

## SONNING COMMON. SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE

Brief reflections and recommendations following day visit and evening discussion  
16<sup>th</sup> September 2013.



The very unusual pattern and structure of the village sets up a number of specific challenges. These include:-

- A very confused edge and boundary to the settlement. To the south, the junction of Peppard Road and Kennylands Road, and the lonely pub, makes for an apparent entry point, but there is then a long gap and lack of continuity before the centre. To the north, the boundary with Peppard Common and Rotherfield Peppard lacks any definition. As a result the village appears to sprawl along the B481, at best occasionally visible and mostly irrelevant to passing traffic.
- The village has a main centre in Wood Lane, comprising a variety of retail outlets, Village Hall and Health Centre. A row of shops is along one side of Peppard Road. There are 3 schools in the village.
- The approach streets do not communicate a consistent or appropriate story about the presence and activity of the village. This is particularly striking in the highway configuration and layout of the junction of Wood Lane with Peppard Road, and the bend at the junction of Kennylands Road where it intersects with Reades Lane and Kidmore Lane, approaching Wood Lane.
- The widths and layout of the streets has



- not adapted to the presence of parked cars, or to the use of areas fronting the buildings. This awkward sectional arrangement is compounded by the continued use of centre-lines.
- The network of footpaths and pedestrian routes is surprisingly understated and obscured by insensitive highway detailing.
  - Little visual or spatial status is given to pedestrian routes, or to the spaces fronting, and approaches to, the two schools.
  - The village lacks the essential landmarks and “punctuation points” that could provide a legible structure, and influence the relationship between traffic and essential civic activities. Such places could be highlighted and reinforced at key intersections, or at places of interest such as the pub forecourts, the local garage, shop frontages and outside key buildings such as the Village Hall.



As a component in developing a neighbourhood plan, we would recommend preparing an outline study of the streetscape and traffic provision within the village, with a focus on the approximate 12-13 critical spaces. Such a study would gather all the relevant highway and traffic data, and look to achieve a fundamental rebalancing of the relationship between vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and places. In particular, the study would examine ways in which the **design** speed for the village could be clarified and communicated through environmental elements and street design.

The scale and scope of such a study could be adapted to the resources available. As a very general rule, and subject to a more detailed brief, a study for the whole village might cost in the region of £14,000 - £20,000. However, the dispersed nature of the village makes it possible to address a number of areas and elements in distinct phases. Most urgent would appear to be the centre of the village in Wood Lane, combined with the two “bookend” entry-points at either end (the junctions of Wood Lane with Peppard Road and Kennylands Road. This initial focused study might be achieved for something in the order of £8,000 - £12,000, depending on the number of site visits and local meetings. Such studies will depend on the close co-operation of the highway authority and the local planning authority.

A more detailed proposal can be prepared once some initial guidance on the scope and extent of any study is clarified.





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Director  
9th October 2013