

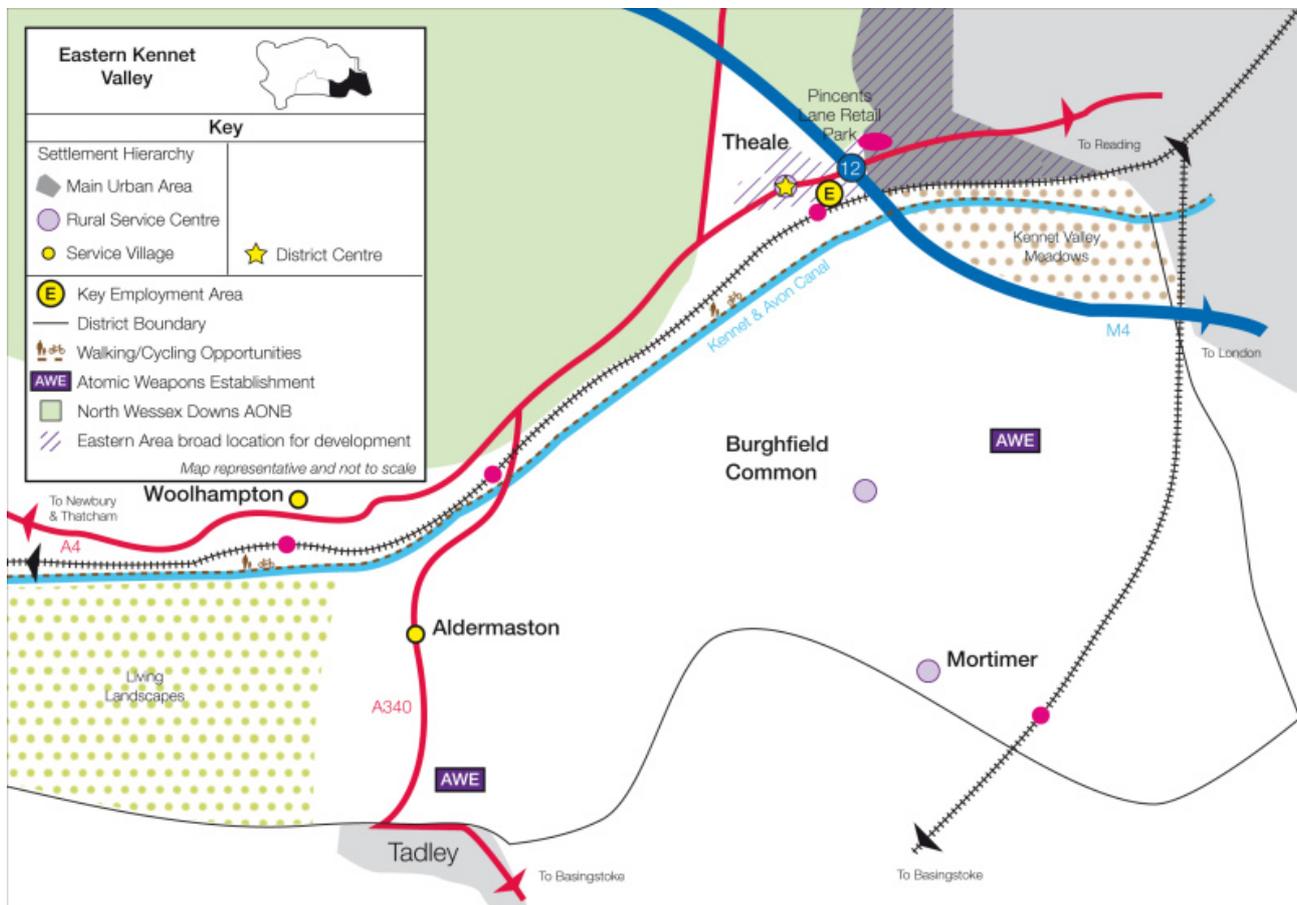
The East Kennet Valley

East Kennet Valley - The Vision

4.43 The East Kennet Valley is the name given to the rural south-east of the District that lies to the east of Thatcham and outside of the AONB. Distinct features of this area are the Kennet and Avon Canal and River Kennet which both run from west to east across the breadth of this area, parallel to the Newbury – Reading train line and the A4. The East Kennet Valley is also characterised by a number of villages along the route of the canal/river such as Woolhampton and Aldermaston Wharf and others dispersed across farmland and some woodland including Aldermaston, Brimpton, Burghfield Common and Mortimer.

4.44 The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) has two bases in this area, at Aldermaston and Burghfield. AWE is an important provider of local jobs but has implications for the future level of development in this area. There is a business park at Arlington near Theale, and a number of other employment areas comprising small industrial estates. The main transport links include the mainline railways linking the West Country with Reading and London, and Reading with Basingstoke and the south coast. There are stations at Midgham, Aldermaston, and Stratfield Mortimer. The people of this area interact significantly with the surrounding larger centres, with Reading, Newbury, Thatcham and Basingstoke and to a lesser extent Tadley all providing jobs, shopping and leisure facilities.

Figure 4 East Kennet Valley



4 The Spatial Strategy

4.45 This area has a number of environmental assets, notably the canal and river but also a large number of ancient woodlands, local wildlife sites and SSSI. A small area in the very south east around Beech Hill falls within the 5km boundary of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). The 5km boundary⁽³⁸⁾ has been determined by Natural England as a buffer area to regulate development near the SPA. However, it is possible that certain types of development up to 7km from the boundary of the SPA⁽³⁹⁾ could have an impact on the SPA. In terms of the historic environment, there is an Elizabethan Manor at Ufton Court, two Historic Parks and Gardens, Folly Farm near Sulhamstead and The Manor House near Aldermaston. Minerals have been extracted from the Kennet Valley since the first settlements appeared in the area. Due to its gravel deposits, the River Kennet will continue to be a focus for extraction over the next plan period.

Area Delivery Plan Policy 6

The East Kennet Valley

Housing

- Some growth is planned for this area to help meet the needs of the village communities and to assist with the viability of village shops and services. This amounts to approximately 800 homes between 2006 and 2026, an average of 40 new homes a year. The relatively low growth proposed for this area of the District reflects the more limited services and poorer transport connections. At March 2011 there had already been considerable housing commitments and completions in the East Kennet Valley, leaving only about 320 dwellings to be allocated.
- With regard to the presence of AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield, the Council will monitor housing completions and population levels in conjunction with the ONR and neighbouring authorities. Residential development in the inner land use planning consultation zone is likely to be refused planning permission in accordance with Policy CS8. Aldermaston will continue to play the wider role of a service village, in terms of the provision of a range of services to the community and surrounding areas.
- The two identified rural service centres of Burghfield Common and Mortimer will be the focus for development in this area, together with the more modest development of the identified service village of Woolhampton. Development may take the form of small extensions to these villages, based on information set out in the SHLAA, which has shown a 'basket' of potentially developable sites from which to select through the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD.

Employment

- Existing Protected Employment Areas, such as Young's Industrial Estate and Calleva Park near Aldermaston, Beenham Industrial Area and Theale Lakes Business Park at Sheffield Bottom will continue to play a vital role in the local economy. The role, function and boundaries of these Protected Employment Areas will be reviewed through the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD.

Environment

- The character of all the settlements in this area will be conserved and enhanced by ensuring that any development responds positively to the local context. Conservation Area Appraisals will be carried out in accordance with the Council's programme.

38 as shown on the Proposals Map

39 as shown on the Proposals Map

The Spatial Strategy 4

- The environmental and leisure assets, including the river and its floodplain, the canal and the boating lakes will be conserved and enhanced, and development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled.
- The Council will continue to implement strategic biodiversity enhancements in conjunction with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT), within the area covered by the Living Landscape Project.⁽⁴⁰⁾
- New residential development of one or more net additional dwellings proposed up to 5km from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will require screening to assess whether it will have a likely significant effect on the SPA. Where a significant effect exists or cannot be excluded, an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010⁽⁴¹⁾ should be undertaken. Proposals will only be permitted if they do not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework will be used to guide assessment and any avoidance or mitigation measures that may be needed.
- Residential development of over 50 dwellings located between 5 and 7km of the boundary of the SPA will require screening to assess whether it will have a likely significant effect on the SPA. Where a significant effect exists or cannot be excluded, an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010⁽⁴²⁾ should be undertaken. Proposals will only be permitted if they do not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA Delivery Framework will be used to guide assessment and any avoidance or mitigation measures that may be needed.

Community Infrastructure and Services

- The new Integrated Waste Management Facility at Padworth Sidings will improve the management of waste and significantly improve recycling and composting rates in West Berkshire.
- The boundaries of any local centres for retail and other services will be defined through the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD and opportunities for a more distinct centre offering shops and services in Burghfield Common will be explored.

Accessibility

- Through partnership working, opportunities to improve public transport links between the villages and nearby towns including Newbury, Thatcham and Reading will be sought, and the area will benefit from the planned electrification of the London to Newbury railway line.
- Improvements to the accessibility of Mortimer railway station will be sought, for example through enhancements to the road bridge. This will be taken forward through partnership working.
- Opportunities for the improvement of cycle and pedestrian routes between Burghfield Common and Mortimer; between Mortimer railway station, and between the schools in Burghfield will be explored in partnership with landowners, Network Rail and education providers.

40 [Living Landscape Project](http://www.westberks.gov.uk) information available at www.westberks.gov.uk and www.bbowl.org.uk

41 [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) available to view at www.legislation.gov.uk

42 [Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010](http://www.legislation.gov.uk) available to view at www.legislation.gov.uk

4 The Spatial Strategy

Delivery and Monitoring

The strategy for the East Kennet Valley will be implemented through the range of core policies identified in Section 5 'Core Policies'.

Infrastructure requirements are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Monitoring will be through a range of indicators which are outlined in Section 6 'Monitoring Framework'.