

# Wantage Neighbourhood Plan



## Environmental SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letcombe Brook and its corridor is a rare chalk stream with protected species.</li> <li>• Parks, nature reserve, conservation area, green spaces, allotments and community garden.</li> <li>• Attractive countryside and landscape eg: North Wessex Downs AONB.</li> <li>• Access to the countryside - public rights of way network and Ridgeway.</li> <li>• Local conservation volunteer groups actively caring for the natural environment.</li> <li>• Attractive rural landscape and approaches to Wantage by road.</li> <li>• Semi-natural habitats and landscape features including hedgerows, shelter belts, small areas of woodland in surrounding countryside.</li> <li>• Good soils and air quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor maintenance and management of semi-natural areas in green spaces.</li> <li>• Unconnected habitats leading to fragmentation and isolation of areas for wildlife.</li> <li>• Developers, landowners and contractors not experienced in managing semi-natural habitats eg: wildflower meadows become regularly mown grassland.</li> <li>• Lack of environmental awareness. Little or no real gain achieved for biodiversity on new developments, lack of opportunity to effectively get involved in environmental aspect of planning process.</li> <li>• Lack of trees or green boundaries planted on edges of new developments.</li> <li>• Developers not implementing and maintaining agreed landscaping and biodiversity plans, little or no enforcement of planning conditions.</li> <li>• Insufficient resources and infrastructure to improve water quality at Wantage and Grove Sewage Treatment works.</li> <li>• Minimal resourcing of local projects enhancing the environment.</li> <li>• Small gardens with little space for play or wildlife.</li> <li>• Insufficient signed cycle paths/footpaths linking together green spaces, the Brook, Wantage and surrounding countryside.</li> <li>• Lack of facilities in parks for all ages.</li> <li>• Insufficient links with countryside community eg: farmers and racehorse stables.</li> <li>• Lack of open green spaces and poor distribution away from users eg: Manor Road Memorial Park.</li> <li>• Dog fouling and litter in open spaces and footpaths, and lack of bins.</li> <li>• Low civic pride, lack of active volunteers to maintain green and clean environment.</li> <li>• Bye-laws not enforced or un-enforceable.</li> </ul>

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New developments - create new accessible green spaces in urban area for public enjoyment and recreation, including semi-natural habitats for wildlife and public enjoyment.</li> <li>• Protect, enhance and create green spaces, including areas with semi-natural habitats, biodiversity and nature conservation interest.</li> <li>• Connect green open spaces and habitats with green corridors to allow movement of species and people.</li> <li>• Letcombe Brook - designate, protect and enhance rare chalk stream and corridor with a brook restoration and management plan.</li> <li>• Protect Letcombe Brook from development, pollution and disturbance.</li> <li>• Promote nature conservation with local residents, especially children.</li> <li>• Restore the Wilts and Berks Canal providing recreation opportunities and a green corridor for wildlife.</li> <li>• Community action groups and partnerships - need to be more visible and supported.</li> <li>• Develop education and volunteer opportunities to engage and inspire new conservationists to tackle the ongoing problems faced by wildlife and the natural world.</li> <li>• Continue to support and increase resources to local environment groups eg: Letcombe Brook Project to raise awareness and engage people in caring for their environment.</li> <li>• Undertake a survey and engage the public in identifying areas of biodiversity interest, raise awareness of these, protect and enhance areas.</li> <li>• Carry out an environmental audit of green spaces and improve and integrate areas for recreation, biodiversity, and landscape.</li> <li>• Ensure developments are designed/constructed to high sustainable standards eg: energy efficiency, renewable energy, grey water recycling systems, water storage etc.</li> <li>• Develop a Green Plan for Wantage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letcombe Brook has no legal protection, is not designated as important priority habitat, suffers from a range of issues and challenges; ecological status under the Water Framework Directive is failing 'Moderate to Poor'.</li> <li>• Climate change - increasing temperatures leading to intense rainfall in summer and prolonged wet periods on winter. Increasing regularity of surface, fluvial and pluvial flooding. Threats to people, homes and businesses, habitats and species.</li> <li>• Growing population - increasing demands on scarce resources eg: local water is supplied by the aquifers of the Letcombe Brook on which animals and plants rely.</li> <li>• Development pressure - increasing pressure on the natural environment and scarce resources; including strain on drainage system, roads, parking, crowded cemetery, etc.</li> <li>• Development on green field land and close to sensitive habitats such as Letcombe Brook and countryside in North Wessex Downs AONB.</li> <li>• Intensification of agriculture; solar farms in open rural countryside.</li> <li>• Loss of semi-natural habitats.</li> <li>• Lack of management of nature conservation areas.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about local biodiversity areas, and how to manage habitats and wildlife, and lack of monitoring and recording.</li> <li>• Tidier environment - we are less tolerant of "weeds" and use more pesticides. More space is covered by decking, gravel, tarmac and other sterile surfaces.</li> <li>• Development - keep the countryside setting of the parish and green gaps between Wantage, Grove, and East Challow protected and where appropriate enhanced.</li> <li>• Non-native and invasive species eg: American signal crayfish, ash dieback and domination of areas with Himalayan balsam.</li> <li>• Lack of base-line data, monitoring to assess the environment eg: water quality before during and after developments.</li> <li>• People have less contact with their natural environment leading to a lack of environmental awareness.</li> <li>• Fly-tipping, vandalism, graffiti, litter and dog fouling a serious problem, which increases as population increases.</li> <li>• Future biodiversity offsetting needs to be properly evaluated locally.</li> </ul>

- Improve signposting for footpaths and cycle routes and usage of public rights of way
- Solar panels should be encouraged on roofs.
- Undertake a tree survey, protect existing trees and plant new trees in appropriate areas.
- Cycle friendly paths.
- Provide more allotments as population increases.
- Promote Wantage as 'Gateway to Ridgeway'.
- Adopt woods for community use eg: Pewitt Wood.
- Promote community spaces.
- Promote local businesses using local products.
- King Alfred Academy could help improve environmental education of pupils and parents.
- Use of festivals to facilitate greater awareness of the environment.
- Sponsorship opportunities for green/environmental improvements, eg: use of Trusts.

- Heavier traffic during construction works, results in increase in pollution and roads become more dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians.