

# Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



**Monday, 15th April, 2024 at 6.00 pm**

To members of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee - A Bailey, G Meadows, R Smith, J Aitman, O Collins, J Robertshaw, S Simpson and D Temple (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

## **Admission to Meetings**

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk [derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) in advance.

## **Recording of Meetings**

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings, please let the Town Clerk or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

## **Agenda**

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk [derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

**Standing Order 30(d)(v)** permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have informed the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

### **3. Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of five minutes each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

4. **Planning Applications** (Pages 3 - 29)

To receive and consider a Planning Application from West Oxfordshire District Council.

[24/00482/OUT](#) - North Witney Strategic Development Area, New Yatt Road, Witney.

Outline planning application for a residential-led mixed-use development (Use Class C3 / C2), a 2.2ha primary school (Use Class F1), and up to 400m2 community use and/or co-working hub and/or shop (Use Class E and F2) and Northern Distributor Road with creation of new vehicular access off Woodstock Road, New Yatt Road and Hailey Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. (All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of access to the site)

An extract from the [West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031](#) is attached which relates to the strategic development area under consideration.



Town Clerk

4

- 4.1 **WTC/052/24** Plot Ref :- 24/00482/OUT Type :- OUTLINE  
Applicant Name :- . Date Received :- 04/04/2024  
Parish :- Date Returned :-  
Location :- NORTH WITNEY Agent  
STRATEGIC  
DEVELOPMENT AREA  
NEW YATT ROAD  
Proposals :- Outline planning application for a residential-led mixed-use development (Use Class C3 / C2), a 2.2ha primary school (Use Class F1), and up to 400m2 community use and/or co-working hub and/or shop (Use Class E and F2) and Northern Distributor Road with creation of new vehicular access off Woodstock Road, New Yatt Road and Hailey Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. (All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of access to the site).  
Observations :-
-



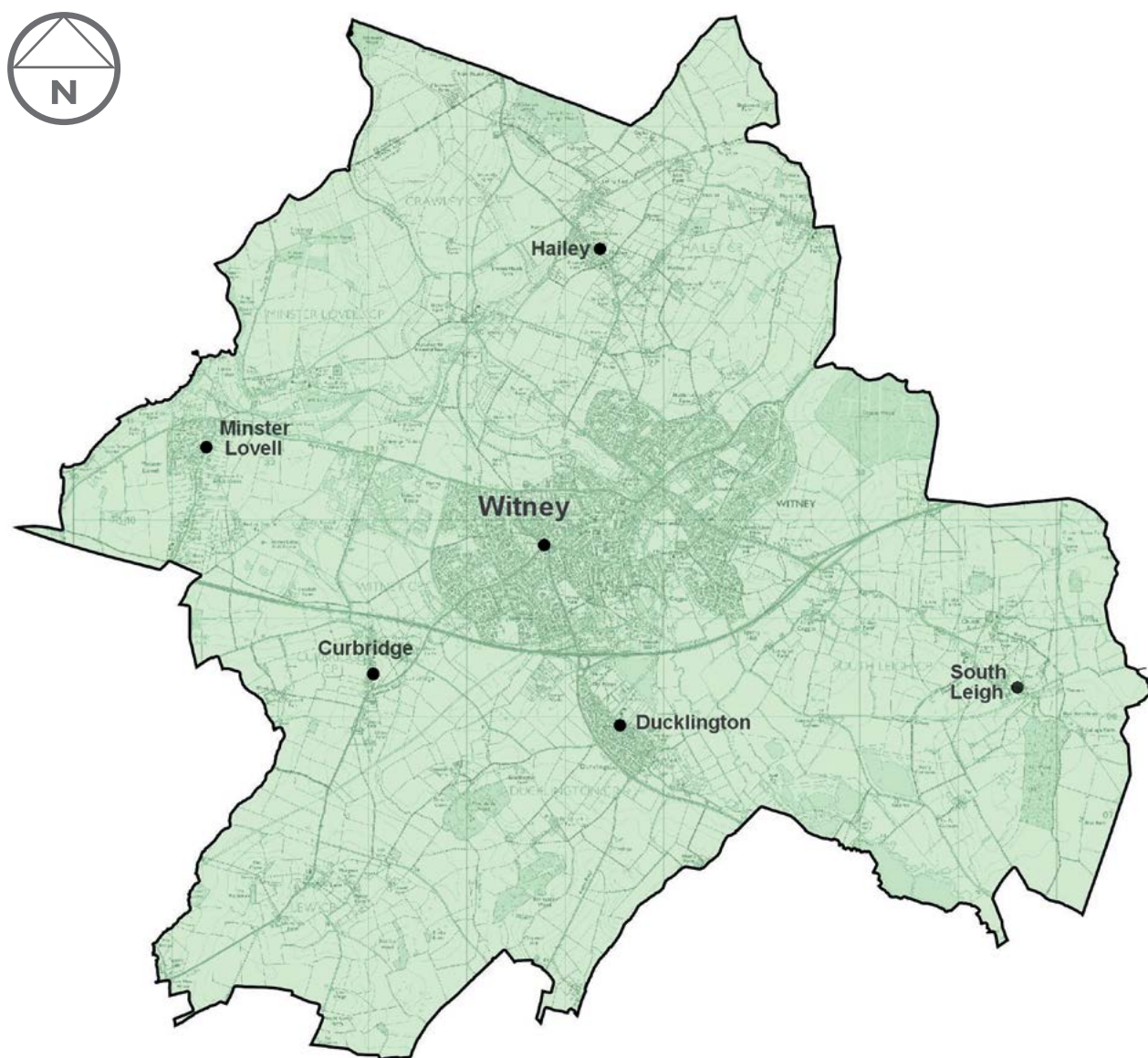
Witney sub-area

Witney

9.2.1 This is the smallest of the five-sub areas covering an area of around 7,000 hectares. However, it is the most heavily populated, containing around 33,000 people. The majority of residents (28,000) live in Witney a vibrant and historic market town famed for its association with the blanket industry. Witney is the District's largest town, acting as the main service centre and offering a broad range of housing and employment opportunities as well as key services and facilities including retailing, health care, leisure and culture.

9.2.2 The rest of the sub-area comprises a number of villages and hamlets on the fringes of Witney including Crawley, Hailey, Minster Lovell, Ducklington, South Leigh and Curbridge. Although these places offer some local facilities they naturally look to Witney for most essential services.

**Figure 9.2a: Witney sub-area**



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## Housing

- 9.2.3 Most of the existing housing in this sub-area is located in Witney (around 12,000 dwellings) which has experienced major growth over the last 30 years, more than doubling its population. Much of this growth has been accommodated through successive urban extensions in the post-war era, to the north, west and east of the town.
- 9.2.4 Property prices are relatively high (although not as high as some parts of the District) and there is considerable housing need<sup>35</sup> with about 550 households on the housing waiting list having identified Witney as their preferred location. The County Council has also identified Witney as its priority location for the provision of specialist housing for adults with care and support needs.
- 9.2.5 Whilst there are some further opportunities for housing within the built up area of Witney, these are relatively limited and to accommodate future housing needs there is a need to develop on the fringes of the town on Greenfield land. This needs to be carefully balanced with the need to protect the town's setting and the separate identity of nearby villages. There are some further development opportunities within the rest of the sub-area although these are relatively modest in scale.

## Employment

- 9.2.6 The Witney sub-area plays an important economic role containing just over 30% of the District's employment opportunities (almost 15,000 jobs) and almost 30% of the District's economically active residents<sup>36</sup>.

9.2.7 Witney is the main economic centre in the District and its role as a centre for blanket manufacturing was important in the town's expansion. Today the economy is diverse with a range of shopping, leisure and tourist facilities and accommodation, several small employment sites throughout the town and large employment estates on the southern and western edges. The town retains a strong manufacturing and engineering presence, and the availability of good quality employment sites on the western side of the town has attracted significant investment, including some high technology manufacturers linked to the Oxford Bioscience Cluster.

9.2.8 Around 8 hectares of land remains on several sites within the large employment area to the west of the town. However, much of this is earmarked for the future expansion of existing businesses meaning it is not available to facilitate inward investment from outside of the District. An additional 10 hectares is proposed as part of the committed urban extension at West Witney (see Figure 9.2h) and will meet a significant proportion of future business land requirements in the town, benefitting from improved access onto the A40 via a new junction at Down's Road. In the longer-term, the delivery of this new junction could also unlock further employment land potential to the west of Down's Road. This would need to be considered alongside other reasonable alternatives through a review of the Local Plan.

## Transport

9.2.9 Transport is a key issue for the Witney sub-area which contains a number of important and well-used routes including the A40 the A4095 and A415. Although Witney has the best road connections and bus services in the District context, traffic congestion is a significant problem due to high car use particularly for journeys outside of Witney.

35 People who cannot afford to buy or rent a suitable property at market prices

36 Economic snapshot and outlook report

- 9.2.10 Improvements to the Ducklington Lane junction were implemented by Oxfordshire County Council in 2014 to help improve traffic flow, but problems persist in the historic core of the town around Bridge Street where the town's single river crossing creates a 'bottleneck' that causes delays to journey times and poor air quality.
- 9.2.11 A further key issue is the A40. Currently access to the A40 at Witney is relatively limited and the route is also heavily congested at peak times between Eynsham and the edge of Oxford. The A40 problems are seen as a major constraint to inward investment into the District as well as a great inconvenience for those sitting in long queues every day. An award of £35m through the Local Growth Fund will be used to deliver improvements comprising a new park and ride at Eynsham and an eastbound bus lane from the park and ride toward Oxford. Longer-term improvements to the A40 have also been identified although funding is yet to be secured.
- 9.2.12 Relieving congestion through investment in transport infrastructure is not only important in terms of public amenity and air quality, it is also essential to unlocking future housing provision and sustainable economic growth.

## Retail and leisure

- 9.2.13 Witney is the primary shopping and a key leisure destination serving West Oxfordshire and beyond. With the historic Market Place and High Street at its core, the centre retains its market town character and has a large number of independent and national multiple retailers as well as service uses. The town centre is performing well, maintaining a strong market share with low vacancy rates.
- 9.2.14 Major developments including the Marriott's Walk town centre expansion and the extension to the Woolgate Centre have enhanced the shopping and leisure offer of the town. The availability of free car parking is a significant attraction over competing centres but car park capacity is already under pressure.
- 9.2.15 Evidence<sup>37</sup> suggests there is capacity for additional shopping provision in Witney in the medium and longer term and recommends a strategy of phased development to reinforce the role of the town centre in the context of increasing competition elsewhere, such as Oxford.

<sup>37</sup> Retail assessment 2012

## Environment and heritage

- 9.2.16 Witney grew up as a valley settlement near crossing points of the River Windrush. The river and associated floodplain forms a significant green corridor that is an important part of the character of the town and its historic setting as well as an ecological and recreational resource. The Windrush Valley is a designated Conservation Target Area (CTA)<sup>38</sup> and includes the Windrush in Witney Project Area<sup>39</sup> which provides guidance for the management of the area in order to protect and enhance its special landscape, character, ecological, cultural and recreational value.
- 9.2.17 Immediately to the south of the town is the Lower Windrush Valley Project Area, an area that has been transformed by sand and gravel extraction. The project was set up in 2001 and is a jointly funded initiative that seeks to strengthen and develop the evolving landscape of the valley, protect and enhance biodiversity, improve opportunities for countryside access and raise awareness of the issues that influence the valley environment.
- 9.2.18 Whilst representing a significant asset, the River Windrush and its tributaries create a flood risk and there have been several flood events in the Witney area with particularly severe flooding in July 2007.
- 9.2.19 The landscape surrounding the town is a mix of valley floor, valley side and open ridge and is generally sensitive to new development. Land to the north and east rises to form a prominent ridge which is a backdrop in many views to and from the town and where there are remnants of the ancient landscape of the Wychwood Forest.

- 9.2.20 In terms of the historic environment, as described above, Witney is an historic market town, famed for its association with the blanket industry with some of the former mill buildings having now been converted to new uses. A Conservation Area washes over much of the central area of the town and there are several scheduled monuments and numerous listed buildings. A number of the smaller settlements surrounding Witney also have designated Conservation Areas.

## Infrastructure

- 9.2.21 Infrastructure provision within this sub-area is naturally focused on Witney as the District's main town. Witney offers a significant range of infrastructure including key roads, public transport, schools, health care, museum, library, sports pitches, informal open space, allotments, leisure centre and so on.
- 9.2.22 The growth of Witney in recent years has placed these services and facilities under increasing pressure and careful consideration is needed in terms of the impact of additional housing and business growth. This is a particularly important consideration for Witney which is intended to accommodate a significant proportion of future development in the District to 2031.

## Scope for future expansion

- 9.2.23 Opportunities for major development within the built up area of the town are relatively limited. This means that development on the fringes of the town will be required to meet future needs. Land to the west of the town (north Curbridge) is already committed, incorporating 1,000 homes and 10 hectares of new business land but it is quite possible that a modest increase in the number of homes (e.g. to around 1,100) could be achieved as detailed planning applications are dealt with. The remaining strategic options considered through the Local Plan process are to the south, east, north-east north and further west of Witney. There are some further development opportunities within the rest of the sub-area although these are relatively modest in scale.

38 [www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk)

39 [www.westoxon.gov.uk/ldfevidence](http://www.westoxon.gov.uk/ldfevidence)



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

- This is the smallest of the five sub-areas but is the most densely populated with most people living in the main town Witney;
- Witney is a key service centre with other nearby settlements looking to it for their principal needs;
- Witney is a vibrant and historic town and the protection of its setting and the individual identities of nearby villages is a key consideration;
- Major housing development has taken place at Witney in the last 30 years doubling the population;
- Property prices although not as high as some parts of the District are still high compared to the national average;
- There is a high level of affordable housing need with Witney being the preferred location for almost half of the Council's housing waiting list;
- Witney is a priority location for the provision of specialist housing for adults with care and support needs;
- This sub-area plays an important economic role, particularly Witney which provides most of the District's job opportunities and economically active residents with a particularly strong presence of manufacturing and engineering;
- Although there is additional business space available, much of this is already earmarked for the expansion of existing businesses rather than inward investment;
- Witney is a key shopping and leisure destination with scope for additional shopping provision in the medium to long-term although parking capacity in the Town Centre is an issue at peak times;
- Traffic congestion is a key issue for this area both in the centre of Witney and on the A40 toward Oxford;
- Flood risk is an important issue due to the presence of the River Windrush;
- This is an environmentally sensitive area with a number of local designations and a small element of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB);
- There are significant mineral resources (sand and gravel) within the Lower Windrush Valley and the after-use of quarry sites presents good opportunities for suitable forms of informal recreation;
- The conservation and enhancement of the historic environment is an important issue in this area which includes many heritage assets such as Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings;
- There is an extensive range of infrastructure primarily at Witney but major growth in recent years has placed this under increasing pressure and future development will need to ensure that appropriate measures are put in place;
- Relatively limited development opportunities within Witney mean that the development of Greenfield land on the edge of the town will be required to meet future needs. There are some further development opportunities within the rest of the sub-area although these are relatively modest in scale.

## Strategy

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

## Housing

- 9.2.26 In terms of future housing provision the anticipated housing delivery for this sub-area is 4,702 new homes in the period 2011 – 2031. In accordance with the overall strategy, the majority of these new homes will be located at Witney which is ranked as the District's most sustainable settlement and offers a number of opportunities for further development.
- 9.2.27 It is anticipated that this will be provided through a combination of homes already completed (2011 – 2017), existing commitments, windfall development, two allocated Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) and two 'non-strategic' housing allocations. This is summarised in the table right. Further sites will also be identified through any subsequent review of this Local Plan.

**Table 9.2b: Anticipated housing delivery in the Witney sub-area**

Homes already completed (2011 – 2017)	600
Existing large planning commitments at 1 April 2017 (10 or more units):	1,772
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Curbridge (West Witney) (1,000)</li> <li>• Land at Downs Road, Curbridge (257)</li> <li>• Land off Well Lane, Curbridge (14)</li> <li>• Standlake Road, Ducklington (24)</li> <li>• Land West of Minster Lovell (85)</li> <li>• Land at Northfield Farm, Witney (4)*</li> <li>• Springfield Nursery, Witney (13)*</li> <li>• Dark Lane, Witney (14)</li> <li>• Land at Thorney Leys, Witney (26)</li> <li>• Land north of Springfield Oval, Witney (75)</li> <li>• Land north of Burford Road, Witney (260)</li> </ul>	
Existing small planning commitments at 1 April 2017 (less than 10 units)	114
<b>Local Plan Allocations</b>	
WIT1 - East Witney strategic development area (SDA)	450
WIT2 - North Witney strategic development area (SDA)	1,400
WIT3 - Woodford Way Car Park, Witney	50
WIT4 - Land West of Minster Lovell**	125 (net gain of 40 units as 85 units already listed in commitments above)
Anticipated windfall (2017– 2031)	276
<b>Total anticipated housing delivery</b>	<b>4,702</b>

\* Remaining units forming part of a larger scheme

Past completions, existing commitments, and windfall

- 9.2.28 In the first six years of the plan period (2011 – 2017) a total of 600 homes were completed in the Witney sub-area. As of 1 April 2017, a further 1,886 homes are already committed through the planning process<sup>40</sup>. This includes 1,772 homes on larger sites (i.e. 10 or more units) and 114 homes on smaller sites (i.e. less than 10 units). The largest committed site is the proposed West Witney (north Curbridge) urban extension which was allocated as a reserve site in the adopted Local Plan. The outline consent envisages the provision of 1,000 new homes plus 10 hectares of new employment land although it is possible that through detailed planning applications the number of new homes could increase to around 1,100.
- 9.2.29 In addition to past completions and existing commitments it is reasonable to include a 'windfall' allowance to cater for unidentified sites expected to come forward for housing over the period of the Local Plan. Based on past evidence of historic rates of windfall delivery by sub-area, it is reasonable to expect delivery of at least 276 units from unidentified windfall sites in the period 2017 - 2031.

Strategic Development Areas (SDAs)

- 9.2.30 Because there is relatively limited capacity for further housing development within the built up area of Witney, it will be necessary for development to take place on undeveloped land on the edge of the town. Land to the west of Witney (north Curbridge) was identified as a reserve site in the previous Local Plan and is now a firm commitment, expected to deliver at least 1,000 homes within the plan period and possibly more as detailed planning applications are dealt with.

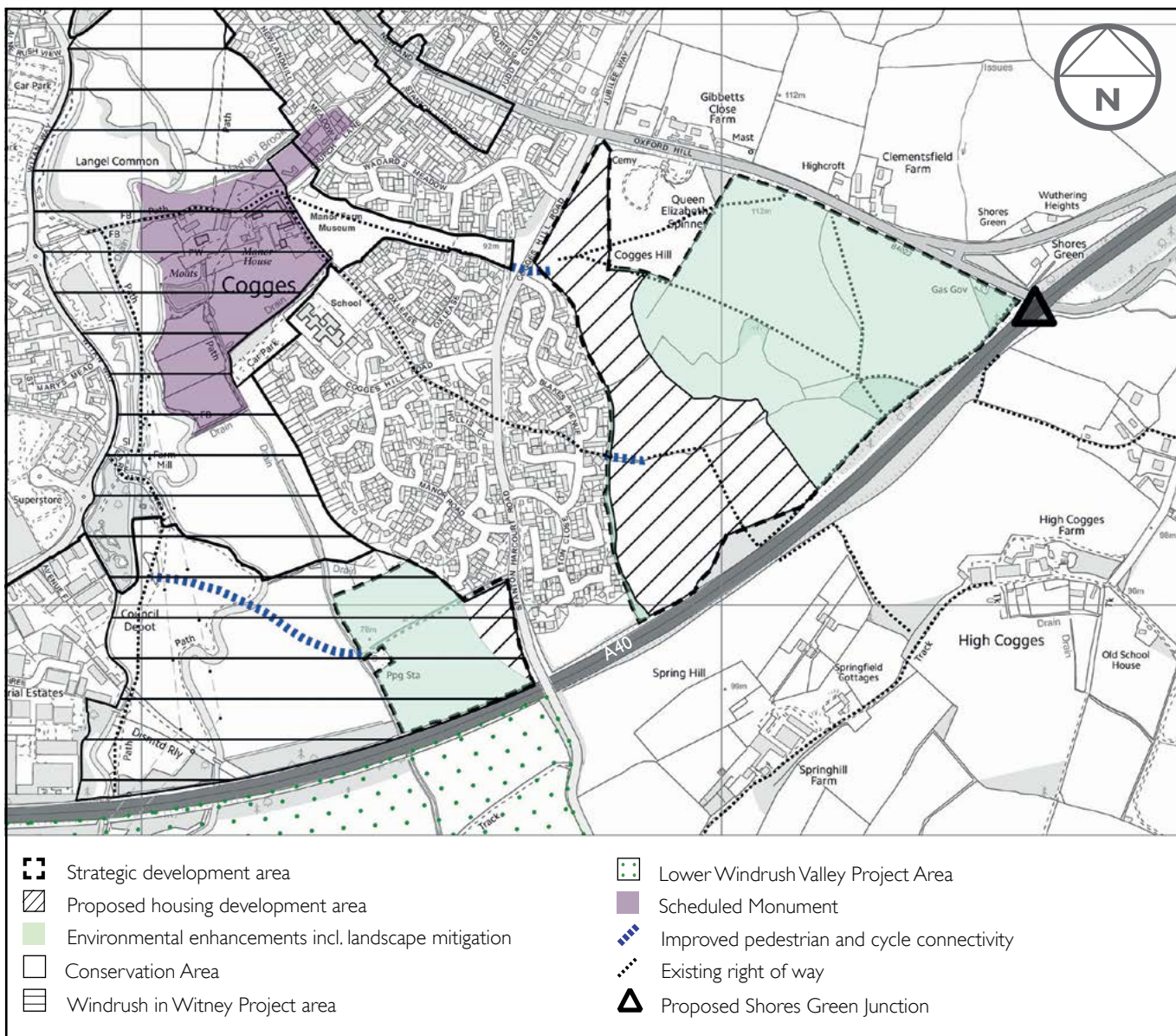
- 9.2.31 Throughout the preparation of this Local Plan, a number of other options for strategic extensions to Witney have been considered including land further land to the west, south, east, north-east and north of the town. Following detailed consideration and analysis, the Council has concluded that land to the east of Witney which falls within Witney Parish and land to the north of Witney which falls within Hailey Parish, represent the most sustainable options for future strategic growth. As such it is proposed that these sites are allocated for 450 homes and 1,400 homes respectively.

### **East Witney strategic development area (SDA) – 450 homes (Witney parish)**

- 9.2.32 Land to the east of Witney is allocated for the delivery of 450 new homes. The site has no significant environmental or heritage constraints, is well-located in relation to the Town Centre and provided the extent, scale and design of development is sensitively controlled, will not have a significant landscape impact. Importantly, the west facing slip roads at the Shores Green junction onto the A40 will need to be delivered alongside the development in order to help manage the impact of the development.
- 9.2.33 The Shores Green improvements allow traffic using the junction to travel both east and west. A financial contribution towards the slip roads has already been secured from another housing development north of Burford Road in Witney and the East Witney SDA provides another mechanism by which the slip roads can be delivered. The development itself is able to deliver the 'off-slip' through a planning obligation and an appropriate financial contribution will be sought towards the 'on-slip' potentially as part of a wider strategic transport infrastructure fund/package for Witney.
- 9.2.34 The proposed allocation is shown in Figure 9.2c (note: the extent of the developable area shown is indicative only).

<sup>40</sup> i.e. already benefit from planning permission or a resolution to grant planning permission subject to a legal agreement

**Figure 9.2c: East Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)**



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**9.2.35** The allocation is split across two separate sites. A small parcel of land served off the Stanton Harcourt Road will provide a limited development of around 30 homes. The inclusion of this land within the allocation will help to facilitate the provision of links to the Town Centre across the Windrush Valley thereby increasing the integration of the overall development with the existing built area. It will also provide early revenue for the developer to help fund the infrastructure needed to bring forward the larger part of the site.

**9.2.36** The remaining homes (c. 420) will be provided on the land known as Cogges Triangle, subject to consideration of the likely traffic impact on Witney in particular Bridge Street and an agreed strategy for the delivery of the Shores Green junction improvements. The precise quantum of development on both sites will depend on a number of issues including landscape and heritage impact, surface water run-off and traffic impact. A balanced mix of housing types including affordable housing will be sought together with the provision of essential supporting infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the development.

**POLICY WIT1:**  
**East Witney Strategic Development Area**  
**(450 homes)**

Land to the east of Witney to accommodate a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Witney, including:

- a) about 450 homes with a balanced and appropriate mix of residential accommodation to meet identified needs, including affordable housing. This will include c.30 homes on land adjacent to Stanton Harcourt Road (subject to landscape impact and flood risk) and c. 420 homes on land at Cogges Triangle (subject to landscape impact and surface water run-off).
- b) comprehensive development to be led by an agreed masterplan.
- c) development to be phased in accordance with the timing of provision of supporting infrastructure and facilities including the essential improvements to the Shore's Green junction onto the A40 and related highway measures.
- d) the provision of other supporting transport infrastructure, including mitigating the impact of traffic associated with the development; the provision of appropriate financial contributions towards LTP4 transport schemes; provision of appropriate public transport (services and infrastructure) serving the site; and provision of a comprehensive network for pedestrians and cyclists with good connectivity provided to adjoining areas, including a particular emphasis on improving the linkages across the Windrush Valley into the town centre consistent with the aims and objectives of the Windrush in Witney Project and to Hanborough Station.
- e) the provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development and associated infrastructure.
- f) the provision of appropriate financial contributions towards primary and secondary education capacity enhancements.
- g) biodiversity, landscape and public access enhancements within the Lower Windrush Valley including arrangements for future maintenance.
- h) provision of appropriate green infrastructure including allotments.
- i) appropriate measures to mitigate traffic noise.
- j) the conservation, and enhancement where possible, of the setting of the Cogges Scheduled Monument and the Witney and Cogges Conservation Area.
- k) the investigation, recording and safeguarding of the known and potential archaeological significance of the Area prior to any development taking place. The results of the investigation and recording should inform the final layout of the development and be deposited in a public archive.
- l) appropriate measures to mitigate flood risk including the use of sustainable drainage methods to ensure that post-development surface water run-off rates are attenuated to achieve a reduction in greenfield run-off rates. The sustainable drainage systems should be designed to provide a biodiversity enhancement.
- m) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements.
- n) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.
- o) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.

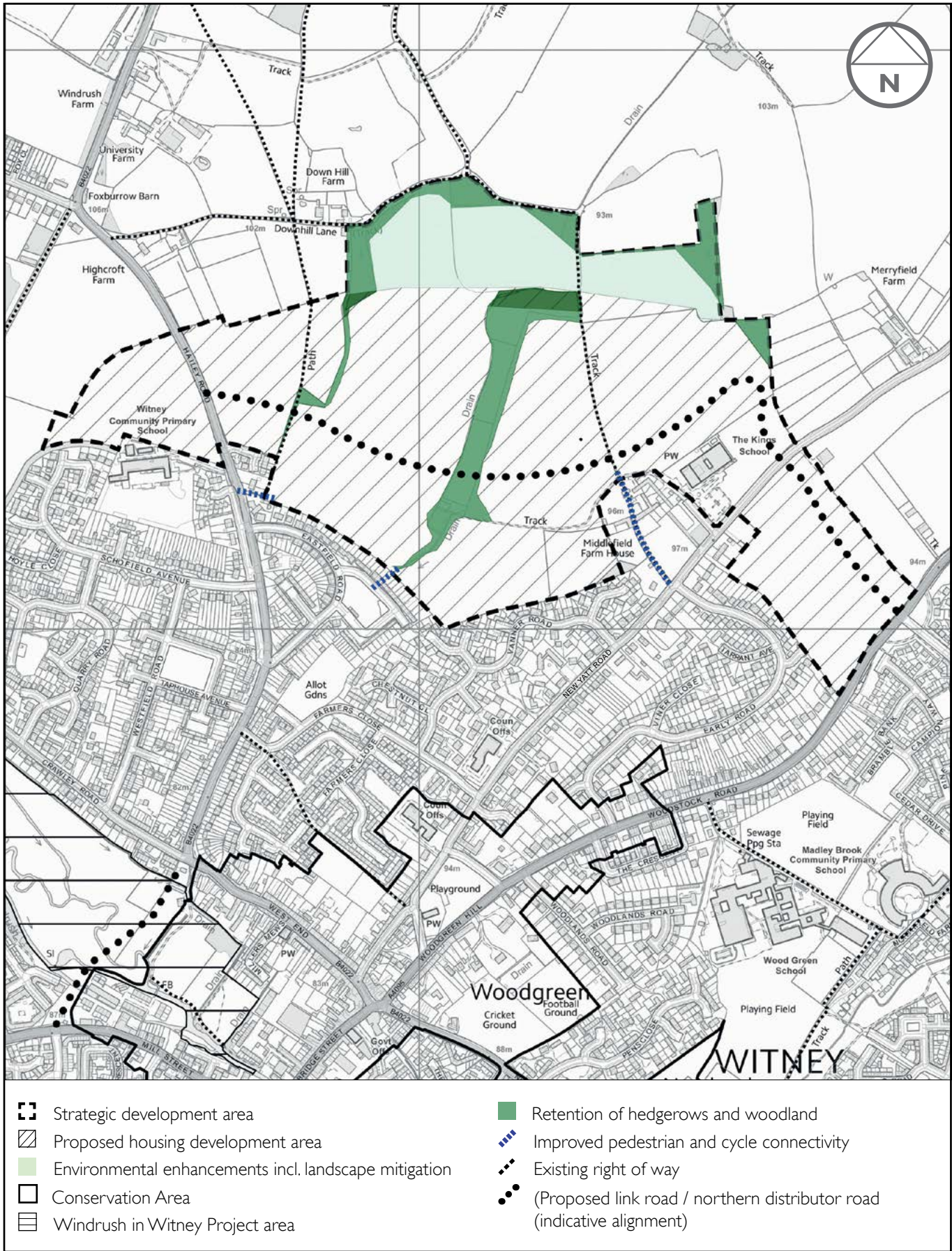
## **North Witney strategic development area (SDA) - 1,400 homes (Hailey parish)**

- 9.2.37 Land to the north of Witney is allocated for the delivery of 1,400 homes. The site is considered to be well-related to the main services and facilities of Witney, has no major ecological or heritage constraints and based on the proposed quantum of growth, will not have a significant landscape impact. Importantly, the development will require the delivery of the West End Link (WEL) a second river crossing for Witney together with a new northern distributor road connecting Hailey Road to New Yatt Road and onto Woodstock Road.
- 9.2.38 The proposed allocation is shown overleaf (note: the extent of the developable area is indicative only).
- 9.2.39 The proposed site allocation comprises three separate parcels of land, a larger area of land (c. 49ha) between Hailey Road and New Yatt Road a parcel between New Yatt Road and Woodstock Road (c. 7ha) and a smaller parcel of land west of Hailey Road (c. 4ha). It is anticipated that across the allocation as a whole, around 1,400 homes could be provided.
- 9.2.40 The land west of Hailey Road is capable of accommodating around 100 new homes, the land between Hailey Road and New Yatt Road, around 1,100 homes and the land between New Yatt Road and Woodstock Road around 200 homes.
- 9.2.41 In addition to the proposed site allocation shown on Figure 9.2d, there may also be some potential for further development on the land further north between New Yatt Road and Woodstock Road. The site has not been promoted for development through the Council's housing land availability assessment and has therefore not been included within the allocation but in principle may be suitable subject to there being a demonstrable benefit eg. in terms of improved highway access arrangements and Green Infrastructure provision.
- 9.2.42 Key considerations for this site include flood risk, ecology, landscape impact, transport impact, deliverability and phasing. Consideration of the archaeological significance of the area, including historic landscape, will also be needed.
- 9.2.43 In terms of flood risk, evidence<sup>41</sup> suggests that there is scope to reduce surface water run-off from the site itself through the use of sustainable drainage and potential off-site enhancements. The site promoter has identified land to the north of the SDA boundary which could be used for the purpose of off-site storage. Although the associated West End Link falls within an area of designated floodplain, it is classed as 'essential infrastructure' and there are no sequentially preferable alternatives available (other than the A40/Shores Green slip roads scheme which is also being taken forward).
- 9.2.44 Importantly, the West End Link could offer the potential to serve a 'dual' role not only in terms of transport but also in terms of flood risk mitigation – the concept of which has the support of Oxfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency. Any development proposal will need to be supported by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).
- 9.2.45 With regard to ecology, evidence<sup>42</sup> suggests that both the site and the West End Link have no significant ecological constraints and that the proposed development presents a number of opportunities to deliver positive enhancements.

41 North Witney and WEL Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015)

42 North Witney and WEL Preliminary Ecological Assessment (2015)

**Figure 9.2d: North Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)**



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9.2.46 In terms of landscape impact, evidence<sup>43</sup> prepared in support of the Local Plan suggested that the originally proposed quantum of development (1,000 homes) was able to be accommodated on the site without undue adverse impact. Taking account of the additional development capacity provided by the inclusion of land west of Hailey Road, a modest increase in the extent of the developable area to the north (see Figure 9.2d) and slightly higher density assumptions, it is considered that around 1,400 homes can be delivered on the site whilst ensuring an acceptable degree of impact in landscape terms. A detailed landscape and visual impact assessment would however be required in support of any future application to determine the most appropriate form and layout of development which would ultimately influence final housing numbers.

9.2.47 Traffic impact is a key consideration and any development will need to be supported by a detailed Transport Assessment (TA) and Travel Plan. Evidence<sup>44</sup> prepared in support of the Local Plan suggests that whilst not eliminating congestion in the central core of Witney around Bridge Street, the provision of the West End Link and Northern Distributor Road will, in combination with other strategic highway measures proposed at Witney, have a number of tangible benefits as well as mitigating the impact of the proposed development.

9.2.48 In terms of deliverability, there are no known constraints in terms of land assembly to prevent the site coming forward and evidence prepared in support of the Local Plan<sup>45</sup> suggests that the scheme is a financially viable proposition.

9.2.49 As a large site, development of the North Witney SDA is likely to fall into a number of phases. There is already a current planning application on part of the site for 200 dwellings which is likely to form 'Phase 1' (subject to a comprehensive masterplan/delivery framework for the whole site). Because of the lead-in times associated with larger strategic sites, it is likely that the majority of the site will come forward later in the plan period after 2021 unless delivery can be accelerated. Delivery of the bulk of development in the medium to long-term would however offer the following advantages:

- help to ensure that housing delivery is provided evenly across the whole of the Local Plan period;
- ensure the transport impact of the scheme is minimised by allowing for the new A40/Down's Road junction and A40/Shores Green improvements to come forward first;
- allow time for the east and west Witney schemes to come forward in advance; and
- allow for the West End Link element of the scheme to be phased in appropriately as an integral part of the development.

43 Kirkham Associates Landscape and Visual Review of Submissions for Carterton and Witney Strategic Development Options (2012)

44 Technical Note: Witney Development and Infrastructure Strategic Modelling (White Young Green October 2014)

45 Aspinall Verdi – SDA appraisal North Witney (2015)



## **POLICY WIT2:**

### **North Witney Strategic Development Area (1,400 homes)**

Land to the north of Witney to accommodate a sustainable, integrated community that forms a positive addition to Witney, including:

- a) about 1,400 homes with a balanced and appropriate mix of residential accommodation to meet identified needs, including affordable housing;
- b) comprehensive development to be led by an agreed masterplan;
- c) development to be phased in accordance with the timing of provision of supporting infrastructure and facilities including the essential delivery of the West End Link and Northern Distributor Road;
- d) the provision of other supporting transport infrastructure, including mitigating the impact of traffic associated with the development; the provision of appropriate financial contributions towards LTP4 transport schemes; provision of appropriate public transport (services and infrastructure) serving the site; and provision of a comprehensive network for pedestrians and cyclists with good connectivity provided to adjoining areas including the town centre and other key destinations;
- e) the provision of a new primary school on-site (2FE including nursery) on a 2.2ha site together with financial contributions towards secondary school capacity as appropriate;
- f) the conservation and where possible enhancement of the setting of the grade II listed Middlefield Farmhouse and dovecote and the Witney and Cogges and Hailey Conservation Areas;
- g) the investigation, recording and safeguarding of the known and potential archaeological significance of the Area prior to any development taking place. The results of the investigation and recording should inform the final layout of the development and should be deposited in a public archive;
- h) the provision of appropriate landscaping measures to mitigate the potential impact of development including a positive landscape framework to create a new town edge;
- i) retention of important on-site hedgerows and plantation woodland;
- j) biodiversity enhancements including arrangements for future maintenance;
- k) provision of appropriate green infrastructure including allotments;
- l) appropriate measures to mitigate flood risk including the use of sustainable drainage methods to ensure that post-development surface water run-off rates are attenuated to achieve a reduction in greenfield run-off rates. This may include consideration of 'off-site' solutions. The sustainable drainage systems should be designed to provide a biodiversity enhancement.
- m) all development should be steered to areas at least flood risk within Flood Zone 1 and flood alleviation measures to reduce flood risk associated with the Hailey Road Drain should be incorporated where appropriate.
- n) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements.
- o) ensuring that the design and construction of the West End Link has no undue impact on heritage assets and biodiversity and provides for mitigation and enhancements where feasible;
- p) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.
- q) the developer will be required to set aside 5% of the developable plots for those wishing to undertake custom/self-build.

## Alternative options for strategic growth at Witney

- 9.2.50 In terms of alternative strategic directions of growth at Witney, several other options have been considered including land to the south and land to the north east of the town as well as land to the west of Downs Road. Having regard to the overall housing requirement and evidence prepared in support of the Local Plan<sup>46</sup> these sites have not been allocated at this point but will be re-considered alongside any other reasonable alternatives as part of any subsequent review of this Local Plan.
- 9.2.51 Land to the south of Witney which straddles the boundaries of Ducklington and Curbridge Parishes, whilst physically proximate to the town centre and main employment areas in the south is segregated from the town by the A40. There are concerns regarding noise, odour and landscape impact and unlike the alternative options, the scheme would not deliver any strategic highway improvements for Witney.
- 9.2.52 Land to the north east of Witney which straddles the boundaries of Witney Parish and South Leigh Parish is highly sensitive in terms of landscape impact and importantly, in terms of deliverability, there is some uncertainty in relation to the assembly of land needed to provide satisfactory access arrangements onto Jubilee Way.
- 9.2.53 Land to the west of Downs Road is at present rather divorced and isolated from the existing built area of Witney. However, when the committed urban extension at West Witney (North Curbridge) is completed, the context of the site will change and it could potentially form a logical urban extension to the town.

## Non-strategic housing allocations

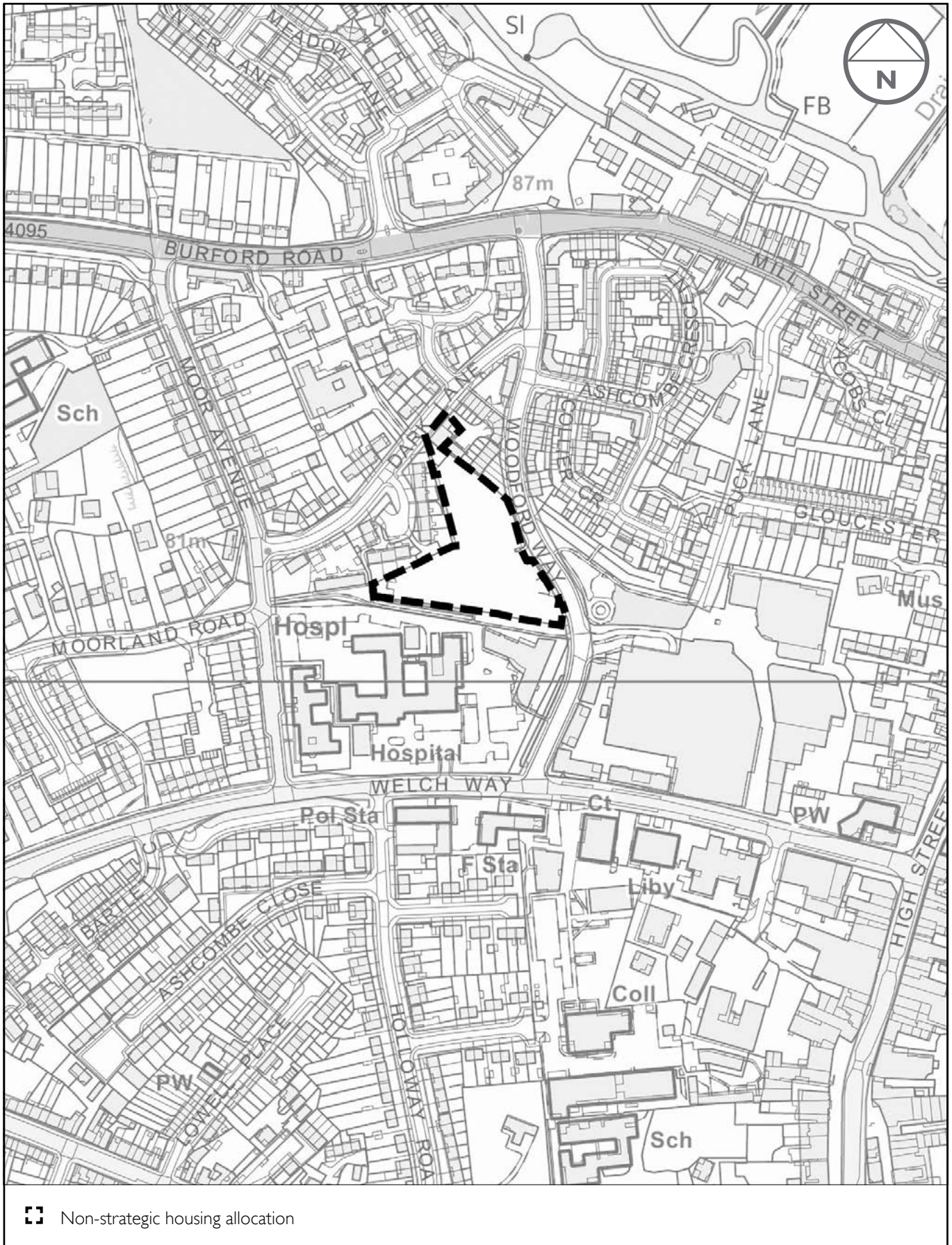
- 9.2.54 In order to help meet identified housing needs, in addition to the two strategic development areas outlined above, two smaller site allocations are proposed in the Witney sub-area; Woodford Way Car Park at Witney and Land to the west of Minster Lovell, near Witney.

### **Woodford Way Car Park (50 homes)**

- 9.2.55 This site is currently in use as a surface level car park close to the centre of Witney on Woodford Way. It is a highly sustainable location for residential development being within easy walking and cycling distance of a broad range of services and facilities. The principle of residential development on the site has previously been accepted through a planning permission although this has now lapsed. The proposed site allocation is shown in Figure 9.2e overleaf.
- 9.2.56 Whilst not available in the short term, it is reasonable to expect that a residential scheme could come forward on this site within the plan period most likely as part of a mixed-use scheme including other suitable and compatible town centre uses. The southern part of the site falls within Flood Zone 2 and is a key consideration for any future redevelopment.

<sup>46</sup> West Oxfordshire Assessment of Strategic Site Options Update (February 2015); Sustainability Appraisal of Pre-Submission Draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan (Enfusion February 2015); SA Addendum Report (Enfusion 2016); SHELAA (2016)

Figure 9.2e: Woodford Way car park



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### **POLICY WIT3: Woodford Way Car Park, Witney**

Land at Woodford Way Car Park to accommodate around 50 new homes either as part of a residential or mixed-use scheme with other compatible town centre uses whilst retaining an appropriate amount of public car parking.

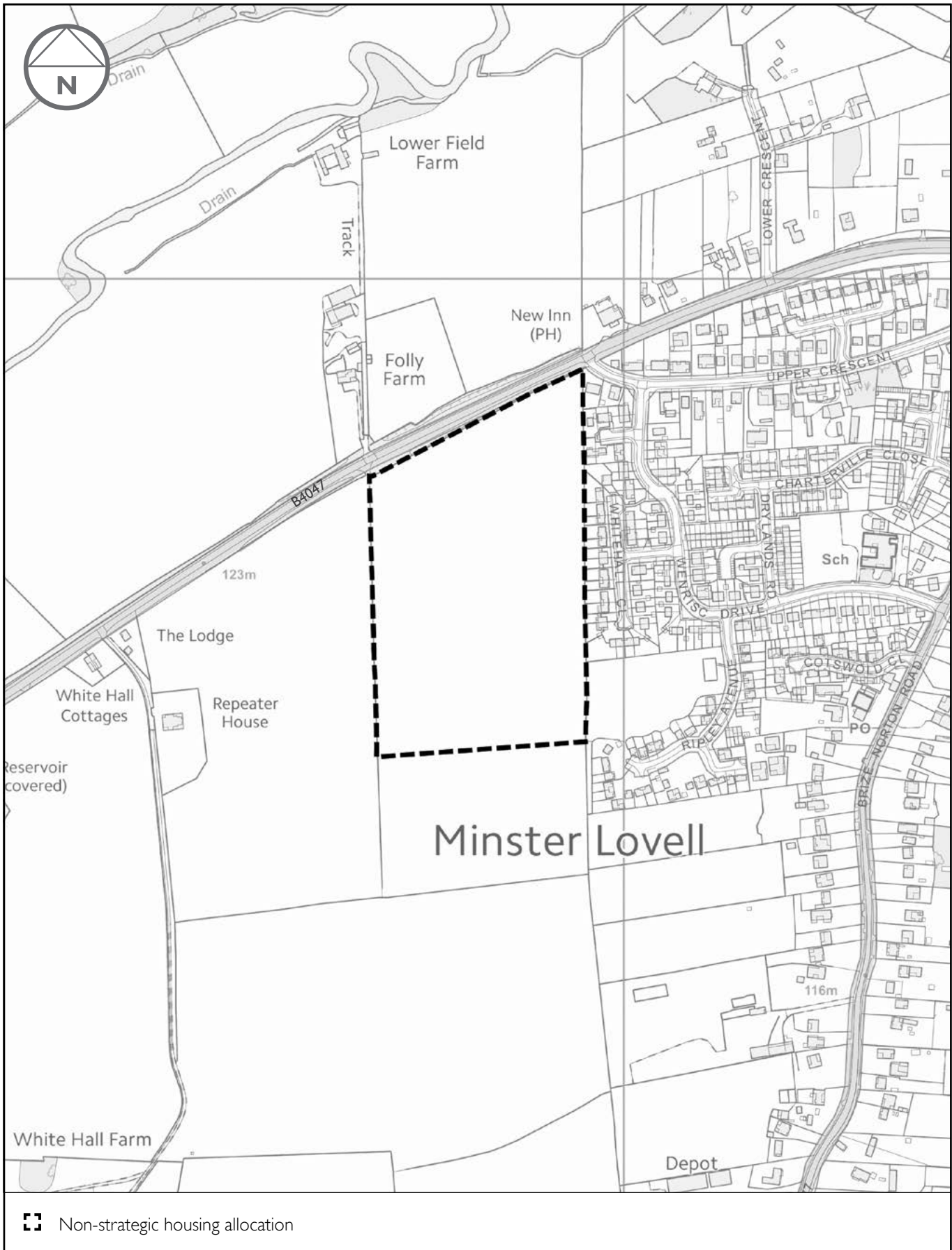
Key issues to be addressed as part of any development proposal will include:

- a) provision of a mix of house types and tenures including affordable housing in accordance with Policy H3 – Affordable Housing;
- b) making efficient use of the site in terms of density and layout recognising the irregular site boundary and the need to provide passive supervision of the footpath along the southern boundary;
- c) the provision of supporting transport infrastructure, including mitigating the impact of traffic associated with the development; the provision of appropriate financial contributions towards LTP4 transport schemes; provision of appropriate public transport (services and infrastructure) serving the site; and provision of a comprehensive network for pedestrians and cyclists with good connectivity provided to adjoining areas including the town centre and other key destinations.
- d) consideration of appropriate flood risk avoidance/mitigation;
- e) appropriate provision of and contributions towards supporting infrastructure;
- f) the need to provide a strong frontage to Woodford Way whilst ensuring that the height and design of any proposed buildings has regard to the topography of the site and the potential impact on adjoining occupants including in particular the single storey bungalows to the west of the site;
- g) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements;
- h) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.

### **Land west of Minster Lovell (125 homes)**

- 9.2.57 This is a greenfield site currently in agricultural (arable) use on the western side of Minster Lovell near Witney. The site is just under 8 ha in size in total but the southern portion of the site would primarily be designated as public open space. The anticipated number of dwellings is around 125. Minster Lovell is a sustainable settlement close to Witney and also offering its own range of service and facilities.
- 9.2.58 Importantly, the site is next to an existing area of relatively dense, more modern development that is not characteristic of the historic core of Minster Lovell which has a very linear form and single plot depths running along the B4477 reflecting the chartist origins of the settlement. The scale of proposed development is such that it would integrate with rather than dominate the existing village. The development also offers the opportunity to enhance the western edge of the settlement on the approach to Minster Lovell along the B4047 Burford Road. The proposed allocation is shown in Figure 9.2f overleaf.
- 9.2.59 The site is the subject of a current planning application demonstrating clear developer interest in bringing the site forward in the short-term. Key considerations for the site include the mitigation of landscape and visual impact including views from the Cotwolds AONB to the north, ensuring effective integration with the existing village and the need to reflect the existing pattern of development including the provision of open space on the southern portion of the site.

**Figure 9.2f: Land west of Minster Lovell**



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## **POLICY WIT4:**

### **Land West of Minster Lovell**

Land to the west of Minster Lovell to accommodate around 125 new homes as part of a sustainable, integrated extension of the existing village.

Key issues to be addressed as part of any development proposal will include:

- a) provision of a mix of house types and tenures including affordable housing in accordance with Policy H3 – Affordable Housing;
- b) the provision of primary vehicular access from the B4047;
- c) giving great weight to conserving the setting of the Cotswold AONB to the north of the site including key views southwards towards the site;
- d) effective integration with the existing village including consideration of any pedestrian and cycle linkages;
- e) a positive enhancement of the western edge of Minster Lovell including the approach from the west along the B4047;
- f) development layout that respects the existing built form to the east of the site;
- g) appropriate provision of and contributions towards supporting infrastructure; including the provision of supporting transport infrastructure, including mitigating the impact of traffic associated with the development; the provision of appropriate financial contributions towards LTP4 transport schemes; provision of appropriate public transport (services and infrastructure) serving the site; and provision of a comprehensive network for pedestrians and cyclists with good connectivity provided to adjoining areas including the town centre and other key destinations.
- h) provision of open space on the south of the site to take account of the existing public open space on Ripley Avenue;
- i) connection to the mains sewerage network which includes infrastructure upgrades where required including any necessary phasing arrangements;
- j) the use of sustainable drainage methods to ensure that post-development surface water run-off rates are attenuated to achieve a reduction in greenfield run-off rates. The sustainable drainage systems should be designed to provide a biodiversity enhancement;
- k) demonstrate the use of renewable energy, sustainable design and construction methods, with a high level of energy efficiency in new buildings.

## Employment

- 9.2.60 The Witney sub-area plays an important role in terms of the West Oxfordshire economy, with Witney itself accommodating a significant proportion of the District's job opportunities.
- 9.2.61 In accordance with the overall strategy, Witney will be a key focus for additional business and employment opportunities over the period of the Local Plan. There is around 8 hectares of existing business land to the west of the town but much of this is unavailable having been set aside for the expansion of existing businesses. An additional 10 hectares of new business floorspace will be provided as part of the committed urban extension at West Witney (north Curbridge).
- 9.2.62 In the longer term, there may be potential for further business land provision to the west of Downs Road. Part of the land adjoins an existing industrial area which includes number of leading local employers including Chris Hayter Transport and Stewart Milne Timber Systems. A further extension of this area to the south and west would be logical in planning terms and could provide the opportunity to deliver an additional road connection between Downs Road and the B4047. There is also scope for additional business land to be provided around the new Downs Road/A40 junction.
- 9.2.63 It is anticipated that the provision of new employment land could also facilitate the upgrading of Witney's existing employment land stock through the provision of modern business premises enabling businesses to move and expand. There is for example considerable potential for redevelopment of the Station Lane employment estates in the medium to longer term.
- 9.2.64 We will seek the retention of existing employment sites and support in principle, the modernisation of premises to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- 9.2.65 Employment provision in the rest of the sub-area will generally be limited to meeting local community and business needs. Rural diversification projects will be supported in principle.

## Transport

- 9.2.66 Transport is a key issue for the Witney sub-area which includes a number of key routes. Congestion within the town and further afield on the A40 are known to be significant problems. The Local Plan therefore proposes a number of measures to help alleviate congestion and improve the flow of vehicular traffic.
- 9.2.67 A number of strategic highway improvement schemes are proposed to complement the improvements that were made to the Ducklington Lane junction in 2014. These include:
- **A40/Down's Road junction** – the provision of a new 'all movements' junction onto the A40 at Downs' Road to the west of Witney. This will be delivered as part of the committed urban extension to the west of Witney (north Curbridge).
  - **A40/Shore's Green Western Slip Roads** - the provision of west facing slip roads at the Shore's Green junction onto the A40 to the east of Witney. This will be facilitated by new development including primarily the proposed East Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)
  - **West End Link Road (WEL)** – the provision of a new road link between Woodford Way and West End creating a second river crossing for Witney. This will be facilitated by new development including primarily the proposed North Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)
  - **Northern Distributor Road** – the provision of a new road link between Hailey Road and Woodstock Road via New Yatt Road. This will be delivered as part of the proposed North Witney Strategic Development Area (SDA)
- 9.2.68 It is anticipated that this 'package' of strategic highway improvements will help to mitigate the impact of planned housing and business growth in Witney and provide a significant improvement to the flow of vehicles in and around the town. It is proposed that a strategic transport strategy and fund will be created

for Witney in conjunction with the County Council as highway authority. Other 'non-strategic' highway improvements will be sought as appropriate through new development including those identified in the IDP.

- 9.2.69 Provision will also be made for improved public transport provision in the Witney sub-area including the frequency and coverage of bus services. This will be accompanied by measures to promote the use of public transport including improved waiting facilities and cycle parking.
- 9.2.70 Improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes and the provision of new routes will be sought where appropriate. This will include the potential provision of a new cycle route between Witney and Carterton as identified in the IDP.
- 9.2.71 Parking capacity will be kept under review with additional provision to be sought from new developments where necessary. Parking will also be managed in order to try and reduce car use for short journeys.

#### Retail and leisure

- 9.2.72 Witney will be the focus for new retail and leisure provision. Our retail assessment has identified capacity for additional shopping provision in the medium and longer term and recommends a strategy of phased development to reinforce the role of the town centre in the context of increasing competition elsewhere, such as Oxford. In accordance with national policy and Policy E6, new town centre development in Witney will follow the 'town centre first approach'.
- 9.2.73 A strong and diverse town centre will be maintained with a good mix of independent and national multiple retailers. Further town centre development will be accommodated through phased and organic extension of the Woolgate shopping centre and at Welch Way, opposite Marriott's Walk in a way which strengthens the connecting High Street as the primary pedestrian route and strong shopping core, reinforcing the town centre as a whole.

- 9.2.74 A primary shopping frontage, where the loss of shops will be resisted, is defined linking Marriott's Walk and Woolgate. Elsewhere, such as at the Market Square and Corn Street, there are opportunities to continue to promote these areas for shopping, leisure and cultural uses, including the Corn Exchange, hotels, restaurants and performing arts. These areas are designated secondary shopping frontages.
- 9.2.75 We will seek to raise the profile of Witney as a visitor destination investigating opportunities for additional accommodation and visitor related facilities such as coach drop off and waiting facilities.
- 9.2.76 The historic significance and special qualities of the Conservation Area, which encompasses the town centre, should be conserved and enhanced through development proposals which respect the architectural quality, established fabric and heritage assets emblematic of the area.
- 9.2.77 There is a need to enhance the market town character and ensure that the historic centre remains attractive whilst striving to improve accessibility to all through investment in the public realm, particularly in the Market Square and Corn Street. The town centre will be enhanced through improvements to the public realm including improved street furniture, sympathetic shop fronts and the de-cluttering of signage. This will be enabled by developer contributions or other funding and may include opportunities for public art. The provision and management of free car parking is significant to the attractiveness of the town centre. Significant new development which creates additional car parking demands in the town centre will be required to contribute to increasing public car parking provision alongside improvements to bus, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure.
- 9.2.78 In the remainder of the sub-area, existing retail and leisure facilities will be safeguarded and any new facilities will be modest in scale and appropriate to the function and setting of the village in which they are proposed.



## **POLICY WIT5:**

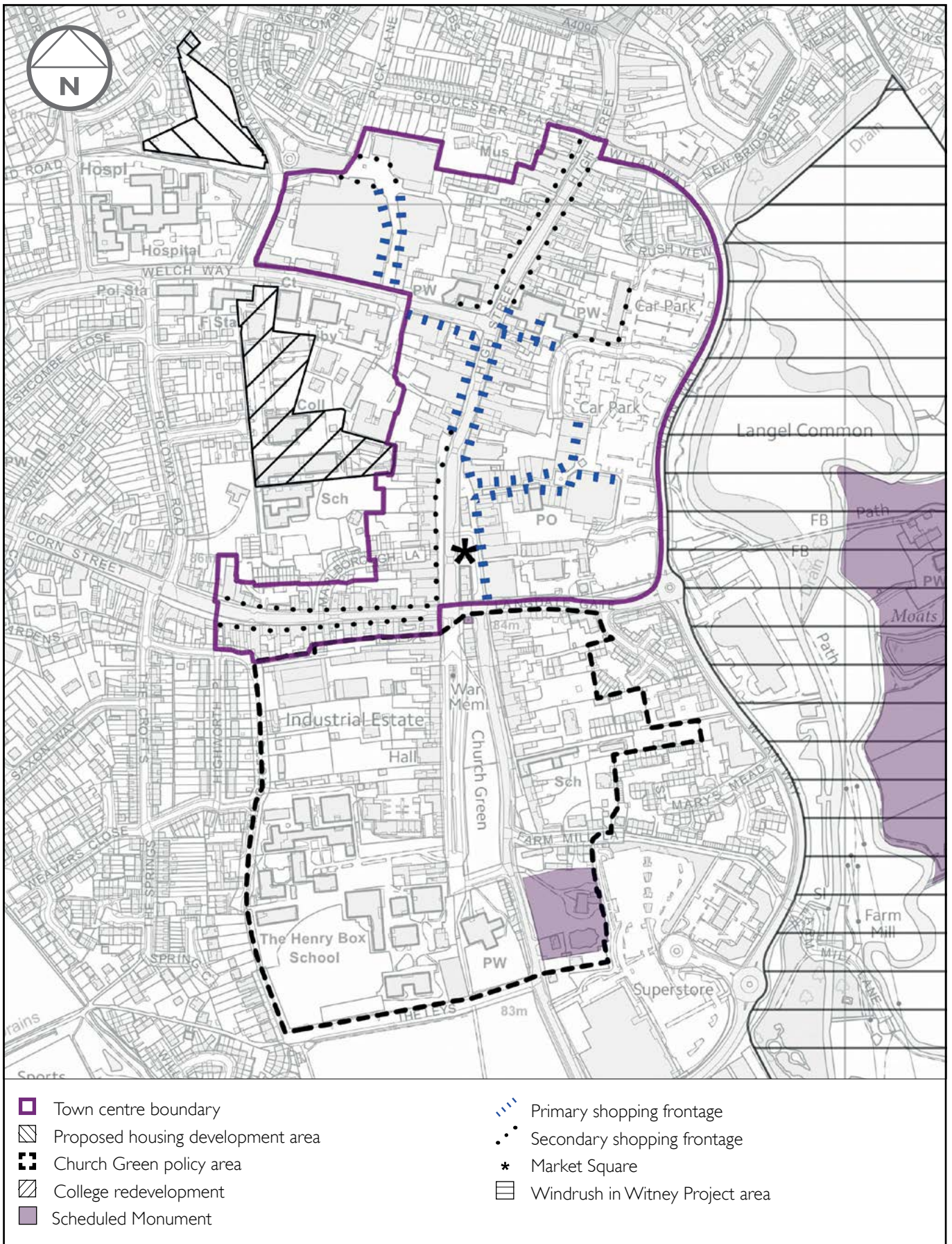
### **Witney Town Centre Strategy**

The overall objective is to maintain and enhance Witney Town Centre providing an accessible, attractive and diverse shopping, visitor and evening economy offer and the principal shopping and leisure destination for West Oxfordshire and the surrounding area. This will be achieved by:

- Maintaining a strong and diverse shopping core with a good mix of retailers, focused on the High Street as the main pedestrian route and connector between the Woolgate and Marriotts Walk shopping centres. A primary shopping frontage is defined between these shopping centres and along the High Street where development resulting in the loss of shops will be refused unless the criteria listed in Policy E6 (Town Centres) can be met in full.
- Promoting the Market Square and Corn Street areas as shopping, leisure and cultural quarters, whilst resisting concentrations of single uses where this would be likely to cause issues of amenity or affect the vitality of the area. Secondary shopping frontages are defined in these and other areas where development proposals resulting in the loss of town centre uses will be refused unless the criteria listed in Policy E6 – Town Centres, can be met in full.
- Investigating opportunities for phased, organic extension of the Woolgate shopping centre and at Welch Way to meet retailer needs, well connected to and strengthening the High Street.
- Maintaining and enhancing the Market Square as an attractive public space which can be used for other purposes at other times.
- Seeking to raise the profile of Witney as a visitor destination, investigating opportunities for additional accommodation and improved visitor facilities such as coach drop off/waiting areas.
- Conserving and enhancing the special interest of the Witney Conservation Area and the significance of the other heritage assets in the town.
- Enhancing the historic market town character and public realm by seeking to ensure investment in paved areas, street furniture, signage and shop fronts and through the provision of appropriate servicing and waste collection arrangements.
- Ensuring the town centre, as a key destination, remains accessible, through the provision and management of car parking and through enhancing public transport, pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure.
- In the Buttercross/Church Green area south of Corn Street and Langdale Gate, the further intensification of shopping or commercial development will be resisted except where the proposed use would be incidental to the primary permitted use of the building (e.g. working at home).

Development proposals which significantly increase car parking demand will be expected to make appropriate public car parking provision or provide equivalent financial contributions.

**Figure 9.2g: Witney town centre strategy**



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## Environment and heritage

- 9.2.79 The Witney sub-area is environmentally sensitive including part of the Cotswolds AONB, the Upper and Lower Windrush Conservation Target Areas, the Windrush in Witney Project Area and the Lower Windrush Valley Project. It also includes some areas of ancient woodland.
- 9.2.80 In determining future development proposals, the Council will have significant regard to the potential impact on the environment, particularly where the proposed development would affect a designated area. In accordance with Policy EH1 and national policy, any proposed development within the AONB will be expected to conserve and enhance landscape and scenic beauty. Major developments will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that they are in the public interest.
- 9.2.81 Where applicable, development will be expected to have regard to the aims and objectives of the Windrush in Witney Project and Lower Windrush Valley Project and where appropriate, make a positive contribution either directly as part of the development or through an appropriate financial contribution.
- 9.2.82 In accordance with national policy and Policy EH9 all new development will be expected to conserve or enhance the special character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire's historic environment and conserve or enhance the District's heritage assets and their significance and settings.

## Infrastructure

- 9.2.83 Infrastructure capacity is a key consideration for this sub-area. Witney has accommodated significant growth in the last 30 years more than doubling its population. As the key focus for growth within the Local Plan, it is essential that further development at Witney is supported by appropriate investment in new and improved infrastructure.
- 9.2.84 A number of strategic transport improvements are set out above but other forms of supporting infrastructure will also be needed including education, health, open space, community facilities and so on.
- 9.2.85 Some of these will be provided directly as part of new developments (e.g. a new primary school as part of the north Witney SDA) whilst others will be provided indirectly through developer contributions and other potential sources of funding.
- 9.2.86 The Council has prepared an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which seeks to quantify the infrastructure improvements that will be needed to support the planned level and distribution of growth set out in the Local Plan. This will form the basis upon which future decisions regarding the provision of new or improved infrastructure will be made along with the Council's CIL regulation 123 list once introduced.
- 9.2.87 In accordance with Policy OS5, we will seek to ensure that all new development within the Witney sub-area is supported by appropriate and timely provision of essential supporting infrastructure.

## **POLICY WIT6:**

### **Witney sub-area strategy**

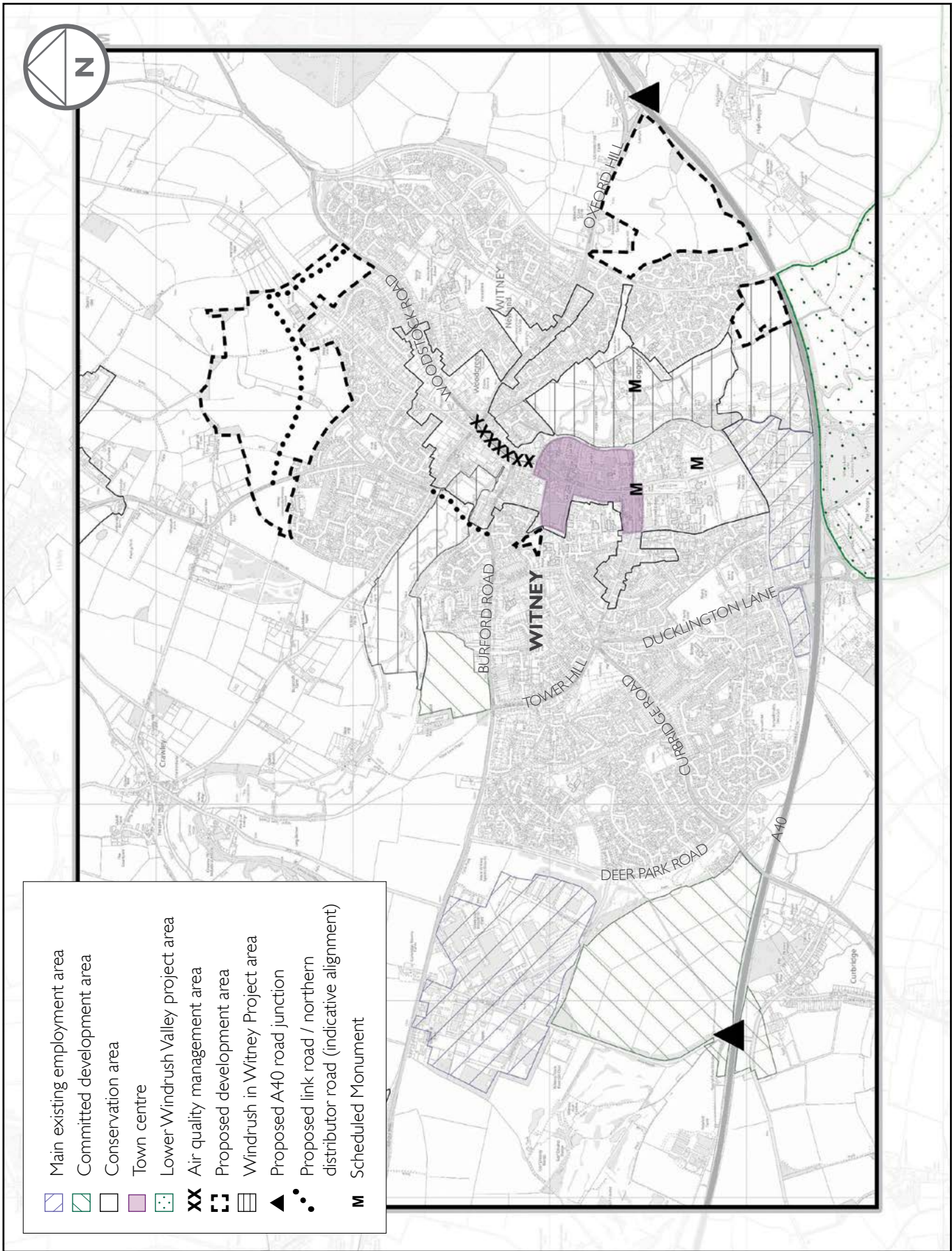
The focus of new housing, supporting facilities and additional employment opportunities will be Witney. New development in the rest of the sub-area will be limited to meeting local community and business needs and will be steered towards the larger villages.

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

- delivery of around 4,702 new homes\* to be focused on Witney and to include affordable housing and homes designed to meet a range of different needs including older people.
- a Strategic Development Area of around 450 dwellings on the eastern side of Witney (see Policy WIT1)
- a Strategic Development Area of around 1,400 dwellings to the north of Witney (see Policy WIT2)
- a non-strategic housing allocation of 50 dwellings on Woodford Way Car Park, Witney (see Policy WIT3)
- a non-strategic housing allocation of 125 dwellings on land west of Minster Lovell (see Policy WIT4)
- expansion of employment opportunities in the town through the retention and modernisation of existing sites, development of remaining available employment land (8ha) and the provision of further employment land (at least 10ha) on the western edge of Witney to provide sufficient space for business expansion, relocation and inward investment
- continuing to work with Oxfordshire County Council and landowners/developers to deliver improvements to key highway infrastructure to reduce traffic and pollution in the historic core and to improve the general flow of traffic and access to primary transport routes, with priority on delivering the A40/Downs Road junction (all traffic movements), Shore's Green junction (west facing slip roads) the West End Link and Northern Distributor Road and other supporting highway improvement measures
- enhancing public transport, and pedestrian and cycle routes and infrastructure together with managing car parking to reduce car use for short journeys
- avoiding development which will be at risk of or increase the risk of flooding and working with landowners/developers and partners such as the Environment Agency to deliver flood mitigation measures
- protection and enhancement of the market town character and setting of Witney, neighbouring villages and the Windrush Valley
- development on land within or where it would be visible from the Windrush in Witney Policy Area will be required to protect and enhance the intrinsic landscape, character, ecology and cultural value of the valley
- conservation and enhancement of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- conservation and enhancement of the historic environment
- ensuring that new development makes appropriate and timely provision for essential supporting infrastructure, including new transport, education, health, green infrastructure and other community facilities in accordance with the IDP
- maximising opportunities for enhancements within the Conservation Target Areas (CTAs).
- masterplanning of strategic development areas that takes adequate account of open space and green infrastructure networks and needs, and maximises opportunities to create and strengthen green infrastructure in accordance with the Council's Green Infrastructure Plan (to be prepared).

\* Note: In accordance with Policy H1, the figure of 4,702 homes is not an absolute target or a maximum ceiling to development.

**Figure 9.2h: Witney Sub-Area Strategy (inset map)**



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