

Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document

June 2013



Table of Contents

Non-Technical Summary.....	1
Background.....	6
Purpose of the Strategic Environmental Assessment	6
Objectives of the Plan or Programme	6
Links to other international, national, regional, local plans and programmes, and relevant environmental objectives including how these have been taken into account	7
Description of baseline characteristics.....	14
Environmental Issues and Problems	14
SEA Objectives, targets and indicators.....	16
Developing the SEA Objectives.....	16
Testing the plan or programme against the SEA Objectives	18
Plan/ Programme Issues and Alternatives.....	22
Developing the Main Strategic Alternatives (Task B2)	22
Comparison of the alternatives	22
Prediction of effects (Task B3).....	31
Evaluation of Effects (Task B4)	33
Proposed Mitigation Measures (Task B5).....	39
Proposed Measures to Monitor the Significant Effects of Implementing the SPD	52
Consultation.....	54
Task D1: Consulting on the Draft Plan or programme and Environmental Report.....	54
Appendices:	57
Appendix 1: Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening: Correspondence with Natural England.....	58
Appendix 2: Combined SEA Screening and Scoping Report	69
Appendix 3: Complete List of Sustainability Objectives	87

Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

The purpose of Strategic Environmental Assessment is to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental considerations into the plan-making process.

This Non-technical summary provides a brief summary of the process and how the Strategic Environmental Assessment has impacted upon it. It also provides information about how to comment on the SEA Report.

Contents and main objectives of the plan/ programme

The Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will set the framework for the development of the Oxpens site. The SPD will sit underneath the “parent” document – the West End Area Action Plan (AAP). As such it reflects, and is based on the policies within the West End AAP.

The Oxpens SPD provides an indicative masterplan that illustrates how development could look on the site, as well as a regulating plan to guide development and a series of design principles on which the masterplan has been based.

The design principles are set out below:

DP1	A High Quality Development
DP2	Maximising the value and potential of the site
DP3	A Sustainable Scheme
DP4	Addressing Oxpens Road
DP5	Improving Accessibility in the West End
DP6	High Quality Public Realm: Streets and Spaces
DP7	Enhancing Oxpens Meadow
DP8	Relationship to the Rive
DP9	Appropriate Land Use Mix
DP10	Generating Activity
DP11	Coherent Character
DP12	Phasing

Table NTS1: Design Principles on which the SPD masterplan is based

Current State of the Environment and Environmental Characteristics of the area significantly affected

The site is in a prominent position within and bounds the edge of the West End area. It has good access to the rail network and is in walking distance of the city centre. The site has a variety of owners including the City Council and British Rail Board (Residuary) (BRBR). At present the main features of the site include a flood storage area, which is currently cleared, and a number of buildings in a variety of uses, and a car park.

The main existing environmental issue relevant to the development of the Oxpens SPD is flooding and flood risk. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken to support the AAP (Atkins, June 2007). The

SFRA provides detailed flood zone maps of the area. The SFRA flood zone map shows the Oxpens site to contain an area of flood storage/ functional floodplain which lies in Flood Zone 3b, as well as some parts of the site which lie in flood zones 3a and flood zone 2. As part of this work, an initial investigation was undertaken to see whether it would be possible to move the current flood storage area on the Oxpens site in order to create a more regularly shaped or larger area suitable for development.

The AAP states that *“potential ways of compensating for this flood storage were identified, and a feasibility study will be carried out to identify the best option as part of the master planning of the site”*. Other existing problems include, but are not limited to, the existing traffic and transport issues in the area; poor quality townscape character; and limited biodiversity opportunities.

Alternatives

Two iterations of alternatives were looked at when developing the SPD. The first iteration considered whether or not an SPD should be undertaken, or whether another way to take the site forward may be more appropriate. The SEA found that an SPD was the most appropriate mechanism for taking the site forward at this stage in the process, particularly given the constraints around flooding.

The second set of alternatives looked at broad alternatives for how the site could be taken forward with respect of potential flooding issues on site. Two options were considered. One was informed by the flood mitigation scheme and the other was informed by the Environment Agency flood zones. There were further variants which varied the balance of housing and employment on site. These variants were all based on one of the two flooding-based options.

Key findings of the SEA Process

This summary provides a brief summary on each of the topic areas that was screened into the assessment and provides a short overview of the type of mitigation measures considered.

Flooding

As a result of this topic being included in the SEA, further technical work which was commissioned to examine how the site could be taken forward in relation to the flooding constraints. Two broad options were examined in this work. One option was based on the Environment Agency flood maps. The other involved remodelling of the site to increase the developable land area.

The technical work undertaken to support the SPD found that there are sufficient uncertainties associated with the current representation of flooding at Oxpens to cast doubt on the EA's Flood Map. This means that the impact of development upon water levels and flood risk is not fully understood. As such the likelihood or geographical scale of the effect, its significance, permanence or reversibility could not be predicted or evaluated.

The technical work concluded that the existing understanding of flood water and flood risk in the vicinity of the Oxpens site is rather rudimentary and on that basis, to either rule out the sketch Masterplan or definitely say that it is technically feasible would be wholly unsubstantiated.

The technical work suggested promoting the SPD on the understanding that there is a need for further and more detailed hydraulic modelling and understanding of flood risk to be completed as the Oxpens site is taken forward. The text of the SPD was amended to reflect this uncertainty.

Biodiversity

At the early consultation stage, the Environment Agency noted that

“The SEA findings should inform the master plan and design principles by identifying all features of ecological interest, within the site and incorporating wildlife, mitigation and enhancement into the development, in accordance with the LA duties under the NERC Act 2006.”

As a result of these comments, which supported the inclusion of biodiversity being scoped into the assessment process, additions to various sections of the SPD were made including references to habitat enhancement and ecological sustainability.

Cultural Heritage

A wide range of issues surrounding the historic environment were included in the SPD as a result of the SEA. Comments made by the Heritage Officer at the City Council led to additional work being carried out and also a number of changes in the SPD. Mitigation was mainly in the form of textual additions and included the following parts of the historic environment:

- Impact on the setting of both the city’s conservation areas – the Central (City and University) Conservation Area and the Osney Town Conservation Area;
- Relationship with the former historic suburb of St. Ebbe’s;
- Visual impact of the development on the city’s sensitive historic skyline including the City Council’s protected view cones;
- Below-ground heritage;

Transport

Further Transport modelling work was carried out as a result of the SEA process. This work looked at a number of options for a junction accessing the development from Oxpens Road, as well as ensuring that the roads within the development were sufficient to carry the type of vehicles expected. Three main options were considered for junctions accessing the development. These were a roundabout, signal controlled junction and a priority junction. As a result of the technical work and additional discussions with the County, a preferred option was taken forward. The SEA suggested that the SPD should be sufficiently purposeful in its textual amendments so that the mitigation measures suggested to make the scheme work would be carried forward.

Climate Change

A number of additions have been made to the SPD as a result of the SEA process. The original draft SPD made no reference to the potential for an energy centre. The mitigation suggested as part of the SEA has been incorporated into the document and now references to the potential for an energy centre and renewable

energy are present. In terms of mitigating the impacts of climate change, this a significant step forward. The SEA suggests further investigation of this topic as the development of the site moves forward as this could be a significant positive benefit for both the Oxpens site and the West End as a whole.

Mitigation

A number of changes to the document itself were made particularly in the case of the historic environment/cultural heritage. Additions were also made in relation to flood risk and flooding, biodiversity and climate change and sustainability.

Monitoring

Monitoring indicators have been provided for each of the constituent parts of the environment that the SPD looks at. Indicators include the following:

SEA Objective	Indicator
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	Permissions granted in Flood Zone 3b Applications in areas of flood risk (or over 1ha) submitted with an FRA Number of approvals for development incorporating sustainable drainage systems
SEA Objective 9: Biodiversity	Improvements made to green spaces and waterside environments
SEA Objective 10: Heritage	Number of schemes that have considered heritage in their design and access statement
SEA Objective 11: Transport	New links created Improvements made to the street environment Road congestion and Average Daily Motor Vehicle Flows
SEA Objective 13:	Number of schemes approved that meet the requirements of the NRIA SPD (and/or Sites and Housing Plan where relevant)

Summary

In summary the SEA process has added considerable value to the Oxpens SPD. Environmental effects have been considered and key issues of flooding and flood risk are being scrutinised in detail. Transport modelling has been undertaken; the historic and natural environment has been given due consideration; and how the SPD will approach climate change particularly in terms of energy efficiency and renewable energy has been included in the SPD.

How to comment on the report

The consultation period for the SEA report corresponds with that of the Oxpens SPD. If you wish to make comments on the SEA Report, please make comments in writing. Either, email your comments to planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk

Or write to:

Planning Policy,
City Development,
3rd Floor, St. Aldate's Chamber,
109-113 St. Aldate's,
Oxford,
OX1 1DS

Background

Purpose of the Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.1 The purpose of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is “to provide for a high level of protection for the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development” Article 1 of the SEA Directive¹.

1.2 The purpose of this Strategic Environmental Assessment is to assess the likely significant effects that the Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will have on the environment. It is worth noting that that the effects assessed as part of this SEA are considered in the context of previous work that was carried out in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the West End Area Action Plan (WEAAP).

Objectives of the Plan or Programme

1.3 The Oxpens SPD has a set of design principles which have been developed along the same lines as plan objectives. As such it is prudent to use them as such.

1.4 There are twelve Design Principles set out in the Oxpens SPD. These are listed below:

DP1	A High Quality Development
DP2	Maximising the value and potential of the site
DP3	A Sustainable Scheme
DP4	Addressing Oxpens Road
DP5	Improving Accessibility in the West End
DP6	High Quality Public Realm: Streets and Spaces
DP7	Enhancing Oxpens Meadow
DP8	Relationship to the Rive
DP9	Appropriate Land Use Mix
DP10	Generating Activity
DP11	Coherent Character
DP12	Phasing

Table 1: Design Principles (Plan Objectives) for the Oxpens SPD

1.5 The Design Principles for the Oxpens SPD reflect and expand upon the design principles set out in the West End AAP.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (June 2001) implemented in to UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 SI No. 1633

Links to other international, national, regional, local plans and programmes, and relevant environmental objectives including how these have been taken into account

National Planning Policy

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the National Planning Policy for England. When identifying other plans and programmes it is clearly relevant. The NPPF provides policy on when and how to use SPDs at para.153:

Supplementary planning documents should be used where they can help applicants make successful applications or aid infrastructure delivery, and should not be used to add unnecessarily to the financial burdens of development.

- 2.2 The glossary of the NPPF provides a definition of Supplementary Planning Documents:

Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites, or on particular issues such as design. Supplementary planning documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.3 Oxford's planning policies are found in a suite of planning documents which together form Oxford's Local Plan or as it is also known, the Local Development Framework.
- 2.4 The Core Strategy provides the strategic planning framework for Oxford. It allocates large strategic sites for housing and employment uses and includes a suite of core policies on housing; employment; responding to climate change; transport; townscape and the historic environment; and the natural environment.
- 2.5 The Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016 contains "saved policies" on a range of different topics including urban design, the historic environment, shopping frontages, and many more. Some of the policies in the Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016 have been updated through a variety of Development Plan Documents including the Core Strategy and the Sites and Housing Plan.
- 2.6 The Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016 made commitments to produce a number of SPDs. These included SPDs on Planning Obligations, Parking Standards, Affordable Housing and the Natural Resource Impact Analysis (NRIA) SPD. The Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD are currently being revised to take account of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It is also worth noting that the NRIA SPD includes a long-standing requirement for large developments (10 or more residential units or 2,000m² non-residential floorspace) to provide 20% of their energy requirements from renewable or low-carbon technologies. The Oxpens SPD does not appear to cross-reference the NRIA SPD in the policy review section.

- 2.7 The West End is a key location and represents the south-west quarter of the city centre. As well as being within the city centre, the West End is also the gateway to Oxford for those who arrive by train or reach the city from the west. The West End forms a significant area of land and includes key city landmarks and facilities such as the railway station; the Westgate Shopping Centre; the Castle site; Gloucester Green; and Oxford Town Hall. However this area does not currently match Oxford's worldwide reputation or live up to its potential as a city centre area of the highest quality (Oxford Core Strategy, 2011)
- 2.8 One of the strategic sites allocated in the Core Strategy is the West End. The Core Strategy Policy on the West End, Policy CS5 states:

Policy CS5

West End

The West End is allocated as a strategic location which will deliver a mixed-use development. Planning permission will be granted for development that includes:

- Significant housing provision (approximately 700-800 dwellings)
- Retail floorspace (at least 37,000m²)
- Office space (15,000m² for the private sector and 20,000m² for the public sector)
- New leisure and cultural attractions;
- A high quality network of streets and public spaces; and
- A new 1-form entry Primary School to serve the area

- 2.9 An Area Action Plan (AAP) was produced for the West End. The West End AAP sits underneath the Core Strategy in the hierarchy of development plan document for Oxford City. The West End AAP does not specifically allocate development sites but instead proposes a range of indicative land uses appropriate for the area and suggests potential sites for particular uses giving certain uses priority on certain sites. The West End AAP forms part of the development plan and contains a suite of policies to guide development within the West End Area.

Sustainability Appraisal of the West End Area Action Plan

- 2.10 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was carried out alongside the production of the West End AAP. The SA for the WEAAP dealt with a range of issues focussing on many aspects of the West End Area. The Guidance² for undertaking SEA discusses at Paragraphs 2.22-2.25 the level of detail in SEA.

- 2.11 Paragraph 2.22 states:

An SEA need to be done in any more detail, or using any more resources than is useful for its purpose.

- 2.12 Paragraph 2.25 states:

² ODPM, (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

Where proposals need to be assessed more than once, e.g. at different stages of a plan or programme, information from earlier assessments can be used subject to updating or extra detail which may be necessary. This can help avoid duplication of assessment.

- 2.13 Because the SA for the West End has covered a number of issues already, there is no need for duplication of the assessment as many aspects have already been assessed. Table 2 (taken from the Combined Screening and Scoping Report) documents the review of the Sustainability Appraisal for the West End AAP. The Table includes an additional column for additional information where relevant.

SEA Directive Topics. (The environment is defined by Schedule 2 paragraph 6 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Summary of previous SA findings or undertaken as part of the West End AAP.	Additional information
Biodiversity/ Flora/ Fauna	Potential loss of an area of scrub on the Oxpens site. The AAP will ensure that a linear park is to be created along the length of the castle mill stream to mitigate this.	The HRA Screening concluded, and Natural England agreed, that the West End AAP would not be likely to have a significant effect on the interest features of the Oxford Meadows SAC.
Population	Development will bring more residents and workers to the West End.	n/a
Human Health	AAP will improve health by providing more affordable housing which will reduce the number of people in inadequate accommodation. Potential for new health centre in West End	n/a
Soil	Depending on flood remediation measures this may need to be addressed at a later date.	n/a
Water	Further investigations required in relation to the provision of flood storage capacity on Oxpens Site.	The AAP makes a commitment to carry out a feasibility study to identify the best option as part of the master-planning of the site. Further modelling work is being commissioned and will be undertaken to examine this issue part of the SPD.
Air	SA suggests that there are not likely to be any significant improvements in air quality.	The whole of Oxford City is now an Air Quality Management Area.
Climatic factors	The West End provides one of the	If this commitment is not fully

	few opportunities for providing a district-wide heating system for Oxford and as such the AAP commits to providing this system. The Oxpens site was identified by a study by ARUP as a key site to delivering the system in the West End.	considered on the Oxpens site, there may be no further opportunities for its development in the West End
Material Assets	Depending on the detail of the development proposal this may have an impact on material assets.	n/a
Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage	Current policies exist in the Core Strategy and West End AAP which will ensure that these matters are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.	n/a
Landscape	Current policies exist in the Core Strategy and West End AAP which will ensure that these matters are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.	n/a
Inter-relationships between the above issues	SA suggests that vehicle movements associated with the AAP should have a modest impact on the strategic road network	Some transport issues unresolved with regards to the Oxpens site. For instance, visitor coaches currently use the site, and there are also proposed changes to the bus routes. The City Centre Stage 1 Transport Strategy has been completed. This provides some information about what is proposed for the routing of buses around Oxpens. There is also the issue that as part of the Westgate redevelopment, the car park on Oxpens was an option to use as a temporary car park while building works was undertaken.

2.14 Table 3 (also taken from the Combined Screening and Scoping Report) shows the links between the AAP and the SPD. As is seen below, the AAP provides a comprehensive framework for development and renaissance in the West End; and that the SPD is broadly consistent with what the AAP proposes. It will be for the SPD to provide further guidance for development of the Oxpens site.

SPD Contents		Existing Policies	Additional requirements sought by the SPD
Vision		Core Strategy and West End AAP	None. Vision consistent with existing Local Plan documents
DP1: A HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT	High quality architecture	WE12; WEDC section E; CS18; HP9	None. DP1 consistent with existing policies and the Street Scene Manual.
	Palette of materials	Street Scene Manual for public realm materials	
DP2: MAXIMISING THE VALUE AND POTENTIAL OF THE SITE	Maximum number of units / floorspace	CS22 (“at least...”); HP9a (“efficient use of land”); WE20	None. DP2 consistent with existing policies
	Balance of land uses	CS23; WE15; WE20	
DP3: A SUSTAINABLE SCHEME	Water and flood risk	CS11; WE14	DP3 consistent with existing policies in all aspects except that the commitment to a district heating scheme is not referred to and flooding matters not fully addressed.
	Improving connections	CS13; CS14; WE2; WE3;	
	Sustainable building design	CS9; WE12; WE13; HP11	
	SUDS	CS11; WE14	
	City centre housing	CS22; WE15; WE19	
	Integrating movement options	CS13; CS14; WE2; WE3; AAP Appendix 4	
	Creating employment opportunities	CS27; WE21	
	Supporting viability of the wider West End and City Centre	CS5; WEAAP vision	
DP4: ADDRESSING OXPENS ROAD	Building line/ set back	WEDC type 1 streets	None. DP4 consistent with existing policies
	Floor to ceiling heights	WEDC type 1 streets	
	Public realm	WE1 and supporting text; WE3 and supporting text; WE5(Oxpens Square); Street Scene Manual	
	Pedestrian movement	WE2	
	Street trees	WEDC type 1 streets	
DP5: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY IN THE OXFORD WEST END	Network of connected streets	WE1; WE2; WE3; WE5; WE7; WE8; WE9; WEDC; CS13(1st bullet); CS5(5 th bullet)	None. DP5 consistent with existing policies in all aspects except that the SPD does not resolve the

	Thames, Castle Mill Stream, Oxpens Meadow	WE2; WE7; WE8; WE9	identified transport issues.
	Public transport	WE3 and supporting text	
	Foot/cycle bridge	WE2	
	Enhancement to Oxpens Road	WE1 and supporting text; WE3 and supporting text; WE5(Oxpens Square); Street Scene Manual	
DP6: HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC REALM: STREETS AND SPACES	Palette of materials	CS18; Street Scene Manual for public realm materials	None. DP6 consistent with existing policies
	Oxpens Square	WE5 and supporting text	
DP7: ENHANCING OXPENS MEADOW	Using meadow more	WE8	None. DP7 consistent with existing policies
	Flood mitigation	CS11; WE14	
	landscaping	WE7; WE8;	
DP8: RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER	Flood mitigation	CS11; WE14	None. DP8 consistent with existing policies
	Orientated towards river	WE9	
DP9: APPROPRIATE LAND USE MIX	Mix of uses and residential types	CS23; WE15; WE20; AAP Appendix 2	None. DP9 consistent with existing policies
	Mix of business opportunities	WE21; WESection5.3; WE22; WE24; WE26; WE27; WE28; AAP Appendix 2	
	hotel	WE26; CS32(WE specifically mentioned); AAP Appendix 2	
	Student accommodation	CS25; WE18; HP5	
	Complimentary land uses	WE19; WE20; WE24; WE27; WE28; AAP Appendix 2	
DP10: GENERATING ACTIVITY	Balance of land uses	CS23; WE15; WE20	None. DP10 consistent with existing policies
	On street activity	WE20 and supporting text; WEDC section B3 and 4	
	Flexible ground floor uses	WE20; CS18 (bullet 4)	
DP11: COHERENT CHARACTER	Palette of materials	Street Scene Manual for public realm materials	None. DP11 consistent with existing policies
DP12: PHASING	Retention of ice rink in medium to long	WE28;	None. DP12 consistent with existing policies

	term		
Regulating Masterplan	Main junction with Oxpens Road has moved A couple of streets have swapped places in the hierarchy.	West End AAP	None. Regulating Masterplan consistent existing policies.
Uses	Residential (Houses and apartments) Employment: Offices, R&D Hotel A-Class Uses Student Accommodation Retirement Accommodation Café (Oxpens Meadow Attraction)	Houses (P) Flats (M) Public Space (P) Community Energy (P) Amenities for housing (S) Offices (S) Public Offices (P) Food and Drink (M) Museums (S) Hotel (P) Conference (P) Leisure (P) Where P = Primary S = Secondary M = Minor	Draft SPD introduces student accommodation and possible education use. Draft SPD omits Community Energy, Museums, Conference and Leisure.
Illustrative Masterplan	Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how site can be designed in detail. Includes proposed distribution of uses across the site.	No equivalent diagram in AAP. AAP contains illustrations of building heights, streets and spaces and street sections, parking standards.	None. Illustrative Masterplan consistent existing policies.
Phasing and Delivery	SPD provides indicative phasing strategy, infrastructure list and funding options.	See Appendices 8 and 9 of the West End AAP.	None. The Draft SPD consistent with existing policies. Draft SPD provides updated information on funding sources.

2.15 Other environmental protection objectives include Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA). An HRA Screening was undertaken to support the West End AAP. The HRA screening considered that, development within the West End is unlikely to have an impact on the integrity of the SAC. Natural England supported this screening opinion. An HRA was also undertaken to support the Core Strategy.

The HRA for the Core Strategy also concluded that development within the West End would be unlikely to have an adverse impact on the integrity of the Oxford Meadows SAC. The HRA Screening can be found at Appendix 1.

Description of baseline characteristics

- 2.16 A number of studies were undertaken to support the AAP including a community energy feasibility study; Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; pre-feasibility flood mitigation study; transport work which examined the impact of the AAP on the strategic road network; a conference centre study; a hotel and short stay accommodation study; and others.
- 2.17 The WEAAP makes several commitments to further studies and future work that is needed. Further studies to support the AAP include flood mitigation work; updated transport modelling; and a review of the historic environment carried out by specialist officers in the City Council's Heritage Team.
- 2.18 The Combined SEA Screening and Scoping Report includes information about the baseline environment. The entire report is found at Appendix 2.

Environmental Issues and Problems

- 2.19 The LDF Scoping Report identifies environmental problems (or sustainability issues) for the city. A complete list of sustainability issues can be found at Appendix 3. It is worth noting that these sustainability issues have been consulted upon and agreed. Those that are relevant to the Oxpens site are noted below (only environmental problems are included):

Flooding: Climate change is a growing concern due to increased storm events which may lead to increased flood risk

Flooding: Pressure for development is likely to push new development into higher risk areas and also contribute to higher risk of flooding through increased run-off

Flooding: Increasing levels of development may have an adverse impact on water quality due to increased run-off

Housing: High house prices and continued increases pose significant barriers to first-time buyers. Housing has become unaffordable for many first-time buyers.

Biodiversity: Some of the species mentioned are to be found on unprotected sites and are therefore at risk

Historic Environment and Heritage Assets: On-going development pressure threatens the city's cultural and archaeological heritage. Development pressure in certain areas of the city could threaten heritage assets more than others for instance inside the City Centre Archaeological Area.

Transport and Air Quality: Pollution in the city centre related to buses is likely to decrease as a result of the Low Emission Zone

Transport and Air Quality: Car Traffic is not yet affected by the Low Emission Zone. Pressure at major junctions and congestion on arterial roads that can lead to high pollution is likely to increase as a result of continuing development pressure both inside and outside the city. It will be important to minimise car traffic and its impacts

Transport and Air Quality: Poor air quality can result in poor health. It is important that monitoring continues and that steps are taken to manage air quality and ensure that the air quality in the area does not become poor

Climate Change: Rising demand for energy will put pressure on energy suppliers

Climate Change: Cost of providing renewable energy still a barrier to more widespread production

- 2.20 The main existing environmental problem relevant to development of the Oxpens SPD is flooding and flood risk. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken to support the Area Action Plan (Atkins, June 2007). The SFRA provides detailed flood zone maps of the area. The SFRA flood zone map shows the Oxpens site to contain an area of flood storage/ functional floodplain which lies in flood zone 3b, as well as some parts of the site, which lie in flood zones 3a, and flood zone 2. As part of this work, an initial investigation was also undertaken to see whether it might be possible to move the current flood storage area on the Oxpens site to create a more regularly shaped or larger area suitable for development. (The SEA combined Screening and Scoping Report (April 2013) – Appendix 2)
- 2.21 The AAP states that *“potential ways of compensating for this flood storage were identified, and a feasibility study will be carried out to identify the best option as part of the master planning of the site”*.
- 2.22 Other existing problems include, but are not limited to, the existing traffic and transport issues in the area; and poor quality townscape character and limited biodiversity opportunities.
- 2.23 It is worth noting that the whole of the administrative area of the city has been declared an Air Quality Management Area.

SEA Objectives, targets and indicators

Developing the SEA Objectives

2.24 Sustainability Appraisal objectives were developed for Oxford's LDF/ Local Plan Scoping Report. These objectives directly relate to the topics in the SEA Directive and their links are shown in the SA Scoping Report. The full list of Sustainability Objectives is set out at Appendix 3.

2.25 Table 4 below is taken from the Combined SEA Screening and Scoping Report. The table clearly demonstrates that there are a limited number of key areas where additional assessment may be required.

Directive Topic	Probability, Duration, Frequency & Reversibility of the effects
Biodiversity/ Flora/ Fauna	An additional report which looks at on-site biodiversity has been produced since the publication of the AAP. The findings of the additional information found in this report will be considered as part of the SEA process.
Water	Different land uses are appropriate in different areas of flood risk. This is set out nationally (in the NPPF and the associated technical guidance) and locally (in the Core Strategy (Policy CS11) and the West End AAP (Policy WE14)). The Oxpens site contains an area of flood storage (flood zone 3b). The SA and the AAP make a commitment to undertake further investigations to inform the master-planning of the Oxpens site. At present information is not known about the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects. As such it has not been possible to assess whether or not there will be likely significant effects on the environment. Therefore an SEA is needed with regard to this particular SEA Topic. It is worth noting that SEA is proportionate to the level of detail that is required. This topic is therefore screened into the assessment.
Climatic Factors	The Oxpens site has been ear-marked through the evidence base as a site which is integral in delivering the West End Community Energy scheme. The City Council invested in a series of reports to deliver a community energy scheme. The report concludes that an area of 20m x 30m could serve the longer term energy needs of the whole of the West End. As a site that is within the control of the city, siting an energy centre on the Oxpens site would enable a significant benefit to the city. There is no information about the probability duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects of either including or not including the energy centre for the community energy scheme on this site. As such this topic is screened into the assessment.
Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage	There are some uncertainties particularly around how the development will impact the historic environment in particular townscape character, landscape and below-ground heritage. Oxford City Council's Heritage Team has been consulted regarding the historic environment and townscape character and their response will feed into the SEA Report.
Inter-relationships (Transport)	There are some unresolved transport issues in relation to the Oxpens site. Despite being in a highly sustainable location, the number of residential units proposed has increased from the time of the assessment undertaken for the AAP. This new level of housing proposed on the Oxpens site has not been assessed in terms of its potential additional transport and traffic impacts. Issues such as the environmental impact of removing and

	relocating visitor coaches off the site would need to be addressed. As there is no additional information available other than that produced to support the AAP, transport impacts are screened into the assessment.
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2.26 Table 5 links the SEA Objectives from the LDF Scoping Report to the SEA Directive topics that have been scoped into the assessment.

SEA Directive Topics	Relevant SEA Objectives
Biodiversity/ Flora/ Fauna	Objective 9: To conserve and enhance Oxford's biodiversity (Biodiversity)
Water	Objective 1: To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment (Flooding) Objective 12: Maintain and improve soil and water quality. Manage water resources (Water and Soil)
Climatic Factors	Objective 13: Increase energy and resource efficiency (including minimising waste) and renewable energy, with the aim of mitigating climate change (Climate change)
Cultural Heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage	Objective 10: Protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets (Heritage)
Inter-relationships (Transport)	Objective 11: Reduce traffic congestion and associated air pollution by improving travel choice, shortening length and duration of journeys and reducing the need to travel by car/ lorry (Traffic and Air Quality)

Testing the plan or programme against the SEA Objectives

2.27 The following matrix looks at the internal compatibility of the SEA Objectives. This is an important step as it is important to assess the SEA Objectives for compatibility with each other as it is important to record if there are competing interests in sustainability terms.

2.28 The following compatibility matrix represents an analysis of the SEA Objectives to highlight if there are any potential conflicts.

1. Flooding					✓ = compatible
9. Biodiversity	✓/X				X = incompatible
10. Heritage	✓/X	✓/X			Blank = no links
11. Transport			✓/X		
13. Climate Change			✓/X		
SEA Objective	1. Flooding	9. Biodiversity	10. Heritage	11. Transport	13. Climate Change

Table 6: Compatibility Matrix of SEA objectives vs SEA objectives

2.29 The main conflicts between the SEA objectives are outlined in the table 7 below:

Table 7: Potential conflicts between the SEA Objectives

Objective	Objective(s) potentially in conflict with	Description of potential conflict
Objective 1: To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment	<p>Objective 9: To conserve and enhance Oxford’s biodiversity</p> <p>Objective 10: Protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets</p>	Many areas of countryside around Oxford are wetland areas that require some flooding to maintain their nature conservation value and biodiversity. An increase in flooding could damage areas of countryside and biodiversity and some flood protection would be required to maintain their value.

Objective 9: To conserve and enhance Oxford's biodiversity	Objective 10: Protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets	Protecting the historic environment is often seen in the same light as the protection of the natural environment and increasing biodiversity. Care needs to be taken that one is not seen to be more important than the other and conserved to the detriment of the other.
Objective 10: Protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets	Objective 13: Increase energy and resource efficiency (including minimising waste) and renewable energy, with the aim of mitigating climate change	There are often conflicts in terms of visual impacts of increasing energy efficiency on the historic environment and heritage assets. Care should be taken that to increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy does not have a detrimental impact on the historic environment. There is the potential for conflict between these objectives.

2.30 The following Plan Objectives were used in the Oxpens SPD. As discussed previously the Plan Objectives for the Oxpens SPD are described within the document as "Design Principles". Table details the list of "Design Principles"/ Plan Objectives.

Table 8: Design Principles/ Plan Objectives	
DP1	A High Quality Development
DP2	Maximising the Value and Potential of the Site
DP3	A Sustainable Scheme
DP4	Addressing Oxpens Road
DP5	Improving Accessibility in the Oxford West End
DP6	High Quality Public Realm: Streets and Spaces
DP7	Enhancing Oxpens Meadow
DP8	Relationship to the River
DP9	Appropriate Land Use Mix
DP10	Generating Activity
DP11	Coherent Character
DP12	Phasing

2.31 The next step of the SEA process is to assess the Plan Objectives against the relevant SEA Objectives

Oxpens SPD Plan Objectives	SEA Objectives				
	1. Flooding	9. Biodiversity	10. Heritage	11. Transport	13. Climate Change
1. High Quality Development			✓/X		
2. Maximising Site Value and Potential	X	X			X
3. Sustainability	✓				✓
4. Oxpens Road					
5. Accessibility	X			✓	
6. Streets and Spaces				✓	
7. Oxpens Meadow		✓			
8. Relationship to the river	✓	✓			
9. Land Use	X	X	X	✓/X	X
10. Activity					
11. Character			✓		
12. Phasing					

Key:

✓ = compatible X = incompatible Blank = no links

Table 10: Compatibility Matrix

2.32 Table 11 provides more details regarding the potential conflicts between the SEA Objectives and the Plan Objectives.

Table 11: Possible conflicting interactions between the SPD objectives and the SEA Framework		
Conflict Number	Objectives in conflict	Rationale
SPD1	SEA Objective 1 vs. Plan Objectives 2, 5 & 9	<p>Increased levels of hard surfacing associated with new housing, business premises and other development will require special drainage measures to manage the run-off and reduce the risk of flooding. It will also be necessary to ensure that new development is provided with the appropriate standard of flood-defence.</p> <p>Careful consideration will be required in relation to the excavations and drainage required to provide new roads and footways in order to manage run-off and reduce the risk of flooding.</p>
SPD2	SEA Objective 9 vs. Plan Objectives 2 & 9	<p>Care should be taken when seeking to maximise the value and site potential that other important environmental aspects such are not overlooked and are given an equal weighting. There is a risk that maximising site value and potential could outweigh other considerations and be the driving force behind decision-making.</p> <p>The design and location of development must be carefully considered so as not to compromise existing biodiversity but rather to create further opportunities for its enhancement.</p>
SPD3	SEA Objective 10 vs. Plan Objective 1	<p>This plan objective could have a positive or negative impact on the historic environment and heritage. High quality development does not always respect its historic context and it will be important that the historic context of the surrounding area.</p> <p>Careful planning will be required to ensure that the provision of a mix of uses and land allocations and building typologies does not compromise the existing open spaces and historic features but rather works with them and enhances them.</p>
SPD4	SEA Objective 11 vs. Plan Objective 9	<p>Providing more development could potentially lead to increases in road congestion and associated air pollution impacts. Car parking should be kept to a minimum and more sustainable patterns of travel are to be encouraged.</p> <p>Attracting more tourists into the area could potentially lead to increases in road congestion and associated air pollution impacts if more sustainable patterns of travel are not provided or encouraged</p>
SPD5	SEA Objective 13 vs. Plan Objective 2 & 9	<p>New development will only lead to an increase in energy efficiency and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources if these features are incorporated into the design of the development either at building or site scale.</p> <p>Care should be taken when seeking to maximise the value and site potential that other important environmental aspects such are not overlooked and are given an equal weighting. There is a risk that maximising site value and potential could outweigh other considerations and be the driving force behind decision-making.</p>

Plan/ Programme Issues and Alternatives

Developing the Main Strategic Alternatives (Task B2)

- 3.1 The SEA Regulations³ requires that the Responsible Authority must appraise the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme and any reasonable alternatives (Regulation 12).
- 3.2 The SEA Guidance⁴ states that is normal practice when developing a plan or programme, to propose different ways of fulfilling objectives. These are known as options. Each alternative can then be tested against the SEA Objectives, with positive as well as negative effects being considered, and uncertainties.
- 3.3 The SEA Guidance sets out some options that should be looked at in all cases. These are the “No Plan” option and “Business as usual” option. “No Plan” means what would happen if no plan or programme was introduced. “Business as usual” means a continuation of an existing plan or programme, as an alternative to preparing a new one. In the case of the preparation of the Oxpens SPD, these two options result in the same outcome.
- 3.4 The development of the “strategic” options was straightforward in this case. Option 1 is the “No Plan”/ “Business as usual” approach (the No SPD option) and Option 2 is the option to produce an SPD to set the framework for the development of the site.

Comparison of the alternatives

- 3.5 Table 12 is suggested in the SEA Guidance as a mechanism for the comparison of alternatives.

³ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, SI No. 1633

⁴ ODPM (2005), A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

Comparison of alternatives: Table 12

		Option 1 (Business as usual/ No plan)				Option 2 (Produce an SPD to set the framework for development for the site)			
SEA Objective	Short term	Medium term	Long term	Comments/ Explanation	Short term	Medium term	Long term	Comments/ Explanation	
Objective 1: Flooding	+/-	+/-	+/-	Portion of land on-site is currently a flood storage area. Without the SPD this area is likely to remain as such until the planning application stage.	+	+	+	In producing an SPD to be adopted for the site, additional work on flood mitigation has been commissioned. The results of this work will feed into the assessment process. (See sections on prediction and evaluation of effects)	
Objective 9: Biodiversity	0	0	0	Site cleared following ecological survey. Survey detailed best time to clear the site and this guidance was followed. If biodiversity matters left to planning application stage then opportunities for enhancement may be lost.	?/+	?/+	?/+	Part of site cleared following ecological survey. Survey detailed optimum time to clear the site and this guidance was followed. Biodiversity improvements to be considered through SPD process	
Objective 10: Heritage	0/-	0/-	0/-	Existing planning policy including Local Plan, Core strategy and the design code in the West End AAP provides support for protection and enhancement of historic environment. No additional work would be undertaken until a planning application was submitted.	+	+	+	Masterplan produced as part of SPD to give an indication of how the site could look. Given strong suite of existing policy protection for the historic environment, the SPD is likely to provide a minor positive impact as any discussions regarding the likely impacts on the historic environment will be brought forward at an early stage in the process and are likely to be resolved in a satisfactory manner.	
Objective 11: Transport	-/?	-/?	-/?	It was not appropriate for the existing policy framework as set out in the AAP to provide	+	+	+	Given the need to make further decisions regarding transport, the production of an SPD	

			<p>answers to all of the issues surrounding transport. As such several decisions are needed "down-the-line".</p> <p>Without the production of the SPD these decisions would inevitably be left until the planning application stage, which may not be the most appropriate stage to be considering potential secondary impacts.</p>				<p>would be likely to provide an appropriate vehicle to do this.</p> <p>By considering potential secondary impacts of transport decisions at the SPD stage, it provides more certainty at the application stage.</p>
<p>Objective 13: Climate Change</p>	-	-	<p>The West End AAP included a policy on resource efficiency. This policy made a commitment to deliver a community energy scheme in the West End. A number of technical reports were produced to support the AAP and subsequently after its adoption. These reports were progressed on the basis that the Oxpens site would be the site of the energy centre. Without an SPD in place, the location of the energy centre on the Oxpens site could be lost to more profitable uses such as housing</p>	+	+	+	<p>With the production of an SPD that provides a masterplan for the site, it is likely that discussions around the location of the energy centre will happen early in the process. If discussions happen early in the process then it is more likely that the energy centre will receive a small footprint of land on the Oxpens site. This will have a positive impact in relation to mitigating the impacts of climate change.</p>
<p>Key: + positive - negative 0 neutral ? uncertain +/- minor ++/-- major</p>							
<p>Summary</p> <p>The comparison assessment of the strategic options shows that producing an SPD can be seen overall to have a positive impact. This mainly relates to addressing key environmental issues at a sufficiently early stage such that they can be discussed and resolved in ample time and prior to the submission of a planning application. As discussed above, the key issues are flood risk, the inclusion of an energy centre as part of the masterplan, opportunities for biodiversity on site, and ensuring that opportunities for protection and enhancement of Oxford's historic environment are maximised.</p>							

3.6 Once the need for an SPD had been determined, several options for taking forward the SPD considered. The two main options were informed by the pre-feasibility flooding study. These were compared against the “No Plan”/ “Business as usual” option in order to determine what, if any significant environmental effects on the environment would be likely from the Oxpens SPD.

3.7 Below are the two “Illustrative masterplans” showing how the two strategic options “could” look. Clearly the developable area of option 1 is more as this option would involve re-profiling of the flood storage area which is shown as a green swathe through the site in Option 2. Each of the options has positive as well as negative implications, not all of which will be caught through this SEA process. It is worth noting that these diagrams show the redevelopment after the potential final phase (as set out in the draft SPD) –in which the Ice Rink is no longer present on site. The section on Phasing in the SPD discusses this as the final element in the long-term redevelopment of the site.



Option 1: Development boundary informed by flood mitigation scheme

Option 2: Development informed by EA flood zones

3.8 Table 13 examines the two different options and compares them with the “No Plan”/ “Business as usual” option.

3.9 These two options were developed from the Atkins’ (2007) report on possible concepts for flood mitigation, which comprised four distinct options. These are listed below:

1. Designing within the existing flood envelope
2. Left bank flood storage (on land within the study area)
3. Right bank storage (on land outside the study area)
4. A combination of the above options

3.10 The first two options were considered during the formulation of the SPD as they did not rely on space outside the study area and it was considered that they had a more likely success of being delivered.

- 3.11 The Environment Agency (EA) has been consulted during the production of the SPD. The EA was consulted on masterplans that responded to the alternative approaches. The EA did not discount either approach (in principle), subject to further technical work being carried out on the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and technical work.
- 3.12 The options for the available land were based broadly around these two main options, which have been reviewed in the SEA. The masterplan options were prepared on the basis of development which was informed by a flood mitigation scheme (Option 1) and development informed by the EA flood zones (Option 2).
- 3.13 Further variants were examined that considered different amounts and types of land-uses on-site. The options varied the balance of housing and employment on the site but were all based around one of the two options assessed in the SEA.

Table 13: Examination of alternatives

SEA Objective	Option 1 – Development boundary informed by flood mitigation scheme	Option 2 – Development boundary informed by EA flood zones	Option 3 - ‘No SPD’/ ‘Business as usual’	Comments
1 Flooding	?	?	New baseline created by revising how the floodplains in the model around the development were represented. This resulted in lower water levels, but no real change to flood extents due to the shape of the floodplain.	<p>Technical work was undertaken to support the AAP and further technical work has been undertaken to support the SPD.</p> <p>There are sufficient uncertainties associated with the current representation of flooding at Oxpens to cast doubt on the EA’s Flood Map. This means that the impact of development upon water levels and flood risk is not fully understood. As such the likelihood or geographical scale of the effect, its significance, permanence or reversibility cannot be predicted or evaluated.</p> <p>However, regarding the certainty, the technical work concludes that the existing understanding of flood water and flood risk in the vicinity of the Oxpens site is rather rudimentary and on that basis, to either rule out the sketch Masterplan or definitely say that it is technically feasible would be wholly unsubstantiated.</p> <p>The Technical work goes on to suggest promoting the SPD on the understanding that there is a need for further and more detailed hydraulic modelling and understanding of flood risk to be completed as the Oxpens site is taken forward.</p>
9 Biodiversity	- This option	+ This option		Results of ecological survey used to determine the optimum time to clear part of the site.

SEA Objective	Option 1 – Development boundary informed by flood mitigation scheme	Option 2 – Development boundary informed by EA flood zones	Option 3 - ‘No SPD’/ ‘Business as usual’	Comments
10 Heritage	provides less scope for habitat creation on-site	would provide better opportunities for habitat enhancement and creation on site.	Existing policies in AAP, Core Strategy and Local Plan provide context for historic environment. The evidence base for the city’s historic environment – the Heritage Plan provides detailed evidence to support policies and policy development including view cones, conservation area appraisals, archaeological assessments and more.	<p>Opportunities exist through the redevelopment of the site to enhance biodiversity opportunities on-site through habitat creation.</p> <p>In evaluating the impact of the masterplan on heritage, a number of issues which need to be addressed individually. Impacts and opportunities on the following areas have been evaluated in terms of heritage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on the setting of both the city’s conservation areas – the Central (City and University) Conservation Area and the Osney Town Conservation Area; - Relationship with the former historic suburb of St. Ebbe’s; - Visual impact of the development on the city’s sensitive historic skyline including the City Council’s protected view cones; - Below-ground heritage; - Character of the development including on-site features; and - Impact on trees.
11 Transport	More development on site could mean	Less development on	?/- Effects would depend on implementation.	Transport modelling was undertaken. The transport options examined did not did not inform the development of the strategic options for the site.

SEA Objective	Option 1 – Development boundary informed by flood mitigation scheme	Option 2 – Development boundary informed by EA flood zones	Option 3 - ‘No SPD’/ ‘Business as usual’	Comments
13 Climate Change	<p>more traffic, although it is anticipated that the development will be low-car so this is unlikely to be a significant issue (see transport modelling work for qualitative results)</p>	<p>site could mean less-traffic although it is anticipated to be a low-car development so unlikely to be too much of an issue (see transport modelling work for quantitative results)</p>	<p>The West End AAP includes a commitment to provide a community energy scheme in the West End.</p>	<p>Not including energy centre on the Oxpens site has potential secondary implications for the future of the West End Community Energy scheme. This is more likely to worsen in the long-term.</p> <p>Suggest inclusion of an energy centre within the Oxpens site in order to achieve vision for the West End and key corporate challenge of a low-carbon Oxford.</p> <p>It is unclear how the existing policy requirements as set out in the NRIA SPD and Sites and Housing Plan would be met. These requirements are for 20% of the energy on site to be provided from renewable or low carbon technologies.</p>
Summary				

SEA Objective	Option 1 – Development boundary informed by flood mitigation scheme	Option 2 – Development boundary informed by EA flood zones	Option 3 - ‘No SPD’/ ‘Business as usual’	Comments
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In environmental sustainability terms, Option 2 scores slightly better than Option 1 as there is more scope for the creation of habitats and more green space on site. In terms of flooding, the technical work was inconclusive and further work is needed once the EA flood model has been revised. In terms of cultural heritage, the general comments received were broadly sympathetic to both schemes. Concerns were raised regarding views into and out of the site, particularly the view cones and these have been addressed in the mitigation section. Option 1 would have a slightly worse impact in terms of transport than option 2 just by the fact that there would be more development so more people would be travelling to the site. There are unlikely to be significant transport impacts however, and the technical work has indicated that with mitigation, the impact of Option 1 (which would be higher than Option 2) can be mitigated to a satisfactory level.

Finally in terms of climate change – there needs to be a firm commitment to how the City Council’s own plans and programmes will be adhered to, particularly the Natural Resources Impact Analysis SPD (and the Sites and Housing Plan) which requires 20% of the energy requirements to be generate through on-site renewable or low carbon technologies. It is at present unclear how this will be achieved.

Prediction of effects (Task B3)

Table 14: Prediction of effects

SEA Objective	Effects over time	Comments	Further research that may be required
1.	Flooding ?	<p>Technical work was undertaken to support the AAP and further technical work has been undertaken to support the SPD.</p> <p>There are sufficient uncertainties associated with the current representation of flooding at Oxpens to cast doubt on the EA's Flood Map. This means that the impact of development upon water levels and flood risk is not fully understood. As such the likelihood, or geographical scale of the effect, its significance, permanence or reversibility cannot be predicted or evaluated.</p> <p>However, regarding the certainty, the technical work concludes that the existing understanding of flood water and flood risk in the vicinity of the Oxpens site is rather rudimentary and on that basis, to either rule out the sketch Masterplan or definitely say that it is technically feasible would be wholly unsubstantiated.</p>	<p>Further and more detailed hydraulic modelling and understanding of flood risk to be completed as the Oxpens site is taken forward.</p>
9.	Biodiversity -	<p>Part of site cleared following ecological report. Advice in report followed as to the optimum time to clear the site with minimum disturbance to existing flora and fauna.</p> <p>Opportunities for new habitats to be investigated as part of SPD and planning application process. Oxpens field provides an important green space within the city. This will be maintained and opportunities for enhancement should be investigated.</p>	<p>Further work could be undertaken to explore how best to maximise opportunities for biodiversity on-site.</p>
10.	Heritage (including "vision") +/-	<p>Oxford's unique historic environment and visual relationship to the surrounding countryside are vital to maintain the city's character.</p>	<p>Additional assessment of</p>

			The City Council Heritage Officers comments regarding the scheme were received. As a result of these comments, additional assessments were made including looking at Oxford's skyline through the view cones, archaeological comments including the location of civil war defences have also been noted.	Oxford's skyline from the perspective of the view cones undertaken.
11.	Transport			Further transport modelling and work undertaken to support SPD.
13.	Climate Change	-	<p>The policy review (chapter 2 of the SPD) does not mention the City Councils adopted Natural Resources Impact Analysis SPD which requires 20% of the energy requirements of a site to be provided by on-site renewable or low carbon technologies. The first draft SPD did not include a mention of renewable energy or how the 20% on-site renewable energy target will be met.</p> <p>In the first draft SPD there was no indication or commitment to reducing the demand for energy. There was no indication or commitment demonstrating how the proposed development would reduce carbon emissions or reduce waste generation.</p> <p>One of the design principles is a sustainable scheme. In one of the early iterations of the SPD, it was unclear how this section went further than the existing building regulations in terms of reducing energy, carbon etc.</p>	<p>Suggest viability testing includes figures for how to meet the 20% on-site renewable low-carbon energy requirements will be met</p>
Summary				
<p>As the Masterplan is indicative it is subject to change. Any positive aspects of the scheme are therefore subject to change. The same is true, of course of any negative aspects. The illustrative nature of the Masterplan is therefore both positive and negative. It creates flexibility over the block structure, layout, and how the scheme is taken forward. This is often seen as a positive aspect of development. However, with this flexibility brings uncertainty about what will exactly be delivered. Overall it is difficult to score the indicative masterplan as anything other than +/--. The reason for this is, as stated above, there is both flexibility and uncertainty around what is proposed.</p>				

Evaluation of Effects (Task B4)

Table 15: Evaluation of effects

SEA Objective	Main predicted effects (Task B3)	Probability/ Frequency	Duration/ Reversibility	Secondary/ cumulative/ synergistic effects	Comment/ Overall effects
1. Flooding	New baseline created by revising how the floodplains in the model around the development were represented. This resulted in lower water levels, but no real change to flood extents due to the shape of the floodplain.	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	There are sufficient uncertainties associated with the current representation of flooding at Oxpens to cast doubt on the EA's Flood Map. This means that the impact of development upon water levels and flood risk is not fully understood.
9. Biodiversity	Opportunities to enhance biodiversity on site	If mention is made in the SPD then it is likely that biodiversity improvements and opportunities will be maximised on site	Biodiversity improvements will be long-lasting and have positive effects	Improvements to biodiversity resource can have secondary function of acting as a wildlife corridor. Improvements could include creating an avenue or boulevard of	Further work required to support the detailed planning application. Enhancing biodiversity features on site is likely to be positive particularly as competing land uses within the city mean that biodiversity improvements and

SEA Objective	Main predicted effects (Task B3)	Probability/ Frequency	Duration/ Reversibility	Secondary/ cumulative/ synergistic effects	Comment/ Overall effects
				trees to increase potential for movement of biodiversity across the site.	enhancement is often an add-on.
10. Heritage	See commentary below at *	?	?	?	*see below for details of evaluation
11. Transport	See commentary below at **	?	?	?	** see below for details of evaluation
13. Climate change	See commentary below at ***				*** see below for details of evaluation

*Evaluation of Heritage Impacts

3.14 In evaluating the impact of the masterplan on heritage, there are a number of issues which need to be addressed individually. Impacts and opportunities on the following areas have been evaluated in terms of heritage:

- Impact on the setting of both the city's conservation areas – the Central (City and University) Conservation Area and the Osney Town Conservation Area;
- Relationship with the former historic suburb of St. Ebbe's;
- Visual impact of the development on the city's sensitive historic skyline including the City Council's protected view cones;
- Below-ground heritage;
- Character of the development including on-site features; and
- Impact on trees.

Conservation Areas

3.15 The site forms part of the settings of both the city's Central (City and University) Conservation Area and the Osney Town Conservation Area, notably in longer range views of the city and views from Osney Cemetery.

3.16 The impact of development in the Conservation Areas' settings will be a material consideration in determining planning applications, which, given the illustrative nature of the masterplan should be highlighted as both a constraint and an opportunity in the SPD document.

Historic suburb of St. Ebbe's

3.17 The site lies on the edge of the former historic suburb of St. Ebbes, whilst elements of St Thomas's suburb lie between it and the city centre. These areas are characterised by a complex pattern of narrow streets and red brick terraced houses, interspersed with larger buildings associated with former industrial use set around courtyards and with large frontage blocks. This might help inform the design approach adopted.

Visual impacts (including view cones)

3.18 The illustrative bird's eye images of development, showing large, flat roofed blocks need to be carefully considered given the sensitivity of the city's skyline. Whilst these may be intended to support consideration of the position, use and composition of blocks of development, these illustrations may be misleading to developers and create problems when considering planning applications if such roof profiles are not considered to protect these features of the city.

3.19 Building heights, and the forms, extents and materials of rooflines will receive detailed consideration within the determination of planning applications and will need to be carefully considered during the preparation of proposals.

3.20 The prominence of this site in views of the City Centre from the western hills, and in the City Council's protected view cones in particular needs to be explored and should be referenced in this document as a consideration, with more detailed consideration in the technical appendixes. The loss of trees that currently contribute to the character of these views will be a particular impact of this development. Measures to minimise and, where necessary mitigate this impact should be outlined in the masterplan.

Below ground heritage

- 3.21 There are some key historical features of the area that will need to be considered by developers. These include the potential for medieval remains of Osney Abbey and the potential remains of the city's Civil War defences.
- 3.22 The location of Civil War defences recorded on historic maps of the city coincides with part of the area identified for flood mitigation works. The need to undertake archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording could delay implementation of development proposals if not factored into the overall development plan.

Character of the development

- 3.23 The suggestion of character areas to be created appears to be based principally on land use. We would suggest that a larger number of small character areas defined by both use and both architectural and spatial character would help to develop the intricate and complex character of townscape elsewhere in West Oxford. We would disagree with the assertion at 5.9 that the whole development must read as one. This could result in a monotonous townscape. Several separate character areas can be incorporated within a development of this scale, whilst the long frontage of Oxpens Road needs to be broken up by buildings of varied form, style and materials to create a more attractive townscape.

Existing on-site heritage

- 3.24 There has been no assessment of current upstanding heritage on site. Such buildings should be identified at an early stage as they can be retained to help retain a sense of connection to the past as well as adding detail and interest.

Impact on Trees

- 3.25 The loss of trees that currently contribute to the character of these views will be a particular impact of this development. Measures to minimise and, where necessary mitigate this impact should be outlined in the masterplan.

Summary

- 3.26 Given the indicative and illustrative nature of the masterplan, impacts on heritage will need to be reconsidered again and more fully at the planning application stage. As a result of this evaluation of the impacts on heritage, additional work has been carried out examining the impacts of the development on the historic environment. This includes an examination of the impact of views into and out of the site.
- 3.27 With regard to assessing the effects of the proposed masterplan, because it is flexible, a lot of the effects will be uncertain, for instance, currently the frontage along Oxpens Road is illustrated as being uniform. This, as the assessment notes, could result in a monotonous townscape. "[T]he long frontage of Oxpens Road needs to be broken up by buildings of varied form, style and materials to create a more attractive townscape".
- 3.28 Given the flexibility of the masterplan, this aspect could be incorporated at the planning application stage and the SPD should put sufficient measures in place to ensure that this and all the points above are addressed in an appropriate manner in order to ensure that a development comes forward which both

preserves and enhances the historic character of the city of Oxford. The mitigation measures are discussed in the following section.

**Evaluation of Transport Impacts

3.29 There were three options for accessing the development that were tested in the transport modelling.

Roundabout:

3.30 The roundabout option provides sufficient capacity in the PM peak but in the AM Peak the junction would operate at capacity. This would result in queues on the approach from Oxpens Road South. The queues form as a result of pedestrian demand within the modelled junction, which results in reduction in entry capacity.

3.31 The Technical work stated that:

“Consideration should be given as to whether the pedestrian demand could be encouraged to use the northern arm of the junction instead of the southern arm. The southern arm is demonstrated as being critical to the operation of the junction and the location of a zebra crossing proves detrimental to capacity”

3.32 A mini-roundabout option was also considered but this was rejected as it would be unlikely to have sufficient capacity at this location when pedestrian crossings are provided.

Traffic signals:

3.33 With traffic signals, the analysis shows the junction reaching practical capacity as some arms of the junction have degrees of saturation near to 90%. Although this indicates that the junction has some spare capacity at other times. Delays of up to 80 seconds in the PM peak and 61 seconds in the AM peak are associated with the signal option.

Priority junction:

3.34 A priority junction has also been designed for the junction of the site access/ Oxpens Road. The analysis indicates that the junction design would result in capacity issues for traffic accessing Oxpens Road from the development access road.

Preferred Option:

3.35 The technical work undertaken by Halcrow suggested that in terms of capacity, the signal solution best accommodates traffic demand and provides a safer option for pedestrians and cyclists in negotiating and leaving the junction. However the signal option does have a marginally higher level of delay over that of the roundabout.

3.36 The final option selected was the roundabout but with one of the crossing points removed. After careful consideration with the County Council, the roundabout's southern zebra crossing was removed, as it was considered that this could increase capacity at the junction. The roundabout option would also reduce visual clutter from the street-scene.

3.37 Given the indicative and illustrative nature of the masterplan, it is important that these changes are highlighted in the text as fundamental to this option being carried forward otherwise there may be capacity issues at the roundabout.

***Evaluation of Climate Change effects

3.38 The SPD includes a Design Principles (DP3) entitled “A Sustainable Scheme” and a section on “Integrating Sustainability” which discussed Physical, Social and Economic Sustainability. A notable omission from this section is “Environmental Sustainability”. Although a range of positive factors are included in this section, including sections on Sustainable Building Design; and a Sustainable Location for Development, the actual sustainability credentials appear to be statutory in nature.

3.39 It is encouraging to see statements such as “Proposals should seek to maximise sustainable building design to provide a flagship precedent scheme for future developments in the Oxford West End to learn from”, however it is unclear how this will be achieved given what the sustainable building design should incorporate. For instance, to simply “explore the potential for integration of micro-generation” is unlikely to result in the kind of flagship scheme that Design Principle 3 – A Sustainable Scheme – aspires to. The illustrative and indicative nature of the masterplan provides both flexibility in terms of future development coming forward and uncertainty. This makes any evaluation of effects highly subjective as they are not firm proposals. Mitigation measures put forward as a result of the SEA are documented in the following section.

3.40 The option that was carried forward in the SPD was the option 1, although the indicative layout was illustrated differently in the final document than it was shown above.

3.41 Option 1 was considered to have several benefits over option 2 including, making more efficient use of land, and providing a greater developable land area. The option was also considered to meet more of the design principles.

Proposed Mitigation Measures (Task B5)

- 3.42 Measures to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects of the plan or programme are known as 'mitigation measures'. Mitigation measures include pro-active avoidance of adverse effects as well as actions taken after effects are noticed.
- 3.43 A number of additional studies were commissioned as mitigation measures after seeing the first draft of the SPD. A technical study on flooding was produced, which went on to inform the SPD (see prediction and evaluation of effects above). As a result the flooding study that was commissioned, text changes were made to the SPD itself. These are documented in the Table 16 below.
- 3.44 Further transport work was also commissioned. This work, like the flooding work, fed into the SPD and resulted in a number of changes to the figures in the SPD itself, as well as several text changes, all of which are documented below.
- 3.45 Comments on the Scoping Report were received from English Heritage and the Oxford Preservation Trust. As a result of the comments made from Oxford Preservation Trust and the findings of the SEA Combined Screening and Scoping Report, additional work was undertaken and text added to the SPD in relation to the historic views and vision into and out of the site. The text changes are linked to the SEA objective heritage.
- 3.46 Table 16 below shows the mitigation measures that were incorporated into the document as a result of the studies and further work. However, the SEA recommends a couple of additional mitigation measures to be taken forward in light, in particular of the climate change SEA objective. Investigation into the potential for an energy centre should be continued as the site is moved forward as this could be a significant positive benefit for both the Oxpens site and the West End as a whole.

3.47 Table 16 showing mitigation measures added to document by SEA topic

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	3.53 – 3.55 added	<p>3.53 As part of the development of the Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), all reasonable efforts have been made to fully understand flood risk issues to the Oxpens site, likely impacts to flood risk subsequent to development and, the potential need for flood risk mitigation. The flood risk analysis undertaken was based upon the best available information at the time of writing, as used by the Environment Agency to produce the published Flood Map.</p> <p>3.54 It was identified that there are inherent uncertainties associated with current understanding of flood risk and it is not possible, therefore, to definitively report on the extent or severity of flood risk and, whether there would indeed be a need for mitigation and if so, the scale of that mitigation. A short technical note was produced to support this analysis and circulated between project partners.</p> <p>3.55 It is recommended therefore, that a more detailed analysis of flood risk is undertaken for the site, subsequent to the publication of the Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), as better information becomes available and prior to the progression of the site beyond this master plan stage. The Environment Agency are due to deliver an updated, and more representative, hydraulic model for the River Thames through Oxford during the summer of 2013, this model will be used to identify development impacts and appropriate mitigation measures prior to the site being taken forward.</p>
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	Additions made to 3.56-3.57	<p>Identification of a flood mitigation zone to inform the master plan:</p> <p>3.56 Oxford City Council has considered a range of flood mitigation schemes during a high level scoping exercise undertaken by Atkins. The key reference document for flood mitigation schemes is the <i>Oxpens Compensatory Flood Storage Pre-Feasibility Study</i>. This study was commissioned by Oxford City Council and prepared by Atkins in June 2007 in agreement with the Environment Agency that further investigations would be undertaken as plans for the site progress.</p> <p>3.57 The study considered three potential options for flood storage / mitigation worth of further investigation to manage flood risk at the Oxpens site. These options included options on both banks of the River Thames (Isis):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Option on the left bank only;</i>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Option on the right bank only;</i> and • <i>Option considering both left and right banks.</i>
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	Figure 3.6 added	Flood Mitigation (left bank) diagram included from pre-feasibility work
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	3.79 – 3.81 added	<p><u>Change in Levels on boundary between BRBR & OCC land</u></p> <p>3.79 As stated under in Flood Risk / Mitigation in this chapter the southern half of the BRBR land includes an area that is at a lower level than adjacent land. The neighbouring site of the Oxford coach station and car park is at a higher level and the boundary between the BRBR land and OCC land holding, at the rear of the coach / car park is marked by a retaining wall and notable change in levels.</p> <p>3.80 The change in levels will need to be addressed with earth works to ensure the two areas can be unified to ensure delivery of a connected comprehensive development scheme.</p> <p>3.81 Figure 3.8 Site Features Plan illustrates the lower area of land in the BRBR land ownership, the dashed line to the east of the lower land area notes the location of retaining wall and most notable step change in levels between the BRBR and OCC land holdings.</p>
SEA Objective 1:	Part of 5.42 added	<p>5.42 The need to incorporate a flood mitigation solution to enable the development of the Oxpens site provides the opportunity to reshape the form of Oxpens Meadow to create an attractive public open space that can accommodate a range of activities including outdoor events and performances. The landform can provide scope for sitting and overlooking performance areas. This idea promotes the concept of Oxpens Meadow as a multi-function space. Other solutions may be possible and Oxpens Meadow provides an exciting opportunity to engage with local stakeholders to consider a range of uses and create a multi-functional space that serves the needs of the wider community, both existing and future local residents.</p>
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	7.10 – 7.12 amended and added	<p>Phase 1a: Oxpens Meadow – Flood mitigation and landscape scheme</p> <p>7.10 A detailed scheme for flood mitigation and a landscape scheme for Oxpens Meadow should be approved, by the Environment Agency, and implemented prior to the occupation of any development on which would be at risk of flooding.</p>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
		<p>7.11 Whilst undertaking the landform works a landscape scheme for Oxpens Meadow should be constructed in line with the landscape design proposal, so that the changes in level required for flood mitigation can be formed to create the appropriate setting for other landscape features proposed.</p> <p>7.12 The location of Civil War defences recorded on historic maps of the city coincides with part of the area identified for flood mitigation works. The need to undertake archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording could delay implementation of development proposals if not factored into the overall development plan.</p>
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	7.15 and 7.17 added	<p>7.15 The development plots will provide the 'enabling development' to generate capital required ensure viability contributing to the funding of the flood mitigation and landscaping scheme at Oxpens Meadow.</p> <p>7.17 Whilst redevelopment and construction work could progress in parallel to the flood mitigation and landscape scheme, no occupation of the area of redevelopment would be permitted until the flood mitigation scheme has been completed, to protect the Oxpens site from more extreme flood events.</p>
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	7.22 added	<p>7.22 An important consideration for this area is the change in levels within the BRBR land, particularly the change in levels between the (lower) BRBR land and the (higher) OCC land. The master plan assumes a comprehensive redevelopment scheme for the whole of Oxpens with ground levels being aligned to create a level development platform. Should this area be phased at a different time to the land identified in phase 3 the change in levels will need particular attention to develop solutions for the ground levels.</p>
SEA Objective: 9 Biodiversity	3.83-3.87 added	<p>Ecological Features</p> <p>3.83 Oxpens Meadow is the greatest existing landscape feature, mostly comprising open, short mown grassland with trees and other vegetation along the waterside edges to the River Thames/Isis and Castle Mill Stream.</p> <p>3.84 Aerial photography including Figure 1.1 has illustrated trees within the central section of the site, within the BRBR land ownership area. The majority of these trees and vegetation has been cleared since the aerial photography has been taken, creating a predominantly vacant development plot on the BRBR land.</p> <p>3.85 Smaller areas of tree planting exist along some site boundaries including:</p>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
SEA Objective: 9 Biodiversity	5.16 bullet point added	<p>o The eastern edge of the Oxford Business Centre, screening the site from adjacent sites;</p> <p>o Some and trees adjacent Oxpens Road, at the northern end of Oxpens Meadow;</p> <p>o Both long edges of the Oxford Ice Rink plot – screening to the current coach & public parking area on one side and a more formal row of trees along the edge adjacent to Oxpens Meadow open space.</p> <p>3.86 Where possible the existing trees to the edge of Oxpens Road and the edge of the Ice Rink addressing Oxpens Meadow should be retained. Trees and vegetation along the waterside edges to the River Thames/Isis and Castle Mill Stream should be retained where possible, although this will be subject to detailed design considerations in the reprofiling of Oxpens Meadow to accommodate flood mitigation.</p> <p>3.87 Further details regarding ecological features in the Oxford West End are presented in ecological studies and previous SEA for the WEAAP.</p> <p>5.16 Oxpens should showcase best practice in sustainable development. Sustainability should be integrated throughout the development proposals, not bolted on as an optional extra. Sustainability embraces the physical development, social interactions and economic opportunities. Sustainable design should include reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing water and flood risk; • Improving connections; • Sustainable building design; • Sustainable urban drainage (SUDS); • Sustainable energy – potential accommodation of a CHP Energy Centre; • Promoting bio-diversity, particularly by protecting and enhancing ecological assets in Oxpens Meadow; • Sustaining the significance of the city’s renowned historic environment; • Providing city centre housing; • Integrating movement options (car clubs, cycle facilities); • Creating employment opportunities; <i>and</i> • Supporting the vitality of the wider Oxford West End and City Centre.

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
SEA Objective: 9 Biodiversity	6.113-6.115 added	<p>Physical Sustainability: Ecological Assets</p> <p>6.113 Ecological assets, especially the landscape features in Oxpens Meadow, notably adjacent the watercourses of the River Thames/Isis and Castle Mill Stream should, where possible, be protected. The enhancement of leisure routes through Oxpens Meadow will improve public access to these landscape assets. Flood mitigation works will require some land reprofiling and landscaping works but the reshaped Oxpens Meadow will be supplemented by new landscape features including new tree planting.</p> <p>6.114 The West End Area Action Plan provides further details of ecological considerations in the Oxford West End.</p> <p>6.115 Further information is also provided in the <i>Ecological Constraints Report (Atkins, September 2011)</i> that BRBR commissioned for their land holding within the Oxpens site.</p>
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	3.39 added	<p>3.39 The location of Civil War defences recorded on historic maps of the city coincides with part of the area identified for flood mitigation works. The need to undertake archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording could delay implementation of development proposals if not factored into the overall development plan.</p>
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	3.43-3.46 added	<p>Historic precedent issues</p> <p>3.43 The site lies on the edge of the former historic suburb of St. Ebbes, whilst elements of St Thomas’s suburb lie between it and the city centre. These areas are characterised by a complex pattern of narrow streets and red brick terraced houses, interspersed with larger buildings associated with former industrial use set around courtyards and with large frontage blocks. This form may help inform the design approach adopted. Further information on this issue noted in Chapter 6, Master Plan.</p> <p>West Oxford Historic Context Study</p> <p>3.44 Further information on the historic pattern of development in the Oxford West End can be found in the West Oxford Historic Context Study (March 2012, Oxford Archaeology). References of interest to the Oxpens site contained within the Context Study report relate to how districts around Oxpens have evolved. References of interest include:</p> <p>West Oxford Historical Overview:</p> <p>3.2,28 “The areas of older housing just outside the city centre were subject to sporadic clearance from the 1930s. St. Thomas’s lost a large part of its population as a result of slum clearance combined with commercial development: the castle mill was demolished in</p>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
		<p>1930, and Paradise Street, Tidmarsh Lane, Park End Street, and Hythe Bridge Street were given over to offices, warehouses, and garages. Beginning in the 1960s a long period of change has seen the disappearance of older housing cleared away as slum dwellings in both St Thomas' and St Ebbe's, the re-alignment of roads (particularly Oxpens Road) the proliferation of car-parks, the erosion of evidence for the earlier industrial and commercial activity in the area..."</p> <p>3.45 The above extract from the <i>Historical Overview</i> identifies how land uses have changed with the loss of finer grain uses, replaced car parks and highways engineering. The extract shows the historic precedent for mixed use development with heritage of finer grain residential streets and larger plots for commercial enterprise which the Oxpens master plan could seek to replicate in a contemporary form.</p> <p>Greyfriars and Paradise Areas of West Oxford, assessment of significance:</p> <p>5.5.2 Community Significance: <i>This area contains a number of residents in houses and apartments, in isolated islands and split from other main residential and recreational areas by the very busy Oxpens Road and large land unit car parks. Apart from Paradise Square the modern housing bears little relation to the pre-Victorian topography and the large-scale developments (plot size and mass) have overwhelmed the remaining historic features. The significance of the area is currently reduced by the delayed development and associated blight although recent redevelopment along St Ebbes has markedly improved this streetscene. Roads, car-parking, the Westgate Centre and College (OCVC) also make this a familiar area for workers. For the tourist/visitor arriving via the car parks or main coach park (Oxpens), who will mostly be unaware of the heritage of the area, the initial experience of the historic city is dismal in particular the sign-posted route to the city beneath the multi-storey car park. Approached from this low-lying area, the historic city is largely hidden from view and the road system and poor signage add to the confusion and bleakness of this major gateway to the city for many visitors. Sparse greenery is provided by churchyards/college gardens –with the exception of Paradise Square which has mature trees but with its air of neglect and reputation for anti-social use is little visited. Castle Mill Stream is screened from Oxpens Road and has an air of neglect. Oxford Preservation Trust buildings, Littlegate House and the buildings in Paradise Square offer a rare and much appreciated tangible reminder of the former character of the area the redevelopment of which was a key event in the modern history of the city. Its lost schools, pubs, work places, and shops still hold important memories and associations for many local families now living elsewhere in the city.</i></p> <p>3.46 The above extract regarding <i>Community Significance</i> further identifies a rich mixture of community land uses have largely been lost, replaced by car parks, highways engineering and island blocks of more recent residential infill development. This extract clearly states how the current Oxpens Road area presents a poor image for visitor, with a</p>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
		lack of clear connection to the historic city. Improving the appearance of the area with high quality urban design, architecture and public realm is an objective of the Oxpens master plan, improving connections and links to the historic city is also an important objective.
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	Fig 3.8 amended in conjunction with Para. 3.47	Paragraph 3.47 amended to include the following features of the historic environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation area - Archaeological considerations - Heritage assets
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	3.82 added	Conservation Areas 3.82 The Oxpens site forms part of the settings of both the city's Central (City and University) Conservation Area and the Osney Town Conservation Area, notably in longer range views of the city and views from Osney Cemetery. The impact of development in the Conservation Areas' settings will be a material consideration in determining planning applications, which is both a constraint and an opportunity for development proposals to consider.
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	3.88-3.90 added	Archaeological Considerations 3.88 The site does have some potential for archaeological remains of the medieval abbey and Civil War defensive works (including Hart's Sconce), which are likely to be of 'at least' local significance, but possibly of greater significance depending on their nature, condition and extent. Development proposals that will affect these should be informed by the results of archaeological evaluation undertaken to a brief agreed by the City's Archaeologist prior to the submission of a planning application. 3.89 The location of Civil War defences recorded on historic maps of the city coincides with part of the area identified for flood mitigation works. The need to undertake archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording could delay implementation of development proposals if not factored into the overall development plan. Heritage Assets 3.90 Heritage Officers have not yet undertaken an assessment of what up-standing heritage remains within the site. Whilst much of the railway sidings landscape has been cleared of historic features, any small structures that survive and illustrate previous land uses could be retained within large development to help to retain a sense of connection with the past as well as adding detail and interest. Such buildings should be identified at an early stage in developing

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	5.16	development proposals and consideration given to how they may be put to beneficial use within the new development. Sustaining the significance of the city's renowned historic environment; added to bullet point list
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	6.8 - 6.10 added	<p>Urban Blocks and Urban Grain:</p> <p>6.8 Informed by the issues listed above the Development Framework establishes a clear network of urban blocks that are proportioned to have flexibility to accommodate a range of potential appropriate land uses.</p> <p>6.9 The urban grain varies with slightly larger urban blocks on the main street frontages to Oxpens Road and Osney Lane, with a finer grain of streets and development blocks within the central core of the Oxpens site.</p> <p>6.10 This approach has local precedent in the historic urban morphology of St. Ebbes and St Thomas's that have presented patterns of narrow streets of housing, interspersed with larger buildings associated with non-residential uses, as noted in Site Features.</p>
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	6.72-6.78 added	<p>6.72 Further detail in relation to the roofscape design is noted under Oxford skyline and view cone issues, as follows.</p> <p>6.73 Oxford Skyline: Key View Cone Points</p> <p>6.74 Oxford has protected view cones, of long-distance views into the city from sites on the outskirts of the city. The view cone policy (Policy HE10) protects the distinctive skyline of Oxford, the city of 'Dreaming Spires'.</p> <p>6.75 The prominence of this site in views of the City Centre from the western hills, and in the City Council's protected view cones in particular has been explored as Oxford City Council officers, including the Heritage Officer have undertaken site visits to consider the potential impact of the Oxpens site.</p> <p>6.76 The site visits informed the Officers conclusion that the three most important view points from which development at Oxpens is visible are Port Meadow; Raleigh Park; and Boars Hill. These are official view cone points and will be used by Officers in determining the impact of new development at the Oxpens site on the spires and historic landscape.</p>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
		<p>6.77 Another important location for views is Hinksey Golf Course. Although this is not an official view cone location (when the viewcones were developed it was private land that wasn't accessible to the public), now that it is a golf course, members of the golf course may view Oxford from this location.</p> <p>6.78 Photography of the views from the three key view cone points is presented in Figure 6.5, Oxford Skyline: Photography from View Cone Points.</p>
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	6.79 added	<p>View cone points design considerations:</p> <p>6.79 The Oxpens development should seek to minimise its impact upon the Oxford skyline, to help ensure views of the city from the stated view cones are not unduly affected. Key design features to reduce impact up skyline and view cones include the following points that need to be considered in design proposals for Oxpens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken building lines are encouraged to prevent a flat building mass; • Variation in roof lines is desirable, particularly on frontages to key streets – notably Oxpens Road; • Roofscape materials need to be selected so that they do not appear stark against the landscape and blend with the overall palette of the city although there is always the possibility for a special form to perhaps use copper, as many of the spires do; • The loss of trees that currently contribute to the character of these views will be a particular impact of this development. Where possible existing trees should be retained within Oxpens Meadow; <i>and</i> • New trees should be incorporated where possible in the public and private realm. Oxpens Road and routes within the site are identified as key locations for street tree planting. Street trees and trees within private gardens and communal courtyards will contribute to the green feel and appearance of the Oxpens site. The Development Framework Plan illustrates the location of key tree lined streets. <p>Pictures from the view cones added</p>
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	Fig 6.5	
SEA Objective: 10 Cultural Heritage	7.12 added	<p>7.12 The location of Civil War defences recorded on historic maps of the city coincides with part of the area identified for flood mitigation works. The need to undertake archaeological evaluation, investigation and recording could delay implementation of development proposals if not factored into the overall development plan.</p>
SEA Objective: 11	5.22 added	<p>5.22 A comprehensive scheme of public realm improvements is required to enhance the quality of Oxpens Road,</p>

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
Transport		improving the physical form and function of the street, and improving access and experience for pedestrians and cyclists. This should be agreed with Oxfordshire County Council as Highways Authority. The specification of public realm treatments should be in accordance with the <i>Oxford City Centre Street Scene Manual</i> .
SEA Objective: 11 Transport	5.25 added	5.25 The proposed Becket Street extension will create an alternative route for traffic reducing vehicular flow on Oxpens Road, which in turn should help improve conditions for pedestrian and cyclist crossing and links to the wider Oxford West End. The proposal to create a 'through route' running through the Oxpens site, connecting Oxpens Road to Becket Street will provide an alternative route. This proposal is reliant upon solution for the existing Becket Street. Proposals for Becket Street are yet to be confirmed but are likely to include the creation of a two-way vehicular route with current on-street parking potentially to be relocated from Becket Street to Osney Lane.
SEA Objective: 11 Transport	5.33 – 5.34 added	5.33 A key connection to improve is route for pedestrians and cyclists from the riverside (and potential bridge crossing), across Oxpens Meadow, across Oxpens Road, connecting north through the wider Oxford West End to link to the City Centre. 5.34 Walking and cycling links through to the wider Oxford West End will be enhanced by improved crossing points along Oxpens Road, improving access between Oxpens and important local features including the Westgate Centre, the Castle, Castle Mill Stream, and proposed attractions including the Magnet. The Becket Street extension proposals (as referenced in DP4) are intended to help reduce vehicular traffic on Oxpens Road and enhance the potential for crossing of Oxpens Road.
SEA Objective 13: Climate Change	Add new 3.103 re: district heating	Suggest the following at 3.103 A range of complimentary land uses that has the potential to ensure activity is generated at different times of the day provides a good potential for a base-load for a community energy system
	5.16 bullet point added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable energy – potential accommodation of a CHP Energy Centre;
	5.56 added	5.56 The site may be able to accommodate an Energy Centre, subject to detailed design considerations. The site was identified in the Oxford West End Sustainable Energy Study (Stage 3 report, December 2008, Arup on behalf of Oxford City Council) as having the potential to accommodate an Energy Centre with associated district heating network.
	6.7 bullet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential locations for an Energy Centre, other suitable locations may also exist, all subject to detail design

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
	point added	testing.
	6.13 bullet point added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A potential Energy Centre.
	6.43 – 6.46 added	<p>Energy Centre</p> <p>6.43 The site may be able to accommodate an energy centre, subject to detailed design considerations.</p> <p>6.44 Policy WE13 in the Oxford West End Area Action Plan requires a community energy scheme to be developed within the Oxford West End. The Oxpens site was identified in the <i>Oxford West End Sustainable Energy Study</i> (Stage 3 report, December 2008, Arup on behalf of Oxford City Council) as having the potential to accommodate an Energy Centre with associated district heating network.</p> <p>6.45 Potential locations for an energy centre are identified on the Development Framework Plan and illustrative Master Plan. Other locations may also exist. All are subject to detailed design testing.</p> <p>6.46 Incorporating an energy centre into the site will require a sensitive design approach with due consideration of neighbouring adjacent land uses. Any proposal for an energy centre and/ or related infrastructure will require consideration of issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of plot: The <i>Oxford West End Sustainable Energy Study</i> includes illustration of CHP energy centre buildings in two scenarios including a 30m x 20m building footprint and a 20m x 20m building footprint. The size of plot may be larger than these dimensions as external site area may be required for access, servicing, deliveries, parking and landscaping. • Access: Energy Centre plant would require access for servicing. The plot may need to accommodate space for vehicle turning. • Deliveries: An indication of the frequency and scale of deliveries would be beneficial to inform location. Timings of deliveries may need control.

SEA Objective	Paragraph	Mitigation proposed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design: Any Energy Centre plant would need a high standard of architectural design to ensure it integrates with the adjacent development. • Location: An Energy Centre should be located to minimise visual impact on and from the public realm. Such a facility should not be located on main routes or frontages, preferably should be positioned within a block on 'back' streets to minimise visual impact.

Proposed Measures to Monitor the Significant Effects of Implementing the SPD

3.48 Monitoring is a fundamental activity that allows us to assess the level of implementation of the plan or programme and also perceive the impacts and effects of the SPD.

3.49 The City Council produces an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), which documents the progress of Oxford's Local Plan.

3.50 The AMR includes indicators measuring and assessing the sustainability effects of implementing a number of policy documents.

3.51 Table 17 below shows possible indicators to monitor implementation of the Oxpens SPD.

SEA Objective	Indicator	Target	Where Monitored?
SEA Objective 1: Flooding	<p>Permissions granted in Flood Zone 3b</p> <p>Applications in areas of flood risk (or over 1 hectare) submitted with a FRA</p> <p>Number of approvals for development incorporating sustainable drainage systems</p>	<p>Only water compatible uses and essential infrastructure permitted</p> <p>100% of such applications to be submitted with an FRA</p> <p>All schemes where practicable</p>	<p>West End AAP</p> <p>Core Strategy</p>
SEA Objective 9: Biodiversity	Improvements made to green spaces and waterside environments	Enhancement of Castle Mill Stream to create a streamside park	West End AAP
SEA Objective 10: Heritage	Number of schemes that have considered the issue in their Design and Access Statement	Enhancement of Oxpens Field	West End AAP
SEA Objective 11: Transport	<p>New links created</p> <p>Improvements made to the street environment</p> <p>Road congestion and Average Daily Motor Vehicle Flows</p>	<p>100% of schemes granted planning permission demonstrate consideration of historic environment in Design and Access Statement</p> <p>Provision of new links as set out in the AAP</p> <p>Improvements as set out in the AAP</p> <p>Reduce</p>	West End AAP
SEA Objective 13: Climate Change	Number of schemes approved that meet the requirements of the NRA SPD (and/or Sites and Housing Plan where relevant)	100% of schemes approved comply with the requirements of the NRA SPD (and/ or Sites and Housing Plan where relevant)	<p>Core Strategy CS9</p> <p>Sites and Housing Plan HP11</p>

Consultation

Task D1: Consulting on the Draft Plan or programme and Environmental Report

3.52 The Consultation Bodies were consulted at the Scoping Stage. Table 18 summarises the comments received in relation to the SEA Combined Screening and Scoping Report.

Comments Received at Scoping Stage and Actions Taken		
Agency	Comment	Actions
English Heritage	<p>We note that the Council concludes that it is not able to rule out that the SPD would give rise to any significant environmental effects, including potentially on the historic environment. Accordingly, it considers that a SEA is required in relation to a number of topics, including cultural heritage.</p> <p>Our records indicate that the Oxpens site does not include any designated heritage assets. Nevertheless, you have rightly identified potential impacts of development on the site on townscape character and below-ground heritage. We are pleased to note that you have consulted your Council's Heritage Team on these matters.</p> <p>English Heritage finds no reason to disagree with the Council's conclusions and, in the light of its conclusion regarding the historic environment, is pleased to see that cultural heritage has been scoped in. However, we would be happy to defer to the views of your Heritage Team, should they be different to ours.</p> <p>If cultural heritage remains scoped in, you might find the English Heritage guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessments, Sustainability Appraisals and the Historic Environment of use. This identifies sources of information for the baseline, sustainability objectives and decision-making criteria. It can be found using the following link:</p> <p>http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/strategic-environmental-assessment-sustainability-appraisal-historic-environment/</p>	<p>Heritage Team consulted regarding above and below ground heritage.</p> <p>Detailed comments regarding indicative masterplan were received and taken account of in drafting the SPD.</p>
Oxford Preservation Trust	<p>The Trust agrees with the report's conclusion that SEA is required. The Trust's comments are limited to the references in the report at Table 3 and Table 4 to Cultural Heritage.</p> <p>The Trust notes that in Table 3 against "cultural heritage..." it states that "current policies exist in the Core Strategy and the West End AAP which will ensure that these matters are unlikely to have</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>Noted.</p>

	<p>significant effects on the environment.” The Trust’s short point in this regard is that there should also be a reference to/an acknowledgement of the relevant ‘saved’ Local Plan Heritage Policies i.e. Policies HE.9 (High Building Area) and Policy HE.10 (View Cones).</p> <p>This point then follows through in to Table 4 where there the Trust would like to see an additional ‘vision’ item; namely, protecting views of the skyline of Oxford’ historic centre. The relevant policies in this regard are ‘saved’ Local Plan Policies HE.9 & HE.10 and Core Strategy Policy CS18.</p>	<p>Additional “vision” item not explicitly added but potential impacts on the historic skyline of the city have been considered. References added to the document at sections 3.43-3.46 (historic context) and 6.72-6.79 (views/ vision). Figure 6.5 added (views/ vision)</p>
SENDRA	<p>SA / SEA: Welcome decision for this assessment to be undertaken, and along with other stakeholders wish to be consulted on the scope, preparation and conclusions of SA/SEA.</p> <p>SA/SEA: Consider the scope of the SA/SEA should include: managing water & flood risk; improving connections; building design; housing; integrated movement; employment opportunities; vitality of West End; noise management; air pollution; road safety; biodiversity and school provision.</p>	<p>SEA limited to those elements of the SPD that go further than what was appraised at the time of the West End AAP SA. See combined screening/ scoping report April 2013 for further details.</p>
Environment Agency	<p>The SEA findings should inform the master plan and design principles by identifying all features of ecological interest, within the site and incorporating wildlife, mitigation and enhancement into the development, in accordance with the LA duties under the NERC Act 2006.</p> <p>The EA responded to the Screening/ Scoping Consultation as follows:</p> <p><i>The SEA screening and scoping report recognises the need to fully assess and where necessary provide mitigation for works which could impact on the function of the floodplain. To support any planning application, a detailed Flood Risk Assessment will need to be undertaken in line with the requirements of the NPPF.</i></p> <p><i>We welcome the commitment in Table 5 to scope in both Flood Risk and Biodiversity into the SEA and are pleased to see that it recognises that additional work will be required to allow development at this location.</i></p>	<p>SEA includes biodiversity as an indicator. An assessment of the SPD has been made in the context of this SEA objective. Amendments have been made to the SPD with regard to biodiversity enhancement opportunities.</p> <p>The comments in respect of the SEA Screening and Scoping have been noted. We will continue to work with the EA to ensure</p>

	<p><i>At this stage in the planning process, i.e. at the SPD/Master Planning stage, we consider that flood risk is a significant enough constraint to require technical assessment to support the development proposals and as such have requested that this work is carried out by Oxford City Council. An initial assessment based on the current best available information has been completed in support of the SPD document.</i></p> <p><i>We would welcome continued consultation on this development as the planning process progresses.</i></p>	<p>that flood risk is dealt with in an appropriate manner as the development moves forward.</p>
<p>Natural England</p>	<p>Natural England sent an email stating the following:</p> <p><i>Natural England has no comments to make with respect to the above consultation, other than to concur with the conclusions as set out in section 5.</i></p>	<p>Comments noted.</p>

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening: Correspondence with Natural England

Rebecca Tibbetts,
Natural England,
Foxhold House,
Crookham Common,
Thatcham,
Berkshire,
RG19 8EL

Planning Policy

01865 252718 or 01865 252163

planningpolicy@oxford.gov.uk

Please ask for: Sarah Harrison or
Steve Pickles

12th January 2007

Dear Ms Tibbetts,

Appropriate Assessment of Oxford's West End Area Action Plan

The Planning Policy department at Oxford City Council is currently working on an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Oxford's West End. In case you are not aware, the West End is the southwest quarter of the City centre, bounded by Hythe Bridge Street, Oxpens Road, St. Aldates and the railway line. The area covered is shown on the attached plan. It is expected that 600 new units of residential accommodation will be developed in the area, as well as new student accommodation, new tourist facilities and some new offices. A key aim of the West End AAP will be to improve the public realm and green spaces in the area, offering enhanced recreational opportunities. You may have come across the preferred options document, but if not, information is available on our website at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/planning/west-end-aap.cfm>. The draft Area Action Plan will be submitted for Examination to the Secretary of State in June.

The area covered by the West End Area Action Plan is at its closest point 800 metres from the southern edge of Port Meadow, which forms part of the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation. For this reason the City Council has carried out a Screening of likely impacts on this European site, which is contained below, and which concludes that there is unlikely to be any significant impact and that an Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required. I would be grateful if you would let me know whether you agree with this conclusion.

Appropriate assessment of plans that could affect Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) for habitats (SACs) is required by article 6 (3) of the European Habitats Directive, which states:

'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'

The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle to SACs. Plans and projects can only be permitted if it can be shown that they will have no significant adverse effect on the integrity of the site in question. They may still be permitted if there are no alternatives to them and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest as to why they should go ahead. In such cases, compensation will be necessary to ensure the overall integrity of the site network.

Relevant European Sites

Figure 1 shows the location of the area covered by the West End Area Action Plan and the nearest European sites. There are three SACs within 15 kilometres of the area covered by the West End Area Action Plan. These are:

- Oxford Meadows: which is located 800 metres away at the closest point;
- Cothill Fen: which is located 7 kilometres away;
- Little Wittenham: which is located 15 kilometres away.

It is considered that the West End Area Action Plan could not have an adverse impact on either Cothill Fen or Little Wittenham. Cothill Fen is an alkaline fen dependent on a high water table and calcareous, base-rich water supply. As Cothill Fen is in the catchment of the River Ock which is a different catchment, it could not have an adverse impact on this site. Little Wittenham has been designated because it contains two ponds with large populations of great crested newts. As development in Oxford's West End will not affect the habitat in the ponds or the newts foraging habitat around them, the West End Area Action Plan could not have an adverse impact on this site. These two sites have therefore been excluded from further assessment in this screening exercise.

Oxford Meadows: Qualifying features and Environmental Requirements

The citation for the Oxford Meadows SAC states that:

*'Oxford Meadows includes vegetation communities that are perhaps unique in reflecting the influence of long-term grazing and hay-cutting on lowland hay meadows. The site has benefited from the survival of traditional management, which has been undertaken for several centuries, and so exhibits good conservation of structure and function. Port Meadow is the largest of only three known sites in the UK for creeping marshwort *Apium repens*.*

Qualifying habitats: The site is designated under article 4 (4) of the Directive 992/43/EEC) as it hosts the following habitats listed in Annex I:

- Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*)

Qualifying species: The site is designated under article 4 (4) of the Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the following species listed in Annex II:

- Creeping marshwort *Apium repens*.

Environmental Requirements

The following key environmental requirements to support the SAC's integrity were identified at an appropriate assessment screening workshop carried out for the South East Plan:

1. Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing.
2. Absence of direct fertilisation.
3. Minimal air pollution.
4. Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality.
5. Balanced hydrological regime – alteration to adjacent rivers may alter flooding regime and reduce botanical diversity.

A further workshop on appropriate assessment for the Oxford Core Strategy was held on the 20th October 2006 at which the additional issue of ensuring that recreational pressures are maintained at a reasonable level was also raised as an issue.

Possible Impacts of the West End Area Action Plan (AAP)

A34 goes through the SAC

Table 1. Likely impacts of AAP on environmental requirements of Oxford Meadows

Environmental Requirement of Oxford Meadows	Likely impact of AAP	Likely risk to site integrity
1. Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing.	None – related to activities directly at the site, which AAP will not affect.	No
2. Absence of direct fertilisation.		
3. Minimal air pollution	Additional development in the West End may increase traffic movements into Oxford. However, the area is very sustainably located with excellent public transport links as the railway station and Gloucester Green Bus Station are located within the area covered by the AAP. The area is also readily accessible from other parts of Oxford by walking and cycling and the AAP proposes to improve these links. There will be very limited residential and commercial parking and no increase in public parking, with the intention of helping to ensure car use is not increased. Given the large number of vehicles which travel along the A34 the impact on pollution levels deriving from this source of increased traffic from the West End is considered to be imperceptible.	Little or no impact.
4. Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters: good water quality.	Although relatively close to the Oxford Meadows, Oxford's West End is downstream of the site, so any pollution of surface water run	Little or no impact.

	<p>off could not affect the Oxford Meadows. Sewage treatment will be dealt with at Sandford Sewage Treatment Works, which is located just outside Oxford on its southern boundary, downstream of the SAC.</p>	
5. Balanced hydrological regime	<p>Water to serve development in the West End would come from Farmoor reservoir, which derives its water from the Thames. There is the potential for water abstraction from the Thames to affect the hydrology of Oxford Meadows. Water levels in the Thames have not dropped enough to affect the meadows since the drought of 1976, but climate change and increased water abstraction could potentially lead to this in the future. However, use of water for development of the West End would be a tiny proportion of the total extracted from the Thames and in itself is not likely to have a significant impact.</p> <p>The West End AAP Preferred Options Document states that 'to cater for development in the West End, alternative flood-plain capacity may be needed. It could be provided within the West End, or may be more appropriately located outside the area, further upstream.' If the compensation was provided upstream it is possible that the works could affect the hydrology of Port Meadow.</p>	<p>Unlikely to be significant impact in terms of water abstraction. If flood compensation is provided upstream of the West End, it will be important to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are included to prevent it having an adverse impact on the hydrology of the Oxford Meadows. Flood compensation is currently being investigated as part of a SFRA of the West End.</p>
6. Balanced use for recreational pressures	<p>Public consultation carried out by Scott Wilson as part of their 'Oxford City Green Space Study' revealed that people are willing to walk approximately 1,900 metres to important green spaces and 750 metres to neighbourhood sites. As the West End is 800 metres from the southern end of Port Meadow it is likely that some people will use this area of the SAC for recreational purposes. Extensive public use is already made of Port Meadow for informal recreation without an adverse impact on <i>Apium repens</i>, the species for which it has been designated a SAC. This species is not particularly sensitive to trampling and also thrives in the wettest areas, where there is least recreational pressure for most of the year. The remaining areas of the SAC are at least 3,500 metres away beyond Port Meadow, and it is considered that recreational use of these areas is unlikely to increase significantly as a result of implementation of the West End AAP.</p> <p>A key aim of the West End development will be to improve the public realm and green spaces</p>	<p>Unlikely to be significant</p>

	<p>in the area, offering enhanced recreational opportunities. Key of these will be the creation of a linear park along Castle Mill Stream, improvements to Oxpens Field and to the path along the Thames. Amenity space and play areas to serve the new residential development will also be required. It is expected therefore that many recreational needs will be met within the West End, which will reduce the pressure on Port Meadow. There are also already extensive alternative areas of green space that residents of the West End would be able to use including Grandpont Nature Park; Christchurch Meadows; the University Parks; Oxpens recreation ground; the Thames path long distance trail and the canal towpath.</p>	
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Possible 'in combination' impacts

Table 2 shows other plans, programmes and underlying trends, which could affect the environmental requirements of Oxford Meadows and lead to 'in combination' impacts.

Table 2. Likely 'in combination' impacts on environmental requirements of Oxford Meadows

Environmental requirements of Oxford Meadows	Likely Impact of Other Plans, projects and Trends	Likely 'in combination' risk to site integrity
<p>1. Maintenance of traditional hay cut and light aftermath grazing.</p> <p>2. Absence of direct fertilisation.</p>	<p>The A34 goes through the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation. Improvements/widening to the A34 could potentially have a significant impact on the SAC through land take. The draft South East Plan states that 'Premium bus routes with frequent, high quality services will also be needed to link the country towns to Oxford, supported by bus priority measures and remote park and ride. There is also a need for improved rail services on the A34 corridor, particularly as this is unlikely to be widened and the government is considering demand management measures. East West Rail is crucial to linking the sub-region to Milton Keynes and supporting development at Bicester. So is enhanced capacity at Oxford station (linked to essential resignalling work), if this busy rail corridor is to cope with growth in passenger and freight traffic in the face of limited capacity on A34.' The importance of these measures is further emphasised by the report in the Oxford Times on 15th December 2006 that 'experts at the Highways Agency predict that by 2026 the A34, between the M40 and Didcot, will become one of the most congested roads in the South-East...the A34 is already operating above capacity and ... Oxford city, the only major hub in the region, attracts more than 22,000 car based commuters from the outlying districts every day.'</p>	<p>By taking the opportunity to make more efficient use of the land near the station/bus stations, the West End Area Action Plan will help to reduce pressure on the A34. However, it also represents a unique opportunity to secure improved rail and bus facilities in central Oxford, which are likely to be key in avoiding the need for further widening of the A34.</p>

<p>3. Minimal air pollution</p>	<p>The table below shows where air pollution levels at Oxford Meadows in 1999/2000 exceeded the site’s critical load. Pollution loads were within the critical load for acid deposition, ammonia, nitrogen deposition and SO₂, but near capacity for ozone. Compared to most other European sites in the South East region, Oxford Meadows is relatively unaffected by pollution. Air pollutant levels in the South East are expected to go down until about 2010 – 2015 due to improving technology (particularly for cars), after which they are likely to rise again.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="405 600 976 1124"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="405 600 657 707">pollutant</th> <th data-bbox="657 600 976 707">deposition / critical load</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 707 657 779">acid deposition</td> <td data-bbox="657 707 976 779">0.433</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 779 657 846">ammonia</td> <td data-bbox="657 779 976 846">0.163</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 846 657 913">N deposition</td> <td data-bbox="657 846 976 913">0.772</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 913 657 981">NO_x</td> <td data-bbox="657 913 976 981">0.99</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 981 657 1048">ozone</td> <td data-bbox="657 981 976 1048">1.26</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 1048 657 1124">SO₂</td> <td data-bbox="657 1048 976 1124">0.18</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: http://www.apis.ac.uk</p> <p>Note: The critical air pollutant loads that a given site can accommodate depends on the type of site. In this case, Oxford Meadow has been assumed to be unimproved hay meadow.</p> <p>Key: deposition / critical load</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="405 1496 1066 1608"> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="405 1496 523 1608"><0.25</td> <td data-bbox="523 1496 641 1608">0.25-0.74</td> <td data-bbox="641 1496 759 1608">0.75-0.99</td> <td data-bbox="759 1496 877 1608">1-1.24</td> <td data-bbox="877 1496 995 1608">1.25-1.99</td> <td data-bbox="995 1496 1066 1608">2+</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Development of 47,200 new homes in Oxfordshire as proposed in policy H1 of the draft South East Plan and 80,000 new homes and 2 million square metres of new business floorspace in South Hampshire is likely to increase traffic levels on the A34 and cause reduced air quality.</p>	pollutant	deposition / critical load	acid deposition	0.433	ammonia	0.163	N deposition	0.772	NO _x	0.99	ozone	1.26	SO ₂	0.18	<0.25	0.25-0.74	0.75-0.99	1-1.24	1.25-1.99	2+	<p>Air pollution is likely to worsen at the Oxford Meadows site due to increased traffic levels, particularly on the A34. The West End AAP proposes very limited residential and commercial parking and no increase in public parking, with the intention of helping to ensure car use is not increased. It is unlikely therefore to significantly contribute to these increased pollution levels.</p>
pollutant	deposition / critical load																					
acid deposition	0.433																					
ammonia	0.163																					
N deposition	0.772																					
NO _x	0.99																					
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SO ₂	0.18																					
<0.25	0.25-0.74	0.75-0.99	1-1.24	1.25-1.99	2+																	
<p>4. Absence of nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality</p>	<p>As the area covered by the West End AAP is downstream of the Oxford Meadows, it will not adversely impact on nutrient enrichment or water quality in combination with other plans.</p>	<p>Little or no impact.</p>																				
<p>5. Balanced</p>	<p>Development in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire,</p>	<p>Natural England has</p>																				

hydrological regime	<p>including that in the West End, that uses water from the River Thames catchment upstream of Oxford Meadows could affect the hydrology of the meadows.</p> <p>Gravel extraction to meet the increased primary aggregate targets (South East Plan Policy M3) could affect the hydrology of the site.</p> <p>The Environment Agency's flood alleviation scheme for Oxford, which is likely to consist of enlargement of existing watercourses and/or creating flood relief channels, may affect the flooding regime of the River Thames.</p>	<p>stipulated that a key requirement of the Oxford flood relief scheme is that it does not have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows hydrological regime. Similarly it is important that other plans that could impact on it are also subject to appropriate assessment, but their impact is beyond the scope of this assessment. Given the scale of water abstraction from the Thames and the relatively small scale of development in the West End it is not considered likely that it would cause a perceptible effect on the hydrological regime of the Oxford Meadows, in combination with other plans.</p>
6. Balanced use for recreational pressures	<p>There has been extensive development in the Oxford canal corridor in recent years, but this is now largely complete. Few other sites have been allocated for residential development within 1,900 metres of the SAC in the 'Oxford Local Plan 2001 –2016', though Wolvercote Paper Mill has been allocated for a mix of employment and employment generating uses. Further residential development within this zone could also occur if the Safeguarded Land at Peartree was allocated for residential use in the Oxford Core Strategy. However, while this covers 16 hectares, it is more likely to be developed for employment uses, which is the current preferred option in the Core Strategy. There are few other opportunities for residential development in north Oxford owing to the extensive area of the Oxford flood plain, while access from the existing residential areas of north Oxford is limited by the severance created by the main Oxford to Birmingham railway line.</p>	<p>Unlikely to be significant</p>

Suggested Avoidance Measures

Widening of the A34

There are currently no proposals by the Highways Agency to widen the A34. The road through Oxford is, however, already at capacity and forecasted to become through Oxford one of the most congested roads in the south east. While the development proposed in the West End Area Action Plan is unlikely to have a significant impact on traffic levels on the A34 and the issue of whether in the long term widening is more likely, it does provide a unique opportunity to improve public transport facilities in central Oxford, and thereby reduce the likelihood of such a widening to become necessary.

Ensure that the West End Area Action Plan makes provision for improving rail and bus transport facilities in the West End and does not increase public parking, with very limited residential and commercial parking so as to encourage residents, with the intention of ensuring that car use is not increased.

Air pollution

The Environment Agency's advice⁵ on traffic related pollution is that it needs to be considered if a road carrying a significant proportion of new traffic related to the plan runs within 200 metres of a European site. In the case of the West End Area Action Plan, this will generate some new traffic that will pass along the A34 through the Oxford Meadows SAC. No precise information is available on the volumes of traffic involved. However, it is likely to be very small in terms of the overall levels of traffic along the road. The West End is also located in a very sustainable location, in transport terms, probably more so than almost any other location in Oxfordshire given its location in the centre of Oxford, in an area which includes the railway station and the Gloucester Green Bus Station. Given that large numbers of people commute into Oxford the provision of 600 homes in the heart of Oxford is likely to help reduce commuting in contrast to development in other places close to the A34 that are further away from Oxford, such as Bicester and Didcot. The West End Area Action Plan also provides the opportunity to improve rail and bus facilities in Oxford, thus encouraging more people to travel by public transport and to further limit public and private parking. Therefore it is considered that provided the West End Action Plan does incorporate measures to promote public transport use and limit travel by car, it will not significantly increase traffic along the A34 and exacerbate pollution levels in the vicinity of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Recommend that further information is obtained from the highway authority on whether there is likely to be an increase in traffic generation along the A34 arising from development in the West End Area Action Plan and to ensure that the submission document includes measures designed to improve the use of public transport by improvements to the railway station; bus terminals and by restricting public and private parking in the West End.

Water quality

As development in the West End is downstream of the Oxford Meadows it is considered that it will not lead to any deterioration in water quality on the Oxford Meadows.

Hydrological Regime

The City Council has adopted a Natural Resource Impact Analysis Supplementary Planning Document (NRIA SPD). This requires new developments to look at the issue of minimising the use of water resources, and encourages new developments to look at measures such as water-saving devices; rainwater collection/harvesting and grey water recycling. The preferred target is to achieve a 30% reduction of average

⁵ English Nature (16 May 2006) letter to Runnymede Borough Council, 'Conservation (Natural Habitats&c.) Regulations 1994, Runnymede Borough Council Local Development Framework

water use. Given also the scale of development is small scale compared to the extent of development in other areas of the Thames catchment, it is considered that the impact on the Oxford Meadows hydrological regime would be insignificant. As these measures are already in the NRIA SPD, no further action is required.

Recreational Pressures

The impact on the Oxford Meadows SAC is unlikely to be significant as there are other areas of green space closer at hand that can also be used. A key aim of the West End development will be to improve the public realm and green spaces in the area, offering enhanced recreational opportunities. Key of these will be the creation of a linear park along Castle Mill Stream, improvements to Oxpens Field and to the path along the Thames. Amenity space and play areas to serve the new residential development will also be required. It is expected therefore that many recreational needs will be met within the West End.

While the recreational impact from development in the West End on the Oxford Meadows SAC is unlikely to be significant, the West End AAP will ensure that new recreational provision is made within the area which will help to encourage people to also use other areas for recreational purposes and thereby reduce recreational pressure.

In conclusion, our own screening of the likely impacts of development of the West End on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation has indicated that there are unlikely to be any significant impacts and that an Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required. I would be grateful if you would consider this issue and let me know whether you agree with this conclusion.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Harrison

Senior Planning Officer

Date: 21 February 2007
 Our ref: SP 40.05
 Your ref:



Ms Sarah Harrison
 Oxford City Council
 Ramsay House
 10 St Ebbe's Street
 Oxford
 OX1 1PT

Fenlock Court
 Blenheim Office Park
 Long Hanborough
 Oxfordshire
 OX29 8LN

T 01993 886540
 F 01993 886541

Dear Ms Harrison

Appropriate Assessment of plans that could affect Special Protection Areas for birds (SPAs) or Special Areas of Conservation for Habitats (SACs) as required by Article 6(3) of the European Habitats Directive

Appropriate Assessment of Oxford's West End Area Action Plan

Thank you for your letter of 12 January 2007. This letter is Natural England's formal consultation response under Section 28 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and Regulation 48(3) of the *Habitats Regulations 1994*¹.

Based on the information provided, **Natural England has no objection to the proposed development.** It is our view that, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, it would not be likely to have a significant effect on the interest features of the Oxford Meadows SAC, or any of the features of special scientific interest of the Port Meadow and Wolvercote Common and Green, Pixey and Yarnton Meads, Cassington Meadows and Wolvercote Meadows Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that make up the site. Our detailed reasoning behind this view is set out below:

Air Pollution - The likely risk of air pollution of the West End Action Plan (APP) is acceptable to Natural England. Oxford City Council should be aware that the Appropriate Assessment for the South-East Plan may recommend measures to be followed by all local authorities including some which are not

Natural England
 Head Office
 1 East Parade
 Sheffield S1 2ET

¹ *The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994*

www.naturalengland.org.uk

currently covered by the APP. It may be necessary to amend the APP to take these measures on board. The AAP must ensure that it provides opportunities to improve rail and bus facilities in Oxford and promote public transport use and limit travel by cars to ensure that the development does not exacerbate pollution levels in the vicinity of the Oxford Meadows SAC.

Nutrient enrichment of waters; good water quality - The likely risk of nutrient enrichment of waters of the APP is acceptable to Natural England.

Balanced hydrological regime - Consideration needs to be given to potential future climatic changes and future impacts caused by increased water abstraction. In particular, the Appropriate Assessment suggests that flood-plain capacity will be needed for the APP, which could impact on the hydrology of the Oxford meadows SAC and will require further investigation. To fully implement the precautionary principle for Oxford Meadows SAC, Oxford City Council should ensure that the new development minimise the use of water resources and encourages measures such as water-saving devices, rainwater collection and grey-water recycling. New developments should be water efficient with an excellent BREEAM rating with respect to its water component, exceeding the Government proposed code of Sustainable Construction.

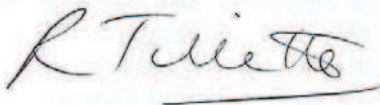
Recreational pressures - The likely risk of nutrient enrichment of waters of the APP is acceptable to Natural England. Ensure that new recreational provisions are made within the area which will help to encourage people to use other areas for recreational purposes.

If the application is amended, Natural England should be re-consulted for a further 21 days in accordance with Circular 08/2005.

Please forward a copy of the decision notice to our office at the above address.

If you have any queries relating to the content of this letter, please contact the author at the above address.

Yours sincerely



DR REBECCA TIBBETTS
Grade II Advisor

Appendix 2: Combined SEA Screening and Scoping Report

Oxpens SPD

Strategic Environmental Assessment
Combined Screening & Scoping Report
Regulation 9 (1) (Screening) & Regulation 12(5) (Scoping)
Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regs 2004



02 April 2013

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been produced to determine the need for, and consult on the scope and level of detail to be included for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations for the proposed Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is twofold. Firstly to undertake a screening assessment that meets the requirements of the European Legislation, applied in the UK through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (SI No. 1633). The Regulations do not require an assessment of the planning merits of the proposals at this stage, instead the requirements is to ascertain whether or not a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required. This process is completely distinct from the planning process and governed by an entirely different set of Environmental Regulations.
- 1.3 The purpose of this document is also to consult the consultation bodies on the level of detail of the information that must be included in the report (also known as scoping). The receipt of this report marks the start of the five-week consultation period in accordance with Regulation 12.
- 1.4 The policy framework for the Oxpens SPD is found in the Oxford Core Strategy (2011), and West End Area Action Plan (2008).
- 1.5 The SPD will be subject to public consultation in accordance with the relevant regulations and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

2. Requirement for SEA

- 2.1 Previously all statutory land-use plans, including Supplementary Planning Documents, required a Sustainability Appraisal which incorporated the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment. This was a requirement under UK Government legislation. However, the 2008 Planning Act⁶ and 2012 Regulations⁷ removed the UK legislative requirement for the sustainability appraisal of Supplementary Planning Documents. Despite no longer requiring sustainability appraisal, SPDs may still require SEA.

⁶ Planning Act 2008 – Paragraph 180(5d)

⁷ Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

- 2.2 The requirement for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is set out in the regulations⁸. There is also practical guidance on applying European Directive 2001/42/EC⁹. These documents have been used as the basis for this screening report. Regulation 5 sets out three types of plans that require SEA:
- The plan is for town and country planning and sets the development framework for future consent of projects listed in annexes I or II of the EIA Directive¹⁰ (There is an exemption for a plan dealing with the use of a small area at a local level OR a minor modification of a plan¹¹);
 - The plan requires a Habitat Regulations Assessment
 - The plan sets the future development consent framework that is not in the above two categories but has been determined to be likely to have significant environmental effects.
- 2.3 The proposed SPD will be for town and country planning and sets the development framework for future consent of a project within annex II of the EIA Directive. The relevant section of the EIA Directive is Annex II(10b) Urban development projects¹².

3. Screening

- 3.1 The ODPM practical guidance provides a checklist approach based on the SEA Regulations to help determine whether SEA is required. This guide has been used as the basis on which to assess the need for SEA as set out below. **Figure 1** below¹³ (taken from government guidance) illustrates the process that has been followed.

Figure 1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes

⁸ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (no. 1633)

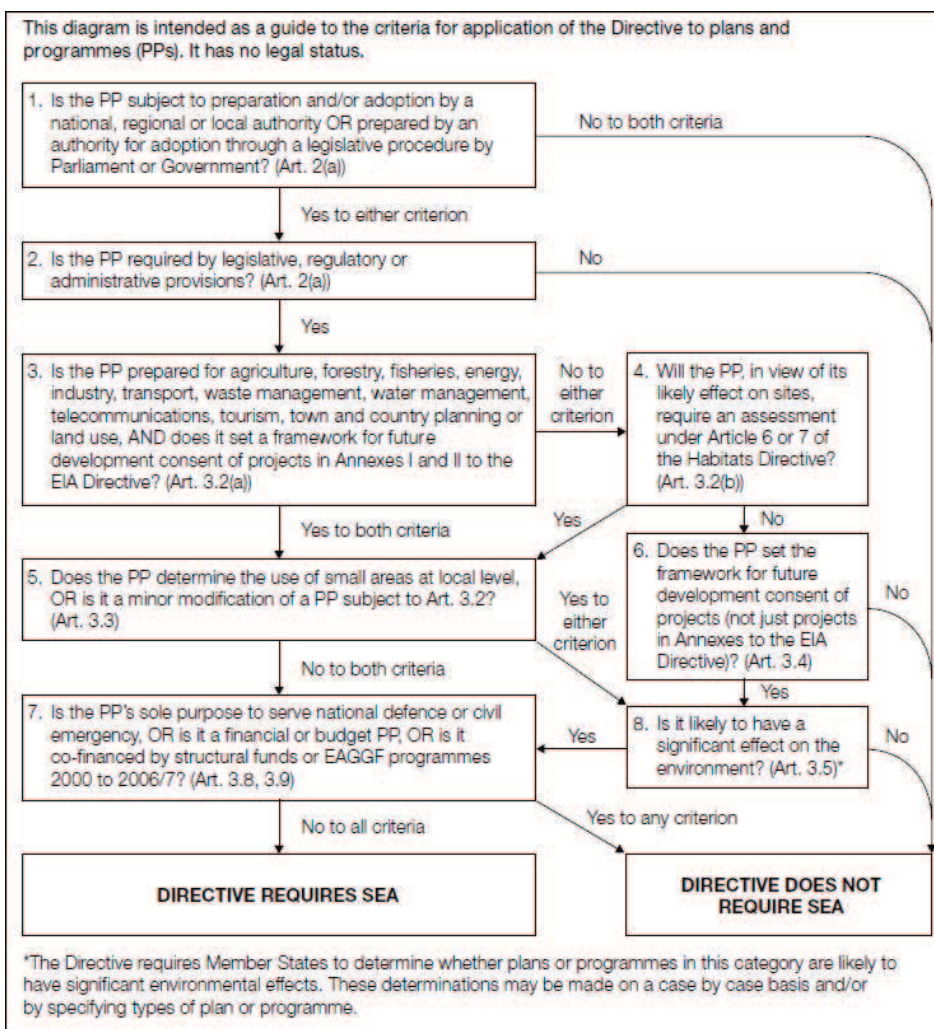
⁹ A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

¹⁰ Regulation 5(2) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (no. 1633)

¹¹ Regulation 5(6) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (no. 1633)

¹² Schedule II of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011

¹³ Taken from: A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2005), ODPM – page 13



3.2 Table 1 below sets out the 8 questions identified in the diagram above and provides an answer with regard to the proposed Oxpens SPD.

Table 1 – Application of the proposed SPD: Is an SEA required?

Establishing the need for SEA		Answer	Reasons	Next step
1	Is the SPD subject to preparation and/ or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government? (Article 2(a))	Yes	The SPD is to be adopted by Oxford City Council	Proceed to question 2
2	Is the SPD required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? (Article 2(a))	No	The SPD is not required but it is considered to be the appropriate delivery mechanism by which to bring the Oxpens site forward.	Proceed to question 3
3	Is the SPD prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry,	Yes	The SPD will be for town and country planning purposes and	Proceed to question 4

Establishing the need for SEA		Answer	Reasons	Next step
	transport, waste management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive? (Article 3.2(a))		sets a framework for the development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II of the EIA Directive ¹⁴	
4	Will the SPD, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? (Article 3.2(b))	No	The HRA Screening concluded, and Natural England agreed that the West End AAP would not be likely to have a significant effect on the interest features of the Oxford Meadows SAC.	Proceed to question 5
5	Does the SPD determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a plan subject to Article 3.2? (Article 3.3)	Yes	The SPD does determine the use of a small area at the local level.	Proceed to question 8
6	Does the SPD set the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)? (Article 3.4)	Yes	The SPD sets the framework for future development consent of projects.	N/A
7	Is the SPD's sole purpose to serve the national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial or budget plan, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000 to 2006/7? (Article 3.8, 3.9)	N/A	N/A	N/A
8	Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment (Article 3.5)		See Table 2 below for the detailed reasoning	

¹⁴ The EIA Directive (85/337/EEC) as amended in 1997, 2003 and 2009

3.3 **Table 2** below sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment taken from Schedule 1 of the Regulations¹⁵ and applies them to the proposed Oxpens SPD.

Table 2 – Criteria for determining the likely significance of effects on the environment

Criteria		Oxford City Council's Assessment
1 Characteristics of the plan or programme		
1a	The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources	<p>The Oxpens SPD will set the framework for the development for the Oxpens site. The SPD will sit underneath the “parent” document - the West End Area Action Plan (AAP). In order to supplement the policies in the AAP, the SPD must reflect and be based on the AAP policies.</p> <p>Despite not formally allocating sites, the AAP provides the strategic mix of development for the area and lists the primary and secondary uses to be contained on individual sites in order to achieve the overall vision for the West End.</p> <p>The AAP states at Appendix 2 that <i>“the AAP has been written to address the West End as a whole instead of considering a series of individual sites... It should be recognised that at the planning application or master planning stage, further site investigations will be required to confirm that the indicative uses identified here are appropriate in all regards.”</i></p> <p>The Oxpens SPD will guide the location, nature, size and operating conditions of particular uses to meet the objectives of the AAP and ultimately the City Council. Whilst an SPD does not have the weight of a Local Plan policy, it will be adopted by the City Council as a material consideration when determining planning applications.</p> <p>Oxpens is a large site which falls primarily within the ownership of the City Council and British Rail Board (Residiary). The AAP lists the priority uses in Appendix 2. Priority use is defined as the main use or uses for the site. Priority uses include, houses, public, space community energy, leisure, conference and hotels. Opportunities for some uses are limited in the West End, in fact due to their size or location, if certain uses are not delivered on the Oxpens site, it is unlikely that they will be brought forward in in the West End at all.</p>
1b	The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and	The SPD will have less material weight than the Core Strategy and the West End Area Action Plan. It will only be able to expand on existing policies and will not be able to introduce any new policies.

¹⁵ Criteria taken from Schedule 1 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Criteria		Oxford City Council's Assessment
	programmes including those in a hierarchy	The SPD will be at the bottom of the hierarchy and will have no impact on the content of those documents above it.
1c	The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.	<p>The SPD will help with the delivery of plan policies and help meet with the City Council's objectives contained in the Core Strategy and West End AAP, both of which were developed to deliver sustainable development. It is intended to promote sustainable development by ensuring that development fulfils the economic, social and environmental dimensions as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.</p> <p>The SPD will support strong, healthy and vibrant communities, by providing a framework to bring forward the supply of housing and it contributes to improving biodiversity, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, for instance through delivery of a community energy scheme in the West End.</p>
1d	Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme	<p>The main existing environmental problem relevant to development of the Oxpens SPD is flooding and flood risk.</p> <p>A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was undertaken to support the Area Action Plan (Atkins, June 2007). The SFRA provides detailed flood zone maps of the area. The SFRA flood zone map shows the Oxpens site to contain an area of flood storage/ functional floodplain which lies in flood zone 3b, as well as some parts of the site, which lie in flood zones 3a, and flood zone 2. As part of this work, an initial investigation was also undertaken to see whether it might be possible to move the current flood storage area on the Oxpens site to create a more regularly shaped or larger area suitable for development. The AAP states that:</p> <p><i>"Potential ways of compensating for this flood storage were identified, and a feasibility study will be carried out to identify the best option as part of the master planning of the site".</i></p> <p>Other existing problems include, but are not limited to, the existing traffic and transport issues in the area; a poor quality townscape character and limited biodiversity opportunities.</p> <p>It is worth noting that the whole of the administrative area of the city has been declared an Air Quality Management Area.</p>
1e	The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of	There are unlikely to be significant impacts.

Criteria		Oxford City Council's Assessment
	Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection).	
2 Characteristics of the effects of the area likely to be affected		
2a	The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects	The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations breaks down the environment into a series of constituent parts. These are as follows: biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the inter-relationship between these issues. See Tables 3 & 4.
2b	The cumulative nature of the effects	From the available evidence and technical studies, it is unclear whether there will be cumulative effects on biodiversity, water, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage, climatic factors and transport. Applying the precautionary principle means that factors should be considered as part of the SEA of the SPD. This does not necessarily mean that there will be any significant effects on the environment; it simply means that at present there is not the information available to be able to make a decision.
2c	The trans-boundary nature of the effects	There will be no trans-boundary effects in the sense of between countries. On a more local level, trans-boundary effects with neighbouring authorities are unlikely to result in significant environmental effects beyond those identified in the SA of the West End Area Action Plan
2d	The risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents)	None identified.
2e	The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	The site area is approximately 8.3ha. At present it is not clear how development of the site will impact either the site or the wider area in terms of flood risk. It is also unclear about how the development will impact the historic environment in particular townscape character and landscape. Oxford City Council's Heritage Team has been consulted regarding the historic environment, townscape character and below-ground heritage. Their response will feed into the final SEA Report. Although Biodiversity was covered at the AAP stage, a subsequent report has been produced looking at potential issues on site. This will be also be considered through the SEA

Criteria		Oxford City Council's Assessment
		<p>process.</p> <p>How the Oxpens site is developed could have implications for traffic and transport both inside and outside of the West End. Issues such as the routing of buses and visitor coaches (which currently park on the Oxpens site) will need to be resolved. The Oxpens site has been identified as an integral site in the delivery of a community energy scheme for the West End. The SPD should demonstrate how this scheme will be brought forward.</p>
2f	<p>The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; or ii) Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or iii) Intensive land-use 	<p>The SPD will supplement existing policies in the Core Strategy and West End Area Action Plan. It is envisaged that the SPD will firm up the types and quantum of development that will come forward on the Oxpens site.</p> <p>The Oxpens site is an important site within the context of delivering the City Council's objectives for the West End which are documented in the adopted AAP.</p> <p>It is not clear how the land-uses proposed will intensify the site and care should be taken not to substitute much needed community uses for more profitable uses if this has a negative effect on the Council's aims and objectives for the West End. Whilst clearly in a sustainable location in the heart of the city centre, care should be taken not to over-develop the site and create an over-intensified development framework. The Oxpens site is a key site for delivering many AAP objectives. The key question that should be asked is: If certain key uses are not going to be located on the Oxpens site, where will they go, are they likely to be delivered there and will this deliver the City Council's vision, aim and objectives for the area?</p>
2g	<p>The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.</p>	<p>None identified.</p>

3.4 In order to work out whether or not an SEA would be required on the Oxpens SPD, it was necessary to first review the Sustainability Appraisal for the West End Area Action Plan. **Table 3** reviews the Sustainability Appraisal of the West End AAP in relation to SEA Directive Topics giving specific consideration of the Oxpens site.

Table 3 – Review of the Sustainability Appraisal of the West End AAP

SEA Directive Topics. (The environment is defined by Schedule 2 paragraph 6 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)	Summary of previous SA findings or undertaken as part of the West End AAP.	Additional information
Biodiversity/ Flora/ Fauna	Potential loss of an area of scrub on the Oxpens site. The AAP will ensure that a linear park is to be created along the length of the castle mill stream to mitigate this.	The HRA Screening concluded, and Natural England agreed, that the West End AAP would not be likely to have a significant effect on the interest features of the Oxford Meadows SAC.
Population	Development will bring more residents and workers to the West End.	n/a
Human Health	AAP will improve health by providing more affordable housing which will reduce the number of people in inadequate accommodation. Potential for new health centre in West End	n/a
Soil	Depending on flood remediation measures this may need to be addressed at a later date.	n/a
Water	Further investigations required in relation to the provision of flood storage capacity on Oxpens Site.	The AAP makes a commitment to carry out a feasibility study to identify the best option as part of the master-planning of the site. Further modelling work is being commissioned and will be undertaken to examine this issue part of the SPD.
Air	SA suggests that there are not likely to be any significant improvements in air quality.	The whole of Oxford City is now an Air Quality Management Area.
Climatic factors	The West End provides one of the few opportunities for providing a district-wide heating system for Oxford and as such the AAP commits to providing this system. The Oxpens site was identified by a study by ARUP as a key site to delivering the system in the West End.	If this commitment is not fully considered on the Oxpens site, there may be no further opportunities for its development in the West End

Material Assets	Depending on the detail of the development proposal this may have an impact on material assets.	n/a
Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage	Current policies exist in the Core Strategy and West End AAP which will ensure that these matters are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.	n/a
Landscape	Current policies exist in the Core Strategy and West End AAP which will ensure that these matters are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment.	n/a
Inter-relationships between the above issues	SA suggests that vehicle movements associated with the AAP should have a modest impact on the strategic road network	Some transport issues unresolved with regards to the Oxpens site. For instance, visitor coaches currently use the site, and there are also proposed changes to the bus routes. The City Centre Stage 1 Transport Strategy has been completed. This provides some information about what is proposed for the routing of buses around Oxpens. There is also the issue that as part of the Westgate redevelopment, the car park on Oxpens was an option to use as a temporary car park while building works was undertaken.

3.5 The SPD itself is assessed as to what additional requirements, changes or omissions it contains, on top of the Core Strategy and West End AAP, to identify which topics require specific consideration in this screening. Table 4 provides this assessment.

Table 4 – Assessment of additional requirements sought by the SPD

SPD Contents		Existing Policies	Additional requirements sought by the SPD
Vision		Core Strategy and West End AAP	None. Vision consistent with existing Local Plan documents
DP1: A HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT	High quality architecture	WE12; WEDC section E; CS18; HP9	None. DP1 consistent with existing policies and the Street Scene Manual.
	Palette of materials	Street Scene Manual for public realm materials	

DP2: MAXIMISING THE VALUE AND POTENTIAL OF THE SITE	Maximum number of units / floorspace	CS22 (“at least...”); HP9a (“efficient use of land”); WE20	None. DP2 consistent with existing policies
	Balance of land uses	CS23; WE15; WE20	
DP3: A SUSTAINABLE SCHEME	Water and flood risk	CS11; WE14	DP3 consistent with existing policies in all aspects except that the commitment to a district heating scheme is not referred to and flooding matters not fully addressed.
	Improving connections	CS13; CS14; WE2; WE3;	
	Sustainable building design	CS9; WE12; WE13; HP11	
	SUDS	CS11; WE14	
	City centre housing	CS22; WE15; WE19	
	Integrating movement options	CS13; CS14; WE2; WE3; AAP Appendix 4	
	Creating employment opportunities	CS27; WE21	
	Supporting viability of the wider West End and City Centre	CS5; WEAAP vision	
DP4: ADDRESSING OXPENS ROAD	Building line/ set back	WEDC type 1 streets	None. DP4 consistent with existing policies
	Floor to ceiling heights	WEDC type 1 streets	
	Public realm	WE1 and supporting text; WE3 and supporting text; WE5(Oxpens Square); Street Scene Manual	
	Pedestrian movement	WE2	
	Street trees	WEDC type 1 streets	
DP5: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY IN THE OXFORD WEST END	Network of connected streets	WE1; WE2; WE3; WE5; WE7; WE8; WE9; WEDC; CS13(1st bullet); CS5(5 th bullet)	None. DP5 consistent with existing policies in all aspects except that the SPD does not resolve the identified transport issues.
	Thames, Castle Mill Stream, Oxpens Meadow	WE2; WE7; WE8; WE9	
	Public transport	WE3 and supporting text	
	Foot/cycle bridge	WE2	
	Enhancement to Oxpens Road	WE1 and supporting text; WE3 and supporting text; WE5(Oxpens Square); Street Scene Manual	

DP6: HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC REALM: STREETS AND SPACES	Palette of materials	CS18; Street Scene Manual for public realm materials	None. DP6 consistent with existing policies
	Oxpens Square	WE5 and supporting text	
DP7: ENHANCING OXPENS MEADOW	Using meadow more	WE8	None. DP7 consistent with existing policies
	Flood mitigation	CS11; WE14	
	landscaping	WE7; WE8;	
DP8: RELATIONSHIP TO THE RIVER	Flood mitigation	CS11; WE14	None. DP8 consistent with existing policies
	Orientated towards river	WE9	
DP9: APPROPRIATE LAND USE MIX	Mix of uses and residential types	CS23; WE15; WE20; AAP Appendix 2	None. DP9 consistent with existing policies
	Mix of business opportunities	WE21; WESection5.3; WE22; WE24; WE26; WE27; WE28; AAP Appendix 2	
	hotel	WE26; CS32(WE specifically mentioned); AAP Appendix 2	
	Student accommodation	CS25; WE18; HP5	
	Complimentary land uses	WE19; WE20; WE24; WE27; WE28; AAP Appendix 2	
DP10: GENERATING ACTIVITY	Balance of land uses	CS23; WE15; WE20	None. DP10 consistent with existing policies
	On street activity	WE20 and supporting text; WEDC section B3 and 4	
	Flexible ground floor uses	WE20; CS18 (bullet 4)	
DP11: COHERENT CHARACTER	Palette of materials	Street Scene Manual for public realm materials	None. DP11 consistent with existing policies
DP12: PHASING	Retention of ice rink in medium to long term	WE28;	None. DP12 consistent with existing policies
Regulating Masterplan	Main junction with Oxpens Road has moved A couple of streets have swapped places in the hierarchy.	West End AAP	None. Regulating Masterplan consistent existing policies.
Uses	Residential (Houses	Houses (P)	Draft SPD introduces

	and apartments) Employment: Offices, R&D Hotel A-Class Uses Student Accommodation Retirement Accommodation Café (Oxpens Meadow Attraction)	Flats (M) Public Space (P) Community Energy (P) Amenities for housing (S) Offices (S) Public Offices (P) Food and Drink (M) Museums (S) Hotel (P) Conference (P) Leisure (P) Where P = Primary S = Secondary M = Minor	student accommodation and possible education use. Draft SPD omits Community Energy, Museums, Conference and Leisure.
Illustrative Masterplan	Illustrative Masterplan demonstrates how site can be designed in detail. Includes proposed distribution of uses across the site.	No equivalent diagram in AAP. AAP contains illustrations of building heights, streets and spaces and street sections, parking standards.	None. Illustrative Masterplan consistent existing policies.
Phasing and Delivery	SPD provides indicative phasing strategy, infrastructure list and funding options.	See Appendices 8 and 9 of the West End AAP.	None. The Draft SPD consistent with existing policies. Draft SPD provides updated information on funding sources.

4. Scoping

- 4.1 The SPD incorporates no additional requirements on top of the policies Core Strategy or West End AAP. The SPD omits reference to a district heating scheme, does not provide the assessment for or address flood risk or transport matters as set out in the AAP. Therefore in order for the SPD to comply with the European Directive, when working out the scope and level of detail, the SEA must specifically consider these omissions and changes in the light of the SEA Directive topics that they affect. Additional information is also available with regard to the biodiversity of the site. This will be examined as part of the SEA. An assessment by the City Council Heritage Team will also be included which looks at the site in terms of its Cultural Heritage. The findings of this report will be included in the final SEA Report.

- 4.2 The review of the Sustainability Appraisal of the West End AAP (Table 3) and the assessment of the changes contained within the SPD (Table 4) have identified five SEA Directive topics that the SPD may have an effect upon: Biodiversity, flora and fauna; Water; Climatic Factors; Cultural Heritage; and Inter-Relationships (transport). An examination into the likely probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects is looked at in **Table 5**.

Table 5 – Topics screened into the SEA Assessment

Directive Topic	Probability, Duration, Frequency & Reversibility of the effects
Biodiversity/ Flora/ Fauna	An additional report which looks at on-site biodiversity has been produced since the publication of the AAP. The findings of the additional information found in this report will be considered as part of the SEA process.
Water	Different land uses are appropriate in different areas of flood risk. This is set out nationally (in the NPPF and the associated technical guidance) and locally (in the Core Strategy (Policy CS11) and the West End AAP (Policy WE14)). The Oxpens site contains an area of flood storage (flood zone 3b). The SA and the AAP make a commitment to undertake further investigations to inform the master-planning of the Oxpens site. At present information is not known about the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects. As such it has not been possible to assess whether or not there will be likely significant effects on the environment. Therefore an SEA is needed with regard to this particular SEA Topic. It is worth noting that SEA is proportionate to the level of detail that is required. This topic is therefore screened into the assessment.
Climatic Factors	The Oxpens site has been ear-marked through the evidence base as a site which is integral in delivering the West End Community Energy scheme. The City Council invested in a series of reports to deliver a community energy scheme. The report concludes that an area of 20m x 30m could serve the longer term energy needs of the whole of the West End. As a site that is within the control of the city, siting an energy centre on the Oxpens site would enable a significant benefit to the city. There is no information about the probability duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects of either including or not including the energy centre for the community energy scheme on this site. As such this topic is screened into the assessment.
Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage	There are some uncertainties particularly around how the development will impact the historic environment in particular townscape character, landscape and below-ground heritage. Oxford City Council's Heritage Team has been consulted regarding the historic environment and townscape character and their response will feed into the SEA Report.
Inter-relationships (Transport)	There are some unresolved transport issues in relation to the Oxpens site. Despite being in a highly sustainable location, the number of residential units proposed has increased from the time of the assessment undertaken for the AAP. This new level of housing proposed on the Oxpens site has not been assessed in terms of its potential additional transport and traffic impacts. Issues such as the environmental impact of removing and relocating visitor coaches off the site would need to be addressed. As there is no additional information available other than that produced to support the AAP, transport impacts are screened into the assessment.

- 4.3 Table 5 concludes that at present, information is not known about the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects. As such it has not been possible to assess whether or not there will be likely significant effects on the environment. Therefore these topics are scoped into an SEA. It is worth noting that SEA is proportionate to the level of detail that is required.
- 4.4 By not including a topic in Table 5 it does not preclude the inclusion of any other SEA Directive topic from Table 3 from needing to be assessed in terms of any future potential Environmental Impact Assessment that may be required or as part of any planning application that is submitted.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The proposed SPD will supplement existing adopted policies as set out in Appendix 1. The SPD will form part of the framework for the development for the Oxpens site. It will sit underneath the “parent” document of the West End Area Action Plan (AAP) and will become a material consideration when determining planning applications.
- 5.2 In order to supplement the policies in the AAP, the SPD must reflect and be based on the AAP policies. Any significant changes or additions to the policies in the AAP must be the subject of a formal Strategic Environmental Assessment as they would constitute a material departure from the development plan. This ensures that the SPD will comply with the European Directive.
- 5.3 This SEA Combined Screening and Scoping assessment has not been able to rule out that the SPD would give rise to any significant environmental effects. The SEA Combined Screening and Scoping assessment has shown that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required in relation to the following SEA Topics: Biodiversity, Water, Climatic Factors, Cultural Heritage, and Transport (Inter-relationship between Air, Climatic Factors and Material Assets) See Table 5. Therefore it is considered that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required for the proposed Oxpens SPD that relates to only these SEA topics. It is considered that the rest of the topics were considered sufficiently through the Sustainability Appraisal (which includes SEA) of the West End Area Action Plan.
- 5.4 As this report also represents the Scoping Report, the City Council is consulting with the three statutory environmental bodies (English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England) for 5 weeks in order to decide the level of detail of the information that must be included in the SEA Report. As well as meeting the requirements of the Regulations, this Combined Screening and Scoping Report will be made available alongside the draft SPD and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Draft SPD (programmed for June 2013).
- 5.5 The Oxpens SPD is likely to add an additional level of detail to that of the AAP. The SEA Guidance¹⁶ states that

“An SEA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose. The Directive requires consideration of the significant environmental effects of the plan or programme,

¹⁶ ODP, (2005), A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

and of reasonable alternatives that take into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.”

As such the assessment should be proportional to the level of the plan that is being assessed.

- 5.6 Any assessment undertaken under the SEA Regulations¹⁷ does not rule out the need for further assessment, should it be necessary, under the EIA Regulations.¹⁸

¹⁷ Environmental Assessment of plans and programmes Regulations 2004 SI No. 1633

¹⁸ Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 SI No. 1824

Appendix 1 – List of policies directly relevant to the Oxpens SPD

Oxford Core Strategy 2026 Policies:**Policy CS5****West End**

The West End is allocated as a strategic location which will deliver a mixed-use development. Planning permission will be granted for development that includes:

- Significant housing provision (approximately 700-800 dwellings);
- Retail floorspace (at least 37,000m²);
- Office space (15,000m² for the private sector and 20,000m² for the public sector);
- New leisure and cultural attractions;
- A high quality network of streets and public spaces; and
- A new 1-form entry Primary School to serve the area.

The supporting text of Policy CS9 – Energy and Natural Resources states at Paragraph 4.1.5 that

Developments at the strategic locations offer opportunities to incorporate large scale or area-wide renewable energy or low-carbon technologies. For instance, a District Heating Scheme is being developed for the West End... The appropriate technologies for each location will be investigated through the AAP/ SPD processes.

West End Area Action Plan policies

Policy WE1: Public realm

Policy WE2: New links

Policy WE3: Redesign of streets and junctions in the West End

Policy WE4: Public parking

Policy WE5: Public spaces

Policy WE7: Castle Mill Stream

Policy WE8: Oxpens field

Policy WE9: The Thames

Policy WE10: Historic environment

Policy WE11: Design code

Policy WE12: Design and construction

Policy WE13: Resource efficiency

Policy WE14: Flooding

Policy WE15: Housing mix

Policy WE16: Affordable housing

Policy WE17: Affordable housing from commercial development

Policy WE18: Student accommodation

Policy WE19: Amenities to support new housing

Policy WE20: Mixed uses

Policy WE21: Office accommodation

Policy WE22: Public sector offices

Policy WE23: Retail

Policy WE24: Cultural activity

Policy WE25: Visitor Coaches

Policy WE26: Hotel Accommodation

Policy WE27: Conference facility

Policy WE28: Leisure

Policy WE29: Streamlined contributions

Policy WE30: Pooled contributions and forward funding

Policy WE31: Compulsory purchase powers.

Appendix 3: Complete List of Sustainability Objectives

SO1: To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment

SO2: To encourage urban renaissance by improving efficiency in land use, design and layout and to create and sustain vibrant communities

SO3: To meet local housing needs by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, affordable home

SO4: To improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health

SO5: To reduce poverty and social exclusion and to reduce the crime and fear of crime

SO6: To raise educational achievement levels and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work

SO7: To provide accessible essential services and facilities

SO8: To provide adequate green infrastructure, leisure and recreation opportunities and make these readily accessible for all

SO9: To conserve and enhance Oxford's biodiversity

SO10: Protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets

SO11: Reduce traffic congestion and associated air pollution by improving travel choice, shortening length and duration of journeys and reducing the need to travel by car/ lorry

SO12: Maintain and improve soil and water quality and manage water resources

SO13: Increase energy and resource efficiency (including minimising waste) and renewable energy, with the aim of mitigating climate change

SO14: Achieve sustainable economic growth (includes the development of a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy)

SO15: To stimulate economic revival in priority regeneration areas

SO16: To encourage the development of a buoyant, sustainable tourism sector

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