

## Section 4 The Spatial Strategy

### Introduction

#### The Spatial Strategy

**4.1** The spatial strategy seeks to deliver the spatial vision and objectives for the District, and has been shaped through analysis of the evidence base, consultation, and the sustainability appraisal of options and policies. It provides a broad indication of the overall scale of development in the District, and the infrastructure needed to support it. The role of the strategy is to achieve an appropriate balance between protection of the District's environmental assets and improving the quality of life for all, ensuring that necessary change and development is sustainable in the interests of future generations. Policies in the Core Strategy seek to deliver the spatial strategy and provide the context for the preparation of other Local Plan Documents.

**4.2** In considering the most appropriate spatial strategy and type of development for the District, the Council has based this on the outcome of several public consultations, and the results of the evidence base including the sustainability appraisal. Not all development can be accommodated within the District's urban areas, and this would not be the best approach to meeting housing needs across West Berkshire as a whole. However, urban development will be maximised, and in accordance with the outcomes of Options for Delivering Homes<sup>(19)</sup> a combination of strategic urban extensions and smaller sites are identified either through the Core Strategy or within the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. The spatial strategy builds on the existing settlement pattern, with a particular focus on Newbury as the District's administrative centre and on other sustainable urban areas. The aim is to maintain a network of sustainable communities, meeting the needs of communities while protecting and enhancing the environmental assets of the District.

**4.3** The spatial strategy therefore reflects the existing and future role and function of settlements in West Berkshire. A hierarchy of settlements has been identified through the consultations on Options for Delivering Homes<sup>(20)</sup> and Options for Development in the Rural Areas<sup>(21)</sup> with the majority of growth taking place in the urban areas at the highest level of the hierarchy. Rural service centres have also been identified which contain a range of facilities which can provide services to a wider area and where some development could potentially enhance or strengthen their role.

**4.4** Most new development will take place in Newbury, Thatcham and in the settlements in the east of the District close to Reading. The existing urban areas are regarded as the most suitable locations for future development by virtue of their existing access to services and facilities, thereby providing the opportunity to reduce out-commuting and the need to travel. Development in Newbury and the smaller towns of the District is seen as contributing not only to their regeneration, through provision of additional services and facilities, but also to the rural areas they serve.

**4.5** Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change are an integral part of the spatial strategy and cut across all policies. A key principle of the Core Strategy is that intensive trip generating development should be built in the most accessible locations. The co-location of employment, shopping, leisure, transport and other facilities means that people can carry out multiple activities in a single journey and there will be a boost to the local retail economy.

**4.6** A high quality environment has a key role in delivering the spatial strategy. West Berkshire has an important cultural heritage and much of the District is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This high quality environment is important for the quality of life of West Berkshire residents and has an important role in attracting visitors and investment. Green infrastructure, such

19 [Options for Delivering Homes Paper November 2007](#) available to view at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

20 [Options for Delivering Homes Paper November 2007](#) available to view at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

21 [Options for Development in the Rural Areas](#) available to view at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

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as open space, biodiversity, geodiversity and other semi-natural features will be protected and enhanced, including networks of green wildlife corridors and spaces. Green infrastructure has an important role in our adaptation to climate change and contributing to carbon neutral development.

### Delivering the Spatial Strategy

**4.7** To implement the Spatial Strategy, a delivery strategy is set out which divides the District into four main geographical areas and sets out a vision and an Area Delivery Plan Policy for each. These reflect the distinct characteristics of the different parts of West Berkshire, using the District's settlement hierarchy as the focus for development within these areas:

- Newbury and Thatcham, with separate delivery plan policies for Newbury and Thatcham.
- The Eastern Area, which includes the Eastern Urban Area (Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley on Thames) and the Rural Service Centre of Theale.
- The North Wessex Downs AONB which includes the Rural Service Centres of Hungerford, Lambourn and Pangbourne.
- The East Kennet Valley, including the Rural Service Centres of Burghfield Common and Mortimer.

**4.8** A vision for each area sets the scene for how it is expected to change and evolve over the Core Strategy period. This vision is followed by a set of bullet points which show how the vision will be implemented and how the level of growth for each area will be delivered, with detailed proposals coming forward through the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD and through the development management process.

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### Area Delivery Plan Policy 1

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Development in West Berkshire will follow the existing settlement pattern and comply with the spatial strategy set out in the Area Delivery Plan policies of this document based on the four spatial areas. Provision will be made for the delivery of at least 10,500 net additional dwellings and associated infrastructure over the period 2006 to 2026.

Most development will be within or adjacent to the settlements included in the settlement hierarchy set out below, and related to the transport accessibility of the settlements (especially by public transport, cycling and walking) their level of services and the availability of suitable sites for development. The majority of development will take place on previously developed land.

West Berkshire's main urban areas will be the focus for most development. The most intensively used developments, intensive employment generating uses, such as B1(a) offices, and intensive trip generating uses, such as major mixed use, retail or leisure uses, will be located in those town centre areas where the extent and capacity of supporting infrastructure, services and facilities is the greatest. High densities of development may be appropriate in these locations. Such development will have to be comprehensively planned in order to deliver maximum social, environmental and economic benefits to the wider community.

The scale and density of development will be related to the site's current or proposed accessibility, character and surroundings. Significant intensification of residential, employment generating and other intensive uses will be avoided within areas which lack sufficient supporting infrastructure, facilities or services or where opportunities to access them by public transport, cycling and walking are limited.

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## District Settlement Hierarchy

<b>Urban Areas</b>	<b>Wide range of services and the focus for the majority of development</b>	<b>Newbury, Thatcham, Eastern Urban Area (Tilehurst, Calcot and Purley on Thames)</b>
<b>Rural Service Centres</b>	<b>Range of services and reasonable public transport provision - opportunities to strengthen role in meeting requirements of surrounding communities</b>	<b>Burghfield Common, Hungerford, Lambourn, Mortimer, Pangbourne, Theale</b>
<b>Service Villages</b>	<b>More limited range of services and some limited development potential</b>	<b>Aldermaston, Bradfield Southend, Chieveley, Cold Ash, Compton, Great Shefford, Hermitage, Kintbury, Woolhampton</b>

Below the settlement hierarchy there are two additional types of area where there will be more limited development, including affordable housing for local needs:

- smaller villages with settlement boundaries - suitable only for limited infill development subject to the character and form of the settlement,
- open countryside - only appropriate limited development in the countryside will be allowed, focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy.

**4.9** The Core Strategy Vision aims to build upon the existing settlement pattern and direct most development to those urban areas which have the infrastructure and facilities to support sustainable growth. The main focus for housing growth will therefore be Newbury, Thatcham and the east of the District. Within the Newbury and Thatcham urban areas, two strategic urban extensions are proposed: the first to be developed will be the site at Newbury Racecourse to the east of Newbury which gained planning consent in April 2010, for up to 1,500 dwellings, partly on land within the existing settlement boundary, and the second will be a greenfield site at Sandleford, to the south of Newbury where up to 2,000 homes could be developed, with delivery commencing in the second half of the plan period and extending beyond 2026. The allocation of this strategic site introduces some flexibility into the housing delivery with the opportunity to amend the phasing to respond to changing circumstances. Additional non-strategic scale sites in Newbury and Thatcham will be allocated in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD based on the evidence base in the SHLAA.

**4.10** In the Eastern Area there are significant constraints to development, including floodplain and the adjoining AONB. A broad location has been defined within this spatial area, encompassing the urban area, Theale and intervening land. Sites will be allocated within this broad location, informed by the SHLAA and any more up to date evidence about the suitability and deliverability of sites.

**4.11** In the rural areas of the North Wessex Downs AONB and the East Kennet Valley, the distribution of housing reflects the District wide settlement hierarchy, which takes account of the function and sustainability of settlements and is set out in Policy ADPP1. The proposed housing distribution reflects recent completions and existing residential commitments as well as the constraints and opportunities for development in the rural settlements. Within the AONB, housing is focused on meeting identified local needs in accordance with Government policy. The result of this is that although 74% of West Berkshire lies within the North Wessex Downs AONB, and 29% of the District's population live in the AONB; only 19% of the housing has been allocated to this area. Within the AONB, the conservation

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and enhancement of the natural beauty of the protected landscape will be the primary consideration in any allocation of sites to be made through the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD or any subsequent document. Landscape sensitivity analysis has been carried out to inform this process.

**4.12** Development within the East Kennet Valley will take into account the presence of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield, as set out in Policy CS8.

**4.13** The number of dwellings proposed in the different spatial areas forms a basis for the allocation of sites in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. Within the four spatial areas, the focus of development will follow the settlement hierarchy.

**4.14** The rural service centres provide the role of a focal point for the surrounding villages and rural areas in terms of the provision of services and facilities and will accommodate some additional housing. The level of development in the individual settlements will vary depending on the character and function of the settlement and on assessment of the potential sites available for housing.

**4.15** Villages identified in the District settlement hierarchy as service villages will accommodate more limited development: these villages would benefit from small-scale development, appropriate to the character and function of the village, in order to meet local needs, including residential infill or minor development adjacent to the settlement, which will be allocated in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD.

**4.16** The characteristics of the individual rural service centres and service villages vary, reflective of the diverse nature of West Berkshire. They are not intended to have the same amount of growth as each other; instead, the level of growth will depend on the role and function that they perform for the surrounding spatial area, and will be related to their size, range of facilities and services as well as the availability of suitable development opportunities. This is set out in more detail in the Area Delivery Plan policies.

**4.17** Settlements below the service village level in the hierarchy would deliver additional housing but this would be limited to infill or minor development where a settlement boundary has been defined, and to rural exception schemes for affordable housing to meet local needs. Some limited development is important for the long-term sustainability of rural communities. As no allocations are proposed for villages that are not listed in the settlement hierarchy, infill and rural exceptions sites in these settlements would be additional sources of housing supply which would introduce a further element of flexibility to help meet the development objectives of the strategy. Outside these settlements, in the countryside, a more restrictive approach to development will be taken. Specific exceptions to this approach could include barn conversions and agricultural workers dwellings to support the rural economy. Any development within the North Wessex Downs AONB will be more restrictive than in the general countryside, reflecting the national designation of the landscape.

**4.18** It is anticipated that part of the housing supply throughout the rural areas of the District will be affordable homes to meet local identified needs, which may come forward as rural exception sites rather than through site allocations.

### Delivery and Monitoring

This policy will be delivered through development management decisions, supported by the Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document.

The following indicators will be used by the Council to assess the effectiveness of the policy:

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- The percentage of all new development completed on previously developed land.
- The percentage of all new development completed within and adjacent to the settlements within the District Settlement Hierarchy.