, kennels, new industrial, minerals or waste operations.

p) Large-scale new commercial uses or inappropriate farm diversification projects.

q) New road building, road and rail route upgrades and other large-scale infrastructure projects.

r) Impact of road signage, street lighting and other highway clutter on landscape character, including within settlements. Measures which have an urbanising effect on National Landscape character include: oversized, multiple and yellow-backed road signs; new street lighting in previously unlit locations; lighting that allows spillage or glare; road markings; concrete kerbing; illuminated bollards; fencing; and insensitive traffic-calming schemes.

Planning and Development: Principles

1. Ensure that the formulation and implementation of planning policies across the North Wessex Downs take full account of relevant authorities' statutory duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Landscape designation, conserving and enhancing the character and the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.
2. Ensure that all development proposals, including allocations at Local Plan stage, are landscape-led and development is based on identified need to sustain the vitality of local communities in ways that conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs.

REFERENCES

i Dark Skies of the North Wessex Downs – a guide to good external lighting
ii Population estimates for national landscapes in England and Wales by single year of age and sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022
iii Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, s.89(2).
iv NPPF (2024) paragraph 187.
v NPPF (2024) paragraph 189
vi NPPF (2024) paragraph 190, footnote 67
vii NPPF (2024) paragraph 11 d) footnote 7.
viii NPPF (2024) paragraph 11 b) footnote 7.
ix (19 NPPF (2024) paragraph 188.
x (20 NPPF (2024) paragraph 20.
xi (21 NPPF (2024) paragraphs 192-195.
xii International Dark-Sky Association
xiii https://www.northwessexdowns.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Wind_turbine_sensitivity_report_FULL_WEB.pdf
xiv (22 NPPF (2024) paragraph 189.
xv (23 NPPF (2024) paragraph 224(a).
xvi (24 NPPF (2024) paragraph 190.

Planning and Development: Policies

DE 01 Development and use changes within the North Wessex Downs and its setting must seek to further the purpose of the National Landscape (to conserve and enhance the Natural beauty of the protected landscape) and should demonstrate how they have had regard to the Management Plan and guidance produced by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership.

DE 02 Under the NPPF determining major development is a judgement for the local authority as decision taker; in determining this, plan makers and decision takers should consider the context of the locality and whether the development by reason of its scale, massing, character or nature, has the potential to have a significant adverse impact on the natural beauty and valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs. The potential for significant adverse impacts must include the consideration of both the impact of cumulative development and the individual characteristics of a proposed development or use of land.

DE 03 A landscape-led approach should be applied at the earliest stages of development of Local Plan policies and all development proposals within the National Landscape and its setting. Natural beauty must be a golden thread throughout all stages of the process and aim to encompass a sense of place. The North Wessex Downs Landscape Character Assessment along with landscape sensitivity assessments and landscape visual impact assessments are essential tools in achieving a landscape-led approach.

DE 04 Development within the National Landscape and its setting should be of high quality which responds to local context, including; historic settlement pattern, height, massing, roof form, density, materials (inc. colour) and local building vernacular. All development should actively seek to conserve and enhance local distinctiveness, sense of place, tranquillity, biodiversity, the historic environment and dark skies.

DE 05 Historic settlement patterns and valued green spaces within and surrounding settlements form part of the distinctive character and heritage of the North Wessex Downs. Neighbourhood Plans, Development Plan allocations and development proposals should identify these characteristics and ensure their value is recognised and retained.

DE 06 The surroundings of the North Wessex Downs and the protected landscape itself add value to each other as the landscape and landforms link visually and functionally, joining the surroundings to the National Landscape. Proposals for development or change of use in the setting should, therefore, reflect and respond to the inter-connectivity with the National Landscape, its landscape character, and valued qualities.

DE 07 Development (apart from exempted development) must encourage, support and promote biodiversity net. gain and contribute to nature recovery by protecting, restoring and providing for new and improved habitats and connected nature recovery networks.

DE 08 To ensure that dark skies and tranquillity are protected, no new uses or developments that individually or cumulatively result in a material increase in lighting, noise, pollution and/or activity that fails to conserve and enhance the valued qualities of the National Landscape should be permitted.

DE 09 To avoid and reduce the potential for light pollution, details of external lighting should be submitted alongside a lighting assessment as part of any development or new use within the National Landscape and its setting, to ensure it meets the standards set out in the NWDNL Good Lighting Guide.

DE 10 Encourage, support and promote good practice in the design and management of roads in the National Landscape and its setting that conserves and enhances the character of the landscape and settlements. Opportunities should be taken to reduce erosion and maintain or restore the character of rural roads through adoption of a low-key rural design approach to roads across the North Wessex Downs.

DE 11 Maintain the rural character and valued qualities of the National Landscape by preventing over development of sites and the erosion of local character. The following should be considered:

- The overall size, scale and massing of the replacement dwelling and/ or extension compared to the original (new dwellings should not be materially larger in terms of volume).
- Site context and local context including natural and built character and features, visual prominence and the local vernacular.
- Relationship within the local street scene/ rural countryside and potential to unbalance this.

DE 12 Proposals for farm diversification, including the re-use of buildings, should be considered positively provided they will conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the National Landscape and its setting and:

- can demonstrate that they meet a local need;
- contribute to the local economy;
- add value to land-based products; or form part of a whole farm/ estate plan endorsed by the NWDNL unit and the local authority

DE 13 To help meet net zero targets, a net zero design approach should be adopted for all new developments. The installation of roof-mounted photovoltaic solar installations and other small-scale renewable energy proposals that are compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape should be supported.

DE 14 Renewable energy schemes determined to be major development must demonstrate that the development is appropriate in location, scale and design which conserves and enhances the local landscape character and natural beauty of the National Landscape. Proposals for renewable energy should not have an adverse impact individually or cumulatively and should demonstrate that important views and tranquillity are maintained or enhanced.

DE 15 Encourage the retention of existing and provision of new 'Green and Blue Infrastructure'. Ensure that Green and Blue Infrastructure (including new or enhanced biodiversity assets) is incorporated within the area of all 'major developments', both within and in the setting of the National Landscape.

DE 16 Any development within the catchment area of watercourses within the National landscape and its setting, or supplied by water abstraction from the aquifers that feed them, must apply a nature-based approach to avoid, and if necessary mitigate, any potential impacts to this valued landscape asset/valued quality. Nutrient neutrality requirements may also apply in some catchments. The North Wessex Downs are home to globally rare chalk streams. These ecosystems are sensitive to change and play a key role in sustaining local biodiversity.

DE 17 New landscape enhancement proposals and/or mitigation should apply a nature-based approach which is informed by local context. The NWDNL Nature Recovery Plan and the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Non-native or invasive species will not be supported unless a valid reason can be demonstrated, and it meets the priorities of the Nature Recovery Plan and conserves and enhances local landscape and the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

DE 18 Encourage environmentally sustainable economic growth, new responsible tourism opportunities and diversification of the local economy of a scale and nature compatible with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the National Landscape.

DE 19 Breaches of planning controls that undermine the purpose of designation should meet with prompt and robust enforcement action.

CHAPTER 9

Communities

Overview:

- Containing a **dispersed and relatively small population** spread over a large area, the majority live in the small villages and the two market towns of Marlborough and Hungerford with the high downs including large expanses, without any significant habitation. The trend of young people leaving to relocate to areas with better service provision and cheaper housing continues, resulting in a higher proportion of middle aged and elderly people in many communities.
- Unemployment remains low and **economic activity** rates high, with many jobs in high value-added industries within a short journey from villages in the National Landscape. Swindon, Newbury and Basingstoke in particular maintain international reputations within the technology sector with some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. Remote working practices have increased since the pandemic, enabling more residents to work for distant employers while living in the National Landscape. The economic influence of London, the Thames Valley and north Hampshire is most keenly felt to the south east and east of the National Landscape and in particular those villages with good access to mainline stations.
- The **Armed Forces** continue to play a significant role in the local economy, especially in places such as Tidworth and Ludgershall to the south of the National Landscape on the Wiltshire-Hampshire border.
- **Good access to the wider area** and road network means that much of the National Landscape is highly accessible to commuters working in the adjacent towns. The east of the National Landscape continues to experience greater pressure on housing stock in West Berkshire, Basingstoke and Deane and South Oxfordshire.
- A well-structured and resourced **farming industry**, with substantial assets of land, machinery, knowledge and entrepreneurial ability, though facing significant challenges with the continuing transition to Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). Many examples of diversification into food processing, tourism and provision of space for economic activity can be seen across the North Wessex Downs.
- Villages and small towns with a **strong sense of identity and wellbeing** linked to the historic landscape, active and resourceful community groups.
- There is a strong local resonance and **affinity with the landscape** of the North Wessex Downs, particularly the individual downs and the river valleys and other outstanding features.

Communities of the North Wessex Downs

9.1 The North Wessex Downs National Landscape is not a wilderness. It is a distinct and recognisable area arising from a long history of human occupation and the sustainable use of its natural resources. There is a clear relationship between land stewardship, community, the economy and natural beauty; these features and functions combine to give the area its special character.

9.2 Within the North Wessex Downs there are 173 parish councils and two market towns, Marlborough and Hungerford. In mid-2022, the total population of the National Landscape was estimated as 102,352[1]. Post-pandemic working patterns have evolved, with a notable increase in remote and hybrid working arrangements. Many villages are now largely occupied by those who split their working time between home and offices outside the area. This has continued to stimulate rising house prices, with very significant pressure placed on the affordable housing stock. In addition, villages often have a reduced population during parts of the day, undermining the viability of 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.

9.3 To have sustainable communities in the North Wessex Downs they must be places where people want to live and work, now and in the future. Sustainable communities should be:

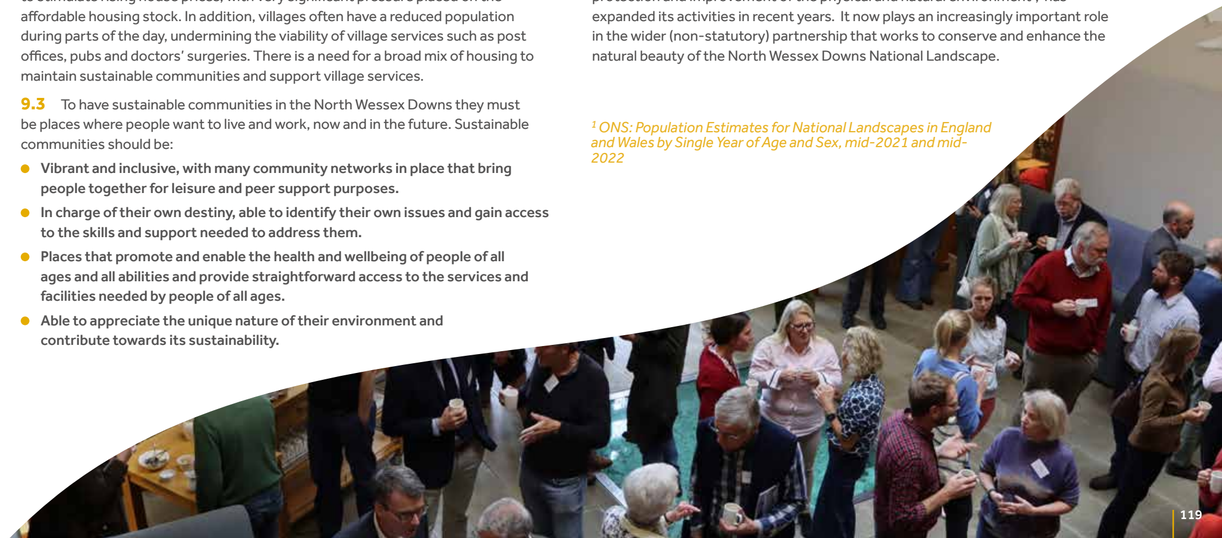
- **Vibrant and inclusive, with many community networks in place that bring people together for leisure and peer support purposes.**
- **In charge of their own destiny, able to identify their own issues and gain access to the skills and support needed to address them.**
- **Places that promote and enable the health and wellbeing of people of all ages and all abilities and provide straightforward access to the services and facilities needed by people of all ages.**
- **Able to appreciate the unique nature of their environment and contribute towards its sustainability.**

9.4 A number of parishes in the North Wessex Downs have undertaken community-led planning, and the number of Neighbourhood Plans in the National Landscape has continued to increase since 2019. Community-led plans include actions relevant to the social, economic and environmental objectives of the North Wessex Downs. We support this approach and provide advice and support to parishes where requested.

9.5 Most North Wessex Downs residents continue to have poor access to services when compared to regional averages, though digital service provision has improved access to some services.

9.6 The North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust, established in 2016 "To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape and its setting." [and] "To advance the education of the public in the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment", has expanded its activities in recent years. It now plays an increasingly important role in the wider (non-statutory) partnership that works to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

[1] ONS: Population Estimates for National Landscapes in England and Wales by Single Year of Age and Sex, mid-2021 and mid-2022



Employment and Training

9.7 The majority of the local economy remains part of a larger 'urban economy', a characteristic that is likely to have been reinforced and extended by the changes to living and working patterns in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many businesses benefit from the area's high landscape quality to either attract staff or customers. Agriculture, forestry and fishing businesses are the third-largest business types in the North Wessex Downs, accounting for approximately 10% of all businesses in the area.

9.8 The fundamental changes in the area's land-based economy continue to require new skills and the re-learning of old skills. There is a need to understand, define and then meet training and education needs. Support comes from:

- **National Training Organisations (such as LANTRA representing the land-based sector);**
- **Further education and training colleges;**
- **Representatives of community groups.**
- **Travel and Transport**

9.9 Local communities and visitors need access to services – a key issue for social inclusion. That access should be sustainable. The North Wessex Downs is within easy reach of three mainline railways:

- **The Waterloo to Exeter line with stations at Basingstoke, Overton, Whitchurch and Andover;**
- **The Paddington to Penzance line with stations at Kintbury, Hungerford, Bedwyn and Pewsey (and connections to Marlborough);**
- **The Paddington to Bristol and South Wales line with stations at Pangbourne, Goring, Cholsey, and Didcot.**

9.10 Outside the main towns that ring the North Wessex Downs, bus services remain limited and have faced further reductions in some places since 2019. Although the distribution of bus routes suggests that rural areas are well served, many of these services run only infrequently. Some routes between significant towns, e.g. Hungerford and Wantage, are not served at all. However, a number of innovative and flexible community transport schemes continue to operate within the North Wessex Downs. These often rely on the support of charitable funding and volunteers. During the last Management Plan period, the new Wiltshire Connect service has been rolled out to cover much of the western half of the North Wessex Downs. This includes both timetabled services and a flexible on-demand bus service supported by a dedicated app, that allows passengers to book from seven days to 30 minutes in advance.

Communities: Key Issues

9.18 Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Communities Valued Qualities:

a) Widespread lack of awareness of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape among local residents and businesses.

b) The towns which surround the National Landscape are all expected to accommodate significant housing and employment development.

c) Impact of the main strategic highway corridors running through the National Landscape, including the M4 and A34. Increased volumes of traffic or an increasing demand for quicker journey times may lead to pressure for widening and other 'improvement' schemes on these and other roads in the National Landscape and its setting.

d) Greater prosperity enjoyed by some people leads to other environmental impacts such as more over-flights by aircraft, more use of roads and rights of way for motorised leisure pursuits, and increased demand for second homes.

e) Loss of affordable housing, reducing the social mix within settlements and leading to a loss of essential rural skills and services.

f) Potential changes in demographic profile, social exclusion, access to services and loss of public transport routes and other key facilities.

g) The trend of commuting to higher paid jobs outside the National Landscape whilst living in the area is resulting in rising house prices, though increased remote working is changing some of these patterns.

h) High demand for traditional buildings to convert to residential use, so reducing the opportunities for business conversions.

i) The positive benefits of a strong and active community spirit in many National Landscape communities, including a rich artistic and cultural life.

j) Perceived limitations on opportunities for businesses in inaccessible locations, although improved digital connectivity is reducing some barriers.

k) Opportunities and risks for the National Landscape associated with instruments such as Neighbourhood Plans, which form an increasingly important element of local decision-making

l) Financial pressures reducing the ability for town and parish councils to participate in partnerships and community activities.

m) Lack of understanding of the impacts of daily lifestyle decisions on the environment of the North Wessex Downs – from individual travel decisions to the use of water as if it were an unlimited natural resource.

n) 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.

o) Government requirements that businesses running apprenticeship schemes must have business premises (many traditional land-based contractors do not have formal business premises).

p) The need for better understanding and awareness of the links between high environmental quality and ecosystem services and local business.

q) There are opportunities to increase involvement in local community activities to improve social cohesion and sense of belonging.

r) The need for local sources of employment and opportunities for local people to develop skills that could support them into self-employment or enterprise.

s) The need for a wide range of skills training for land managers and other rural enterprises within the North Wessex Downs.

t) The impacts of the transition to the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) on farming businesses and communities.

u) The opportunities and challenges presented by changes to living patterns in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, including increased remote working and use of telecommunications for shopping and access to services.

v) The role of communities in climate change mitigation and adaption.

w) Poor level and extent of bus services across some parts of the National Landscape.

x) The need to decarbonise travel and transport.

y) The challenges of enabling school-age children to learn about the history, management and conservation of the National Landscape.

Communities: Priorities

1. Support the development of the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust in pursuit of its charitable purposes to promote actions which underpin the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape.
2. Support and facilitate community-led initiatives that help deliver National Landscape purposes and Management Plan objectives.
3. Encourage an enhanced sense of respect and pride in the North Wessex Downs amongst local people and their increased participation in activities that raise the understanding and profile of the National Landscape.
4. Assist the development of connectivity, based on principles of planning and integrating multi-functional green infrastructure assets, from neighbouring urban areas and within the area, facilitating active and sustainable access to and around the National Landscape to make it easier for communities to experience and benefit from the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs.

Communities: Policies

CO 01	Support efforts to raise the profile of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape among communities within and surrounding the area.
CO 02	Provide parishes and all other relevant community groups and individuals with information and training as necessary to raise awareness of the valued qualities of the National Landscape and the need to conserve and enhance it.
CO 03	Encourage, support and celebrate local communities' engagement in the planning, conservation and enhancement of their local environment, protecting its natural beauty and enhancing the sense of local pride and ownership.
CO 04	Support communities to play their part in climate change mitigation and adaption, including projects to promote community use of renewable energy sources, consistent with National Landscape objectives.
CO 05	Publicise relevant community activities and events across the North Wessex Downs.
CO 06	Support community initiatives aimed at retaining rural services, including the combining of services where this will improve their viability.
CO 07	Support initiatives to foster awareness, understanding and appreciation of the National Landscape in local schools and encourage greater connectivity with nature and the environment in line with proposals in DEFRA's 25 Year Environment Plan and the 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan.
CO 08	Support initiatives to address the specific needs of different groups within and around the National Landscape, such as access to training and social activities for young people and engagement with under-represented and/or disadvantaged groups.
CO 09	Support provision of reliable and affordable broadband and mobile telephone connections throughout the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect the valued qualities of the area.
CO 10	Ensure the development and implementation of transport plans and programmes, including those related to the strategic highway corridors running through the National Landscape, addresses the needs of North Wessex Downs communities, reduces transport impacts on the environment, and conserves and enhances the valued qualities of the landscape.
CO 11	Support measures to enable active travel and provide integrated and demand-responsive passenger transport, including easily accessible information, across the North Wessex Downs that serves the needs of local people and visitors.
CO 12	Secure Travel Plans for new developments with significant traffic generation potential within the North Wessex Downs to reduce car use and encourage active and sustainable travel.
CO 13	Support good practice examples of community approaches that respond to locally identified needs and promote them as an inspiration to others (e.g. the establishment of local housing trusts, support for new village shops, community transport schemes, etc).
CO 14	Support communities in landscape-led approaches to enable the availability of housing for identified local needs that will be -and will remain- genuinely affordable in perpetuity, consistent with National Landscape purposes.

CHAPTER 10

Access, Recreation & Tourism

Overview:

- Offering some of the finest **cultural landscapes** in England including chalk downland, river valleys, ancient woodland, historic sites. There is recognition of the landscape in literature and the arts, with locations such as Watership Down, Uffington White Horse and the Wittenham Clumps inspiring well known works.
- **Historic attractions** reflecting the industrial and socio-economic history of the area including the Kennet and Avon Canal, Crofton beam engines and Wilton Windmill.
- **Picturesque market towns** and small villages with independent shops, superb pubs, restaurants and plenty of B&Bs and hotels. A growing reputation for local food and produce.
- **Rich archaeological history** and evidence of our ancestors that can be found in greater concentrations than much of the country.
- The **great country houses** at Highclere, Basildon Park, Littlecote, Tottenham and Ashdown and the medieval, Norman and Saxon churches
- The **extensive Rights of Way** network offering many opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the countryside away from crowds, by ramblers, cyclists and riders, including the Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails, access land, commons and accessible woodland
- A **'hot spot' for antiques** in Hungerford, Marlborough and Pewsey.

9.1 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. Tourist attractions of international renown within the North Wessex Downs include the 25 km2 (9.6 square miles) Avebury World Heritage Site (taking in Avebury Village, the Avebury Henge complex, as well as Silbury Hill, Windmill Hill and the West Kennet long barrow); the White Horse at Uffington; the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails; 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.

9.2 There are different types of users for access, recreation and tourism in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape who have different priorities and needs, and will engage with different partners across the area. These include tourists visiting or touring in the National Landscape; tourists to major destinations outside the protected landscape, e.g. Stonehenge, Blenheim, Oxford, or visitors on business who are staying in the North Wessex Downs for its proximity to other places; residents in the National Landscape; residents of adjacent towns; and groups who use the area for recreation, including ramblers, runners, road cyclists, mountain bikers, youth and school groups, horse riders and carriage drivers.

Rights of Way and Access

9.3 Access to the countryside is an important part of the lives of people who live in the area and also for visitors as a tourism asset. There is widespread recognition of the importance of using and enjoying the natural environment for health and well being, yet the potential of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape to enable and support this has so far been largely untapped. Government funding for access in the National Landscape tends to be short-term in nature and restricted to capital projects. Long-term commitment and resourcing will be needed to build links with t surrounding large towns and other communities to better understand their needs and facilitate their engagement with the landscape. The lack of convenient public transport imposes limits on the benefits and sustainable use of the protected landscape as a resource. The on-demand Wiltshire Connect bus service, which now serves a wide area linking Marlborough, Pewsey, Great Bedwyn, Hungerford and Devizes, is good example of what can be done to improve green travel options for residents and visitors.

9.4 Access and the needs of recreational users must be managed alongside those of farmers/land managers and objectives for nature recovery and heritage conservation. Wider and easier access should be encouraged where this can be achieved without conflicting with conservation aims or the landowner's use of the land. There may be opportunities arising from the growth of settlements on the fringes of the North Wessex Downs to mitigate some of the impact by improving and extending access.

9.5 The CRoW Act 2000 established access land which the public has the right to enjoy under certain conditions. There are 1,189 ha of open access land and 694 ha of registered commons in the North Wessex Downs. There are also permissive arrangements by which landowners grant access voluntarily or as part of inheritance tax agreements. At present some of this access can be difficult to determine due to the patchwork nature of its provision. In addition, there are 100 hectares of National Trust land to which there is access. An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in South East England (2007) found that the North Wessex Downs National Landscape had the smallest proportion of all accessible natural greenspace (4% of the total) across the South East Protected Landscapes. No more recent data have been found to indicate whether this has changed in recent years]

9.6 Of the accessible natural greenspace, 59% was woodland. In general woodland with open or partial access is owned by the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust or the National Trust. Sixty-nine per cent. of the woodland area has a public right of way either crossing through or along one edge of a wood. However, open access to woodland is at a different scale, at just 14% of the total National Landscape woodland area.

9.7 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, free for all to use. 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 are set out in the Table below. In addition, a very large number of other paths are promoted as recreational walking routes by a diverse range of local authorities and national and local organisations, on the ground, online and in published walking guides.

Table 1: Walking routes of National and Regional significance in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (some figures are estimated)

	Approximate Distance within the NWDNL	
Route name	**Kilometres**	**Miiles**
Ridgeway National Trail[1]	68	42
Thames Path National Trail[2]	13	8
Kennet & Avon Canal towpath	48	30
Lambourn Valley Way	29	18
Mid-Wilts Way	59	37
Pewsey Vale Circular Way	116	73
Test Way	22	14
Watership Down Trail	37	23
Wayfarer's Walk	27	17
White Horse Trail	29	18

[1] *Natural England: PLTOF Additional statistic 8: The length of National Trails within Protected Landscapes 2024.*

[2] *As footnote 1.*

9.8 There are a large number of advertised cycle routes (on- and off-road) that pass through the area, taking advantage of quiet lanes, byways and bridleways. Route 4 of the Sustrans National Cycle Network (NCN4) runs for 29 miles / 47 km through the North Wessex Downs, in part following the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath. NCNs 45, 246, 403, 482 and 544 also pass through the National Landscape. Cycling UK has developed a 217 mile / 350 km circular leisure cycle route, King Alfred's Way, part of which goes along the Ridgeway National Trail.

9.9 The Three Downs Link is a multi-user recreational route connecting The Ridgeway with the South Downs Way, utilised by riders alongside cyclists and walkers. The Ridgeway is promoted as a National Trail for riding. There are a number of shorter riding routes promoted by the British Horse Society that utilise the Ridgeway and link with the much wider multi-use network. These include the Ilsley Downs Riding Route and the Downland Villages Riding Route, both shown on the OS Explorer map and waymarked on the ground. Responsible recreational cycling and riding are two of the key activities to encourage in the North Wessex Downs. Supporting the provision, consistent with the purposes of designation, of facilities such as accommodation with access to stables and paddocks, parking for horse boxes and trailers, drying rooms, bike wash facilities and cycle hubs are examples of how this could be achieved.

9.10 The CRoW Act 2000 requires every county and unitary authority to set out their plans for improvement of the rights of way network. This is through the production of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP, sometimes called a Countryside Management Plan or a Countryside Access Improvement Plan). These plans set out how an authority will maintain countryside access resources and take opportunities for improving and promoting access to the countryside. The Act also requires these authorities to establish a Local Access Forum with a membership representing a range of stakeholders, which advises the authority on matters relating to public rights of way and other types of access.

9.11 Landowners are often reluctant, for example because of the associated liability and responsibilities for maintenance, to dedicate new public rights of way so permissive paths may be the only way to improve connectivity of the existing network. The Eling Way in Berkshire is a good example of a permissive route created in the last few years.

"Out on that almost trackless expanse of billowy Downs such a track is in some sort humanly companionable; it really seems to lead you by the hand."

KENNETH GRAHAME (1859-1932)

Recreation and Tourism

9.12 Although not large in number, there is a range of paying visitor attractions within the North Wessex Downs. These include Basildon Park, Lower Basildon (run by the National Trust) and Highclere Castle, near Newbury (owned by the Earl of Carnarvon), the Crofton Beam Engines and Pumping Station on the Kennet and Avon Canal at Great Bedwyn, and the Living Rainforest environmental education centre at Hampstead Norreys. There are many more attractions in the National Landscape or its setting that could benefit from greater collective promotion and support. These tend to be individual small sites, often managed by independent charities. They include museums and heritage centres in Devizes, Pewsey, Wallingford, Whitchurch and Wantage; nature reserves, commons and access land managed by the Wildlife Trusts, the National Trust and private owners; the wealth of ancient monuments across the whole landscape; prominent landmark sites such as Wilton windmill; and individual urban properties such as the Merchant's House in Marlborough. The North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust's Postcards Project (2025) may help to address this with the promotion of interesting, historic or quirky local landmarks.

9.13 Despite its close proximity to major areas of population, the North Wessex Downs is not well used as a place for quiet enjoyment. Green tourism offers enormous opportunities for the North Wessex Downs and a good business reason for conserving and enhancing the landscape. Many visitors (and residents) are unaware that they are in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape when they are in a particular town or village or passing through the area - most users of the Kennet and Avon Canal and walkers on the Ridgeway National Trail and the Thames Path are passing though the North Wessex Downs or Chilterns National Landscapes. The North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust's welcome signage programme for the North Wessex Downs will help address this issue. It is also important for any organisation promoting its town, village, or site to include information about the North Wessex Downs National Landscape. Tourists who use the National Landscape as a base for exploring external attractions also represent a potential market that could be encouraged to discover the North Wessex Downs. There are opportunities for the tourism sector to support investments in improving rights of way, providing accommodation, facilities, and information.

9.14 At present, visitors to the National Landscape directly support around 2,200 full time jobs. Of all visitors, 18% are from overseas, most of whom are travelling for business purposes and stay for a single night, during Monday-Thursday. Well over 90% of all foreign visitors are either business or family related. Nearly half of all visitors to the area stay with family or friends. The average length of stay by UK visitors is two days and it is estimated that a visitor spends an additional £27 in the North Wessex Downs. More than half of all serviced accommodation providers are un-graded for quality. Budget accommodation for young visitors and others is very limited, but at the time of writing includes Streatley Youth Hostel in the Thames valley and the Court Hill Centre above Wantage in Oxfordshire. Despite efforts by the local community, supported by the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs National Landscapes during the last Management Plan period, the future of Streatley Youth Hostel remains uncertain. There is great potential to improve the performance of the area as a short break destination. This is especially with the development of bespoke activity packages, such as self-guided off-road cycle routes. The area can appeal particularly to affluent visitors from London and the Home Counties. That could bring significant benefits to the rural economy.

Access, Recreation and Tourism: Key Issues

9.17 Key issues with the potential to have significant influence on the National Landscape's Access, Recreation and Tourism Valued Qualities:

a) Increasing pressure on local authority funding for management and maintenance of rights of way, poor condition of some rights of way, especially byways used by off-road vehicles, and poor connectivity of the rights of way network in some areas for circular walks and rides.

b) Irresponsible use of the rights of way network by motorised vehicles, of particular concern along the route of the Ridgeway and green lanes in and around the World Heritage Site at Avebury, on the downs south-east of Pewsey and on some commons, e.g. at Bucklebury.

c) Impact of behaviour of some rights of way users, including littering, dogs off leads disturbing wildlife and worrying livestock, leaving gates open etc.

d) Noise associated with some recreation pursuits, including that from trail bike courses and powered aircraft, affecting tranquillity and others' enjoyment.

e) Lack of information and provision for the less able and other disadvantaged groups to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs.

f) Popularity of a few 'honeypot' locations with resulting impact of traffic noise and disturbance, car parking, wear and tear on verges and paths, litter and lower enjoyment, and potentially intrusive traffic management measures.

g) Management and resourcing challenges and opportunities presented by the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.

h) Infrequent or non-existent public transport links to and between points of access, key attractions and accommodation. Limited services at some railway stations reduce green travel opportunities.

i) Increasing recreational pressures and associated opportunities arising from the predicted growth in the population of settlements surrounding the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

j) Tourism provision in the National Landscape is fragmented and poorly co-ordinated, supporting relatively few jobs and limited income considering its accessibility, natural beauty and historic interest.

k) Multiple destination management organisations and Local Visitor Economy Partnerships across the National Landscape mean that co-ordinated marketing of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape as a whole remains weak, despite significant progress in recent years.

l) Lack of indication such as road/railway station, bus stop and waymark signs that visitors are entering or in the National Landscape.

m) Generally limited recognition amongst North Wessex Downs communities of the opportunities that association with a landscape of national importance offers for quiet recreation and green tourism and their associated economic benefits, e.g. for local produce.

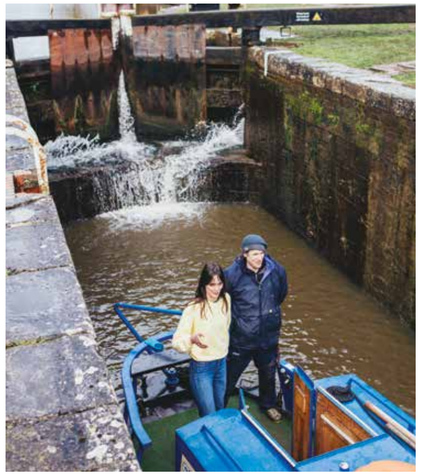
n) Potential for insensitive, inappropriate or excessive recreational or tourism development to harm the valued qualities of the National Landscape.

o) Impacts and risks associated with climate change, particularly more extreme weather. Extreme rainfall, storms and drought cause impacts, costs and risks for access, for example through tree damage, flooding, path erosion and wildfire risk.

p) The need to manage pressures relating to holiday accommodation, including proposed development or intensification of holidays parks and other sites, and pressure on the housing stock from second homes and short-term lets.

9.15 A number of sites in the National Landscape offer educational visits. There is increasing interest among farmers in hosting school visits and the North Wessex Downs Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has enabled more farms to do so, helping to fund training and infrastructure such as classrooms and trailers. To deliver a greater benefit from grant funding, beneficiaries are encouraged to make agreements to share use of trailers, for example with other members of the same farmer-led group. Rushall Manor Farm in Berkshire (run by the John Simonds Trust, Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre in Wiltshire and Linkenholt Countryside Adventure Centre in Hampshire, (both run by Community First, the latter in partnership with the Blagrave Trust) offer outdoor learning facilities for school and youth groups.

9.16 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, on foot, by bike and on horseback. Following the previous Our Land and Love Your Land initiatives to encourage local businesses to reflect the protected landscape better in their offer, the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Partnership has become a Designated Ambassador under the Great West Way (London to Bristol) destination touring initiative led by Visit Wiltshire.



Access, Recreation and Tourism: Priorities

1. Facilitate opportunities for more people of all backgrounds and abilities to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect and promote the valued qualities of the National Landscape and its setting.
2. Greater awareness of the value of access and enjoyment of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for public health and well being.
3. Develop a strategic framework to guide the use of funding provided to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for access enhancements.
4. Co-ordinated promotion of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape by the tourism and recreation sector as a destination for responsible access that respects and promotes the valued qualities of the protected landscape and its setting.

Access, Recreation and Tourism: Policies

ART 01 Enable greater accessibility to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for users of all backgrounds and abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well-being, consistent with National Landscape purposes..

ART 02 Support local initiatives by communities and businesses to promote responsible recreation and tourism across the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

ART 03 Manage and improve the network of public rights of way, ensuring that relevant plans for development and delivery of access to the area take full account of the local distinctiveness, character and quality of the North Wessex Downs and its setting.

ART 04 Promote and encourage non-motorised journeys throughout the North Wessex Downs by the creation and appropriate maintenance of new - and improvement of existing - permissive and definitive routes, including links using the road network.

ART 05 Encourage the creation and maintenance of new permissive and definitive routes that link existing routes and enable recreational walkers, cyclists, riders and carriage-drivers to avoid busy roads.

ART 06 Recognise and protect those areas which are too sensitive to intrusion or disturbance, for example archaeologically or ecologically, for the promotion of public access.

ART 07 Promote a strategic, collaborative, approach among destination management organisations, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships and other partners to marketing responsible access and tourism and in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape.

ART 08 Encourage events such as walking festivals that celebrate the valued qualities of the North Wessex Downs, introduce new audiences to the landscape and contribute to the visitor economy

ART 09 Encourage and facilitate signage or other ways of informing visitors and residents that they are in the North Wessex Downs National Landscape, consistent with the purpose of designation.

ART 10 Encourage greater recognition among commercial transport providers such as train operating companies and bus operators of the recreational / leisure potential of stations in and around the North Wessex Downs, including access from the 'gateway towns' on the edge of the National Landscape.

ART 11 Support initiatives to help communities and businesses reduce the outflow of revenue, retaining and recycling income from visitors in the area for longer.

ART 12 Support more and better monitoring of the distribution and demography of visitors and promote management approaches that reduce pressure on sensitive habitats.

ART 13 Support land managers and the access sector to recognise and manage the potential for tensions between public access and commercially sensitive areas, for example livestock farms or game shoots where disturbance could have a damaging impact.

ART 14 Enable, encourage and promote active and sustainable transport access, including but not limited to particular 'honeypot' locations which are under stress from car-borne visitors, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape.

CHAPTER 11

Summary of Activity

under the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2019-2025

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North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) Partnership

- The Partnership's governing Council of Partners was chaired by Ted Hiscocks (2015-2021), Sarah Nichols (2021-2025) and Gill Haggarty (2025-).
- Continued Partnership meetings and activity throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Committed to becoming the first UK candidate protected area to achieve the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Green List standard.
- Undertook a comprehensive governance review, inc. a revised Partnership Agreement, new Partnership Goals and Strategic Objectives, and a new Business Plan.
- Supported 20 community projects with grants from the Sustainable Development Fund, managed on our behalf by the North Wessex Downs Landscape Trust.

Value for Money

- Delivered an increase in the annual value of benefits to the NWDNL levered by each £1 of partners local authorities' funding contributions from £4.82 (2019-20(to £22.46 (2023-24).

National and Regional Collaboration

- Hosted field trips and visits for the National Landscapes annual conference (twice); DEFRA Environment Bill, 30 by 30 and Landscapes, Access and People teams; the Protected Landscapes Partnership;; and the Minister responsible for protected landscapes.
- Supported National Landscapes Association activities.
- Participated in the Big Chalk calcareous landscapes nature recovery initiative as a board member, inc. hosting a field trip at the inaugural Big Chalk Conference.
- Participated in the SE and E Protected Landscapes Lead Officers' Group and the SE, E and SW Protected Landscapes Planning Officers' Group.
- Collaborated with other landscapes on FiPL projects such as Pasture and Profit in Protected Landscapes.
- Chaired the Avebury World Heritage Site Steering Committee.

Communications

- Commissioned an entirely new web site focussed on public access in light of experience during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Celebrated the 50th anniversary of the designation of the North Wessex Downs as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Rebranded ourselves as a National Landscape and published a new visitor guide leaflet.
- Produced regular newsletters and social media posts and grew our general and targetted mailing lists, social media following and web site visits.

Access, Recreation and Tourism

- Ran annual walking festivals 2022-24 with delivery partners.
- Delivered access improvements using DEFRA's Access for All Fund.
- 22 projects supported.
- £414,000 in project grants to make new or existing rights of way more accessible; replace styles with gates, create permissive paths, install publicly available lavatories on or next to rights of way, add way markers and other improvements to recreation across the NWDNL.
- Promoted the NWDNL as a Destination Ambassador for the Great West Way tourism initiative.

Dark skies and Lighting

- Published a Good Lighting Guide and leaflet to help minimise light pollution in the National Landscape and its setting.
- Partnered with Marlborough Town Council and Marlborough College to hold the first Marlborough Dark Skies Festival, with 30 events attracting more than 4,500 people.
- Offered dark skies training to our partner local authorities.
- Supported local astronomy groups with grants and community-led light level monitoring.

Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme

FiPL is a national DEFRA programme of advice, guidance and grants for farmers and land managers. It is focussed on four pillars of nature climate, people and place, viewed through the prism of each protected landscape's Management Plan. In the first four years 2021-25:

- Over 200 grant applications received.
- 176 projects awarded grants.
- £3,073,638.66 in grant funding given to environmental projects.

Major projects:

Some of the highest value projects supported (all over £50K):

- Pond creation at Englefield Home Farms.
- Restoration of Manor Farm Barn, Old Burghclere.
- Pasture cropping trial to assess landscape scale change ro farming system.
- Hedgerow dormouse project within the Wessex Farm Conservation and Southern Streams Farmer Groups.
- Micro-scale vegetable tannery for cattle hides and create an education hub at Great Cotmarsh Farm.
- Regenerative farming and re-introduction of livestock at Manor Farm, Wilton.
- Cactus Guards, fencing, farm surveys, bird boxes, a short educational film, bridleway access gates and automatic magnesium chloride water dispenser at Yatesbury House Farm.
- Dew ponds on the Pewsey Downs.
- Saving England's Lowland Junipers – revitalising populations in the North Wessex Downs (Plantlife).

Other projects and support:

- Also supported river enhancement and wetland creation, scrub removal, arable reversion, access improvements, fenceless collars to aid conservation grazing, a sheep dairy, deer management/venison initiatives (training, diversification scheme), public access, including toilets and information, repair and restoration of historic listed barns, and re-introduction of Large blue butterfly in collaboration with NE and other partners.
- Helped establish eight new farmer-led groups.
- Convened regular meetings of the facilitators of all farmer led groups in NWDNL.

Education:

- Training for farmers to host schools, e.g. LEAF collaboration.
- Knowledge-sharing for farmers and the public, e.g. Pasture for Life, FiPL events, equine events.
- Equipment and facilities, e.g. trailers, classrooms, to enable improved visits.
- Support for local community gardens to feed and educate local groups.

Going Underground at Roundway Hill

Under the £500m Visual Impact Provision agreed with Ogfem, NWDNL is benefitting from one of four National Grid projects to reduce the impact of overhead electricity transmission lines on protected landscapes. The route runs across the site of the Battle of Roundway Down (1643), a Registered Battlefield, and close to Roundway Down and Covert SSSI and the Devizes Millennium White Horse. On completion, 4.5km of overhead electricity line will be buried underground, removing 13 pylons from the National Landscape. We have:

- Engaged closely with National Grid from the project's inception. The scheme received consent in 2023.
- Worked with National Grid and the Pewsey Downs Farmer Group to identify associated opportunities for nature recovery and landscape enhancement along the route.

Historic Ridgeway

- With partners we helped develop, match funded and supported delivery of this Ridgeway Partnership project with funding from Historic England to survey scheduled and unscheduled monuments along the Ridgeway National Trail and identify conservation, access, interpretation, and nature recovery needs and opportunities.

Landscape Character

- Commissioned an Environmental Colour Assessment and published Guidance on the Selection and Use of Colour in Development. Designed to minimise potential negative impacts of development on the character of the National Landscape by providing advice on colour selection and material use to help integrate development into the protected landscape.
- Held a training session for local authority partners.
- Commissioned the first comprehensive review of the NWDNL Landscape Character Area Assessment since 2002 to provide an up-to-date evidence base for the new Management Plan.

Mend the Gap

- Mend the Gap is a joint initiative between the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns National Landscapes and the Railway Action Group to soften and heal the landscape harm caused by electrification of the Great Western mainline between Reading and Didcot. It is funded by Network Rail. The programme has delivered:

Landscape Enhancement:

- Softened the impact of the overhead wires and gantries with over 4km of hedge planting and over 600 trees so far.

Communities:

- Worked with eight Parish Councils to help them support nature recovery in their communities, including a new management plan for Pangbourne Meadows.
- Worked with over 6000 children to support them to better understand the Landscape and nature around them, with over £200,000 committed to school grounds projects.

Wildlife:

- Levered over £700,000 in nature recovery projects so far to enhance chalk and wetland habitats, for example working with farmers and expert botanists to restore chalk grassland and raise awareness of the Goring Gap's importance for wild plants.
- Delivered a Joint project with Partnerships for Nature to fund and new wetland with grassland and arable plant conservation on the Sulham Estate.

The Arts:

- Worked with two artists on the Springline Project at Aston Tirrold and Cholsey to commission artwork to communicate the special wildlife of the Cholsey and Mill brooks.

Nature Recovery Plan

- Fulfilled our commitment under the Colchester Declaration (2019) by developing a Nature Recovery Plan for the NWDNL, sent to over 115 consultees in addition to the online consultation.
- Launched at our Nature Recovery-themed Annual Forum in October 2023.
- Contributed to the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies in Berkshire, Hampshire Oxfordshire and Wiltshire.

Partnerships for Nature

We secured £1.75m from DEFRA's Species Survival Fund with matched funding for a Partnerships for Nature programme of habitat creation and restoration involving nine partners across seven sites in NWDNL.

- Restoration/enhancement of 2.5 km of chalk stream habitat and regrading of 2.36 km of riverbank habitat.
- Restoration and enhancement of 26 ha of existing lowland heathland, 31 ha of newly created heathland and 200 ha of wood pasture, with a ranger service and reintroduction of grazing by non-breeding, native breed cattle.
- 26ha arable field demonstration site for regenerative farming inc. agroforestry, with wildlife-rich habitats alongside food production.
- Restoration/enhancement of 20 ha of chalk grassland
- Creation of 0.5ha of wetland habitat.
- Restoration/enhancement of two coppice plots (1.6 ha and 2 ha).
- Restoration/enhancement of two dew ponds.
- Creation of ten hibernacula.
- Recruitment and training of project volunteers.
- A series of activities including organised site walks, workshops for local farmers and landowners, practical advice for farms on how to introduce species and nature recovery into their longer-term business models, habitat interpretation materials.

Planning and Design

- Engaged with Local Plans, Core Strategies, Minerals and Waste Plans and other policy documents for Basingstoke and Deane, Hampshire, Vale and South Oxfordshire, Test Valley, West Berkshire and Wiltshire Councils.
- Prevented major harm to the setting of the National Landscape from a large commercial Science Park development on the edge of Swindon. We worked alongside Council Officers during the application and at appeal.
- Screened over 5,000 applications and commented on approximately 2,000.
- Collaborative working with Natural England and West Berkshire Council which resulted in a landscape-led local plan review and the formulation of a standalone National Landscapes policy.
- Supported Swindon Borough Council at an Enforcement Inquiry against unauthorised change of use and development at Wroughton Airfield. The appeal was dismissed and the enforcement notices upheld.

Sparkling Streams

We Secured £990,000 Green Recovery Challenge Funding for the Sparkling Streams Project: a catchment approach, working with Action for the River Kennet (ARK) and the Town and Manor of Hungerford to improve the condition of the River Kennet chalk stream and its Shalbourne and river Dun chalk stream tributaries, increasing wildlife and connecting people with nature.

- 1.1 km of new or enhanced chalk stream and a fish pass created at Eddington Mill.
- 3 km of enhanced in-river, and riparian habitat work carried out on eight sites on the river Dun and the Shalbourne.
- 1 km hedge (5,025 plants) and 6 ha woodland (3,400 trees) planted on six sites.
- 64 volunteer tasks held.
- 145 people (94 new volunteers) gave over 1,600 hours of their time.
- Rain garden created at Shalbourne Primary School.
- 381 adults and 60 children attended activities.

CHAPTER 12

Protected Landscape Targets

Protected Landscape targets

The Protected Landscape targets are non-statutory and create a shared ambition for all 44 of England's Protected Landscapes. The targets are for the Protected Landscapes as places (the geographic area covered by the designation). Action will be coordinated by Protected Landscape bodies through their statutory management plan. It will be the responsibility of all stakeholders, partners and land managers in the area to support their delivery.

Some targets are action-focussed, while others set a clear numerical target for how much Protected Landscapes are expected to contribute as areas to the national targets.

The targets are based on an analysis of the environmental potential of the Protected Landscapes. They are also set proportionally, based on the characteristics of these areas and the share of relevant natural assets within them. The targets are set for Protected Landscapes as geographical areas and will be delivered and monitored as such.

The targets in this framework are set at a national level for all 44 landscapes as a collective. Each individual Protected Landscape body, working with relevant local partners, will set their own individual contribution, which will be embedded in their management plan. Natural England will support this process and ensure contributions represent a fair share and add up to the national total.

Thriving plants and wildlife targets

Protected Landscapes have significant environmental potential, containing almost half of England's priority habitats. They also contain over half of our most precious sites for biodiversity, land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). To ensure these habitats are reaching their full potential for nature recovery, we have set targets to motivate more activity on the components needed to ensure wildlife can thrive.

The protection, restoration, creation, and management of priority habitats will increase species abundance. It will help turn the tide on extinction risk and support our international commitment to protect 30% of land by 2030 (30by30). The adoption of nature friendly farming practices will help stop biodiversity loss and increase species abundance alongside sustainable food production.

Protected Landscape bodies and partners should seek to increase the amount of land in favourable management in Protected Landscapes through meeting the targets below and other available means. This will maximise the contribution that Protected Landscapes can make towards our national targets for nature recovery.

TARGET 1

Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).

TARGET 2

Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.

TARGET 3

For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having 'actions on track' to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.

TARGET 4

Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.

TARGET 5

Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change targets

Protected Landscapes contain some of the UK's most important carbon stores, including significant tracts of peatland, woodland and hedgerows providing important carbon sinks for achieving net zero. To ensure we are maximising the opportunities for climate mitigation within our Protected Landscapes we have set targets for restoring peat and increasing tree planting. Restoration and ongoing management of these habitats is essential for sequestering and storing carbon into the future, and therefore reducing net greenhouse gas emissions. They can also provide natural flood management and other benefits for farmers and local communities.

Protected Landscapes are leading action to achieve net zero at a landscape level, working with residents, businesses and communities, aiming to reduce emissions and deliver nature-based solutions. We have set a target to support them in this ambition and strengthen their important contribution to our world leading target to achieve net- zero by 2050.

Tree planting and peat restoration at scale will support new skills and green jobs, attract private investment and help grow the rural economy.

For the long-term protection of our iconic landscapes, action is needed to increase their resilience and that of the communities within them. We must mitigate climate risks through nature-based solutions and adapt to the unavoidable impacts, planning for a changing future.

TARGET 6

Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.

TARGET 7

Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.

TARGET 8

Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment targets

Protected Landscapes are designated for their natural beauty and provide a range of health and wellbeing benefits and educational opportunities. We know these benefits are not currently being enjoyed equally by all parts of society. Protected Landscapes have a distinctive sense of place and represent our shared heritage and national identity. These special qualities must be protected for everyone to enjoy. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) made a commitment that everyone in England should live within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space. It also committed to reduce other barriers that prevent people from accessing green and blue spaces, such as physical challenges, lack of confidence and lack of information. Protected Landscapes should be setting the standard for meeting this commitment, leading efforts to increase responsible access and engagement with nature.

To ensure that more people have the opportunity to enjoy and learn from these special places, we have set targets to improve accessibility for all. Protected Landscapes are leading the way to promote accessibility to the natural environment. They are using a range of tools such as engaging schools, providing disabled facilities and improving trails and waymarking. Targets will also conserve the important sense of place that these landscapes bring to our country and communities.

The government wants to boost visitor numbers in a safe and manageable way for local areas, allowing people, communities and businesses to reap the benefits of tourism, growing the rural economy, whilst preserving heritage and natural assets.

We rely on Protected Landscape bodies to gather relevant data to measure progress towards our beauty, heritage and engagement outcome. We will continue to work with Protected Landscape bodies and other partners to explore the benefits of further developing targets to improve and promote accessibility and engagement.

TARGET 9

Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.

TARGET 10

Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

Source: DEFRA Policy paper: Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework, January 2024

Glossary

Term used	Definition / Explanation
Agri-environment Schemes (AES)	A range of schemes operated by DEFRA designed to encourage environmentally friendly farming and public enjoyment of the countryside. Currently includes Countryside Stewardship.
Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)	An ancient woodland site, believed to have had continuous woodland cover since 1600 AD, composed principally of native tree species that have not obviously been planted.
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Area designated under the National Parks and ... ose of designation being to conserve natural beauty.
Biodiversity Net. Gain	A principle by which development operations l... n by Government as a possible principle for national planning policy in 2018/1... account for the complexities of environmental goods and services provided by
Byway	A Byway open to all traffic (BOAT) is a Public Right of Way open to all users, including vehicular and all other kinds of traffic. Defined in 66(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. (See also Restricted Byway q.v.)
Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)	CAMS is a process used by the Environment Agency (EA) to provide both a consistent approach to local water resource management and greater public involvement in water management. The EA uses CAMS to determine its approach to catchment abstraction licensing within a given catchment. This is set out in a Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy for the catchment.
Catchment Partnership	A Catchment Partnership brings together a wide range of interests with local expertise to undertake integrated management of land and water, addressing each Water Framework Directive river catchment as a whole and delivering cross-cutting practical interventions on the ground. These aim to provide multiple benefits to water quality, wildlife, flood risk, resilience to climate change and more resource efficiency. Catchment Partnerships are active across England.
Catchment-Sensitive Farming (CSF)	A partnership between Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England. It works with farmers and a range of other partners to improve water and air quality in high priority areas. CSF offers farmers free training, advice and support for grant applications. Also used to refer to the general approach advocated by CSF.

To follow

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)	European Union-wide policy that supports agriculture through price support, market management and measures to improve the agriculture industry. Undergoing a Mid term review, introducing decoupling and more modulation and cross compliance.
Common Land	Defined in section 22 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 as land subject to rights of common (as defined in this Act) whether those rights are exercisable at all times or only during limited periods.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	A planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities to pay for infrastructure to support development in their area. Introduced by the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Development may be liable for CIL if the local planning authority has chosen to set a charge in its area.
Conservation Area	Defined by section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve or enhance.
Coppice	Woodland which has normally been regenerated from shoots formed at the cut stumps of the previous crop trees, root suckers, or both i.e. by vegetative means. Coppice is normally grown on a short rotation, e.g. 5–25 years, to yield small diameter material.
Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000)	Contains measures to improve public access to the open countryside and registered common land while recognising the legitimate interests of those who own and manage the land concerned; it amends the law relating to rights of way; it amends the law relating to nature conservation by strengthening protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest including tougher penalties and by providing extra powers for the prosecution of wildlife crime; it provides a basis for the conservation of biological diversity; and it provides for better management of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the requirement for local authorities to produce AONB management plans every five years and places a duty on public bodies to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation.
Countryside Stewardship (CS)	The current Common Agricultural Policy environmental land management support scheme introduced by DEFRA in 2014.
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)	The central government department body with responsibility for protected landscapes, wildlife, food and farming, natural resources etc.
Ecosystem Goods and Services	The assets and services, especially those of benefit to humans, provided by the functioning of an ecosystem or environment. Often categorised as: • supporting e.g. soil formation, nutrient cycling, pollination • provisioning e.g. food, timber, water • regulating e.g. carbon sequestration, floodwater storage, air and water purification, climate regulation • cultural e.g. landscapes, wildlife etc. of aesthetic, cultural, historical, recreational or spiritual value to people.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)	A process under which developers are required to provide, in additional to a planning application, an environmental statement evaluating the likely environmental impact of the development, together with an assessment of how this may be mitigated. EIA is intended to ensure that, when deciding whether to grant planning permission for a project which is likely to have significant effects on the environment ,a local planning authority does so in full knowledge of the likely effects, and takes this into account in the decision making process. Governed by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 in compliance with EU Directive 2011/92/EU.
Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)	The Higher Level Scheme was a Stewardship (i.e. agri-environment) scheme introduced in 2005 to concentrate on the more complex types of management needed to achieve the objectives of the ELS where land managers need advice and support, where agreements need to be tailored to local circumstances and where management needs to be carefully targeted.
Highway Authority	The Highways Act 1980 defines a Highway Authority as the body responsible for maintaining all highways maintainable at public expense and keeping them free of obstruction, including responsibility for public rights of way.
Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)	A method used to define and map the historic and archaeological dimensions of the present-day landscape. HLC is an extremely useful tool for enabling better decision making about future land use management and change. By properly understanding the historic landscape context we can assess the likely effects of changes and make better informed decisions.
Historic Parks and Gardens	Parks and Gardens containing historic features dating from 1939 or earlier and registered by Historic England in three grades as with historic buildings.
Landscape	An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.
Landscape Character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from one another, rather than better or worse.
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)	A process for identifying the effects of proposed changes (e.g. new development) on views and on the landscape itself. A depth of analysis and understanding of these two interrelated aspects is required to produce a successful LVIA. The Landscape Institute publishes guidelines for carrying out LVIA. LVIA may be required for significant planning applications within the AONB or its setting (q.v).
Landscape Character Area (LCA)	Unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur, which share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type but have their own particular identity.
Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)	A method for identifying, understanding and expressing the different patterns and features i.e. woodlands, hedgerows, building styles and historic artefacts which give a place a distinctive character.

LEADER	European Union rural development initiative for assisting rural communities in improving the quality of life and economic prosperity of their area through the distribution of grant funding.
Local Access Forum (LAF)	Set up under CRoW Act to represent a balance of local interests and views, providing independent guidance to the relevant local authorities and the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation in ways that address social, economic and environmental interests. Each county has one covering their respective areas of the North Wessex Downs.
Local Planning Authority (LPA)	The local authority, normally a unitary or local borough or district council, which is empowered by law to exercise planning functions.
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	Designated by Government under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 to protect and conserve nationally important areas of wildlife habitat and geological formations and to promote scientific research.
National Trail	Routes based on Public Rights of Way through the nation's finest and most characteristic countryside, allowing an extensive journey on foot, horseback or by bicycle and capable of attracting tourist use from home and abroad.
Natural Beauty	Legislation and associated guidance defines natural beauty as including the physical elements of flora, fauna, geology and physiographic or geomorphological, the cultural and heritage elements, together with less tangible values such as intactness, rarity, wildness, remoteness, tranquillity and the appeal to the physical senses.
Natural Capital	The elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, the air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions. Natural capita is described in terms of assets. Natural capital is simply those assets provided by nature which have the capacity to generate goods and services. Natural capital can be regarded as the source of all other types of capital: whether manufactured, financial, human or social, underlining the importance of a healthy environment for human prosperity.
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006	Legislation that extended the biodiversity duty in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. The Act also refined the definition of "natural beauty".
Neighbourhood Plan	A document that a community may choose to prepare to set out a vision for how it wants an area to develop over the next 10-20 years. Once approved by an inspector and endorsed in a local referendum the plan becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area. Established by the Localism Act 2011.
Parkland	A large piece of ground usually comprising woodland, scattered mature trees, pasture and/or semi-formal gardens, often created to a specific landscape design and currently or once attached to a country house or mansion.
Pasture	An area of land dominated by grass, which is used only or principally for grazing, as distinct from a meadow that is mown. Pasture may be enclosed fields or unenclosed common land.
Permanent Grassland	Any grassland, whether pasture or meadow, composed of perennial or self-seeding annual plants kept indefinitely and not sown or ploughed.

Permissive Access	Public access to a route or area granted by the landowner, usually for foot access but occasionally for [horse] riders, which is not dedicated as a public right of way.
Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS)	Ancient Woodland Sites in which the former tree cover has been replaced, often with non-native trees. PAWS often retain important ancient woodland features including characteristic flora, fauna and archaeology.
Pollard	A tree which has had its top and/or upper branches cut some height above the ground to promote new and multiple growth, to avoid the reach of browsing animals or to create aesthetically pleasing forms, extend the life of the tree and/or maintain wildlife habitat. This is called pollarding.
Quiet Lane	Section 208 of the Transport Act 2000 makes provision for local traffic authorities to designate roads for which they are responsible as Quiet Lanes, enjoying voluntary speed restrictions and promotion for non-motorised traffic.
Regional Walking Routes	Longer named paths, promoted on the initiative of local authorities, signed and fully waymarked, and based on public rights of way, offering more than a day's travelling, perhaps following a theme or feature that offer tourism potential, such as the Wayfarer's Walk and the White Horse Trail.
Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)	Sections 60 to 62 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 require local highway authorities to prepare and publish Rights of Way Improvement Plans for improving rights of way in their areas, taking into account the needs of the public including people with disabilities.
River Basin Management Plan	A River Basin Management Plan (RBMP), produced in compliance with the Water Framework Directive (q.v.), provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment. It also informs decisions on land-use planning. It consists of a number of different documents, maps and datasets. Overseen by the Environment Agency, there is one for each of the seven River Basin Districts in England.
Scheduled Monument (SAM)	A structure identified by Historic England for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
Section 106 agreement	A binding agreement between a local planning authority and a developer associated with a grant of planning permission and regarding matters linked to the proposed development.
Setting **(of the AONB)**	The area within which development and land management proposals, by virtue of their nature, size, scale, siting, materials and design can be considered to have an impact, positive or negative, on the landscape, scenic beauty and special qualities of the AONB.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Area identified by Natural England under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for protection by reason of the rarity of its nature conservation, wildlife features or geological interest.
Sites and Monument Record (SMR)	A database of sites of archaeological interest and potential within a particular area, usually a county.
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	Site designated according to the Habitats Directive 93/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora.
Special Qualities	The special qualities of the AONB are those aspects of the landscape for which it is considered important, and on which the priorities for its management are based. The interaction between natural and cultural factors can create a significance which is not recognised by looking at one aspect in isolation.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Documents prepared to support and amplify policies in the Local Development Plan. Such guidance must be consistent with national and local planning policy
Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS)	SUDS are intended to reduce flooding downstream of development by enabling surface water run-off to be controlled as near to the source as possible. National planning policy encourages use of SUDS and seeks to ensure that flood risk is considered on a catchment scale.
Tranquillity	Composite feature which seeks to characterise elements of wildness, solitude, peace and quiet, relating for example to low levels of built development, traffic, noise and artificial lighting.
Unimproved Grassland	Grassland consisting of native grasses and herbs which have not been significantly affected by treatment with mineral fertilisers, pesticides, intensive grazing or drainage.
Veteran Tree	Tree which by virtue of its great age, size and/or condition, is of exceptional value whether in cultural terms, for its landscape contribution or for the benefit of wildlife.
Water Framework Directive	EU Directive 2000/60/EC aims to achieve good qualitative and quantitative status of all surface and groundwater bodies.
Wetland	Transitional areas between wet and dry environments; wetlands range from permanently or intermittently wet land to shallow water and water margins.
Whole Farm (Conservation) Plan	A plan that considers an individual farm as a whole, producing a bespoke conservation plan considering farm type, location and any particular landscape or wildlife value, identifying adjustments to management practices that can significantly benefit the landscape and wildlife.
World Heritage Site (WHS)	A cultural or natural heritage site inscribed under the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage for its Outstanding Universal Value.

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TO FOLLOW

This document is the statutory Management Plan for the nationally designated 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.

Following informal consultation in 2017, an initial draft was approved by the Partnership in July 2018 and published for public consultation between August and November 2018. All comments received were reviewed and recommendations approved by the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Working Group and a Management Plan Review Group, created to oversee the process on behalf of the Council of Partners. The North Wessex Downs Council of Partners and relevant local authorities have approved this Plan for publication.

Assessment, associated documents and further map data can all be found on the North Wessex Downs website: **www.northwessexdowns.org.uk**. For Historic Environment mapping data visit: **www.historicnorthwessexdowns.org.uk**

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Oxfordshire County Council

Equalities Impact Assessment

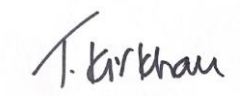
Delegated Decision by the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action to adopt the North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan

30th October 2025

Contents

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Environment and Highways, Landscape and Nature Recovery Team
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Oxfordshire County Council are requested by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) Council of Partners to formally adopt the new North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	An existing function. The NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 is an update to the existing management plan, which was adopted by the council in 2019.
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	The management plan is considered to have a positive impact on equalities overall. The management plan includes priorities and policies relating to equalities, particularly in the context of access, social inclusion, community engagement, and equitable opportunities. The document demonstrates a commitment to addressing barriers for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, promoting inclusive participation, and ensuring that access and the benefits of the landscape are available to all. This is reflected in its overarching principle 9, which highlights 'the importance of engagement, outreach and landscape accessibility for all, including underrepresented communities, removing physical, cultural and perceptual barriers and creating equitable opportunities to connect with the landscape and be active partners in its stewardship' which has informed priorities and policies of the plan. The plan also aligns with the priorities of the council's Strategic Plan 2025-2028 for a greener, fairer and healthier Oxfordshire.
Completed By	Haidrun Breith

Authorised By	
Date of Assessment	29th October 2025

Section 2: Detail of proposal

Context / Background Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.	**Background** The NWDNL is one of the three National Landscapes extending into the Oxfordshire, which together make up approximately 26% of the county. The NWDNL can be found at the southern end of the county. The NWDNL has a resident population of approximately 100,000 people but only a relatively small proportion of this designated landscape extends into Oxfordshire. The NWDNL area within Oxfordshire is predominately rural with agricultural fields and farmsteads rising to an escarpment at the southern edge of the county. It does not include any towns within Oxfordshire but runs along the southern edge of Wantage, Didcot, Cholsey and Wallingford, as well as larger towns in Berkshire, Wilthshire and Hampshire. NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 is an update of the existing management plan, which was adopted by the council in 2019. The NWDNL is managed as a partnership, known as the Council of Partners (CoP). The Partnership works to an agreed five-year management plan and oversees the work of the National Landscape team. It consists of the nine local authorities in the area, Natural England, community groups and other associations such as the National Farmers Union. Oxfordshire County Council is one of the nine local authority partners. The NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 was approved by the CoP in July. The new management plan was drafted in consultation with partners (including the council), stakeholders, community groups and the public.

	<u>The NWDNL Management Plan</u> It is intended to guide the activities of all who live and work in the National Landscape to help conserve and enhance the area's natural beauty. The plan policies are designed to be delivered by a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the National Landscape. It sets out a framework for action for the NWDNL team and all partners to deliver on the objectives and polies set out in the plan. The National Landscape team co-ordinates the monitoring and delivery of the plan policies and are directly responsible for the delivery of certain work areas. The management plan sets out a vision for the North Wessex Downs and is split into eight key themes designed to better focus the delivery of objectives. Each of the key themes is evaluated and described in detail and the key issues affecting them are drawn out. The key issues are used to identify the priorities which are supported by a number of policies. The themes are Landscape, Farming and Land Management, Biodiversity and Nature Recovery, Historic Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change, Planning and Development, Communities and Access Recreation and Tourism. The communities and access recreation and tourism chapter is considered to be most relevant when assessing equalities.
Proposals Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.	**The proposal is for the council to adopt the NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030.** Under s.89 of the Countryside and Right of Way (CRoW) 2000 Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to produce a management plan for the NWDNL every 5 years. The council, like the other local authority partners to the NWDNL, delegate this authority to the NWDNL team to manage and create a management plan on behalf of the authorities. In addition, Section 85 of the CRoW 2000 Act (as amended by the *Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023*) requires 'relevant authorities', in exercising or performing any function that affect National Landscapes in England, to "*seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*." As such the council is required to ensure that it carries out work within or affecting the NWDNL in line with the policies and guidance in the management plan.

	The management plan includes numerous priorities and policies relating to equalities, particularly in the context of access, social inclusion, community engagement, and equitable opportunities. The document demonstrates a commitment to addressing barriers for underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, promoting inclusive participation, and ensuring that the benefits of the landscape are available to all. Overarching principle 9 states (p21) *The importance of engagement, outreach and landscape accessibility for all, including underrepresented communities, removing physical, cultural and perceptual barriers and creating equitable opportunities to connect with the landscape and be active partners in its stewardship, should be recognised.* The management plan includes the following priorities and policies relating to equalities: *Communities (chapter 9)* • *Encourage an enhanced sense of respect and pride in the North Wessex Downs amongst local people and their increased participation in activities that raise the understanding and profile of the National Landscape (priority 3)* • *Assist the development of connectivity, based on principles of planning and integrating multi-functional green infrastructure assets, from neighbouring urban areas and within the area, facilitating active and sustainable access to and around the National Landscape to make it easier for communities to experience and benefit from the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs (priority 4)* • *Support initiatives to address the specific needs of different groups within and around the National Landscape, such as access to training and social activities for young people and engagement with under-represented and/or disadvantaged groups.(policy CO08)* • *Support measures to enable active travel and provide integrated and demand-responsive passenger transport, including easily accessible information, across the North Wessex Downs that serves the needs of local people and visitors. (policy CO11)* *Access, Recreation and Tourism priorities (chapter 10)*

	• *Facilitate opportunities for more people of all backgrounds and abilities to access and enjoy the North Wessex Downs in ways that respect and promote the valued qualities of the National Landscape and its setting (priority 1)* • *Greater awareness of the value and benefits of access and enjoyment of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for public health and well being (priority 2).* • *Develop a strategic framework to guide the use of funding provided to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for access enhancements (priority 3).* • *Co-ordinated promotion of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape by the tourism and recreation sector as a destination for responsible access that respects and promotes the valued qualities of the protected landscape and its setting (priority 4).* • *Enable greater accessibility to the North Wessex Downs National Landscape for users of all backgrounds and abilities for quiet enjoyment and improved health and well-being, consistent with National Landscape purposes. (policy Art 01)* It also outlines the following actions for local authorities and transport operators (p30) • Protect and maintain rights of way • Require green travel plans for relevant developments • Use management plan and additional guidance when considering options and making decisions • Improve and promote access from public transport routes into the NWDNL • Install NWDNL signage and information e.g. at stations and on buses and trains • Support collaboration by operators with National Trail partnerships, rights of way authorities and access groups **<u>The council's Equalities, diversity and inclusion framework – Including Everyone 2025 - 2029</u>** The proposed measures align with the council's equalities, diversity and inclusion framework 2025-2029 especially with regard to the council's ambitions for: • Inclusive communities - we work with communities to help them thrive, and we support and encourage partners to be inclusive;

	• Inclusive service delivery - we communicate and engage with our residents to plan and meet their diverse needs. It is important to note that the NWDNL Management Plan is a high-level framework to guide further detail work and actions. It is produced by the NWDNL team and as such the council has little control over actions and next steps. The NWDNL team also plans, implements and monitors actions within the NWDNL. It is therefore recommended that the council reviews and monitors this Equalities Impact Assessment as and when actions in their control come forward.
Evidence / Intelligence List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.	The NWD Team carried out an extensive consultation with partners including the council, the public, external organisations and interest groups when drafting the plan. This included: • Summary of main changes circulated among local authority partners. • Direct conversations with individual partners. • Six-week public consultation. • Web survey. • Online consultation on the draft Management Plan. • Three public webinars, attended by 30-40 people. • Promotion on the NWDNL website, newsletter and social media posts. • One-day facilitated workshop for key stakeholders – around 75 people invited, 26 attended. • Some consultees asked for and were given extensions to the deadline so they could still respond. Within the council, comments from various teams were collated by the council's Landscape Officer and submitted to the NWDNL team for consideration. Regarding equalities the comments Human Health & Wellbeing officer and the Countryside access strategy & development officer are considered particularly relevant. Officers concurred with many of the key issues raised in the Communities chapter, notably those around sustainable travel and managing the future demand on the network, the intention to advance the education of the public about the importance of the landscape including school children, the need to improve connections between those living in

	and around the national landscape, better information for less able and disadvantaged groups, e.g. by improving accessibility of paths for pushchair and wheelchair users. Council responses have informed the final version of the NWD Management Plan.
Alternatives considered / rejected Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.	The alternative would be not to adopt the management plan. This would result in the council not meeting its statutory duty under s.89 of the CRoW Act, which requires local authorities including the council to *"prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it".* Not adopting the management plan would also have financial implications for the council as it would have to prepare its own Management Plan for the NWDNL, undertake public consultation and submit the plan to DEFRA and the Secretary of State. There would also be a reputational risk if not adopting or unduly delaying the adoption of the NWDNL management plan.

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	☐	☒	☐	It is understood that younger voices are often less-heard in decision-making processes. There could therefore be a negative impact on them if their prriorities were not accurately captured. The management plan takes a proactive approach in engaging with young people (policy CO08).	The council has limited influence on this as the actions are initiated and managed by the NWD team. However, this often happens in collaboration with partners. The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on actions and will review and update this EIA as part of proposals.	NWDNL team; Landscape & GI Officer for the council	Annually The NWDNL provides regular updates on work areas to the CoP. The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on planned and completed actions in the NWDNL as part of their CoP in the first instance. The council's landscape & GI officer will act as a link between the NWDNL and relevant teams within the council.

Disability	☐	☒	☐	Access to the NWDNL and to green spaces is particularly difficult for people with disabilities. Physical barriers such as styles, surfacing can make access to the countryside difficult or even impossible. The management plan takes a proactive approach and seeks to encourage access by people of all abilities to the NWD (policy ART 01)	The council has limited influence on this as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. The council is responsible for the management and maintenance of public rights of way in Oxfordshire and will continue to do this in line with its statutory duties. The council will liaise with the NWD team and review PRoW improvements in relation to improving access for people of all abilities	NWDNL team; Landscape & GI Officer for the council	Annually The NWDNL provides regular updates on work areas to the CoP. The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on planned and completed actions in the NWDNL as part of their CoP in the first instance. The council's landscape & GI officer will act as a link between the NWDNL and relevant teams within the council.

Gender Reassignment	☒	☐	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and is not related to gender reassignments. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond to the plan.			
Marriage & Civil Partnership	☒	☐	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and is not related to marriages & civil partnership. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond to the plan.			

Pregnancy & Maternity	☒	☐	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to pregnancy or maternity. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond to the plan.			

Race	☐	☒	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to race. However, people of race and ethnic minorities are often underrepresented in the NWD. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond. The management plan also seeks to better engage with under-represented groups and to encourage people of all backgrounds to the NWD (policy ART 01)	The council has limited influence on this as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. The council will liaise with the NWD team and review PRoW improvements in relation to improving access for people of all abilities	NWDNL team; Landscape & GI Officer for the council	Annually The NWDNL provides regular updates on work areas to the CoP. The council will liaise with the NWDNL team on planned and completed actions in the NWDNL as part of their CoP in the first instance. The council's landscape & GI officer will act as a link between the NWDNL and relevant teams within the council.

Sex	☒	☐	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to sex. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond.			
Sexual Orientation	☒	☐	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to sex orientation. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond.			

Religion or Belief	☒	☐	☐	The protection and enjoyment of the NWDNL is for the enjoyment for all and not related to religion or beliefs. The consultation on the management plan included a range of methods for engagement and responding to ensure that everybody had the opportunity to respond.			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	☐	☒	☐	Rural communities often have little access to open space despite being surrounded by countryside.The management plan includes a section on communities in which it outlines priorities and policies that benefit rural communities ranging from increasing participation in activities (priority 3), improving connectivity to multi-functional green infrastructure assets, facilitating active and sustainable access to and around the NL (priority 4) It also supporting initiatives to address specific needs of different groups within and around the NL (policy CO08).	The council has limited influence on this, as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. However, council will liaise and work closely with the NWD team on proposals that create better sustainable PRoW networks, or the creation of multi-functional open spaces near urban areas.	NWDNL team; Landscape & GI officer	Annually The counci'ls landscape & green infrastructure officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and relevant teams within the council to agree and coordinate improvements.
Armed Forces	☒	☐	☐	There are no armed forces in the Oxfordshire part of the NWD but the management plan recognises that they			

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				continue to play a significant role in the local economy of the NWDNL in other counties.			
Carers	☒	☐	☐	The management plan is for guiding action for everyone and does not specifically impact on carers.			
Areas of deprivation	☐	☒	☐	Areas if deprivation tend to have no or limited access to attractive multi-functional green space. The Oxfordshire part of the NWDNL does not include large conurbation or areas of deprivation but it is close to Didcot and urban centres outside the county like Reading. The management plan recognises limited connectivity and sustainable access from nearby urban areas, for communities to experience and benefit from the natural beauty of the NWD. The management plan seeks to	The council has limited influence on this as actions tend to be initiated and managed by the NWD team. However, council will liaise and work closely with the NWD team on proposals to improve connectivity and the creation of multi-functional open spaces. The councils landscape & green infrastructure officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and the council's relevant teams to agree and coordinate improvements.	NWDNL team; Landscape & GI officer	Annually The council's landscape & green infrastructure officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and relevant teams within the council to agree and coordinate improvements.

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				improve connectivity and access from urban areas to the countryside by facilitating sustainable travel.			

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Staff	☒	☐	☐	The council was consulted on the draft plan. Within the council different teams were consulted and their responses collated for consideration by the NWD team.			
Other Council Services	☒	☐	☐	All service areas doing work within the NWD or affecting it will have to have regard to the plan. Service areas were consulted on the plan and comments passed on to the NWD team for consideration. As the plan is a light touch update to the existing management plan, not many comments were received. The priorities of the management plan also mostly align with the council's vision and are already being integrated into the service areas.			

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Providers	☒	☐	☐	The NWD team plans and undertake actions of the plan.			
Social Value [1]	☒	☐	☐	The management plan offers social value to people across this county offering a range of benefits such as building a sense of place, recreation and leisure, access to nature, delivering nature improvements, all of which will improve the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors of Oxfordshire.			

[1] If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	Annually. The NWDNL team will be monitoring achievements against the Management Plan objectives and actions. The NWDNL team provide regular updates on their work areas at the CoP meetings.
Person Responsible for Review	NWDNL team in liaison with the Council of Partners The council's Landscape & Green Infrastructure Technical Lead officer will act as a link between the NWDNL team and relevant functions in the council.
Authorised By	

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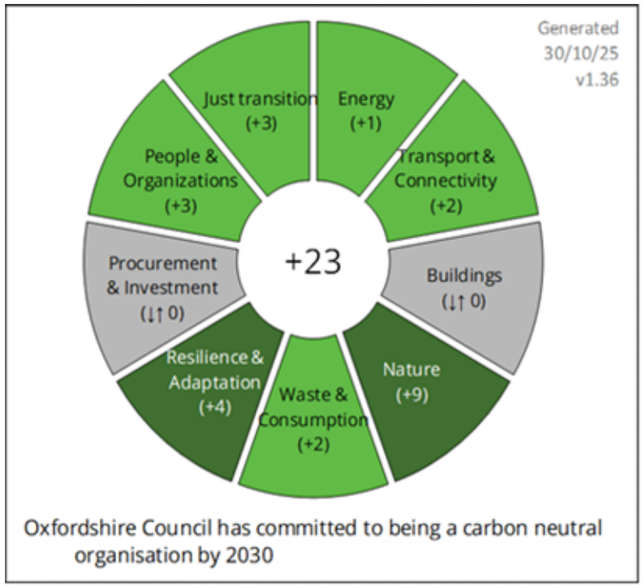
Climate Impact Assessment

Summary

Directorate and Service Area	Environment and Highways, Landscape and Nature Recovery Team
What is being assessed	Oxfordshire County Council are requested by the North Wessex Downs National Landscape (NWDNL) Council of Partners to formally adopt the new North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	An existing function. The NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030 is an update to the existing management plan, which was adopted by the council in 2019.
Summary of assessment	With a score of +15 the management plan is considered to have a clear positive climate impact. It delivers particularly well on nature, connectivity & transport, resilience & adaptation and a just transition. The plan is considered to align well with the council's vision for achieving net-zero, adapting to climate change and protecting the natural world.
Completed by	Haidrun Breith
Climate action sign off by	Franco Gonzalez
Director sign off by	
Assessment date	30/10/2025



Detail of proposal

Context / Background	Under s.89 of the Countryside and Right of Way (CRoW) 2000 Act, local authorities have a statutory duty to produce a management plan for the NWDNL every 5 years. Updates reflect legislative changes, changes in terminology and a greater emphasis on nature recovery and addressing climate change and adaptation.
Proposal	The proposal is for the council to adopt the NWDNL Management Plan 2025-2030. Chapter 7 includes objectives and policies that are specifically aimed at delivering action on climate change within the NWD, but climate change adaptation and mitigation is also a common thread running throughout the majority of the plan.
Evidence / Intelligence	The NWDNL Team carried out an extensive consultation with partners including local authorities, the public, external organisations and interest groups when drafting the plan. Within the council, comments from various teams including the climate team were collated and submitted to the NWDNL team for consideration. The climate comments included recommendations of how to further improve action on climate, but were supportive overall.
Alternatives considered / rejected	The alternative would be not to adopt the management plan. This would result in the council not meeting its statutory duty under s.89 of the CRoW Act, which requires local authorities including the council to “prepare and publish a management plan which formulates [their] policy for the management of the AONB and for carrying out of their functions in relation to it”. There would also be a reputational risk if not adopting or unduly delaying the adoption of the NWDNL management plan.

Category	Impact criteria	Score (-3 to +3)	Description of impact	Actions or mitigations to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timeline and monitoring arrangements
Energy	Increases energy efficiency	N/A				
Energy	Promotes a switch to low-carbon or renewable energy	1	encourages small-scale solar			
Energy	Promotes resilient, local, smart energy systems	N/A				
Transport & Connectivity	Reduces need to travel and/or the need for private car ownership	N/A				
Transport & Connectivity	Supports active travel	1	encourages sustainable travel options; seeks to increase connectivity			
Transport & Connectivity	Increases use of public transport	1	encourages public transport providers to increase sustainable travel options			
Transport & Connectivity	Accelerates electrification of transport	N/A				
Buildings	Promotes net zero new builds and developments	N/A				
Buildings	Accelerates retrofitting of existing buildings	N/A				
Nature	Protects, restores or enhances biodiversity, landscape and ecosystems	3	sets targets for the protected landscape in line with the governemt Targets Framework; has Nature Recovery Plan; project work			
Nature	Develops blue and green infrastructure	3	includes a policy that encourages green and blue infrastructure improvements and creation			
Nature	Improves access to nature and green spaces	3	improved access to the NWDNL and its nature and greenspaces one of the key aims of the Management Plan			
Waste & Consumption	Reduces overall consumption	1	encourages local businesses to minimise waste and to conserve energy and water			
Waste & Consumption	Supports waste prevention and drive reuse and recycling	N/A				
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience to flooding	1	seeks more natural flood management			
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience to other extreme weather events (e.g., storms, cold snaps, heatwaves, droughts)	3	development of a climate change adaptation strategy for the NWDNL is one of the priorities of the plan			
Resilience & Adaptation	Increases resilience of council services, communities, energy systems, transport infrastructure and/or supply chains	N/A				
Procurement & Investment	Procurement practices prioritise low-carbon options, circular economy and sustainability	N/A				
Procurement & Investment	Investment being considered supports climate action/ is consistent with path to net zero	N/A				

People & Organizations	Drives behavioural change to address the climate and ecological emergency		2	the plan includes priorities and policies that seek to improve information and education to raise awareness and understanding of nature
People & Organizations	Drives organizational and systemic change to address the climate and ecological emergency	N/A		
Just transition	Promotes green innovation and job creation		1	supports new skills and green jobs
Just transition	Promotes health and wellbeing		2	improving health and wellbeing is a key theme in the plan
Just transition	Reduces poverty and inequality	N/A		