

# SCNDP

SONNING COMMON  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Sonning Common  
Neighbourhood  
Development Plan

Final Submission  
version

2012 – 2027



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## Foreword

The future of our village – the way it grows and changes in years to come is of great concern to us all.

The Government's Localism Act of 2011, which aims to give local communities the right to have a vital say in how their area is developed, led to Sonning Common Parish Council's decision to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

By the beginning of 2012 a group of residents and parish councillors formed a working party to produce an NDP for Sonning Common. This group of volunteers has been working for 4 years to shape the future development of our village in a way that meets the needs, concerns and aspirations of our residents.

At its heart is the key issue of how many new homes should be built in the village, what kind of homes they should be, and where they should be built. We have been informed by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) that we need to provide for a minimum 138 new homes, and that is what we have done. We have also been advised that it is likely that this number will rise, and we have provided for that contingency by making provision for up to 195 new homes.

But the NDP is about more than housing. It covers other important issues, such as the viability of the village centre, parking and transport, the future of the schools, the library, the health resources, and the provision of leisure and recreation facilities. We have done our utmost to consider the welfare of the village and its people, as well as the sustainability of future housing developments.

During the last 4 years we have held many public meetings and exhibitions, held consultations with residents and asked them to complete surveys for us. We have also met with landowners, land agents, developers, local organisations and service providers as well as commissioning reports - all of which have produced the material and evidence contained in our Plan. In all of this, the support of the Parish Council and the Clerk's Office has been invaluable.

This is the Final Submission version of the Plan. It has been amended in accordance with the recommendations of the Examiner who also welcomed the depth and breadth of consultations with residents. This is a Plan which has been informed by and represents the views of the residents in and around Sonning Common.

Electronic copies of the Final Submission version and its supporting documents and reports can be found at: [www.scpc-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scpc-ndp.co.uk). Hard copies are available from: The Parish Office, Village Hall, Wood Lane, Sonning Common RG4 9SL. Phone: 0118 972 3616. Reference copies are also available at Sonning Common Library in Grove Road.

Sonning Common Parish Council thanks the members of the NDP Working Party for all their hard work and time since 2012. Without them and the support of our residents our NDP would not have been completed.

**Barrie Greenwood**  
Chairman SCNDP Working Party

**Douglas Kedge**  
Chairman, Sonning Common Parish Council

# Part One: Setting the scene

## Introduction

### Preamble

A neighbourhood development plan (NDP) is a type of planning document designed to enable local communities to be closely involved and have more say in the development decisions which affect their parish or neighbourhood. The right of communities to prepare and establish neighbourhood plans was facilitated by the Localism Act 2011 and legislation came into effect in April 2012.

### Purpose

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP and Stephen Williams MP, Department for Communities and Local Government, 7 November 2012, said:

“Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure they get the right types of development for their community. Using these tools communities will be able to:

- choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built
- have their say on what those new buildings should look like
- grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead”<sup>1</sup>

People have often found it difficult to have a meaningful say in the planning process and more often than not are reacting to development proposals in isolation. Allowing communities to create policies against which development is assessed makes the planning system much more locally driven and responsive. However, it must be emphasised that such policies cannot block development and must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area.

- South Oxfordshire District Council Core Strategy (2012)
- saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 (2006)

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is preparing a new Local Plan referred to as the Local Plan 2031, which is scheduled to be adopted in 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.planningportal.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplanning)



## Process

The Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP) was commissioned by Sonning Common Parish Council with advice from SODC and help from external consultants. The costs of the neighbourhood plan are being met by the parish council and available grants from governmental sources.

A working party of residents (who volunteered) and parish councillors was established in January 2012. Consultants were appointed to assist the process. The Traffic Task Group formed in November 2012.

## Designated neighbourhood area

In accordance with part 2 of the Regulations, SODC publicised the neighbourhood area application from Sonning Common Parish Council and advertised a consultation period – 6 September to 18 October 2013 inclusive.<sup>2</sup> The application was approved by the Cabinet of SODC on 25 October 2013.

The parish of Sonning Common comprises 1,595 homes and has a population of 3,784.<sup>3</sup> It is located on the southern edges of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), some four miles north of the centre of Reading and three and a half miles west of Henley-on-Thames.

The Sonning Common parish boundary and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are illustrated on Map 1.1.

The SCNDP applies to the parish of Sonning Common and to parts of Kidmore End and Rotherfield Peppard parishes so that all the sites within SODC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) can be considered. The designated Neighbourhood Area (Map 1.2) covers:

- the parish of Sonning Common
- site SON 13, which is in the parish of Rotherfield Peppard
- site SON 4, which is in the parish of Kidmore End
- site SON 15, which was in the parish of Kidmore End and is now in Sonning Common

It should be noted that consideration of sites SON 13 and SONs 4 and 15 has been agreed by the respective parish councils of Rotherfield Peppard and Kidmore End.

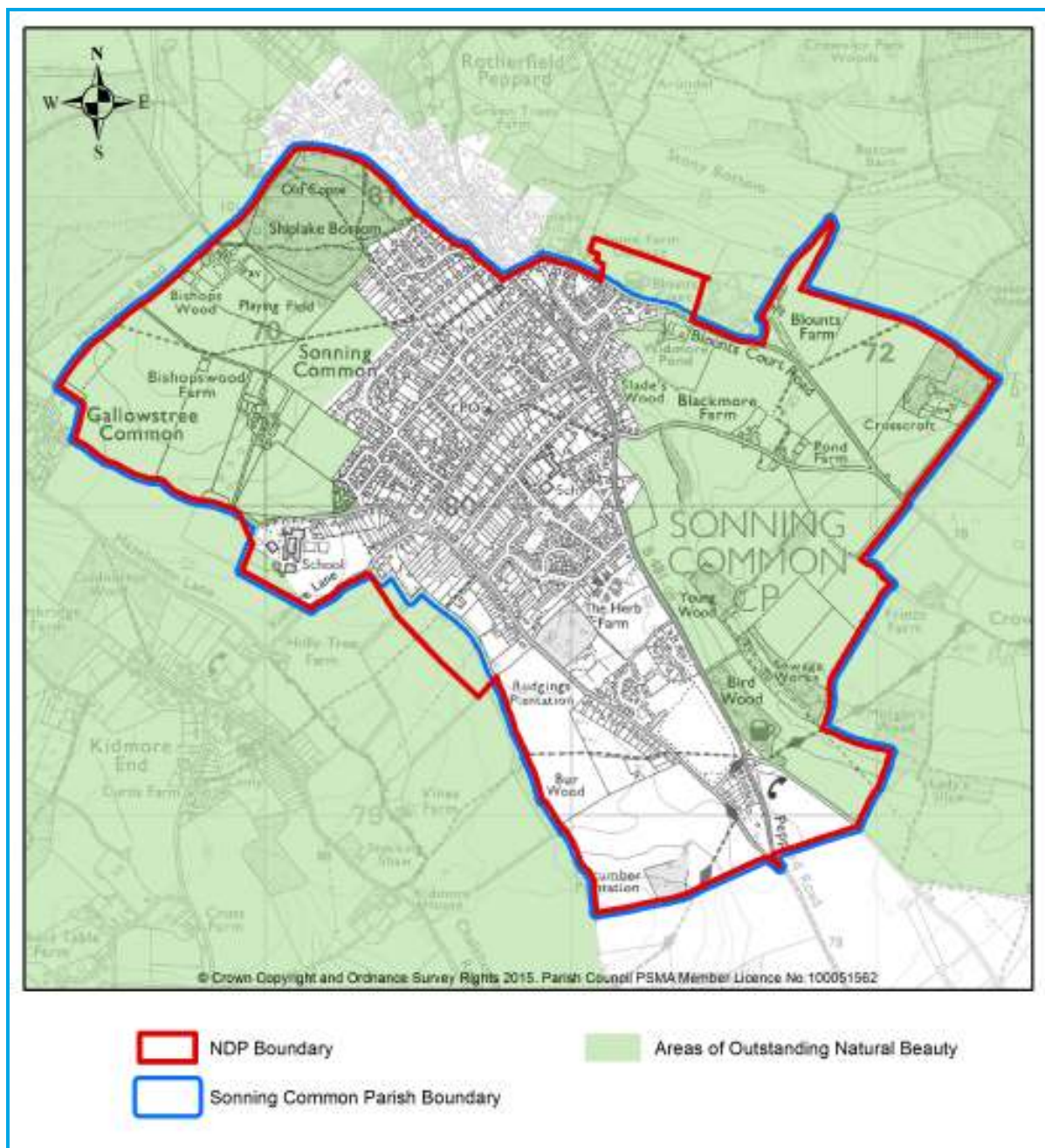
Parish and town councils lead the creation of neighbourhood plans, supported by the local planning authority, which in the case of Sonning Common is SODC. Once written, the plan is independently examined and put to a referendum of local residents for approval.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Sonning Common Neighbourhood Planning Area Consultation Statement, SODC, October 2013

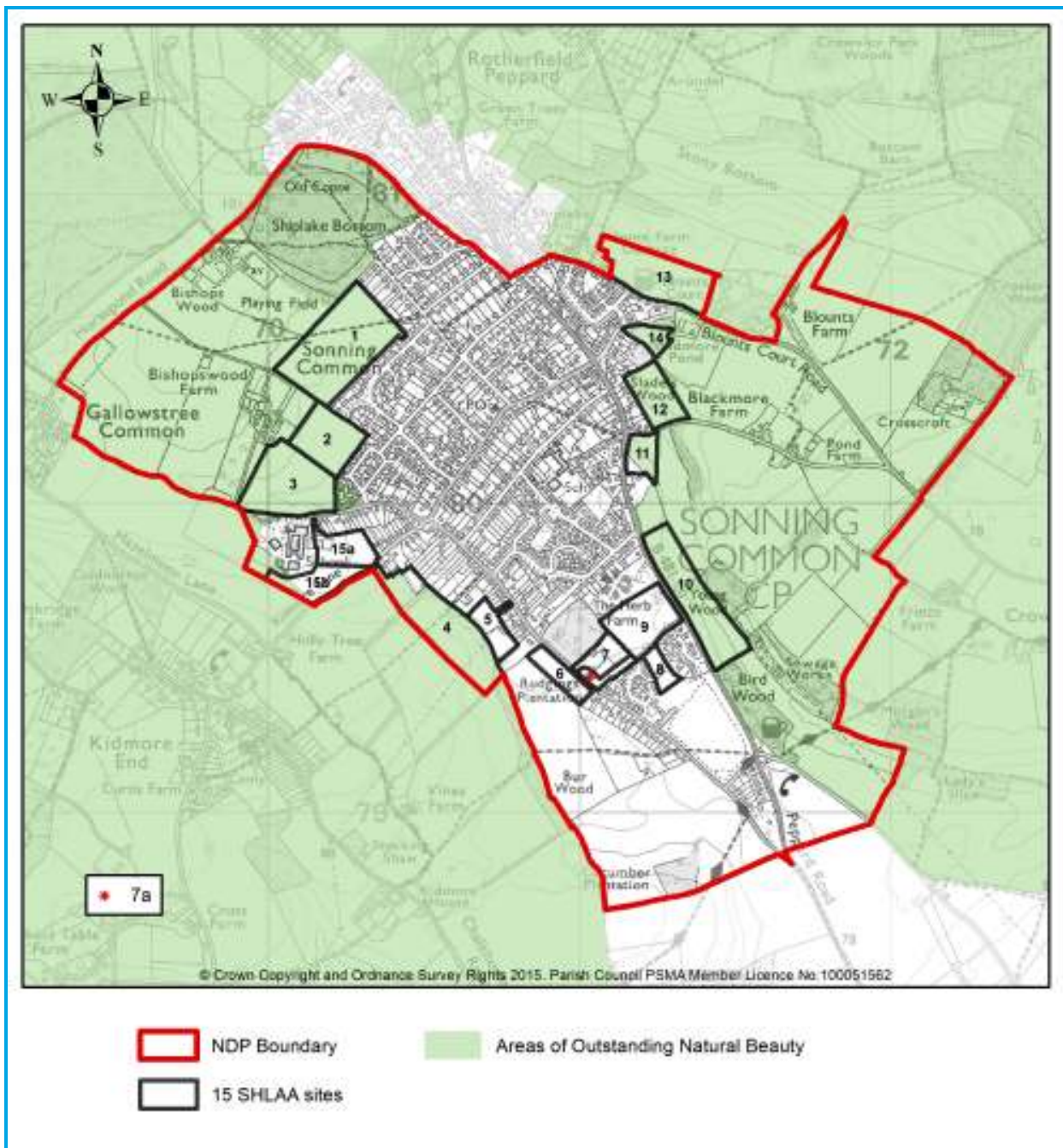
<sup>3</sup> Source: Census 2011



Map 1.1: Sonning Common parish boundary and Chilterns AONB



Map 1.2: SCNDP designated area and 15 SHLAA (SON) sites



SODC in its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identified 14 sites in and around Sonning Common which had been put forward by landowners/land agents as potentially available for development. A further site was added in 2013 to make a total of 15. The location of the 15 sites is found on Map 1.2. The SHLAA sites were assessed as part of the Plan process to see which ones were considered appropriate for development.

The Core Strategy made no formal allocation of a target number of homes to Sonning Common, but subsequent discussions with parish councils in the SODC area concerning the proposed distribution of 1,154 homes to the larger villages, concluded with a figure of 138 for Sonning Common for the period to 2027.<sup>4</sup>

Oxfordshire's 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the outcome of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 consultation could lead to an additional allocation of new homes to Sonning Common to 2031.

The SCNDP has been prepared by the working party and it will run concurrently with the SODC Core Strategy and the emerging plan until 31 March 2027. It is, however, a response to the needs and aspirations of the local community as understood today and it is recognised that current challenges and concerns are likely to evolve over the plan period.

Sonning Common Parish Council, as the responsible body for neighbourhood planning, will be responsible for maintaining and periodically revisiting the SCNDP to ensure relevance and to monitor delivery.

## Evolution

### Narrative

There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood development plan to be prepared for Sonning Common. If such a plan is not prepared, Sonning Common residents would then lose the opportunity to ensure that development is neighbourhood specific and focusses on sustainability issues that have been considered through the extensive community engagement and involvement, which has been clearly demonstrated in the preparatory work done to date. To this end, the SCNDP will be particularly useful in helping to ensure that new development reflects the needs of the local community.

In November 2011 Sonning Common Parish Council took the decision to produce an NDP primarily to promote appropriate development on suitable sites which deliver benefit to the wider community and do not damage the distinctive and highly valued character of the village.

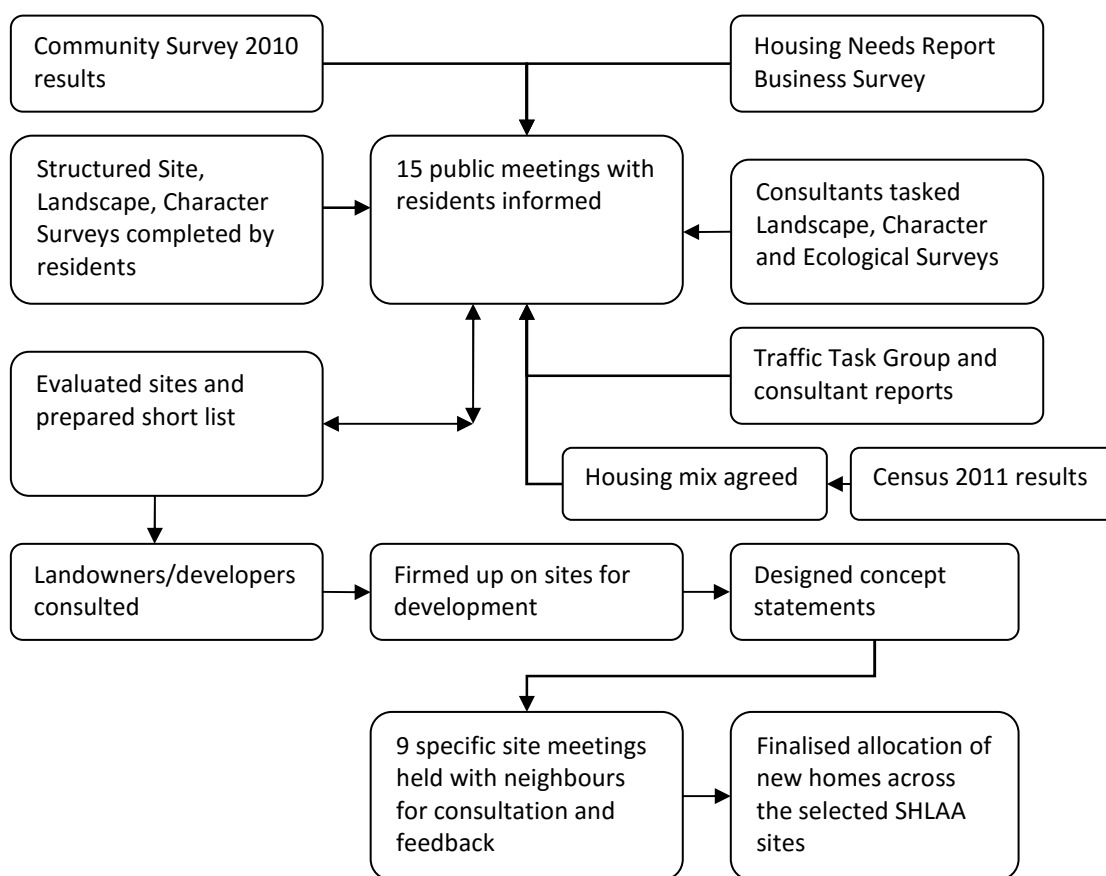
<sup>4</sup> Source: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2013-06-24%20-%20Housing%20Distribution.pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2013-06-24%20-%20Housing%20Distribution.pdf)



## Community involvement and consultation

From the outset community involvement has been the priority, commencing with a public event in April 2012 and proceeding with further regular public meetings. Our consultants provided structured survey formats, based on planning criteria, at the first NDP meeting in the village hall. These survey formats were then reviewed and modified (from the feedback) and residents were recruited to conduct structured site surveys of the designated SON1 to SON15 sites. 170 Site, Landscape and Character surveys were completed.



**Figure 1.1: Data collection by and from residents and consultants**

## Evidence base

An evidence base was established and used to robustly support all the Policies in this NDP. That evidence base is referred to where necessary throughout the Plan and a list of key evidence is included in the appendices. The list provides links to external documents. All Sonning Common evidence is available on the website<sup>5</sup> and it includes a comprehensive statement of community involvement. The following reports contributed to our evidence base:

- ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012
- Interim SCNDP Traffic Report (November 2012)
- Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013
- Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014

<sup>5</sup> Source: [www.scpnc-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scpnc-ndp.co.uk)

## Sonning Common

Map 1.3: Sonning Common in South Oxfordshire<sup>6</sup>



Sonning Common is a large village in South Oxfordshire, about four miles north of Reading centre and three-and-a-half miles west of Henley-on-Thames. It comprises 1,595 homes, and has a population of 3,784 (Census 2011). It is situated along the southern fringe of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in a rural landscape of rolling farmland and woodland. Its neighbouring parishes are Kidmore End to the west and Rotherfield Peppard to the north.

Its name is derived from the fact that it was originally the grazing, or common, land attached to the parish of Sonning, which is on the Thames to the south east. As recently as 1900 it consisted of no more than 40 houses on plots along Wood Lane, Woodlands Road and Baskerville Road. The settlement, defined by two dry valleys, the AONB and edged by the B481 and Kennylands Road, expanded slowly over the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century so that by 1951 the population had grown to more than 1,400. At this point Sonning Common became a parish in its own right.

Thereafter it expanded steadily. During the 1960s and 1970s several new estates were built, as a result of which Sonning Common became one of the largest villages in South Oxfordshire.

<sup>6</sup> Source: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/adopted-policies-maps](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/adopted-policies-maps)

## Demographics

Sonning Common's overall population has remained static since the 2001 Census. However, the number of 0-44 year olds has fallen, the 45-74 age group is increasing slowly but the 75+ numbers are growing quickly. The 65-74 mix is 22% more than the SODC average, while the 75+ is 60% more.

The 18-34 year old age group is lower than average for SODC. However, the proportion of under 44s is still considerably more than the number of 45 -74 year olds, and the 35-65 age group is in line with SODC.

Population forecasts for the SODC area indicate a likely overall growth of 12% for the years 2006-2026, with the proportion of over 65s increasing by 45%. <sup>7</sup> The population is therefore trending towards an imbalance between young and old which will impact on the housing requirements and housing stock over the next 20 years. This appears in part to be a result of the boom in house building in the 1960s and 1970s, when many young families moved into Sonning Common and have subsequently chosen to stay in the village.

The demographic distribution information has informed the housing mix required for future homes.

**Table 1.1: Sonning Common population 2001-2011** <sup>8</sup>

Age band (years)	Census		
	2001	2011	Change
0-15	759	694	-9%
16-24	290	274	-6%
25-44	937	838	-11%
45-64	1004	1016	1%
65-74	422	450	7%
75+	366	512	40%
	<b>3778</b>	<b>3784</b>	<b>0%</b>
Mean age	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	
Median age	<b>43</b>	<b>46</b>	

## Housing stock

Of the 1,595 homes in the village, around 50% are detached houses or bungalows, just over 30% are semi-detached houses and bungalows, 12% are terraced and the remainder are flats and maisonettes. More than 80% of the total is owner-occupied. This proportion is higher than elsewhere in South Oxfordshire, which is in itself above the national average in terms of owner-occupation. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Source: Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) data – Core Strategy 2012

<sup>8</sup> Source: Census 2001 and 2011

<sup>9</sup> Source: Census 2011



Census 2011 data highlights the imbalance of housing stock in Sonning Common. Table 1.2 shows that 1 bedroom households account for only 3.7% of Sonning Common households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC and 11.8% across England.

**Table 1.2: Sonning Common households – bedrooms per occupied dwelling**<sup>10</sup>

	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	SE England	England
<b>1 bedroom</b>	4%	8%	12%	12%
<b>2 bedrooms</b>	21%	24%	26%	28%
<b>3 bedrooms</b>	45%	40%	39%	41%
<b>4 bedrooms</b>	23%	21%	17%	14%
<b>5+ bedrooms</b>	7%	8%	6%	5%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Affordability is a serious problem for South Oxfordshire. Lower end house prices are over ten times higher than lower end incomes. This is much higher than the Oxfordshire and national averages.<sup>11</sup>

Table 1.3 shows that the mix of Council Tax Bands in Sonning Common is weighted very strongly towards high end, larger properties.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1.3: Sonning Common Council Tax Bands**

Bands	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	SE England	England
<b>A-C</b>	22.0%	39.3%	39.3%	66.2%
<b>E-H</b>	53.5%	37.7%	28.5%	18.5%

The ORCC housing needs report<sup>13</sup> concluded that affordable (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate, such as shared ownership) housing ranked as the most important housing need. The lack of affordable housing restricted residents from moving within the village, forced others to leave and prevented families from living near each other.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Census 2011

<sup>11</sup> Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)

<sup>12</sup> Source: ONS 2011

<sup>13</sup> Source: ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

## Facilities and services

### Health

There is a health centre in the middle of the village with six doctors, three registrars, three nurses and a health care assistant serving a total of more than 8,500 patients from a wide area of South Oxfordshire. The patient register extends beyond Sonning Common (population of 3,784) and includes residents from neighbouring villages such as Binfield Heath, Gallowstree Common, Kidmore End, Rotherfield Peppard, Shiplake, and Tokers Green, as well as parts of Emmer Green and Caversham which are outside the district.<sup>14</sup>

Next to it is a dental surgery with three dentists, three hygienists and four nurses, serving 3,400 patients. The spread of patients outside the Sonning Common NDP area is of a similar mix to that of Sonning Common Health Centre.<sup>15</sup>

Abbeycrest Care Home, located at the southern end of Kennylands Road, offers residential, nursing and specialist dementia support and has 70 single rooms.

### Education

Sonning Common has a primary school situated in Grove Road; 30% of pupils come from outside the village, mainly from Caversham. The school has a capacity of just below 420 pupils and currently there are 394 on roll. Chiltern Edge Secondary School is in Reade's Lane, and was within the parish of Kidmore End, although by agreement with Kidmore End Parish Council its site is included in the Sonning Common NDP designated area. After the boundary review in 2014 the school has become part of Sonning Common parish. It has just over 500 pupils, although its capacity is considerably more. Bishopswood Special School has locations at both the Primary and Secondary school in the village, with a pre-school in Gallowstree Common. There is also a Sonning Common pre-school.

### Library

Since late August 2014 the library, which is located on the primary school site, has been run with one professional librarian assisted by a team of more than thirty volunteers, who work one shift every two weeks. The library continues to be open 25 hours a week, and is used by the public and the primary school. It offers book, DVD and audio book loans, access to the internet, magazines and newspapers, as well as Saturday story-time and craft activities for children.

### Social

There is a police office in Lea Road, which is staffed by volunteers and Police Community Support Officers provide coverage for the area. The Friends in Sickness and Health (FISH) centre, which is in Kennylands Road, is staffed by volunteers who arrange car visits for the elderly to hospitals and other appointments. The charity owns a 17 seat bus in which volunteer drivers transport residents for shopping trips and on a variety of other outings.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Sonning Common Health Centre – Practice Manager

<sup>15</sup> Source: Wood Lane Dentistry – Practice Manager



The village hall in Wood Lane is recognised as the civic heart of Sonning Common

### Village hall

The village hall was built in the 1970s and, although small and having only a single main hall, is extremely well-used for a wide variety of social activities as well as markets, auctions, concerts and other events. It has a small kitchen and also accommodates the office of the parish council's staff. It has limited facilities for the modern requirements of a community of our current size. It is efficiently run by a management committee, with capital spending funded by the parish council. Population growth since it was built has exacerbated the need for larger premises.

Within the parish there is Kidmore Memorial Hall on Reade's Lane which is available for hire for functions and activities. This hall is owned and run by the Kidmore Memorial Hall (KMH) Trust.

### Recreation

Sonning Common has three play areas for children up to the age of 11, all of them well-equipped and maintained and regularly inspected. At the southern end of the village is the Millennium Green, an open area of natural grassland and trees, with paths and seats, and a designated natural habitat in the centre, much used by runners, walkers and dog owners. The green is owned by the Millennium Green Trust and run by the Trustees. The mown grass area is maintained by the parish council and the remainder by volunteers from Green Gym.

The village is surrounded by mainly beech woodland and countryside, which is popular for walks and picnics. Sonning Common is where the Health Walks project was started, in recognition of the lack of recreation for health provision. It was set up by Dr Bird, a former GP in the village and it aims to improve people's fitness, both in body and mind, by encouraging them to use their local countryside for walking. The health centre also initiated Sonning Common Green Gym to enable residents to regain and maintain fitness via conservation work in the local area. This group meets twice a week to work at various sites in South Oxfordshire, and is a thriving self-support voluntary organisation. It has now grown into a very successful scheme that has been adopted nationwide, and even internationally.

There is a shortage of sporting facilities within the SCNDP designated area. The only playing fields are privately-owned by Rotherfield United Football Club (RUFC), focussing on youth from 5-18 years with one adult pitch, and used exclusively for football. Sonning Common has no cricket ground, MUGA (multi-use games area) or sports hall. There are two tennis courts at Bishopswood (owned by RUFC) and a privately-owned gymnastics facility next to the Millennium Green.

### Public transport and parking

A regular (every 30 minutes) and well-used bus service between Sonning Common and Reading runs along Peppard Road from the direction of Rotherfield Peppard, along Wood Lane and exits the village along Kennylands Road. Car parking in the village centre is a major issue; the only public car park (32 spaces) is behind the Co-op supermarket on the corner of Wood Lane and Woodlands Road and is often full. On-street parking along Peppard Road and Wood Lane is largely unregulated and frequently obstructs the free flow of traffic, particularly the buses.

### Churches

There are three churches in the village with small halls or rooms for hire. All were built during the last century.



Christ the King  
Church of England



St Michael  
Catholic Church



Free Church

### Retail

Sonning Common's retail centre grew up over three decades in a haphazard fashion without coherent shaping or planning. It has an exceptionally rich and varied range of retail outlets, including a busy small supermarket (Co-op), a butcher, a hardware shop with associated bicycle and machinery repair workshop, dry cleaners, sandwich shop/café, two newsagents, barber, off-licence, florist, two hairdressers, greetings cards/haberdashery, veterinary surgery, pet shop, an Indian restaurant, a fish-and-chip shop and a Chinese take-away.

The village also has three public houses, two estate agents, three car repair and servicing businesses, a petrol station and a car showroom. The Herb Farm, situated some distance from the village centre is a plant nursery, combined with a shop and a small café. There is a cashpoint in the One Stop convenience store on Wood Lane, which also includes the all-important post office. There was until recently a small branch of NatWest Bank on the Peppard Road but this has now closed.

## Employment

Employment provision in the village centre is limited by the size of the retail space and or the type of the facility/service provided:

- Co-op supermarket has 13 employees
- 20 or so other outlets, the pubs and offices all employ small numbers
- Kidby's Yard, a small light industrial site off Kennylands Road, provides employment for 15 people
- Sonning Common Garage has three sites and employs more than 30 people
- The Herb Farm (garden nursery, shop and café) employs 8 FTE people
- three schools have 60, 59 and 37 staff respectively
- health centre and dental practice together employ around 23 people
- Abbeycrest Care Home has 80 employees (full-time and part-time)

For a village of its size with an adult population of 2,578 between the ages of 16 and 74 years (Table 1.1), these facilities provide a healthy level (c. 15%) of employment, some of which includes local residents.

The biggest employer in the 'wider' area by far is Johnson Matthey. Their technology centre, which employs 260 people, is actually just outside Sonning Common's parish boundary and the designated NDP area. Although the majority of employees do not live in Sonning Common, the company has a major influence on the village in terms of business for the retail centre and traffic flow. The rising cost of housing in the village has made it more difficult for employees to live closer to the organisation.



## Character

**Map 1.4: Aerial view of inner village**<sup>16</sup>



The comparatively recent development of Sonning Common means that it has a character very different from many other villages in South Oxfordshire which have much longer histories. It has very few historic buildings; there are only two listed buildings,<sup>17</sup> Pond Cottage and the adjacent barn in Blackmore Lane which are Grade II listed. It does, however, have Widmore Pond, with written records dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and a large area of ancient woodland - Old Copse Wood, extending north from the end of Woodlands Road. There is a 16<sup>th</sup> Century home, Reddish Manor.

Its 'feel' – spacious, wooded, semi-rural – derives from the 'plotland' model of growth in which houses were built along the existing principal roads, usually with generous gardens. The Character Assessment and Design Statement commissioned in 2013 provides greater detail about the style of homes in Sonning Common. The Google map shows that its woodland character stretches through the very centre of the village and highlights the considerable number of trees.

There is little architecture of real distinction in the village, but there is a pleasing variety of building styles which gives each of the older roads and lanes a distinction and interest much valued both by those who live in them and the residents of Sonning Common as a whole.

The appearance from the 1960s onwards of some housing developments of a more generic and less locally distinctive style has affected the overall impression without seriously compromising it. There is very little of striking beauty in Sonning Common but, equally, very little that is downright ugly!

<sup>16</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

<sup>17</sup> Source: [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

The affection that its people generally feel for the village is enormously enhanced by its setting. The countryside around is delightfully varied in the contrasts between open fields and woodland. There are splendid opportunities for walking and cycling and fine views, particularly across the dry valleys to the east and west. The village benefits from easy access to Reading and Henley, but its separation from both is of especial importance to the residents of Sonning Common.

Sonning Common is blessed in many ways. It is peaceful and pleasant but it is also full of life and activity. The busyness of the retail centres along Peppard Road and Wood Lane gives it real vibrancy. It is regarded by its residents as a great place to grow up in, to mature in and to grow old in. One of the chief aims of this Neighbourhood Development Plan is to protect and enhance the qualities that have made that possible.

When asked why people like living in Sonning Common, the two most commonly identified reasons were “people who smile” and the “community spirit.” This spirit has been retained in spite of a significant growth in the population over the last 40 years and this is reflected and celebrated in the large number of thriving clubs.



There have been many meetings with some 800 or so residents, who have made a considerable contribution to the Plan. Emerging from these meetings residents have commented on the strengths and issues of concern about living in Sonning Common. These have been summarised and appear in Table 1.4.



**Table 1.4: Strengths and issues identified by residents**<sup>18</sup>

Strengths	Issues
Residents like living in Sonning Common	Age balance/longevity
Community spirit	Lifestyle changes
Distinctive character of village	Balance of housing stock/cost of homes
Local employment	Identikit new houses
Variety of retail	Road parking/bus manoeuvring in Wood Lane
Schools/library/health services	Retain rural feel with growth/low level lighting
Rural 'look and feel' to village	Traffic calming measures
Access to open country side	Road/path maintenance
Active parish council	Low level of recreation facilities
Woodland character	Lack of community space
Thriving clubs and activities	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thames Bridge

<sup>18</sup> Source: [www.scp-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scp-ndp.co.uk) - Community evidence – collated by Place Studio – consultants, 28 April 2012

## Aims, priorities and development choices

### Aims and priorities

The SCNDP consultation with residents built on evidence already gathered in the Community Survey carried out in 2009/10. This survey was distributed to 1,800 homes and 78% were returned. Among the top priorities identified were:

- village centre environment to be remodelled
- parking improvements to be implemented
- housing developments to be shared between a number of sites and restricted in size

With regard to housing, 81% favoured small housing developments and two thirds of the respondents believed 40% of homes should be affordable, shared ownership. 82% believed the village centre needed to be remodelled.

Over recent years there have been comparatively few new houses built in Sonning Common and those that have been built have tended to be 4 and 5 bedroom dwellings. At the same time there has been a trend towards extending existing properties, with the same outcome: a shortage of smaller homes for young families and for older people to 'downsize,' exacerbated by significant increases in house prices.

The ORCC housing needs report <sup>19</sup> recorded the strong view of the residents that smaller and more affordable homes should make up the majority in new developments. This need for a focus on 1, 2 and 3 bedroom homes in order to rebalance the housing stock was confirmed by the Census results of 2011, published in 2012.

The aim from the 2009/10 survey that new houses should be shared between several sites has been confirmed in the more recent consultations. Although 15 SHLAA sites were identified by SODC the availability/suitability has been reduced, either as a result of landowners withdrawing sites or following consultation with villagers and preliminary discussions with The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB).

This has resulted in a focus on a smaller number of sites which provide a balance between development in the north west and south of the village and a strong desire to retain the existing separation between the edge of Sonning Common and Reading town. Residents also expressed strong views against any development that might suggest a merger with Kidmore End. A strong view from SCNDP public consultations emerged that the "rural feel of the village" should be conserved and enhanced and any development should minimise the impact on the AONB and surrounding countryside.

Residents have consistently commented that parking and traffic issues need to be resolved to help the village centre to thrive. While many of these problems are caused by inconsiderate behaviour by motorists, especially parking on pavements, the village hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park in the village centre. Sonning Common is currently a service centre for the surrounding villages through provision of education, health and retail facilities. The proposed additional housing is likely to bring further parking pressures.

<sup>19</sup> Source: ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

Sonning Common has no recreational facilities of its own for teenagers or adults, i.e. no playing fields/pitches or recreational grounds and no sports or sufficiently large community hall. SODC has identified these and other recreational deficiencies in three studies undertaken in 2008, 2011 and 2015.<sup>20 21 22</sup> The introduction of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in South Oxfordshire may go some way to providing assistance with funding for new facilities.

## Development choices

The SCNDP Working Party has fully involved residents in the decision making process of site selection and this consultation generated the following guiding principles for the future use of land:

- protect the rural character of Sonning Common in relation to its surroundings
- designate further land for public amenity use to make good identified shortages
- distribute the housing on a number of sites
- enhance and sustain the retail centre and local employment
- support the schools and other essential facilities
- ease the traffic flow and car parking problems
- promote the use of the bus service, cycling and footpaths
- address shortfalls in the provision of recreational and sporting facilities

The site selection process concluded that allocations or designations should be made for the following SHLAA sites (Part Four for further detail):

- SON 1 Old Copse Field (Local Green Space designation)
- SON 2/3 Bishopswood Middle Field/Memorial Hall Field
- SON 5 Kennylands Paddock
- SON 6 Kennylands Road Infill
- SON 7/7a Hagpits House/Hagpits Orchard
- SON 8 Kennylands Gymnastics (subject to a covenant from 1983 specifying recreation use)
- SON 9 Lea Meadow
- SON 15a Chiltern Edge Top Field

<sup>20</sup> Source: SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment April 2008

<sup>21</sup> Source: SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy March 2011

<sup>22</sup> Source: Sonning Common: Local Needs Report, June 2015 by Nortoft

## Part Two: Vision, objectives, development strategy

### Vision

Sonning Common will grow and renew itself while enhancing and protecting its village character.

“In 2027, Sonning Common parish will be at the hub of a thriving community, where the total settlement will extend to some five thousand people all living within a beautiful and valued AONB woodland area. It will have a modern service centre, providing a good range of retail and healthcare, and modern recreation, sports, youth and care home facilities all serving a total of some nine thousand people from the community and surrounding villages.

Our neighbourhood **will provide a more even mix of housing**, which is accessible to each segment of a balanced and inclusive community. We will recognise that **changing demographics, longevity and smaller average household** sizes require a modest increase in numbers of homes locally. We will plan for and support the **construction of our allocation of homes** resulting from the SODC Core Strategy of 2012 and subsequently for the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014.

Sonning Common will be a healthy place where everyone of all ages can live, learn, shop, access healthcare, travel, work and engage in active recreation, sports and cultural pursuits with modern community facilities. Provision of opportunities for all-year activity will recognise the risks inherent in more sedentary lifestyles and work environments.

The **village centre will thrive and suffer less from congestion** if we can succeed in providing an appropriate new car park, maintain a good bus service and enable free-flowing traffic through the main internal artery (along Kennylands Road and Wood Lane). We also aspire to see a remodelling of the village centre to focus on its key retail and healthcare service role and to allow modernisation and expansion of these facilities so that they remain of appropriate scale to meet future demands. (Ideally this would include the supermarket having direct trolley access to an appropriately sized car park.)

We aspire to have a **new modern community sports hall**, surrounded by appropriate provision of playing pitches and car parking to provide a venue where the wider community can come together and engage in a wide range of social, charitable, cultural and healthy sporting activities. Ideally, we would like this facility to be close to our **secondary school to allow shared use of these facilities**. We also see these facilities as giving proper scope, locally, to a friendly community spirit.

Sonning Common will continue to be a key nexus of educational facilities with excellent nursery, preschool, library, primary school and secondary school facilities. We would aim for there to be a genuine partnership between the community and these vital facilities so that all can achieve the highest standards.

We recognise that Sonning Common, like much of South Oxfordshire, presently suffers a high degree of out-commuting for employment. By 2027, we aspire to have a **new small office park** close to, but out of, the village centre with modern ICT enabled buildings and dedicated parking facilities.

Ideally, we would like to encourage a situation where existing office users in the congested village centre choose to migrate their operations to the new office park. We will positively support the **provision of broadband and** communications infrastructure to both local business and **appropriate home working**. We will encourage a positive employment environment generally with a more sustainable pattern of travel and less commuting.

In embracing development, Sonning Common will actively seek to ensure that change benefits the whole of the local community. We will encourage **preferential access to new homes** for families and people with **strong local connections**. Where possible, we will ensure that employment opportunities arising from development benefit local skills and capabilities.

Sonning Common will continue to protect and respect its cherished woodland character and its setting within a beautiful AONB rural environment and ensure that the existing open countryside between the village and neighbouring settlements is maintained; particularly as regards Reading, where there is a very different urban character and density.

As part of the necessary housing development we will have ensured **appropriate landscaping and tree-planting to maintain the woodland character and rural feel** of our neighbourhood.”

## Objectives

**Table 2.1: SCNDP Objectives**

<b>Development strategy objectives</b>
To avoid the coalescence of Sonning Common with neighbouring settlements and protect the character of the countryside setting of the village.
To produce a coherent overall strategy for the sustainable development of Sonning Common over the plan period.
To deliver development and other changes that conserve and enhance the sustainability of Sonning Common in a balanced approach to social, economic, and environmental factors.
<b>Housing objectives</b>
To allocate sites for the number of new homes expected to be apportioned to Sonning Common by SODC, with an appropriate contingency of reserve sites.
To deliver a mix of new housing which will rebalance the existing housing stock and will better meet local needs for smaller starter and downsizing homes in future.
To support infill development providing that it does not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area.
To seek viable means whereby families with meaningful local connections to this area can be given some preferential access to new housing – including social and affordable housing.
<b>Design objective</b>
To ensure that new housing and development is designed and built to a high quality and respects the existing character of Sonning Common.
<b>Village centre objectives</b>
To protect and support the vitality and viability of our village centre, based on its diverse mix of retail and public services, as a vital component of the sustainability of our settlement and district.
To ensure the village centre is accessible to all users with particular reference to buses, the disabled and delivery vehicles and to reorganise parking provision around the schools.
<b>Economic and employment objectives</b>
To increase local employment and new business opportunities by securing new employment sites and by enabling appropriate intensified use of existing sites.
To seek and support continuous improvements in the provision of high-speed broadband and communications infrastructure to support home working, providing that the siting and appearance of the proposed apparatus seek to minimise impact on the visual amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area.

**Table 2.1: SCNDP Objectives continued**

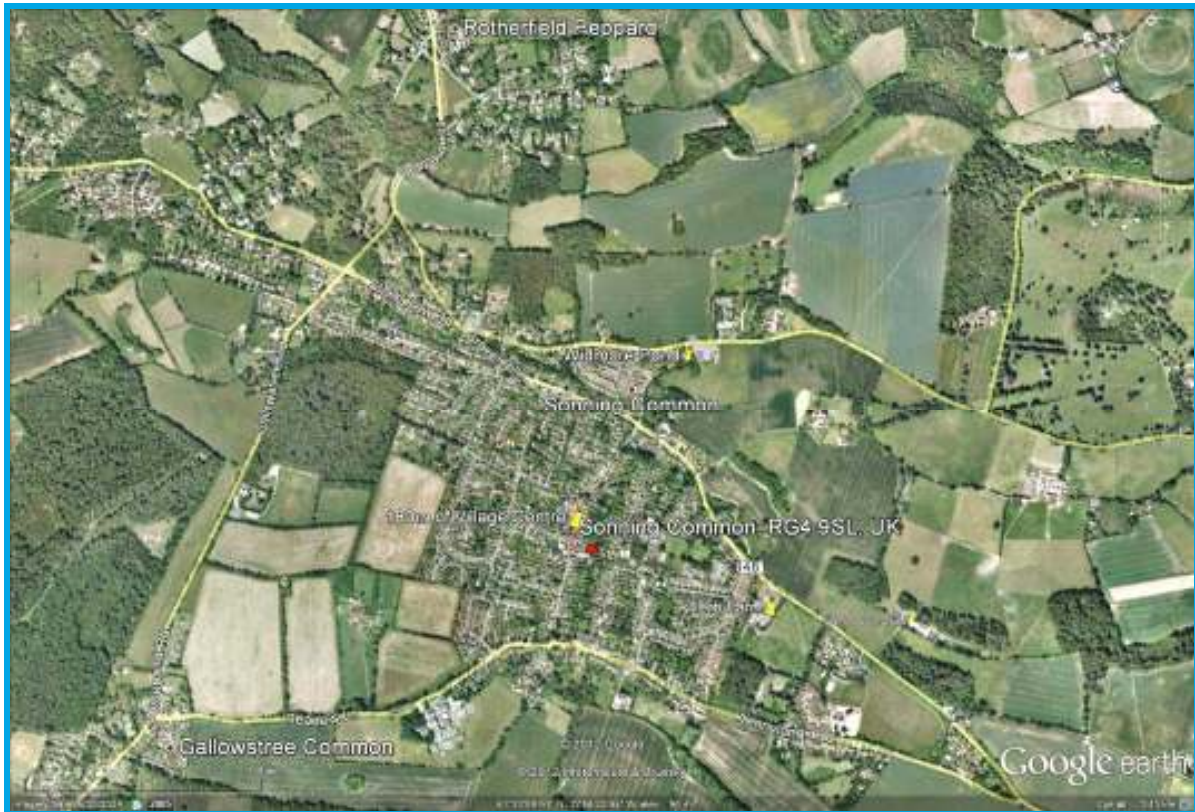
<b>Community, social &amp; health objectives</b>
To retain and enhance existing local community services and facilities, ensuring that public services (including medical, educational, public transport, utilities and amenities) are aware of and can support growth from new housing.
To secure land for and encourage the provision of identified shortfalls in healthy recreation facilities for all age groups, and particularly for older children and adults.
To support the full range of educational facilities in Sonning Common.
<b>Movement, road safety and parking objectives</b>
To retain the bus service and its stops, on its existing route along Peppard Road, Wood Lane and Kennylands Road.
To undertake a programme of traffic calming and management both generally and specifically for the village centre and along Peppard and Kennylands Roads and for both school roads.
To ensure that all new developments bring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locally appropriate car parking and cycling provision</li> <li>• connecting pedestrian routes through and around the village</li> <li>• road safety</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental objectives</b>
To conserve and enhance the Neighbourhood Area's countryside and open spaces, in particular those areas of natural beauty, sensitive ecology and landscape designation.
To maintain and enhance the wooded and rural character of the village by encouraging the integration of soft landscaping in new developments and where appropriate screening from any adjacent AONB.
To conserve and enhance the environment, ecosystem and biodiversity, ensuring that new development protects biodiversity including habitats and provision of appropriate wildlife, biodiversity and movement corridors.
<b>Heritage objective</b>
To conserve and enhance the historic environment in relation to buildings, landscapes and places of local cultural value.
<b>Delivery objectives</b>
To encourage potential applicants for development to work with the community of Sonning Common, via its Parish Council, in preparing their proposals.
To ensure that all financial contributions received by Sonning Common Parish Council from developments (S106 and/or CIL) are used on projects and initiatives that meet the identified needs of the community.



## Development strategy

This section lays out a strategy for how the village as a whole will grow and change over the period of the Plan. The development strategy aims to permit appropriate development whilst retaining the distinctive character of the village in its rural and woodland setting, as shown on the Google Map 2.1.

**Map 2.1: Sonning Common and surrounding areas**<sup>23</sup>



## Guiding principles

We have adopted these guiding principles to inform the development strategy of our Plan:

- protecting and enhancing the setting in a rural landscape
- promoting overall sustainability
- strengthening the village centre
- promoting 'walkability' – accessibility of development to local services
- protecting the character of the NDP designated area

These guiding principles have informed the strategy right from the outset. The structured site surveys of all of the fifteen SHLAA sites, conducted by volunteers from the village, used sustainability criteria covering views and setting; green space and wildlife; neighbouring character; walkability; public transport; ecology; archaeology; heritage; AONB proximity; flood risk and community facilities. The full coverage of these aspects can be viewed on an exemplar site survey form and the results in a 'traffic light' grid on the website ([www.scpc-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scpc-ndp.co.uk)).

<sup>23</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

A careful selection of the potential development sites (as identified in the SHLAA or nominated subsequently) made available to the Neighbourhood Development Plan, takes into account all the relevant factors including the extent that particular sites and land prices offer scope for investment in much needed community facilities.

### Setting in a rural landscape

Almost all of the 15 sites identified in the SHLAA exist on the periphery of the village, on green mostly arable fields and many are in the AONB – see Map 2.2. Great attention has been paid to ameliorate the impacts upon the landscape, ecology and wildlife corridors and on the character of the village. This is reflected in the development of the Plan's objectives and policies, including the individual site policies.

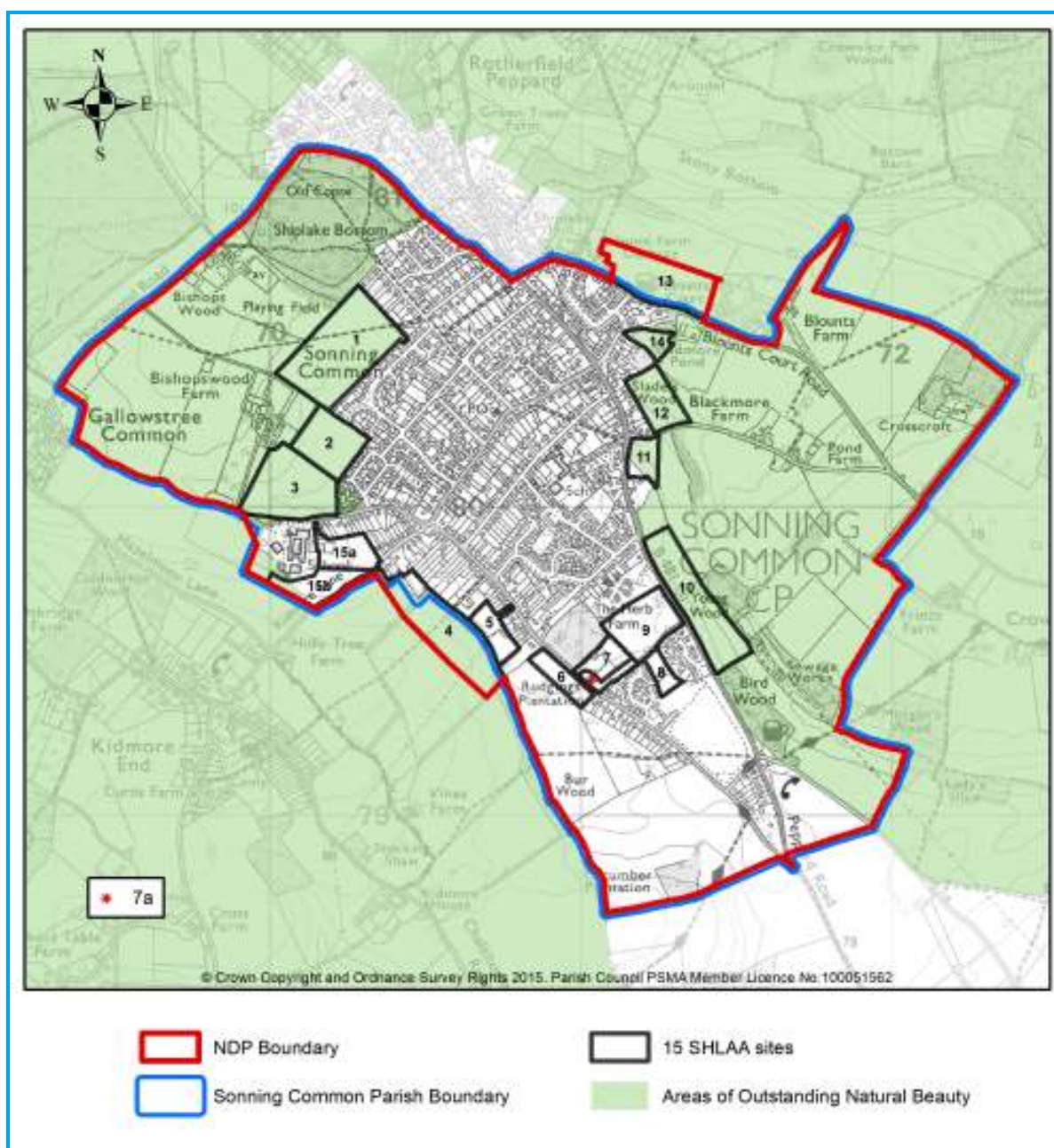
Except to the north east, where existing development blurs into Rotherfield Peppard, Sonning Common is surrounded by landscape which is mostly in the AONB. The existing settlement shape in between the dry valleys is a defining feature of the village. This very important overall setting is to be retained as follows:

- the edge of the village to the east is AONB and not to be developed, as advised by an officer of The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB)
- to the west of the village the aim will be similar – to preserve the gap between the edge of the village and Kidmore End
- to the south to retain the gap from Reading

In each of the site allocation policies considerable attention has been paid to reducing the impact on the AONB. SONs 5, 6, 7 (at the highest point overlooks the AONB) 9 and 15a which exist alongside the AONB, have policies which emphasise the need for extensive structured planting in order to lessen the effect on the rural setting. This has impacted on the amount of land available for the new homes and on all sites has reduced the number and allocation of dwellings in order to provide the requisite mitigations. Reduced ridge heights of homes will lessen the effect on the rural landscape and AONB and many of the site allocation policies include this recommendation. Furthermore, developers should consider the impact of the colour used in building materials. Bricks are far less noticeable from the AONB as are brown gable ends, gutters and window frames.



Map 2.2: SHLAA sites within the rural landscape





## Overall sustainability

Use of the available and suitable sites in the southern and north western areas of the village will satisfy the strongly expressed community desire for several small developments. Map 2.3 illustrates that the sites in the north west are closer to the village centre offering more accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists than those in the southern areas and as such are more likely to support the sustainability of the village centre.

Importantly, this distribution will ensure a balanced growth of the village and make it better connected for pedestrians, thereby potentially enhancing general health and sustainability. This in turn will support local services and minimise the need for car use.

Of the sites nominated through the SHLAA not all remained available. Three were withdrawn by their owners, another three to the eastern edge of the village were not to be considered for development after advice from The Chilterns Conservation Board officer. All of these sites have been surveyed by residents and the evidence collected and shown on the 'traffic light' grid, which made it clear that they were not deemed sustainable. The exceptions were part of SON 13, which had been withdrawn by the landowner and part of SON 11. The latter is a very sustainable site with regards to its location to the village centre, walkability and bus service but was not much favoured by residents when the site scenarios for development were presented at a public meeting. Also it is mostly in the AONB.

None of the sites considered in the previous paragraph were offered by their owners for recreation land, to satisfy the recognised deficit in Sonning Common. However, SON 2/3 was offered by the landowner partly for housing and partly for recreation land. This was deemed to be the ideal location for formal recreation given that it is opposite the secondary school and that the space could be shared.

It is, however, in the AONB. Using the NPPF guidance a submission has been made to the CCB and can be found on the website ([www.scpc-ndp.gov.uk](http://www.scpc-ndp.gov.uk)).

Evidence from the Nortoft report<sup>24</sup> commissioned by SODC, identifies the lack of recreation space in Sonning Common, and it also supports recreation on SON 2/3.

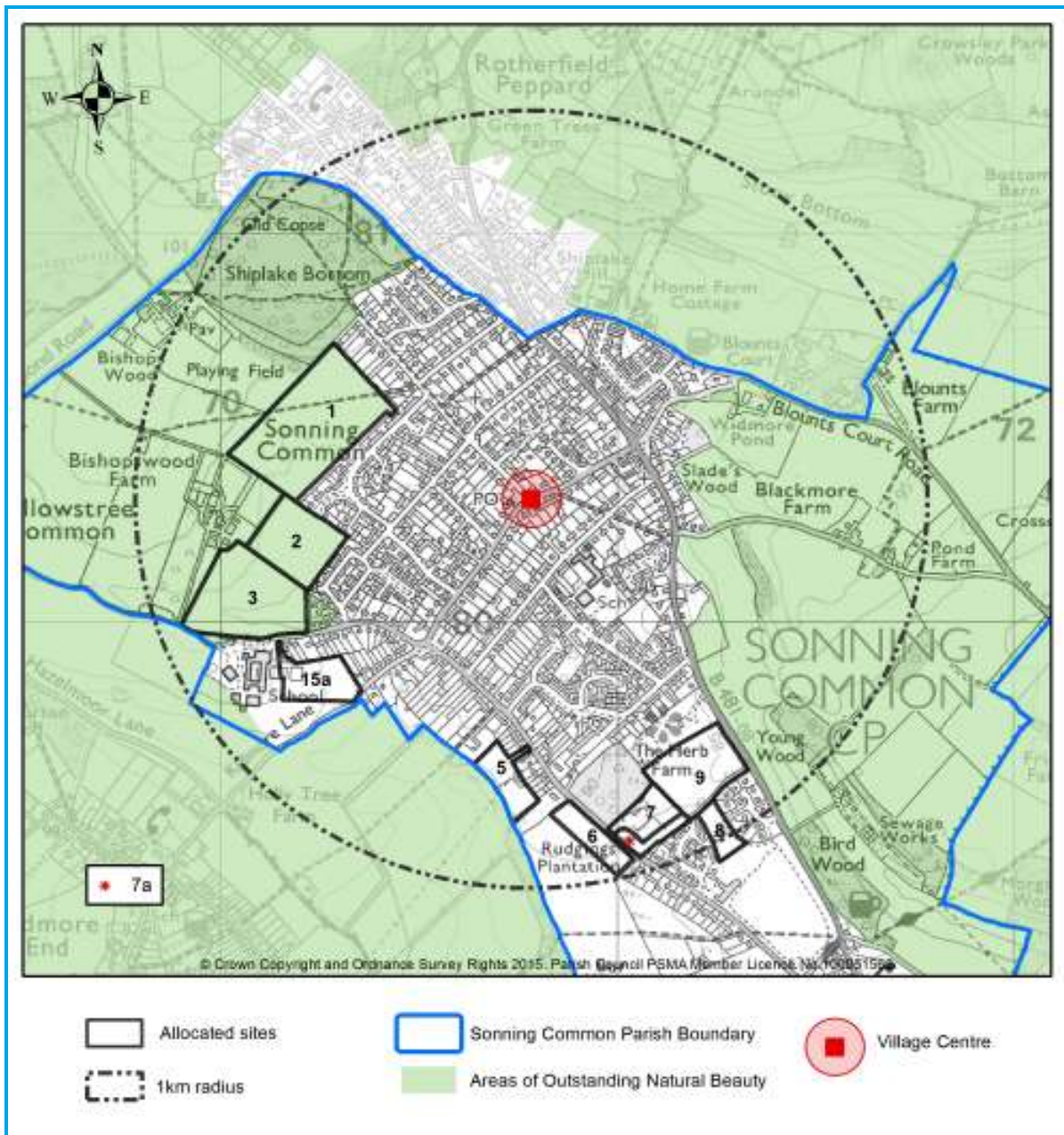
A recent landscape and visual impact survey in respect of the larger villages in South Oxfordshire,<sup>25</sup> which was also commissioned by SODC, reinforces the view that currently the north western built boundary of the village is mostly rear garden fencing. A principle for the proposed development in this part of the village is to redress this hard, poor quality boundary to the AONB through large areas of structured planting and landscaping.

The 'traffic light' grid demonstrates that SON 2/3 is the most sustainable site across a whole range of planning criteria. The distance of each site from the village centre is an important consideration and the proximity of SON 2/3 can be seen clearly on Map 2.3.

<sup>24</sup> Source: Sonning Common: Local Needs Report, June 2015 by Nortoft

<sup>25</sup> Source: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies)

Map 2.3: Area within 1km radius of village centre



### Strengthening the village centre

While the village centre can be accessed by foot or cycle from all sites, those in the north west are closer than those in the south where residents may be more likely to use public or private transport to reach the village amenities.

Little physical change is anticipated for the village centre, the emphasis being on improvements to bolster its economy, retaining the number and range of existing retail and business/employment and community uses. The parish council will work with residents and developers to improve pedestrian accessibility and to seek parking solutions.

The focal point of the village centre is the village hall situated in the midst of the core retail and service providers; behind it is the only public car park (32 spaces). Built in the early 1970s when the population was half its current number, the hall, which seats 120 people, is now too cramped to fulfil the increasing demands of a growing 21<sup>st</sup> Century community.

A future decision by the parish council, based on financial information, will decide whether the village hall should be enlarged with a second floor or some of its uses could be transferred to a community sports hall.

### Development potential

SODC has recommended that our Plan includes some flexibility in order to address the possible outcomes arising from consultation with communities on Oxfordshire's 2014 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). These results will inform SODC's emerging Local Plan 2031 which could lead to the SCNDP having to accommodate an additional allocation of new homes through to 2031.

There is, therefore, some uncertainty about the precise number of new homes the village may be required to satisfy by 2031 and the sport and recreational land likely to be provided for community use.

The evidence base provides details of how all the SHLAA sites were assessed and options considered, leading to the identification of sites suitable for some form of development. The number of homes per site is as follows:

SON 2/3:	50
SON 5:	22
SON 6:	26
SON 7:	25 (Reserve)
SON 7a:	5 (Reserve)
SON 8:	4 (Reserve) + 10 (Phase 2) – subject to a covenant from 1983 specifying recreation use
SON 9:	60
SON 15a:	37

The SCNDP is seeking to provide some further amenity green space and SON 1 is designated as Local Green Space.

Further information about the site selection process can be found on [www.scp-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scp-ndp.co.uk) under Evidence base and also in the Appendix to this document.

Each of the allocated site policies include a requirement for a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to be commissioned by the developers. As part of this work a further view about housing densities on each of the sites will emerge.

The development proposals for SON 2/3 are required to satisfy National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) tests (paragraphs 115 and 116) in relation to development in an AONB. The SCNDP Working Party believes that the selection of this site satisfies the relevant NPPF tests.

**Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where they can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:**

**Test: ‘The need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy.’**

Rationale:

- The need for new homes is both a national and local issue. Denying appropriate levels of new housing could damage the wider local economy and impact on the delivery of housing targets across the wider district.
- The need for locally targeted sports and recreation, which SODC acknowledges is in deficit, could impact negatively if not provided in Sonning Common.

**Test: ‘The cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way.’**

Rationale:

- The Chilterns Conservation Board and the Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013 conclude that development to the east or west of the village could have a serious negative impact on the Chilterns AONB. The evidence also shows that the boundary to the AONB in the north west is in need of additional screening.
- Given that any recreational provision which is focused on local community use would also require provision for parking, there is no other suitable site within the designated neighbourhood area.

**Test: ‘Any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.’**

Rationale:

- If appropriate landscaping is delivered as this Plan requires for both new homes and the provision of sports/recreation, the quality of the AONB boundary to the north west will be enhanced.
- Far from having a detrimental effect on recreational opportunities, the addition of sports facilities could have a positive impact on the AONB boundary in the north west as well as improving people’s health and well-being.

A submission has been made to The Chilterns Conservation Board to present the SCNDWP case for the development of SON 2/3. This background paper can be found on the website [www.scpc-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scpc-ndp.co.uk).

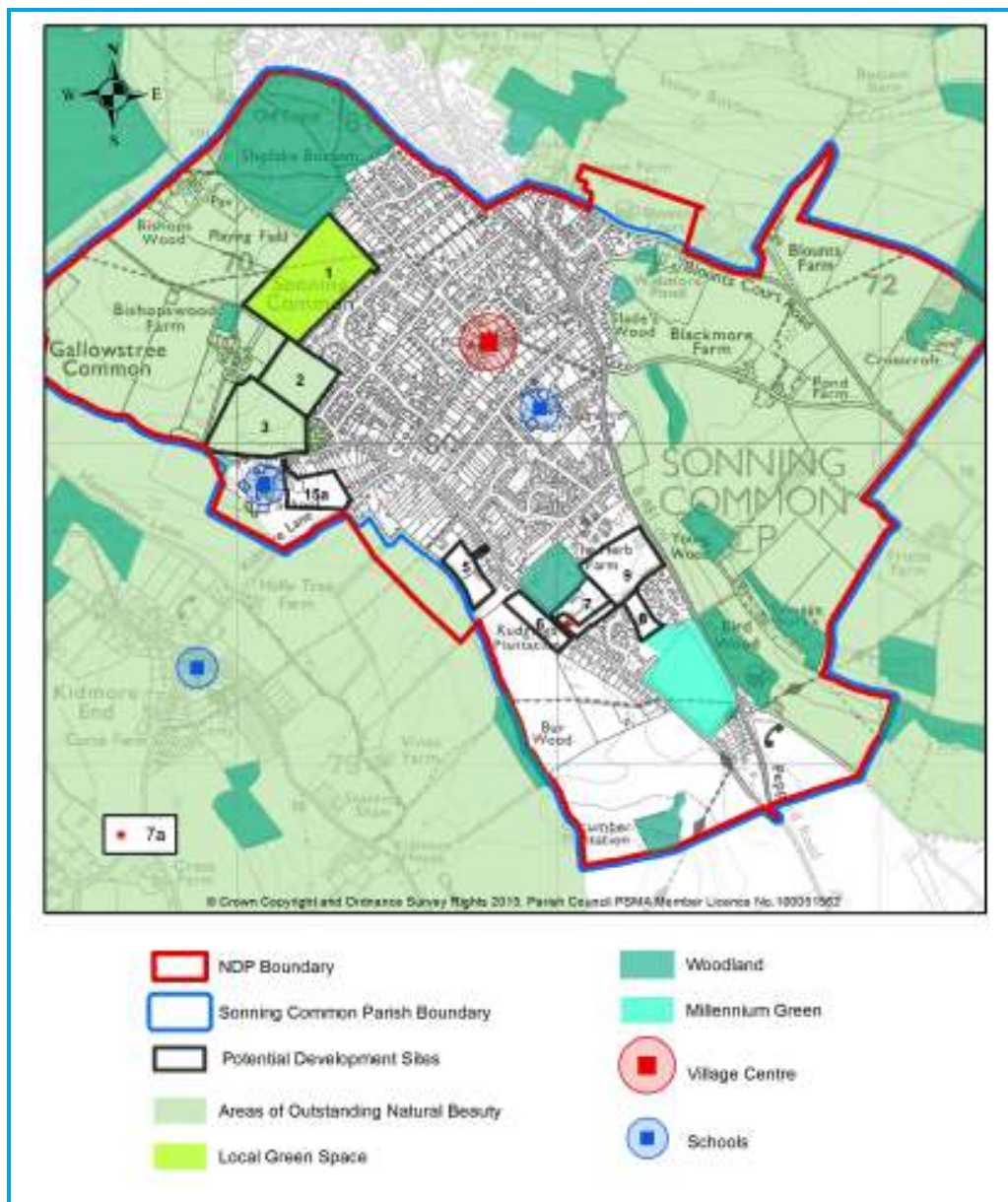


## Spatial strategy

The spatial strategy is our concept for coherent development, providing for a clear, natural boundary between the village and the AONB countryside. The key principle for the spatial strategy is to maintain the separate village of Sonning Common within the AONB landscape. Detail appertaining to the individual site policies follows in Part Four.

Map 2.4 shows the current shape of the built up area within the wider AONB landscape. There are few remaining opportunities for development within this boundary. Consequently, development will focus on land towards the southern part of the village and in the north west. In the north west, the inclusion of SON 2/3 would move the built area towards the parish and NDP boundaries. The inclusion of this site will provide improved screening to the AONB and allow the deficit in recreational facilities to be addressed. The map also shows Millennium Green in the south and a designated Local Green Space in the north, which is intended to increase the public space in Sonning Common.

**Map 2.4: Spatial strategy**



## Part Three: Policies

### Housing policies

#### Housing distribution

There have been 15 public meetings and 9 site specific meetings with our residents. The principal message from the feedback has been the desire to see the allocation of new homes spread across several small sites rather than concentrated on larger ones. This has resulted in two clusters of sites, one in the north west and the other in the south.

New housing developments have been allocated and will be sufficient to meet the minimum of 138 currently allocated to Sonning Common, plus a further likely allocation as a result of Oxfordshire's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2014.

**Objective:** To allocate sites for the number of new homes expected to be apportioned to Sonning Common by SODC, with an appropriate contingency of reserve sites.

#### **Policy H1: Housing distribution**

Planning permission will be granted for a minimum of 138 homes to be distributed across the sites listed below and shown on Map 3.1:

##### **Allocated sites**

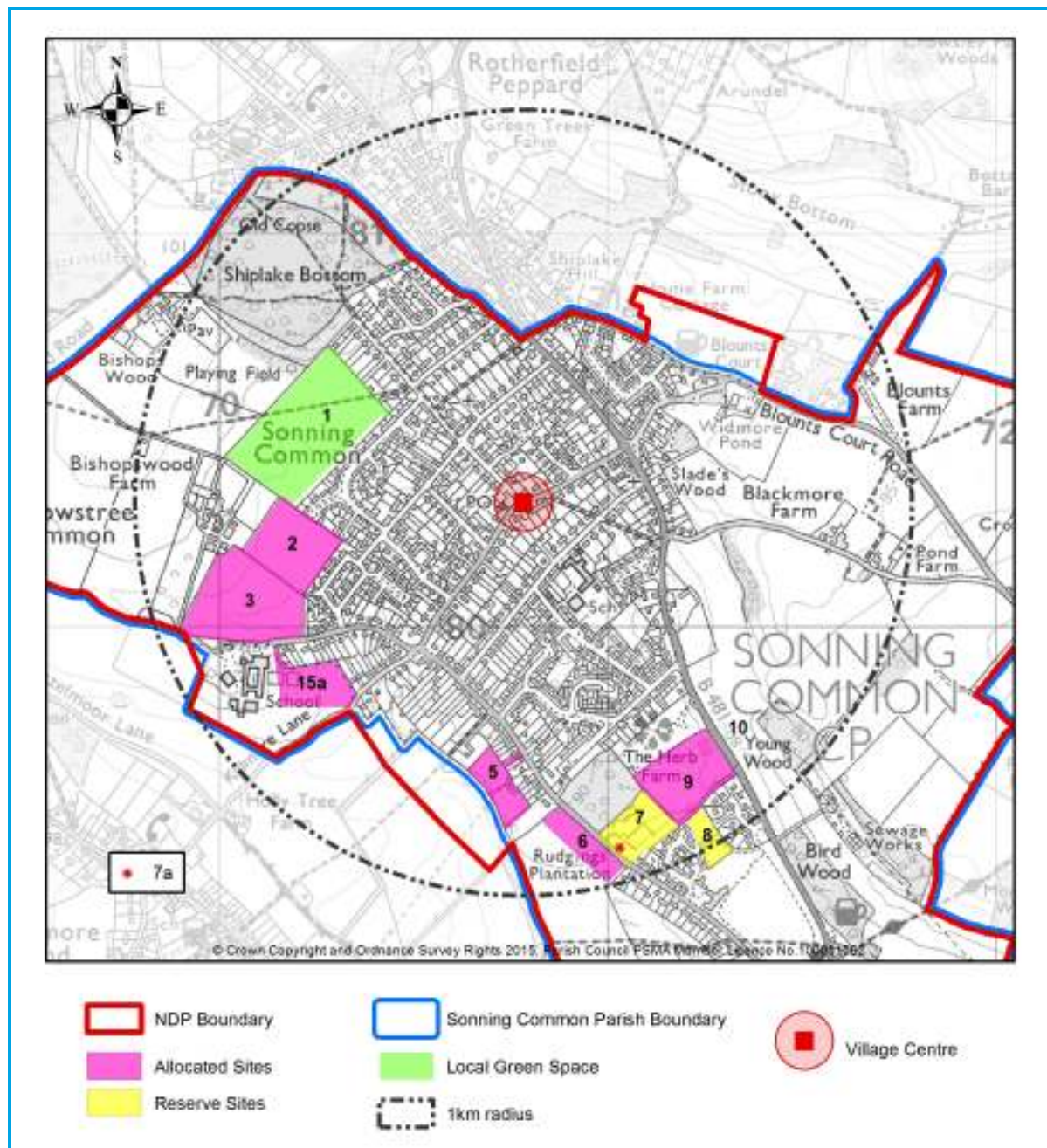
**SON 2/3 = 50 homes   SON 5 = 22 homes   SON 6 = 26 homes   SON 9 = 60 homes**  
**SON 15a = 37 homes**

##### **Reserve sites**

**SON 7   = 25 homes**  
**SON 7a   = 5 homes**  
**SON 8   = 4 homes plus 10 homes (Phase 2)**

Map 3.1 shows the location of the allocated sites. These are spread across the village and the map shows their distances from the village centre. It is an important requirement and intention of this Plan to support the sustainability of Sonning Common's retail outlets.

Map 3.1: Distribution of sites within 1km radius of village centre



## Housing mix

The Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) was commissioned by the Parish Council to conduct a housing needs survey for Sonning Common.<sup>26</sup> The subsequent report concluded that affordable (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate, such as shared ownership) housing ranked as the most important housing need. The lack of affordable housing restricted residents from moving within the village, forced others to leave and prevented families from living near each other.

Affordability is a serious problem for South Oxfordshire. Lower end house prices are over ten times higher than lower end incomes. This is much higher than the Oxfordshire and national averages.<sup>27</sup>

The table below shows that the mix of Council Tax Bands in Sonning Common is weighted very strongly towards high end, larger properties.<sup>28</sup>

**Table 3.1: Sonning Common Council Tax Bands**

Bands	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	SE England	England
A-C	22.0%	39.3%	39.3%	66.2%
E-H	53.5%	37.7%	28.5%	18.5%

Over the last three years (2011-2014), average house prices in Sonning Common, Reading and Oxfordshire have risen between 17% and 18%. However, the average house price in Sonning Common is 22% higher than across Oxfordshire and 33% higher than Reading.<sup>29</sup>

Many residents commented that affordable housing was needed to encourage young people in particular to stay in the village to ensure that “it didn’t become a village of elderly people.”

Census 2011 data highlights the imbalance of housing stock in Sonning Common. Table 3.2 shows that 1 bedroom households account for only 3.7% of Sonning Common households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC and 11.8% across England.

The trend is similar in respect of 2 bedroom households which account for 20.6% of households in Sonning Common, compared with 23.7% for SODC and 27.9% for England. In contrast, the data in respect of 3 and 4 bedroom households shows a mix which is higher than SODC, SE England and England.

<sup>26</sup> Source: ORCC - Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

<sup>27</sup> Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – Sustainability Scoping Report (June 2014)

<sup>28</sup> Source: Census 2011

<sup>29</sup> Source: [www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices](http://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices)

**Table 3.2: Sonning Common households - bedrooms per occupied dwelling**<sup>30</sup>

	Sonning Common	South Oxfordshire	South East England	England
All household spaces with at least one usual resident	1,547	54,104	3,555,463	22,063,368
0 bedrooms	3 0.2%	82 0.2%	8,531 0.2%	54,938 0.2%
1 bedroom	57 3.7%	4,154 7.7%	413,761 11.6%	2,593,893 11.8%
2 bedrooms	319 20.6%	12,802 23.7%	932,994 26.2%	6,145,083 27.9%
3 bedrooms	703 45.4%	21,581 39.9%	1,383,662 38.9%	9,088,213 41.2%
4 bedrooms	355 22.9%	11,215 20.7%	603,887 17.0%	3,166,531 14.4%
5 or more bedrooms	110 7.1%	4,270 7.9%	212,628 6.0%	1,014,710 4.6%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3.3: Dwelling type**<sup>31</sup>

	Sonning Common		South Oxfordshire		South East England	England
Dwelling type	Number	%	Number	%	%	%
Detached house or bungalow	792	50	20,279	36	28	22
Semi-detached or terraced house or bungalow	666	42	29,082	51	51	56
Flat, maisonette etc	137	8	7,302	13	21	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,595</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>56,663</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

This census data shows that half of the village's housing stock is detached or bungalows which is 14% higher than South Oxfordshire and almost double the other areas of the country. Meanwhile semi-detached or terraced properties are lower than the others indicated.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Census 2011<sup>31</sup> Source: Census 2011



In the comparison table below privately-rented property in Sonning Common is a smaller percentage than in SODC and much lower than the rest of the country. Owner occupation is very high.

**Table 3.4: Tenure of property** <sup>32</sup>

Households	Sonning Common		South Oxfordshire		SE England	England
Tenure	Number	%	Number	%	%	%
Owner-occupied	1,236	80	39,461	73	68	63
Rented – council/HA (including Equity-Hybrids)	211	14	6,622	12	15	19
Rented – private landlord	100	6	8,021	15	17	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,547</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54,104</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

The data presented in this section thus far gives an overall position of the housing stock in Sonning Common at the time of Census 2011. It provides clear evidence that there are a large number of 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes currently in the village equating to 75.4%.

The conclusions drawn from this information are that the provision of more 1 and 2 bedroom homes, and rented accommodation, would help balance housing provision in Sonning Common.

The ORCC housing needs survey for Sonning Common <sup>33</sup> provides similar information namely the need for:

- 1 and 2 bedroom homes and also
- 'Affordable' housing

The emphasis and bias towards this housing mix would enable a re-balancing of the housing stock and encourage younger persons and families to move into or indeed to remain in the village, thereby helping to regenerate the population. The data presented in this section of the Plan, together with the ORCC survey have helped to inform Table 3.5 below, which sets out an aspirational housing mix.

**Table 3.5: Sonning Common housing mix** <sup>34</sup>

Housing mix	Market housing 60%	Affordable 40%
<b>1 bedroom</b>	5%	25%
<b>2 bedroom</b>	40%	35%
<b>3 bedroom</b>	45%	35%
<b>4 bedroom</b>	10%	5%

It is recognised that affordable housing has to meet the needs of the wider district and this mix must be based on that wider need.

<sup>32</sup> Source: Census 2011

<sup>33</sup> Source: ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing and Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

<sup>34</sup> Source: SCNDP Working Party

**Objective:** To deliver a mix of new housing which will rebalance the existing housing stock and will better meet local needs for smaller starter and downsizing homes in future.

### **Policy H2: Housing mix**

Within allocated sites, support will be given to schemes where the majority of dwellings comprise one, two and three bedrooomed homes.

### **Policy H2a: Extra care homes**

Development proposals that provide housing for extra care/senior living accommodation are encouraged.

Development will be encouraged to contribute towards local needs housing, especially that for older people. The Parish Council is keen for developers to adopt Building to National Optional Technical Standards and to integrate affordable housing with market housing.

### **Extra care homes**

The ORCC report also indicated that supported housing needs should be addressed. When asked what type of supported housing was required 23.5% of respondents considered private (warden assisted) was required, 21.5% considered housing association sheltered (warden assisted) housing, and 26% considered independent accommodation with care support. In consultation with SOHA the local provider of social housing, their view was that there was a much greater need in Sonning Common for affordable housing, so senior accommodation could not be considered.

Following feedback from the Sonning Common Health Centre on the Plan it was decided to investigate their suggestion for extra care homes. These would be privately purchased homes with some support.

Assisted Living/Extra care housing falls either into Use Class C2 or “Sui Generis”:

- use Class C2 is defined as: *“Use for the provision of residential accommodation and care to people in need of care (other than a use within a class C3 (dwelling house). Use as a hospital or nursing home. Use as a residential school, college and training centre”*

The Use Class Order does not require all land uses to fall within particular classes and the recognition of a sui generis class therefore allows flexibility for development.

Given the growth in our elderly population of over 65 year olds from 788 in 2001 to 962 persons in 2011, a small scale development of extra care housing would be a welcome addition to the Sonning Common housing stock. The over 65s comprise 25% of the current Sonning Common population and while 80% of the entire population are home owners, many of whom will be amongst the senior group.



## Housing infill

Any development must enhance the local character and distinctiveness, including its woodland and rural dimensions.

**Objective:** To support infill development providing that it does not have an adverse impact on the character of the surrounding area.

### Policy H3: Infill

Development proposals on infill sites (the infilling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage or group of houses where they are surrounded on all sides by other buildings) will be supported where they are of a design which:

- positively responds to, where appropriate, the prevailing size, height, scale and mass, materials, layout, density and access of the surrounding area;
- reflects the existing character of the village;
- demonstrates that the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers will not be adversely affected through overbearing development and loss of light;
- includes an appropriate amount of landscaping which complements and enhances the green and wooded character of the local area.

The Sonning Common Character and Design Assessment<sup>35</sup> provides additional relevant background to Policy H3.

## Design policies

Good design is applicable to all new development, including but not limited to housing. Local character is rural with a strong woodland character. Trees are prevalent and often large – right into the centre of the village. Aerial photographs illustrate the extent of trees and this nature is of course sustainable and supportive to the wider environment. Hedges and plot enclosures, together with well planted rear gardens, add to the rural feel. The form of properties is generally quite mixed within streets thus avoiding a bland identikit character. Most development sites are ‘green field’, possessing low existing use values.

Sonning Common is a rural area with virtually no development originally built as more than 2 storey in form. Clearly there have been some reasonable loft extensions with dormer windows where this does not cause adverse effects for neighbours or the street scene. Generally flat roofed dormers have only been approved at the rear of properties and where they do not intrude on the street scene nor harm the amenity of neighbouring properties. High rise buildings which would urbanise and harm local character will not be appropriate.

<sup>35</sup> Source: Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013

**Objective:** To ensure that new housing and development is designed and built to a high quality and respects the existing character of Sonning Common.

### **Policy D1: Design**

All new development within Sonning Common must demonstrate good quality design. This should include respecting the scale and appearance of the existing built environment, responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context. The development of the residential allocations should use soft boundary treatments such as trees, hedges or planting to enclose the front of plots and be in keeping with the character of the village street scenes, unless viability or other material considerations show a compelling justification for a different treatment. Every effort should be made to avoid harsh urban parking courts. Design should ensure that parking is provided in a discreet and sensitive manner.

#### **Policy D1a: Design – storeys**

In order to respect the rural character of Sonning Common, new buildings should be no more than 2 storeys plus roof (pitched or as normally acceptable) unless there is a robust justification for a taller building. Such a justification will need to include evidence to demonstrate how the proposal addresses local character and residential amenity.

#### **Policy D1b: Design on allocated and infill sites**

Proposals to develop infill sites and the sites allocated in this Plan must be accompanied by a **design brief** that demonstrates how the proposal:

- reflects and positively responds to the good quality existing character of Sonning Common taking careful account of the Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement and SODC Design Guide;
- complies with the relevant site specific allocation policy in this Plan.

Nothing in Policy D1a is intended to restrict loft extensions or dormer windows in roofs where a planning application to do so would be acceptable or where permitted development rights allow a laissez-faire regime. The style of roofing for any dormer windows in roofs should respect the local rural character and flat roofs for such dormer windows should be avoided where they will be visually prominent or cause adverse amenity impacts.

In Sonning Common good design means:

- achieving high quality design that respects the scale, coverage and character of existing and surrounding buildings
- respecting established building set back and arrangements of front gardens, walls, railings or hedges
- using soft boundary treatments such as trees, hedges or planting to enclose the front of plots and be in keeping with the character of the street scene
- incorporating street lighting on new sites at a level compatible with the rural environment
- avoiding harsh urban parking courts
- ensuring proposals relate to established plot widths within streets where development is proposed, particularly where they establish a rhythm to the architecture in a street
- using good quality materials that complement the existing palette of materials used within Sonning Common
- adopting the principles of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), where appropriate
- meeting the requirements of ‘Secure by Design’ to minimise the likelihood and fear of crime and
- using innovation to achieve low carbon sustainable design

## Village centre policies

### Sonning Common as a larger village

Sonning Common’s village centre, as defined by Map 3.2, performs well in terms of the number and range of shops, the fact that it includes a health centre, dental surgery, post office and village hall, and because it includes several small offices. This undoubtedly makes it very lively and thriving to the extent that it acts as a local centre for many people from nearby areas. It is for this reason that the village is identified as a larger village in the SODC Core Strategy.

In order to conserve and enhance its vital sustainability role as a district centre, this Plan explicitly designates the area of the village centre, including as suggested by the NPPF (paragraphs 21 and 23) adjacent areas of land that are likely to be important for its future role.

Map 3.2: Village centre



The core roles of the village centre are:

The shops and facilities in Wood Lane are regarded as the centre of the village offering residents and neighbouring villages a wide variety of services including a butchers, pharmacy, Co-op supermarket, florist, post office, hairdressers, a variety of eating houses, haberdashery, estate agent, drycleaners, and an ironmongers.

Along the B481 Peppard Road, there is a petrol station, car showroom, off-licence, newsagent, barbers, estate agent and until recently an electrical shop and a small branch of NatWest Bank. These outlets have contributed to village life for a number of years.

**Objective:** To protect and support the vitality and viability of our village centre, based on its diverse mix of retail and public services, as a vital component of the sustainability of our settlement and district.

**Policy VC1: Village centre – use of scarce land for sustainable development**

Regarding applications and proposals within the designated area of the village centre as shown on Map 3.2, the following development will be supported:

- 'centre uses': retail, leisure and office on the ground floor;
- applications to extend and/or improve existing centre uses subject to the provision of suitable off street parking.

### Village centre accessibility

The lack of public parking spaces and inconsiderate parking on Wood Lane and alongside the retail outlets on the Peppard Road have long been concerns of residents. The village centre currently lacks parking capacity. Its wider district service role, and the additional housing allocated in this plan, some of which will be more distant from the centre, places ever growing demands on car access and parking. There are only 32 spaces in the village hall car park with others on-road or in front of shops.

There is an ongoing problem of misuse of the health centre and dentistry car parks - causing difficulties of access for patients. The Sonning Common Health Centre already serves 8,500 registered patients and during the Plan period this is likely to increase to some nine thousand people.

On-road parking causes difficulties for access by delivery vehicles and for Reading buses seeking to get through the centre. The extension of the Co-op store in Sonning Common some 5 years ago and increasingly limited options in other villages have heightened demand – a sustainability success. However, there is anecdotal evidence that some shoppers are finding parking problems irksome and choosing instead to go to Emmer Green.

Should sites become available in the designated area of the village centre or on sites close to it, applications for increased car parking capacity would be welcomed.

**Objective:** To ensure the village centre is accessible to all users with particular reference to buses, the disabled and delivery vehicles and to reorganise parking provision around the schools.

#### Policy VC2: Parking

Applications for public car and cycle parking within the designated village centre will be supported.

Support will be given to proposals to improve disabled access and make more efficient use of car parking spaces.

## Economic and employment policy

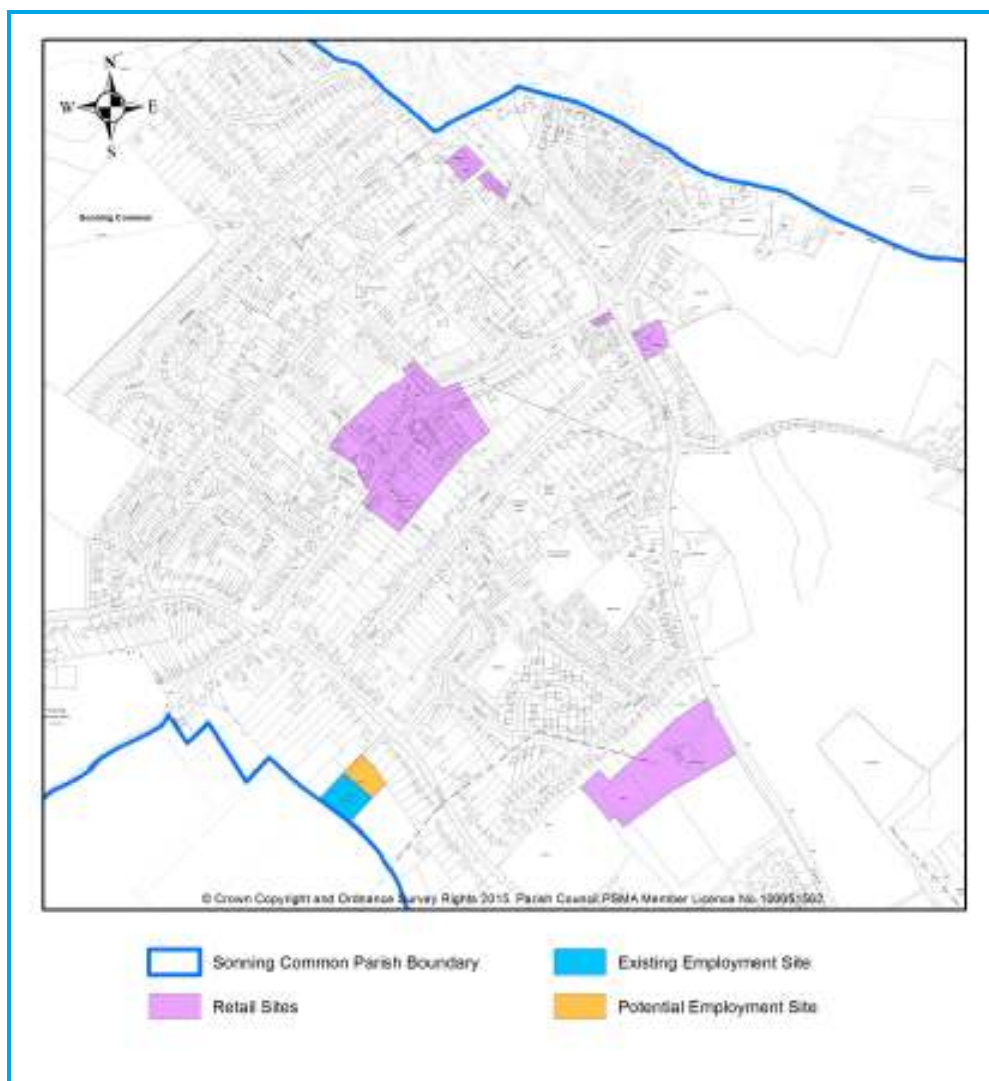
The core roles of the village centre and retail also apply here because they provide evidence of a high level of local employment, notably at the three schools, health centre, dental practice, the Vauxhall Garage and Abbeycrest Care Home. The 20 or so smaller outlets, pubs and offices, the light industrial site at Kidby's Yard and The Herb Farm (garden nursery, shop and café) also provide further opportunities.

Given the scarce land and congested nature of the village centre, one of the existing employment sites at Kidby's Yard could provide additional employment potential. The majority of the Sonning Common work force travels by car out of the village for employment.

Map 3.3 shows current retail and employment sites and the one possible area for expansion namely Kidby's Yard.

Every effort has been made to find new employment sites. Landowners appear reluctant to offer their land, possibly due to the fact that post 2008 banks have been unwilling to fund commercial development, or indeed to help finance commercial property thus limiting demand.

**Map 3.3: Current retail and potential employment site**





**Objective:**

To increase local employment and new business opportunities by securing new employment sites and by enabling appropriate intensified use of existing sites.

**Policy EE1: Employment sites**

This plan designates the site identified in Map 3.3 as one which should remain in employment use. Applications to intensify and extend the use of this site, into the yellow area highlighted on Map 3.3, will be supported. Proposals to change the use of this site to non-employment uses will not be supported.

Sonning Common, like the District, suffers from too much ‘out-commuting’ as it is termed in the Core Strategy. Thus extra scope for employment would have merit. There exists a limited scope for small to medium size companies and for branches of larger ones to operate here and benefit from excellent connections to Reading, the Thames Valley and beyond. B1 office provision would fit well to those needs. More local employment would be sustainable and help reduce commuting pressures.

Clearly any development needs to relate well to its surrounding area and not have adverse impacts on the landscape, wildlife or be a nuisance to neighbours. Details of the employment use for any extension of Kidby’s Yard can be found in Site policy, EMP1 in Part 4 of the Plan.

The allocation obligation of this Plan places more pressure on the south of the village. It will be important to retain the specified site both for employment and to provide a service role, if pressures on the village centre diminish its capacity to support the sustainability of Sonning Common. For these reasons the identified employment site would not make sense as a residential site.

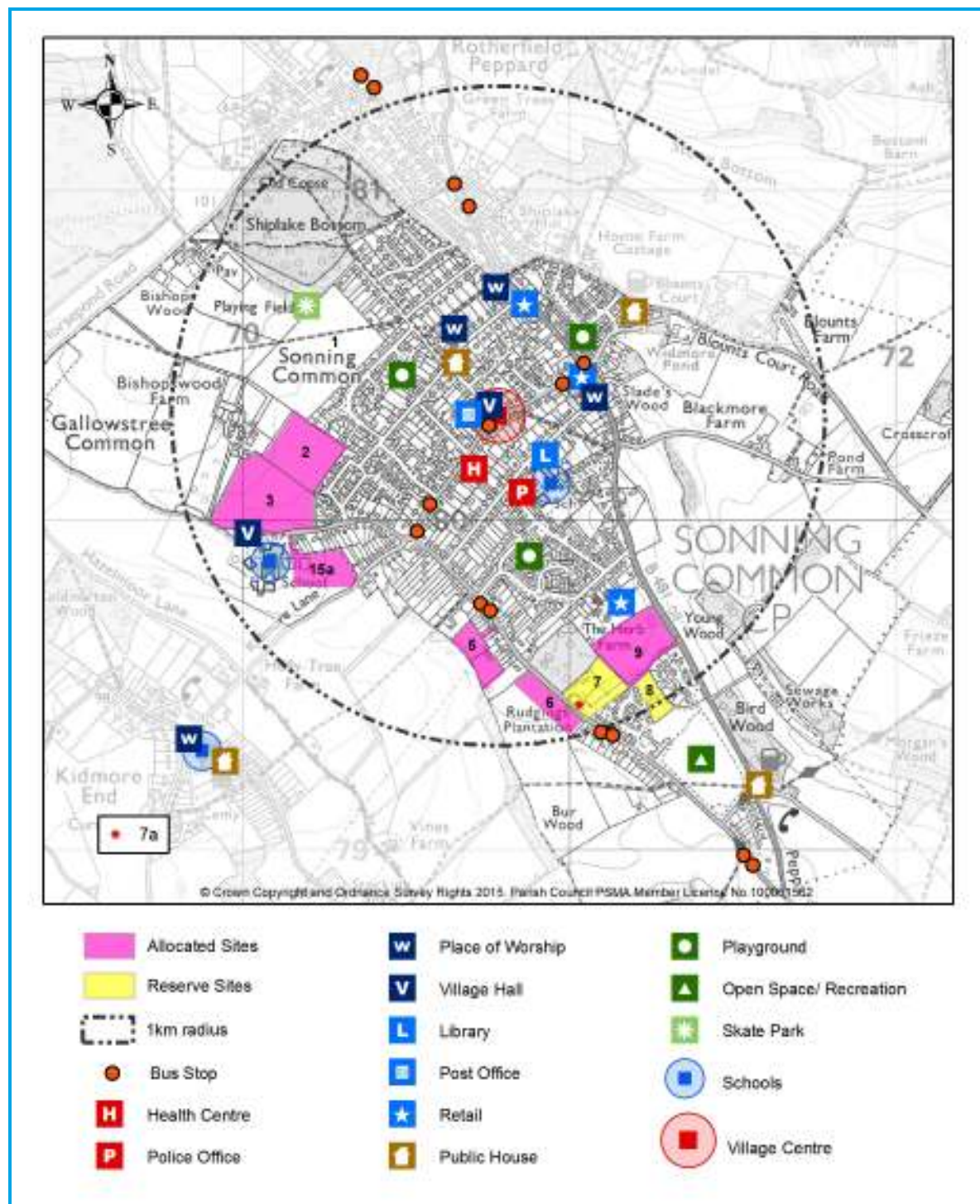
Similarly, The Herb Farm contributes to the sustainability of the village with its retail role. It is important to Sonning Common as it attracts many visitors from other areas and is highly valued within the community. Its Saxon Maze is listed as one of the few recreation sites and its location to the south of the village provides enhanced retail potential. For this reason, it is the wish of the Plan to retain The Herb Farm as a garden centre with its supporting retail facilities.

## Community, social and health policies

The overriding principle here is to support the schools in the village and other essential facilities as well as improving the provision for sport and recreation. One of the aspects of Sonning Common life, which is frequently commented upon by residents is its “community spirit.” This needs to be sustained and developed alongside the population growth.

The current facilities and amenities in Sonning Common are shown on Map 3.4.

**Map 3.4: Village amenities**



## Education

### Schools

Clearly the increase in the number of new homes will bring with it a requirement for more school places. Advice was sought from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) which supplied the following estimates. It was emphasised that at this stage of the Plan these could only be regarded as approximations because school places are generally identified having regard to the Plan's housing mix:

- 25 primary pupils per new 100 homes over 7 years (4-11)
- 18 secondary pupils per new 100 homes over 5 years (11-16)

The current capacity of Sonning Common Primary is 409 pupils, although the roll in January 2015 was 394. The school would like to increase the capacity to 420 pupils. OCC's view is that the current layout and accommodation at the primary school are not suitable for any increase in numbers as there are two small classrooms which do not accommodate classes of 30 pupils. The school have asked for and been given half of the old caretaker's garden. This could accommodate two new classrooms of a suitable size but cannot be paid for by OCC. Therefore, developer contributions will be sought to ensure that it can effectively deliver its current 60 per year school place entry.

Investment in and refurbishment development of Sonning Common Primary School and Chiltern Edge Secondary School are required and to be welcomed. In each case a lack of investment over a sustained period has left both requiring significant improvement and modernisation of the fabric and core services of their premises. Development to resource educational facilities will be supported, subject to the provision of an enhanced community facility (paragraph 74 NPPF).

**Objective:** To retain and enhance existing local community services and facilities, ensuring that public services (including medical, educational, public transport, utilities and amenities) are aware of and can support growth from new housing.

#### **Policy CSH1: Community education**

Applications for the enhancement and/or refurbishment of Sonning Common Primary School and Chiltern Edge Secondary School will be supported.

#### **Policy CSH1a: Community facilities**

Developments that enhance existing local public services, community services and facilities will be supported. Any that undermine or detract from these will be resisted.

With regard to the enhancement of community facilities and local public services used by groups these would include the village hall (Nottakwire and Luncheon Club) and the Scout hut as examples.

## Sport and recreation

It should be noted that Sonning Common is largely a construct of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is not a traditional village with a green to support public events and fetes. New provision could address this deficit. Financial contributions that offer particular benefits to community well-being and provide missing resources will be encouraged and supported. In this way the local public interest will be taken into account. As a first key step, the priority is to acquire **land**, including for appropriate and accessible Local Green Space, provision for sports pitches and potentially for a future community sports hall.

**Objective:** To secure land for and encourage the provision of identified shortfalls in healthy recreation facilities for all age groups, and particularly for older children and adults.

### Policy CSH2: Land for recreation

The provision of land to address the identified shortfalls in sports pitches and facilities, as set out in the NDP, will be supported.

In particular, there is an identified clear need for at least 3.26 hectares of amenity green space, based on the Census 2011 population and potentially 0.6 hectares more with the Core Strategy allocation of homes and expected new windfall dwellings.

Identified sports shortfalls:<sup>36</sup>

- amenity green space 3.26 ha
- community sports hall 30m x 30m (without full height roof)
- floodlit AGP – 60m x 40m
- full sized MUGA/tennis facility
- senior 9 – strip cricket pitch 111.84 x 115.58
- a mix of youth and mini football pitches
- space for other activities (fitness trail/outdoor gym)
- sufficient parking for all necessary community use

These deficits are substantial and likely to affect the sustainability of Sonning Common. Sport England standards indicate that sports pitches and sports halls should be integrated within an appropriate area of land. It is likely that increases in population as a result of the development outlined in this plan will require attention to provision.

Furthermore, such sports and recreation facilities as currently exist are not fully open to the public, being within Chiltern Edge School or in privately-run clubs at Rotherfield Peppard Football Club and Kennylands Gymnastics; these also face qualitative and quantitative investment challenges. The existing provision for younger players meets the standard needed for them but not for adults. Though there is anecdotal evidence that some residents currently go elsewhere for some of their sport and recreation, there is a need for retention of all existing facilities and new provision within the village which is accessible to all, by foot or cycle.

<sup>36</sup> Source: Sonning Common: Local Needs Report, June 2015 by Nortoft

## Movement, road safety and parking policies

### Traffic

Detailed data is not available on traffic movements, speeds and volumes either along the main roads, Kennylands and Peppard Roads, or along the two main village link roads, Wood Lane and Grove Road. At present the bus route uses Kennylands Road, Wood Lane and Peppard Road.

However, local community consultation regularly generates serious concerns:

- traffic speeds along the two main roads
- congestion along Wood Lane in and near the village centre
- parking problems in and around the village centre
- congestion and parking problems in Grove Road linked to the Primary School
- congestion and parking problems in Reade's Lane linked to the Secondary School
- safety in relation to all of the above

A brief study was undertaken by a consultant, Ben Hamilton-Baillie<sup>37</sup> on how to address all of the above issues. This study looked at the principles and use of 'shared space' and highlighted specific issues in relation to the points above.

**Objective:** To undertake a programme of traffic calming and management both generally and specifically for the village centre and along Peppard and Kennylands Roads and for both school roads.

#### Policy MRP1: Traffic calming

Proposals for traffic calming treatments along Kennylands Road and the B481 will be supported.

#### Policy MRP1a: Footpaths and cycle ways

Proposals for the provision or improvement of footpaths and cycle ways will be supported.

Suggestions to calm the traffic on Peppard Road and Kennylands Road include 'gates' at the village entry points and red tarmac on the boundary to alert drivers that the 30mph zone is ahead. Speed ramps are generally considered unfavourably. Further details appear in a traffic report.<sup>38</sup>

Pedestrian and cycle movement within the village is generally good although community concerns have been raised about pavement conditions and lighting. There are a number of particular problems for disabled users with wheelchairs and scooters who cannot access some of the footpaths and pavements. The layout of the village roads is also such that some potentially valuable links cannot be made and some others are poor and in need of improvement. However, links out into the countryside are generally good and highly valued by local people.

As regards cycle ways, there would be particular benefit in a new and safe cycleway to Reading which is not on the B481 roadway.

<sup>37</sup> Source: [www.scp-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scp-ndp.co.uk)

<sup>38</sup> Source: Interim SCNDP Traffic Report (November 2012)

## Environmental policies

### Protect AONB

Sonning Common is bounded by the Chilterns AONB to the north, east and west and is thus significantly affected by it. Even though the existing built area of the parish is largely outside of the AONB, the policy to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB is highly relevant.

Sonning Common sits on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills and is located on a semi-enclosed dip slope; gently sloping ground cut through by two dry valleys which trend through the area from NNW to SSE. The elongated shape of the village has been formed by the valleys and the land rises gently on each side of the Peppard and Kennylands Roads. Multiple footpaths link from the village outwards towards adjacent settlements and beyond. They are well maintained and used with gates/stiles recently replaced by volunteer conservationists. The residents value their local environment and are determined that new housing developments will respect the AONB through careful structured planting and screening to mitigate the impact.

The village is set within the Chilterns AONB and largely surrounded by it. As shown in the landscape and character assessment reports undertaken by external consultants<sup>39</sup> and other community consultation evidence, the environment within the village and in the surrounding landscape is greatly valued by local people and considered to be highly distinctive. The generally green and wooded character of the surrounding landscape continues into and throughout the built settlement. The area has a strong structure of woods, hedgerows and trees enclosing open arable fields.

**Objective:** To conserve and enhance the Neighbourhood Area's countryside and open spaces, in particular those areas of natural beauty, sensitive ecology and landscape designation.

#### Policy ENV1: Protecting the AONB

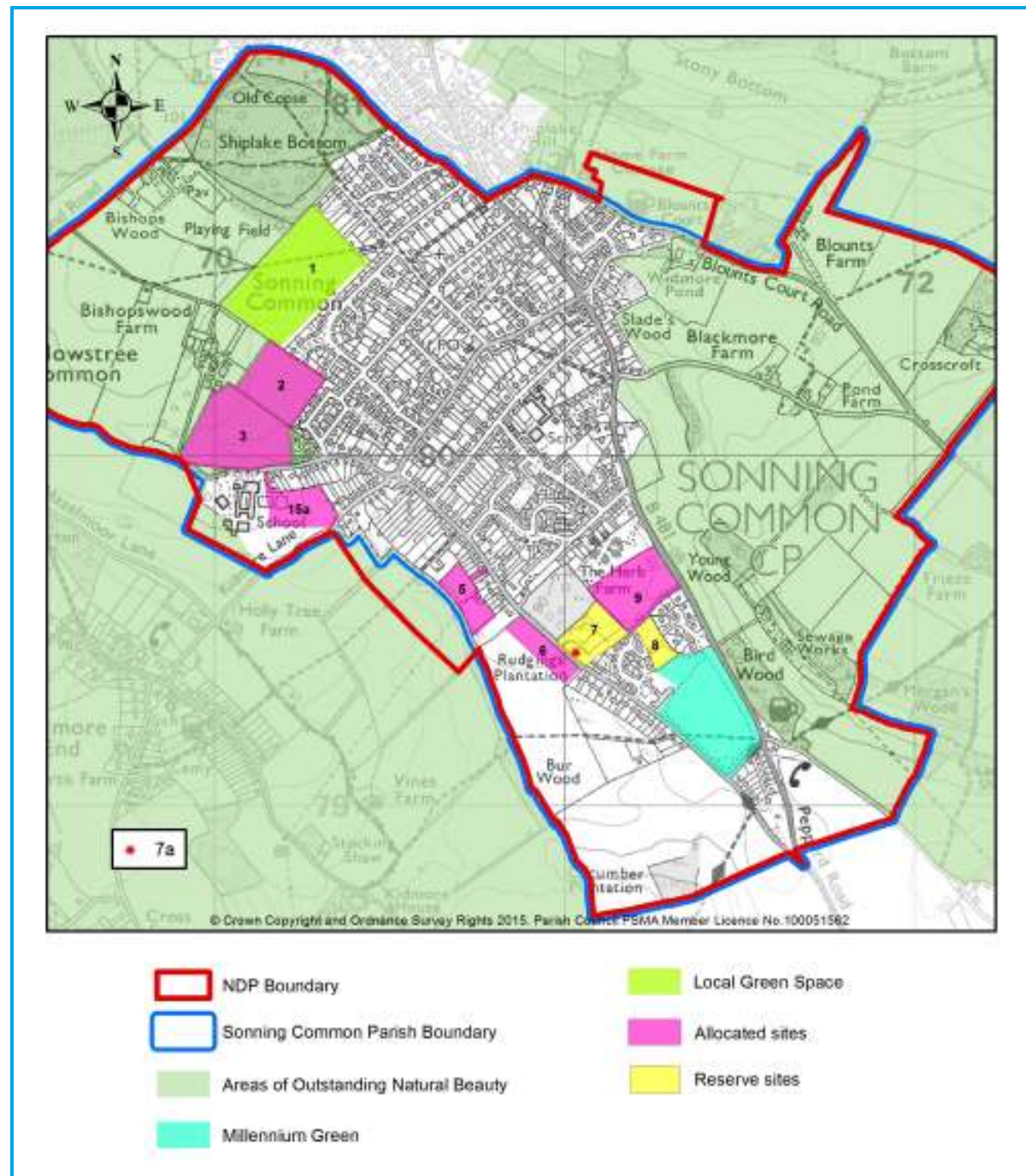
New development in the Chilterns AONB must demonstrate how it conserves and enhances landscape and scenic beauty. Major development in the AONB will not be supported except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

<sup>39</sup> Sources: SCNDP Landscape Assessment – Potterton Associates Ltd; Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013



Map 3.5 illustrates Sonning Common, its relationship to the surrounding countryside and woodland with particular reference to the AONB and the location of sites.

**Map 3.5: Chilterns AONB around Sonning Common**



Within the designated Neighbourhood Area, there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves or Conservation Target Areas. There are currently no local level designations although the Parish Council and residents value the Millennium Green,<sup>40</sup> Old Copse Wood<sup>41</sup> and Widmore Pond.<sup>42</sup> This value has been demonstrated by the community's involvement in the purchase of Millennium Green and establishing a trust for its upkeep, assisting with the purchase of the Old Copse Wood and its transfer to The Woodland Trust in 1995 for ongoing management, and the sub-committee of the parish council which is responsible for maintenance of Widmore Pond.

## Rural 'look and feel'

It is important to residents that the existing woodland and rural character of the village is maintained. The planting of screening, trees and hedging is considered to be a vital part of any new development. Sonning Common is particularly characterised by its wooded and leafy character. Trees are abundant and this is clearly illustrated in aerial images and photographs. An ecology report commissioned by Sonning Common Parish Council<sup>43</sup> reinforces the point about the 'green feel' within the village by highlighting a good quality of biodiversity both within and close to the village. This has been supported anecdotally by local community comments about specific sites being considered.

To maintain the woodland and rural character of our district and to behave responsibly with respect to our environment, the impact of new development on the surrounding countryside, environment and ecosystem must be minimised. This will include not only the particular priority of protected species, but also minimising and mitigating any potential impact on significant habitats and hedgerows generally.

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<sup>40</sup> Sonning Common Millennium Green Trust established 1998

<sup>41</sup> Ancient semi-natural woodland taken over by The Woodland Trust in 1995

<sup>42</sup> SC Parish Council - Widmore Pond Heritage Site

<sup>43</sup> Source: Ecological Survey, Sonning Common 2014

**Objective:** To maintain and enhance the wooded and rural character of the village by encouraging the integration of soft landscaping in new developments and where appropriate screening from any adjacent AONB.

### **Policy ENV2: Environment – landscape setting**

Development proposals should take account of the locally valued landscape setting of the village and include landscape buffers where this would enhance the setting and help integrate the development into its surroundings.

### **Policy ENV2a: Green environment – pre-existing trees**

Development proposals should seek to retain mature or important trees, groups of trees or woodland on site. Where removal of a tree(s) of recognised importance is proposed, a replacement of similar amenity value should be provided on site.

### **Policy ENV2b: Green environment – new planting**

As part of new developments the planting of additional trees and hedging, in keeping with local character, will be supported. Applications for major development (as defined by the Town & Country Planning Act) should be accompanied by an indicative planting scheme to demonstrate that a suitable level of sustainable planting can be achieved.



## Wildlife corridors

A network of wildlife movement corridors has been identified in the wider area around and through Sonning Common as shown on Map 3.6.

Sonning Common and its surrounds support a variety of habitats including woodland, open part-wooded habitats, hedge or other field boundaries, grassland and agricultural land including a large element of arable. Most of the possible sites are on the periphery of the village in open countryside but there are some more centrally located sites wholly or partially hemmed in by existing development. The landscape east and north of the village tends to be more open with larger fields and fewer hedges or similar field boundaries – with a more structured landscape of smaller fields and hedges to the west and south. Much of the land is subject to intensive management with the better wildlife habitats generally being less intensively or occasionally managed.

There is good connectivity of wooded habitats – especially west and south of the village. Most of the woodlands proper are linked by a network of linear wooded habitats such as hedges and/or lines of trees. In addition, the village itself has numerous trees and hedges – including some large wooded gardens. Some of the best habitats identified in the ecological survey<sup>44</sup> are the more mature hedge/boundary banks such as those in west of village (SON 1, SON 2, SON 3 and SON 4) - these being much more than simple low hedges containing some large/old trees potentially of high conservation value.

Towards the south of the village, there are some more open habitats perhaps remnants of a previous parkland type landscape (SON 6, SON 7) including a possible 'old green lane'. These sites are adjacent to Hagpits Wood (one of several woods in or around the parish) and together they form an area of continuous habitats.

"Good open habitats such as grassland are more restricted, in the areas surveyed at least, being dominated by arable land with only small fragments of more herb rich open grassland. In the event of any development it is important to retain this variety and connectivity of habitats in and around the parish. Where possible, existing habitats should be improved and new wildlife habitats created appropriate for the local area and conditions."<sup>45</sup>

Particular attention should be paid to the maintenance and development of wildlife corridors around and through any new housing site.

**Objective:** To conserve and enhance the environment, ecosystem and biodiversity, ensuring that new development protects biodiversity including habitats and provision of appropriate wild life, bio-diversity and movement corridors.

### Policy ENV3: Green and wildlife movement corridors

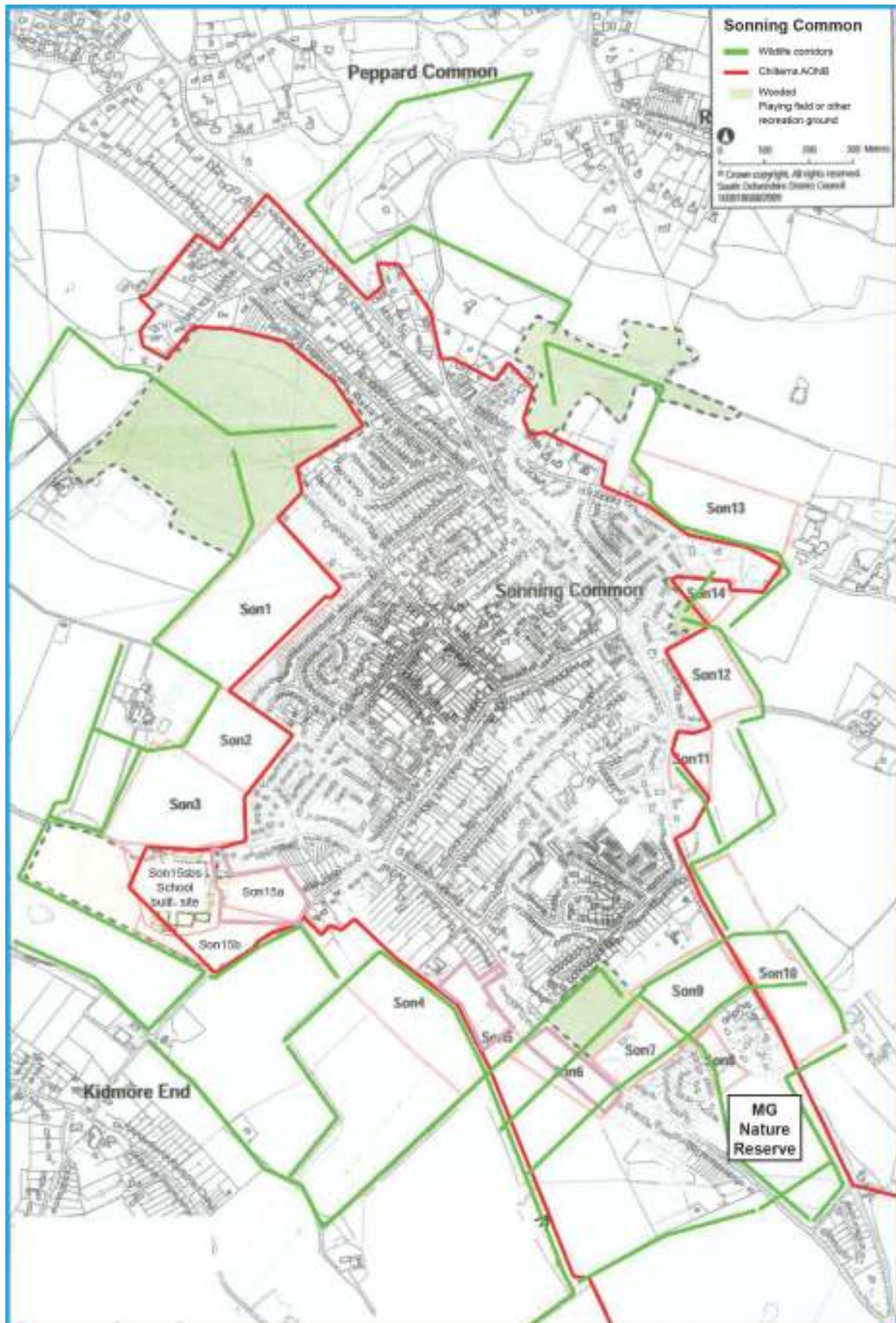
The conservation and enhancement of ecological networks will be supported. Where appropriate, development proposals should seek to connect existing wildlife corridors and provide new ones to enhance biodiversity and provide for freedom of movement for species through the site.

<sup>44</sup> Source: Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014

<sup>45</sup> Source: Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014



Map 3.6: Wildlife corridors through and around Sonning Common



## Delivery policy

**Objective:** To encourage potential applicants for development to work with the community of Sonning Common, via its Parish Council, in preparing their proposals.

**Policy DE1: Delivery and Pre-Application engagement on significant development proposals**

In order to ensure a positive and structured Pre-Application engagement, potential applicants bringing forward a significant development proposal are encouraged to follow the Pre-Application Protocol set out at the end of Part Four.

Significant development proposals are defined as being:

- on a site allocated in the Plan
- or any application for
  - more than 10 new homes
  - a site in the village centre area designated in the Plan or
  - an employment site likely to have 5 or more employees

The above policy, together with the protocol, facilitate a structured approach whereby Sonning Common Parish Council will provide a means to enable effective involvement of the local community in any development application.



## Actions for the Parish Council

This section includes the non-land use actions and it is intended that the Parish Council will monitor and implement these actions. These were identified as important concerns, by the residents of Sonning Common, resulting from the extensive consultation process conducted throughout the emergence of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

### Housing

In the ORCC housing needs survey strong views were expressed that local people and younger family members needed homes in Sonning Common. It also highlighted the limited scope for older people looking to downsize and release larger family homes, but to remain in their community.

**Objective:** To seek viable means whereby families with meaningful local connections to this area can be given some preferential access to new housing – including social and affordable housing.

#### **Action: Preferential access to housing**

The Parish Council will seek to work with other bodies to encourage 20% of all new affordable housing in Sonning Common provided by the Plan to be subject initially to a local connection, meaning that people with a strong local connection to the parish and whose needs are not met by the open market will be the first to be offered the tenancy or shared ownership of the home. In this context a strong local connection means an applicant:

- who has lived in the parish for 5 of the last 8 years and is currently resident there or
- who has lived in the parish for at least 5 years and whose parents or children are currently living in the parish and have at least 10 years continuous residency there.

This will not be a condition of granting planning permission but could give some initial priority to young people who have grown up in, and want to set up home in Sonning Common and to those older residents in under occupied properties seeking to downsize whilst remaining in their community. Discussions with landowners and potential developers have shown support for this aim.

## Economic and employment

**Objective:** To seek and support continuous improvements in the provision of high speed broadband and communications infrastructure to support home working, providing that the siting and appearance of the proposed apparatus seek to minimise impact on the visual amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area.

**Action: Broadband infrastructure**

The Parish Council will monitor to ensure the continuous improvement of the provision of high speed broadband within the village.

## Community, social and health

A new public library building is expected to be required. The library is located on the primary school site which supports the wider community and it also plays an important role in supporting the children in their learning. Since late August 2014, the library has been run with one professional librarian assisted by a team of more than 30 volunteers for 25 hours per week. Time is also allocated specifically for school use. The building's location on Grove Road at the front entrance to the school is viewed as appropriate by the community as it is valued by both pupils and residents. Due to its location the running costs of power, light and water are paid for by the school.

The grounds are more than adequate for the school's needs but there is no front entrance to the school as the library occupies the frontage onto Grove Road. Outline plans have been drawn up to rebuild a new learning centre/library on the existing building studio site. Any increase in the population will require an extended library and it is a requirement that any replacement and enlarged building should be on the school site.

**Objective:** To retain and enhance existing local community services and facilities ensuring that public services are aware of and can support growth from new housing.

**Action: Community library**

The Parish Council by working with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) would welcome applications for a new library building and/or applications that would resource the provision of a new library building on the existing primary school site.

OCC has advised that any future development of the library will be based on the Library Service delivery strategy. Furthermore, contributions which are collected from new housing development within the ward-based catchment will go towards any library development.

**Objective:** To support the full range of educational facilities in Sonning Common.

**Action: Investment for collaboration**

To enhance and develop a mutually beneficial programme of collaboration between the educational facilities in Sonning Common and the community.

It is clear that the schools in Sonning Common are in urgent need of investment. However, beyond that covered in Policy CSH1, it is appropriate for there to be an active collaboration and partnership between the community and our schools. This is worthwhile for its own sake within an integrated and inclusive community but also offers scope for gains that are only possible in partnership.

## **Movement, road safety and parking**

The bus service, number 25, runs through the village to and from Reading. The weekday service operates every 30 minutes from 5.26am to 9pm, slightly reduced on Saturdays and every hour on Sundays.

**Objective:** To retain the bus service and its stops, on its existing route along Peppard Road, Wood Lane and Kennylands Road.

**Action: Retention of the bus service to Reading**

The Parish Council will work with Reading Bus Company to retain the bus service in its current form, both its regularity and route.

The Reading Bus service is the only significant and reliable public transport service in Sonning Common. As a rural community it is of vital importance to many residents. Issues have been reported of challenges for the buses in navigating parts of the village. This has affected Kennylands Road, Wood Lane and Peppard Road, but particularly in the congested village centre area of Wood Lane.

**Objective:** To undertake a programme of traffic calming and management both generally and specifically for the village centre and along Peppard and Kennylands Roads and for both school roads.

**Action: Traffic measures**

The Parish Council by working with Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, would welcome the following measures which are considered necessary given developments in Sonning Common:

- a reduction in the 40 mph speed limit along the Peppard Road passing Millennium Green and Lea Meadow (SON 9)
- a reduction in the speed limits on Reade's Lane leading to and past Chiltern Edge Secondary School to 20 mph
- a reduction in the speed limits on Grove Road and Lea Road around Sonning Common Primary School to 20 mph
- car-sharing schemes for commuting to Reading
- actions to support the measured and steady flow of traffic along the arterial thoroughfares of the village including, Peppard Road, Kennylands Road, Wood Lane and Reade's Lane
- studies to apply 'shared space'/'Streets for All' principles to some key areas of the village

A number of these changes are long overdue, but their importance is greatly increased both by the anticipated volume of development and by its expected location. Sonning Common is presently used as a cut-through for traffic from the Caversham Park and Emmer Green areas to join the A4074 in order to head north towards Wallingford and Oxford; this traffic travels along Kennylands Road and Reade's Lane, often at speed. Whilst calming is important, it is also important to retain the rural character of the village and this should inform the approach.

Historic England's publication 'Streets for All' describes traffic management projects and this advice will be used in future plans for Sonning Common's traffic/parking issues.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Source: 'Streets for All' – Historic England

## Environmental

**Objective:** To maintain and enhance the wooded and rural character of the village by encouraging the integrity of soft landscaping in new developments and where appropriate screening any adjacent AONB.

**Action: Environment – Wider planting**

A programme of green infrastructure, green networks and substantial tree and woodland planting should be undertaken throughout the designated Neighbourhood Area. To replace what has been lost over time from development and lack of replanting as well as to protect existing and provide new areas of planting, hedgerows and habitats.

The intention will be to conserve, replace and enhance. The parish council will encourage, if the necessity arises ‘to cut down a tree then plant another one.’ All residents will be encouraged to do so. This would ensure a continuity of the rural look and feel across the village.

This is a vital part of maintaining the character of Sonning Common over the Plan period. It is expected that the parish council will orchestrate efforts but it will need support from the wider community of property owners.

## Financial contributions

**Objective:** To ensure that all financial contributions from developments (s106 and/or CIL) are used on projects and initiatives that meet the identified needs of the community.

**Action: Application of s106 and/or Community Infrastructure Levy funds**

To ensure that all financial contributions received by Sonning Common Parish Council from developments (s106 and/or CIL) are used on projects and initiatives that meet the identified needs of the community.

To this end, development applications which confer benefits to identified community services and facilities will be supported. The following investment needs are not listed in order of priority:

- car park, sports grounds, pitches works
- traffic calming investment
- upgrades and extension (2nd floor) to village hall
- village centre enhancement
- car parks (including land)
- footpaths and cycle ways (including land)
- library
- pre-school
- primary school refurbishment
- secondary school refurbishment
- health and dentistry facilities
- Widmore Pond
- youth club
- green infrastructure, green networks
- tree and woodland planting



## Part Four: Site allocations and designations

The site allocations and designations have been introduced in the development strategy section in Part Two. The choice of sites to take forward emerged from a thorough process of consideration. All 15 sites put forward in the SHLAA were surveyed by villagers against sustainable and environmental criteria. Discussions were held with landowners and an officer from The Chilterns Conservation Board and there were also multiple public information sessions with residents.

This part of the Plan elaborates the details for the allocated sites as two groups: north western and southern. A Concept statement is included for each site followed by an introduction and then a site specific policy.

Viable land use allocations are those which are consistent with the National Policy Planning Framework and that can deliver the SCNDP objectives which form the core of the Plan. The SCNDP Working Party has consulted landowners/developers of each of the proposed site allocations which are considered viable and deliverable. Additionally, residents who live close to these sites were invited to discuss the development proposals with the working party; 9 such meetings were held.

Sonning Common Parish Council commissioned Stuart Michael Associates to conduct a highways assessment survey of the vehicular access to the allocated sites.<sup>47</sup> Subsequently OCC Highways added their comments and revisions (July 2014). Map 4.19 illustrating the access points to the Allocated and Reserve sites can be found at the end of Part Four.

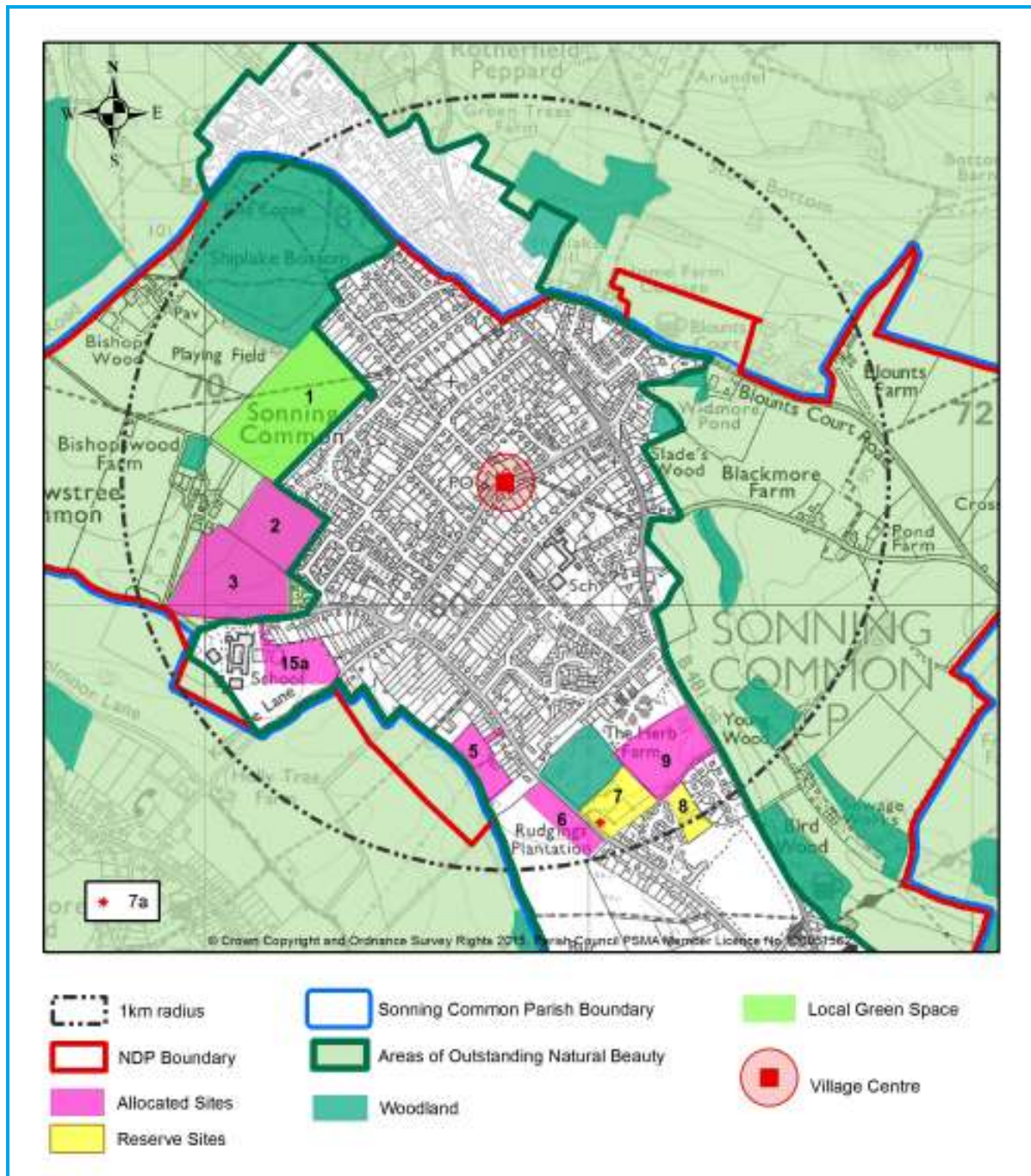
### Concept statements

There are a number of plans in this section entitled Concept statements. These do not form part of any policies and are indicative only. They do not comprise masterplans or requirements, but are intended as a guide only.

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<sup>47</sup> Source: Highways – Sites Access Assessments Report July 2014

Map 4.1: Site allocations



## Concept statement SONs 1, 2/3 and 15a



## Old Copse Field

Site reference:

SON 1

Gross area of site:

7.8 hectares

SON 1 is designated as Local Green Space, where no development will take place other than in very special circumstances. Map 4.2 shows the area shaded in green and edged in red.

SON 1 is in the AONB.

Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances.

NPPF regulation 77 stipulates that the designation should only be used:

- (i) *where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- (ii) *where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- (iii) *where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land*

There are no major 'green spaces' or even a village green within the main part of Sonning Common. The spaces that do exist include the Millennium Green which is in the southern extremity of the elongated settlement and, if only because of the Public Right of Way, the allocated SON 1 (Old Copse Field) site in the north west. Map 4.20, illustrating Sonning Common Public Rights of Way, can be found at the end of Part Four.

SON 1, which is currently used as arable farmland, lies within the AONB and the Public Right of Way (PROW) passing through it is well used. This footpath, PROW 350/5, leads from Woodlands Road through to Horsepond Lane linking with other footpaths to the open countryside. The site formed part of the original common land of Sonning Common and was enclosed in 1820. It is adjacent to Old Copse Wood, a classic ancient beech wood with long heritage in the Chilterns AONB. A much-cherished feature and resource, it was transferred to The Woodland Trust in 1995 following its purchase by villagers.

We believe that SON 1 meets the requirements of the NPPF criteria listed above:

- (i) **Proximity:** SON 1 (Old Copse Field) is in close proximity to the community and readily accessible from the village centre being less than 1km distance
- (ii) **Special to a local community and holds a particular local significance:** It is crossed by PROW 350/5 and informal footpaths that provide the community with access to the AONB and open countryside. These routes and views have been used and enjoyed by the local community, including hikers and dog walkers for many years.

It is a route favoured by the 'Health Walks', which is now a national movement. Sonning Common is where the concept of health walks was created in recognition of the lack of recreation for health provision. Set up by a former GP at Sonning Common Health Centre, it aims to improve people's fitness, both in body and mind, by encouraging them to walk in their local countryside.

Just to the north of SON 1 is the recently built Sonning Common skate park. Its location, at the edge of the Public Right of Way, was chosen by the parish council to enable safe access by children. Anecdotal evidence suggests that use of this footpath has tripled since the skate park was built.

(iii) **Local in character and not an extensive tract of land:** SON 1 is local in character as the village is surrounded with large arable fields. SON 1 is a large field and 5.3 ha. would remain as arable for food growing, while a section marked on the Concept statement to the east of the PROW, which has Old Copse Wood on its western side, could be used for amenity green space. This could provide the community with 2.5 ha of much-needed leisure and recreational area in the north west of the village as promoted in Community Rights.<sup>48</sup>

## Evidence

In February 2013, residents attended a meeting in the village hall and voted on the sites that were to be taken forward for further consideration as part of the Plan. SON 1 was identified by the SCNDP working party as potential amenity green space, a suggestion which was favoured by many of the residents who provided their comments. 29 agreed and 3 disagreed to the proposal. To put these numbers into context the highest votes on the other sites were 33 for and 6 against.

Importantly, a recent report,<sup>49</sup> commissioned by SODC, identified a current shortfall of amenity green space of up to 3.26 ha in Sonning Common:

- *“It is clear that there is a deficit of amenity green space in Sonning Common Parish, and suggested provision by SCNP to the northwest of the current housing area (SON 1 site) would be an appropriate location to cover a gap in provision.”*

## Map 4.2: Outline of Designated Local Green Space for SON 1



<sup>48</sup> Source: Localism Act 2011

<sup>49</sup> Source: Sonning Common: Local Needs Report, June 2015 by Nortoft



## Concept statement SON 1



**pottertonplace**  
landscapeurban

- Legend**
- 'SON' boundary
  - Buffer zone
  - Open space / recreation
  - Residential
  - Community Recreation land
  - Pedestrian link
  - Vehicle access
  - Vehicle route
  - Overhead cable
  - Public Right of Way
  - Native woodland planting (wildlife corridor)

This diagram is not to scale.



## SON 2/3: Bishopswood Middle Field and Memorial Hall Field

**Homes: 50 on SON 2/3**

**Status: Allocated**

The South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) outlines a management approach to development:

*“Large scale development of any kind will be inappropriate within open countryside areas but particularly within the AONB. The ability of the landscape to accommodate smaller scale development will depend upon:*

- *the potential impacts on distinctive landscape and settlement character*
- *the potential impacts on intrinsic landscape quality and valued features and the overall sensitivity of the landscape to change*
- *the visual sensitivity of the receiving landscape.”*

The SPG highlights that most forms of new development *“will have an adverse impact on the AONB.”* The assessment advises that *“special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape edges to settlement to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside.”*

In 2013 the parish council commissioned a landscape assessment<sup>50</sup> of all the SHLAA sites available for development. For SON 2/3 it concluded there to be no apparent reason why this site should not be developed. SODC have since commissioned and published a landscape and visual impact assessment in respect of the larger villages<sup>51</sup> which found the site to have an overall medium landscape sensitivity and a medium to low landscape capacity. It recommends that only a reduced area (up to 50%) should be considered for homes on the grounds of landscape and visual concerns. While there are differences in the location of homes on SON 2/3, both surveys evidence the fact that appropriate mitigations could be implemented. Evidence of these mitigations can be seen on Site policy, HS1.

Nonetheless a comprehensive landscape and visual impact assessment will be required as part of the formal planning application process to inform the final capacity of the site, before the Design Brief is developed for SON2/3.

Collectively SONs 1 and 2/3, all of which are designated as AONB, already have a strong landscape screening from the wider AONB on their western boundaries. SONs 2 and 3 are allocated **together**: SON 2 for a development of up to 50 homes and SON 3 for community, sport and recreation uses.

Although SON 2 has AONB designation, it is already surrounded by housing development on two sides and the farm complex on the third side. Development of this arable field, which is in a highly sustainable location, would have limited impact on the wider AONB as it is well screened.

SON 3 is the only viable, sustainable and accessible location within the parish for the provision of its community outdoor sport and recreation facilities. Situated opposite Chiltern Edge School it is expected to encourage shared use of facilities and to provide a parking drop-off for buses and cars at the beginning and end of the school day.

<sup>50</sup> Source: SCNDP Landscape Assessment – Potterton Associates Ltd

<sup>51</sup> Source: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-studies)

Particular sensitivity is required in terms of landscaping, building design, materials and heights, lighting and road/parking areas to mitigate the impact on the AONB. This is reflected in the specified area for housing development and substantial landscape mitigation for SON 2 as well as the retained and then enhanced landscape buffer around SON 3 as shown on the Concept statement. Any built facility eg. changing rooms or community hall would be in line with recommendations in the following guide in order to ensure appropriate design and implementation on a site within the AONB, reference should be made to the Chilterns Building Design Guide and the Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org).

A detailed background paper for this development has been submitted to The Chilterns Conservation Board and can be viewed on [www.scp-ndp.gov.uk](http://www.scp-ndp.gov.uk).

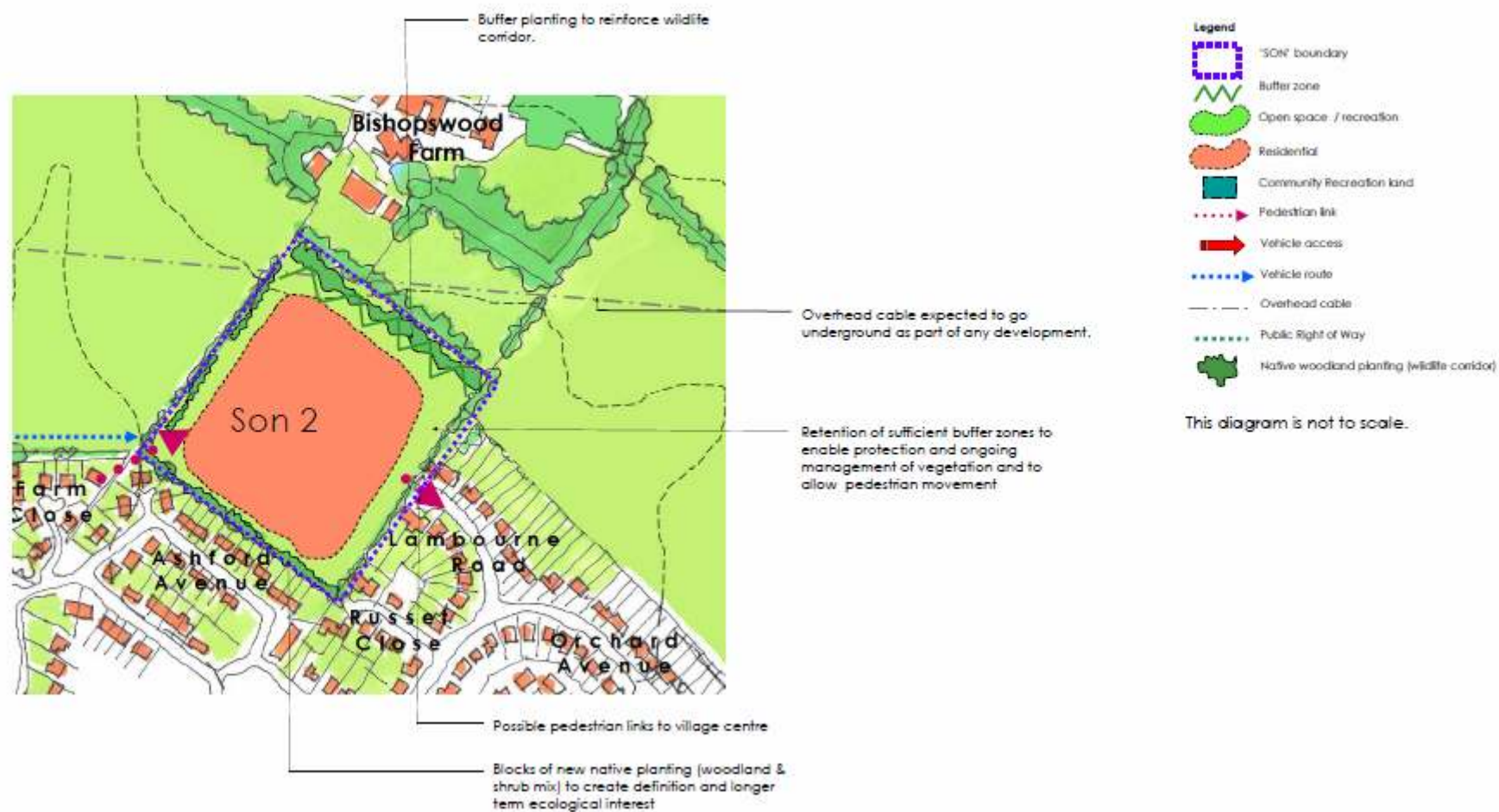
**Map 4.3: Aerial view of Bishopswood Middle Field and Memorial Hall Field** <sup>52</sup>



<sup>52</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

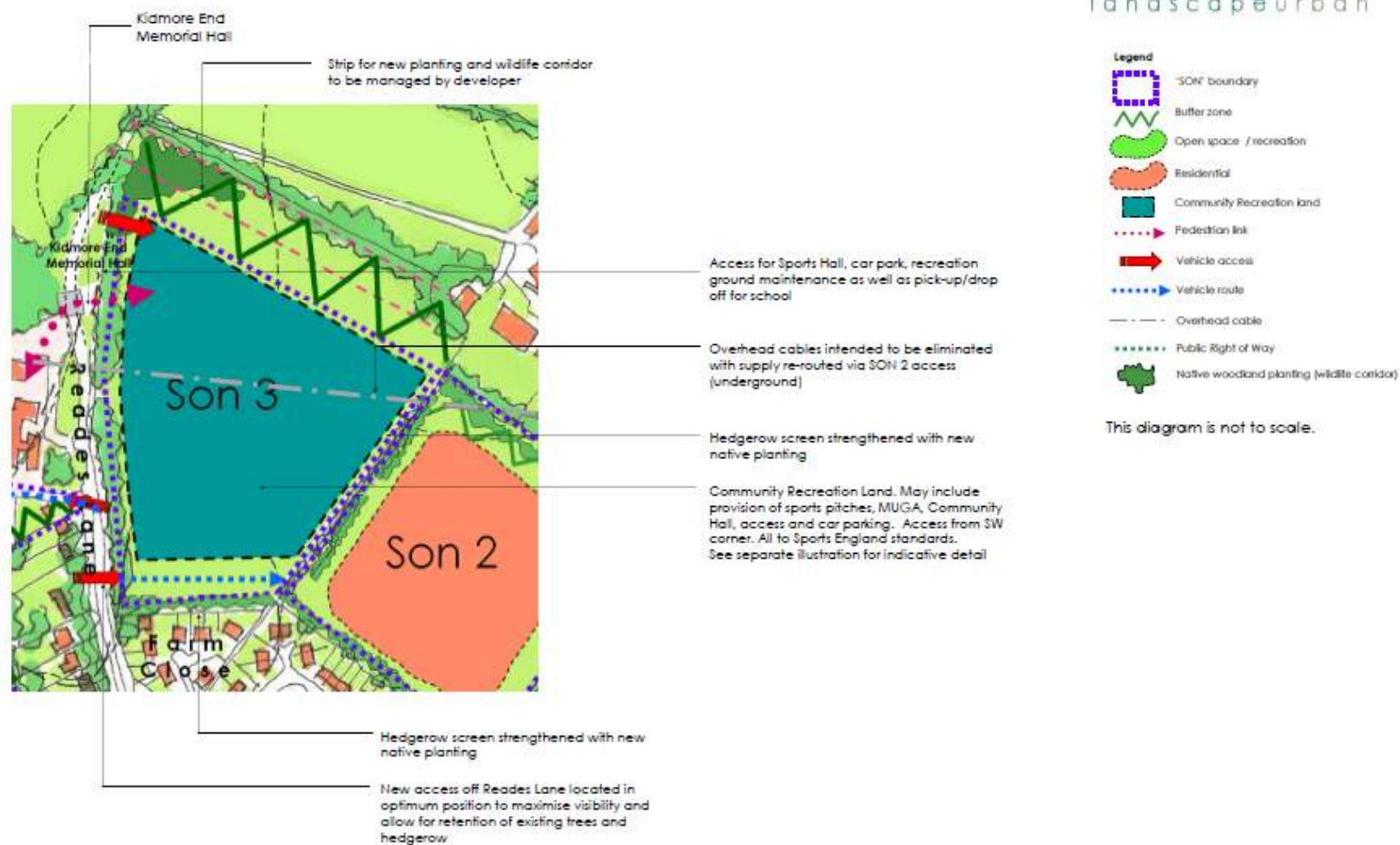
## Concept statement SON 2

**pottertonplace**  
landscapeurban





## Concept statement SON 3



**Bishopswood Middle Field & Memorial Hall Field**

Policy HS1

Site reference:	SON 2/3
Gross area of site:	7.7 hectares
Number of homes:	50
Affordable homes:	40%

SON 2/3 comprises 7.7 hectares. The land shaded blue on Map 4.4 is allocated for 50 houses. The land shaded green on Map 4.4 is allocated for public recreation. Circa 0.9 hectares of land will provide a buffer along the north western edge of the site as shown on Map 4.4 to be managed by the developers.

The recreational area will be laid out and provided, together with suitable public access, prior to the sale of the first market house on site SON2/3.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

**Landscape**

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- A significant and structured landscape buffer zone to be extended along the NW boundaries to provide a screen against the visual impact on the Chilterns AONB;
- Further boundaries to be maintained and reinforced include the existing field boundaries, especially the hedges between SONs 2/3 and alongside the road adjacent to Farm Close and the Reade's Lane boundary.

**Open space and infrastructure**

- Provide green space on the northern part of the site adjacent to Bishopswood Farm to protect a significant wildlife area, in addition to the central, publicly accessible, open space.

**Access**

- Provide a single vehicular access for the residential development area from Reade's Lane. This vehicular access road should follow the eastern edge of the site until reaching the residential development area;
- Provide safe pedestrian and cycle access across the site from Reade's Lane to the village centre via Farm Close and Lambourne Road. From Reade's Lane to the residential development area this pedestrian and cycle access should be located alongside the vehicular access;
- No vehicular connection to the site from Ashford Avenue or Lambourne Road.

## Layout and design

- Homes built on SON 2 that are adjacent to SON 3 along the south western boundary should provide natural surveillance of the recreation land;
- Ensure that all existing electricity cables are located underground;
- Ensure that the proposed dwellings are designed to minimise the visual impact of the development on the AONB. Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed dwellings and to the colour of building materials.

In addition to ensuring the provision of a public recreation area, the long term aim for the recreation space is to have a community leisure/sports space to be delivered by the parish council using monies collected through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL priority policy) and other means including major grants. The development of this space must reflect and respect the AONB and rural surroundings and will include the following:

- a community sports hall located in the south western corner of the site that in its design and materials will minimise visual impact on the AONB and rural situation
- vehicular access for the community leisure/sports space from Reade's Lane at the western end of the site alongside Kidmore End Memorial Hall
- a car park of at least 60 spaces, including an appropriate landscape strategy to soften its appearance
- lighting designed to minimise light pollution

All of this work will be phased in over a long period of time and every opportunity will be sought to elicit matched funding.

### Map 4.4: Outline of development area for SON 2/3





### SON 15a: Chiltern Edge Top

**Homes: 37**

**Status: Allocated**

Chiltern Edge School has received formal government approval for the sale of the land known as SON 15a. The site boundary for SON 15a has been defined by containment behind the existing line of school buildings to minimise the impact on the open countryside and long distance views from the AONB. It provides scope for dense landscape planting above the ridgeline to provide full screening. The allocation and development of SON 15a is intended to provide funds to enable the school to achieve urgently needed improvements to its infrastructure and facilities thereby ensuring its future viability. This site would be considered to be in the overall interest of the community.

**Map 4.5: Aerial view of Chiltern Edge Top** <sup>53</sup>



<sup>53</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

## Concept statement SON 15a

**pottertonplace**  
landscapeurban



School and residential access combined to enable retention of Caretakers House

Nursery to move

Buffer zone to perimeter to enable access to private garden gates and to aid ongoing hedgerow management

Planting in this area to act as buffer to AONB and to bolster wildlife corridor.

#### Legend

- 'SON' boundary
- Buffer zone
- Open space / recreation
- Residential
- Community Recreation land
- Pedestrian link
- Vehicle access
- Vehicle route
- Overhead cable
- Public Right of Way
- Native woodland planting (wildlife corridor)

This diagram is not to scale.

## Chiltern Edge Top

## Policy HS2

## Site reference

SON 15a

## Gross area of site:

2.1 hectares

## Number of homes:

37

## Affordable homes:

40%

SON 15a is allocated for 37 homes within the site area of 2.1 hectares shown on Map 4.6 shaded in blue and edged in red.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

#### Landscape

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- Incorporate and reinforce existing landscape with hedgerow screening around the site;
- Encourage biodiversity features including existing wildlife corridors, and allow adequate root protection zones for existing trees and hedgerows;
- The four trees lining the western side of the current access road could be removed in order to improve access to the site.

#### Open space and infrastructure

- It is vital to protect Kidmore Lane from surface water run-off. All necessary arrangements including Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) should be made to prevent this occurrence.

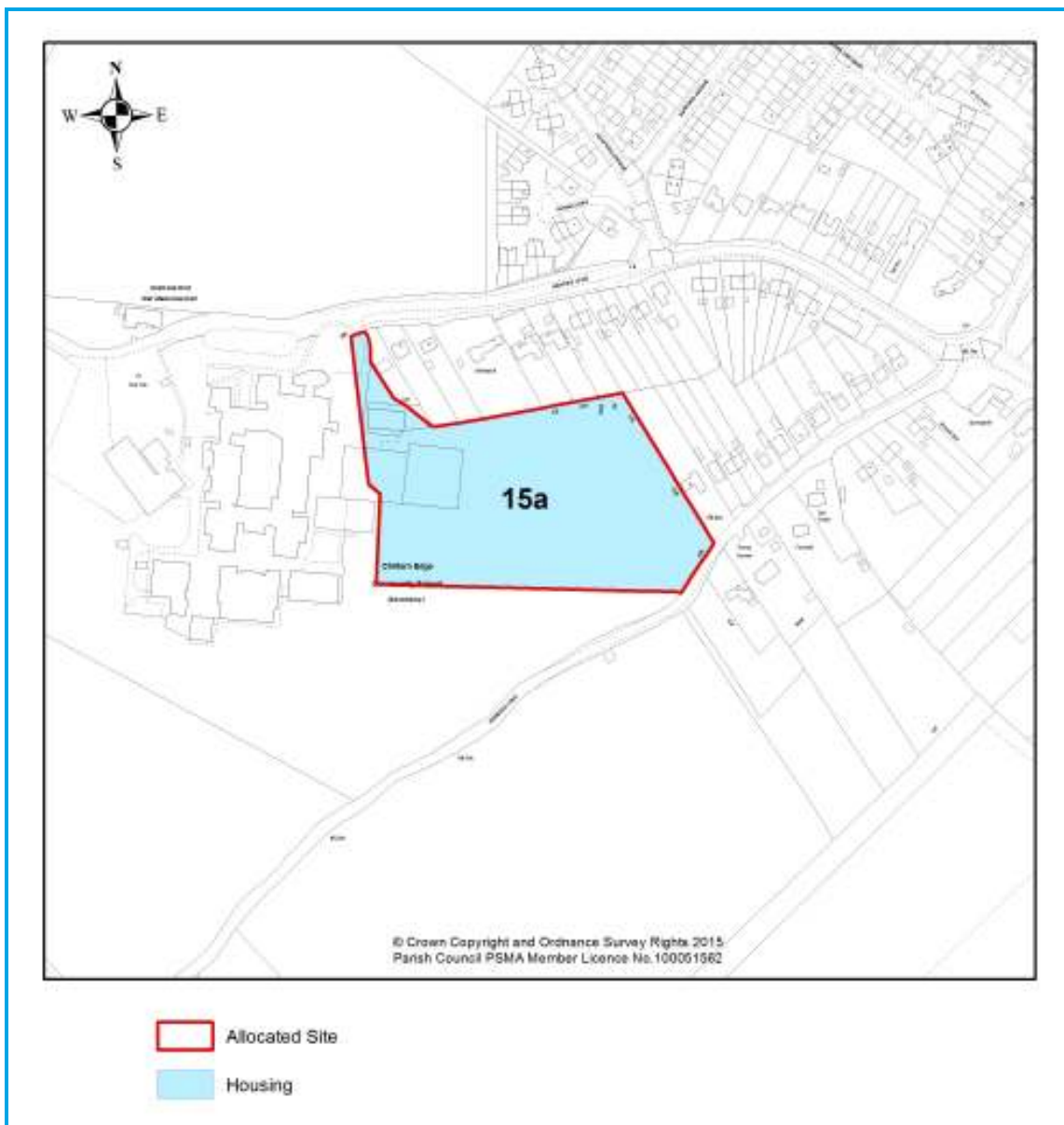
#### Access

- Provide vehicular access for the residential development area from Reade's Lane – the indicative location of the vehicular access is shown on the Concept statement;
- Provide safe pedestrian and cycle access across the site from Reade's Lane;
- The caretaker's house to be retained with a slight reduction in the garden in order to accommodate the access road.

### Layout and design

- Ensure that the proposed dwellings are designed to minimise the visual impact of the development on the AONB and neighbouring properties. Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed dwellings and to the colour of building materials;
- Make appropriate arrangements to respect existing residents' prescriptive rights of way from the Reade's Lane rear garden gates to maintain their hedges. Details to be confirmed with residents at planning stage. Any arrangements must ensure that the safeguarding policy at Chiltern Edge School and any statutory requirements in respect of this are fully complied with to ensure pupil safety;
- Ensure that existing properties around the site will be well screened and their privacy respected.

**Map 4.6: Outline of development area for SON 15a**





## Southern sites

The southern sites are all in the 'setting' of the AONB. The Chilterns Conservation Board Position Statement provides guidance to local planning authorities, landowners, developers and other interested parties in connection with the need to consider the impacts on the AONB of development and land management proposals which lie outside it but with its 'setting'. The CCB noted that the southern sites, "while not in the AONB, form part of the setting of the Chilterns AONB and have a reduced capacity for development e.g. SON 6 and SON 9, which does appear to have been taken on board in the proposed allocated numbers."<sup>54</sup> This reduction in the number of homes now also applies to SON 5.

This group includes SON 5, SON 6, SON 7/7a, SON 8 and SON 9. SON 8 includes a privately-run gymnastics centre and is the subject of an SODC restrictive covenant to remain for recreation purposes.

The southern sites will retain the eastern edge of the village as SON 9 will complete the development along the B481. SON 5 extends the current built line up to the orchard of Alpen Rose. This will provide the furthest edge towards Kidmore End and south towards Reading. SON 6 completes the line of building along Kennylands Road.

In the absence of any other opportunity for pedestrian, cycling and wildlife corridor links between Peppard Road and Kennylands Road towards the south of the village, an integrated approach to landscape and movement (both human and animal) in particular is crucial.

The village has an elongated form, shaped by the AONB dry valleys on either side. These sites are a vital link between the east and west AONB and principal roads. Applications will therefore be expected to demonstrate how development of each site contributes to a coherent overall concept.

The key principles for overall development include the need to:

- produce a clear planted boundary line to the settlement at the rear of SON 6
- protect the rural and wooded quality of Kennylands Road
- deal sensitively with the boundary to the east towards the AONB
- take account of the topography
- avoid any additional vehicular access between Kennylands and Peppard Roads
- retain and enhance the existing landscape structure
- provide appropriately located footpath and cycle way between SON 9 and Kennylands Road
- create wildlife corridors from east to west and north to south

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<sup>54</sup> Source: CCB feedback 9 June 2015

## Concept statement SONs 5, 6, 7/7a, 8 and 9



**pottertonplace**  
landscapeurban

- Legend**
- SON boundary
  - ~ Buffer zone
  - Open space / recreation
  - Residential
  - Community Recreation land
  - - - - - Pedestrian link
  - Vehicle access
  - - - - - Vehicle route
  - - - - - Overhead cable
  - - - - - Public Right of Way
  - Native woodland planting (wildlife corridor)

This diagram is not to scale



## SON 5: Kennylands Paddock

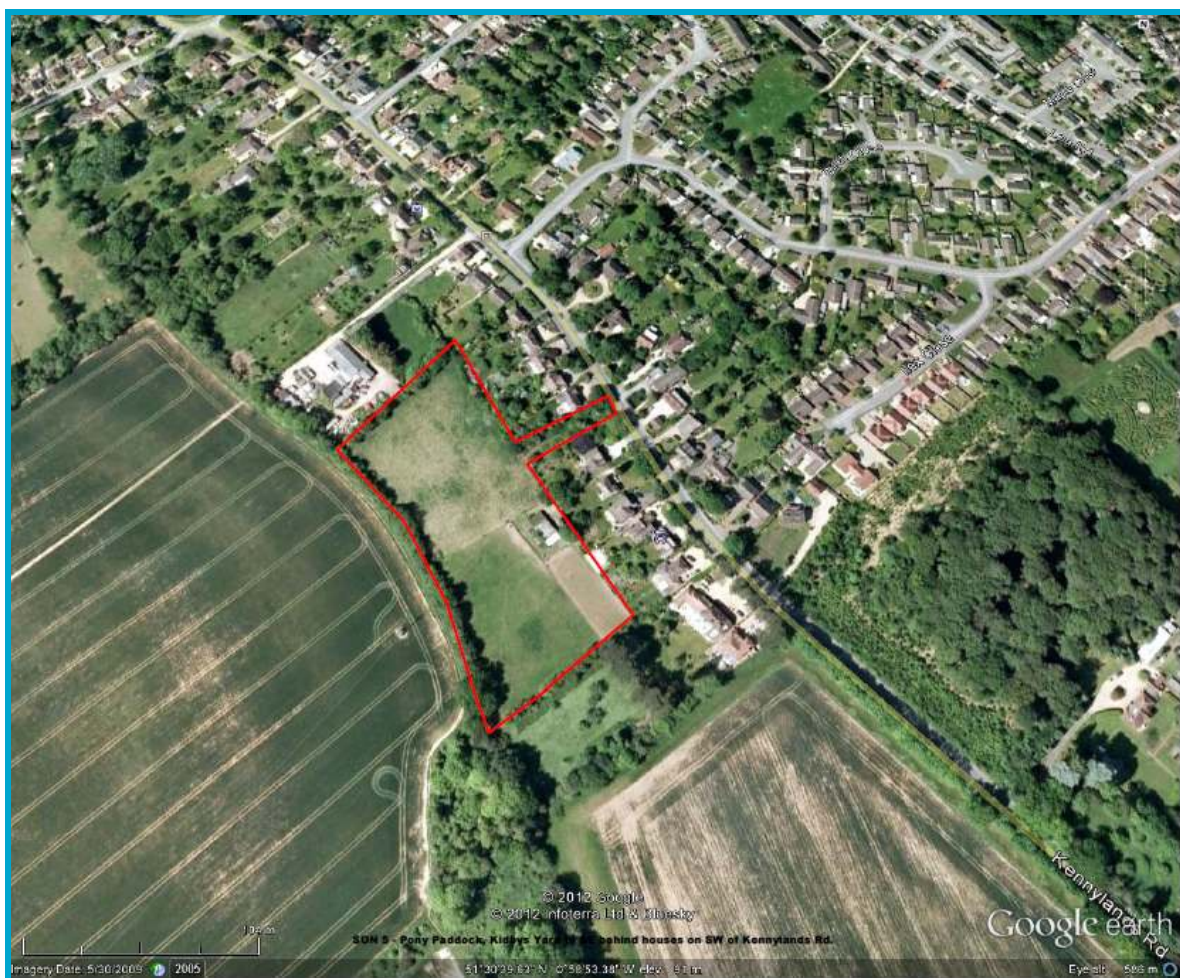
**Homes: 22**

**Status: Allocated**

This site is within the setting of the AONB and any development of this site will further widen the linear settlement along the south western side of the village. The original SON 5 SHLAA site extended from Kidby's Yard southwards to include the orchard of Alpen Rose, 54 Kennylands Road. One of the most important policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is to retain the gap between Sonning Common and Kidmore End to the west and Reading to the south.

Negotiations have taken place between the SCNDP and the developers and an agreement has been reached with them as to the constraints outlined in the Site policy, HS3. The site is reduced to exclude the orchard at Alpen Rose and this will provide a natural break against any further sprawl towards Reading to the south. There will be a substantial green infrastructure link and landscape buffer to be created between the open landscape of the AONB and the village edge. This will lessen the impact on the views from the nearby Public Right of Way (PROW 350/12 - see Map 4.20). The rural nature of Kennylands Road needs to be preserved and when designing the road access care should be taken to avoid the loss of trees in order to maintain the wooded character.

**Map 4.7: Aerial view of Kennylands Paddock excluding the orchard**<sup>55</sup>



<sup>55</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

## Concept statement SON 5



## Kennylands Paddock

## Policy HS3

Site reference:	SON 5
Gross area of site:	1.2 hectares
Number of homes:	22
Affordable homes:	40%

SON 5 is an allocated site for 22 homes within the site area of 0.976 hectares shown on Map 4.8 shaded in blue and edged in red.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

#### Landscape

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- A significant and structured landscape boundary, to supplement the existing hedgerow and outside of the gardens of the new homes, which will screen the AONB to the west alongside SON 4, with particular consideration for wildlife corridors;
- A root protection zone and understorey planting to complete the screen and protect the visual context of the Chilterns AONB;
- Due to evidence of subsidence, applications must be accompanied by a ground conditions survey and the recommendations of the survey shall be reflected in the application, to be secured as appropriate by condition.

#### Open space and infrastructure

- The developer must ensure that the existing power cable is sited underground from the pylon on SON 4 to the pylon at the proposed access road for SON 5, providing due access for any future maintenance or replacement.

#### Access

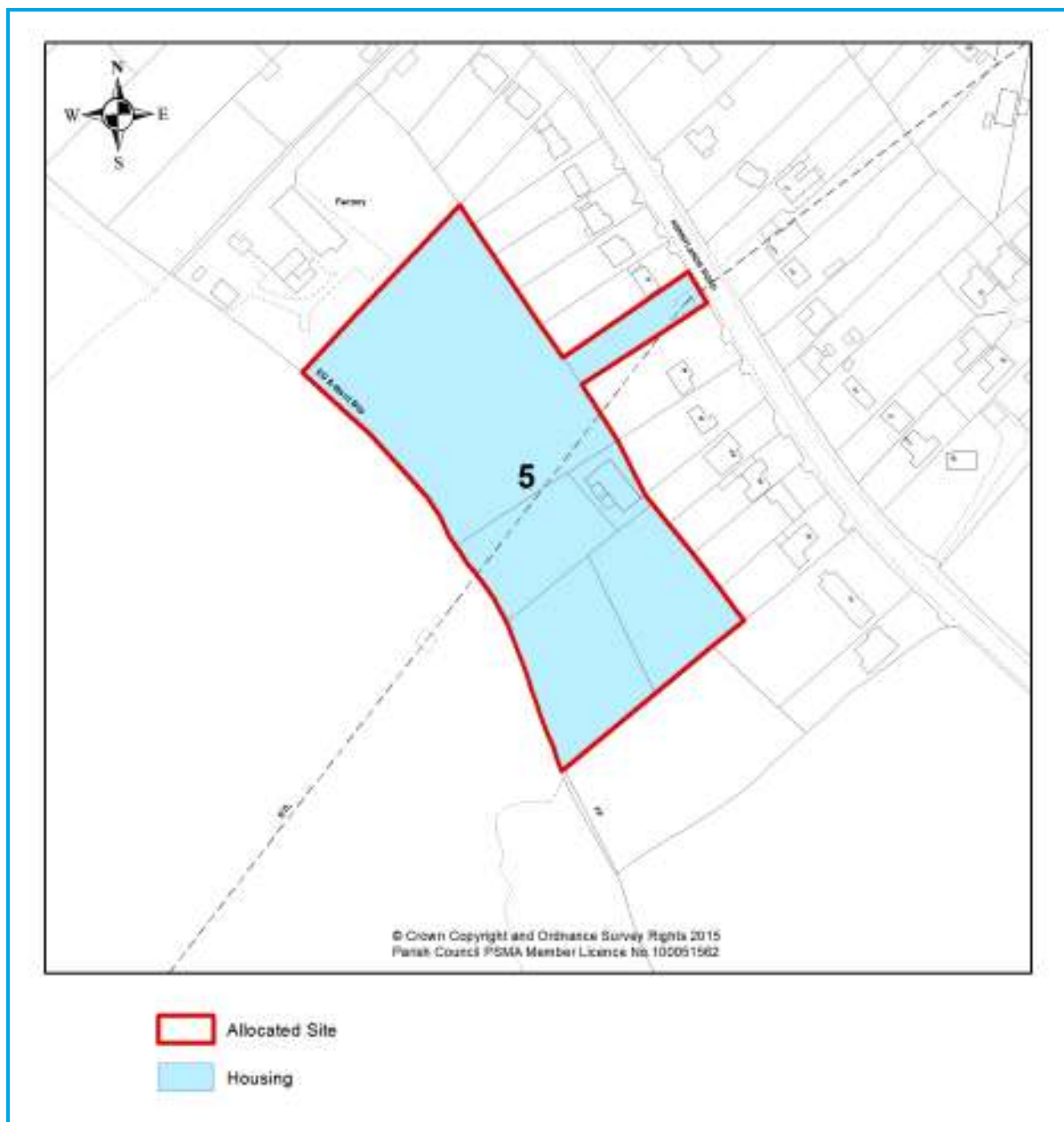
- Provide a single vehicular access for the residential development area onto Kennylands Road;
- Provide safe pedestrian and cycle access across the site to Kennylands Road.



### Layout and design

- Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed dwellings at the highest part of the site (possibly with bungalows) and the colour of the building materials to minimise the visual impact on the AONB;
- Ensure that existing properties of Kennylands Road will be well screened with a 3m buffer and their privacy respected.

**Map 4.8: Outline of development area for SON 5**



## SON 6: Kennylands Infill

**Homes: 26**

**Status: Allocated**

The original SHLAA submission for SON 6 included 2.1 hectares. Because of the significance of the current built line in this area of the village, it was decided to allocate only 1.5 hectares and for this to be a linear development close to the road so as to achieve genuine infill.

Although this site is in a reasonably prominent location on one of the main roads into Sonning Common, the surrounding trees and native hedges screen the site from long distance views and allow only glimpses into the site from Kennylands Road. The trees and hedgerow that form the front of the site make an important contribution to the rural character of the area. Planning applications are expected to meet the requirements of the linear layout.

The principle of development is of a series of plots along a one way single track access road (behind the tree line) to reinforce the 'plotland' pattern described in the Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013 and the adjacent character of Kennylands Road. Buildings are expected to be in a linear pattern respecting the existing form of development so width and character will constrain the number of dwellings. However, a key requirement for the 26 homes will be for the plots to be segmented to allow each home a private garden.

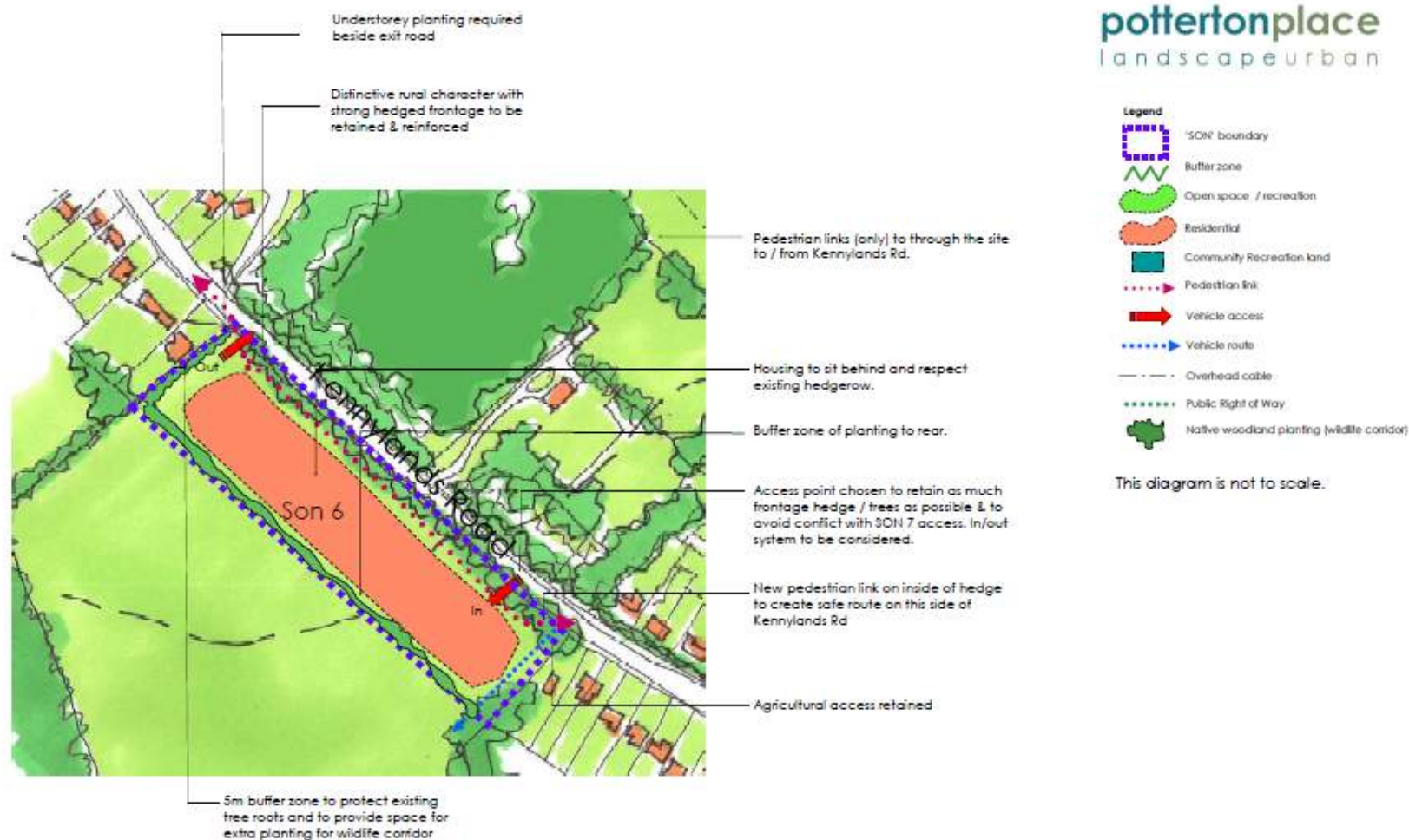
The site is a genuine infill between house numbers 56 and 80 Kennylands Road.

**Map 4.9: Aerial view of Kennylands Infill**<sup>56</sup>



<sup>56</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'

## Concept statement SON 6





## Kennylands Infill

Policy HS4

Site reference: SON 6

Gross area of site: 1.5 hectares

Number of homes: 26

Affordable homes: 40%

SON 6 is allocated for 26 homes within the site area of 1.5 hectares shown on Map 4.10 shaded in blue and edged in red.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

**Landscape**

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- Create a new structured landscape boundary outside of the gardens of the new homes which will screen the AONB to the west, with particular consideration for wildlife corridors;
- The current tree line along Kennylands Road must be reinstated through replacement planting, roots protected and understorey planting completed in order to preserve the rural view from the road.

**Open space and infrastructure**

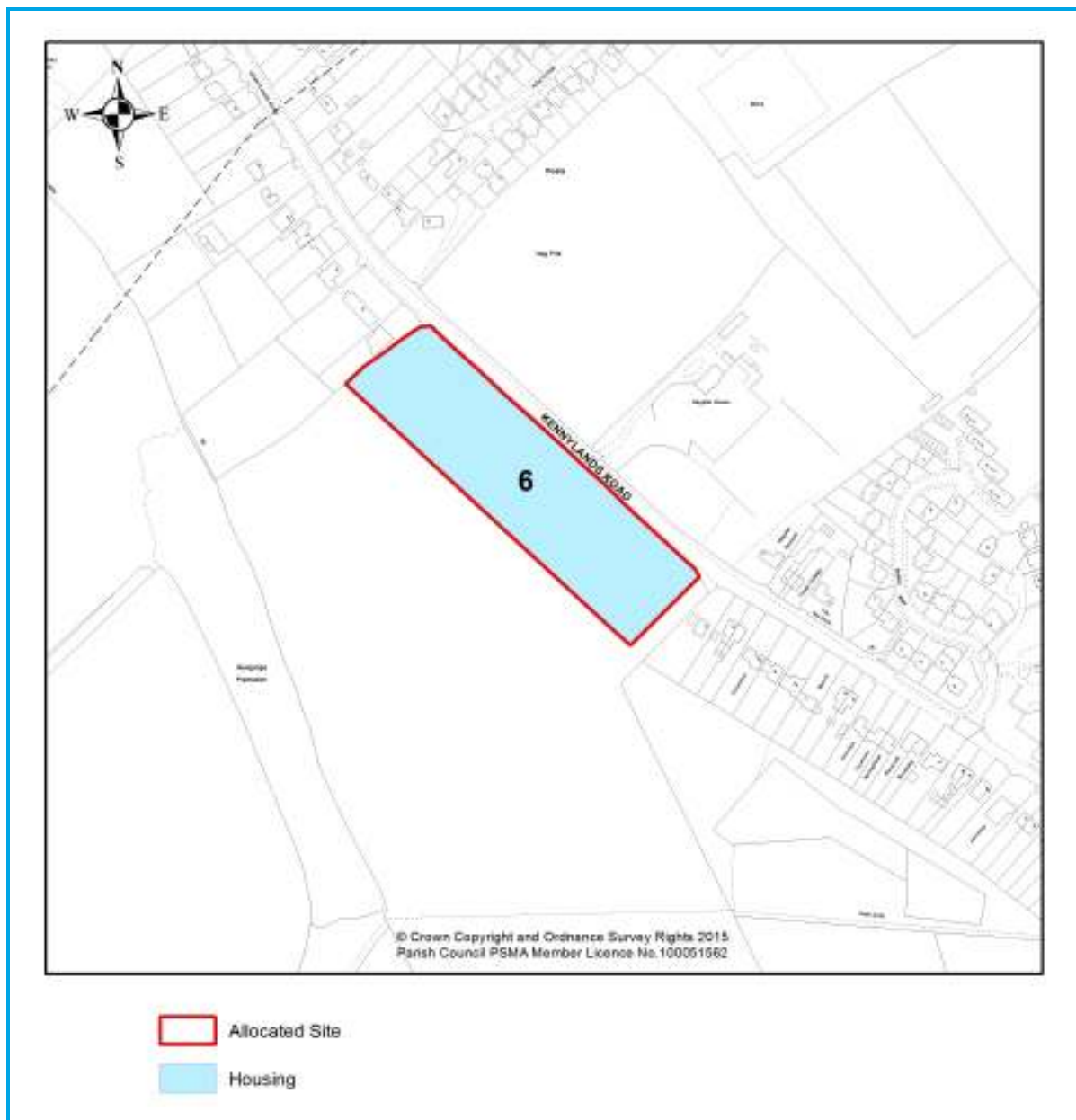
- Provide a suitable 8 metre wide access for agricultural vehicles from Kennylands Road to the farmland south west of the site, as shown on the Concept statement;
- This access should be appropriately screened with trees and hedgerows to separate it from the rest of the site.

**Access**

- Provide residential vehicular access, ideally a one way single road, from the eastern corner of the site to the northern corner running parallel with Kennylands Road, adjacent to the existing landscaping. The location is shown on the Concept statement and access has been agreed with Oxfordshire County Council Highways;
- Provide safe pedestrian and cycle access adjacent to the vehicular access.

**Layout and design**

- Ensure that the proposed dwellings are designed to minimise the visual impact of the development on the AONB. Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed dwellings and the colour of the building materials;
- Provide a linear development to reflect that it is infilling between 56 and 80 Kennylands Road.

**Map 4.10: Outline of development area for SON 6**

## SON 7/7a

The original SHLAA site known as SON 7 includes two areas of land under different ownerships.

### SON 7: Hagpits House

**Homes: 25**

**Status: Reserve**

The landowners of this site currently reside in Hagpits House, located next to Hagpits Wood and demolition of the house is required as part of the development. Hagpits Wood will remain.

There are a large number of trees on the site and consequently further detailed site survey information is required to clarify issues such as TPOs.

This site is designated as a Reserve site as the landowners do not seek immediate development. It is clear that this site has potential as it would enable a more coherent development in conjunction with SON 7a – with particular regard to pedestrian links and access.

### SON 7a: Hagpits Orchard

**Homes: 5 (2 for self-build)**

**Status: Reserve**

This Reserve site links from the edge of SON 9 through to Kennylands Road, with a strip of land along the road itself. The existence of a significant area of trees makes it inappropriate to develop homes in the stretch of land parallel to Essex Way rear gardens towards SON 9.

To retain the rural character of the village the front screen of trees along Kennylands Road is to be reinforced. Consequently, access to the homes would have to be via SON 7 by agreement.

SON 7a is designated as a Reserve site since its access is reliant upon agreement with the landowners of SON 7 and is dependent on the timing of the development of SON 7 (Hagpits House).

Map 4.11: Aerial view of SON 7/7a<sup>57</sup>



<sup>57</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'



## Concept statement SON 7





## Concept statement SON 7a

pottertonplace  
landscapeurban

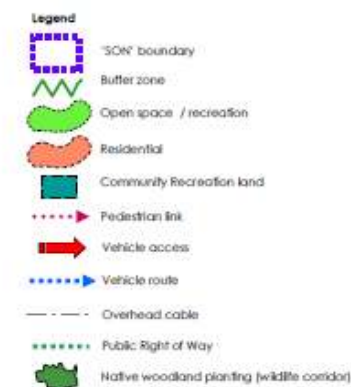


Important wildlife corridors to be retained and enhanced.

Area of significant trees to be retained

Development area

Distinctive rural character with strong hedge & tree frontage to be retained & reinforced



This diagram is not to scale.

**Policy HS5 Site Policy reference: SON 7**  
**Hagpits House**  
**Area of site: 1.3 hectares**  
**Number of homes: 25**  
**Affordable homes: 40%**

**Site Policy reference: SON 7a**  
**Hagpits Orchard**  
**Area of site: 0.2 hectares**  
**Number of homes: 5 (2 self-build)**

SON 7 is a Reserve site allocated for 25 homes within the site area of 1.3 hectares shown on Map 4.12 shaded in blue and edged in red. SON 7a is a Reserve site allocated for up to 5 homes within the site area of 0.2 hectares as shown on the map and has a different landowner.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

#### **Landscape**

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- A full arboricultural survey needs to be undertaken on this site;
- Significant trees on this site should be retained as dominant landscape features that will enhance the development;
- Incorporate and reinforce existing landscape and biodiversity features, including existing wildlife corridors and adequate root protection zones for retained trees and hedgerows;
- Hagpits Wood and the tree screen along Kennylands Road must be retained;
- Structured landscape buffers of trees and hedgerow will provide a screen along the north east border with SON 9;
- Retain the trees along the south eastern boundary to screen Essex Way properties.

#### **Open space and infrastructure**

- Retain the start of the existing logging track entering Hagpits Wood.

### Access

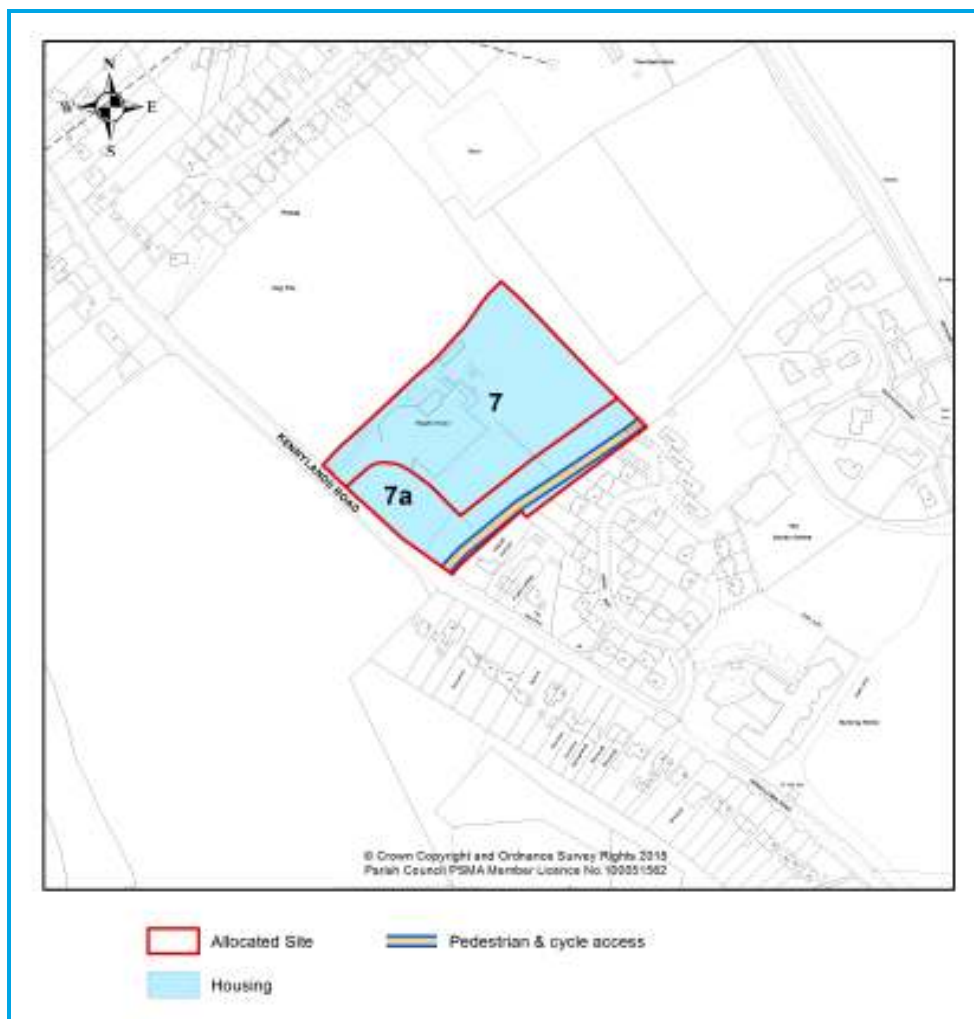
- Provide a single vehicular access from Kennylands Road using the existing access point with any required improvements. This road will provide access to both SON 7 and SON 7a. This must also include provision for separate access into Hagpits Wood for its management and maintenance;
- There must be no vehicular access through the site onto the B481 Peppard Road.

### Layout and design

- Ensure that proposed dwellings adjacent to SON 9 are designed to minimise the visual impact of the development on the AONB to the north east. Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of these dwellings;
- It is presently a very rural and tranquil wooded area and its transition to a built site should be accomplished sensitively.

It is a requirement that these two sites are developed together.

**Map 4.12: Outline of development area for SON 7 and SON 7a**



## SON 8: Kennylands Gymnastics

**Homes: 4**

**Status: Reserve**

The site known as SON 8 is part of the gap between the main village and its southern extremity. It is set between housing to the north east and south west. It is not widely visible but there are sensitive view receptors in the adjacent Millennium Green and it would be necessary to create a buffer edge between the green and the built-up area.

This Reserve site will be considered for possible development in two phases:

**Phase 1:** 4 homes on the part of the site located adjacent to SON 9 and behind the gymnastics facility. The proceeds from this development would be invested into the infrastructure of Kennylands Gymnastics. The landowners are concerned that without this investment the life of the facility is limited.

The village has a deficit of recreational facilities and until this is addressed with new additional land and ideally a community/sports hall, Kennylands Gymnastics needs to remain in operation. If at some future date this need is supplanted, then Phase 2 could be put in place.

**Phase 2:** The remainder of SON 8 may be developed for a maximum of 10 homes. A lower density of dwellings may be necessary to avoid visual intrusion from the built form and the potential impact on Millennium Green, and this would necessitate a further full landscape visual impact assessment to inform the capacity of SON 8.

It is very important that care should be taken in upgrading existing road access to avoid any impact on Millennium Green. Furthermore, there are differing views about the ownership of the land beneath the access road surface.



**Map 4.13: Aerial view of Kennylands Gymnastics**<sup>58</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'



## Concept statement SON 8



**pottertonplace**  
landscapeurban

### Legend

- 'SON' boundary
- Buffer zone
- Open space / recreation
- Residential
- Community Recreation land
- Pedestrian link
- Vehicle access
- Vehicle route
- Overhead cable
- Public Right of Way
- Native woodland planting (wildlife corridor)

This diagram is not to scale

## Kennylands Gymnastics

Policy HS6

Site Reference:

SON 8

Gross area of site:

0.2 hectares

Number of Homes:

4 + 10 (Phase 2)

Site SON 8 is a Reserve site to be allocated in two phases.

### Phase 1

This phase is to be made available for 4 homes within the northern part of the site area of 0.2 hectares shown on Map 4.14 shaded in blue and edged in red. The development is to support investment in the infrastructure of the gymnastics facility. The mound to the western side of the site must remain and be planted with screening to protect the residents from overlooking by the adjacent apartments.

### Phase 2

The remainder of SON 8 to be made available as a Reserve site for development **only when and if** the parish council is able to source an equivalent facility on SON 3 (Memorial Hall Field) which, ultimately, could substitute for the use of Kennylands Gymnastics. This development would be for a maximum of 10 homes.

The gymnastics facility on SON 8 to be retained until Phase 2 above becomes active.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

### Landscape

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- Create a new structured landscape boundary outside of the gardens of the new homes which will screen the gymnastics facility and enhance wildlife corridors.

**Open space and infrastructure**

- The Phase 1 site should be appropriately screened with trees and hedgerows to separate it from the Kennylands Gymnastics building, its visitors and Essex Way residents;
- Enhance the existing landscaping to screen Millennium Green.

**Access**

- Access to SON 8 shall be via Bird Wood Court which feeds into the B481 Peppard Road;
- The existing walkway Naish Way, which runs through SON 8, must be retained;
- A safe pedestrian access to the bus route on Kennylands Road should be via Naish Way, providing the security of Essex Way homes is respected by users.

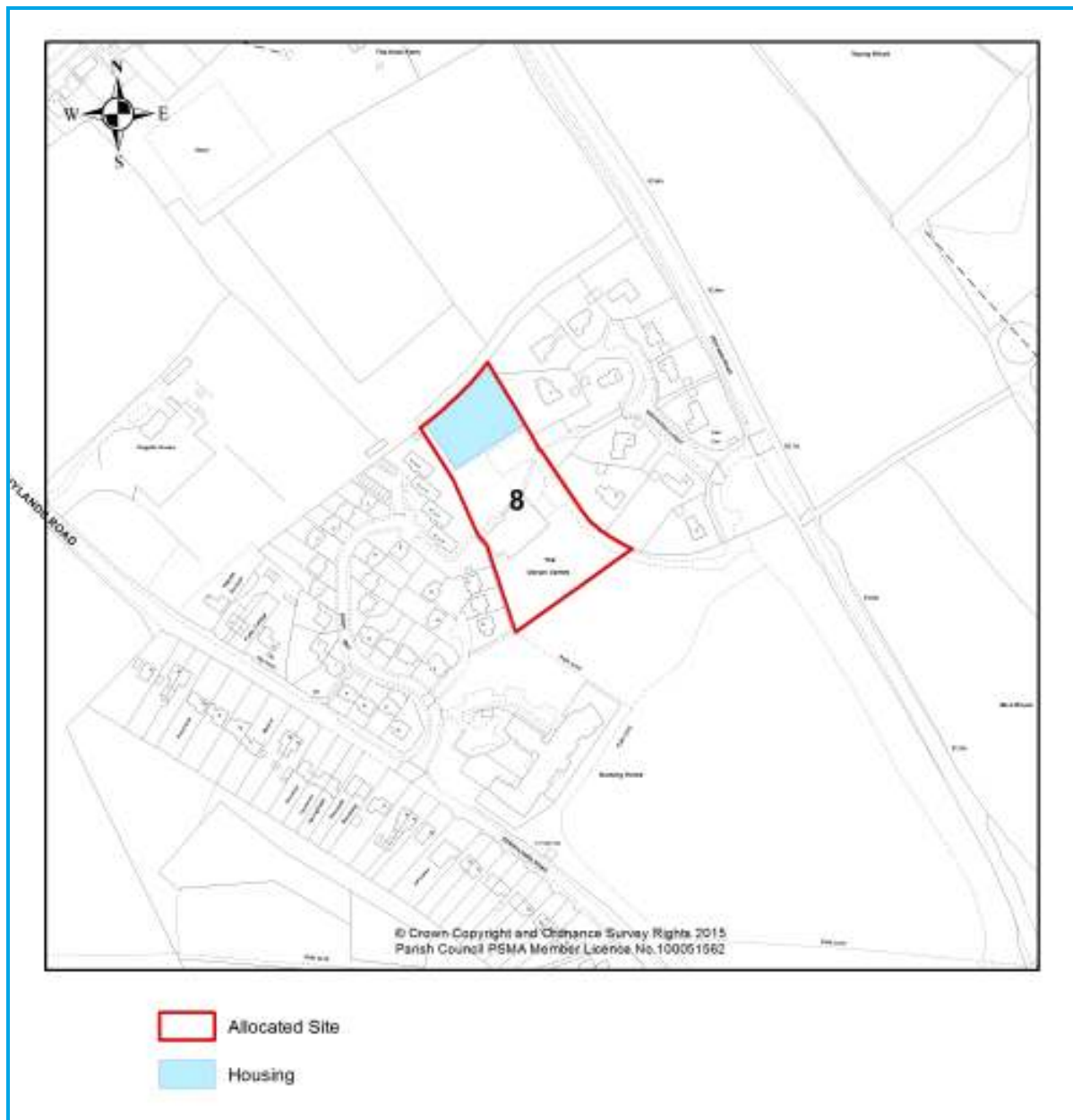
**Layout and design**

- Ensure that the proposed dwellings are designed to minimise the visual impact of the development on the adjacent dwellings which could be achieved with single storey homes;
- Ensure that existing properties in Essex Way and Bird Wood Court are well screened and their privacy respected.

There is a restrictive covenant in place (31 March 1983 Title No. ON89504). This states that “the site shall not at any time hereafter be used other than as open space for recreation and amenity purposes.”

While the gymnastics facility is still in operation a new car park may be required at the front of the site.

**Map 4.14: Outline of development area for SON 8 \***



\* The Dorian Centre is now known as Kennylands Gymnastics.

## SON 9: Lea Meadow

**Homes: 60**

**Status: Allocated**

This site, allocated for housing, is very close to the AONB, requiring care with the boundary to the landscape beyond the Peppard Road. There are at present no landscape divisions within the site yet it is steeply sloping down to the Peppard Road. The landform continues to fall on the east side of the Peppard Road before rising again on the opposite side in the AONB.

This topography is an important consideration for screening the AONB and for drainage. There are some significant trees on this site notably along what is believed to be an 'old green lane' along its southern boundary. It is considered important to provide wildlife connections through this site.

**Map 4.15: Aerial view of Lea Meadow**<sup>59</sup>



<sup>59</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'



## Concept statement SON 9



SON 9 is allocated for 60 homes within the site area of 3.2 hectares shown on Map 4.16 shaded in blue and edged in red.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

#### **Landscape**

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment should be prepared and submitted with the planning application;
- Incorporate and reinforce existing landscape and biodiversity features, including adequate root protection zones for existing trees and hedgerows around the site;
- Protect existing wildlife corridors that cross the site and connect to adjacent woodland, countryside and open spaces;
- Retain, augment and widen the area of trees and hedgerows along the Peppard Road frontage to screen the lower part of the site from the AONB;
- Strategic planting of lateral screening woodland belts midway up the rising site to minimise visual impact of development from the AONB as shown on the Concept statement.

#### **Open space and infrastructure**

- Provide green space that is multi-functional (for a range of age groups) readily accessible to the residents of the development and well overlooked;
- The installation of an integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) or an acceptable alternative.

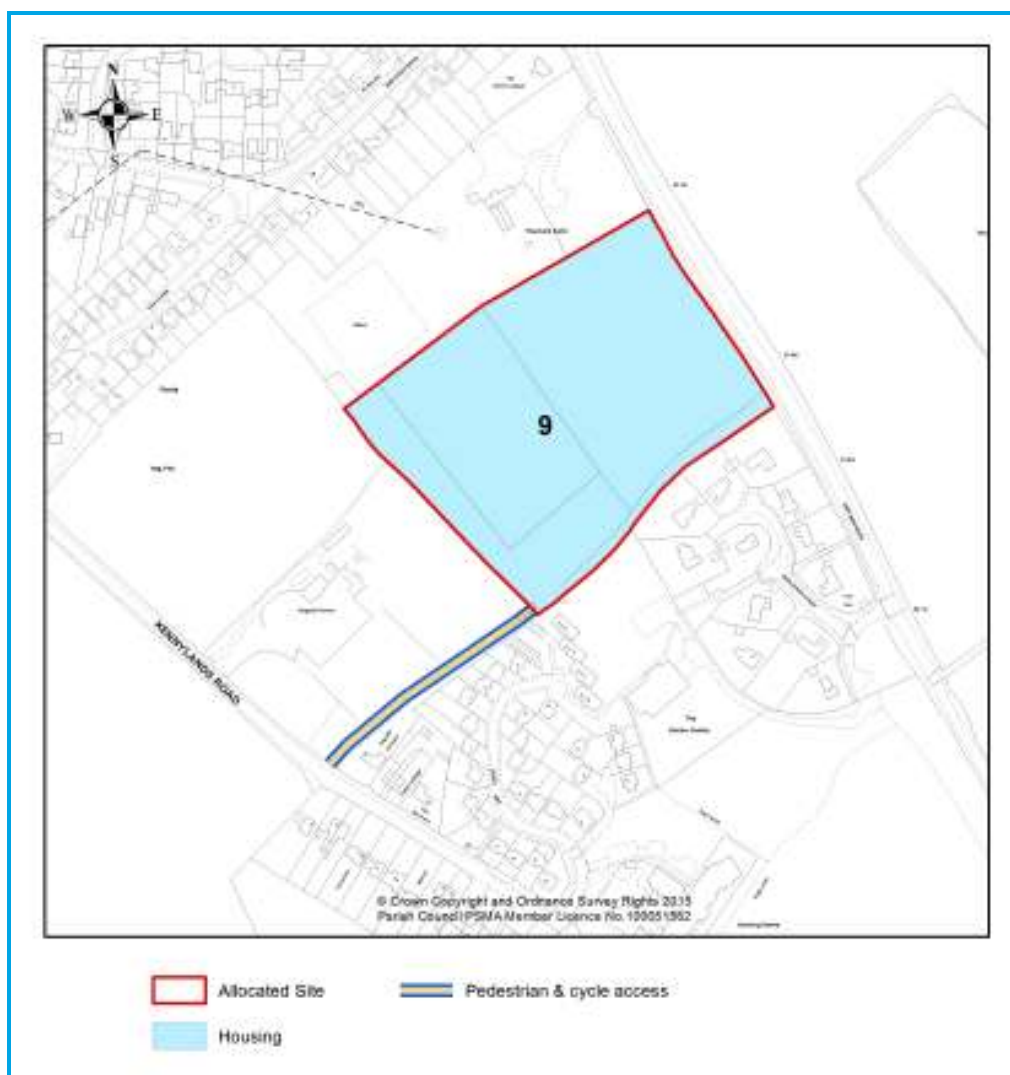
### Access

- Provide a single centrally located vehicular access from Peppard Road;
- Provide safe pedestrian and cycle access from the site to Kennylands Road;
- Any footpath/cycle route connecting the site to Kennylands Road that passes to the rear of Essex Way and Bird Wood Court properties must be adequately screened and be fenced to give privacy to the residents.

### Layout and design

- Ensure that the proposed dwellings are designed to minimise their visual impact on the AONB. Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed dwellings and the colour of the building materials used.

**Map 4.16: Outline development area for SON 9**



## Employment site

### Kidby's Yard

Policy:	EMP 1
Site ref:	Kidby's Yard
Gross area of site:	0.4 hectares
New site:	0.1 hectares

**Kidby's Yard** site, as shown on Map 4.18, is allocated for continued use as an **Employment** site with:

- Potential for reorganisation of the yard; and
- An extension area (0.1 hectares) adjacent to and contiguous with the yard.

#### Existing employment use:

Office, vehicle storage and light industrial workshops on the existing yard.

#### Proposed scope:

Any new development on this site will be B1 use. Where planning permission is required applications for change of use from B1 uses to non B1 uses will be refused.

Planning applications should be accompanied by a Design Brief setting out the principles for development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss, and gain support for the Design brief from the Parish Council and encouraged to follow the pre-application protocol found at the end of Part Four.

The **Design Brief** should demonstrate how the proposed development includes the following:

#### Landscape

- Strategic planting/buffer zones, where needed, to protect the AONB. This should include lateral planting to screen prominent areas resulting from rising topography.

#### Access

- The potential to have a circular internal road to improve access and movement around the site.

#### Layout and design

- Ensure that the proposed buildings are designed to minimise their visual impact on the AONB. Particular consideration should be given to the ridge heights of the proposed buildings, preferably single storey and the colour of the building materials used;
- Provide an appropriate number of car parking spaces in order to discourage on-road parking on Kennylands Road.

#### Operations

- The following restrictions on visitors and workers to the site are not before 8am and after 8pm from Monday to Friday, before 8am and after 1pm on a Saturday and anytime on a Sunday or Bank Holiday.



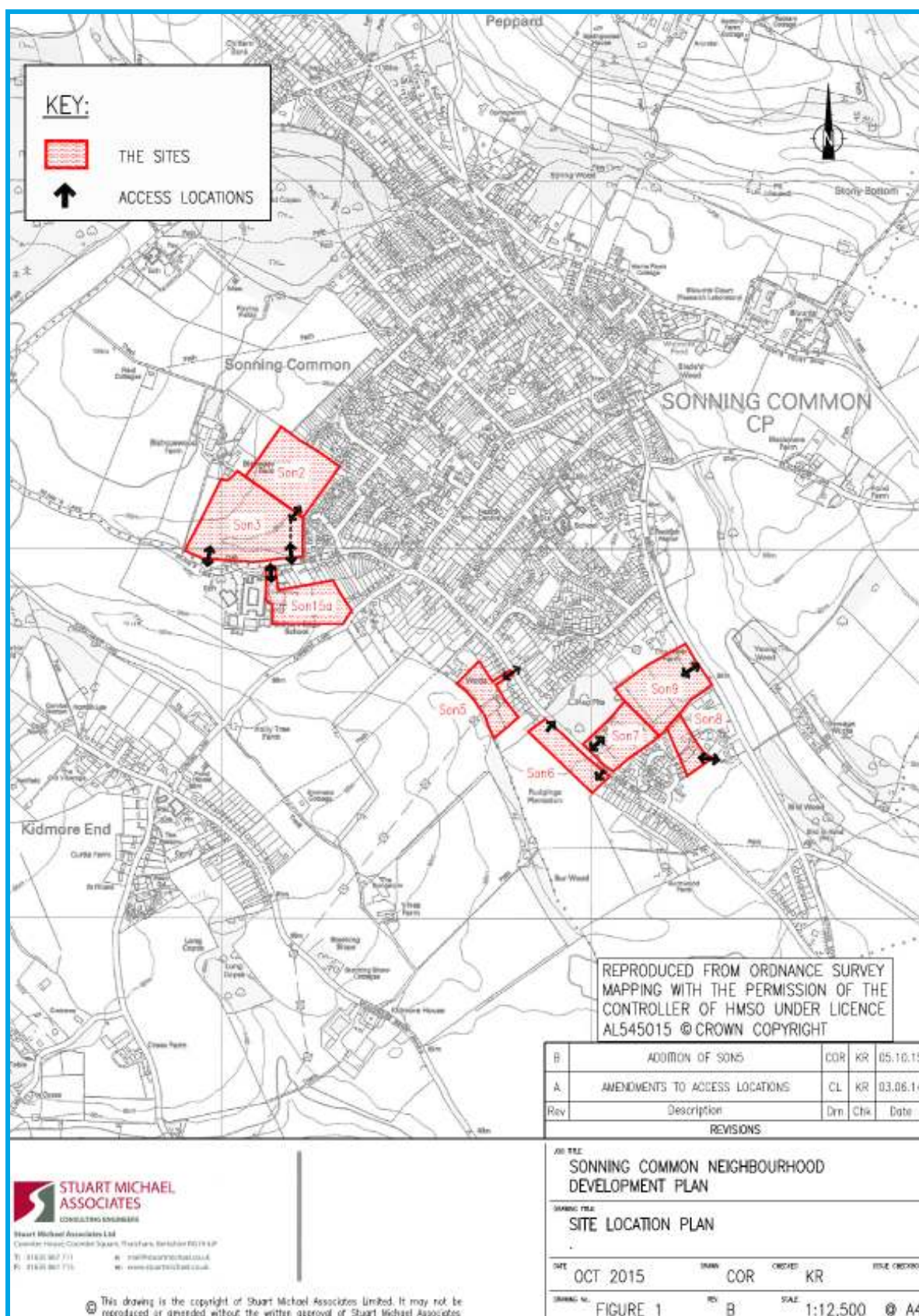
Map 4.17: Kidby's Yard<sup>60</sup>

Map 4.18: Outline of Kidby's Yard

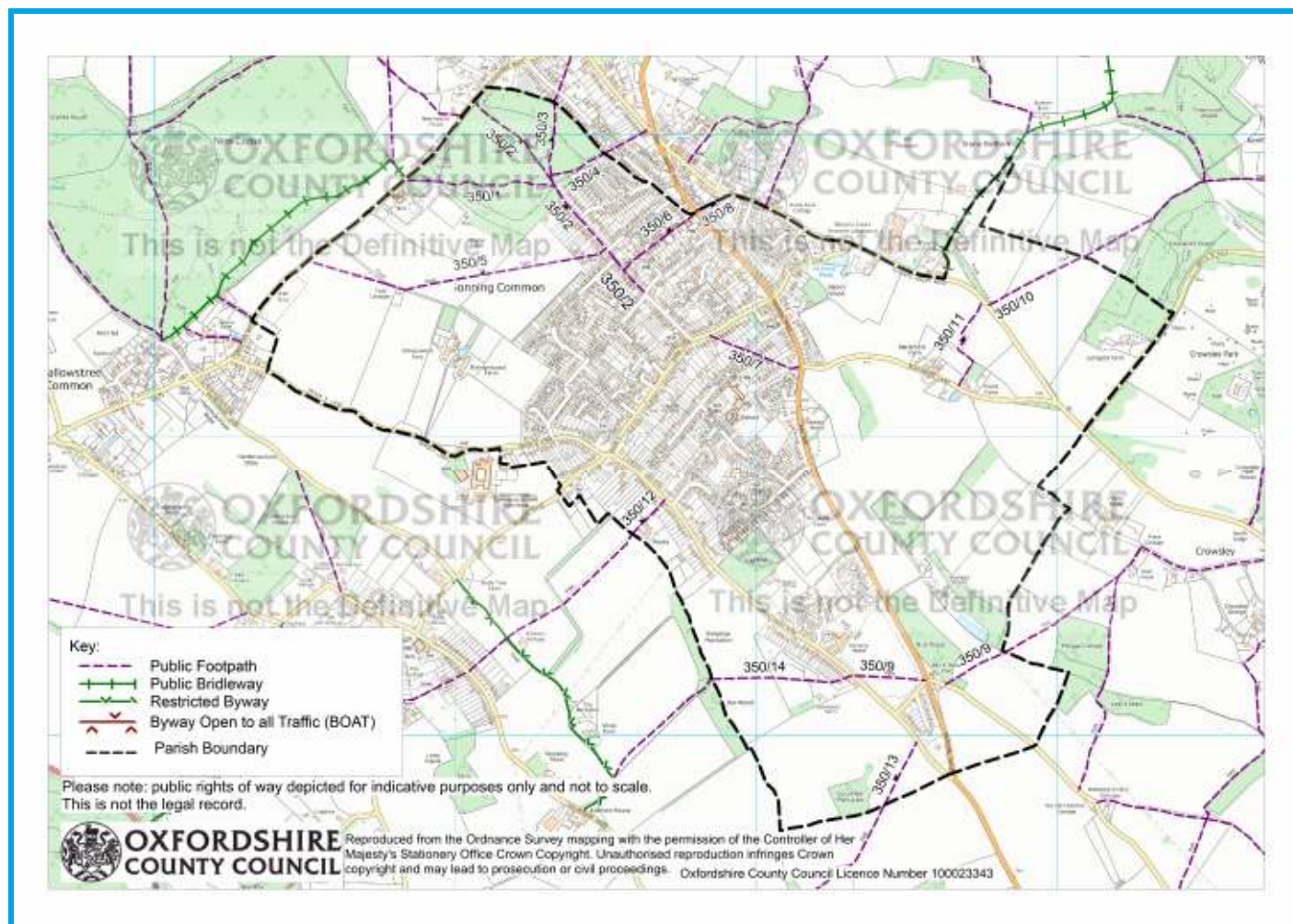


<sup>60</sup> Source: 'Imagery ©2015 DigitalGlobe, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, The GeoInformation Group, Map data ©2015 Google'



Map 4.19: Location of access points to allocated and reserve sites<sup>61</sup><sup>61</sup> Source: Stuart Michael Associates - consultants

Map 4.20: Sonning Common Public Rights of Way<sup>62</sup>



<sup>62</sup> Source: Recorded Public Rights of Way – OCC – Mar 2015

## Sonning Common Pre-Application Protocol

Any proposals **must accord with the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan** and with those of any higher level plans, notably those of South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, as well as all national policy. Because much of any engagement will be about overall and detailed design and character, particular attention is drawn to the Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement because applicants will be required to demonstrate how their eventual proposals will add to the local distinctiveness of the village.

*Use of this Protocol is without prejudice to the eventual judgement of Sonning Common Parish Council on the merits of any final application, even if a good involvement process has been agreed and followed.*

### Context

The National Planning Policy Framework states that:

*“Applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in developing the design of the new development should be looked on more favourably.”*

South Oxfordshire District Council’s “Statement of Community Involvement” also states that:

*“We would like applicants and developers to discuss proposals with neighbours in all cases, before making a formal application and recommend that they consult more extensively with the community for applications that are likely to have a wider effect. Town and parish councils may be a useful contact point for developers at the pre-application stage. In this way issues and local concerns can be identified and alternatives considered. This early involvement of local people can save time by reducing objections later.”*

The “10 Commitments for Effective Pre-application Engagement” published by a group representing planning, industry and community groups states that:

*“Early, collaborative discussions between developers, public sector agencies and the communities affected by a new development can help to shape better quality, more accepted schemes and ensure improved outcomes for the community. These discussions also avoid wasted effort and costs.”*

Sonning Common Parish Council fully support and endorse all of the above and will play their appropriate role in delivering high quality pre-application involvement with themselves and the wider Sonning Common community as proposals come forward.



## Sonning Common Pre-Application Protocol continued

The process is set out below:

### Process

Drawing from the 10 Commitments and other guidance on best practice, we require potential applicants to work with us to fulfill the following principles:

- **Day one contact:** The best results for all emerge when contact is made with our Parish Council, and through us our local community, at the very start of any process; consulting people with pre-prepared schemes is not productive.
- **Agreed process:** A key aim of this early contact is to discuss and agree the nature, scope, timing, information and so forth of the involvement – i.e. the process to be followed. (There is also considerable benefit for applicants in discussing any process with the District Council, as planning authority, and securing their agreement to it.)
- **Applicant leadership but shared responsibility:** Although it is the applicant's role to lead and fund involvement, the Parish Council will offer as much support as possible – e.g. local information, advice on meeting places, access to newsletters etc.
- **Openness and transparency:** Building trust between all and ensuring an agreed outcome depend heavily on having a process that is as open as possible on all sides, though the Parish Council will respect any issues of clear commercial confidentiality.
- **Agreed community:** A project may have an impact on a limited number of people or on all of the parish. This will need to be discussed and agreed for any project, as will the potential ways to contact and engage them.
- **Agreed scope:** There will also need to be agreement about the scope of the involvement, i.e. what is and is not open to change (e.g. layout, quantum of development, design etc.)
- **Proportionality:** The nature and scale of involvement will be balanced in appropriate proportion to the scale and likely impact of any proposals.
- **Final reporting:** The applicant should submit, with any final application, a thorough report describing and summarising the outcomes of the involvement, showing how the proposals have (or have not) responded to results. (If they have not, a short note should be included to explain this.) If the process has been followed fully, the Parish Council will endorse this report; if not they may submit their own evaluation of it. (Endorsement of an involvement process and results does not necessarily mean support for the resulting proposals.) ‘

Initial contact should be made with the Parish Council via the Clerk. The Parish Council commits to doing all possible to arrange an initial meeting as soon as possible following this contact.

## Part Five: Delivery

### Allocated sites

SODC's conclusions on the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) could increase the allocated number of new homes for Sonning Common beyond the figure of 138 required by the Core Strategy.

The Plan makes provision for 190+ homes with a small reserve to accommodate more than this number. The allocated sites are distributed across the village as shown in the tables below.

**Table 5.1: Sites allocated for residential/employment development off Kennylands Road**

Site reference	Site name	Number of homes
<b>SON 5</b>	Kennylands Paddock	22
<b>SON 6</b>	Kennylands Infill	26
<b>EMP 1</b>	Kidby's Yard	Employment site

**Table 5.2: Sites allocated for residential development off Reade's Lane**

Site reference	Site name	Number of homes
<b>SON 2/3</b>	Bishopswood Middle Field	50
<b>SON 15a</b>	Chiltern Edge Top	37

**Table 5.3: Site allocated for residential development off Peppard Road**

Site reference	Site name	Number of homes
<b>SON 9</b>	Lea Meadow	60



## Traffic management

The SCNDP Working Party wishes to set out a specified order for the phasing in of development on allocated sites.

The allocated sites are located in two main areas of the village. They are in close proximity and serviced by the same roads. It is therefore proposed that a traffic management plan will avoid situations where the principal routes in and out of the village could be blocked by contractors' vehicles.

**Objective:** To ensure that new house building in Sonning Common is managed through a traffic plan to minimise disruption to residents.

### Policy HP1: Traffic management

As a requirement of planning permission, applicants seeking to develop any of the allocated sites will be required to submit a traffic management plan to include details of delivery timescales and propose mitigations in the event of multiple developments taking place in Sonning Common.

A traffic management plan would structure the movement and parking of vehicles and plant during the construction of new homes on the allocated sites. This is particularly relevant concerning developments on SON 5 and SON 6 along Kennylands Road where off-road parking could be severely restricted. It is also a crucial issue for SON 15a and SON2/3 on Reade's Lane where school related traffic will exacerbate the situation (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2).

## Reserve sites

Developments will be delivered during the life time of the Plan ending on 31 March 2027. It is expected that most of the homes will be delivered in the first 7 years of the Plan.

If before 31 March 2023, 138 new homes have not been built and

- planning permission has not been implemented or
- the landowner has notified South Oxfordshire District Council and Sonning Common Parish Council in writing that the site is no longer available

then the Plan allocation for that site will lapse and Policy HR1 will apply. This policy will ensure that the minimum number of houses will be delivered by 31 March 2027.

**Objective:** To provide for delivery of the reserve sites.

**Policy HR1: Release of reserve sites**

If in the event that a Plan allocation lapses Reserve sites SON 7 and 7a will be released for development to make up the shortfall in the number of homes, in accordance with Site policy HS5. Once released, this site will continue to be allocated for the remainder of the Plan period.

If Reserve sites SON 7 and SON 7a cannot make up the shortfall in the number of homes, then Reserve site SON 8 (Phase 1) will be released in accordance with Site policy HS6. Once released, this site will continue to be allocated for the remainder of the Plan period.

In the event that SON 8 (Phase 2) conditions are met and if there is still a shortfall in the number of homes, then Reserve site SON 8 (Phase 2) will be released in accordance with Site policy HS6. Once released, this site will continue to be allocated for the remainder of the Plan period.

Feedback from Thames Water 24 November 2016:

“These sites have been assessed on an individual base. Therefore, the impact of multiple sites in the same area coming forward will have a greater impact. The scale, location and time to deliver any required upgrades will be determined after receiving a clear picture of the location type and scale of development together with its phasing”.

Given the proximity of the sites in the southern part of the village and the north west this comment adds weight to the desire to phase these housing developments.

## Financial contributions

The village as a whole shall benefit from housing and other types of development which take place within Sonning Common and developer contributions will be sought either through s106 or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments, to address a range of local investment needs.

A key feature of the Plan has been to enable identification of deficient resources and in this regard recreation and sports facilities rank highly as do the needs of our schools and library.

Urgent solutions are required to tackle the traffic congestion and parking issues which are prevalent in the village centre and in particular Wood Lane, the creation of ‘shared spaces’ being one option. A task group will be established by the Parish Council after referendum to further consult with residents and to seek advice from traffic specialists.

## Onward journey of the Plan

The SCNDP will have delivered the Vision for Sonning Common if the following are achieved by 2027:

- as the village grows in size, the community spirit is retained
- sports and recreation provision is implemented and the deficit eliminated
- the village centre continues to thrive and maintains its vibrancy
- extension of the village hall is achieved and/or further community space is provided
- Wood Lane is remodelled on shared space principles with parking solutions
- use of local facilities and services increases and public transport is promoted
- wildlife corridors in and through the village are enhanced
- new homes with the designated housing mix bring young people into the village
- in turn the population rebalances with a proportional reduction in the senior age group
- Sonning Common remains as a discrete village retaining its rural 'look and feel'

## Appendix: Rationale for housing numbers

The rationale for numbers of homes allocated to each site included the following considerations:

- most importantly to protect the AONB landscape which is alongside the majority of these sites, specifically SONs 5, 6, 9 and 15a
- the community's wishes for several housing sites spread across the village
- the character of existing homes, often with very low density, which are adjacent to the designated sites
- SODC Core Strategy policy requirement of a minimum of 25 dwellings per hectare which is used as a baseline
- advice from an SODC planning officer and a Chilterns Conservation Board officer.

Almost all of these sites are within the 'setting' of the AONB, two in the AONB and consequently require a wide barrier of structured planting. This necessity left a net amount of land.

The detail for each of these sites is described on the following page.

**Table Appendix: Mitigations for allocated sites**

Site number	Gross area (ha.)	Net developable area (ha.)	Mitigation	Housing allocation
<b>SON 2/3</b>	7.7	2.0 for housing	On AONB land and to provide a new planted boundary of significant and substantial size. Area of significant wildlife activity to remain undisturbed. Stand-off for tree root protection zones. Landscape treatment of edges especially field boundaries. Screening hedgerow needed against existing fences/back gardens. Planting alongside the new road, pedestrian and cycle paths. Enhance wildlife habitats in the identified area. Adjacent homes 25 per ha.	25 homes per ha.
<b>SON 15a</b>	2.1	1.5	Provide a boundary against AONB. Wildlife habitat in hedgerow along Kidmore Lane. Buffer for existing neighbours to access their hedges.	25 homes per ha.
<b>SON 5</b>	1.2	0.976	Provide a wider improved boundary against AONB. Buffer against existing homes. Low density adjacent housing, 18 homes per ha.	20 homes per ha.
<b>SON 6</b>	1.5	1.2	8m farm track required by owners. A screen of trees and hedgerow alongside the farm access road. Provide a newly created boundary against AONB. Understorey planting required in the tree and hedge line along Kennylands Road at the front of the site. Adjacent homes very low density.	20 homes per ha.
<b>SON 7</b>	1.3	0.9	A wooded area with trees requiring root protection zones. Tree and hedgerow screening against SON 9. Wildlife corridor to remain and strengthened. Separate logging track into Hagpits Wood required by owners.	25 homes per ha.  The density on this site is dependent on a tree survey as advised by SODC
<b>SON 7a</b>	0.2	0.2	Root protection zones required for existing trees. New planting to supplement the tree/hedgerow along Kennylands Road. Retain wildlife corridor.	25 homes per ha.
<b>SON 8</b>	0.2	0.2	Structured planting required for the boundary with SON 9 and next to Essex Way. Retain the wildlife corridors.	25 homes per ha.
<b>SON 9</b>	3.2	1.9	Provide a structured tree and hedge boundary against AONB. Site slopes upwards so lateral planting required to lessen the impact on AONB.	20 homes per ha.



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