

West Berkshire Strategic Vision 2050



November 2022



Executive Summary

This Vision document has been drafted to guide long term, sustainable growth in West Berkshire. It sets out a series of objectives and the key strategic infrastructure requirements, focussing on those that enable sustainable and active travel options, implement blue and green infrastructure and help Newbury and Thatcham achieve a net zero carbon future.

The work is informed by engagement, with input from local residents, groups and stakeholders. Supporting technical work has also been undertaken, with a separate Baseline Report (June 2022) and Socio-economic Report (June 2022) produced to ensure a robust evidence base.

The work sits alongside and is supported by West Berkshire District Council's suite of Local Plan Review evidence documents; including, but not limited to, the Site Selection Paper, Sustainability Appraisal, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The natural environment in West Berkshire is one of the area's key assets exemplified by the prominence of the North Wessex Downs AONB. However, due to the highly constrained nature of the district with environmental protections and land use designations, options for growth are limited and the Council's draft LPR has directed future growth to significant extensions of the towns of Newbury and Thatcham, where around 67,000 (43%) of West Berkshire residents currently live.

This comprises Sandford Park, on the southern side of Newbury, expected to deliver approximately 1,500 new homes. While Newbury is the main focus for growth in the adopted Local Plan, the emerging Local Plan Review also proposes strategic growth in Thatcham, with the delivery of homes to the north east of the town, together with associated infrastructure.

There is a need to ensure new development is coordinated with the necessary critical infrastructure, delivered at an appropriate stage and linked to development phasing. The evidence clearly indicates that in Thatcham in particular there is an 'infrastructure deficit'. Strategic growth can help to address this, and in doing so can improve the sustainability of the settlement, access to services and facilities and reduce the need to travel.

With careful consideration and on-going engagement, the aim of the Vision is to help address the current infrastructure deficit, deliver the necessary equitable growth and provide the sustainable service provision that is required, through:

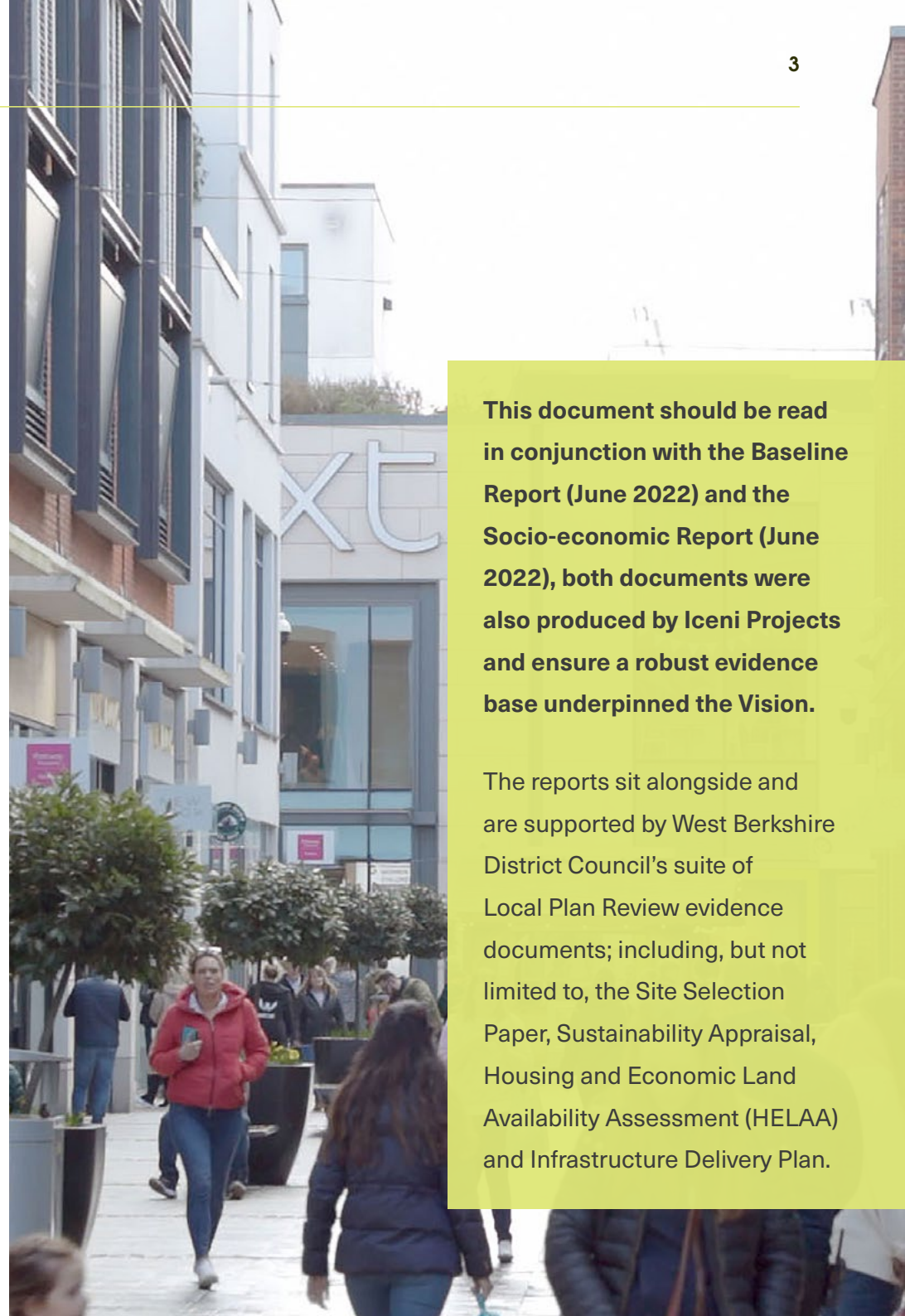
- Improving access to housing;
- Responding to climate change and biodiversity loss
- Enhancing access to the abundance of environmental assets
- Embedding economic resilience in a strong local economy
- Addressing social and health inequalities
- Delivering social and transport infrastructure

Introduction

This Strategic Vision has been drafted to support the preparation and examination of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) 2021 – 2039 and guide sustainable growth over the long term, in particular responding to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) requirements of Paragraph 22.

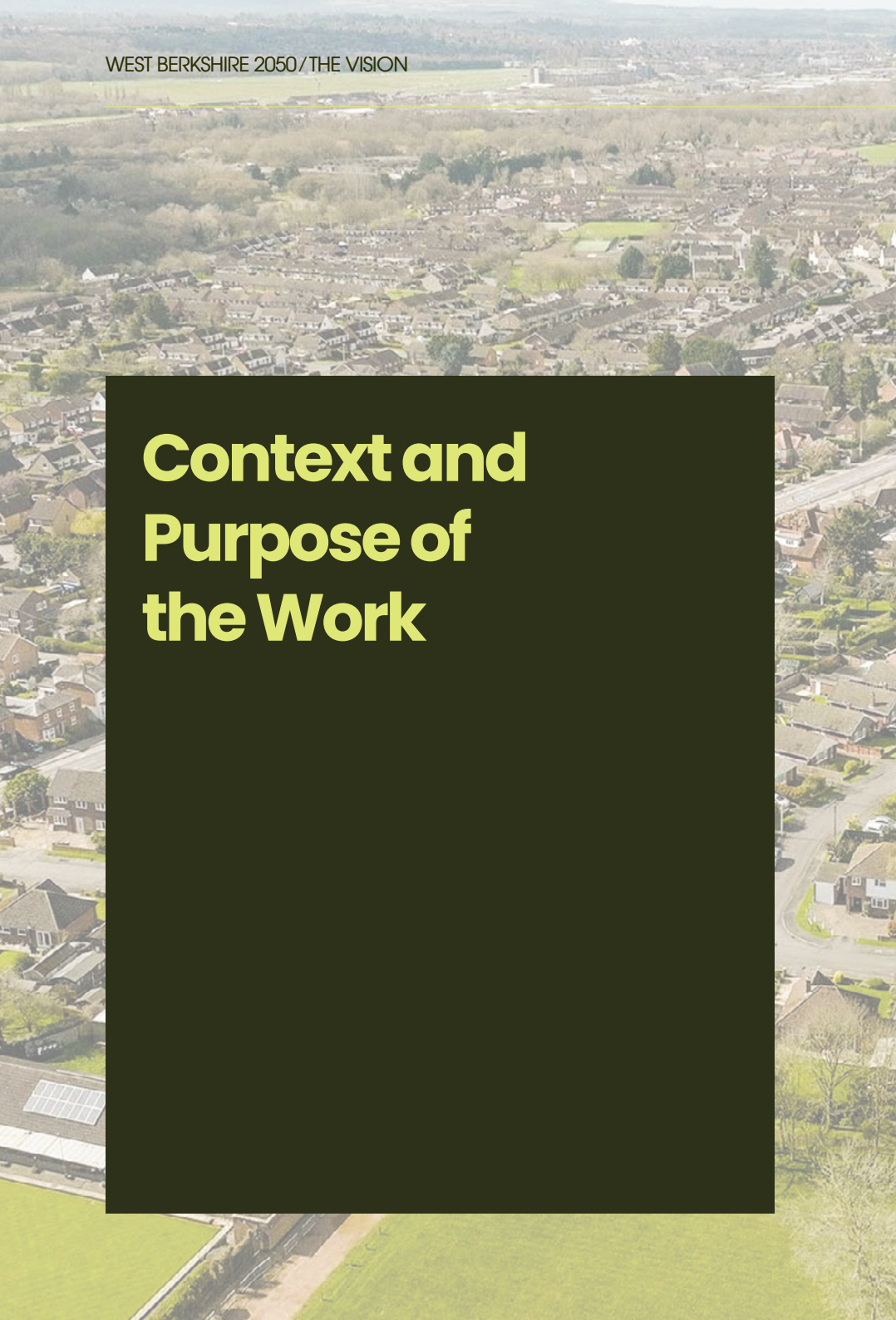
The process undertaken to develop the Vision has involved a detailed review of existing technical information, a period of consultation with the public and other key stakeholders and a multidisciplinary, independent assessment of the area, before coming to an informed conclusion of where future growth in Newbury and Thatcham should be directed and what critical infrastructure is needed to support it. The Vision offers a clear spatial steer as to where growth in Newbury and Thatcham might go over the longer-term period up to 2050.

We have also used the feedback gained to develop a shared Vision around some of the biggest opportunities and challenges facing the district over the long term including meeting Net Zero targets, delivering infrastructure investment, supporting sustainable travel habits, and creating healthy and happy communities.



This document should be read in conjunction with the Baseline Report (June 2022) and the Socio-economic Report (June 2022), both documents were also produced by Iceni Projects and ensure a robust evidence base underpinned the Vision.

The reports sit alongside and are supported by West Berkshire District Council's suite of Local Plan Review evidence documents; including, but not limited to, the Site Selection Paper, Sustainability Appraisal, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.



Context and Purpose of the Work

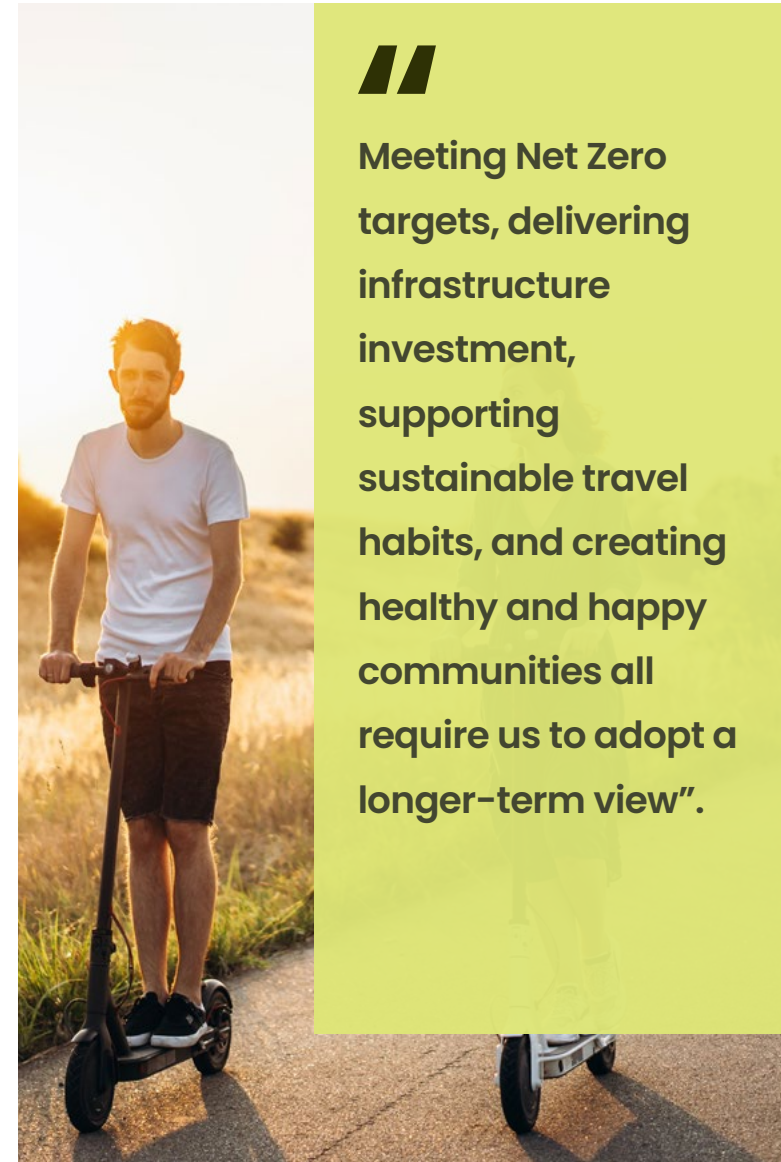
1.1. **The Strategic Vision has been developed to guide the sustainable growth of key settlements in West Berkshire up to 2050. The Vision will address some of the biggest opportunities and challenges facing the district with the aim of creating a shared view for the future.**

1.2. West Berkshire District Council are preparing a Local Plan Review (LPR) to cover the period of 2023-2039. However, following a Regulation 18 consultation on the draft emerging LPR (which took place between December 2020 and February 2021), an update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) was made which set out (in Paragraph 22 therein):

“Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15-year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure. Where larger-scale developments such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a Vision that looks further ahead (at least 30 years), to take into account the likely timescale for delivery.”

1.3. The emerging Plan proposed strategic development at two locations: at Sandleford Park, on the southern side of Newbury, and at North East Thatcham. These represented significant extensions to Newbury and Thatcham respectively.

- 1.4. In response, this Strategic Vision has been developed to support the relevant policies contained in the West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) 2023 – 2039, forming part of a wider set of qualitative and quantitative evidence produced by West Berkshire District Council that includes the Sustainability Appraisal, Appropriate Assessment, and other key technical evidence.
- 1.5. The Vision looks beyond the LPR period and focuses on two settlements within the district that are proposed as strategic urban extensions. West Berkshire District Council is heavily constrained by environmental designations, attractive countryside and high quality landscape. As a result the Council's draft LPR has directed future growth to the towns of Newbury and Thatcham. The Vision aims to inform strategic development schemes and knit together the necessary infrastructure required to deliver good growth up to 2050.
- 1.6. The outcome of this exercise is a Strategic Vision that is based on community and technical input. A series of strategic objectives and growth principles have been developed to help inform the development of strategic sites, whilst also outlining how the wider West Berkshire area could benefit.
- 1.7. Meeting Net Zero targets, delivering infrastructure investment, supporting sustainable travel habits, and creating healthy and happy communities all require us to adopt a longer-term view. Each of these factors have been taken into consideration during this exercise to identify what infrastructure is needed to support good growth, and importantly, what growth is needed to support the necessary infrastructure.
- 1.8. The Vision will be a useful tool in helping to maximise opportunities and respond to challenges to make West Berkshire, Newbury and Thatcham more resilient in the years ahead.



Meeting Net Zero targets, delivering infrastructure investment, supporting sustainable travel habits, and creating healthy and happy communities all require us to adopt a longer-term view”.



Newbury and Thatcham: An Overview

2.1. **The following section summarises key influences on the growth strategy. As noted above, the accompanying Baseline and Socio Economic Reports provide further detailed analysis in relation to the topics highlighted, to underpin the emerging Vision.**

West Berkshire District

2.2. West Berkshire lies on the western fringe of the South East region, centrally located, at a crossroads where the South East meets the South West and where the south coast comes up to meet the southern Midlands. As such, the district lies at the convergence of key road arteries in the south – the M4, A34 and the A339. These connections provide direct road links in all directions with the key urban centres of southern England.

2.3. The district has good rail links, with London less than an hour by train and further connections, via Reading, to all the mainline routes throughout the country. The rail line to London has recently been electrified. The area also has very good links to international transport hubs: Heathrow and Southampton airport are 40 miles away, as are the ferry terminals in Southampton and Portsmouth, providing links with the continent.

2.4. At the time of writing, only Phase One of the Census 2021 results have been published. This phase covers data relating to the number of people and households in England and Wales and is subdivided by sex and age at the

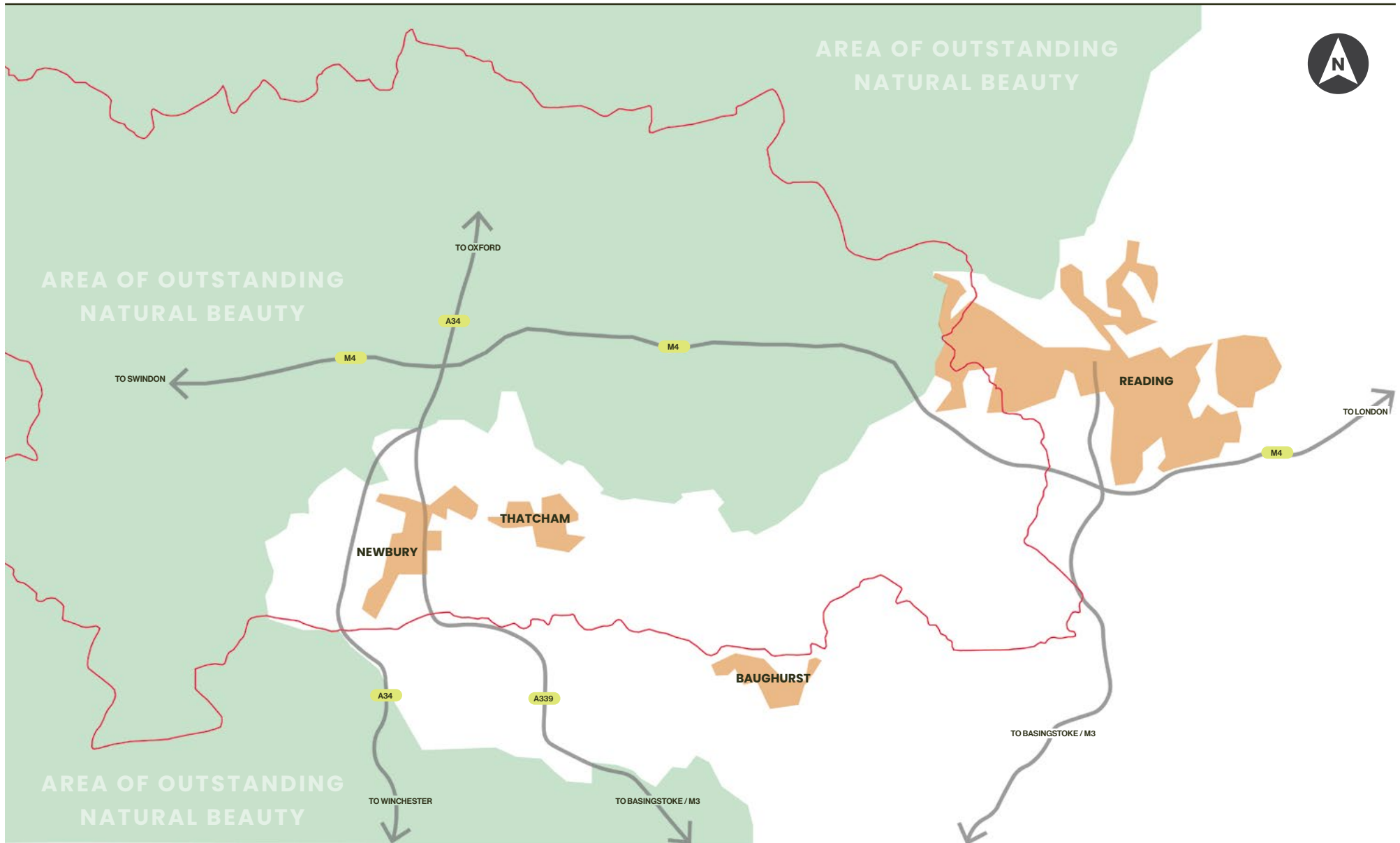


Fig 1: West Berkshire District and its main settlements.



Fig 2: Newbury and Thatcham: context and correlation to key transport links.

local authority level rounded to the nearest 100. Future phases of data sets that will cover topic summaries and combine multiple variables have yet to be released.

Population

2.5. West Berkshire has a population of approximately 161,400 (ONS Census 2021 data) which is a slight increase on the previous population estimate of 158,500 (ONS Population

Estimates 2020). Of the 161,400, 50.6% are female and 49.4% are male, with over 19.5% falling within the 65+ age category.

2.6. According to ONS Population Estimate 2020, 73% of people were living in settlements along the Kennet Valley and in the suburban areas just to the west of Reading borough. The largest urban area in the district is Newbury and Thatcham, where around 67,000 (43%) of West Berkshire residents live. The two largest groups of commuters travelling

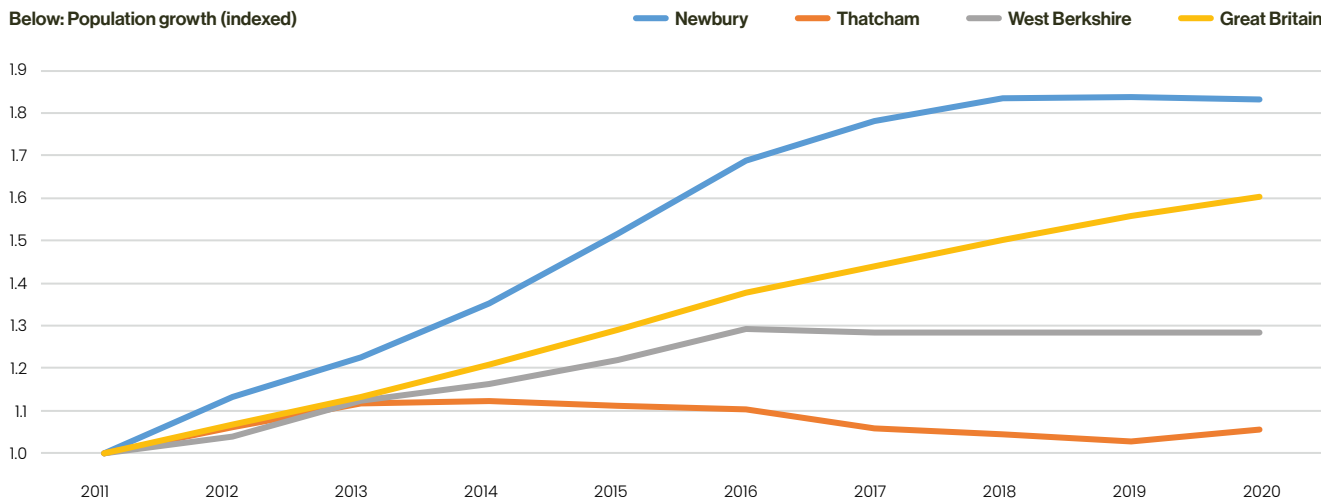
into the district originate from Basingstoke and Deane and Reading; whereas West Berkshire residents mainly commute to Reading and London.

2.7. Newbury's population has historically grown at a much faster pace than Thatcham's, with an average annual growth rate of 5% in the last decade. Thatcham's population has remained stable in the same period. As shown in the graph below.

2.8. The population is older in Thatcham, with higher representation of people in their 40s and 50s. Both urban areas have witnessed a decreasing economically active population (i.e. people of working age, 16-64). However, both are characterised by a high wage and high skilled workforce, with low unemployment rate and low relative deprivation (an indicator of poverty).

2.9. Other significant towns in the district are Hungerford and Theale. The remainder of the population are dispersed in small rural settlements across the district.

Below: Population growth (indexed)



Economy

2.10. West Berkshire benefits from a strong economy, in which key sectors are:

- Professional, scientific and technical: 21% of all jobs in the district
- Information & communication: 13% of all jobs which is 70% higher than the national average – linked to the presence of Vodafone and a wider cluster of ICT / digital technology employers in the area
- Arts & entertainment: which also outperforms the national average with 7% of all jobs

2.11. Newbury has a higher proportion of high-skilled professionals, as seen in the chart below. It also has more office-based employment, including in the Town Centre and Newbury Business Park, while Thatcham has more industry based employment. Key industrial areas include London Road Industrial Estate in Newbury and Colthrop Business Park in Thatcham.

Newbury

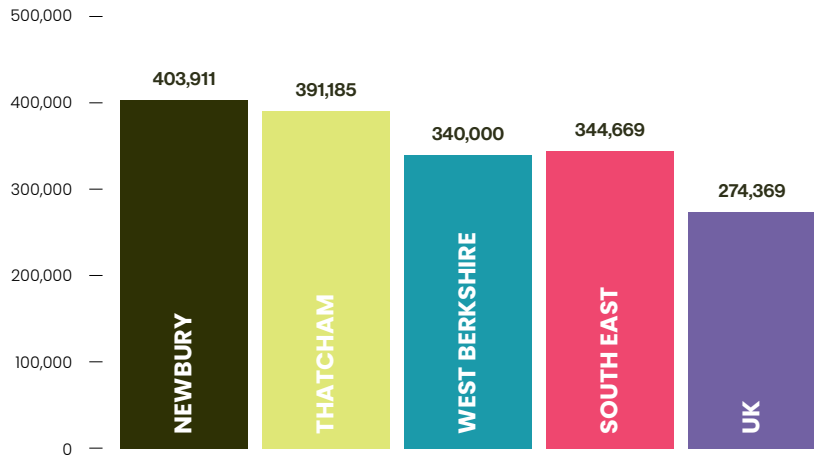
2.12. Newbury is a traditional market town and the largest settlement in West Berkshire. It offers significant employment opportunities as well as retail and leisure facilities, making it the focus of growth in the adopted Local Plan. Newbury's accessibility in terms of rail and strategic road network means that it is a key area for business investment and development.

2.13. Newbury enjoys strong economic drivers, however there is some uncertainty associated with changing work patterns and commuting behaviours. High housing costs are also a barrier to prosperity and growth. Continued success will require developing the enterprise base, providing housing for the future workforce and capitalising on quality of place.

Thatcham

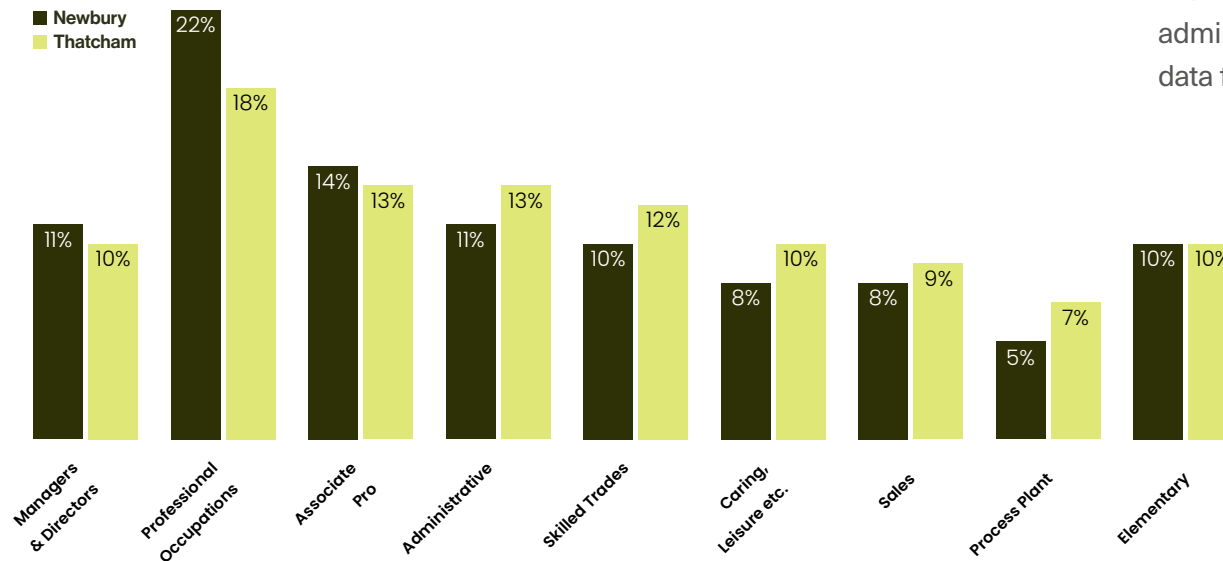
2.14. Thatcham is a historic market town approximately 3 miles east of Newbury. Since the 1970s, the town has grown significantly, by 40% from 1971 to 1980 and by another 50% from 1981 to 2001. As new developments were low density and car-orientated, Thatcham did not experience self-contained growth but instead services became concentrated in Newbury. The town was also severely affected by flooding in 2007 with over 1,000 homes flooded.

2.15. Overall, Thatcham is less economically resilient to Newbury, as seen in data such as the share of economically active population. There is also a limited town centre offering and a lack of community and leisure facilities which was reinforced through the community consultation undertaken, expanded on below.




Above: Average house price (£)

Below: Occupational split (residence based)



2.16. The accompanying chart (based on ONS/HM Land Registry data, 2021) highlights the issue of housing affordability within West Berkshire. House prices in Newbury and Thatcham are above the Southeast average with a premium of almost £13,000 on prices in Newbury over Thatcham. The district is more expensive than the UK average. Median house prices are currently 9.7 times average earnings for people working in the area, creating significant barriers for non-homeowners.

2.17. In general, Newbury has a higher professional workforce, with Thatcham residents more likely to be working in administrative, skilled trades, caring and leisure roles, based on data from the ONS Annual Population Survey.



How much growth is needed in West Berkshire?

3.1. The work has included reflecting on previous housing delivery to identify trends, test needs and ensure we sustainably plan for the future.

Housing requirement and supply to Date

3.2. The West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 Development Plan Document (adopted July 2012) forms part of the current Local Plan, and it sets out that provision will be made for the delivery of at least 10,000 homes and associated infrastructure over the period 2006-2026.

3.3. Since the start of the plan period, a total of 7,565 homes were built in West Berkshire district, with 617 homes built in the period 2020/21.

3.4. In terms of the location of housing delivery to date in the district, 57% of residential completions in 2019/2020 were on previously developed land, which is significantly below the average of 83% over the plan period so far. The adopted Housing Site Allocations DPD which covers the period 2006-2026, and forms part of the current Local Plan, does however include allocations on greenfield sites. Many of these greenfield sites are currently being built out and so this partly explains why the number of completions on previously developed land reduced in 2019/20.

3.5. Although future sites may come forward, development on greenfield land is expected to be higher in the second half of the plan period when

greenfield allocations begin to deliver greater numbers, including sites allocated in the Housing Site Allocations DPD, the strategic site at Sandleford Park together with North Newbury.

Housing requirement and Supply Going Forward

3.6. Local Housing Need is currently calculated using the Government's standard method. The standard method uses national household growth projections and applies an affordability adjustment (using affordability ratios that are published annually each spring by Office for National Statistics). The calculation starts with the projected average annual household growth over a 10 year period. This should be 10 consecutive years, with the current year being used as the starting point from which to calculate growth over that period. Therefore at the present time the period is 2022 - 2032. An uplift for affordability is then applied to this. The household growth figures changes year on year, along with the affordability ratios until a Local Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The 2022 Local Housing Need for West Berkshire is 513 dwellings per annum. In order to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, the Council could identify its housing requirement as a range rather than a single figure.

3.7. Several sources will ensure a continuous supply of land for housing going forward. These will include:

- Allocations in Local Plans
- Allocations in Neighbourhood Plans
- Existing planning commitments on unallocated sites
- Windfall sites – sites not specifically identified in the development plan but that will come forward through the development control process in accordance with policies set out in the Local Plan and through the use of permitted development rights.

3.8. In Newbury, Sandleford Park is a strategic site allocation in the adopted Core Strategy development Plan Document, which forms part of the current Local Plan. Sandleford Park which is located to the south of the town, is proposed to be retained as an allocation in the LPR as it has yet to be delivered. Development of the larger proportion of the site, which is expected to deliver approximately 1,500 new homes, was approved in May 2022 by the Secretary of State after being the subject to Planning Appeal. The site is expected to start delivering housing from Summer 2024. Major development is also coming forward at North Newbury.

3.9. The emerging Local Plan Review also proposes other allocations including Land off Greenham Road and New Road, SE Newbury; and the redevelopment of the Kennett Centre in Newbury Town Centre.

3.10. While Newbury is the main focus for growth in the adopted Local Plan, the Regulation 18 consultation proposed strategic growth on Thatcham with the delivery of circa 2,500 homes to the north east of the town along with the associated infrastructure. The precise quantum of development to be proposed as part of the Regulation 19 consultation has yet to be agreed.

3.11. The current Local Plan does not allocate any sites within settlement boundaries. Settlement boundaries are a long-established planning tool which identify the main built-up area of a settlement within which development is considered acceptable in principle, subject to other policy considerations.

3.12. The Council has also included a small site windfall allowance in the calculation of the 5-year housing land supply and believes there is a clear case for an allowance for the longer plan period. This is supported by the NPPF which states that local planning authorities should support the development of windfall sites through policies and decisions, giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes. Over the current plan period so far (2006-2020), an average of 373 residential units each year have been completed on land that has not been allocated in the Local Plan. The vast majority of these are on previously developed land within settlement boundaries.

	Housing Need across the District*	Pipeline supply across the District**
To 2039	9,288	9,431
To 2052	15,996	11,251
	*Using the Standard Method with a base date of 1st April 2022, but does not include meeting any unmet housing need from Berkshire HMA.	**As of 1st April 2022, and including Sandleford Park at 1,500 homes

3.13. The windfall allowance, of 140 dwellings per annum is, proposed in the emerging Local Plan Review has been based on the average annual delivery on small sites of less than 10 units (excluding prior approvals for permitted development) over the existing plan period 2006 – 2020.

Specialist Housing Needs

3.14. The West Berkshire Updated Housing Needs Evidence Report (2022) shows a projected growth in those aged 65 and over, noting an additional 13,500 people over the 2021-39 period, a 43% increase.

3.15. The evidence shows a projected increase of 1,200 older people with dementia; and over 2,700 increase in those with mobility problems to 2039.

There is an expected need for around 1,200 wheelchair user homes in West Berkshire which has been identified in the period to 2039 – equating to about 12% total housing need. There is also a clear need for different forms of specialist housing.

3.16. A projected ageing population with increased long-term health problems and specialised care needs, creates a situation where future growth needs to be holistic in the package it delivers. Future growth must include the necessary physical and social infrastructure that transforms a development into a community and gives residents the individual empowerment to live independently and comfortably in their own home.

3.17. A nation-wide shortage of housing delivery and increasing affordability issues have created a situation in which young people and first-time buyers struggle to get on to the housing ladder. One of the many consequences of this issue is the difficulty locations can be presented with in terms of attracting a local workforce. Knock-on effects include challenges to business resiliency and environmental impacts associated with unsustainable commuting patterns.

3.18. The evidence shows a need for 96 affordable per annum in Newbury and Thatcham, split between a need for rented affordable homes (47 pa) and affordable home ownership products (26 pa). The need for affordable housing reflects both existing supply and affordability pressures, where entry-level market rents are almost £800 per month and entry-level house

prices £267,000 at the time of writing are 10.4 times' earnings of younger households.

Requirements for other Land Uses:

3.19. The supporting evidence for the LPR identifies that the following are required:

- **Offices:** The West Berkshire Employment Land Review (ELR), December 2020 identifies that over the plan period, there is an additional need of 11 ha or 65,000sq.m.
- **Industry and warehouses:** The ELR also identifies need for industrial and warehouse floorspace over the plan period. An additional 16ha or 62,000sq.m is required.
- **Retail:** The Western Berkshire Retail and Commercial Assessment produced in conjunction with Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, and Wokingham Borough Council was published in April 2017. A net need of 23,500 sq m retail and related space was identified. This was however undertaken prior to the pandemic which has seen further growth in e-retailing.

3.20. The Local Plan Review is considering how and whether these economic needs can be met, and will make site allocations as appropriate.

Where Could the Growth Go?

Assessing Constraints and Opportunities

In this section we explore the key constraints and opportunities within the District.

- **AONB:** North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies to the North, West and South Settlement Area. The AONB is a nationally important and legally protected landscape designated for the quality of its landscape and scenic beauty.
- Whilst Newbury and Thatcham are separate and distinct towns with their own character, they are geographically close and functionally related with both towns having significant employment provision.
- There is significant movement between the two towns and transport linkages, by rail and road are vital.
- Both Newbury and Thatcham are well located in terms of access to rail and to the strategic road network with train stations at Newbury, Newbury Racecourse and Thatcham enabling rail access to Reading and London and to the West Country. Newbury provides many of the major services, including retail and leisure facilities
- Newbury straddles the River Kennet and Railway line.
- Thatcham lies to the north of the railway line and the Kennet, straddling the A4.

- **Employment area:** Typically located adjacent to water, Newbury's main employment area (the London Road Industrial Estate) lies on the eastern edge, between the rail line, the A4 and within the flood zone of the River Kennet.
- Thatcham's main employment area (the Colthrop Business Park) also lies to the east between the A4 and the railway line.
- **Town Centre:** Newbury's Town centre has a north south orientation connecting from the station to the A4 and straddles the River Kennet.
- Thatcham's much smaller Town centre is located to the south of the A4 remote from the station.
- **Conservation and Heritage:** A wealth of heritage sites and buildings are located around Newbury, including the registered battlefield of the Battle of Newbury (1643) which lies to the west of Newbury
- **Rivers, ponds and flood area:** The River Kennet and River Lambourn are located to the West of Newbury where the land is relatively flat and is characterised by ponds and an extensive flood zone.
- Both Newbury and Thatcham are within Flood Zones, with some zones at greater risk of flooding than others. Further detail is set out within the West Berkshire Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2019).
- **Greenham Common and Newbury Racecourse:** These places are socially and historically significant to residents of Newbury and Thatcham.
- **Parks:** Public parks appear lacking, small and un connected
- **Area of restricted development:** Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Aldermaston and associated radii
- **Special Areas of Conservation**
- **Site of Special Scientific Interest:** This includes Greenham Common, the surrounding woodland and the Wetland area to the south of Thatcham.
- A diverse range of biodiversity and geodiversity assets within Newbury and Thatcham. The areas include sites of international (Special Area of Conservation (SAC) – River Lambourn SAC, Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain SAC); national (SSSIs); and local importance (Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves)

The diagram illustrates that when environmental constraints are taken into account, including those listed in the key, the district is heavily constrained in terms of future urban growth. The white areas illustrate the general extent of available land, both close to Newbury and Thatcham: land to the southeast (avoiding the Commons) and land to the north.

Key

- Settlements
- Constraints (Greenham common, battlefield)
- River & flood plain
- AONB and other designated nature conservation sites eg. SSSI, SAC
- Biodiversity opportunity area
- Nutrient neutrality SSSI catchment
- Highway infrastructure
- District Boundary
- Railway line and stations
- AWE- DEPZ

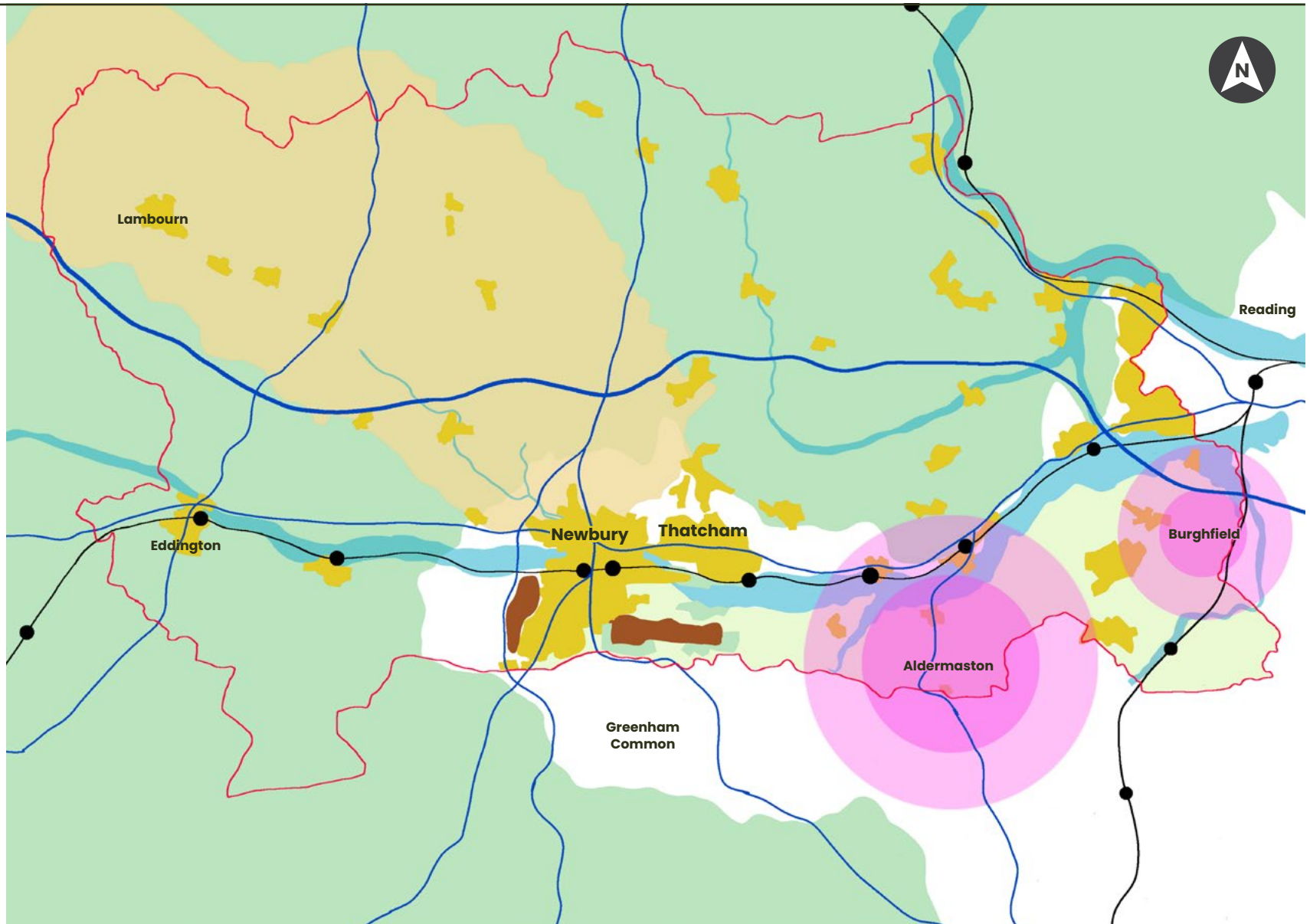


Fig 3: West Berkshire Constraints

- **River Lambourn Nutrient Neutrality Zone:**

- The River Lambourn is a lowland chalk river, its' catchment is almost entirely chalk which results in a predominantly gravelly river bed. The River Lambourn Special Area for Conservation (SAC) is legally underpinned by the River Lambourn SSSI and is designated for the following features:
 - H3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with *R. fluitantis*
 - S1096 Brook lamprey, *Lampetra planeri*
 - S1163 Bullhead, *Cottus gobio*
- On 16 March 2022, the River Lambourn SAC was found to have significant levels of phosphate pollution and classified as being in a “unfavourable condition” with the ‘Riverine’ habitat being impacted by an excessive quantity of phosphorus nutrients.
- Natural England informed West Berkshire District Council they would need to consider the negative impacts of new development in this area on the River Lambourn. Natural England produced an accompanying map, which included the entire river catchment area.
- If a planning application is submitted where significant environmental effects cannot be ruled out, the Local Planning Authority, or Environment

Agency must make an appropriate assessment (AA) of the implications of the plan or project for that site, taking account of the site’s conservation objectives. If the AA cannot rule out a negative impact of nutrient pollution, planning permission would be denied under this legislation unless mitigation to reduce or eliminate the impact can be put in place.

- Where plans or projects will contribute additional nutrients to these sites, then a robust Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required and developers may be asked to mitigate impacts through nutrient neutrality such as:
 - building additional mitigation into their plans onsite,
 - working with the LPA to arrange for mitigation offsite, or
 - purchasing nutrient credits via a nutrient trading scheme (where other landowners in the catchment have taken action to reduce their nutrient load)
- Nutrient neutrality provides a mechanism by which development that would otherwise be prohibited on the grounds of nutrient pollution may be given consent if mitigation is put in place. Using nutrient neutrality, developers only pay for mitigation required to counteract nutrients generated by their development.

- This means that in the case of Newbury and Thatcham, which fall within the River Lambourn catchment area, the Council need to consider the possibility of adverse effects as a result of additional nutrient loads (including from residential developments), as part of a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- In order to assess what mitigatory measures are required, further work is being undertaken by Natural England and the West Berkshire District Council. This work will assess what potential mitigatory measures are available for development within the River Lambourn Nutrient Neutrality Zone and outline a detailed mitigation plan that includes measures for ongoing management.
- There are a number of principles that any nutrient neutrality mitigation would need to meet in order for it to meet the requirements of the Habitat Regulations. Natural England's advice is that any neutrality measures relied on in an Appropriate Assessment (AA) should:
 - Have scientific certainty that the measures at the time of the AA will deliver the required reduction to make the plan or project 'neutral'.
 - Have practical certainty that the measures will be implemented and in place at the relevant time when the AA is undertaken, e.g. secured and funded for the lifetime of the development's effects.
- Be preventive in nature so as to avoid effects in the first place rather than offset or compensate for damage.
- Not undermine the objective of restoring the site to favourable condition by making the 'restore' objective appreciably more difficult or prejudicing the fulfilment of that objective.
- However, as both towns fall within the river catchment area, all relevant future development within the nutrient neutrality zone must demonstrate that it has mitigated nutrient pollution and delivered nutrient neutrality. As a result, until the Council have completed this workstream and outlined the necessary mitigatory measures, the likelihood of future development coming forward in north Newbury is now in doubt. However, the situation is still evolving.
- **District Boundary:** West Berkshire District Boundary is immediately to the South of Newbury and Greenham Common, development in the south of Newbury extends to this boundary, defined in part by the River Enborne. To the north of the town centre and the River Kennet, Newbury extends to the north-west, with Thatcham located on the north east. As a result, with the presence of environmental designations and constraints, this has created a natural landscape wedge, transecting the two towns.

Key Strategic Development Sites, illustrating:

- Existing settlements of Newbury and Thatcham
- The villages of Ashmore Green and Cold Ash are to the north of Thatcham
- The River Kennet passes through Newbury and south of Thatcham

Key

- District Boundary
- Principle Rail Infrastructure
- Location of settlement from village to town

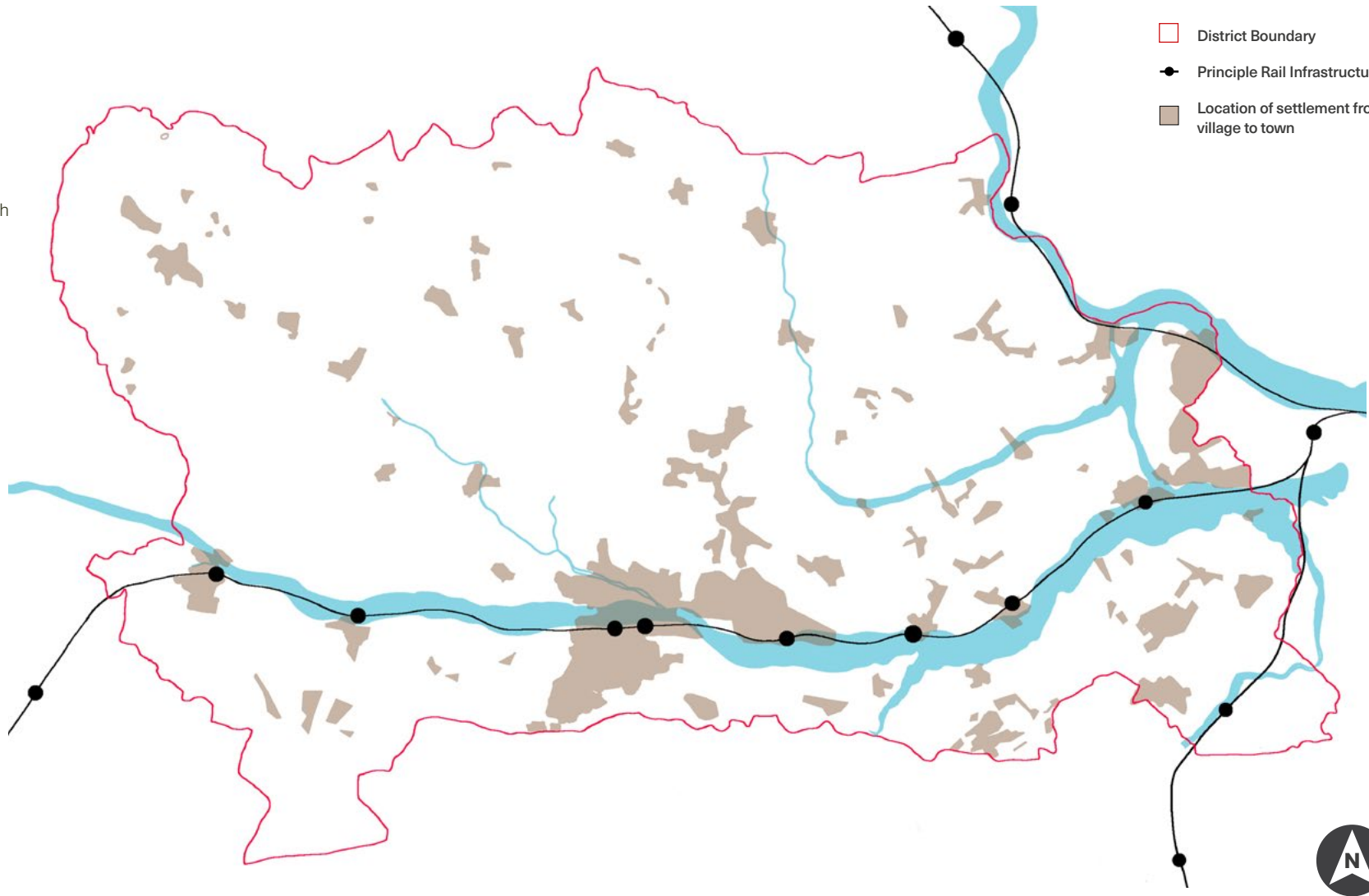


Fig 4: Key Strategic Development Sites

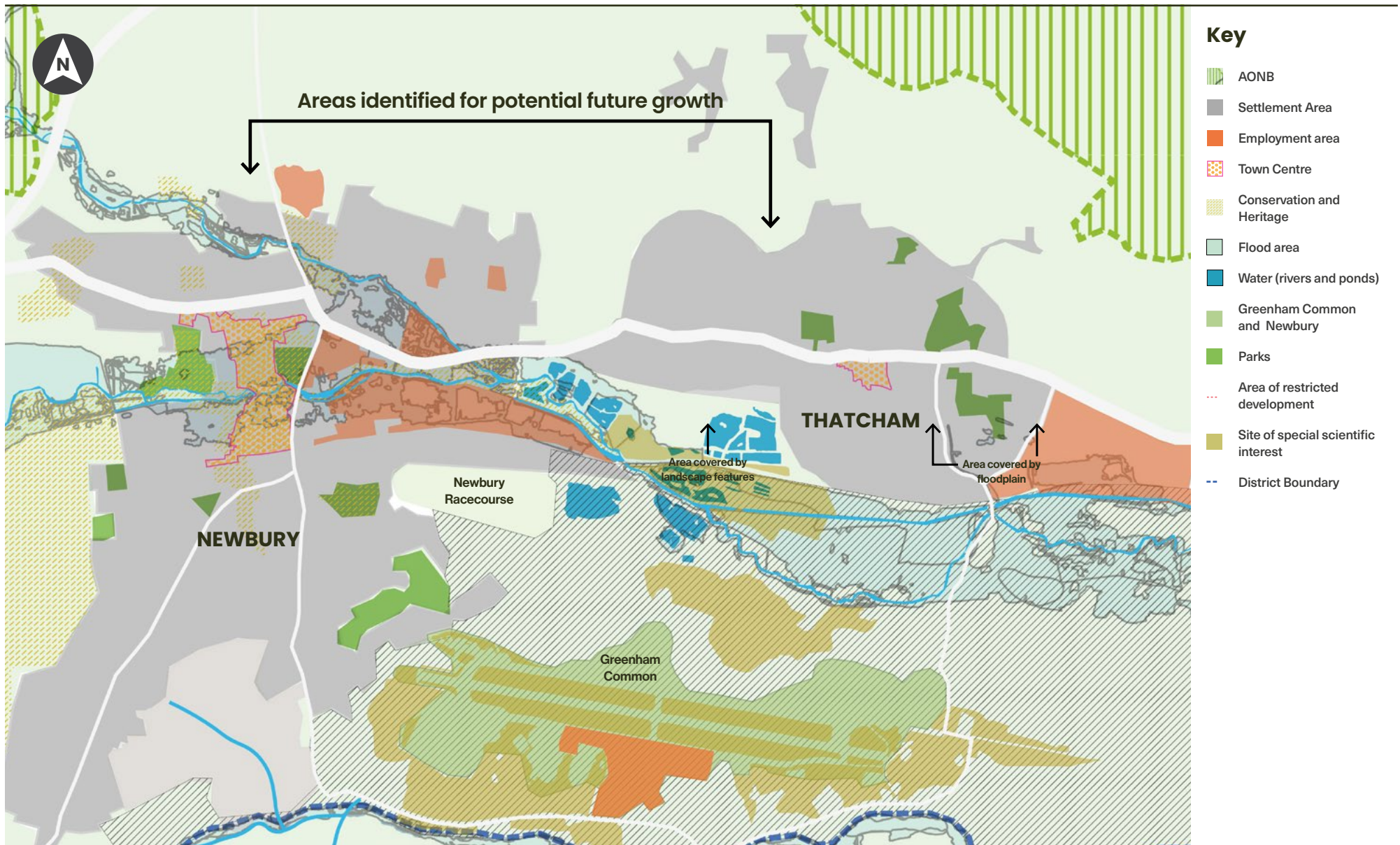



Fig 5: Newbury and Thatcham : Influences Plan including opportunities and constraints



A 30-year View of Growth: Key Issues

5.1. **A Vision for growth in Newbury and Thatcham that takes a 30+ year view must respond to a wide range of strategic and spatial opportunities and site influences. The context within which these considerations sit has changed in recent years with the adoption of a legally binding national target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 as well as environmental legislation driven by the Environment Act 2021. These legislative changes alongside existing policies and the aspirations of the community will play a key role in shaping a Vision to 2050 and beyond.**

5.2. A combination of national policies and local action and strategies have brought sustainability to the forefront of spatial planning. Delivering growth alongside economic, social, and environmental sustainability for Newbury and Thatcham must consider the following spatial influences and opportunities.

Resilience to the physical impacts of climate change

5.3. The issue of rapid climate change is a global one, but many of the solutions and responses can be delivered locally. Whilst the projected increase in incidences of flooding, heat waves, and broader extreme weather events pose risks for the communities and infrastructure in Newbury and Thatcham and will have to be carefully mitigated, the transition to a more resilient built and natural environment will also present opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, enhance ecology and biodiversity, and grow the green economy locally.

Growth Areas

- Based on our analysis the growth areas identified are parts of the district with least constraints and influences.
- They benefit from their co-location to existing settlements and existing strategic infrastructure
- They have the opportunity to graft onto the existing settlements and contribute to the vitality of the existing town centre.
- They can be well connected to both existing settlements and interconnected within themselves.
- The existing topography adds value to some sites by providing passive solar gain; as they form part of the southern slope of the North Wessex Downs.

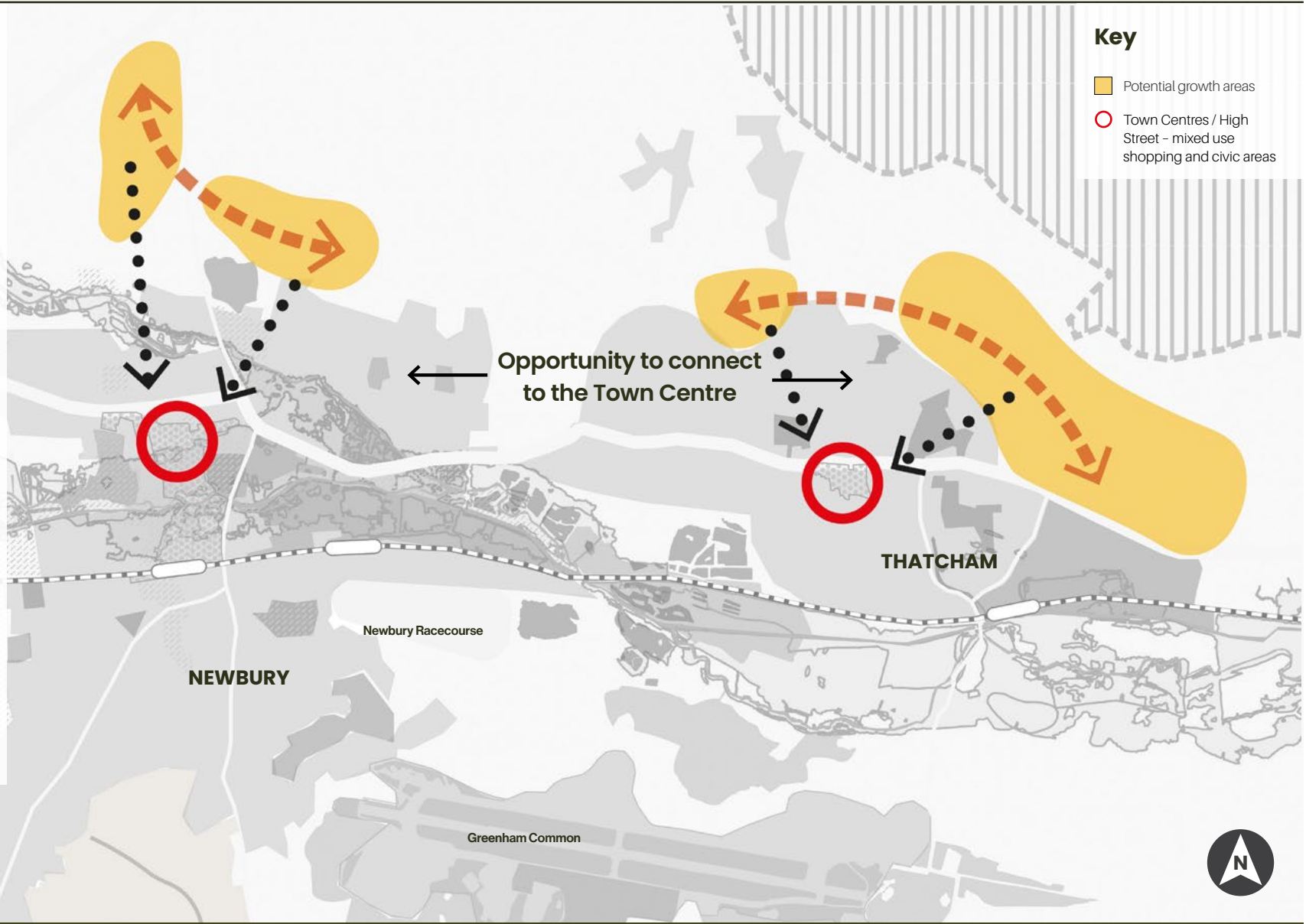


Fig 6: Potential Growth Areas

5.4. The risk of flooding and overheating in particular will have implications for where growth can be located and will need to be a key consideration for any proposed development. The integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will form an important part of future development plans both in high and low-risk areas. Nature based solutions will also be targeted in low-risk areas as they provide the multiple benefits of acting as protection measures, as enhancements to local ecology, and as contributors to health and wellbeing. Careful enhancement and further activation of local waterways could also provide dual benefits of mitigation and improved amenity for the local community.

Securing future access to renewable and low-carbon energy

5.5. The imperative to fully decarbonise the economy by 2050 will be heavily anchored in growing capacity in renewable and low carbon sources of energy. The West Berkshire Environment Strategy 2020-2030 identifies

local energy generation as a key aspect of achieving carbon neutrality for the local authority by 2030. This will require the growth of local solar, wind, and smart energy solutions. The growth of this provision is critical not only to ensure energy security in a low carbon world but to reduce costs for residents and businesses.

5.6. The Vision for Newbury and Thatcham can tap into existing capacity and skills in the technology and service sectors as well as great connections to other markets to deliver renewable energy generation projects in a connected and integrated way. By 2050 Newbury and Thatcham could be a hub for piloting, innovating and delivering low and zero carbon energy networks for use locally and to export to surrounding areas or a decarbonised grid.

5.7. These projects will become increasingly important as the electrification of heating and transport take flight and demand for electricity from business premises and homes becomes more acute. The location of renewable projects





will have to be planned for to ensure that sufficient capacity is secured alongside the delivery of new homes, employment space, cultural and leisure uses, and accessible open space.

Contribute to reducing West Berkshire's carbon emissions and meeting the 2030 goal

5.8. A critical element of the pathway for growth in Newbury and Thatcham is to decarbonise the local economy. With a significant target for carbon neutrality in West Berkshire by 2030, associated actions and policies must look to the immediate and long term.

5.9. A key requirement is to decouple economic growth and carbon emissions. This has implications for a diverse range of issues, but principally requires considered planning to locate the correct type, quality, and scale of development in the correct places. Effective spatial planning can minimise emissions associated with transport, circular economic principles, waste,

energy intensity, the efficiency of buildings, and heating and powering the built environment. Building the local supply chain and skills for critical actions such as retrofitting existing homes for energy efficiency will constitute a constraint in the immediate term but will represent an opportunity to create new business, economic sectors and jobs over the longer term.

5.10. By co-locating the right mix of uses and amenities alongside housing and employment space and linking these with sustainable and active modes of travel there will be significant opportunities to minimise waste, maximise efficiency and enable a more circular local economy. In 2050 a higher proportion of goods, services and resource will be produced and used within West Berkshire and this could include resources as drivers such as food, energy, and construction materials.

5.11. The location of development for growth will maximise the opportunities to deliver net zero carbon buildings in line with rapidly changing

national standards. This must drive operational energy efficiency in buildings and be considered in parallel with low carbon and renewable energy solutions for instance through efficient use of waste heat from industrial processes and densities that maximise the value of low carbon district heating solutions which operate most efficiently at scale. The spatial element will be built upon with high sustainability standards for all new developments and major renovations.

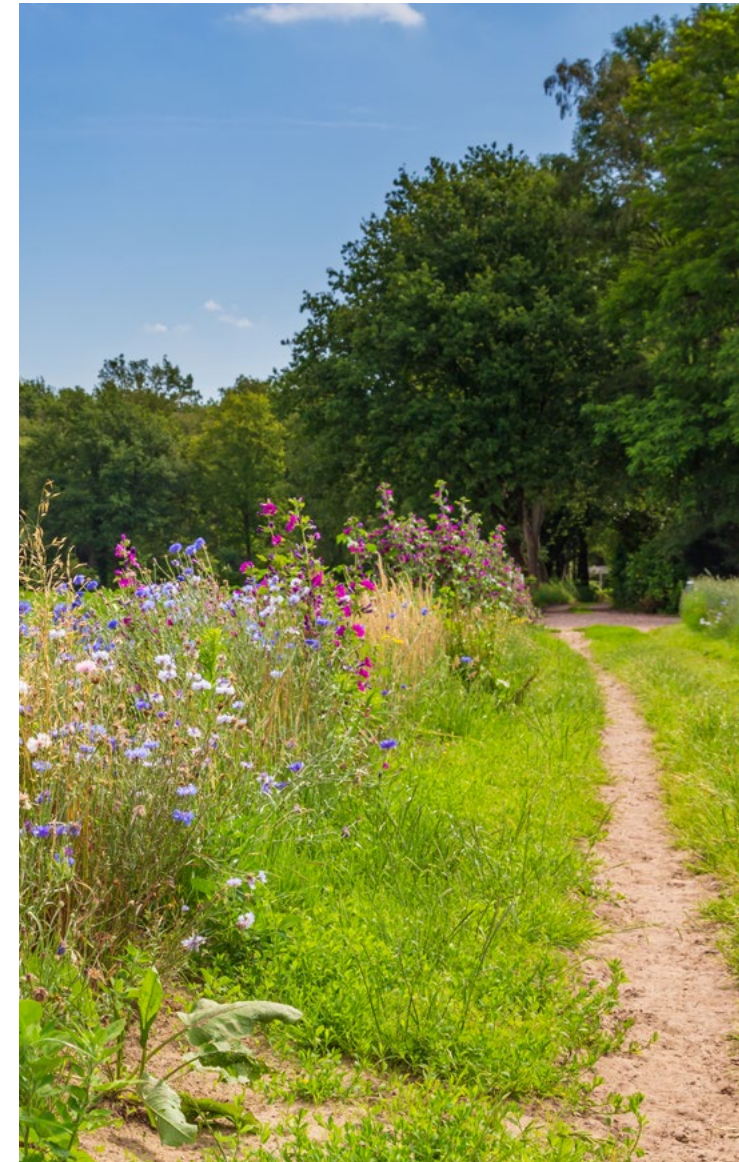
5.12. The Vision will not stop at operational efficiencies and will therefore give equal weight to embodied carbon and whole life carbon considerations. It is projected that as we move closer to 2035 and deliver efficiencies in operational emissions c.50 percent of all built environment emissions will be attributed to the embodied carbon associated with construction, ongoing maintenance, and demolition of buildings and infrastructure. A Vision for a net zero West Berkshire will carefully consider the re-use and repurposing of existing buildings (including heritage assets) and infrastructure to minimise

waste. Where new development is required, it must demonstrate how it is reducing the impacts of embodied carbon across its lifecycle.

Conserve and enhance the open space, natural environment, and biodiversity

5.13. West Berkshire and the settlements of Newbury and Thatcham benefit from the combination of a rural character and urban living. The natural environment is one of the area's key assets exemplified by the prominence of the North Wessex Downs AONB. Access to open spaces and blue and green infrastructure is central to enhancing the health of the population and maintaining the identity and character of the area.

5.14. The quality of our natural environment cannot be compromised and will be enhanced and made more accessible to create added value for ecology, recreation, population health, and nature-based solutions to climate resilience. Growth will be focused in sustainable locations at the correct densities to ensure that not only the existing natural





environment is protected but that opportunities to grow and enhance habitats are maximised.

5.15. The implementation of the Environment Act 2021 sets the foundations for a more strategic approach to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. The requirement to deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain through almost all types of development has significant implications for the availability and use of land. A strategic approach delivered in partnership between public and private sectors will be required to deliver on a Vision for Newbury and Thatcham that delivers sustainable growth in harmony with the natural environment. The development of a Nature Recovery Network will be a key milestone in this pursuit and will require contributions from a wide range of local stakeholders.

5.16. The strategy will be aligned with West Berkshire's decarbonisation targets to ensure that enhancing the natural environment can deliver the multiple benefits of ecosystem recovery,

climate risk mitigation, and carbon capture and sequestration. The council's 2030 carbon neutral target requires residual emissions to be offset and captured through these methods. All opportunities to maximise these multiple benefits should be taken to minimise the pressures on the availability of land. The suitability of land otherwise unsuitable for development will be assessed to understand the potential to allocate them for environmental enhancement. Crucially, any enhancements to open space and the natural environment whether separate to or part of development plans, should seek to include provision for stewardship and long-term management. The statutory requirement for the delivery of biodiversity net gain will secure a minimum guarantee of 30 years for the management and maintenance of associated land.

Promote sustainable transport, connectivity, and access

5.17. Patterns of movement in Newbury and Thatcham are integral to the sustainability of the local economy and to enabling people to lead

happy, healthy lives. Appropriately locating homes, employment uses, shops, leisure and education facilities can minimise the number of journeys taken and subsequently ease congestion and provide benefits for wellbeing, air quality and the natural environment. By focusing growth around existing settlements and services, the Vision will promote 15-minute neighbourhoods where everyone's daily needs can be accommodated for within a 15-minute walking radius. Investment in delivering everyday services alongside growth should help to support this. Improved digital infrastructure with ubiquitous ultra-fast broadband will keep people connected and serve as a critical access point in a digital age.

5.18. Transport strategies will be focussed on widening mobility choices in line with a rapidly shifting environment for private and public transport. The M4 and A34 account for over 50% of all the CO₂ generated from transport activity in West Berkshire each year, and around 30% of the district's total CO₂ emissions. Whilst the operation of these two strategic roads is largely

outside of the council's control but is indicative of the environmental impact of petrol driven private vehicles. The sale of new petrol and diesel cars is set to end by 2030 providing a clear signal that the proceeding 20 years and more will be characterised by low carbon personal vehicles.

5.19. The Vision will support growth in walking and cycling and public transport along with the use of electric vehicles and shared mobility options. This will require significant investment in smart electric vehicle infrastructure (including demand response technologies), spatial planning that promotes active travel, and better public transport options. With the proliferation of electric and autonomous/driverless vehicles attention will also be given to how local transport networks can adapt to these realities in the future. This will require new approaches to network design, street safety, parking, charging and storage. A high skilled and innovative local workforce will serve as a key stakeholder in adapting to the future of mobility.



Access to public Transport

- Transport is a big issue,
- access to public transport needs improving
- Accessible and affordable bus routes
- Opportunities to integrate the new neighbourhoods with public transport
- Integrate communities and active travel
- Potential to electrify the rail line

Key

- ▨ Potential growth areas
- Key bus route
- 1 k / 2 k radius
- Floodplain

The 1km and 2 km radius indicates the proximity of identified areas from Newbury and Thatcham rail stations.

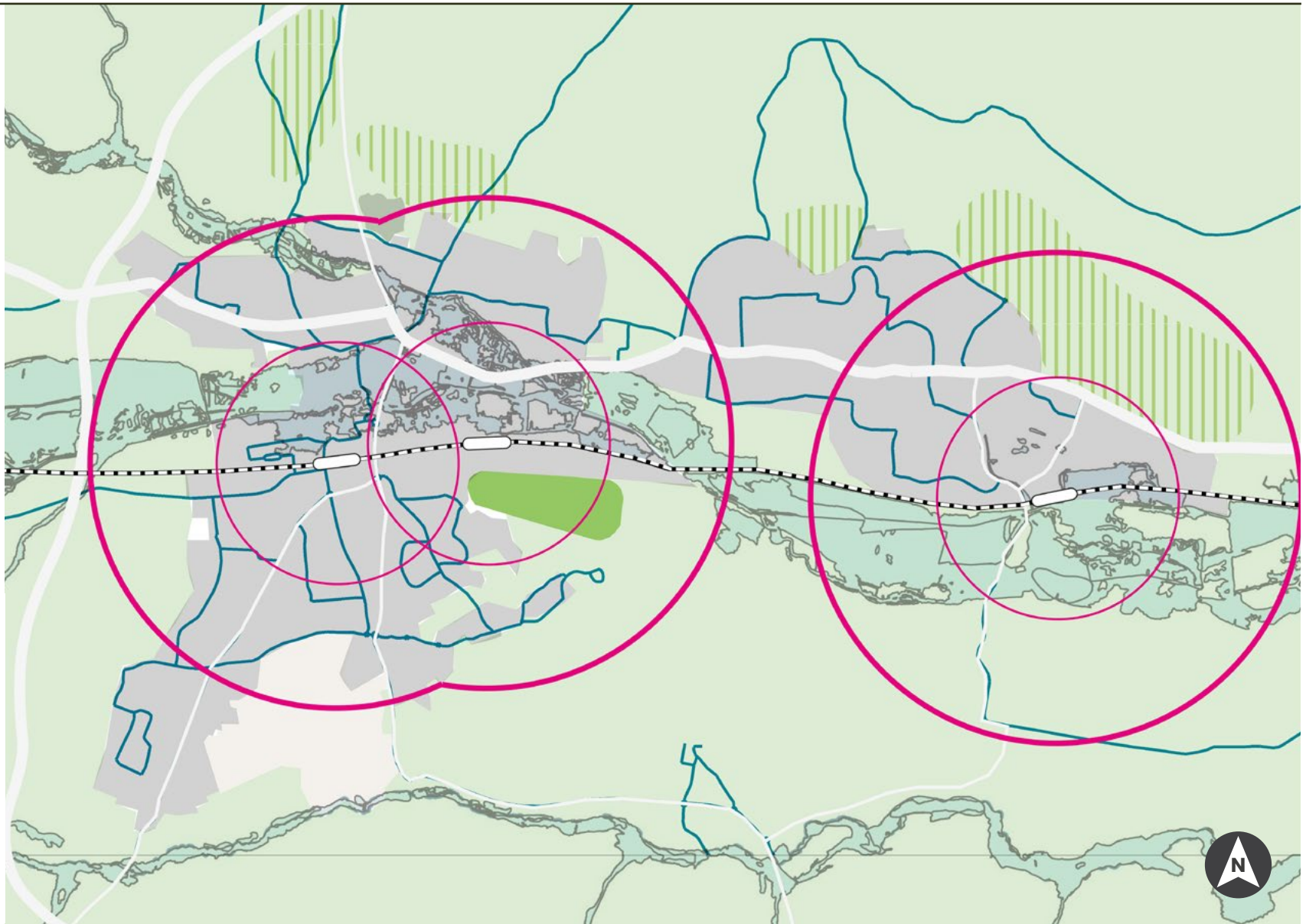
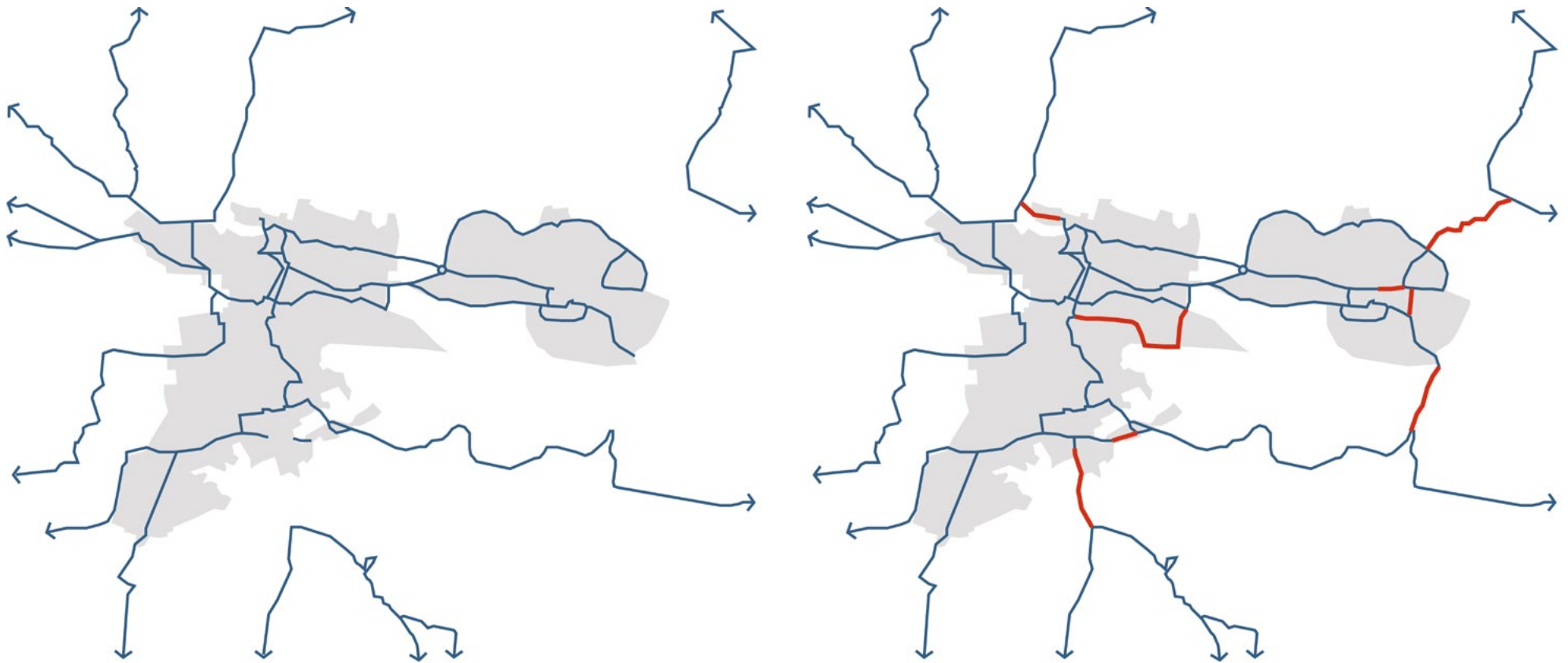


Fig 7: Newbury and Thatcham : Influences, including opportunities and constraints



Walking and Cycling

- A disconnected network of cycle routes.
- All potential development must integrate the existing routes and enhance existing routes.
- Communities will benefit from improved walking and cycling to services and facilities.

Key

- Existing cycle route
- Proposed cycle route

Fig 8: Newbury and Thatcham : Influences plan (includes opportunities and constraints)



Sustainability Benefits of Strategic Sites at Newbury and Thatcham:

5.20. Focussing future development on respective strategic sites at Newbury and Thatcham will provide numerous benefits for delivering sustainable growth. Optimising densities to make the best use of available land amidst significant local site influences will provide efficiencies relating to co-locating services, reducing vehicular journeys, delivery of infrastructure, and providing open space and ecological value. This focus also has benefits for conserving and enhancing the distinctive character and identity of the existing built, historic, and natural environment in Newbury and Thatcham by minimising piecemeal development elsewhere.

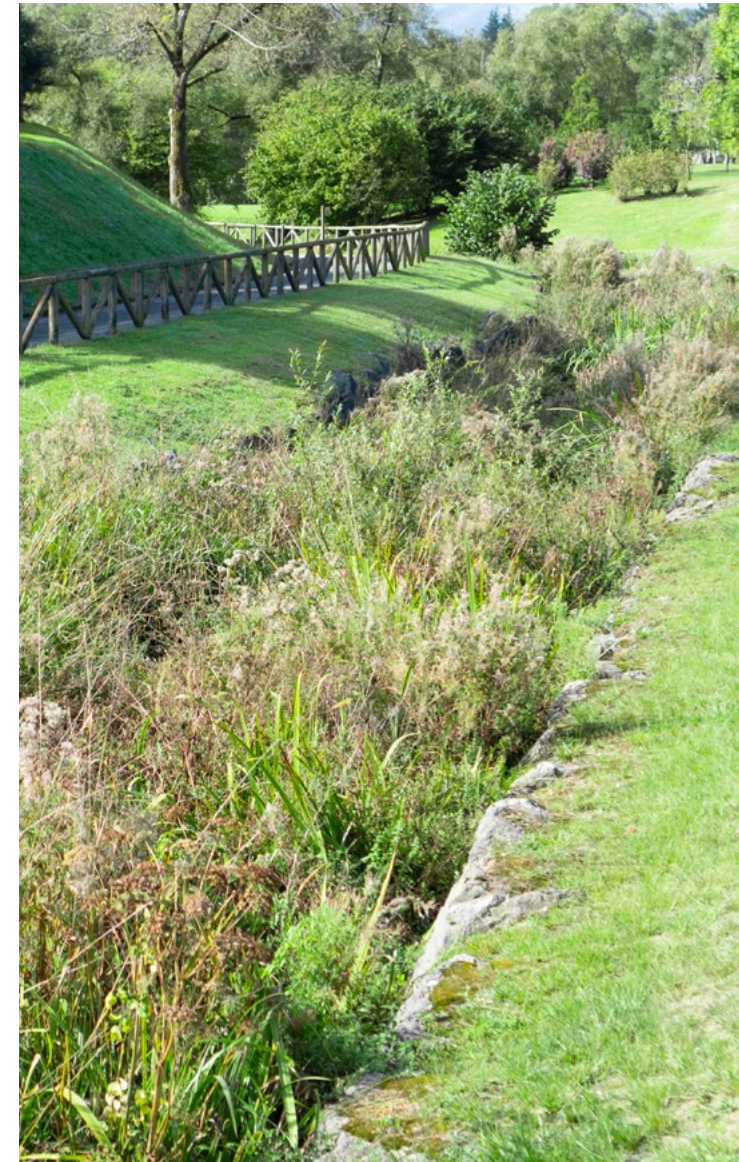
5.21. The West Berkshire emerging Draft Local Plan Review identifies priorities for where growth will be focussed, noting that housing development will be expected to particularly come forward through strategic sites where infrastructure can be delivered alongside growth. In Newbury this

will largely, but not solely, be supported by existing infrastructure whilst Thatcham will be a focus for regeneration including new homes as well as provision of services and facilities, partially through planned strategic growth to the north-east.

5.22. Concentrating development on these sites and in these locations ensures that places are connected, existing services can support growth, that new development can reciprocally support growth in these existing services and infrastructure, and that new social, economic, and transport infrastructure can be delivered as part of well-considered masterplans factoring in viability with contributions from those bringing development forward to the funding of essential infrastructure.

5.23. Crucially, focussing growth on identified strategic locations can deliver carbon savings and environmental benefits through measures including but not limited to;

- the introduction of smart, responsive, and low carbon heating and energy systems that deliver efficiencies at scale. Such systems could include district heating/heat networks, heat recovery from industrial or energy intensive processes, and demand response networks with battery storage which maximise renewable sources and adjust to times of peak demand.
- repeatable and replicable design and construction methods can be deployed to deliver a fabric first approach which optimises energy efficiency and future proofs buildings for net zero.
- embodied carbon impacts can be minimised through efficiencies in the design and construction phases. This can only be achieved wholistically by carefully choosing materials, layouts, and uses relating to roads, hard surfaces, utilities, infrastructure such as foul water, stormwater, and substations.
- spatial planning and the mix of uses can be optimised to maximise renewable energy solutions such as solar generation through photovoltaic panels or even domestic wind turbines where appropriate.
- biodiversity and accessible natural environments can be prioritised. Opportunities to capture and sequester carbon can be significant and integrated into landscaping strategies. The density of development can be optimised to allow the natural environment to cover large areas of respective growth sites.
- climate resilience can be addressed at a strategic level through sustainable drainage features such as open swales, areas for flood water storage, and by minimising the effects of urban heat islands and solar gain through plot orientation.
- alternative solutions can be considered for electric vehicle charging infrastructure alongside individual domestic chargers as space can be allocated to associated uses.





- strategies can be adopted to minimise waste and create circular principles for resource use and the production of goods on site or locally.

Thatcham Town Centre

5.24. According to ONS population estimates, between 2011-20, Thatcham's estimated population growth sat at 0.5% and its population appears to have fallen slightly since 2015. To put this into context, Newbury gained an additional 3,235 inhabitants since 2011, while Thatcham only gained an estimated 142.

5.25. Although both settlements are home to an older population, both above the UK average, Thatcham comprises a substantial number of residents in their later 40s and 50s. This is reflected in the rate of population who are economically active (i.e. share of 16-64 out of total population). Nationally, this stands at 78.8% where as in Newbury and Thatcham, the rates are 62% and 63%.

5.26. Previous growth in Thatcham was focused largely on residential development and was heavily dominated by a car-based model. This resulted in urban extensions that have been severed from the town centre, styming the necessary footfall to support business vitality and viability. This has been exacerbated by the close proximity of Newbury which has resulted in Thatcham becoming reliant on Newbury to provide local service provision. Recent piecemeal development has failed to overcome these historic infrastructure deficiencies, lacking the critical mass required to enable sustainable development and deliver new infrastructure.

Newbury Town Centre

5.27. West Berkshire District Council commissioned recent masterplanning work to assess and analyse the town centre and recommend principles for future development. The masterplan established a Vision for Newbury Town Centre to remain a focus for social interaction, economic growth, civic engagement and community activity.

5.28. Ten key principles underpin the masterplan which strive to create a more ‘walkable’, ‘greener’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ town centre.

5.29. The spatial strategy of the masterplan and its key principles, complements and supports the Visioning work.

5.30. Temporary events and identified ‘quick-wins’ in the masterplan require minimal investment in local infrastructure but have the potential to create significant positive outcomes in terms of community cohesion. In accordance with this Vision, the infrastructural needs for medium to longer term proposals are largely focused on creating a more pedestrian friendly environment, enhancing connectivity into and around the town centre, and strengthening the link between the local natural and built environment.

London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE)

5.31. Adjacent to Newbury Town Centre, the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) comprises

a key piece of land that is majority-owned by West Berkshire District Council. This strategic site is underutilised, car-dominated and failing to positively contribute towards the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.

5.32. West Berkshire District Council, as landowner, recently approved a refreshed Delivery Strategy for LRIE as part of a wider commitment to deliver infrastructure that supports local economic growth. With a focus on ‘job creation, attracting investment to Newbury and achieving carbon neutrality’, the current proposals for LRIE would see the area become a high-quality employment site and business destination that would welcome additional employers and investment to the town.

5.33. In regard to LRIE, it is the ambition of WBDC to:

- Bring forward business investment to safeguard 300+ jobs and create at least 200 new jobs;





- Agree lease terms to unlock at least 30% of new employment space and place-making improvements; and
- Align values with carbon net zero agenda.

5.34. If the proposed development is to be carbon neutral, having a pool of potential employees living locally in the town, rather than commuting, will be highly beneficial. This Vision document therefore assists the Council in fulfilling its objectives by creating a sustainable neighbourhood in close proximity to the LRIE.

Consultation Feedback

6.1. The conversation around the long-term future of Newbury and Thatcham is key and needs to be shaped and shared by the local community. A programme of engagement was undertaken with a range of stakeholders, to capture a broad spectrum of voices and enable insight to inform the work.

6.2. The team sought to gather a representative spread of views on what stakeholders see as West Berkshires qualities and challenges, key areas of interest, priorities, ambitions, and Visions for the long-term future.

6.3. A dedicated website was created as a central hub for the project, hosting background information, the Baseline and Socio-Economic Reports from the outset, and engagement content.

6.4. In order to keep Elected Members abreast of project progress, a political memo was drafted and distributed, setting out an overview of the project and baseline report, detailing the engagement strategy and timescales for project delivery.

6.5. To ensure the team captured the insight of young people, given the long-term planning horizons being considered, and those who do not normally respond to strategic consultation exercises, a digital engagement exercise was undertaken alongside the more traditional meetings, one



on one. The digital engagement exercise targeted respondents via social media, including Facebook, Instagram and Google Play.

5.6. Alongside this, a dedicated two week campaign was advertised on the local Kennet Radio station during the consultation period, helping to further highlight the project and opportunities for people to engage.

5.7. Adding depth to the online survey results, a series of focused discussions were held with local stakeholders, including Elected Members, Council Departments, Town Councils, Parish Councils, Landowners, Developers, Employers, Business Groups and Community Groups.

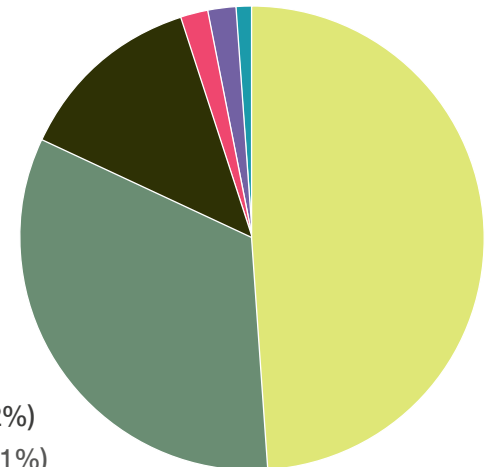
Consultation In Numbers

5.8. The widespread engagement involved:

- 21 group workshops and 1-2-1 meetings;
- 6,780 visits to the survey website;
- 2,269 individuals voting on the survey.

5.9. This included respondents from across the district:

■ Newbury resident (49%)	■ Visitor (2%)
■ Thatcham resident (33%)	■ Newbury worker (2%)
■ Wider West Berkshire (13%)	■ Thatcham worker (1%)



Key Consultation Findings

Community Feedback

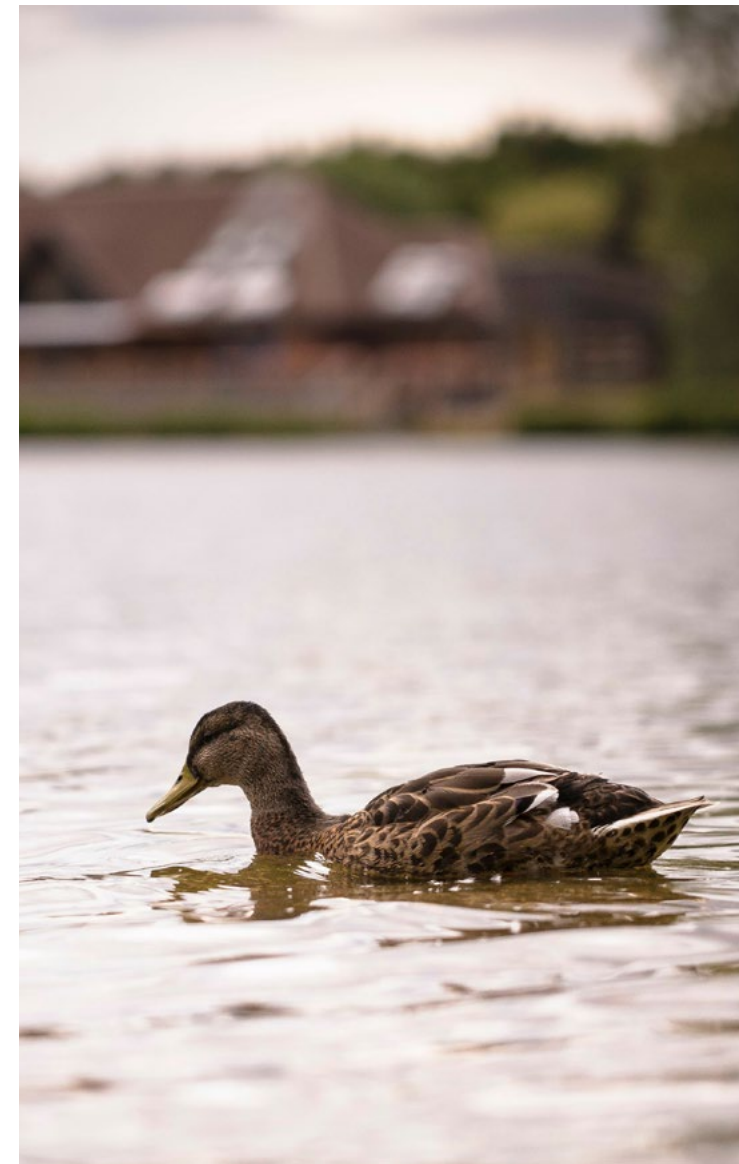
5.10. The survey was divided into quantitative and qualitative questions, and our analysis has been organised accordingly.

5.11. The following sections provide a separate summary of the feedback for the quantitative and qualitative questions in the survey, a full report for each can be found in the Appendix of this report.

Quantitative questions:

5.12. Participants were asked four questions in the survey generating quantitative feedback.

- The first question asked people how they generally felt about living and working in West Berkshire, with feedback generated using a slider to indicate a negative or positive feeling. 86% voted positively overall.
- The second question asked people their favourite things about where they live/ work, providing a number of choices from which up to two could be selected. The top three choices were:
 - ▶ Parks and open spaces (65%)
 - ▶ Connectivity to other areas (30%)
 - ▶ The town centre (19%)
- For Newbury residents, the top three choices were the same as the overall top three, however 'ease of getting around' was the third most popular choice for Thatcham residents, with 15% of responses.





- The third question asked people what would make West Berkshire a better place looking to 2050, providing a number of choices from which up to two could be selected. The top three priorities for people were:
 - ▶ better leisure / retail / culture offering (41%)
 - ▶ improved health facilities (31%)
 - ▶ increased housing choices (25%)
 - For Newbury residents, the top three choices were the same as the overall top three, however 'parks and open spaces' was the third most popular choice for Thatcham residents, coming up in 26% of responses.
 - The fourth question asked people how they would like to travel in the area by 2050, providing a number of choices from which up to two could be selected. The top three responses were:
 - ▶ Sustainable public transport (56%)
 - ▶ Active travel i.e. walk / cycle (45%)
 - ▶ Zero emissions private vehicle (36%).
- 5.13. A full report on the quantitative questions in the survey can be found in **Appendix 1**.

Qualitative questions:

5.14. Participants were asked two questions in the survey which generated open, written feedback.

- The first question asked people if there was anything they would like to change about West Berkshire by 2050, whilst the second question asked people if there was anything further they wanted to add.
- The overall results of the qualitative questions indicated that travel and connectivity are the most important issues in need of change. Alleviating traffic congestion and improving local infrastructure was a particular concern.
- Housing was another significant point of discussion. Respondents highlighted the need for improved development principles and housing densities, interventions to address the cost of living and housing affordability whilst potentially retaining the green 'landscape wedge' that exists between the two towns.
- In terms of retail, which featured heavily, support for more independent businesses, the need for an improved shopping experience, general improvements to the retail environment and specific shops.
- 1,655 people answered the first qualitative question, with 1,825 individual pieces of feedback received. The top five overarching themes are detailed below, in order of number of times raised (shown in brackets). Travel / connectivity was the most popular issue, raised in 21% of comments, whilst the top four themes make up 55% of all individual pieces of feedback.





- ▶ Travel / connectivity (373)
 - ▶ Retail (252)
 - ▶ Development principles/ ideas and housing density (208)
 - ▶ Cost of living and affordable housing (163)
 - ▶ Entertainment, arts / culture, community and leisure (154)
- 20% of responses from Newbury residents were concerned about cost of living, affordable housing and other social issues, as opposed to only 14% of Thatcham residents.
 - Meanwhile, 26% of Thatcham residents made comments about entertainment, arts / culture, leisure, and health / education services, as opposed to only 16% of Newbury residents.
 - 6% of Thatcham residents raised concerned about crime and anti-social behaviour, as opposed to only 3% of Newbury residents.
 - 5% of Newbury residents made comments about the look and feel of their town centre and street environments, as opposed to only 3% of Thatcham residents.
 - 663 people answered the second qualitative question, with 792 individual pieces of feedback. The top five overarching themes are listed below (themes/comments are shown in order of frequency with the number of times raised referenced in brackets).
 - ▶ Travel/ connectivity (146)
 - ▶ Unspecified or N/A (132)

- ▶ Retail and hospitality (115)
 - ▶ Development principles / ideas and housing density (63)
 - ▶ Entertainment, arts / culture, community and leisure (62)
- For question this question, once again a higher proportion of Newbury residents (8%) mentioned social issues than Thatcham residents (5%).
 - Although entertainment, arts/ culture, and leisure was more proportionately represented amongst Newbury residents in this question (11% compared to 8% of Thatcham residents), health, education and public services was only raised in 3% of comments, as opposed to 12% of Thatcham residents.
- 5.15. A full report on the quantitative questions in the survey can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.16. An analysis of the open feedback can be found in **Appendix 2**.



Key Stakeholder Feedback

During extensive conversations with local stakeholders, the following key messages were drawn out:

Key Messaging	
Elected Members of Town and Parish Councils:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of addressing ageing population and attracting younger people and businesses into the district • Ensure Thatcham benefits from same success as Newbury • Provide more housing options and improve housing affordability • There is a strong pride in the distinct identities of Newbury and Thatcham • Critical to embed climate resilience and Net Zero measures • Thatcham is in need of community and social space • Avoid and address local flood risk (including surface water run-off and flooding from the Kennet) • Education, health and community provision needs to align with development progression
Elected Members of Town and Parish Councils:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key conclusions and priorities for Thatcham Town Council for 2050: • To maintain the distinct identity of Thatcham, imperative that the 'strategic gap' between Thatcham and Newbury is protected, and that the town centre retains its character. • It is essential that the deficit in infrastructure in Thatcham is addressed before there is any further development. • The infrastructure that would be required by any new development in and around Thatcham must be provided in step with the progress of that development, and not all 'lumped' towards the end. • Any new development must adopt best practice in environmental performance, including insulation, alignment of roofs to maximise performance of solar panels, ground source heat pumps and community heating schemes. • Traffic congestion at the level crossing and on the A4 near the town centre need to be addressed, and the northern distributor road needs to be improved before any new development occurs. <p>(cont)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In anticipation of universal electric vehicles and driverless cars, properties should have sufficient parking spaces for all vehicles, and there should be provision of space and capability for charging for future pools of driverless cars. • While active travel has an important place, it should not be used as an excuse to avoid proper provision for vehicular transport.
Business Groups:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and recruitment – a local skills drain linked to the pandemic and increased household mobility • The benefits of having a College in Newbury town which now delivers university courses • Challenges associated with office space suitability and availability particularly for SME businesses • Impact of Vodafone downsizing physical footprint in Newbury • Supply issues with industrial land in Newbury • Challenges associated with housing affordability • Opportunity for London Road Industrial Estate to positively contribute to Newbury • Strength associated with high-profile economic sites and major employer presence in the local area • Importance of sustainably connecting any future growth with existing Town Centres
Landowners, Developers and Key Employers:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to build communities, not just development • Difficulty sourcing employees for certain jobs – West Berkshire needs greater housing affordability • Improved frequency of train connections would be beneficial • Covid-19 pandemic has permanently changed workspace requirements • Good digital connectivity is critical: technology is vital to the growth of business and household demands • Sustainability needs to be a central feature of all future development • Future growth is positive and required to maintain and improve local business vitality/viability • There is an important role for developer contributions in delivering infrastructure • Collaborative approach needed between landowners, developers, employers and West Berkshire District Council

Key Council Departments:

Environment

- Importance of Climate Emergency targets
- Must consider carbon impact of growth (embedded and operational)
- Green growth and nature-based solutions must be embedded into future development

Countryside
Rights of Way

- Issues of severance
- Importance of inclusive and equitable access to Countryside and greenspace

Health and
Wellbeing

- Need to address health inequalities
- Importance of linking health assets
- Community integration and cohesion to combat loneliness
- Connection with nature and planetary health
- Level of health and wellbeing service provision needs to be linked to growth
- Different demographics have differing health and wellbeing needs

Drainage

- Historic, present and future risk
- Unpredictability associated with Climate Emergency
- Need to use more natural solutions to create multi-purpose space for community benefit
- High quality SUDs need to be a key principle of any future growth

Archaeology

- View archaeological sensitivities as an opportunity for placemaking initiatives and to enhance local pride
- Blue and green infrastructure collectively add to local cultural richness

Education

- Importance of educational forecasting – lead in time for future growth is essential
- Need to integrate resilience for potential fluctuations i.e. impact of pandemic on birth rates, adjustments in demographic profile due to migration associated with changing work habits

Economic Development

- Changing demands of office space relating to what employers, and employees, expect in terms of quality of space. Large companies traditionally based in London seeking smaller premises where staff can meet and collaborate outside of the capital.
- Thatcham offering dominated by distribution and warehousing
- Newbury contains a town centre cluster comprising an information service sector which should be further expanded
- West Berkshire local economy should aspire to be a place that promotes green businesses, innovation and leads on the race to Net Zero
- The West Berkshire Inward Investment Strategy seeks to support existing businesses within the green sector including those involved in fuel cell systems, hydrogen storage and battery production.
- Due to its crossroads location between the A4 and M24, the demand for light industrial space in West Berkshire is significant. This is exacerbated by the fact much of the district is within AONB meaning it is difficult to find sufficient space to meet demand.
- Retail, hospitality and office space in Newbury increasingly being lost to residential
- Plans for London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) focused on employment use. The estate has good links with the town centre, is served by bus and cycle provision and within walking distance of Newbury train station.
- Thatcham town centre not well connected to the local train station
- Council leading on local digital infrastructure commitments with an ambition to be at the forefront of implementing the latest technology
- Important to work in partnership with local stakeholders (DWUP, Newbury College, health, education and training providers etc) to reduce employment barriers and increase local job prospects, density of businesses and quality of opportunities.

Highways

- Emphasis on active travel
- Infrastructure needs to address changes in technology, sustainability and congestion
- Railway crossing causes traffic congestion at peak travel times; however, an infrastructural solution would be extremely costly and technically challenging due to the necessary gradient required to clear overhead electric cables
- Importance of good design regarding travel and transport

Infrastructure

- Sandleford – improvements to walking and cycling routes; bus service improvements; new cabs; junction improvements; link road to A339.
- NE Thatcham – walking and cycling improvements; bus service improvements; car clubs; access to rail station and improved facilities; junction improvements; primary/secondary schools
- Need to address:
 - Energy/ water/ wastewater/telecoms infrastructure
 - Community library
 - Health
 - Open Space/ sports facilities
 - air quality/nutrient neutrality through infrastructure provision

SWOT Analysis

The baseline work and community and stakeholder engagement is brought together in the SWOT analysis below:

Strengths

- Good transport connections - rail and road
- Proximity to London and other regional centres
- Abundance of surrounding natural environment including AONB
- Key national employers invested in town
- College presence in Newbury
- Large visitor attractions such as Newbury Racecourse
- Reputation as a good place to live, work and visit
- Strong identities and local pride of Newbury and Thatcham

Opportunities

- Potential to attract new residents moving out of London and other big cities wanting a better work-life balance and enhanced greenspace access
- Regeneration of Thatcham, in particular the Town Centre
- Strategic sites could bring forward new services, infrastructure and amenities
- Retaining unique character of place whilst accommodating growth
- Improving local infrastructure, including transport infrastructure

Weaknesses

- Environmental influences (Notified Safety Zone associated with Atomic Weapons Establishment, functional flood plain etc)
- High housing costs
- Unaffordability for first-time buyers
- Supply issues with industrial land- in Newbury
- Support for ageing population
- Traffic congestion at peak times – including railway
- Limited retail, leisure and evening economy offering in Thatcham town centre
- Imbalance of community services between Newbury and Thatcham

Threats

- Changing work patterns creating uncertainty around employment space needs/ demand
- Flood risk
- Slow delivery of development that does not capitalise on strategic opportunities
- Declining population in Thatcham



Strategic Objectives and Growth Principles

7.1. Climate Emergency

Quality / standards for what's built

- Robust standards equal to or beyond national requirements covering occupant wellbeing, air quality, cost of living, digital connectivity, carbon offsetting and access to amenities.
- Design centred in resource efficiency and sustainable placemaking.

Net zero

- Policies and milestones for achieving net zero and decoupling carbon from economic activity. By 2050 Newbury and Thatcham could be a hub for piloting, innovating and delivering low and zero carbon energy networks for use locally and to export to surrounding areas or a decarbonised grid.
- A whole life approach to development covering embodied and operational carbon with significant reductions in energy intensity over time. Considered mix of uses to minimise journeys and utilise local economies/resources

Renewable energy

- Invest in and plan for renewable energy projects to significantly build local capacity contributing to reducing domestic and business-related emissions. Respond to changing demands and changing energy use patterns with smart systems including energy storage. Ensure that corporate prerogatives to decarbonise business and industrial processes can be utilised to deliver innovation and benefits to the local community

Infrastructure with growth – limiting need to travel / circular economy

- Ensure the existing community and new neighbourhoods are truly sustainable by assessing the changing needs of residents and workers and conserving and enhancing the social, cultural, educational, health, and leisure offering. Enhancing the case for active travel by reducing the need to commute for key services and delivering attractive, safe routes. Delivering social, community, physical and green infrastructure in step with growth.

Supporting travel by sustainable modes

- Provide a broader and flexible series of mobility choices grounded in sustainable and zero or low carbon active travel and personal and public transport options. Changing movement patterns and more localised economies lend themselves to varied options that can respond to live demand.
- Residents must be able to move around freely and so a network of high-quality walking and cycle routes, alongside public transport improvements, must be delivered in Newbury and Thatcham.





These should better connect train stations to both town centres and conveniently onwards to surrounding residential areas.



Integrated rail infrastructure

- Enhanced facilities of train stations and direct connections through to London would further improve the level connectivity and convenience of rail travel locally.
- New rail-to-road logistics terminals would add greater resilience to the local distribution network. A localised industrial and logistics offering operating a smart last mile delivery system from the rail terminal could bring multiple benefits and reduce the impact of HGV's in both towns.



Protecting and enhancing the natural environment

- Build on West Berkshire's most valuable asset by protecting existing green and blue infrastructure while significantly increasing biodiversity and access to new open spaces. Investing in a green grid which becomes a defining feature of Newbury and Thatcham will deliver benefits in terms of increased space for food production, carbon capture and storage, enhancements to biodiversity, the environment and public wellbeing.



Target waste and resource efficiency

- Produce locally, reduce, re-use and recycle. Apply life cycle and circular principles to all relevant activities including residential and commercial development.



Significantly grow net zero skills and supply chain locally

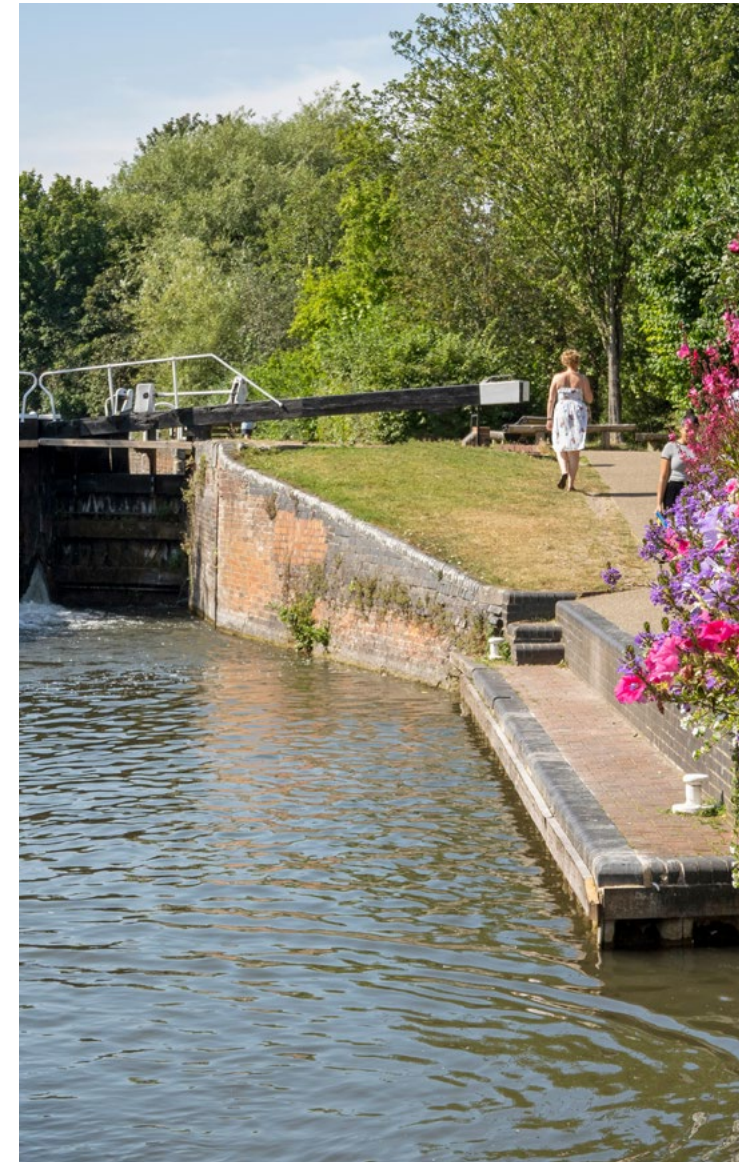
- Take advantage of the necessary growth in green industry and ensure that resources are available to hit targets associated with priorities like retrofitting homes for energy efficiency and decarbonising construction and business activities. Leverage the skills, resources, and status of Newbury and Thatcham as tech hub to drive economic growth locally.

7.2. Importance of green space; in both urban and rural setting



Green grid

- The vast abundance of green space and rural countryside that encase Newbury and Thatcham are a highly distinctive feature.
- It is important these environmental assets are conserved and enriched, whilst realising opportunities to make more sustainable use of them by embracing the environmental, social and cultural benefits for all.
- Establish a green grid which integrates open space and wider green assets into the urban environment providing a resource for nature, recreation and safe, sustainable movement. Supporting appropriate recreational access whilst managing potential disturbance on sensitive habitats.
- It's important to strike a balance in finding appropriate routes for different uses and user abilities. Children, dog walkers, those with mobility impairments and those on horseback, all





deserve fair access to the green grid. This will require working closely with local groups, such as Walking for Health, Age UK and Canal and River Trust.

- The green grid will sensitively connect Newbury and Thatcham town centres with the surrounding countryside. Routes and streets will create direct links for wildlife and local residents to explore the urban and rural environment.
- Green spaces located in close proximity to the River Kennet and descending from the villages in the surrounding hills will assist in mitigating flood risk and creating new public spaces for passive recreation as part of this green grid.
- Given the findings of both the constraints mapping and feedback received during consultation in relation to the importance of 'green wedge' between settlements, it is recommended that further specialist landscape assessment work is undertaken.

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Nature based solutions

- Developing a nature recovery network with strategic solutions found to support the operation and maintenance of ecological assets, including through joint working with partners such as Berkshire Wildlife Trust, Thames Water, local schools and landowners.



- A partnership based approach will be key to addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis, with strong collaboration required to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain and carbon sequestration in future growth areas of North East Thatcham and Sandleford.
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will form an important part of future development plans. Nature based solutions will also be targeted in low-risk areas as they provide the multiple benefits of acting as protection measures, as enhancements to local ecology, and as contributors to health and wellbeing.
- Careful enhancement and further activation of local waterways such as the Kennet and Avon Canal, could provide dual benefits of mitigation and improved amenity for the local community.
- Opportunities should be taken to include the use of SUDs for environmental learning, either formally as a school resource, or more informally via interactive play and through the work of community or environmental organisations using interpretation and public signage for greater awareness.

Meeting range of housing needs

- Homes must cover a full spectrum of accommodation types and ownerships choices to meet a range of individual requirements and aspiration levels, ensuring that quality housing is readily available for all stages of life.
- Delivering a range of high quality housing, with a focus on affordability and options for a growing older population and those with disabilities.





- Ensuring housing caters for the local workforce, minimising challenges to business resiliency and environmental impacts associated with unsustainable commuting patterns.
- Homes must be of a high standard, reflecting the local character, embedding low energy use, water consumption and waste disposal where possible.



Compact neighbourhoods – 15 min principles

- Compact neighbourhoods, in line with the 15 minute neighbourhood principles, will help make Newbury and Thatcham, their economic opportunities and environmental assets more equitable and accessible to all.
- Delivering compact growth in North East Thatcham will include everyday local amenities and the necessary infrastructure, such as open space and community facilities, so that new development and the existing town centre complement each other in terms of offering but are viewed as one identity.
- Infrastructure such as cycle paths, broadband, shops and community hubs, must be planned and delivered alongside residential development.

7.3. **Social Infrastructure**

- Social infrastructure is key to good physical health and mental wellbeing and Newbury and Thatcham must be places where inequalities are reduced so that residents live healthier and with greater independence for longer.
- Social infrastructure must be easily accessible physically, geographically and financially to support residents' specific needs.
- Maintaining and enhancing provision of social infrastructure, including schools and healthcare provision, and ensuring timely delivery of additional provision in tandem with residential growth.
- Well-planned education provision in Newbury and Thatcham will ensure local schools are the first choice for families. Facilities will be designed to promote greater walking and cycling for healthier lifestyles, improved wellbeing and educational attainment of young people and students.
- Amenities and facilities such as playing pitches, a lido and community allotments will further complement future growth.
- Opportunities for environmental stewardship led by young people should be sought after, including elements of food production on site of educational facilities to embed early and positive stewardship behaviours.





7.4. **Supporting Town Centres**

- Regeneration of Thatcham town centre will help to breathe new life and activity into the area. However, this must be achieved without compromising the existing character that the local community are so rightly proud of.
- Coordinating growth to support town centre regeneration through quality mixed-use development, provision of social infrastructure, investing in ease of access and improving town centre environment.
- Recognising the role of town centres in supporting residential growth including through development of retirement, rental and student accommodation.
- Maximise the opportunity for increased investment in Thatcham given the case for regeneration, and improve the quality of life for local Thatcham residents over the longer term by having amenities in the town centre that are easily accessible by all.

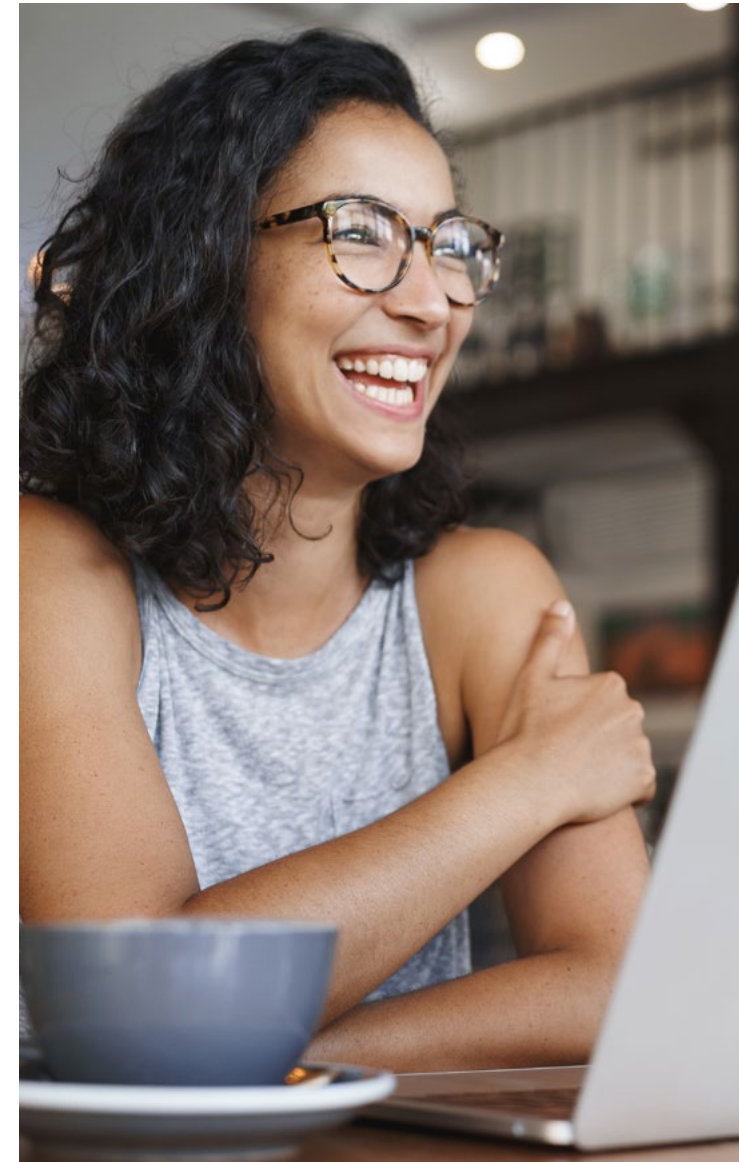
7.5. **Dynamic economies**

- Investing in business infrastructure to support economic growth, including broadband connectivity and provision of SME and 'grow' on business space.
- Intensification of LRIE and extension of Colthorp and phased regeneration and investment in other sites to deliver modern business space.

- Delivering telecoms infrastructure to support home working and leverage the quality of place offer to drive enterprise growth.
- Draw existing business into innovation, providing mechanisms for idea sharing and collaboration across the area.
- Fostering an economic environment that delivers a range of jobs, and career options, across multiple sectors to support economic resilience across Newbury and Thatcham.
- Supporting continued growth in Newbury's role as a IT/telecoms hub including through enabling small business growth.
- Improving Newbury's business density by becoming a leader in low-carbon enterprises and renewable research could help the district achieve its carbon-reduction targets while strengthening Newbury's image as an attractive destination at the forefront of innovation and change.
- Encouraging and supporting business innovation should be a priority with greater collaboration between educational providers and the local business community so that everyone has fair access to quality jobs and an improvement in quality of life.

7.6. **A place to visit**

- A welcoming environment and established visitor location including arts, culture, sporting events, a thriving night time economy and strong programme of voluntary/community events.





- Identity and coalescence – maintain and enhance strong identities for Newbury and Thatcham; and with the surrounding villages, maximising the benefits of the combination of a rural character and urban living
- Newbury should be further strengthened as a destination for major events, including those of national significance. Better integration of events venues and the town centre should be developed via public realm enhancements, including sustainable travel options that feel safe and intuitive for both local and visitor use. Town centre residential developments will ensure the area is vibrant due to a critical mass and plenty of footfall creating an attractive place for visitors to explore and businesses to thrive.
- Thatcham should focus on growing its local visitor offering, catering more for the surrounding villages and wider West Berkshire population. This could be supported through the development of a community offer in the heart of the town centre, alongside associated infrastructure and a programme of activities and leveraging its environmental assets.

Key

- Settlement area
- Town Centre
- Greenham Common & the Countryside
- Canals & Rivers

Newbury and Thatcham have retained separate identities due to the separation of both towns with a green landscape 'wedge'. Feedback from the local community was strongly in favour of retaining separate identities of both towns and this green 'wedge' should be used as an environmental asset to integrate into the wider green grid.

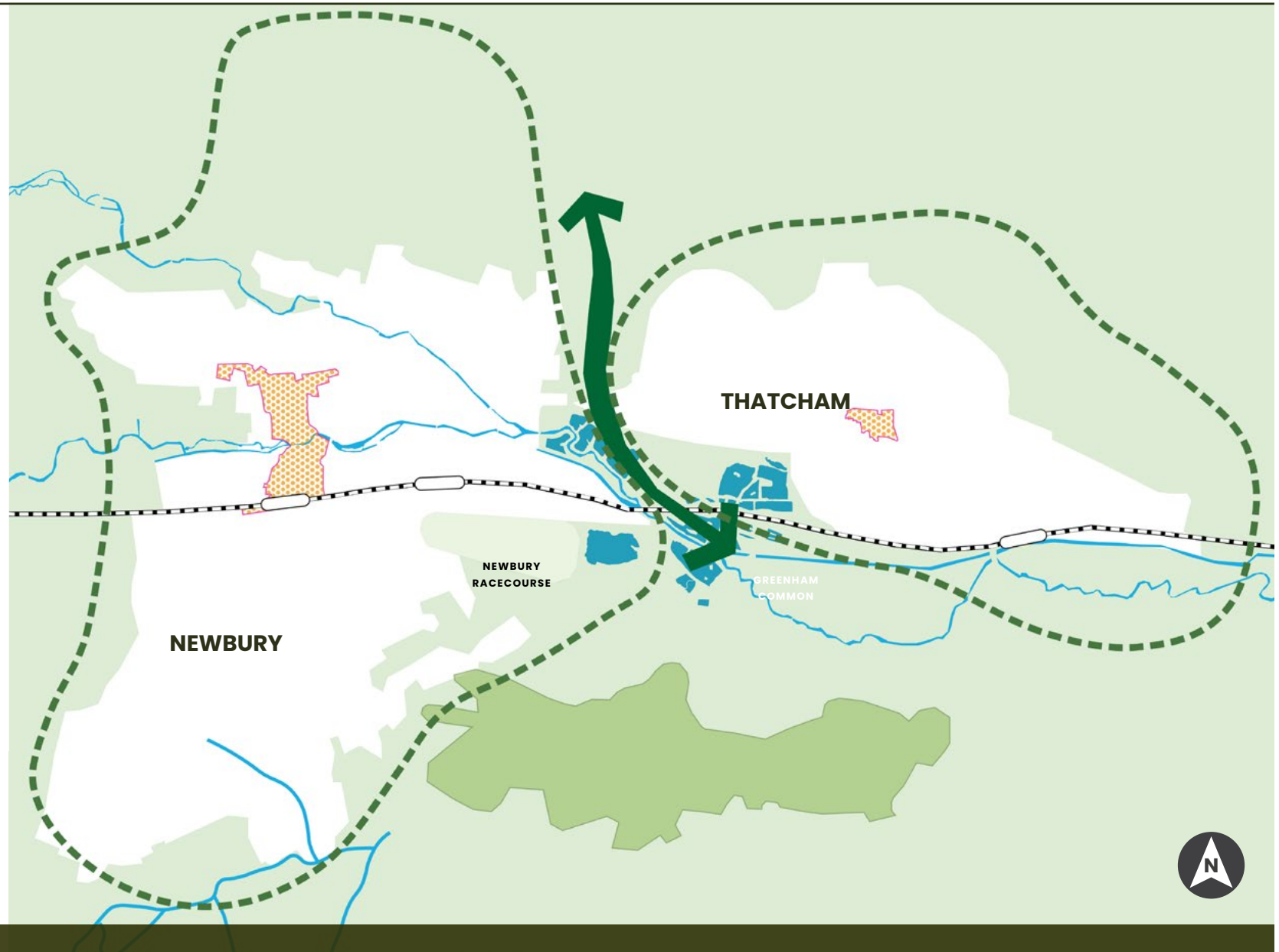


Fig 10: Identity and Green Connectivity

An aerial photograph of the Newbury and Thatcham area in West Berkshire. The image shows a mix of residential housing, commercial buildings, and green spaces. A prominent feature is a large, curved green area that appears to be a park or sports field. In the foreground, there's a dark green rectangular overlay with white text. The background shows rolling hills and a river or canal winding through the landscape.

Emerging Vision for Growth at Newbury & Thatcham

8.1. The natural environment is one of the area's key assets, exemplified by the prominence of the North Wessex Downs AONB. Access to open spaces and blue and green infrastructure is central to enhancing the health of the population and maintaining the identity and character of the area.

8.2. The West Berkshire emerging Draft Local Plan Review identifies priorities for where growth will be focussed, noting that housing development is expected to come forward through strategic sites where infrastructure can be delivered alongside growth. In Newbury this will largely, but not solely, be supported via existing infrastructure. Conversely, Thatcham will be a focus for regeneration, involving new homes as well as an increased provision of community services and facilities. This will be delivered through planned strategic growth to the north-east of Thatcham.

8.3. Concentrating development on these sites and in these locations ensures that places are connected, existing services can support growth, that new development can reciprocally support growth in these existing services and infrastructure, and that new social, economic, and transport infrastructure can be delivered as part of well-considered masterplans factoring in viability with contributions from those bringing development forward to the funding of essential infrastructure.

8.4. Crucially, focussing growth on identified strategic locations can deliver carbon savings and environmental benefits.

8.5. West Berkshire District Council commissioned recent masterplanning work to assess and analyse the town centre and recommend principles for future development. The masterplan established a Vision for Newbury Town Centre to remain a focus for social interaction, economic growth, civic engagement and community activity. Ten key principles underpin the masterplan which strive to create a more 'walkable', 'greener' and 'entrepreneurial' town centre. The spatial strategy of the masterplan and its key principles, complements and supports the Visioning work.

8.6. Founded on both our analysis and feedback from consultation, we have developed a Vision for Growth at Newbury and Thatcham centred on developing the enterprise base, improving transport connectivity, providing housing for the future workforce and capitalising on quality of place.

Vision Objectives:

8.7. Looking ahead to 2050, and taking account of the likely timescales for delivery, the Vision for Newbury and Thatcham seeks to deliver equitable growth and sustainable service provision by:

- Improving access to housing;
- Responding to climate change and biodiversity loss
- Enhancing access to the abundance of environmental assets
- Embedding economic resilience in a strong local economy





- Addressing social and health inequalities
- Delivering social and transport infrastructure

8.8. This concept plan illustrates the principal ideas to be retained as part of a vision going forward to 2050, highlighting the integration of a blue and green grid at the regional scale. The pattern shows a strong east west blue corridor and a strong north south green corridor. Alongside this, the plan notes the main transport infrastructure corridor which also follows an east west link. The three railway stations on this corridor have the potential to further the sustainability of both Newbury and Thatcham.

8.9. Vision Principles:

Growth that creates sustainable places and:

1. Enables wellness and nurtures wildness; via equitable access and strong visual connections to surrounding environmental assets, such as North Wessex Downs AONB and River Kennet.
2. Unlocks the potential of place; by significantly boosting footfall and creating attractive and exciting destinations
3. Comprises ecological solutions and ecological experiences; integrating green and blue infrastructure and sensory experiences, such as interactive rainfall gardens and visible wildlife habitats, into the urban realm.
4. Delivers infrastructure which advocates walking and wheeling as priority forms of movement –embedding 15 minute neighbourhood principles so that car ownership is no longer viewed as necessary





5. Creates town centres which are revived, resilient and an extension of everyday local life – With Newbury and Thatcham Town Centres championing quality mixed-use developments that everyone can enjoy and full of life, not just on ‘big event’ days.
6. Ensures West Berkshire, Newbury and Thatcham remain attractive places to put down roots, invest in and experience again and again – With all areas feeling safe, secure and comfortable to explore and spend time in
7. Focusses on design quality with climate quality standards at the core – futureproofing development by integrating energy efficient technologies, nature-based solutions, such as SUDs and biodiversity uplift.
8. Adapt to cater for an ageing population in terms of accessibility and economic opportunities – with equitable access to leisure and recreational facilities, and through the provision of lifetime homes, and Third Age accommodation in both Town Centres and strategic developments.

9. Provides equal opportunities for everyone to thrive including the ageing population – With social space crafted into the public realm that encourages individuals of all ages and backgrounds to cross paths, converse and socialise, such as a new multi-function market square or ‘grow your own’ community allotments.
10. Builds on a high skilled, productive, and dynamic local economy to spread and promote innovation – Providing dedicated space for high growth industries, start-ups and SME’s that encourage cross-pollination of business ideas through social interaction.
11. Connects the power of businesses with the aspirations of the community (e.g. Vodafone 2030 SBTi/Micro Focus ESG solutions) – Creating flexible and affordable workspace that can be used by local community groups and school groups for a more dynamic business environment and to foster incubator ideas.
12. Leverages high levels of digital connectivity to create smart, flexible and responsive places – using smart technology embedded into the public realm and street furniture to deliver data-driven decisions and informed business choices.





Key

- Town Centres: renewal, regeneration, revitalisation of the major centres making them welcoming with a rich mix of social, cultural and commercial attractors.

- Water Courses: Enhanced landscape environment of river and canal with a mix of environments from town centre wharfage to wetland and meadows.

- Connect the Landscape: linking the commons in the south to Curridge and Cold Ash in the north; and prevent coalescence of Newbury and Thatcham.

- Rail Infrastructure: increase the number of quality pedestrian and cycle links to stations, and ensure stations are well connected to the bus network.

- Principle Road Infrastructure: retain road network within a landscape setting, with no major increases in highway projects. Landscape with include high quality pedestrian crossings where severance is impacting on local communities.

- Woodland: preserve and extend existing woodland and ensure ecology connections in a mosaic of biodiverse corridors.

- Green Spaces: preserve a network of farming, public open spaces and natural landscape. Ensure that new and existing parks perform a civic and leisure function.

- Race Course: retain the race course as a major attractor for sport and economic vitality. Ensure the course is well integrated into the fabric and landscape of the town and Greenham.

- Potential Areas of Search for Future Growth: areas to comply with The National Design Guide or current best practice of the time. Considerations to include, but not limited to:-
 - Areas on least landscape constraints
 - Areas suitable for grafting on to existing settlements for the sharing and extending of social facilities
 - Allowing walking, cycling and buses to be the first choice for moving around
 - Allowing leisure connections through extended public rights of way to the wider countryside

Fig 11: Emerging Vision for Growth at Newbury and Thatcham

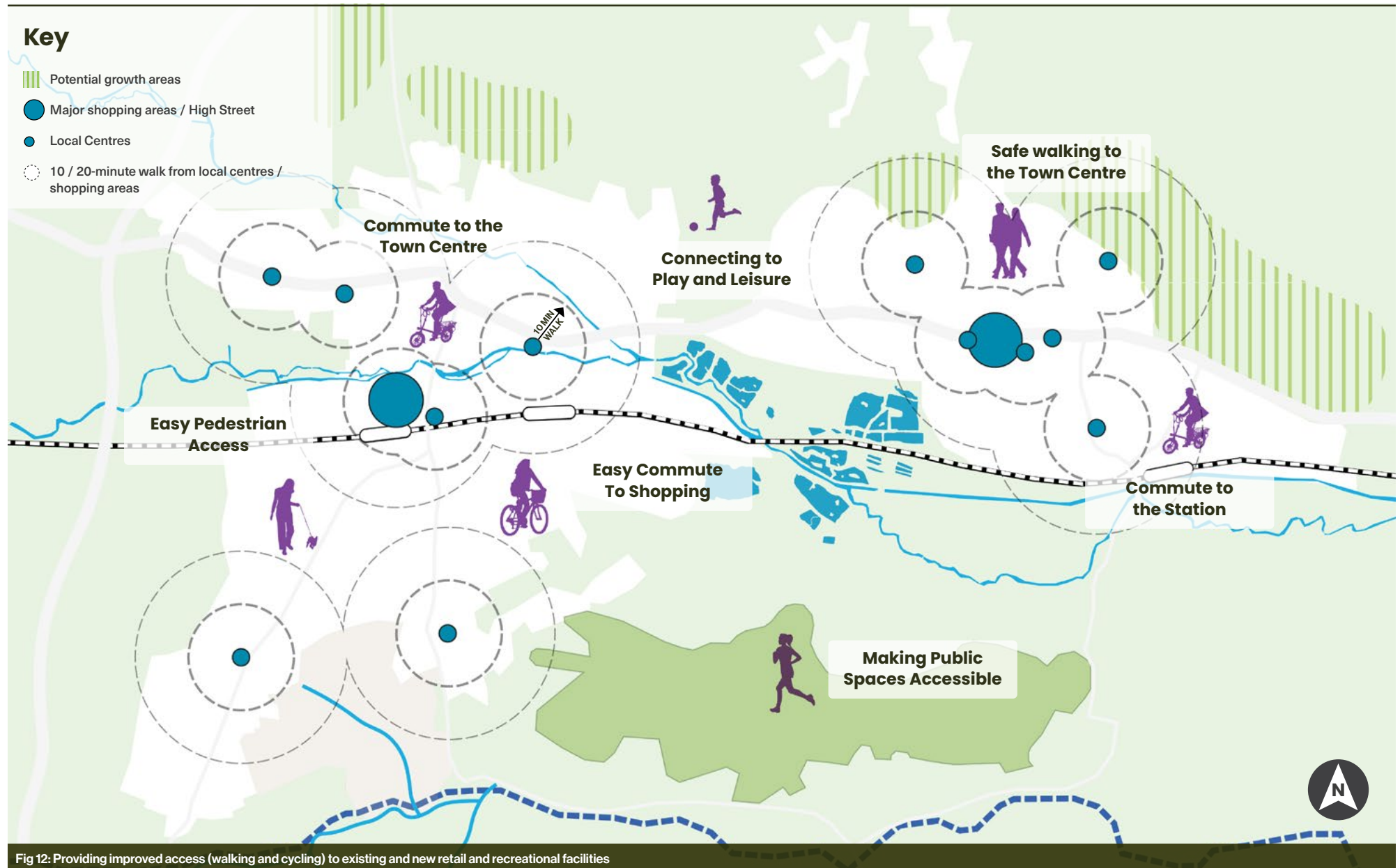


Fig 12: Providing improved access (walking and cycling) to existing and new retail and recreational facilities



Delivering Infrastructure with Growth

What constitutes infrastructure:

9.1. According to West Berkshire's draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2021), the term 'infrastructure' is broadly used for planning purposes to define "all of the requirements that are needed to make places function efficiently and effectively and in a way that creates sustainable communities". It is commonly split into three main categories:

- **Physical** – transport networks, housing, energy supplies, water, drainage, ICT networks and public realm.
- **Social, Health and Community** – community facilities and groups, small scale funding to assist skills development and volunteering projects.
- **Green** – open spaces, gardens, woodlands, waterways, street trees and public rights of way.

9.2. The definition of 'infrastructure' for the purposes of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (Section 216(2) of the Planning Act 2008, and regulation 59, as amended by the 2012 and 2013 Regulations) includes

roads and other transport facilities, flood defences, schools, medical, sporting and recreational facilities as well as open spaces.

9.3. For the sake of the Vision, infrastructure will be constituted in accordance with the CIL definition, to include schools, medical and recreational facilities, seeking to pair high-quality good growth with the necessary infrastructural items provided alongside in a timely manner.

Infrastructural Requirements, Phasing and Delivery

9.4. A component of this Vision is to consider issues related to the timing and pace of development and the funding and delivery of infrastructure. The evidence clearly indicates that in Thatcham in particular there is an 'infrastructure deficit.' Strategic growth can help to address this, and in doing so can improve the sustainability of the settlement and access to services and facilities; and reduce the need to travel.

Timing and Pace of Development

9.5. The report has sought to first consider issues associated with the timing and pace of strategic developments, examining questions relating to the lead-in time to development and the pace of delivery – the build-out rates – for major strategic sites.

9.6. It is notable that the majority of development within the two major strategic sites in Newbury have planning permission. The West Berkshire Core Strategy identified two major strategic sites – Newbury Racecourse and Sandford Park.





9.7. Residential development at Newbury Racecourse has been under construction for almost a decade, with 988 of the 1500 homes completed by March 2021, and the final phase – the eastern parcel – under construction. This final phase of this David Wilson Homes development is expected to be completed by 2026.

9.8. At Sandleford Park (East), outline planning permission for up to 1,080 dwellings and 80 extra care units was granted by the Secretary of State in May 2022 (20/01238/OUTMAJ). There is a housebuilder – Bloor Homes – in place who intend to move forwards to delivery. Iceni consider that it would be reasonable to expect on this basis first completions to take place in Spring 2025.

Estimated Lead-In Time for Sandleford Park

Stage	Timings
Outline Planning Permission	May-22
Submission of Discharge Conditions	Jan-23
Discharge of Pre-Commencement Conditions & Technical Approvals	Feb-23 - Jan-24
Site Works and Infrastructure	Feb-24 -Apr-24
First Reserve Matters Submission	Apr-24
First Reserve Matters Approvals	Aug-24
Residential Development Commences	Sep-24
First Completions	Mar-25

9.9. Bloor Homes expect to develop their part of the site out at a rate of 100 units a year, which includes 40% affordable housing. This appears reasonable; in particular given the potential for different sales outlets given the site's scale and layout.

9.10. A planning application for the remaining component of the Sandleford Park allocation – Sandleford Park West - was submitted by Donnington New Homes in April 2018 (18/00828/OUTMAJ). Donnington New Homes are currently considering how to progress and take forward the proposal for the redevelopment of their site for 500 new homes.

9.11. It is reasonable to expect that housing at the Sandleford Park site will therefore be delivered over the coming years with a reasonable expectation that this is completed by around 2036. It will be completed well within the plan period.

9.12. North Newbury is a development of up to 401 dwellings which was granted at appeal in March 2017 (14/02480/OUTMAJ). The eastern part of the site, to the east of the A339, is being delivered by Taylor Wimpey. Reserved matters approval for this scheme of 179 dwellings was approved by the Council in December 2020 (20/00047/RESMAJ). Land to the west of the A339 is being brought forward by David Wilson Homes; with a separate Reserved matters application for this land (18/03061/RESMAJ) for 222 dwellings approved in October 2020. 40% affordable housing is provided. Construction of homes is underway on both sites (termed Donnington Heights and Shaw Valley respectively) at the current time, and is expected that the developments will be largely complete by 2026, well within the plan period.

9.13. The number of dwellings to be delivered at North East Thatcham has yet to be agreed, either through the Local Plan Review process or through the submission of a planning application. The Vision is therefore





based on the Reg18 figure of 2,500, however, the precise quantum of development to be proposed as part of the Reg19 consultation has yet to be agreed. Development at North East Thatcham is being promoted by a consortium, with four main landowners/ promoters, being A2 Dominion, Donnington New Homes, Ptarmigan Land (a strategic promoter) and Catesby Estates (again a promoter). There is the potential for access to each landownership from the A4 Bath Road or from Floral Way; and there is potential for the development to sustain 4 separate sales outlets with potential for different housebuilders delivering on each concurrently.

Estimated Lead-In Time for NE Thatcham

Stage	Timings
Submission of Outline Planning Application	Spring 2023
Outline Planning Permission	Winter 2024
Discharge of Pre-Commencement Conditions & Technical Approvals	Spring 2025
Site Works and Infrastructure	2025/6
First RM Submission	Autumn 2025
First RM Approvals	Winter 2025
Residential Development Commences	Spring 2026
First Completions	Winter 2026

9.14. Based on four outlets, it is envisaged that delivery of at least 160 homes could take place. Icenl consider that a higher delivery rate could be achieved depending on the differentiation of product, and extent to which other markets such as specialist older persons housing and build-to-rent are provided for in the development. Taking a cautious assumption of delivery of 160 units per annum, c. 1800 homes might be delivered over the plan period to 2039 with c. 700 thereafter and the development could be expected to be completed by 2043/44.

9.15. On this basis, development north-east of Thatcham can be expected to be completed within 23-24 years from the start of the plan period. Delivery is not expected to extend 30 years or longer from the start of the plan period.

Infrastructure Delivery

9.16. It is important that infrastructure is delivered alongside new development. The Council's emerging draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) defines infrastructure as including physical infrastructure, which includes transport and utilities infrastructure; social, health and community infrastructure, related to education, health, community public services and sporting infrastructure; and green infrastructure, including open spaces, parks and green corridors.

9.17. In respect of this Vision document and the development of the Council's Local Plan, we have focused particularly on the infrastructure which is required to support the proposed allocations recognising that for schemes such as North Newbury, Newbury Racecourse and the Sandleford Park allocation, infrastructure requirements have been identified and secured through the planning application and approval process; with contributions also expected through the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).





9.18. The North Newbury development is delivering affordable housing, a local centre, is providing a primary school (1FE), an underpass connecting the two parts of the site, and supporting junction improvements (including to the Robin Hood junction to the south of the site) and funding for bus services. It will also deliver open space and play space provision.

9.19. The now consented scheme for 1000 homes at Sandleford Park will deliver a 2FE secondary school, contributions to secondary school provision, land for a community facility, a new local centre, 86 ha of public open space, together with play areas within the development, the delivery of an A339 Access Link and £3.7m funding for other off-site highways works on surrounding roads/ junctions, transfer of land to Newbury Rugby Club and contributions to the delivery of a new bus service linking the site to the Town Centre. The development will also deliver 40% affordable housing. As with North Newbury, the Section 106 Agreement sets out triggers for delivery/payment linked to the build-out of the scheme.

9.20. A notable feature of the proposed development at North East Thatcham, given the scale of development, is that there are not substantial 'big ticket' infrastructure which is required to support it. Details on infrastructure requirements are considered in the Thatcham Strategic Growth Study (Stage 3) and in the Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan, and subject to ongoing work as part of the plan-making process and masterplan development.

9.21. Infrastructure to support development of North East Thatcham, principally as identified within the Strategic Growth Study, includes:

- **On Site Transport Infrastructure** – primary road link, secondary internal road, and investment in cycle/ pedestrian accessibility;

- **Highways Improvements** – delivery of accesses/ roundabouts on Floral Way and capacity improvements; together with improvements to the A4 and junctions along it;
- **Public Transport** – funding contributions for the delivery of new bus routes, linking the development to the Town Centre and Station; and improvements to facilities at the Station;
- **Off-Site Pedestrian & Cycle Improvements** – improvements to crossing facilities/ arrangements along Floral Way and the A4, delivery of new cycle routes and provision of cycle parking facilities including in the Town Centre and at Thatcham Station.
- **Education** – new primary school provision (providing 5 forms of entry) and anticipated to be delivered as two schools (1 3FE and 1 2FE). In addition a new 8FE secondary school is needed, with funding contributions from NE Thatcham^m.
- **Health** – provision of new primary healthcare facilities within the new development. We understand a new surgery is needed with potential to accommodate 4 GPs.
- **Drainage** – provision of attenuation basins within the development to mitigate the potential for surface water flooding.
- **Utilities** – undergrounding of 11kv and 33kv overhead power lines together with provision of utilities connections to the site.
- **Sport and Community Infrastructure** – provision of sport, open space and recreational





infrastructure, and potential contributions to enhanced pitch provision at Henwick Worthy, and on-site community buildings/facilities.

9.22. On-site transport and utilities infrastructure can be expected to be funded and delivered by the site developers. Off-site highways works can be secured through a Section 106 agreement, or a Section 278 agreement in the case of off-site highways works, and/or through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or in future any alternative infrastructure levy. The delivery of social and community infrastructure, and/or contributions to its delivery, can equally be secured through Section 106 or an infrastructure levy.

9.23. In addition to those identified above, and other elements of this Vision document, consideration should also be given to seeking contributions to deliver of a new community/library building in Thatcham and improvements to Northcroft Lido subject to viability.

9.24. The Council's whole plan viability evidence considers the viability of development and its potential to support the infrastructure or contributions envisaged and shows that the delivery of North East Thatcham is economically viable.

9.25. Looking ahead to 2050, the key strategic infrastructural requirements are dominated by those items which support sustainable and active travel options, implementing blue and green infrastructure and help Newbury and Thatcham achieve a net zero carbon future.

9.26. As the Vision has identified, there are issues of elevated phosphorous nutrients within the River Lambourn and further work is being undertaken to assess this and devise a detailed mitigation plan

and measures for ongoing management. Additional requirements for mitigation and for development to demonstrate nutrient neutrality may in due course arise from this.

9.27. There is a clear need to ensure new development is coordinated with the necessary critical infrastructure, delivered at an appropriate stage, and linked to development phasing. It will be important for the Council to clearly set out its expectations on the timing of delivery of infrastructure relative to the pace of development. For North East Thatcham, this needs to be informed by the masterplan and consideration of phasing of development across the different land holdings. Ultimately this can be secured through the Section 106 Agreement which is negotiated alongside an outline application for the scheme.

Funding

9.28. Funding of infrastructure will be provided by a range of key partners and extracted via multiple financial levers and delivery models. However, Section 106 Agreements are most likely to continue to be the key mechanism to obtain infrastructure contributions – particularly for strategic development schemes.

9.29. The Government's Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (2022) notes the potential role of Infrastructure Levy's (IL's) in securing necessary investment associated with growth, however, this approach excludes Strategic Sites and so is less relevant for development in North East Thatcham where Section 106 Agreements alongside development will still play a key role in the delivery of infrastructure alongside development.



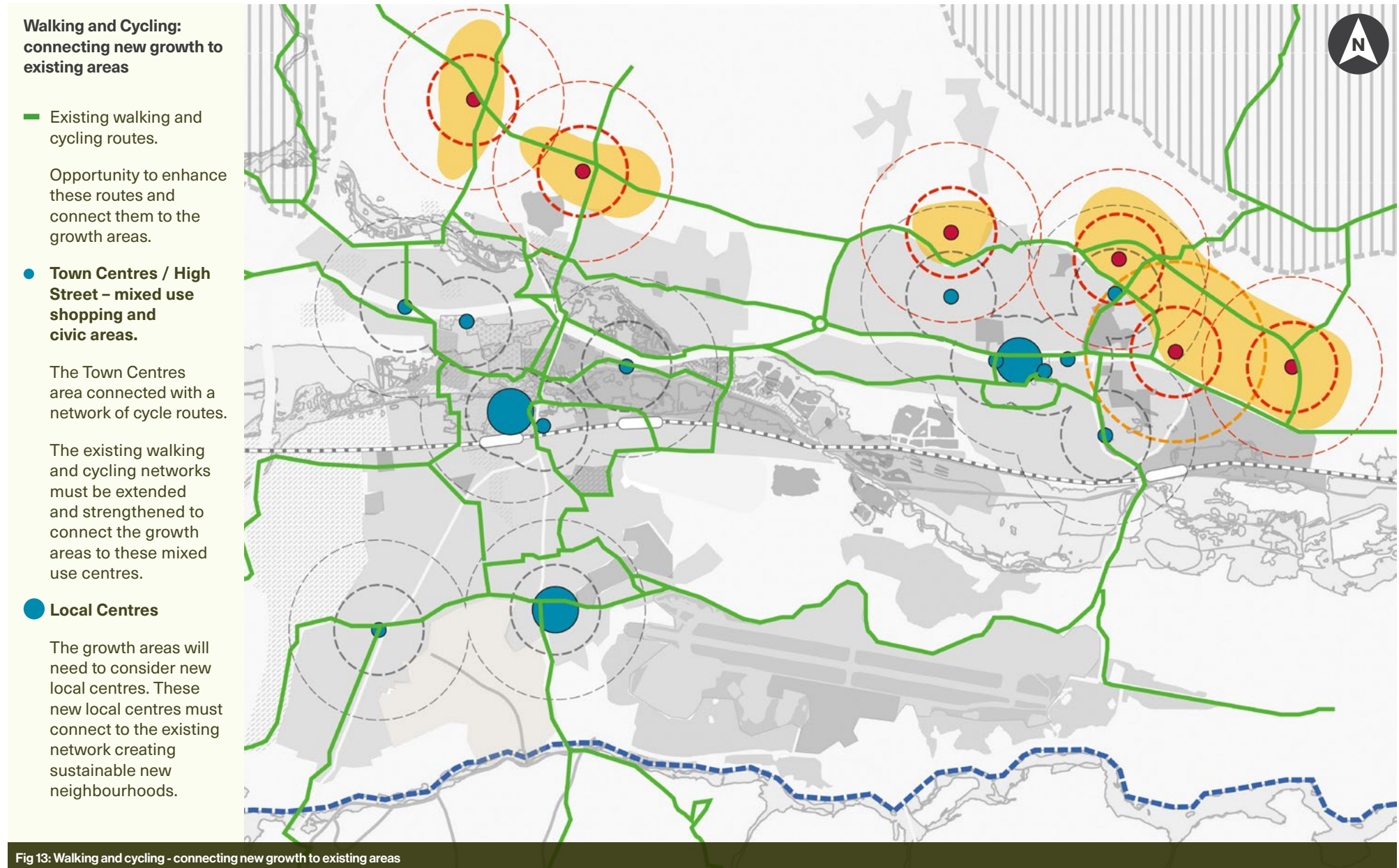


Fig 13: Walking and cycling - connecting new growth to existing areas

**Public Transport:
Integrating into existing
bus services**

The plan illustrates the high level of connectivity of the new growth areas with existing walking and cycling routes, represented in the 5 and 10 minute walking distance radii.

Enhanced bus network.

A well connected bus network that links the Town Centre, the train station station and the wider areas.

Opportunity to enhance these routes and connect them to the growth areas.

**Train Stations:
integrated with the bus network.**

Newbury and Thatcham are well serviced by 3 trains stations. All new development must provide sustainable transport connections to the Train Stations.

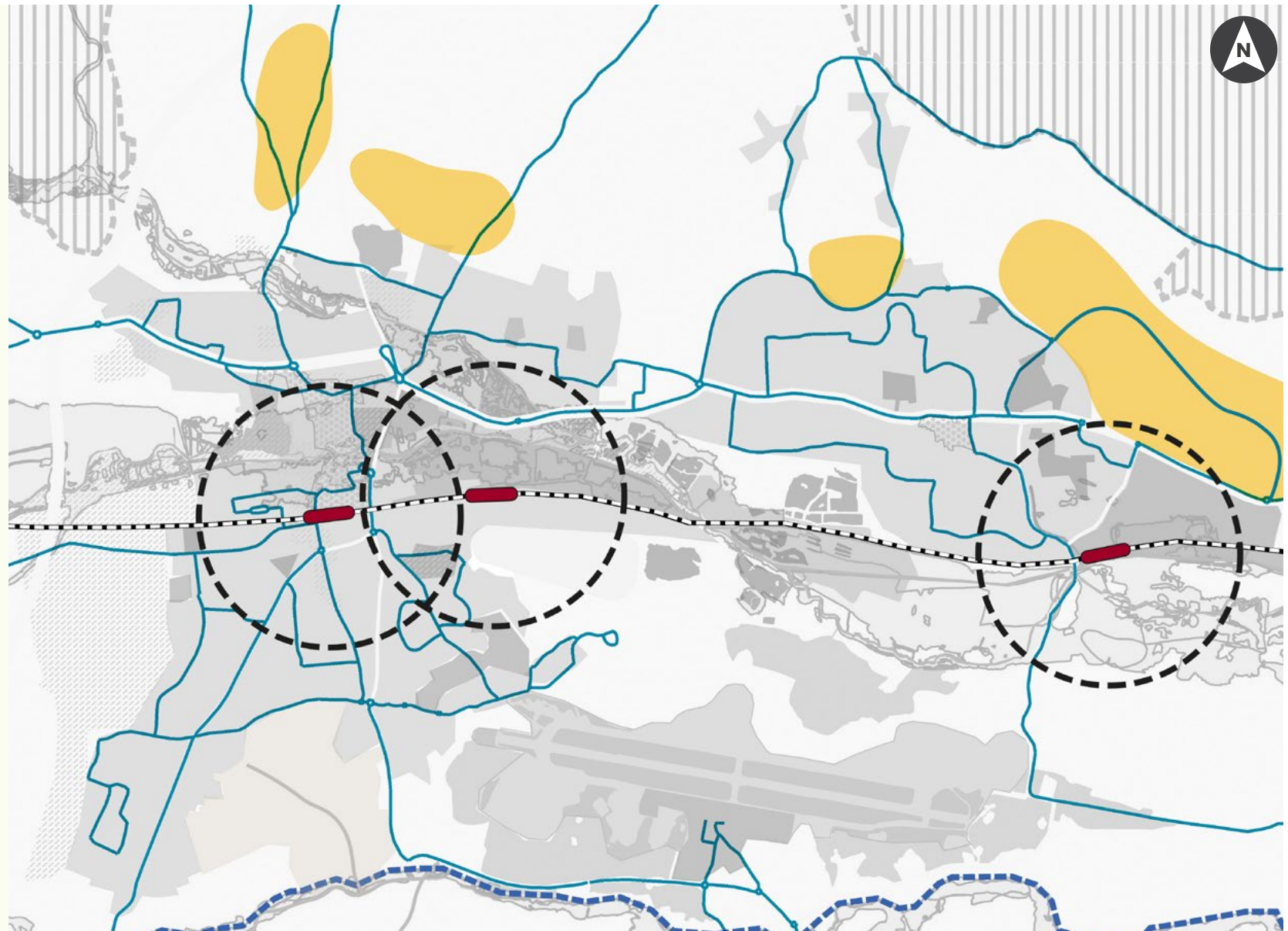


Fig 13: Public Transport: Integrating into existing bus services



9.30. The Council's Whole Plan Viability Assessment provides the necessary evidence that appropriate developer contributions to secure the delivery of infrastructure can be viable secured from the strategic site at North East Thatcham.

Infrastructure Requirement Summary – Delivery Partners and Phasing

9.31. The table below draws together key information on the funding and delivery of infrastructure, drawing information from the Thatcham Strategic Growth Study and the Council's emerging Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The IDP is the key source of information and is intended to be a live document, responding to the requirements of the PPG for an Infrastructure Funding Statement. This will be updated over time as new information emerges, particularly around development costs.

9.32. The table below outlines broad categories of infrastructure; but for the purposes of the Local Plan Review, delivery of infrastructure to support development at North East Thatcham is of the greatest significance given that other strategic sites have planning consent.


Item	Location	Delivery Partner	Delivery Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Funding Stream
Transport and Travel					
Walking and Cycling Infrastructure (In line with LCWIP)	Newbury & Thatcham	West Berkshire District Council	Phasing as per LCWIP target of 2040	£20 million (District wide) // £10 million for Vision?	Section 106 Agreement (S106), CIL and Council capital funding
Wayfinding Infrastructure/ Signage	District wide	West Berkshire District Council	Phasing as per LCWIP target of 2040	£500,000	CIL, S106, Council capital funding and external grant funding
Bike Hire facility	Thatcham	Developer			S106
Highway Improvements	Newbury & Thatcham	Developer & WBDC	Dependent on granting of planning permission	£22 million	Planning Conditions
Enhanced bus Service	Thatcham	Developer & WBDC	Phasing to accord with development delivery	£1 million? Sandleford listed as £2.2m	S106, Government grants
Car Club	Sandleford Park	Developer	To be operational in line with development phasing	£500,000	S106
Electric Vehicle Charging Points	North Newbury	Developer & WBDC	Phasing to accord with development delivery	£1 million? Sandleford listed as £2.2m	S106, Government grants
Railway Bridge	Unknown			Unknown	

Item	Location	Delivery Partner	Delivery Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Funding Stream
Sandleford Park Access and Link Road	Newbury	Developer contributions	To be delivered alongside development	£4 million	S106 contributions
NE Thatcham Primary Link Road	Thatcham	Developer-delivery	TBC		Development cost
Thatcham Station accessibility improvements	Thatcham	Developer, WBDC, National Rail, Great Western Rail	To be delivered alongside development	£3 million	S106, External funding bids
Community and Social Facilities					
Primary Schools (x2)	Thatcham	WBDC (Education) Developer	To be in place to meet the demand created by the development	£42 million	S106, CIL, WBDC capital funds
Primary Schools – Sandleford Park	Sandleford Park	WBDC (Education) Developer	To be in place to meet the demand created by the development		S106, CIL, WBDC capital funds
Secondary School	Thatcham	WBDC (Education) Developer	To be in place to meet the demand created by the development	£48 million	S106, CIL, WBDC capital funds
Healthcare facility – Doctor Surgery (4xGP)	Thatcham	Developer			S106, CIL
Adult Nursing Home	Newbury/ Thatcham	Developer		£6 million	S106, CIL
Library	Newbury	Developer			S106, CIL


Item	Location	Delivery Partner	Delivery Timeframe	Estimated Cost	Funding Stream
Community facility	Thatcham	Developer	Up to 2037	£1.2 million	S106, CIL
Country Park	Thatcham	Developer			S106
Neighbourhood Centre	Thatcham	Developer			S106
Sports facilities	Thatcham	Developer			S106
Energy, Utilities and Communications					
Renewable energy and zero carbon projects for homes and non-residential premises	Newbury & Thatcham	Developer			S106, Government grants
Super-fast Broadband	Newbury & Thatcham	Developer, Energy Providers	To be delivered as part of development	Up to 2037	S106, Government grants
Wastewater Treatment Facility – Nutrient Neutrality	Newbury & Thatcham	Developer, Council and Thames Water			Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
Environment					
Nature Based Solutions (SUDs, ecosystem restoration and carbon capture)	Site-by-site basis				



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