

Policy CUL7: Nature Recovery and Climate Change

- A. The Parish contains a variety of green and blue infrastructure that provides an environmental support system for the community and wildlife. The Neighbourhood Plan designates this as a Network, as shown on the Policies Map, for the purpose of promoting nature recovery and for mitigating climate change. The Network comprises the Water Meadows between the village and Sutton Pools, Andersey Island Water Meadows, woodland, trees, hedgerows, Culham Brook SSSI and other land of biodiversity value.***
- B. Development proposals that lie within or adjoining the Network are required to have full regard maintaining and improving the functionality of the Network, including delivering a net gain to biodiversity, in the design of their layouts and landscaping schemes. Proposals that will harm the functionality or connectivity of the Network will not be supported.***
- C. Development proposals that will lead to the extension of the Network, which includes the delivery of allotments for the use of the village, will be supported, provided they are consistent with all other relevant policies of the development plan.***

5.24 The policy defines the presence of green and blue infrastructure assets in the Parish. By doing so it supports SODCLP Policies ENV1 – ENV5 on the Environment. Its purpose is linked with the vision and principles of green infrastructure in the district of defining a network of green infrastructure assets in the neighbourhood plan area as a means of providing environmental support for the community and wildlife. These assets will be maintained and added to throughout the Neighbourhood Plan area and will be the means of nature recovery through connecting and improving habitats and sequestering carbon through woodland planting.

5.25 Alongside the Culham Brook SSSI, there is a variety of other priority habitat areas in the Parish. The village itself hosts Traditional Orchard habitats as well as Deciduous Woodland. A number of these form part of the Core Zone of the Draft Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network prepared by Wild Oxfordshire. A large part of the Parish has also been identified as a Recovery Zone. The purpose of this policy is to identify existing green and blue infrastructure and opportunities to better connect them which may also play a part in delivering the aims of the Recovery Zone of the Draft Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Network carried out collaboratively by a partnership of local nature conservation organisations, led by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC), Wild Oxfordshire and The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) and overseen by Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Advisory Group (BAG) and adopted by the Oxfordshire Environment Board (OxEB). Whilst much of the land surrounding the village settlement, and northern parts of the Parish already have Countryside Stewardship Agreements, opportunities identified by the Neighbourhood Plan include additional tree planting on Land adjacent to the Cricket Club Grounds, additional catchment woodland, floodplain woodland and riparian woodland planting opportunities using the 'Working with natural processes to reduce flood risk' evidence base by the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research and Development Programme and Environment Agency in February 2021. These opportunities are all shown on the Policies Map and the Parish

Council will seek to work with landowners to realise such opportunities where possible avoiding the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

5.26 The policy therefore requires that all development proposals that lie within the Network, or that adjoin it, should consider how they may improve it, or at the very least do not undermine its integrity of connecting spaces and habitats. The Policy Map shows the full extent of the Network, which allows applicants to determine if their proposals should take this policy into account. Where proposals include provision for landscaping, new means of access or new layouts, there may be an opportunity to relate the land better to the Network, for example in complementing existing biodiversity value through the design of the landscape scheme. At the very least, the policy requires that proposals that will undermine the existing value of the Network will be refused permission.

5.27 The Network will become more valuable over time, and although the majority of these features are physically attached to enable habitat connectivity, some features of the Network are not. This does not devalue their integral biodiversity or recreational value and at some point in the future an opportunity may arise to achieve similar connectivity. The Neighbourhood Plan also signals to the Responsible Authority that it should consider the role of this Network in the future Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the area which is now a requirement of the Environment Bill.

Policy CUL8: Sustainable Travel

- A. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the existing Sustainable Travel Network, as shown on the Policies Map, for the purpose of supporting active travel in the Parish.***
- B. Development proposals on land that lies within or adjacent to the Network should sustain, and where practicable, enhance the functionality of the Network by virtue of their layout, means of access and landscape treatment.***
- C. Proposals that will harm the functioning or connectivity of the Network will not be supported.***
- D. The comprehensive masterplan for the strategic allocation STRAT9 Land adjacent to Culham Science Centre will be expected to demonstrate that the masterplan layout enables safe and secure access to the required social infrastructure for the existing village of Culham through new, and improvement to, existing cycleways, footpaths, and bus services.***

5.28 The policy seeks to encourage safe, accessible and convenient means of walking and cycling in the parish. It refines Policy TRANS2 by providing a local element to its provisions. The policy implements elements of the Culham Community Led Plan in 2014 which identified cycle safety as being important especially between Culham and Abingdon. At the time the Culham Centre for Fusion Energy was interested in improving arrangements for their cycling employees. Ideas that came from the consultation were:

- 1) A cycle path from Waggon and Horses to Abingdon