

# SONNING COMMON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Sustainability Appraisal

Scoping Report – Pre-submission

Status: Final  
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# Chapter One – Introduction

## Report purpose

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This document is the scoping report for a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating the requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP).

The purpose of sustainability appraisal is to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are embodied into all levels of planning policy. To this end, it must be demonstrated how the SCNDP will contribute to achieving sustainable development.

A principal requirement of the SCNDP is that it is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area. The development plan in South Oxfordshire consists of:

- South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012)
- Saved policies of the Local Plan 2011 (2006)

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) are also preparing a new Local Plan referred to as the Local Plan 2031, which is scheduled to be adopted in 2016.

Given this, we have taken into account the Scoping Reports prepared by the District Council for each of these documents to ensure:-

- consistency with the SODC Core Strategy
- that all relevant legislation and policies identified as relevant and necessary by SODC are present in the SCNDP Scoping Report and Sustainability Appraisal

Strategic Environmental Assessment is a requirement of the EC Directive 2001/42/EC (the 'Directive') on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (Directive). This is enshrined in UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which introduced environmental assessment as a requirement for most planning documents in the UK.

A sustainability appraisal is different from a strategic environmental assessment in that it is more comprehensive since it covers the effects of plans on the economy and society, as well as the environment. By undertaking a sustainability appraisal of our plan, we will therefore fulfill the requirements of the SEA Directive.

SODC undertook a formal screening opinion which assessed whether the SCNDP required a Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Screening Opinion, published 11 November 2014, concluded that an SEA was required.

## Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP)

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The SCNDP was commissioned by Sonning Common Parish Council with advice from SODC and professional 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 comprising residents (who volunteered) and parish councillors was established and the neighbourhood plan process formally commenced in January 2012.

The parish of Sonning Common comprises 1,595 homes and has a population of 3,784.<sup>1</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 (Map 1.1).<sup>2</sup>

The Sonning Common parish boundary and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are illustrated on Map 1.2.<sup>3</sup>

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 1.3)<sup>4</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Census 2011

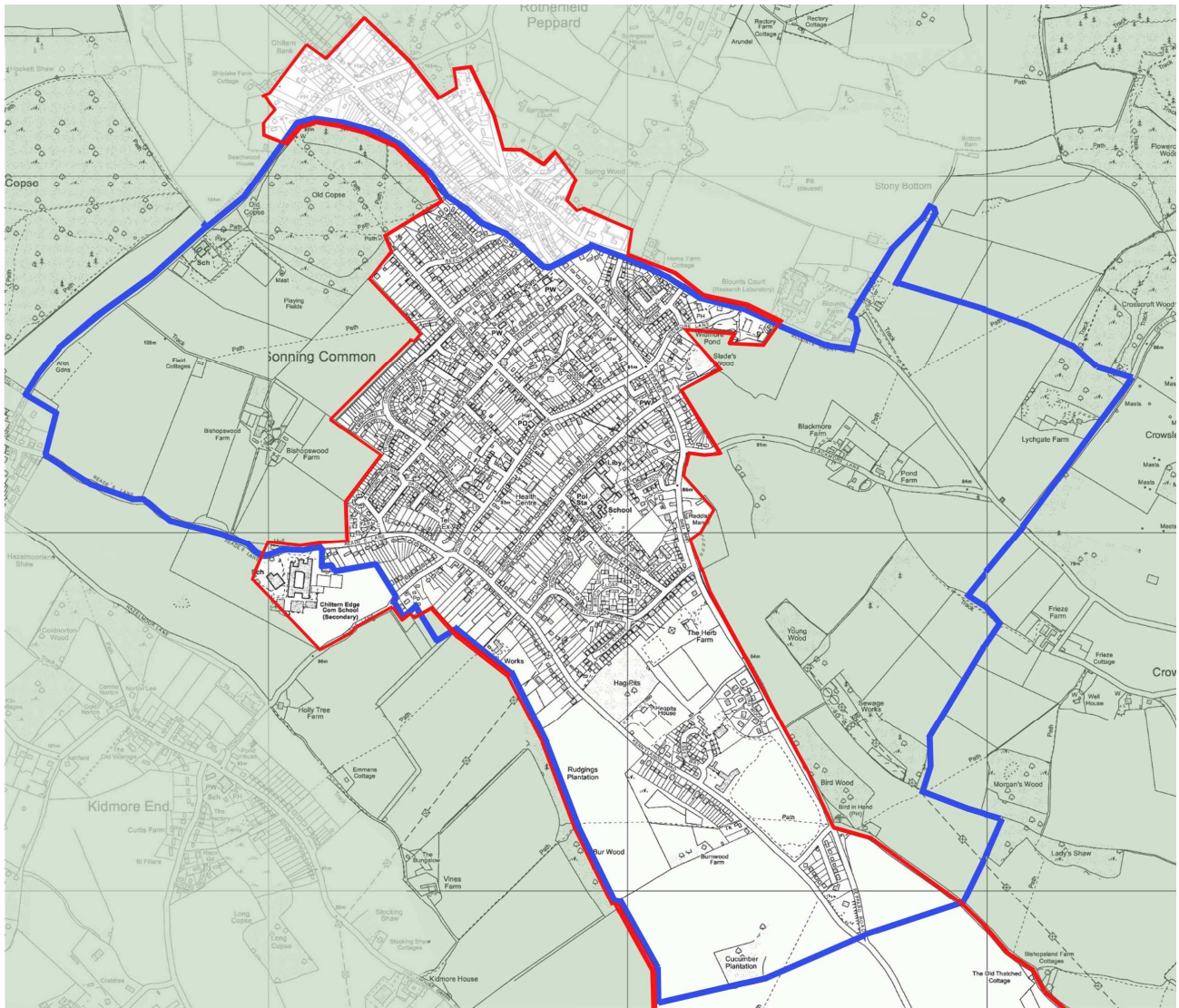
<sup>2</sup> Source: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/adopted-policies-maps](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/adopted-policies-maps)




<sup>3</sup> Source: Place Studio - consultants

<sup>4</sup> Source: Place Studio - consultants



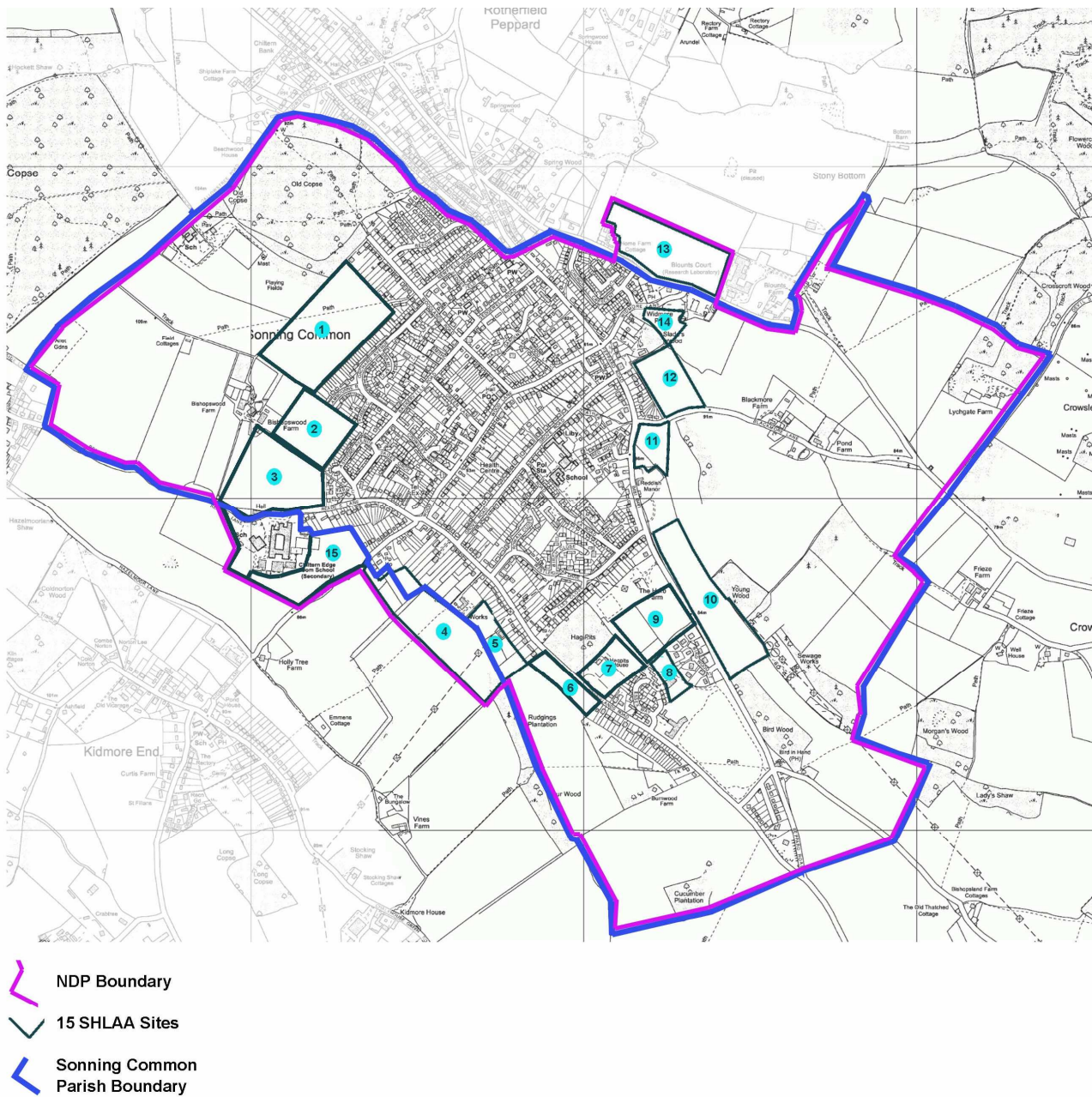
Map 1.1: Sonning Common in South Oxfordshire



-  AONB Boundary
-  AONB
-  Sonning Common Parish Boundary

Map 1.2: Sonning Common parish boundary and Chilterns AONB





**Map 1.3: SCNDP designated area and 15 SHLAA sites**

In accordance with part 2 of the Regulations, SODC publicised the neighbourhood plan application from Sonning Common Parish Council and advertised a consultation period – 6 September to 18 October 2013 inclusive.<sup>5</sup> The application for a designated plan area was approved by the Cabinet of SODC on 25 October 2013.

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. Given that Sonning Common is a rural village there are currently no available sites that could be defined as previously developed land. Map 1.3 shows that the majority of potential sites are located along the edges of the village.

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>6</sup>

The recent 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.

From the outset community involvement with the preparation of Sonning Common's neighbourhood development plan has been the priority. Since April 2012 there have been 15 public meetings<sup>7</sup> held in the local Village Hall. Residents were recruited to complete structured surveys of the sites potentially available for development, the formats for these and other surveys (landscape and village character) being provided by consultants, Place Studio.

Written feedback throughout the process has informed the SCNDP Working Party as to the views of residents and the wider community (neighbouring parishes). External reports commissioned by Sonning Common Parish Council, including:

- Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report October 2012 (ORCC)
- Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013 (Place Studio)

have contributed valuable input also to the collection of evidence which underpins the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives (see Chapters Two and Six).

In short, the SCNDP Working Party believes it has a sound quantitative measure of the opinions and desires of local residents. A statement of the SCNDP's vision<sup>8</sup> for the future has been shared with all residents on a number of occasions, including delivery to every home in the parish.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Sonning Common Neighbourhood Planning Area Consultation Statement, SODC, October 2013

<sup>6</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)

<sup>7</sup> Source: SCNDP Communications Log – [www.scpc-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scpc-ndp.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> Source: SCNDP Vision Statement – [www.scpc-ndp.co.uk](http://www.scpc-ndp.co.uk)

## Chapter Two – Sustainability Appraisal

### Sustainability Appraisal stages

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While there is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood development plan (NDP) to prepare a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) the SCNDP Working Party has chosen to do so as it is a useful approach towards ensuring that the SCNDP will contribute to achieving sustainable development.

The National Planning Practice Guidance suggests a five stage (A-E) approach that an NDP should follow in the production of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. These stages can also be applied to a Sustainability Appraisal. The relationship of these five SA stages to the stages of the plan preparation is shown in Figure 2.1 below. This scoping report will describe the findings of 'Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope' of the SA process.

Chapter Three captures the relevant policies, plans and programmes as supplied by SODC (April 2014) and draws out the Key Messages, which are the building blocks that form the foundation of the SA Framework. This chapter has been prepared with the assistance of consultant, Daniel Black, of db+a.

Chapter Four provides a summary of the environmental, social and economic baseline information relevant to Sonning Common and Chapter Five describes the sustainability challenges emerging from that collection process.

The closing Chapter Six sets out our sustainability objectives and how they will be used to assess the effects of the neighbourhood development plan; including the plan's vision, objectives, policies and the development sites to be allocated.

For ease of reference, the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives are also listed at the end of this Chapter Two (Table 2.1).

As to stakeholder consultation (Stage A5), a European Directive sets out statutory requirements for formal consultation on this scoping report which includes seeking the views of the following statutory bodies:

- The Environment Agency
- Natural England
- English Heritage

In addition, the SCNDP Working Party will also consult:

- South Oxfordshire District Council as the local planning authority
- The Chilterns Conservation Board since parts of Sonning Common lie within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Kidmore End Parish Council and Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council as part of their parishes lie within the designated neighbourhood plan area
- Other local groups and bodies that have environmental, social and economic interests and expertise

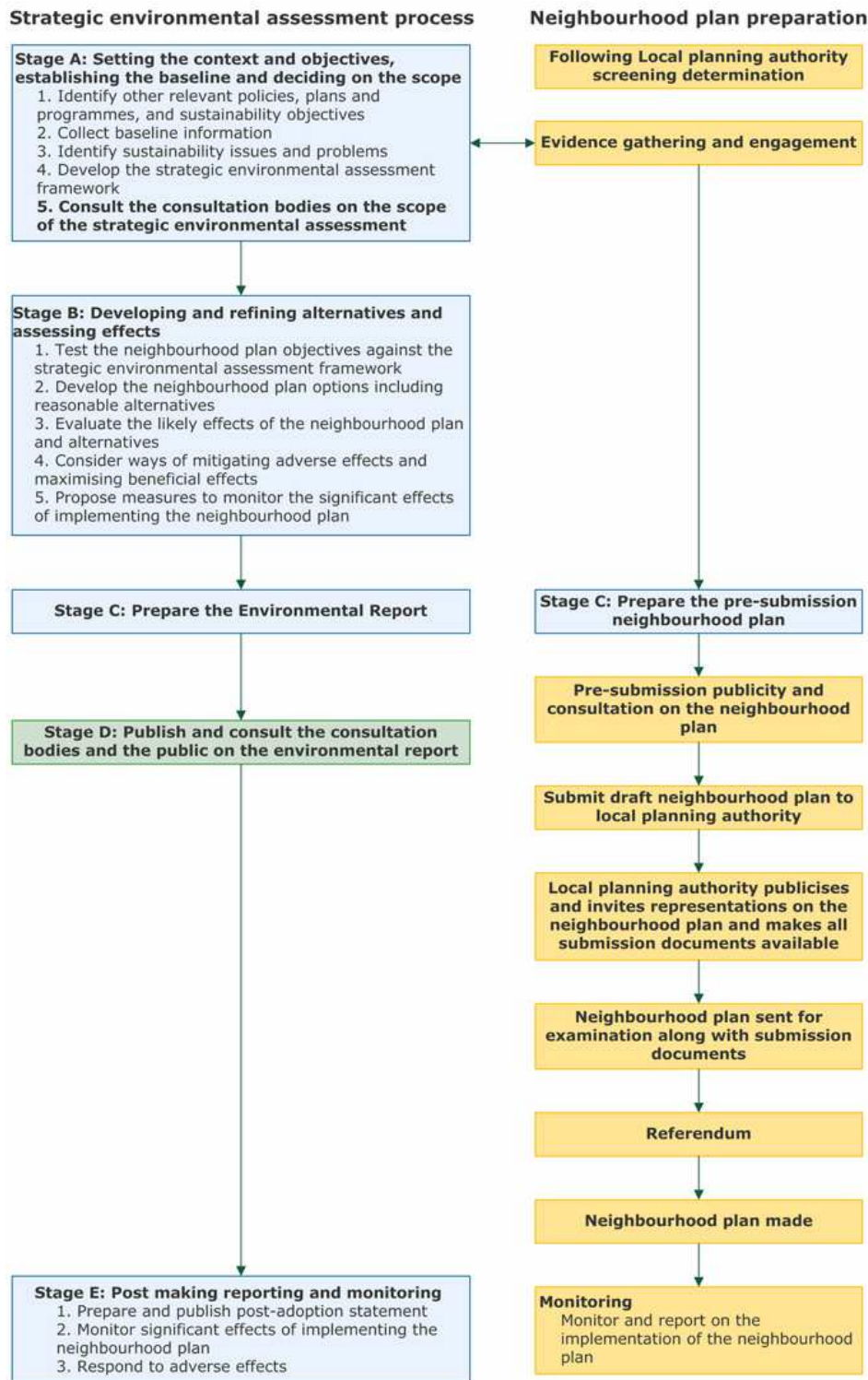


Figure 2.1: Strategic environmental assessment process <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Source: Planning Practice Guidance, paragraph 033, Reference ID: 11-033-20140306

## SCNDP Sustainability Objectives

| SCNDP Sustainability Objectives |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1                               | Plan positively for growth with a presumption in favour of sustainable development.  |
| 2                               | Where possible, promote the use of previously developed land prior to the use of 'greenfield' land.  |
| 3                               | Promote the efficient use of land by ensuring that housing is developed at an appropriate density (minimum 25 dwellings per net developable hectare).  |
| 4                               | Improve housing provision by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) providing a minimum of 138 new dwellings</li> <li>b) increasing the amount of lower value (one and two bedroom) properties</li> <li>c) delivering a minimum of 40% of new homes as affordable housing (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate)</li> <li>d) encouraging the provision of specialist and/or appropriate accommodation for older residents.</li> </ul> |
| 5                               | Maintain and enhance the existing retail and services offer in the village centre.   |
| 6                               | Ensure new developments are well connected to the village centre and amenities by creating new footpaths and/or cycle paths and improving existing accessibility.  |
| 7                               | Plan and promote additional parking solutions and resist the loss of existing parking within the village centre.   |
| 8                               | Maintain and enhance the existing public transport links to the village centre.  |
| 9                               | Ensure developments allocated and promoted through the SCNDP are viable and allow for contributions to be made to local infrastructure and facilities.   |
| 10                              | Promote the development of new and improvement of existing community facilities which will contribute to community cohesion and improve people's health and well-being. Resist the loss of existing community facilities.  |
| 11                              | Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and create strong landscape edges to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside.  |
| 12                              | Maintain and enhance biodiversity by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) improving where possible existing habitats and creating new wildlife habitats</li> <li>b) conserving and enhancing existing wildlife corridors and incorporating them into new developments, where appropriate.</li> </ul>   |
| 13                              | Plan and promote new developments that reflect the rural character of the village and conserve and enhance the heritage assets in the SCNDP designated area.   |
| 14                              | Reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds especially water, soil, and noise pollution.  |
| 15                              | Conserve and enhance Sonning Common's countryside setting.   |
| 16                              | Plan and promote new development that is of a high quality, reflects the local distinctiveness of Sonning Common and is inclusive to all.  |
| 17                              | Encourage the adoption of sustainable energy solutions in all new development.   |
| 18                              | Seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the re-use of waste through recycling, compost or energy recovery.   |
| 19                              | Protect and improve sustainable use of the water environment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) encouraging the use of measures to minimise potable water demand, as well as reducing surface water run-off</li> <li>b) encouraging the use of SUDs to control surface water run-off.</li> </ul>  |
| 20                              | Ensure new developments prioritise on-site facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (including secure cycle parking) and facilitate safe access to public transport and village amenities.  |
| 21                              | Maintain and enhance existing rights of way and encourage new developments to link into these footpaths.   |
| 22                              | Ensure that the community, landowners/developers and key stakeholders are involved constructively in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.  |

Table 2.1: SCNDP Sustainability Objectives

# Chapter Three – Policy Context

## Introduction

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The **SEA Directive**<sup>10</sup> states that the information to be provided in the required ‘environmental report’ should describe the “relationship with other relevant plans and programmes” and the “environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant...” This is often referred to as the ‘policy context’ within which a plan or programme is created and applies also to neighbourhood plans. This is described in both the **National Planning Practice Guidance** (UK Government, 2014) (‘NPPG’) and the **Practical Guide to the SEA Directive** (ODPM, 2005) (The ‘Practical Guide’) as: ‘Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives’ with the purpose being threefold:

- To establish how the plan or programme is affected by outside factors
- To suggest ideas for how any constraints can be addressed
- To help identify SEA objectives

There is no prescribed way of carrying out this element of the SEA process, but there are best practice guides and locally adopted approaches.

1. Levett-Therivel’s targeted best practice guidance **DIY SA: Sustainability Appraisal of Neighbourhood Plans** (2011) (‘DIY SA’) suggests the Scoping Report’s chapter on the policy context should be roughly 2-3 pages and it should: “explain what local plan(s) you reviewed, also any other documents that you looked at so far.” They suggest using a simple 3-column table listing: 1) local policies; 2) description of the policy; 3) description of how it affects the neighbourhood plan.
2. This approach aligns closely to Figure 8 in Appendix 2, p.48 of the **Practical Guide**, except the DIY SA suggests analysing each individual policy (specifically using the Core Strategy by way of illustration) whereas the Practical Guidance suggests looking at other plans and programmes in their entirety and summarising relevant major themes or main principles.
3. South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) have opted to use a 2-column table listing in their latest SEA Scoping Report for the new emerging Local Plan: 1) what their policy document should seek to do; 2) linking each to the specific policy documents from which they were derived.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Directive 2001/42/EC (the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment), Article 5(1), Annex 1 (a) and (e)



With a view to what is proportional – see box below - we have followed the Practical Guide format summarising major themes of the policy and plan documents then focussing our response on the threefold objectives listed above. In addition, given their importance, we have burrowed down into the two central local policy documents in much greater detail: the Core Strategy and the adopted Local Plan.

#### **Level of detail required for SEA**

In order to focus on the salient areas when drafting the environmental report, it is worth noting the national guidance and the SODC Screening Statement (September 2014), which narrow the field of search very specifically to dealing with the potential significant impacts of the proposed development within the Neighbourhood Plan on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The NPPG states that:

*“The strategic environmental assessment should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of the neighbourhood plan...It does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is considered to be appropriate for the content and level of detail in the neighbourhood plan.”*

The SODC Screening Statement highlights that:

*“Sonning Common Development Neighbourhood Plan seeks to allocate sites for a minimum of 138 houses, as well as 5,000 to 10,000 sqm of employment use and 53,000 to 78,000 sqm of community use, and seeks to protect the retail uses in the village centre. There is a high probability that these allocations will have significant effects on the environment, including potential effects on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is a nationally protected landscape...a Strategic Environment Assessment is required for the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan, particularly to address potential environmental impacts on the AONB... The results of the assessment should then be used to determine which sites are appropriate to be allocated for development.”*

[N.B. It is worth noting that the Screening Statement also highlights potential impact on Natura 2000 sites – specifically, the several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the north, north-east and east. The Statement confirmed that SODC will be updating the Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment to take into account the housing allocated to Larger Villages. This, therefore, does not need to be assessed as part of the neighbourhood planning process.]

## National-level policy

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The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and replaces most of the previous Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). Annex 3 of the NPPF lists the documents it replaces (44 documents; 25 of which are PPS/PPGs).

The NPPF is supported by an online National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), which was launched in March 2014. The 13 pages of guidance documents superseded by this new guidance can be found on the Planning Portal:

[http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/cancelled-guidance\\_06032014.pdf](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/cancelled-guidance_06032014.pdf)

The NPPF sets out the Government's 1) planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied, and 2) requirements for the planning system only to the extent that it is relevant, proportionate and necessary to do.

The overarching principle of the NPPF is the '**presumption in favour of sustainable development**', which *"should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking"*. Similar to the concept in law of 'innocent until proven guilty', this requires local planning authorities to "positively seek" development opportunities unless demonstrable adverse impacts can be evidenced or unless it contravenes specific policies in the NPPF. Planning permission should be granted if a local plan is absent or out of date, unless again it can be substantively evidenced otherwise.

The NPPF breaks 'sustainable development' down into its three widely recognized areas: economic, social and environmental. It references the UK's Sustainable Development Strategy, which sets out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development:

1. Living within the planet's environmental limits
2. Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
3. Achieving a sustainable economy
4. Promoting good governance
5. Using sound science responsibly



The NPPF lists 'core' planning principles, which include consideration of:

1. The plan being up to date and taking account of latest developments
2. Inclusivity of all stakeholders
3. High quality design and good standard of amenity
4. Recognising the different roles and character of different areas
5. Supporting the transition to a low carbon future: taking full account of flood risk, reuse of resources, renewable energy
6. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
7. Reusing land
8. Encouraging mixed-use developments
9. Conserving heritage assets
10. Actively managing patterns of growth to maximise public transport, walking and cycling
11. Supporting local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing

## Local-level policy

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SODC provided the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP) Working Party with a non-exhaustive list of 15 ‘relevant plans and programmes’ – see Appendix 2 - from which the following information is drawn. As stated in the Practical Guide (Appendix 2, p.47) and repeated by SODC, “no list of such plans, programmes or objectives can be definitive.”

Added to this list are four further documents:

- 1&2. The South Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Update (July 2013), noting that discussion is ongoing around revised housing allocations following the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and the ongoing production of the new Local Plan
3. The South Oxfordshire Statement of Community Involvement (SODC, July 2006)
4. Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Final Report Non Technical Summary (NTS) (SODC, 2006), which sets out recent district-wide sustainability concerns

With regard to national policy on what is proportionate combined with the identified focus in the SEA Screening on the Chilterns AONB, we omit the following:

1. The ‘Water Resources for the Future – A Strategy for the Thames Region’ (EA, 2004), given that:
  - We cover two other plans on water relevant to (and covering comprehensively) Sonning Common
  - this specific publication is unavailable as a free download
2. North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 (North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners), given that:
  - North Wessex AONB is 8 miles from Sonning Common
  - The proposed development in SC is relatively small-scale
  - Biodiversity is a key focus of the SEA

What follows below draws upon SODC's list of 'relevant plans and programmes' (April 2014), summarises their policies and considers how they impact upon the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP).

Given the focus of the SEA as identified in the SODC Screening Statement, the Chilterns AONB policy document is considered first.

| Key policy summary   | Impact on the SCNDP  |
|--|--|
| <b>Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2014-2019</b>  |  |
| <p>The major themes within this document are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conserving and enhancing natural beauty (incl. landscape; farming, forestry and other land management)</li> <li>2. Biodiversity</li> <li>3. Water environment</li> <li>4. Historic environment</li> <li>5. Development</li> <li>6. Understanding and enjoyment</li> <li>7. Social and economic wellbeing</li> </ol> <p><i>"The Chilterns AONB was designated for the natural beauty of its landscape and its natural and cultural heritage. In particular, it was designated to protect its special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower rich downland, woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, the network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures."</i></p> <p>Example engagement actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of the Chilterns Buildings Design Guide</li> <li>• Encourage use of Chilterns Historic Landscape Characterisation</li> <li>• Targeted promotion of SUDS to homeowners and developers</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How SCNDP is affected by policy document</li> <li>2. How constraints can be addressed</li> <li>3. Help in identifying SEA objectives</li> </ol><br><ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The focus of the SEA as identified in the Screening Report is the potential significant impact on the Chilterns AONB. These major themes should therefore be core concerns in the SCNDP.</li> <li>2. These constraints can be addressed through the SCNDP by drawing on the best available evidence and guidance to support these objectives.</li> <li>3. The emerging SEA objectives must include these major themes.</li> </ol> |

| South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) (SODC)   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presumption in favour of sustainable development</li> <li>• Larger villages as local service centres</li> <li>• Towns and village centres supported and strengthened by encouraging...retail, leisure, community facilities and local distinctiveness (see Core Strategy for details)</li> <li>• Healthier transport and street environments</li> <li>• Supporting local economy (through transport, home working, digital economy, tourism industry and recreation-based rural diversification)</li> <li>• Appropriate density (general rule: &lt;25dph min. (net))</li> <li>• 40% affordable housing (general rule)</li> <li>• Mix of dwelling types and sizes</li> <li>• Supply of pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in accordance with Core Strategy</li> <li>• Support: agricultural diversification; re-use of rural buildings; small-scale infill schemes in villages; agricultural production and the retention of functioning farm units; tourism based on character of the area</li> <li>• Enhancement of the Chilterns AONB</li> <li>• Conservation of designated historic heritage assets</li> <li>• Energy from renewable resources encouraged provided no adverse impact</li> <li>• Energy efficiency of buildings: decentralised and renewable or low carbon energy; Code for Sustainable Homes; BREEAM; SUDS</li> <li>• High quality and inclusive design</li> <li>• A net gain in green infrastructure &amp; biodiversity</li> <li>• Appropriate community infrastructure and services with each new development</li> <li>• Allocations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– About 4.2ha of employment land distributed among some of the larger villages.</li> <li>– Rest of the District (other than Didcot): 2006-2027 target = 5,187; identified deliverable sites = 2,460; new allocations = 2,884</li> <li>– Larger villages: 2017/18-21/22 = 615; 2022/23-26/27 = 539; Total = 1,154</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The SCNDP must support all Core Strategy policies that might impact on the Chilterns AONB's major themes (natural beauty, biodiversity, etc.)</li> <li>2. Constraints can be best addressed through a combination of policy-making and collaboration with local delivery agents.</li> <li>3. These many policies will be collated into a workable appraisal framework (in order to create the new, locally specific SEA objectives).</li> </ol> <p><i>Note re: allocations: the new Local Plan is in the process of revising development targets following the latest SHMA, but until the Local Plan is adopted, these Core Strategy figures are current (see SODC Position Statement on implementation of SHMA findings (SODC, 2006))</i></p> |

| South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (strike-through version)  |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect district's countryside, settlements and environmental resources from adverse developments, particularly attractive landscape setting and Green Belt</li> <li>• Significant increases in traffic generation in relatively inaccessible or isolated rural locations (or out of town uses that generate high levels of transport) will not be allowed</li> <li>• Priority to the release of previously-developed sites (PDL) will be given</li> <li>• Maintain and enhance distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley</li> <li>• Maintain and enhance biodiversity resource of the district; full account of the effects of development on wildlife will be taken; ensure there is no net loss in biodiversity</li> <li>• Development adversely affecting SAC, NNR or SSSI not allowed</li> <li>• Development adversely affecting locally designated sites of nature conservation importance not allowed (unless development outweighs the local value and loss can be mitigated)</li> <li>• Development adversely affecting a specially protected species not allowed (unless damage can be satisfactorily mitigated)</li> <li>• Protect and enhance heritage assets</li> <li>• Discourage pollution (inc. emissions, effluent, noise, vibrations and light)</li> <li>• Protect water supply, surface water and groundwater; ensure appropriate treatment of contaminated land and hazardous substances</li> <li>• Follow principles of good design (see Local Plan for details)</li> <li>• Provide appropriate levels of: vehicle and bicycle parking; garden/outdoor/amenity space; privacy and daylight; mixed-use development</li> <li>• Reduce crime through design and layout, while ensuring access for all</li> <li>• Ensure sufficient waste facilities are provided</li> <li>• New development over a certain size should contribute towards public art</li> <li>• Allow appropriate housing within villages (see Local Plan for details)</li> <li>• Allow appropriate recreation and safeguard facilities where appropriate, particularly in local centres</li> </ul> | As per Core Strategy. |

| <b>South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (strike-through version) continued</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage appropriate employment and agricultural uses/diversity</li> <li>• Ensure outdoor advertisements and signs not to have adverse effect on visual amenity or public safety</li> <li>• Extend range and quality of facilities by allowing appropriate small-scale in-fills, extensions and re-development</li> <li>• Retain residential accommodation and gardens, particularly in town centres within reason (e.g. environmental limits, access)</li> <li>• Offices proposing to extend into upper floor accommodation must follow policy stipulations.</li> <li>• Change of use in primary shopping frontages will be discouraged appropriate parking</li> <li>• Healthy and inclusive transport network prioritising sustainable modes of travel and arrangements encouraged</li> <li>• Improve railway services and protect rail infrastructure</li> <li>• Promote cycling and walking; appropriate car parking; no petrol stations outside built up areas; appropriate lorries and freight distribution depots</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>South Oxfordshire Housing Strategy 2008-2011 (SODC)</b>  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase number, options and quality of housing, especially affordable</li> <li>• Prevent homelessness</li> <li>• Create sustainable communities</li> <li>• Protect vulnerable groups</li> </ul>   | <p>1&amp;2. As above.</p> <p>3. Example SEA Objective: To improve housing provision in Sonning Common (this to be amalgamated with Core Strategy policies).</p>      |
| <b>South Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026 (SODC)</b>  |  |
| <p>Encourage 'thriving communities':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe</li> <li>• Housing needs met</li> <li>• Volunteering and civic engagement encouraged</li> <li>• Equal opportunities</li> <li>• Good access</li> <li>• Healthy</li> </ul>   | <p>1&amp;2. As above.</p> <p>3. Example SEA Objective: To support 'thriving communities' in Sonning Common (this to be amalgamated with Core Strategy policies).</p> |

| <b>River Basin Management Plan for the Thames Region (2009) (EA)</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| Protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment. River basin management is led by the Environment Agency to ensure combined efforts achieve the improvement needed in the Thames River Basin District. This Plan applies to SODC as a whole. There is no strategy specific to Sonning Common. See Flood Risk Assessment and Thames Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy for relevance to local policy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Water is one of the major themes of the Chilterns AONB.</li> <li>2. These constraints can be addressed through the SCNDP by drawing on the best available evidence and guidance to support these objectives, through policy-making, and collaboration with local delivery agents.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: The SCNDP should seek to protect, improve and ensure the sustainable use of the water environment.</li> </ol> |
| <b>The Thames Catchment Abstraction Licensing Strategy (EA, May 2014)</b>   |  |
| Sonning Common sits within the Thames Corridor. For catchments AP4 and AP5 there is no water available at low flows. SCNDP will need to plan for low water supply at low flow times.  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1&amp;2. As above.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: The SCNDP should seek to ensure that new development supports greater autonomy of water supply and can manage during periods of low flow.</li> </ol>  |

| <b>Oxfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan (March 2014)</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>The SEP sets out Oxfordshire's ambition for Oxfordshire to 2030:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic growth</li> <li>• Science and knowledge</li> <li>• Business growth and productivity</li> <li>• Accelerated housing delivery</li> <li>• Better integrated transport</li> <li>• Better qualified workforce (underpinned by)</li> <li>• Quality of place that few locations can offer:</li> </ul> <p><i>"It is estimated that Oxfordshire's cultural, visitor and heritage economy is worth around £3.1 billion per year. Oxfordshire benefits from proximity to three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – the Cotswolds, North Wessex Downs and the Chilterns."</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economic growth is not a central theme of the Chilterns AONB, but it is central to the NPPF and local policy. As this economic plan suggests, the Chilterns AONB is a primary attraction for inward investment in the region. Logic suggests therefore that supporting the central themes of Chilterns AONB Management Plan would support the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan.</li> <li>2. The challenge here will be to accommodate the growth without impacting adversely on the quality of the environment, and in particular the Chilterns AONB. It may be that these objectives are best achieved not only through policy-making, but also by active engagement in the delivery process.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: To promote economic development that maintains and enhances the special qualities of the Chilterns AONB.</li> </ol> |



| Prelim FRA 2011 (OCC) & SODC & VoWHDC SFRA (2009) (SODC & VOWH)   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>This report documents a Level 1 and 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. The assessment focuses on 42 Key Settlements, including Sonning Common. The comments below relate only to Sonning Common.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no properties in either Flood Zone 2 or 3 so the entirety of Sonning Common is classified as being in Flood Zone 1. Flood Zone 1 is the preferred area for development in terms of flood risk.</li> </ul> <p><i>“With respect to flooding, South Oxfordshire’s preferred strategy is to only allow future development on new sites on land identified as being in Flood Zone 1. The council believes that there is sufficient land available within Flood Zone 1 such that it will not be necessary to consider site allocations within Flood Zones 2 and 3.”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There have been no recorded <b>sewer flooding</b> incidents (from 1997-2007) nor have there been any <b>groundwater flooding</b> incidents in 2000-2003 according to DEFRA. The classification of flood zones refers only to <b>tidal and fluvial flooding</b>.</li> <li>There is only a ‘Low’ risk of <b>surface water flooding</b>.</li> <li>Surface water flooding problems are inextricably linked to issues of poor drainage or drainage blockage by debris, and sewer flooding, suggesting the need for a strategy to be mindful of these potential causes.</li> </ul> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Water is one of the major themes of the Chilterns AONB.</li> <li>2. The SCNDP should seek to ensure that any new development takes appropriate measures to avoid any increase in risk. This should include any re-development or refurbishment that might impact on the volume or flow of surface water, including the paving over of driveways, roofs, etc. The challenge will be in ensuring that quality of proposals and delivery meet the Chilterns AONB objectives.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: (to be amalgamated with other water issues) To ensure that surface water flooding is not exacerbated.</li> </ol> |

| <b>Prelim FRA 2011 (OCC) &amp; SODC &amp; VoWHDC SFRA (2009) (SODC &amp; VOWH) continued</b>   |  |
|--|--|
| <p>The Thames Catchment Flood Management Plan (EA, 2008) - <b>fluvial flooding</b> only - breaks down different areas into different policy units. Sonning Common comes under 'P4': <i>"accept the risk, but in the longer term take action to ensure that risk does not increase from current level."</i> Actions listed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floodplain most important asset in managing flood risk</li> <li>• Maintain the conveyance of water courses in the towns and villages</li> <li>• Use refurbishment of buildings and redevelopment of industrial areas as opportunities to increase the resilience in these areas</li> <li>• Flood storage schemes will be complementary to wider objectives</li> <li>• Individual action will play an increasingly important role in these areas</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2030 (2011) (OCC)</b>   |  |
| <p>Key objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a better, safer and more healthy transport system: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– improve economy</li> <li>– reduce transport emissions</li> <li>– promote greater equality</li> <li>– improve quality of life</li> </ul> </li> </ul>   | <p>1&amp;2. As per Core Strategy.</p> <p>3. Example SEA objective: To ensure that any transport proposals are safe and promote more healthy forms of transport.</p>  |
| <b>Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan 2015 (OCC)</b>   |  |
| <p>The plan contains specific Conservation Target Area objectives for each CTA in Oxfordshire. For Sonning Common these are the <b>Chilterns Dipslope and Plateau</b>.</p> <p><i>"Chilterns Dipslope and Plateau CTA (Conservation Target Area)...(is a)...complex area consists of the steeper side of the chalk valleys that cut through the plateau and key areas of the plateau where the main areas of woodland and heathland remnants are found. These valleys run into Buckinghamshire to the north. Valleys with chalk grassland or significant woodland at the edge of the area are excluded along with the flat chalk areas at the heads of the valleys."</i></p>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Biodiversity is a key focus area for the Management of the Chilterns AONB.</li> <li>2. While development, particularly on biodiverse sites, can and does have substantial impact on biodiversity, it is possible (though not easy) with the right expertise - through good planning, design and management - to ensure there is a net positive impact on biodiversity.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: To promote a net positive gain in biodiversity and ensure there is no net loss (details will need to be expanded upon).</li> </ol> |

| <b>Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan 2015 (OCC) continued</b>  |   |
|---|---|
| <p>The Chilterns Dipslope and Plateau surrounds Sonning Common on three sides (West, East and North). Adjacent to the village itself are: ancient woodland, county wildlife sites, SSSIs, replanted ancient woodland and numerous 'Other Mapped Sites and Habitats'.</p> <p>In terms of biodiversity, it lists the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chalk grassland</li> <li>2. Woodland (beech woodland and some lowland mixed deciduous)</li> <li>3. SSSIs</li> <li>4. Heathland</li> <li>5. Plateau land and important parkland</li> <li>6. Acid grassland and lowland meadow habitat</li> <li>7. Arable land is important for arable wildflowers and farmland birds</li> </ol> <p>This contributes significantly to the character of the AONB</p> |   |
| <b>Oxfordshire Draft Rights of Way Management Plan 2014-2024 (2014) (OCC)</b>   |   |
| <p>The safeguarding of Rights of Way and their management.</p>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rights of Way are critical to access and enjoyment of any area, including the Chilterns AONB; enjoyment is one of the key themes.</li> <li>2. See Appendix 1 for Rights of Way map relevant to Sonning Common.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: To ensure that the Rights of Way and their management are safeguarded and promote their use.</li> </ol> |

| South Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SODC, July 2013)   |   |
|--|---|
| <p><i>“The SHLAA identifies relevant sources of housing supply. This study reveals limited opportunities within the majority of settlements for large-scale development. It does show however that there is a significant amount of land that is available and suitable and that the number of potential sites far exceeds the amount of land we need to allocate to meet the targets within the adopted core strategy...The next stage of the plan making process is to carry out more detailed assessments of the possible sites in the larger villages in order to allocate the remaining housing requirement as part of the Local Plan: Sites and General Policies.”</i></p>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development near to the Chilterns AONB is critical to the achievement of the core themes.</li> <li>2. Given the relatively limited scale of the proposed development, these constraints can be best addressed, not only through local neighbourhood policy, but also by actively engaging in the development process to improve the quality of the developments.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: To ensure that a sufficient amount of housing is available by allocating sites for a minimum of 138 dwellings.</li> </ol> <p>See ‘SODC Position Statement on implementation of SHMA’.</p> |
| The South Oxfordshire Statement of Community Involvement (SODC, July 2006)   |   |
| <p>The aim of the Statement of Community Involvement is to set out how the Council and developers will involve the community in preparing planning policy documents and development proposals. Applicants and developers should discuss proposals with neighbours, Town and Parish Councils, and relevant statutory bodies and stakeholder in all cases before making a formal application.</p> <p>Applications are split into three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Major</b> (over 10 units/0.5ha/1000sq m);</li> <li>• <b>Minor</b> (under “ )</li> <li>• <b>Other</b> (changes of use, householder development, advertisements, listed building, conservation area consents)</li> </ul> <p><i>“The Council supports pre-application discussions and consultation. 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.”</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consultation and community involvement has been a core part of the formulation of the Chilterns AONB. This must be used in conjunction with the Chilterns AONB when creating neighbourhood level policy in this area.</li> <li>2. Working with delivery agents is not straightforward, but neighbourhood policy could encourage more inclusive dialogue.</li> <li>3. Example SEA objective: To ensure delivery agents employ best practice consultation and stakeholder engagement.</li> </ol>  |

| <b>Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Final Report NTS (SODC, 2006)</b>  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Environmental problems</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Landscape deterioration</li> <li>2. Loss of biodiversity</li> <li>3. Congestion</li> <li>4. Flood risk</li> <li>5. Risk of drought</li> <li>6. Climate change</li> <li>7. Energy Consumption</li> </ol> <p><b>Social problems</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Affordable Housing</li> <li>9. Lack of appropriate size of housing</li> <li>10. An ageing population</li> <li>11. Social exclusion</li> <li>12. Community sports facilities</li> <li>13. Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour</li> </ol> <p><b>Economic problems</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Pockets of deprivation</li> <li>15. Ageing resident population structure</li> <li>16. Workforce skills</li> <li>17. Road traffic congestion</li> <li>18. Availability of sufficient housing and its high cost</li> <li>19. Insufficient investment in infrastructure:</li> <li>20. Threats to the vitality and viability of town and village centres</li> </ol> <p>Development in settlements close to the conservation target areas in the south eastern part of the district (Henley, Sonning Common, Woodcote, Goring and Nettlebed) creates the potential for a detrimental impact on biodiversity, depending upon which sites are allocated. Suggested measures to mitigate these effects are to use biodiversity assessments to inform the site allocations process.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. These environmental concerns overlap strongly with (and expand upon) the Chilterns AONB themes.</li> <li>2. As per the Chilterns AONB and Core Strategy.</li> <li>3. As per the Chilterns AONB and Core Strategy.</li> </ol> |

## SCNDP Key Messages

Table 3.1 summarises the key policy messages that the SCNDP should seek to apply.

Where policies are replicated across different policy documents, they are brought together and listed under the 'Plan Element' column.

To save space we abbreviate the titles of the documents. However, they correlate exactly with the information above which references full titles and respective dates.

| Plan Element                             |    | SCNDP Key Messages   | Derived from  |
|--|----|--|---|
| Development strategy                     | 1  | Presumption in favour of sustainable development   | Core Strategy & NPPF                                |
|  | 2  | Prioritise the development of previously-developed sites   | Local Plan  |
|  | 3  | Encourage the efficient use of land by ensuring that housing is developed at an appropriate density (general rule: minimum of 25dph (net))   | Core Strategy                                       |
| Housing                                  | 4  | Improve housing provision by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a minimum of 138 dwellings</li> <li>• Providing a wide choice of high quality homes, including affordable homes (minimum 40%), that meet the needs of current and future residents</li> </ul>   | Housing Strategy, Core Strategy, Local Plan & SHLAA |
| Retail and Services                      | 5  | Support and strengthen the role of larger villages as local service centres by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging further retail and leisure uses within village centres</li> <li>• Diversifying village centres by allowing uses which are complementary to retail and which contribute to the evening economy, community facilities and upper floor uses</li> </ul> | Core Strategy & Local Plan                          |
|  | 6  | Ensure new development is accompanied by all necessary infrastructure to support communities   | Core Strategy                                       |
|  | 7  | Encourage the provision of and resist the loss of community facilities   |   |
| Quality of natural and built environment | 8  | Conserve and enhance natural beauty, in particular the Chilterns AONB  | Chilterns AONB, Core Strategy SA & Local Plan & BAP |
|  | 9  | Maintain and enhance biodiversity and Green infrastructure encouraging a net gain and ensuring there is no net loss  |   |
|  | 10 | Maintain and enhance the character of the built environment and in particular conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings  |   |
|  | 11 | Discourage pollution (inc emissions, effluent, noise, vibrations and light)  | Local Plan  |
|  | 12 | Maintain and enhance distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley  | Local Plan  |

Table 3.1: SCNDP Key Messages

| Plan Element                  |    | SCNDP Key Messages  | Derived from   |
|-------------------------------|----|---|--|
|                               | 13 | Encourage high quality and inclusive design by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting mixed-use development</li> <li>Ensuring housing is designed to reduce the opportunity for crime</li> <li>Incorporating adequate parking for vehicles and bicycles</li> <li>Encouraging the provision of well-designed outdoor amenity space</li> <li>Ensuring access for all</li> </ul>                                       | Core Strategy & Local Plan   |
|                               | 14 | Energy efficiency of buildings should be maximised through appropriate use of latest guidance/standard (pending Government's Housing Standards Review)  | Core Strategy  |
| Economy and employment        | 15 | Support the local economy by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging proposals which support the economy in rural areas (home working, digital economy, tourism based on character of the area and recreation-based rural diversification, re-use of rural buildings; small-scale infill schemes in villages; retention of functioning farm units)</li> <li>Maximising the quality of the Chilterns AONB</li> </ul> | Core Strategy, Local Plan & Oxfordshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan    |
| Energy                        | 16 | Encourage decentralised energy and energy from renewable resources (unless adverse impact outweighs positives)  | Core Strategy  |
| Waste                         | 17 | Ensure sufficient waste facilities are provided   | Local Plan   |
| Water                         | 18 | Protect, improve and ensure the sustainable use of the water environment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring that new development supports greater autonomy of water supply and can manage during periods of low flow</li> <li>Protecting water supply, surface water and groundwater</li> <li>Ensuring the appropriate treatment of contaminated land and hazardous substances</li> </ul>                      | Local Plan, Thames River Basin, Thames Catchment Abstraction, FRA & SFRA |
|                               | 19 | Ensure that surface water flooding is not exacerbated (inc. re-development or refurbishment; paving over of driveways; roofs)   |  |
| Accessibility (inc. movement) | 20 | Promote good access for all through more integrated transport solutions and create healthy communities by maximising healthier transport options such as public transport, walking and cycling by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing appropriate levels of vehicle and bicycle parking</li> <li>Promoting cycling and walking</li> </ul>   | Transport Plan & Local Plan  |
|                               | 21 | Ensure that the rights of way and their management are safeguarded.   | RoW  |
| Inclusivity                   | 22 | Delivery agents should employ best practice consultation and stakeholder engagement.  | SCI  |

Table 3.1: SCNDP Key Messages continued

## Chapter Four – Sustainability Context

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### Baseline situation

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The SEA Directive requires that baseline information should include:

*“the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without the implementation of the plan or programme”*

*“the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected”*

*(Annex 1(b) and (c))*

This chapter of the Scoping Report provides a summary of the environmental, social and economic baseline information for Sonning Common and is linked to the Key Messages detailed at the end of Chapter Three. Whilst baseline information should be as comprehensive and current as possible, there are acknowledged gaps in data coverage especially at parish level.

The SCNDP Working Party is small with no planning background so the learning curve has been steep. From the outset the working party focussed on engaging with local residents and involving them in the process of identifying key features of the potential development sites through the completion of structured Site Assessment surveys. Landscape and Village Character Surveys were also completed by residents.

170 residents attended the first public meeting in April 2012, which was organised with the help of external consultants, Place Studio. The purpose of this meeting was to disseminate information about the designated SHLAA sites and the SODC minimum target of 138 new houses to be built by 2027.

Three more public meetings were held during 2012 to guide and update stakeholders on the progress of residents' surveys, recruit more volunteers, seek further views on the village centre and to launch the ORCC Sonning Common Housing Needs Survey.

By early 2013, three of the potential SHLAA sites had been withdrawn by landowners, and in the spring, Chiltern Edge School put forward land to SODC for consideration as part of the SCNDP.

Throughout 2013, the working party was heavily committed to the tasks of collating and analysing survey data and to keeping stakeholders informed about sustainability issues highlighted by the surveys, in addition to the feedback gained from questionnaires.

The resulting momentum was such that the requirement to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was not fully recognised until late 2013. A draft Scoping Report was forwarded to statutory consultees in April 2014 and responses were received from all.

Additionally, the preparation process has been adversely affected at times because of the need to address planning applications in respect of one of the SHLAA sites.



Baseline data has been assembled for the criteria required by the SEA Directive and the UK SEA Regulations. These criteria include:

- A. Nature conservation (biodiversity, flora and fauna)
- B. Landscape and townscape
- C. Air quality and climate factors
- D. Heritage and archaeology
- E. Soils and geology
- F. Water
- G. Human population
- H. Human health
- I. Material assets.

In addition, baseline information for the following aspects has been addressed:

- J. Employment and skills
- K. Education

## **A. Nature conservation**

Key Messages under this sub-heading primarily come from within the Plan Element: Quality of natural and built environment and include the following:

- Conserve and enhance natural beauty
- Maintain and enhance biodiversity
- Maintain and enhance the character

Within the Sonning Common NDP (SCNDP) 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>11</sup> Old Copse Wood<sup>12</sup> and Widmore Pond<sup>13</sup> for their wildlife and plants. This value has been demonstrated by the community's involvement in the purchase of the 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.

An ecological survey,<sup>14</sup> commissioned by the Parish Council and undertaken by ecological consultant, Rod d'Ayala, includes the following observations:

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<sup>11</sup> Sonning Common Millennium Green Trust established 1998

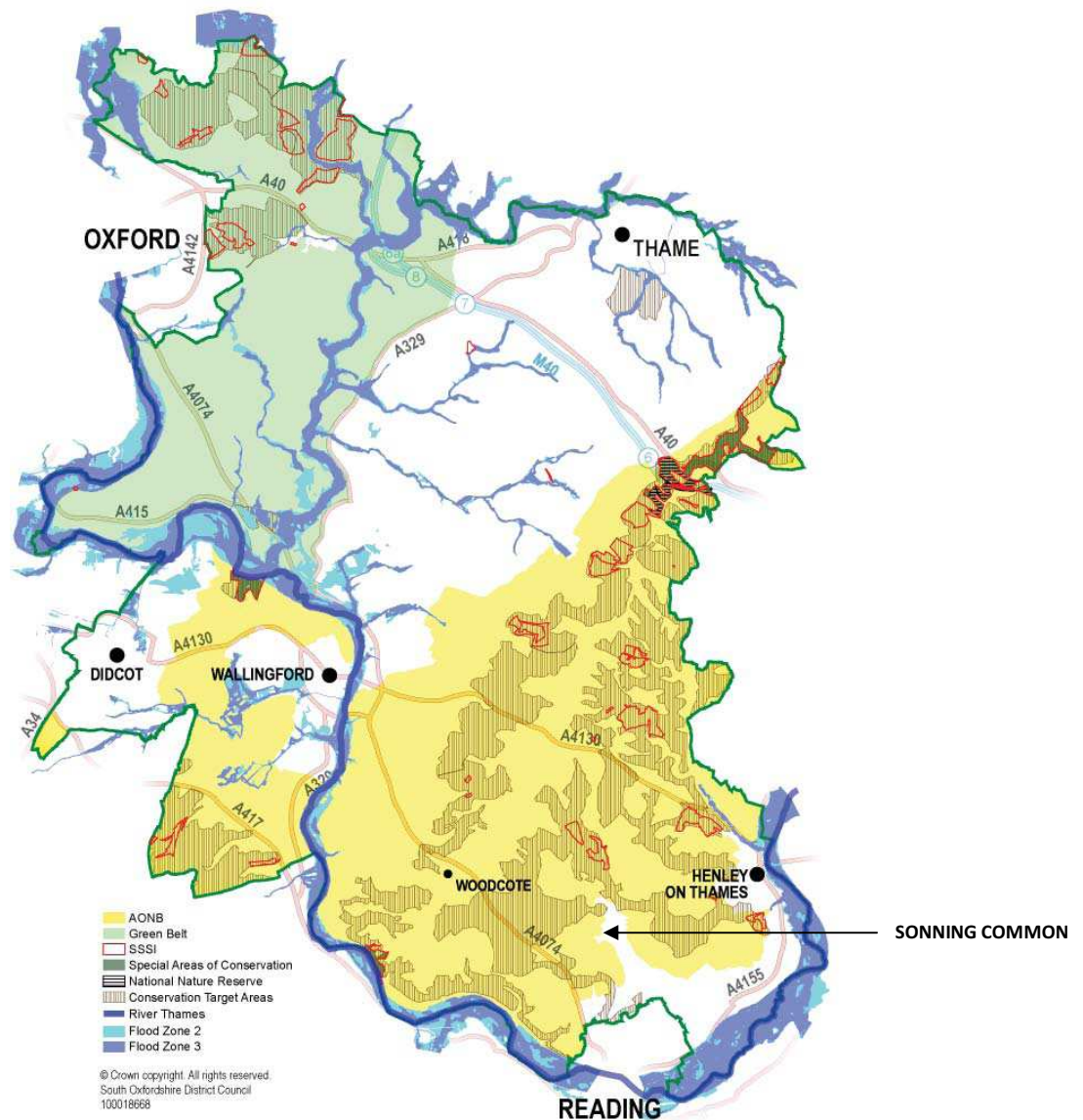
<sup>12</sup> Ancient semi-natural woodland taken over by The Woodland Trust in 1995

<sup>13</sup> SC Parish Council - Widmore Pond Heritage Site

<sup>14</sup> Source: Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014

“Sonning Common and its surrounds support a variety of habitats including woodland, some more open part-wooded habitats, hedge or field boundaries, grassland and agricultural land, including a large element of arable. Much of the land is intensively managed.

Several of the SHLAA sites put forward for development are located within the boundary of the AONB. However, in some cases due to the intensive nature of their management, the value for nature conservation for such landscapes is not as high as it might be but measures could be adopted that would significantly improve their status for nature conservation.”



Map 4.1: Environmental highlights and constraints in South Oxfordshire <sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Source: [www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SA%20Scoping%20report%20final.pdf](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/SA%20Scoping%20report%20final.pdf)

### Local wildlife centres

There are no sites listed in the SCNDP designated area by The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre. However, the SCNDP would seek to protect wildlife in its area.

### Biodiversity

Biodiversity is protected by a range of legislation and through the planning system, as set out in the Oxfordshire County Council guide: Biodiversity and Planning in Oxfordshire. Projecting and enhancing biodiversity is of great importance. In Sonning Common, the trees, woodland and hedgerows are key features in the natural environment and should be retained in order to maintain and enhance local biodiversity. There is a risk of these features being lost when they become parts of domestic gardens.

### Wildlife corridors

A habitat or wildlife corridor enables animals and plants to survive in areas being developed for buildings, roads and other hard surfaces. As there are no rivers or streams in Sonning Common, the corridors will be land corridors. These can be hedgerows, strips of woodland or simply a line of shrubs along a footpath or pavement.

The ecological survey <sup>16</sup> includes the following assessments:

- Most of the woodlands in and around the village are linked by a network of linear wooded habitats such as hedges or lines of trees
- There is good connectivity of wooded habitats, especially west and south of the village. Hagpits Wood is pivotal in this context being adjacent to three of the potential sites for development in the south
- The road network creates a barrier for some species (e.g. dormouse) and presents a risk to others that use the wooded habitats for foraging or movement corridors (e.g. badger)
- Some of the best habitats are the more mature hedge/boundary banks such as those in the west of the village 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 more open parkland landscape including a possible old green lane
- In the event of development, retention of variety and connectivity of habitats in and around the village is important
- Where possible existing habitats (including wildlife corridors) should be improved and new habitats created

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<sup>16</sup> Source: Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014

## B. Landscape

Sonning Common is bounded by the Chilterns AONB to the North, East and West and is thus significantly affected by it. The Key Message ‘Conserve and enhance natural beauty, in particular the Chilterns AONB’ is therefore highly relevant to Sonning Common. Even though the existing built area of the Parish is largely outside the AONB, some of the potential development sites in the SHLAA lie within the AONB. Also important is the Key Message ‘Maintain and enhance the distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley.’

Sonning Common sits on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills within Character Area 10: Chilterns Plateau and Valleys. Specifically, Sonning Common is located on semi-enclosed dipslope, a term describing gently sloping or level ground cut through by dry valleys – two of which trend through the area from NNW to SSE. These dry valleys form the western and eastern edges of the village settlement and have helped shape the elongated form of Sonning Common’s built area. This area has a strong structure of woods, hedgerows and trees enclosing open, arable fields. Woodland is important to the local character and trees and woodland extend through the village.<sup>17 18</sup>

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 Table 10.2, Chilterns plateau with valleys – Landscape quality and sensitivity, shows that semi-enclosed dipslope has a high scenic quality and a strong sense of place.

The SPG highlights that whilst this landscape type (semi-enclosed dipslope) is less visually sensitive, much of the landscape is of high quality and 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 settlements to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside”. This is especially applicable to Sonning Common as it is bounded by AONB on three sides.

In most cases, landscapes of higher quality are more sensitive to change than those of lower quality, but this depends on the nature of the change. The landscape assessment process looks at a number of criteria to determine the ‘quality’ of the area.

<sup>17</sup> Old Copse Wood taken over by The Woodland Trust in 1995

<sup>18</sup> Source: Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014

‘Landscape sensitivity’ is a general indication of the extent to which a landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character and this can include existing land use, pattern and scale, scope for mitigation and the general quality of the landscape. The SPG Table 10.2, Chilterns plateau with valleys – Landscape quality and sensitivity accords semi-enclosed dipslope a moderate rating in terms of sensitivity to change.

The management strategy for the landscape around Sonning Common is to conserve.

### **Landscape assessments**

As part of the site selection process within the SCNDP, landscape considerations will be assessed for each of the potential development sites.

## **C. Air quality and climate factors**

The relevant Key Messages applying this criterion include:

- Discourage pollution (incl. emissions, effluent, noise, vibrations and light)
- Energy efficiency of buildings should be maximised
- Encourage decentralised energy and energy from renewable resources
- Maximising healthier transport options

Since December 1997 all local authorities in the UK have been monitoring air quality in their area. If SODC finds that the air quality in Sonning Common does not meet national air quality objectives then it must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). No such AQMA has been declared for Sonning Common.

Traffic growth and congestion can lead to air quality deterioration and over the 10 year period (2002-2012) Oxfordshire County Council noted that the greatest increase in traffic was for B roads. This is particularly relevant to a rural authority like South Oxfordshire that has many B roads. In South Oxfordshire nearly 50% of residents travel to work by car either as a driver or passenger. Although the figure has remained about the same as in 2001, it is significantly higher than the proportion for England.<sup>19</sup>

A report prepared by the NDP Traffic Task Group<sup>20</sup> recorded residents’ concerns about traffic volumes and speeding on the arterial routes of B481 Peppard Road and Kennylands Road but not air quality issues.

There is a twice-hourly and recently improved energy efficient bus service to Reading, which is routed through the shopping and service centre along Wood Lane.

<sup>19</sup> Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)

<sup>20</sup> Source: Interim SCNDP Traffic Report (November 2012)

In common with the wider district, car ownership is high (Table 4.1).<sup>21</sup>

|                                | Sonning Common | South Oxfordshire | SE England | England |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------|---------|
| <b>Average cars / dwelling</b> | 1.7            | 1.6               | 1.4        | 1.2     |

**Table 4.1: Average cars per dwelling**

The dependency on private transport is further illustrated by Table 4.2<sup>22</sup> which shows the car ownership per household for Sonning Common.

| <b>Share (%) of households with:</b> | <b>Sonning Common</b> | <b>South Oxfordshire</b> | <b>SE England</b> | <b>England</b> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>0 car</b>                         | 9.2                   | 11.6                     | 18.6              | 25.8           |
| <b>1 car</b>                         | 34.7                  | 38.9                     | 41.7              | 42.2           |
| <b>2 cars</b>                        | 39.5                  | 36.0                     | 29.8              | 24.7           |
| <b>3 cars</b>                        | 12.1                  | 9.3                      | 7.1               | 5.5            |
| <b>4+ cars</b>                       | 4.6                   | 4.1                      | 2.8               | 1.9            |

**Table 4.2: Cars per household**

New housing developments will lead to an increase in the number of cars in the village with possible impacts on the road network and upon air quality within Sonning Common.

A number of residents have suggested cycle lanes along the arterial roads to facilitate safer usage of bicycles to access Reading and its suburbs. However, it is unclear how the B481 could accommodate dedicated lanes.

## **D. Heritage and character**

The Key Messages include the requirements to:

- Maintain and enhance the character of the built environment and in particular conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings
- Maintain and enhance distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley

Sonning Common lies in the Chilterns, 5km north of the River Thames at Caversham and 6km west of Henley-on-Thames.

Until 1952, Sonning Common was largely in the Parish of Eye and Dunsden. Its name is derived from its higher and drier chalk-based common lands used for the seasonal grazing of animals from the lower, wetter land of the floodplain around Sonning-on-Thames.

<sup>21</sup> Source: ONS 2011

<sup>22</sup> Source: ONS 2011

A character assessment report,<sup>23</sup> produced by the Parish Council's consultants, Place Studio, draws upon comments made by residents in their structured NDP surveys on the village and its surroundings. It states:

- Sonning Common is a product of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- The village has a very distinctive character, one that is important historically and one that the residents value and wish to see understood and enhanced as any future development takes place
- The two main character areas, plotlands (straight 'grid type' roads with plots directly off them) and estates, are interspersed across the village, with plotlands accounting for around two-thirds of the area
- All the estates are either groups of winding roads with cul-de-sacs or single cul-de-sacs. These were deliberately designed so as not to be used as through routes
- There is no village green. However, there is a remarkably green feel throughout the village as a result of long-term planting of trees, shrubs and hedges in private gardens
- The overall and very distinctive nature of the village is shaped by the straight roads and plot-by-plot development

An extensive network of public footpaths links the built settlement of the parish to surrounding countryside and to neighbouring villages (see Appendix 1). These form an important part of the Sonning Common heritage. Footpaths between Grove Road (schools, library, police sub-station) and Wood Lane (village centre and bus stops) encourage residents to walk to these amenities as they afford quick and safe access.

The village has two listed buildings;<sup>24</sup> three post WW2 churches and a non-designated 16<sup>th</sup> Century manor house. Widmore Pond<sup>25</sup> has a history dating from the Roman era and Old Copse Wood, an ancient semi-natural woodland, was taken over by the Woodland Trust in 1995.

Local conservation groups and villagers regard Sonning Common as a well-established village set in a rural area and surrounded by wooded and agricultural countryside despite being one mile away from the edge of Reading to the south. A frequently expressed view by residents is that they do not want to see Sonning Common lose its identity and "just become an urban satellite of Reading."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Source: Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013

<sup>24</sup> Pond Cottage and adjacent cottage, Blackmore Lane, Grade II

<sup>25</sup> Source: [www.archaeologicalsurveys.co.uk/docs/Widmore\\_screen.pdf](http://www.archaeologicalsurveys.co.uk/docs/Widmore_screen.pdf)

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

## **E. Soils and geology**

This criterion has a significant effect on the green nature of the village, its agricultural surroundings, run-off of surface water and its ability to replenish the groundwater. The Key Messages relating to it include:

- Protecting water supply, surface water and groundwater
- Encouraging proposals which support the economy of rural areas
- Conserve and enhance biodiversity and green infrastructure

Sonning Common and its surrounding area are carved out of Upper Chalk with overlays on higher ground of river gravels deposited in more recent times. This has resulted in soils of a heavier clay-based nature with mixed-in flints and pebbles.

The resultant soils have created woodlands and agricultural land of mainly 'Grade 3' quality. Arable farming of cereals and rapeseed are most common, with some cattle grazed locally.

There are allotments (1.0 ha) on land rented by Sonning Common Parish Council in the north of the parish beyond its built limits. These provide locally grown food and recreational and social activities.

It is important that due consideration is given to the soils and geology when considering whether sustainable development can take place on specific sites, as well as maintaining and enhancing the use of land for leisure and small scale home-grown vegetable and fruit culture on allotments. Sinkholes 'formed' by dissolution of the underlying rock do exist within the area and it will be important that these will not occur on any proposed development sites.

## **F. Water**

The South Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2013) showed Sonning Common to be at Low Risk in the following categories:

- Surface water
- Groundwater and
- Sewer

The Key Messages indicate that the sustainable use of the water environment within the South Oxfordshire District shall be maintained through:

- Ensuring new development supports greater autonomy of water supply and can manage during periods of low flow
- Protecting water supply, surface water, and groundwater
- Ensuring that surface water flooding is not exacerbated

These are not specific to Sonning Common but must be considered within the overall context of sustainable development.



## G. Human population

The rate of population growth or change is a key factor in planning for the future development of the village and hence the sustainability which must be built into the NDP. It impacts on nearly all the Plan Elements relating to the Key Messages, including housing, employment, recreation, transport, health, education, and retail services.

This paragraph of the Scoping Report focusses on the housing aspect as other SEA criteria, e.g. health, are dealt with elsewhere in this chapter.

The Key Messages relating to the provision of housing are:

- Provide a minimum of 138 dwellings
- Provide a wide choice of high quality homes including affordable homes (minimum 40%) to meet the needs of current and future residents

Sonning Common's population numerically has remained static since the 2001 Census, but over the same period has significantly aged as Table 4.3 <sup>27</sup> illustrates.

|                  | Census       |              |           |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Age band (years) | 2001         | 2011         | Change    |
| 0-15             | 759          | 694          | -9%       |
| 16-24            | 290          | 274          | -6%       |
| 25-44            | 937          | 838          | -11%      |
| 45-64            | 1,004        | 1,016        | 1%        |
| 65-74            | 422          | 450          | 7%        |
| 75+              | 366          | 512          | 40%       |
|                  | <b>3,778</b> | <b>3,784</b> | <b>0%</b> |
| Mean age         | 42.0         | 45.2         |           |
| Median age       | 43.0         | 46.0         |           |

Table 4.3: Sonning Common population 2001-2011

The 0 – 44 year olds have fallen, the 45 – 74 year olds are increasing slowly but the 75+ year olds are growing quickly. The 65 – 74 mix is 22% more than for the overall District, while the 75+ mix is 60% more. However, the 18 – 34 year old range is lower than the average for the District perhaps indicating attendance at higher education, jobs away from home or problems of access to affordable property.

The population is trending to an imbalance between young and old. This will impact on the housing requirements and housing stock over the next 20 years. This appears in part to be an echo of the boom in house building in the 1960s and 1970s when many young families moved to Sonning Common and have subsequently chosen to stay in the village.

<sup>27</sup> Source: 2001 and 2011 Census

## Housing stock

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>28</sup>

Table 4.4 shows that the mix of Council Tax Bands in Sonning Common is weighted very strongly towards high end, larger properties.<sup>29</sup>

| 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%   |

**Table 4.4: Sonning Common Council Tax Bands**

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>30</sup>

The Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) was commissioned by the Parish Council to conduct a housing needs survey for Sonning Common.<sup>31</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.

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.”

The report also indicated that supported housing needed to be addressed. When asked what type of supported housing was required, 23.5% of respondents considered private sheltered (warden assisted) was required, 21.5% considered Housing Association sheltered (warden assisted) housing and 26% considered independent accommodation with care support.

Given the ageing demographics within Sonning Common, consideration should also be given to households including one or more members with limited mobility and/or a medical condition.

Census 2011 data highlights the imbalance of housing stock in Sonning Common. Table 4.5 shows that one bedroom households account for only 3.7% of Sonning Common households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC and 11.8% across England.

<sup>28</sup> Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – Sustainability Scoping Report (June 2014)

<sup>29</sup> Source: ONS 2011

<sup>30</sup> Source: [www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices](http://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices)

<sup>31</sup> Source: ORCC - Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012

The trend is similar in respect of two 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 three and four bedroom households shows a mix which is higher than SODC, SE England and England.

|  | <b>Sonning Common</b> | <b>South Oxfordshire</b> | <b>SE England</b> | <b>England</b> |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>All household spaces with at least one usual resident</b> | 1,547                 | 54,104                   | 3,555,463         | 22,063,368     |
| <b>No Bedrooms</b>   | 3                     | 82                       | 8,531             | 54,938         |
|  | 0.2%                  | 0.2%                     | 0.2%              | 0.2%           |
| <b>1 Bedroom</b>   | 57                    | 4,154                    | 413,761           | 2,593,893      |
|  | 3.7%                  | 7.7%                     | 11.6%             | 11.8%          |
| <b>2 Bedrooms</b>  | 319                   | 12,802                   | 932,994           | 6,145,083      |
|  | 20.6%                 | 23.7%                    | 26.2%             | 27.9%          |
| <b>3 Bedrooms</b>  | 703                   | 21,581                   | 1,383,662         | 9,088,213      |
|  | 45.4%                 | 39.9%                    | 38.9%             | 41.2%          |
| <b>4 Bedrooms</b>  | 355                   | 11,215                   | 603,887           | 3,166,531      |
|  | 22.9%                 | 20.7%                    | 17.0%             | 14.4%          |
| <b>5 or more Bedrooms</b>                                    | 110                   | 4,270                    | 212,628           | 1,014,710      |
|  | 7.1%                  | 7.9%                     | 6.0%              | 4.6%           |
|  | <b>100%</b>           | <b>100%</b>              | <b>100%</b>       | <b>100%</b>    |

Table 4.5: Sonning Common households - bedrooms per occupied dwelling <sup>32</sup>

## Deprivation

South Oxfordshire District Council is one of the least deprived local authorities in the UK ranking 307 out of 354 authorities where rank 1 is the most deprived (Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010). <sup>33</sup>

According to the IMD 2010, overall, South Oxfordshire has no Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the worst 20% nationally. However, around 26% of the SODC LSOAs ranked poorly in the housing and services domain.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is a UK government qualitative study of deprived areas in local district councils. It is a composite indicator used to compare deprivation and comprises a number of factors that contribute to deprivation including income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, and also barriers to housing and other services.

Sonning Common is very similar to SODC overall and has a little less deprivation than SE England. Relative to England, overall deprivation is low (Table 4.6). <sup>34</sup> Sonning Common has three LSOA deciles within the NDP area. Out of a national total of 32,482 LSOA deciles, these three areas have overall IMD score rankings of 27,126, 31,264, and 31,767. <sup>35</sup> An IMD score of 32,482 represents the least deprived overall so it can be seen that Sonning Common is amongst the least deprived areas.

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

<sup>33</sup> Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2013 – Sustainability Scoping Report (June 2014)

<sup>34</sup> Source: ONS 2011

<sup>35</sup> Source: [www.english-indices-of-deprivation-2010:overall-gov.uk](http://www.english-indices-of-deprivation-2010:overall-gov.uk)

|  | Sonning Common | South Oxfordshire | SE England       | England          |
|--|----------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>All households</b>                          | 1,547          | 54,104            | 3,555,463        | 22,063,368       |
| <b>Household not deprived in any dimension</b> | 814<br>53%     | 29,701<br>55%     | 1,695,912<br>48% | 9,385,648<br>43% |
| <b>Household deprived in 1 dimension</b>       | 494<br>32%     | 16,164<br>30%     | 1,145,825<br>32% | 7,204,181<br>33% |
| <b>Household deprived in 2 dimensions</b>      | 217<br>14%     | 6,985<br>13%      | 569,744<br>16%   | 4,223,982<br>19% |
| <b>Household deprived in 3 dimensions</b>      | 22<br>1%       | 1,154<br>2%       | 129,939<br>4%    | 1,133,622<br>5%  |
| <b>Household deprived in 4 dimensions</b>      | 0<br>0%        | 100<br>0%         | 14,043<br>0%     | 115,935<br>1%    |

Table 4.6: Sonning Common households – deprivation dimensions

### Crime and public safety

Sonning Common is a safe place to live. There is a police sub-station and a ‘Help desk’ staffed by volunteers. The number of crimes per thousand persons per year in the Henley Neighbourhood Policing Area, which includes Sonning Common, has declined from 40 in the period April 2011 to March 2012 to 36 in the period April 2013 to March 2014.<sup>36</sup>

Annual figures for Sonning Common Parish alone are not readily available but monthly data can be extracted from Henley Neighbourhood Policing Area statistics. During the six month period from May 2014 to October 2014, out of the total of 602 recorded crimes within the Henley area 74 occurred within Sonning Common, representing approximately 12% of the Henley Neighbourhood figures.

### Income

Sonning Common has three LSOA deciles within the Parish and these are ranked 19,340, 28,206 and 30,495 out of 32,482 covering the whole of England.<sup>37</sup> All these deciles are well above the median being approximately in the top 40%, 13% and 6% respectively. These figures do show significant variation across the Parish.

## H. Human health

The Key Messages from Chapter 3 relating to the health of the Sonning Common population can be listed as:

- Encourage the provision of and resist the loss of community facilities
- Create healthy communities by maximising healthier transport options

<sup>36</sup> Source: [www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk)

<sup>37</sup> Source: [www.english-indices-of-deprivation-2010:overall-gov.uk](http://www.english-indices-of-deprivation-2010:overall-gov.uk)

The former relates to the maintenance of the excellent facilities provided by Sonning Common Health Centre and Wood Lane Dentistry, each of which services a much wider population living beyond the Sonning Common NDP area (see 'Medical provision' below).

Also included is The Friends in Sickness and Health (FISH) centre, located in Kennylands Road. This community facility is staffed by volunteers who arrange car visits for the elderly to hospitals and other appointments. The charity owns a 17-seat bus and volunteer drivers transport residents for shopping trips and to a variety of other outings.

Table 4.7 gives a series of indicators of the health<sup>38</sup> of those living in South Oxfordshire and shows that, in general, those living in the District enjoy better health than the average across the country. The only area where residents of South Oxfordshire are at significantly greater risk is that of being killed or seriously injured on the road.

|  | South Oxfordshire | England | Measure  |
|--|-------------------|---------|--|
| <b>Obese children</b>                          | 13.74             | 18.74   | Percentage of year 6 children  |
| <b>Adult smoking</b>                           | 12.62             | 21.15   | % of those aged 18 and over  |
| <b>Child tooth decay</b>                       | 0.5               | 0.74    | Mean number of decayed, missing or filled teeth in 12 year olds  |
| <b>Life expectancy - male</b>                  | 79.8              | 78.22   | Life expectancy  |
| <b>Life expectancy - female</b>                | 82.31             | 84.1    | Life expectancy  |
| <b>Drug misuse</b>                             | 4.59              | 9.41    | Number per 1000 of population aged 16-64 using crack and/or opiates                                    |
| <b>Early death heart disease &amp; stroke</b>  | 51.35             | 70.49   | Rate per 100,000   |
| <b>Road injuries and death</b>                 | 64.88             | 48.12   | Rate per 100,000   |
| <b>Early death cancer</b>                      | 95.56             | 112.07  | Rate per 100,000   |
| <b>Physically active adults</b>                | 12.89             | 11.49   | % participating in moderate intensity sport or recreation on more than 20 days in the previous 4 weeks |
| <b>Hospital stays for alcohol related harm</b> | 977               | 1742    | Rate per 100,000   |

Table 4.7: Human health indicators

## Medical provision

GP provision and associated facilities are highly regarded.<sup>39</sup> Sonning Common's Health Centre (SCHC) was built on a site on Wood Lane close to the shopping centre of the village and opened in 1970. It was extended in 1993 and again in 1998 when a first floor was added providing a suite of meeting rooms.

SCHC has approximately 8,500 patients.<sup>40</sup> As mentioned, the patient register extends beyond Sonning Common (population of 3,784 according to Census 2011) 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. The centre is served by six doctors, three registrars, three nurses, one health care assistant and a practice manager. Additional staffing may be required to meet the demands of increased number of patients generated by the proposed number of new homes.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Source: The Network of Public Health Observatories

<sup>39</sup> Source: SCNDP Public Meeting 28 April 2012

<sup>40</sup> Source: Sonning Common Health Centre – Practice Manager

<sup>41</sup> Source: Sonning Common Health Centre – Practice Manager

The Health Centre has been actively promoting preventive health and established Sonning Common Health Walks 13 years ago.<sup>42</sup> This group undertakes daily walks for differing fitness levels throughout the week.

Wood Lane Dentistry has 3,390 patients on its register. It too provides an excellent service supported by three dentists, three hygienists, four nurses and a practice manager. The spread of patients outside the Sonning Common NDP area is of a similar mix to that of SCHC. The facility would be able to cope with the additional patients likely to be generated by the proposed number of new homes in Sonning Common.<sup>43</sup>

## I. Material assets

The Key Messages affecting Sonning Common village assets are those which encourage the sustainability of the community facilities. These include:

- Encouraging further retail and leisure uses within the village centre
- Diversifying village centre to complement retail and to contribute to the evening economy, community facilities and upper floor uses
- Providing appropriate levels of vehicle and bicycle parking
- Ensure that rights of way are protected

For a large village which serves as a hub for the surrounding neighbourhoods and beyond, the community facilities are a curious mixture of the good, inadequate or non-existent.

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 and an electrical shop and until recently a small branch of NatWest Bank. These outlets have contributed to village life for a number of years.

Sonning Common Village Hall, which is a focal point in Wood Lane, was built in the early 1970s when the population of the village was half its current number. The Hall, which will seat 120 people, is now too cramped to fulfil the increasing demands of a growing 21<sup>st</sup> century community and the requisite infrastructure.

It has an office to accommodate the Parish Clerk and the Deputy Clerk, a small kitchen and inadequate storage space. There are no committee or meeting rooms. The Hall is well-managed and very well-used as a community facility. It is currently undergoing some modernisation but it will need to be extended. 32 off-road parking spaces serve both the Hall and the village retail centre.

<sup>42</sup> Source: [www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk](http://www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk)

<sup>43</sup> Source: Wood Lane Dentistry – Practice Manager

Sonning Common has three LEAP<sup>44</sup> standard play areas for children aged up to 11/12 years. It has an open space amenity area – the Millennium Green – at the southern edge of the village which provides a semi-natural green space for walkers and dog walkers. It is also used by Sonning Common Health Walks.

The public footpaths through the woodlands and across/around agricultural land are well used by the local community and form an important source of leisure as well as links with nearby villages, such as Kidmore End (Appendix 1).

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 / community hall. SODC has identified these and other recreational deficiencies in two studies undertaken in 2008 and 2011.<sup>45 46</sup> Both surveys and subsequent updates will inform the emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031. Additionally, we note SODC's Open Space Standards – 2013 which will help in planning effectively for networks of accessible, high-quality open spaces and sports and recreation facilities.

Sports amenities in the SCNDP area are currently limited to:

- Boys and girls football at Bishopswood, owned by the private RUFC club
- Two tennis courts at Bishopswood
- Squash courts at Chiltern Edge School
- Kennylands Gymnastics (privately-owned)

There is a youth club for 11-16 year olds, 'Club SC', based at Chiltern Edge secondary school.

Sonning Common's football team plays its home games outside the parish, at Peppard. The cricket club has had no home ground for a number of years. Thus villagers wishing to play these sports have to go to the nearby towns e.g. Reading, Henley, or neighbouring villages, for outdoor pitches.

Car parking problems in the village centre (Wood Lane) feature prominently in many questionnaires and surveys.<sup>47</sup> Many residents believe that for the centre to thrive parking and traffic issues warrant further attention and investment. Of particular concern is the (unrecorded) comment from Reading Buses that the traffic problems in Wood Lane may cause the withdrawal of the bus from the area, and reduce the route to the Peppard Road. Many local people rely on the service and its accessibility so such a restriction would have a marked impact on their lives.

Parking difficulties are particularly bad at school times; morning and afternoon. Reade's Lane is affected by Chiltern Edge School traffic, while roads leading into Grove Road (Primary School) are also affected.

Both the Health Centre and Dentistry, which between them have 43 parking spaces to accommodate staff and patients, commented that 'non-patient' parking was an increasing problem and that measures to remedy this were under consideration.

Parking for bicycles is limited to a small area near the Co-op supermarket.

<sup>44</sup> Locally Equipped Area for Play. A minimum of 400m2 with at least five activities

<sup>45</sup> Source: SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment April 2008

<sup>46</sup> Source: SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy March 2011

<sup>47</sup> Source: Community Survey 2010; SCNDP public meetings; ORCC - SCNDP Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report - 2012

The SCNDP Traffic Task Group <sup>48</sup> concluded that many of the difficulties identified are a result of unlawful behaviour by motorists (parking on pavements, illegal parking on yellow lines and across domestic driveways). Measures to increase safety could include a 'walking bus' ([www.walkingschoolbus.org](http://www.walkingschoolbus.org)) for school children, while time-limited parking for the village car park and the banning of deliveries during peak times would help to spread the traffic over a more prolonged period.

The report concludes "What happens in the centre affects the entire village because it serves the practical needs of Sonning Common and many of its smaller neighbours." To this end it is worth highlighting that the Village Hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park and this has to serve not only the Hall but also the majority of the amenities in the village centre.

The SODC Submission Core Strategy document <sup>49</sup> identifies that after the towns the four most sustainable larger villages are Sonning Common (19 points), Wheatley (19 points), Benson (18 points) and Goring (18 points).

The SODC Car Parking Order 2011 which included maps of all the car parks provided by SODC, highlighted that of the four sustainable larger villages Sonning Common is alone in not having a public car park provided by SODC.

## J. Employment and Skills

Key Messages relating to this sustainability criterion include:

- Encouraging further retail and leisure uses within the village
- Diversifying village centres by allowing uses which are complementary to retail and which contribute to the evening economy, community facilities and upper floor uses
- Encouraging proposals which support the economy in rural areas, home working, digital economy

The levels of unemployment in Sonning Common (2.6% of all residents aged 16 to 74 years and 3.6% of residents in active employment) are similar to those for the District and low in comparison to the country. <sup>50</sup> An increasing number of residents work from home. <sup>51</sup> Employment provision in the village is limited by the size of the retail space and the scope of services offered.

|  | Sonning Common | South Oxfordshire | SE England | England    |
|--|----------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>All usual residents aged 16 to 74</b> | 2,578          | 96,892            | 6,274,341  | 38,881,374 |
| <b>Unemployed</b>                        | 2.6%           | 2.5%              | 3.4%       | 4.3%       |
| <b>Residents in active employment</b>    | 1,860          | 72,820            | 4,521,184  | 27,183,134 |
| <b>Unemployed</b>                        | 3.6%           | 3.4%              | 4.8%       | 6.3%       |

Table 4.8: Economic activity – employment

<sup>48</sup> Source: SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012

<sup>49</sup> Source: SODC Submission Core Strategy Settlement Assessment Background Paper March 2011

<sup>50</sup> Source: ONS 2011

<sup>51</sup> Source: Sonning Common Business Collaboration



## Workforce skills

The qualification mix of residents is broadly similar to that of the District, while Level 4 qualification and above is higher than the region and the country.<sup>52</sup> The mix at the higher qualification level may be affected by the age profile of Sonning Common.

|   | Sonning Common | South Oxfordshire | SE England | England    |
|---|----------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>All usual residents aged 16 and over</b> | 3,090          | 108,232           | 6,992,666  | 42,989,620 |
| <b>No qualifications</b>                    | 18%            | 16%               | 19%        | 22%        |
| <b>Level 1 qualifications</b>               | 11%            | 12%               | 14%        | 13%        |
| <b>Level 2 qualifications</b>               | 14%            | 15%               | 16%        | 15%        |
| <b>Apprenticeship</b>                       | 5%             | 4%                | 4%         | 4%         |
| <b>Level 3 qualifications</b>               | 11%            | 12%               | 13%        | 12%        |
| <b>Level 4 qualifications and above</b>     | 37%            | 37%               | 30%        | 27%        |
| <b>Other qualifications</b>                 | 4%             | 4%                | 5%         | 6%         |

Table 4.9: Highest qualification

## K. Education

Clearly, the continuation of a healthy educational establishment is essential for the sustainable development of the village. This falls within the Key Message presumption in favour of sustainable development, but also links to ‘encouraging the provision of and resisting the loss of community facilities.’ Sonning Common is served by three public sector schools.

### 1. Sonning Common Primary School

This is an Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) co-educational school for children aged 5 – 11 years. It is located on its own site south of the village centre in a residential area. It has three secure access points from two residential roads.

The school celebrated its centenary in 2013. The original buildings are still in use. Additional development to accommodate rising numbers occurred in the 1960s and the 1970s. The condition of the buildings is recognised by OCC as requiring substantial investment. The school has large playing fields and good playground space. The much-valued village library is located on the school site.<sup>53</sup>

The school currently has a capacity of 420 pupils with 396 presently on roll.<sup>54</sup> As about 30% of its pupils come from outside Sonning Common, mostly Caversham, the school could cope with additional numbers generated by new housing development.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Source: ONS 2011

<sup>53</sup> The library is run and maintained by OCC with support from volunteers in the local community

<sup>54</sup> Source: Headteacher

<sup>55</sup> Source: Headteacher

## 2. Chiltern Edge Secondary School

The school is located on the NW edge of Sonning Common on its own secure site. It is in the parish of Kidmore End but by agreement with Kidmore End Parish Council has been included in the SCNDP Designated Area.

The school gained 'Foundation' status in 2012.

Chiltern Edge is a co-educational, comprehensive school with 509<sup>56</sup> pupils on roll, aged 12 – 16 years. Ten years ago it had a roll of one thousand pupils. It could comfortably accommodate extra pupils generated by new housing development. The school was initially built during 1956/7 and it opened in September 1957. The buildings, which mainly date from that era, are ageing and high maintenance. Renewal of its infrastructure is a high priority in order to ensure that the school provides high-quality education for the foreseeable future.<sup>57</sup>

The ability to recruit teachers occasionally causes problems for both schools due to the high cost of housing in and around Sonning Common.<sup>58</sup>

## 3. Bishopswood School

The school educates children with severe learning and physical disabilities. It shares sites with both the Primary and Secondary schools.

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<sup>56</sup> Source: Headteacher

<sup>57</sup> Source: Headteacher

<sup>58</sup> Source: Headteacher

# Summary presentation

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In order to summarise the different stages of our Sustainability Appraisal we have devised a table which is included at the end of Chapters Four, Five and Six. We refer to this as a ‘rolling table’ as it pulls forward the conclusions at the end of each of these chapters.

The ‘rolling table’ at the end of this Chapter Four summarises the first part of the information gathering process beginning with the Key Messages derived from the national and local policies detailed in Chapter Three. The table is expanded at the close of Chapter Five and at the end of Chapter Six is completed with the addition of the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives.

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation   | Evidence   |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Presumption in favour of sustainable development  | Where possible promote 'win win' solutions that advance economic, social and environmental objectives together<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available   | South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)   |
| 2. Prioritise the development of previously developed sites                                    | None of the SON sites currently identified as available for development in SODC's SHLAA could be defined as previously developed land  |  |
| 3. Encourage efficient use of land by ensuring appropriate housing density (minimum 25dph net) | The evolution of Sonning Common since the early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century has resulted in a broad spectrum of densities   | SODC Core Strategy   |
| 4. Improve housing provision   | <p>Affordability is a serious problem for South Oxfordshire. Lower end house prices are over ten times higher than lower end incomes</p> <p>The South Oxfordshire Local Plan can only be expected to deliver a small proportion of the need for affordable housing</p> <p>Average house prices in Sonning Common are 22% higher than Oxfordshire and 33% higher than Reading</p> <p>Affordable housing ranks as the most important housing need in Sonning Common. Lack of it restricts residents from moving within the village, forces others to leave and prevents families from living near each other</p> <p>More affordable housing is needed to encourage young people to stay to prevent Sonning Common becoming a village of elderly people</p> <p>Sonning Common's population numerically has remained static since 2001 Census, but over the same period has significantly aged</p> <p>Sonning Common has an ageing population. The 65–74 mix is 22% more than for the overall District, while the 75+ mix is 60% more</p> <p>One bedroom households account for only 3.7% of households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC</p> <p>Two bedroom households account for 20.6% of households, compared with 23.7% for SODC and 27.9% for England</p> <p>In contrast the data in respect of three and four bedroom household shows a mix which is higher than SODC, SE England and England</p> <p>ORCC report highlighted that Supported housing needed to be addressed in the private and housing association sectors</p> | <p>SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)</p> <p>South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Study 2011</p> <p>Zoopla</p> <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> <p>ONS and Census 2011</p> |

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation   | Evidence  |
|--|--|---|
| 5. Support and strengthen the role of larger villages as local service centres   | Shops and facilities offer residents and neighbouring villages a wide variety of services. These outlets have contributed to village life for a number of years<br><br>GP provision and associated facilities are excellent. Sonning Common Health Centre has 8500 patients. The dentistry has 3390 patients   | Initial SCNDP public meeting 28 April 2012<br><br>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012 |
| 6. Ensure new development is accompanied by necessary infrastructure to support communities                            | There is a lack of adequate sports and recreation facilities for the community   | SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2008<br><br>SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2011                                     |
| 7. Encourage the provision of and resist the loss of community facilities  | The Village Hall, built when the population was c2000, is too small to fulfil the increasing demands of a 21 <sup>st</sup> century community. It has no committee or meeting rooms<br><br>Sonning Common has no recreational facilities of its own for teenagers or adults   | SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2008<br><br>SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2011                                     |
| 8. Conserve and enhance natural beauty, in particular the Chilterns AONB   | Sonning Common is bounded by the Chilterns AONB to the North, East and West<br><br>It sits on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills within Character Area 10: Chilterns Plateau and Valleys<br><br>This area has a strong structure of woods hedgerows and trees enclosing open arable fields<br><br>Sonning Common is located on semi-enclosed dipslope. The dry valleys have helped to shape the elongated form of Sonning Common's built area<br><br>The SPG highlights that semi-enclosed dipslope has high scenic quality and strong sense of place. Landscape sensitivity (extent to which landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character) is rated moderate by the SPG<br><br>SPG says "special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape edges to settlements to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside | South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance (SPG)   |
| 9. Maintain and enhance biodiversity and Green infrastructure encouraging a net gain and ensuring there is no net loss | There are no sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or local level designations<br><br>Community helped to purchase Millennium Green, established a trust for its upkeep; assisted with purchase of Old Copse Wood and its transfer to The Woodland Trust<br><br>Surroundings support a variety of habitats including woodland, open part-wooded habitats, hedge boundaries, grassland and agricultural land including a large element of arable  | Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014   |

| Key Message   | Baseline Situation   | Evidence   |
|---|--|--|
| 10. Maintain and enhance the character of the built environment and in particular conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings | <p>Distinctive nature of the village is shaped by the straight roads and plot by plot development</p> <p>Estates are groups of winding roads with cul-de-sacs so as not to be used as through routes</p> <p>Rural character of the village is partly as a result of long-term planting in private gardens</p> <p>Village has two listed buildings; a non-designated 16<sup>th</sup> Century manor house; Widmore Pond, which dates back to the Roman era; Old Copse – ancient semi-natural woodland</p> <p>Extensive network of public footpaths are an important part of the village's heritage</p> | Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013  |
| 11. Discourage pollution (incl emissions, effluent, noise, vibrations and light)  | Air, noise, soil, water and light pollution have not been identified as being a problem in Sonning Common  |  |
| 12. Maintain and enhance distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley   | Sonning Common is set in a rural area surrounded by wooded and agricultural countryside despite being one mile away from Reading to the south  |  |
| 13. Encourage high quality and inclusive design   | The two main character areas, 'plotlands' and estates, are interspersed across the village with 'plotlands' accounting for two-thirds of the area (but not of the number of houses as densities tend to be lower)  | Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement   |
| 14. Energy efficiency of buildings should be maximised through appropriate use of latest guidance / standard                              | <p>South Oxfordshire's average energy consumption of electricity and gas is significantly higher than for the region as a whole</p> <p>Information specific to Sonning Common not available</p>  | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)  |
| 15. Support the local economy   | <p>Many residents say that for the village centre to thrive, parking and traffic issues warrant further attention and investment</p> <p>The Village Hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park and this has to serve not only the Hall but also the majority of amenities in the village centre</p> <p>SODC in 2011 noted that of the four most sustainable larger villages in South Oxfordshire, Sonning Common was alone in not having a car park provided by SODC</p>  | <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> <p>SCNDP public meetings</p> <p>SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012</p> <p>SODC Car Parking Order 2011</p> |
| 16. Encourage decentralised energy and renewable resources  | <p>As of 2011 South Oxfordshire has achieved 70% of its total 2010 targets for installing renewable energy technology. However, generation of wind and biomass electricity is well behind the targets.</p> <p>Information specific to Sonning Common not available</p>   | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)  |

| Key Message   | Baseline Situation   | Evidence  |
|---|--|---|
| 17. Ensure sufficient waste facilities are provided   | The amount of household waste recycled in South Oxfordshire is high, however, in recent years the percentage of waste being recycled has dropped from over 68% to 65.2%<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available  | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)   |
| 18. Protect, improve and ensure sustainable use of the water environment  | Thames Water draft water resource management plan (2013) shows that the Thames Valley Region is seriously water stressed<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available   | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)   |
| 19. Ensure that surface water flooding is not exacerbated   | South Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2013) rates Sonning Common as low risk  |   |
| 20. Promote good access for all through more integrated transport solutions and by maximising healthier transport options such as walking and cycling | In South Oxfordshire nearly 50% of residents travel to work by car<br><br>Car ownership in Sonning Common is high<br><br>Residents are concerned about traffic volumes and speeding on arterial routes<br><br>New housing developments will lead to an increase of cars in the village with possible impacts on the road network and air quality in Sonning Common<br><br>Footpaths between Grove Road and Wood Lane encourage residents to walk as they afford quick and safe access.<br><br>There is only one public car park (32 spaces) and this has to serve the Village Hall and the majority of amenities in the village centre<br><br>Parking in several roads is particularly difficult at school times<br><br>Parking for bicycles in the village centre is limited to a small area near the supermarket<br><br>Residents have suggested cycle lanes along the arterial roads to facilitate safe usage of bicycles to access Reading and its suburbs | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)<br><br>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012<br><br>SCNDP public meetings<br><br>SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012 |
| 21. Ensure that the rights of way and their management are safeguarded  | Public footpaths within the village are well used, as are those to neighbouring villages   | ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012<br><br>SCNDP public meetings  |
| 22. Delivery agents should employ best practice consultation and stakeholder engagement   | Since its inception in 2012 the SCNDP Working Party has engaged extensively with the community, landowners and developers all of whom are invited to public meetings in the Village Hall<br><br>There have also been small group discussions with residents living close to potential development sites and meetings with individual landowners and developers   | Sonning Common magazine delivered to every household in the parish<br><br>Registers of attendees<br><br>SCNDP Communications Log  |

## Chapter Five – Sustainability Challenges

### Issues, problems and trends

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This chapter of the Scoping Report draws upon the Key Messages and baseline information described in earlier chapters in order to identify issues and problems relevant to Sonning Common. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 - Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014) identifies the sustainability challenges facing the district, including environmental, social and economic issues and some of these will apply also to Sonning Common.

In terms of environmental challenges, the SEA Directive states that an Environmental Report should include:

*“any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC (the Birds Directive) and 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive)”*

Issues of particular relevance to Sonning Common were identified by:

- Sonning Common Survey 2010
- Analyses of ONS statistics
- ORCC - SCNDP Housing and Housing Needs Survey Report (October 2012)
- SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report (November 2012)
- SCNDP consultations, workshops, presentations and displays held in 2012, 2013 and 2014 attended by over 500 residents
- Site Assessment, Village Character and Landscape Setting structured surveys completed by residents

Although consultation with residents is not necessarily as robust statistically as other evidence, it is an important part of the neighbourhood planning process.

The baseline data shows that Sonning Common is located in an economically successful district in a pleasant, rural environment. The village has one of the lowest levels of deprivation and higher than average levels of income. Unemployment levels are similar to those for the district as is the qualification mix of adults. It has, however, an ageing population with the high cost of housing likely to be preventing young people from remaining in the village.

The SODC Core Strategy requires Sonning Common to build 138 new homes before 2027. Additionally, there are needs for employment and recreational land. SODC identified 15 potential development sites in the SHLAA (Map 1.3). However, some of these sites have since been withdrawn by landowners. Residents living closest to the potential sites are increasingly concerned about the possible impact of the SHMA.

None of the SHLAA sites can be regarded as ‘previously developed’ sites, although SON 7 contains one existing large house and SON 8 is occupied by Kennylands Gymnastics, a private recreational facility. There are no other previously developed or brownfield sites within Sonning Common that are available for housing development.



Thus, 'greenfield' sites will have to be considered to accommodate the proposed 138 dwellings. Furthermore, some of these 'greenfield' sites may be close to or within the AONB.

As the village has a deficit in terms of the provision of recreational and amenity land, it may be appropriate to consider land within the AONB that may meet both the Core Strategy housing allocation and the additional recreational facilities for the community.

Site assessment surveys completed by residents as part of the initial NDP process have indicated a preference for developing sites within the AONB on the northern edge of the village, as opposed to other AONB and/or non-AONB sites which extend the village boundary elsewhere, and including both community recreational facilities as well as housing, close to Chiltern Edge School. Any such developments, however, would need to be discussed with and endorsed by The Chilterns Conservation Board.

Ultimately, community opinion could be divided as to the use of AONB for any form of development which in turn might hinder the SCNDP passing referendum.

The Core Strategy recommends a minimum housing density of 25 dwellings per net developable hectare (dph). However, mindful of the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB, sites which impact upon the AONB may need to be built at slightly lower densities. SCNDP discussions with developers on both density and, indeed, housing mix may lead to differences of opinion.

The proposed new homes are unlikely to meaningfully reduce market rate house prices given that demand for housing in the village and surrounding areas is high and likely to continue to outstrip supply. The SCNDP will, however, play a significant role in the delivery of the Core Strategy requirement for 40% affordable housing (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate – such as shared ownership).

Furthermore, the new supply of both market rate and affordable homes is intended to fill a gap at the lower end of the existing housing stock (notably one and two bedroom properties) and thus rebalance the housing mix in the village. This will lead to a more sustainable environment which will go some way towards meeting the projected needs of the Sonning Common community.

Sonning Common is currently a service centre for the surrounding villages through provision of education, health and retail facilities. There are unlikely to be any problems or issues relating to education and health as a result of the proposed additional housing and the retail services should benefit from the increased population. However, the limited parking availability in the village centre may provide a constraint.

The trend towards internet banking has already led to the closure of the remaining bank in the village. An alternative ATM service is available at the Post Office and, for the time being, an ATM is maintained at the former bank site. However, there is no longer a banking service which provides fully for the needs of the elderly and the less computer literate. Similarly, the trend towards internet shopping may impact on the sustainability of other local retail services.

As already mentioned, the village has a current lack of adequate public recreation facilities. The introduction of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in South Oxfordshire may go some way to providing assistance with funding for new facilities.

Sonning Common has no Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or local level designations. However, the value placed on rural assets such as the Millennium Green, Old Copse Wood and Widmore Pond has been amply demonstrated by the community's involvement in safeguarding their future. Much of the land in the surrounding area is arable and already intensively managed, which does present a threat to existing habitats and a risk to the creation of new habitats.

The village is not rich in heritage assets, but this makes residents all the more protective of those it does have, and of preserving its rural character, much of which is provided by the surrounding woodland and the long-term planting in private gardens. Minimum density requirements could impact adversely on the existing character of the village.

Residents have consistently commented that parking and traffic issues need to be resolved to help the village centre to thrive. Many of these problems are caused by unlawful behaviour by motorists, especially parking on pavements, which can also create difficulties for those with mobility issues due to restricted pavement width.

However, as mentioned elsewhere, the Village Hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park in the village centre. Furthermore the SODC Car Parking Order 2011 noted that of the four most sustainable larger villages in South Oxfordshire, Sonning Common was alone in not having a public car park provided by SODC.

There is concern too about traffic volumes and speeding on arterial routes. Car ownership in Sonning Common is high and across the district nearly 50% of residents travel to work by car. Given its rural nature, this seems unlikely to change.

The desire to increase road safety, discourage speeding and illegal parking could lead to unsightly traffic control measures with consequent negative impacts on village character.

Residents have suggested cycle lanes along the B481 to enable safe use of bicycles to Reading but financial constraints imposed on highways authorities would seem to rule this out in the short term.

Pollution, including emissions, effluent, water, noise and light, has not been identified by SODC as being a problem in Sonning Common. Similarly, there are no current issues regarding solid waste management in the village. As to flooding, Sonning Common is rated as low risk. While there are serious water resource issues in parts of the Thames Valley region, Sonning Common is not cited as one of the problem locations. The SCNDP will seek to maintain the status quo with regard to all emissions.

Identifying issues, problems and trends is key to deriving the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives which are described in the following chapter. The SCNDP will seek to ensure that development within the village takes account of those sustainability objectives. If development were to occur without the SCNDP in place then SODC would be responsible for ensuring that environmental conditions do not deteriorate through the implementation of policies within their current development plan and preparing a robust environment assessment of their emerging Local Plan.

There is no legal requirement for a neighbourhood development plan to be prepared for Sonning Common. If such a plan is not prepared, however, the responsibility for planning matters reverts to SODC. 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.

## Summary presentation

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The 'rolling table' at the end of this chapter has been expanded to incorporate a summary of the issues and problems relevant to Sonning Common. It is by no means exhaustive but it includes those areas where the SCNDP may contribute towards their solution or amelioration. The position of an item in the summary does not indicate its priority.

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   |
|--|---|--|---|
| 1. Presumption in favour of sustainable development  | Where possible promote 'win win' solutions that advance economic, social and environmental objectives together<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available  | South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)   | It may not always be possible to identify 'win win' solutions   |
| 2. Prioritise the development of previously developed sites                                    | None of the SON sites currently identified as available for development in SODC's SHLAA could be defined as previously developed land   |  | Given that Sonning Common is a rural village there are currently no available development sites that could be defined as previously developed land. Therefore, 'greenfield' sites will need to be considered in order to allocate land for the allotted 138 dwellings   |
| 3. Encourage efficient use of land by ensuring appropriate housing density (minimum 25dph net) | The evolution of Sonning Common since the early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century has resulted in a broad spectrum of densities  | SODC Core Strategy   | In order to maintain and enhance the character of the AONB, some sites within and close to the AONB may need to be built at slightly lower densities than the 25 dph minimum. There is scope for this in the Core Strategy policy. However, a strong justification will be needed   |
| 4. Improve housing provision   | Affordability is a serious problem for South Oxfordshire. Lower end house prices are over ten times higher than lower end incomes<br><br>The South Oxfordshire Local Plan can only be expected to deliver a small proportion of the need for affordable housing<br><br>Average house prices in Sonning Common are 22% higher than Oxfordshire and 33% higher than Reading<br><br>Affordable housing ranks as the most important housing need in Sonning Common. Lack of it restricts residents from moving within the village, forces others to leave and prevents families from living near each other<br><br>More affordable housing is needed to encourage young people to stay to prevent Sonning Common becoming a village of elderly people<br><br>Sonning Common's population numerically has remained static since 2001 Census, but over the same period has significantly aged | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)<br><br>South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Study 2011<br><br>Zoopla<br><br>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012 | The SCNDP will increase the supply of housing but this may not have any significant effect on prices given the continued high level of demand for private housing in the district.<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>The population in SC is trending to an imbalance between young and old and will impact on housing requirements and housing stock over the next 20 years |

| Key Message   | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   |
|---|---|--|---|
| 4. Improve housing provision continued  | <p>Sonning Common has an ageing population. The 65–74 mix is 22% more than for the overall District, while the 75+ mix is 60% more</p> <p>One bedroom households account for only 3.7% of households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC</p> <p>Two bedroom households account for 20.6% of households, compared with 23.7% for SODC and 27.9% for England</p> <p>In contrast the data in respect of three and four bedroom household shows a mix which is higher than SODC, SE England and England</p> <p>ORCC report highlighted that Supported housing needed to be addressed in the private and housing association sectors</p> | ONS and Census 2011  | <p>Imbalance of housing stock has implications for young and old wanting to stay or move into the village</p> <p>The ageing demographics suggest that specialist needs accommodation will need to be addressed as regards mobility and medical conditions</p>                                       |
| 5. Support and strengthen the role of larger villages as local service centres              | <p>Shops and facilities offer residents and neighbouring villages a wide variety of services. These outlets have contributed to village life for a number of years</p> <p>GP provision and associated facilities are excellent. Sonning Common Health Centre has 8500 patients. The dentistry has 3390 patients</p>   | <p>Initial SCNDP public meeting 28 April 2012</p> <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> | <p>The retail outlets could be vulnerable to increasing competition from larger centres and the trend towards online retail (witness recent closure of NatWest branch in the village)</p> <p>Given the ageing demographics of Sonning Common the access to services becomes ever more important</p> |
| 6. Ensure new development is accompanied by necessary infrastructure to support communities | There is a lack of adequate sports and recreation facilities for the community  | <p>SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2008</p> <p>SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2011</p>                                     | Recent housing developments within Sonning Common have not been of an adequate size to be viable to contribute to local infrastructure and service provision through Section 106 agreements. The new CIL currently being introduced in South Oxfordshire should help to address this                |

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   |
|--|---|--|---|
| 7. Encourage the provision of and resist the loss of community facilities  | <p>The Village Hall, built when the population was c2000, is too small to fulfil the increasing demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century community. It has no committee or meeting rooms</p> <p>Sonning Common has no recreational facilities of its own for teenagers or adults</p>  | <p>SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2008</p> <p>SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2011</p> | <p>Inadequate facilities will struggle to contribute to a vibrant and healthy community</p>   |
| 8. Conserve and enhance natural beauty, in particular the Chilterns AONB   | <p>Sonning Common is bounded by the Chilterns AONB to the North, East and West</p> <p>It sits on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills within Character Area 10: Chilterns Plateau and Valleys</p> <p>This area has a strong structure of woods hedgerows and trees enclosing open arable fields</p> <p>Sonning Common is located on semi-enclosed dipslope. The dry valleys have helped to shape the elongated form of Sonning Common's built area</p> <p>The SPG highlights that semi-enclosed dipslope has high scenic quality and strong sense of place. Landscape sensitivity (extent to which landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character) is rated moderate by the SPG</p> <p>SPG says "special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape edges to settlements to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside</p> | <p>South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance (SPG)</p>                                 | <p>Although the built area is largely outside the AONB some potential sites lie within the AONB</p> <p>Most forms of new development will have an adverse effect on the AONB</p> <p>The adverse impacts may not be mitigated by the sustainability of a potential development site</p> <p>Reducing the urbanising influences of development on the surrounding countryside has a particular relevance for Sonning Common given the locations of the majority of the sites</p> <p>Opinion could be divided as to the use of AONB for any form of development which in turn might hinder the SCNDP passing referendum</p> |
| 9. Maintain and enhance biodiversity and Green infrastructure encouraging a net gain and ensuring there is no net loss | <p>There are no sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or local level designations</p> <p>Community helped to purchase Millennium Green, established a trust for its upkeep; assisted with purchase of Old Copse Wood and its transfer to The Woodland Trust</p> <p>Surroundings support a variety of habitats including woodland, open part-wooded habitats, hedge boundaries, grassland and agricultural land including a large element of arable</p>  | <p>Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014</p>   | <p>There are no sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or local level designations</p> <p>Much of the land is arable and is already intensively managed thus presenting a threat to existing habitats and a risk to creating new habitats</p>  |

| Key Message   | Baseline Situation   | Evidence  | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   |
|---|--|---|---|
| 10. Maintain and enhance the character of the built environment and in particular conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings | <p>Distinctive nature of the village is shaped by the straight roads and plot by plot development</p> <p>Estates are groups of winding roads with cul-de-sacs so as not to be used as through routes</p> <p>Rural character of the village is partly as a result of long-term planting in private gardens</p> <p>Village has two listed buildings; a non-designated 16<sup>th</sup> Century manor house; Widmore Pond, which dates back to the Roman era; Old Copse – ancient semi-natural woodland</p> <p>Extensive network of public footpaths are an important part of the village's heritage</p> | Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013   | <p>Most of the potential development sites are outside the existing built environment</p> <p>Minimum density requirements may adversely impact on the existing character of the village</p> <p>The community desire to increase road safety, discourage speeding and illegal parking could lead to unsightly traffic control measures</p> |
| 11. Discourage pollution (incl emissions, effluent, noise, vibrations and light)  | Air, noise, soil, water and light pollution have not been identified as being a problem in Sonning Common  |   | No issues identified  |
| 12. Maintain and enhance distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley   | Sonning Common is set in a rural area surrounded by wooded and agricultural countryside despite being one mile away from Reading to the south  |   | The allocation of 138 houses could erode the existing setting of the village  |
| 13. Encourage high quality and inclusive design   | The two main character areas, 'plotlands' and estates, are interspersed across the village with 'plotlands' accounting for two-thirds of the area (but not of the number of houses as densities tend to be lower)  | Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement        | New buildings in Sonning Common are generally built to a high quality   |
| 14. Energy efficiency of buildings should be maximised through appropriate use of latest guidance / standard                              | <p>South Oxfordshire's average energy consumption of electricity and gas is significantly higher than for the region as a whole</p> <p>Information specific to Sonning Common not available</p>  | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014) | Developers do not automatically adopt eco-friendly building techniques  |

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   |
|--|---|--|---|
| 15. Support the local economy  | <p>Many residents say that for the village centre to thrive, parking and traffic issues warrant further attention and investment</p> <p>The Village Hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park and this has to serve not only the Hall but also the majority of amenities in the village centre</p> <p>SODC in 2011 noted that of the four most sustainable larger villages in South Oxfordshire, Sonning Common was alone in not having a car park provided by SODC</p> | <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> <p>SCNDP public meetings</p> <p>SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012</p> <p>SODC Car Parking Order 2011</p> | <p>Many of the difficulties identified are as a result of unlawful behaviour by motorists</p> <p>However, the paucity of public car parks for a village the size of Sonning Common remains an issue</p>   |
| 16. Encourage decentralised energy and renewable resources               | <p>As of 2011 South Oxfordshire has achieved 70% of its total 2010 targets for installing renewable energy technology. However, generation of wind and biomass electricity is well behind the targets.</p> <p>Information specific to Sonning Common not available</p>  | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)  | Developers do not automatically adopt eco-friendly building techniques  |
| 17. Ensure sufficient waste facilities are provided                      | <p>The amount of household waste recycled in South Oxfordshire is high, however, in recent years the percentage of waste being recycled has dropped from over 68% to 65.2%</p> <p>Information specific to Sonning Common not available</p>  | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)  | No issues identified  |
| 18. Protect, improve and ensure sustainable use of the water environment | <p>Thames Water draft water resource management plan (2013) shows that the Thames Valley Region is seriously water stressed</p> <p>Information specific to Sonning Common not available</p>   | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)  | The proposals in the draft water resource management plan do not contain the most up to date housing projections for Oxfordshire contained in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014. These may cause more stress, but are not specific to Sonning Common |
| 19. Ensure that surface water flooding is not exacerbated                | South Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2013) rates Sonning Common as low risk   |  | No issues identified  |



| Key Message   | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)  |
|---|---|--|--|
| 20. Promote good access for all through more integrated transport solutions and by maximising healthier transport options such as walking and cycling | <p>In South Oxfordshire nearly 50% of residents travel to work by car</p> <p>Car ownership in Sonning Common is high</p> <p>Residents are concerned about traffic volumes and speeding on arterial routes</p> <p>New housing developments will lead to an increase of cars in the village with possible impacts on the road network and air quality in Sonning Common</p> <p>Footpaths between Grove Road and Wood Lane encourage residents to walk as they afford quick and safe access.</p> <p>There is only one public car park (32 spaces) and this has to serve the Village Hall and the majority of amenities in the village centre</p> <p>Parking in several roads is particularly difficult at school times</p> <p>Parking for bicycles in the village centre is limited to a small area near the supermarket</p> <p>Residents have suggested cycle lanes along the arterial roads to facilitate safe usage of bicycles to access Reading and its suburbs</p> | <p>SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)</p> <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> <p>SCNDP public meetings</p> <p>SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012</p> | <p>Given the rural nature of South Oxfordshire car usage is likely to remain high especially as few of the development sites are in the built area of the village</p> <p>Many motorists park illegally in the village centre</p> <p>Cycle lanes along the B481 to access Reading and its suburbs seem unlikely given the nature of the existing highway and current financial constraints imposed on local highway authorities</p> |
| 21. Ensure that the rights of way and their management are safeguarded  | <p>Public footpaths within the village are well used, as are those to neighbouring villages</p>   | <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> <p>SCNDP public meetings</p>  | <p>Parking on pavements especially in the village centre is an ongoing issue</p>   |
| 22. Delivery agents should employ best practice consultation and stakeholder engagement   | <p>Since its inception in 2012 the SCNDP Working Party has engaged extensively with the community, landowners and developers all of whom are invited to public meetings in the Village Hall</p> <p>There have also been small group discussions with residents living close to potential development sites and meetings with individual landowners and developers</p>   | <p>Sonning Common magazine delivered to every household in the parish</p> <p>Registers of attendees</p> <p>SCNDP Communications Log</p>  | <p>While the community acknowledges the many benefits of an NDP, residents closest to the potential development sites are increasingly concerned about the possible impact of the SHMA</p> <p>Discussions with some landowners and developers have led to differences of opinion on density and housing mix</p>  |

# Chapter Six – Sustainability Appraisal

## Next steps

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This final chapter of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report considers how we move forward to the next phase, which includes Stage B of the SEA process (Figure 2.1, Chapter Two). It summarises how the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives are consistent with those of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014), and also how they address any other plans that affect Sonning Common. It concludes the report by proposing how we would test the emerging policies and site allocations in our neighbourhood development plan against our sustainability objectives.

The sustainability challenges identified in the previous chapter, which stemmed from our review of relevant policies, previous consultation and baseline information, form the basis of the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives as described in the ‘rolling’ table at the end of the chapter.

## Sustainability objectives

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Table 6.1 below provides a list of the 22 sustainability objectives which we use to assess our emerging neighbourhood development plan and illustrates how the key messages have been captured.

In order to check that the district-wide sustainability objectives contained within the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014) have been considered, Table 6.2 below cross-references corresponding SODC Objectives against those identified for the SCNDP. It can be seen that whilst some of the SCNDP Objectives are specific to Sonning Common others are quite broad in their terms of reference. The SODC Sustainability Objectives are shown in full at Appendix 3.

Of the 17 SODC Objectives, 13 are covered within the objectives formulated for the SCNDP. The four outstanding SODC Objectives (13, 14, 15 and 16) which include employment and more specifically Science Vale, the development of a skilled workforce and tourism have a perspective more befitting of a town, whilst tourism is not especially relevant to Sonning Common.

Additionally, our objectives are reviewed in relation to the environmental issues listed within Annex 1 of the SEA Directive (Table 6.3).

| Key Messages | SCNDP Sustainability Objectives |  |
|--------------|---------------------------------|--|
| KM 1         | 1                               | Plan positively for growth with a presumption in favour of sustainable development.  |
| KM 2         | 2                               | Where possible, promote the use of previously developed land prior to the use of 'greenfield' land.  |
| KM 3         | 3                               | Promote the efficient use of land by ensuring that housing is developed at an appropriate density (minimum 25 dwellings per net developable hectare).  |
| KM 4         | 4                               | Improve housing provision by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e) providing a minimum of 138 new dwellings</li> <li>f) increasing the amount of lower value (one and two bedroom) properties</li> <li>g) delivering a minimum of 40% of new homes as affordable housing (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate</li> <li>h) encouraging the provision of specialist and/or appropriate accommodation for older residents</li> </ul> |
| KMs 5 & 15   | 5                               | Maintain and enhance the existing retail and services offer in the village centre.   |
| KMs 5 & 15   | 6                               | Ensure new developments are well connected to the village centre and amenities by creating new footpaths and/or cycle paths and improving existing accessibility.  |
| KMs 5 & 15   | 7                               | Plan and promote additional parking solutions and resist the loss of existing parking within the village centre.   |
| KMs 5 & 15   | 8                               | Maintain and enhance the existing public transport links to the village centre.  |
| KM 6         | 9                               | Ensure developments allocated and promoted through the SCNDP are viable and allow for contributions to be made to local infrastructure and facilities.   |
| KM 7         | 10                              | Promote the development of new and improvement of existing community facilities which will contribute to community cohesion and improve people's health and well-being. Resist the loss of existing community facilities.  |
| KM 8         | 11                              | Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and create strong landscape edges to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside.  |
| KM 9         | 12                              | Maintain and enhance biodiversity by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) improving where possible existing habitats and creating new wildlife habitats</li> <li>d) conserving and enhancing existing wildlife corridors and incorporating them into new developments, where appropriate.</li> </ul>   |
| KM 10        | 13                              | Plan and promote new developments that reflect the rural character of the village and conserve and enhance the heritage assets in the SCNDP designated area.   |
| KM 11        | 14                              | Reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds especially water, soil, and noise pollution.  |
| KM 12        | 15                              | Conserve and enhance Sonning Common's countryside setting.   |
| KMs 10 & 13  | 16                              | Plan and promote new development that is of a high quality, reflects the local distinctiveness of Sonning Common and is inclusive to all.  |
| KMs 14 & 16  | 17                              | Encourage the adoption of sustainable energy solutions in all new development.   |
| KM 17        | 18                              | Seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the re-use of waste through recycling, compost or energy recovery.   |
| KMs 18 & 19  | 19                              | Protect and improve sustainable use of the water environment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c) encouraging the use of measures to minimise potable water demand, as well as reducing surface water run-off</li> <li>d) encouraging the use of SUDs to control surface water run-off.</li> </ul>  |
| KM 20        | 20                              | Ensure new developments prioritise on-site facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (including secure cycle parking) and facilitate safe access to public transport and village amenities.  |
| KM 21        | 21                              | Maintain and enhance existing rights of way and encourage new developments to link into these footpaths.   |
| KM 22        | 22                              | Ensure that the community, landowners/developers and key stakeholders are involved constructively in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.  |

Table 6.1: SCNDP Sustainability Objectives and associated Key Messages

| SCNDP Sustainability Objectives |  | Corresponding SODC Sustainability Objectives |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 1                               | Plan positively for growth with a presumption in favour of sustainable development.  | Objective 1                                  |
| 2                               | Where possible, promote the use of previously developed land prior to the use of 'greenfield' land.  | Objective 8                                  |
| 3                               | Promote the efficient use of land by ensuring that housing is developed at an appropriate density (minimum 25 dph net).  | Objective 8                                  |
| 4                               | Improve housing provision by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) providing a minimum of 138 new dwellings</li> <li>b) increasing the amount of lower value (one and two bedroom) properties</li> <li>c) delivering a minimum of 40% of new homes as affordable housing (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate)</li> <li>d) encouraging the provision of specialist and/or appropriate accommodation for older residents.</li> </ul> | Objective 1                                  |
| 5                               | Maintain and enhance the existing retail and services offer in the village centre.   | Objective 3                                  |
| 6                               | Ensure new developments are well connected to the village centre and amenities by creating new footpaths and/or cycle paths and improving existing accessibility.  | Objective 3                                  |
| 7                               | Plan and promote additional parking solutions and resist the loss of existing parking within the village centre.   | Objective 3                                  |
| 8                               | Maintain and enhance the existing public transport links to the village centre.  | Objective 3                                  |
| 9                               | Ensure developments allocated and promoted through the SCNDP are viable and allow for contributions to be made to local infrastructure and facilities.   | Objectives 1 and 3                           |
| 10                              | Promote the development of new and improvement of existing community facilities which will contribute to community cohesion and improve people's health and well-being. Resist the loss of existing community facilities.  | Objective 4                                  |
| 11                              | Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and create strong landscape edges to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside.  | Objective 8                                  |
| 12                              | Maintain and enhance biodiversity by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) improving where possible existing habitats and creating new wildlife habitats</li> <li>b) conserving and enhancing existing wildlife corridors and incorporating them into new developments, where appropriate.</li> </ul>   | Objective 7                                  |
| 13                              | Plan and promote new developments that reflect the rural character of the village and conserve and enhance the heritage assets in the SCNDP designated area.   | Objective 9                                  |
| 14                              | Reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds especially water, soil, and noise pollution.  | Objective 5                                  |
| 15                              | Conserve and enhance Sonning Common's countryside setting.   | Objective 8                                  |
| 16                              | Plan and promote new development that is of a high quality, reflects the local distinctiveness of Sonning Common and is inclusive to all.  | Objectives 1 and 9                           |
| 17                              | Encourage the adoption of sustainable energy solutions in all new development.   | Objective 10                                 |
| 18                              | Seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the re-use of waste through recycling, compost or energy recovery.   | Objective 12                                 |
| 19                              | Protect and improve sustainable use of the water environment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) encouraging the use of measures to minimise potable water demand, as well as reducing surface water run-off</li> <li>b) encouraging the use of SUDs to control surface water run-off.</li> </ul>  | Objectives 10 and 11                         |
| 20                              | Ensure new developments prioritise on-site facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (including secure cycle parking) and facilitate safe access to public transport and village amenities.  | Objectives 2 and 6                           |
| 21                              | Maintain and enhance existing rights of way and encourage new developments to link into these footpaths.   | Objectives 3 and 6                           |
| 22                              | Ensure that the community, landowners/developers and key stakeholders are involved constructively in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.  | Objective 17                                 |

Table 6.2: SCNDP Sustainability Objectives versus SODC Sustainability Objectives

One of the key reasons for preparing a sustainability appraisal alongside our neighbourhood development plan is to ensure we consider the environmental criteria in the SEA Directive. Table 6.3 below indicates how the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives relate to the environmental issues listed in Annex 1 of the SEA Directive.

| SEA Directive issue             | SCNDP Sustainability Objectives         |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Biodiversity, fauna and flora   | 12,                                     |
| Human population                | 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 20, 21, 22 |
| Human Health                    | 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 20, 21        |
| Soil                            | 12, 14                                  |
| Water                           | 14, 19                                  |
| Air quality and climate factors | 6, 8, 14, 17                            |
| Material assets                 | 5, 6, 10, 18                            |
| Cultural heritage               | 13, 16                                  |
| Landscape                       | 2, 3, 11, 15                            |

**Table 6.3: SCNDP Sustainability Objectives and SEA Directive issues**

## Sustainability assessment

The site assessment criteria (Table 6.4) were informed by our research of criteria used in other plans. Our main sources of influence were the SODC SHLAA, Woodcote NDP, and the Harborough District Council Site Allocation Plan Site Methodology, but we also examined other respected planning sources in addition to recognition of key local issues arising from SCNDP public workshops.

| SCNDP Site assessment criteria |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1                              | Is the site available for development within 1 - 5 years  |
| 2                              | Is the site available for development within 1 - 10 years   |
| 3                              | Is the site available for development within 15 years   |
| 4                              | Is the site highly sensitive environmentally or ecologically?   |
| 5                              | Is the site a 'greenfield' site?  |
| 6                              | Are there tree preservation orders?   |
| 7                              | Is the site of archaeological interest?   |
| 8                              | Does the site contain or is it within the setting of any heritage assets?   |
| 9                              | Is the land graded 3a, or above for agriculture? (SODC map gives whole grades only)                                       |
| 10                             | Does the site have any infrastructure deficiencies?   |
| 11                             | Is the site particularly sensitive from a landscape (AONB) standpoint?  |
| 12                             | Is the site free from flood risk? (including significant drainage problems)   |
| 13                             | Is the site readily accessible to the highway network?  |
| 14                             | Are community healthcare facilities reasonably accessible? (including by bus)   |
| 15                             | Is a bus stop reasonably accessible?  |
| 16                             | Are shops reasonably accessible? (including by bus)   |
| 17                             | Are community facilities reasonably accessible? (including by bus)  |
| 18                             | Are local schools reasonably accessible?  |
| 19                             | Will the local traffic impact be acceptable? (including traffic access & over-spill parking)                              |
| 20                             | On how many sides does the site adjoin existing housing or development?   |
| 21                             | Are there natural, or other obvious boundaries to the site?   |
| 22                             | Can this site take a mixed development of houses? (including any restraint on ridge heights)                              |
| 23                             | Would development of this site risk a significant trend toward merging with another settlement?                           |
| 24                             | Could development of this site be appropriate in scale, density & character with the existing settlement?                 |
| 25                             | Is development compatible with existing or proposed neighbouring uses?  |
| 26                             | Would the development support or undermine the vitality and viability of the village centre? (protect key routes)         |
| 27                             | Does site provide publicly accessible open space, green infrastructure, recreation facilities or public right of way?     |
| 28                             | Landscape setting: looking from outside would development have a significant adverse effect on surrounding area?          |
| 29                             | Does site offer particular scope for provision of straightforward Amenity Greenspace?                                     |
| 30                             | Does site offer scope for development of appropriate B1 office space?   |
| 31                             | Does site offer particular scope for development of Community/Sports Hall/Changing Rooms with parking and playing fields? |
| 32                             | Does site offer particular scope for development of schools, shops or healthcare etc facilities?                          |

Table 6.4: Site assessment criteria

We adopted these criteria to assess the potential development sites within the designated SCNDP area (Map 1.3, Chapter One) at the start of the plan making process. This was done prior to the preparation of the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives. In order to make sure the criteria used to assess the sites cover the sustainability issues in Sonning Common, the criteria have been cross-referenced against our 22 sustainability objectives in Table 6.5 below.

The table demonstrates the level of congruence between the SCNDP Sustainability Objectives and the site assessment criteria.

|    | <b>SCNDP Sustainability Objectives (abbreviated)</b>  | <b>Site assessment criteria (Table 6.4)</b> |
|----|---|---|
| 1  | Plan positively for growth in favour of sustainable development.  | All assessment criteria                     |
| 2  | Where possible, promote the use of previously developed land.   | 4, 5, 9, 11, 13, 21, 23-28, 30-32           |
| 3  | Promote the efficient use of land.  | 10, 22, 24, 26, 28                          |
| 4  | Improve housing provision.  | 1, 2, 3, 22                                 |
| 5  | Maintain and enhance the village centre retail and services.  | 15, 16, 17, 19, 26                          |
| 6  | Ensure new developments are well connected to the village centre by improving accessibility.  | 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26                  |
| 7  | Plan and promote additional parking solutions within the village centre.  | 26, 32                                      |
| 8  | Maintain and enhance the existing public transport links to the village centre.   | 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 26                      |
| 9  | Ensure developments are viable and contribute to local infrastructure/facilities.   |   |
| 10 | Promote community facilities which will contribute to and improve community cohesion, health and well-being. Resist the loss of existing community facilities.                            | 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 26, 29, 31, 32          |
| 11 | Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB.  | 4, 5, 6, 11, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29             |
| 12 | Maintain and enhance biodiversity.  | 4, 5, 6, 11, 21, 27, 28, 29                 |
| 13 | Plan and promote new developments that reflect the rural character of the village and conserve and enhance the heritage assets in the SCNDP designated area.                              | 4, 6, 8, 11, 21, 23, 27, 28, 29             |
| 14 | Reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution.  | 4, 6, 11, 12, 14-18, 27, 28, 29             |
| 15 | Conserve and enhance Sonning Common's countryside setting.  | 4, 6, 11, 12, 14, 21, 23, 24, 26-29         |
| 16 | Promote new development that is of a high quality and is inclusive to all.  | 4, 8, 10-13, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27, 28         |
| 17 | Encourage the adoption of sustainable energy solutions in all new development.  |   |
| 18 | Seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the re-use of waste.  |   |
| 19 | Protect and improve sustainable use of the water environment.   | 12  |
| 20 | Ensure new developments prioritise on-site facilities for pedestrians and cyclists (including secure cycle parking) and facilitate safe access to public transport and village amenities. | 13-19, 26, 27, 29                           |
| 21 | Maintain and enhance existing rights of way and encourage new developments to link into these footpaths.  | 10, 27, 29                                  |
| 22 | Ensure that the community, landowners / developers and key stakeholders are involved constructively in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.   |   |

**Table 6.5: SCNDP Sustainability Objectives versus SCNDP Site Assessment Criteria**

In order that each of the sustainability objectives can be tested further against the site assessment criteria any gaps in the above table will be addressed during the Sustainability Appraisal.

As can be seen from the above table, our current site assessment criteria have not addressed the sustainability objectives in their entirety. In particular, Objectives 9, 17, 18 and 22 have not been assessed. In the case of Objectives 9, 17, and 18 this is because it is not reasonable to make a detailed assessment prior to developers' specific proposals being available and therefore these will be reviewed later. A general assessment may be possible once the draft NDP and its preferred development sites are known. With regard to Objective 22, there has already been considerable dialogue between the SCNDP Working Party and key stakeholders, including the residential community and the landowners/developers. This is an ongoing process and will continue as the draft plan is developed.

Each of the development proposals in the emerging plan will be assessed for compliance with the sustainability objectives to see how well they perform. This will give us an indication of the 'sustainability' of each option. The results of this exercise will be used to inform the SCNDP. However, in deciding which of the development proposals to adopt subsequent to this assessment, the SCNDP Working Party will use their judgement in the light of their knowledge of other factors to derive the final proposals within the neighbourhood development plan.

A small focus group will prepare a Sustainability Appraisal framework, which will enable different options to be considered for every SCNDP Sustainability Objective in respect of each site and/or policy. This would then be audited by a separate team to check that there is no bias by those directly affected by specific development proposals.

The following provides an example of an assessment question and the effects that might occur with one or more options.

| SCNDP Sustainability Objective                            | Effects   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Assessment question<br>What will be the effect of:        | Option 1: Allocate sites for 138 homes as per SHLAA                                   | Option 2: Allocate sites for 138 homes plus reserve sites for SHMA |
| Prioritising use of previously developed land             | Not applicable as no previously developed land available                              | As for Option 1  |
| Encouraging the efficient use of land                     | Sites close to/within AONB may need to be built at lower densities than 25dph minimum | As for Option 1 but situation exacerbated                          |
| Continue through the list of Sustainability Objectives... |   |  |



The results of the assessment will be compiled in a Sustainability Appraisal Report, which will incorporate elements of an environmental report and other relevant matters, such as effects on the economy. The sustainability appraisal will inform the SCNDP on relevant issues and the impacts of plan policies. While the emphasis will be on establishing positive effects of any option, mitigation of negative impacts will also be considered.

The assessment will indicate the most sustainable options and will therefore be a useful tool in developing the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan but, as previously mentioned, it serves to inform rather than dictate which policies and options will shape the Plan itself.

The intention is to publish the Sustainability Appraisal Report alongside the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan during the consultation period(s). It should be considered as a 'living' document which is updated to reflect any changes to proposals contained within the Plan.

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges (issues, problems, trends)  | Sustainability Objectives   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Presumption in favour of sustainable development  | Where possible promote 'win win' solutions that advance economic, social and environmental objectives together<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available  | South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)   | It may not always be possible to identify 'win win' solutions   | Plan positively for growth with a presumption in favour of sustainable development  |
| 2. Prioritise the development of previously developed sites                                    | None of the SON sites currently identified as available for development in SODC's SHLAA could be defined as previously developed land   |  | Given that Sonning Common is a rural village there are currently no available development sites that could be defined as previously developed land. Therefore, 'greenfield' sites will need to be considered in order to allocate land for the allotted 138 dwellings   | Where possible, promote the use of previously developed land prior to the use of 'greenfield' land  |
| 3. Encourage efficient use of land by ensuring appropriate housing density (minimum 25dph net) | The evolution of Sonning Common since the early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century has resulted in a broad spectrum of densities  | SODC Core Strategy   | In order to maintain and enhance the character of the AONB, some sites within and close to the AONB may need to be built at slightly lower densities than the 25 dph minimum. There is scope for this in the Core Strategy policy. However, a strong justification will be needed   | Promote the efficient use of land by ensuring that housing is developed at an appropriate density (minimum 25dph net)   |
| 4. Improve housing provision   | Affordability is a serious problem for South Oxfordshire. Lower end house prices are over ten times higher than lower end incomes<br><br>The South Oxfordshire Local Plan can only be expected to deliver a small proportion of the need for affordable housing<br><br>Average house prices in Sonning Common are 22% higher than Oxfordshire and 33% higher than Reading<br><br>Affordable housing ranks as the most important housing need in Sonning Common. Lack of it restricts residents from moving within the village, forces others to leave and prevents families from living near each other<br><br>More affordable housing is needed to encourage young people to stay to prevent Sonning Common becoming a village of elderly people<br><br>Sonning Common's population numerically has remained static since 2001 Census, but over the same period has significantly aged | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)<br><br>South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Study 2011<br><br>Zoopla<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012 | The SCNDP will increase the supply of housing but this may not have any significant effect on prices given the continued high level of demand for private housing in the district.<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>The population in SC is trending to an imbalance between young and old and will impact on housing requirements and housing stock over the next 20 years | Provide a minimum of 138 new dwellings<br><br><br><br><br><br>Increase the amount of lower value (one and two bedroom) properties<br><br><br><br><br><br>Deliver a minimum of 40% of new homes as affordable housing (social rented, affordable rented and intermediate – such as shared ownership) |

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   | Sustainability Objectives   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| 4. Improve housing provision cont.   | <p>Sonning Common has an ageing population. The 65–74 mix is 22% more than for the overall District, while the 75+ mix is 60% more</p> <p>One bedroom households account for only 3.7% of households, as compared to 7.7% for SODC</p> <p>Two bedroom households account for 20.6% of households, compared with 23.7% for SODC and 27.9% for England</p> <p>In contrast the data in respect of three and four bedroom household shows a mix which is higher than SODC, SE England and England</p> <p>ORCC report highlighted that Supported housing needed to be addressed in the private and housing association sectors</p> | ONS and Census 2011  | <p>Imbalance of housing stock has implications for young and old wanting to stay or move into the village</p> <p>The ageing demographics suggest that specialist needs accommodation will need to be addressed as regards mobility and medical conditions</p>                                       | Encourage the provision of specialist and/or appropriate accommodation for older residents  |
| 5. Support and strengthen the role of larger villages as local service centres | <p>Shops and facilities offer residents and neighbouring villages a wide variety of services. These outlets have contributed to village life for a number of years</p> <p>GP provision and associated facilities are excellent. Sonning Common Health Centre has 8500 patients. The dentistry has 3390 patients</p>   | <p>Initial SCNDP public meeting 28 April 2012</p> <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> | <p>The retail outlets could be vulnerable to increasing competition from larger centres and the trend towards online retail (witness recent closure of NatWest branch in the village)</p> <p>Given the ageing demographics of Sonning Common the access to services becomes ever more important</p> | <p>Maintain and enhance the existing retail and services offer in the village centre</p> <p>Ensure new developments are well connected to the village centre and amenities by creating new footpaths and/or cycle paths and improving existing accessibility</p> <p>Plan and promote additional parking solutions and resist the loss of existing parking within the village centre</p> <p>Maintain and enhance the existing public transport links to the village centre</p> |

| Key Message   | Baseline Situation   | Evidence  | Sustainability Challenges (issues, problems, trends)   | Sustainability Objectives  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| 6. Ensure new development is accompanied by necessary infrastructure to support communities | There is a lack of adequate sports and recreation facilities for the community   | SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2008<br><br>SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2011 | Recent housing developments within Sonning Common have not been of an adequate size to be viable to contribute to local infrastructure and service provision through Section 106 agreements. The new CIL currently being introduced in South Oxfordshire should help to address this   | Ensure developments allocated and promoted through the SCNDP are viable and allow for contributions to be made to local infrastructure and facilities  |
| 7. Encourage the provision of and resist the loss of community facilities                   | The Village Hall, built when the population was c2000, is too small to fulfil the increasing demands of a 21 <sup>st</sup> century community. It has no committee or meeting rooms<br><br>Sonning Common has no recreational facilities of its own for teenagers or adults   | SODC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment 2008<br><br>SODC Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy 2011 | Inadequate facilities will struggle to contribute to a vibrant and healthy community   | Promote the development of new and improvement of existing community facilities which will contribute to community cohesion and improve people's health and well-being. Resist the loss of existing community facilities |
| 8. Conserve and enhance natural beauty, in particular the Chilterns AONB                    | Sonning Common is bounded by the Chilterns AONB to the North, East and West<br><br>It sits on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills within Character Area 10: Chilterns Plateau and Valleys<br><br>This area has a strong structure of woods hedgerows and trees enclosing open arable fields<br><br>Sonning Common is located on semi-enclosed dipslope. The dry valleys have helped to shape the elongated form of Sonning Common's built area | South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Guidance (SPG)                                 | Although the built area is largely outside the AONB some potential sites lie within the AONB<br><br>Most forms of new development will have an adverse effect on the AONB<br><br>The adverse impacts may not be mitigated by the sustainability of a potential development site<br><br>Reducing the urbanising influences of development on the surrounding countryside has a particular relevance for Sonning Common given the locations of the majority of the sites | Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Chilterns AONB and create strong landscape edges to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside   |

| Key Message   | Baseline Situation   | Evidence  | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   | Sustainability Objectives  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| 8. Conserve and enhance natural beauty, in particular the Chilterns AONB continued  | <p>The SPG highlights that semi-enclosed dipslope has high scenic quality and strong sense of place. Landscape sensitivity (extent to which landscape can accommodate change without unacceptable detrimental effects on its character) is rated moderate by the SPG</p> <p>SPG says “special attention should be paid to creating strong landscape edges to settlements to reduce the urbanising influences of development on adjacent countryside</p>  |   | Opinion could be divided as to the use of AONB for any form of development which in turn might hinder the SCNDP passing referendum  |  |
| 9. Maintain and enhance biodiversity and Green infrastructure encouraging a net gain and ensuring there is no net loss                    | <p>There are no sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or local level designations</p> <p>Community helped to purchase Millennium Green, established a trust for its upkeep; assisted with purchase of Old Copse Wood and its transfer to The Woodland Trust</p> <p>Surroundings support a variety of habitats including woodland, open part-wooded habitats, hedge boundaries, grassland and agricultural land including a large element of arable</p>   | Ecological Survey, Sonning Common, 2014                       | <p>There are no sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation or local level designations</p> <p>Much of the land is arable and is already intensively managed thus presenting a threat to existing habitats and a risk to creating new habitats</p>  | <p>Improve where possible existing habitats and create new wildlife habitats</p> <p>Conserve and enhance existing wildlife corridors and incorporate them into new developments, where appropriate</p> |
| 10. Maintain and enhance the character of the built environment and in particular conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings | <p>Distinctive nature of the village is shaped by the straight roads and plot by plot development</p> <p>Estates are groups of winding roads with cul-de-sacs so as not to be used as through routes</p> <p>Rural character of the village is partly as a result of long-term planting in private gardens</p> <p>Village has two listed buildings; a non-designated 16<sup>th</sup> Century manor house; Widmore Pond, which dates back to the Roman era; Old Copse – ancient semi-natural woodland</p> <p>Extensive network of public footpaths are an important part of the village’s heritage</p> | Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement 2013 | <p>Most of the potential development sites are outside the existing built environment</p> <p>Minimum density requirements may adversely impact on the existing character of the village</p> <p>The community desire to increase road safety, discourage speeding and illegal parking could lead to unsightly traffic control measures</p> | Plan and promote new developments that reflect the rural character of the village and conserve and enhance the heritage assets in the SCNDP designated area  |
| 11. Discourage pollution (incl emissions, effluent, noise, vibrations and light)  | Air, noise, soil, water and light pollution have not been identified as being a problem in Sonning Common  |   | No issues identified  | Reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds especially water, air, soil, and noise pollution  |

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation   | Evidence  | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)  | Sustainability Objectives  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| 12. Maintain and enhance distinctive character of the River Thames and its valley                            | Sonning Common is set in a rural area surrounded by wooded and agricultural countryside despite being one mile away from Reading to the south  |   | The allocation of 138 houses could erode the existing setting of the village   | Conserve and enhance Sonning Common's countryside setting  |
| 13. Encourage high quality and inclusive design  | The two main character areas, 'plotlands' and estates, are interspersed across the village with 'plotlands' accounting for two-thirds of the area (but not of the number of houses as densities tend to be lower)  | Sonning Common Character Assessment and Design Statement  | New buildings in Sonning Common are generally built to a high quality  | Plan and promote new development that is of a high quality, reflects the local distinctiveness of Sonning Common and is inclusive to all   |
| 14. Energy efficiency of buildings should be maximised through appropriate use of latest guidance / standard | South Oxfordshire's average energy consumption of electricity and gas is significantly higher than for the region as a whole<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available   | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)   | Developers do not automatically adopt eco-friendly building techniques   | Encourage the adoption of sustainable energy solutions in all new development  |
| 15. Support the local economy  | Many residents say that for the village centre to thrive, parking and traffic issues warrant further attention and investment<br><br>The Village Hall car park (32 spaces) is the only public car park and this has to serve not only the Hall but also the majority of amenities in the village centre<br><br>SODC in 2011 noted that of the four most sustainable larger villages in South Oxfordshire, Sonning Common was alone in not having a car park provided by SODC | ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012<br><br>SCNDP public meetings<br><br>SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012<br><br>SODC Car Parking Order 2011 | Many of the difficulties identified are as a result of unlawful behaviour by motorists<br><br>However, the paucity of public car parks for a village the size of Sonning Common remains an issue | Maintain and enhance the existing retail and services offer in the village centre<br><br>Ensure new developments are well connected to the village centre and amenities by creating new footpaths and/or cycle paths and improving existing accessibility<br><br>Plan and promote additional parking solutions and resist the loss of existing parking within the village centre<br><br>Maintain and enhance the existing public transport links to the village centre |

| Key Message  | Baseline Situation  | Evidence  | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)   | Sustainability Objectives   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 16. Encourage decentralised energy and renewable resources               | As of 2011 South Oxfordshire has achieved 70% of its total 2010 targets for installing renewable energy technology. However, generation of wind and biomass electricity is well behind the targets.<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014) | Developers do not automatically adopt eco-friendly building techniques  | Encourage the adoption of sustainable energy solutions in all new development                                     |
| 17. Ensure sufficient waste facilities are provided                      | The amount of household waste recycled in South Oxfordshire is high, however, in recent years the percentage of waste being recycled has dropped from over 68% to 65.2%<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available                             | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014) | No issues identified  | Seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the re-use of waste through recycling, compost or energy recovery |
| 18. Protect, improve and ensure sustainable use of the water environment | Thames Water draft water resource management plan (2013) shows that the Thames Valley Region is seriously water stressed<br><br>Information specific to Sonning Common not available  | SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014) | The proposals in the draft water resource management plan do not contain the most up to date housing projections for Oxfordshire contained in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014. These may cause more stress, but are not specific to Sonning Common | Encourage the use of measures to minimise potable water demand, as well as reducing surface water run-off         |
| 19. Ensure that surface water flooding is not exacerbated                | South Oxfordshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2013) rates Sonning Common as low risk   |   | No issues identified  | Encourage the use of SUDS to control surface water run-off  |

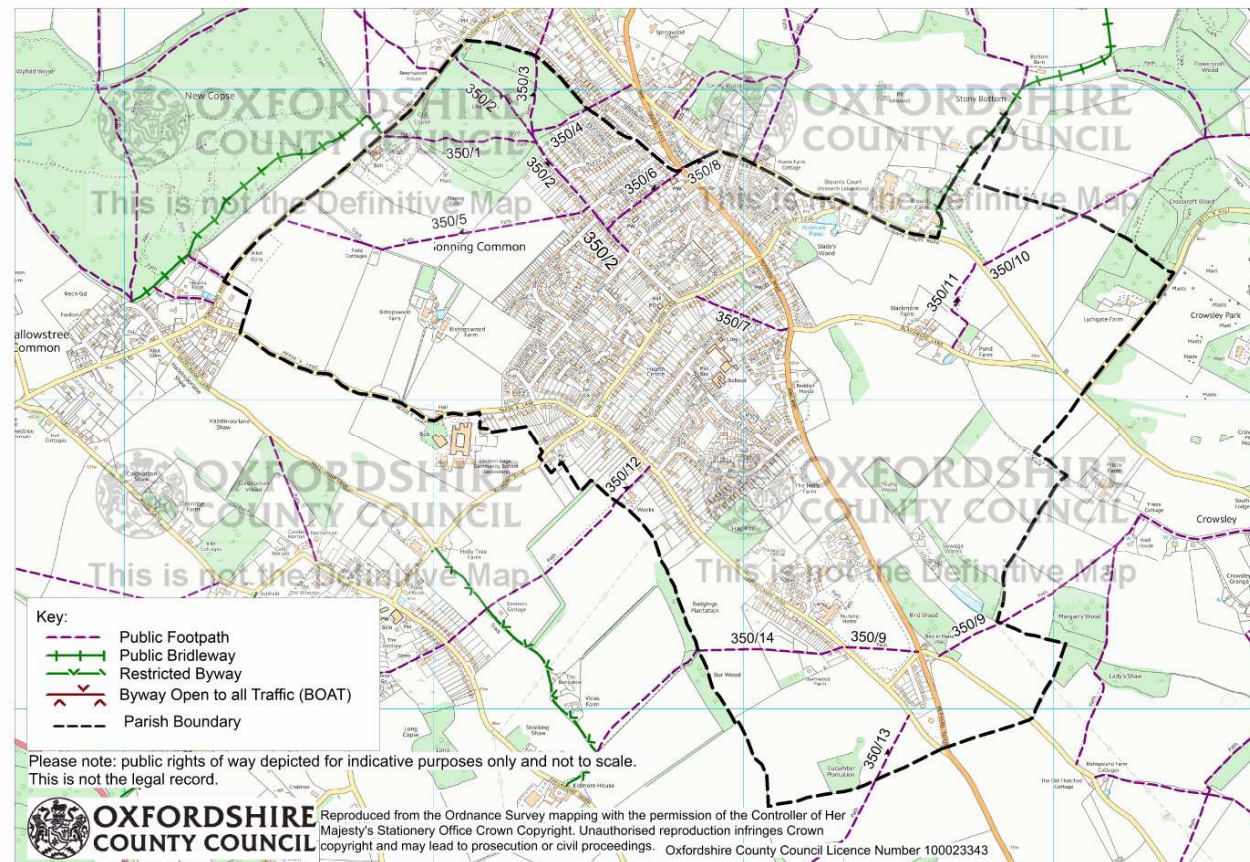
| Key Message   | Baseline Situation  | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)  | Sustainability Objectives   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| 20. Promote good access for all through more integrated transport solutions and by maximising healthier transport options such as walking and cycling | <p>In South Oxfordshire nearly 50% of residents travel to work by car</p> <p>Car ownership in Sonning Common is high</p> <p>Residents are concerned about traffic volumes and speeding on arterial routes</p> <p>New housing developments will lead to an increase of cars in the village with possible impacts on the road network and air quality in Sonning Common</p> <p>Footpaths between Grove Road and Wood Lane encourage residents to walk as they afford quick and safe access.</p> <p>There is only one public car park (32 spaces) and this has to serve the Village Hall and the majority of amenities in the village centre</p> <p>Parking in several roads is particularly difficult at school times</p> <p>Parking for bicycles in the village centre is limited to a small area near the supermarket</p> <p>Residents have suggested cycle lanes along the arterial roads to facilitate safe usage of bicycles to access Reading and its suburbs</p> | <p>SOLP 2031 – Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (June 2014)</p> <p>ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012</p> <p>SCNDP public meetings</p> <p>SCNDP Traffic Task Group interim report 2012</p> | <p>Given the rural nature of South Oxfordshire car usage is likely to remain high especially as few of the development sites are in the built area of the village</p> <p>Many motorists park illegally in the village centre</p> <p>Cycle lanes along the B481 to access Reading and its suburbs seem unlikely given the nature of the existing highway and current financial constraints imposed on local highway authorities</p> | <p>Ensure new developments prioritise on-site facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, (including secure cycle parking) and facilitate safe access to public transport and village amenities.</p> |



| Key Message   | Baseline Situation   | Evidence   | Sustainability Challenges<br>(issues, problems, trends)  | Sustainability Objectives   |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| 21. Ensure that the rights of way and their management are safeguarded                  | Public footpaths within the village are well used, as are those to neighbouring villages   | ORCC – Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan Housing And Housing Needs Survey Report – October 2012<br><br>SCNDP public meetings     | Parking on pavements especially in the village centre is an ongoing issue  | Maintain and enhance existing rights of way and encourage new developments to link into these footpaths.  |
| 22. Delivery agents should employ best practice consultation and stakeholder engagement | Since its inception in 2012 the SCNDP Working Party has engaged extensively with the community, landowners and developers all of whom are invited to public meetings in the Village Hall<br><br>There have also been small group discussions with residents living close to potential development sites and meetings with individual landowners and developers | Sonning Common magazine delivered to every household in the parish<br><br>Registers of attendees<br><br>SCNDP Communications Log | While the community acknowledges the many benefits of an NDP, residents closest to the potential development sites are increasingly concerned about the possible impact of the SHMA<br><br>Discussions with some landowners and developers have led to differences of opinion on density and housing mix | Ensure that the community, landowners/developers and key stakeholders are involved constructively in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. |

# Appendix 1

## Sonning Common Public Rights of Way (Map) <sup>59</sup>



<sup>59</sup> Source: Recorded Public Rights of Way – OCC – Mar 2015

## Appendix 1 continued

### Sonning Common Public Rights of Way<sup>60</sup>

| Number | Status | Description   | Width | Conditions + Limitations | Remarks (non-conclusive information) |
|--------|--------|---|-------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1      | FP     | From the Rotherfield Peppard to Gallowstree Common road, opposite Rotherfield Peppard BR 28, near the W corner of Old Copse, leading E to FP 2 near the SE boundary of the Copse.   |       |                          |                                      |
| 2      | FP     | From the Rotherfield Peppard to Gallowstree Common road, SW of the Greyhound P.H., leading SE through Old Copse, passing FPs 3 and 1, continuing SE along Woodlands Road passing FPs 5 and 6 to Sedgewell Road opposite its junction with Baskerville Road. |       |                          |                                      |
| 3      | FP     | From Rotherfield Peppard FP 27 at the Rotherfield Peppard Parish boundary SW of Shiplake Bottom leading S past FP 4 to FP 2 near the SE boundary of Old Copse.  |       |                          |                                      |
| 4      | FP     | From Rotherfield Peppard FP 26 at the Rotherfield Peppard Parish boundary, at the E corner of Old Copse, leading WSW to FP 3 near the SE boundary of Old Copse.   |       |                          |                                      |
| 5      | FP     | From the Rotherfield Peppard to Gallowstree Common road (Horsepond Road), SW of Bishopswood School, leading ESE to Field Cottages and ENE to Woodlands Road.  |       |                          |                                      |
| 6      | FP     | From the S end of Shiplake Bottom, opposite FP 8, leading SW to Woodlands Road (FP 2).  |       |                          |                                      |
| 7      | FP     | From Wood Lane, E of the Post Office, leading SE across Grove Road and continuing SE and NE to the Reading road opposite Blackmore Lane.  |       |                          |                                      |
| 8      | FP     | From the Reading road at the junction of Shiplake Bottom and Gravel Hill leading NE to the Blounts Court Road road W of Home Farm Cottage and opposite Grove Road.  |       |                          |                                      |
| 9      | FP     | From Kennylands Road, opposite FP14, leading E to the Reading road at the Bird in Hand PH, continuing from Bishopsland Lane, S of Bird Wood, and leading NE to the Binfield Heath Parish boundary at its junction with Binfield Heath FP1.                  |       |                          |                                      |

<sup>60</sup> Source: Recorded Public Rights of Way – OCC – Mar 2015

# Appendix 1 continued

## Sonning Common Public Rights of Way continued

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| Number | Status | Description  | Width | Conditions + Limitations | Remarks (non-conclusive information) |
|--------|--------|--|-------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 10     | FP     | From the Rotherfield Peppard to Binfield Heath road (Blounts Court Road), E of Blountscourt Farm, leading NE to Harpsden FP 16 at the Harpsden Parish boundary W of Crosscroft Wood. |       |                          |                                      |
| 11     | FP     | From the Rotherfield Peppard to Binfield Heath road SE of Blountscourt Farm and opposite FP 10 leading generally SW, SE and SW to Blackmore Farm Cottages on Blackmore Lane.         |       |                          | Diversion Order 17.7.56.             |
| 12     | FP     | From Kennylands Road near Coopersfield leading SW to the Kidmore End Parish boundary at its junction with Kidmore End FP 10.   |       |                          |                                      |
| 13     | FP     | From Kennylands Road, 200m N of its junction with the Reading road, leading SW to the Kidmore End Parish boundary E of Cucumber Plantation at its junction with Kidmore End FP 11.   |       |                          |                                      |
| 14     | FP     | From Kennylands Road opposite FP 9 leading W to the Kidmore End Parish boundary at the N end of Bur Wood at its junction with Kidmore End FP 13.                                     |       |                          | Diverted pre-1968.                   |

## Appendix 2

### List of relevant plans and programmes supplied by SODC, April 2014

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1. South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (2012) (SODC)
2. South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (2006) (SODC)
3. South Oxfordshire Housing Strategy 2008-2011 (SODC)
4. South Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026 (SODC)
5. River Basin Management Plan for the Thames Region (2009) (EA)
6. The Thames Corridor Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (2008) (EA)
7. Cherwell, Thame and Wye Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (2008) (EA)
8. Oxfordshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan (March 2014)
9. Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment 2011 (OCC)
10. South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2009) (SODC & VOWH)
11. Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2030 (2011) (OCC)
12. Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan 2015 (OCC)
13. Oxfordshire Draft Rights of Way Management Plan 2014-2024 (2014) (OCC)
14. Village appraisals/design statements/parish plans (relevant parish council/community group)
15. Chilterns AONB Management Plan 2008-2013 (Draft plan published for 2014-2019, final plan scheduled to be published in spring 2014) (The Chilterns Conservation Board)

Added:

16. South Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SODC, July 2013)
17. South Oxfordshire Statement of Community Involvement (SODC, July 2006)
18. Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Final Report NTS (SODC, 2006)

Omitted:

19. Water Resources for the Future – A Strategy for the Thames Region (2004) (EA)
20. North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 (North Wessex Downs AONB Council of Partners)

## Appendix 3

### Proposed SODC Sustainability Objectives <sup>61</sup>

| Table 3. Proposed Sustainability Objectives |  |
|---|--|
| 1   | To help to provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home and in a decent environment supported by appropriate levels of infrastructure   |
| 2   | To help to create safe places for people to use and for businesses to operate, to reduce anti-social behaviour and reduce crime and the fear of crime.   |
| 3   | To improve accessibility for everyone to health, education, recreation, cultural, and community facilities and services.   |
| 4   | To maintain and improve people's health, well-being, and community cohesion and support voluntary, community, and faith groups.  |
| 5   | To reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds especially water, air, soil and noise pollution.   |
| 6   | To improve travel choice and accessibility, reduce the need to travel by car and shorten the length and duration of journeys.  |
| 7   | To conserve and enhance biodiversity   |
| 8   | To improve efficiency in land use and to conserve and enhance the district's open spaces and countryside in particular, those areas designated for their landscape importance, minerals, biodiversity and soil quality.  |
| 9   | To conserve and enhance the district's historic environment including archaeological resources and to ensure that new development is of a high quality design and reinforces local distinctiveness.  |
| 10  | To seek to address the causes and effects of climate change by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) securing sustainable building practices which conserve energy, water resources and materials;</li> <li>b) protecting, enhancing and improving our water supply where possible</li> <li>c) maximizing the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources; and</li> <li>d) ensuring that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change.</li> </ul> |
| 11  | To reduce the risk of, and damage from, flooding.  |
| 12  | To seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the reuse of waste through recycling, compost, or energy recovery.  |
| 13  | To assist in the development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) high and stable levels of employment and facilitating inward investment;</li> <li>b) a strong, innovative and knowledge-based economy that deliver high-value-added, sustainable, low-impact activities;</li> <li>c) small firms, particularly those that maintain and enhance the rural economy; and</li> <li>d) thriving economies in market towns and villages.</li> </ul>   |
| 14  | To support the development of Science Vale as an internationally recognised innovation and enterprise zone by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) attracting new high value businesses;</li> <li>b) supporting innovation and enterprise;</li> <li>c) delivering new jobs;</li> <li>d) supporting and accelerating the delivery of new homes; and</li> <li>e) developing and improving infrastructure across the Science Vale area.</li> </ul>  |
| 15  | To assist in the development of a skilled workforce to support the long term competitiveness of the district by raising education achievement levels and encouraging the development of the skills needed for everyone to find and remain in work.   |
| 16  | To encourage the development of a buoyant, sustainable tourism sector.   |
| 17  | Support community involvement in decisions affecting them and enable communities to provide local services and solutions.  |

<sup>61</sup> Source: South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 – Sustainability Scoping Report (June 2014)

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